

**THE TAUHID OF IMAM AL-ASY'ARI IN THE MALAY TRADITION: AN  
ANALYSIS OF FARIDAT AL-FARĀID BY SHEIKH WAN AHMAD BIN  
MUHAMMAD ZAYN**

**Affan Sisaeng<sup>1</sup>, Zuherni AB<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Khok Pho, Patani Thailand

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh, Indonesia

Email: 70304049@student.ar-raniry.ac.id

**Abstract**

This article aims to analyze the concept of *tauhid* (Islamic monotheism) according to Imam Al-Asy'ari as elaborated in the book *Faridat al-Farāid fi ilmi al-'Aqāid* by Sheikh Wan Ahmad bin Muhammad Zayn, highlighting its relevance to the Islamic educational tradition in the Malay world. The study employs a descriptive-analytical method using a qualitative approach grounded in library research. The *Faridat al-Farāid* serves as the primary source, while secondary sources include theological references and scholarly works related to Imam Al-Asy'ari's concept of *tauhid*. The findings indicate that Imam Al-Asy'ari's *tauhid* as presented in the *Faridat al-Farāid* encompasses three main aspects—*dzāt* (essence), *sifat* (attributes), and *af'al* (acts)—which are explained through 13 obligatory attributes, 13 impossible attributes, and one permissible attribute of Allah SWT. The book adopts a detailed (*tafsili*) approach to strengthen the understanding of *tauhid* while bridging textual and rational arguments in line with the Asy'ari school of thought. Furthermore, the book's relevance lies in its role as a theological guide for traditional Islamic education in the Malay world, integrating textual and rational pedagogies. This study concludes that the *Faridat al-Farāid* not only reflects Imam Al-Asy'ari's theological thought but also significantly contributes to Islamic education. Future studies are recommended to explore the application of Asy'ariyah theology in addressing contemporary challenges.

**Keywords:** *Tauhid*, Imam Al-Asy'ari, *Faridat al-Farāid*, attributes of Allah

**Abstrak**

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis konsep tauhid Imam Asy'ari sebagaimana diuraikan dalam kitab *Faridat al-Farāid fi ilmi al-'Aqāid* karya Syekh Wan Ahmad bin Muhammad Zayn, dengan menyoroti relevansi ajarannya dalam tradisi pendidikan Islam di dunia Melayu. Penelitian menggunakan metode deskriptif analitis dengan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis kajian pustaka. Kitab *Faridat al-Farāid* menjadi sumber primer, sedangkan sumber sekunder berupa referensi teologis dan karya ilmiah terkait tauhid Imam Asy'ari. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tauhid Imam Asy'ari dalam kitab *Faridat al-Farāid* terdiri atas tiga aspek utama—*dzāt*, *sifat*, dan *af'al*—yang dijelaskan melalui tiga belas sifat wajib, tiga belas sifat mustahil, dan satu sifat jaiz bagi Allah SWT. Kitab ini menggunakan pendekatan *tafsili* (rinci) untuk memperkuat pemahaman umat Islam terhadap tauhid, sekaligus menjembatani dalil naqli dan akli sesuai dengan mazhab Asy'ari. Selain itu, relevansi kitab ini terlihat pada kemampuannya menjadi pedoman pendidikan teologi Islam tradisional di dunia Melayu melalui pengajaran berbasis integrasi dalil tekstual dan rasional. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa kitab *Faridat al-Farāid* tidak hanya merefleksikan pemikiran teologis Imam Asy'ari, tetapi juga

memberikan kontribusi signifikan dalam pendidikan Islam. Kajian ini merekomendasikan penelitian lebih lanjut terkait aplikasi pemikiran Asy'ariyah dalam menghadapi tantangan kontemporer.

