

TAREKAT AND POLITICS IN INDONESIA:  
CONTESTED AUTHORITY BETWEEN *MURSHIDS* IN THE  
TAREKAT QADIRIYAH WA NAQSYABANDIYAH  
IN EAST JAVA

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**Abstract:** This article scrutinizes the dynamics between tarekat and politics in contemporary Indonesia in relation to the contested authority between *murshids* in the Tarekat Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah (TQN) in East Java. Using a historical approach, this article analyzes the position, characteristics, and political attitudes of the *murshid* in Jombang and Surabaya amidst the political currents during the New Order era. This article finds that *murshids* show adaptation and innovation in responding to challenges in their tarekat hierarchy and political leadership in Indonesia. The political stance of the *murshid* is considered a rational choice. In East Java, some *murshids* such as KH. Musta'in Romli, KH. Adlan Ali, and KH. Usman al-Ishaqi developed different relationships with political organizations. Kiai Musta'in tried to be adaptive and compromising as he involved in practical politics and joining the ruling party, i.e., Golkar. Kiai Adlan, on the contrary, kept his distance from the ruling regime by joining the Islamic United Development Party (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan/PPP). Kiai Usman, on the other side, remained loyal to the tarekat spirit as he refused to be involved in politics. The difference in political attitudes among the members of TQN has been considered a reflection of the political *ijtibad* of the *murshids*. Competition for authority, which resulted in conflict and internal divisions in this tarekat, is a logical consequence of political interests when they meet the tarekat and influence its dynamics.

**Keywords:** *Murshid*; Tarekat Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah; authority; KH. Musta'in Romli; KH. Adlan Ali; KH. Usman al-Ishaqi.

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## Introduction

Some scholars view that a tarekat (*ṭarīqa* or Sufi order) has no interest in politics and focuses merely on spiritual matters. This view cannot be entirely justified, however. In his *Muslim Society* (1981), Ernest Gellner stated that the tarekat is a quiet and apolitical group that does not care about political influence.<sup>1</sup> One reason that tarekat has often been portrayed as non-political is Sufism's historical emphasis on asceticism. Many early Sufis questioned whether one could simultaneously focus on an immediate and direct relationship with God, and still be involved in the affairs of the material world.<sup>2</sup> Riazul Islam (2002),<sup>3</sup> Paulo Pinto (2003),<sup>4</sup> and Omid Safi (2011)<sup>5</sup> are among those academics who challenged this view. Indeed, several Muslim countries have a long history of tarekats involved in resisting colonialist powers and authoritarian regimes,<sup>6</sup> and tarekats exert political influence in Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, Lebanon, and Syria.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 57-59.

<sup>2</sup> Paul L. Heck, *Sufism and Politics: The Power of Spirituality* (Princeton, New Jersey: Markus Weiner Publishing, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Riazul Islam, *Sufism in South Asia: Impact on Fourteenth Century Muslim Society* (Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Paul Pinto, "Dangerous Liaisons: Sufism and the States in Syria", in Slavica Jakelic and J. Varsoke (eds.), *Crossing Boundaries: From Syria to Slovakia* (Vienna: IWM Junior Visiting Fellows' Conference, 2003), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Omid Safi, "Good Sufi, Bad Muslims", *Sightings*, January 27, 2011. Available online <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/sightings/articles/good-sufi-bad-muslims-omid-safi>

<sup>6</sup> 'Ammār 'Alī Ḥasan, *al-Ṣūfiyya wa al-Siyāsa fī Miṣr* (Cairo: Markaz al-Maḥrūsa li-l-Buḥūth wa al-Tadrīb wa al-Nashr, 1997), 35-38. Cf. Paul Pinto, "Dangerous

There have been undeniable historical evidences that show that political leaders entertained relations with the local tarekat. Political leaders were interested in establishing good relations with the local Sufi groups to increase their own status and provide them with religious legitimacy for their political agendas.<sup>8</sup> Even today it is acknowledged that most *murshids* are cautious and even suspicious of political power and authority. Their attitudes towards individual regimes and rulers vary. Some *murshids* accept and some refuse to join certain political regimes. In other cases, some *murshids* are known to have deliberately approached the local rulers to exert a positive influence on their governmental policies. Nevertheless, some *murshids* also frequently disapprove of unfair and oppressive policies and they stand with the people to challenge the authorities.<sup>9</sup>

The relationship between the tarekat and politics in Indonesia is very multi-faceted. On some rare occasions, the *murshid* of a tarekat tries to compromise with the government's political policies. However, many *murshids* prefer to avoid direct involvement within governmental sphere and choose to keep distance as they become the opponent of the government. Some *murshids* present their tarekats as an impartial group that stays out of secular affairs like politics.

During the New Order era (1966-1998), the Jam'iyah Ahli Thoriqoh Mu'tabaroh Indonesia (JATMI) and Jam'iyah Ahlith Thoriqoh Al Mu'tabaroh An Nahdliyyah (JATMAN) used to be two large mass organizations which accommodated various local Islamic groups. The dynamics that occur in both are inextricably linked to the tarekat's internal development as well as external influences such as the political situation. According to Sri Mulyati (2010), the emergence

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Liaisons: Sufism and the States in Syria”, 2; Cf. Katherine Pratt Ewing and Rosemary R. Corbett (eds.), *Modern Sufis and the State: The Politics of Islam in South Asia and Beyond* (United States: Columbia University Press, 2020). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/ewin19574>. Cf. Heck, *Sufism and Politics*, 255.

