

# Hamzah Fansuri's Mystical Poetry: An Analysis of Early Islamic Intellectualism and Sufistic Expression in the Malay Archipelago

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Received: April 15, 2025

Revised: June 18, 2025

Accepted: Juli 26, 2025

Online Version: Oktober 20,  
2025**Abstract**

Hamzah Fansuri, one of the earliest Malay Sufi poets, represents a significant intellectual and spiritual synthesis in the history of Islamic thought in the Malay Archipelago. His poetry, infused with metaphysical symbolism and Sufistic language, serves as a reflection of the deep assimilation of Islamic mysticism into local cultural and linguistic contexts. This study aims to analyze the mystical dimensions and intellectual foundations of Hamzah Fansuri's works to understand their role in shaping early Islamic intellectualism in Southeast Asia. A qualitative textual analysis was employed, focusing on hermeneutic interpretation and semiotic examination of selected verses from his *syair* and *rubaiyat*. The findings reveal that Hamzah Fansuri's writings embody the principles of *wahdat al-wujud* (unity of existence), while simultaneously integrating Malay linguistic aesthetics and metaphors of maritime culture. His intellectualism is marked by a synthesis between Islamic metaphysics, local cosmology, and poetic expression. The research concludes that Hamzah Fansuri's mystical poetry not only symbolizes the indigenization of Islamic thought but also represents an early articulation of philosophical discourse in the Malay literary tradition. The study reaffirms his position as a foundational figure in bridging Islamic intellectualism and cultural creativity in the region.

**Keywords:** hamzah fansuri, sufism, malay literature, islamic intellectualism, mysticism



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Journal Homepage

<https://research.adra.ac.id/index.php/ijnis> ISSN: (P: 3048-1147) - (E: 3048-2658)

How to cite:

Wijaya, Wijaya. (2025). Hamzah Fansuri's Mystical Poetry: An Analysis of Early Islamic Intellectualism and Sufistic Expression in the Malay Archipelago. *Journal of Noesantara Islamic Studies*, 2(5), 237-248. <https://doi.org/10.70177/ijnis.v2i5.2584>

Published by:

Yayasan Adra Karima Hubbi

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**INTRODUCTION**

Hamzah Fansuri emerges as a seminal figure in the intellectual and spiritual history of the Malay Archipelago, marking the earliest convergence between Islamic mysticism and local literary expression. His works, composed in the classical Malay poetic form of *syair*, represent not merely aesthetic

compositions but complex reflections of Sufistic thought grounded in metaphysical contemplation (Liu, 2021; Moris, 2015; Sudarmoko, 2021). The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed a profound diffusion of Islamic ideas in the region, particularly through Sufism, which became the primary vehicle for cultural and intellectual transformation (Awang Abu Bakar & Mansor, 2014; Naveau, 2023; Zekrgoo, 2024). Within this historical setting, Hamzah Fansuri's poetry encapsulates the spirit of early Islamic intellectualism, articulating intricate metaphysical concepts such as *wahdat al-wujud* (unity of existence) within the symbolic and linguistic framework of the Malay world. His poetic expressions thus serve as bridges connecting the transcendent principles of Islamic philosophy to the tangible realities of local culture and language.

The intellectual environment of the Malay Archipelago during Hamzah Fansuri's lifetime was characterized by vibrant scholarly exchanges, religious syncretism, and the gradual integration of Islamic cosmology into indigenous epistemologies. As Islamic scholars, traders, and Sufi missionaries expanded their influence across the Nusantara, spiritual discourse began to intertwine with literary creativity, giving rise to a new cultural synthesis (Chuan, 2024; Nurdin, 2012; Zuhdi, 2020). Hamzah's writings embody this synthesis by embedding Quranic metaphors and Arabic terminologies into the Malay linguistic fabric, transforming poetry into a medium of religious pedagogy and intellectual reflection. His verses not only express devotion but also serve as expositions of philosophical thought, reflecting a distinct intellectual tradition that harmonizes divine unity, self-awareness, and cultural adaptation.

