

Locality in Kiai Sholeh Darat's Qur'anic Commentary *Faid al-Rahman*

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Abstract

The use of Javanese in *Faid al-Rahman* raises a fundamental question about religious instruction: how can Qur'anic meanings be made accessible to readers whose everyday language differs from that of scripture? This article examines locality in KH. Sholeh Darat's commentary through its language and script, interpretive organization, and educational purpose. It draws on qualitative library research and descriptive textual analysis of available excerpts and scholarship on the author and his work. The analysis indicates that Javanese written in Pegon allows religious concepts to be explained in a linguistic setting familiar to readers. The commentary follows the order of the Qur'anic chapters and brings together explanations of outward meaning, Sufi reflection, and jurisprudential discussion. This combination suggests attention to the learning needs of Javanese communities. Accounts of Sholeh Darat's encounter with R.A. Kartini preserve a memory of the importance of accessible religious instruction, although their historical reliability requires critical assessment. The commentary's coverage, from al-Fatihah to al-Nisa', limits its textual scope while retaining its significance in the history of Javanese Qur'anic interpretation. Locality is thus understood as an interpretive orientation toward readers and their social circumstances. Claims about wider influence, however, must remain proportionate to the available evidence.

Keywords: *Faid al-Rahman*; Javanese; locality; Pegon; Qur'anic interpretation.

Abstrak

Pilihan bahasa Jawa dalam *Tafsir Faid al-Rahman* memperlihatkan persoalan mendasar dalam pengajaran agama, yakni bagaimana makna Al-Qur'an dijelaskan kepada pembaca yang bahasa sehari-harinya berbeda dari bahasa kitab suci. Artikel ini menelaah lokalitas tafsir karya KH. Sholeh Darat melalui pilihan bahasa dan aksara, susunan penafsiran, serta orientasi pendidikannya. Penelitian menggunakan studi kepustakaan kualitatif dengan analisis teks secara deskriptif, berdasarkan bagian teks yang tersedia dan literatur mengenai pengarang beserta karyanya. Hasil telaah menunjukkan bahwa bahasa Jawa beraksara Pegon menyediakan sarana untuk menjelaskan konsep keagamaan melalui lingkungan bahasa yang dikenal pembaca. Penafsiran mengikuti urutan surah dalam mushaf serta mempertemukan penjelasan makna lahiriah, perenungan sufistik, dan pembahasan fikih. Perpaduan tersebut menunjukkan perhatian terhadap kebutuhan belajar masyarakat Jawa. Riwayat perjumpaan Sholeh Darat dengan R.A. Kartini menggambarkan ingatan tentang pentingnya pengajaran agama yang dapat dipahami, meskipun nilai historisnya perlu dinilai secara kritis. Cakupan kitab yang terbatas pada al-Fatihah hingga an-Nisa' membatasi keluasan pembahasannya, tetapi tetap menempatkannya sebagai karya penting dalam sejarah tafsir Jawa. Lokalitas dengan demikian dipahami sebagai orientasi penafsiran terhadap pembaca dan keadaan sosialnya, sedangkan klaim mengenai pengaruh yang lebih luas harus disesuaikan dengan kekuatan bukti yang tersedia.

Kata kunci: Arab Pegon; *Faid al-Rahman*; lokalitas; Sholeh Darat; *tafsir Nusantara*.

A Introduction

Language shapes how readily readers can understand religious explanations. In the history of Qur'anic interpretation in the Indonesian archipelago, this relationship is evident in the use of Malay, Javanese, Sundanese, and other regional languages to explain the Qur'an. Exegetes addressed communities with varied speech practices, learning traditions, and levels of literacy. Their choices of language and script were therefore closely connected to the educational needs of the settings in which

they wrote. This diversity has shaped the region's exegetical tradition and invites an examination of the relationship between religious texts and their readers (Faiqoh 2018).

