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## **AGAINST THE REFORMISTS: A STUDY OF THE SUNDANESE TAFSIR *MALJA' AT-THALIBIN* BY HAJI AHMAD SANUSI**

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**Abstract:** *The background of this research is that tafsir has patterns and characteristics whose development can be influenced by the text, context, and interpretation of the interpreter from time to time. *Malja' at-Thalibin*, a Sundanese tafsir by Ahmad Sanusi, is interesting to study because it was born in the socio-religious context of the Priangan region. The purpose of this research is to explore Ahmad Sanusi's response to interpreting the Qur'an as resistance to the reformist lawsuit in which this group moves on the factor of wanting a return to the Qur'an and Sunnah, which is used as a starting point in assessing the truth in religion and community culture. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method sourced from literature studies with a content analysis approach. The depth of knowledge and insight possessed by the author shows its own satisfaction in dealing with community problems through the interpretation of the Qur'an, in addition to the combination of culture, society, and language that is able to give birth to a high-value work of interpretation and influence its readers. In addition, this tafsir also illustrates the attitude of the ulama in the context of resistance to the reformists.*

**Keywords:** *Sundanese Tafsir; *Malja' at-Thalibin*; Ahmad Sanusi; Reformist.*

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia as a Muslim-majority country and even the largest Muslim population in the world has a long history in the development of tafsir from time to time. In exploring the religious and cultural life of the archipelago, it is certainly inseparable from the process of vernacularization of Islam as an effort to translate from the Arabic source (al-Qur'an) which is then written, translated and understood in the local language and script. Therefore, tafsir in the archipelago initially appeared in various local languages such as Sundanese and Javanese (Gusmian, 2021). This was in accordance with the level of needs of the community at that time, which did not yet have a national language as it is now.

At the beginning of the period before independence, Indonesia experienced a difficult period in various conditions due to the Japanese colonial period, which was previously also by the Dutch for approximately three and a half centuries. This condition affected the psychological condition of the community, including affecting the treasures of tafsir in Indonesia. Not to mention, the internal problems faced by the community were further exacerbated by colonial activities. Therefore, from several figures, a nationalist movement emerged that sought to encourage detachment from the colonial nation by instilling an anti-colonialism attitude and efforts to achieve independence (Rachman, 2018).

Especially in the Priangan region, the writing of Islamic texts, especially tafsir, began to be found in the early 20th century (Gusmian, 2021). One of them is Ahmad Sanusi, a scholar who is productive in producing works, of which Rohmana mentions that there are around 125 titles of works, including 101 written in Sundanese and 24 titles in Indonesian. Ahmad Sanusi's works cover various religious fields, such as the sciences of Arabic, tafsir, tawhid, fiqh and tasawwuf (Rohmana, 2014). Among his tafsir works is the book of *Malja' al-Thalibin*, a tafsir book written in Sundanese pegon script (Yuliani, 2020). This work of interpretation was written in the 1930s when it was still in the colonial era.

The conditions in which the colonial nation still existed at that time turned out to have influenced the development of the pesantren scientific tradition. At that time, Ahmad Sanusi was not only involved in the development of pesantren traditions but also in community problems, especially in the religious field. The reformist group came to the surface with its desire to purify Islamic teachings (Ihsan & Syam, 2022) who tried to take over the application of sharia law by eliminating religious traditions that were traditional and had been running for generations. Sanusi tried to re-explore the sources of Islamic teachings and displayed them in his work for the general public in the face of the reformists' lawsuit. Sanusi is known as a figure who tends to be traditionalist in understanding religious law, but is also critical in making decisions (*ijtihad*) in interpreting the Qur'an, so there is nothing wrong if some people call him a progressive traditionalist scholar (Rohmana, 2017).

Research on tafsir Nusantara has been conducted by various academics and researchers, especially those who examine the development of tafsir in a local and historical context. Gusmian and Rohmana's research highlights the early development of tafsir in the archipelago and the contribution of figures such as Ahmad Sanusi in writing local tafsir. Gusmian explains the various local languages used in tafsir (Gusmian, 2021), while Rohmana focuses on Sanusi's works and his contributions in various religious fields (Rohmana, 2014). Those who discuss *Malja' al-Thalibin*, for example, Yuliani analyzes *Malja' al-Thalibin* in the context of pesantren tradition (Yuliani, 2020). Rohmana also analyzed the religious polemics in the tafsir (Rohmana, 2017). Research that examines the reformist movement, for example, was conducted by Muhammad Ihsan and Nur Syam (Ihsan & Syam, 2022) and Azyumardi Azra (Azra, 2004). A more in-depth study of Ahmad Sanusi's

response to the reformists in the socio-political context of the colonial period, especially through the tafsir *Malja' al-Thalibin*, has not been widely explored. This research tries to fill the gap by exploring how Sanusi used his tafsir as a tool of resistance against the reformist movement and how this reflected the religious and political dynamics of the time. The gap in this research lies in the lack of an in-depth study of the role of *Malja' al-Thalibin's* tafsir as a response to the reformist challenge. Most previous studies have focused more on the historical and philological aspects of Sanusi's works, but less on exploring the socio-political dimensions and the role of this tafsir in maintaining religious traditions amidst the onslaught of reform ideas.

