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## THE WFAQ MANUSCRIPT OF LAMPUNG: A Textual Study on Esoteric Knowledge and the Islamization of Local Culture

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**Abstract:** *This study addresses a significant lacuna in Nusantara Islamic manuscript scholarship, which has predominantly emphasized cataloguing, textual transmission, and codicological description, while leaving the functional, symbolic, and theological dimensions of wafaq practices underexamined. Focusing on a circular wafaq (wafaq da'irah) manuscript from Lampung containing Q. 48:29 and Q. 2:246, this research investigates how Qur'anic text, geometric symbolism, and local religiosity intersect within the tradition of 'Ilm al-Hikmah. Employing a qualitative-descriptive design that integrates philological, codicological, and hermeneutical approaches, the study analyzes the manuscript's textual integrity, visual structure, and socio-historical context in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. The findings demonstrate that the Qur'anic verses were transmitted faithfully according to the 'Uthmanic rasm, yet functionally transformed through circular geometric inscription, shifting from recitative devotion (tilāwah) to visual-symbolic mediation (hirz/azīmah). Genealogically, the manuscript reflects adaptation of classical Middle Eastern esoteric works—particularly Shams al-Ma'arif al-Kubrā and Khazīnat al-Asrār—into a localized Lampung context, evidenced by Pegon annotations and pragmatic spiritual aims such as protection and authority. Beyond documenting syncretization, this study argues that wafaq manuscripts constitute a contested epistemological arena in which orthodoxy, esotericism, and local authority are negotiated. Consequently, Islamization in Lampung is better understood not as linear doctrinal purification but as a process of symbolic internalization and material articulation of sacred text. By foregrounding the theological contestation and socio-symbolic function of wafaq, this research reframes Indonesian Islamic esotericism as an integral, though debated, component of Islamic intellectual history rather than a peripheral magical residue.*

**Keywords:** *Wafaq Manuscript; Hikmah; Islamic Esotericism; Talismanic Texts; Lampung Islam.*

## INTRODUCTION

This study is grounded in the philosophical premise that manuscripts are not merely material artifacts, but rather historical representations of the dialectical interplay between sacred texts, local culture, and the spiritual experiences of communities (Kuswandi et al., 2021). In the context of Lampung, wafak manuscripts reflect the process through which the teachings of Ilmu Hikmah, rooted in the classical Islamic intellectual tradition—such as Shams al-Ma‘ārif al-Kubrā and Khawzīnat al-Asrār—were adapted into the socio-cultural landscape of the Indonesian archipelago. This tradition demonstrates that Islamic spirituality evolved through mechanisms of assimilation, localization, and reinterpretation of meaning (Iswanto et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the practice of wafak cannot be uncritically assumed to represent a harmonious expression of Islamic spirituality. Within the history of Islamic thought, esoteric practices have frequently existed in tension with mainstream normative theology (‘aqidah) (Maulani, 2023). Accordingly, this research does not merely describe wafak manuscripts as products of religious culture, but critically examines them through a historical-hermeneutical framework in order to assess their theological and epistemological legitimacy. In this respect, the manuscript is positioned as a contested arena of meaning, encompassing the transcendental dimension (belief in the power of sacred verses), the social dimension (functions of protection and legitimation), and the normative dimension of Islamic doctrine.

The urgency of this research lies in the need to preserve and reinterpret local Islamic intellectual heritage amid the currents of globalization, which often marginalize manuscript-based religious traditions (Ruldeviyani et al., 2024). As an integrative product combining sacred texts, geometric symbols, and the social practices of the Lampung community, wafak constitutes part of the broader corpus of Islam Nusantara that has yet to be comprehensively examined. To date, studies of local Islamic manuscripts have largely concentrated on inventory, textual history, and physical preservation (Kuswandi et al., 2021), while their functional and spiritual dimensions remain relatively underexplored. Yet, a critical understanding of wafak is essential for evaluating how the teachings of Ilmu Hikmah transformed from classical Middle Eastern sources into living local religious practices (Iswanto et al., 2025). Therefore, this research holds not only academic relevance but also cultural significance in reinterpreting the dynamics of Sufism and hikmah traditions within the socio-religious context of Lampung.

