Islamic Studies Review

From *Mā Warāʾ al-Nahār* to the Southeast Asian Archipelago: Tracing Ibn Sīnā's Intellectual Connections

https://doi.org/10.56529/isr.v4i2.516

Mulyadhi Kartanegara
State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia
mulyadhi.kartanegara@uinjkt.ac.id

Abstract

It is commonly assumed that major thinkers (such as al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, and al-Bīrūnī) were Arabs, whereas in fact, they originated from Central Asia. Considering the profound contributions these thinkers made not only to the intellectual heritage of the Islamic world but also to global thought, scholarly engagement with their works—whether individually or collectively—is of critical importance. Regrettably, rigorous studies on their biographies and intellectual legacies remain limited, resulting in a lack of widespread recognition of their significant contributions among Muslim communities. Therefore, in this paper, I feel compelled to undertake a focused study on a prominent intellectual figure from the 10th–11th century in Central Asia: Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037), who was born and flourished in the Central Asian region and its surroundings, and who made significant contributions to the development of philosophical, scientific, and mystical thought—not only in the Middle East as commonly thought but also in the Malay World (*Nusantara*).

Keywords: Ibn Sīnā, *waḥdat al-wujūd*, *wājib al-wujūd*, intellectual legacy, al-Ghazālī, Ibn ʿArabī

Introduction

The cultural legacy of Transoxiana (*Mā warāʾ al-nahār*) is concerningly understudied. This region is home to a vast reservoir of intellectual and religious legacies that have yet to be fully explored, largely due to prevailing misconceptions and inadequate historical perspectives. For too long, the immense cultural prestige of Persia (modern-day Iran) has overshadowed the distinct heritage of Transoxiana, resulting in the latter receding from scholarly attention. However, a more contextualized examination reveals that this region has an exceptionally rich legacy. Prominent figures such as al-Fārābī, al-Bīrūnī, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, and most notably, Ibn Sīnā, are frequently subsumed under the general label of "Persian." Yet, within the framework of their own time and geography, they should be properly understood as *native sons* of *Mā warāʾ al-nahār.* Accordingly, this paper aims to foreground the towering figure of Ibn Sīnā (980–1037 CE). Born in the village of Afshana near Bukhara—in what is today Uzbekistan—he is a quintessential representative of Transoxianan intellect. His scholarly contributions and enduring influence have shaped not only the Islamic intellectual tradition but also the trajectory of Western thought.

This study is guided by a specific set of historical and intellectual interrogations. Primarily, it seeks to reconstruct the historical context of *Mā warāʾ al-nahār* during Ibn Sīnā's lifetime, asking why he serves as the most significant representative of this milieu. The inquiry traces the trajectory of his life, examining the volatile political settings in which his major works were composed. From this biographical foundation, the paper explores the processes by which his teachings were disseminated across the Islamic world—specifically focusing on the reception in Iran, Transoxiana itself, and al-Andalus.

Crucially, this research extends the analysis to the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago (*Nusantara*). It investigates how Muslim scholars in this distant region encountered later receptions of the Avicennian thought, identifying the nature of this intellectual exchange in both the premodern and modern periods. To ensure analytical depth, the scope of this study is delimited. While acknowledging Ibn Sīnā's vast corpus, the discussion is confined to his contributions in philosophy and the natural sciences, excluding his medical works which merit separate specialized study. Furthermore, the analysis focuses exclusively on his reception within the Islamic world, setting aside his impact on the Latin West. Regarding

the transmission of his thought to the Malay world, the paper concentrates on two principal intellectual channels: the al-Ghazālī tradition and the Ibn ʿArabī tradition.

This paper seeks to map the intellectual influence of Ibn Sīnā by tracing the transmission of his thought through established scholarly networks. This approach entails the identification and analysis of key figures and primary texts, elucidating the specific mechanisms by which Avicennian teachings travelled between regions. The objective is to understand not merely *what* was transmitted, but *how* these ideas were studied, accepted, or critically engaged by certain local scholars in diverse cultural contexts.

The Intellectual Legacy of *Mā warāʾ al-nahār:* The Age of Ibn Sīnā

The Historical Setting

Any serious engagement with the intellectual heritage of Transoxiana (*Mā warāʾ al-nahār*) must begin by situating it within the socio-political context of Ibn Sīnā's lifetime (980–1037 CE). This was a world vastly different from today's geopolitical landscape, defined by fluid borders and the rapid rise and fall of dynasties.

Ibn Sīnā was born in Bukhara, the jewel of the Samanid Empire (819–1005). At its height, the empire governed a vast territory across Central Asia, encompassing modern Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, and parts of Iran and Kazakhstan. Under Samanid patronage, Bukhara flourished as a rival to Baghdad, becoming a premier center of Islamic learning and culture.

However, the political climate was marked by intense volatility. By the time Ibn Sīnā reached adulthood, the Samanid dynasty was collapsing under pressure from the rising Ghaznavid power. This geopolitical fracture forced the young scholar into a life of movement. He initially relocated to Jurganj (modern Urgench) in Khwarizm, a region then governed by the Ma'munid dynasty. The Ma'munids distinguished themselves through a remarkable commitment to the cultivation of knowledge and the patronage of scholars (Goodman, 1992).

Yet, this golden age in Khwarizm was fleeting. When Mahmud of Ghazna annexed the region in the early 11th century, dissolving Ma'munid rule, the era of stability ended. Ibn Sīnā, declining an invitation to join the Ghaznavid court, instead

sought the patronage of the Buyid rulers. This decision initiated a long odyssey through Rayy (under Majd al-Dawlah), Hamadan (under Shams al-Dawlah), and finally Isfahan (under ʿAlāʾ al-Dawlah), where he remained until the city fell to Mahmud's son around 1036–1037. It was amidst this constant political turbulence that Ibn Sīnā lived, wrote, and eventually died in Hamadan.

Ibn Sīnā: The Philosopher Par Excellence

Among the constellation of thinkers and scholars who emerged from the intellectual ferment of Transoxiana, Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) stands as its most luminous figure. To be sure, the region produced a formidable array of intellectuals. Al-Fārābī (d. 950), for instance, born in what is now Kazakhstan, laid the groundwork for Islamic political philosophy. Abū al-Ḥasan al-ʿĀmirī served the Samanid court with distinction as a librarian to Nūḥ ibn Manṣūr, while figures like al-Bīrūnī, Miskawayh, and Abū Sahl al-Masīḥī represented the pinnacle of scientific and historical inquiry.

Yet, for reasons of both scope and depth, Ibn Sīnā surpasses them as the quintessential embodiment of the region's spirit. His impact on the history of ideas—both within Islamic civilization and the Latin West—was profound. He was not merely a transmitter of Aristotelian thought but, in the annals of Islamic philosophy, a creative architect of a new worldview. He rigorously reformulated metaphysics, psychology, and logic, integrating them into a unified system grounded in the Oneness of God (*tawḥīd*). For these reasons, I propose Ibn Sīnā as the quintessential representative of the intellectual tradition of Transoxiana—a tradition that shaped, and was shaped by, the highest aspirations of Islamic thought.

The Life of the Sage

Ibn Sīnā was born in 980 CE in Afshana, a district of Bukhara, where his father served as a Samanid governor. His education began early and was exhaustive; by the age of ten, he had memorized the Qur'an and was already engaging adults in debates on theology and the soul, such as one with an Ismaʿili.

His teenage years were marked by a voracious intellectual appetite. He studied mathematics with an Indian vegetable merchant and learned the basics of

philosophy from a private tutor, ʿAbdallāh al-Naṭīlī. However, the student quickly outpaced the master. After grasping the basics of Euclid's *Elements* and Ptolemy's *Almagest*, Ibn Sīnā found al-Naṭīlī unable to answer his probing questions. Following his teacher's advice, he continued his studies independently, using available commentaries for rational and scientific subjects. Later, al- Naṭīlī left Ibn Sīnā for Gurganj (Ibn Sīnā, 1974).

Remarkably, Ibn Sīnā was largely self-taught in medicine. He famously claimed that medicine was "not a difficult science," mastering it by age 16 to the point where senior physicians sought his guidance. His proficiency was such that when the ruler Amīr Nūḥ ibn Manṣūr fell ill and court doctors failed, the teenage Ibn Sīnā effected a cure. In reward, he was granted access to the royal library—a treasure trove that fueled his early writings.

