

Epistemology Of Ahmad Sirhindi's Interpretation In The Book Of Mektubat Rabbani

Hafiz Abdurrahman ^{a,1}, Sukiman ^{b,2}

^{a,b} North Sumatra State Islamic University, Medan, Indonesia

¹ abdurrahmanhafiz30@gmail.com; ² sukiman@uinsu.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Accepted: 29 September 2024

Revised: 27 November 2024

Approved: 15 December 2024

Available Online: 1 January 2025

Keywords:

Epistemology

Interpretation

Rabbani's Mektubat

ABSTRACT

Epistemological changes can also affect the development of interpretation depending on the nature of science, the social context and the time in which the interpreter is located. Currently, not only philosophy, epistemological problems also spread to other disciplines such as interpretation. This study analyzes the epistemology of Ahmad Sirhindi's interpretation in the book Mektubat Rabbani to find out the sources used in the interpretation, the methods used to conduct the analysis, the patterns produced from the analysis, and the validity of the results of the analysis. This research is a qualitative research that uses a content analysis model and the type of library research related to books, journals, and others. The results obtained from this study include the integration between interpretation bil ma'tsur which is sourced from the Qur'an and hadith with interpretation bil ra'yi which shows the personal opinions of the interpreter, with this the book Mektubat Rabbani falls into the category of interpretation bil iqtirani when viewed from the source of interpretation. The interpretation made by Ahmad Sirhindi using many parameters and characteristics can be included in the category of Isyari Interpretation according to its method. The most dominant style of this interpretation is shufi, as well as kalami, fiqhi, siyasi and falsafi. Ahmad Sirhindi's Mektubat Rabbani is based on pragmatic theory, which presents solutions to the problems and confusion faced by society.

©2025, Hafiz Abdurrahman, Sukiman
This is an open access article under CC BY -SA license



1. Introduction

Since the revelation of the Qur'an, the Qur'an has been a guide for all humans, wherever they are and whenever until the end of time. Its role as a book that guides life in this world and in the hereafter is not limited to people living in a certain time and place. The Qur'an is different from other holy books in this regard. The Qur'an includes a large number of laws that encourage good and forbid evil in addition to historical narratives that serve as a moral compass for modern humanity (Umar, 2014). Interpretation of the Qur'an has been carried out since the time of the Prophet and is still carried out today. Regarding the terms used in the science of the Qur'an, interpretation is a means of explaining the meaning and substance found in the verses of the Qur'an (Al-Qaththan, 2015). This is intended so that through the interpretation of the Qur'an, Muslims can access the Qur'an, accept its truth, and feel its positive influence. This will enable them to adhere to the standards that Allah has set, such as bashirah (knowledge-based worship) (al-Utsaimin, 2008).

Tafsir is divided into two categories by Abdul Mustaqim: interpretation as a process and interpretation as a product. As a product, interpretation is described as a dialectic that occurs between the text of the Qur'an, the interpreter, and the context that surrounds it. This dialectic is then documented in books of interpretation, which can contain 30 chapters or several chapters,

or perhaps several verses of the Qur'an. Meanwhile, interpretation, as a process, is an intellectual exercise that seeks to reconcile the Qur'an with *das sein*, or reality, which is always developing and changing. Thus, interpretation is a thought process that will continue until the Day of Judgment (Mustaqim, 2020). One type of interpretation is the *isyari* interpretation. This type of interpretation is an interpretation known to the Sufis because there are hidden signs other than the literal meaning of the Qur'an and do not contradict the literal meaning. *Tafsir Isyari* is the interpretation of the Koran according to several hidden meanings and signs that are only known to those who are on the right path and can be reconciled with its literal meaning. In other words, *tafsir ishar* is the interpretation of the Qur'an in a way that is in accordance with its literal meaning, but beyond its literal meaning, by people who know the secrets of the Qur'an through the enlightenment of the horizon of vision by Allah (swt), or by people of knowledge who have been given by Allah (swt) subtle meanings through inspiration and discovery. This kind of *Isyari* interpretation is based on inspiration and signs that appear in the heart according to the conditions and position of the Sufi (Ad-Dzahabi, nd).

