

## The Epistemology of Sufism of Datuk Ri Tiro in the 17th Century

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines the epistemology of Sufism (tasawuf) of Datuk ri Tiro, one of the key figures in the spread of Islam in Tiro, Bulukumba, and South Sulawesi in the 17th century. This study aims to understand how the structure of Sufi knowledge taught by Datuk ri Tiro was formed, validated, and practiced in the daily life of the Tiro community. This study employs a qualitative approach through library research by reviewing historical sources and academic works related to the Sufism of the Indonesian archipelago. The findings show that the epistemology of Sufism of Datuk ri Tiro is constructed through three main pillars: (1) the sources of Sufi knowledge rooted in the Minangkabau–Aceh tradition as well as Bugis–Makassar local wisdom; (2) methods of acquiring knowledge based on inner experience through dhikr, self-purification, and spiritual discipline; and (3) epistemic validity criteria grounded in purity of heart, continuity of dhikr, and the internalization of shari'ah–tarekat–haqiqat–ma'rifat. This study affirms that the epistemology of Datuk ri Tiro's Sufism is not merely a historical legacy, but also a knowledge model relevant for strengthening spirituality and ethics in contemporary Muslim society.

**Keywords:** *Epistemology, Sufism, Epistemology of Sufism, Islamic, Datuk Ri Tiro*

### Introduction

Sufism is a discipline within Islam with a broad epistemological scope, encompassing both the outward and inward aspects of human life. The uniqueness of Sufism lies in its model of knowledge acquired through spiritual experience, which, at a certain level, can lead a person to a state of *fana* in absolute reality (Cibro, 2021). The epistemology of Sufism, also known as *'irfani*, possesses unique characteristics that distinguish it from other Islamic disciplines such as philosophy, theology (*'aqidah*), and jurisprudence (*fiqh*). In this context, the epistemology of Sufism offers a unique perspective on the sources and disclosure of spiritual knowledge (Hasan, 2012).

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Therefore, research related to the epistemology of Sufism is both interesting and important to conduct, considering that Sufism is positioned as a complement to the two dimensions of Islam, *fiqh* and *'aqidah*, while at the same time there are groups within Islam that reject it (Hakim et al., 2024). The objective of Sufism is not to attain intuitive knowledge of ultimate reality, but to become a servant of God. There is no station higher than that of servanthood (*'ubūdiyyah*), and there is no truth outside the Sharia (Bilqies, 2014). Sufism may therefore be understood as a path for deeply understanding every action or act of worship, recognizing that all ultimately lead to Allah SWT.

Several scholars in the Nusantara Islamic tradition, particularly the *mursyid* of various Sufi orders such as Shaykh Yusuf al-Makassari, Shaykh Abdul Wahab Bugis, and the *khalifah* of the Khalwatiyah Order, have made the Sufi approach the foundation of their *da'wah*. In their *da'wah* strategy, they employ a Sufi-oriented approach that emphasizes the purification of the soul, spiritual closeness to Allah, and the moral cultivation of society (Azis, 2021). As in the Bulukumba region of South Sulawesi, particularly in the area of Tiro, there is a well-known figure who played an important role in spreading Islamic teachings, known as Datuk Ri Tiro (Khatib Bungsu). The approach he used in his *da'wah* was Sufism. In Tiro, the local community was known for having practices or abilities related to black magic, which were manifestations of inner power and meditation teachings that existed before the arrival of Islam, as the community at that time still inherited the beliefs of their ancestors, namely animism and dynamism (Bahtiar, 2012).

The application of Sufism is not limited to the individual dimension but also plays an important role in the history of the spread of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago. One of the forms of success in Islamic *da'wah* in Indonesia cannot be separated from the Sufi approach, which is adaptive to local culture (Maskur, 2022). The scholars and saints (*ulama* and *wali*) realized that Sufism possesses a high degree of flexibility in engaging with the traditions, beliefs, and spiritual symbols of local communities. Through a gentle approach grounded in the purification of the heart, Islamic values were introduced without causing cultural conflict (Bahiyah, 2020).

One of the prominent figures in the context of local Sufi *da'wah* is Datuk Ri Tiro (Khatib Bungsu) in the Tiro area, Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi. He is known as a great scholar and a pioneer of Islamic dissemination in the region. In his *da'wah* strategy, Datuk Ri Tiro employed a Sufi approach to bridge Islamic teachings with the belief systems and spiritual practices of the Tiro community. Before the arrival of Islam, the people in this region were known for their practices rooted in animism and dynamism, as well as spiritual traditions related to inner mystical powers and meditation, which they regarded as forms of inner strength.