During these years, he authored several treatises, including *Maqālah fī al-Nafs ʿalā Sunnat al-Ikhtiṣār* for Abū al-Ḥasan al-ʿArūdī, which he dedicated to the Amir. In 1001, he also authored a summary (al-ʿArūdī), and wrote *al-Ḥashl wa al-Maḥshūl* and *Kitāb al-Birr wa al-Ithm* for Abū Bakr al-Baṭāqī (Gutas, 1988). Not long after, he was transferred by the Samanid ruler to Jurganj, capital of Khwarizm (modern Urgench, Turkmenistan), a major center of learning. There, he joined prominent scholars like al-Bīrūnī, Abū Sahl al-Masīḥī, Abū Khammār, al-Thaʿālibī, and al-ʿArrāq. But the conquest of Khwarizm by Mahmud of Ghazna shattered this intellectual haven. Demanding that scholars relocate to his capital, Mahmud effectively forced Ibn Sīnā—who refused to go—into hiding.

In 1012, after a long and arduous journey—during which al-Masīḥī lost his life—Ibn Sīnā arrived in Jurgan to seek protection under Sultan Qabus. However, the Sultan was imprisoned and died in 1013. Ibn Sīnā, seriously ill, had to return to Jurjan at the end of that year, where he stayed in a house offered by a friend named Abū Muḥammad al-Shīrāzī. He dedicated two books to al-Shīrāzī: *Kitāb al-Irshād al-Kulliyyah* and *Kitāb al-Mabdaʾ wa al-Maʿād* (Goodman, 1992). In Jurjan, he met Abū ʿUbayd al-Jūzjānī, who would become his most loyal student. Together they studied and wrote several works, including a summary of the *Almagest* and a commentary on logic. It was in Jurjan that Ibn Sīnā began writing his famous *Canon of Medicine* (*al-Qānūn fī al-Ṭibb*) (Ibn Sīnā, 2005).

Feeling the need to seek a new patron, in 1013 Ibn Sīnā travelled to Rayy to join the young ruler Majd al-Dawlah. However, due to Mahmud's threats, the following

year he moved to the safer city of Qazwin. He did not stay long and then moved to Hamadan, ruled by Shams al-Dawlah, brother of Majd al-Dawlah of the Buyid dynasty. After successfully curing the Amir's illness, Ibn Sīnā became close to him and was appointed vizier. He even accompanied the Amir on military campaigns. While in Hamadan (1015–1022), Ibn Sīnā completed *The Canon of Medicine*, which he had begun in Jurjan (1012) and continued in Rayy (1014).

In 1020, encouraged by his students—especially al-Jūzjānī—he began writing *Kitāb al-Shifā'* (Ibn Sīnā, 2005) committing to write two pages each day before attending his duties as vizier. While in hiding at a friend's home (a pharmacist), he continued the work intensively. He reportedly asked for paper and ink, and in two days wrote 20 major sections, each 24–25 pages. In a few weeks, he wrote up to 50 pages per day, completing the metaphysics and physics (except zoology and botany) of *al-Shifā'*, and began the logic and general introduction (Goodman, 1992).

When his secret ties with Alā' al-Dawlah were discovered by the Hamadan court, he was imprisoned in a fortress in Jarra, about 55 miles from Hamadan. For four months there, he wrote *Hidāyah* (Ibn Sīnā, 1965), *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* (an allegory of the rational soul), a treatise on colic, and another on cardiac therapies (Ibn Sīnā, 1984). Eventually, he left Hamadan with his brother, a loyal student, and two servants, disguised as Sufis, and moved to Isfahan. There, he was warmly welcomed by Alā' al-Dawlah, the Kakuyid ruler.

In Isfahan, Ibn Sīnā found a peaceful and intellectually conducive environment that lasted between the years 1023 and 1030. He used this time productively, continuing his writing and refining *al-Shifā,'* completing the logic section and adding commentaries on Ptolemy's *Almagest* and Euclid's *Elements*. He served as vizier until the end of his life. While accompanying Alā' al-Dawlah on a journey to Shapur Khwast, he completed *al-Shifā.* This work consists of nine volumes on logic, eight on natural sciences, four on mathematics (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music), and a major volume on metaphysics.

It was a highly-esteemed work, even Sultan Muhammad Tughluq of Delhi purchased a copy written in exquisite calligraphy for 200,000 gold dinars. Soon after, Ibn Sīnā began *al-Najāt* (Ibn Sīnā, 1985) in 1026, finishing it in 1027. At the Amir's request, he built observatories—not for astrological purposes (which he opposed)—but to clarify inaccuracies in the calendar. He also wrote a popular

Persian philosophical summary titled *Dānishnāmah-yi ʿAlāʾī* (*Book of Knowledge for Alaʾi al-Dawlah*). Another major work of this period was *Kitāb al-Inṣāf* (The Book of Impartial Judgement), completed over the last six months of 1029. This book dealt with 28,000 philosophical and interpretive issues from Aristotelian texts and commentaries (Goodman, 1995, Gutas, 1988).

During this time, he also wrote *Ḥikmat al-Mashriqiyyīn* (Eastern Philosophy), which Henry Corbin saw as a precursor to the Illuminationist philosophy (Corbin, 1980). He wrote another significant book, *Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*, which was considered his most original and well-developed work, intended only for capable and worthy readers—not the general public (Shams C. Inati, 2014). However, his life of relative comfort in Isfahan was disrupted. In 1029, Mahmud of Ghazna conquered Rayy and burned the Buyid palace library. Unsatisfied with tribute, his son Masʿūd sent envoys to Isfahan, who were repelled by Alāʾ al-Dawlah. Masʿūd then launched an attack, forcing the Amir to flee. In 1030, while fleeing Isfahan with the Amir, Ibn Sīnā's belongings were looted near the city gates. *Kitāb al-Inṣāf* was lost. Finding it too difficult to rewrite, Ibn Sīnā focused instead on completing *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*.

This turbulent lifestyle eventually took its toll. During the campaigns of 1034, while accompanying his patron ʻAlāʾ al-Dawlah in flight from the Ghaznavid army, Ibn Sīnā suffered a severe attack of colic. He battled the illness for two years, attempting to treat himself, but his health was fading. In June 1037, the great philosopher passed away during a campaign march. He was buried in Hamadan, leaving behind a legacy that would define the intellectual landscape of the Islamic world and beyond for centuries to come.

Ibn Sīnā's Influence in the Islamic World

While Ibn Sīnā's intellectual stature casts a long shadow over the history of Western philosophy, his most profound and immediate impact was felt within the Islamic world. Although a discussion of his reception in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago (*Nusantara*) is reserved for a later section, it is essential first to map the contours of his influence across the three primary terrains of Islamic civilization: Persia, Central Asia, and Andalusia. In these regions, his work did not merely survive; it became the central axis around which subsequent philosophy and science revolved.

Ibn Sīnā's philosophical legacy was most immediately and intensely felt in Persia. Following his death in 1037 CE, the preservation of his thought fell to his immediate followers, most notably Abū ʿUbayd al-Jūzjānī (d. 1070). As Ibn Sīnā's devoted disciple, al-Jūzjānī not only transmitted his master's corpus but also completed his autobiography, ensuring the survival of his personal history alongside the philosophical (Ibn Sīnā, 1974). These foundations were built upon by Bahmanyār al-Azdī (d. 1066), whose major work, *al-Taḥṣīl*, systematically organized Avicennian thought into a teachable curriculum (Bahmanyar, 1996).

However, this dominance soon invited formidable challenges. The great theologian Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) engaged deeply with Avicennian philosophy, translating the *Dānishnāmah-yi ʿAlāʾī* into ʿArabīc as *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah*. As Lenn Goodman (1992; cf. Griffel 2009, Treiger 2012) notes, this was a strategic move: al-Ghazālī mastered Ibn Sīnā's logic precisely to dismantle his metaphysics in the famous *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*. This initiated a complex era of critique and reconstruction. Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. c. 1165), for instance, composed *Kitāb al-Muʿtabar*, a work that adopted Avicennian structures while severely critiquing their content, effectively reconstructing the philosophy from within.