<sup>7</sup> Fait Muedini, “Sufism and Anti-Colonial Violent Resistance Movements: The Qadiriyya and Sanussi Orders in Algeria and Libya”, *Open Theology* 1, no. 1 (2015), 204. <https://doi.org/10.1515/opth-2015-0003>.

<sup>8</sup> Nashwā Muḥammad Aḥmad, *al-Ṭuruq al-Ṣūfiyya wa al-Mushāraka al-Siyasiyya: al-Dawajī' wa al-'Awā'iḳ* (Cairo: al-Markaz al-Dawli li al-Dirāsāt al-Mustaqbilīyya wa al-Istrātijīyya, 2011), 35-37. Cf. Rüdiger Seesemann, “Between Sufism and Islamism: The Tijāniyya and Islamist Rule in the Sudan”, in Paul Heck, *Sufism and Politics: The Politic and Spirituality* (Princeton, N.J: Markus Weiner, 2007), 16.

<sup>9</sup> Muedini, “Sufism and Anti-Colonial Violent Resistance Movements”, 204.

of Jam'iyah Ahlith Thoriqoh al-Mu'tabaroh (JATM)—which protected the tarekats in Indonesia—cannot be separated from the emergence of extensive illegitimate practices of mysticism which deviate from Islamic orthodoxy among Muslim societies.<sup>10</sup>

Martin van Bruinessen (1994),<sup>11</sup> Nur Syam (1997),<sup>12</sup> and Endang Turmudi (1998)<sup>13</sup> examined the dynamics of contestation between JATMI and JATMAN in the 1990s and found that the contestation of religious and spiritual authority cannot be separated from the political escalation process in the form of nationalist agendas. Kiai Musta'in Romli, who decided to openly join the Golkar party, a secularist and nationalist party, received a lot of criticism and rejection from several congregations who were still committed to supporting the Islamic party, i.e. PPP. In addition, the majority of NU *Kiais* were unsympathetic to the Golkar party which was viewed as a political and ideological enemy. Kiai Musta'in's move created considerable friction within his tarekat, especially TQN in Jombang, East Java, which split into the two camps, namely TQN Rejoso and TQN Cukir. The TQN group in Rejoso led by KH. Musta'in Romli joined JATMI, while the TQN group in Cukir was led by KH. Adlan Ali joined JATMAN.<sup>14</sup> Another TQN group outside Jombang, based in Kedinding Surabaya, led by KH. Usman al-Ishaqi took a different approach and opted to remain neutral.

Looking at the general aspects of the dynamic intertwined relations between tarekat and politics in Indonesia from pre-independence to the New Order, this article scrutinizes the TQN case in Jombang and Surabaya East Java during the New Order era. It was unusual that *murshids* of a tarekat became actively involved in politics. Using a historical approach, this study analyzes the position, characteristics, and political attitudes of the *murshids* of the TQN Rejoso and TQN Cukir in Jombang, and TQN Kedinding in

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<sup>10</sup> Sri Mulyati, *Peran Edukasi Tarekat Qadiriyyah Naqshabandiyyah dengan Referensi Utama Suryalaya* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2010), 86.

<sup>11</sup> Endang Turmudi, "The Tarekat Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah in East Java and Islamic Politics in Indonesia," *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science* 26, no. 2 (1998).

<sup>12</sup> Nur Syam, "Agama dan Politik: Makna Afiliasi Politik Penganut Tarekat Qodiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah di Wilayah Kemursyidan Cukir Jombang" (Master Thesis, Universitas Airlangga Surabaya, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Indonesia* (Bandung: Penerbit Mizan, Second Edition, 1994).

<sup>14</sup> Turmudi, "The Tarekat Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah", 65-84.

Surabaya in their relation to contemporary Indonesia's political streams.

### **Tarekat amidst the Political Currents**

Examining the early modern period, Carl W. Ernst (1997) observed that Sufi groups not only played an important role in the anti-colonialist movements in Muslim-majority countries but also maintained their influence after the collapse of the local government.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the colonial powers were acutely aware of the significant role played by tarekat organizations in the local society. In the twentieth century, Pnina Werbner (1996) found that *murshids* were now actively involved in supporting demands for more socio-economic equality and democracy.<sup>16</sup>

Previous studies have presented an overview of the relationship between the tarekat and politics throughout Indonesian history, from pre-colonial to post-independence. Nur Syam (1997) traced the involvement of tarekat groups in the pre-colonial era back to the early process of Islamization, coinciding with the collapse of the pre-Islamic kingdoms in the archipelago until the emergence of the axes of political power in the form of Islamic kingdoms and sultanates. In the government bureaucracy of these early Islamic kingdoms, the Walisongo were awarded strategic positions as advisers to the sultan or king. The synergy of the Sufis and sultans was especially visible in the early period of the Demak kingdom where the Walisongo helped establish the first Islamic government in Java and became the patron of the sultan.<sup>17</sup>

In the colonial era, when the axis of local power was gradually seized and controlled by European colonialists, the political stance of the tarekat groups shifted to the opposition. The local Sufi groups became a force of resistance against the colonialist rule, as can be seen in the figures of Sheikh Yusuf Makassar (1626-1699), Pangeran Diponegoro (1785-1855), Tuanku Imam Bonjol (1772-1864), and Kiai Hasyim Asy'ari (1871-1947). In times of political oppression and crisis, the *murshids* often emerged as resistance movement leaders. Bruinessen (1994) meticulously examined the role of the

<sup>15</sup> Carl W. Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism* (Boston: Shambhala, 1997), 29.