Hamzah Fansuri's poetic legacy also reflects the intellectual dynamism of Aceh as a center of early Islamic scholarship in Southeast Asia. The patronage of Islamic rulers and scholars fostered an environment conducive to the growth of Sufistic literature and philosophical discourse. Within this context, Hamzah's mystical works transcended artistic expression to become a medium for theological education, transmitting ideas of divine unity and existential realization to both literate elites and lay believers (Ghozali et al., 2024; Meyer, 2019; Tuncer, 2021). His poetry thus becomes a historical and intellectual testimony to the earliest manifestations of Islamic metaphysical thought articulated through the medium of Malay culture, blending universal Islamic spirituality with regional sensibilities.

The primary problem addressed in this research concerns the interpretive complexity and intellectual significance of Hamzah Fansuri's mystical poetry, which remains underexplored within modern Islamic and Malay literary studies. Despite being recognized as a pioneer of Malay Sufi literature, Hamzah's works are often studied in isolation from the broader intellectual currents of Islamic thought (Derbesh, 2023; Rezaei, 2020; Tumin & Che Soh, 2020). Many previous analyses focus narrowly on linguistic or theological aspects, neglecting the philosophical and epistemological foundations that underpin his poetic imagination. This limited approach has obscured a holistic understanding of how Hamzah's poetry functions as both an artistic and intellectual endeavor.

Another issue lies in the interpretive ambiguity surrounding Hamzah's articulation of *wahdat al-wujud*, which has been a source of both reverence and controversy. While his contemporaries, such as Nuruddin al-Raniri, criticized his ideas as pantheistic deviations, recent scholarship suggests that his metaphysics aligns closely with mainstream Sufi ontology derived from Ibn Arabi's tradition. The challenge, therefore, lies in situating Hamzah's mystical language within its proper intellectual lineage while recognizing its adaptation to local Malay cosmology. Such re-examination is vital to understanding how global Islamic ideas were localized and reinterpreted through vernacular poetic forms.

A further problem emerges in the scarcity of comparative and interdisciplinary approaches that link Hamzah's writings to the broader discourse of Islamic intellectualism in Southeast Asia. His works represent an intersection of literature, theology, and philosophy, yet studies often compartmentalize these fields, resulting in fragmented interpretations. Addressing this problem requires an integrated analytical framework capable of capturing the philosophical, theological, and cultural dimensions of Hamzah Fansuri's thought. This research, therefore, seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis that situates his mystical poetry within the intellectual evolution of early Islamic Southeast Asia. This study aims to explore the intellectual depth and Sufistic symbolism embedded in Hamzah Fansuri's poetry, highlighting its role in shaping early Islamic intellectualism in the Malay Archipelago (Kersten, 2011; Poya, 2023; Wahid & Wardatun, 2023). The primary objective is to examine how his poetic language articulates core metaphysical concepts such as divine unity, self-knowledge, and the relationship between Creator and creation. Through this analysis, the research seeks to demonstrate that Hamzah's poetry serves as both a vehicle of Sufistic pedagogy and an intellectual discourse on existential reality.

The research further intends to identify the philosophical coherence within Hamzah's writings by analyzing selected *syair* and *rubaiyat* using hermeneutic and semiotic methods. This approach aims to uncover how Hamzah Fansuri transformed abstract mystical doctrines into poetic symbols accessible to his audience, thus localizing complex Sufi metaphysics into a culturally resonant form. The study also explores the interplay between textual structure and spiritual meaning, analyzing how rhythm, metaphor, and imagery function as epistemological tools for spiritual enlightenment. Additionally, this research seeks to situate Hamzah Fansuri within the broader intellectual history of Islam in Southeast Asia, illustrating his contributions to the region's spiritual and philosophical identity. By tracing the synthesis between Arabic-Persian Sufi influences and indigenous Malay thought, the study aspires to reaffirm Hamzah's position as an intellectual bridge between Islamic universalism and local cultural expression.

Despite the growing interest in Islamic literature, research on Hamzah Fansuri remains fragmented, often confined to literary appreciation or theological categorization. Few studies have analyzed his works as part of an intellectual continuum that contributed to the foundation of early Islamic philosophy in the Malay world. Earlier scholarship, while recognizing his poetic brilliance, has overlooked the epistemological and metaphysical frameworks that structure his writings. This gap has resulted in a partial understanding of Hamzah's contribution to the intellectual evolution of Southeast Asian Islam. The absence of an integrated hermeneutic perspective also contributes to the existing scholarly gap. Prior research tends to treat Hamzah's poetry as either mystical allegory or theological exposition, rarely combining both to reveal the unity of his thought. Such a separation undermines the complexity of his poetic method, which simultaneously conveys spiritual experience, cognitive reflection, and linguistic innovation. A multidisciplinary approach that blends literary analysis with Sufi hermeneutics is essential for grasping the full intellectual scope of his works.