As a result, this *tafsir* is a type of *tafsir* that approaches and interprets the Qur'an with the knowledge of *laduni* that Sufis obtained by internalizing and analyzing as a result of their asceticism. Among the arguments for the existence of *Tafsir Isyari* are the words of Allahu Ta'ala in the Al-Qur'an: "Do they not think about the Al-Qur'an? If the Qur'an came from other than Allah, surely they would find in it many things that are not appropriate." (QS an-Nisa: 82) And in another verse, "Allah has bestowed upon you worldly and *ukhrawi* blessings." (QS Muhammad: 24). It was said, "What happened to this people that they did not immediately understand a single word?" (QS an-Nisa: 78) These verses lead to the interpretation of *Isyari*. Al-Syaṭibi interpreted these verses as follows: "When Allah swt. reproaching the polytheists for 'not understanding the words', He did not mean that they did not understand the literal meaning. Because they were Arabs, they understood the outward meaning of the Qur'an al-Karim. However, what is meant by this statement is that they do not understand its inner meaning (As-Sarraj, 1960). Allah cursed them for not understanding this inner meaning. Allah also invites them to reflect on His verses and understand their true meaning and go beyond their limits. When Allah takes away understanding and knowledge from a people, they cannot understand the *zahir* meaning or the ultimate meaning. Only people who have been given knowledge by Allah can understand the true meaning, namely the inner meaning behind the spiritual meaning (Ad-Dzahabi, nd).

The source of all Islamic knowledge is the Qur'an and Sunnah. While sciences such as jurisprudence and theology use the path of "*istidlal* and *nazar*" through reason in interpreting these sources, Sufism uses the path of "discovery and inspiration", namely the path of *laduni* knowledge. However, to attain the secrets of this knowledge requires a certain spiritual maturity through asceticism and struggle. There are several expressions in the Qur'an and Sunnah that can be evidence that humans can attain some subtle insights, inspirations and knowledge as a result of worship, piety and spiritual improvement. In short, the conditions that must be present in an interpretation so that the interpretation can be accepted by the majority of scholars, including: a) The interpretation must not contradict the literal meaning of the Qur'an al-Karim, b) The interpretation must not state that its meaning is not the literal meaning, but only the meaning of figurative language, and c) The interpretation must not be too weak and far from the wording of the Qur'an so that it is impossible to do.

One of the experts in the interpretation of the *isyari* is Ja'far al-Shadiq (148/765), the grandson of Zayn al-Abidin, the son of Husein bin Husain (Khalikan, 1948). His friend and student, the great Sufi Sufyan bin Sa'id al-Tsauri (161/778) and his student, Abdullah bin

Mubarak, were among the interpreters of the *tabiin* and *tabi'ut tabiin* periods (181/797) (Ates, 1974). When the ascetic movement developed after the period of *tabi'in* and *tabi'ut tabi'in* and love of Allah became the main theme, the *ishari tafsir* developed in parallel with this, taking up concepts such as *zuhud* and *taqwa* as well as the concepts of *fana fillah*. In this period, there were three great Sufis who played the greatest role in the development and systematization of Sufi *tafsir*. They were: Sahl ibn Abdullah al-Tustari (283/896), Junayd al-Baghdadi (298/910), and Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Musa al-Washiti (331/942) (Al-Sulami, n.d.). Towards the end of the fourth century AH, there was a major development in the *ishari tafsir*. Orally transmitted *tafsirs* were replaced by stand-alone *tafsir* books. Some of the scholars who paved the way for this are as follows. Abu Abdurrahman al-Sulami (412/1021), Abu Ishaq al-Sa'lebi (427/1035), Abdulkarim al-Qusyairi (465/1072), Abdullah al-Anshari (481/1089), Imam al-Ghazali (505/1111), Abdul Kadir al-Jaylani (561/1165), and Ruzbihan Bakli (606/1209).

Among the many works of interpretation written by the *mufasssirs*, the author would like to focus on the interpretation of *Mektubat Rabbani* by Ahmad Sirhindi. He, who is often called Imam Rabbani, was a Sufi and multidisciplinary scholar who lived in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. His understanding of *jihad* was shaped by the driving forces of the historical background of his time. Many deviant groups emerged at that time. The basic understanding of these deviant groups was to discredit the revelation and consider it no longer valid because a thousand years had passed since the arrival of the Prophet. They tried to build an eclectic understanding of religion by taking part in all religions. In conditions like this, Ahmad Sirhindi tried hard to purify religion from superstition and obey the Prophet. He carried out his guidance activities by sending letters to people who were politically, scientifically, and spiritually influential in the area where he was. For his efforts, he was given the title *Mujaddid Alf Sani* (Reformer of the Second Millennium Hijri).

Ahmad Sirhindi, who completed his memorization at a young age, included many verses of the Qur'an in his letters and other works. When interpreting these verses, he sometimes mentioned them figuratively and sometimes in a straightforward manner. When he felt joy and success in what he interpreted, he quoted verses that indicated God's favor, and when he felt tired and obstructed, he sought a way out with the verses he quoted in the form of prayers. This research consists of a study of Imam Rabbani's understanding of the Qur'an and the theological, legal, political, and theological interpretations of the verses he discussed in the letters. These letters will later be collected into the book *Mektubat Rabbani* (Nesriyat, 2017). This book is very interesting to study because it was written in Persian, translated into Arabic more than a century ago, and widely accepted, especially in Muslim countries that use Turkish (Atalay, 2020). The *ishari* interpretation method used by Ahmad Sirhindi in interpreting texts may be a fairly foreign method used by Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia.