<sup>16</sup> Pnina Werbner, "The Making of Muslim Dissent: Hybridized Discourses, Lay Preachers, and Radical Rhetoric among British Pakistanis," *American Ethnologist* 23, no. 1 (1996): 116. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/646256>.

<sup>17</sup> Nur Syam, "Agama dan Politik", 78.

Naqshabandiyah order during the colonial era. Several resistance movements against the colonialists were clearly motivated by this tarekat, such as the Banten uprising in 1888.<sup>18</sup>

The peasant rebellion clearly demonstrated the tarekat's activism in the form of an anti-colonialism resistance movement. Inspired by the messianic teachings of TQN, Haji Abdul Karim, Haji Tubagus Ismail Haji Marjuki, and other tarekat leaders rose as charismatic figures in the widespread rebellion against the Dutch. Another resistance movement in Lombok was led by other tarekat leaders. Between 1891 and 1894, Guru Bangkol led a resistance movement against the arbitrary ruling of the Dutch-backed Mataram royal overlords with the help of his Sasak tribal disciples. The involvement of tarekat figures frequently occurred in the Dutch East Indies, such as in Sidoarjo under the leadership of Kiai Kasan Mukmin, a TQN caliph from Kiai Kasan Tafsir who lived in Krapyak Lor, Yogyakarta. The most illustrious figure emerging in the Java War is Pangeran Diponegoro, a *santri* and tarekat adherent.<sup>19</sup>

Engelberg, a Dutch controller, viewed the involvement of the tarekat in the resistance movement against the Dutch East Indies Government as a force to be reckoned with because it inspired fierce loyalty and devotion in their followers. He writes:

The inherent sanctity of the tarekat *murshids*, the influence on their disciples stemming from their sanctity (*karāma*) and the belief that they have magical powers, and the piety that is spread among the masses of followers are so attractive that they do not limit themselves in the choice of followers. Everyone is welcome, and everyone is then affected by the turmoil of truth and self and the turmoil of hatred for infidels that is characteristic of every narrow-minded Muslim. The dream of an Islamic state, an *umma* who will receive the blessings of Allah, contains contempt and hatred for unbelievers. It is this danger that the tarekat poses to the state, not to Islam. So, it is not the tarekat itself that is dangerous, but its effect on the masses of people who are aroused by the tarekat. Try to let a teacher freely betray the country and revolt

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<sup>18</sup> Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Indonesia*, 27-29; Cf. Ajid Thohir, *Gerakan Politik Kaum Tarekat: Telaah Historis Gerakan Politik Antikolonialisme Tarekat Qadiriyyah-Naqsyabandiyah di Pulau Jawa* (Bandung: Pustaka Hidayah, 2002), 172-178.

<sup>19</sup> Nur Syam, "Agama dan Politik", 87.

against the government—the masses will follow him like sheep follow the shepherd.<sup>20</sup>

It is obvious from the aforementioned works that a *murshid's* charisma was the key to the political movement of the tarekat group. Nevertheless, Bruinessen drew attention to the fact that not all Sufi groups in the Dutch East Indies were involved in the resistance movement against the Dutch such as the Naqshabandiyah Khālidiyyah and Muzhariyyah orders. Bruinessen considered as a possible factor the difference in their follower base which consisted mostly of sultans, princes, regents, and other members of the elite. Their spiritual teachings also did not include ways to harness supernatural powers and self-defense (*kanuragan*) and focused on cultivating the heart.<sup>21</sup> In several parts of the world, the Qadiriya, Sammaniya, and Shattariya orders often served as conduits for the aspirations of the local population and their dissatisfaction with the political and economic conditions at the time.

In the post-independence era, the tarekat groups followed two distinct paths; either assimilating into the power structure or remaining neutral. The first tarekat to openly engage with the Indonesian government during the Guided Democracy period (1955-1966) was the TQN group in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra. Syekh Jalaluddin led the congregation to establish the Islamic Tariqa Political Party (Partai Politik Tharikat Islam or PPTI). This party took part in the 1955 elections and succeeded in gaining approximately 35,000 votes (2.2%) in Central Sumatra. It soon developed into a mass organization under the name Association of Defenders of the Islamic Sufi Order (Persatuan Pembela Tharikat Islam or PPTI). In the New Order era, PPTI joined the Golkar party.<sup>22</sup>

Other members of the tarekat group, such as Kartosoewirjo, a Darul Islam leader who had studied supernatural abilities with Kiai Yusuf Tauziri, a *murshid*, opted to be government opponents.<sup>23</sup> Kartosoewirjo (1905-1962) succeeded in establishing himself as a charismatic leader among his followers, who were mostly rural residents. He used mystical elements to raise his profile as a

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>22</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, “Wali, Politisi, dan Birokrat Sufi”, in Martin van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell (eds.), *Urban Sufism* (Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada, 2008), 166-168.

<sup>23</sup> Nur Syam, “Agama dan Politik”, 30.

charismatic figure by ordaining himself as the heir to the legendary daggers (*keris*) of Ki Rompang and Ki Dongkol. He also founded the Suffah Institute as a center of education and political regeneration. During the Japanese occupation, the Suffah Institute transformed into a military institution that produced military cadres and, more recently, fighters who joined Hezbollah and Sabilillah groups. Even though Darul Islam is essentially an extremist political group, rather than a tarekat, and wants to establish an Islamic state, traditional symbols such as supernatural powers, local authority, and messianism are highly visible.<sup>24</sup>

The connection between tarekat and politics changed throughout the New Order period from being covert to being more obvious but on a strictly individual basis. It relied on how well the tarekat leaders got along with the other political parties. This condition can be seen from the dynamics that occur in JATM, which becomes the focus of this article and will be discussed next. JATM was founded in 1957 to ensure the continued presence of Sufism in Indonesia. In the early formation era, JATM only focused on tarekat affairs as guardians of the legitimacy of the murshidship lineage and did not involve itself in practical politics and adhered to NU policy until 1975. The dynamics in the tarekat organization subsequently occurred once KH. Musta'in Romli was elected as the chairman of JATM in 1975 and in the 1977 general election, he maneuvered politically by leaving the PPP and joining the Golkar party.

