

Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani: The Teaching Pioneer of the Seven Dignities in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to describe how Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani's position in transmitting doctrine of waḥdat al-wujūd in Indonesia. The research used a descriptive form with a qualitative approach and historical method. This study through four stages, namely heuristics, source criticism, interpretation and presentation. Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani has played a very important role in transmitting waḥdat al-wujūd thought in Indonesia. Firstly, the thought of waḥdat al-wujūd tends to be more difficult to understand, but in the next time, it can be explained more easily through the concept of the seven dignities. Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani then explained the concept of waḥdat al-wujūd in the Book of Tuḥfah al-Mursalāh written by al-Burhanpuri through some of his works including Book of al-Ḥarakat, Book of Jauhār al-Ḥaqā'iq and Book of Risalah Tubayyin.

Keywords: Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani, Seven Dignities, Waḥdat al-Wujūd

1. Introduction

As one of the chain of *waḥdat al-wujūd* thought in Indonesia, the position of Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani becomes very important after Hamzah Fansuri. He is known as the organizer of the doctrine of seven dignities which is a brief explanation of doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. At the time the Book of *Tuḥfah al-Mursalāh* written by al-Burhanpuri arrived in Aceh then become the main reference. In Indonesia, Sheikh Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani (d. 1630 AD) is known as the first scholar whom refer to this book. His ideas was described in various books such as the book *Jauhār al-Ḥaqā'iq*, *Nūr al-Ḥaqā'iq*, *Mir'at al-Mu'minīn* and the book *al-Ḥarakat* (Dahlan, 1992).

At first, the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* caused controversy and received a lot of rejection in society. The Book *Zīnat al-Wāḥidīn* by Hamzah Fansuri written at the end of the 16th century when the debate was going on about *wujūdīyah* in Indonesia, particularly in Aceh. This debate was also discussed by Nūr al-Dīn al-Raniri (d. 1068/1059) in *Bustān al-Salatīn*. The intense debate that eventually resulted in the tragedy of intellectual history, that was the burning of the works of Hamzah Fansuri and Shams al-Dīn Al-Sumatrani (d. 1630), and their followers under strict supervision and to be killed if necessary (John, 1965).

After this tragedy, Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani became a figure who played an important role through the works he produced. Although it is not much known about the life of *Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani* and not found an adequate explanation of the relationship between Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani and Hamzah Fansuri. However, many scholars have concluded that there is a close relationship between the two. Hasjmy (1983) for example, tends to conclude that *Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani* is the greatest student and caliph of Hamzah Fansuri among Hamzah Fansuri's followers in Aceh. This view according to Dahlan (1992) has the possibility of truth because Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani has a writing of Hamzah Fansuri's work as *Syarah*. The writing of *Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani* is *Syarah Ruba'i Hamzah Fansuri* and the *Syarah* of the Cob Fish Poem. But it still becomes the question is that if Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani and Hamzah Fansuri have the student and teacher relationship, where and when Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani learnt from Fansuri Hamzah. There are many questions have to be answered about Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani. This paper aims to describe about him as the pioneer teaching of the seven dignities concept in Indonesia.

2. Methods

The research used a descriptive form with a qualitative approach and historical method. The historical method is carried out by making a comparative study between several historical works and reliable sources based on the historical method. Intertextual studies are needed to reveal ideas or polemics that occurred at that time, because the texts and writings produced by Indonesian figures cannot be separated from the situations and conditions when the text was written. The written text could be in response to any questions around in society or written at the request of the ruler. Therefore the ideas and thought of people written at that time in any form such as manuscripts, or other people's ideas

at that time became very important. In addition, the writings produced by scholars about ideas and figures becomes an important material to enrich this study.

This study through four stages, namely heuristics, source criticism, interpretation and presentation. Heuristics is an activity to collect traces or signs of the past, and after that a critical review is carried out to investigate whether the traces are true, based on historical methods. From the collected data, interpretation is carried out, to determine the interconnected meanings of the facts obtained. Meanwhile, the final step is to convey a synthesis of the data obtained, (Hegelian Analysis).