The concept of locality offers a way to examine this relationship. In this article, locality refers to a work's connections with a community's language, customs, and social circumstances. The use of Pegon in Javanese writing and Jawi in the Malay tradition shows how Islamic knowledge was communicated through forms of literacy already familiar to local communities. Within interpretation itself, these connections may also appear in the choice of terms and the ways particular issues are explained. An analysis of locality should therefore ask how linguistic features contribute to understanding, rather than simply identify the language in which a work is written (Arifin 2018).

KH. Sholeh Darat al-Samarani's *Faid al-Rahman* is an important work in the development of Javanese Qur'anic commentary written in Pegon. Its two volumes cover al-Fatihah, al-Baqarah, Ali 'Imran, and al-Nisa'. Although the work does not encompass the entire Qur'an, it provides material for examining how a scholar explained matters of belief, worship, and spiritual cultivation to local readers. The choice of Javanese indicates the intended readership, while the explanations reveal how religious knowledge was organized to meet that readership's needs (Faiqoh 2018).

Sholeh Darat's position within Javanese scholarly networks provides further context for reading his work. Biographical literature presents him as an influential teacher of several prominent figures, including KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan. Accounts of R.A. Kartini are also frequently associated with his teaching. These connections help explain the continuing attention to Sholeh Darat's work in Indonesian Islamic intellectual history. The influence of each relationship must nevertheless be assessed in light of the sources that document it, particularly when accounts derive from biographical narratives or community memory (Ulum 2016, 35).

Previous scholarship provides a foundation for this study. Surur (2011) examines the commentary's method and interpretive tendencies, while Aziz (2013) explores Islamic teaching through Pegon texts in coastal Java. Faiqoh (2018) investigates vernacularization in the language and interpretation of *Faid al-Rahman*. Arifin (2018) specifically relates the work's local features to its author's sociocultural background. Together, these studies show that the relationship between Qur'anic interpretation and Javanese culture has received scholarly attention. This article extends that discussion by bringing the connections among language choice, interpretive orientation, and educational function into a common analytical frame.

The study asks how Sholeh Darat's attention to Javanese communities is reflected in the composition of his commentary. The use of a local language alone does not establish that all its interpretations derive from local culture. Jurisprudence and Sufism also belong to Islamic scholarly traditions that developed across regions. The analysis therefore distinguishes features that connect the work to Javanese readers from those that demonstrate continuity with the broader exegetical tradition. This distinction is necessary if locality is to serve as a precise analytical concept.

Several terms require clarification. Pegon is an adapted Arabic script used to write local languages, including Javanese; the term does not refer to the Arabic language. *Tartib mushafi* denotes the arrangement of discussion according to the order of surahs in the Qur'an. *Tahlili* refers to the analysis of verses through their various aspects, whereas *ishari* interpretation concerns inner meanings or spiritual allusions. These distinctions matter because script, textual sequence, interpretive method, and exegetical orientation describe different features of a commentary.

Reading *Faid al-Rahman* can also inform reflection on religious education that takes learners' circumstances and linguistic traditions seriously. Its relevance lies in understanding how knowledge is communicated, including the obstacles that arise when the language of instruction is unfamiliar to readers. Present-day relevance, however, does not in itself establish historical social impact. This article confines its conclusions to relationships traceable through the text and the literature, while assigning due weight to accounts of the work's reception.

B Method

This study adopts a qualitative, library-based research design. Content analysis is used to examine textual excerpts and written accounts relevant to locality in *Faid al-Rahman*. The commentary is approached as an exegetical work produced within a particular linguistic and social setting. The units of analysis comprise statements about the reasons for writing the work, its presentation, examples of verse interpretation, and accounts of the author's relationship with his readership.

The primary object of study is *Faid al-Rahman*, particularly its introduction and selected interpretations of verses in Ali 'Imran and al-Nisa'. Access to the primary text is incomplete, and some material has been obtained through quotations and discussions in previous studies. Supporting literature includes the biographies by Masyhuri (2007) and Ulum (2016), Surur's study (2011), and articles by Aziz (2013), Faiqoh (2018), and Arifin (2018). These sources are distinguished by type so that information obtained through other researchers remains explicitly identified as secondary evidence.