This article explores Ahmad Sanusi's response in interpreting the Qur'an as a resistance to the reformist lawsuit in which this group moves on the factor of wanting a return to the Qur'an and Sunnah which is used as a starting point in assessing a truth in religion and community culture. The object of study is tafsir *Malja' at-Thalibin*, which is a Sundanese-language tafsir considered to play the role of transforming traditional Islamic values that maintain the Aswaja ideology of the pesantren style. This research has important significance in understanding the role of tafsir as a tool of ideological and political resistance in Indonesia. By exploring the *Malja' al-Thalibin* tafsir, this research provides new insights into how traditionalist scholars such as Ahmad Sanusi faced the challenges of the reformists and contributed to maintaining religious traditions. The benefits of this research are expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the religious dynamics in Indonesia during the colonial period and enrich the study of Nusantara tafsir and the intellectual history of Islam in Indonesia.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This article uses descriptive qualitative research with a critical discourse analysis approach. The data used comes from primary data in the form of tafsir *Malja' al-Thalibin* supplemented by secondary sources in the form of books and online media. The data obtained is described to show the meaning of critical discourse to understand the intentions of the author of the tafsir. The analysis process goes through three stages: data presentation, description, and interpretation (Eriyanto, 2015). Re-presentation of data is done by showing patterns and trends of data related to the views of scholars. The data obtained is described to show the meaning and intention of the interpreter of the verse. Meanwhile, the interpretation stage is carried out to show a re-reading of the Qur'anic verse and explore the contextual motives of interpretation.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Ahmad Sanusi's Intellectual Map

Ahmad Sanusi was born in the village of Cantayam Sukabumi on 3 Muharram 1306 Hijri/ September 18, 1888. His knowledge was based on religious education that came from a religious family environment. His knowledge originated from his father, H. Abdurrohim, an *ajengan* from Cintayan who came from Sukapura, Tasikmalaya (Suryana, 2022). It is said that H. Abdurrohim is the son of H. Yasin who is still related to Sheikh Abdul Muhyi, the spreader of Islam in the South Tasikmalaya area which is centered in Pamijahan. He also received religious knowledge from a number of pesantren both in Sukabumi and outside Sukabumi. From several pesantren that he had entered, Sanusi studied various sciences, namely tafsir, hadith, fiqh, ushul fiqh, balaghah and Sufism. (Kusdiana, 2013). Sanusi studied with K. H. Muhammad Anwar from Pesantren Selajambe

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(Cisaat), K. H. Muhammad Siddiq from Pesantren Sukamantri (Cisaat), and K. H. Jaenal Arif from Pesantren Sukaraja. All of them came from the Sukabumi area.

Ahmad Sanusi also studied to deepen his religious knowledge in several pesantren outside Sukabumi including the Kudang Tasikmalaya Pesantren, Garut and Cianjur. In Garut, Sanusi studied with K. H. Nahrowi from Pesantren Kereseck who was rumored to have studied with Kiai Kholil Bangkalan and Mama Kudang Tasikmalaya (Kusdiana, 2013). Sanusi also traveled to study with Mama Kudang in Tasikmalaya, also known as *Ajengan* K. H. Suja'i. Mama Kudang is very famous in the Priangan area for giving birth to many kiai or *ajengan*. Including her students such as *Ajengan Sobandi* (Cilenga Islamic Boarding School) Kiai Mubarak or known as Abah Sepuh (Suryalaya Islamic Boarding School). Mama Kudang is rumored to have studied with Kiai Sobari from Ciwedus Kuningan. Mama Kudang herself is 125 years old and was a member of the constituent assembly. Currently, Mama Kudang's pesantren is gone, the only thing that exists is Mama Kudang's grave in Bojong Kaum, Tasikmalaya (Yahya, 2006).

Looking at his scientific genealogy, Ahmad Sanusi can be said to have a strong network with Nusantara pesantren scholars who cannot be separated from the central influence of the *ajengan*, namely Kiai Kholil Bangkalan (1834-1925) who is connected to Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani (1815-179), who is known as an outstanding Jawi scholar and is known as Sayyid Ulama Hijaz (Israeli & Johns, 1984). Some of the kiai who are mentioned as teachers include KH. Nahrowi from the Kereseck Garut pesantren, Kiai Sobari Guru Mama Kudang, Kiai Mubarak or Abah Sepuh from the Suryalaya pesantren who was a student of Mama Kudang Tasikmalaya and had also studied with Sheikh Kholil Bangkalan.

The tradition of *ngetan* or *mesantren* to Java as this term is mentioned by C. Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936) is a tradition that connects pesantren in Java and Madura (Wardhani, 2023). This tradition has become an option to study in pesantren until today, especially in Priangan. Likewise, the pesantren in the Priangan area where Sanusi studied are also inseparable from the network of other pesantren in Java in strengthening the intellectual tradition of pesantren in the archipelago.