### **Contestation for Authority between JATMI and JATMAN**

JATM was founded on 10 October 1957 in Tegalrejo, Magelang, Central Java by *kiais* in NU including KH. Muslih Abdurrohman (Mranggen, Central Java), KH. Nawawi (Purworejo, Central Java), KH. Masruhan (Mranggen, Central Java), KH. Khudlori (Tegalrejo, Central Java), and Andi Potopoi (Regent of Grobogan, Central Java). Initially, the organization was not formally affiliated with NU. However, at the 26<sup>th</sup> NU Congress in Semarang in 1979, a number of *kiais* including KH. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah (Ro'is 'Am of Executive Board of Nahdlatul Ulama), KH. Bisri Syamsuri (Katib 'Am of Executive Board of Nahdlatul Ulama), and KH. Dr. Idham Cholid (General Chairman of the Nahdlatul Ulama Executive Board) suggested for JATM to become an autonomous institution (Badan

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

Otonom/BANOM) and add “An-Nahdliyah” to its name, as stated in the decree of the NU executive board number 137/SyurPB/V/1980.<sup>25</sup>

Before JATM changed its name to JATMAN and entered the NU’s autonomous institution, between 1975 and 1977, JATM experienced an internal conflict starting with the determination of KH. Musta’in Romli (Jombang, East Java) as General Chair of JATM at the fifth Congress in Madiun, East Java (2-5 August 1975) to replace Kiai Muslih, who had led JATM for four consecutive terms. However, Kiai Musta’in soon lost his position as chairman two years later due to his political involvement. JATM had supported the Nahdlatul Ulama Party (Partai Nahdlatul Ulama/PNU) in the 1971 general elections; after PNU had fused into PPP in 1973, most JATM leaders switched their support to PPP except for Kiai Musta’in who decided to support the Golkar party and split the group apart.<sup>26</sup>

The removal of Kiai Musta’in from the position of chairman split JATM into two separate camps, namely the Mranggen group affiliated with PPP and the Rejoso group affiliated with Golkar. Both camps had great influence because they were at the center of authority in TQN. After Kiai Musta’in lost his influence in NU, JATM morphed into JATMAN and officially joined NU as BANOM. At the sixth Muktamar at Kraksaan Probolinggo in 1984, JATMAN opted for a neutral political stance and withdrew its support for any political party, which was in line with NU’s official return to “Khittah of 1926”.<sup>27</sup> In consequence, the Rejoso group, which was enjoying

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<sup>25</sup> Mulyati, *Peran Edukasi Tarekat*, 87.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. Cf. Moh. Rosyid. “Potret Organisasi Tarekat Indonesia dan Dinamikanya”, *Religia: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman* 21, no. 1 (2018), 78-95. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.28918/religia.v21i1.1507>.

<sup>27</sup> The Khittah of 1926 was a religio-cultural movement that was sparked from all commitments to liberate NU members from excessive political expectations and to improve their social and economic conditions through social and economic agendas. Martin van Bruinessen, *NU: Tradisi, Relasi-relasi Kuasa, Pencarian Wacana Baru* (Yogyakarta: LKiS and Pustaka Pelajar, 1994), 45-48. The Khittah is intended to revitalize social, religious, and educational activities which have been neglected by NU’s central board because of their power-minded style. In addition, this Khittah is a movement that is relatively political in its goals and character, but with a cultural strategy that accommodates the depoliticization process of mass organizations carried out by the New Order government since the early 1980s. See Ali Munhanif, “The Khittah of 1926 Reexamined: Views of the NU in Post-Cipasing Congress”, *Studia Islamika* 3, no. 2 (1996), 90-117. DOI: 10.15408/sdi.v3i2.808.

close ties with Golkar, ended up being eliminated from the JATMAN leadership.

Internal tension and contestation within JATMAN caused the eliminated factions to consolidate their influence elsewhere and establish a rival tarekat organization called JATMI in 1991. Both JATMAN and JATMI claimed to be the successors of JATM established in 1957. In the 1990s, JATMI exerted more influence than JATMAN due to its support of Golkar which controlled the government at the time. Eminent Golkar figures such as Soedharmono (Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia, 1988-1993) who joined the JATMI Guardian Council, Munawir Sjadzali (Minister of Religion, 1988-1993), and Wahono (General Chairman of the Golkar Party and Governor of East Java, 1983-1988). Since the 1990s, however, JATMAN has replaced JATMI in terms of popularity and closeness with the government,<sup>28</sup> especially after Habib Muhammad Lutfi bin Yahya took over as chairman.<sup>29</sup> JATMAN organized The World Sufi Forum last held in Pekalongan in 2019, and Habib Luthfi has been appointed as a member of the presidential advisory council (2019-2024) and has ties with the Indonesian Police Force (Polisi Republik Indonesia/Polri) and Indonesian National Armed Force (Tentara Nasional Indonesia/TNI).

