

**THE MYSTERY OF HUMAN PERSON:
MYSTICAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN HAMZAH FANSURI'S *SHA'IR*****A. Bagus Laksana**Sanata Dharma University
*bagus.laksana@usd.ac.id***ABSTRACT**

This essay endeavors to look closely at the mystical theological anthropology of Hamzah Fansuri, the first and one of the greatest Sufi writers in the Malay world. Mystical anthropology is arguably the underlying theme of all Fansuri's poems and he develops this mystical discourse on the theomorphic dignity of every human person, together with the dynamic of return to God, by using some quite original imageries and symbolisms of his own. However, Fansuri's mystical theological anthropology belongs to the tradition of Ibn al-'Arabī (the *Wujūdiyyah* doctrine), while his works also betray familiarity with and the influence of other great mystics of Islam, such as 'Aṭṭār and Ḥāfīz.

Keywords: *Fansuri, Islamic mysticism, Sufism, anthropology, union with God.*

ABSTRAK

Tulisan ini mencermati antropologi mistik Hamzah Fansuri, seorang tokoh Sufi Melayu awal dan salah satu yang terbesar. Bisa dikatakan bahwa antropologi mistik adalah sebuah tema mendasar yang melandasi seluruh syair Fansuri. Fansuri mengembangkan wacana mistik mengenai martabat teomorfis manusia dan dinamika perjalanan manusia kembali menuju Tuhan, dengan menggunakan beberapa gambaran dan simbolisme yang cukup orisinal. Meskipun demikian, pemahaman antropologi teologis-mistik yang dikembangkan Fansuri termasuk dalam tradisi Ibn al-'Arabī (ajaran *Wujūdiyyah*). Di samping itu, karya-karya Fansuri juga memperlihatkan keakrabannya dengan, dan pengaruh dari, para Sufi besar lainnya, misalnya 'Aṭṭār dan Ḥāfīz.

Kata-kata Kunci: *Fansuri, Mistisisme Islam, Sufisme, antropologi, kesatuan dengan Tuhan.*

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Introduction

Anyone who wants to study Islamic mystical movement (Sufism) in the Malay-Indonesian world has almost always to start with the figure of Hamzah Fansuri (16th century). This is only understandable since Fansuri is indeed the first mystic-poet who introduced the mystical idea of Sufism in that region in the local language (Malay). For Indonesian educated people in general, however, Fansuri's contribution comes to be identified mostly in the sphere of literature, although very few people have actually read his works.¹ In this regard, Fansuri has indeed exerted significant influence on a number of Indonesian writers, such as Sanusi Pane and Amir Hamzah (W.M. 2001, 314ff).

In the last two decades or so, we have seen a modest resurgence of wider interest in the works of Malay-Indonesian Sufis, including those of Fansuri's. In the historical dynamic of the Indonesian Islam, the reappearance of Sufi themes at the time of the New Order (*Orde Baru*) can be found in the writings of Abdul Hadi W.M. (2001), Taufiq Ismail, and Sutardji Calzoum Bachri, as well as in the works of younger generation of poets, such as Emha Ainun Nadjib, Ahmadun Yosi Herfanda, and Acep Zamzam Noor. In the words of Harry Aveling in his 2001 book *Secrets Need Words: Indonesian Poetry, 1966-1998, these writers:*

...wrote a type of verse that was youthful, light, playful, at ease with Koranic references as well as the names of the prophets and the Persian mystics... There was almost a radiance to their descriptions of a world filled with the God whose beauty attracted spontaneous worship, who was everywhere and yet "nearer to you than your jugular vein". (Quoted in Howell 2001, 710).

Indeed, Sufism in general, not just its literary or artistic dimension, has continued to be alive in Indonesian society, as Julia Day Howell (2001, 702-703) writes:

Sufi devotionism, including mystical practice, is alive and well in both country and city and has captured the interest of people who are well

¹ Almost all Indonesian school children would recognize his name, since he is included among the first pioneers of Indonesian literature, especially the *sha'ir* genre, in the standard Indonesian literature textbooks. However, they almost knew nothing about the ideas of Fansuri and will have no real opportunity later on to read him, largely because his ideas are not widely discussed even in the world of Indonesian literature.

educated in the general education system—even members of the national elite. Moreover, Sufism, in diverse manifestations, has attracted people of both sexes who are still fully engaged in their careers, including some now in positions of considerable power. These new aficionados are reinterpreting Sufi thought as a source of inspiration for contemporary religious practice and are even becoming involved with long-established Sufi institutions (the Sufi orders, or *tarekat*). In the towns and cities, there is also avid experimentation with new institutional forms designed to engage cosmopolitan Muslims, estranged from the social milieu of traditional Sufism, with Sufi learning and practice.