The author will investigate this book in more detail by using epistemology as an object or formal method. By using epistemology, this book of interpretation can be studied comprehensively and conceptually, starting from the source of the interpretation and continuing to the style, writing process, and validity of the interpretation. In short, the research of the epistemology of interpretation using Ahmad Sirhindi's work, *Mektubat Rabbani*, as a material object is something new and has never been done before. Points regarding the epistemology of interpretation, namely the sources used by the interpreter in interpreting the verses of the Qur'an, the approach used in explaining the interpretation of the verses, the characteristics that emerge from the results of the interpretation, and the validity value of the work of interpretation-will be highlighted in this article.

2. Method

This type of research is library research *because* it is in the form of a literature review *and* starts from the problems to be studied and the data to be obtained. The literature review attempts to identify research gaps by analyzing and synthesizing the body of knowledge already available on the research subject. Some of its objectives are to provide a theoretical basis or background for the research, to examine the scope or depth of previous research on the subject, and to address practical problems by referring to previous research findings. All of this research material is taken from published literature, including books, journal articles, and Tafsir books. The condition of this data is considered sufficient to be used as raw material for research, so that it is not difficult to assess and draw conclusions based on research.

3. Results and Discussion

Biography of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi

In Ahmad Sirhindi, the twenty-third caliph of the Naqshbandiyya Order, was born in the city of Sirhind in India on the day of Ashura in the year 971 (AD 1564). His name was Ahmad, his father's name was Abdullahad, his grandfather's name was Zaynalabidin. His nickname was Badruddin and his nickname was Abu'l-Barakat. His lineage reaches the Companion Umar ra. in the 28th lineage. Sheikh Muhammad Bakibillah gave him the name "Imam Rabbani" and he is better known as "Imam Rabbani". He is called " *Mujaddid Alf Sani* " because he is the mujaddid (reformer) of the second millennium of the Hijri, and he was first described with this characteristic by His Eminence Abdulhakim Sialkoti, one of the Indian scholars. He is also nicknamed "Sila" which means unifier because of his unification between Ahkamiyah and Sufism. Because he was a descendant of Umar ra, he was called "Farukî" and because he came from the city of Sirhind, he was called "Sirhindi" which refers to that city. With all these qualifications, his name is Imam Rabbani Mujaddid Alf Sani Syekh Ahmad Faruki Sirhindi. He comes from the Hanafi madhab.

His father and grandfather were great scholars, pious people of their time. His father, Abdulehad, was a virtuous man who was a scholar in the intellectual and spiritual sciences and reached a high level in Sufism. When he was traveling to show the right path to people in his youth, in a famous city in India, a pious woman who belonged to one of the leading communities of that country understood that Abdulehad was a blessed person. This woman had a sister who was pure and had good qualities. She made an offer to Abduhâd to marry her sister. Imâm-i Rabbânî Hazretleri was born from this marriage. Imam Rabbani suffered from a serious illness in his childhood. His father took him to Shaykh Shah Kamal Qadiri, who was his shaykh from the Qadariyyah lineage. The shah said, "Don't be afraid. This child will live a long life, he will become a great scholar with great knowledge, a great scholar, a person with a high spiritual level and a unique sage".

He started his early education with his father. He memorized the Holy Quran at a young age. Then he got involved in the study of sciences. After learning most of his knowledge from his father, he went to the city of Sialkot. He learned some inner sciences very well from a famous scholar of that time, Mawlana Kamaluddin Kashmiri. Maulana Kamaluddin Kashmiri was the teacher of the famous scholar Abdulhakim Sialkoti and the greatest scholar of his time. He also learned hadith from Maulana Yakub al-Kashmiri as-Sarfi. After that, he read hadith, tafsir and some books of fiqh and ushul from the scholar Qadi Bahlul al-Badahsyi. When Imam Rabbani was only seventeen years old, he received ijazah from all the sciences of akli and nakli, ushul and furu'. During his education, he was involved in the Qadiriyyah, Suhrawardiyyah and Chistiyyah orders through his father and he was given permission by his father to guide and

become a caliph in these orders. While his father was still alive, he began to teach spiritual and spiritual sciences to students. At this young age, he wrote the treatise *Radd al-Rawafidh* to refute the Shiites, *Risalatut Tahliliyyah* and *Isbatun Nubuwwah*, in which he discussed issues related to prophecy. He was very interested in literature, to the point that his fashohah and balaghoh, his speed of communication, and his intelligence were at a very high level.

