

Facing the Ka'bah from Java in the Eighteenth Century: 'Abd al-Şamad al-Fālimbānī's Thought on the Qibla and Mosque Orientation in the Malay Archipelago

Nur Hidayatullah,¹ Arisy Abror Dzukroni,^{1*} Unggul Suryo Ardi,¹ Abdulloh Hamid,² Raharjo¹

¹UIN Walisongo, Semarang, Indonesia

²UIN Sunan Ampel, Surabaya, Indonesia

*Correspondence: dzukronia@gmail.com

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Abstract

Debates among Muslim scholars over the qibla in the eighteenth-century Malay Archipelago were not merely concerned with astronomical accuracy but also with the authority of Islamic law to validate the ritual practices of Muslim communities located far from Mecca. This article examines 'Abd al-Şamad al-Fālimbānī's conception of the qibla as articulated in *Sayr al-Sālikīn* and explores its legal significance for the orientation of mosques in Java and the broader Malay world. Methodologically, the study employs a qualitative historical approach based on textual analysis, combined with Teun A. van Dijk's critical discourse analysis to examine the text, social cognition, and social context underlying al-Fālimbānī's legal reasoning. The findings show that 'Abd al-Şamad adopted the concept of *jihat al-Ka'bah*, drawing on Imām al-Ghazālī, so that the obligation to face the qibla for Muslims living far from Mecca was understood as facing the general direction of the Ka'bah on the basis of *ẓann* (probable judgment), rather than requiring absolute precision toward the *'ayn al-Ka'bah*. This framework enabled him to validate the westward orientation of mosque *mīhrābs* (prayer niches) in Java while still acknowledging the superiority of *'ilm al-falak* (Islamic astronomy) as a more precise method of determination. In contrast to the dominant tendency among Jāwī scholars of his time to privilege geometric precision in line with mainstream Shāfi'ī doctrine, 'Abd al-Şamad articulated a juristic model that reconciled scriptural normativity, scientific reasoning, and social reality. The article argues that his thought offers an important socio-legal framework for understanding how Islamic law mediated between legal orthodoxy, scientific knowledge, and local religious practice in early modern Southeast Asia.

[Perdebatan para ulama lokal mengenai arah kiblat di Kepulauan Melayu pada abad ke-18 tidak hanya berkaitan dengan akurasi astronomis, tetapi juga menyangkut otoritas hukum Islam dalam memvalidasi praktik ibadah komunitas muslim yang secara geografis berada jauh dari Makkah. Artikel ini menganalisis konsepsi kiblat dalam pemikiran 'Abd al-Şamad al-Fālimbānī sebagaimana tertuang dalam *Sayr al-Sālikīn*, serta mengkaji signifikansi hukumnya terhadap orientasi masjid-masjid di Jawa dan dunia Melayu secara lebih luas. Secara metodologis, penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif historis berbasis analisis teks, yang dipadukan dengan kerangka critical discourse analysis dari Teun A. van Dijk untuk menelaah dimensi teks,

kognisi sosial, dan konteks sosial dalam konstruksi penalaran hukumnya. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ‘Abd al-Şamad mengadopsi konsep jihat al-Ka‘bah dengan merujuk pada pemikiran Imam al-Ghazali, sehingga kewajiban menghadap kiblat bagi umat Islam yang berada jauh dari Makkah dipahami sebagai orientasi ke arah umum Ka‘bah berdasarkan dugaan kuat (ẓann), bukan sebagai tuntutan presisi absolut menuju ‘ayn al-Ka‘bah. Kerangka ini memungkinkannya untuk melegitimasi orientasi mihrab masjid-masjid di Jawa yang menghadap ke barat, sekaligus tetap mengakui keunggulan ilmu falak sebagai metode yang lebih presisi. Berbeda dengan kecenderungan dominan ulama-ulama Jawi pada masanya yang menekankan presisi geometris sesuai dengan doktrin arus utama mazhab Shāfi‘ī, ‘Abd al-Şamad merumuskan suatu model penalaran yuridis yang mempertemukan normativitas skriptural, rasionalitas ilmiah, dan realitas sosial. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa pemikirannya menawarkan kerangka sosio-legal yang penting untuk memahami bagaimana hukum Islam memediasi antara ortodoksi hukum, pengetahuan ilmiah, dan praktik keagamaan lokal di Asia Tenggara awal modern.]

Keywords: ‘Abd al-Şamad al-Fālimbānī, Islamic Astronomy, Jāwī Scholars, Malay Archipelago; Mosque Orientation, Qibla Direction.

Introduction

Debates over the proper determination of the qibla in accordance with *Shari‘ah* (Islamic law) in the Malay world have persisted for more than two centuries.¹ This discourse can be traced to the arrival of several prominent scholars who returned to the Malay Archipelago² in 1772 CE after intensive study in the Ḥaramayn (Mecca and Medina), namely ‘Abd al-Şamad al-Fālimbānī, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Miṣrī al-Bāṭāwī, Muḥammad Arsyad al-Banjārī, and Shaykh ‘Abd al-Waḥḥāb al-Būghisī. Upon their return, they became involved in a fundamental religious debate regarding how Muslims living in regions geographically distant from Mecca should orient themselves during ritual prayer. Two of them, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Miṣrī and Muḥammad Arsyad, firmly adhered to the position of Imām al-Shāfi‘ī and the majority of Muslim jurists within the Shāfi‘ī school of law (*madhhab*), which requires orientation toward the ‘*ayn al-Ka‘bah*’ (the precise physical structure of the Ka‘bah).³ Within this framework, facing the qibla is understood as a matter of normative precision: for those in close proximity to the Ka‘bah, the obligation is *yaqīnī* (certain), whereas for those at a distance, it must be pursued through *ẓannī* (probabilistic) reasoning based on careful calculation.⁴ This position

¹ Philipp Bruckmayr, “Facing Mecca from Java: Two Treatises on the Establishment of the Qibla, and Their Scholarly and Social Context,” *Islamic Law and Society* 31, nos. 1–2 (January 2023): 102–35.

² The Malay Archipelago generally refers to the broader maritime Southeast Asian region, encompassing present-day Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, Timor-Leste, parts of the southern Philippines, and southern Thailand. However, in this article, the term is used more specifically to refer to the Indonesian archipelago. See: Mark Woodward, “Islamic Societies in Southeast Asia,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Global Religions*, ed. Mark Juergensmeyer (Oxford University Press, 2006), 491–98; Achmad Yafik Mursyid, Aizan Ali Mat Zin, and Faisal Ahmad Faisal Abdul Hamid, “Codicology, Islamization, and Qur’an Manuscripts in Southeast Asia: A Structural Mapping of Scholarship,” *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur’an dan Hadis* 27, no. 1 (January 2026): 181–216.

³ Muḥammad Arsyad al-Banjārī, *Mas‘alat al-Qiblah fī al-Bāṭāwī* (1772), 64.

⁴ See: Yusuf Halidi, *Ulama Besar Kalimantan Syekh Mubammad Arsyad al-Banjari* (Banjarmasin: TB Aulia, 1980), 34; Karel A. Steenbrink, *Beberapa Aspek Tentang Islam di Indonesia Abad ke-19* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1994), 92–3; Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah & Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII & XVIII: Akar Pembaharuan Islam Indonesia*, (Depok: Prenadamedia Group, 2019), 331.

was also supported by certain Muslim jurists from other *madhhabs*, such as Ibn Qīṣār (Mālikī) and Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Jurjānī (Ḥanafī).⁵ The commitment of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Miṣrī and Muḥammad Arsyad to this position was not merely theoretical but was also expressed through practical efforts to correct the qibla orientation of several mosques in the Malay Archipelago, including Kampung Sawah Besar Mosque in Batavia,⁶ Pekojan Mosque, Luar Batang Mosque,⁷ and several mosques in Palembang. These efforts were based on the conviction that even minor directional deviations could affect the validity of prayer.⁸

In contrast to this approach, ‘Abd al-Ṣamad al-Fālimbānī advanced a more accommodating and context-sensitive position. He argued that the qibla orientation of mosques in the Malay Archipelago—which generally faced westward—remained legally valid under *Shari‘ah*. In his view, the obligation was not to face the ‘*ayn al-Ka‘bah* with absolute precision but rather to orient oneself toward the general direction of the Ka‘bah (*jihat al-Ka‘bah*).⁹ This position did not compromise accuracy; rather, it reflected an awareness of geographical constraints, epistemic limitations, and the role of intentionality in ritual practice. Intellectually, this view was strongly influenced by the thought of Imām al-Ghazālī, which ‘Abd al-Ṣamad adopted and further developed in *Sayr al-Sālikīn*, a work that functions both as a translation (*tarjamah*) and a *sharḥ* (commentary) on *Mukhtaṣar Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*. More broadly, ‘Abd al-Ṣamad’s position also resonates with views found in the other three Sunnī *madhhabs*—Ḥanafī, Mālikī, and, to some extent, Ḥanbalī—which recognize the legitimacy of the *jihat al-Ka‘bah* approach for Muslims living far from Mecca.¹⁰ Accordingly, ‘Abd al-Ṣamad’s thought should not be understood as a deviation from orthodoxy but rather as an alternative articulation within the Islamic legal tradition that seeks to balance normative precision with practical attainability.