In this same context, most recently, Sufi themes, including Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's works, are becoming more popular and have found a new space, that is, the social media, for example, through the various works of Haidar Bagir and Candra Malik.² Furthermore, one of the most salient characteristics of Indonesian Sufism is its mystical anthropology. In the Javanese context, for example, this mystical anthropology is indigenized in some interesting ways.³

This essay endeavors to present an analysis of an important aspect of Fansuri's mystical ideas—if not the most important one—namely, his mystical theological anthropology. For this purpose I choose poem 31 as a focus of analysis. However, before embarking on this analysis I will deal with some general aspects of Fansuri, the man and his works, especially his place among the classical poets of Islam.

Fansuri and Sufism in the Malay-Indonesian World

Who is Hamzah Fansuri? Born in Fansur, in the island of Sumatera, this Malay poet joined the Qādiriyyah Order.⁴ What is rather striking in Fansuri's career was of course the controversy that arose about the mystical and philosophical underpinnings of works.

Al-Raniri, the Muslim '*ulamā*' from Gujarat who migrated to Aceh and became an influential chief '*ulamā*' in the court of the Sultanate of Aceh under Iskandar Thāni (d. 1641), accused Fansuri of espousing the doctrine

² Candra Malik claims to have 30.000 followers on his Tweeter account. Some of the works of Haidar Bagir on Rūmī were originally his tweets as well (Cf. Bagir 2016; 2015).

³ In certain Javanese texts, Sufi mystical anthropology is put in the framework of Javano-Hindu spirituality, for example by using the framework of Dewaruci (Laksana 2014, 34ff).

⁴ This is why in some of his poems he mentions 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī; See poems XVI (15), XVII (15).

of the eternity of the world—together with the logical consequence of that belief, namely, the question as to whether God is the Agent (*fā'il*) and Maker (*ṣāni'*) of the world—as well as the doctrine of pantheism (Al-Attas 1970, 66).⁵ Al-Raniri was also the man behind the purge of Fansuri's works. Surely this controversy deserves a separate discussion. However, since it is beyond the modest and immediate scope of this essay, so it suffices to note that modern scholarship about this debate has agreed that al-Raniri's accusations have little foundation and largely resulted from his misconstrual of Fansuri's ideas.⁶

As for Fansuri's poems, they belong to the *rubā'* genre. Their metre, though, is the well-known Malay *sha'ir* metre, the rhyme-scheme of which is not that of the Persian *rubā'i* "quatrain": not "a-a-b-a", but "a-a-a-a" (Drewes and Brakel 1986, 34). As Drewes and Brakel (1986, 34) note, it might be case that Fansuri was the inventor of *sha'ir*, but the fact is that his poems certainly "are the earliest specimens of the *sha'ir* metre that we know of."

And with regard to his style and language, Fansuri is a demanding poet precisely because his poems make no easy reading, not only due to the lofty and mystical ideas in them, but also for the simple fact that his Malay is abundantly interspersed with Arabic (Drewes and Brakel 1986, 35). On this point Drewes and Brackel write:

The reader is rather heavily taxed, and it is obvious that this did not make for popularity of his writings. Hence it is quite understandable that, while his fame as a mystic and a poet endured, his poems were not secured from passing into oblivion, because, so to speak, he stood in his own light. Though in recent years there are signs of awakening interest in his poetry, Hamzah clearly belongs to the category of poets and writers who are eulogized rather than read. (Drewes and Brakel 1986, 35).

In Fansuri's poem we find echoes of some towering figures in Islamic poetry and mysticism, such as 'Aṭṭār and Ḥāfiẓ. Although it is rather difficult to establish historically that he read 'Aṭṭār and Ḥāfiẓ directly, his poems themselves testify to some connections with both of these poets, however

⁵ On the problem of the eternity of the world, al-Attas (1970, 73-74) writes, "according to Hamzah, taking his cue from the Sufis, creation presupposes voluntary action on the part of the Creator. The Universe as such cannot be said to exist eternally with God, for it has no existence... Hamzah agrees with the doctors of theology that the World as such is a thing created and not eternal."

⁶ On this question, see the various works of al-Attas.

indirect these connections might be. For example, Fansuri has a group of poems called “bird poems”. All poems in this group begin with *ṭayr* or *unggas* (Malay word for birds), thus echoing ‘Aṭṭār’s classic *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr* (*Conference of the Birds*).⁷

Furthermore, very much like Ḥāfiẓ, the codas of Fansuri’s poems are self-referential, recapitulating the discourse of the respective poem, sometimes in “a profoundly ironic and self-deprecating note.” For example, in poem 4 in which he talks about the initial phases of the journey to the *ma’rifah*, he says in the last strophe:

*Hamzah Fansuri most foolishly
thought that the sweetness of this world was lasting
He was neglectful of gathering provisions for the hereafter
Later on no doubt he will be sorry for this.*

And among the so-called “birds poem”, the coda of poem 10 reads thus:

*Hamzah the stranger is a sacred bird
His house is the ‘Frequented House’
In this pre-existent state he was intended for camphor
From the trees of the region of Fansur.*

Furthermore, as we will see later, Ḥāfiẓ’s most important symbolisms, such as the ocean and “wine” (beverages), can be found in Fansuri as well.⁸ Thus, although the exact nature of Fansuri’s direct relationship with ‘Aṭṭār, Ḥāfiẓ and other poets in the world of Islamic spirituality might be harder to determine, there is no doubt that his poems are closely connected to the inner world of these poets, both in terms of theme and literary symbolisms.