At present, JATMI and JATMAN continue to be separate organizational bodies.<sup>30</sup> JATMI has its main office at Jl. Kramat Raya No. 27i, Senen, Central Jakarta, while JATMAN has its main office at Amir Hamzah No. 5, Central Jakarta. Both of them also have separate policies regarding the structure organization and role of the tarekats in Indonesia. Both organizations share similar views, such as championing Indonesian nationalism. However, certain differences have remained. For instance, in JATMI's eleventh congress held in March 2018 in Pati, JATMAN members refused to offer their support arguing that JATMI was not part of JATMAN; therefore, they were

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<sup>28</sup> This measure of popularity takes into account the stability of the organizational aspect and role in the public. In simple terms, this popularity can be seen from the activity records of JATMAN on its website <http://jatman.or.id> or <http://jatmi.or.id> for the JATMI website.

<sup>29</sup> The Rais Aam of Jam'iyah Ahlith al-Thariqah al-Mu'tabarah an-Nahdliyyah (JATMAN) for four periods from 2000 to 2023.

<sup>30</sup> JATMI is registered with the Ministry of Law and Human Rights Number: AHU-0000367.AH.01.08. 2018. Meanwhile, JATMAN is registered with the Ministry of Law and Human Rights Number: AHU-0007241.AH.01.07.Tahun 2019.

not obliged to join their activities. This incident shows that there is still potential for tensions between JATMI and JATMAN who continue to compete for their right to represent tarekat groups in Indonesia. On another occasion, the Şiddiqiyya order founded by Kiai Muchtar Mu'thi, Jombang, East Java, was granted *mu'tabara* level by JATMI, while JATMAN rejected its status.<sup>31</sup>

### **Contestation for Authority among the TQN *Murshids***

The esteemed Dutch anthropologist personally met with several TQN *murshids* while doing research for his doctoral dissertation<sup>32</sup> and became thoroughly acquainted with the religious and political structure of the order in the 1980s and 1990s. Bruinessen brought the research experience he had gained in the Middle East to Indonesia. He was very interested in Sufism which was developing in Indonesia, especially TQN. In his view, TQN cannot be separated from the figure of Syekh Yusuf al-Makassari (1626-1699) who combined the Tarekat Qadiriyyah and Naqshabandiyah and made TQN popular in Indonesia.

Since its inception, TQN has not experienced an interruption in its development, both from the aspect of its spiritual teachings as well as its size of followers. It has remained the most popular tarekat among Indonesian Muslims and has the largest number of disciples. Many of these tarekat *murshids* have appeared as leaders in JATMAN, JATMI, and PPTI. In Java, TQN has a strong presence in East Java, especially in the Jombang area. According to Bruinessen (1994), its original center was the Pesantren Darul Ulum in Rejoso, Jombang, East Java. The pesantren's *kiais* are the successors of Kiai Ahmad Hasbullah al-Manduri, who lived in Mecca and was one of the caliphs of Kiai Abdul Karim Banten. An important figure in the TQN master's chain at this *pesantren* is Kiai Romli bin Tamim (d. 1957) who helped spread its influence in East and Central Java where the TQN

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<sup>31</sup> See M. Tohar al-Abza, "Praktik Dualisme Pilihan Politik Tarekat Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah Cukir dalam Pemilihan Bupati Jombang 2018" (PhD Diss., Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, 2020), 44. In the case of the Şiddiqiyya Sufi Order, the controversy over the legitimacy of the congregation has occurred since 1971 when JATM as the main organization of JATMAN and JATMI sentenced it to *ghayr mu'tabara*. Turmudi, "The Tarekat Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah in East Java".

<sup>32</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, "Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Organization of Kurdistan" (PhD Diss., Utrecht University, 1987).

gained tens of thousands of followers, with several caliphs and eighty substitutes (*badal*).<sup>33</sup>

As soon as Kiai Romli passed away, the TQN Rejoso experienced a leadership crisis. He had appointed his son, Kiai Musta'in as his successor the year before in the presence of two witnesses and received an *ijāzā bay'ā*.<sup>34</sup> However, Kiai Musta'in was still very young and had yet to complete his *murshid tarbiyya* from his father's main caliph, Kiai Muhammad Usman al-Ishaqi in Sawah Pulo, Surabaya. Many TQN disciples consider Kiai Usman to be the most legitimate substitute for Kiai Romli.<sup>35</sup> However, Kiai Musta'in seemingly inherited the position of murshid from his father as his direct descendant. Under the education (*tarbiyya*) of Kiai Usman, Kiai Musta'in soon mastered all levels of spiritual introspection (*murāqaba*) and began to assume the position of *murshid* under the guidance of his teacher.<sup>36</sup>

Kiai Musta'in gradually consolidated his position among the TQN leaders and followers in the region and extended his national influence. Kiai Musta'in soon played a prominent role in JATM, reaching the peak of his influence in 1975 when he was elected as general chairman and came to the attention of the New Order government. He learned to entertain good relations with government officials, the majority of whom were members of Golkar, and received land and financial assistance for the development of educational institutions under his care. In return for their assistance,

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<sup>33</sup> Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah*, 178.

<sup>34</sup> This testimony was almost two decades later and was recorded and published by Pondok Pesantren Darul Ulum, perhaps because someone questioned it. See Hendro, *Sejarah Surat Wasiat "Ijazah Baiat" (Janji Thariqat) dari K.H. Romly Tamim kepada Musta'in Romly* (Jombang: n.p., 1984).