Over the past five years, scholarship on Islam Nusantara manuscripts has shown significant development, with an increasingly broad research spectrum. Research conducted by Dedi Kuswandi, Abdul Rohman, and Ghazi Abdullah Muttaqien in *Suhuf: Jurnal Kajian Al-Qur’an dan Kebudayaan Islam* underscores that Qur’anic manuscripts in Indonesia function not only as religious texts but also as cultural artifacts documenting the spiritual dynamics of Muslim societies (Kuswandi et al., 2021). Meanwhile, studies published in *Studia Islamika* highlight the substantial influence of the Haramain scholarly networks in transmitting manuscript-writing traditions to eastern Indonesia (Maulani, 2023). From a local perspective, research in the *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Manuscript Studies* reveals the intellectual connections between Islamic traditions in Bali and the

Malay world (Iswanto et al., 2025), while studies in the Journal of Digital Humanities and Heritage have developed deep learning–based OCR technology for Pegon script as part of classical manuscript digitization efforts (Ruldeviyani et al., 2024). Additionally, research in the Journal of Arabic Linguistics and Pedagogy addresses the pedagogical dimensions of Pegon literacy and the challenges faced by non-Javanese santri (Aziz et al., 2022).

Despite their significant contributions, these studies generally emphasize philological, historical, intellectual network, and digitization perspectives. The functional, mystical, and lived spiritual dimensions embedded in the practice of Ilmu Hikmah remain insufficiently explored. Furthermore, some scholarship tends to assume the continuity of manuscript traditions as a cultural given without critically evaluating their theological legitimacy within normative Islamic frameworks. It is within this gap that the present study situates itself: not merely describing wafak manuscripts as cultural heritage, but examining—through an interdisciplinary lens—their symbolic meaning, social function, and theological positioning within Islamic discourse.

The novelty of this research lies in its effort to conceptualize wafak manuscripts as a contested religious phenomenon. It integrates philological, codicological, semiotic, and contextual-theological approaches to analyze circular talismanic diagrams written in Pegon script as symbolic systems that incorporate Qur’anic verses within specific geometric structures. This analysis seeks to investigate how symbols, texts, and social practices interact in constructing spiritual legitimacy within Lampung society during the colonial period. Accordingly, this study does not merely trace processes of syncretization and Islamization, but also evaluates the boundaries between orthodoxy and esotericism in local religious practices.

The primary objective of this research is to uncover and explicate the meaning, structure, function, and theological position of wafak manuscripts within the Ilmu Hikmah tradition of Islam Nusantara. Specifically, the study analyzes the circular geometric form of the wafak, the selection of Qur’anic verses employed, and the supplementary annotations in Pegon script as components of an integrated symbolic system. In addition, it investigates the transformation of classical Ilmu Hikmah teachings into the lived religious practices of the Lampung community in order to understand the processes of assimilation between theology, culture, and the existential needs of local communities. Through codicological, semiotic, and critically theological approaches, this study seeks to affirm that wafak manuscripts should not be reduced to magical or folkloric artifacts, but rather understood as religious expressions that warrant rigorous scholarly examination—both in terms of their symbolic meanings and their theological legitimacy within the broader Islamic intellectual tradition.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study is classified as a qualitative-descriptive investigation employing philological and hermeneutic approaches and adopts a single interpretative case study design with

two wafak manuscripts as the unit of analysis. A qualitative methodology was selected because the study aims to achieve an in-depth understanding of the textual, symbolic, and contextual meanings embedded within the manuscripts, rather than merely describing their physical characteristics. Both manuscripts originate from a family heritage and were directly inherited from the grandfather of Dr. Achmad, M.Pd., and are currently preserved in his private residence in Sukabumi, Bandar Lampung. Physically, the manuscripts are in good condition, well preserved, and maintain the integrity of the textual content, geometric wafak forms, and supplementary annotations written in Arabic Pegon script. These manuscripts were purposively selected due to their significant philological, historical, and spiritual value, as well as their relevance to the research objectives, namely to produce a microhistorical and philological study that not only examines textual and codicological aspects but also reveals the symbolic, social, and historical dimensions of Sufism in Lampung in an objective and scholarly manner. The philological approach was employed to trace the textual origins, structural composition, and interconnections with the classical Ilmu Hikmah tradition, particularly works such as *Shams al-Ma'arif al-Kubrā* and *Khawzinat al-Asrār*. Meanwhile, the hermeneutic approach was utilized to interpret the symbols, textual elements, and geometric wafak forms within the broader cultural, spiritual, and religious practices of Lampung society, particularly during the colonial period. Through the integration of these two approaches, the study elucidates not only the textual dimensions but also the philosophical, spiritual, and social meanings embedded in the manuscripts.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data (Na'ali & Samiran, 2022). The primary data were obtained directly from the two wafak manuscripts serving as the principal objects of analysis, which contain Qur'anic verses, including Surah Al-Fath verse 29 and Surah Al-Baqarah verse 246, accompanied by geometric wafak elements and annotations in Arabic Pegon script. These manuscripts were examined through codicological and philological analysis to identify their physical characteristics, textual structure, and intertextual relationships with the Ilmu Hikmah tradition (Magfiroh & Muttaqin, 2024). Secondary data were derived from classical Ilmu Hikmah texts, particularly the works of Ahmad al-Buni and Muhammad Haqqi An-Nazili, as well as other academic sources, including scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and prior research relevant to Nusantara Islamic manuscripts, practical Sufism (*tasawuf amali*), and the spiritual culture of Lampung society (Sidiq, 2025). The integration of primary and secondary data enabled interpretative triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity and analytical depth of the study, ensuring that interpretations extend beyond textual analysis to encompass contextual and historical dimensions (Dahal, 2025).

