

From Physical to Spiritual Intoxication in Javanese Sufi Interpretation of Q. Al-Nisā' [4]:43 in the Hakikate Bismillah Manuscript

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Abstract

The study of local interpretation manuscripts in the Nusantara Islamic tradition holds significant potential for expanding Qur'anic interpretation beyond normative approaches toward contextual and spiritual dimensions. This research examines a Javanese-Pegon Sufistic commentary from a pesantren (Islamic boarding school) in Lamongan that interprets QS. al-Nisā' [4]:43 with an emphasis on worship awareness. It explores how the term *sukārā* and the phrase *ḥattā ta'lamū mā taqūlūn* are understood not merely as a prohibition of physical intoxication, but as a critique of inner negligence and diminished spiritual awareness during prayer. Employing a qualitative-descriptive approach through textual analysis, hermeneutic-contextual reading, and a brief textual examination, this study engages in dialogue with Sufi and Nusantara tafsir traditions. Primary data were obtained from digital manuscripts archived at the British Library (EAP061/2/65), supplemented by classical tafsir literature, Sufi commentaries, and studies on Javanese Sufism. The findings indicate that *sukārā* is interpreted as a state of forgetting God and ignorance of the meaning of prayer recitations, positioning worship without awareness as a form of "spiritual intoxication." This interpretation underscores that worship quality is determined by conscious presence, understanding of meaning, and recognition of humanity's dependence on Allah. The study strengthens the position of Nusantara tafsir as practical Sufism (*taṣawwuf 'amalī*) that integrates Sufistic hermeneutics, local language, and spiritual ethics while offering a Qur'anic critique of formal ritualism in contemporary religious life.

Keywords: Javanese Tafsir; Sufi Tafsir; Worship Awareness; *Sukārā*; Nusantara Tafsir.

INTRODUCTION

Amid the increasing intensity of religious activities within contemporary Muslim communities, a paradox has emerged that warrants critical attention. On the one hand, religious practices appear more regular and institutionalised; on the other hand, spiritual awareness is frequently reduced to mere formal obedience. Prayer, despite its

transformative spiritual potential, is often performed mechanically, lacking sufficient inner presence and reflection (Alsuhaymi & Atallah, 2025). Several studies indicate that the quantitative increase of ritual practices does not necessarily correspond to spiritual depth and may instead result in inner emptiness when detached from conscious awareness (Farahani et al., 2023). Hossein Nasr (2009) identifies this condition as part of a broader modern spiritual crisis, marked by a rupture between formal religious observance and inner experience, where worship risks becoming legally valid yet spiritually hollow.

Within this context, QS. al-Nisā' [4]:43 occupies a critical position. The verse is commonly understood as a prohibition against performing prayer while intoxicated, with *sukārā* predominantly interpreted as physical drunkenness caused by the consumption of khamr. Such a legal-formal reading raises an essential question: can the ethical purpose of this verse be considered fulfilled merely by abstaining from alcohol, while inner negligence, loss of awareness, and misunderstanding of prayer recitations persist in daily worship?

Departing from this problem, this study seeks to reinterpret the concept of *sukārā* in QS. al-Nisā' [4]:43 through an examination of Javanese tafsir manuscripts. It explores how the Nusantara tafsir tradition—shaped by Sufistic thought and Javanese spiritual ethics—understands the prohibition of *sukārā* not merely as physical intoxication but as a state of spiritual heedlessness that disrupts conscious presence in worship. In doing so, this research moves beyond normative textual interpretation toward uncovering the ethical and spiritual orientations embedded in local religious experience.

By positioning Javanese tafsir manuscripts as primary sources, this study investigates how the concept of presence of heart in worship (*ḥudūr al-qalb*) is constructed through local language, cultural symbols, and contextual spirituality. This focus aligns with recent developments in Qur'anic studies that increasingly recognise non-Arabic interpretations as legitimate sites of meaning production, grounded in locally authoritative epistemologies such as the Javanese notions of *rasa* and *batin* rather than functioning merely as acts of translation, reflecting the historical and cultural experiences of Muslim communities beyond the Middle Eastern core.

Classical and contemporary tafsir literature on QS. al-Nisā' [4]:43 has largely been dominated by legal and normative frameworks, situating the verse within discussions of ritual validity and the gradual prohibition of alcohol. Within this paradigm, *sukārā* is defined primarily as a physiological condition that impairs rational capacity, rendering prayer invalid during intoxication (Al-Qurṭubī, 1964; Shihab, 2003). While legally coherent, such readings tend to marginalise the broader ethical implications of worship consciousness embedded in the verse.

