The Concept of Tauhid According to the Rifai Order

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Abstract

The concept of Tauhid is a fundamental element in the formation of Sufi teachings. A complete understanding of the concept of Tauhid leads to the truth of a teaching. Wahdat al-Wujud is one of the Sufi concepts that often becomes a subject of polemics among scholars. Wahdat al-Wujud is a doctrine that has always been a polemic amona scholars causing a rejection of the Sufism teachings. This paper is related to the stance of Sufism figures among the followers of al-Rifā'ivvah Tariqa towards the Wahdat al-Wujud teachings. This paper focuses on the discussion of the general meaning of Wahdat al-Wujud and the nature of Wahdat al-Wujud according to the Sufis. In addition, this paper also focuses on the al-Rifā'iyyah Tariga's stance towards Wahdat al-Wujud. The methodology used to achieve the objective is qualitative methods divided into historical and textual studies. The nature of Wahdat al-Wujud is divided into two, firstly, shirk and secondly, monotheism as believedby the Sufis. However, al-Rifā'iyyah Tariga rejects this teaching because it brings doubt to the public.

Keywords: Agidah, Wahdat al-Wujud, Sufism, Thought, Teaching.

INTRODUCTION

The discussion about the concept of Tauhid is a central topic in Sufi teachings. This paper will focus on the discussion regarding Wahdat al-Wujud. In the historical development of Sufism and the Sufis, the teachings often face criticism and contradiction. Among the teachings that contradict scholars is the Wahdat al-Wujud. Wahdat al-Wujud is understood as the unification between God and creatures. The understanding of unification caused scholars such as Ibn Taimiyyah (d. 1328 AD) to make the issue of Wahdat al-Wujud one of the foundations to reject the Sufis. Although Wahdat al-Wujud is said to

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be a Sufis' teaching, al-Sayyid Ahmad al-Rifā'i (d. 1182 AD), a Sufi figure and the founder of the al-Rifā'iyyah Tariqa in the 5th century, opposed the teachings of Wahdat al-Wujud. Al-Sayyid Ahmad al-Rifā'i's (d. 1182 AD) rejection became one of the polemics; to what extent is the truth that says the teachings of Sufism are influenced by the Wahdat al-Wujud?

RESEARCH PROBLEMS

Wahdat al-Wujud is a popular term among Sufism scholars and Tariqas. Wahdat al-Wujud (the Unity of Being) is a term that has become a polemic among scholars. Wahdat al-Wujud is a belief in the unity between Allah and creatures or the belief that Allah and creatures unite as one (Jamil, 1982). Due to this understanding, some scholars reject the teachings of Sufism and tariqa (Abd Rahman, 1999). In addition, there is also a view that says the historical development of Wahdat al-Wujud teachings is from the misguided Shia Rafidah (Ibn Khaldun, 1993). National Fatwa Committee of Malaysia, which convened in 2000, affirmed that Wahdat al-Wujud is a teaching that is opposing to the Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah and agreed to judge the teaching of Wahdat al-Wujud as kufr (e-SMAF, 2000).

Based on the discussion above, Wahdat al-Wujud is rejected and even judged as a heretical teaching. According to Mohd Asri Zainal Abidin (Dr. MAZA), Wahdat al-Wujud will be redeveloped in the Malaysian archipelago, there will even be groups that will defend this teaching (Video, 2018). Mikhael Mas'ud believes that Wahdat al-Wujud is expanding widely through the development of Sufism, this is because Sufism is teaching influenced by various ideologies, among them is Wahdat al-Wujud which is sourced from Hindu and Shia teachings (Mikhael, 1993).

Dr. Maza's stance and view that Wahdat al-Wujud will be redeveloped in Malaysia need to be given attention, even more, because Wahdat al-Wujud is linked to Sufism. This stance raises a question about the truth of the claim that Sufism is influenced by Wahdat al-Wujud, while the Sufis or Sufists are groups that always believe in monotheism and the oneness of Allah (al-Kallabāzi, 1933). Additionally, there are also Sufism figures such as al-Sayyid Ahmad al-Rifā'i (d. 1182 AD), the founder of the al-Rifā'iyyah Tariqa, who insists that belief in Wahdat al-Wujud is a clear disbelief (Zulhafizi, 2019). The stance of al-Sayyid Ahmad al-Rifā'i also formed a polemic between the claims that the Sufis adhere to the teaching of Wahdat al-Wujud and his rejection of this teaching. The question is, what is the position of the Sufis and al-Rifā'iyyah Tariqa towards Wahdat al-Wujud

OBJECTIVE

This paper will focus on three main objectives which are the meaning and nature of Wahdat al-Wujud, Wahdat al-Wujud according to the Sufis, and Wahdat al-Wujud according to the Rifa'iyyah Tariqa's perspective.