**Kata Kunci:** Tauhid, Imam Asy'ari, *Farīdat al-Farāid*, sifat-sifat Allah

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## A. Introduction

Tauhid (Islamic monotheism) constitutes the fundamental foundation of Islamic teachings, emphasizing the oneness of Allah SWT as the sole entity worthy of worship (Bilal, 1994). This concept is not only the core of faith but also serves as the theological and practical basis for Muslims in their daily lives. Within the Islamic sciences, tauhid is studied through various disciplines, such as ilmu kalam (theology), ilmu aqaid (creed), or ilmu ushuluddin (principles of religion), aiming to strengthen the conviction in Allah SWT's perfect attributes. Tauhid in Islamic thought is not merely a conceptual belief but carries profound implications for human relationships with their Creator and with fellow human beings (Nata, 2008; Rahman, 2013).

From the perspective of Imam Abu Hasan al-Asy'ari, tauhid holds a deep meaning encompassing three dimensions: *dzāt* (the essence of Allah), *sifat* (the attributes of Allah), and *af'al* (the acts of Allah) (Kounsar, 2016). According to him, Allah SWT is *wahid* (One), incomparable to creation in any respect—whether in His *dzāt*, *sifat*, or *af'al* (Zain, 2018). In this context, tauhid is further classified into tauhid rububiyah (acknowledging Allah as the Creator and Sustainer), uluhiyah (affirming that Allah alone is worthy of worship), and asma wa sifat (believing in the perfect names and attributes of Allah). This classification reinforces the understanding of tauhid as the essence of faith in Islam, as explained in the Qur'anic chapters Al-Ikhlās and Ash-Shura (Muda, 2019).

The theological framework of Imam Asy'ari has become a principal reference for the Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah tradition (Hasyim, 2005). His views were not only a response to the theological challenges of his time, such as Mu'tazilah and Jabariyah doctrines, but also synthesized textual and rational arguments to deepen the understanding of tauhid (Rabbani, 2019). He emphasized that Allah's attributes are *qadīm* (eternal) and not *muh'dath* (new), thus avoiding any resemblance to created beings. This perspective is

elaborated through the 13 obligatory attributes of Allah, which are central to the Asy'ariyah teachings and are detailed in numerous classical works (Ibrahim & Basmeih, 2001).

In the Malay world, the tauhid thought of Imam Asy'ari is predominantly taught through the book *Faridat al-Farāid fi ilmi al-'Aqāid* by Sheikh Wan Ahmad bin Muhammad Zayn Al-Fatani (Rashidi Wahab et al., 2013). This book has not only served as a primary guide for traditional Islamic educational institutions, such as Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) in Patani and other Malay regions, but has also become a key reference in the study of ilmu ushuluddin (principles of religion) (al-Fatani, 2002). *Faridat al-Farāid* specifically emphasizes the discussion of tauhid in three aspects—dzāt, sifat, and af'al—which reflects the systematic methodology of the Asy'ari school. The book also contains an in-depth explanation of the 13 obligatory attributes of Allah and their opposites, presented in a detailed (tafsili) manner to facilitate understanding and teaching (Zayn, 2021)

This study aims to examine the concept of tauhid as articulated by Imam Asy'ari in the book *Faridat al-Farāid fi ilmi al-'Aqāid*. The central research questions focus on the following: What is the general concept of tauhid according to Imam Asy'ari? How is this concept explained in *Faridat al-Farāid*? Using a descriptive-analytical method, this study seeks not only to provide a deeper understanding of tauhid from the perspective of Imam Asy'ari but also to highlight the relevance of his teachings in the context of traditional Islamic education in the Malay world.

## **B. Method**

This study employs a descriptive-analytical method with a qualitative approach to analyze the concept of tauhid as presented by Imam Asy'ari in the book *Faridat al-Farāid fi ilmi al-'Aqāid* by Sheikh Wan Ahmad bin Muhammad Zayn Al-Fatani. This method is chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of the text by systematically and comprehensively examining the data and drawing conclusions based on relevant content analysis. The type of research conducted is library research, which relies on primary data sources in the form of *Faridat al-Farāid* and secondary sources, including books, articles, and other scholarly works that support the analysis of the concept of tauhid.

