



**Politea : Jurnal Pemikiran Politik Islam**  
**P-ISSN : 2621-0312**  
**E-ISSN : 2657-1560**  
**Vol. 6, No. 2 Tahun 2023**  
**DOI : [10.21043/politea.v6i2.22210](https://doi.org/10.21043/politea.v6i2.22210)**

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## **The Politicization of Heresy:**

### **Foucault's Analysis of the Hamzah Fansuri and Nuruddin Arraniry Debate**

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#### **Abstract**

*This article delves into the historical debates between two prominent figures, Hamzah Fansuri and Nuruddin Arraniry, in the context of Islamic civilization in Aceh. While existing literature recognizes this significant event as the genesis of enduring Islamic thought in Aceh, a crucial aspect remains underexplored - the analysis through the lens of power/knowledge theory by Michel Foucault. Consequently, this article aims to fill this scholarly gap by employing a political knowledge approach to reexamine the conflict between these two intellectuals. By focusing on the motives of power in Nuruddin Arraniry's accusations of heresy against Hamzah Fansuri and considering the prevailing political landscape, the article argues that the charges were primarily driven by a quest for influence within the Aceh sultanate. This perspective leads to the conclusion that the knowledge conflict between Hamzah Fansuri and Nuruddin Arraniry stemmed from the underlying tension between Sufism and fiqh, calling for a reevaluation of their ideological divergence.*

**Keywords:** *Politics of Heresy, Foucault, Hamzah Fansuri, Nuruddin Arraniry*

## Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas perdebatan sejarah antara dua tokoh yaitu Hamzah Fansuri dan Nuruddin Arraniry, dalam konteks peradaban Islam di Aceh. Meskipun literatur yang ada mengakui peristiwa penting ini sebagai asal mula pemikiran Islam yang bertahan lama di Aceh, masih ada aspek penting yang belum dieksplorasi, yaitu analisis melalui kacamata teori kekuasaan atau pengetahuan oleh Michel Foucault. Oleh karena itu, artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengisi kesenjangan ilmiah tersebut dengan menggunakan pendekatan pemikiran politik untuk mengkaji kembali konflik antara kedua intelektual tersebut. Dengan berfokus pada motif kekuasaan dalam tuduhan *bid'ah* yang diajukan Nuruddin Arraniry terhadap Hamzah Fansuri dan mempertimbangkan lanskap politik yang ada, artikel tersebut berpendapat bahwa tuduhan tersebut terutama didorong oleh upaya untuk mendapatkan pengaruh di dalam Kesultanan Aceh. Perspektif ini mengarah pada kesimpulan bahwa konflik pengetahuan antara Hamzah Fansuri dan Nuruddin Arraniry bermula dari ketegangan mendasar antara tasawuf dan fiqh, yang memerlukan evaluasi ulang atas perbedaan ideologi mereka.

Keywords: Politik Bid'ah, Foucault, Hamzah Fansuri, Nuruddin Arraniry

## Introduction

The debate between Hamzah Fansuri and Nuruddin Arraniry is central to the study of Islamic political thought in Aceh. The competition between these two prominent figures during the Acehese Sultanate not only impacted the model of Islam practiced in Aceh but also influenced how the Muslim community in Aceh perceived power (Burhanudin, 2014; Miswari et al., 2022; Permana, 2021). Various literature shows that Hamzah Fansuri's thoughts were more adaptive and cooperative with the local culture and mysticism, resulting in a more cosmopolitan Islamic community in Aceh (Cibro, 2019; Hadi, 2010; Musarofah, 2020). In contrast, Nuruddin Arraniry emphasized strict adherence to *fiqh* rules (Imran & Nurdin AR, 2021; Miswari, 2018). This article does not seek to reiterate previous studies by examining the conflicts between these two figures but aims to review the political background from the history of their debate. Therefore, this article presents its arguments using Michel Foucault's framework of power knowledge (Foucault, 1980). The main argument of this article is that Nuruddin Arraniry's accusations of heresy against Hamzah Fansuri were driven by political circumstances rather than religious motives.

