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## ANALYZING HUIJATUL ISLAM IMAM AL-GHAZALI; HIS INFLUENCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY AND SUFISM IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

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## HIGHLIGHT

- Al-Ghazali integrates rational philosophy and Sufism to balance intellect and spirituality in Islamic thought.
- His critique of philosophers redefines the role of reason within Islamic theology and revelation.
- Al-Ghazali's ideas strongly influence the development of moderate Islamic spirituality in Indonesia.

## ABSTRACT

*Imam al-Ghazali is one of the most prominent figures in the history of Islamic thought whose influence extends widely across the development of philosophy and Sufism. Through his major works *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, and *Bidayatul Hidayah* al-Ghazali sought to integrate the rational and spiritual dimensions of Islam, creating a balance between intellect and heart. This study aims to explore al-Ghazali's intellectual journey, his thoughts in the fields of theology, philosophy, and Sufism, as well as his influence on Islamic civilization, particularly in Indonesia. Using a qualitative descriptive approach through a literature review of both primary and secondary sources, this study reveals that al-Ghazali's ideas have provided new direction for the development of Islamic sciences, especially in harmonizing rational and mystical aspects. In Indonesia, his ideas have profoundly influenced the pesantren tradition and the formation of a moderate and contextual Islamic spirituality.*

## KEYWORD

*Al-Ghazali, Islamic Philosophy, Islamic Reform, Sufism*

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Classical Islamic thought gave rise to numerous great figures who had a profound influence on human civilization. Among these prominent names, Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali holds a very special position. Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali was a teacher at the Nizamiya Madrasah in Baghdad, the most prestigious center of learning of his time (Al-Ghazali 1961). He is known not only as a scholar and intellectual, but also as a spiritual reformer who strives to integrate knowledge, reason, and heart. This figure, nicknamed Hujjatul Islam, succeeded in harmonizing the rationality of philosophy with the spiritual depth of Sufism, making Islam appear complete, not only as a system of faith but also as an ethical and intellectual guide.

Through his monumental work *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, Al-Ghazali criticized philosophers who were considered to rely too heavily on reason in understanding the nature of God. This criticism was not intended to destroy philosophy, but rather to place it in a proportional position within the framework of faith. Thus, Al-Ghazali presented a new paradigm asserting that truth is not only obtained through reason but also through the illumination of the heart and profound inner experience (Khaswara 2022). al-Ghazali provided a new direction for Islamic civilization, which at the time was experiencing sharp debates between rationalists and Sufis (Ghafur, Waryono Abdul 2006).

Aside from being known as a philosopher and theologian, al-Ghazali was also a central figure in the development of Sufism. In his major work *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, he successfully combined the knowledge of sharia with the essence of faith, as well as outward

worship with spiritual dimensions. For him, Sufism is not a form of escape from the world, but a path to deepen spiritual awareness so that humans can live life sincerely and responsibly.

In the era of globalization, when humans are easily trapped in materialism and lose moral direction, al-Ghazali's thought remains relevant as a source of inspiration in building a balance between knowledge, faith, and humanity. Al-Ghazali's universal thought shows that Islamic values can indeed address the challenges of the times without losing their essence.

Based on the problems described above, which illustrate how risky a civilization can be if it does not pay attention to Islamic values in its development, the researcher will therefore re-examine the importance of upholding Islamic values in the current era. This is based on the intellectual heritage of al-Ghazali, the Hujjatul Islam, who has developed Islamic philosophy and contemporary Sufism, especially in presenting a humanistic and moderate face of Islam amidst global dynamics (Al-Lathif 2020).

## B. METHOD

This research employs a qualitative method through a literature study. This model is used because the discussion about Imam al-Ghazali's thought is more conceptual and philosophical in nature, so the data analyzed is obtained from various literatures, both from primary and supporting sources. The main focus of this study is to examine al-Ghazali's thought as Hujjatul Islam and to trace its influence on the development of Islamic philosophy and Sufism in the context of globalization.