In the early 17th century, Datuk Ri Tiro arrived in South Sulawesi together with two other *muballigh*, namely Datuk Ribandang (Khatib Tunggal) and Datuk Patimang (Khatib Sulung) (Malli et al., 2021). Khatib Sulung himself chose the Tiro region as the area for his *da'wah* in spreading Islamic teachings because the model of *da'wah* he used was a Sufi approach, which was considered harmonious with the spiritual practices of the Tiro community, particularly their traditions of inner mysticism (Bahtiar, 2012). Therefore, critical research on the epistemology of Datuk Ri Tiro becomes important to conduct by uncovering how the Sufi teachings of Datuk Ri Tiro operate, as well as portraying how his thoughts influence the community in practicing spiritual, moral, and social teachings that reflect a balance between the outward and inward dimensions of daily life.

Studies on Sufism have been conducted by Islamic scholars from doctrinal, historical, and ethical perspectives (Mas' ud & Fuad, 2018). However, most of these studies still focus on classical Middle Eastern Sufi figures such as al-Ghazali, Ibn Arabi, Abu Yazid al-Busthami, and Jalaluddin Rumi. As in the research Amri & Santalia, (2023) whose research focuses on the teachings of Eastern Sufi figures such as Hasan al-Bashri, Rabi'ah al-'Adawiyah, al-Junayd al-Baghdadi, al-Hallaj, and al-Ghazali. Meanwhile, studies oriented toward local Sufi figures in the Indonesian archipelago, particularly those who played significant roles in the Islamization of specific regions such as South Sulawesi, are still relatively limited. Therefore, the thoughts and epistemologies of

figures such as Datuk Ri Tiro have not yet received adequate attention in the academic discourse on Islam in Indonesia.

Furthermore, previous studies on Datuk Ri Tiro tend to highlight the historical aspects of his da'wah and his social role in the spread of Islam, rather than the epistemological structure underlying his Sufi teachings. As in the research by Malli et al. (2021), which focuses on identifying the educational background, family, and genealogy of Datuk Ri Tiro, then examines his da'wah strategies in developing Islamic teachings in Bulukumba Regency, and traces the central areas of Islamic propagation carried out by Datuk Ri Tiro through his da'wah. However, in the context of da'wah and spiritual education, there are strong indications that the epistemological approach he employed possesses its own distinctiveness, namely, the ability to integrate Islamic Sufi knowledge with local spiritual values.

In addition, there remains a gap in understanding how the epistemology of Sufism functions as a foundation of knowledge within the context of traditional societies. In many studies, the epistemology of Sufism is understood theoretically and universally, without considering the contextual and sociocultural aspects of the environment in which these teachings are applied. In other words, there has been little research attempting to examine how Sufism functions as a living system of knowledge within local Muslim communities (Musttasir et al., 2024). Based on these conditions, it is necessary to conduct a study that deeply examines the epistemology of Sufism of Datuk Ri Tiro by placing it within the social and cultural context of the Tiro community.

This study is important for understanding how concepts of spiritual knowledge are formed, transmitted, and practised in community life. Thus, this research not only aims to fill the gap in studies on local Sufi figures in the Indonesian archipelago but also contributes to the development of contextual Islamic epistemology discourse. This approach allows us to understand Sufism not merely as a mystical teaching, but as a system of knowledge that integrates reason, revelation, and intuition into a single, coherent religious experience. (Ali, Muhdi and Sa'ad, Suadi and Anwar, 2025).

Moreover, this study is expected to demonstrate that the epistemology of Sufism of Datuk Ri Tiro has strong relevance in contemporary life, especially in building a balance between spirituality and rationality, and between tradition and modernity. In a modern world that tends to be materialistic and secular, the epistemological values of Sufism as taught by Datuk Ri Tiro can serve as an inspiration for cultivating deeper moral and spiritual awareness. In other words, this research will show that the thoughts of Datuk Ri Tiro are not merely a historical legacy but also a living and relevant epistemological source. His Sufi approach not only shaped the religious identity of the Tiro community in the past but can also serve as a foundation for the development of Islamic ethics and spirituality today.

## Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach using a literature review method. The primary data sources include books and literature about Datuk Ri Tiro, including the book written by M. Irfan Mahmud (2012) entitled *Datuk Ri Tiro: Penyiar Islam di Bulukumba* and how his influence shaped the Muslim community in the Tiro area of Bulukumba, South Sulawesi. In addition, this study examines books and scholarly articles that discuss the relationship between the epistemology of Sufism and the Sufi teachings of Datuk Ri Tiro. Data were collected through a review of relevant literature and sources concerning the concept of Sufi epistemology. The collected data were then analyzed, a process that included interpretation and correlation with studies related to Sufi epistemology and research concerning Datuk Ri Tiro (Salim et al., 2024).