The data collection process adopts a documentation approach, encompassing identification, classification, and interpretation of texts. In the initial phase, the researcher conducts a symbolic reading of *Faridat al-Farāid* to understand its structure and main themes. Subsequently, a semantic reading is performed, analyzing the essence of each section related to tauhid. The data collected is then organized and recorded using data cards, either through direct quotations or by summarizing the main ideas from the text to facilitate analysis. To analyze the data, this study applies two primary methods: descriptive analysis and content analysis. The descriptive method is used to outline the concept of tauhid as elaborated in *Faridat al-Farāid*, while content analysis is employed to interpret the theological messages conveyed in the text. This analysis involves identifying patterns, categories, and relevant themes, such as the obligatory, impossible, and permissible attributes of Allah and how these concepts are linked to the Asy'ariyah approach. This method allows the researcher to present a comprehensive interpretation while also highlighting the book's relevance to Islamic scholarly traditions.

## C. Result and Discussion

### 1. The Concept of Tauhid According to Imam Asy'ari

Imam Abu Hasan al-Asy'ari made significant contributions to establishing the theological foundations for Muslims through his concept of tauhid, which is divided into three main aspects: dzāt (essence), sifat (attributes), and af'al (acts) (Wahid et al., 1994). His understanding of Allah's dzāt emphasizes that Allah SWT is One, indivisible, and entirely distinct from His creation. In Asy'ari's view, Allah SWT is not only utterly incomparable to His creation, but His existence is independent of space, time, or any external entity. Asy'ari bases this perspective on Qur'anic verse Ash-Shura: 11: "*There is nothing like unto Him.*" This principle, known as *tanzīh* (negation of similarity), lies at the core of Asy'ari's tauhid. This assertion was particularly crucial during Asy'ari's time, when anthropomorphic interpretations of Allah were prevalent among certain groups, leading to misconceptions about His dzāt. By contrast, Asy'ari advocated a rational approach that remained consistent with revelation to articulate Allah's uniqueness (Adryan & Santalia, 2022; Watt, 2019)i.

Regarding Allah's sifat, Imam Asy'ari asserted that His attributes are eternal (*azali*), everlasting (*qadīm*), and inseparable from His dzāt. According to Asy'ari, Allah

possesses 13 obligatory attributes that must be explicitly acknowledged by every Muslim. These include *wujūd* (existence), *qidam* (pre-eternity), *baqā'* (eternity), and *wahdāniyah* (oneness). These attributes are explained in the book *Faridat al-Farāid fi ilmi al-'Aqāid* as attributes that do not imply *tasybīh* (resemblance) to creation. For example, Allah's attribute of *qudrat* (power) cannot be compared to human power, as Allah's power is absolute and limitless. This is affirmed in Qur'anic verse Al-Baqarah: 20: "*Indeed, Allah is competent over all things.*" This distinction directly responds to the Mu'tazilah school, which denied the existence of Allah's attributes, arguing that they constituted non-eternal additions. Asy'ari refuted this view by arguing that Allah's attributes are intrinsic to His eternal and perfect *dzāt* (Rabbani, 2019). Concerning *af'al*, Imam Asy'ari emphasized that all actions occurring in the universe are creations of Allah SWT, including human actions. In Asy'ari theology, the concept of *kasb* (acquisition) serves as a middle ground between Allah's absolute will and human accountability. According to Asy'ari, humans have the ability to choose their actions, but the outcomes ultimately rest within Allah's will. This is highlighted in Qur'anic verse Al-Buruj: 16: "*And Allah does what He wills.*" This understanding distinguishes Asy'ari theology from the extremes of Jabariyah, which denies human agency entirely, and Qadariyah, which overemphasizes human free will at the expense of Allah's sovereignty (Adryan & Santalia, 2022; Nasution, 2002). Asy'ari's approach provides a balanced solution that respects the interplay between divine will and human responsibility (Masrukhin, 2021).

Furthermore, Asy'ari's tauhid not only emphasizes Allah's oneness but also establishes a methodological foundation for understanding the relationship between revelation and reason. Imam Asy'ari integrated *dalil naqli* (scriptural evidence) and *dalil akli* (rational evidence) to strengthen his arguments, rendering his concept of tauhid applicable across both traditional and modern contexts. For instance, the principles of *tanzīh* and *tafwīdh* (entrusting the understanding of divine attributes to Allah) allow interpretative flexibility without compromising the foundational aspects of revelation (Shah, 2018; Watt, 2019). This perspective positions Asy'ariyah as a moderate school of thought, which continues to serve as a primary reference for Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah, as seen in the detailed exposition of the 13 obligatory attributes of Allah in *Faridat al-Farāid fi ilmi al-'Aqāid* and their relevance to daily life (Zayn, 2021).