3. Results

3.1 His Life and Works

This question can not be answered clearly because there is not enough information that explains about it. But if it looks at the tradition of the intellectual journey of Hamzah Fansuri who likes to wander to different places, it is very possible that the two never met. Winsted (1972) explains that Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani is a student of Sunan Bonang in Java, and Hasjmy (1983) even considers that both (Hamzah Fansuri and Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani) studied to Sunan Bonang in Java. The scholar's speculation above is missed with the tombstone inscription discovery of Hamzah Fansuri (if the gravestone actually leads to Hamzah Fansuri) which was on April 11st 1527, so it is impossible for Shams al-Dīn to have a student teacher relationship with Hamzah Fansuri because both of them are considerable distance which is about 1 century. (Guillot, 2007)

Who is actually Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani? It is not much information obtained about the biography of this great scholar, as well as the information about Hamzah Fansuri. The Local information about Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani is obtained from the Tale of Aceh, Acehnese tradition, and *Bustan al-Salatin*, while the sources of the West is the track record of the European nomads who came in Aceh. But all this information leads to information that Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani is an influential figure in the royal palace of Aceh at the end of 16 century AD and becomes qadhi's kingdom. He probably lived during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda (1603 - 1636 AD) (Hurgronje, 1997). During this period, the Hamzah Fansuri and Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani groups got quite a lot of followers in the community as well as a strong position in the palace. When it is connected to the Sultanate Mughol in India, it seems to be exist a parallel relationship. At that time, the group considered heterodox in India has strong support in the palace at the time of Sultan Akbar the Great (1560 - 1605 AD) and his successor Jahangir (1605 - 1627 AD), until then the emergence of Nur al-Dīn al-Raniri in Aceh. (Schimmel, 1988)

In the Acehnese Tale narrated that Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani is the spiritual leader of the community. He is who reads *Surātal-Fātiḥāh*, and or receives the reports of pilgrims returning from Mecca. The Acehnese Indigenous gave him the honor of a great time for prayer and the religious ceremonies. The wanderers were deal with Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani during 1600 – 1630 AD. In this European trip notes, it mentioned there is a priest who is mentioned by the bishop or eveque name.

The oldest information originating from Frederich de Houtman, who came to Aceh during the reign of the Early Alaudin Ri'ayat Shah (1589-1604 M.) who is the grandfather of Iskandar Muda of the mother's side. Together with his brother -Cornelis de Hotman- left town Texel in 1595 AD. and reached Indonesia after the previous stop in Madagascar. But he was arrested in Banten in September 1595M and worked out with the ransom in February 1596 AD. and returned to his homeland. On March 15, 1598 AD. He set off again and anchored in Aceh on June 21, 1599 AD. Due to a dispute Cornelis died and Frederich on hold at the Pidie fort for approximately two years. And on November 29, 1601 AD. he could climb aboard the Cornelis Bastiansz ship again, and sailed to New Zealand. (Lombard, 1995)

Frederich de Houtman was a Dutch sailor who arrived in Aceh in 1599 AD; mentions in his book that in Aceh found a man whobecame the King Sheikh General Counsel. John Davis, the British sailor who is on the flotilla Cornelis de Houtman ship and Frederich de Houtman keeps a diary about Aceh that there is a high priest who is highly respected by the king and the people, and there is a person considered to have a prophetic spirit which is also highly respected by the people. The subsequent information is provided by Lancaster (1940) in the Journey stories which was published under the title of *The Voyages of Sir James Lancaster to Brazil and the East Indies*. Lancaster was an envoy of Queen Elizabeth of England to hold trade with Aceh stated that he was dealing with a bishop who is respected by the king and his people, and participate in the discussions. He is a man who speaks fluent Arabic. Taking into account this information traveling from the West and combining with the local information then it is very likely that intended by Lancaster, Frederich de Houtman, and John Davis when dealing with Aceh is Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani. (Dahlan, 1992)

As a scholar of Islam in the Indonesia early, Shams al-Dīn is a quite prolific writer associated with the religious issues. He wrote the treatises in Arabic as well as Malay language which are still accessible in the presence.