<sup>35</sup> Based on information obtained by Martin van Bruinessen from Kiai Asrori, son of Kiai Usman, Kiai Romli actually had three or four caliphs. They were Kiai Usman al-Ishaqi for the Surabaya and Madura areas, Kiai Makki Muharram for the Kediri, Blitar and Tulungagung areas, and Kiai Bahri Mashudi in Mojokari. Sources of information from Kiai Musta'in's family also mentioned the names of Kiai Usman and Kiai Makki as the caliphs of Kiai Romli, but according to them the third and fourth caliphs were Kiai Muhammad (Kiai Makki's brother) and Kiai Maksoem Djafar in Porong. Kiai Usman was very much liked by disciples who paid allegiance to him. They believed that Kiai Usman's level was above Kiai Musta'in and even Kiai Romli himself was his teacher. See *manāqib* compiled by Abdul Goffar Umar (1404/1984). Cf. Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah*, 181-182.

<sup>36</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat: Tradisi-tradisi Islam di Indonesia* (Bandung: Mizan, 1995), 309-310.

Kiai Musta'in was asked to show his support for Golkar in the 1977 election. However, this move earned him much criticism from his fellow *kiai* and TQN followers who saw this as a public betrayal of NU and their support for PPP.

On the eve of the 1977 elections, NU scholars issued a *fatwā* requiring NU members to vote for PPP. Kiai Musta'in's political maneuvers were undoubtedly contrary to this, and calls for his dismissal as chairman of JATM grew louder, particularly in Jombang. At the same time, a new contestant appeared on the scene in the person of Kiai Adlan in Cukir, Jombang who received the *ijāza bay'ā* from Kiai Muslih in Mranggen, Central Java. Originally a substitute for Kiai Musta'in, Kiai Adlan received support from TQN followers who rejected Kiai Musta'in. Other TQN disciples who had previously pledged allegiance to Kiai Musta'in now made their allegiance to Kiai Usman in Sawah Pulo, Surabaya who chose to remain neutral in this conflict in Jombang, whether in Cukir or Rejoso.

At the NU congress in Magelang in 1979, JATM became JATMAN and Kiai Adlan was chosen as its leader along with Kiai Muslih (from Mranggen, Central Java), Kiai Hafidh (from Lasem, Central Java), and Kiai Arwani (from Kudus, Central Java) as members of the advisory board. This contest for authority within JATM was directly influenced by the political events surrounding Kiai Musta'in. The followers who remained loyal to Kiai Musta'in did not sit still and founded a rival organization called JATMI. According to Bruinessen (1994), the struggle for authority within TQN ranks in Jombang is a common phenomenon in tarekat organizations and can be characterized as a form of political excess.<sup>37</sup> Turmudi (1998) identified two intersection points between tarekat and politics in the case of TQN Jombang. First, there is a close relationship between the tarekat and politics in Indonesia. Second, the *murshid-murid* relationship does not necessarily translate into the political sphere.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, Nur Syam (1997) argued that this case suggests a reciprocal relationship between tarekat and politics.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah*, 180-181.

<sup>38</sup> Turmudi, "The Tarekat Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah", 77.

<sup>39</sup> Nur Syam, "Agama dan Politik", 267-268.

### Political Attitudes of TQN Groups in East Java

The difference in political attitudes between Kiai Musta'in and Kiai Adlan during the New Order era had implications for the dynamics of Indonesian politics and the internal organization of the tarekat. TQN was previously united in its support for PNU and JATM. However, the actions of Kiai Musta'in as chairman of JATM caused a split in its ranks in Jombang and triggered competition for authority in Rejoso and Cukir. According to Mulyati (2010), three TQN centers revealed the characteristics of the political attitudes at the time: TQN in Rejoso Jombang (KH. Musta'in Romli), TQN in Cukir Jombang (KH. Adlan Ali), and TQN in Kedinding Surabaya (KH. Usman al-Ishaqi). The orientation of each group can be schematized in the following table:<sup>40</sup>

No	Dimension	Tarekat Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyyah		
		Rejoso, Jombang	Cukir, Jombang	Kedinding, Surabaya
1	Political behavior	Adjusting and compromising with the government's political policies	Becoming opposition and hostile (rejection of government political policies)	Cooperative (ready to cooperate with the government)
2	Exemplary in thinking	Rationalistic, Realistic, and substantivistic	Skripuralistic, formal, and idealistic	Rationalistic, realistic, and substantivistic
3	Response category	Substantivistic	Scripturalistic	Substantivistic
4	Political membership	Golongan Karya (Golkar)	Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP)	Neutral
5	Religious ceremony	No difference		

The three TQN groups in East Java shown above emphasize the informal and formal political affiliations of Indonesian tarekat groups in the New Order Era. Formal political affiliations generally occur in *murshid*, while informal ones represent the overall political loyalty of the group. From this scheme, it can be seen that the

<sup>40</sup> Mulyati, *Peran Edukasi Tarekat*, 83.

political behavior of the TQN Rejoso was adaptive and compromising, the TQN Cukir showed an antagonistic tendency, while the TQN Kedinding Surabaya was more cooperative with the government. It shows the difference in their political preferences.<sup>41</sup> Although they hold different political attitudes, they tranquilly share common ritual practices. The neutrality of the TQN Kedinding had been explained in their acknowledged role as a medium of purifying the soul. It, therefore, did not require political involvement. The membership and political choice of the follower are considered individual business and voluntary acts. Nevertheless, the followers' political loyalties were often driven by the political preferences of their respective *murshid*.