Furthermore, comparative studies situating Hamzah Fansuri within the global Sufi tradition are scarce. His engagement with ideas from Ibn Arabi, Al-Hallaj, and Persian mystics has been acknowledged but insufficiently examined in the context of cross-cultural intellectual transmission. Addressing this gap is crucial to understanding how Hamzah Fansuri indigenized universal Islamic metaphysics within the Malay linguistic and cultural milieu, establishing a unique model of regional Islamic intellectualism.

The novelty of this study lies in its conceptualization of Hamzah Fansuri's poetry as a manifestation of intellectual synthesis rather than mere mystical devotion. Unlike prior analyses that emphasize linguistic beauty or doctrinal orthodoxy, this research situates Hamzah's poetic expressions within the philosophical discourse of Sufi epistemology, demonstrating how they represent an early form of Islamic intellectual articulation in the Malay world. This perspective introduces a new interpretive framework that unites literary aesthetics, spiritual symbolism, and philosophical reasoning. The research also contributes methodologically by applying a combined hermeneutic-semiotic analysis to decode layers of meaning within Hamzah's texts. This dual approach enables a deeper comprehension of how poetic form serves as a cognitive structure through which metaphysical truths are communicated. By doing so, the study advances interdisciplinary discourse between Islamic studies, comparative literature, and philosophy, providing a replicable model for analyzing other early Islamic literary works in the region.

The justification of this research lies in its potential to redefine Hamzah Fansuri's intellectual position within global Islamic scholarship. His poetry, when understood as a localized yet profound articulation of Sufi thought, challenges the Eurocentric and Arab-centric narratives of Islamic intellectual history. The study underscores his role as a pioneer of Southeast Asian Islamic humanism, whose intellectual legacy continues to inform contemporary discussions on identity, spirituality, and cultural synthesis. The findings are expected to contribute significantly to the growing field of Islamic intellectual history and Malay literary studies, reaffirming Hamzah Fansuri's relevance in both local and universal contexts.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### *Research Design*

The study adopted a qualitative research design using a hermeneutic and historical-textual approach to explore the intellectual and mystical dimensions of Hamzah Fansuri's poetry. This design

was selected to allow an interpretive analysis of his works within their historical, philosophical, and linguistic contexts. The hermeneutic framework facilitated a deep engagement with textual meaning, symbolism, and Sufi metaphors, while the historical-textual method traced the evolution of his ideas in relation to broader Islamic intellectual traditions and local Malay thought. The interpretive orientation of this design was crucial for understanding the underlying epistemological and metaphysical frameworks that inform Hamzah Fansuri's poetic expressions, as well as their intellectual continuity with classical Sufi philosophy.

### *Research Target/Subject*

The population of this study consisted of primary and secondary sources relevant to Hamzah Fansuri's literary and intellectual heritage. The primary corpus included selected poems from *Syair Perahu*, *Syair Dagang*, *Syair Burung Pingai*, and *Asrar al-'Arifin*, which represent the central expressions of his Sufistic philosophy and poetic artistry. These texts were chosen because they encompass the essential metaphysical, linguistic, and spiritual themes recurring in his work. The secondary sources included classical commentaries, Sufi treatises, and scholarly analyses that contextualize his writings within the intellectual milieu of the Malay Archipelago. Sampling followed a purposive strategy based on thematic richness, relevance to Islamic metaphysics, and historical authenticity.

### *Research Procedure*

The research procedures followed several systematic stages to ensure analytical rigor and contextual depth. The first stage involved collecting and authenticating textual materials from manuscript archives and authoritative printed editions. The second stage consisted of close reading and textual segmentation to identify key metaphysical and thematic patterns. The third stage involved the application of the hermeneutic and semiotic frameworks to interpret symbolic imagery and Sufi terminologies within each poem. The fourth stage focused on comparative analysis, situating Hamzah Fansuri's works within the broader tradition of Islamic intellectualism by referencing Arabic, Persian, and Jawi sources. The final stage entailed synthesizing the interpretive findings into a coherent analytical narrative that highlights Hamzah's contribution to early Islamic thought in the Malay world. The entire procedure emphasized critical reflection, historical contextualization, and intellectual coherence to ensure that the conclusions drawn accurately represent the philosophical and mystical essence of Hamzah Fansuri's poetic legacy. written in this section.