The intellectual discussion between Nuruddin Arraniry and Hamzah Fansuri has been widely studied in literature. Miswari's (2018;2022) works is one example of in-depth investigation as demonstrated by scholars. Miswari's research shows that the discrepancies in opinions between these two people may be attributed to variances in their separate scholarly schools of thinking. Hadi (2010), Cibro (2019) and Musarofah (2020) offers a similar approach, arguing that the traditional split between Nuruddin Arraniry and Hamzah Fansuri stems from fundamental disparities in their underlying academic paradigms. As a result, the lengthy dispute between Nuruddin Arraniry and Hamzah Fansuri is more than just a difference of opinion, but also reflects divergent philosophical underpinnings that drive their various positions. This explanation emphasizes the complexities of this conversation and the significance of recognizing academic school of thought inequalities as the backdrop to this intellectual dispute that characterizes the interaction between these two personalities.

The Sultan of Aceh Darussalam has never divided political and religious concerns (Wormser, 2012). As a result, the ulama's (religious academics) status and bureaucracy were inextricably linked. This is also what led to the height of the Islamic government in Aceh under the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda Derma Wangsa Perkasa Alamshyah (Lombard, 1991). Aceh Darussalam witnessed an unprecedented golden period under his rule, exceeding any other Acehnese monarch before or after him. Of course, all of this cannot be detached from the efforts of the previous sultans who successfully expelled the Portuguese from Malacca, where they had been in power for 120 years (Lombard, 1991). Sultan Ali Mughayat Syah was the first ruler of the Aceh Darussalam Kingdom (Hadi, 2010; Miswari et al., 2022). This must be understood in the context that he was the first Acehnese ruler who expanded the kingdom's territorial power and successfully integrated several trading ports in the Malacca Strait. In such an advanced era, the civilization of Islamic thought in Aceh also reached its pinnacle. During this time, Hamzah Fansuri lived and wrote extensively on philosophy, Sufism, and poetry (Hadi, 2010).

Hamzah Fansuri, a prominent figure during the Aceh Darussalam Sultanate, played a crucial role in various aspects of life in the kingdom (Cibro, 2019). First, Hamzah Fansuri's role in Islamic thought can be seen through his works, which reflected a profound

understanding of Islamic teachings and philosophy, providing new insights into existence, life, and the relationship between humans and God. His philosophical thoughts unveiled profound spiritual concepts, influencing many intellectuals and scholars in Aceh, who passed down his ideas to the next generation (Al-Attas, 1970). Second, he became spiritual guidance for Sufi adherents in the kingdom (Sher Banu A. L. Khan, 2015). His thoughts on self-introspection and the significance of experiencing a spiritual connection with God influenced the lifestyle and religious attitudes of the Acehnese society during that era. Hamzah Fansuri's literary works also played a significant role in the literary richness of Aceh. His beautiful and meaningful poems about love, life, and the relationship between humans and God gained recognition among literary scholars and the wider community. His works made meaningful contributions to the development of literature in the Aceh region and contributed to shaping the cultural identity of Aceh as one of the important centers of Malay literature during that time (Al-Attas, 1968).

As a respected and acknowledged scholar by Sultan Iskandar Muda, Hamzah Fansuri also had an impact on maintaining social stability and religious harmony in Aceh (Gedacht & Feener, 2018). His teachings on tolerance among religious communities and the importance of interfaith dialogue contributed to easing religious conflicts and strengthening unity in the kingdom. His role in creating a peaceful and tolerant social climate helped to preserve stability and security in Aceh during that period. However, his role and influence started to diminish due to the growing influence of the fiqh-oriented Islamic group (Hakiki, 2018). One of the main figures who criticized Hamzah Fansuri's thoughts was Nuruddin Arraniry. The conflict of ideas between Hamzah Fansuri and Nuruddin Arraniry had a significant impact on the power dynamics in the Sultanate of Aceh at that time. The conflict stemmed from their differing views on Sufi teachings and their positions in society. Arraniry views on Sufism and the role of a spiritual teacher differed from those of Hamzah Fansuri. Nuruddin Arraniry believed that a spiritual teacher did not necessarily need to hold a high position or be regarded as a friend of God (*wali Allah*) (Miswari, 2018). This view caused a difference in perspectives and beliefs among Hamzah Fansuri's followers. The followers of

Hamzah Fansuri and Nuruddin Arraniry formed competing supporter groups vying for the ruler's, Sultan Iskandar Muda's, support, and influential positions within the government.

