

RESISTING THE SURGE  
OF SALAFISM AMONG MALAY AND JAVANESE MUSLIMS:  
The Dynamics of the Tarekat Naqshbandiya  
and Qadiriya wa Naqshbandiya in Promoting Peaceful Islam  
in Riau Sumatera

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**Abstract:** This article examines the role of two Sufi orders, the Naqshbandiya order and the Qadiriyya wa al-Naqshbandiya order, in the social and cultural transformation of Malay and Javanese Muslims in contemporary Sumatra, specifically in the Malay Riau region. Socio-political approach is employed in order to analyze the internal and external dynamics of the actors involved in the object of study. The argument presented in this article states that, the Naqshbandi order or 'Malay Riau Muslim tarekat' has played a vital role in the social and cultural transformation of Malay Muslims by promoting a peaceful and moderate interpretation of Islam. However, the more legalistic and rigid interpretation of Islam from Saudi Arabia has promoted the Naqshbandi order to adopt a more Shari'a-oriented approach which has gradually eroded the spiritual essence of the order's culture and given way to more radical Islamic beliefs in the Malay Riau region. In response, the Qadiriya wa al-Naqshbandiya order continues to represent the authentic Javanese Muslim traditions and beliefs, propagating the original heritage of Malay Islamic tradition and culture. This article found out that the ethnicity embedded in the followers of tarekat may influence the orientation of a particular sufi order.

**Keywords:** Naqshbandi Order; Qadiriyya-Naqshbandiya Order; Islamic

Radicalism; Peaceful Islam.

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**Introduction**

The majority of researchers agree on the peaceful transformation and Islamization in Southeast Asia, including the Nusantara region (i.e., Indonesia). This pattern of Islamization conceptually referred to as 'peaceful Islam' (*Islam damai*) can be used to analyze the model and character of Islam in Indonesia, particularly in the Malay region of Riau. The main factor in the formation of the construction of peaceful Islam is due to the approach of Islamization through Sufism. The transformation of Islam with a Sufi-based approach emphasizes the esoteric or spiritual aspects, which is known as the cultural approach.<sup>1</sup> The region's gradual adaptation from various pre-Islamic traditions and cultures (i.e., Hindu and Buddhist) through the spiritual aspect has resulted in a moderate and tolerant interpretation of Islam passed down through generations.

In addition to Sufism as institutionalized through the *tarekat* (Arabic *ṭarīqa*), another characteristic of Malay Islam is strong support from rulers (i.e., kings or sultans) for the process of Islamic transformation from the top down to the grassroots level.<sup>2</sup> The *tarekat* institution is an extension of Sufism because its teachings are based on core Sufi doctrines that are conceptualized and practiced by Sufi teachers. To facilitate the practice of Sufi teachings, Sufi teachers developed a set of teaching methods and systems to achieve the level

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<sup>1</sup> Ifitah Jafar and Mudzhira Nur Amrullah, "Proving Peaceful Islam through the Application of *al-ʿIllat wa al-Maʿlul* Approach in Reading Qurʿanic Verses of War: Interpretation of Q.2: 190-194 and Q.9:5–15," *Sunan Kalijaga: International Journal of Islamic Civilization* 2, no. 2 (2019), 169-174.

<sup>2</sup> Husni Thamrin, *Antropologi Melayu* (Riau: Kalimedia & Fakultas Ushuluddin UIN SUSKA, 2018), 175-187.

of gnosis or knowledge of God (*ma'rifa*), as adopted by the various *tarekat* institutions in Indonesia today, most of which are included in the Jam'iyah Ahl al-Tariqat al-Mu'tabarrah al-Nahdliyah (JATMAN). There are at least 45 *tarekat* in Indonesia.<sup>3</sup>

