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Javanese mystical Qurʾān interpretation: Kyai Saleh Darat’s (d. 1903) Fayḍ al-Raḥmān and the Javanese mystical world

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This book examines *Fayḍ al-Raḥmān fī tarjamat tafsīr kalām Mālik al-Dayyān* (The Grace of the Merciful in the Interpretative Translation of the Words of the King and the Judge), a Sufi exegesis authored by a prominent Javanese scholar Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ b. ʿUmar al-Samārānī (d. 1321/1903). It investigates the *Fayḍ al-Raḥmān* within its intellectual, historical, and hermeneutical contexts. It tackles two issues: 1) how did the work emerge as a Sufi *tafsīr* and 2) which interpretive strategies and conceptual frameworks does the author employ in engaging with the Qurʾān?

We start the course of our analysis by tracing back the formation of *Fayḍ al-Raḥmān* in nineteenth-century Java, situating Ṣāliḥ within the Meccan–Javanese intellectual networks of his time. The findings demonstrate that Ṣāliḥ composed his *tafsīr* in response to the pervasive influence of the Akbarian mystical school, which had primarily shaped Javanese mysticism. Rather than rejecting these traditions outright, Ṣāliḥ reinterpreted the popular concepts in Javanese mysticism through the epistemological and ethical lens of the Ghazālian school. The *Fayḍ al-Raḥmān* thus offers an alternative Sufi hermeneutic – one that re-centered Qurʾānic interpretation as the spiritual journey that emphasizes the discipline of rituals and the soul purification – to the philosophical ideas of Being, especially the doctrine of the seven grades of Being that permeated the Javanese mystical world.

We further analyze Ṣāliḥ's hermeneutical approach. The results demonstrate that Ṣāliḥ adapted al-Ghazālī's mystical hermeneutics of the twofold structure of meaning – *ẓāhir* (exoteric) and *bāṭin* (esoteric) – by reconfiguring the theory of the spiritual journey as its principal interpretive key. For Ṣāliḥ, the Qurʾān's esoteric dimension signifies the believer's gradual ascent toward the divine knowledge, thereby integrating moral, intellectual, and mystical cultivation into a single exegetical process.

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