Sultan Iskandar Muda's power was also influenced by how he handled this conflict. The political decisions he made to resolve this dispute would affect the support and perception of society towards his government. Therefore, the Sultan had to be cautious in balancing political interests and the stability of the kingdom while considering the opinions and perceptions of the people. Overall, the conflict between Hamzah Fansuri and Nuruddin Arraniry had complex impacts on the power dynamics in the Sultanate of Aceh. This dispute created political and social tensions among intellectuals and scholars and influenced the way Sultan Iskandar Muda ruled. In facing this conflict, the Sultan had to strive to maintain stability and his authority as a ruler while considering the interests of the people and public opinion.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### *Power, Knowledge, and the Politicization of Heresy*

Michel Foucault, a renowned French philosopher and social theorist, offers a perspective on power as a relational force that operates within the complexities of society, connecting individuals, groups, and institutions in a web of reciprocal influence (Marzoni, 2019; Shiraz Dossa, 2018). His ideas, combined with the insights of Pitsoe and Letseka, emphasize the social construction of power, where power is not an external entity but rather a product of complex social relations, culturally defined, and symbolically created (Foucault, 1977). This essay will delve into Foucault's conceptualization of power as a relational force and explore its construction, influence, and impact on social organization and individual subjectivity.

Foucault's conceptualization of power differs from the traditional view that perceives power as static ownership by specific entities. He sees power as a dynamic and fluid force, operating within social relations (Foucault, 1980). According to Foucault, power is not solely possessed by those with authority; instead, it is distributed across various layers of society, shaping interactions between individuals and institutions. Power is exercised through discourse, truth, discipline, and order, permeating all aspects of social life. Power constructs

and sustains itself through discourse and truth (Foucault, 1980). Discourse is a system of language and knowledge that shapes how individuals understand reality and perceive their roles in society. Dominant discourses establish norms, values, and beliefs, defining what is deemed acceptable or deviant in a particular social context. These discourses can reinforce existing power structures, perpetuate inequalities, and marginalize certain groups (Foucault, 1989).

The construction of truth is closely related to the exercise of power. What is deemed "true" in a society is not an objective reality but rather a product of power dynamics. Those in positions of power have the authority to define and impose truth, influencing the collective understanding of history, identity, and morality. As a result, they shape public opinion, control narratives, and maintain their positions of authority (Mason, 2019). Another way in which power operates is through discipline and order. Institutions such as schools, prisons, and workplaces implement systems of surveillance and control to regulate behavior and maintain social order. Foucault refers to this as "disciplinary power" (Foucault, 1988). Individuals conform to norms and regulations that govern their actions, conditioning them to align with societal expectations.

Disciplinary power not only constructs social order but also shapes individual subjectivity. It molds the desires, ambitions, and aspirations of individuals, influencing them to internalize social norms and conform to predefined roles. As a result, individuals may unknowingly become agents of the power structures that control them. Pitsoe and Letseka further emphasize that power is a multi-layered construction deeply embedded in social relationships (Schlosser, 2013). Their perspective aligns with Foucault's idea of power as a relational force arising from interactions among various social actors. Society, with its intricate network of power relations, continually shapes and reshapes the contours of power. Understanding power as a social construction implies that power is not a fixed or predetermined entity. Instead, power is subject to change, contestation, and negotiation. When individuals and groups challenge existing power structures and discourses, they can create space for the emergence of alternative forms of power and knowledge. Foucault's concept of power as a relational force and Pitsoe and Letseka's view of its multi-layered

social construction explains the complex nature of power in society (Schlosser, 2013). Power is not a monolithic entity held by a select few; instead, it is dispersed throughout the social body, influencing and shaping interactions at every level. Discourse, truth, discipline, and order play a crucial role in maintaining the dynamics of power, perpetuating social hierarchies, and marginalizing certain groups.