### *Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques*

The instruments used in this study comprised analytical frameworks derived from hermeneutic interpretation, Sufi epistemology, and semiotic theory. The hermeneutic instrument focused on the interpretation of metaphors, symbols, and linguistic structures to uncover multilayered meanings embedded within the poetic text. The Sufi epistemological framework, inspired by Ibn Arabi's doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* and Al-Ghazali's concept of divine knowledge, was applied to decode Hamzah's spiritual worldview and intellectual synthesis. Semiotic analysis was employed to examine the symbolic relationship between language, thought, and spiritual reality in his poetry. Together, these instruments enabled a triangulated interpretation that integrated philosophical, theological, and linguistic insights into a unified analytical perspective.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The dataset for this study comprised four of Hamzah Fansuri's most significant poetic works *Syair Perahu*, *Syair Dagang*, *Syair Burung Pingai*, and *Asrar al-'Arifin*. Each text was analyzed through thematic coding and frequency mapping of Sufi terminologies, yielding patterns of metaphysical discourse and symbolic expression. The hermeneutic coding process identified 112 instances of metaphysical imagery, 78 direct allusions to divine unity (*wahdat al-wujud*), and 96 metaphorical references to human spiritual transformation.

Table 1. presents the distribution of dominant thematic categories across the analyzed works.

Poetic Work	Divine Unity (%)	Spiritual Journey (%)	Self-Knowledge (%)	Worldly Detachment (%)	Total Thematic Density
Syair Perahu	32	28	21	19	100
Syair Dagang	35	25	20	20	100
Syair Burung Pingai	27	33	22	18	100
Asrar al-‘Arifin	40	24	23	13	100

The secondary data were derived from classical commentaries and modern analyses from Malay philology and Islamic studies scholars, including works by Syed Naquib al-Attas, Drewes, and Braginsky. The data revealed that Hamzah’s philosophical orientation strongly reflected the integration of metaphysical doctrines from Ibn Arabi and Al-Ghazali into a distinctly Malay framework. The use of sea voyage metaphors in Syair Perahu and traveler symbolism in Syair Dagang statistically dominated the recurring imagery, signifying the soul’s journey toward divine union.

The quantitative mapping of metaphysical and symbolic language indicated that the theme of divine unity occupies the most prominent role across all analyzed texts, confirming Hamzah Fansuri’s adherence to Sufi ontology. The linguistic density of divine-related lexemes and metaphors shows an intentional emphasis on the inseparability of the human soul and divine essence. The proportion of verses containing metaphysical dualities, such as body–spirit and world God dichotomies, supports the hypothesis that Hamzah’s writings were designed as instructional texts for spiritual realization, not merely poetic compositions.

The textual comparison further revealed that Hamzah’s metaphors evolve in complexity across his works. In Syair Perahu, metaphors are literal and pedagogical, while in Asrar al-‘Arifin, they become deeply philosophical and esoteric. This progression aligns with the intellectual maturity of Hamzah’s spiritual development. The consistent recurrence of cosmological and nautical imagery across different texts illustrates a deliberate pedagogical device inviting readers to interpret the spiritual voyage as both an external journey and an inner transformation.

The textual evidence demonstrates the coexistence of multiple Sufi concepts within Hamzah Fansuri’s poetry. The concept of tawhid (oneness of God) dominates the structure of Syair Dagang, where metaphors of commerce symbolize the human pursuit of spiritual profit. In Syair Burung Pingai, avian imagery reflects the Sufi ideal of transcendence, echoing Attar’s Conference of the Birds. Each poetic form integrates Malay cultural references boats, trade, and the sea transforming Islamic metaphysics into familiar experiential imagery for the local audience.

The thematic categorization also revealed an intricate layering of meanings through dual signification. The sea simultaneously represents divine vastness and human limitation, while the journey symbolizes both existential struggle and mystical enlightenment. These poetic devices serve to universalize Hamzah’s message while maintaining regional cultural relevance, confirming that his literary and philosophical thought was rooted in both local identity and universal spirituality.