Based on various sources, early studies on the role of the Naqshbandiyya order in the Malay region proliferated in the 19th century. This Islamic transformation was marked by the role of the *murshids* (guides) in attracting the sympathy of the royal court and government officials.<sup>4</sup> In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Sufism played a vital role in the process of Islamizing Malay society; however, it had not yet been institutionalized in the form of specific orders. Interestingly, the trace of the role of Sufism in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was not only important in the transformation of Islam but also produced intellectual works of Sufi Islam. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, figures such as Hamzah Fansuri (d. ca. 1590) and his student, Samsuddin al-Sumaterani (d. 1630) made a significant contribution to the formation of Islamic thought as well as the Islamicization of Malay society, especially in the Aceh Sultanate.<sup>5</sup> The ideas of these two Sufi figures who embraced the teachings of Ibn 'Arabi (1165-1240), especially his theory of the unity of existence (*wahdat al-wujud*), gave rise to long debates led by Nuruddin al-Raniri (d.1658), the leading jurist and royal *mufti*. Al-Raniri's criticism of Fansuri's thought gave birth to a

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<sup>3</sup> The 43 mentioned tarekats are: (1) Abbasyiah, (2) Akbariyah, (3) Baerumiyah, (4) Bakriyah, (5) Buhuriyah, (6) Ghaibiyah, (7) Haddadiyah, (8) Idrisiyah, (9) Isawiyah, (10) Justiyah, (11) Khadiriyyah, (12) Naqsyabandiyah, (13) Madbuliyah, (14) Maulawiyah, (15) Rifa'iyah, (16) Sa'diyah, (17) Sumbuliyah, (18) Syadziliyah, (19) Suhrawiyah, (20) Umariyah, (21) Utsmaniyah, (22) Ahmadiyah, (23) Alawiyah, (24) Bakdasiah, (25) Bayumiyah, (26) Dasuqiyah, (27) Ghazaliyah, (28) Hamzawiyah, (29) Idrusiyah, (30) Jalwatiyah, (31) Kalsyaniyah, (32) Khalwatiyah, (33) Kubrawiyah, (34) Malamiyah, (35) Qadariyah wa Naqsyabandiyah, (36) Rumiyah, (37) Samaniyah, (38) Sya'baniyah, (39) Syattariyah, (40) Tijaniyah, (41) Usyaqiyah, (42) Uwaisiyah, (43) Zainiyah, (44) Khalidiyah wa Naqsyabandiyah, dan (45) Turuq Akabir al-'Auliya. See, Moh. Rosyid, "Potret Organisasi Tarekat Indonesia dan Dinamikanya," *Religia* 21, no. 1 (2018), 84. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.28918/religia.v21i1.1507>.

<sup>4</sup> Achmad Syahid, "Sufistifikasi Kekuasaan pada Kesultanan Riau-Lingga Abad XVIII-XIX M," *Ulumuna* 16, no. 2 (2005), 295-311. See, also, Bharuddin Bin Che Pa, "Institusi Raja dan Perannya terhadap Penyebaran Islam di Alam Melayu Nusantara," in Nurarfan Zainal (ed.), *Membongkar Rahsia Pendidikan Islam* (Bandar Seri Begawan: Kolej Universiti Perguruan Ugama, 2012), 1-11.

<sup>5</sup> Mohd. Taib Osman, et. al., *Islamic Civilization in the Malay World* (Kuala Lumpur and Istanbul: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka and the Research Centre for Islamic History, Art, and Culture, 1997), 165.

new pattern of Sufi thought in the form of neo-Sufism which was more in line with the Shari'ah and became the dominant pattern of Naqshbandiya Sufism in the Malay region in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Malay region is more closely identified with the Naqsyabandiya order,<sup>6</sup> and its role has been extensively examined by scholars like van Bruinessen,<sup>7</sup> Osman,<sup>8</sup> Abduh,<sup>9</sup> Rehayati and Farihah,<sup>10</sup> and Pinem.<sup>11</sup> Although there are several orders other than the Naqsyabandiya, those orders have not developed as much and do not have as many followers. Looking back, the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the golden age of the Naqsyabandiya order due to its growing influence in Islamic kingdoms in the Malay region, especially in Riau.<sup>12</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the teachings propagated by the Naqshbandi shaykhs were first accepted by the local rulers; as a consequence, the type of Islam that consolidated itself in the region was predominantly Sufi Islam.<sup>13</sup> The Muslim Malay region of Riau borders on West Sumatra, and the orthodox reform movement led by Tuanku Imam Bonjol (1772-1864) was not able to influence the *Islam damai* of the Muslim Malays. However, this was eventually achieved by Muhammad Shaleh, known as Tuanku Tambosai (1784-1882),