Recognizing power as a social phenomenon requires a critical examination of prevailing discourses and power structures. By challenging dominant narratives and creating space to listen to diverse voices, we can work towards building a more just and inclusive society. Empowering individuals to question and redefine power relations can pave the way for transformative change, where power becomes a force for collective progress rather than a tool of oppression. The intellectual debate between Hamzah Fansuri and Nuruddin Arraniry in Aceh is a crucial chapter in the study of Islamic political thought in the region. Understanding this historical discourse through Foucault's framework of power-knowledge reveals the complex interplay between power dynamics and the construction of knowledge in the political and intellectual context. Hamzah Fansuri, a prominent Sufi and skilled poet from 16th-century Aceh, employed an inclusive approach in his thinking. He emphasized unity and love as a path to a deeper understanding of God. Fansuri crafted beautiful and heart-touching poems that reflected a cosmopolitan view of Islam. His thinking inspired the community to embrace diversity and unite Muslims regardless of ethnic or cultural differences. His approach offers insights into how Islamic thought can serve as a unifying force in a multicultural society.

On the other hand, Nuruddin Arraniry, an influential scholar of that time, adopted a fiqh-centric approach aimed at consolidating political power through standard Islamic practices. Arraniry emphasized the importance of Islamic law and interpreted the religion strictly according to the dominant Sunni tradition of the time. His approach tended to be exclusive and limited acceptable interpretations of Islam, leading to tensions within society and putting him at odds with Fansuri. Arraniry sought to maintain and strengthen the sultanate's power by using religious discourse as a tool to achieve his political goals. The Sultanate of Aceh at that time played a significant role in the political and intellectual context. As Aceh became a

dominant maritime power in the region, political and economic control became the rulers' primary focus. The accusations of heresy against Fansuri and Arraniry were more driven by political rivalry than purely religious motives. The rulers of Aceh sought to strengthen their control over the people by using religious narratives to criminalize opposition and prohibit thoughts deemed threatening to political stability.

This analysis reminds us of the complexity of debates and discourses in the history and thought of Islam. The interconnection between political power, the ruler's policies, and the construction of knowledge influences how society perceives Islamic thought and views figures like Hamzah Fansuri and Nuruddin Arraniry. Understanding the interaction between power and knowledge also helps us reread historical events with a more critical and contextual perspective. In the context of Aceh, this debate reflects how political power can manipulate religious discourse to achieve their political goals, while Fansuri's inclusive thinking presents an alternative for a more tolerant and open society. By learning from the history of this debate, we can approach past and present events with more wisdom. A deep understanding of the interplay between power and knowledge in the development of Islamic thought gives us a broader view of how religious and political ideas are interconnected, and how we can build an inclusive and cultured society based on this rich historical experience.

## **Method**

This article uses a qualitative approach to look at the debate between Nuruddin Arraniry and Hamzah Fansuri. An interdisciplinary approach is used to provide a strong framework for understanding the complex nuances that underlie political conditions when the debate between the two figures takes place. The key sources for this article are Nuruddin Arraniry's and Hamzah Fansuri's written works. Texts had been chosen based on their importance in Islamic literature and mysticism, as well as their availability and accessibility. A qualitative content analysis approach will be employed to analyze the selected texts. The researchers will identify recurrent themes, linguistic patterns, and philosophical concepts present in the writings of Nuruddin Arraniry and Hamzah Fansuri. The comparative analysis will focus on key aspects such as their understanding of divine love, notions of self and ego, concepts of the Sufi spiritual journey, and interpretations of the Qur'an. To present a thorough



understanding of their contributions, the study will include a variety of texts such as poetry, religious treatises, and philosophical lectures. The data will be gathered by a thorough examination of the selected texts, which will be collected from trustworthy libraries, digital repositories, and scholarly databases. For analysis, the researchers will thoroughly transcribe and translate significant portions. The main materials will be cross-referenced with respectable translations and academic commentary to verify correctness and authenticity.

## **Result and Discussion**

### *Nuruddin's Departure as the Catalyst for the Conflict's Onset*

After residing in Aceh for approximately seven years, Nuruddin Arraniry suddenly left Aceh in 1644 (Ar-raniry, 2011). His abrupt departure raised various questions among researchers, especially those studying the thoughts of these two figures. Speculations emerged, but Nuruddin Arraniry likely left Aceh due to a series of debate defeats. The religious debates took place between Syekh Nuruddin Arraniry and a wujudiah scholar named Saifurrijal. It appears that after the death of Sultan Iskandar Tsani, Nuruddin Arraniry began to lose support for attacking the wujudiah followers. He also realized this after he debated with Saifurrijal and the lack of support from Ratu Safiatuddin. Following the debate, Ratu Safiatuddin even invited Saifurrijal to the palace to be honored, which further solidified Nuruddin's decision to return to his homeland. He left Aceh in haste, even before completing his work titled "Jawáhiru Al-'Ulum fi Kasyfi Al-Ma'lúm," which was later finished by his disciple.