One year after his father's death, in 1008 (A.D. 1600), he set out from Sirhind to reach Mecca and Medina. When he reached Delhi, Hasan Kashmiri, one of his acquaintances there and a member of the Naqshbandi order, took him before Sheikh Muhammad Baqibillah. Imam Rabbani was given allegiance by Sheikh Muhammad Baqibillah and continued his conversation. With his superior abilities and the help and guidance of his teacher, within two months, he achieved qualities and perfection not seen in others. Then he was ordered to return to Sirhind with the full diploma given by his teacher. When Imam Rabbani returned to his hometown, he began training his students. Students come from all over the world to benefit from his knowledge. He revived and strengthened the Sunnah of Rasûlullah SAW. He encouraged the sultans and leaders at that time to adhere to religion and the Sunnah with his letters and produced many scholars and wise people. Even in the last days of his life, he firmly instructed his students to continue their studies and attached great importance to this.

Imam Rabbani died in Sirhind on 28 Safar 1034 (1624 CE) at the age of 63. His tomb is in Sirhind, a city in the province of Punjab, which is now within the borders of India. Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi produced several works, among others: a) *Mektubat*, this is the most famous and widely read work of Imam Rabbani. Imam Rabbani wrote his letters in Persian and only six letters were written in Arabic; b) *Ta'yid-i Ahl-i Sunnah (Risale Der Redd-i Revafiz)* is a Persian work written by him to refute the corrupted Shia beliefs; c) *Risalah fi Isbatin Nubuwwah*, this is a treatise written to prove the necessity of the existence of prophets by Imam Rabbani, who fought against the religion created by Akbar Shah, d) *Risalah fi al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ad* (originally in Persian, translated into Arabic by Muhammad Murad Kazani and published in the margins of the second volume of *Maktubat*); e) *Al-Mukasyafat al-Ghaybiyyah*; f) *Jazbah and Suluk*; g) *Maarif Laduniyyah*; h) *Risalah Tahliliyyah*; i) *The Law of the Awarifil Maarif of Shihabuddin al-Suhrawardi*; j) *The Law of the Rubaiyyati of Hace Abdulbaki*, and; k) *The Manners of the Students*.

Maktubat Rabbani Book and Presentation of its Interpretation

Maktubat consists of three volumes and consists of 534 surahs. The first volume of *Maktubat* was compiled in 1025 (1616 CE) by Yar Muhammad Jadid Badahsyi Talkani, one of the famous students of Imam Rabbani. There are three hundred and thirteen surahs in the first volume. Imam Rabbani wanted the first volume to end with three hundred and thirteen surahs to match the number of the Messengers and the companions of Badr. The first twenty surahs of the first volume are called 'arîza'. These are the letters that Imam Rabbani wrote to his teacher. He began these letters with the word ariz or maruz. In these letters, he presented his spiritual condition and the progress of his students. The second volume of the letters with his hint was collected by one of his students, Abdulhay bin Haji Chakerhisari in 1028 (1619 CE). This second volume was completed in ninety-nine surahs to match the number of ninety-nine Asmaul Husna of Allah SWT.

The third volume was compiled by Haja Muhammad Hashim Kishmi, one of Imam Rabbani's students, in 1031 (1622 CE). The number of letters in this volume was intended to be 113 to match the number of names of Allah SWT, Baqi, which are counted alphabetically. However, when the letters began to be collected for the fourth volume, their number was too few for one volume, so they were added to the third volume and the number of letters in the third

volume became one hundred and twenty-two. Thus, three volumes were formed consisting of 534 letters. Maktubat was translated from Persian into Turkish by Mustakimzade Suleyman Sadettin Efendi in 1158 (1745 CE) and printed in 1270-1277 (1853-1860 CE). This book was translated into Arabic by Muhammad Murad Kazani under the title " *ad-Durar al-Maknunat* " and published in Makkah al-Mukarramah in 1317 (1899 AD). This Arabic translation was first published in Istanbul in 1963. It is still printed by Fazilet Nesriyat.

The hadiths mentioned in Mektubat have been analyzed by Muhammad Said in his book entitled " *Tasyid al-Mabani fi Tahriji Ahadisi Maktubat al-Imam ar-Rabbani* ". When Imam Rabbani's method of interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an is analyzed in general, examples of bil ma'tsur and bil ra'yi can be identified. Imam Rabbani's interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an in bil ra'yi is isyari (interpreting with vague signs). In interpreting the verses in his work, Imam Rabbani sometimes refers to the history of Ibn 'Abbas (d. 68 H/687 AD), Zamakhshari (d. 538/1144), al-Razi (d. 606/1210), al-Baidhowi (d. 685/1286), and al-Nasafi (d.710/1310). Afterwards, Imam Rabbani was mentioned by Muhammad Senaullah Panipeti (d.1225/1810) in *Tafsir al-Mizan*.