Fansuri’s Mystical Anthropology of Poem 31

As has been stated, this essay endeavors to look rather closely at how Fansuri’s *sha’ir* works, especially in terms of how he elaborates certain

⁷ On this point, Drewes and Brakel (1986, 38) goes on to point out that, “Hamzah was familiar with this story [*of Manṭiq al-Ṭayr*] is also apparent from some of his other poems and from a Persian quotation from the poem itself, where it says that some of the birds strayed away from the mystic path because they were attracted by worldly amusements.”

⁸ On this point, it might be interesting to note that, echoing Ḥāfiẓ’s symbolism of “wine” or drunkenness, together with the imageries of the lover and the Beloved, we find the same symbolisms in Fansuri’s poems as well as his prose work, particularly his *Sharab al-Āshiqīn* (*The Beverage of the Lovers*).

mystical ideas in his poems by using some original imageries and symbolisms. For this reason, I will take poem 31 as a case in point. The theme of this poem, which comes toward the end of Fansuri's collected poems, is arguably mystical anthropology in the tradition of Ibn al-'Arabi. In general, mystical anthropology—that is, mystical discourse on the theomorphic dignity of every human person, together with the dynamic of return to God—is arguably the underlying theme of all Fansuri's poems, as Drewes and Brakel (1986, 35) point out:

In the main Hamzah, deeply affected by the indelible memory of his own spiritual experience, deals admirably with the pivotal theme of his poetry, viz. man's lofty origin and his assignment to strive after return to this primeval state of "hidden treasure." The way thither is knowledge of self, i.e. to be alive to the meaning of the *ḥadīth qudsī*, "Man is my secret and I (God) am his secret" (*al-insān sirrī wa anā sirruhu*). Hence the frequent recurrence of the maxim "Whosoever knows himself knows his Lord" (*Man 'arafa nafsahu fa-qad 'arafa Rabbahu*), which words could with truth be styled Hamzah's favorite quotation.

Thus, the main sources for Fansuri's mystical anthropology are ultimately the Quran and the *ḥadīth*. However, the role of Ibn 'Arabi's sufi ontology (as well as other Sufis such as al-Tustarī) is also crucial, as Drewes and Brakel (1986, 35-36) go on to argue:

The essential complement of this main theme is Ibn al-'Arabi's Sufi ontology, to which Hamzah reverts every now and again, as it constitutes the speculative base of his appeal to mankind. For in his phenomenal existence, mystic man re-actualize his pre-existential past and anticipates his post-existential future, since he penetrates to his inmost being where he grasps his one Lord as the secret of his soul (*sirr al-nafs*) and perceives the Transcendent as the certitude (*yaqīn*) of his ultimate destiny. (this passage includes a quotation from Böwering 1980, 185).

As we will see more clearly later, the doctrine of *Nūr Muḥammadī*, expressed by al-Tustarī and elaborated later on by Ibn al-'Arabi, becomes the foundation of Fansuri's elaboration of his mystical anthropology in poem 31, in which he talks about *Nūr Muḥammadī* through the symbolism of "the Unique Fish".⁹

⁹ It is possible that the poetic expressions of this doctrine of *Nūr Muḥammadī*

However, before we move to the textual analysis of poem 31, it is important to see this poem's place in the overall dynamic of Fansuri's collected poems. In general terms, Fansuri's poems can be divided both on the literary and thematic grounds into six groups.

The biggest one is the first group, which consists of 13 poems. The underlying theme of these poems is, as Drewes and Brakel argue, the spiritual realization of God's manifestations in the whole reality through ascetic-mystical path in which the following of the *shari'a* as well as some ascetic and ethical practices are stressed.

Then, building on this broad foundation, Fansuri comes to the more strictly theological discourse about God in the second group of his poems. He talks about the sublimity of God's Being, God as the source of our inebriety as well as God as the best of schemers (*khayr al-mākirīn*).

Then, what follows is the third group in which the dominant theme is the mystical journey to God. It is here that the echoes of 'Aṭṭār are so pronounced, for Fansuri describes this process as the journey of the birds to the Simurgh in which some of the birds withdrew because they gave in to the various attachments to worldly things. In this group of poems, Fansuri seems to argue that self-knowledge, namely, the art to find the jewel inside oneself, should be the key to union with God, so much so that he tends to denigrate the value of ascetic practices at this stage precisely because these practices should have produced this self-knowledge (Drewes and Brakel 1986, 38).

And, in the fourth group of poems, the symbolism of bird that is developed further when Fansuri talks about "the naked bird" that has shed its feathers, metaphorically describing the accomplished mystic who has stripped his self from all attachments and attained union. At this point, anyone familiar with Ḥāfiẓ will recognize the central symbolism of drunkenness as an imagery for union.