Data collection techniques included direct observation, documentation, and literature review (Na'ali & Samiran, 2022). Observation was conducted through careful examination of the physical condition of the manuscripts, including the writing material, ink, calligraphic style, textual structure, geometric wafak configurations, and additional notes in Pegon script (Fauji et al., 2025). Documentation involved systematic photographic recording and detailed annotation of each manuscript element to support

accurate visual, codicological, and textual analysis (Magfiroh & Muttaqin, 2024). Meanwhile, the literature review was undertaken by examining classical Ilmu Hikmah sources and modern academic references to compare, identify, and contextualize the manuscript content within the broader framework of Islamic intellectual tradition and local spiritual practices (Febriyanti & Alawy, 2025). These three techniques were implemented in an integrated manner to ensure data completeness, interpretive accuracy, and methodological transparency (Dahal, 2025).

Data analysis in this study employed the interactive analytical model developed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three principal stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Ghozali, 2025). During the data reduction stage, the researcher categorized and synthesized the data based on codicological, textual, symbolic, and contextual aspects of the manuscripts (Magfiroh & Muttaqin, 2024). The data display stage involved organizing observational findings and interpretative results into systematic analytical descriptions, thereby highlighting the relationships between the wafak textual structure, Ilmu Hikmah sources, and the spiritual practices of Lampung society (Kuswandi et al., 2025). Finally, the conclusion drawing stage was conducted using a symbolic hermeneutic framework to uncover the theological, spiritual, and cultural meanings embedded within the manuscripts (Sholehah et al., 2025). Through this analytical process, the manuscripts are understood not merely as textual artifacts but also as spiritual and historical media reflecting the dynamic interaction between the Ilmu Hikmah tradition, the local culture of Lampung, and Sufi practices within specific social contexts (Sidiq, 2025). Accordingly, this study produces a comprehensive, valid, and contextually grounded interpretation of the function and significance of the manuscripts within the spiritual history of Lampung society.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Sacred Text and Symbolic Media: A Philological Study of Rajah Based on Qur'anic Verses

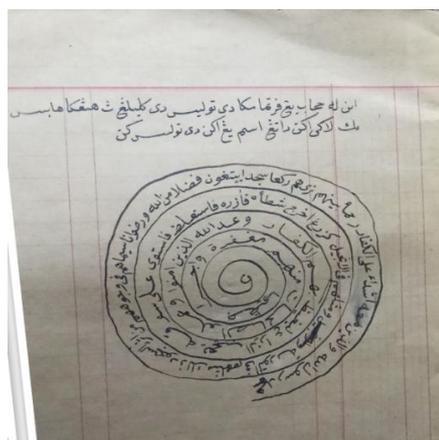


Figure 1.1 Surah Al-Fath (48): 29

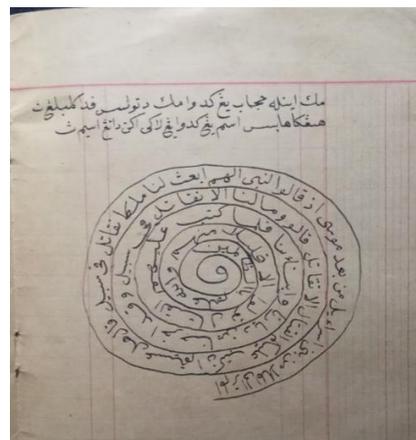


Figure 1.2 Surah Al-Baqarah (2): 246

The Text of Surah Al-Fath (48): 29:

﴿ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا سِيمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ مِنْ أَثَرِ السُّجُودِ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْإِنْجِيلِ كَزَرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ شَطْأَهُ فَآزَرَهُ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوَى عَلَى سُوقِهِ يُعْجِبُ الزُّرَّاعَ لِيُغَيِّظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْهُمْ مَغْفُورَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٢٩﴾ ﴾

Within the tradition of Ilmu Hikmah (Islamic esoteric sciences), this verse is widely employed in the practice of rajah or wafaq. Thematically, the verse portrays the characteristics of the Prophet's Companions: firmness toward disbelievers, compassion among believers, devotion in worship, and the promise of forgiveness and immense reward. Within amaliah traditions, this semantic structure is functionally interpreted as a source of authority (haibah), protection, and blessing (Ismail & Rahman, 2022).