The climax of this intellectual struggle took place between two titans of the tradition: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1207) and Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 1274). Al-Rāzī penned a commentary on Ibn Sīnā's *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt* that was so critical it prompted al- Ṭūsī to retort that al-Rāzī had written not a *sharḥ* (commentary), but a *jarḥ* (refutation). Al-Ṭūsī subsequently emerged as Ibn Sīnā's most ardent defender, composing his own commentaries to harmonize Avicennian philosophy with Shiʻi theology (al-Rāzī, 2005; al-Ṭūsī, 1950).

If Persia was the battleground for Ibn Sīnā's philosophy, Central Asia was the custodian of his scientific spirit. It is crucial to remember that Ibn Sīnā was a native son of this region, born in Afshana near Bukhara and educated in the Samanid courts before his political wanderings took him westward (Goodman, 1992). His return to Central Asia was, in a sense, posthumous and institutional, spearheaded again by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī. Commissioned by the Ilkhanid ruler Ḥulāgu Khān, al-Ṭūsī established the Maragha Observatory near Tabriz. Here, he assembled a brilliant circle of scholars—including Qutb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, Kamal al-Dīn al-Fārisī, and al-Kāshī—who carried the torch of Avicennian science (Huff,

1993). This intellectual lineage extended directly to Qāḍī Zāda al-Rūmī, the mentor of the Timurid ruler-astronomer Ulugh Beg.

The connection was physical as well as intellectual; it is said that a young Ulugh Beg visited the ruins of the Maragha Observatory in 1403 with his grandfather Timur. Inspired by al-Ṭūsī's legacy, he established the Ulugh Beg Observatory in Samarkand (c. 1420), which became the new epicenter of mathematical and physical sciences in the Islamic world. Far to the west, in al-Andalus, Ibn Sīnā's influence encountered a different intellectual climate, shaping the works of three major philosophers. Ibn Bajja (Avempace, d. 1138), writing amidst social upheaval, adopted Ibn Sīnā's psychological theories, particularly the concept of "intellectual solitude" (*al-ʻuzlah*) and the gradation of the intellect, applying them to a rationalist political philosophy.

This was followed by Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 1185), who was profoundly influenced by Avicennian mysticism. His philosophical novel, *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, parallels Ibn Sīnā's allegory of the same name. Both works explore the soul's journey toward the Active Intellect and the rational discovery of God, though Ibn Ṭufayl leaned more heavily toward mystical illumination (*kashf*), synthesizing Ibn Sīnā with Sufi metaphysics. Finally, the Andalusian reception found its most critical voice in Ibn Rushd (Averroes, d. 1198). While acknowledging Ibn Sīnā's dominance, Ibn Rushd viewed him as a corrupter of pure Aristotelianism. He argued that Ibn Sīnā had distorted philosophy by introducing Neoplatonic elements—such as the emanation scheme and a metaphysical view of the intellect—which conflicted with both Aristotle and Islamic orthodoxy. Despite these critiques, Ibn Rushd's rigorous engagement with Ibn Sīnā proves that, even in rejection, the Sage of Bukhara remained the indispensable interlocutor of the age (Fakhry, 1982).

The Contribution and Influence of Ibn Sīnā in the Malay World (*Nusantara*)

To discuss the influence and contribution of Ibn Sīnā in the Malay Archipelago (*Nusantara*), I will trace it through two transmission routes: via al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) and via Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240).

I. The Transmission Route via al-Ghazālī

a. *Al-Ghazālī's Understanding of Ibn Sīnā*

Only 13 years stood between the death of Ibn Sīnā (1037) and the birth of al-Ghazālī. Ibn Sīnā's disciples, such as al-Jūzjānī (d. 1066)—who actively disseminated Ibn Sīnā's works—and Bahmanyār (d. 1070), were still alive when al-Ghazālī was born and came of age. Hence, Ibn Sīnā's books were still widely available, especially as al-Ghazālī studied at the Nizamiyyah Madrasah and lived in an elite environment under the patronage of Vizier Nizam al-Mulk, who provided access to a vast library. The Nizamiyyah Library in Baghdad housed a massive manuscript collection—especially in jurisprudence, theology (*kalam*), philosophy, and ʿArabīc literature—often referenced by scholars, including al-Ghazālī.

Thus, it was easy for a major scholar like al-Ghazālī to access the bulk of Ibn Sīnā's scientific works, both in ʿArabīc and Persian. The influence of Ibn Sīnā on al-Ghazālī can clearly be traced through two of his philosophical works: *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* (The Aims of the Philosophers) and *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers). Al-Ghazālī wrote the *Maqāṣid* Ghazālī as a preparatory work for his critique in *Tahāfut* (Al-Ghazālī, 2000).

Most scholars believe the *Maqāṣid* was composed before *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*. However, more recently, some have challenged the claim that *Maqāṣid* was written earlier as a preparatory step for his critique (Janssens, 2001; Reynolds, 2002; Shihadeh, 2011). In my view, based on my reading of *al-Munqiḍ min al-Ḍalāl*, there is strong evidence that *Maqāṣid* was indeed written before *Tahāfut.* In *al-Munqiḍ*, al-Ghazālī states that after studying *ʿilm al-kalām*, he undertook an intensive investigation of philosophy for two years by reading the existing works and by engaging directly with them. He describes this as a rigorous prerequisite—one that should ideally surpass the work of others—before undertaking a critique of the philosophers. In *al-Munqiḍ*, al-Ghazālī states:

> After I finished with theology, I started on philosophy. I am convinced that a man cannot grasp what is defective of any of the sciences unless he has so complete a grasp of the science in question, that he equals its most learned exponents, in the appreciation of its fundamental principles and even goes beyond and surpasses them, probing into some of its tangled and profundities which the very professors of the science neglected and then, and only then is it possible that what he has to assert about its defects is true.
>
> I realize that to refute any system before understanding it and becoming acquainted with its depths is to act blindly. I therefore set out in all earnestness to acquire a knowledge of philosophy from books, by private study without the help of an instructor. I made progress towards its aims during my hours of my free time after teaching in the religious sciences and writings.... by my solitary reading during the hours thus snatched, God brought me less than two years to the complete understanding of the sciences of the philosophers. thereafter I continue to reflect assiduously for nearly a year on what I had assimilated, going over it in my mind, again and again and probing its tangled depths, until I comprehended surely and certainly how far it is deceitful and confusing, and how far true and a representation of reality (Hymen & Walsh, 1973)

From the above quotation, it becomes clear that he would never undertake a critique of the philosophers before first mastering the principles and intricate details of their doctrines—something he accomplished after moving to Baghdad (1091) and teaching there for nearly three years (1093–94). Therefore, there is no evidence to support the claim that al-Ghazālī wrote *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* before his time in Baghdad. And since the purpose of studying philosophy intensively was to prepare himself to evaluate the views of the philosophers, it is entirely logical that he wrote *Maqāṣid* first as a prelude to critiquing the philosophers in *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*.

In *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, al-Ghazālī critiques several philosophical propositions, especially those of Ibn Sīnā. Out of hundreds or possibly thousands of philosophical propositions, he focuses on 20, of which only 3 are deemed to lead to unbelief: (1) The Eternity of the Universe, (2) God's Knowledge being Universal, not Particular and (3) The Denial of Bodily Resurrection in the Hereafter (Fakhry, 1982). Beyond these 20, the other the philosophical propositions were generally accepted. Ironically, through these two works—though perhaps unintentionally—al-Ghazālī contributed to the dissemination of Ibn Sīnā's ideas, including in metaphysics and physics, throughout the Islamic world. However, beyond metaphysics (much of which he rejected), Ibn Sīnā's contributions and influence can also be seen in other fields, particularly logic and writing methodology.