Material was collected by locating literature on the author, the history of the commentary's composition, and its interpretive characteristics. Relevant sources were then read for information about the use of Javanese, the organization of explanations, and the relationship between outward meaning and spiritual interpretation. Passages relevant to the research focus were recorded alongside their source details. This documentation allowed quotations and other information to be checked when incorporated into the discussion.

Analysis began by selecting material relevant to the research question and organizing it under biography, the circumstances of composition, textual organization, interpretive orientation, and locality. Accounts of language use were then compared with the educational purposes stated in the sources. The selected verse interpretations were examined to understand how religious concepts were explained, without treating these two examples as representative of the commentary as a whole. Conclusions were drawn from traceable relationships among the materials, with textual evidence distinguished from assessments of social function.

Sources were assessed through comparison across the literature. Biographical information, for example, was considered in relation to the accounts of Masyhuri and Ulum, while assessments of exegetical method and orientation were compared across Surur, Faiqoh, and Arifin. Differences were retained rather than forced into a single account. Popular narratives about Kartini were treated as evidence of the reception or remembered significance of Sholeh Darat's teaching. They were not accorded the same evidentiary status as contemporaneous documents for establishing historical causation.

The study's principal limitations are incomplete access to the primary text and the partial reliance on secondary sources. Comparing sources helps identify inconsistencies but cannot replace direct examination of the editions cited. Nor does this study collect field data to measure changes in

community understanding. Accordingly, the term social function refers here to the educational orientation and accounts of reception found in the literature, rather than to measured effects within a population.

C Results and Discussion

1 Sholeh Darat's Life and Scholarly Milieu

Muhammad Sholeh bin Umar al-Samarani is widely known as Kiai Sholeh Darat or Mbah Sholeh Darat. The name Darat is associated with the coastal district of Semarang where he lived. Identifying a scholar by his place of residence reflects the close relationship among the individual, his teaching environment, and the community that knew him. Biographical literature places Sholeh Darat's scholarly activity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, emphasizing religious instruction and the writing of works for Javanese readers (Masyhuri 2007, 73).

His family provided a foundation for his education and social outlook. His father, Kiai Umar bin Tasmin, is known as a religious scholar who participated in the Java War of 1825–1830. Ulum (2016, 37) also records a maternal genealogical connection, through Nyai Umar binti Kiai Singapadon, to the lineage of Sunan Kudus. This family history brings together traditions of religious education and experience of resistance to colonial rule. Such genealogical accounts should still be treated as information from biographical sources; their influence on a particular work requires more specific evidence.

Sholeh Darat began his education with his father before studying with several teachers in Java. Those named in the literature include KH. Muhammad Syahid in Kajen, KH. Muhammad Shalih bin Asnawi in Kudus, Kiai Ishaq Damaran, Kiai Muhammad al-Hadi bin Baquni, Shaykh Abdul Ghani Bima, and other teachers in Semarang and Purworejo. These settings introduced him to Arabic grammar, jurisprudence, hadith, Qur'anic interpretation, theology, and Sufism. The breadth of this education helps account for the range of disciplines later represented in his writings (Masyhuri 2007, 81).

Traveling to Mecca with his father expanded these scholarly networks. After his father's death, Sholeh Darat continued to study with scholars of the Haramain, the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Accounts of his education name Ahmad Zaini Dahlan, Muhammad ibn Sulaiman Hasbullah, and Muhammad Shaleh Zawawi al-Makki among his teachers. He was subsequently entrusted with teaching. In this setting, connections between Javanese scholars and Mecca as a center of learning developed through direct encounters, the study of scholarly texts, and networks of teachers and students (Masyhuri 2007, 81).