In contrast, the Sufi interpretive tradition offers an alternative perspective that foregrounds the inner dimensions of Qur'anic meaning. From this viewpoint, intoxication (*sukr*) extends beyond physical drunkenness to encompass spiritual negligence arising from forgetfulness of Allah, attachment to worldly desires, and the absence of inner awareness in worship (Godlas, 2017; Taleb, 2021). Studies on Nusantara tafsir further demonstrate that Qur'anic interpretation in the Malay-Indonesian world developed through the integration of scripture with local languages and cultural sensibilities (Abidin et al., 2024; Baidowi & Ma'rufah, 2025), although the theme of worship consciousness remains underexplored.

Accordingly, this article argues that Javanese tafsir manuscripts offer a distinctive synthesis of Sufi spirituality and local ethical sensibilities, particularly the Javanese virtues of *eling* (mindful remembrance of God), *andhap asor* (humility), and spiritual attentiveness in worship in interpreting QS. al-Nisā' [4]:43. Rather than reiterating normative legal meanings, these manuscripts articulate a shift from prohibiting physical intoxication to critiquing spiritual negligence in worship. Through this lens, Nusantara tafsir emerges as a form of practical Sufism (*taṣawwuf 'amali*) that emphasises the transformation of

consciousness, challenges formal ritualism, and affirms the relevance of local Qur'anic hermeneutics in responding to contemporary spiritual crises.

METHOD

This study examines a Javanese Pegon Sufistic tafsir manuscript entitled *Hakikate Bismillah*, originating from a pesantren milieu in Lamongan, East Java, which interprets QS. al-Nisā' [4]:43. Written in Arabic Pegon script and Javanese, the undated manuscript, tentatively attributed to the nineteenth century based on the British Library catalogue description (EAP061 2 65) and the owner's assessment comes from the private collection of Raden Edi Santoso (Drajat Village, Paciran, Lamongan). The unit of analysis focuses on textual sections discussing *sukāra*, the phrase *ḥattā ta'lamū mā taqūlūn*, and explanations concerning forgetfulness of God and worship awareness.

This research adopts a qualitative textual analysis approach, aiming to understand processes of meaning construction, ethical orientation, and hermeneutic dynamics rather than quantitative measurement. The approach enables an examination of the relationship between Qur'anic interpretation, Sufi tradition, and the Javanese socio-cultural context.

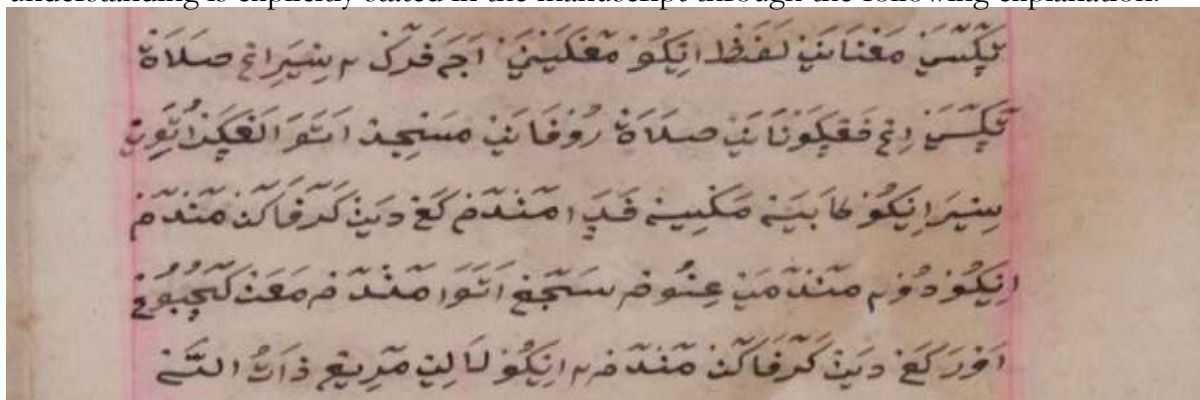
Primary data are drawn from a digital copy of the manuscript preserved in the Endangered Archives Programme, British Library (EAP061/2/65), accessible at <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP061-2-65>. Secondary sources include classical and contemporary Sufi commentaries and scholarly works on Nusantara tafsir, Sufism, and Qur'anic hermeneutics.

Data collection involved hermeneutic textual analysis, including identification of relevant passages, transliteration of key terms, and analysis of the interpreter's argumentative structure. Data analysis employed a contextual hermeneutic approach—textual, intertextual, and cultural—to situate the interpretation as a form of *taṣawwuf 'amali* oriented toward cultivating spiritual awareness and worship ethics.