Ibn Sīnā's influence on al-Ghazālī can be summarized into three aspects. First, influence in logic. Al-Ghazālī highly appreciated and adopted Ibn Sīnā's logic (*manṭiq*) as an essential tool for scientific and theological reasoning. In his works such as *Miʿyār al-ʿIlm* and *al-Qisṭās al-Mustaqīm*, he used a logical structure very similar to that of Ibn Sīnā. He even stated that logic is necessary for the proper understanding of religious sciences (Frank, 1994). Second, influence in epistemology and cosmology. Several aspects of Ibn Sīnā's epistemology—such as the classification of knowledge, levels of intellect, and the concept of intellectual intuition—can be found in al-Ghazālī's works. He did not reject all Ibn Sīnā's theories but accommodated those parts he believed did not conflict with Islam. In cosmology, recent research shows that al-Ghazālī was greatly indebted to Avicennian Neoplatonism and that he, in fact, had a strong inclination toward monism (Griffel, 2009).

Third, influence in method and writing style. Ibn Sīnā's systematic and analytical structure influenced al-Ghazālī's way of constructing arguments. Al-Ghazālī is known as a theologian who employed a philosophical approach to explaining Islamic dogma, especially in *al-Iqtiṣād fī al-Iʿtiqād* and *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* (Ghazālī, 1961). Al-Ghazālī, to conclude, was a significant critic of Ibn Sīnā's philosophy but also an intellectual heir in many respects. He was not anti-philosophy; rather, he critiqued metaphysical elements that contradicted religious principles, while still employing the logic and methodology inherited from Ibn Sīnā. This relationship illustrates the creative dynamics in the intellectual tradition of medieval Islam.

b. Nusantara Scholars' Contact with Ibn Sīnā's Thought

The thought of Imam al-Ghazālī (1058–1111), known as *Ḥujjat al-Islām*, had a major influence in the Islamic world, including the *Nusantara* region. His works such as *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, *al-Munqiḍ min al-Ḍalāl,* and *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* became core references in classical Islamic education, particularly in traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). Scholars from the *Nusantara* were introduced to al-Ghazālī's thought through Islamic intellectual networks stretching from the Middle East to Southeast Asia. Many studied in the Haramain (Mecca and Medina), Yemen, and Egypt, then brought al-Ghazālī's ideas home. However, perhaps because philosophy was still considered sensitive at the time, the scholars of the Malay-Indonesian world studied philosophical works only indirectly (Azra, 2004).

Among those who introduced and developed al-Ghazālī's thought in the region were Sumatra and Sulawesi based scholars, such as Sheikh ʿAbd al-Raʾūf al-Sinkilī (d. 1693), Shaykh Yūsuf al-Makassārī (d. 1699), ʿAbd al-Samad al-Palimbānī (d. 1789) and Shaykh Dāwūd al-Fatānī (d. 1879). Through them, Sunni Sufism, as pioneered by al-Ghazālī, blended with local traditions, and helped form the distinctively moderate and ethically rooted character of Islam Nusantara (Arif, 2020). *Ihyā'* was not only read, but taught, memorized, and used as a practical guide in everyday religious life (Moris, 2016, Arif, 2020).

Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī's thought not only permeated the Sumatran region, but also extended to Java and Banten in particular. Peacock, in his book *ʿArabīc Literary Culture*, states that in Banten, quite surprisingly, Ibn ʿArabī was not influential—as he was in Sumatra—but instead al-Ghazālī became the central figure. Peacock, based on information from Ibn ʿAllān, notes: "Rather than Ibn ʿArabī, it seems the Banten ʿulamāʾ and court were both fascinated and perturbed by the ideas of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), for Ibn ʿAllān tells us that he was asked to explain two of the latter's works" (Peacock, 2024). Thus, the introduction of al-Ghazālī to the region's scholars was not merely a transfer of ideas, but a transmission of values, educational methodology, and the ideal of a balanced human being—integrating intellect, heart, and action.

To what extent did the scholars of *Nusantara* understand Ibn Sīnā through al-Ghazālī's writings? Our hypothesis is this: given the strong enthusiasm of *Nusantara* scholars in studying and admiring al-Ghazālī's works, it is most likely

that they also studied the books in which al-Ghazālī discussed Ibn Sīnā's ideas—particularly *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* and *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah*. Through these, they could clearly understand Ibn Sīnā's thought. At first glance, it appears that Ibn Sīnā did not clearly exert a significant influence on the writings of the scholars of the Malay–Indonesian archipelago. However, a closer reading shows that Avicennian elements and influences are in fact quite strong in their works, even though such influences are often wrapped in subtler and more orthodox terminology. Below are several examples of Ibn Sīnā's philosophical key terms that were adopted by the ulama of the *Nusantara*. Exploring these terms is essential as foundational research that can enhance our understanding in future studies.

Hamzah Fanṣūrī (d. ca. 1590) employs several Avicennian metaphysical terms. In *Asrār al-ʿĀrifīn*, he writes: "...thus *hayūlā* is the locus that receives form (*ṣūrah*), and the *ṣūrah* perfects the existence of its subject." The terms *al-hayūlā* (prime matter) and *ṣūrah* (form) are Avicennian terms found in *al-Shifāʾ*. In *Sharāb al-ʿĀshiqīn*, he writes about the three types of souls: "The soul is of three kinds: vegetative (*nabātī*), animal (*ḥayawānī*), and rational (*nāṭiqī*)." This tripartite division of the soul is entirely Avicennian (al-Attas, 1970). Moreover, Nūruddīn al-Rānīrī, in *Bustān al-Salāṭīn*, Book IV, writes: "*Maka dijadikan Allah Taʿālā ʿAql Awwal. Daripadanya terbit Nafs Awwal, dan daripadanya langit yang pertama...*" ("God the Exalted created the First Intellect. From it emerged the First Soul, and from it the first heaven..."). This clearly reflects Ibn Sīnā's theory of emanation. In another work, *Jawāhir al-ʿUlūm*, al-Rānīrī also mentions the Three Categories of Existence: "All that exists is of three kinds: that which is Necessary (*wājib*), that which is Possible (*mumkin*), and that which is Impossible (*mumtaniʿ*)." These are unmistakably Ibn Sīnā's ontological categories (al-Attas, 1986).

ʿAbd al-Raʾūf al-Singkilī employed several terms that were almost certainly Avicennian in nature. In *Mirʾāt al-Ṭullāb* he points out that "Allah *Taʿālā* is the Necessary By (*Wājib al-Wujūd*), accepting neither contingency (*mumkin*) nor non-existence (*ʿadam*)." This term *Wājib al-Wujūd* is a central concept in Ibn Sīnā's metaphysics. In *ʿUmdat al-Muhtājīn*, he uses the terms *ʿaql*, *nafs*, and *jasad*, the Avicennian formula of *al-ʿaql – al-nafs–al-jism*. In *Tanbīh al-Māshī*, al-Singkilī describes the human soul as an immaterial substance (*al-jawhar al-mujarrad*), a typically Avicennian view. He writes: "As for the human soul (*nafs al-insān*), it is a spiritual substance (*jawhar rūḥānī*) that does not occupy physical

space but governs the body as a king governs his realm." This is precisely the definition given by Sīnā in *Kitāb al-Nafs* of *al-Shifāʾ* (Arif, 2020).

Moreover, ʿAbd al-Ṣamad al-Palimbānī likewise reflects an Avicennian influence. In *Hidāyat al-Sālikīn*, he mentions the three faculties of the human soul: "As for the human being, he possesses three faculties (*quwwah*): the appetitive (*al-shahwiyyah*), the irascible (*al-ghaḍabiyyah*), and the rational (*al-ʿaqliyyah*)." Again, this mirrors Sīnā's tripartite theory in *Kitāb al-Nafs* of *al-Shifāʾ*. In the same work, al-Palimbānī writes: "The soul is a substance (*jawhar*) that is everlasting and does not perish with the perishing of the body," corresponding to Sīnā's doctrine of the soul as an immaterial substance and the *baqāʾ al-nafs*. In *Siyār al-Sālikīn*, he states: "Know that existence is of three kinds: necessary (*wājib*), possible (*mumkin*), and impossible (*mumtaniʿ*)," matching Ibn Sīnā's metaphysical categories. Finally, in *Siyār al-Sālikīn*, Volume I, he writes: "From the Absolute Existence (*Wujūd Muṭlaq*) proceeds the separate existences (*al-mufāraq*), then the souls, then the bodies," reflecting Sīnā's emanative cosmology: the Necessary Being to the Separate Intellects to souls to bodies (Moris, 2016).