Previous scholarship on qibla orientation in the Malay Archipelago reveals three major trends: studies examining inaccuracies in the qibla orientation of various mosques;¹¹ sociological analyses of the use of contemporary technologies and methods in qibla

⁵ ‘Umar ibn Abī Bakr al-Khaṭīb, *Durūs ‘Ilm al-Falak* (n.d.), 88.

⁶ This mosque is one of the oldest in Batavia, having been established by Shaykh ‘Abd al-Muḥīṭ in 1717. It was formerly known as the Kampung Sawah Mosque. See: “Masjid Jami Al Mansur 300 Tahun (1717-2017), Wadah Revolusi Akhlak dan Mental,” *Bulletin Edisi Khusus: Milad 300 Tahun Masjid Jami Al Mansur*, October 22, 2017, 1.

⁷ Maṅṣūr al-Baṭāwī, *Miẓān al-I’tidāl fī Takmilat Jawāb al-Su’al fī Mas’alat Iktibāl al-Maṭālī’ wa Ru’yat al-Hilāl* (n.d.), 24.

⁸ Muḥammad Arsyad al-Banjārī, *Mas’alat al-Qiblah fī al-Baṭāwī* (1772), 64.

⁹ ‘Abd al-Ṣamad al-Fālimbānī, *Sayr al-Sālikīn ilā ‘Ibādat Rabb al-‘Ālamīn* (Semarang: Toha Putra, n.d.), 2:180.

¹⁰ See: Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Qalyūbī, *Al-Hidāyah min al-Ḍalālah fī Ma’rifat al-Waqt wa al-Qiblah min Ghayr Ālah*, ed. ‘Abd al-Sattār Abū Ghuddah (Cairo: Dār al-Aqṣā, n.d.), 37; Muḥammad Yāsīn al-Fadānī, *Sharḥ Thamarat al-Waṣīlah* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1949), 47–55; Muḥammad Nawawī al-Bantānī, *Marāq al-‘Ubūdiyyah* (Semarang: Toha Putra, n.d.), 44.

¹¹ See: Philipp Bruckmayr, “Facing Mecca from Java: Two Treatises on the Establishment of the Qibla, and Their Scholarly and Social Context,” *Islamic Law and Society* 31, nos. 1–2 (2023): 102–35; Maitane Urrutia-Aparicio, Juan A. Belmotne, and A. César González-García, “Time and Culture Across the Iberian Lands: The Cathedrals’ Orientation Paradigm—A Diachronic Analysis of the Orientation of the Cathedrals of Portugal and Spain,” *Mediterranean Archaeology and Archaeometry* 24, no. 3 (2024): 1–22; Bagoes Wiryomartono, *Historical Mosques in Indonesia and the Malay World: Roots, Transformations, and Developments* (Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore, 2023), 37–66; Verena Meyer, “Where Is Mecca? Or, Map and Territory: Reflections from Java,” in *Storied Island: New Explorations in Javanese Literature*, ed. Ronit Ricci (Brill, 2023), 176–200.

measurement;¹² and astronomical studies aimed at improving methods of qibla determination.¹³ According to Cesare, one cause of changes in qibla orientation is earthquakes, which have led to the reconstruction and re-excavation of mosque structures.¹⁴ However, İlçi et al. have found that qibla deviations often remain within a tolerable range.¹⁵ Sunarto and Hariyadi categorize qibla orientation in Indonesia into three types: general (west), semi-specific (northwest), and specific (*'ayn al-Ka'bab*).¹⁶ Despite this, scholarly and communal responses to such deviations remain fragmented.¹⁷ Some communities have resisted changing the qibla direction that has been regarded as correct for decades or even centuries;¹⁸ a prominent example is the qibla orientation of the Demak Mosque, traditionally attributed to Sunan Kalijaga.¹⁹ Additionally, several astronomical studies have advanced qibla research through the integration of digital compasses, Global Positioning Systems (GPS), and microcontrollers,²⁰ as well as the application of the World Magnetic Model (WMM).²¹ Other research has yielded important insights into the transfer of mathematical, geodetic, and astronomical knowledge between the medieval Islamic world and Europe²² and the challenges of observing the North Star in equatorial regions due to its very low position above the horizon.²³

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- ¹² See: Razieh S. Mousavi, "From Complex to Simple: The Example of Qibla-Indicators," in *Failed Historical Scientific Instruments* (Brill, 2024), 148–66; David A. King, "Astronomy and Islamic Society: Qibla, Gnomonics and Timekeeping," in *Encyclopedia of the History of Arabic Science* (Routledge, 2019), 128–84; Younes Mahdavi, "Astral Sciences among the Safavids: Bahā' al-Dīn al-Āmilī on the Prayer Niche Direction (Qibla) and the Crescent Garden," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 12, nos. 1–2 (2024): 70–103.
- ¹³ See: Walter R. Schumm, "How Accurately Could Early (622-900 CE) Muslims Determine the Direction of Prayers (Qibla)?," *Religions* 11, no. 3 (2020): 102; Abdul Kohar, "Al-Biruni's Contribution to the Development of Qibla Determination Methods: Historical Analysis And Scientific Relevance," *AJIS: Academic Journal of Islamic Studies* 10, no. 1 (2025): 253–76; Muhamad Syazwan Faid et al., "Development of Qibla Direction Determinant Using Sun Shadow," *Online Journal of Research in Islamic Studies* 9, no. 1 (2022): 89–102.
- ¹⁴ Michelina Di Cesare, "A Qibla Mušarriqa for the First Al-Aqṣā Mosque? A New Stratigraphic, Planimetric, and Chronological Reading of Hamilton's Excavation, and Some Considerations on the Introduction of the Concave Mihrāb," *Annali Sezione Orientale* 77, nos. 1–2 (2017): 66–96.
- ¹⁵ Veli İlçi et al., "Investigation on the Accuracy of Existing Qibla Directions of the Mosques from Different Periods: A Case Study in Çorum City, Turkey," *Tehnicky Vjesnik* 25, no. 6 (2018): 1642–49.
- ¹⁶ Sunarto and Muhammad Hariyadi, "Thematic Interpretation Study in Determining Indonesia's Qibla through Takhsis," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 23, no. 2 (2022): 207–21.
- ¹⁷ Ismail, "Urgensi dan Legitimasi Fatwa Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama Aceh Nomor 3 Tahun 2018 Tentang Penetapan Arah Kiblat," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 14, no. 1 (2020): 87–98.
- ¹⁸ Muthmainnah Muthmainnah et al., "Analisis Implementasi Program Gerakan Arah Kiblat 1000 Masjid/ Mushola di Kabupaten Sleman," *Nuansa Akademik: Jurnal Pembangunan Masyarakat* 4, no. 2 (December 2019): 91–104.
- ¹⁹ Muhammad Nurkhanif, Raharjo, and Najahan Musyafak, "Between Legalism and Mystical Intuism: Sunan Kalijaga's Qibla Direction in Pati and Demak Grand Mosque," *Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Mysticism* 12, no. 1 (2023): 99–118.
- ²⁰ W. S. M. Sanjaya et al., "Qibla Finder and Sholat Times Based on Digital Compass, GPS and Microprocessor," *IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering* 288, no. 1 (January 2018): 012149.
- ²¹ Asmuni Asmuni, Hasan Matsum, and Imamul Muttaqin, "The True North Urgency of the Earth in Determining the Direction of the Qibla According to Fiqh and Falak Science," *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute (BIRCI-Journal): Humanities and Social Sciences* 3, no. 4 (2020): 3353–58.
- ²² Pietro Armenti and Angela M. Venger, "A Middle Age Qibla Finder and the Secret Code of Portolan Maps," *Journal of Cultural Heritage* 29 (2018): 137–44.
- ²³ Reza Akbar and Riza Afrian Mustaqim, "Theoretical Study of the Use of the Polaris Star as a Reference for the North Point in Determining the Qibla Direction," *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura* 22, no. 1 (2022): 16–28.

Against this background, it can be concluded that studies on the conceptualization of qibla orientation by scholars of the Malay Archipelago—particularly from the perspectives of intellectual history and socio-legal studies—remain relatively limited. This article seeks to address this gap by offering an in-depth analysis of ‘Abd al-Şamad al-Fālimbānī’s thought on qibla orientation as articulated in *Sayr al-Sālikīn*. In contrast to the predominantly technical approaches that have characterized earlier scholarship, this study treats the qibla as a normative problem situated at the intersection of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) texts, epistemic authority, and socio-religious practice. It therefore argues that ‘Abd al-Şamad’s conception of qibla orientation functioned not merely as a practical solution to the problem of qibla deviation in Indonesia, but also as a socio-legal framework that enabled the coexistence of scientific precision and the legitimacy of religious tradition. To test this argument, the study addresses two principal questions: (1) How is the qibla orientation conceptually constructed in ‘Abd al-Şamad’s *Sayr al-Sālikīn*? and (2) How did he view deviations in the qibla orientation of mosques in the Malay Archipelago?