From the perspective of visual form and layout, the manuscript analyzed in this study can be classified as an Ilmu Hikmah amulet in the form of a rajah or wafaq. The circular arrangement of the verse, centered around a symbolic core, reflects the distinctive characteristics of Wafaq Da'irah. The presence of explanatory notes in Arabic Pegon script at the upper section of the manuscript referring to "isim" further supports the identification that the text was not intended merely for recitation, but for inscription as a medium of blessing (tabarruk) serving a specific function (Hefni, 2021).

Historically, such practices are rooted in classical Islamic esoteric literature, including Shams al-Ma'arif al-Kubra by Ahmad al-Buni and Khazinat al-Asrar by Sayyid Muhammad Haqqi al-Nazili. These works elaborate on the utilization of Qur'anic verses, divine names (asma'), and symbolic configurations in diagrammatic structures for specific spiritual purposes—phenomena that contemporary scholarship understands as manifestations of textual mysticism within Islam (Sviri, 2021).

Nevertheless, it is essential to emphasize that such practices are not universally accepted within Islamic tradition. Certain scholars from more puritan theological orientations critique the use of rajah and wafaq as religious innovations (bid'ah) or even as practices bordering on superstition if believed to possess intrinsic power. Conversely, within Sufi traditions and various traditional Muslim communities, such practices are understood as forms of tawassul and tabarruk—that is, employing sacred verses as intermediaries while affirming that ultimate power belongs solely to God (Knysh, 2021). Accordingly, the analytical position of this study does not presume absolute legitimacy; rather, it acknowledges the contestation of authority and the plurality of paradigms in interpreting the relationship between sacred text and symbolic media (Kersten, 2023).

The Text of Surah Al-Baqarah (2): 246:

﴿ أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الْمَلِإِ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مُوسَى إِذْ قَالُوا لِنَبِيِّ لَّهُمْ إِنْعَثْ لَنَا مَلِكًا نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَقَالَ هَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ أَلَّا تُقَاتِلُوا قَالُوا وَمَا لَنَا أَلَّا نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَدْ أُخْرِجْنَا مِنْ دِيَارِنَا وَأَبْنَائِنَا فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ تَوَلَّوْا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٤٦﴾ ﴾

This verse narrates the request of the Children of Israel to their prophet to appoint a king so that they might fight in the path of God. Within the framework of Ilmu Hikmah, the narrative of leadership, courage, and preparedness for struggle is interpreted symbolically as representing mental fortitude, steadfastness, and persuasive influence (M. Rahman & Hidayat, 2023).

Owing to these semantic associations, the verse is frequently employed in amuletic practices aimed at cultivating bravery, inner strength, and support in matters of leadership. The interpretive method underlying this tradition is semantic analogy (*munāsabah al-ma'nā*), namely, the correspondence between the thematic content of the verse and the intended practical objective (Ismail & Rahman, 2022).

However, as with the previous verse, its inscription in the form of *rajab* or *wafaq* remains subject to debate. Some scholars argue that transferring the verse from its primary context of recitation (*tilāwah*) and contemplation (*tadabbur*) into symbolic media risks displacing its normative function. In contrast, practitioners emphasize that the verse continues to be regarded as divine speech (*kalam Ilahi*), while the *rajab* constitutes merely a symbolic endeavor (*ikhtiar*) (Hefni, 2021). This contestation illustrates that the practice of *wafaq* cannot be understood ahistorically; rather, it must be situated within broader dynamics of religious authority and the construction of orthodoxy in Islam (Knysh, 2021).