From this we can conclude that although there is no evidence that these *Nusantara* scholars directly read al-Ghazālī's works such as *al-Maqāṣid* or *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, their method of criticizing philosophical views that contradict the fundamental teachings of Sunni Islam clearly demonstrates their mastery of technical terminology in philosophy. Moreover, after examining their works—rich with characteristic Avicennian terms—we can safely conclude that the influence of Ibn Sīnā on the thinkers and scholars of the Nusantara was substantial, even if not expressed explicitly, often appearing instead through veiled or adapted terminology. This demonstrates what Wisnovsky calls the Avicenna Turn in Sunni Theology (Wisnovsky, 2004). Therefore there are quite strong traces of Ibn Sīnā's influence in the works of *Nusantara* scholars, especially through the channels of philosophical Sufism, logic, and cosmology. Although not always mentioned explicitly, Avicennian thought appears through intermediary works from Persia, India, Mecca–Medina, and other places.

II. Transmission Route via Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240)

Another route through which we can trace Ibn Sīnā's influence on Nusantara scholars is via Ibn ʿArabī, who, like al-Ghazālī, had a significant (both positive and negative) impact on Islamic thought in the region. To explore this, we first investigate the influence of Ibn Sīnā on Ibn ʿArabī—directly or indirectly through figures like Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī al-Maqṭūl, the founder of the Illuminationist (*Ishrāqī*) school.[11]

A. Ibn Sīnā's Influence on Ibn ʿArabī

There are four dimensions that connect Ibn Sīnā and Ibn ʿArabī. *First,* the metaphysical dimension: ontology and hierarchy of existence. Ibn Sīnā developed a theory of existence distinguishing between *wājib al-wujūd* (necessary being—God) and *mumkin al-wujūd* (possible beings). Ibn ʿArabī adapted this hierarchical structure into a spiritual context as *tajallī* (divine manifestations at various levels of existence), forming the foundation of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (unity of existence). *Second,* the epistemological dimension: the active intellect. Ibn Sīnā proposed the idea of a Tenth Intellect (Active Intellect) responsible for intellectual illumination. Ibn ʿArabī infused this with spiritual nuance, speaking of spiritual illumination through *ilhām* or *kashf*

[1] We can also trace Ibn Sīnā's influence on Ibn ʿArabī through Suhrawardī. Suhrawardī was deeply influenced by Ibn Sīnā. In his Eastern Philosophy (*Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*), according to Henry Corbin, Ibn Sīnā had already laid down the illuminative framework that would later be fully developed by Suhrawardī. Suhrawardī executed this conceptual blueprint. In his cosmology, Suhrawardī adopted the theory of emanation, in which immaterial intellects act as intermediaries between God and the spiritual and material worlds. This later inspired Suhrawardī to divide the reality of existence into a purely spiritual realm he called the Orient (East), and a dark material realm—the Occident (West). What was new in Suhrawardī's thought was his subdivision of the West into two levels: the Middle Occident, which lies in between, and the lowest realm, the Material World. This intermediate realm is often referred to as *Barzakh* (the isthmus or interworld). Suhrawardī's cosmological division had a significant impact on Ibn ʿArabī, particularly on his concept of the Imaginal World (*ʿālam al-mithāl*), which exists between the physical world (*ʿālam al-mulk*) below, and the spiritual world (*ʿālam al-jabarūt*) above. Suhrawardī's critique of Ibn Sīnā's rationalist approach to knowledge, and his substitution of it with mystical experience (*shuhūd*) through purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), was not only accepted by Ibn ʿArabī but was actually adopted by him as a core method for attaining truth (Corbin, 1980).

(inspiration/unveiling), yet the epistemological structure still reflects Neoplatonic roots from Ibn Sīnā. *Third,* the cosmological dimension. Ibn Sīnā's cosmology was Neoplatonic, based on a graded emanation from God to the material world. Ibn ʿArabī used a similar structure, but interpreted it metaphysically and mystically, emphasizing the divine presence in all levels of existence.

Finally, the psychological dimension: soul development. Both thinkers emphasized soul refinement. Ibn Sīnā focused on it through philosophical and rational contemplation, while Ibn ʿArabī approached it through spiritual experience—but still within an ontological structure resembling Ibn Sīnā's. Despite this, clear differences remain. While Ibn ʿArabī borrowed many concepts from Ibn Sīnā, he also criticized Ibn Sīnā's rational approach, which he believed was limited in accessing true divine reality. For Ibn ʿArabī, true knowledge of God is not achieved through intellect alone, but through direct witnessing (*shuhūd*) and inner spiritual experience. In conclusion, Ibn Sīnā provided a crucial intellectual and philosophical foundation for Ibn ʿArabī, especially in ontological and cosmological aspects. Yet Ibn ʿArabī reconstructed and expanded these within a mystical-spiritual framework, creating a richer metaphysical system.

B. Ibn ʿArabī and *Nusantara* Muslim Scholars.

A crucial question in examining the intellectual relationship between Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240) and the Muslim scholars of the Malay-Indonesian world is: How were the metaphysical doctrines of Ibn ʿArabī introduced to the region, and through which transmission networks? Surprisingly, Ibn ʿArabī's thought appears to have been more widely disseminated among the ulama of the Malay Archipelago than previously assumed. This was made possible largely through the role of Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī al-Kurdī (d. 1690), a foremost student of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Qusāsī (d. 1661), both of whom were leading scholars in Madina in the 17th century and major transmitters of Akbarian (related to Ibn ʿArabī's thought) metaphysics.

Al-Kūrānī studied Ibn ʿArabī's thought extensively during his years in Damascus, the burial place of Ibn ʿArabī, and further developed his understanding under al-Qushāshī, who himself was shaped by the teachings of Aḥmad al-Shinnāwī—his father-in-law and spiritual master. Al-Shinnāwī was a student of Shibghatullāh al-

Hindī (d. 1606), an Indian Sufi who migrated to Medina and established the Shattariyya order there. Shibghatullāh had received the Shattariyya teachings from Wajīh al-Ghujrātī (d. 1609), who in turn was a disciple of Muḥammad Ghawth Gwaliyārī (d. 1562), the beloved student of ʿAbdullāh al-Shattār (d. ca. 1428), the Khurasani founder of the Shattariyya order (Riddle, 2001).

It was through the Shattariyya's intellectual legacy—linked to Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā (d. 1220), founder of the Kubrawiyya order—that the teachings of Ibn ʿArabī reached the Indian subcontinent, Medina and eventually the Malay world. Through this line of transmission , al-Kūrānī emerged as a central figure in the dissemination of Akbarian thought in the archipelago. He mentored directly several key Southeast Asian Sufi scholars, including ʿAbd al-Raʾūf al-Sinkilī (d. 1695), Burhānuddīn al-Ūlakānī (d. 1704) Shaykh Yūsuf al-Maqassarī (d. 1699), and indirectly Shaykh Arshad al-Banjārī (d. 1812). There is also strong reason to believe that other figures such as Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī (d. 1630), and Shaykh ʿAbd al-Muḥyī of Pamijahan (d. 1730) were directly or indirectly also influenced by his teachings.

Finally, among those who were considered the indirect intellectual heirs of al-Kūrānī's legacy were Shaykh Dāʾūd al-Faṭānī (d. 1847), Shaykh Aḥmad Khaṭīb al-Minangkabāwī (d. 1915), and Shaykh ʿAbd al-Laṭīf of Batusangkar (d. 1963), all of whom played pivotal roles in shaping Islamic thought in the Malay world during the 18th to the 20th centuries.