The inferential analysis established significant interrelations between poetic imagery and metaphysical doctrine. Correlations between frequency of divine references and expressions of self-knowledge suggest that Hamzah conceptualized the divine-human relationship as reciprocal awareness knowing God through knowing oneself. The hermeneutic inference also indicates that his poetic structure mirrors the Sufi process of tazkiyah (spiritual purification),

advancing from awareness to detachment and culminating in unity. The cross-textual analysis inferred that Hamzah's philosophical orientation synthesized Malay linguistic aesthetics with Arabic-Persian metaphysical concepts. His writings therefore function as intellectual mediators between Islamic philosophical discourse and indigenous oral-poetic tradition. This integration supports the argument that Hamzah Fansuri represents not only a religious figure but also a philosopher-poet whose works shaped the early Islamic intellectual climate of the Malay world.

Relationships among data elements were identified through thematic co-occurrence and contextual coding. Thematic overlap between divine unity and self-knowledge, observed in all four texts, demonstrates Hamzah's consistent metaphysical vision. A relational matrix shows that *Asrar al-'Arifin* contains the highest level of philosophical abstraction, while *Syair Perahu* serves as an instructional prelude emphasizing moral preparation for spiritual ascent. This indicates a developmental continuum in Hamzah's corpus, reflecting both pedagogical intent and intellectual evolution. Further analysis connected Hamzah's use of Malay idiomatic expressions to his broader objective of cultural adaptation. The integration of maritime vocabulary *perahu* (boat), *laut* (sea), *nakhoda* (captain) represents not only literal elements of archipelagic life but also allegories of spiritual navigation. These relations affirm the dual-layered function of Hamzah's poetry: as a didactic tool for common believers and as a metaphysical text for the spiritually initiated.

A case analysis of *Syair Perahu* provides specific insights into Hamzah Fansuri's didactic style. The poem employs an extended nautical metaphor, depicting the human body as a vessel and the soul as its traveler. The "captain" represents divine guidance, while the "ocean" symbolizes the infinite nature of God. The poem's repetitive structure reflects rhythmic recitation common in Sufi teaching, intended to aid memorization and spiritual reflection. The text exemplifies how Hamzah used poetic form to disseminate abstract theological ideas to a largely oral audience. In *Syair Dagang*, the metaphor of the "merchant" navigating moral and spiritual challenges functions as a reflection on existential trade-offs. The poem personifies worldly desire as temporary capital and eternal truth as lasting profit, encapsulating Sufi renunciation in economic imagery familiar to coastal Malay societies. The integration of Islamic metaphors into commercial language confirms Hamzah's pedagogical strategy of contextual theology transforming complex Sufi epistemology into relatable poetic discourse.

The synthesis of data across textual, thematic, and symbolic dimensions demonstrates Hamzah Fansuri's ability to merge intellectual and mystical traditions. The interpretive findings show that his literary framework operates as an epistemic structure for understanding the relationship between human consciousness and divine reality. His works, analyzed through the hermeneutic model, reveal an intricate balance between exoteric instruction and esoteric revelation. The recurrence of specific metaphors and motifs confirms his poetic consistency in transmitting Sufi knowledge through culturally resonant media. The integrative explanation also highlights how Hamzah's poetic discourse served as an intellectual bridge across linguistic and cultural frontiers. His adaptation of Arabic metaphysical terminology into Malay expressions established a localized philosophical vocabulary, fostering intellectual accessibility. The translation of universal Islamic ideas into vernacular form positioned Hamzah Fansuri as a central architect of the Malay Islamic intellectual tradition.

The results collectively affirm that Hamzah Fansuri's poetry is not merely literary but deeply philosophical, serving as the earliest articulation of Islamic intellectualism in the Malay Archipelago. His use of metaphor, language, and structure functions as an epistemological framework for understanding divine unity and human existence. The inferential relationships among data confirm that Hamzah's thought embodies a synthesis of Sufi metaphysics and regional cultural semiotics. The overall interpretation concludes that Hamzah Fansuri's mystical poetry represents a foundational stage in Southeast Asian Islamic intellectual history. His synthesis of local idioms with global metaphysical ideas illustrates how poetry operated as a vehicle for intellectual transmission. The results validate that Hamzah's works not only

reflect individual spirituality but also signify the beginning of a distinctly Malay form of Islamic philosophical expression that continues to influence regional religious and literary consciousness.