After the polemics and accusations of misguidance by Nuruddin Arraniry towards the followers of Hamzah Fansuri, it seems that the state of Sufism in Aceh began to return to a more conducive atmosphere after Syekh Nuruddin Arraniry's return to his homeland (Ferawati, 2022). This was supported by efforts from Acehnese scholars to re-examine the thoughts of Hamzah Fansuri and his followers, such as the initiatives taken by Syekh Abdurrauf As-Singkili. Syekh Abdurrauf was one of the Acehnese scholars who disagreed with Syekh Nuruddin Arraniry's harsh approach to dealing with the wujudiah followers, so he sought clarification from his teacher in Madinah (Lombard, 1991). The question posed by

Syekh Abdurrauf to his teacher was regarding the statement made by the wujudiah followers that "Truly, Allah is our essence and our existence," a phrase that Syekh Nuruddin Arraniry often used in his comments (Hakiki, 2018). The response Syekh Abdurrauf received from his teacher was that according to his teacher, if those who say it have achieved the knowledge of ma'rifat, then such a statement is true. However, if those who say it have not attained the level of perfect ma'rifat, then they have committed an act of disbelief with that statement (Hadi, 1995).

In this regard, Syekh Hamzah Fansuri himself prohibited the use of that statement by the common people, stating that it should only be allowed for those who have attained perfect ma'rifat (Miswari et al., 2022). He said, "Whoever is not perfect in ma'rifat and passion like them, if he speaks like them, he is considered to have committed an act of disbelief" (Al-Attas, 1970). Therefore, Syekh Abdurrauf's actions were an effort to improve the atmosphere in Aceh at that time and make it conducive. He was well aware that Syekh Nuruddin Arraniry's accusations were misguided. This mistake can also be seen in the comment of ulama from Palembang regarding Syekh Syamsuddin As-Sumaterani, who was a disciple of Syekh Hamzah Fansuri. The ulama named Syekh Abdul As-Samad Al-Palimbáni, in explaining the division of Sufi books, stated that books written by scholars in the field of Sufism are divided into three levels. The books in the first level are specifically for beginners who want to delve into the field of Sufism, such as the book "Minháju Al-'Abidin," "Bidáyah Al-Hidáyah," "Mukhtashar Ihya Al-'Ulúmu Ad-Din," and others (Muliadi, 2013). As for the second level, the books are intended for those who have reached a midway level of tarekat knowledge, such as the books "Syarah Al-Hikám," "Futúhu Al-Ghaibi," and others. Meanwhile, for those who have reached the third or highest level, namely those who have attained the knowledge of haqiqat, the books meant for them are works like "Futúhat Al-Makkiyah" by Syekh Ibnu 'Arabi, "Insánu Al-Kámil" by Abdul Karim Al-Jilli, "Tuhfátu Al-Mursalah," "Misykat al-Anwar" by Imam Ghazali, and others (Abdul As-Shamad Al-Palimbani, 1953).

In his explanation of the third level, Syekh Abdul As-Samad also mentioned the book "Jauháru Al-Haqáiq" written by Syekh Syamsuddin As-Sumaterani and the book "Tanbíh

Al-Tulláb fi Ma'rifah Al-Muluk Al-Wahháb." However, it is important to note that Syekh Nuruddin Arraniry had misled his thinking and ordered all of his works to be burned. Therefore, by including the works of Syekh Syamsuddin As-Sumaterani in the book "Siyáru As-Sálikin" authored by Syekh Abdul As-Shamád, it can be concluded that most of the ulama in the Nusantara did not agree with the attitude shown by Syekh Nuruddin Arraniry towards Syekh Syamsuddin As-Sumaterani and his teacher, Syekh Hamzah Fansuri. Furthermore, in the book "Siyáru As-Salikin," there is also a discussion about the seventh level, which can also be found in the works of Syekh Syamsuddin As-Sumaterani and Syekh Hamzah Fansuri (Abdul As-Shamad Al-Palimbani, 1953).