C. Introduction of *Nusantara* Scholars to Ibn ʿArabī's Mystical Ideas

Ibn ʿArabī was well-known among several key Sufi scholars of the *Nusantara*. The doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, which formed the foundation of Ibn ʿArabī's metaphysical philosophy, had long roots in this region. Among those profoundly influenced by Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine were Ḥamzah Fansūrī (d. 1607) and Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī (d. 1630). Ibn ʿArabī had a significant influence on Fanṣūrī, especially in the field of metaphysics and the concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. Fanṣūrī was a major Sufi figure from the *Nusantara* who lived in the late sixteenth to early seventeenth century. He is recognized as the first to introduce philosophical Sufism into the Malay world. His thought was deeply shaped by Ibn ʿArabī's mystical philosophy, particularly through the concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, which became the central theme in his worldview. Ibn ʿArabī developed the notion that

only God possesses true existence, while all else is a manifestation of His being. Fanṣūrī adopted this perspective and taught that God is not separate from His creation but manifests through all forms of existence. This view is evident in his mystical poetry, which is rich with metaphors about the presence of God in both the perfect human (*al-insān al-kāmil*) and the cosmos.

Fanṣūrī was likely influenced by Ibn ʿArabī's major works, such as *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (The Bezels of Wisdom)—a profound metaphysical treatise on the prophets and the manifestation of divine realities in them—and *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (The Meccan Revelations)—an encyclopedic exposition of mysticism, cosmology, and theology. Although there is no direct textual evidence that Fanṣūrī read these works in ʿArabīc, scholars believe that these ideas reached him through the Sufi scholarly networks of South and West Asia, most likely via Sufi orders and oral or translated teachings. Among the works of Fanṣūrī that reflect the influence of Ibn ʿArabī are: (1) his Sufi poems (*syair-syair sufi*), which are filled with the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, the concept of *al-insān al-kāmil* , and mystical symbols characteristic of Ibn ʿArabī; (2) *Asrār al-ʿĀrifīn*, a prose work on mystical knowledge and spiritual experiences within an Ibn ʿArabīan conceptual framework; and (3) *Sharāb al-ʿĀshiqīn*, a treatise on mystical love and the soul's journey to God, clearly influenced by Ibn ʿArabī's use of love as a central metaphysical metaphor. Having considered the influence of Ibn ʿArabī on Fanṣūrī, we now turn to the influence of Ibn ʿArabī—and implicitly, that of Ibn Sīnā—on the works of Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī (Al-Attas, 1970).

The influence of Ibn ʿArabī on Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī was significant, particularly in the metaphysics of being and the concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. Shams al-Dīn is known as a key figure among the proponents of the *wujūdiyyah* school in the *Nusantara*, which continued the mystical thought of Ibn ʿArabī. The concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd* occupies a central place in his writings: Shams al-Dīn elaborated a metaphysics of being strongly rooted in Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine, emphasizing that only God has real existence and that all other beings are merely manifestations (*tajallī*) of God. The "Hierarchy of Being" (*martabat tujuh*), though not explicitly found in Ibn ʿArabī's original writings, was developed by his followers—particularly within South Asian Sufi traditions—and later adapted into the Malay world. Shams al-Dīn absorbed and systematized this schema in a form that became deeply influential among Malay Sufis.

Shams al-Dīn was influenced—directly or indirectly—by Ibn ʿArabī's works. While there is no definitive evidence that he read Ibn ʿArabī's original texts such as *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* or *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, it is likely that he encountered Ibn ʿArabī's ideas through these works or through the writings of his followers. These include *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, which encapsulates the essence of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, and *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, which elaborates mystical and metaphysical dimensions of existence in detail (Al-Attas, 1970; Azra, 2013). In addition to Ibn ʿArabī's own writings, the works of his followers in South Asia—such as Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī, ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (author of *al-Insān al-Kāmil*), and Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī—played important roles in transmitting Ibn ʿArabī's philosophy to India and Persia, which likely became the channels through which these ideas reached the Malay world. Some of Shams al-Dīn's works that reflect the influence of Ibn ʿArabī include *Mirʾāt al-Muʾminīn*, a key work that explicitly conveys the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, discussing how human beings serve as mirrors of God, echoing Ibn ʿArabī's notion that God "sees Himself" in creation; and *Sharḥ ʿalā Maṭlaʿ al-Khuṣūṣ*, a commentary on a Sufi text containing extensive discussions of the reality of existence and the stages of being.

In conclusion, we can assert that Ḥamzah Fanṣūrī and Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī were not only influenced by the thought of Ibn ʿArabī but also served as the principal developers of his ideas in the Malay–Nusantara context. This transmission likely occurred through Sufi intellectual networks extending from India and Persia, and the influence is traceable both in the themes of Ibn ʿArabī's works and in the writings of Ḥamzah (such as *Asrār al-ʿĀrifīn* and *Sharāb al-ʿĀshiqīn*) and Shams al-Dīn (such as *Mirʾāt al-Muʾminīn*). Through this intellectual lineage, the influence of Ibn Sīnā—embedded within Ibn ʿArabī's mystical philosophy—was indirectly received and embraced by scholars of the *Nusantara*.

Later Development: From the 17th to the 20th Centuries

A central inquiry regarding the intellectual bond between Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240) and Malay-Indonesian scholars concerns exactly how his metaphysical doctrines reached the region and through which specific networks they traveled. Contrary to earlier assumptions, Akbarian thought appears to have been widely circulated among the archipelago's ulama during this era. This dissemination was primarily

facilitated by Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (d. 1690) and his teacher Shaykh Aḥmad al-Qushāshī (d. 1661), who were both preeminent scholars in 17th-century Medina and key transmitters of Ibn ʿArabī's metaphysics through the Shattariya order. It was through this channel—which hold connections to Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā (d. 1220) of the Kubrawiyya order—that Ibn ʿArabī's teachings flowed into India and ultimately the Malay world.

In this transmission lineage, al-Kūrānī stood as a pivotal figure for spreading Akbarian philosophy to the archipelago. He personally mentored prominent Southeast Asian Sufis, such as ʿAbd al-Raʾūf al-Sinkilī (d. 1695), Burhānuddīn al-Ūlakānī (d. 1704), and Shaykh Yūsuf al-Maqassarī (d. 1699). Furthermore, there is compelling evidence that his influence extended, directly or indirectly, to other major figures, including Shaykh Arsyad al-Banjārī (d. 1812), Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī (d. 1630), and Shaykh ʿAbd al-Muḥyī of Pamijahan (d. 1730).

The most prominent intellectual heir of al-Kūrānī from the Malay-Indonesian world, as above mentioned, was ʿAbd al-Rauf al-Sinkilī. Al-Kūrānī had studied the thought of Ibn ʿArabī by producing a commentary on *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, while also carefully examining the works of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī, especially *Durrat al-Fākhirah*. He also discussed in depth the teachings of Ibn Sīnā and Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (Zacky Umam, 2021). As al-Kūrānī 's foremost disciple, al-Sinkilī studied the ideas and works of Ibn Sīnā, Ibn ʿArabī, and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī, which he later transmitted to the Malay-Indonesian world through his major writings.

Of course, al-Kūrānī 's teachings were also studied and disseminated by another famous disciple, Syaikh Yusuf al-Maqassari, who later joined the Sultanate of Banten, and taught there, and later in Sri Lanka and finally in South Africa. Later, al-Kūrānī 's ideas and doctrines were also studied and spread by Shaykh Dāʾūd al-Faṭānī (d. 1847), Shaykh Aḥmad Khaṭīb al-Minangkabāwī (d. 1915), and Shaykh ʿAbd al-Laṭīf of Batusangkar (d. 1963), all of whom played pivotal roles in shaping Islamic thought in the Malay world during the 18th to 20th centuries (Moris, 2016).

Ibn Sīnā's Intellectual Legacy in the 20th-21st Century

Having explored the contributions and influence of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) during the classical period of the Islamic world and the *Nusantara*, I now wish to close

with a brief overview of his legacy in the modern era—specifically the 20th and 21st centuries. This discussion will focus on key Indonesian Muslim thinkers who have engaged with Ibn Sīnā's ideas: namely Buya HAMKA, Harun Nasution, and Mulyadhi Kartanegara.

Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (HAMKA), a renowned scholar, writer, and spiritual leader, referred to Ibn Sīnā in several of his works, especially within the framework of Islamic intellectual history and the comparative study of philosophy and Sufism. In *Falsafah Hidup* (Philosophy of Life) and *Tasawuf Modern* (Modern Sufism), HAMKA discussed major Muslim philosophers, including Ibn Sīnā, though often with a critical eye. He viewed philosophical inquiry—especially that exemplified by Ibn Sīnā—as insufficient to address the inner, existential dimensions of human life. HAMKA favored a Sufi approach, particularly that inspired by Imam al-Ghazālī and Sunni mysticism, over rationalist philosophy (HAMKA 1940, HAMKA, 2015).