METHODOLOGY

This study used historical research to uncover the background of Wahdat al-Wujud. Additionally, this study used a textual approach involving debates on the content of scholarly works and will go through a rigorous data analysis to produce a research finding.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results focused on the objectives, including the meaning of Wahdat al-Wujud and the nature of Wahdat al-Wujud according to the Sufis. In addition, the main focus of the discussion was on the stance of the al-Rifā'iyyah Tariqa towards Wahdat al-Wujud.

The Meaning and Nature of Wahdat al-Wujud

Wahdat al-Wujud is etymologically two words, a combination of words Wahdat and Wujud. The word Wahdat, according to Sibawayh (d. 796 AD), means unity or unification (al-Zabudi, 1888) while the word Wujud means to exist or something real (Musṭafa & Ahmad Zayyat, 1961). Terminologically, Wahdat al-Wujud is a shirk term that means to unite God and creatures (al-Qusayr, 2003). Ibn Taimiyyah (d. 1328 AD) explained that Wahdat al-Wujud is a damaging term of shirk because this term leads to the unification of God's Essence with creatures (ibn Taimiyyah, 2001). Al-Afghāni (d. 1999 AD) stated that one of the reasons for the Sufis' rejection is because the Sufis adhere to the false teachings of Wahdat al-Wujud. After all, according to him, Wahdat al-Wujud is the unification of all creatures in the Essence of Allah SWT (al-Afghāni, 1996). This clearly describes that Wahdat al-Wujud can be understood as the unification between Allah and humans.

In addition, the concept and teachings of Wahdat al-Wujud can be found in other religions, not just among the Sufis. The development of Wahdat al-Wujud also influenced Hinduism teachings and was discussed among its followers (Whitting, 1991). According to Abd Fattah (d. 2020 AD), the origin of the Wahdat al-Wujud doctrine comes from the teachings of Hinduism and Neoplatonism (Abd Fattah, 1992). Correspondingly, among Catholic Christians, the Wahdat al-Wujud is a heretical teaching that must be eradicated (William, 2002)

Based on the meaning of Wahdat al-Wujud and its origins related to other religious teachings, ulama and scholars firmly condemn the teachings of Wahdat al-Wujud as kufr (unbelief). Al-Syaukāni (d. 1834 AD) judged all the followers of al-Hallaj (d. 922 AD) as kufr for adhering to the teachings of Wahdat al-Wujud. Al-Shaykh Ali al-Khawwas who was a Sufi figure in the 9th century as narrated by al-Sya'rāni (d. 1565 AD) forbade the students to receive any gift or contribution from the group that adheres to the teachings of Wahdat al-Wujud (al-Sya'rāni, 2005). The rejection of Wahdat al-Wujud is very clear but this teaching is still a polemic among scholars because some of the Sufis think that their Wahdat al-Wujud is different from this concept.

Wahdat al-Wujud According to the Sufis

Wahdat al-Wujud for the Sufis fully believes in monotheism or oneness of Allah SWT. The Sufis' belief in the oneness of Allah Taala is very clear as explained by al-Shaykh Nuh al-Qudhah (d. 2010 AD) in his fatwa asserting that the Sufis are people who always believe in the oneness of Allah Taala (al-Qudhah, 2012). According to al-Kallabāzi (d. 990 AD), a person cannot be recognized as a Sufi unless he has perfect faith and belief in the oneness of Allah (al-Kallabāzi, 1933). This statement reveals an opposition between the Sufis' monotheism and the concept of Wahdat al-Wujud.

Al-Nābulusi (d. 1731 AD) explains Wahdat al-Wujud according to the Sufis as a statement of perfect monotheism because Wahdat al-Wujud is the belief that there is no real and mighty existence other than Allah SWT, while the life of creatures is a loan and permission from Allah Taala (al-Nābulusi, 1969). Similarly, Said Nursi (d. 1960 AD) affirmed that Wahdat al-Wujud is the concentration of the heart that only points to the existence of Allah Taala as a substance that wajib al-Wujud (must exist) and denies any view of the creatures (Said Nursi, 2011). The concept of Wahdat al-Wujud argumentation and meaning are understood differently from the Wahdat al-Wujud concept which is judged as kufr by scholars. Mustafa Bakri (d. 1749 AD) explained that there was a misunderstanding of the concept of Wahdat al-Wujud by the Sufi scholars which eventually made this concept understood as misguided and kufr (Mustafa, n.d.). According to Ramadan al-Būti (d. 2013), Wahdat al-Wujud which is mentioned as the teaching of the Sufis is a concept that should be known as Wahdat al-Shuhud which results from the meaning of understanding the greatness of Allah S.W.T., that looking at all creatures leads to a view of Allah's greatness (al-Buti, T.th).