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative design with a historical approach grounded in textual and manuscript analysis. Within this framework, documentary research serves as the primary method for tracing, cataloging, and analyzing data contained in relevant manuscripts. The principal object of this study is ‘Abd al-Şamad’s monumental work *Sayr al-Sālikīn ilā ‘Ibādat Rabb al-‘Ālamīn* (The Journey of the Wayfarer in Worshipping the Lord of the Worlds). Composed in four volumes between 1779 CE (1193 AH) and 1788 CE (1203 AH), this work is generally regarded as the longest and most comprehensive text authored by ‘Abd al-Şamad. Textually, it functions as a *sharḥ* on *Mukhtaşar Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* by Imām al-Ghazālī, which was subsequently translated and adapted into Malay. The work was first published in Mecca in 1880 CE (1303 AH). This study primarily relies on the Toha Putra edition published in Semarang, Indonesia, while also consulting several other editions for comparison to preserve textual integrity, verify editorial consistency, and minimize potential textual bias. The central focus of this study is to analyze the construction of ‘Abd al-Şamad’s thought on qibla orientation as articulated in *Sayr al-Sālikīn*, particularly in relation to Islamic legal discourse and Muslim religious practice in the eighteenth-century Malay Archipelago.

This study adopts Teun A. van Dijk’s critical discourse analysis,²⁴ focusing on its three principal dimensions—text, social cognition, and social context—to examine how ‘Abd al-Şamad’s views on qibla orientation were formulated, negotiated, and positioned within his intellectual milieu. The analysis centers on key terminology, conceptual frameworks, argumentative strategies, and lexical choices used in *Sayr al-Sālikīn*, particularly in sections addressing qibla orientation. These passages are interpreted with close attention to their intertextual relationship with the works of Imām al-Ghazālī, as well as their connection to the broader tradition of classical *fiqh*. The interpretive criteria applied to these key passages include: (1) the consistency of the argument with the principles of classical *fiqh*; (2) semantic

²⁴ Teun A. Van Dijk, “Critical Discourse Analysis,” in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, 1st ed., ed. Deborah Tannen, Heidi E. Hamilton, and Deborah Schiffrin (Wiley, 2015), 446.

analysis of technical terms such as *‘ayn al-Ka‘bah* and *jihat al-Ka‘bah*; and (3) the structure of legal reasoning developed by ‘Abd al-Ṣamad in addressing the problem of ritual orientation. To reconstruct the historical context, the study also draws on a range of historical sources concerning the eighteenth-century Malay Archipelago, including data on mosque construction, local religious practices, and the dynamics of Islamic scholarly networks during the period. These textual materials are then systematically correlated with broader socio-cultural dynamics by identifying ‘Abd al-Ṣamad’s argumentative responses to practical concerns, particularly the existence of mosques whose qibla orientation did not precisely correspond to the direction of the Ka‘bah. Through this integrated analytical framework, the study aims to demonstrate that the construction of Islamic legal reasoning was shaped not solely by the authority of normative texts but also by social context, historical experience, and the practical needs of Muslim communities in the Malay Archipelago.

The Concept of Qibla in Islamic Jurisprudence

The term “qibla” derives from the Arabic “*qiblah*”, which lexically means “direction” or “orientation.”²⁵ In common usage, the term refers to one’s orientation toward a particular direction. Accordingly, the expression “Where is your qibla?” essentially asks which direction one is facing. In the terminology of *fiqh*, however, qibla refers more specifically to the direction that a Muslim is legally required to face when performing ritual prayer. Nawawī al-Bantani, in *Sullam al-Munājāt*, explains that facing the qibla means facing the Ka‘bah, which serves as the ritual center of orientation for Muslims. The Ka‘bah is called the qibla because it constitutes the focal point toward which worshippers direct themselves in prayer, while also symbolizing the unity of ritual orientation in Islam.²⁶ Across different periods, Muslim jurists have generally offered definitions that converge on the same essential meaning: the Ka‘bah as the normative point of ritual orientation.²⁷ In contemporary scholarship, Hambali defines qibla orientation as the shortest direction toward the Ka‘bah along the earth’s great-circle route. Thus, qibla orientation is not merely a matter of “facing west” or adopting a rough orientation toward Mecca, but rather of identifying the shortest geodesic path connecting a given location to the Ka‘bah.²⁸ Based on these definitions, the qibla may be understood as the shortest direction toward the Ka‘bah that a Muslim is normatively required to face in the performance of prayer.

Determining the qibla for prayer is one of the most fundamental obligations in Islamic law. The majority of Muslim jurists—particularly those from the four major Sunnī *madhhabs*—agree that facing the qibla is a legal requirement for the validity of prayer, based on Sūrat al-Baqarah verse 144. However, this consensus does not eliminate differences of opinion regarding the degree of precision required, especially for Muslims who are geographically distant from the Ka‘bah and therefore unable to see it directly.²⁹ At the center

²⁵ Luwīs Ma‘lūf, *Al-Munjid fī al-Lughah wa al-A‘lām* (Dār al-Mashriq, 1986), 606–7.

²⁶ Muḥammad Nawawī al-Bantani, *Sbarḥ Sullam al-Munājāt* (Semarang: Toha Putra, n.d.), 13.

²⁷ Al-Qalyūbī, *Al-Hidāyah min al-Ḍalālah fī Ma‘rifat al-Waqt wa al-Qiblah min Ghayr Ālah*, 35–36.

²⁸ Slamet Hambali, *Ilmu Falak Arab Kiblat Setiap Saat* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Ilmu, 2003), 14.

²⁹ See: Nur Hidayatullah, *Fa-Wallī Wajhaka Shaṭr al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* (Semarang: Pustaka Al-Faradis, 2024), 30; Al-Qalyūbī, *Al-Hidāyah min al-Ḍalālah fī Ma‘rifat al-Waqt wa al-Qiblah min Ghayr Ālah*, 37.

of this disagreement are two key concepts in *qibla* discourse on the qibla. The first is *‘ayn al-Ka‘bah*, which refers to the obligation to face the physical structure of the Ka‘bah itself with precision. This concept is generally upheld in the Shāfi‘ī and Ḥanbalī *madhhabs*. The second is *jihat al-Ka‘bah*, which refers to the obligation to face the general direction in which the Ka‘bah is located; this constitutes the dominant position in the Ḥanafī and Mālikī *madhhabs* for those who are far from Mecca. These differences stem from divergent interpretations of the term “*shaṭṭ*” in Sūrat al-Baqarah verse 144, as well as differing readings of relevant ḥadīth.³⁰ Accordingly, the distinction between *‘ayn al-Ka‘bah* and *jihat al-Ka‘bah* constitutes a crucial conceptual foundation for understanding both the normative demands and the practical implications of qibla determination.

Table 1
Jurisprudential Differences among the Sunnī Madhhabs on Qibla Orientation for Those Distant from the Ka‘bah

<i>Madhhab</i>	Qibla Concept	Required Degree of Precision
Shāfi‘ī	<i>‘Ayn al-Ka‘bah</i>	Facing the Ka‘bah as precisely as possible on the basis of <i>ẓann</i> (probable judgment)
Ḥanbalī	<i>‘Ayn al-Ka‘bah</i>	Facing the Ka‘bah precisely, with tolerance for <i>jihat al-Ka‘bah</i> when exact precision is not possible
Ḥanafī	<i>Jihat al-Ka‘bah</i>	Facing the general direction of the Ka‘bah within a quadrant-based tolerance (<i>jihat ṣughrā</i>)
Mālikī	<i>Jihat al-Ka‘bah</i>	Facing the general direction of the Ka‘bah within a quadrant-based tolerance (<i>jihat ṣughrā</i>)

Source: Compiled by the author.

Imām al-Shāfi‘ī and the majority of Muslim jurists within the Shāfi‘ī *madhhab* maintain that the obligation to face the qibla in prayer is directed toward the *‘ayn al-Ka‘bah*—that is, the Ka‘bah itself—whether through certain knowledge or probable judgment, depending on one’s geographical position relative to Mecca. For those far from the Ka‘bah, the requirement to face the *‘ayn al-Ka‘bah* does not imply that absolute certainty must always be achieved; rather, it means that prayer should be oriented as closely as possible toward the Ka‘bah based on the best available means of knowledge. Within this framework, astronomical and geographical calculations gain legitimacy as instruments of *ijtihād* (independent legal reasoning) for attaining the most accurate orientation possible. Sharaf al-Nawawī emphasizes that the legal obligation remains directed toward the Ka‘bah itself, even when a Muslim is located at a great distance from it.³¹ This position rests on a literal reading of the term “*shaṭṭ*” in Sūrat al-Baqarah verse 144, understood as direct orientation toward the intended object. On this basis, the Shāfi‘ī *madhhab* treats precision in qibla orientation as a normative requirement that must be pursued to the greatest extent possible, whether through direct visual alignment when the Ka‘bah is visible or through reasoned calculation when it is not. A similar view is also found in the Ḥanbalī *madhhab*. Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal

³⁰ See: Al-Bantānī, *Marāq al-‘Ubūdiyyah*, 44; Al-Fadānī, *Sharḥ Thamarat al-Waṣīlah*, 47–55.