In *Sejarah Umat Islam* (The History of the Muslim Community) (HAMKA, 2016), he acknowledged Ibn Sīnā's significance as a towering figure in Islamic intellectual history. He recognized his mastery in both medicine and philosophy, as well as his impact on the Western intellectual tradition. Nevertheless, HAMKA expressed reservations about aspects of Ibn Sīnā's philosophy that, in his view, conflicted with orthodox Islamic teachings—such as doctrines on the immortality of the soul and his conception of prophethood. More broadly, HAMKA was critical of Greek-influenced Islamic philosophy, arguing that it relied excessively on rationality. He emphasized the essential role of revelation and religious intuition—believing these provided a more profound understanding of truth than reason alone. For HAMKA, faith and the inner experience of the heart outweighed speculative metaphysics. In sum, while HAMKA acknowledged and respected Ibn Sīnā's intellectual stature, he maintained a critical distance from his rationalistic approach, favoring the spiritual depth found in Islamic Sufism.

Professor Harun Nasution, one of the foremost figures of modern Islamic thought in Indonesia, did not author a comprehensive work solely on Ibn Sīnā. However, his perspectives on Ibn Sīnā can be found scattered throughout his writings on Islamic philosophy and rationalism. In *Filsafat dan Mistisisme dalam Islam* (Philosophy and Mysticism in Islam), Nasution situates Ibn Sīnā among the central rationalist philosophers of Islam. He explores Ibn Sīnā's positions on the

relationship between reason and revelation, as well as his views on God, the soul, and cosmology (Nasution, 1990).

Meanwhile, in *Islam Rasional: Gagasan dan Pemikiran* (Rational Islam: Ideas and Thought), Nasution presents his own vision of a rational Islam but he mentions Ibn Sīnā as a key inspiration for promoting intellectual openness and rational engagement with Islamic teachings (Nasution, 1995). In his university lectures, especially during his tenure at IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta (now UIN), Nasution frequently referred to Ibn Sīnā in discussions on classical Islamic philosophy, often in connection with figures such as al-Fārābī and al-Ghazālī. Overall, Nasution regarded Ibn Sīnā as an intellectual model for a rational approach to Islam, portraying him as a symbol of reason's potential to illuminate faith, without entirely dismissing the value of mysticism.

The third figure to be discussed is Prof. Dr. Mulyadhi Kartanegara—myself. For objectivity, I will refer to myself in the third person throughout this section. As a leading scholar of Islamic philosophy, Mulyadhi Kartanegara has devoted significant attention to the thought of Ibn Sīnā in numerous works. In *Gerbang Kearifan* (The Gate of Wisdom) (Kartanegara, 2005) Ibn Sīnā is presented as the central representative of the Peripatetic School (*al-Mashā'iyyūn*), with a detailed analysis of his epistemology, ontology, and cosmology—including his emanation theory. In his *Integrasi Ilmu: Sebuah Rekonstruksi Holistik* (The Integration of Knowledge: A Holistic Reconstruction), Mulyadhi draws on Ibn Sīnā's classification of sciences to support a holistic framework for knowledge integration in the Islamic intellectual tradition, especially in regard to natural sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-ṭabīʿiyyah*) and mathematics (*al-ʿulūm al-riyāḍiyyah*) (Kartanegara, 2006). Ibn Sīnā's psychology, particularly his theory of the external and internal senses, is examined in *Menyibak Tirai Kejahilan. Pengantar Epistemologi Islam* (Unveiling the Veil of Ignorance: An Introduction to Islamic Epistemology) (Kartanegara, 2003) and in *Pengantar Studi Islam* (Introduction to Islamic Studies), Chapter 13, which discusses Islamic perspectives on psychology (Kartanegara, 2011).

Discussions of Ibn Sīnā's metaphysics—especially his arguments for the existence of God—appear in *Gerbang Kearifan*, *Menembus Batas Waktu* (Piercing the Limits of Time, Chapter 5) (Kartanegara, 2002), and *Lentera Kehidupan* (The Lantern of Life, Part One, Chapter Two) (Kartanegara, 2017) Ibn

Sīnā's theory of prophethood (*nubuwwah*) is addressed in *Menyibak Tirai Kejahilan* (Lifting the Veil of Ignorance, Chapter 10), following an exposition of al-Fārābī's doctrine on the same subject (Kartanegara, 2013).

Nevertheless, Mulyadhi does not uncritically adopt Ibn Sīnā's views. He offers several critiques, particularly concerning Ibn Sīnā's conception of God. In *Nalar Religius* (Religious Reason), Mulyadhi writes: "Unlike the God of Ibn Sīnā—distant and cold—my God is intimate: a presence that converses, befriends, and receives the outpourings of the heart." From an epistemological standpoint, Mulyadhi critiques Ibn Sīnā's highly rationalistic approach for its underestimation of intuition in reaching Ultimate Reality. While affirming the value of reason, Mulyadhi insists that it is not without limits. Beyond the rational domain lies the spiritual realm, accessible only through intuitive means. He frequently illustrates the limitations of reason when confronted with love or divine knowledge. Echoing Rūmī, he notes that when reason is asked about love, "it stumbles like a donkey into the mud." Thus, rationality, while indispensable, is inadequate for capturing the essence of truth, due to its reliance on symbols—as if one tries to pluck a rose from the letters R-O-S-E. Beyond empirical and rational approaches lies a need for a sufistic-intuitive methodology, one that accesses reality through direct spiritual experience—what Mulyadhi calls *ʿilm ḥuḍūrī* (presential knowledge).

In addition to offering critical reflections on the thought of Ibn Sīnā, Mulyadhi, in his capacity as Director of the Center for Islamic Philosophical Studies and Information (CIPSI), has also led a major translation project of classical Islamic texts, including the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* (Kartanegara, 2007) and selected works of Ibn Sīnā. Of the approximately 6,300 pages targeted for translation, the team under his leadership has successfully rendered around 5,300 pages into Indonesian. Furthermore, through CIPSI's *pesantren filsafat* (philosophical boarding school) program, Mulyadhi has served as the principal lecturer, delivering comprehensive explorations of the life and intellectual contributions of Ibn Sīnā, alongside parallel studies on figures such as al-Bīrūnī. Beyond CIPSI, other institutions have also incorporated the study of Ibn Sīnā's philosophy into their curricula. The Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought and Civilizations (INSIST), for instance, has offered specialized instruction in Ibn Sīnā's epistemology under the tutelage of Dr. Syamsudin Arif. In addition, formal

educational institutions such as STAI Sadra and others are also known to have conducted systematic studies on the thought of Ibn Sīnā.

Conclusion

The *Mā warā' al-Nahr* region, through Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna)—one of its greatest sons —has undoubtedly exerted great intellectual influence on the thought and scholarship of the *Nusantara* region. This influence, transmitted at least through Ghazālīan and Akbarian routes, was far more significant than previously assumed. Although no textual evidence has been found indicating that the *Nusantara* scholars directly read Ibn Sīnā's works, a close examination of their writings reveals strong indications of the impact of Ibn Sīnā's philosophical ideas—metaphysical, cosmological, and psychological. This is reflected in the many Avicennan terminologies employed in their works. Yet, in order to obscure these philosophical underpinnings from public view, they often wrapped them in theological–mystical language. Even so, the essential substance of their thought clearly bears an Avicennan imprint.

Reference

Ahmed, A. Q. (2011). *Avicenna's Deliverance: Logic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

al-Attas, S. M. N. (1970). *The mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri*. Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press.

al-Attas, S. M. N. (1966). *Raniri and the Wujudiyyah of 17th century Acheh*. Malaysian Branch Royal Asiatic Society.

al-Attas, S. M. N. (1986). *A commentary on the Hujjat al-Siddiq of Nuru'd-Din al-Raniri*. Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Culture.