Hasjmy (1983) says there are sixteen works written by Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani, there are *Mir'āt al-Mukminīn*, *Jauhār al-Ḥaqā'iq*, *Risalat Tubayyīn Mulāḥadhat al-Muwāḥhidīn wa al-Mulḥidīn fī Dzīkrillah*, *Kitāb al-Ḥarakat*, *Nūr al-Daqā'iq*, *Mir'āt al-Imān*, *Sharḥ al-Qulb Mir'āt*, *Kitāb Taẓmīn*, *shar' al-Ārifīn*, *Kitāb Usūl al-Tahqīq*, *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqīqāt*, *Kitāb al-Martabāt*, *Risālat al-Wahhāb*, *Mir'āt al-Muḥaqqiqīn*, *Tanbih Allāh*, *Syarah Ruba'i Hamzah Fansuri*.

His works can be found to this day, among others, as follows:

1. *Jauhar al-Daqā'iq*: This book is 30 pages and written in Arabic and edited by Van Nieuwenhuijze -a Dutch scholar-. It teaches us to understand the seven dignities and the best book and the most complete teaching of the mystical.
2. *Risālah Tubayyīn Mulāḥadhat al-Muwāḥhidīn wa al-Mulḥidīn fī Dīkr Allāh*: This book also has been edited by Van Nieuwenhuijze and amounted to 8 pages in Arabic. Although it is compact, but this book has a significant role in religious understanding, because this treatise explains the differences between the *mulhid* group (atheist) and *muwāḥhid* (believer) group.
3. *Mir'āt al-Mukminīn*: This book is 70 pages and in Malay, and explains about the belief in Allah, His apostles, His books, His angels, the Hereafter and His Qadar. This book talks about the issues that are in line with the creed of *Aqḍah Ahlus sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*.
4. *Syarah Ruba'i Hamzah Fansuri*; This book is written in Malay and as explanatory of Hamzah Fansuri's poetry about the unity of manifestation of God and nature.
5. *The Syarah of the Cob Fish poem*; This book is written in Malay and explains about Nur Muhammad and how to achieve mortal in God.
6. *Nūr al-Daqā'iq*; this book is written in Arabic and has been inscribed by AH John who explained about the dignity of seven.
7. *Tarīq al-Sālikīn*; this book is written in Malay and contains an explanation of some terms like wujud, adam, haqq, wajib, mumkin and so on.
8. *Mir'āt al-īmān*; this book is written in Malay and describes the seven dignities and the spirit issue.
9. *Kitāb al-Ḥarakat*: this book is written in Arabic and some in Malay version, talking about the concept of seven dignities.

3.2 The Concept of the Seven Dignities

Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani is an Islamic scholar who is quite creative writer and produces some writings. From some of his work, it can be seen that Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani is a follower of the *Wujūdīyah* Sufis. Some of the essays prove it which are *Jauhār al-Ḥaqā'iq* (the gems of truth) and *Risālah Tubayyīn Mulāḥadhat al-Muwāḥhidīn wa al-Mulḥidīn fī Dīkr Allāh*, *al-Ḥarakat*, and *Mir'at al-Mu'minīn*. These articles are included in the dissertation CAO van Nieuwenhuijze entitled *Samsu'l-Din van Pasai, Bijdrage Tot De Kennis Der Sumatranche Mystiek* and published at EJ Briil Leiden in 1945. (Nieuwenhuijze, 1945)

Jauhār al-Ḥaqā'iq describes the *waḥdat al-wujūd* problem that consisting of a preamble, five chapters and a conclusion. The book is written in Arabic which is quite good with quite touching Sufi style. This book begins with Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani warning to humans for declaring the oneness of Allah with the essential monotheism and telling people to know God truly, knowing God perfectly by combining between *tanzīh* and *tasybīh*, because anyone who knows the Lord with *tasybīh* only then he is stupid and infidel while anyone who knows the Lord with *tanzīh* only then he is less Arif. However those who know the Lord with both then they are perfectly enhanced *Ārif*.