³¹ Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī, *Minhāj al-Ṭālibīn wa ‘Umdat al-Muṭtīn* (Dār Ibn Ḥazm: Beirut, 2010), 45.

likewise, in principle, requires orientation toward the *'ayn al-Ka'bah*. Nevertheless, some Ḥanbalī jurists, such as Ibn Qudāmah in *al-Mughnī*, acknowledge that orientation toward the *jihat al-Ka'bah* may be accepted under certain conditions, particularly when achieving precision through astronomical or geographical calculation encounters serious obstacles or imposes excessive hardship. Such considerations are commonly associated with conditions of high mobility, such as travel in the desert or navigation at sea.³² Notably, the tendency to require orientation toward the *'ayn al-Ka'bah* may also be found among a minority of Muslim jurists from other *madhhabs*, such as Ibn Qīṣār in the Mālikī tradition and Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Jurjānī in the Ḥanafī tradition.³³

By contrast, the dominant position in the Ḥanafī and Mālikī *madhhabs* holds that, for those far from Mecca, the legal obligation is sufficiently fulfilled by facing the *jihat al-Ka'bah*, rather than the *'ayn al-Ka'bah*. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah maintained that orientation toward the general direction of the Ka'bah is sufficient for those beyond the range of direct visual access to the Ka'bah itself. As explained by Abū Bakr al-Marghīnānī, the direction in question is not an extremely narrow geometric point but rather a broader sector or quadrant that still falls within the directional scope of the Ka'bah.³⁴ This approach demonstrates that, within the Ḥanafī tradition, the validity of qibla orientation is not measured solely by geometric precision but also by the principles of normative attainability and legal ease. A broadly similar position is found in the Mālikī *madhhab*, which likewise accepts the *jihat al-Ka'bah* as the operative basis of legal obligation for those far from Mecca. This flexibility rests on the recognition of human limitations in achieving a high degree of astronomical precision, particularly under premodern conditions. More fundamentally, the underlying rationale is that the normative function of the qibla lies in establishing a unified direction of worship among Muslims, rather than requiring them to identify an extremely narrow geometric point that is difficult to realize in practice.³⁵ This view is also reinforced by a ḥadīth narrated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim concerning the prohibition against facing or turning one's back toward the qibla while relieving oneself, in which the Prophet instructed people instead to face east or west. This instruction was given in the context of Medina, which lies north of Mecca and thus has its qibla to the south. Accordingly, the instruction to orient oneself eastward or westward indicates recognition of a relatively broad directional range within a single quadrant (*jihat al-ṣughrā*).³⁶ In later developments, some Ḥanafī jurists—especially in the later (*muta'akhhirīn*) period—attempted to quantify the scope of *jihat al-Ka'bah* more precisely, for example, by describing it as one-fifth of a circle (72°) or one-sixth of a circle (60°). Such quantitative formulations reflect a systematic effort to translate *fiqh* concepts into more operational spatial parameters. In this sense, the Ḥanafī and Mālikī approaches represent a

³² 'Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad Ibn Qudāmah, *Al-Mughnī* (Riyadh: Dār 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1997), 2:378.

³³ Jalaluddin Khanji, "Al-Qiblah wa Taḥdīduhā bayna al-Fiqh wa al-Falak wa al-Handasah," in *The 3rd Islamic Astronomy Congress, "Al-Taṭbīqāt al-Falakīyyah fī al-Sharī'ah al-Islāmīyyah"* (Omman Yordania, 2003), 9.

³⁴ 'Alī ibn Abī Bakr al-Marghīnānī, *Al-Hidāyah Sharḥ Bidāyat al-Mubtadī* (Beirut: Dār Ihya' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, n.d.), 48.

³⁵ 'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn 'Alī al-Baghdādī al-Mālikī, *Al-Isbrāf 'alā Nukat Masā'il al-Khilāf* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1999), 1:158.

³⁶ Khanji, "Al-Qiblah wa Taḥdīduhā bayna al-Fiqh wa al-Falak wa al-Handasah," 9.

legal orientation that places greater emphasis on the principles of *taysīr* (facilitation) and *raf‘ al-ḥaraj* (the removal of hardship) in fulfilling legal obligations.³⁷

‘Abd al-Ṣamad and His Work, *Sayr al-Sālikīn*

‘Abd al-Ṣamad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Abd al-Jalīl al-Fālimbānī was one of the most prominent scholars of the eighteenth-century Malay Archipelago, widely recognized for integrating the intellectual traditions of *fiqh* and *taṣawwuf* (Sufism). He was born in Palembang, South Sumatra, to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān and Raden Ranti in 1116 AH (1704 CE), although the exact date of his birth is not recorded in available sources. From an early age, he was raised in an environment deeply shaped by religious learning and scholarly traditions, despite losing his mother at a young age. Biographical accounts highlight his intellectual aptitude from childhood, including his reported ability to memorize the Qur’ān around the age of ten. Throughout his life, ‘Abd al-Ṣamad was not only engaged in scholarly pursuits but also participated in missionary activities and resistance against the Siamese kingdom. He passed away on 19 April 1832 CE (17 Dhū al-Qa‘dah 1247 AH) and was buried in present-day Thailand.³⁸ In the context of Southeast Asian Islamic intellectual history, his biography is significant not only for its personal dimension but also for his role as a representative of Jāwī scholars who facilitated the transmission of transregional Islamic scholarly authority into the Malay world.

Figure 1
Portrait of ‘Abd al-Ṣamad al-Fālimbānī



Source: jatman.or.id (2023).

‘Abd al-Ṣamad’s early education began within his family, particularly under the guidance of his father, from whom he learned the Qur’ān and the foundational elements of

³⁷ Muḥammad al-‘Arabī al-Khaṭṭābī, *‘Ilm Al-Mawāqīt: Uṣūluhu wa Manābijuhu* (Kuwait: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa al-Shu‘ūn al-Islāmiyyah, n.d.), 82.

³⁸ Kemas Andi Syarifuddin, “Faith al-Ihsānī Naskah Manaḳib Syaikh Abduṣ Ṣamad al-Palimbānī: Sebuah Kajian Filologi dan Analisis Isi,” *Medina-Te : Jurnal Studi Islam* 17, no. 2 (December 2021): 118.

Islamic teachings. He also studied with several scholars in Palembang who contributed to the development of his early intellectual foundation. Among his influential teachers during this formative period was Sayyid Ḥasan ibn ‘Umar Idrūs, a scholar whose genealogical lineage traced back to the Prophet Muḥammad. Under his guidance, ‘Abd al-Ṣamad studied the Qur’ān and the science of *tajwīd* (Qur’ānic recitation) within the milieu of the Palembang Sultanate, which at the time was an important center of Islamic learning in the Malay world. This early intellectual foundation later became the basis for his broader scholarly journey. He subsequently continued his travels in pursuit of knowledge to Aceh, Kedah, Pattani, and Thailand. However, the identities of many scholars who taught him in these regions are not fully documented in the available historical sources. This limitation reflects a broader methodological challenge in reconstructing the biographies of eighteenth-century Jāwī scholars, whose intellectual trajectories must often be pieced together from a combination of manuscript traditions, local narratives, and dispersed scholarly networks.³⁹

The pinnacle of ‘Abd al-Ṣamad’s intellectual career occurred when he undertook the pilgrimage and pursued advanced studies in Mecca and Medina, the two principal centers of Islamic scholarly authority in the eighteenth century. Among his teachers in these cities were ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Maghribī (d. 1785), Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Sammān al-Madanī (d. 1775), Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Kurdī (d. 1780), ‘Abd al-Mun‘im al-Damanhūrī (d. 1778), Ibrāhīm al-Ra’īs al-Makkī (d. 1780), Sa‘īd ibn Muḥammad Sunbul al-Makkī (d. 1762), Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ghanī ibn Muḥammad al-Hilāl (d. 1797), and Abū al-Fawz Shaykh Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad al-Ra’īs al-Zamzamī al-Makkī (d. 1780), among others. His participation in the scholarly circles of the Ḥaramayn demonstrates that his intellectual formation was not confined to local or regional horizons but was shaped by transregional currents of Islamic scholarship. His dedication to learning earned him an *ijāzah* (scholarly authorization) to teach at the Grand Mosque in Mecca, an authoritative recognition that signified his scholarly legitimacy within the central institutions of the Muslim world.⁴⁰ Among his teachers, Abū al-Fawz Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Ra’īs al-Zamzamī was known for his expertise in Islamic astronomy (*‘ilm al-falak*), a detail particularly relevant given the discussion of qibla orientation in ‘Abd al-Ṣamad’s work, which reflects a sensitivity to spatial knowledge and ritual orientation. Moreover, two figures played a decisive role in shaping his intellectual outlook.⁴¹ In the field of *taṣawwuf*, the most influential was Shaykh Muḥammad al-Sammān,⁴² founder of the Sammāniyyah order and his primary spiritual guide, whose authority is repeatedly affirmed in *Sayr al-Sālikīn*. In the domain of *fiqh*, the most influential figure was Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Kurdī, a prominent Shāfi‘ī jurist and *mufīī* (jurisconsult).⁴³ This

³⁹ See: Mal An Abdullah, *Syaikh Abdus-Samad al-Palimbani: Biografi dan Warisan Keilmuan* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pesantren, 2015), 26–7; Syarifuddin, “Faith Al-Ihsānī Naskah Manaḡib Syaikh Abduṣ Ṣamad al-Palimbānī,” 119.

⁴⁰ See: Abdullah, *Syaikh Abdus-Samad al-Palimbani*, 26–7; Syarifuddin, “Faith Al-Ihsānī Naskah Manaḡib Syaikh Abduṣ Ṣamad al-Palimbānī,” 120.