Then, all the three poems of the fifth group "begin with *baḥr*, 'sea', 'ocean', followed by respectively (of the highest place), *al-Ḥaqq* (of the Divine Reality), and *al-butūn* (of the deeps). The poems are built on the theme of God as the primeval Ocean, on the surface of which the waves are called into fleeting

reached Hamzah Fansuri through 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmi' whose works seemed to be familiar to Fansuri. For, as Annemarie Schimmel points out, "Ibn 'Arabi placed the tradition of the 'hidden treasure' at the center of his system, and in his succession, as in that of his poetical interpreter Jāmi', the poets continued to sing: 'God made you the mirror of the Essence, a looking glass for the unique Essence', or From 'I was a treasure' your true nature has become clear: Your person is the mirror of the unqualified Light'" (Schimmel 1985, 131).

existence by the gale of creation" (Drewes and Brakel 1986, 40). What Fansuri talks about here is his favorite image of the relationship between God and the creation as well as the centrality of self-knowledge (in order to get in touch with our true self).

Thus, one can argue that the five groups of poems that go before poem 31 prepare the ground for the last group (to which poem 31 belongs), in terms of the logic of the progression of theme of the mystical journey to God, the thematic discourse about important concepts like *Nūr Muḥammadī* and self-knowledge, and some central imageries like "naked bird", "drunkenness", "ocean" and so forth. All of these are recapitulated in poem 31.

In the context of Fansuri's poetic work, poem 31 is definitely a very complex one in terms of its theme and elaboration. Thus, it is only understandable that it should come toward the end of the collection. As we have seen, this poem belongs to the last group (6th group), which consists of two poems (poems 31 and 32), all dealing with the symbolism of fish (Drewes and Brakel 1986, 40).

Interestingly, in these two poems Fansuri offers two symbolisms of fish, the unique fish and the whale, signifying respectively two kinds of seekers of God: the accomplished one and the failed one. The unique fish in poem 31 is the symbolism of accomplished mystics who are constantly aware of their origin from *Nūr Muḥammadī* and of their union with the ocean of God's being, while the whale in poem 31 and 32, is the symbolism of the human persons who look for God in the wrong place, like the whale who looks for water in the rocks of the shore. We will deal more with the meaning of this symbolism later.

Now, with regard to the structure of the poem, it consists of 13 strophes which can be divided into four smaller parts:

- a. a. Strophe 1-9: discourse on the unique fish as symbolism of the accomplished mystic's union with God;
- b. b. Strophe 10: discourse on the whale (the opposite of unique fish), symbol of the failed seekers;
- c. c. Strophe 11-12: some advice for the readers (learning from the difference between the two fishes);
- d. d. Strophe 13: coda (recapitulation of the whole discourse).

For the sake of brevity, I am not going to delve into a meticulous analysis of each line. Rather, I will flesh out some of the important thematic elements of this poem in the bigger framework of a mystical anthropological doctrine of Fansuri, while attending also to its peculiar literary devices, such as its main symbolisms, as we move through the thematic discussion. For

our purpose here, we are fortunate to have the commentaries of Syamsuddin of Pasai (d. 1630), himself a well-known mystic who followed the Fansuri's teachings, which we will take as a guide although we have to disagree with him on certain points.¹⁰ In the following section, the whole poem will be displayed so that we can easily move back and forth between the poem and our analyses of it.

1
Ikan tunggal bernama Fāḍil
Dengan air dā'im iya wāṣil
'Ishqī-nya terlalu kāmīl
Di dalam laut tiada ber-sāḥil

(The unique fish is properly called accomplished
 It is in constant union with the water
 Most perfect in its love
 It lives in the shoreless Ocean)

2
Ikan itu terlalu 'alī
Bangsanya nūr al-raḥmānī
Angganya rupa insānī
Dā'im bermain di laut bāqī

(This fish is most exalted
 Its kind is the Light of the Merciful
 Its body is of human shape
 It is continuously sporting in the eternal Ocean)

3
Bismi-llāhi akan namanya
Ruhu-llāhi akan nyawanya
Wajhu-llāhi akan mukanya
Zāhir dan bāṭin dā'im sertanya

(It is called by the name of God
 God's spirit is its life
 God's countenance its face
 Outwardly and inwardly it is always with Him)

¹⁰ Although my interpretation of Fansuri's poems is largely based on Syamsudin's work, I attempt to put a more systematic framework and structure to Fansuri's ideas in these poems, as well as to situate his ideas within the larger connection to other Muslim mystics. Syamsudin's interpretation is found in Drewes and Brakel (1986, 194-207).