The literature links Sholeh Darat's teaching to several scholars from the Indonesian archipelago, including Kiai Dalhar Watucongol, Kiai Dimyati Termas, Kiai Dahlan Termas, Kiai Kholil Harun Kasingan, and Kiai Raden Asnawi Kudus. Hasyim Asy'ari and Ahmad Dahlan are also named within this network. His recognition as *shaykh al-mashayikh*, a teacher of scholars, reflects his standing in the scholarly memory of pesantren, or Islamic boarding schools. For this study, these networks provide context for the circulation of knowledge without attributing the entire intellectual development of his students solely to his teaching (Ulum 2016).

Writing was an important part of his teaching. Works attributed to him include *Matan al-Hikam*, *Munjiyat*, *Hidayat al-Rahman*, *Fasolatan*, *Hadis al-Ghaiti*, *Syarah Barzanji*, *Lataif al-Taharah wa Asrar al-Salah*, *Majmu'at al-Syari'ah*, *Manasik Haji wa al-Umrah*, *Minhaj al-Atqiya'*, *al-Mursyid al-Wajiz*, and *Faid al-Rahman* (Faiqoh 2018, 95–96). These titles indicate a concern with worship, moral cultivation, and the understanding of religious teachings. Writing in a language familiar to readers made such texts part of community education, as Aziz (2013) discusses in his study of Pegon works.

Sholeh Darat died in 1903 and was buried in Bergota, Semarang. His life continues to be remembered through the reading of his works and the memory of communities that honor him. In relation to *Faid al-Rahman*, his education in Java and Mecca reveals two connected settings: a scholarly tradition extending across regions and the educational needs of a local community. This relationship helps explain how a broad range of religious sources could be communicated in Javanese (Ulum 2016).

2 The Circumstances of Writing *Faid al-Rahman*

Making Qur'anic meanings accessible was the principal reason for writing *Faid al-Rahman*. In the introduction quoted by Faiqoh (2018, 91), Sholeh Darat explains that limited knowledge of Arabic made it difficult for readers to understand scripture. This difficulty prompted him to compose explanations in Javanese. His statement identifies a concrete obstacle to learning: a person may be familiar with Qur'anic recitation yet lack the linguistic knowledge needed to understand what is recited.

The choice of Javanese addressed this need by bringing the explanation closer to readers' own language. In this context, limited understanding should not be reduced to a reluctance to reflect on religious teachings. Opportunities to learn, language proficiency, and the availability of reading materials also shape a person's ability to understand a text. Sholeh Darat's explanations can be read as an effort to broaden those opportunities through a medium already familiar within his community.

The work's full title is commonly given as *Faid al-Rahman fi Tarjamah Tafsir Kalam Malik al-Dayyan*. The expression *Faid al-Rahman* refers to the outpouring of grace from the Most Merciful. This connotation is consistent with the work's concern for spiritual cultivation. Its exegetical orientation must nevertheless be established through its contents, rather than its title alone. Imam Taufiq's emphasis on the social dimension also suggests that a Sufi orientation can coexist with concern for community affairs (Taufiq 2016, as cited in Faiqoh 2018, 97).

The language of the work is described in the literature as Javanese *al-Maraki* or *al-Meriki*. Faiqoh (2018, 91) records two explanations: the first term is linked to the Semarang region, while the second reading is associated with an expression meaning "here." Both point to the proximity between the commentary's language and the world of its author and readers. The variant readings should be retained as a philological question; in this analysis, they underscore the work's orientation toward local speakers.

The history of composition and publication needs to be distinguished by volume. Faiqoh (2018, 97–98) records that the first volume was begun on 20 Rajab 1309 AH and completed on 19 Jumada al-Awwal 1310 AH, before being printed in Singapore by Haji Muhammad Amin in 1311 AH. The second volume was completed in 1312 AH. These dates place the work's composition in the late nineteenth century. For an analysis of locality, the central point is the relationship between its intended Javanese readership and its circulation through printing networks that extended beyond Java.