Ahmad Sanusi also had connections with Islamic intellectual networks, especially when he went to Mecca for about five years (1909-1914) and studied with a number of scholars of the Shafi'i school, including Shaykh Muhammad Junaedi, Shaykh Mukhtar Atarid Al-Buguri (Garut), Shalih Muhammad Bafadhil, Sa'id Jamani, Abdullah Zawawi (Suryana, 2022), Shaykh Muhammad Mahfudz at-Tirmisi (Umar, 2001). As Azra emphasized how the relationship between the Nusantara scholars in the intellectual network began with the scholars in Haramain (Fawaidah, 2023). Here, it can be seen that Sanusi is inseparable from the world of pesantren which is connected to Islamic intellectual networks both in the archipelago and in Haramain. Thus, Sanusi's intellectual background shaped his personality as an *ajengan* who mastered various fields of Islamic science and enabled him to face a number of growing religious problems.

### **About Tafsir Malja' At-Thalibin**

The authorship activity carried out by Ahmad Sanusi was not only used as an activity that was inseparable from the elements of the pesantren, but also as an answer to religious problems that occurred in the social environment of the community which was considered incompatible with what he believed. In his condition as a Dutch colonial prisoner in Batavia because he was accused of being involved in the Afdeeling B case (1919), the KH. Asnawi Menes Banten resistance case (1926) and the sabotage of the telephone wire in

Sukabumi (1927), Sanusi remained productive in writing a scientific paper as evidenced by his writing several Sundanese interpretations including *Tafsir Malja' at-Thalibin*.

This interpretation is written in pegon script with a form that resembles the form of the description of al-Jalalain's interpretation. This interpretation is titled *Malja' at-Thalibin fi Tafsir Kalam Rabb al-'Alamin* or *Panyalindungan Santri-Santri dina Tafsir Kalamna Rabb al-'Alamin*. This pioneer in writing tafsir was not Sanusi's first result because previously he had written a tafsir entitled *Rawdat al'Irfan* in 1912 which was both written in Sundanese pegon script (Yuliani, 2020).

*Tafsir Malja' at-Thalibin* is a work that was written and published and spread around Priangan, Batavia, Banten and Purwakarta. There were 28 volumes published, 20 of which were published in Batavia and the rest in Sukabumi. In each volume, there is a prayer request for a deceased customer and an explanation of a number of corrections. In this tafsir, it is mentioned in the opening of the first volume that this tafsir is sourced from the mu'tamad tafsirs (Sanusi, 1931a). He did not explain further about it, but it can be seen from the description of the tafsir, he took references from tafsir *Ma'alim Tanzil* by al-Baghawi (d. 464 AH/1071 AD), *Tafsir Kabir Mafatih al-Ghayb* by Fakhrudin al-Razi (d. 603 AH/1206 AD), tafsir *al-Kasyf wa al-Bayan* by al-Sa'labi, tafsir *al-Burhan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an* by al-Zarkasyi and others. In tafsir *Malja' at-Thalibin* it is also explained about the Qur'an and the surah it will discuss such as matters relating to the imam qira'at, the number of surahs, verses, letters, and the history of the collection of the Qur'an. Furthermore, Sanusi also explained the theological aspects of the Qur'an. He said that the Qur'an is qadim not a creature (Sanusi, 1931a).

The methodology used by Sanusi in tafsir *Malja' at-Thalibin* can be said to be the tahlili (analytical) method with a *bi al-ma'tsur* approach. (Kuswandi & Maskur, 2022). In his interpretation, Sanusi provides an explanation of what the meaning of the verse he is discussing is based on various narrations (*ma'tsur*) *asbab al-Nuzul*, hadith, Israiliyat, companions of the tabi'in or classical interpretation scholars. Tafsir *Malja' at-Thalibin* tends to present the style of tafsir *al-Jalalain* by Jalaludin as-Suyuti and Jalaludin al-Mahali, which is a model of mufradat interpretation done by word by putting brackets on the word being interpreted (Sanusi, 1931b). In some places, Sanusi did not hinder his interpretation with the socio-religious background of his time, including in some parts, he seemed critical of the colonials and the rulers about the fate of his people.

As a traditionalist cleric, in the tafsir *Malja' at-Thalibin*, Sanusi clearly adheres to the teachings of Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah both in fiqh, theology and a little about Sufism. This is repeatedly mentioned in several madhhabs in explaining his tafsir. In the field of fiqh, it tends to be the Syafi'iyah madhhab, for example on the issue of the invalidation of wudhu due to touching (Sanusi, 1931h). In the field of theology, it tends to Asy'ari (Sunni) theology such as Sanusi's refutation of the Mu'tazilah, Murjiah, Khawarij school of kalam about seeing God in the afterlife (Sanusi, 1931g). Sufism also appears in Sanusi's explanation of the science of shari'a, tariqah and ma'rifat (Sanusi, 1931e).

### Interpretation and Socio-Cultural Context

Tafsir is not born from an empty space but is born from a diverse socio-cultural space. Since the time of Abd ar-Rauf as-Sinkili (1615-1693) in the 17th century to the time of M. Quraish Shihab in the early 21st century, interpreters from various backgrounds have played diverse social roles, such as as government advisors (mufti), teachers, or kiai in pesantren, surau or madrassas (Gusmian, 2021). One of the tafsir discussed here is tafsir *Malja' at-Thalibin* by Ahmad Sanusi, which is a tafsir that comes out of the social base of

pesantren outside the palace. However, it does not discourage the use of local language as an introductory medium in its interpretation. Tafsir *Malja' at-Thalibin* was created as a result of interaction between elements of the pesantren and products of the Sundanese socio-cultural environment. In addition, the language needs in Tafsir *Malja' at-Thalibin* using Sundanese local language consider the needs of readers or users of the interpretation, which at the same time shows the movement of Islamic propaganda that can enter the pesantren space and also the space of inland Sundanese society (Yuliani, 2020).