Classification as *Wafak/Rajah*:

Geometric Form	<p>Both manuscripts employ a circular (<i>dā'irah</i>) format, in which the verse is arranged around a symbolic center. In Islamic esoteric cosmology, the circle symbolizes unity (<i>wahdah</i>), continuity, and protection. Accordingly, this configuration is not merely decorative but carries symbolic significance (Melvin-Koushki, 2022).</p> <p>In Ilmu Hikmah literature, this format is identified as <i>Wafaq Dā'irah</i>, understood as a medium for symbolically “binding” the meaning of the verse into a unified structure. Nevertheless, interpretations concerning “spiritual energy” within <i>rajab</i> must be approached cautiously. From the standpoint of normative theology, efficacy remains attributed exclusively to God, while the diagram functions only as a mnemonic device (<i>tadhakkur</i>) or symbolic representation of supplication (Azra, 2022).</p> <p>Thus, this study does not theologically affirm its metaphysical claims; rather, it describes and analyzes the phenomenon within a philological and religio-cultural framework (Rijal, 2024).</p>
Textual Content and Selection of Verses	<p>The verses employed in <i>wafaq</i> typically belong to what is traditionally referred to as <i>āyāt al-khawās</i>—verses believed to possess particular virtues or properties. Their selection is not arbitrary but grounded in semantic correspondence between textual meaning and the intended ritual purpose (Sahal, 2024).</p> <p>This feature distinguishes <i>wafaq</i> from conventional <i>wirid</i> practices. In</p>

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	wirid, verses or supplications are orally recited repetitively, whereas in wafaq, the text is transferred into a visual medium structured through specific geometric patterns. This transformation of medium constitutes a central point of criticism from those who argue that the primary function of Qur’anic verses is recitation and comprehension, rather than material-symbolic objectification (Kersten, 2023).
Purpose of Inscription (Azimat, Hirz, or Talisman)	The Pegon-script annotation referring to “isim” indicates that the text was intended for inscription as an object to be carried (hirz) or preserved. In local tradition, such objects are known as azimat or talismans. Sociologically, this practice reflects the localization of sacred text within the cultural matrix of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago (Azra, 2022). Theologically, however, it remains a contested domain. The principal distinction lies in intentionality and belief: whether the object is regarded as possessing autonomous power, or merely as a symbolic medium of supplication whose efficacy depends entirely upon divine will (Knysh, 2021).
Analytical Position of the Study	Taking into account the foregoing findings, the analyzed manuscript may be classified as a rajah/wafaq within the tradition of Ilmu Hikmah, rooted in classical Islamic esoteric literature. Such classification, however, does not entail uncritical normative endorsement. On the contrary, this study explicitly situates the practice of wafaq within intra-Islamic debates concerning legitimacy, orthodoxy, and the boundaries between spirituality and superstition. By acknowledging these contestations, the analysis achieves greater academic rigor, refraining from presuming universal acceptance and instead understanding the practice as part of the dynamic interplay of authority, interpretation, and tradition within Islamic intellectual history (Kersten, 2023).

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**Materiality of the Manuscript: Codicological Features and Scribal Practices**

1. Codicological Analysis (Physical Aspects of the Manuscript)

a. General Description and Manuscript Dimensions

Based on direct visual observation of the manuscript, its physical dimensions measure approximately 17 × 25 cm. These dimensions are broadly consistent with the standardized format of factory-produced notebooks that were widely circulated in the Dutch East Indies during the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. Such uniformity in size suggests that the writing medium was likely derived from industrially manufactured paper rather than traditional local materials such as *daluang*. However, this conclusion is presented cautiously as a contextual codicological inference derived from typological comparison, rather than from laboratory-verified material identification.

#### b. Script Style, Writing System, and Functional Differentiation

The manuscript demonstrates the use of two distinct script systems: Arabic Pegon and standard Arabic script. Arabic Pegon is employed for supplementary annotations or explanatory notes positioned outside the principal structural framework of the wafaq, whereas the Qur'anic verses constituting the structural core of the wafaq are written in standard Arabic script using the Naskhi calligraphic style. Naskhi is widely recognized as the most commonly used calligraphic style for copying Qur'anic texts due to its high degree of legibility and structural consistency.

This differentiation in script usage indicates the presence of functional layering within the manuscript, distinguishing between the ritual-religious core component (the Qur'anic verses forming the wafaq) and the supplementary explanatory or practical component (the Pegon annotations). The handwriting of the wafaq itself appears more structured, symmetrical, and meticulously executed, while the Pegon annotations exhibit a relatively freer yet still clearly legible character. This distinction suggests that the scribe possessed sufficient proficiency in both writing systems and understood the differing symbolic and practical functions associated with each textual layer.

#### c. Layout of the Wafaq and Indications of Symbolic Function

One of the defining features of this manuscript is the presence of a *wafaq* structure containing Qur'anic verses arranged in a circular configuration. This circular layout is not merely an aesthetic variation but carries strong symbolic significance within the Nusantara Islamic manuscript tradition, particularly in the context of the *wafaq*'s use as a medium with religious, protective, or amuletic functions. The circular arrangement reinforces the interpretation that the manuscript functioned not solely as a textual medium but also as an object endowed with symbolic and spiritual dimensions within the religious practices of the community.