3 Organization and Exegetical Method

Faid al-Rahman follows the order of surahs in the Qur'an. The first volume covers al-Fatihah and al-Baqarah, while the second contains Ali 'Imran and al-Nisa'. This arrangement is known as *tartib mushafi*. The term describes the sequence of presentation and does not, by itself, indicate whether individual verses receive brief or detailed explanations. Distinguishing textual organization from method allows a more precise understanding of the commentary's character (Faiqoh 2018, 97–98).

At the beginning of a surah, Sholeh Darat provides information about its name, the circumstances of its revelation, and its principal themes. The introduction may also discuss differences among scholarly views and the number of verses. The commentary then proceeds through the verses being interpreted. This structure offers readers context before moving to more specific explanations. In the layout described by earlier studies, the Qur'anic text is presented separately from the commentary, which is written in Javanese (Faiqoh 2018).

The explanations draw on the Qur'an, hadith, the views of the Companions and Successors, and the interpretations of earlier scholars. Some passages also refer to the circumstances of revelation and features of Arabic. The use of Javanese thus remains connected to wider sources of Islamic scholarship. The local language serves as a medium of communication, while the knowledge conveyed is grounded in an established exegetical tradition (Arifin 2018, 18; Surur 2011, 64–66).

Assessments of the commentary's method are not entirely uniform. Arifin (2018, 18) emphasizes its *tahlili*, or analytical, tendency, whereas Surur (2011, 64–66) classifies it as *ijmali*, or concise exposition, on the grounds that several explanations are brief and easy to follow. This disagreement shows why the basis of classification needs to be made explicit. Sequential treatment of verses, breadth of explanation, and depth of discussion should be assessed separately. This article attends to the work's analytical features while acknowledging alternative assessments of the level of detail it provides.

Sufism and jurisprudence are both prominent interpretive orientations. The Sufi orientation appears when verses are read in relation to the condition of the heart and the cultivation of the self; the jurisprudential orientation emerges in explanations of religious obligations and the conduct of worship. Their presence allows readers to learn religious requirements while reflecting on the quality of their practice. This relationship informs the discussion of the following two examples, without assuming that every verse receives the same extent of treatment (Surur 2011).

4 The Sufi Orientation in Verse Interpretation

An example of the Sufi orientation appears in the discussion of Qur'an 3:27, in Ali 'Imran. The verse describes God's power over the alternation of night and day, life and death, and the granting of sustenance. The verse and its translation provide the starting point for examining how the spiritual interpretation develops.

تُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَتَرْزُقُ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

“You cause the night to pass into the day and the day to pass into the night. You bring the living out of the dead and the dead out of the living. And You grant sustenance without measure to whom You will.” (Qur'an 3:27, Ali 'Imran)

An *ishari* reading connects the imagery of light and darkness with the human inner life. The following excerpt in Pegon contains the explanation used to illustrate this connection (Surur 2011, 68).

ستوني منجىفاكن توان اغ صنايعي ظلمانية البشرية اغدالم ريناني انوار صنايعي الروحانية مك دادى فتغ مغكوني اتي. لن
منجىفاكن توان اغ ريناني انوار الروحانية اغدالم ظلمات الصفات النفسانية مك دادى فداغ منجورغ مغكونو اتي. لن
مليه غتوكاكي توان اغ قلب الي باليو القيقية متو ساكغ نفس الميت. لن غتوكاكي توان اغ قلب الميت كلون سبب
سفي حيو القيقية متو ساكغ نفس الي

In this explanation, darkness is associated with harmful qualities and the dominance of desire, whereas light is associated with good qualities that illuminate the heart. The imagery of life and death is then used to explain changes in spiritual condition. Interpretation moves from events recognizable through sensory experience to reflection on the self. Readers are thus invited to consider the condition of their hearts and conduct as they seek to understand the verse's message.