4

Nūru-llāhi nama bapainya
Khilqatu-llāhi akan sakainya
Raja Sulaiman akan pawainya
Dā'im berbunyi dalam balainya

(God's Light is the name of its father
 God's creation the name of its bondmen
 King Solomon the bearer of its regalia
 It is always hiding in his hall)

5

Empat bangsa akan ibunya
Summun bukmun akan tipunya
Kerja Allah yang ditirunya
Mengenal Allah dengan bisunya

(Its mother is the elements
 Its deafness and dumbness are deceptive
 It follows God's activity
 Attending to Him in spite of its dumbness)

6

Fanā' fī-llāhi akan sunyinya
"Innī anā Allāh" akan bunyinya
Memakai dunia akan ruginya
Rāḍī kan mati dā'im pujinya

(To pass away into God is its effacement
 "I am God" its pronouncement
 To stick to the world is to its detriment
 That it is willing to die is its continuous prayer)

7

Tark al-dunyā akan labanya
Menuntut dunia akan maranya
'Abd al-Wāḥid asal namanya
Dā'im "Anā al-Ḥaqq" akan katanya

(To give up the world is to its advantage
 To strive after the world its undoing
 Servant of the Only One is its real name
 "I am the Supreme Reality" its constant pronouncement)

8

Kerjanya mabuk dan 'āshiq

*Ilmunya sempurna fā'iq
Mencari air terlalu ṣādiq
Di dalam laut bernama Khāliq*

(Ebriety and rapture are its daily practice
Its knowledge is utterly superior
Most faithfully it is in quest of the water
In the sea called the Creator)

9
*Ikan itulah terlalu Zāhir
Diamnya dā'im di dalam air
Sungguhpun iya terlalu hanyir
Wāṣil-nya dā'im di laut halir*

(That fish is very much in evidence
As it is permanently in the water
Though it gives forth a penetrating smell
It is in constant union, in the currents of the Sea 10

*Ikan aḥmaq bersuku-suku
Mencari air ke dalam batu
Olehnya taqsīr mencari guru
Tiada iya tahu akan jalan mūtu*

(Stupid fishes in shoals
Are looking for water inside a rock
Being remiss in looking for a teacher
They are ignorant of the way to die [before dying])

11
*Jalan mūtu terlalu 'alī
Itulah ilmu ikan sulṭānī
Jangan kau ghāfil jauh mencari
Wāṣil-mu dā'im di laut ṣāfi*

(The way to die is most lofty
The royal fish is possessed of this knowledge
Do not be so inattentive as to look for it far away

You are in constant union with the pure Ocean) 12

*Jalan mūtu yogya kaupakai
Akan air jangan kaulali
Tinggalkan ibu dan bapai
Supaya dapat shurbat kaurasai*

(You should go the way to die
Do not be neglectful of the water
Leave your mother and your father
So that you may taste the water)

13

*Hamzah Shahrnawi sungguhpun hina
Tiada iya rādī akan Tur Sina
Diamnya dā'im di laut Cina
Bermain-main dengan gajah mina*

(Hamzah of Shahrnawi, though of low descent
Is not content with Mount Sinai
His permanent abode is the China Sea
Where is disporting himself with the whale)

As we can see, this poem starts with the symbolism of fish (1st strophe). In this respect, it can be argued that the symbolism of fish employed in this sense is Fansuri's original contribution to Islamic humanities. The originality of this image is evident in the way Fansuri contextualizes this image: he did not just use the generic term "fish" (Malay: *ikan*), instead both *ikan tunggal* or *tongkol* (translated as unique fish) and *gajah mina* (Malay: literally meaning "sea-elephant," that is, whale), are considered to be the special fishes that populated only the China Sea.

Furthermore, the use of these symbolisms is based on Fansuri's observation of the contrasting characteristic of both fishes. The characteristic of the unique fish is to be always immersed in the sea while the whale is always tempted to go to the shore to look for water in the stone.

The symbolism of fish becomes appropriate and insightful in Fansuri precisely because God's Being is described as the Ocean. In this respect, the dynamic relationship between God (as the ocean) and the human person (as fish) can be made clearer. In poem 30 the idea of the primeval Ocean of God's Being is so central: as the primeval place of undifferentiated unity from which the differentiated world took its origin. It is also the place of return, where all these differentiated phenomena cease to exist.

Although not directly related, it would be insightful, with regard to the importance of the symbolism of ocean in Islamic spirituality, to look at a mystical vision of the Divine Majesty as the ocean as experienced by Rūzbihān Baqlī (d. 606/1209):

One night, I saw an immense ocean and this ocean was composed of a drink that was red in colour. And I saw the Prophet seated, drunk, in

the midst of the depths of this ocean. He held a cup of the drink in his hand and was drinking it. When he saw me, he took some of that ocean into the palm of his hand and gave me to drink. And that which was opened to me was opened! Then I understood that the Prophet was above all other creatures, who die thirsty while he stands intoxicated in the middle of the ocean of divine Majesty. (Quoted in Chodkiewicz 1993, 43).

With this background we can understand more clearly as to why the relationship between fish and ocean can express the union between the mystics and God. As Fansuri says in strophe 1, the fish or accomplished mystic is in constant union with the ocean's water, "it lives in the shoreless Shore", due to his perfection of love.