RESULTS

Prayer, Awareness, and Forgetting God in Javanese Interpretive Manuscripts

The reading of Javanese interpretation manuscripts shows that QS. al-Nisā' [4]:43 is not understood solely as a prohibition against performing prayer while physically intoxicated, but rather as a prohibition against approaching prayer in a state of losing awareness of Allah. The word "*sukāra*" in the verse "*walā taqrabū al ṣalāta wa antum sukāra ḥattā ta'lamū mā taqūlūn*" is interpreted as a state of intoxication that is not limited to the effects of alcoholic beverages or intoxicating substances, but also includes inner heedlessness that causes a person not to know or be unaware of what they are saying in prayer. This understanding is explicitly stated in the manuscript through the following explanation:



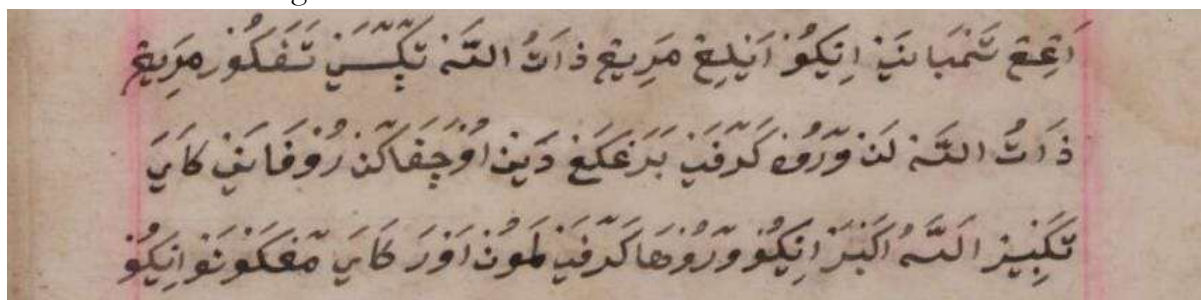
Tegese maknane lafadz iku mengkene ojo parek2 siro ing sholat tegese ing panggonane sholat rupane masjid utawa langgar utawi siro iku kabeh maksih pada mendem kang den karepaken mendem iku du2 nginum sajang utawa mendem mangan kecubung ora kang den karepaken mendem2 iku lali maring dzat Allah (Hakekate Bismillah, n.d.)

Translated as:

As for the meaning of this phrase, it is as follows: do not approach prayer, meaning do not approach places of prayer such as mosques or prayer rooms, if you are still in a state of intoxication. What is meant by intoxication here is not intoxication from drinking alcohol or from eating jimsonweed, but rather, the intoxication referred to is a state of forgetting the Essence of Allah.

Based on the description in the manuscript text, it is explained that the state of being intoxicated (*mendem*) is not solely caused by the consumption of alcohol or plants like datura, but also by a condition of forgetting the Divine Essence of God. Therefore, the meaning of intoxication in this manuscript encompasses both physical and spiritual aspects, both of which directly affect the quality of a person's presence in prayer.

The interpretation of the phrase "*hattā ta'lamū mā taqūlūn*" in the manuscript confirms the importance of knowing and understanding the meaning of the prayer readings. This understanding is positioned as part of the awareness that must accompany the performance of worship and is explained through the illustration of the takbir Allāhu Akbar reading, as stated in the following text:

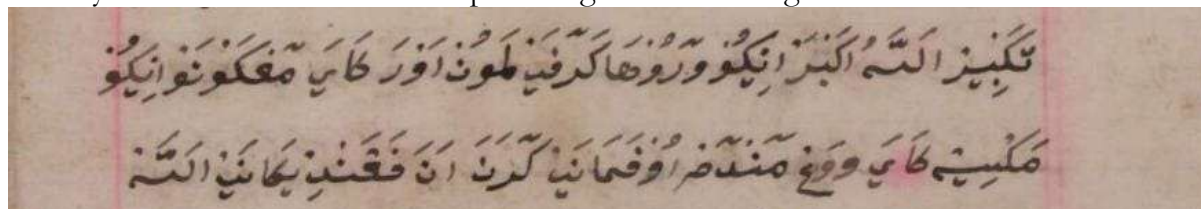


Eling maring dzat Allah tegese tafakkur maring dzat Allah lan weruh karepe barang kang den ucapaken rupane kaya takbir Allahu Akbar iku weruha karepe (Hakekate Bismillah, n.d.).

Translated as:

Remembering the Essence of God means contemplating (*tafakkur*) the Essence of God and understanding the meaning of what is said, such as the takbir (declaration of greatness) "*Allahu Akbar*," which means knowing and realising the meaning it contains.

Conversely, prayer performed without understanding the meaning of the recitation is positioned as prayer that is still in a state of being intoxicated (*mendem*). This condition is directly confirmed in the manuscript through the following statement:

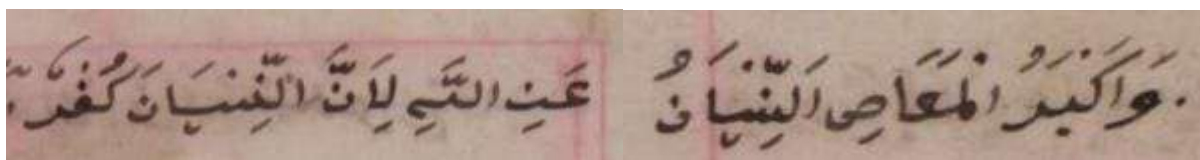


Lamun ora kaya mengkono iku maksih kaya wong mendem (Hakekate Bismillah, n.d.).