The relationship between outward and inner meaning requires careful explanation. The spiritual reading extends the interpretation, while the alternation of night and day remains part of the verse's explicit content. Maintaining this distinction avoids conflating *ishari* interpretation with literal translation. For Javanese readers, a familiar language helps explain ideas about the heart, desire, and self-cultivation that may otherwise seem abstract when presented only through technical terminology.

Sholeh Darat's Sufi orientation is connected to traditions of study and Sufi sources, including the thought of al-Ghazali and Ibn 'Arabi, as noted in scholarship on the commentary. Sufism, however, is a tradition that developed well beyond Java. The local dimension of this example lies chiefly in the language of presentation and in how the explanation relates to readers' needs. Its Sufi orientation must therefore be considered alongside its mode of presentation when used as evidence of locality (Surur 2011; Arifin 2018).

5 The Jurisprudential Orientation and Religious Practice

The commentary's attention to jurisprudence is evident in its discussion of Qur'an 4:102, in al-Nisa', concerning prayer under threat. The verse connects worship with vigilance in circumstances that endanger the congregation. Its explanation allows discussion of prayer procedures, the division of worshippers into groups, and precautions for their safety.

وَإِذَا كُنْتَ فِيهِمْ فَأَقَمْتَ لَهُمُ الصَّلَاةَ فَلْتَقُمْ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ مَعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوا أَسْلِحَتَهُمْ فَإِذَا سَجَدُوا فَلْيَكُونُوا مِنْ وَرَائِكُمْ وَلْتَأْتِ
طَائِفَةٌ أُخْرَى لَمْ يُصَلُّوا فَلْيُصَلُّوا مَعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوا حِذْرَهُمْ وَأَسْلِحَتَهُمْ وَذَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْ تَغْفُلُونَ عَنْ أَسْلِحَتِكُمْ وَأَمْتِعَتِكُمْ
فَيَمِيلُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَيْلَةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنْ كَانَ بِكُمْ أَدَى مِنْ مَطَرٍ أَوْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَى أَنْ تَضَعُوا أَسْلِحَتَكُمْ وَخُذُوا
حِذْرَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعَدَّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا

"When you (Muhammad) are among them (your companions) and lead them in prayer, let one group stand with you, carrying their weapons. When those praying with you have prostrated (having completed one unit of prayer), let them take their position behind you (to face the enemy). Then let the other group, who have not yet prayed, come and pray with you, remaining vigilant and carrying their weapons. The disbelievers wish that you would neglect your weapons and belongings so that they might attack you all at once. There is no blame on you if you put down your weapons because

rain causes you hardship or because you are ill, but remain vigilant. Indeed, God has prepared a humiliating punishment for the disbelievers.” (Qur’an 4:102, al-Nisa’)

In the jurisprudential explanation examined here, the threat of attack provides the context for carrying weapons and arranging for groups to take turns in prayer. Vigilance is explained as part of worship in these circumstances. Readers are thus shown how the verse’s command relates to the situation it addresses. The jurisprudential orientation is evident in the effort to explain the required actions and their legal reasoning within the context of *salat al-khawf*, prayer under conditions of fear or danger (Surur 2011).

The discussion also addresses differing views on whether the procedure for *salat al-khawf* remained applicable after the Prophet’s lifetime. In the account cited, the view attributed to Abu Yusuf limits it to circumstances in which the Prophet led the prayer, while another view treats it as guidance that the Muslim community may continue to follow. This disagreement shows that jurisprudential explanation involves reasoning about the scope of a command. The issue is presented through competing positions, with attention to the arguments used to establish the scope and continuing applicability of the verse’s provisions.

This example shows that understanding a verse may involve examining outward requirements and the responsibility to observe them under particular circumstances. Its connection to spiritual cultivation lies in the concern for the quality of religious practice. Observance of prescribed forms of worship, attentiveness in prayer, and the effort to avoid wrongdoing are related elements in the commentary’s religious education. The example of *salat al-khawf* is nevertheless insufficient to establish that every jurisprudential discussion in the work directly responds to conditions in colonial Java.