Because *Malja' at-Thalibin's* tafsir is in Sundanese, Sanusi's view in his tafsir is a functional relationship between culture, society and language. The relationship between the three elements is so close that it is possible to talk about culture and society by involving the language used by that society. Thus, the tafsir of *Malja' at-Thalibin* can be seen as a cultural activity of Sundanese society which is a convention of Sundanese culture and language. In other words, tafsir *Malja' at-Thalibin* is the result of cultural activities or also as a result of the literary activities of Sundanese society.

Tafsir in Sundanese actually does not only come from the work of Ahmad Sanusi. Many other Sundanese scholars also created several interpretations such as the interpretation entitled "*al-Furqan Basa Sunda translation*" of A. Hassan published by Taman Poestaka Persatoean Islam as many as 3 volumes, interpretation of the *Holy Verses Lenyepaneun* (1984) by Moh. E. Hasyim, and interpretation of *Nurul Bajan* by H. Mhd. Romli and H.N.S Midjaja. Of the several tafsir mentioned earlier, only Ahmad Sanusi's tafsir has a work using *pegon* Arabic letters. It can be ascertained that scholars who use *pegon* Arabic letters are great scholars who grew up from the pesantren.

The culture of pesantren is very influential in its concentration on maintaining local traditions and cultures that are acculturated into Sunni or Aswaja Islamic teachings. Religious studies continue to be developed through the yellow book which is called *tafaqub fi al-din* (deepening religion). That is why Abdurrahman Wahid said that pesantren is called a separate subculture because it has its own characteristics when compared to life outside pesantren (Riady & Wardi, 2021). Pesantren is able to become an institution that spearheads the flow of social change in society while maintaining the integrity of Islamic teaching values (Ismail, 2017). It can be said that this pesantren is one of the answers to the question of why the victory of Islam in Java in particular is so perfect.

Ahmad Sanusi's Tafsir Sunda has at least recorded all traces of traditional Islamic ideology or Aswaja. The interpretation strongly shows the traditional Islamic background of this pesantren. In this case, Sanusi became the connector of the pesantren's cultural tradition which was realized in the intellectual tradition in the form of Sundanese interpretation. Tafsir by Ahmad Sanusi such as *Malja' at-Thalibin* was written which was then used as a part that connects the interests of traditional pesantren Islam with the interests of the religious intellectual needs of the lay community. In interpreting certain verses, these traditional Islamic interests often appear. For example, in interpreting issues of fiqh, theology and Sufism. In matters of fiqh, for example, the interests of Aswaja ideology appear when Sanusi interprets QS. Al-Fatihah 1-7:

*(Hukumna Maca Fatihah) Ceuk mazhab Syafi'i, Maliki, Ahmad Hambali, jeung jumbuh ulama wajib maca fatihah dina shalat henteu bisa cukup ku anu sejen. Hujabna kabiji, riwayat Bukhari Muslim tina hadits 'Ubadah bin Shamit... Kadua, hadits Abu Hurairah... Ari dalilna wajib maca fatihah dina unggal-unggal raka'at: kabiji...dst. Ceuk mazhab Hanafi, henteu tangtu fatihah anu wajib ka anu shalat balik anu wajib the maca ayat al-Qur'an ayat mana bae. Hujabna ayat faqra-u ma tayassara min al-Qur'an.... (Sanusi, 1931a)*

From the quote above, it is clear that Sanusi reinforces the standard set by the Aswaja school of thought by quoting the opinions of the four schools of thought. According to him, reading al-Fatihah in prayer is obligatory as has been determined by the opinions of the Shafi'i, Maliki, Hambali and the majority of scholars. This obligation to recite al-Fatihah cannot be replaced by reciting other surahs. Even in the interpretation of *Malja' at-Thalibin*, Sanusi explained several arguments to strengthen his opinion, namely in the form of hadiths regarding the obligation to read al-Fatihah in prayer. Sanusi mentions the hadith of the Prophet SAW narrated from Abu Hurairah which *he* interpreted, "*Saba anu shalat beunteu maca fatihah dina eta shalat mangka eta shalatna beunteu sampurna.*" As for the hadith regarding the obligation to recite surah al-Fatihah in every raka'at of prayer, Sanusi mentioned a hadith narrated by Imam Ahmad, Abu Dawud, and Ibn Ahmad in which he said, "*mangka kudu recite ku maneh fatihah jeung kudu pigawe ku maneh eta diunggal-unggal reka'at.*" and also the hadith narrated by Imam Bukhari that the Prophet always recited in every raka'at of prayer on surah al-Fatihah, as well as the hadith narrated by Ibn Majjah that there is no prayer for those who do not recite surah al-Fatihah in every raka'at of prayer (Sanusi, 1931a).