Translated as:

If not, then he is still like a drunkard.

Additionally, the results of the manuscript reading also indicate that forgetting God is positioned as a very serious form of spiritual negligence. The manuscript explicitly states that the greatest sin is forgetting God, as this condition is understood as a form of disbelief, as stated in the following Arabic text:

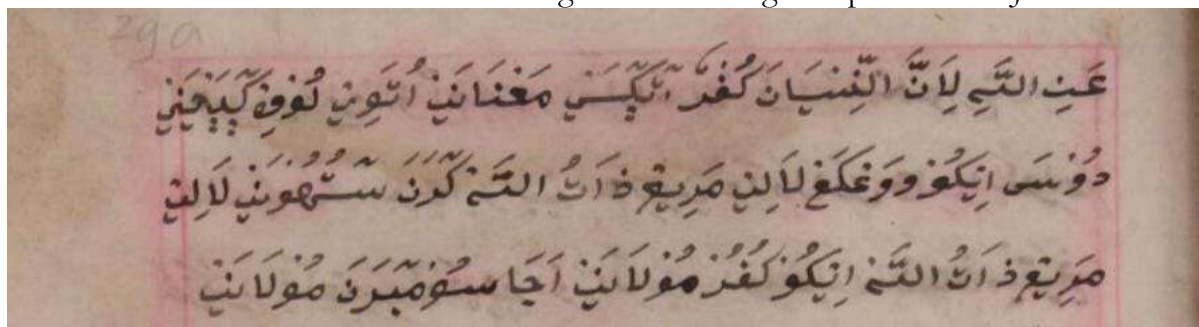


Wa akbarul ma'āsi an-nisyānu 'anillāhi li anna an-nisyāna kufrun (Hakekate Bismillah, n.d.).

Translated as:

The greatest sin is negligence towards God, as a form of spiritual or Sufistic kufr, namely ingratitude and veiling of the heart, rather than legal apostasy (kufr in the juridical sense).

The statement was further clarified through the following interpretation in Javanese:

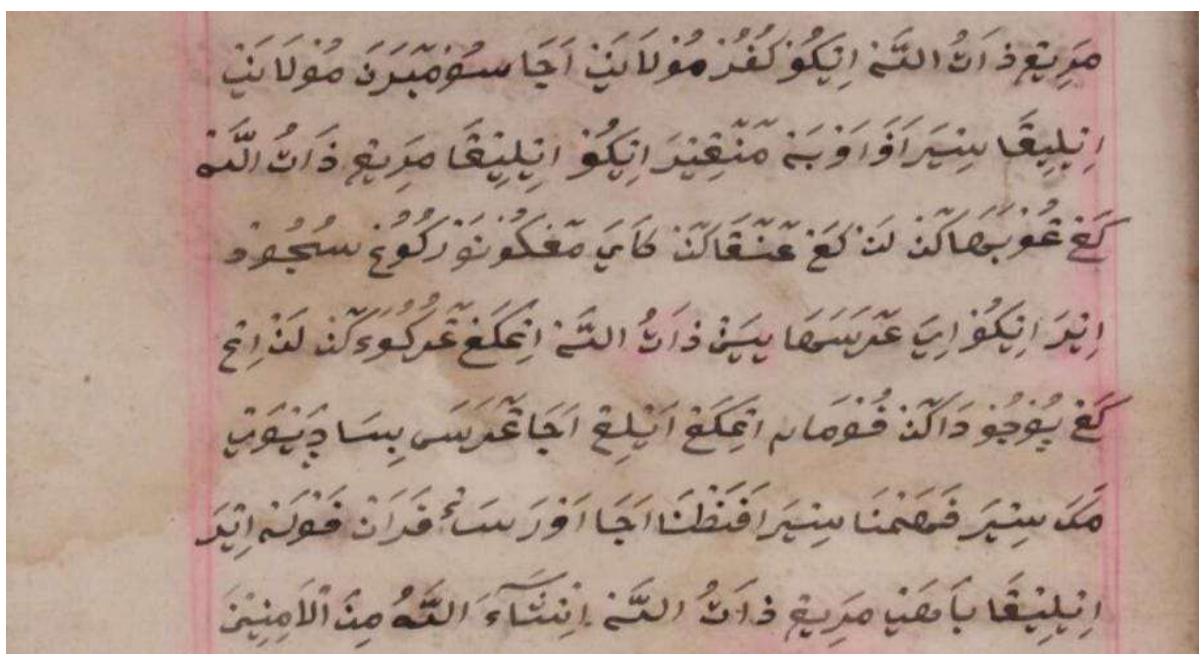


Utawi luwih gedene duso iku wong kang lali maring dzat Allah keronu setuhune lali maring dzat Allah iku kufur (Hakekate Bismillah, n.d.).