In strophe 2 Fansuri connects this fish to the idea of *Nūr Muḥammadī* or *Ḥaqīqah Muḥammadiyah*, saying: "its kind is the Light of the Merciful." As we have examined briefly, the doctrine of *Nūr Muḥammadī* has a central place in Fansuri's mystical system. In different work, *Asrār al-ʿArifīn*, he identifies this light as the principle of creation and argues: "if there is no Muhammadan Light, the universe will not exist" (Quoted in al-Attas 1970, 257). On this point, Syamsudin's commentary on this strophe makes an allusion to the divine saying: "I created the world on account of thee, and thee on account of Me," and he explains further that this saying means that all creation became manifest on account of Muhammad and Muhammad in turn became manifest on account of God (Drewes and Brakel 1986, 199).

According to Drewes and Brakel, this doctrine can be explained by reference to al-Jīlī's *Kitāb al-Insān al-Kāmil*, especially al-Jīlī's insight about the created world and its origin. Central in this speculative discourse is the role of *Kursī* that is conceived as "the place where the correlation of the Divine Being and creation sets in by the play of God's attribute of action (*al-ṣifāt al-fi'liyyah*), the effects of which show in the variegated pattern of the world" (Drewes and Brakel 1986, 169). It was during this primordial process of creation that the Prime Intellect (*ʿAql al-Awwal*) and the Exalted Pen (*Qalam al-A'lā*) made their appearance as the first created. Then, the pen imprints the forms of existence on the Preserved Tablet (*Lawḥ al-Mahfūz*).

However, in the context of our discussion, it must be noted that both the prime intellect and the pen are to be understood as the aspects of the *Nūr Muḥammadī*, the light of Muhammad, that is the first-created. So, within this framework, we can understand Fansuri's idea in this poem that the fish is referring to the Prophet—as he is the most perfect manifestation of the primordial *Nūr Muḥammadī*—as well as to the accomplished mystics

or *awliyā'*, such as Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj whose famous saying is constantly quoted in the poems, including poem 31 (Drewes and Brakel 1986, 171). In a broader sense of the word, all other realities are manifestations of *Nūr Muḥammadī* too.

In this poem the idea of *Nūr Muḥammadī* is taken as a theological-mystical framework for an understanding of human person vis-à-vis God (mystical anthropology), rather than as a purely theological or mystical doctrine. Thus, in this context, the accomplished mystic who has managed to come to the realization of this anthropology is modeled after the Prophet, the most perfect manifestation of *Nūr Muḥammadī*. This is the point developed in strophes 2 to 9, the backbone of the whole poem. In what follows we will examine *three* basic ideas of the kind of mystical anthropology that Fansuri develops in this part of the poem. The logic of development behind these ideas is of course based on the journey of the prophets, saints, accomplished mystic and human person in general: from their origin in God, through his sojourn on earth and back to Him (return) while living here on earth.

The first idea is about the lofty and spiritual origin of the human person that, as Fansuri says, is “from the light of the Merciful.” In strophe 4, it is also mentioned that “God’s Light is the name of its father.” At this point, it might be interesting to note that the spiritual origin of the human person is spoken in terms of “paternal” connection with God, in contrast to the earthly dimension of human life which is spoken in terms of “maternal” relationship with God and his creation. Furthermore, Fansuri speaks about the glory of the human person in strophe 4 thus: “King Salomon [is] the bearer of its regalia”, and “It is always hiding in his hall.”

The second idea is about the earthly reality of the human person. According to strophe 2, “the light takes a human shape” while strophe 4 reveals the bondedness of the human person to the created reality (“God’s creation the name of its bondmen”). In this respect, the earthly nature of human existence is spoken of in terms of “motherly” relationship with God through the four earthly elements (“Its mother is the four elements”). For Fansuri, these elements’ deafness (*summun*) and dumbness (*bukmun*) are capable of proclaiming the God’s greatness.¹¹ Thus, it seems that the earthly reality of the human life is not put in a negative light since ultimately this dimension is embraced by the comprehensiveness of God’s Being.

¹¹ This is the interpretation of Syamsuddin’s over the line “Deafness and dumbness are deceptive/It follows God’s activity/Acquainted with Him by its knowledge” (Drewes and Brakel 1986, 199).

The third idea touches upon the difficult vocation of the person to achieve union with God while living here on earth. In this framework, it is once again important to note that the bodily existence does not prevent the constant union of the person with God, like a fish continuously sporting in the eternal Ocean (strophe 2). This is so because of the person's spiritual realization of the facts that "God's spirit is its life" and "God's countenance its face" (strophe 3). This is a realization that human life begins and in God and is continuously sustained by God's spirit as well as the realization that God's presence, or God's face, is found everywhere. This realization would enable the person to be always with God both outwardly and inwardly.