Picture 1 STEPS OF THE RESEARCH METHOD

This research began with the determination of literature, including selecting reliable references or sources of information from the library using original works of Imam Al-Ghazali, such as *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, *Al-Munqidh min ad-Dhalal*, and *Tahafut al-Falasifah*. The secondary sources come from various literature, such as books, academic journals, articles, and research findings that discuss Al-Ghazali's thought, both from classical and contemporary Muslim scholars. All these sources were collected through documentation techniques, namely by tracing relevant and credible literature to obtain comprehensive data.

All the information obtained was then processed through a content analysis approach. This analysis was conducted by thoroughly examining the substance of al-Ghazali's thought, identifying his ideas that influenced Islamic philosophy and Sufism, and interpreting their relevance to the socio-religious conditions in the era of globalization. Through this method, it is expected that an objective and systematic understanding of al-

Ghazali's intellectual contributions to the development of Islamic civilization can be obtained. To maintain data validity, this study uses a source triangulation technique, which involves comparing and confirming various data from different literature. This process is intended so that the research results are not partial but representative of the general views of experts on al-Ghazali. This approach is expected to produce a discussion that is comprehensive, academic, and still relevant to the development of discourse on Islamic thought in the globalized era.

## **C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Biography and Education of Al-Ghazali**

Al-Ghazali is known in the West as Algazel, with the full name Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Ahmad at-Thusy and he has the kunyah Abu Hamid. Due to the breadth and depth of his knowledge, he received various honorary titles, including Hujjatul Islam, Zainul 'Abidin, A'jubah az-Zaman, and al-Bahr. He was born in the city of Tus, in the region of Khurasan, Persia (now Iran), in the year 450 H/1058 AD. Al-Ghazali grew up in a modest family. His father, a wool craftsman (al-ghazzal), was known as a pious man and deeply devoted to religious knowledge. From his father's profession, two opinions arose regarding the origin of the name "Al-Ghazali," whether it came from the word al-ghazzal (wool spinner) or from the village of Ghazala near Tus (Madzkur 2020).

Although he lived in poverty, Al-Ghazali grew up in a religious and intellectual environment. His uncle, Abu Hamid, was known as a scholar and a prolific writer. When his father passed away, Al-Ghazali and his brother, Ahmad, were entrusted to a Sufi named Ahmad bin Muhammad ar-Razakani for guidance and care. After their father's inheritance ran out, they continued their education at a madrasa with free study facilities and accommodation. The religious environment and the spirit of learning inherited from his family shaped Al-Ghazali into a great scholar who would later be known as Hujjatul

Islam and an important figure in the history of Islamic philosophy and Sufism. From a young age, Al-Ghazali showed remarkable intelligence and a strong interest in knowledge. He was known for his sharp memory and mature reasoning abilities. These traits and talents earned him the title "Hujjatul Islam". He received his basic education in his hometown, Tus, before continuing his studies in Jurjan and then returning to Tus. After about a year, he decided to continue his intellectual journey to Nishapur to study under the great scholar, Imam al-Haramain al-Juwaini. Under his guidance, Al-Ghazali mastered various disciplines such as logic, theology, jurisprudence, principles of jurisprudence, philosophy, Sufism, and the art of debate. He had a deep understanding of the differences between experts in various fields and was even able to critique and refute opinions considered less accurate. His expertise led al-Juwaini to nickname him 'Bahr al-Murid' (the ocean of knowledge that overwhelms). Al-Ghazali's reputation then continued to grow ( Anwar and M solihin 2008).

After the death of Imam al-Haramain, Al-Ghazali left Naisabur for Mu'askah, a location that became the center of scientific activities and gatherings organized by Nizam al-Mulk, the Prime Minister of the Seljuk Dynasty. The forum was attended by many scholars

and jurists from various regions. In that discussion assembly, Al-Ghazali excelled and was able to surpass other intellectuals in debate. Because of his expertise, Nizam al-Mulk received him with great respect and then appointed him as an instructor at the Nizamiyah Madrasa in Baghdad (al-Asnawi 1987).