Translated as:

As for the greatest sin, it is for a person to forget the Essence of Allah, because forgetting the Essence of Allah is indeed disbelief.

Furthermore, the manuscript asserts that the performance of worship does not originate solely from human strength. Every movement in prayer, including standing, bowing, and prostrating, is understood to occur because of the actions and will of Allah, not solely due to human power and ability. This affirmation is clearly stated in the manuscript text, as follows:



Mulane ojo sumebaran mulane ilinga siro opo obah meneng iro iku ilinga maring dzat Allah kang ngubabaken lan kang ngenengaken kaya mengkonu ruk'u' sujud ira iku iya ngerosoho yen dzat Allah ing kang ngeruku'aken lan ing kang nyujudaken puma2 ing kang iling aja ngeroso biso dewe maka siro fabamno siro opo dzon aja ora sak paran polah iro ilingo babe maring dzat Allah, insya Allah minal aminina (Hakekate Bismillah, n.d.).

Translated as:

Therefore, do not be negligent; always remember the Essence of God, whether you are moving or still. Remember the Essence of God who moves and who stills. Similarly, when you bow and prostrate, you should realise that it is the Essence of Allah that causes you to bow and prostrate. As long as you are in a state of remembrance, do not feel self-sufficient with your own strength. So understand yourselves and do not make assumptions without direction in every action; always remember the Essence of Allah, *insya Allah minal aminina*. Overall, this section shows that the Javanese tafsir manuscript contains interpretations of the prohibition of *sukārā*, the importance of understanding prayer readings, the dangers of forgetting Allah, and the affirmation of human dependence on Allah in carrying out worship.

DISCUSSION

The Shift in the Meaning of Sukārā: From Physical Drunkenness to Spiritual Negligence

The results of this study indicate that Javanese exegetical manuscripts offer an expansion of the meaning of the term *sukārā* in QS. al-Nisā' [4]:43, contributing significantly to the contextual and spiritual discourse of Qur'anic interpretation in the archipelago. In the classical exegetical tradition, as found in the works of al-Ṭabarī and systematised by Ibn Kathīr, *sukārā* is generally understood as a state of physical intoxication caused by alcoholic consumption that impairs rational consciousness, thereby prohibiting prayer in such a condition (Ibn Kathīr, 2000). This interpretation primarily emphasises the legal dimension (*aḥkām*) and the outward validity of worship, in line with the fiqh framework that places reason as a prerequisite for ritual validity (Hallaq, 2009).

Nevertheless, several classical exegetes suggest that this prohibition concerns not only physical condition but also the quality of consciousness in worship. Al-Rāzī, for instance, emphasises that the phrase *ḥattā ta'lamū mā taqūlūn* implies the necessity of understanding the meaning of recitation as a requirement for the spiritual value of prayer (Al-Razi, 1981). This view is reinforced in early Sufi interpretations. Al-Sulamī, in *Ḥaqā'iq al-Tafsīr*, argues that the loss of inner awareness (*dhahāb al-istish'ār*), regardless of its cause, obstructs the realisation of worship as genuine communication with God, equating spiritual negligence with intoxication that impedes supplication (Al-Sulami, 2001).

A more systematic elaboration of the inner meaning of *sukārā* appears in al-Qusyairī's *isyārī* interpretation. In *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt*, he asserts that the prohibition in QS. al-Nisā' [4]:43 is directed not at the ritual act itself, but at a state of intoxication that negates inner presence, since supplication is impossible in the absence of consciousness and attentiveness (al-Qusyairi, 2007). He identifies various forms of *suker*, ranging from intoxication due to alcohol to negligence arising from excessive attachment to worldly desires and *suker al-nafs*, which he considers the most perilous.

This inner dimension is further deepened in Ibn 'Arabī's *isyārī* reading. Interpreting QS. al-Nisā' [4]:43, Ibn 'Arabī explains that the prohibition of *lā taqrabū al-ṣalāh* fundamentally concerns approaching the *maqām al-ḥuḍūr wa al-munājāb*—the state of presence and existential dialogue with Allah—while in a condition of *suker*. Here, *suker* encompasses sensory intoxication, negligence (*nawm al-ghaflah*), domination of lust, and excessive worldly attachment that diverts the heart from Allah (Ibn 'Arabi, 1968).

Departing from this Sufi horizon, the Javanese tafsir manuscript examined in this study reorients *sukārā* from a physical state to an inner condition characterised by spiritual negligence toward Allah. The manuscript asserts that drunkenness is not confined to substances, stating: '*ora kang den karepaken mendem iku lali maring dzat Allah*' (drunkenness

does not refer to alcohol or substances, but rather forgetfulness of Allah). Accordingly, *mendem* is defined as forgetfulness that results in the loss of inner awareness in worship.