Differences in political preferences are dynamics that often occur in certain tarekat, as happened within the TQN in East Java. At the core of the issue of political patronage is the subordinating relationship between the *murshid* and his followers and the charismatic figure of the *murshid* who can create public sympathy.<sup>42</sup> During the New Order era, the *murshids* became the target of political parties to gather support among their constituents, as was the case with Kiai Musta'in in Jombang. The active involvement of TQN in practical politics has certainly given rise to internal excesses as occurred in East Java, thus triggering polarization and the emergence of three TQN groups in Rejoso, Cukir, and Kedinding and the split of JATM into JATMAN and JATMI.

Tarekat relations with political authority and power were the effect of vested interests and shared spheres of influence. Ahmad Jauhari Umar (2021) stated that the reasons for the *murshid* to approach the authorities could be understood from the perspective of social movements as a way to consolidate their authority. The tarekat requires material and non-material capital to support the successful mobilization of its resources. The material capital is in the form of financial support, supporting the group's facilities and infrastructure, while non-material capital is in the form of social relations, networks, public attention, moral commitment, and solidarity.<sup>43</sup> However, Umar (2021) did not emphasize the mutuality of their relationship. In the

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>42</sup> Ahmad Hasan Afandi, *Kontroversi Politik Kyai Tarekat: Studi Pergeseran Orientasi Politik Kyai Tarekat Qodiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah* (Surabaya: Scopindo, 2020), 98.

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.nusantarainstitute.com/tarekat-politik-dan-penguasa-sebuah-dinamika-jatman/> Accessed October 19, 2021.

case of East Java, Mulyati (2010) offered a categorization of the link between politics and tarekat by looking at the tendencies of each TQN axis in the New Order era, as illustrated in the table below:<sup>44</sup>

No	Dimension	Tarekat Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyyah		
		Rejoso, Jombang	Cukir, Jombang	Kedinding, Surabaya
1	The relationship between religion and politics	Substantial	Formal	Substantial
2	Political behavior	Adaptive and compromise	Antagonist	Cooperation
3	Strategy	Fight from within and actively interact	Keep a distance from politics Fight from the outside	Limited communication To improve the situation for the benefit of the religion/tarekat
4	Independence from government	Low	Very high	Relatively high
5	Relations between government and tarekat	Very close	Not close	Close

The tarekat actors responded to issues both locally and nationally with ingenuity and adaptability, as stated by Julia Day Howell and Martin van Bruinessen (2007).<sup>45</sup> In the case of TQN in East Java, the response of KH. Musta'in Romli, KH. Adlan Ali, and KH. Usman al-Ishaqi was a form of personal *ijtihad* that affected the internal structure. The political communication characteristics of each *murshid* illustrate the elasticity of the tarekat when it comes to political involvement. In the case of TQN in East Java, KH. Musta'in decided to become involved in practical politics by joining Golkar. He saw the need to change the political paradigm of the tarekat and its many followers to derive benefits for them. Kiai Musta'in believed that taking part in practical politics would allow the tarekat to be actively

<sup>44</sup> Mulyati, *Peran Edukasi Tarekat*, 85.

<sup>45</sup> Julia Day Howell and Martin van Bruinessen (eds), *Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam* (New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2007).

involved in the development of the nation and state. According to Max Weber, this choice was a rational choice.<sup>46</sup>

The close relationship between Kiai Musta'in and the Golkar leadership created a mutually beneficial relationship for both parties involved. As the *murshid* of a large tarekat, Kiai Musta'in influence benefited Golkar in gaining sympathy among TQN disciples who had pledged their allegiance to him. Kiai Musta'in's political considerations to be actively involved in political dynamics at that time are considered to be entirely rational and logical. At the time, Golkar was the ruling party which meant that its power was extended nationwide. By working closely with the authorities, Kiai Musta'in intended to gain political and financial support to develop the *pesantren* and its social activities. It is proven that through access to funding from the government, Kiai Musta'in was recorded as the first *kiai* who established a private university, namely Darul Ulum University. In the view of Turmudi (1996), Kiai Musta'in was a figure who possessed the courage to swim and go against the mainstream public opinion by voting for a secular party. He did not regard politics as a medium for the Islamic struggle and saw no benefit in supporting an Islamic party that had no practical political power.<sup>47</sup>

Kiai Musta'in's political stance against the mainstream by joining the Golkar party led to several consequences. As a prominent *kiai* of NU, caretaker of Darul Ulum, and TQN *murshid*, his political stance had wide implications in the way he was perceived by NU sympathizers, *santri*, and tarekat disciples. There was an intense social pressure at the time to support Islamic parties, and it was unheard of that a Muslim leader of a religious community would publicly support a secular party. His decision to do the unthinkable meant that parents removed their children from Darul Ulum and TQN's disciples in Rejoso left him. However, not all people around Kiai Musta'in responded negatively to his political *ijtihad*. Some of them understood his political move and remained loyal to him, even though they continued to support PPP.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Michael Hechter and Satoshi Kanazawa. "Sociological Rational Choice Theory." In *Rational Choice Sociology*, 2019, 2–25. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781789903256.00007>.