In the archipelago, there are Malay Sufi figures who talked about Wahdat al-Wujud. Among them, al-Shaykh Abdul Malik or known as Tokku Pulau Manis (d. 1736 AD) stated that Wahdat al-Wujud is the belief that no substance exists in reality but Allah Taala while the existence of creatures is an existence that depends on Allah Taala (Ab

Malik, T.th). Similarly, al-Shaykh Abd Şamad al-Falimbani (d. 1832 AD) explained in Sayr al-Sālikin (1953);

And the fourth Tawhid is called Tawhid khawāṣṣ, al-khawāṣṣ and this is the meaning of Lā ilāha illā Allāh, namely Lā mawjūda illā Allāh, that is, there is nothing that truly exists except the existence of the One Allah S.W.T., there is nothing alike of Him, who stands by Himself, as mentioned in the hadith of the Prophet Sallā Allah 'alayhi wa sallam, "kāna Allāh wa lā shay'a ma'ahu," which means that Allah Ta'ala exist and there is nothing with Him. And it is this fourth Tawheed that is discussed by the al-Sufis who are mufiaqqiqīn, who are 'ārifīn, and the knowledge that discussed the fourth Tawheed is called the knowledge of the truth, knowledge of ma'rifat, and wafidat al-wujūd.

According to al-Shaykh Abd Samad, Wahdat al-Wujud understood by the Sufis is a perfect monotheism belief. This is because Wahdat al-Wujud is always looking to Allah Taala alone.

Based on this discussion, it can be clearly understood that Wahdat al-Wujud among Sufis is a perfect monotheistic teaching. The Sufis always strive to achieve the state of Wahdat al-Wujud because this concept proves the recognition of a servant towards Allah Almighty.

Wahdat al-Wujud According to the al-Rifā'iyyah Tariqa

Al-Rifā'iyyah Tariqa is one of the most credible (muktabar) tariqa in Sufism. The stance of the Rifā'iyyah Tariqa's figures or scholars is different from other Sufis. Al-Sayyid Ahmad al-Rifā'i (d. 1182 AD) clearly states that the word that causes a Sufi to slip from the foundation of belief and religion is Wahdat al-Wujud (Zulhafizi, 2019). The rejection of Wahdat al-Wujud teachings by al-Sayyid Ahmad al-Rifā'i has been made a basic doctrine in the tariqa's teachings causing the al-Rifā'iyyah Tariqa's scholars to also expressed their rejection of Wahdat al-Wujud.

The firm stance of al-Sayyid Ahmad al-Rifā'i (d. 1182 AD) in rejecting Wahdah al-Wujud is that he commented on the phenomenon that arose from al-Halaj (d. 922 AD). Al-Sayyid Ahmad believes that if it is true that the recurring news that al-Halaj once uttered the words of Wahdat al-Wujud by claiming himself to be al-Haq (Allah), then al-Sayyid Ahmad supported the fatwa that sentences him to death (al-Rifā'i, 1787a). In addition, al-Sayyid Ahmad stated that if al-Halaj (d. 922 AD) was a person who was above al-Haq (the truth) he would not have claimed that he was al-Haq (al-Rifā'i, T.th). It must be understood that the word Ana al-Haq is a word that contains Wahdat al-Wujūd which means "I am al-Haq", which is one of the noble names of Allah. Therefore, al-Rifā'i stated that al-Halaj (d. 922 AD) had caused doubt in people, so he was judged because of the doubt that resulted from his words, which seemed like Wahdat al-Wujud

Al-Sayyid Ahmad al-Rifā'i (d. 1182 AD) also advised the students and the entire al-Rifā'iyyah Jamaah (congregation) to always stay away from words that contain Wahdat al-Wujud because these words cause a person go to the hell (al-Rifā'i, T.th). The strictness expressed by al-Sayyid Ahmad al-Rifā'i (d. 1182 AD) is intended to ensure that Muslims stay away from any teachings of Wahdat al-Wujud and he does not arbitrarily judge kufr for anyone who conveys these teachings. This is proven through his advice to the students to always maintain their manners as a servant with Allah Taala by staying away from anything doubtful such as the word of Wahdat al-Wujud (al-Rifā'i, T.th). Nevertheless, al-Sayyid Ahmad (d. 1182 AD) thinks that if the word of Wahdat al-Wujud is mentioned by a Sufi who is recognized to have a true belief, then the word can be explained or represented (takwil) but it is better and more important to leave or never utter the word of Wahdat al-Wujud (al-Rifā'i, T.th).