As for Imam Rabbani's method in mentioning the verses of the Qur'an in his works, he made the verse itself the focus and mentioned it in talmih (alluding) and istisyhad (quoting). Imam Rabbani sometimes quoted the verse and gave his interpretation in the following lines of the letter. Sometimes he gave his interpretation and gave the verse at the end of his explanation. However, the relationship between the verse and Imam Rabbani's interpretation is very clear.

1. An example of Imam Rabbani who first mentioned the verse, then interpreted it, and at the same time interpreted and concluded it with the verse:

"In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Allah Ta'ala says: "Allah will change their bad deeds into good deeds." (QS al-Furqan: 70) With Allah's grace and glory. His Messenger, the Prophet SAW, the behavior of the owner of knowledge reached such a level that what was bad for others became good for him. For example, hypocrisy was considered bad behavior and morals the ugly. However, it becomes good for him and replaces praise and gratitude because the dervish who has reached this level has abandoned all forms of grandeur and arrogance and has attributed all that to Allah Ta'ala, goodness and perfection, he knows it all from Allah SWT, not from his own soul. He sees nothing but shortcomings and evil in himself. He feels his nafs in a state of weakness, need, and submission (Rabbani, Vol II, nd). Therefore, if something that can be considered perfect is directed to him, he will see it as a ladder to climb higher and reach Allah SWT, the owner of greatness and majesty. Therefore, the same is true with goodness, beauty, deeds and virtues, his soul has no share in them, they are only ladders for his ascent. For example, in the case of showing off and fame, the goal is not to become famous and praised, glorified and exalted. Rather, the goal is to show off Allah's favors and be grateful for His favors, so that what was originally considered as showing off and fame, turns into praise and gratitude to Allah Ta'ala, and changes from reprehensible behavior to praiseworthy behavior. The same is true with other qualities. Allah Ta'ala says: "So Allah changed their bad deeds into good deeds. Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (QS al-Furqan: 70).

2. An example of Imam Rabbani's istisyhad (quotation) of a verse in his letter which provides information about the degrees of negligent people:

"Do not misunderstand! This difference is only between the saints. Because after both of them reach the final stage of their ranks, a saint in the stage of akhfa is higher than another saint in the stage of heart, but this is not the case with the prophets and saints. The guardianship of a prophet is superior to the guardianship of a saint who is in the stage of

akhfa, even though he is in the stage of heart. This situation does not change even though the saint has reached the final stage of his position. This is because the guardianship of the saints is always below the feet of the prophet who is the owner of the guardianship. Allah Ta'ala says, "Indeed We have promised Our servants, the prophets. They will surely be victorious. Our army will surely be victorious." (QS as-Saffat: 171-173) (Rabbani, Vol I, nd).

3. An example of Imam Rabbani's talmih (alluding) to this verse in his interpretation of how the Qur'an gives guidance to the seekers:

"My Imam and guide in this work is the word of Allah, my boss is the Qur'an. If it were not for the guidance and direction of the Qur'an, the path to worshipping the true God would not have been opened. On this path, every latent and more latent thing would cry out, "I am Allah" and lure the traveler of the path of Sufism into the trap of worshipping it. Even if the form and quantity of the latent thing were known, it would appear as if its essence were unknown. Even if it resembled material things, it would present itself as if it were separate from them. Here it is difficult to distinguish between the jaiz and the wujub, the created and the uncreated. Falsehood appears as truth, and illusion as guidance. The Sufi traveler, like a blind traveler, turns to each of them saying, "This is my Lord." (QS al-An'am: 76). Allah praises Himself as "Creator of the heavens and the earth" (QS as-Shura: 11). He stated that He is "the Lord of the East and the West" (QS ar-Rahman: 17). During the spiritual ascent, when the Sufi travelers attribute these characteristics and attributes of Allah to imaginary gods and desire these attributes in themselves, then those imaginary gods flee from them and become extinct. Instead, the Sufis turn away from all that by saying, "I do not love the sunken," (QS al-An'am: 76) and they do not turn their attention to anything other than the Essence of Allah Ta'ala" (Rabbani, Vol II, nd).

In particular, the letters in which he mentions a verse at the beginning of his letter and then comments on the verse mostly coincide with the third volume. From this it can be concluded that he intended to create a more organized work of interpretation before his death. These verses number eleven. Slightly shifting from the method of interpretation to the style of interpretation, in the book Maktubat Rabbani one can easily find interpretations that are directed towards Sufism studies so that this book is dominated by the color or style of *al-shufi interpretation*. Not only *al-shufi interpretation* appears in this book, several other styles also take positions in various verses such as the style of *al-kalami*, *al-fiqhi*, *al-siyasi* and *al-falsafi*.