Upon arriving in Baghdad in 484 AH/1090 AD, Al-Ghazali began teaching at the institution. His scholarly gatherings were soon filled with students from various places.

His name became increasingly known through the fatwas and religious studies he delivered. In addition to teaching, he also began writing various works, including in the fields of jurisprudence, theology, as well as various refutations against the Bathiniyah, Ismailiyah, and certain philosophical thoughts (Supriyadi 2008). In a short time, his fame reached the environment of the Abbasid Caliphate Palace. In 1091 AD, he was officially appointed as a lecturer at the Nizamiyya University of Baghdad, and at the age of 34, he was entrusted to become the head (rector) of the institution. During his leadership, he produced many scholarly works in various fields. However, his tenure lasted only four years. After that, he experienced profound inner turmoil, encompassing issues of faith and the nature of knowledge. Unknown to many, he left Baghdad for the Levant under the pretext of performing the pilgrimage to Mecca so as not to arouse suspicion of seeking a political position. He relinquished teaching activities and began living an ascetic life, distancing himself from the hustle and bustle of society (Rusn 2009).

For nearly two years, Al-Ghazali led a strict spiritual life, restraining his desires and increasing his acts of worship. He spent a lot of time in seclusion, remembering God, and praying at the Damascus mosque, even often retreating to the mosque's tower. After that, he continued his spiritual journey to Jerusalem. From there, a strong intention to perform the Hajj pilgrimage arose. He went to Mecca and Medina, visited the graves of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), and then continued his journey to the Hijaz region.

After about a decade of moving between Syria, Jerusalem, and the Hijaz, Al-Ghazali finally returned to Nishapur at the request of Fakhru'l Muluk in 499 AH/1106 AD. He resumed teaching at the Nizamiyah University, although it is not precisely known how long he dedicated himself there after recovering from his spiritual turmoil. Having attained inner peace and true conviction, Al-Ghazali passed away in his hometown, Tus, on December 19, 1111 AD, or Monday, 14 Jumada al-Akhir 505 AH.

According to the author, the conclusion is that it all began with al-Ghazali living in poverty, yet he had the spirit of a true learner. Growing up in a religious and intellectual environment, even when he reached the peak of his success, he did not feel superior. He experienced deep inner turmoil regarding matters of faith and the essence of knowledge. He left teaching activities and began leading an ascetic life, distancing himself from the hustle and bustle of society for nearly two years. Al-Ghazali lived a strict spiritual life, restraining his desires and increasing his devotion.

### **The Works of Al-Ghazali**

As a great thinker in the Islamic world, Al-Ghazali produced many important works that continue to be referenced to this day. His writings are still read, discussed, studied, and used as subjects of research in various educational institutions, ranging from Islamic boarding schools to universities. In today's digital era, numerous scholars and intellectuals even study them through online learning platforms. One very famous example is the Ihya' study conducted by Ulil Abshar-Abdalla every Thursday night. The Ihya' study sessions are even packaged under the name Kopdar Ihya', which are held in various regions. This demonstrates that Al-Ghazali's thoughts, through his many works, remain relevant, particularly his ideas on Sufism. In examining his intellectual journey, experts generally divide Al-Ghazali's creative process into two major phases: the Baghdad period and the period after he left the city until his death. In the first stage, he produced a number of works before and while he was in Baghdad (Ghafur, Waryono Abdul 2006)

- a. Mizan al-'Amal, al-Mankhul fi al-Ushul
- b. Al-'Iqtisad fi al-I'tiqad, Khulasaf al-Mukhtasar
- c. Mahkan Naza fi al-Manthiq, al-Basit
- d. Al-Musfazhiri fi al-Rad 'ala al-Batiniyyah
- e. Hujjat al-Haq, Qawasim al-Batiniyyah
- f. Jawab Mafsal al-Khilaf, Qawa'id al-Qawa'id
- g. Al-Durj al-Marqum bi al-Jadawil, al-Wasit
- h. Mi'yar al-'Ilmi, Mi'yar al-'Uqul, al-Wajiz
- i. Maqasid al-Falasifah, Tahafut al-Falasifah