Read alongside the preceding Sufi example, this discussion reveals the breadth of the commentary’s educational purposes. Readers receive explanations of actions prescribed by religion while also being encouraged to examine their inner lives. Jurisprudence and Sufism emerge here as potentially complementary concerns. Their relationship must still be assessed in the discussion of each verse, since the commentary does not treat every issue with the same depth.

6 Contributions and Limitations of the Commentary

The principal contribution of *Faid al-Rahman* lies in its explanation of the Qur’an in a language intended for Javanese readers. Its place among the important early works in this tradition gives it historical value for the study of Qur’anic interpretation in the Indonesian archipelago. The commentary allows readers to trace how religious knowledge was communicated in a regional language. Linguistic familiarity may facilitate understanding, especially for readers who already know Pegon and need explanations of Arabic terms (Faiqoh 2018).

The range of subjects addressed is another contribution. Discussions of jurisprudence, belief, and Sufism provide material for learning that connects religious conviction, practice, and self-cultivation. Explanations of *ishari* meanings attend to the inward experience of religion, while legal discussions offer guidance for action. For intellectual history, the intersection of these fields helps show how religious knowledge was organized within Sholeh Darat’s teaching environment (Surur 2011).

Linguistic accessibility, however, always depends on readers’ abilities. A combination of Arabic vocabulary and varieties of Javanese may be readily understood in one setting yet prove difficult in another. Likewise, proficiency in spoken Javanese does not necessarily entail the ability to read Pegon.

The commentary's accessibility must therefore be understood in relation to its intended readership, learning traditions, and the teaching support available. Locality creates familiarity for particular communities while making further explanation necessary for readers beyond them.

Coverage of four surahs constitutes a clear textual limitation. The commentary does not explain the entire Qur'an, so readers must consult other sources for verses it does not address. This study also faces limitations in access to the complete primary text. Such access constraints should be distinguished from an absolute claim that the work is no longer printed or is entirely unavailable. The availability of editions, reproductions, and copies must be assessed with reference to the time and place of inquiry.

Assessing the use of hadith requires similar care. Surur (2011) notes the need for closer attention to the commentary's treatment of hadith. The absence of an explicit assessment of a hadith's reliability does not, in itself, establish that it is weak. Examination of the chain of transmission (*isnad*), the reported text (*matn*), and the sources of transmission remains necessary in a separate study. For this analysis of locality, the limitation that can be identified is the need for more detailed source tracing, rather than a judgment on the reliability of all reports used.

The use of earlier exegetes' views should likewise be understood within the scholarly tradition of Qur'anic interpretation. Engagement with previous works forms part of the establishment of exegetical authority. Sholeh Darat's contribution can be assessed through the ways he selected, explained, and communicated this material to Javanese readers. This approach permits a fairer reading of a work rooted in the transmission of knowledge, while still requiring precise attribution when it is examined according to contemporary academic standards.

7 Linguistic Locality and the Social Function of Interpretation

Locality in *Faid al-Rahman* is most clearly evident in the relationship among the Javanese language, Pegon script, and the intended audience of instruction. The introduction expresses concern for readers who have not mastered Arabic, indicating that the choice of language serves an educational purpose. Readers are given a way to follow explanations of meaning in a more familiar language, while religious terms remain connected to the scholarly traditions from which they derive (Faiqoh 2018; Arifin 2018).

Pegon should be understood as a script used to write a language; describing it as the "Arabic Pegon language" can obscure that distinction. The work's local identity resides primarily in its Javanese language and forms of expression, while Pegon represents the choice of writing system. This distinction clarifies who can read the commentary and what forms of literacy are required. Familiarity with the language and the ability to read the script are separate conditions that jointly shape access to the text.