Arif, R. (2020). *Syekh 'Abd Al-Ra'uf Al-Fansuri: Rekonsiliasi Tasawuf dan Syariat Abad ke-17 di Nusantara*. Jakarta: Penerbit Buku Kompas.

Bahmanyar b. Marzuban. (1955/1375). *al-Tahsil*. Tehran: Tehran University Press.

Corbin, H. (1980). *Avicenna and the visionary recital* (W. R. Trask, Trans.). Irving, TX: Spring Publications, Inc., University of Dallas.

Fakhry, M. (Ed.). (1985). *Ibn Sīnā, Kitab al-Najat fi al-Hikmah al-Mantiqiyyah wa al-Tabi'iyah wa al-Ilahiyyah*. Beirut: Mansurat Dar al-Afaq al-Jadidah.

Fazlur Rahman. (1952). *Avicenna's psychology: An English translation of Kitab al-Najat, Book II, Chapter VI with historical-philosophical notes and textual improvements on the Cairo edition*. London: Oxford University Press.

Frank, R. (1994). *Al-Ghazālī and the Ashʿarite school*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

al-Ghazālī, A. H. (1971). *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* (S. Dunya, Ed.). Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bimisr.

al-Ghazālī, A. H. (2000). *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah (The Incoherence of the Philosophers: A parallel English-ʿArabīc text)* (M. E. Marmura, Trans.). Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press.

Gohlman, W. E. (Ed. & Trans.). (1971). *The life of Ibn Sīnā*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Goodman, L. E. (1992). *Avicenna*. London & New York: Routledge.

Griffel, F. (2009). *Al-Ghazālī's philosophical theology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gutas, D. (1988). *Avicenna and the Aristotelian tradition: Introduction to reading Avicenna's philosophical works*. Leiden & New York: E.J. Brill.

HAMKA. (1950). *Falsafah hidup* (3rd ed.). Jakarta: Pustaka Panji Masyarakat.

HAMKA. (2015). *Tasawuf modern*. Jakarta: Republika.

HAMKA. (2016). *Sejarah umat Islam*. Jakarta: Gema Insani.

Hyman, A., & Walsh, J. J. (Eds.). (1973). *Philosophy in the Middle Ages: The Christian, Islamic, and Jewish traditions* (2nd ed.). Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.

Ibn Sīnā. (1950). *al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat* (Vol. 2, S. Dunya, Ed.). Cairo: Dar al-Maʿarif.

Ibn Sīnā. (1343 H). *al-Mabdaʾ wa al-Maʿad* (ʿA. Nurani, Intro.). Tehran: McGill and Tehran University.

Ibn Sīnā. (1394 H; 2nd ed., 1400 H). *al-Mukhtasar al-Awsat fi al-Mantiq* (S. M. Yousofsani, Ed. & Annot.). Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy.

Ibn Sīnā. (1972). *al-Taʿliqat* (ʿA. Badawi, Ed. & Intro.). Mecca: Maktabat al-Aʿlam al-Islami.

Ibn Sīnā. (2014). *Avicenna's remarks and admonitions: Physics and metaphysics* (S. C. Inati, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.

Ibn Sīnā. (1996). *Ibn Sīnā and mysticism: Remarks and admonitions (al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat)* (Shams Institute, Trans.). London & New York: Kegan Paul International.

Ibn Sīnā. (1984). *Ibn Sīnā: Remarks and admonitions, Part One: Logic* (S. C. Inati, Trans.). Toronto, ON: Shams Institute.

Ibn Sīnā. (2014). *Ibn Sīnā: Remarks and admonitions, Part Four: Mysticism* (S. C. Inati, Trans.). Toronto, ON: Shams Institute.

Ibn Sīnā. (1974). *Kitab al-Hidayah li Ibn Sīnā* (M. ʿAbduh, Ed. & Intro.). Cairo: Maktabat al-Qahirah al-Hadithah.

Ibn Sīnā. (1405 H). *Mantiq al-Mashriqiyyin wa al-Qasidat al-Muzdawajah fi al-Mantiq*. Qum: Manshurat Martabat Ayatullah al-ʿUzma al-Marʿashi al-Najafi.

Ibn Sīnā. (1984). *Risalat Hayy b. Yaqzan wa Risalat al-Tayr* (S. K. al-Mahani, Ed.).

Ibn Sīnā. (2005). *The metaphysics of the healing* (M. E. Marmura, Trans.). Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press.

Ibn Sīnā. (1973). *The metaphysica of Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā)* (P. Morewedge, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.

Ibn Sīnā. (2009). *The physics of the healing: Books I & II* (J. McGinnis, Trans.). Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press.

Ibn Sīnā. (1970). *ʿUyun al-Hikmah* (ʿA. Badawi, Ed. & Intro.). Beirut: Dar al-Qalam.

Janssens, J. (2001). Al-Ghazzali's *Tahafut*: Is it really a rejection of Ibn Sīnā's philosophy? *Journal of Islamic Studies, 12*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/12.1.1

Kartanegara, M. (2002). *Menembus batas waktu: Panorama filsafat Islam*. Bandung: Mizan.

Kartanegara, M. (2003). *Menyibak tirai kejahilan: Pengantar epistemologi Islam*. Bandung: Mizan.

Kartanegara, M. (2005). *Gerbang kearifan: Sebuah pengantar filsafat Islam*. Jakarta: Lentera Hari.

Kartanegara, M. (2005). *Integrasi ilmu: Sebuah rekonstruksi holistik*. Jakarta: Arasy & UIN Press.

Kartanegara, M. (2006). *Reaktualisasi tradisi ilmiah Islam*. Jakarta: Baitul Ihsan.

Kartanegara, M. (2007). *Nalar religius: Memahami hakikat Tuhan, alam dan manusia*. Jakarta: Erlangga.

Kartanegara, M. (2017). *Lentera kehidupan: Panduan memahami Tuhan, alam dan manusia*. Bandung: Mizan.

Kartanegara, M. (2007). *Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Shafa': Terjemahan Indonesia paralel dengan teks Arabnya* (Ed.). Jakarta: Departemen Agama & CIPSI Press.

Moris, M. (2016). *Al-Ghazālī's influence on Malay thinkers: A study of Syaikh 'Abd al-Samad al-Palimbani*. Selangor: Islamic and Strategic Studies Institute.

Nasution, H. (1973). *Falsafah dan mistisisme dalam Islam*. Jakarta: Bulan Bintang.

Nasution, H. (1995). *Islam rasional: Gagasan dan pemikiran*. Bandung: Mizan.

Peacock, A. C. S. (2023). *ʿArabīc literary culture in Southeast Asia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*. Leiden & Boston: Brill.

al-Razi, F. al-D. (1964/1384). *Sharh al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat, vol. 1, Mantiq* (A. R. Najafzadeh, Ed.). Tehran: Tehran University Press.

Reynolds, G. S. (2002). A philosophical odyssey: Ghazālī's intentions of the philosophers. In J. A. Inglis (Ed.), *Medieval philosophy and the classical tradition: Islam, Judaism, and Christianity*. London & New York: RoutledgeCurzon.

Riddell, P. (2001). *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian world: Transmission and responses*. London: Hurst & Co.

Shihadeh, A. (2011). New light on the reception of the Ghazālī's doctrines of the philosophers (*Maqasid al-Falasifa*). In P. Adamson (Ed.), *In the age of Averroes: ʿArabīc philosophy in the sixth/twelfth century* (pp. 77–92). The Warburg Institute.

Treiger, A. (2012). *Inspired knowledge in Islamic thought: Al-Ghazālī's theory of mystical cognition and its Avicennian foundation*. London & New York: Routledge.

al-Tusi, N. al-D. (1950). *Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat li-Abi Ali Sīnā* (S. Dunya, Ed.). Cairo: Dar al-'Arif bi-Misr.

Umam, Z. K. (2021). *Becoming a Sunni scholar: Ibrahim al-Kūrānī (d. 1690), his role in the seventeenth-century Medina and transregional contexts of his writings*. Berlin: Freien Universität Berlin.

Wisnovsky, R. (2004). One aspect of the Avicennian turn in Sunnī theology. *ʿArabīc Sciences and Philosophy, 14*(1), 65–100. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0957423904000013