<sup>47</sup> Endang Turmudi, *Struggling for the Umma: Changing Leadership Roles of Kiai in Jombang, East Java* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2006), 92.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

In contrast with Kiai Musta'in, Kiai Adlan decided to follow the mainstream attitude of the NU majority who supported PPP. Kiai Adlan has been a senior TQN disciple in Rejoso and has taken allegiance to Kiai Romli, Kiai Musta'in's father. When Kiai Musta'in sided with Golkar in 1977, Kiai Adlan, with the support of TQN figures in Jombang and PBNU, moved his allegiance to Kiai Muslih from Mranggen, Central Java. According to Nur Syam (1997), his aim was to become *murshid* and lead TQN in Jombang and at the national level while continuing its support of PPP. In the eyes of the TQN leaders in Jombang, Kiai Musta'in had violated their trust and the genealogy of authority through Kiai Usman because he had acted against their teachings. As the appointed chairman of JATM, he had been obliged to show consistency in politics so as not to cause unrest among the followers.<sup>49</sup>

Kiai Adlan became the new TQN *murshid* in Jombang after pledging allegiance to Kiai Muslih and assumed the position Kiai Musta'in had vacated. Bruinessen (1994), Nur Syam (1997), and Turmudi (1998), who studied the dynamics of TQN in Jombang, confirmed that the momentum of the 1977 election changed the nature of *murshid* authority in TQN. Kiai Adlan benefited from Kiai Musta'in's move to support Golkar and was able to build a TQN group in Cukir and attract the sympathy of existing TQN disciples by renewing the tarekat chain from Kiai Musta'in to Kiai Adlan and the sympathy of new TQN disciples who pledged their allegiance to him. Apart from that, Kiai Adlan also assured a leading position in JATMAN.

From the collectivist perspective, Kiai Adlan won the contestation for authority as TQN *murshid* and JATMAN leader, yet he refrained from establishing any ties with the ruling party. The PPP remained the leading party in Jombang for the 1982 elections, but following its disagreement with NU, the party's dominance declined in the 1987 elections. At the 27<sup>th</sup> NU congress in Situbondo in 1984, NU withdrew from being involved in practical politics and returned to Khittah of 1926.<sup>50</sup> It was then that the practice of deflating or expelling members for supporting a secular party other than PPP was slowly eroding. This increasingly liberal stance was promoted by prominent figures such as Abdurrahman Wahid (1940-2009). The

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<sup>49</sup> Nur Syam, "Agama dan Politik", 151-152.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 191.

authority of Kiai Adlan as *murshid* was severely tested. He and the TQN axis elites in Cukir were forced to be more actively involved in PPP campaigns to ensure support and loyalty of their followers.

While Kiai Musta'in and Kiai Adlan were involved in contesting authority in tarekat and politics, Kiai Usman, a TQN *murshid* in Surabaya, limited his involvement to competing with the TQN *murshid* in Jombang. Kiai Usman preferred to avoid practical politics while maintaining good relations with the government. In addition, Kiai Usman also did not involve himself in the conflict between JATMAN under Kiai Adlan and JATM under Kiai Musta'in. Kiai Usman consistently adhered to the spiritual tradition of not getting involved in profane matters such as politics. Neutrality has been the stance of the TQN group in Kedinding since the era of Kiai Ahmad Asrori, the son and successor of Kiai Usman who was not even a member of JATMAN or JATMI so as to maintain close ties with all TQN disciples in their care. Kiai Asrori frequently warned his disciples to avoid political practices. They must, however, keep good relations with everyone, even the government. It seems that Kiai Asrori adopted Kiai Usman's neutral attitude in politics and retained his focus on purifying the heart and cultivating morality.

In the case of TQN in East Java, the relationship between tarekat and politics is yet relevant. According to José Casanova, as cited by Robert Rozehnal (2007), all religions inevitably enter the public sphere and the arena of political contestation, not only to continue their tradition but also to participate in the struggle to define and establish modern boundaries between private and public space, legality and morality, nation, state, and civilization.<sup>51</sup> The difference in political attitudes between the TQN groups in Rejoso and Cukir is the *ijtihad* of the *murshids* in their efforts to protect the welfare of Indonesia and its citizens. The *murshids*' political stance in the TQN case also demonstrates how adaptable the tarekat is when it comes to deal with contemporary issues and participate in socio-political life.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Robert Rozehnal, "Sufism and the Politics of Islamic Identity", in Robert Rozehnal (ed.), *Islamic Sufism Unbound: Politics and Piety in Twenty-First Century Pakistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 20.

<sup>52</sup> Mahmud Sujuthi, *Politik Tarekat Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah Jombang: Studi tentang Hubungan Agama, Negara, dan Masyarakat* (Yogyakarta: Galang Press, 2001). See, Rizqa Ahmadi, 2021. "The Politics of a Local Sufism in Contemporary Indonesia". *Epistémé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 16 (01), 59-82. <https://doi.org/10.21274/epis.2021.16.01.59-82>.

Competition for authority, conflict, and internal divisions are the logical implications of political excesses entering the dynamics of the tarekat. JATMAN was the direct result of Kiai Musta'in publicly supporting Golkar, despite the TQN majority supporting PPP. The emergence of Kiai Adlan as the new *murshid* who built the Cukir axis is evidence of competition for authority within TQN, one of the factors being the political dynamics at the time.

### Concluding Remarks

During the New Order era, competition for the authority among the *murshid* of the TQN Jombang has been an interesting phenomenon that occurred due to the encounter between the tarekat with practical politics. The tarekat figures showed adaptation and innovation in responding to challenges at the local and national levels. However, the political attitudes and preferences of the *murshids* were entirely rational and free from fanaticism and egocentrism.

The three aforementioned TQN groups in East Java emphasize the informal and formal political affiliations among Indonesian tarekat groups in the post-independence era. Formal political affiliations generally occur among *murshids*, while informal affiliations represent the tarekat's general political orientation. The political behavior of the TQN Rejoso was more adaptive and compromising, the TQN Cukir was more antagonistic, while the TQN Kedinding Surabaya was more cooperative as far as its relationship with the government was concerned. Although each group held its own political attitudes, they embraced common rituals and teachings as they also shared the same chain of authority (*sanad*).

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