These hadiths clearly indicate the obligation to recite al-Fatihah in every rak'ah of prayer whether one is the imam or the congregation, whether it is done loudly or slowly. However, there is a rule that if the imam reads al-Fatihah out loud, then the congregation is obliged to be silent and listen, but when the imam has finished reading it, the congregation is obliged to start reading al-Fatihah but read it with no loudness. According to him, only the Hanafi school says that reciting al-Fatihah in prayer may be replaced with another surah or verse (Sanusi, 1931a). This interpretation makes it quite clear that Ahmad Sanusi shows his alignment and support for Aswaja, which is considered a representation of traditional Islam in pesantren.

### **Tafsir as Resistance to the Reformers**

Tafsir *Malja' at-Thalibin* is one of Ahmad Sanusi's works that serves as a means of defense against traditionalist ideology. A group of reformists of his time began to dare to give contradictory directions to the traditionalists. They wanted a return to the Qur'an and Sunnah as the starting point in assessing religious truth and community culture. These Islamic reformers openly and sharply criticized the understanding of traditionalist Islamic ideology and various religious practices that had been institutionalized by the scholars in society (Mulyaden, 2021). This group is inseparable from the influence of the understanding of the Islamic modernism movement in Egypt in the early 20th century. Likewise, Indonesian Islam was also influenced by Islamic modernism promoted by Jamaludin al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh. This influence can be seen in the emergence of the establishment of modernist mass organizations such as Muhammadiyah (1912), al-Irsyad (1913) and Persis (1920s) (Sirry, 2019).

It is no different from what happened in the Priangan area, scholars who are members of the Majelis Ahlus Sunnah Cilame (MASC) and the Islamic Union (PERSIS) who massively fight various traditional Islamic traditions. Sanusi mentioned that there were at least fifteen MASC scholars, including Ajengan Anwar Sanusi from Pesantren Biru Tarogong, KH Yusuf Taujiri from Pesantren Cipari, KH Muhammad Ba'li or H Muhammad Zakaria from Pesantren Cilame, KH Muhammad Romli from Pesantren Haurkoneng and others. As for the clerics of PERSIS, he mentioned A. Hassan as the most aggressive cleric who considered deviating from the traditionalists (Rohmana, 2017). Thus Sanusi's ideological resistance led to the reformist thinking of these groups.

As mentioned earlier, the tradition of tafsir in the Sundanese region is inseparable from the intersection of the interpreter's thoughts with the social and religious background that

surrounds him. After studying the interpretation of *Malja' at-Thalibin*, at least there are several views of Sanusi in responding to a number of reformist criticisms, especially the issue of khilafiyah fiqh. In addition to being a Sundanese-language work as a medium for da'wah, it turns out that Sanusi's critical attitude also shows a strong influence on social religious issues that occur. The following are some of Sanusi's responses in tafsir *Malja' at-Thalibin*:

#### 1. Practice of Tawasul

The word tawassul is the Arabic word *tawassul* which comes from the *mashdar* form (abstract noun) of the *fi'il form (verb)* namely *tawassala-yatawassalu-tawassulan*, and has the same etymology as the word *wasilah*, which means way. The path in question here is to be used as an intermediary to get closer to another. Tawasul is closely related to the ritual of reciting prayers that are usually done during pilgrimage or nyekar (Jamhari, 2014). It usually mentions the name of a figure who is considered an intermediary (*wasilah*) when offering prayers to God as well as giving prayer offerings to get blessings (*tabaruk*). The practice of tawasul has generally been widely practiced by traditionalist scholars, especially Nahdlatul Ulama (NU).

In the Qur'an itself the word *wasilah* is mentioned twice, namely in QS al-Ma'idah verse 35 and QS. Al-Isra' verse 57 which is interpreted by most interpreters as good deeds, roads, or means that a person uses in order to get closer to Allah SWT. The pious deeds in question are by multiplying worship, doing good and upholding noble morals. For example, Ibn Katsir interprets *wasilah* as something that can lead to a certain goal. While in the interpretation of *Futubat al-Ilahiyah* it is stated that *wasilah* is something that brings closer to Allah by performing an act of worship. Thus, if the obedience in question is carried out seriously, the goal of obtaining happiness in the world hereafter will be easy to obtain (Asmaran, 2018).

The phenomenon of tawasul often appears in people's religious life. This phenomenon can be seen in the activities of some people with a pilgrimage tradition, namely visiting a tomb that considers someone who is buried to be a saint who has karamah. They visit the tomb and recite tawasul to him with various expected goals such as wealth, position, soul mate, and others. Seeing this phenomenon, the question arises whether the tawasul is in accordance with what is mentioned in the verse of the Qur'an? Of course, this question has been answered with various arguments and texts that justify it provided that it does not violate the main basis of the tawasul, which aims to get closer to Allah SWT.

This view of tawasul is very different from the reformists. They assume that there is no textual evidence that recommends tawasul (Mujibudin, 2022). The tawasul referred to by them and considered permissible to do based on the Qur'an and Sunnah is limited to the names of Allah and His attributes, through righteous deeds, and asking for help from pious people who are still alive to pray for them. Tawasul, which is done by paying homage to the tombs of prophets and saints or righteous people, is considered an act of kufr and shirk. Their reasoning is that this is equated with asking for help from the dead and this action was only done by the people of the jahiliyah period (Rohmana, 2017).