Based on the above studies, it can be concluded that Syekh Nuruddin Arraniry's objections to the ideas of Hamzah Fansuri and his disciple Syekh Syamsuddin As-Sumaterani need to be re-examined. His harsh attitude towards these two figures should not have occurred; instead, he could have approached the situation with the wisdom shown by Syekh Abdurrauf As-Singkili in dealing with the issues related to the wujudiah group. Syekh Abdurrauf's cautious approach indicates that he had reservations about the actions taken by Nuruddin Arraniry, who was fully supported by the Sultan. Moreover, what was conveyed by Syekh Hamzah Fansuri in his work was a result of his *ijtihad*, shaped by his spiritual journey and experiences. He made an effort to express the fruits of his thoughts by quoting and explaining the opinions of renowned Sufi scholars of his time in a language understandable to his students. The works of Hamzah Fansuri should be seen as a product of his profound contemplation and spiritual exploration rather than a deviation from the true path of Islam. Therefore, a more balanced and nuanced approach is needed when evaluating the ideas and contributions of these prominent figures in the context of Islamic thought in Aceh. Instead of harshly condemning their perspectives, a deeper understanding of their teachings and the historical context in which they lived can provide valuable insights into the rich intellectual tradition of the region.

### *Political Context and Governance Situation: Precursors to the Conflict*

Before the arrival of Syekh Nuruddin Arraniry in Aceh, Sufi teachings were the predominant school of thought, not only practiced by the general populace but also embraced by the Sultan. The abundance of studies on Sufism had made the Malay language fully adequate for discussing profound philosophical and metaphysical doctrines formulated by earlier Sufi scholars. Additionally, the philosophical dimension of tasawuf (Sufism) introduced by Hamzah Fansuri was distinct from what had previously developed in the Nusantara region. Syekh Hamzah Fansuri was the first to introduce a pure and untainted tasawuf falsafi (philosophical Sufism) in the Nusantara region, which impeccably drew upon Islamic Arabic sources (Miswari, 2018). However, the arrival of Syekh Nuruddin Arraniry in Aceh at that time effectively buried the treasure of knowledge in the field of Sufism. Even within a short period, he managed to refute the wujudiah doctrine. Surely, he could achieve this due to the full support and orders from Sultan Iskandar Tsani, as he expressed in his work titled "Fathu Al-Mubin" (see Fathu Al-Mubin, 1657). With such staunch support from the Sultan, various assumptions began to arise, and questions kept pouring in without restraint.

One question that emerged was why the Sultan intentionally invited Nuruddin to come to Aceh, even though some literature mentioned that he had previously come to Aceh during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda, but his visit was rejected at that time. However, on his second visit, he was welcomed with open arms and treated very well by Sultan Iskandar Tsani, with red carpets rolled out for him. The reasons behind Sultan's deliberate invitation and the reception of Nuruddin have sparked curiosity and have given rise to various speculations. The invitation extended by Sultan Iskandar Tsani to Nuruddin sparked debates in the literature. The controversy revolves around the existence of other scholars to replace the position of Syekh Syamsuddin As-Sumaterani as the royal mufti. However, various sources suggest that Nuruddin was possibly invited solely for the political interests of the Sultan. It is known that during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda, Syekh Syamsuddin held the position of the royal mufti and was considered by Nuruddin as the ultimate authority among the wujudiah followers. Therefore, Nuruddin's arrival at that time would have

displaced those who were in the palace circle, many of whom were followers of Syekh Syamsuddin and Hamzah Fansuri.

The significant position of Syekh Syamsuddin as Syaikhul Islam or the royal mufti automatically granted prominence to the wujudiah followers and dominated strategic positions. Thus, during the transitional period after the death of Sultan Iskandar Muda, there might have been conflicts of interest among the royal elites. Moreover, Sultan Iskandar Tsani was the adopted son of Sultan Iskandar Muda, brought from Pahang at the age of seven and later married his daughter named Ratu Safiatuddin. This familial relationship could have further complicated the dynamics of the power transition within the court.