This emphasis is reinforced through the interpretation of *ḥattā ta'lamū mā taqūlūn* as the obligation to comprehend the meaning of prayer recitations. The manuscript insists that a person must '*weruh karepe barang kang den ucapaken rupane kaya takbir Allāhu Akbar*' (know and understand the meaning of what is being uttered, such as the recitation of *Allāhu Akbar*), for prayer performed without such understanding remains in a state of *sukārā*, akin to a drunk person unaware of their own speech. Worship without awareness thus remains at the level of outward motion and has not yet reached the essence of supplication.

Moreover, the manuscript links this spiritual negligence to broader theological and pedagogical implications through the statement: '*wa akbarul ma'aṣī an-nisyanu 'anillāh li-anna an-nisyanā kufrun*' (the greatest sin is forgetting Allah, because forgetting Allah is kufr). Rather than asserting legal excommunication, this formulation appears to function as a Sufistic pedagogical hyperbole intended to intensify moral awareness among its readers. This claim indicates that the expanded meaning of *sukārā* touches the very core of the human–divine relationship and the quality of faith itself. Particularly within the instructional milieu of pesantren audiences for whom the manuscript was most likely composed.

This semantic shift aligns with the broader tendency of Qur'anic interpretation in the archipelago, characterised by localised readings that engage the cultural and spiritual horizons of local communities (Johns, 1988; Riddell, 2001). Methodologically, this expansion also resonates with Fazlur Rahman's moral hermeneutics, which prioritises the moral objectives (*maqāṣid*) of the Qur'anic text over its purely literal dimension (Islam, 1982).

Awareness of the Meaning of Recitations and Spiritual Orientation in Worship

The manuscript's emphasis on the phrase *ḥattā ta'lamū mā taqūlūn* reflects an interpretation that places understanding the meaning of recitations as the primary indicator of inner awareness in worship. The prohibition against approaching prayer in a state of *sukārā* is thus not limited to physical intoxication, but mainly targets the inability to comprehend the meaning of the words recited. This is clearly articulated in the expression '*mendem iku dudu nginum sajeng utawa mangan kecubung nanging mendem iku lali maring dzat Allah*' (drunkenness is not due to drinking alcohol or eating *kecubung*, but rather forgetting the essence of Allah). In this framework, prayer performed without understanding fundamental phrases such as *Allāhu Akbar* is considered lacking an inner dimension, because '*takbir Allāhu Akbar iku weruha karepe, lamun ora kaya mengkonono iku maksih kaya wong mendem*' (the meaning of *Allāhu Akbar* must be understood; otherwise, one remains like a drunk person). Awareness in worship is therefore measured not merely by verbal correctness, but by the intellectual and spiritual engagement of the worshipper.

This perspective resonates with the classical Sufi tradition that places *ḥudūr al-qalb* at the centre of worship. Al-Ghazālī, in *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, criticises ritual practices that remain at the level of formality without inner participation, as they fail to function as a means of *tazkiyat al-nafs* (al-Ghazali, n.d.). Similarly, the Javanese tafsir manuscript maintains that those who do not understand the meaning of prayer recitations remain in a state of *mendem*, even when the outward performance of worship appears complete.

A comparable orientation is found in *isyārī* tafsir. Al-Qusyairī interprets verses on worship as an exhortation to cultivate inner awareness and witness the presence of God within each ritual act (al-Qusyairi, 2007). In Javanese tafsir manuscripts, this symbolic dimension is reinforced through the call to '*tafakkur maring dzat Allah lan weruh karepe barang kang den ucapaken*' (contemplate the Essence of God and understand the meaning of what is being

said), positioning semantic awareness as the bridge between ritual speech and divine consciousness.

Beyond the Sufi tradition, concern for understanding the meaning of worship recitations is also present in classical exegesis. Al-Rāzī argues that outwardly valid worship does not necessarily possess spiritual value if it is not accompanied by sufficient awareness and comprehension (Al-Razi, 1981). This demonstrates that the emphasis on inner awareness represents a continuation and elaboration of themes already embedded within the exegetical tradition.

Within the cultural context of the archipelago, this emphasis aligns with the Javanese Islamic concept of *eling*, understood as sustained awareness of God's presence (Ricklefs, 2006; Zoetmulder, 1935). Javanese tafsir manuscripts explicitly connect worship to *eling* through the counsel '*ilinga siro opo obah meneng iro iku ilinga maring dzat Allah*' (remember God in every state, whether in motion or at rest), framing comprehension of prayer recitations as a means of cultivating continuous spiritual awareness.

Thus, the focus of Javanese tafsir manuscripts on awareness of the meaning of prayer recitations constitutes a complex spiritual construct. Rooted in classical Sufi heritage, legitimised within the exegetical tradition, integrated with Javanese cultural values, and supported by contemporary interdisciplinary research, worship in this framework transcends formal ritual to become a process of reflective and continuous spiritual internalisation.