In QS. al-Fatihah verse 5, Sanusi mentions in tafsir *Malja' at-Thalibin*:

.... Jadi salah kacida jeung terang-terangan kasasarna firqoh anu nyebutkeun musyrik ka jalma anu ta'zim tabaruk kana kubur-kubur ambiya sholihin, nyebutkeun pajar eta the sarua reujeung ta'zimna tabarukna 'ubad al-ashnam kana



*berhalana. Kabiji, eta 'ubad al-ashnam nyebutna oge pangeran kana ashnamna. Kadua, ngaku manehana heunteu kawasa ibadah ka Allah ngan ukur kawasa ibadah ka ashnam. Katilu, maranehanana sok sujud kana ashnam. Kaopat, anu parempeuncitan sok ngalawan ngaran ashnam. Tab eta tingkah benteu aya dina muslimin anu sok tabarok sok tawasul ka anbiya sholihin (Sanusi, 1931a).*

In his tafsir, Sanusi clearly refutes the accusations of the reformists. Sanusi clearly mentions the *firqoh* or group that considers tabaruk on the graves of prophets and scholars as an act of shirk and prohibits doing so. A. Hassan, the founder and teacher of PERSIS for example, gave his opinion on why tawasul by way of tabaruk was prohibited, he said: *If it is permissible for a person to ask Allah through another person because of his blessing, then it is permissible to supplicate to the Ka'bah or any other object because it has a blessing. How is this different from the way the people of the jabiliyyah prayed? Who believed in the blessings of idols (Hassan, 2007).*

The reformist group thinks that the meaning of tawasul is equated with that of the people of ignorance who worship idols or the like so that they consider it an act of kufr and even polytheism. This explanation is refuted by Sanusi who understands tawasul as in the previous explanation in the interpretation of QS. Al-Fatihah verse 5 above. In his interpretation, Sanusi says:

*Tegesna heunteu menta tulung abdi kaliyan gusti, karna anu sejen eta heunteu bisa nulungan anging kalawan pertolongan gusti kana eta pertolongan... eta isti'anah ala sabil al-baqiqat, barang isti'anah 'ala sabil al-idhafah eta sok menta kaliyan Allah saperti panginda Allah ngahikayah raja Dzulkarnain: Fa-a'inuni biqunwah, ..... jeung ayat, wa ta'awanu a'lal birri wattaqwa... karena satiba diparentah silih tulungan tangtu meunang menta tulung. Jadi teurang salahna firqah anu ngufurkeun kanu tawasul tasyaffu' ka anbiya sholihin kalawan ieu ayat (Sanusi, 1931a).*

It can be understood that Sanusi understands tawasul with a broader understanding, namely by distinguishing between the meaning of *isti'anah* and the meaning of *idhafah*. Understanding tawasul with the meaning of *isti'anah* means that the practice of tawasul is intended to ask for help only from Allah or what is called the ultimate meaning (directly to Allah). Meanwhile, tawasul with *idhafah* meaning can be done by asking for help by relying on something other than Allah (Rohmana, 2017; Sanusi, 1931a). Sanusi points out these two meanings so that the understanding of tawasul is not only to ask for help from other than Allah, but the purpose of tawasul is to get closer to Allah (the ultimate meaning) by relying on something other than Allah.

In another verse in QS. al-Baqarah verse 125 Sanusi also uses this verse as a rebuttal to the views of the reformists with arguments regarding the commandment of tawasul and tabaruk at the tombs of the prophets such as prayers performed close to Ibrahim's maqam:

*(wattakbiizu) (min maqami ibrahima) (mushalla) kudu nyieun pashalatan sakabeh jalma anu entas thawaf disunahkeun shalat dina deukeut eta batu dua rakaat, benteu aya liyan gusti Allah marentah shalat di dinya salain marentah tabaruk kana atsar-atsarna shalihin, sabab aya tapakna kakasih Allah, tab urang ngadua di dinya deukeut kana dijabahna, jadi kanyaboan salahna firqah anu ngufurkeun ka jalma anu tabaruk tawasul kalawan anbiya jeung auliya, majarkeun heunteu beda reujeung tawasulna kuffar kana ashnam anu matak yakin salahna eta firqah karna maranehanana moal nyaruakeun tawasulna muslimin kalawan anbiya auliya kana tawasulna kuffar kalawan ashnam. Anging saba'da ngungkap kana saruana anbiya*

*auliya reujeung ashnam na'uzu billa tsumma na'uzu billah. Padahal mah geuning hiji batu lantaran aya tapakna Nabi eta diparentah ku Gusti Allah dialap berkah sakira-kira diparentah shalat tukangeunana (Sanusi, 1931b).*

This argument is also reinforced in his interpretation of another verse in QS. al-Maidah verse 35. Sanusi said: "*tab ieu ayat marentah kana kudu neangan wasilah nyaeta neangan perantaraan ka parek ka Gustu Allah, ari neangan wasilah eta disebut tina basa Arab tawasul. Jadi eta tawasul eta diparentah ku syara.*" This verse may be different by the reformists as in the tafsir *al-Jalalain* the meaning of wasilah is *maa yuqarribukum ilaihi min tha'atib* (an obedience that can bring closer to Allah). While the position of obedience in this case is made as worship. So, tawasul performed to other than Allah is equated with worship to other than Allah and it is an act of shirk. For Sanusi, this kind of opinion is considered unable to understand the difference between tawasul and worship. According to him, tawasul that contains shirk is when tawasul is used as worship and considers God as a medium (Sanusi, 1931d).