## Literature Review

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that discusses the various types, foundations, and validity of knowledge (Brown, 1993). This means that epistemology is the study of what can be counted as knowledge, where knowledge is located, and how knowledge develops. Epistemology is a major branch of philosophy that examines the nature, sources, and limits of human knowledge. It seeks to answer fundamental questions such as: what does it mean “to know,” how humans acquire knowledge, and what conditions make a belief valid to be called knowledge. Historically, classical epistemology formulated knowledge as *justified true belief*, a belief that is true and has grounds for justification. This formulation dominated the discourse until (Gettier, 2016) shows that someone can have a true belief supported by reason, but still cannot be said to have knowledge because of the element of.

The development of contemporary epistemology has shown the emergence of various new approaches, such as *internalism* (Feldman & Conee, 1985), as well as externalism, which focuses on external factors such as the reliability of cognitive processes in producing true beliefs. One of the most influential externalist theories is reliabilism (Lackey, 2016), which states that a belief is justified if it is produced by a reliable cognitive mechanism. In addition, virtue epistemology, pioneered by figures such as Sosa (2007) and Swank and Zagzebski (1998), emphasizes that knowledge is the result of intellectual virtues, namely, stable epistemic capacities directed toward the pursuit of truth. These approaches highlight that knowledge is related not only to justificatory reasons but also to the way in which a belief is produced by an epistemic agent.

In its development, modern epistemology has increasingly expanded into social and interdisciplinary domains. Social epistemology examines how institutions, authority, testimony, trust, social biases, and power structures influence the distribution and legitimacy of knowledge, as discussed by (Fricker, 2007) in the concept of epistemic injustice and by (Hardwig, 1991) regarding the importance of trust within epistemic structures. In contrast, formal epistemology has developed through mathematical and probabilistic approaches. In addition, feminist and postcolonial perspectives (Longino, 2002) show that the production of knowledge is never free from power relations. These developments indicate that contemporary epistemology not only investigates the conditions of “knowing” but also the social dynamics, ethics, and power structures that influence who is regarded as a subject of knowledge.

Sufism is a spiritual tradition in Islam that focuses on the purification of the soul, the control of base desires, and the attainment of existential closeness to Allah through inner practices such as dhikr, muraqabah, muhasabah, and other spiritual exercises. Scholars trace the roots of Sufism to the spirit of asceticism (*zuhd*) among the early generations of Muslims, who prioritized simplicity and spiritual depth over worldly luxury (Schimmel, 1978). In its development, Sufism not only became an individual practice, but also formed a rich scholarly tradition, organizing the relationship between the inner dimension and the Sharia, and establishing an ethical foundation that encourages the attainment of the *insan kamil* or the perfect human being (Nasr & Chittick, 2007).

In its intellectual and metaphysical aspects, Sufism developed into several schools, including ethical Sufism (*tasawuf akhlaqi*) and philosophical Sufism (*tasawuf falsafi*). Ethical Sufism emphasizes the refinement of moral virtues and the cultivation of spiritual character, whereas philosophical Sufism developed through the thought of major figures such as Al-Hallaj, Suhrawardi, and, in particular, Ibn Arabi. Metaphysical ideas about *wahdat al-wujud*, creative imagination (*khayal*), and the ontological relationship between God and the cosmos were explained in depth by (Morris et al., 1991) and by other modern scholars (Rizvi, 2013). These schools show that Sufism is not only a religious practice, but also a highly complex system of thought that has made significant contributions to Islamic philosophy, hermeneutics, and theories of intuitive knowledge.

In the modern era, Sufism has undergone revitalization and significant transformation in response to globalization, modernity, and the spiritual crises of contemporary humanity. In the research (Djufri et al., 2025) shows how Sufism offers a spiritual alternative amid a modern life that is entirely materialistic, while (Rozi & Hannase, 2024) emphasizes the dynamics of Sufism as a living tradition that continues to undergo global recontextualization. The phenomena of neo-Sufism, transnational Sufism, and the adaptation of Sufism to the modern public sphere. This shows that Sufism remains relevant and is one of the most adaptive Islamic traditions in responding to the changes of times.

The epistemology of Sufism developed by Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani relies on the paradigm that the highest form of knowledge (*ma'rifah*) is not obtained solely through rational activity (*'aql*), but through a spiritual approach involving the purification of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*), spiritual discipline (*riyadhah*), and inner unveiling (*kashf*). For him, true divine knowledge can only be attained by a heart that has been illuminated by divine light (Arif, 2025).