## 1. The Structure and Approach of the Book in Presenting Tauhid

The book *Faridat al-Farāid fī ilmi al-‘Aqāid* by Sheikh Wan Ahmad bin Muhammad Zayn is structured to facilitate readers' understanding of the core teachings of tauhid according to the Asy'ari school of thought. The book begins with an introduction to tauhid as the foundation of Islamic faith, followed by discussions on the obligatory (*wajib*), impossible (*mustahil*), and permissible (*jaiz*) attributes of Allah SWT. Using a systematic approach, the book emphasizes three main aspects of tauhid: dzāt (essence), sifat (attributes), and af'al (acts of Allah), as outlined by Asy'ari. This structure allows readers to comprehend the attributes of Allah in detail and understand their connection to creation. For example, in explaining the aspect of dzāt, the book prioritizes the principle of *tanzīh* (negation of resemblance to creation), as mentioned in Qur'anic verse Ash-Shura: 11: "*There is nothing like unto Him.*" This scriptural evidence is supported by rational arguments asserting that Allah SWT, as the Creator of all things, cannot resemble His creation (Makdisi, 1963; Nasution, 2002).

The book's approach aligns with Asy'ari's methodology, which harmonizes *dalil naqli* (scriptural evidence) with *dalil akli* (rational evidence) to strengthen faith. For instance, Allah's attribute of *wahdānīyah* (oneness) is explained through Qur'anic evidence from Surah Al-Ikhlās: 1–4: "*Say, He is Allah, [Who is] One. Allah, the Eternal Refuge.*" Rationally, the book argues that the existence of multiple gods would result in chaos and disarray in the universe, contradicting the observable order of the cosmos (Anwar, 2021; Masturi, 2015). This balanced approach not only reinforces the theological foundation of Muslims but also ensures that the teachings are relevant for educational settings, particularly in traditional Islamic institutions. The structure of the book facilitates systematic instruction in Islamic boarding schools (*pondok pesantren*) and other religious institutions in the Malay world (al-Fatani, 2002; Rahman, 2013).

Additionally, the book excels in its *tafsili* (detailed) approach to discussing Allah's attributes. This thorough explanation provides not only theoretical understanding but also instills a deep conviction in tauhid. For example, the attribute *mukhalafah lil-hawādith* (being different from creation) is explained through the Qur'anic verse Al-Ikhlās: 4: "*And there is none comparable to Him,*" and is supported by the argument that anything resembling creation is inherently finite, whereas Allah SWT is absolute and infinite (Hassan Basri et al., 2019)

### 3. Emphasis on the Attributes of Allah in *Faridat al-Farāid*

One of the key strengths of *Faridat al-Farāid* is its detailed explanation of Allah's attributes, which include 13 obligatory attributes (*sifat wajib*), 13 impossible attributes (*sifat mustahil*), and one permissible attribute (*sifat jaiz*). The emphasis on the obligatory attributes of Allah, such as *wujūd* (existence), *qidam* (pre-eternity), and *baqā'* (eternity), forms the cornerstone of tauhid as presented in this book. For instance, the attribute *wujūd* is explained using Qur'anic evidence from Surah Al-Baqarah: 255: "*Allah, there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence.*" This scriptural argument is complemented by rational evidence, demonstrating that the existence of creation necessitates the presence of a First Cause, which is Allah SWT (Zayn, 2021)

The book also gives significant attention to the attribute of *wahdāniyah* (oneness), affirming Allah's oneness in *dzāt*, *sifat*, and *af'al*. The concept is articulated as the belief that Allah SWT is not composed of parts and has no partners in His sovereignty. Rationally, the argument presented is that the existence of more than one god would lead to conflicting wills, which is impossible in a cosmos characterized by order and harmony. This point is reinforced by Qur'anic verse Al-Anbiya: 22: "*Had there been within the heavens and earth gods besides Allah, they both would have been ruined.*" This balanced approach offers a strong foundation for affirming Allah's oneness through both rational and textual evidence.