Meanwhile, the works of al-Ghazali produced during the post-Baghdad period until his death are: Al-Risalah al-Qudsiyyah, Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din

- a. Al-Rad al-Jami' li Ilahiyat Isa bi Sharih al-Injil
- b. Kimiya al-Sa'adah, al-Maqasad al-Asna fi Asma' Allah al-Husna
- c. Al-Madnun bihi 'ala Ghair Ahlih, al-Tibr al-Masbuk fi Nasihat al-Muluk
- d. Bidayat al-Hidayah, Mafsal al-Khilaf fi Usul al-Din, Jawahir al-Quran

In conclusion, Al-Ghazali's works show that his thoughts, through his numerous writings, remain relevant, especially his ideas on Sufism and others such as theology (kalam), jurisprudence and its principles, Sufism, philosophy, ethics, as well as autobiography. Most of his works were written in Arabic, although some were composed in Persian.

### **Criticism of Philosophers**

In his critique of the philosophers, Al-Ghazali identified twenty key issues that he considered problematic. These issues include: Pandangan tentang keqadiman alam; The notion of the eternity of nature, Mistakes in understanding the relationship of God as the creator of nature, Failure to prove the existence of God as the creator, Inability to prove the impossibility of there being two gods, Their denial of the attributes of God, The assumption that God cannot be classified into genus and species, The view that God has no essence, Inability to explain that God does not have a corporeal form, Failure to demonstrate that the universe has a creator, Inability to establish that God knows things beyond Himself, Inability to prove that God knows His own essence, The view that God does not know specific matters, The view that the heavens move by their own will, The theory about

the existence of a purpose that moves the heavens, The notion that the souls of the heavens know all specific matters, The belief that extraordinary events are unlikely to occur, The understanding that the human soul is an independent substance that is neither matter nor property, The assumption that the human soul cannot perish, The view that physical resurrection does not occur

Of the twenty issues, Al-Ghazali considers three views as disbelief, namely: The eternity of nature, Rejection that God knows the details, Rejection of physical resurrection.

He categorized other points as ahl al-bida' (ahl al-bida') because some of these views were closely aligned with the Mu'talizah school of thought, although he did not go so far as to denounce the philosophers as infidels. Thus, Al-Ghazali's criticism was not directed at philosophy as a whole, but rather specifically at aspects of metaphysics that were considered contrary to the principles of Islamic teachings (Nasution 1985).

Upon closer examination, the arguments used by Al-Ghazali in *\*Tahāfut al-Falāsifah\** largely rely on logic to refute the philosophers. However, behind this logical approach, there appears a theological inclination as an adherent of Ash'arism. This is evident, for example, in his rejection of the doctrine of the eternity of the world; for him, the only thing that is eternal is Allah along with His attributes. Since the world is not part of God's attributes, and he rejects the view of emanation, the world is understood as a newly created entity (ḥadīṣ). His stance on denying attributes that are a hallmark of Mu'tazilite teachings also demonstrates Al-Ghazali's loyalty to Ash'ari theology. In terms of his rejection of the belief that God does not know the detailed affairs and the denial of the idea of the nonexistence of bodily resurrection, Al-Ghazali grounds his arguments in the texts of the Qur'an. These philosophical views are considered contrary to many verses, including QS. Saba' verse 2 and QS. Yasin verses 78–79.

يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا وَهُوَ الرَّحِيمُ الْغَفُورُ ﴿٧٨﴾

It means: 'He knows what enters the earth, what comes out of it, what descends from the sky, and what ascends to it. He is the Most Merciful and Most Forgiving.' (Kementrian Agama 2019)

قَالَ مَنْ يُحْيِي الْعِظَامَ وَهِيَ رَمِيمٌ ﴿٧٨﴾  
قُلْ يُحْيِيهَا الَّذِي أَنْشَأَهَا أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ خَلْقٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٩﴾

It means: "And He made a parable for us; and He forgot His creation; He said: 'Who can give life to the bones that have crumbled to dust?' Say: 'They will be revived by the Lord who created them the first time. And He is All-Knowing about all creatures.'" (Kementrian Agama 2019)

In conclusion, although Al-Ghazali's condemnation of philosophers seemed harsh, it did not stop the development of Islamic philosophy in the subsequent period, except in a small segment of the Sunni community. As noted by Henri Corbin in *Histoire de la Philosophie Islamique*, cited by Harun Nasution, Al-Ghazali's critique actually helped spur new dynamics in Islamic philosophy.

## **Al-Ghazali's Thoughts on Theology and Philosophy**

The thinking of Imam al-Ghazali underwent a fairly complex development throughout his intellectual and spiritual journey. After mastering various disciplines, he began to engage in deep reflection on the direction of Muslim thought, which at that time was influenced by various rational schools and foreign philosophies. The following is the development of al-Ghazali's thought over time

### **The Field of Kalam Studies**

In refuting and contesting ideas considered inconsistent with Islamic principles, al-Ghazali studied various kinds of thought that were developing at the time. He read the books of the Mutakallimin to examine and explore them in order to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the Mutakallimin. After analyzing and deepening his study, al-Ghazali expressed his dissatisfaction with the Muslim theologians. He strongly criticized this group and argued that their use of qiyas actually made the clarity of religious feeling murky, caused confusion, and undermined the faith of the common people. The school of thought pioneered by Wasil bin 'Atha and Abul Huzail was strongly influenced by Jewish and Christian thought. Therefore, in its teachings, ideas emerged such as the belief that the Qur'an is a new creation, the assumption that human reason alone is capable of knowing God, an approach to proving religion that relies solely on logic, the concept of al-manzilah baina al-manzilatain (a position between two positions), and a number of other teachings (Hanafi 2001).

His harshest attack on theology can be seen in his book "Ihya Ulumuddin," where al-Ghazali states that the success of theology depends on the evidence it uses; if it comes from the Qur'an and Hadith, then the results are clear. However, if it goes beyond the Qur'an and Hadith, the outcome is nothing but a cursed war of words and drawn-out nonsense, and some of its discussions were not known in the early periods of Islam. Knowing God, His attributes, and His actions does not depend on theology; in fact, this knowledge can become an obstacle. After Al-Ghazali studied and deeply examined the thoughts of the mutakallimin, he concluded that the path they pursued was very much contrary to what he hoped for. Al-Ghazali stated that it is impossible for the truth to be attained solely through reason, because the human intellect is very limited in understanding matters of the unseen. From this, Al-Ghazali's doubts began to arise, and he then criticized their thinking and did not use their doctrines as a measure of truth.

### **Field of Sufism**

Al-Ghazali is known as a Sufi figure in the 5th century Hijri. His inclination toward the world of Sufism is rooted in his life journey, which underwent a change in orientation. In his youth, he pursued education with great determination and eventually taught at the Nizamiyah Madrasa. That period was marked by stability and high status. However, after achieving prestige and wealth, he began to feel doubtful about his own state. This inner turmoil led him to have spiritual experiences, which transformed his life. In the next phase,



he led a much calmer and more peaceful life as a writer, and it was during this period that he produced many Sufi works (Busro 2017).

Al-Ghazali explained that the journey towards Sufism consists of six stages. The first stage is repentance. To repent, a person must have the right knowledge, attitude, and actions. The knowledge referred to is the awareness of the danger of major sins, which then fosters a sense of regret and sorrow, and encourages a person to sincerely return to God with determination not to repeat them. The second stage is patience. According to al-Ghazali, the human soul consists of reasoning, the urge for goodness, and the urge for evil. A person attains patience when their inclination toward goodness can control their inclination toward evil. The third stage is poverty, which is the effort to distance oneself from things that are not truly necessary.