The tensions and resistance from the elite class compelled Sultan Iskandar Tsani to carry out a major reshuffling of key positions within the kingdom. The Sultan was well aware that his reign faced opposition from the elite and nobility, especially after he killed his son-in-law. Despite these challenges, Syekh Nuruddin Arraniry never mentioned this incident in his writings, as it would have displeased Iskandar Tsani, who acted as his patron in Aceh. However, Nuruddin Arraniry did document the killings and persecution of the wujudiah followers in his book titled "Fathu Al-Mubin." Nuruddin Ar-Raniry wrote about his debates with a wujudiah scholar, which ultimately led to his departure from Aceh. In this work, Nuruddin openly described the political situation in Aceh at that time. The involvement of the state in resolving religious debates further exacerbated the situation, resulting in the deaths of many followers of Hamzah Fansuri who were perceived to be opposing and rebelling against the king.

### *Arraniry's Dualistic Stand and Mistakes: Contributing Factors to the Conflict*

His position as a critic of the ideas of Syekh Hamzah Fansuri and his followers should have demonstrated consistency in his beliefs. As known, Syekh Nuruddin Arraniry presented himself as a representative of the mutakallimin (theologians) (Ferawati, 2022). However, in practice, he sometimes disagreed with the mutakallimin on certain issues and leaned more toward the opinions of the Sufi scholars. These two groups held significantly different and

opposing views on many matters. Nonetheless, some researchers consider his approach to be a form of compromise, aimed at reconciling the two contrasting concepts.

As an example, some of the quotes mentioned earlier regarding Syekh Nuruddin Arraniry's statements on the existence of Allah and the world appear to be highly contradictory (Ar-raniry, 2011). His inclination towards the Sufi view on monism does not seem to automatically change his stance towards Hamzah Fansuri and his followers. In theory, they both share an agreement on the concept of monism, as well as the theory of Tajalli and several other issues. With such an agreement, there should have been no more conflicts and misconceptions from Syekh Nuruddin Arraniry. However, it appears that he alone determines the correctness of Hamzah Fansuri's thoughts.

Based on the quotes from Syekh Nuruddin Arraniry regarding the statements of Syekh Hamzah Fansuri, it seems that the accusations he made were somewhat forced. It appears that he was not meticulous enough in his examination of the quotes, and the lack of carefulness in citing someone's statement is crucial, as it can significantly influence the interpretation of those quotes. In some of his rebuttals, Syekh Nuruddin Arraniry did not fully quote Syekh Hamzah Fansuri's statements. Consequently, the intended meaning of Syekh Hamzah Fansuri might be misinterpreted or misunderstood. One such example is regarding the issue of the Quran, whether it is eternal or created, and also several other matters (Ar-raniry, n.d.).

This raises concerns about the accuracy and fairness of Syekh Nuruddin Arraniry's critique of Syekh Hamzah Fansuri's ideas. It is essential for scholars and researchers to be thorough and meticulous in their examination of historical texts and to present the ideas of others accurately. Such rigorous and careful analysis is necessary to ensure a more comprehensive and objective understanding of the intellectual debates that occurred in the past. By doing so, we can avoid misinterpretations and misconceptions that may arise due to incomplete or inaccurate quoting, and we can arrive at a more accurate assessment of the thoughts and contributions of historical figures like Syekh Hamzah Fansuri.