Sufism's epistemology focuses on attaining spiritual knowledge (*ma'rifah*) through inner purification, direct experience, and an existential relationship with God. In the Sufi tradition, knowledge is not attained solely through rationality or empirical observation, but through moral and spiritual transformation that allows the heart to become a 'mirror' of divine truth. Schimmel, (1978) emphasizes that Sufism views the heart (*qalb*) as an epistemic organ capable of receiving the light of knowledge once it has been purified from blameworthy traits. Thus, the epistemology of Sufism is experimental, but not in the empirical sense; rather, it is a spiritual experiment that produces intuitive knowledge or *'ilm al-huḍūrī*, namely knowledge that is presented directly to the soul without the mediation of discursive logic (Nasr, 2005).

In its epistemological framework, Sufis developed a hierarchy of knowledge that begins with *'ilm* (rational knowledge), *ma'rifah* (gnosis), and *haqiqah* (the highest truth) (Abshor, 2018) besides these are Bayāni and Burhāni. It is different with of bayāni and burhāni based on holy scripture and logic. Irfani is based on kasyf (illuminative). The epistemology of Sufism offers a model of knowledge that transcends the dichotomy of reason and empiricism because it places mystical experience as a valid source of knowledge, as long as such experience is accompanied by spiritual discipline and the guidance of a *mursyid*. In modern developments, the epistemology of Sufism is understood not only as a method for attaining spiritual knowledge, but also as a hermeneutical approach to understanding human reality and the world.

Knysh (2017) Sufism saw a sharp decline in the twentieth century, only to experience a stunning revival in recent decades. In this comprehensive new history of Sufism from the earliest centuries of Islam to today, Alexander Knysh, a leading expert on the subject, reveals the tradition in all its richness. Knysh explores how Sufism has been viewed by both insiders and outsiders since its inception. He examines the key aspects of Sufism, from definitions and discourses to leadership, institutions, and practices. He devotes special attention to Sufi approaches to the Qur'an, drawing parallels with similar uses of scripture in Judaism and Christianity. He traces how Sufism grew from a set of simple moral-ethical precepts into a sophisticated tradition with professional Sufi masters (shaykhs emphasizes that contemporary Sufism has developed a more dialogical epistemology by integrating psychological, phenomenological, and ethical dimensions in understanding inner experience (Chih, 2021). shows that mystical experience in Sufism can be read as a form of transformational knowledge namely, knowledge that changes the structure of consciousness rather than merely adding information. In the context of social epistemology, several scholars such as Hermansen (2000) also note that the epistemology of Sufism helps shape the construction of identity, spiritual authority relations, and patterns of knowledge transmission within *tarekat* communities. This shows that the epistemology of Sufism is multidimensional, combining intuition, moral discipline, existential experience, and social structures as mediums of knowledge.

## Result and Discussion

### *Datuk Ri Tiro*

Datuk Ri Tiro was a preacher from Minangkabau who spread Islam in South Sulawesi in the early 17th century CE. His missionary work was centered in the region of Bulukumba Regency (Bahtiar, 2012). He began his missionary work together with Datuk ri Bandang and Datuk Patimang (Abdullah, 2016). Datuk Ri Tiro spread Islam through an approach that adapted to local cultural practices and maintained good relations with the rulers of the kingdoms. His initial role was the Islamization of the Kedatuan of Luwu, the Kingdom of Gowa, and the Kingdom of Tallo (Patmawati, 2016). After that, he Islamized the Kingdom of Tiro. His Islamization efforts continued to the Kingdom of Bantaeng and the Tellu Limpoe Confederation.

Datuk Ri Tiro came from Minangkabau, but studied religious knowledge in the Sultanate of Aceh. After that, he was sent by the Queen of Aceh to spread the teachings of Islam to the South Sulawesi region. Datuk Ri Tiro then visited the Kedatuan of Luwu through the Gulf of Bone. His journey was carried out together with Datuk ri Bandang and Datuk Patimang. On the 15th of Ramadan 1013 AH (1603 CE), these three scholars Islamized the king of the Kingdom of Luwu, namely La Pattiwaro' Daeng Parabbung. The three of them then continued their journey to the Kingdom of Gowa and the Kingdom of Tallo and Islamized the rulers of both kingdoms. After that, each of these scholars spread the teachings of Islam in the South Sulawesi region separately. Each chose one place that still firmly maintained its local traditions.

According to the *lontara* manuscript *Pattoriolang ri Gowa*, Datuk Ri Tiro came to South Sulawesi to carry out the task of serving as a religious teacher, and therefore he was also often referred to as *katte* (khatib or preacher) (Masrifah et al., 2024). Even so, many historians also place him as a scholar on the same level as the Wali Songo in Java. Therefore, besides being known by the name Datuk Ri Tiro, he is also often called *Khatib Bungsu*. The title 'khatib' before the name Datuk Ri Tiro just as with Datuk Sulaiman and Datuk ri Bandang was clearly given by the Bugis and Makassar communities where they carried out their missionary work, because in Minangkabau religious figures are called *tuanku* or *syekh*, and religious positions in customary practice are referred to as *manti* (Junus, 2004).