Every need must be carefully weighed in terms of whether it is halal, haram, or mubah (permissible). Anything that is haram or doubtful must be avoided even if it appears to be necessary. The fourth stage is zuhd, which is the effort to forsake worldly pleasures and focus hopes on the happiness of the hereafter. The fifth stage is tawakkul. This level is achieved through firm belief that Allah is All-Powerful, Most Merciful, Most Generous, and Absolutely Just. With this conviction, a person fully surrenders to Allah's decree. The final stage is ma'rifat, which is the state when a person understands the secrets of divinity and the rules Allah has set for all creation. The knowledge of ma'rifat is at a higher level compared to rational knowledge. The peak is the development of a deep love for God (Rahman 2016).

### **Field of Philosophy**

When al-Ghazali failed to find what he was aiming for in the doctrine of kalam (Islamic theology) to heal his spiritual crisis, he turned to or entered the field of philosophy. Al-Ghazali shifted his attention to the philosophers for in-depth study. Philosophers are a group that places reason as the primary foundation for regulating practical life. Al-Ghazali observed their studies, which presented terms of creed, perhaps in their rational efforts, could lead to something that would ensure the validity of the doctrines they adhered to. However, al-Ghazali found many controversies within them; he realized that forcing reason to take on certain functions is an act that exceeds its capacity (al-Ghazali 2016).

In his journey, al-Ghazali also did not find what he was aiming for: to heal the sense of doubt within his soul. Eventually, he decided to leave the field of philosophy to pursue what he had long sought as a true scholar; he did not surrender in his quest for knowledge and spiritual achievement. He always struggled until he found what he had been searching for all along. Essentially, al-Ghazali did not intend to dismantle philosophy in its true sense, not as it is commonly understood by the general public. He even mastered and studied philosophy deeply. From this perspective, it is clear that al-Ghazali was not someone who wanted to attack philosophy as a discipline, but rather wanted to explain the errors of certain philosophers, particularly criticisms directed at al-Farabi and Ibn Sina (Sofyan 2010). Thus, in this position, al-Ghazali not only attacks the faulty thinking of some

philosophers, but he is also a philosopher. Because, in attacking and criticizing philosophers, al-Ghazali uses philosophy as his analytical tool.

In conclusion, Al-Ghazali sought to find a balance between the use of reason and faith, between philosophy and revelation, so that knowledge would not lose its spiritual essence. He explored every branch of knowledge with a critical, diligent, and cautious attitude in the search for true truth and sought to restore Islamic teachings to their purest form, particularly in the fields of Sufism and philosophy.

### **The Influence of Al-Ghazali in the Field of Sufism**

Although al-Ghazali was not the first figure to be called a Sufi in the history of Sufism, his role was very significant in organizing and systematizing Sufi teachings within the framework of Islamic scholarship and Sharia. Sufism, as a spiritual practice, had in fact existed since the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his companions, characterized by diligence in worship, sincerity, patience, and reliance on God. Such teachings represent authentic Sufism that emphasizes the purification of the heart and closeness to Allah. Through his works, al-Ghazali restored Sufism to its primary function as a means of soul purification combined with adherence to Sharia, while also asserting the balance between the outward and inward dimensions of a Muslim's life (Busro 2017).

The spiritual experiences that underpin the composition of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* were greatly influenced by the monotheistic teachings of Husayn Ibn Mansur al-Hallaj as well as the ascetic approach of al-Muhasibi. Meanwhile, when writing *al-Munqidh min ad-Dhalalah*, al-Ghazali drew much inspiration from the spiritual journeys of Abu Thalib al-Makki, Harits al-Muhasibi, Junayd al-Baghdadi, Abu Yazid al-Bustami, and al-Shibli, which later shaped his life principles. The influence of these figures made al-Ghazali's Sufi perspective more balanced between rational and mystical dimensions. Through the combination of these experiences, al-Ghazali was able to present a concept of spirituality that is not only theoretical but also applicable in the life of a Muslim (Al-Ghazali 1961).