The God in the concept of Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani is the realization that there is no one like Him, and there is nothing that stands with Him, but He is the cause of everything without causing a change in the substance and His nature. He is the First (*al-Awwāl*), the End (*al-Ākhīr*), which Appears (*al-Dhāhīr*) and The Hidden (*al-Bāṭhin*) because his existence encompasses all things. With Him, standing all properties which are Alive (*al-Hayyāh*), the Knowledgeable (*al-'ilm*), the Will (*al-Irādah*), the Power (*al-Qudrah*), the Auditory (*al-sama'*) the Vision (*al-Bashar*) and the Talk (*al-Kalam*). So he is the Living (*al-Hayy*), The Stand Alone (*al-Qayyum*), the Desire (*al-Murid*), the Almighty (*al-Qādir*), the Knowing (*al-Ālim*), the Hearing (*al-Sāmi'*), the Seeing (*al-Bashīr*) and the Talking (*al-mutakallim*) with at His own substance. The actual form is a form of God, while the nature is nothing but the shadow of the ultimate manifestation of God. (Al-Sumatrani, 1945).

All the followers of the *Wujūdīyah* doctrine depart from the same point of view; that the true form is the only one which is God, while the diverse universe is only a shadow of the form of one God. It is also explained by Shams al-

Dīn about the God teachings and this nature while the difference is often seen related to the appearance sequences of the God shadow so it becomes diverse as it looks.

Associated with *tajalli al-hāqq*, Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani follows the concept of the seven dignities formulated by Syekh al-Burhanpuri, who divides the appearance manifestation of God into seven levels. The first level is *ahādiyyah*, the second is *waḥdah*, third dignity is *waḥidiyyah*, the fourth dignity is *alam al-arwāḥ*, the fifth dignity is *alam al-mithāl*, the sixth is dignity *alam al-aḥsām* and the seventh is *alam al-insān (alam al-syahādah)* (al-Sumatrani, 1945).

In the first chapter, Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani discusses the oneness of Allah. There is nothing similar to the manifestation of Allah. His form reaches any nature without a change in the substance and his nature. Everything is tangible except by the reason of His Being. He covers everything, He is the Beginning and the End, and he is the outer and the inner. With this teaching, it seems Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani wants to confirm that the form is actually only one that is a manifestation of Allah., While the other form is just a shadow of the one. In connection with this Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani (1945) says:

"Everything is not tangible but with Him: for it is only by God's tangible and Allah makes everything it stands upright or intangible. Everything (from nature) is essentially a *fana'* (nothing), but it is tangible with God. God is intangible with at His own essence. He is upholding all things; He is the upholder of everything."

God in the first dignity also called *la ta'ayun* dignity, He is holy of all kinds of characters, names, boundaries, and so forth. God in this dignity can not be known by anyone. In the book of *al-Ḥarakat*, he says about the first dignity:

First of all, the manifestation is named *ahādiyyat*
That's where all sick is like
There is no character and *asmā'iyat*
That's the essence of the essence dignity
Like and cues are not there, it is just *munazzah*
There is only existence of *itlāq* and *taqayyud*,
No one is equal to Him. (al-Sumatrani, 1945)

In the second chapter, Shams al-Dīn reinforces the *waḥdat al-wujūd* concept. Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani writes that when Allah explains about Himself with the absolute knowledge, it appears His absolute Being with all divinity circumstances and nature without any distinction and separation between parts one with the other, so he called *al-Waḥdah al-Ḥaqīqah al-Muḥammadiyah* (Unity Nature of Muhammad). In the book of *al-Ḥarakat* mentioned:

The second is the dignity of the form named *waḥda*.
That is the essence of the first real Muhammad in *uluhiyya*
All essence form is real there
Over the road of *ajmal* also is told
Let you know the essence of the word think
Here it's real (al-Sumatrani, 1945).