⁴¹ Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah & Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII & XVIII*, 321–45.

⁴² Michael Laffan, *The Making of Indonesian Islam* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011), 31–3.

⁴³ Nur Hidayatullah, “Jejak Syekh Abdussomad al-Falimbani di Negeri Yaman,” *alif.id*, December 1, 2023, <https://alif.id/read/nur-hidayatullah/jejak-syekh-abdussomad-al-falimbani-di-negeri-yaman-b248657p/>.

combination of *taṣawwuf* and *fiqh* influences became a defining feature of ‘Abd al-Ṣamad’s intellectual orientation.

‘Abd al-Ṣamad was a highly prolific author, credited with no fewer than fifteen works. Among them are: (1) *Zubrah al-Murīd fī Bayān Kalimat al-Tawḥīd*; (2) *Risalah pada Menyatakan Sebab yang Diharamkan bagi Nikah*; (3) *Hidāyat al-Sālikīn fī Sulūk Maslak al-Muttaqīn*; (4) *Sayr al-Sālikīn*; (5) *Al-‘Urwah al-Wuthqā wa Silsilat Anwīyā’ al-Atqiyā’*; (6) *Ratib Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ṣamad al-Fālimbānī*; (7) *Naṣīḥat al-Muslimīn wa Tadbkirat al-Mu’minīn fī Faḍā’il al-Jihād*; (8) *Zād al-Muttaqīn fī Tawḥīd Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*; (9) *Anīs al-Muttaqīn*; (10) *‘Ilm al-Taṣawwuf*; (11) *Al-Risālah fī Kayfiyyat Ratib Laylat al-Jum‘ah*; (12) *Kitāb Mi‘raj*; (13) *Puisi Kemenangan Kedah* (Ode to the Victory of Kedah); and several others. Nevertheless, among these works, *Sayr al-Sālikīn* is generally regarded as his most monumental and influential contribution, particularly in introducing and adapting the Islamic teachings of Imām al-Ghazālī to the intellectual horizon of the Malay world.⁴⁴

Figure 2
Manuscript of *Sayr al-Sālikīn*



Source: British Library, Codex 15646.

Sayr al-Sālikīn is one of ‘Abd al-Ṣamad’s most significant works, serving as a translation, adaptation, and expansion of *Lubāb Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* by Imām al-Ghazālī. The work was composed over nearly a decade, from 1193 AH (1779 CE) to 1203 AH (1788 CE).⁴⁵ As noted by Loir, its composition underscores ‘Abd al-Ṣamad’s central role in transmitting Imām al-Ghazālī’s intellectual legacy to the Malay world, while simultaneously extending the influence

⁴⁴ Henri Chambert Loir, “Abdussamad Al-Falimbani sebagai Ulama Jawi,” in *Sayr Al-Sālikīn* (Aceh: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan Museum Negeri Banda Aceh, 1885), vii.

⁴⁵ ‘Abd al-Ṣamad al-Fālimbānī, *Sayr al-Sālikīn ilā ‘Ibādat Rabb al-‘Ālamīn* (Semarang: Toha Putra, n.d.), 1:1.

of his spiritual teacher, Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Sammān al-Madanī. Structurally, the text comprises a *muqaddimah* (preface), four volumes (*juḏʿ*), and a *kbātimah* (epilogue). Its contents reflect a broad normative and ethical scope. The first volume addresses *uṣūl al-dīn* (Islamic theology) and was completed in Mecca in 1194 AH (1780 CE). The second volume focuses on *‘ibādah* (ritual worship) and was completed in Ṭā’if in 1195 AH (1781 CE). The third volume discusses destructive vices (*al-mublikāt*) and was completed in Mecca in 1197 AH (1783 CE). The fourth volume addresses salvific virtues (*al-munjiyāt*) and was completed in 1203 AH (1788 CE).⁴⁶ Each volume contains multiple chapters that cohesively integrate *fiqh*, *taṣawwuf*, and *adab*. This integration is crucial, as ‘Abd al-Ṣamad’s discussion of qibla orientation is not presented as an isolated astronomical inquiry but rather as part of a broader normative framework of ritual practice. Accordingly, the treatment of the qibla in *Sayr al-Sālikīn* should be understood not merely as a technical issue of spatial orientation but as an articulation of *Sharī‘ah*-based authority in regulating the body, space, and religious practice of Muslim communities in the Malay world.

‘Abd al-Ṣamad’s Thoughts on Qibla Orientation

‘Abd al-Ṣamad distinguishes knowledge of qibla orientation based on the socio-spatial position of the person performing the prayer. For those residing in settled communities, determining the qibla is relatively straightforward, as they can rely on established local markers such as the *miḥrāb* (prayer niche) of the local mosque or the orientation of graves in the surrounding area.⁴⁷ In contrast, for travelers, the issue becomes considerably more complex due to the absence of fixed reference points and the possible unavailability of a competent authority to consult. In this context, ‘Abd al-Ṣamad treats knowledge of the qibla not merely as a technical matter but as part of a normative obligation that must be pursued in accordance with the legal subject’s capacity and circumstances. Therefore, travelers are required to actively learn and employ appropriate methods for determining the qibla. More specifically, ‘Abd al-Ṣamad maintains that studying the *‘ilm al-falak*—as the most accurate method for determining qibla orientation—is classified as *farḍ kifāyah* (a collective obligation) rather than *farḍ ‘ayn* (an individual obligation). Accordingly, not every individual Muslim is obligated to master this scientific discipline. If one is unable to learn it, it is sufficient to follow the *miḥrāb* established by earlier generations or to perform *taqlīd* (legal precedent) by relying on specialists in *‘ilm al-falak* in one’s own time.⁴⁸ ‘Abd al-Ṣamad states:

*“Studying ‘ilm al-falak is legally classified as farḍ kifāyah, not farḍ ‘ayn. Therefore, if a person is unable to study ‘ilm al-falak, it is sufficient for him to taqlīd the miḥrāb established by earlier scholars who determined the qibla through their own ijtihād. Similarly, it is sufficient for him to follow the direction provided by those who possess expertise in ‘ilm al-falak and have determined the qibla through scientific reasoning.”*⁴⁹

⁴⁶ See: Loir, “Abdussamad al-Falimbani Sebagai Ulama Jawi,” xi; Al-Fālimbānī, *Sayr al-Sālikīn ilā ‘Ibādāt Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, 2:2–3.

⁴⁷ Al-Fālimbānī, *Sayr al-Sālikīn ilā ‘Ibādāt Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, 2:179.

⁴⁸ Al-Fālimbānī, *Sayr al-Sālikīn ilā ‘Ibādāt Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, 2:179.

⁴⁹ Al-Fālimbānī, *Sayr al-Sālikīn ilā ‘Ibādāt Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, 2:179.

‘Abd al-Ṣamad outlines three traditional methods for determining qibla orientation that travelers may use. The first is *ardīyyab* (terrestrial indicators), which involves determining direction based on known topographical markers such as hills, villages, rivers, the local *mīḥrāb*, or the orientation of cemeteries. The second is *hawā’īyyab* (atmospheric indicators), which entails determining direction through dominant wind patterns with certain adjustments, including the use of a compass. According to ‘Abd al-Ṣamad, the reliability of this method may vary depending on the geographical characteristics of a given region. The third is *samā’īyyab* (celestial indicators), which involves determining direction through the positions of stars, the moon, and the sun. Of these three methods, ‘Abd al-Ṣamad identifies the last as the most accurate and reliable. This assessment is highly significant, as it indicates that within his intellectual framework, astronomical knowledge is not treated merely as supplementary information but as a form of epistemic authority carrying normative weight in determining the legal validity of ritual orientation. In other words, the hierarchy of methods he constructs reveals a close relationship between the legal validity of prayer and the quality of knowledge used to determine the qibla.⁵⁰

In his work, ‘Abd al-Ṣamad raises a particularly important question: the potential tension between the authority of long-established religious tradition and that of more precise knowledge. He asks, in effect, if the *ijtihād* of a competent Muslim astronomer conflicts with the orientation of an old mosque *mīḥrāb* that has stood for centuries, which one should be followed? To answer this question, ‘Abd al-Ṣamad first advises the believer to attend to the inclination of their own inward conviction. However, if such inward inclination does not yield clarity, he appears to favor following the judgment of the Muslim astronomer, since that calculation is considered closer to the *‘ayn al-Ka‘bah*. In this regard, he writes: “*If the ijtihād of one who possesses knowledge of ‘ilm al-falak differs from the direction of an old mosque mīḥrāb, then attend to the tendency within your heart—whichever of the two your heart finds more convincing, that is your qibla.*”⁵¹ This statement is especially important because it demonstrates that, for ‘Abd al-Ṣamad, determining the qibla does not occur solely within the textual or technical domain but also within the realm of lived religious practice, where local authority, collective custom, and the conviction of the legal subject all play a role. Accordingly, qibla determination in his thought cannot be reduced to an astronomical problem alone; rather, it emerges as a socio-legal issue situated at the intersection of knowledge, tradition, and ritual authority.