Within this dynamic of the journey toward union, strophe 6 speaks about this union in terms of *fanā'* (effacement into God). Obviously this is the beginning of a higher sense of union that, as strophes 6 and 7 show, enables the mystic to say "I am Allah" (*Innī anā Allāh*) and "I am the Supreme Reality (*Anā al-Ḥaqq*). This higher sense of union seems to go beyond the more ordinary spiritual realization of God's omnipresent signs (*āyāh*) mentioned previously.

However, as strophes 6 and 7 imply, this union is made possible by stripping off all kinds of attachment to the world. In both strophes we find lines advocating a detachment from the world: *to stick to the world is to its detriment/ to give up the world is to its advantage/to strive after the world its undoing*. In the Sufi mystical understanding, this detachment, primarily at this higher state of the journey, does not primarily begin with the mystic's strong desire and determination to attain it, instead it should flow from the mystic's total attachment to God. This is, in my view, what Fansuri means when he says that "servant of the Only One is its real name" (strophe 7). This *'ubūdiyyah* (complete servanthood, pure devotion) is what Fansuri and other mystics mean by "*Abd al-Wāḥid* (servant of the Unique One)" and "die before you die." Syamsuddin, Fansuri's commentator, writes on this point: "*Fanā' fī-llāh* means 'to vanish into God', and *Innī anā Allāh* [means] 'I too am God.' That is to say, fading away from self, one is secured in God's Being. A person's realization of this is an act of the purest devotion, and the pronouncement 'I am God' is a declaration that there is no Being save God most high" (Drewes and Brakel 1986, 201).

Then, in strophe 8 Fansuri, in a way that reminds us of Ḥāfīz, likens this state of union to inebriety and rapture in which the mystic is immersing himself totally in the sea of his Creator. In this regard, it is insightful once again to refer to how Syamsuddin interprets this point. He says:

One is enraptured and inebriate when one makes no difference whatever between, for instance, good and bad, lofty and low, that is to say that in one's view there is no difference between one's own being and God's Being, since one's own person too, as accidental being,

comes within God's Being. Which means that essentially our being is God's Being; that is to say: what is called man is only man's essence; that is God most high. Such is the meaning of enraptured and inebriate. (Quoted in Drewes and Brakel 1986, 203).

Obviously, this commentary of Syamsuddin formulates succinctly the gist of the *wujūdiyyah* doctrine. And as we have alluded to briefly at the beginning of this essay, it is this understanding of the doctrine that disturbed ar-Raniri. However, without any pretension to putting an end to this discussion, it should be stated that this doctrine actually stems from a serious and radical engagement with the fundamental idea of *tawhīd*. Furthermore, the context of such an experience (that eventually leads to the formulation of the doctrine) is very particular, that is, it can only be understood in the context of the journey of the servant who confesses God's unity, a servant of God who knows the full implications of this confession.

However, it would be helpful at this point to put this Wujūdiyyah doctrine in the bigger framework of the relationship between God and the universe as understood by Fansuri. In this regard, Naquib al-Attas—probably the most important scholar on Fansuri to date—argues that:

For Hamzah [Fansuri], the relationship between God and the universe is merely metaphorical. Since God alone is the only Reality, how can there be a relationship? But God is not identical with the Universe. We predicate of Him transcendence (*tanzīh*) and immanence (*tashbīh*) in respect of the predisposition of His Being—it is the effects (*athār*) of His creative activity (*shu'ūn*).” (Al-Attas 1970, 67-68).

Furthermore, Hamzah Fansuri himself explains this in his work *Asrār al-Ārifīn* thus:

That which we perceive, whether outwardly or inwardly, all disappear—they are waves. The ocean is not 'separate' from its waves, and the waves are not 'separate' from the ocean. In like manner God, Glorious and Most Exalted is not 'separate' from the World. But He is neither 'in' the world nor 'outside' it; neither 'above' nor 'below' it; neither to the 'right' nor to the 'left' of it; neither in 'front' of nor 'behind' it; neither 'separate' from nor 'joined' to it.... (Quoted in Drewes and Brakel 1986, 68) [emphasis added].

As has been mentioned, in the framework of his poems Fansuri always places this doctrinal explanation in this particular context, that is, the advanced experience of the servant of the Unique One. Thus, quite intentionally, this doctrine did not come at the beginning of Fansuri's poems.

Furthermore, in the dynamics of poem 31, the qualification of this “servant of God’s Unity” is further specified in strophe 9 in terms of his relationship with God and *Nūr Muḥammadī*. The mystic or “the fish” is said to be “so manifest” (*terlalu zāhir*) and to be “permanently in the water” and “is in constant union, in the currents of the Sea.” Commenting on this strophe, Syamsuddin identifies the fish with *Nūr Muḥammadī* and argues:

The *Nūr Muḥammad*, which is compared to a unique fish, is most evident to those who bear perfect knowledge of it, because they permanently find themselves sharing the Ocean of God’s sublimity, i.e. the greatness of God most high... Nothing whatsoever can screen the *Nūr Muḥammad* from sight, for there is nothing without it (Quoted in Drewes and Brakel 1986, 203).