Local folklore sources known as the Tiro version narrate the origin of Datuk Ri Tiro differently. The Tiro version broadly recounts that Datuk Tiro was an original resident of Tiro Village named Abdul Maula, of Sumatran descent from a father named Hasan Basri and a mother named Neneng, a woman from the Kingdom of Luwu. Neneng served in the palace of the Karaeng of Tiro named I Dongko Daeng Irate, titled Karaeng Uhang. At the same time that his wife was pregnant, Hasan Basri returned to the island of Sumatra to trade. Before departing, he left several messages for his unborn child, stating that if the child were born a boy, he should be named Abdul Maula. When he grew up, he was to travel to meet his father in Sumatra. When Abdul Maula came of age, he traveled to Sumatra to find his father. There, Abdul Maula began studying Islam, continuing his studies to Mecca, where he became acquainted with Shaykh Abdul Rahman, who later accompanied him back to Indonesia. Upon returning to Indonesia, Abdul Maula visited several places in Java and Sumatra to further deepen his knowledge under various scholars, including Khatib Tunggal and Khatib Sulaeman. Around the 1600s, Abdul Maula, together with Khatib Tunggal Abdul Makmur, Khatib Sulung Sulaeman, and Shaykh Abdul Rahman, departed for the southern part of Sulawesi (Mahmud, 2012).

In South Sulawesi, the four of them divided their tasks: Khatib Sulaeman developed the teachings of Islam in Luwu, because that was where the family and descendants of Neneng, the mother of Abdul Maula, originated; Khatib Tunggal Abdul Makmur was assigned to Tallo, while Abdul Maula himself was tasked in Tiro Village, his birthplace, assisted by Shaykh Abdul Rahman, who was assigned to develop Islamic teachings in Bira. Shaykh Abdul Rahman carried out his duties in Bira until the end of his life, and after his death he was buried in Bira with the title *Guru*

*Janggo*. Meanwhile, Abdul Maula devoted all his energy and abilities to Tiro, and after his death he was buried in Hila-Hila with the title *Datuk Ri Tiro*.

More reliable sources are found in several local Bugis and Makassar chronicles which mention that Datuk Ri Tiro came from Koto Tangah, Minangkabau. The use of the title 'datuk' affirms the origin of his hometown in Minangkabau. It is known that in the Indonesian archipelago, only the Minangkabau people use the title 'datuk' for nobles or respected figures, a practice that continues to this day. The use of the title 'datuk' began during the early governance in Minangkabau with two main figures, namely *Datuk Parapatik nan Sabatang* for the *Laras Bodi-Caniago* system and *Datuk Katumenggungan* for the *Laras Koto-Piliang* system.

Datuk Ri Tiro was given the name Abdul Jawad by his parents. The administrators of the Datuk Ri Tiro Foundation themselves bestowed upon him the honorary title *Almaulana*, which in Arabic means 'our protector'. He, along with two other preachers, came to South Sulawesi as envoys of the Sultan of Aceh to carry out the mission of spreading Islam. Datuk Ri Tiro first studied Islam in Aceh together with the two others who later traveled with him to South Sulawesi, namely Sulaiman and Abdul Makmur. At that time, it was already common for Minangkabau people to travel to Aceh to study Islam in *zawiyah* or *dayah* (similar to pesantren in Java). The habit of Minangkabau people studying in Aceh was due to the fact that in the 15th century Aceh had already controlled the western coast and taught Islam to its inhabitants. The *dayah* education model in Aceh was generally established during the period of 'feudal integration' under the reign of Iskandar Muda in the 17th century. After completing their studies in the *zawiyah* or *dayah*, many of them later returned to develop Islamic teachings in their respective homelands and were granted permission to preach in the mosque.

Datuk Ri Tiro accepted the assignment from the Sultan of Aceh, then departed from Minangkabau toward Riau, and afterward crossed over to Johor. In Riau and Johor, Datuk Ri Tiro learned about the culture of the South Sulawesi people from Bugis–Makassar sailors. Therefore, before traveling to South Sulawesi, Datuk Ri Tiro together with Datuk Pattimang and Datuk ri Bandang had already known and understood the culture of their destination through the Makassar and Bugis people residing in Riau and Johor. When their knowledge of the culture of the intended region was considered sufficient, they then departed with the facilitation of the Sultan of Johor. Before Datuk Ri Tiro arrived in South Sulawesi, he first stopped to study again in Java under the Wali Songo together with Datuk Pattimang and Datuk ri Bandang (Khatib Tunggal Abdul Makmur). After spending some time with the Wali Songo, they left the island of Java and sailed toward South Sulawesi.