‘Abd al-Ṣamad further legitimizes both positions by arguing that each is, in principle, acceptable because both rely on probable judgment rather than absolute certainty. In his view, absolute certainty regarding the *‘ayn al-Ka‘bah* is, in practice, unattainable except for those physically close enough to see the Ka‘bah directly.⁵² This position indicates that ‘Abd al-Ṣamad allows a degree of tolerance for qibla deviation, provided the worshipper reasonably believes that the direction faced constitutes a legally valid qibla according to the knowledge available to them. Within the *fiqh* framework, this view aligns more closely with the dominant positions of the Ḥanafī and Mālikī *madhhabs*, which maintain that for those far from Mecca,

⁵⁰ Al-Fālimbānī, *Sayr al-Sālikīn ilā ‘Ibādat Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, 2:179–80.

⁵¹ Al-Fālimbānī, *Sayr al-Sālikīn ilā ‘Ibādat Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, 2:179–80.

⁵² Al-Fālimbānī, *Sayr al-Sālikīn ilā ‘Ibādat Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, 2:179–80.

the legal obligation is sufficiently fulfilled by facing the *jihat al-Ka‘bah*, rather than the *‘ayn al-Ka‘bah*.⁵³ Operationally, this may be understood as orientation toward the general direction of the Ka‘bah within a certain angular range, rather than toward a single mathematically precise line. As long as the geographical location of the Ka‘bah remains within that directional sector, the prayer may still be considered valid. What becomes evident here is that ‘Abd al-Ṣamad develops a form of normative flexibility that neither rejects accuracy nor treats geometric precision as the sole measure of ritual validity.⁵⁴

This line of thought provides a particularly important normative framework for lay Muslims who, under Islamic law, are not individually obligated to perform *ijtibād* in determining the qibla. Within this framework, the epistemic responsibility for verifying directional accuracy is assigned to specialists in *‘ilm al-falak*, precisely because mastery of this science is classified as *farḍ kifāyah*. This perspective aligns with Sayyid ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mashhūr’s explanation in *Bughyat al-Mustarshidīn*, where he affirms that facing the *jihat al-Ka‘bah* is sufficient for laypersons and those lacking expertise in *‘ilm al-falak*. In contrast, individuals possessing astronomical competence remain obligated to strive for a more precise orientation toward the *‘ayn al-Ka‘bah*.⁵⁵ Notably, ‘Abd al-Ṣamad also acknowledges the legal validity of classical instruments—such as the compass or the *rub‘ mujayyab* (sine quadrant)—even though their precision does not match that of modern devices, recognizing them as legitimate tools within the tradition of Islamic astronomy. This indicates that, for him, the standard of validity in qibla determination is not dictated by technological absolutism but rather by the correspondence among the instrument’s capability, the epistemic capacity of the user, and the normative demands of the *Shari‘ah*. In this respect, ‘Abd al-Ṣamad’s thought reflects a model of graduated normativity—that is, a differentiation in the level of legal obligation according to the epistemic capacity and social position of the individual.

‘Abd al-Ṣamad’s Islamic Legal Reasoning: The Influence of Imām al-Ghazālī

‘Abd al-Ṣamad maintains that for Muslims residing far from Mecca, the obligation of qibla orientation is fulfilled by facing the *jihat al-Ka‘bah*, rather than the *‘ayn al-Ka‘bah*. This position is articulated in *Sayr al-Sālikīn*, a work that serves as a translation, adaptation, and expansion of Imām al-Ghazālī’s *Lubāb Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*. His argument is grounded in a systematic process of Islamic legal reasoning, drawing upon the Qur’ān, ḥadīth, the practices of the Companions (*af‘āl al-ṣaḥābah*), and established Islamic legal maxims (*qawā‘id fiqhīyah*). These sources are mobilized to demonstrate the sufficiency of the *jihat al-Ka‘bah* approach for Muslims located at a distance from Mecca. In the context of the Malay world, this position carries significant implications, as it provides a flexible yet authoritative *Shari‘ah*-based legitimacy for historically embedded religious practices, including mosque orientations shaped by local traditions that do not always correspond to highly precise geometric

⁵³ See: Al-Marghīnānī, *Al-Hidāyah Sharḥ Bidāyat al-Mubtadī*, 48; Al-Mālikī, *Al-Isbrāf ‘alā Nukat Masā’il al-Khilāf*, 1:158.

⁵⁴ Al-Fālimbānī, *Sayr al-Sālikīn ilā ‘Ibādat Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, 2:180.

⁵⁵ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad al-Mashhūr Bā‘alawī, *Bughyat al-Mustarshidīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 55.

calculations.⁵⁶ Although this view does not fully align with the dominant (*mashhūr*) position within the Shāfi‘ī *madhhab*, which prevails in Indonesia,⁵⁷ it nonetheless rests on a well-established foundation within the broader corpus of *fiqh*. Accordingly, ‘Abd al-Ṣamad’s argument should not be understood as a departure from orthodoxy but rather as a form of *fiqh* articulation that emphasizes *taysīr*, normative attainability, and the practical applicability of the *Shari‘ah* within concrete social contexts.

The first legal basis invoked by ‘Abd al-Ṣamad to support this position is Sūrat al-Baqarah verse 144. He explicitly interprets the term “*shaṭraḥ*” in the phrase “*wa ḥaythu mā kuntum fa-wallū wujūbakum shaṭraḥ*” as referring to “the direction or side of the Ka‘bah,” that is, the *jihat al-Ka‘bah*. This interpretation reinforces the reading advanced by Imām al-Ghazālī, who understands the verse not as requiring precise orientation toward a single geographical point, but rather as mandating orientation toward the general direction of the Ka‘bah, which remains normatively attainable for those at a distance. Within this interpretive framework, turning one’s face toward the *jihat al-Ka‘bah* is considered sufficient to fulfill the legal requirement.⁵⁸ Consequently, for Muslims living far from the Ka‘bah, the obligation of facing the qibla is adequately discharged through orientation toward its general direction. According to Imām al-Ghazālī, this view represents the preponderant opinion (*rājih*) and is even associated with the *qawl jadīd* (new legal opinion) of Imām al-Shāfi‘ī. A similar affirmation is found in the works of Sayyid ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Bā‘alawī, who states that *jihat al-Ka‘bah* is sufficient when precise knowledge of the ‘*ayn al-Ka‘bah*’ is not available. Thus, the Qur’ānic argument advanced by ‘Abd al-Ṣamad underscores that the legal obligation must be understood within the horizon of practical attainability, rather than in terms of abstract geometric precision.⁵⁹

To further substantiate his interpretation of “*shaṭraḥ*” in Sūrat al-Baqarah, verse 144, ‘Abd al-Ṣamad also draws upon a ḥadīth narrated by Mālik ibn Anas from Abū Hurayrah, in which the Prophet Muḥammad stated to the people of Medina: “*mā bayna al-mashriq wa al-maghrib qiblah*” (what lies between east and west is qibla).⁶⁰ In the geographical context of Medina, which lies north of Mecca, the range between east and west corresponds to a southern sector—the direction of the qibla. This ḥadīth thus indicates that, for communities located far from the Ka‘bah, qibla orientation is not conceptualized as a single, narrowly defined geometric line but rather as a directional range that remains legally valid. For ‘Abd

⁵⁶ See: Ahmad Izzuddin, “The Problems of the Relationship between Science and Religion in Qibla Direction Calibration at the Great Mosque of Demak and Baiturrahman Mosque in Semarang, Indonesia,” *Journal of Islamic Law* 3, no. 2 (August 2022): 111–31; Kusdiyana Kusdiyana et al., “A Comparative Study of Islamic Astronomy and Jurisprudence on the Qibla Direction of Historical Mosques in Cirebon Indonesia,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Miḥānī: Wacana Hukum, Ekonomi dan Keagamaan* 11, no. 2 (October 2024): 450–63.

⁵⁷ See: Yasrul Huda, Jajat Burhanuddin, and Mahmood Kooria, “Strengthening the Shafi‘i Madhhab: Malay Kitab Jawi of Fiqh in the 19th Century,” *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)* 22, no. 2 (December 2023): 259–73; Teuku Zulkhairi and Ibnu Hajar, “How Jawi Script Influences Religious Attitudes: An Evidence from Aceh,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 11, no. 2 (May 2023): 633–50; Mariati Aprilia Harahap, “Interfaith Marriage Between Muslims and Female Ahlul-Kitāb: MUI Fatwa and Preservation of the Shāfi‘i Madhhab in Indonesia,” *El-Ushrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 8, no. 2 (December 2025): 812–34.

⁵⁸ Al-Fālimbānī, *Sayr al-Sālikīn ilā ‘Ibādat Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, 2:181.

⁵⁹ Bā‘alawī, *Bughyat al-Mustashidīn*, 52–3.

⁶⁰ Mālik ibn Anas, *Al-Muwatta‘* (Abu Dhabi: Mu‘assasat Zāyid ibn Sulṭān, 2004), 2:274.

al-Ṣamad, this breadth constitutes a powerful prophetic legitimation of the sufficiency of *jibāt al-Ka‘bah* for those at a distance.⁶¹ The same ḥadīth is also employed by Imām al-Ghazālī to support a similar position.⁶² Accordingly, ‘Abd al-Ṣamad’s argument is not an isolated formulation but forms part of a broader *fiqh* tradition found within the Ḥanafī, Mālīkī, and Ḥanbalī *madhhabs*, as well as among some Shāfi‘ī jurists.⁶³ Methodologically, the use of this ḥadīth is significant because it demonstrates that qibla determination in *fiqh* depends not only on textual interpretation but also on a spatial reading of the geographical context in which the prophetic instruction was articulated.