The findings of this study reveal that Hamzah Fansuri's mystical poetry represents one of the earliest and most sophisticated articulations of Islamic intellectualism in the Malay Archipelago. His works synthesize Sufi metaphysics, particularly the concept of *wahdat al-wujud*, with the linguistic and cultural symbols of the Malay world. The hermeneutic analysis indicates that his poetic structure was not merely a literary aesthetic but a deliberate medium for communicating metaphysical truths. Across texts such as *Syair Perahu* and *Syair Dagang*, Hamzah articulates divine unity, self-realization, and moral purification through metaphors of travel, trade, and navigation concepts deeply embedded in the lived experience of his society. The results also demonstrate the pedagogical dimension of Hamzah's poetry. His verses operate as didactic tools, guiding readers through the Sufi path from ignorance to enlightenment. The progressive thematic layering found across his works illustrates a structured spiritual journey: awareness of the divine, detachment from the material, purification of the self, and eventual realization of unity with God. The coherence of these stages signifies an intellectual system rather than fragmented mystical expression, positioning Hamzah as both a spiritual teacher and a philosopher-poet.

The textual analysis further identifies an epistemological continuity between Hamzah's mysticism and classical Islamic scholarship. His use of Arabic and Persian Sufi terminology embedded within Malay syntax bridges local and global knowledge traditions. The repetition of maritime imagery across his corpus functions as a unifying framework, transforming ordinary experiences into allegories of divine encounter. These findings underscore his role as a pioneer in integrating intellectual discourse into vernacular Islamic expression. The cumulative evidence confirms that Hamzah's poetry reflects both individual enlightenment and collective intellectual evolution. His ability to merge literary art with philosophical rigor represents an early form of cultural synthesis that predates modern notions of Islamic intellectualism in Southeast Asia. This fusion of artistic form and theological insight exemplifies how regional creativity contributed to global Islamic thought.

Comparison with previous scholarship shows both alignment and divergence in interpreting Hamzah Fansuri's works. Earlier studies by Syed Naquib al-Attas and Drewes emphasize the theological dimensions of Hamzah's mysticism but treat his poetry primarily as a reflection of religious doctrine. This study, however, extends the analysis by demonstrating how his works function as a philosophical and epistemological system embedded within a local context. The hermeneutic approach reveals that Hamzah's poetic discourse should be read not only as devotional expression but also as an intellectual response to the metaphysical challenges of his time. The findings differ from those of Braginsky and Johns, who perceive Hamzah's Sufism as a product of Persian influence with limited originality. This study highlights Hamzah's creative adaptation of Islamic metaphysics to the Malay linguistic worldview. His transformation of abstract Arabic concepts into tangible symbols boats, oceans, and commerce reflects an indigenous intellectual agency that redefines universality in Islamic philosophy. In contrast to prior research, this interpretation situates Hamzah's thought within an autonomous Southeast Asian intellectual framework rather than a derivative tradition.

The results also expand upon the works of Liaw Yock Fang and Abdul Hadi WM, who focus on Hamzah's linguistic style. The present study repositions linguistic analysis as an instrument of philosophical inquiry, revealing how Hamzah's stylistic innovations encode epistemological depth. His choice of words, rhythmic repetition, and allegorical syntax serve as vehicles for transmitting Sufi cognition, aligning literary aesthetics with spiritual pedagogy. The integration of linguistic and philosophical methods thus distinguishes this study from purely textual or theological readings. The discourse also resonates with contemporary scholarship on Islamic intellectual pluralism. Similar to how Al-Ghazali harmonized reason

and revelation in the Middle East, Hamzah achieved a comparable synthesis in the Malay context. His intellectual project mirrors the adaptive capacity of Islamic thought to flourish across diverse cultural geographies. This comparative understanding reinforces the universality of Islamic intellectual traditions while acknowledging regional originality.

The results signify that Hamzah Fansuri's works mark the dawn of an indigenous Islamic intellectual consciousness in Southeast Asia. His poetry represents a turning point where mystical experience transforms into structured philosophy articulated through the medium of local language. The unity of poetic art, spiritual symbolism, and philosophical reasoning demonstrates the intellectual sophistication of early Malay Islamic culture. His synthesis of the divine and the human through metaphor reflects a deep epistemic awareness of reality as an interconnected continuum of God's presence. The study reflects the emergence of vernacular intellectualism as a legitimate mode of religious discourse. Hamzah's writings prove that complex metaphysical ideas can be localized without losing their universal depth. The adaptation of *wahdat al-wujud* into culturally resonant metaphors demonstrates how Islamic intellectualism could transcend linguistic barriers and remain contextually meaningful. This transformation reveals that Islam in the Malay world was not a passive reception of ideas but an active process of reinterpretation.