Judging from the challenges faced at that time, Datuk Ri Tiro was certainly a chosen figure whom the Sultan of Aceh trusted as one of the Islamic preachers skilled in selecting dakwah strategies. Datuk Ri Tiro himself was known as a Sufi and an expert in Islamic mysticism, in accordance with the important elements of *surau* teachings he had acquired in Minangkabau, while his two companions were respectively experts in *fiqh*, *kalām* and *sharia*. Equipped with religious knowledge and an understanding of Bugis–Makassar culture, at the beginning of the 17th century Datuk Ri Tiro and his two companions arrived in South Sulawesi, which in the Makassar chronicles is recorded under the name *Dato' Tallua*. Their arrival was joyfully welcomed by Malay Muslim merchants who had long settled in the center of the Gowa Kingdom. Their arrival gave renewed spirit to the Malay Muslims, because the preachers they had long awaited had finally come to provide guidance for the teaching and development of Islam in South Sulawesi.

### **Teaching Concept**

Datuk Ri Tiro is depicted as a sacred figure who possesses exceptional spiritual excellence and a very high level of esoteric knowledge, as is commonly found in a Sufi leader. Sufi practice generally involves performing dhikr, reciting wirid, and behaving in ways that reflect spirituality (such as wearing robes and carrying prayer beads) (Wardi & Wahyudi, 2024). Sufis usually form

spiritualist groups by popularizing dhikr and establishing active communication with spiritual leaders and figures (Safii, 2024). The Sufism taught by Datuk Ri Tiro was oriented more toward inner practices or spiritual awareness. Through the teachings of Sufism, the obedience produced was inner obedience of a genuine nature, meaning that every command or prohibition, even the smallest, was obeyed with full consciousness (Mahmud, 2012).

The influence of the zawiyah education he underwent in Aceh caused the teachings of Datuk Ri Tiro to tend to emphasize the essence of Islam rather than the sharia and law (*fiqh* and *tawhid*) (Latif, 2021). The core of Datuk Ri Tiro's teachings emphasizes the deepest purity of the self, both outwardly and inwardly. The concept of self-purification is practiced by maintaining a state of ablution without breaking it at any time (*je'ne' telluka'*) (Wathoni, 2020). After completing *istinja* or waking from sleep, this teaching instructs one to immediately perform ablution again to maintain purity. The secret of ablution in Datuk Ri Tiro's doctrinal concept lies in the dhikr or prayer at the final point of the water being washed. According to this teaching, an accepted ablution must mention the original name of the water at the moment of the final point of the water being washed while intending to store it in the Baitullah (Mahmud, 2012).

The comprehensive self-purification taught by Datuk Ri Tiro must also be maintained through a character of life that is always honest, polite in behavior, trustworthy, and caring. The doctrinal concept that emphasizes the aspect of *haqiqah* is reflected in the inscriptions on gravestones of the 18th–19th centuries AD in the Datuk Ri Tiro tomb complex, which tend to contain only the words *Allah* and *Muhammad* on the two side panels of the gravestones. The inscription *Allah* and *Muhammad* on one of the gravestones at the Datuk Ri Tiro Tomb Complex site itself reflects a tendency to focus on the essence of Islam, the acknowledgment of the doctrine, namely the existence of the Creator and His messenger. The inscriptions *Allah* and *Muhammad* on the gravestones reflect the belief in Datuk Ri Tiro's teachings regarding the two principal measures of a Muslim. The inscription *Allah* is regarded as representing, on the one hand, the rank, power, and wealth of Allah, while the inscription *Muhammad* reflects the light of a Muslim who has passed away. The heritage of gravestone inscriptions at this tomb site also provides an illustration that Datuk Ri Tiro's teachings still had a fairly strong influence at least until the 19th century AD (Mahmud, 2012).