In addition to the Qur’ān and ḥadīth, ‘Abd al-Ṣamad also draws upon the practices of the Companions as a form of practical precedent. He explicitly refers to the well-known incident in which the Companions, while performing the dawn prayer at the Masjid al-Qiblatayn, received news of the change in the qibla direction and immediately turned their bodies during the prayer without undertaking prior geometric verification or complex astronomical reasoning. This spontaneous action was not reproached by the Prophet Muḥammad. For ‘Abd al-Ṣamad, this episode demonstrates that the obligation to face the qibla was fulfilled through orientation toward the *jibāt al-Ka‘bah*, rather than through precise determination of the ‘*ayn al-Ka‘bah*. In other words, this precedent indicates that, in classical Islamic legal practice, the determination of the qibla recognizes the validity of action based on sufficient information and strong *ẓann*. It also confirms that complex methods of calculation aimed at achieving precise alignment with the ‘*ayn al-Ka‘bah* were never imposed upon laypersons as a strict condition for the validity of prayer.⁶⁴ Consistent with this, several Muslim jurists have also cited the orientation of early mosques in Kufa and Basra as evidence that the validity of qibla orientation may be understood within the framework of *jibāt al-Ka‘bah*, even when it does not perfectly correspond to the ‘*ayn al-Ka‘bah*.⁶⁵

Following the legal reasoning of Imām al-Ghazālī, ‘Abd al-Ṣamad also relies on *qawā‘id fiqhīyyah* that emphasize the avoidance of excessive hardship (*mashaqqah*). Among the relevant principles are “*al-ḍarar yuzāl*” (harm must be removed), its derivative “*dar’ al-mafāsīd muqaddam ‘alā jalb al-maṣāliḥ*” (preventing harm takes precedence over attaining benefit), and “*idhā ḍāqa al-amr ittasa‘a*” (when a matter becomes constricted, the law expands).⁶⁶ These maxims demonstrate that the obligation to face the qibla and to construct mosques must be understood within a framework of legal practicality rather than an abstract normative framework that disregards the social and material capacities of the community. If all Muslims were required to face the ‘*ayn al-Ka‘bah* with absolute precision, this would impose an almost insurmountable burden, especially in premodern contexts where access to experts in ‘*ilm al-falak* was limited. For this reason, orientation toward the *jibāt al-Ka‘bah* is deemed sufficient

⁶¹ Al-Fālimbānī, *Sayr al-Sālikīn ilā ‘Ibādat Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, 2:181.

⁶² Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf Al-Sādab al-Muttaqīn Bi Sharḥ Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* (Mu’assasat al-Tārīkh al-‘Arabī, 1994), 6:445.

⁶³ Al-Qalyūbī, *Al-Hidāyah min al-Ḍalālah fī Ma‘rifat al-Waqt wa al-Qiblah min Ghayr Ālah*, 37.

⁶⁴ Al-Fālimbānī, *Sayr al-Sālikīn ilā ‘Ibādat Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, 2:181–2.

⁶⁵ Khanji, “Al-Qiblah wa Taḥdīduhā bayna al-Fiqh wa al-Falak wa al-Handasah,” 8.

⁶⁶ Jalāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Ashbāh wa al-Naẓā’ir* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1990), 83.

in light of necessity and public interest (*maṣlahah*).⁶⁷ This position reflects the *qaul muṭlaq* (general opinion) of Imām al-Ghazālī and differs from some later Muslim jurists who continued to require orientation toward the ‘*ayn al-Ka‘bah*, at least on the basis of strong *ẓann*.⁶⁸ In this framework, ‘Abd al-Ṣamad clearly adopts a mode of legal reasoning that emphasizes the operationalization of the *Shari‘ah* within concrete social conditions.

Taken as a whole, ‘Abd al-Ṣamad’s legal reasoning can be understood as an effort to contextualize Imām al-Ghazālī’s juristic framework within the socio-religious conditions of the Malay Archipelago. Although he does not adopt the dominant opinion (*mashbūr*) of the Shāfi‘ī *madhhabs*, his reasoning remains grounded in minority opinions recognized within the Shāfi‘ī tradition, while simultaneously aligning with the majority of scholars’ (*jumbūr al-‘ulamā*) positions of the Ḥanafī, Mālikī, and Ḥanbalī *madhhabs*. In this sense, ‘Abd al-Ṣamad is not proposing a new doctrine but rather engaging in a form of selective juristic alignment within the classical Islamic legal tradition to validate an already existing religious landscape in Java and the wider Malay world. His thought thus represents a robust alternative form of Islamic legal legitimacy for local religious practices without severing their connection to authoritative *fiqh* traditions. This is precisely what makes his contribution significant from a socio-legal perspective: he does not merely reproduce doctrinal positions but actively operationalizes Islamic law as a normative system responsive to social realities. For this reason, the relevance of his thought extends beyond the eighteenth century and remains pertinent today, particularly in a context where technological standardization tends to promote the homogenization of religious practice. In such circumstances, ‘Abd al-Ṣamad’s thought offers an important lesson: that precision may be valued without negating the legitimacy of tradition and that the *Shari‘ah* can remain authoritative without losing its sensitivity to social realities.

The Qibla Orientation of Mosques in Eighteenth-Century Java: Was Facing West Already in Accordance with *Shari‘ah*?

In the eighteenth-century Malay Archipelago—often referred to by ‘Abd al-Ṣamad as *Tanah Bawah Angin* or *Tanah Jawa*—the traditional qibla orientation of most mosques was generally determined by facing due west.⁶⁹ Geodetically, however, the precise direction toward Mecca from Southeast Asia lies to the northwest. This westward convention therefore produced a qibla deviation of approximately 20 to 25 degrees, depending on the specific geographical location of each region. Such deviation became a significant point of debate among Muslim scholars, particularly as ‘*ilm al-falak* increasingly enabled more precise methods of qibla determination.⁷⁰ Consequently, qibla orientation was no longer merely a practical matter of

⁶⁷ See: Arisy Abror Dzukroni, “The Polemic of Pig Kidney Xenotransplantation for Human Life Sustainability: An Overview of Islamic Legal Thoughts between Halal-Haram Concept and Principle of Mashlahah,” *Maṣāhib* 21, no. 1 (July 2022): 63–92; Azni Azni et al., “Pseudo-Maṣlahah and Epistemological Failure in Marriage Dispensation at Indonesian Religious Courts,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 13, no. 2 (May 2025): 1399–420.

⁶⁸ Al-Fālimbānī, *Sayr al-Sālikīn ilā ‘Ibādat Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, 2:182.

⁶⁹ Al-Fālimbānī, *Sayr al-Sālikīn ilā ‘Ibādat Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, 2:182.

⁷⁰ See: ‘Uthmān ibn Yahyā, *Ṭaḥrīr Aqwāl al-Adillab fī Ṭaḥṣīl ‘Ayn al-Ka‘bah* (n.d.), 1; Al-Banjārī, *Mas‘alat Al-Qiblah Fī al-Baṭāwī*, 8.

ritual direction but evolved into a site of contestation over scholarly authority and the legal validity of worship practices.

Within this context, the scholars who lived during ‘Abd al-Şamad’s time exhibited a markedly diverse range of views. Muḥammad Arsyad and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Miṣrī maintained that any deviation in qibla orientation constituted a fundamental error requiring correction. For both, such deviation had direct implications for the validity of prayer and therefore necessitated the physical realignment of existing mosques.⁷¹ This approach reflects a dichotomous normative paradigm—right or wrong—and treats scientific precision as the primary standard for determining the legal validity of ritual orientation. It also aligns with tendencies within the Shāfi‘ī and Ḥanbalī *madhhabs*, both of which emphasize the obligation to face the ‘*ayn al-Ka‘bah*. Within this framework, precision remains a normative demand, even though the Shāfi‘ī tradition, in practice, allows a probabilistic approach through astronomical or geographical calculation for those located far from the Ka‘bah.⁷² Thus, this position remains fundamentally oriented toward the ideal of precision while acknowledging the practical limitations involved in attaining it.

By contrast, ‘Abd al-Şamad adopts a more flexible and context-sensitive position. He argues that qibla orientations already established in communal religious practice remain legally valid and do not require wholesale correction, even though greater precision through astronomical methods is still considered preferable. Within this framework, ‘Abd al-Şamad does not treat qibla orientation as a binary issue but rather as a spectrum of normative evaluation: wrong, correct, and more correct. This approach is grounded in an awareness of the socio-religious conditions of Muslim communities in the Malay Archipelago, particularly the limited accessibility of experts in ‘*ilm al-falak*. If the obligation to face the ‘*ayn al-Ka‘bah* were imposed strictly and universally, it would risk generating widespread hardship as well as social tension within the community. For this reason, ‘Abd al-Şamad affirms that the *miḥrābs* of mosques in Java remain valid and do not require mass realignment, although correction is still recommended as a means of improving the quality of worship. In contextualizing the thought of Imām al-Ghazālī, he writes:

“If you are asked about the miḥrābs of mosques in Tanah Bawah Angin (a historical term referring to the Malay Archipelago, including present-day Indonesia), which have long been established and followed across generations, and then some scholars of ‘ilm al-falak arrive whose ijtihād differs from the orientation of those miḥrābs—should one follow them or continue to follow the direction of the earlier mosques? The answer is considering the direction toward which your heart inclines, and that is what should be followed. If no such inclination is present, then following those who possess expertise in ‘ilm al-falak is preferable, because it is closer to the precise point of the Ka‘bah (‘ayn al-Ka‘bah). Nevertheless, both remain valid, because each is based on probable judgment (ẓann), not on certainty (yaqīn). Indeed, absolute certainty regarding the exact point of the Ka‘bah can only be attained by one who is sufficiently close to see it directly. And God knows best.”⁷³

⁷¹ See: Steenbrink, *Beberapa Aspek tentang Islam di Indonesia Abad ke-19*, 133; Al-Baṭāwī, *Mīzān al-I‘tidāl fī Takmilat Jawāb al-Su‘āl fī Mas‘alat Ikhtilāf al-Maṭālī‘ wa Ru‘yat al-Hilāl*, 24.