In the third chapter, Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani discusses *al-waḥidiyyah*. When God intends to explain Himself with His knowledge, it appears His absolute form with all divinity names and characters that are different from each other. It is named by *al-waḥidiyyah al-ḥaqīqah al-insaniyyah*. In this article, Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani insists that there is nothing in the form except Allah. (al-Sumatrani, 1945)

Just as al-Burhanpuri, the first third of this dignity is *qadīm* and remains in the God knowledge, and yet out of His science. The Natural form has not appeared actually, then the longing God to be known by His servants has not been implemented. The God *tajallī* at these stages is still ongoing in Himself (*tajallī fi nafsihi*).

For that, God has been appeared (*tajallī*) again at the third stage, which is called the dignity of *alam al-arwāḥ*. *Tajallī* in this stage according to Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani no longer takes place within Himself but on the outside Himself (*tajallī fī ghairihi*). When God has been *tajallī* outside Himself, it becomes the realization of light (*Nūr*) which is also called *Nūr Muḥammad*, the soul of Muhammad, and *al-Qalām al-A'lā* (the highest pen). The Spirit in this dignity is simple (*basīth*) and *mujarrad* (silent on the matter and form). (al-Sumatrani, 1945)

In other writing says:

The Four forms of the dignity are named *alam al-arwāḥ*
That is the plan that looks like *nūr fi al-misbāh*

It explains *allarwāh* (souls)

As *zulmatul-lail* is explained by *nūr al-misbāh*. (al-Sumatrani, 1945)

The fifth dignity is called *ofalam al-mitsāl*. *Alam al-mitsāl* in the Shams al-Dīn's teaching is a continuation of the spirit of *alam al-arwāh*, but it has been arranged and divided though it is still subtly (*latif*), and immaterial. The sixth is dignity of *alam al-ajsām*, also called *alam al-syahādah*. In this dignity the God's *tajallī* has been created in the form of a thick body, can be divided and composed, has been collected in it every name and nature of the Absolute. (al-Sumatrani, 1945). The Book of *al-Ḥarakat* explained:

The five forms of dignity is named *alam al-mitsāl*

That is the plan of the *Zill al-jalāl wa al-jamāl*

That is such a natural

The Shadow of greatness and beauty

Like all *tafsīl*(particular) and *ijmāl*(general)

Alam mitsal has been copied

As in the outer and inner

The six forms of dignity are named *alam al-ajsam*

That is the plan of the form that is *khāss*(specific) and *āmm*(common)

All of it are *tamām* (perfect)

Of the *al-jalāl faidain wa al-karām*

That *Ajsām* is the *kātif* body

There is inside hidden form that is *Latif*

There it is the real *Qāwī* and *dhaif*

Of all object of *fhainunā* and *sarīf*(al-Sumatrani, 1945)

The seventh is the dignity of human (*alam al-insān*) which is the central point of Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani discussion about nature. In this dignity, it is collected all previous *tajallī*; *waḥdah*, *waḥidiyyah*, inner spirit, and dark body, all collected into one and become man. The Man in the Shams al-Dīn's concept outwardly is composed of the four elements; earth, water, air and fire called by *al-insān al-bashari*, whereas when it is viewed from the inner element that contains; *'ilm*, *nūr* and *syuhūd*. The being is substance, *'ilm* is nature, *nūr* is a name, and *syuhūd* is a deed.