Sanusi's opinion on tawasul and tabarak at the tombs of prophets, saints and pious people is part of an exotic and phenomenal phenomenon that occurs in traditionalist Muslim societies. This phenomenon can be seen in various sacred tombs scattered in various regions in Java. Dudung Abdurrahman argues that one of the reformist figures, Ahmad Hassan, tends to interpret it narrowly by accusing kufr and polytheism in the practice of tawasul, which is not as bad as alleged (Lathifah et al., 2019). Sanusi's choice of a broad and open meaning makes tawasul permissible and even part of the practice of Islamic tradition in general in Sundanese. Sanusi shows different interpretative views on tawasul as if he does not want something that has taken root and has been reinforced by the arguments and applicable texts to be revoked and lost due to referring to views that are considered erroneous.

If traced further, Sanusi's opinion relies heavily on a hadith narrated by Tirmidhi, that the Prophet said: "If you ask, then ask Allah, and if you ask for help, then ask Allah for help." However, traditionalist scholars understand that this does not negate the practice of tawasul, as tawasul is invoking Allah through the proximity of prophets and pious people to Allah. In addition, there is another hadith narrated by Ahmad and Al-Baihaqi, in which a blind companion came to the Prophet and asked to be prayed for to be cured, then the Prophet taught him the supplication of tawasul: "O Allah, I invoke You and approach You through the intercession of Your Prophet Muhammad, the prophet of mercy, O Muhammad, I approach my Lord through your *intercession so that my wish may be granted. O Allah, grant me his intercession.*" This hadith shows that tawasul with the Prophet Muhammad is permissible, and therefore, traditionalist scholars also allow tawasul with pious people who are close to Allah (Karnedi, 2022).

## 2. Recitation of Dhikr After Prayer

*Zikr* is a person's effort in *taqarrub* or getting closer to Allah SWT by mentioning His names and attributes to remember His majesty. Usually realized by mentioning His asma, reading His words and praying to Him. The continuous mention or remembrance of Allah will familiarize one's heart to feel close to Allah, as a result it will indirectly foster a deep sense of love and longing for Allah SWT. *Zikr* can be done anytime and anywhere, especially after completing the obligatory prayers.

There are two kinds of dhikr or remembrance of Allah, first, *zikr bi al-lisan*, which is saying certain chants that can move the heart in remembering Allah. This remembrance can be done at certain moments and places. Second, *zikr bi al-qalb*, which is the

guardianship of the heart to always remember Allah. This remembrance can be done without being limited by time and space (Dedi, 2022). However, to achieve perfection in dhikr requires the ability to dhikr with the tongue as well as with the heart (Muvid, 2020). Especially as a layperson who is still very weak in dhikr in earnest, it is very necessary to have both types of dhikr so that the heart can be directed through dhikr with the tongue.

In relation to the remembrance after prayer, as traditionalist Muslims have become accustomed to, this is done together with a loud voice. The imam in this case becomes the leader in the dhikr, so will invite his congregation to follow the recitation of dhikr read by the imam. It is also in some groups that are seen as reformists who consider this kind of dhikr to violate the rules set in religion, which then Ahmad Sanusi commented in his tafsir in QS. Al-Nisa verse 103 says:

*(Faiḏa qada'itum) mangka satiba-tiba geus anggeus maraneh kabeh (al-shalat) tina shalat (faḏkuru) mangka kudu zikir maraneh kabeh (Allah) ka Allah kalawan taḥlil, tasbih, takbir puji shalawat istiḡfar (qiyaman) bari nangtung (wa qu'ndan) jeung kalawan bari diuk (wa 'ala junubikum) jeung kalawan ngedeng maraneh kabeh jeung kalawan tingkah kumaha bae, arek berjamaah atawa sorangan-sorangan. Jeung kade katipu ku kasasaranana mujtahid-mujtahid cap 1350 anu ngamusyrikeun ka jalma-jalma anu berjamaah wiridan sanggeus shalat kalawan dibedakeun sowarana, sebab eta mazhab yakin mazhab iblis, mazhab buda, mazhab pajajaran (Sanusi, 1931c).*

In the statement above, Sanusi explicitly attacked the reformists who considered the traditional practice of Muslim remembrance by reading wirid (recitation of remembrance) loudly together and led by the imam after prayer as a shirk. For them, especially A. Hassan, the teacher of PERSIS, such a practice was considered new and included bid'ah on the grounds that it was a new addition to worship and something new was not allowed (A Purnama, N.H. Lubis, 2017).

Sanusi's attitude explicitly says that the views of the reformists are not justified. When viewed in terms of the benefits or purpose of dhikr is to get closer to Allah SWT, whether done alone or in congregation, it is not considered a wrong thing. Even dhikr recited aloud can be intended to invite and educate to obedience and this is highly recommended. This time, Sanusi attacked the claims of polytheism and heresy by equating them with claims of heresy, the devil, Buddhism and the teachings of Pajajaran. A good attitude in this case is that people should not easily accuse others of heresy or make accusations of bid'ah or shirk. Sanusi thinks that this group is accusing without clear reasons and strong evidence.