⁷² See: Ibn Qudāmah, *Al-Mughnī*, 2:378; Khanji, “*Al-Qiblah wa Taḥdīdubā bayna al-Fiqh wa al-Falak wa al-Handasah*,” 9; Al-Nawawī, *Minhāj al-Ṭālibīn wa ‘Umdat al-Muṣṭafīn*, 45.

⁷³ Al-Fālimbānī, *Sayr al-Sālikīn ilā ‘Ibādat Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, 2:182.

This statement clearly indicates that ‘Abd al-Şamad recognized the plurality of epistemic foundations in determining the qibla, while simultaneously resisting the absolutization of any single form of authority.

‘Abd al-Şamad further argues that the degree of deviation commonly observed—approximately 20 to 25 degrees—did not exceed the maximum tolerable limit within the framework of *jihat al-Ka‘bah*, which he understood to fall within a range of approximately ± 45 degrees. Accordingly, Muslims performing prayers in such mosques could still be considered legally valid in their orientation because they remained within the broader directional scope of the Ka‘bah. In situations where doubt or competing claims of authority arose between the traditional *mibrāb* and the calculations of an astronomer, he recommended following the latter as the “more accurate” option,⁷⁴ without thereby invalidating the existing practice. This position demonstrates that ‘Abd al-Şamad did not reject the authority of scientific knowledge but rather situated it within a broader normative framework that continued to accommodate socially embedded religious practice. Methodologically, this view rests on a comprehensive structure of Islamic legal argumentation—including the Qur‘ān, ḥadīth, the practices of the Companions, and *qawā‘id fiqhīyyah*—all of which reinforce the *jihat al-Ka‘bah* approach. In this respect, the influence of Imām al-Ghazālī is unmistakable,⁷⁵ especially in the integration of normative, ethical, and practical dimensions within Islamic legal reasoning.

The legal implications of ‘Abd al-Şamad’s position were highly significant within the socio-religious context of eighteenth-century Muslim communities in the Malay Archipelago. While some later Muslim jurists emphasized the obligation to face the *‘ayn al-Ka‘bah* with a high degree of precision, ‘Abd al-Şamad articulated a more inclusive and reconciliatory approach. His opinion prevented the widespread delegitimization of worship practices that had been observed for generations, particularly in mosques oriented westward.⁷⁶ Simultaneously, this approach served as a mechanism for social stabilization by reducing the risk of conflict and fragmentation in religious authority within the community.⁷⁷ From a socio-legal perspective, this position illustrates how Islamic law functions not only as a prescriptive normative system but also as an instrument for preserving social cohesion and the continuity of religious tradition.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, ‘Abd al-Şamad left open the possibility of increasing precision through scientific knowledge and did not exclude the potential for correction in extreme cases where deviation exceeded acceptable limits.⁷⁹ In this sense, his

⁷⁴ Al-Fālimbānī, *Sayr al-Sālikīn ilā ‘Ibādat Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, 2:172.

⁷⁵ Al-Marghīnānī, *Al-Hidāyah Sharḥ Bidāyat al-Mubtadī*, 48; Al-Mālikī, *Al-Isbrāf ‘alā Nukat Masā’il al-Khilāf*, 1:158.

⁷⁶ Al-Fālimbānī, *Sayr al-Sālikīn ilā ‘Ibādat Rabb al-‘Ālamīn*, 2:182.

⁷⁷ Bruckmayr, “Facing Mecca from Java,” 102–35.

⁷⁸ Ari Michael Gordon, *Sacred Orientation in Late Antiquity and Early Islam: The Qibla as Ritual, Metaphor, and Identity Marker in Early Islam* (University of Pennsylvania, 2019), 208–52. ABD Karim Faiz et al., “From Qibla Deviation to Social Cohesion: The Construction of Minority Fiqh at the Great Mosque of Makale, Tana Toraja,” *Journal of Islamic Law* 6, no. 2 (August 2025): 317–37; Rui Oliveira Lopes and Nuriskandar bin Mohd Hasnan, “The Expression of Cultural Identity in Mosque Architecture in Brunei Darussalam,” *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 10, no. 1 (May 2022): 39–58.

⁷⁹ See: Schumm, “How Accurately Could Early (622-900 CE) Muslims Determine the Direction of Prayers (Qibla)?,” 102; Duaa Abdullah, “Determining the Qibla Direction by Astronomical and Geometrical Methods,” arXiv:2512.03271, preprint, arXiv, December 2, 2025; Kusdiyana, Samsudin, and Muhammad

thought represents an integrative model of Islamic legal reasoning—one that synthesizes text, tradition, science, and social reality—and remains highly relevant amid modernizing tendencies that increasingly push toward the standardization of religious practice.⁸⁰

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the concept of qibla orientation in the thought of ‘Abd al-Şamad al-Fālīmānī was not merely a technical issue concerning ritual direction but rather an epistemological and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) construct developed in response to the geographical, intellectual, and socio-religious realities of the eighteenth-century Malay-Indonesian world. Through his work, *Sayr al-Sālikīn*, ‘Abd al-Şamad adopted and contextualized Imām al-Ghazālī’s conception of *jihat al-Ka‘bah*, framing the obligation to face the qibla not as an absolute requirement for precise alignment with the ‘*ayn al-Ka‘bah*, but as a normative orientation sufficiently fulfilled through *ẓann* (probable judgment) for those living far from Mecca. This framework allowed him to validate the orientation of mosque *mihṛābs* (prayer niches) in Java that were not geodetically exact, without delegitimizing forms of worship deeply embedded in local religious traditions. Simultaneously, his acknowledgment of the superiority of ‘*ilm al-falak* (Islamic astronomy) demonstrates that he did not reject scientific precision but rather situated it within a layered and context-sensitive framework of Islamic legal reasoning. Thus, this article argues that ‘Abd al-Şamad’s thought exemplifies Islamic legal reasoning by integratively synthesizing *fiqh* texts, epistemic authority, and social necessity.

These findings make a significant contribution to the study of Islamic law by demonstrating that qibla discourse in the Malay-Indonesian world should be understood not only as a matter of astronomy or technical precision but also as a socio-legal arena in which the *Shari‘ah* was operationalized through negotiation among orthodoxy, scientific knowledge, and local religious practice. In this context, ‘Abd al-Şamad emerges not as a deviation from *fiqh* orthodoxy but as a scholar who creatively mobilized the classical Islamic legal tradition to preserve both the validity of worship and the social stability of Muslim communities. Nevertheless, this study is limited by the lack of sufficient historical evidence regarding the astronomical instruments directly used by ‘Abd al-Şamad, as well as the incomplete reconstruction of his intellectual lineage in ‘*ilm al-falak*. Further research is therefore needed to trace the scholarly networks that shaped his astronomical thought and to compare his conception of the qibla with broader developments in astronomy and *fiqh* among early

Wildan Nur Akmal, “Accuracy of Qibla Direction Mosque at Rest Area Toll Road on the Qibla Jurisprudence Perspective,” *Nusantara: Journal of Law Studies* 2, no. 1 (March 2023): 31–39.

⁸⁰ See: Ahmad Nizam, Romli Sa, and Yazwardi Yazwardi, “Divergence in Qibla Direction Determination: A Fiqh-Based Analysis and Its Societal Implementation,” *Nurani: Jurnal Kajian Syari‘ah dan Masyarakat* 25, no. 2 (October 2025): 363–76; Marwadi, Mughni Labib, and Muhammad Fuad Zain, “Reforming the Islamic Calendar and Religious Authority: Dynamics of Hijri Calendar Calculation in Indonesia within Persatuan Islam’s Thought,” *Al-Manabij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 19, no. 1 (June 2025): 149–66; Alimuddin Alimuddin, “Hijriyah Months and the Construction of Religious Moderation in the Sombaopu Community of Gowa, South Sulawesi,” *Al-Adalah* 20, no. 1 (June 2023): 137–56; Syafwan Rozi, Nurlizam, and M. Zubir, “The Reception of Hamka’s Tafsir Al-Azhar within Social Religious Issues in the Malay World,” *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur’an dan Hadis* 25, no. 2 (August 2024): 247–72.

scholars of the Malay Archipelago. Such inquiry would deepen our understanding of the epistemological dynamics of Islamic law in Southeast Asia and further illuminate the relationship among knowledge, space, and religious authority in the region's Islamic history.

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