In the development of Sufism, al-Ghazali made an important contribution to the current of orthodox Sufism. He rejected any Sufi teachings that were considered to deviate from Islamic principles. The Sufism that developed at that time was greatly influenced by new intellectual constructs, including the view that the ecstatic expressions of the mystics arose when they were in a state of rapture or spiritual trance. According to al-Ghazali, once that state passed, true Sufis realized that the experience of "union with God" was not a real union, but merely a symbolic expression (Siregar 2000).

Another significant role is seen through *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, a monumental work that unites Sufism with the core teachings of Islam such as jurisprudence and theology. Al-Ghazali managed to demonstrate that Sufism can coexist with the discipline of Sharia, which for a long time was considered to be in opposition. Since then, Sufism gained acceptance among jurists and was recognized as part of the Islamic knowledge heritage valued by Muslims. The spread of Sufism to various parts of the Islamic world during periods of intellectual decline, especially from the 13th century onwards, cannot be separated from al-Ghazali's influence.

The title “Hujjatul Islam” was given by scholars to al-Ghazali because of his ability to defend the discipline of Islamic knowledge from the dominance of philosophical rationalism and from excessive mystical tendencies. Fazlur Rahman assessed that al-Ghazali’s success lay in his ability to rebuild orthodox Islam by making Sufism an integral part of it. He is regarded as a great reformer of Sufism who cleansed this discipline of elements that were not in harmony with Islamic teachings, thus giving Sufism wide legitimacy among the people. In *Ihya’*, al-Ghazali explains maqamat and ahwal as the basis for achieving the ultimate reality, following the tradition of earlier Sufis. Among these maqamat are repentance, patience, poverty, asceticism, reliance on God, love, gnosis, and contentment (Zaini 2017)

In conclusion, Al-Ghazali had an influence in the field of Sufism. Al-Ghazali succeeded in showing that Sufism could go hand in hand with the discipline of Sharia, which for a long time was considered to be in opposition. Since then, Sufism gained a place among jurists and was accepted as part of the Islamic knowledge treasure valued by Muslims.

### **The Influence of Al-Ghazali's Thought in Indonesia**

In the field of jurisprudence, al-Ghazali adhered to the Shafi'i school; in theology, he followed the Ash'ari school; while in Sufism, he followed the path of Junaid al-Baghdadi. This direction of thought was later widely adopted by Indonesian Muslims, especially in pesantren and madrasah diniyah under the scholarly tradition of Nahdlatul Ulama. Even in Islamic universities, al-Ghazali's thought has a strong influence, along with the role of scholars who spread Islam to the Nusantara.

During the era of the Nusantara kingdoms, society adhered to the doctrine of classical Sunni politics. This was related to the process of the introduction of Islam to Indonesia, which occurred in three stages: first, the arrival of Islam from Gujarat and Malabar in the 12th century through Shafi'i scholars who migrated to India before coming to the Nusantara; second, the arrival of Islam from Bengal along with the genealogical connections of the rulers of Pasai with that region; and third, the spread of Islam from Hadramaut, which brought the Sunni tradition that later became the majority sect among the people of the archipelago.

Islamization in the Nusantara, as explained through various theories, has one common point: the widespread spread of Islam began to be evident in the 13th century. This is demonstrated by the emergence of Islamic kingdoms such as Pasai in North Sumatra, Gresik and Demak in Java, as well as Gowa, Banten, Cirebon, Buton, and Ternate. This development encouraged a mass conversion of people to Islam. In addition, the process of Islamization led to a harmonious blending of Islamic values and local culture, giving rise to a distinctive, peaceful, and moderate Nusantara form of Islam (Khaswara, Fajar 2022).