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<sup>6</sup> The Naqshbandiyya order is attributed to Baha'uddin al-Naqshbandi, a Sufi scholar from Kurdistan, Central Asia. However, in its development, several litanies were developed by some of his successors, such as Khalid al-Kurdi and al-Khalwati. Therefore, the Naqshbandiyya order is also synonymous with the Naqshbandiyya Khalidiyya or Naqshbandiyya Khalwatiyya. See: Martin van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyyah di Indonesia: Survey Historis, Geografis, dan Sosiologis* (Bandung: Mizan, 1994).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Osman et. al., *Islamic Civilization in the Malay World*, 150-174.

<sup>9</sup> M. Arrafie Abduh, "Peran Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah Khalidiyah Syekh Abdul Wahab Rokan: Dalam Dakwah dan Pendidikan Islam di Riau dan Sumut," *al-Fikra: Jurnal Ilmiah Keislaman* 11, no. 2 (2012), 207-243. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24014/af.v11i2.3858>.

<sup>10</sup> Rina Rehayati and Irzum Farihah, "Transmisi Islam Moderat oleh Raja Ali Haji di Kesultanan Riau-Lingga pada Abad ke-19," *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 25, no. 2 (2017), 172-185. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24014/jush.v25i2.3890>.

<sup>11</sup> Masmedia Pinem, "Manuskrip dan Konteks Sosialnya: Kasus Naskah Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Minangkabau," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 10, no. 2 (2012), 292.

<sup>12</sup> Pa, "Institusi Raja dan Perannya terhadap Penyebaran Islam di Alam Melayu Nusantara," 1-11.

<sup>13</sup> Pinem, "Manuskrip dan Konteks Sosialnya," 292.

from Rokan Hulu.<sup>14</sup> However, the influence of Tuanku Tambosai's renewal movement was only on a small scale in Rokan Hulu and did not spread to other areas in Riau. Tuanku Tambosai is more known as an anti-colonial scholar rather than a reformer.

However, the development and role of the Naqshbandiyya order in the Malay world have not always been linear. Ups and downs of the role of the Naqshbandiyyah order have been observed since the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially in Minangkabau, West Sumatra, the existence of the Naqshbandiyyah order faced challenges from the Paderi group and their reform movement. Similarly, entering the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially after the reform era, the order's predominance has been repeatedly challenged by proponents of Wahhabi and Salafi Islam, a more puritanical and orthodox, legalistic interpretation of Islam originating in the Middle East, in addition to ideological groups like Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), even radical Islam such as Jamaah Islamiyah (JI), Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and the like.<sup>15</sup>

Interestingly, both before and after the reformation, the influence of the Naqshbandi shaykhs in Melayu Riau was waning and being replaced by the Qadiriyya-Naqshbandiyya Order (TQN) propagating the new 'Javanese order'. Through student networks from various Javanese Muslim immigrants scattered throughout Riau, TQN assumed the role of maintaining *Islam damai* in the region. More importantly, in the Melayu area TQN eventually became a synonym for 'Malay Islam' itself. The presence of Javanese Muslims in Riau and other regions in Indonesia, both through transmigration programs and self-initiatives, brought Javanese Islamic traditions and cultures that were compatible with the Malay Islamic traditions and cultures rooted in and sourced from the teachings of the *tarekat*.

Therefore, this article argues that, in the context of Malay society in Riau, the Naqshbandiyya order successfully maintains the model of 'peaceful Islam' as an opposing force to the growing

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<sup>14</sup> Ginda, "Aktivitas Dakwah dan Kepahlawanan Tuanku Tambosai," *Jurnal Risalah* 28, no. 1 (2017), 10-22. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24014/jdr.v28i1.5539>.