Forgetting Allah and Criticism of Formalism in Worship

Javanese exegetical manuscripts explicitly view forgetting Allah (*nisyān*) as a fundamental spiritual problem because it directly affects the quality of faith and worship. This inner negligence is not considered neutral, but rather a dangerous condition that may lead to disbelief. This position is clearly expressed in the authoritative statement: "*wa akbarul ma'āsi an-nisyānu 'anillāh, li-anna an-nisyāna kufrun*", reiterated in Javanese as "*luwih gedhene dosa iku wong kang lali maring dzat Allah, keronu setubune lali maring dzat Allah iku kufrun*" (the greatest sin is forgetting Allah, because forgetting Allah is disbelief). Worship performed in a state of forgetfulness thus loses its transcendent orientation and is reduced to mere physical activity.

The emphasis on the dangers of *nisyān* and *ghaflah* has a strong foundation in Qur'anic ethics. Izutsu (2002) demonstrates that remembrance (*dhikr*) and forgetfulness (*nisyān*) function as moral categories that determine the orientation of human existence. Forgetting Allah represents a failure to place God at the centre of consciousness, a perspective reflected in the Javanese manuscript's reading of QS. al-Nisā' [4]:43, which evaluates worship based on inner awareness rather than outward form.

Criticism of formalistic worship constitutes a central theme in Sufi discourse. Schimmel (2008) notes that Sufis consistently reject worship reduced to ritual obligation without inner engagement, as it may obstruct the relationship with God. This resonates with the Javanese tafsir manuscript's assertion that prayer without awareness places the worshipper in a state of *mendem*, as stated: '*lamun ora weruh karepe barang kang den ucapaken, iku maksib kaya wong mendem*' (if one does not understand the meaning of the words recited, one remains like a drunk person). The core problem, therefore, is not the absence of ritual, but the lack of spiritual orientation underlying it (Abdelali & Yasmine, 2018).

Schimmel (2008) further argues that worship devoid of the presence of the heart risks producing false piety—outward compliance without inner transformation. This view aligns with classical Islamic ethics, which regard worship as a means of moral formation. Yıldırım (2020) shows that figures such as al-Ghazālī and Ibn Sīnā understood worship as inseparable from ethical cultivation and character building.

Within this framework, *dhikrullah* and *muraqabah* function as correctives to rigid ritualism. Javanese tafsir manuscripts stress continuous awareness through the advice: '*mulane ojo sumebar, ilinga sira opan obah meneng iro iku ilinga maring dzat Allah*' (therefore, do not be negligent; remember Allah whether moving or still). Spiritual awareness is thus not confined to formal worship, but permeates daily life, echoing Schimmel (2008) and Mat Akhir & Sabjan (2015).

The pedagogical distinctiveness of Javanese tafsir manuscripts appears in their concrete moral instruction. Criticism of formalism is conveyed through practical reminders, such as the assertion that during bowing and prostration one must realise that '*dzat Allah ing kang ngeruku'aken lan ing kang nyujudaken*' (it is Allah who causes one to bow and prostrate). Such formulations indicate that the manuscript primarily operates within a pedagogical Sufistic framework aimed at cultivating devotional awareness among its readers, rather than advancing a systematic theological discourse. This approach reflects the archipelagic tradition of *tarbiyat al-qulub*, prioritising the education of the heart over mere normative transmission (Chittick, 2007; Dhofier, 1982).

Moreover, the manuscript links forgetfulness of Allah with ethical and social consequences. Inner negligence is seen as a source of *qaswah al-qalb* (hardness of heart), which manifests in social behaviour, aligning with Islamic anthropology that views ritual as a medium for ethical formation (Bowen, 1989, 2020).

In the context of Javanese Islam, this emphasis on inner awareness is deeply rooted in local religious culture. Woodward (1989) and Beatty (1999) show that Javanese religiosity demands harmony between outer practice and inner disposition through concepts such as *eling* and *waspada*. This manuscript demonstrates how such cultural ethos is integrated into Qur'anic interpretation, allowing criticism of ritual formalism to function as a revitalisation of the spirit of the shari'ah in communal religious life.

Nusantara Tafsir as Contextual Scientific Production

Conceptually, the results of this study confirm that Nusantara tafsir is an integral part of Islamic scientific knowledge developed through an independent epistemological and methodological foundation. Tafsir from the Nusantara region should not be understood as a peripheral derivation of Middle Eastern traditions, but as a product of Islamic knowledge formed through creative interaction between the Qur'an, classical Islamic intellectual heritage, and local socio-cultural conditions. Contextualisation, therefore, does not represent deviation from the Islamic exegetical tradition, but reflects the dynamic internal development of Islamic scholarship itself.