## *Analysis*

The theoretical approach of power and knowledge by Michel Foucault sheds light on the relevance of political aspects in the debate between Hamzah Fansuri and Nuruddin Arraniry in Aceh. This conflict, which is a renowned story in the history of Islamic civilization in Aceh, is often viewed as a clash between Sufism and fiqh, but this research shows that Nuruddin Arraniry's accusations of heresy might have been more influenced by a power struggle in the Aceh sultanate at that time rather than purely theological differences. The implication is that the intellectual conflict between these two figures needs to be reexamined within the political knowledge context that underpinned the debate, and this article contributes to a broader understanding of intellectual debates in the Islamic world and the relevance of power and knowledge theory in analyzing such conflicts throughout the history of Islamic civilization in Aceh (Foucault, 1980). By adopting Foucault's framework (Foucault, 1980), we gain a more nuanced understanding of how power relations can shape and influence the articulation of religious ideas and beliefs, highlighting the complex interplay between religious thought and political dynamics (Shiraz Dossa, 2018). This approach challenges the dichotomy between religious and political domains and explores their intersections. Furthermore, it serves as a reminder that historical debates should not be reduced to simplistic theological clashes, but seen in the broader sociopolitical context, wherein intellectual contestations become a means of consolidating authority and power. By revisiting the intellectual confrontations between Hamzah Fansuri and Nuruddin Arraniry with a Foucauldian lens, we can uncover hidden layers of power dynamics that shaped the discourse and decisions of that era. In conclusion, analyzing the conflict between Hamzah Fansuri and Nuruddin Arraniry through the theoretical lens of power and knowledge provides valuable insights into the political intricacies of intellectual debates in Islamic history, challenging conventional narratives and offering a more comprehensive understanding of the history of Islamic thought and its relevance in contemporary contexts.

In understanding the debate between Hamzah Fansuri and Nuruddin Arraniry, Michel Foucault's theory of power and knowledge becomes a fundamental basis for examining the political aspects underlying this conflict. Foucault's theory emphasizes that power is not only

repressive but also contains positive dimensions that can influence and shape knowledge (Foucault, 1980). In the context of this debate, the political power existing in the Sultanate of Aceh at that time played a crucial role in regulating religious narratives and determining who was recognized as the authority in religious matters. Through the analysis of the theory of power, the accusations of heresy directed by Nuruddin Arraniry towards Hamzah Fansuri can be understood as a tool to dominate and control the understanding of religion in Aceh. Nuruddin Arraniry, being an Islamic scholar with strong political support, might have perceived Hamzah Fansuri's mystical views as a threat to his authority and influence within the sultanate. By accusing Hamzah Fansuri of heresy, Nuruddin Arraniry could create a justification to eliminate his rival and consolidate his position as the authority in religious matters.

## **Conclusion**

Understanding the political context in the Sultanate of Aceh during the time of this debate is crucial. Aceh was a center of maritime power and trade in the Nusantara region during the 16th and 17th centuries. By incorporating Foucault's power/knowledge analysis into the examination of the Hamzah Fansuri and Nuruddin Arraniry debate, a more nuanced understanding emerges. The clash of ideas within Sufism and fiqh is not solely a theological dispute but a manifestation of power dynamics within the intricate political milieu of the Aceh Sultanate. The Aceh Sultanate played a key role in the spread of Islam in the region, and Islamic scholars held significant positions in the government. Amidst the strong rule of the sultan, the scholars wielded substantial political influence, and the competition to gain support and recognition from the ruler became highly significant. This situation created an environment filled with tension and competition among scholars, including Hamzah Fansuri and Nuruddin Arraniry. Both figures had their followers and adherents to their teachings. Support from fellow scholars and the rulers of the sultanate played a crucial role in maintaining their positions and influence. In this complex political environment, the accusations of heresy launched by Nuruddin Arraniry against Hamzah Fansuri can be seen as a strategy to outmaneuver his competitor and solidify his religious position in Aceh. This political knowledge approach brings significant implications in understanding the conflict of ideas between Hamzah Fansuri and Nuruddin Arraniry in the context of Sufism and fiqh. So



far, this debate has often been viewed as a clash between two theological schools of thought within Islam. However, by considering its political aspects, the implication is that this perspective needs to be re-examined and criticized within the context of the political knowledge underlying the debate.

This perspective is different from the prior research by urging a re-examination of the debate through the lens of political knowledge to unveil the underlying power struggles shaping religious discourse in Aceh during that time. This study contributes to reframing the traditional narrative of the Hamzah Fansuri and Nuruddin Ar-raniry debate by incorporating a Foucauldian power/knowledge analysis. It emphasizes the importance of considering political dimensions, challenging the prevailing view that reduces the conflict to a mere clash of theological ideas. However, the primary limitation of this study is the availability and accuracy of historical records. The 16th and 17th centuries lacked comprehensive documentation, and much of the available information may be biased or incomplete. This limitation could impact the depth and precision of the analysis, potentially leading to gaps in the understanding of the political and religious dynamics in the Sultanate of Aceh.

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