Epistemological Analysis

Epistemological studies related to the science of interpretation have become increasingly popular since they were introduced by Abdul Mustaqim through a dissertation discussing the thoughts of two contemporary interpreters, Muhammad Syahrur and Fazlur Rahman, which was later turned into a book entitled Epistemology of Contemporary Interpretation. The theory of the nature, source, and validity of knowledge adopted from one branch of philosophical research was well received. If epistemological theory is naturalized into interpretation research, then the discussion will focus on what sources are used as the basis for research, as well as what methods are used to pour ideas and concepts into interpretation so that it becomes a complete work of interpretation.

In this study, the book Maktubat Rabbani by the scholar Ahmad Sirhindi, who was born in the city of Sirhind in India in 1564, will be examined critically and epistemologically. In our study it has been concluded that Imam Rabbani, although he was very skilled in the zahiri sciences, he made interpretations based on *kashf* and *ilham*. According to him, *kashf* (revealing) is a reliable source, as long as it does not go beyond the limits of the Shari'a and obedience to

the Prophet. When we look at the works of Imam Rabbani, we see that he generally interpreted the verses in the way of *istisyhad* and *telmih*. In our opinion, the reason for this is because he and especially the companions to whom he sent letters had a deep understanding of the verses of the Qur'an. We can give an example that he did not mention the verse of interest itself, although he commented on the verse in his letter in which he advised that interest should be strictly avoided. His interpretation of the verse itself is usually found in the third volume of the letter. Based on this determination, it can be understood that Imam Rabbani wanted to create a comprehensive work of interpretation before his death.

Imam Rabbani's interpretation of the verses includes examples from history and direct interpretation. The interpretation in terms of *dirayah* (*bil ro'yi*) is an *ishari* interpretation. According to him, each letter of the letters of the Koran contains all the virtues in a nutshell. The same priority in the long letters is also found in the short letters. Every *surah*, every verse, and even every word has its own special virtue and virtue. The person who reads the verse or *surah* becomes part of the meaning contained in the verse. Imam Rabbani stated that a lack of understanding of the Qur'an will lead to the decline of *i'jaz* verses of the Qur'an, and thus can become a means of increasing one's faith. Imam Rabbani believes that it is inappropriate to use the word *tafsir*. According to him, interpretation depends on hearing. Therefore, interpretation is the right of the friends. While *ta'wil* is choosing one of the possible meanings, as long as it does not contradict the Qur'an and Sunnah, and this can be a method that can be used in interpreting the Qur'an. There are threats to those who interpret the Qur'an. The Qur'an according to his own opinion, but does not apply to those who interpret it according to their own opinion. Because they do not claim that their interpretation is the will of Allah (Al-Maturidi, 2005).

According to Imam Rabbani, Al-Qur'an al-Karim covers all Sharia laws and also all previous Sharia laws. Imam Rabbani divides the laws that can be deduced from the Koran into three parts. He stated that the first part can be understood by lay people who have knowledge of *lughat*, and the second part can be mastered by those who have the ability to *ijtihad* and *istinbat*. The third part, the decisions of the Qur'an, are decisions that are beyond the ability of human understanding. These are laws that the Prophet could only know through Allah's revelation. These laws are associated with the Sunnah of the Prophet. Imam Rabbani was very careful in mentioning the people or sources he quoted in his comments. Refraining from *takfir*, Imam Rabbani uses expressions such as "the person who says this will lose his faith" or "so and so scholars have made *takfirnya*" for situations that he thinks need to be *takfir*.

Imam Rabbani established a connection between the Qur'an and the month of Ramadan through the nature of *kalam*. According to him, because the nature of *kalam* is to collect all essential perfection, the month of Ramadan collects all goodness and blessings. For this reason, the Koran was revealed in the month of Ramadan. Imam Rabbani stated that *tarekat* is impossible without fulfilling the commandments of the Shari'a. According to him, submitting to the *dalil* (Al-Qur'an and Sunnah) and submitting inspiration to revelation is the right path and direction. Therefore, citing the verse "Seek a way to get closer to Him" as proof, he said, "This is also one of the commandments of the Shari'a to look for a *murshid* who can be a means of knowing the *tarekat* and guiding it." Imam Rabbani considered attachment to a *murshid* as an important condition for spiritual discipline. He considered attachment to a *murshid* as education. He stated that attachment to the *murshid* will never precede attachment to Allah.