Furthermore, the book discusses the relationship between Allah's attributes and His acts (*af'al*). The attribute *qudrat* (power), for example, is linked to the creation of the universe. The book asserts that Allah's power is absolute and unlimited, as affirmed in Qur'anic verse Al-Baqarah: 20: "*Indeed, Allah is competent over all things.*" In this context, the attribute *qudrat* not only illustrates Allah's greatness but also serves as the basis for the belief that everything occurring in the universe is under His control ((al-Fatani, 2002; Rabbani, 2019).

### 4. Relevance of the Concept in Islamic Education and the Malay Tradition

The book *Faridat al-Farāid* not only contributes theologically but also plays a significant role in shaping the tradition of Islamic education in the Malay world. As one of the main references in teaching *ilmu ushuluddin* (principles of religion), the book has been widely used in Islamic boarding schools (*pondok pesantren*), mosques, and other

Islamic educational institutions. Its emphasis on the obligatory attributes of Allah provides a solid foundation for understanding Islamic theology, while its *tafsili* (detailed) approach to explaining these attributes simplifies the learning process, particularly for novice students (al-Fatani, 2002; Zayn, 2021).

Moreover, the use of the Malay language in the book reflects the author's ability to bridge classical Islamic intellectual traditions with local needs. This approach has significantly strengthened the Islamic identity of the Malay community, integrating Asy'ariyah theology into their spiritual and cultural practices. In this context, *Faridat al-Farāid* transcends being a mere theological text, becoming a guide for life that merges belief with worship practices and moral conduct.

The book's relevance is further evident in its ability to address contemporary theological challenges, such as the rising skepticism toward divine doctrines in modern society. By offering a rational approach to tauhid, the book effectively connects traditional theology with the intellectual needs of contemporary society. This demonstrates the flexibility of Asy'ariyah teachings, which remain relevant to present-day contexts.

#### **D. Conclusion**

This study examines the concept of tauhid as articulated by Imam Asy'ari and elaborated in the book *Faridat al-Farāid fi ilmi al-'Aqāid* by Sheikh Wan Ahmad bin Muhammad Zayn . The findings demonstrate that Imam Asy'ari's concept of tauhid, which focuses on three main aspects—*dzāt* (essence), *sifat* (attributes), and *af'al* (acts)—constitutes the core of Islamic theological teachings in the Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah tradition. These three aspects complement one another to affirm the oneness of Allah SWT, both in His essential nature and in His governance of all creation.

The book *Faridat al-Farāid* makes an important contribution by systematically explaining tauhid according to the Asy'ari school of thought. Dividing Allah's attributes into 13 obligatory attributes, 13 impossible attributes, and one permissible attribute, the book effectively conveys the teachings of tauhid in a comprehensive and detailed (*tafsili*) manner. This approach strengthens Muslims' understanding of Allah's oneness while addressing theological challenges of its time, such as the Mu'tazilah and Jabariyah perspectives.



The relevance of this book also lies in its ability to bridge classical theological concepts with the local needs of Malay society. Through its use of the Malay language and integration of *dalil naqli* (textual evidence) and *dalil akli* (rational evidence), the book serves as a key reference for traditional Islamic education, especially in Islamic boarding schools (*pondok pesantren*) and mosques. This approach not only reinforces theological beliefs but also provides a moral and spiritual foundation applicable to the lives of Muslims today.

In conclusion, the concept of tauhid according to Imam Asy'ari as presented in *Faridat al-Farāid fi ilmi al-'Aqāid* synthesizes textual and rational approaches, offering a strong foundation for faith and religious practice. This study contributes to understanding of the relevance of Asy'ariyah theology in Islamic education while opening avenues for further research into the application of Asy'ari thought in addressing contemporary challenges, such as pluralism, theological skepticism, and the modernization of Islamic education.

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