The teachings of Datuk Ri Tiro also stipulate that in matters of religion there are things that must simply be believed, but there are also things that may be contemplated. In addition, as is generally the case in Sufi teachings, Datuk Ri Tiro also sets forth in sequence the concepts commonly used in Islamic studies, namely *shari'a*, *tariqa*, *haqiqah*, and *ma'rifa*. A handwritten document in Malay script and Arabic script belonging to Mr. A. Azis Arky provides a number of descriptions of teachings that can guide one to attain a good life and safety in this world and the hereafter. In that note is found a reading about *istinja* and its requirements, as well as the requirements of *wudu*, with unusual provisions because it begins with the *dhikr Allahuwa*, along with various types of prayer guidelines including the obligatory prayer, the *duha* prayer, the anti-black magic prayer, the minor repentance prayer, the major repentance prayer, the *takarruf* prayer, the *tahajjud* prayer, the *hajjat* prayer, the *hajjat* prayer for rank or position, and the prayer for identifying a person when news about them arises (Mahmud, 2012). Specifically regarding the *dhikr* phrase *Allahuu*, it can still be found on a single mace-shaped gravestone about 80 cm tall located at the Datuk Ri Tiro cemetery complex site. This *dhikr* phrase is inscribed on the mace-type gravestone at the head section, consisting of two inscription fields: on the uppermost head portion measuring 9 cm, and on the lower, wider portion. At the foot of the gravestone is an ornament of a nine-sided *tumpal*, which reflects local elements. The *dhikr* phrase *Allahuu* constitutes the core *dhikr* in the teachings of Datuk Ri Tiro (Mahmud, 2012).

Dhikr is the highest teaching and practice of Datuk Ri Tiro, as is common in general Sufi understanding (Sajari, 2014). It reveals that in the view of the Sufis, the path of dhikr is the purification of the inner self, because by dhikr one remembers Allah SWT. In Sufism, dhikr can

be divided into three levels. First, verbal dhikr with the shahada phrase, namely Allah Laa Ilaha Illa, which means there is no God but Allah (Maslul, 2022). In study Syatibi (2018) Dhikr with the shahada phrase is considered the highest because this sentence was spoken by the prophets before and after the Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, in the mystical order (*tarekat*) of Tiro, the shahada is distinguished into several types, including: (i) the shahada before the world was created; (ii) the shahada after the world was created; and (iii) the shahada after Prophet Adam was sent down (Mahmud, 2012). It is also believed that whoever faces the moment of death uttering the final phrase *Laa ilaha Illallah* will be kept away from the hellfire and will enter paradise (Sumuranje, 2016). Second, the dhikr of the heart (*qalbu*), which is performed with the phrase *Allah, Allah*. This heart dhikr in the Sufi tradition is done unconsciously. Third, the secret or inner dhikr (*zikir sir*). The secret dhikr is uttered with the phrase *Hu*. This dhikr phrase has never been found inscribed on gravestones, which is certainly related to its secretive nature.

The dhikr phrases found in the teachings of Datuk Ri Tiro differ slightly from the dhikr phrases commonly used in general Sufi teachings. The names and dhikr phrases written in handwritten notes obtained in Tiro regarding the guidance of Islamic teachings include: dhikr *Allahuwa*, dhikr of the body and soul, dhikr that erases sins of the obligatory prayers, and dhikr of the secret body. These dhikr phrases in Datuk Ri Tiro's teachings are often called dhikr *Laa*, as the essence of the recitation *Laa ilaha Illallah*, which contains the principle of affirmation (belief) in the heart and verification through the implementation of Allah's commands. Another dhikr phrase found in Datuk Ri Tiro's teachings is dhikr *Allahuu*. The phrase *Allahuu* appears to be the root of all interpretations of all letter meanings and is regarded as the key to all knowledge (Allah, the messenger, the world, and ourselves). The practice of dhikr is called *tangnatappu* (uninterrupted). The dhikr practice in Datuk Ri Tiro's teachings by his followers is performed anytime and anywhere. Even while speaking, it is considered possible to perform dhikr. One of the purposes of continuous dhikr, besides maintaining the relationship with Allah, is also to purify the heart. The purity of heart sought is the purity that is genuine (*hakiki*). (Mahmud, 2012)

### ***Datuk Ri Tiro's Sufism Epistemology***

The epistemology of Datuk Ri Tiro's Sufism can be understood as a way of acquiring, validating, and internalizing spiritual knowledge sourced from the Nusantara Sufi tradition. In the narrative-historical texts about Datuk Ri Tiro, this epistemology appears to be constructed through three main structures: sources of knowledge, methods of acquiring knowledge, and criteria of validity. Datuk Ri Tiro's sources of knowledge do not come solely from reason or texts, but are layered and historical in nature. He brought the Sufistic heritage of Minangkabau and Aceh, influenced by prominent figures such as Hamzah Fansuri, Syamsuddin Pasai, and Nuruddin ar-Raniri a Sufi tradition that emphasizes *dzauq* (intuition), *kasyf* (inner unveiling), and *dhikr* as epistemic means (Kustati & Firdaus, 2020). In addition, he also absorbed local Bugis-Makassar knowledge by understanding local customs before preaching, indicating a contextual epistemology that grounds spiritual teachings within the local cultural space. Furthermore, his experiences studying under various centers of knowledge in Minangkabau, Aceh, Java, and other regions gave rise to a syncretic epistemology in a positive sense not mixing theology indiscriminately, but integrating methods of preaching and Sufi practices from various regions.