The teachings of Islam introduced by the scholars of Hadramaut easily adapted to local traditions and the socio-political structures of the kingdoms in the Nusantara. The close relationship between scholars and rulers aligns with al-Ghazali's thought, which views the power of the Prophet as God's messenger and the authority of the government as the successor of divine trust. The concept of the relationship between scholars and political

authority is part of Sunni doctrine, which does not separate religion from structures of power (Muhammad Iqbal and Amin Husein Nasution 2015)

The Sunni doctrine brought by the Wali Songo through a Sufi approach also shaped the religious traditions of the community. These saints, including Sunan Gresik, Sunan Ampel, Sunan Bonang, Sunan Giri, Sunan Drajat, Sunan Kalijaga, Sunan Kudus, Sunan Muria, and Sunan Gunung Jati, also influenced the emergence of various Sufi orders, such as Qadiriyyah, rooted in the teachings of Abdul Qadir al-Jailani, Naqshbandiyah, believed to trace its lineage back to the Prophet through Gabriel, as well as other orders.

The growing interest in Sufism in Indonesia today cannot be separated from the intellectual contributions of al-Ghazali, who presented a religious approach that balances rationality and spirituality. The moral and spiritual values he taught also help shape the religious character of Indonesian society in facing the challenges of the modern era. (Zaini 2017).

In conclusion, the influence of al-Ghazali in Indonesia is not only present through the preaching of scholars and the Wali Songo, but is also evident in the works of Muslim intellectuals in the Nusantara. Al-Ghazali's reformist thought has exerted a significant influence in Indonesia, not only on intellectuals but also on the wider society through education, governance, and the spread of religion.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali was a central figure in the intellectual history of Islam who succeeded in integrating rationality and spirituality. His life journey reflects the quest for true truth that does not stop at the level of logic, but continues to a profound inner experience. Through his extensive knowledge, he placed reason as a means to know Allah without neglecting the guidance of revelation. His thinking teaches a balance between intellect and remembrance of God, between knowledge and worship, thus presenting Islam as a complete religion that touches all aspects of life.

Al-Ghazali's thought brought a new direction in the development of Islamic philosophy by placing rationality under the control of faith. Through monumental works such as *Tahafut al-Falasifah* and *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, he emphasized that the essence of truth cannot be reached by reason alone, but also requires a pure heart that submits and obeys Allah. In the field of Sufism, he restored the essence of Sufism to the teachings of the Sharia, rejected deviations that stray from the principle of monotheism, and taught that the path to Allah must be followed with knowledge, patience, and sincerity.

The influence of al-Ghazali's thought extends widely into the modern Islamic world, including in Indonesia. Through the paths of scholars and Islamic boarding schools, his ideas shape a moderate, balanced, and ethical form of Islam. The Sufi values he taught foster spiritual awareness within society without neglecting rationality. His intellectual legacy serves as a guide for Muslims in building a civilization that is knowledgeable and faithful. His teachings demonstrate that true progress can only be achieved when reason and heart go hand in hand in humility before God..

Thus, the thoughts of Imam al-Ghazali remain relevant and important to study in the contemporary context. Amid the challenges of globalization that create moral and spiritual crises, his teachings provide guidance for Muslims to find a balance between intellectual progress and inner peace. The concept of integrating knowledge and faith that he proposed serves as an important foundation for building an Islamic civilization that is both ethical and character-driven. Al-Ghazali's ideas are not merely an intellectual legacy, but also a guide for modern Muslim generations in treading the path toward truth and genuine happiness.

This study proves that Imam Al-Ghazali is a very important figure in the development of Islamic sciences today. The author demonstrates this through a literature review from several reliable sources that have explained Imam Al-Ghazali's works, which are still used as a foundation of knowledge. However, this study has limitations as it only examines theory. The author's suggestion is to conduct further research on the practical implementation, regarding how Imam Al-Ghazali's knowledge is applied in everyday life.

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