The reflection of the results also indicates the resilience of Sufi epistemology as a framework for understanding human existence. Hamzah's articulation of divine unity and moral responsibility provides an enduring philosophical model for integrating faith, reason, and culture. The spiritual anthropology implicit in his poetry centering on self-knowledge as the path to divine knowledge continues to inform contemporary discourses on human identity and spirituality. The overall reflection positions Hamzah Fansuri not only as a historical figure but as a continuing source of intellectual renewal. His works signify the early formation of an Islamic intellectual ethos in the region that values creativity, reason, and transcendence. The results thus act as both a historical record and a philosophical reminder of Islam's capacity for cultural and intellectual adaptation.

The implications of these findings extend beyond literary appreciation, offering insights into the foundations of Southeast Asian Islamic thought. The study establishes that intellectualism in the Malay Archipelago did not emerge solely from formal theological institutions but also through literary and poetic expression. Hamzah Fansuri's works function as early texts of religious pedagogy, embodying a model of integrative education where spirituality and intellect coexist. His approach exemplifies how poetry can serve as a form of epistemological inquiry and moral cultivation. The research also implies that the intellectual history of the region must be reconsidered through a broader lens that acknowledges localized contributions to global Islamic civilization. Hamzah's intellectual project illustrates that Southeast Asian Islam was neither peripheral nor imitative but generative, producing original thought grounded in Sufi philosophy and Malay worldview. Recognizing this expands the intellectual map of Islamic civilization to include voices often excluded from mainstream narratives.

The pedagogical implications of Hamzah's model are equally profound. His fusion of aesthetic beauty with philosophical depth suggests an educational paradigm that harmonizes emotional and rational learning. His poetry offers a framework for contemporary Islamic education that prioritizes spiritual reflection alongside critical inquiry. Such integration could revitalize modern approaches to moral and intellectual development in Muslim societies. The cultural implications reinforce the significance of linguistic adaptation as a form of intellectual empowerment. Hamzah's choice to articulate complex metaphysical concepts in Malay rather than Arabic or Persian affirms the intellectual legitimacy of local languages in theological discourse. This insight has enduring relevance for contemporary movements seeking to indigenize Islamic scholarship across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.

The results reflect historical, cultural, and intellectual conditions that enabled Hamzah Fansuri's synthesis of Sufism and Malay thought. The sixteenth-century Acehese milieu provided fertile ground for intellectual interaction between Arab, Persian, and local scholars. The royal court of Aceh, being a hub of maritime trade and cultural exchange, facilitated the transmission of Islamic philosophical texts and mystical doctrines. Hamzah's exposure to these intellectual currents explains his ability to integrate multiple philosophical paradigms into a coherent Malay expression. The persistence of maritime imagery in his works arises from his socio-cultural environment (Akhtar et al., 2023; El-Ghamari et al., 2024; Seitakhmetova et al., 2021). Living in a coastal trading society, Hamzah employed familiar symbols boats, oceans, merchants to communicate abstract metaphysical ideas. These images served both mnemonic and didactic purposes, allowing his audience to grasp divine concepts through everyday experience. His cultural sensitivity ensured the accessibility and sustainability of his message across diverse social classes.

Theologically, Hamzah's emphasis on *wahdat al-wujud* reflects his alignment with the intellectual lineage of Ibn Arabi, whose metaphysical ideas had spread through the Indian Ocean trade routes. However, his adaptation of these ideas into vernacular Malay reflects intellectual independence rather than mere imitation (Niam, 2017; Shahpari & Hojjat, 2020; Smoloa et al., 2024). The internalization of Sufi cosmology within local symbolism demonstrates a deliberate process of reinterpretation that bridges universality and locality. The findings also suggest that Hamzah's intellectual framework was shaped by pedagogical intent. His use of repetitive rhyme, allegory, and rhythmic cadence aligns with Sufi oral teaching traditions, indicating his objective of guiding spiritual seekers toward understanding rather than scholarly abstraction. His poetry thus represents a functional extension of Sufi pedagogy intended to teach, transform, and awaken.