#### d. Paper Characteristics and Writing Medium

Physically, the manuscript paper exhibits a yellowish-brown coloration, most likely resulting from natural oxidation over time. The paper surface appears relatively smooth and displays the presence of vertical red ruling lines, a feature commonly associated with machine-produced writing paper. These characteristics suggest that the paper is unlikely to be a traditional local product but rather an industrially manufactured material.

Visual inspection did not reveal the presence of any watermark or countermark on the paper surface. Furthermore, chain lines and laid lines were not clearly observable. The absence of these features suggests that the paper is likely machine-produced wove paper, characterized by a homogeneous fiber structure that does not consistently display the linear patterns typically found in laid paper. These

observations are based solely on direct visual examination and do not involve microscopic inspection or advanced material analysis.

e. Codicological Implications and Tentative Dating

Based on the manuscript's dimensions, the physical characteristics of the paper, the presence of red ruling lines, and the typological features associated with machine-produced paper commonly circulated during the colonial period, the manuscript may tentatively be dated to the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. However, because no watermark, countermark, or other specific codicological indicators capable of providing absolute dating were identified, this estimation should be understood as a contextual codicological inference rather than a definitive empirical verification.

Accordingly, the identification of the manuscript's production period and paper type is grounded in the correspondence between its physical characteristics and the typology of industrially manufactured paper widely known from that period, as well as the broader historical context of the use of machine-produced paper in Nusantara Islamic manuscripts during the late colonial era.

f. Ink and Writing Materials

The ink used in this manuscript is predominantly black and is applied to the main body of the text. Visually, the ink appears stable and remains clearly legible, indicating strong adhesion to the paper surface. Based on its visual characteristics, the ink was likely carbon-based—derived from soot or charcoal—and mixed with natural binding agents, as commonly employed in the Islamic manuscript tradition. Nevertheless, this identification of the ink composition is based on visual inference and has not been confirmed through chemical or material analysis.

2. Analysis of the Form and Structure of the *Wafaq*

a. Geometric Form (*Wafaq Dā'irah*)

The analysis indicates that both wafak examined in this study exhibit a circular geometric structure (*dā'irah*). Within the tradition of 'Ilm al-Hikmah, the circular form is understood as a comprehensive configuration, symbolically representing continuity, perfection, and total protection (Abdullah et al., 2025). The circle does not merely function as a visual ornament; rather, it serves as a structural principle believed to embody cosmological significance and specific spiritual functions (Mufidah & Rahman, 2023).

From an emic perspective (i.e., from the standpoint of tradition practitioners), the encircling of sacred verses is intended to concentrate spiritual efficacy at a central focal point while simultaneously constructing a metaphysical “fortress” that prevents the dispersion or fragmentation of such energy (A. Rahman, 2024). The arrangement of verses surrounding the center—referred to as the *muhīt* (outer circle)—is understood as a spiritual boundary that binds and safeguards the core force located at the center. Accordingly, the circular structure establishes a

hierarchical relationship between the center (markaz) and the periphery (muhīt), reflecting a concentric cosmology characteristic of esoteric practices (Zulkifli & Anwar, 2022).

Nevertheless, explanations regarding the superiority of the dā'irah in traditional texts tend to be normative and doctrinal in nature. The symbolic meaning of the circle is often presented as an established truth without comparative analysis vis-à-vis other geometric forms within the wafak tradition—such as the square (murabba') or polygonal configurations—which likewise possess distinct symbolic functions and legitimations (Wulandari, 2023). Therefore, from an etic standpoint (i.e., from an academic analytical perspective), a critical reading is required to differentiate between internally grounded traditional claims and scholarly interpretations of symbolic structures (Bubandt, 2022). Such an approach enables the dā'irah to be understood not as an inherently superior form, but rather as a distinctive geometric choice situated within a particular cosmological framework.

#### b. Symbols at the Center of the Circle

The central section of the circle constitutes a key element in the structure of the wafak. In both research objects, a symbol or rajah was identified at the core of the circle, often taking the form of a spiral or axis-like figure and surrounded by specific sacred inscriptions. From an emic perspective, this center is understood as representing the sirr (secret) or the spiritual essence of the associated devotional practice (Knysh, 2022). The spiral or axial configuration symbolizes the concentration and inward movement of spiritual energy, thereby reinforcing the center's position as the locus (markaz) of power (Hermansen, 2021).