Contemporary studies demonstrate that Nusantara scholars consciously formulated interpretive patterns aligned with the spiritual and pedagogical needs of their communities. Baidowi and Ma'rufah (2025) show that pesantren-based interpretation traditions display high sensitivity to local contexts through language choice, cultural symbols, and ethical-spiritual emphasis. Similarly, Muhammad Alwi et al. (2025) reveal that the Bugis interpretive tradition at the As'adiyah pesantren employs local language and cultural frameworks not merely as communicative tools, but as epistemic strategies that connect Islamic teachings with local understanding. Tafsir thus functions not only as textual explanation, but as a medium for shaping lived religious consciousness.

From the perspective of intellectual history, the continuity of local-language interpretations in the archipelago is well established. Sariyati et al. (2020) note that vernacular tafsir developed from the early period of Islamisation in response to da'wah and educational needs in linguistically diverse societies. This is reinforced by Gusmian and Muttaqin (2024), whose studies of Javanese exegesis works such as *Tafsir al Iklil* and *Tafsir al Ibriz* demonstrate how Qur'anic values are articulated through Javanese cosmology and ethics.

The use of local language and cultural symbols thus reflects a conscious epistemological choice that centres the reader's experience as the starting point of interpretation.

This perspective corresponds with Ricci's (2011) concept of the 'Islamic literary space' in Southeast Asia, which views Islamic texts as undergoing reinterpretation and creative adaptation within local contexts. In this space, Nusantara scholars emerge as active producers of scientific authority rather than passive recipients of global Islamic centres. The Javanese tafsir manuscripts analysed here show how Qur'anic verses are interpreted through ethical, spiritual, and cultural sensitivity while remaining anchored in Islamic normative standards. A similar pattern is evident in Sufi-style tafsir traditions in the archipelago, where mystical contemplation connects revelation with lived spiritual experience (Mauluddin et al., 2025).

This interpretive model can also be read through a contextual hermeneutic framework. Sahiron Syamsuddin (2017) argues that Indonesian tafsir traditions integrate *al-ma'nā al-aṣli* (original meaning) with *al-ma'nā al-mu'āṣir* (contemporary relevance). The Javanese manuscripts develop this model by incorporating psycho-spiritual dimensions as part of the hermeneutic context. Context, therefore, includes not only social-historical factors but also inner religious orientation, a characteristic shared by culturally sensitive Nusantara tafsir traditions (Abidin et al., 2024).

Within Javanese Islamic studies, the integration of inner awareness and outward practice constitutes a deeply rooted pattern. Woodward (1989) and Beatty (1999) show that Javanese religiosity prioritises inner harmony, divine awareness, and social ethics. Consequently, Qur'anic verses on worship are understood not merely as legal norms but as pathways for spiritual transformation. This orientation intersects with the broader idea of Islam Nusantara, which emphasises moderation, inclusiveness, and appreciation of local wisdom as components of sustainable religious life (Thohir, 2022).

Thus, local interpretations reflected in Javanese tafsir manuscripts do not merely mediate between Qur'anic normativity and local culture, but expand the horizon of global Qur'anic studies. They offer an alternative epistemic model for understanding how revelation is internalised and practised in non-Arab Muslim societies. In contemporary Qur'anic scholarship, Nusantara tafsir should therefore be recognised as a significant contribution to the development of diverse, context-sensitive, and experientially grounded interpretive traditions.

Thus, reading Javanese tafsir manuscripts on forgetting Allah affirms tafsir as a medium of spiritual and moral transformation, directing reflection not only toward textual meaning, but toward the quality of worship awareness and its ethical consequences.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the Javanese Pegon tafsir manuscript from the pesantren milieu in Lamongan offers an interpretation of QS. al-Nisā' [4]:43 that moves beyond a normative-legalistic reading. The term *sukarā* is interpreted not merely as physical intoxication, but as spiritual negligence marked by forgetfulness of Allah and the absence of awareness in worship. The phrase *ḥattā ta'lamū mā taqūlūn* functions as the primary indicator of worship consciousness, whereby prayer performed without understanding its meaning is regarded as a form of spiritual intoxication. Consequently, the quality of worship is defined not only by outward validity, but by inner presence, sustained remembrance of Allah, and awareness of human dependence on divine will.

Academically, this study reinforces Nusantara tafsir as a contextual and reflective mode of Qur'anic hermeneutics. Javanese interpretation is positioned as an expression of *taṣannuṣ 'amali*, integrating Sufi exegesis with local interpretive traditions to cultivate spiritual

awareness and worship ethics. By bridging Sufi and Javanese tafsir in the reading of QS. al-Nisā' [4]:43, this research addresses a gap in scholarship that often treats Sufism and Nusantara exegesis separately, while offering a Qur'anic critique of formal ritualism in contemporary religiosity.

Nevertheless, this study is limited to a single manuscript and verse, restricting the scope of its generalisation. It also does not examine how this interpretation is transmitted or practised within pesantren communities. Future research may expand this inquiry through comparative manuscript studies, regional analyses of Nusantara tafsir, or by combining textual analysis with ethnographic approaches to further explore the relationship between tafsir, Sufism, and worship consciousness.

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