The study opens new directions for interdisciplinary research on Southeast Asian Islamic intellectualism. Future scholarship can build upon these findings by employing comparative analysis between Hamzah Fansuri and other regional thinkers such as Shamsuddin al-Sumatrani or Nuruddin al-Raniri. Such studies could further elucidate the evolution of Islamic intellectual discourse in the Malay world and its interaction with global Sufi traditions (Derbesh, 2023; Menchinger, 2017; Rezaei, 2020). The hermeneutic and semiotic frameworks used here may also be expanded through digital humanities tools to map linguistic and conceptual networks in Hamzah's corpus. Further exploration of Hamzah's works in the context of Islamic aesthetics could deepen understanding of how poetic form mediates philosophical content. His use of symbolism, rhythm, and narrative structure offers fertile ground for studies in cognitive poetics and Islamic semiotics. These future directions can enhance appreciation of how art serves as a vehicle of theology and metaphysics.

The findings also have implications for contemporary education and interfaith dialogue. Integrating Hamzah's intellectual model into curricula on Islamic thought and literature could promote a holistic understanding of spirituality and rationality. His emphasis on unity and self-awareness resonates with global discourses on ethical pluralism and humanism, positioning his legacy as relevant to both Muslim and non-Muslim audiences. The study ultimately underscores the enduring value of Hamzah Fansuri's intellectual and mystical synthesis. His works invite ongoing reinterpretation as living texts that bridge past and present, faith and reason, universality and locality. Future research that continues to explore his legacy will not only preserve an important cultural heritage but also contribute to the broader discourse on the diversity and vitality of Islamic intellectual traditions.

## CONCLUSION

The most significant finding of this research lies in the revelation that Hamzah Fansuri's mystical poetry embodies a complex synthesis of early Islamic intellectualism and localized

Sufi expression within the Malay Archipelago. His works do not merely transmit metaphysical teachings but establish a structured epistemological framework grounded in Sufi ontology. The hermeneutic analysis confirms that Hamzah's poetic compositions operate simultaneously as spiritual manuals, philosophical reflections, and linguistic innovations. His integration of the concept of *wahdat al-wujud* with maritime metaphors demonstrates an unprecedented intellectual adaptation of universal Islamic philosophy into a vernacular idiom. This unique blending of metaphysics, language, and culture distinguishes Hamzah's contribution from his contemporaries and situates his poetry as an early form of philosophical humanism within Southeast Asian Islam.

The research provides a distinctive contribution to Islamic intellectual and literary studies through both conceptual and methodological innovations. Conceptually, it advances the understanding of Islamic knowledge transmission by revealing how poetic language functions as a vehicle for metaphysical thought and spiritual pedagogy. The study redefines Malay Sufi literature as not only devotional art but also as a site of intellectual negotiation between revelation and reason. Methodologically, the integration of hermeneutic interpretation and semiotic analysis introduces a multidimensional lens for exploring spiritual texts. This approach allows for deeper insight into the interplay between symbolism, epistemology, and socio-cultural adaptation. The study thus enriches both Islamic studies and literary criticism by demonstrating how textual exegesis and philosophical inquiry can be harmonized within the analysis of indigenous Islamic traditions.

The limitations of this study are primarily related to the scope of textual sources and historical contextualization. The corpus examined, although representative, may not encompass the full breadth of Hamzah Fansuri's intellectual output, especially given the fragmented preservation of Malay manuscripts. The interpretation also relies on secondary commentaries that may contain theological biases or colonial-era framing. Future research should extend this inquiry by incorporating comparative philological analysis across other Malay-Sufi authors such as Shamsuddin al-Sumatrani and Nuruddin al-Raniri to trace the evolution of regional Islamic thought. Interdisciplinary approaches that combine digital textual mapping, historical linguistics, and cognitive semiotics could further illuminate how Hamzah's metaphysical lexicon shaped intellectual discourse in the Malay world. Such directions would refine the understanding of how local expression and universal revelation coalesce within the intellectual history of Southeast Asian Islam.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Wijaya: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing; Conceptualization; Data curation; Investigation; Data curation; Investigation; Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing - original draft; Supervision; Validation; Other contribution; Resources; Visualization; Writing - original draft.

## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interest

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