So in the Shams al-Dīn's concept as ibn 'Arabian school, man is the most obvious God's *tajallī*, because to whom the all dignity Lord's *tajallī* are collected, however, Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani explicitly distinguishes between God and man. As quoted by Dahlan as follows : "The nature of God Almighty is *qadīm* while our character is *muhdats*. Because all substances of Allaah is *qadīm* then all His attributes is also *qadīm*, then our substance is *muhdats*, so our nature is *muhdats* too. That is the difference. Do not hesitate anymore." (Dahlan, 1992)

3.4 The Influence of Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani in Indonesia

Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani is considered by the experts as one of the biggest fan of Hamzah Fansuri. At the time, the *waḥdat al-wujūd* concept got a decent place in the kingdom of Aceh, so many people and the aristocratic the Acehnese kingdom into this. In his writing, Shams al-Dīn obviously gets influence from ibn 'Arabi school and the seven dignities of al-Burhanpuri. The concept of the seven dignities was expected to enter Aceh before 1030/1619 AD, because the book of *Tuḥfah al-Mursalāh* that became the main reference of this doctrine was completed by al-Burhanpuri in 1000/1590 AD. With the description of *tajallī al-ḥaqq* briefly and clearly, he immediately replaced the *tajallī* concept of the previous scholars like Ibn 'Arabī or al-Jīlī, and later was adopted by Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani in explaining the dignity of form. (Niewenhuijze, 1945)

As the biggest follower of Hamzah Fansuri, Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani writes a *Syarah* (explanation) of the book belongs Hamzah identified *Rub'ai* Fansuri. But the concept of the dignity of Shams al-Dīn's appearance of God follows the doctrine of dignity seven delivered by al-Burhanpuri. He does not follow the concept that is presented by Hamzah Fansuri. It can be said as one of continuity and a change of the *Wujūdiyyah* doctrine growing in Indonesia. (Hasjmy, 1983)

Through them and his loyal students, this doctrine spreads in various parts of Indonesia. The *Wujūdiyyah* concept spread to different parts of the archipelago. John found the author's manuscripts without written predicted -17th century AD. in North Sumatra. This manuscript describes about the *waḥdat al-wujūd* teachings, the perfect man and the primacy of remembrance. John assumes that the book author is Shams al-Dīn's students, considering a lot of similar things mentioned in the text referred to and is also found in the al-Shams al-Dīn works. (John, 1957)

In Palembang for example Shihabudin ibn Abd Allah, a scholar before Abd al Shamad al-Palimbani who lived in 18th century AD. tells us that in Palembang was crowded with the seven dignities concept that the community becomes heretic and misguided, therefore the books discussing about the *waḥdat al-wujūd* concept are banned to be studied, because in Palembang there are few qualified religious teachers. (Shihabudin, 1977)

The influence of Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani is also found in Buton, with the existence of the Buton Kingdom laws that adopt the seven dignities and the twenty God characters, during the sultan Dayyan Ihsan al-Dīn (1597-1631 AD.). This is evident from the existence of an agreement made between the parties and the Dutch kingdom, represented by Pieter Both in 1613 AD which, among others, that the kingdom of Buton is free to implement the government system according to the local custom. The local custom referred to in the agreement is the only official custom regulating the distribution of power called the Seven Dignities Acts. (Yunus, 1994)

The books of the Shams al-Dīn's work studied in Buton at the time. This proves the influence of Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani not only in Aceh but spreads to other areas, considering the traffic trade, and transportation were smooth to connect between one place to another in Indonesia. Meanwhile in Java, the dignity of seven new doctrines developed in the late 17th century, and in this case appears to be more influenced by 'Abd al-Rauf al-Sinkili who has more followers, especially in the growing Tareqat Syattariyah in Java. Then the Seven Dignities doctrine is more possible propagated by the followers of 'Abd al-Rauf al-Sinkili in Java. (Yunus, 1994)

4. Conclusion

Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani has played a very important role in transmitting *waḥdat al-wujūd* thought in Indonesia. Firstly, the thought of *waḥdat al-wujūd* tends to be more difficult to understand, but in the next time, it can be explained more easily through the concept of the seven dignities. This explained the the universe is formed in seven levels. This concept was first introduced by al-Burhanpuri in his work entitled *Tuḥfah al-Mursalāh*. Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani then explained the concept of *Tuḥfah* through some of his various works that he had produced including Book of *al-Ḥarakat*, Book of *Jauhār al-Ḥaqā'iq* and Book of *Risalah Tubayyin*.

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