The verses encircling the center function simultaneously as mechanisms of activation and protection for that core (Mufidah & Rahman, 2023). Consequently, a multilayered symbolic structure emerges: the core (sirr), the surrounding layer of sacred text serving as binder and safeguard, and the outer circle operating as a cosmological boundary. This arrangement reflects a concentric logic in which the center operates as the source of spiritual potency, while the periphery functions as a protective system (Rustom, 2020).

Nonetheless, the interpretation of the center as an “energy core” must also be situated within a critical analytical framework. Such an explanation represents an internal epistemological standpoint of the tradition, which may not necessarily correspond to academic interpretations of symbolic and talismanic diagrams (Bubandt, 2022). Therefore, this study should open space for comparison with non-circular talismanic diagrams or central symbolic motifs within other esoteric traditions to assess the extent to which concentric patterns are distinctive, universal, or contextually constructed (Saniotis, 2021). Such an approach would enrich the analysis and shift the discussion from a merely descriptive account toward a more analytical and comparative reflection.

### 3. Identification of Manuscript Components

This section comprises Arabic passages quoted verbatim from the primary source, namely the Al-Qur'an, without any alteration to the wording or syntactic structure. The text inscribed within the wafaq circle consists of excerpts from Q.S. Al-Fath: 29 and Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 246.

To verify the authenticity of these quotations, a collation process (textual comparison) was conducted against the standard rasm 'Utsmani mushaf. The comparison indicates that no discrepancies were identified in orthography (rasm), vocalization (diacritics), punctuation, verse placement, or waqf markers. Accordingly, it can be affirmed that the Qur'anic quotations in this manuscript were reproduced in full and have not undergone any textual modification.

This finding reinforces the claim that the Qur'anic elements within the wafaq manuscript have been preserved in their original form and, from a philological perspective, demonstrate complete conformity with the widely recognized standard mushaf.

### 4. The Tendency of Sufi Thought in Its Historical Context

Practical Sufism (tasawuf amali, or tarekat-oriented Sufism) during this period foregrounded a praxis-based dimension consisting of rituals, dhikr, and specific spiritual procedures aimed at drawing closer to God, which in certain contexts were also associated with the attainment of tangible or pragmatic benefits (Nisa, 2021). The wafak manuscript may be interpreted as a culminating representation of amaliyah practices within the Ilmu Hikmah tradition, where the primary emphasis lies not on speculative-philosophical explorations of metaphysical truth (haqiqa) or gnosis (ma'rifa), but rather on the application of particular operative techniques—such as the circular arrangement of Qur'anic verses—for functional purposes, including protection, authority, or courage (Fathurahman, 2020).

It is important to note, however, that the use of wafak does not represent a universal doctrinal stance across all Sufi orders; instead, it reflects a tendency found within certain currents or localized expressions of practical Sufism that developed in the Indonesian archipelago (Howell, 2022). In this regard, such practices intersect with scholarly traditions embedded in tarekat networks such as the Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah and the Syattariyyah, whose everyday devotional life at times accommodates the use of hiriz (amuletic texts) as a complement to ritual practice, although levels of acceptance and emphasis vary across communities (Sirry, 2020).

Moreover, the use of Pegon script in the marginal notes indicates a process of localizing esoteric knowledge derived from Arabic works such as Syamsul Ma'arif, subsequently adapted into the communicative context of pesantren milieus and local spiritual communities (Knysh, 2023). Accordingly, this wafak manuscript reflects a late nineteenth-century pattern of religious thought characterized by pragmatism and applicative orientation, while remaining within a framework of Islamic legitimacy, and at the same time revealing a syncretic dynamic shaped by the interaction between

practical Sufi traditions and the social needs of the surrounding society (Pranowo, 2024).

#### 5. The Relationship between Manuscript Content and the Social Context in Lampung (1880–1920)

This discussion demonstrates a strong contextual linkage between the content of *wafak*—particularly Qur’anic verses associated with authority, charisma, leadership, and courage—and the social dynamics of the colonial period. These verses may be understood as symbolic resources mobilized by local communities to respond to structural pressures and conditions of uncertainty. Nevertheless, this relationship should be positioned as an interpretive reconstruction grounded in symbolic analysis rather than a fully verified historical causal connection, given that direct evidence of practice remains limited.

##### a. Contestation between Customary and Colonial Authority (Leadership Dimension)

The social structure of Lampung society was underpinned by customary authority led by *penyimbang* and *marga* leaders, while the colonial administration sought to integrate or control these structures for bureaucratic interests (Ricklefs, 2022). Within a symbolic framework, Qur’an 2:246—narrating the leadership of Tālūt—has been interpreted as providing religious legitimation for customary figures engaged in competition or in the defense of their authority (Hidayat & Pratama, 2023). Accordingly, *wafak* may be understood as a spiritual medium culturally construed to reinforce claims to leadership (Ismail et al., 2022). However, this function should be read as a representation of belief and symbolic practice rather than as direct evidence that the verse was historically employed in every instance of power contestation (Laffan, 2021).