However, it can also be argued that the Prophet (s), saints and accomplished mystics can become “manifest” (or rather to make manifest God’s quality) insofar as they are in a constant union with God and in contact with the *Nūr Muḥammadī*.

Now, we arrive at the third part of the poem, strophes 11-12, which consists of some spiritual lessons drawn from the previous discourse in the first and second parts. As the strophe itself reveals, at its center is a discourse about the “other” fish, that is, the whale (*gajah mina*) symbolizing the failed seeker. In strophe 10, this fish is also called “stupid fishes.” In contrast to the unique fish who knows exactly where to look for the water, this stupid fish is foolishly looking for it in the stone or hopelessly trying to find it while swimming in the ocean. In poem 32, we find a line depicting this foolishness:

*The whale is swimming about
in the ocean in search of water
yet the sea is much in evidence
to pious as well as to sinful people*

In the context of poem 31, foolishness is believed to be the result of ignorance of the fact that God’s Being can be found in the innermost secret of the human person. That is why ignorance is always put in contrast to true self-knowledge.

This self-knowledge is the key to union with God as Syamsuddin argues in his commentary: “The essence of man is God most high; essentially man is the Only Lord, do not doubt any more!” (Quoted in Drewes and Brakel 1986, 205). Thus, in this framework, union with God means moving from

the realm of the shadow of God's manifestations to the inner realm of the self, the essence of the person, where God's Being is identified. In Fansuri's poems, including poem 31, this inner journey is often placed in opposition to "meeting God in Sinai", namely, the fixation on the specific physical place in which God's presence is presumed to be experienced.

Apart from this ignorance of the true way toward union with God, the failure of the failed seekers also stems from the fact that due to their neglect to look for a competent teacher, they did not know how to "die before dying" (strophe 11). As we have examined previously, this amounts to more than mere asceticism on the part of the seekers. That is why Fansuri says that "the way to die is most lofty." As Fansuri explains in strophe 11, this "die before dying" is connected to the whole idea of true self-knowledge as the key to union with God.¹² Once again, it is simply false to look for this knowledge "far away." Actually, it should come from the deepest awareness that "you are in constant union with the pure Ocean" (strophe 11). As strophe 12 seems to argue, the hindrance to this spiritual realization comes from human attachments to the world. In this framework, if Fansuri singles out our attachment to our parents (hence his advice to "leave your mother and father"), what he really means is all kinds of attachments, as Syamsuddin argues in his commentary.¹³

The coda of this poem, as always happens in Fansuri, has a self-referential character. This time, Fansuri starts with an irony: he is from a low descent, but he knows true self-knowledge. That is why he is never content with "Mount Sinai", instead he always enjoys his abode in "China Sea", namely, in God's being and greatness. As we can see, what Fansuri does with the coda is recapitulating the whole discourse about true self-knowledge and constant union with God. In this respect, it is interesting to notice an important insight in his recapitulation: the problem with the failed seekers is that they know God's greatness without being able "to enjoy the delight of this loftiness, namely God's reality" (Drewes and Brakel 1986, 207). The whale is also living the same sea but it fails to recognize its unity with the water. Of course, the didactic message of this poem is that the readers should take the path of the unique fish.

With these three components, Fansuri's mystical anthropology seems to be complete since it touches the meaning of the human person's divine

¹² This spiritual principle finds its way among ordinary Muslim seekers and pilgrims in Java (Laksana 2014, 88ff).

¹³ On this point Syamsuddin writes: "What is meant by the loosening of all earthly ties is to give up the entire world" (Quoted in Drewes and Brakel 1986, 207).

origin as well as the ways in which human journey on earth might achieve its ultimate goal, namely, union with God through self-knowledge.

Conclusion

I have endeavored to show the mystical theological anthropology of Hamzah Fansuri by looking rather closely at his poem. Mystical anthropology is arguably the underlying theme of all Fansuri's poems and he develops this mystical discourse on the theomorphic dignity of every human person, together with the dynamic of return to God, by using some quite original imageries and symbolisms of his own. In my view, this is one of Fansuri's distinctive achievements as the first Sufi writer who wrote in Malay. Surely, this achievement is done within a larger tradition of Islamic spirituality, especially the tradition of Ibn al-'Arabi, and in conversation with other great mystics of Islam, such as 'Aṭṭār and Ḥāfiẓ. As scholars have noted, Sufism continues to be an inherent part of Indonesian Islam. And, surely, Fansuri's legacy forms a rather significant part of Indonesian Islamic spirituality. In particular, his mystical anthropology seems to be a relevant source to engage the challenges posed by our contemporary world, where human beings are formed mainly by the capitalist program of human formation. Human persons are turned into egotistical *homo consumens* (consumers), thus showing the banality of this identity formation that eventually leads to a culture of superficiality and disharmony. Fansuri's idea of the relationship between God, the human person, and the cosmos also speaks to our ecological problem, that is, the gradual destruction of the natural environment, a problem that has its roots in the emptying out of the cosmos of the presence of God and a deeper relationship to the human spirit.

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