### 3. Bank Interest Practices

An issue that was also widely discussed in the 1930s was the response to usury in the form of loans (credit loans). Sanusi refutes the opinion of what he calls the mujtahids of 1350 AH who say that interest on loans with interest rates not equal to or not greater than the loan is not haram. It can be seen from Sanusi's explanation in QS. Ali 'Imran verse 130 as follows.

*(Ya Ayyuha al-laḏīna) (amanu) (la ta'kulu) ulah sok ngahakan maraneh kabeh (ar-riba) kana riba, nyaeta rentenleuwihna pambayaran (ad'afan) kalawan pirang-pirang tikelna (muda-afah) anu di tikel-tikel sanajan eta tkelana the beunteu nepi saparo eta haram, karana saparapat oge sok asup kana tikel keneh, geuning sok aya kecap 'tikelkeun saentik.' Jadi teurang kacida salahna pangaku-ngaku mujtahid taun 1350*

*majar maneh perkara riba beunteu harap upama rentenna sarua reujeung asal atawa leuwih cenah menurut ieu ayat. Eta samata-mata bodona bae euweuh pangarti euweuh kanyaho cala-culu hayang istinbath* (Sanusi, 1931f).

Sanusi's response cannot be separated from the lawsuit of reformers who allow the practice of bank interest. At least this is also inseparable from the opinion of A. Hassan who in the 1930s had made a fatwa on bank usury. He argues that usury etymologically means additional money borrowed. According to him, the addition requested by the lender is reasonable and can be accepted by the borrower voluntarily. This is what Hassan understands that all lending and borrowing transactions on a voluntary basis and not exceeding reasonable levels are not forbidden. Therefore, usury that multiplies (ad'afan muda'afah) if done reasonably, then it is not forbidden. For him, the term usury is not pejorative but neutral (Rohmana, 2017). When viewed, Hassan's opinion tends to release the arguments that were originally rigid but were changed to be open, seeing that every bank transaction is nothing but for profit.

Furthermore, A. Hassan said that bank usury is not included in the usury prohibited by the Qur'an because bank usury can be used as a profitable transaction for the Muslim economy and does not have a negative impact (Abbas, 2008; Hassan, 2007). He sees bank interest as a basic thing for customers who open deposits in banks by seeing the right of profit for these customers (Abbas, 2008). According to Sanusi, usury by multiplying any amount, whether it is less than half or a quarter, is still haram. Sanusi's phrase 'tikeulkeun saeutik' (fold just a little) above clearly shows that it is not the level of multiplication that is used as the basis for the prohibition of bank usury but rather whatever the magnitude of the multiplication is basically punished as haram, so even though the multiplication is small it is still haram. For him, the opinion of the reformists shows the compulsion of legal istinbath made on the basis of ignorance. Sanusi pointed out that what is in the text about usury cannot be changed because it is seen from the point of view that usury is a haraam or forbidden thing. Therefore, it is very unnatural if the legal provisions that have been agreed upon will slowly fade away because behind this there is an element of certain interests. In the end, Sanusi wants to remain consistent with traditionalist traditions that must still be relevant without changing views that are already strong and considered correct.

## CONCLUSION

Ahmad Sanusi is one of the traditionalist scholars from Sukabumi. Through his tafsir entitled *Malja' at-Thalibin*, Sanusi provides arguments to counter the rising tide of reformist thought that emerged in the early 20th century on socio-religious issues. Tafsir *Malja' at-Thalibin* is a Sundanese tafsir in *pegon* Arabic script, which shows that the author upholds local culture while having consistency in maintaining the pesantren tradition by strengthening the arguments that teach ahlu sunnah waljamaah. Although the context of the times is always changing, Sanusi places the classical scientific traditions of pesantren must still be maintained to avoid mistakes and errors in religious understanding. Tafsir *Malja' at-Thalibin* appears with a socio-religious background and the interpreter's perspective in facing various problems both ideologically and in its application in society. The presence of this tafsir can be said that in addition to answering the problem, there are actually several verses that are intended as resistance to the views of reformists who are considered wrong and against traditionalist Islamic religious practices that have been deeply rooted in the traditions of Muslim society.

The implications of this research show that local tafsir written in pegon Arabic script plays an important role in maintaining and strengthening pesantren traditions and the teachings of Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah amid the challenges of modernization and religious reform. This research also highlights the importance of appreciating local culture in a broader Islamic context, and shows that classical scientific traditions are still relevant and need to be maintained to maintain the purity of religious understanding. This research has several limitations, namely that it analyzes the text of the *Malja' at-Thalibin* tafsir and has not conducted an in-depth field study to see the real impact of this tafsir in contemporary Sundanese society. Another limitation is that this research is limited to a historical perspective and does not explore the dynamics of interaction between traditionalists and reformists in a broader context. For further research, it is recommended to conduct field studies to explore the social and cultural impact of *Malja' at-Thalibin* in Sundanese society. Further research could focus on interdisciplinary analysis of sociology, anthropology and politics to get a more complete picture of traditional and reformist Islam in Indonesia.

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