In study Nunu (2020) In the Sufi tradition, knowledge is obtained through two epistemic paths: rational-textual knowledge (*al-'ilm*) and intuitive-inner knowledge (*al-ma'rifah*). Both are present in Datuk Ri Tiro's practice, but the *ma'rifah* aspect appears more dominant through emphasis on *riyāḍah* and inner discipline. The text describes how he developed methods of acquiring knowledge through spiritual exercises such as breath control, continuous dhikr practice, maintaining the purity of ablution, and recognizing the levels of the spirit within the body. These practices show that Datuk Ri Tiro's epistemology is practical and based on direct experience; knowledge is not something understood only through reason but is manifested

within the self through *'ilm hudhūrī* (knowledge by presence). Dhikr then becomes the main epistemic instrument: from dhikr *Allahu*, *Allahuwa*, to dhikr of the body and soul and secret body, all function as paths to directly attain divine unveiling. Even the symbols on his gravestones, which contain only the words *Allah*, *Muhammad*, and *Allahuwa*, without personal names, reflect a simplicitas epistemology that the highest knowledge does not lie in social identity but in the recognition of the divine essence. Ultimately, inner knowledge must also be realized in ethics such as honesty, trustworthiness, politeness, and avoiding arrogance, because for Datuk Ri Tiro, epistemology is an ethical-spiritual process, not merely cognitive.

In Datuk Ri Tiro's Sufi epistemological system, the validation of knowledge is not measured through empirical or rational verification, but through the mechanism of self-purification. The purity of ablution (*wudhu*) becomes a form of epistemic purity, because true knowledge can only be accepted by a pure heart. The consistency of dhikr (*tangngatappu*) also plays a role as inner stabilization and ego cleansing; knowledge is considered true when it arises from a heart filled with nothing but Allah. Furthermore, truth can only be attained when one ascends the hierarchy of *shari'a-tariqa-haqiqa-ma'rifa*. This means that truth does not stop at the legal aspect of *shari'a*, but is tested through the depth of *tariqa* experience, awareness of *haqiqa*, and ultimately the witnessing of *ma'rifa*.

The purpose of knowledge in the epistemology of Datuk Ri Tiro's Sufism is theocentric and transformative. Knowledge is not aimed at increasing information, but at purifying the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) so that one attains true inner obedience. He emphasizes that outward deeds only have value when supported by a pure inner consciousness. Spiritual knowledge is also directed toward salvation in both this world and the hereafter through a series of practices including dhikr, prayers, and rituals of closeness to Allah. All epistemic processes culminate in a direct relationship with God, especially through the dhikr *Allahu* and *Allahuwa*, which serve as the path to attaining divine presence within the self.

From the entire analysis, the epistemology of Datuk Ri Tiro's Sufism can be concluded to have four main characteristics. First, it is practical-amaliah in nature, because knowledge is obtained through spiritual exercises that involve the body, breath, and inner consciousness. Second, it reflects embodied knowledge, an epistemology of bodily spirituality where spiritual knowledge flows through the movement of the spirit and breath control, in line with the concepts of *nafs* and *rūh* in classical Sufism. Third, its epistemology is intuitive-*kasyfiy*, placing the clarity of the heart and inner experience as the source of the highest truth. Fourth, its epistemology is contextual-local, as it is able to integrate the Aceh-Minangkabau tradition with the Bugis-Makassar culture without causing theological tension. Thus, the epistemology of Datuk Ri Tiro's Sufism is a system of Sufi knowledge built through self-purification, constant dhikr, body-soul discipline, and the ability to adapt to local culture. This epistemological model demonstrates how Nusantara Sufism can be a source of deep, relevant spiritual knowledge rooted in the cultural experience of the community.

## Conclusion

The epistemology of Datuk Ri Tiro's Sufism is a Sufistic knowledge system deeply rooted in a combination of the Aceh-Minangkabau tradition and the local Bugis-Makassar culture. Spiritual knowledge in his teachings is built through self-purification, continuous dhikr, and the inner realization of *shari'a*. For Datuk Ri Tiro, true knowledge is not merely the result of rational analysis, but the result of inner witnessing born from a purified heart. His teachings emphasize that knowledge and spirituality must be manifested in ethics, such as honesty, trustworthiness, politeness, and social care. Through the integration of Sufi methods and understanding of local culture, Datuk Ri Tiro's epistemology is able to form an effective, relevant, and influential preaching system in shaping the religious identity of the Tiro community. Thus, the epistemology of Datuk

Ri Tiro's Sufism is not only important as a historical legacy but also relevant for contemporary life in building deep spirituality, strong ethics, and harmonious relations between religion and culture.

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