<sup>15</sup> Mohamad Nabil, "Diaspora Salafi di Riau: Identitas, Ideologi dan Perlawanan dari Pinggiran," *Konfrontasi* 1, no. 2 (2012), 43-68. See, also: M. Zainuddin and Suryaningsih, "Rekalkulasi Transformasi Kelompok Penekan Menjadi Partai Politik: Kajian pada Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia," *Nakhoda: Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan* 16, no. 28 (2017), 50-57. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35967/jipn.v16i28.5828>.

influence of Wahhabi-Salafi groups militant Islamic ideologies. In this sense, the presence of TQN in Riau contributes to maintaining the model of this interpretation of Islam among the local Muslims. Both Sufi orders have an intersection of Malay and Javanese Muslim followers; the Naqshbandiya order signifies the 'Malay order' but has some Javanese followers, while TQN signifies the 'Javanese order' but has some Malay followers.

This study, in addition to examining the historical role of the Naqshbandiya *tarekat*, also reveals the challenges of modeling a moderate and peaceful interpretation of Islam for the Malay Muslims in Riau. It also seeks to uncover the same role of TQN in Malay. Given the vast and diverse entities referred to as 'Malay Muslims' in the region, the research locus is limited to Riau. Compared to other Malay regions, Riau is strongly influenced by Malay tradition and culture, and its characteristics are present in the Siak Regency and Palalawan Regency, as well as another part in Rokan Hulu Regency.

### **Malay Islam, Royal Institution, and the Naqshbandiya**

The term 'Malay' covers a wide geographical area, both in terms of territory and culture, covering the entire Sumatra island region. When referring to its traditional cultural identity, the term 'Malay' includes Muslims living in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, southern Philippines, and southern Thailand.<sup>16</sup> In terms of religious and spiritual identity, the Malay region is linked through the shared *tarekat* affiliations of individuals connected through shaykh-disciple bonds, who accepted the same Sufi teachings. Starting from this teacher-student bond, a characteristic tradition and culture was formed, which reflected a certain worldview and became the basis of the Malay Muslim identity. Therefore, the term 'Malay Islam' can be equated with 'Javanese Islam,' or 'Sulawesi Islam'.

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<sup>16</sup> Throughout the region known as the Malay world, there were several Islamic kingdoms or sultanates in the past. Some of the kingdoms referred to include: (1) the Malacca Sultanate in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, (2) the Pasai Sultanate in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, (3) the Pattani Sultanate in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, (4) the Brunei Sultanate in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, (5) the Aceh Sultanate in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, (6) the Sulu Sultanate in southern Philippines in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, (7) the Kedah and Perlak Sultanates in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, (8) the Kelantan Sultanate in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, (9) the Terengganu Sultanate in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and many other sultanates scattered across Malay, Sumatra. See, Pa, "Institusi Raja dan Penyebarannya terhadap Islam di Alam Melayu," 1-11.

The long process of Malay Islamization through tradition and culture sourced from Islamic teachings ultimately formed a collective identity known as ‘Malay Muslim’ or ‘Malay Islam’. In this context, Islam is the source of social norms and values and forms the basis of their social, economic, educational, and political system centered on the authority of the Muslim sultans from Aceh, Malacca, Riau-Lingga to Siak Sri Indrapura, and other Islamic kingdoms.<sup>17</sup> Given this development over the last centuries, Malay Islam has produced the Malay Islamic civilization which is very distinct from Arabic Islamic civilization because it grew in a different socio-cultural context.<sup>18</sup> The reconstruction of these historical fact is useful to refute various theories generally written by Western orientalist who view Islam outside the Middle East as ‘peripheral Islam’ and ‘low tradition’ as opposed to ‘great tradition’.

The misleading terminology of ‘central Islam’ versus ‘peripheral Islam’ seems to be intentional to devalue the various cultural interpretations of Islam and its universality as a world religion. As acknowledged by the orientalist William R. Roff, this seems to be a rather deliberate effort to obscure and minimize the role of Islam in the lives of people in the South Asian region, including Southeast Asia.<sup>19</sup> However, contrary to this claim, the Malay Islamic civilization is of no less historical significance than the Islamic civilizations of the Middle East and Ottoman Turkey. As depicted by orientalist, Islam in the Asian region is portrayed as a teaching that only adheres to surface-level or formality in the lives of South Asian communities that still adhere to Hindu and Buddhist norms, values, and practices.