Imam Rabbani showed that the belief that emerged in him after he passed through the stages of *suluk* (Cebecioğlu, 1997) was that the purpose of *suluk* was to reach the state of sincerity. What can be known with postulates can also be known with *kasyf*. According to him, the realization of the station of sincerity depends on the annihilation of all gods, both external

and internal. The Ikhlas stations mentioned above are one of the three parts of the Shari'a known as science, charity, and sincerity. Tariqat and Haqiqat are subject to Sharia in sincere maturity. Imam Rabbani defended the concept of *wahdat al-syuhud* against the concept of *wahdat al-wujud*. Imam Rabbani evaluated the concept of *wahdat al-syuhud* based on the verses of surah an-Nahl 16/60, surah an-Nur 24/35, and surah Insan 76/1. Imam Rabbani explained this view with the example of the sun and the stars. When the sun rises, the stars are not visible. At that time, if someone says, "There are no stars in the sky, there is only the sun," and believes in it, then it reflects the understanding of the *wahdat al-wujud* people. According to Imam Rabbani, this is an illusion of perception. The person who thinks, "I cannot see anything in the sky except the Sun, but this does not mean that there are no stars; there are stars, but the stars it has been obscured and cannot be seen because of the very bright light of the Sun", is given as an example of the state of the people of *wahdat al-syuhud*. Although Imam Rabbani opposed Ibn al-'Arabi's understanding of *wahdat al-wujud*, he used a style of language that was full of respect against Ibn al-'Arabi.

Imam Rabbani used the *zahiri* science in dealing with the common people and applied the principle of ease, while with the caliphs and his students who were competent in the field of Sufism, he dealt with the *hafizh* and ordered them to act earnestly. He opposed the categorization of innovation as something good and bad. According to him, there is no beauty in innovation. Imam Rabbani said that the opinions of the *mujtahids* should be combined as much as possible in order to act with a unanimous opinion. For example, Imam Shafi'i stipulated the intention in performing ablution. Therefore, a Hanafi must also have an intention before performing ablution. Although Imam Rabbani stated that the study of theology and philosophy contributed to his journey and became a bridge between him and the Divine miracles, he also stated that philosophy that does not originate from the light of prophethood is an empty and useless science. According to him, the attitude of prophethood is outside the attitude of philosophical reason. Imam Rabbani considered the philosophers' approach to reason and its levels as confusing and likened it to the Jews turning over the calf of Samaria.

In this study, we have tried to review the verses that Imam Rabbani included in the *Maktubat*, but it is impossible to mention all of them in detail. Therefore, we have included in this study the interpretation of verses whose interpretations are concentrated on more verses or verses that can be connected to other verses. According to Abdul Mustaqim in his book *Epistemology of Contemporary Interpretation*, one of the issues that is no less important in the study of the epistemology of interpretation is measuring and measuring the truth of an interpretation in terms of how far the work of interpretation can meet the standards required to be said to be true (Mustaqim, 2007). This is very important because the product of interpretation is usually used to influence the lives of Muslims. Although the truth of interpretation is subjective and relative depending on the point of view, and it is impossible to determine which is right and which is wrong, a container is needed to be a measure that allows the truth to be said to be objective and scientific even though it is difficult.

Abdul Mustaqim proposed three theories to determine the truth of interpretation: coherence (the harmony of the internal relationship of the text between one proposition and another), correspondence (the harmony of the interpreter's ideas with facts or scientific theories), and pragmatism (empirically developing into solutions to social and humanitarian problems). So far, the *Mektubat* book is more in line with the pragmatism theory with existing data explaining that all money containing interest is haram, and all contracts leading to illegal acquisition are haram. Imam Rabbani warned against equating interest consumption with situations of need, stating that the person in need must be in a place where the law on the prohibition of interest is

unclear. He emphasized that need is an essential condition and must be used as much as needed. Although the Lahore scholars issued a fatwa on the basis of need, it is unclear how the concept of need will be expanded, which could potentially affect the prohibition of usury.

Although the book *Mektubat Rabbani* is not entirely devoted to interpretation, the structure of the discussion and the flow of the interpretation make it easy for readers to find the theme they need. One of the advantages of this book is its short and to the point language, but still explains long-term problems. Even the best human works are not without their shortcomings. One of the most obvious shortcomings of this book is that it contains many discussions that are not suitable for the layman. In addition, it is still written in Arabic and Turkish, and the use of certain old vocabulary makes it difficult to interpret for those who are not familiar with these letters and phrases. Although this is a disadvantage, it is also an advantage because the value of authenticity is an important attribute, especially when it is disseminated to restore historical traditions to the present generation.