The rejection of any teachings of Wahdat al-Wujud from among the al-Rifā'iyyah scholars is consistent. Al-Sayyid al-Rawwas (d. 1278 AD), one of the main Rifā'iyyah reminds himself and the Rifā'iyyah tariqa followers to be supporters of the Sunnah and eradicate all heresy and Wahdat al-Wujud that become the main cause of the Sufis destruction (al-Rawwas, T.th). In al-Diwan, a collection of poems by al-Rawwas (d. 1278 AD), he also expressed his displeasure with Wahdat al-Wujud. He believed that Wahdat al-Wujud was a philosophy that led to the wrath of Allah the Almighty. Furthermore, Wahdat al-Wujud contradicts the concept of Wahdaniyyat, which is the oneness of Allah Almighty (al-Rawwas, T.th). In addition, al-Rawwas (d. 1278 AD) always advised to be careful when talking about monotheism and Allah Taala, the discussions about Allah Taala need to be clean from any element of Wahdat al-Wujud (al-Rawwas, 2001).

Other figures in al-Rifā'iyyah Tariqa such as al-Sayyid Abu al-Huda al-Şayyādi (d. 1909 AD) also expressed concern and rejection of Wahdat al-Wujud. He asserted that the Sufis who speak with words containing elements of Wahdat al-Wujud need to be rejected from Sufism. Besides, words that contain the elements of Wahdat al-Wujud are an immense sin (al-Şayyādi, 2008). In the book Nur al-Inşaf (T.th), al-Sayvādi (d. 1909 AD) explained that Wahdat al-Wujud is a teaching that results from imagination and is filled with doubt. Furthermore, he asserted that Wahdat al-Wujud is a teaching full of falsehood the Sufis need to be careful of so as not to fall into falsehood (al-Şayyādi, T.th). Contrastingly, al-Sayyādi (d. 1909 AD) differed in the issue of Wahdat al-Wujud among Sufis such as al-Halaj (d. 922 AD), Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1204 AD) and al-Jaylani (d. 1166 AD). He denied the words of Wahdat al-Wujud attributed to the earliest figures of Sufism. He assumes that those words were due to forgery and exaggeration that had a specific intention (al-Şayyādi, 2008). In addition, he insisted that if the word of

Wahdat al-Wujud, which is attributed to the earliest figures of Sufism, is true, then it must be rejected so that society is not confused and damaged (al-Ṣayyādi, 2008). The allegation of falsification and distortion of the work of previous Sufi scholars is also supported by al-Suyuṭi (d. 1505 AD) and al-Sha'rāni (d. 1565 AD), who also think that there is a distortion of the work of Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1204 AD), which made Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1204 AD) appears as a practitioner of Wahdat al-Wujud (al-Sha'rani, 2004). According to al-Hafiz Waliy al-Din al-Iraqi (d. 1422 AD), the books of Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1204 AD) especially al-Fusus and al-Futuhat are full of deviations and errors that must be avoided by the students. He also asserted that the unbelief of Wahdat al-Wujud contained in the two books is essentially not from Ibn 'Arabi's writings (al-Iraq, n.d.).

The attitude of Rifā'iyyah Tariqa's scholars and figures in rejecting Wahdat al-Wujud was also expressed by al-Shaykh Nur al-Din al-Rāniri (d. 1658 AD). Al-Shaykh al-Rāniri was the earliest figure who spread the al-Rifā'iyyah Tariqa in the Malay world. Al-Rāniri (d. 1658 AD) firmly rejected Wahdat al-Wujud after discussing with 40 Wahdat al-Wujud scholars and finally, he issued a fatwa of kufr over all the teachings of Wahdat al-Wujud (Ahmad Daudy, 1983).

Based on this discussion, it can be known that al-Rifā'iyyah Tariqa rejects any teaching that contains the elements of Wahdat al-Wujud. Additionally, the teachings of al-Rifā'iyyah Tariqa accept any takwil (representation) of the Wahdat al-Wujud words that are spoken by the scholars who are acknowledged to have true beliefs but demand that abandoning the words of Wahdat al-Wujud is more important.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the teaching of Wahdat al-Wujud has two different and mutually opposing meanings. The first meaning of Wahdat al-Wujud contains elements of kufr because it assumes that creatures and Allah are one. The second meaning of Wahdat al-Wujud is to believe that Allah the Exalted is the only substance that must exist. In addition, it is a perfect monotheism to believe in the power of Allah Taala solely behind every event. Regardless, al-Rifā'iyyah Tariqa is more inclined to distance itself from Wahdat al-Wujud because all the words that arise from the teachings of Wahdat al-Wujud are capable of causing doubt to the people who do not properly master religion and Sharia.

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