A strong justification for the validity of a ‘Malay Islam’ as well as other regions in Indonesia can be seen in the transformation of Islam through Sufism. Although Islam became the religion of the local kings and established itself in society since the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Islam had already arrived and taken a foothold in the Malay region since the early 12<sup>th</sup> century and had arrived in the region as early as

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<sup>17</sup> Syed Husain al-Atas, “Islam dan Kebudayaan Melayu,” unpublished working paper on Malay Civilization 15-17 July 1967, 1-9.

<sup>18</sup> Herlina, “Islam dan Pengaruhnya terhadap Peradaban Melayu,” *Tamaddun: Jurnal Kebudayaan dan Sastra Islam* 14, no. 2 (2014), 60-66.

<sup>19</sup> William R. Roff, “Islam Obscured? Reflection on Studies of Islam and Society in Southeast Asia,” *Archipel* 29 (1985), 7-34. See, also, John Bowen, “Western Studies on Southeast Asian Islam: Problem of the Theory and Practices,” *Studia Islamika* 2, no. 4 (1995), 69-85. DOI: 10.15408/sdi.v2i4.821.

the eighth century. A scientific and academic justification for this theory is found in the discovery of ancient tomb complexes in the Barus site, in South Tapanuli, North Sumatra.<sup>20</sup> At the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, one of them was marked by the figure of Sheikh Burhanuddin Kuntu (1111-1191) who preached in Kuntu Village, Kampar Regency, Riau.<sup>21</sup>

In the 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Sufism played a dominant role in the spread of Islam in various Malay regions. The 17<sup>th</sup> century was characterized by the dominance of the role of *ulama* figures like Hamzah Fansuri and his disciple Samsuddin al-Sumaterani, whose philosophical discourse focused on the Sufi ideas of Ibn 'Arabi and Abd al-Karim al-Jili.<sup>22</sup> Al-Sumaterani expanded his teacher's ideas by including the seven degrees of al-Burhanpuri (d. 1620). Fansuri's unity of being (*wahdat al-wujud*) was fully supported by Sultan Iskandar Muda in Aceh and became known as the royal *madhhab*;<sup>23</sup> however, after the latter's death the dominance of this doctrine was increasingly questioned by Sunni Sufi scholars and soon diminished. Syekh Nuruddin al-Raniri, the royal *mufti*, was known as the most vocal opponents of the *wujudīya* doctrine in addition to Abdul Rauf al-Singkili (1615-1693). Since then, the significance of philosophical Sufism gradually faded and was replaced by Sunni Sufism.

In the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, al-Singkili began to establish orthodox Sufi teachings in his Shattariya *tarekat*, spreading from Aceh to Minangkabau, West Sumatra, and even to Java. His student, Burhanuddin Ulakan (1646–1704) played an important role in establishing the *tarekat* in Minangkabau, West Sumatra, while Syekh Muhyi expanded the order's network into Java focusing on Pamijahan, Cirebon, and West Java<sup>24</sup> while restraining the *wujudīya* doctrine in Banten, West Java.

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<sup>20</sup> "Mengenal Barus, Situs Peradaban Islam Tertua di Nusantara," <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-3456663/mengenal-barus-pusat-peradaban-islam-tertua-di-nusantara>, accessed on 22 September 2022.

<sup>21</sup> Asmal May, Ellya Roza, and Yasnel, "Islamisasi di Kuntu: Dampak Perjuangan Syekh Burhanuddin," *Nusantara: Journal for Southeast Asian Islamic Studies* 17, no. 2 (2021), 63-70. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24014/nusantara.v17i2.16299>.

<sup>22</sup> R. Michael Feener, *A Re-Examination of the Place of al-Hallaj in the Development of Southeast Asian Islam* (Leiden: KITLV, 1998), 571-592.