##### b. Issues of Safety and Protection (Authority and Protective Dimension)

The colonial context was marked by social insecurity, land disputes, and both physical and non-physical threats (Ricklefs, 2022). In such circumstances, Qur’an 48:29 was interpreted as a spiritual source for cultivating authority, charisma, and personal protection (Hidayat & Pratama, 2023). This interpretation explains why the verse became associated with notions of invulnerability or social influence within the *wafak* tradition (Ismail et al., 2022). Nonetheless, the relationship between text and protective practice remains inferential; therefore, its functional claims should be understood as the outcome of a hermeneutic reading of belief culture rather than as a definitive empirical generalization (Laffan, 2021).

##### c. The Transformation from Oral to Written Tradition

The expansion of *pesantren* networks and the mobility of scholars connected to Middle Eastern centers of learning encouraged a shift from orally transmitted incantatory practices toward the documented formulation of *‘ilm al-Hikmah* (Azra, 2021). The use of Pegon script in *wafak* manuscripts indicates a process of symbolic Islamization alongside the codification of metaphysical knowledge into a

more systematic written form (Hidayat & Pratama, 2023). This phenomenon underscores that manuscripts function not only as media for spiritual practice but also as intellectual artifacts that record epistemological transformations within local traditions (Laffan, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

This study affirms that the wafak manuscript discovered in Lampung can be classified as a wafaq dā'irah, namely a circular talismanic diagram that is structurally and symbolically rooted in the classical tradition of 'Ilm al-Hikmah, particularly as articulated in Shams al-Ma'ārif al-Kubrā by Ahmad al-Buni and Khawzinat al-Asrār by Muhammad Haqqi al-Nazili. Through codicological, philological, and hermeneutical analysis, the circular geometric structure (dā'irah)—which centers upon Q. 48:29 (al-Fath) and Q. 2:246 (al-Baqarah)—reveals a transformation of Qur'ānic text from the medium of tilāwah (recitation) into a visual-symbolic medium functioning as a hirz or talisman. Accordingly, the manuscript does not merely reproduce Qur'ānic verses; rather, it reconstructs the relationship between sacred text, cosmological symbolism, and the social needs of the community.

Furthermore, these findings clarify that wafak should not be understood solely as a magical artifact or as a residue of syncretism. Instead, it constitutes a socio-religious artifact situated within an ongoing negotiation of authority between normative orthodoxy and esoteric practice. In the context of Islamization in Lampung during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the use of Arabic Pegon script and colonial-era paper demonstrates an adaptive and contextual process of localizing Islamic knowledge. Therefore, this study proposes a conceptual clarification: what is often labeled “syncretism” in the study of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago is more accurately understood as a process of vernacularization of Islamic esotericism—that is, the translation of Islamic cosmology and symbolism into local cultural horizons without relinquishing the theological framework of tawhīd. Within this formulation, the present study contributes to broader debates on Islamization, Islamic esotericism, and manuscript studies by positioning wafak as a point of convergence between text, practice, and the construction of religious authority.

Nevertheless, this research is subject to several limitations. The analysis focuses on a single type of wafak manuscript containing two principal Qur'ānic verses, thereby precluding a comprehensive comparison with other wafak variants in Lampung or elsewhere in the Indonesian archipelago. The codicological identification remains inferential, as it is not supported by laboratory-based analysis of the paper, ink, or potential watermarks for absolute dating. Moreover, the hermeneutical approach employed emphasizes textual and symbolic meanings; consequently, the performative dimension—namely, the concrete ritual practices and lived religious experiences of wafak users—has not yet been explored ethnographically.

Future research is therefore encouraged to adopt an interdisciplinary framework integrating philology, anthropology of religion, intellectual history, and digital humanities in order to map the transmission networks of 'Ilm al-Hikmah from intellectual centers in Java and Palembang to Lampung. Laboratory-based material analysis is likewise necessary to strengthen the manuscript's chronological and typological data. Furthermore, comparative studies of wafak manuscripts from diverse regions would help determine whether the dā'irah form represents a dominant pattern or merely one variant within a broader symbolic cosmology. Through such expansions, the wafak tradition may be more firmly situated within the corpus of Indonesian Islamic manuscript studies as an intellectual and spiritual heritage reflecting the dynamic interplay between sacred text, esoteric practice, and the construction of local Islamic identity.

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