4. Conclusion

In relation to the epistemology and validity of the interpretation of the *Maktubat* book by Ahmad Sirhindi or better known as Imam Rabbani, based on the information above, it can be concluded that there is an integration between the interpretation of *bil ma'tsur* (according to history), which comes from the Qur'an and Hadith, and the interpretation of *bil ra'yi* (according to *dirayat*), the interpretation found in the *Maktubat* book falls into the category of interpretation of *bil iqtirani*, when viewed from its source. When viewed from the approach he uses, Ahmad Sirhindi's interpretation, which uses many variables and aspects, can be classified as an *isyari* interpretation. Furthermore, the *shufi* style is dominant in this interpretation, followed by *kalami*, *fiqhi*, *siyasi*, and *falsafi*. As for the verses of the Qur'an, they have an important place in the works of Imam Rabbani. In all his works, he refers to these verses literally, both literally and implicitly. In fact, the fact that all his discussions center on submission to the Shari'a is evidence of how much value he places on the Qur'an al-Karim as a source of Shari'a. The book of *Maktubat* Imam Rabbani when based on the theory of pragmatism can be said to be valid because it offers solutions to the problems and confusions of society such as the mixing of money with usury, the secularization of religion and so on.

5. Bibliography

- Al-Hujwiri, Abul Hasan Ali bin Usman al-Jullabi. *Kasyful Mahjub*. Beirut: 1981.
- Al-Maturidi, Muhammad bin Muhammad Abu Mansur. *Ta'wilat Ahlis Sunnah*. Beirut: Darul Suhul Ilmiyyah, 1426/2005.
- Al-Qaththan, Manna' Khalil. *Mabahits Fi Ulum Al-Qur'an*. Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 1425.
- Al-Sarraj, Abu Nasr at-Tusi. *al-Luma'*. Egypt, Cairo. 1380/1960.
- Al-Sulami, Abu Abdurrahman Muhammad bin Husayn. *The Path of Self-Sufficiency and Self-Reliance*, 155.
- Al-Syatibi, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim bin Musa. *al-Muwafaqat fi Ushulis Sharia* I-IV. Beirut.
- Al-Thabrani, Abu Kasim. *al-Mu'jamul Kabir*, 1427.
- Al-Tirmidhi, Muhammad Abu Isa. *Sunan*. Beirut: Darul Gharbil Islami, 1998.

- Ateş, Süleyman. *İşâri Tefsir Okulu*. Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1974.
- Ethem Cebecioğlu. *Tasavvuf Terimleri ve Deyimleri Sözlüğü*. Ankara: Rehber Yayınları, 1997.
- The Heart of Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn Ali al-Baghdadi. *The Book of the Prophets and the Prophets*. Beirut: Muassalatur Risalah, 1994.
- Ibn al-Jauzi, Abul Faraj Abdurrahman bin Ali bin Muhammad al-Baghdadi. *Siffatul Safwah I-IV*. Beirut: 1986.
- Ibn Khallikan. *Wafayatul A'yan*. Egypt: 1948.
- Ibnul Imad, Abdul Hayy bin Ahmad. *Syadzratud Dzahab fi Ahbari man Dzahab, IX*. Beirut: 1986.
- Imam Rabbani, Ahmad Sirhindi. *Mektubat Rabbani, (ad-Durar al-Maknunat)* Arabic translation by Muhammad Murad Kazani. Mecca: 1963. Istanbul: Fazilet Neşriyat.
- Imam Rabbani, Ahmad Sirhindi. *Mükâşefât-i Gaybiyye*, Necdet Tosun Translation. Istanbul: Sufi Kitap, 2015.
- Imam Rabbani, Ahmad Sirhindi. *Risalatu Raddir Rowafidh, (in a book called an-Nahiyah)* Istanbul: Hakikat Kitabevi, 2014.
- Mehmet Atalay, *Mektûbât-I İmâm-I Rabbânî'nin Arapça Nushasında Bir Tercüme Hatasi Ve Önemi*. 2020.
- Muhammad Sanaullah Panipati. *at-Tafsirul Mazhari*. Pakistan: Maktabatur Rusdiyyah, 1412 AH.
- Mustaqim, Abdul. *Epistemology of Contemporary Interpretation*. Yogyakarta: IDEA Press, 2020.
- Sami, Semseddin. *Kamusu'l-Alam, I-VI*. Istanbul: Mihran Matbaası, 1308.
- Fazilet Neşriyat Research Team. *Silsiletü'z-Zeheb Silsile-İ Sadat-I Nakşibendiyye*. 5th ed. İstanbul: Fazilet Neşriyat, 2017.
- Umar, Nasaruddin. *Deradicalization of Understanding of the Qur'an and Hadith*. Jakarta: PT Alex Media, 2014.
- Utsaimin, Muhammad bin Salih. *al-.Usul Fi Al-Tafsir*. Egypt: Dar Ibn Jawzi, 2008.