Attention to readers is also apparent in the relationship between explanations of outward meaning and spiritual cultivation. The interpretation of a verse provides a basis for understanding a religious requirement and opens space for reflection on its practice. In the examples discussed, good qualities, the condition of the heart, and vigilance in worship are explained in language accessible to the intended readership. The commentary's social function can be understood through this educational orientation. Establishing the extent to which people's understanding changed after reading or hearing it, however, would require more extensive evidence of reception than is available in this study.

The colonial context provides a backdrop to Sholeh Darat's scholarly activity. Arifin (2018) connects his choices in religious teaching and vernacular writing with social conditions and colonial surveillance. This relationship supports a reading of religious education as taking place in a social space

subject to political pressure. A claim that all translation of the Qur'an was comprehensively prohibited, however, would require specific policy documents. Without such evidence, Pegon is more appropriately discussed as part of a tradition of literacy and an educational strategy operating under colonial conditions.

Accounts of Kartini show how the importance of linguistic understanding is remembered in narratives about Sholeh Darat. The account published by Thariqat Sarkubiyah (n.d.) describes Kartini attending a religious study gathering at the residence of the Regent of Demak, where she heard al-Fatihah explained in Javanese. The narrative emphasizes a movement from not knowing the meaning to a closer understanding. As a popular account, it can be read for what it reveals about how communities understand the significance of Sholeh Darat's teaching. Establishing the exact words spoken, the date of the meeting, and the sequence of events still requires traceable historical sources.

The account of this encounter must also be distinguished from the publication history of Kartini's book. *Door duisternis tot licht*, first published in 1911 and known in Indonesian translation as *Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang*, is a collection of Kartini's letters edited by J.H. Abendanon. Whether religious instruction influenced Kartini's thought is a separate question from the form and provenance of the book's contents. The account of the study gathering therefore cannot establish that the book originated directly from an explanation of al-Fatihah or negate its status as a collection of letters (Kartini 1912, preface to the first edition).

With these qualifications, the commentary's relationship to community life can still be examined without overstating the evidence. Its Javanese explanations acknowledge the learning needs of local readers. Accounts of reception suggest appreciation for religious instruction that can be understood. Its jurisprudential and Sufi orientations, meanwhile, reveal the breadth of its educational content. These readings converge in their attention to readers, although each rests on a different kind of evidence and permits a different range of conclusions.

In the context of this work, preserving local wisdom can be understood as sustaining a language and modes of explanation that are meaningful to a community. This understanding does not require the assumption that every teaching in the commentary is a product of Javanese culture. Sholeh Darat's contribution can instead be traced through the ways he explains religious knowledge to a particular readership. Stronger assessment in future research would require examination of the complete primary text, comparison of editions, and investigation of the work's historical use in teaching.

D Conclusion

Faid al-Rahman demonstrates attention to Javanese readers through its choice of language, use of Pegon, and explanations that address the difficulties posed by limited knowledge of Arabic. Its locality is thus connected to its educational purpose and to the relationship between the text and its intended community. These choices coexist with the use of Islamic sources and scholarly traditions that developed across regions.

The commentary follows the order of the Qur'an and brings jurisprudential discussion together with Sufi reflection, connecting explanations of outward requirements with spiritual cultivation. Differences in the classification of its method in earlier research should be acknowledged, while the selected verses illustrate some of the forms of explanation it employs. Its coverage ends with al-Nisa', limiting its

completeness without diminishing its historical significance for the development of Qur'anic interpretation in Javanese.

The social function supported by this analysis is primarily an orientation toward widening access to religious understanding. Accounts involving Kartini may enrich discussion of reception, but they do not establish broad causal influence or determine the origins of her writings. Further conclusions require direct examination of the primary text, precise identification of editions, and historical documentation. Within these limits, an analysis of locality can recognize Sholeh Darat's contribution while maintaining a careful reading of his intellectual legacy.

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Appendix



Figure 1 A Manuscript of *Faid al-Rahman* in Pegon Script