<sup>23</sup> Muhammad Noupal, "Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah Abad 19: Dari Ortodoksi ke Politisasi," *Intizar* 22, no. 2 (2016), 289-292. DOI <https://doi.org/10.19109/intizar.v22i2.943>.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

Entering the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the discourse of Sufism in Mecca and Medina was also more oriented towards the spirit of reform by making it more in line with the Shari'a. The wave of Shari'a orthodoxy in the practices of the *tariqahs* received attention from leading figures inspired by Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624). In the Indonesian archipelago, these reforms were initiated by Abdusshomad al-Palimangi, Ismail al-Minangkabawi, Yusuf al-Makassari, Ahmad Khatib al-Sambasi, and Arshad al-Banjari. As a result, the philosophical-oriented Syattariyya *tarekat* became less popular among the people, especially in the Minangkabau region.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, the Naqshbandiyya and Qadiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya attracted more and more followers and conquered the hearts of the Malay Muslims.

The peak of the Sufi transformation in the Malay world was reached in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, dominated by the Naqshbandi order in the Malay land of Riau. Through the teacher-disciple relationships formed in the heartlands of Islamic scholarship, the Haramayn (Mecca and Medina), the order formed an international network of students who spread the teachings of their *tarekat* at home. Hurgronje noted that until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, at least 50 to 60 teachers who taught in the Haramayn came from Indonesian *ulama*<sup>26</sup> from Naqshbandiyya, TQN, Shadziliyya, Shatariyya, Rifa'iyya, and Samaniyya.

The traces of the Naqshbandiyyah *tarekat* in Riau can be found in the manuscript of *Remarks on the Dhikr Practice of the Naqshbandiyya Ahmadiyya Order (Kayfiyya al-Dhikr 'ala al-Tariqa al-Naqshbandiyya al-Ahmadiyya)* by Muhammad Shalih al-Zawawi.<sup>27</sup> This manuscript was published by the al-Ahmadi printing press in the Kingdom of Riau, Lingga, in 1891. Al-Zawawi was a Naqshbandiyya *murshid* in the Haramayn who had a network of disciples in the Indonesian archipelago, two of his disciples being Raja Muhammad Yusuf al-Ahmadi in Riau Lingga and Sayyed al-Qadri in Pontianak, West Kalimantan.<sup>28</sup> This manuscript contains information about the development, structure, and dynamics of the *tarekat* in Riau, its strong link to Malay tradition and culture as well as the role of the kingdom

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 302.

<sup>26</sup> Christian Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka in the Latter Part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: Daily Life, Customs, and Learning the Muslims of the East-Indian Archipelago* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

<sup>27</sup> Syekh Muhammad Shalih al-Zawawi, *Kayfiyah al-Dzikr 'ala Thariqa an-Naqsyabadiyyah al-Ahmadiyyah* (Penyengat: al-Ahamdi, 1891).

<sup>28</sup> Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabadiyyah di Indonesia*, 119.

in the spread of Islam.<sup>29</sup> Its characteristic interpretation of Islam has served as the basis of Malay Muslim identity and *Islam damai*.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Riau was the center of the Naqshbandiya order before it established branches in other Malay regions, especially in Minangkabau, West Sumatra. The regular interchange between the Haramayn and Riau began in 1825 through Raja Ahmad, the Riau-Lingga kingdom. In Raja Ali Haji's work, *The Previous Gift (Tuhfat al-Nafis)*, it is recounted that before the 1924 London Agreement, the Riau-Lingga Kingdom covered the areas of Johor, Terengganu, Pahang, Singapore, Lingga, Karimun as well as the Natuna and Ambanas Islands.<sup>30</sup> Both Raja Ahmad (1779-1889) and Raja Ali Haji (1808-1872) played a very important role in building the Naqshbandiya network in Riau-Lingga during their *hajj* pilgrimage. The order's teachings passed from the Haramayn to Riau through Shaykh Ismail and Shaykh Muhammad Shalih al-Zawawi. Shaykh Ismail was an established Naqshbandi figure teaching in Mecca, originally from Simabur, Minangkabau. Therefore, he is referred to as Sheikh Ismail al-Minangkabawi in the literature. On his journey, he stopped in the Riau-Lingga kingdom and was welcomed by Raja Ali Haji. Upon his arrival, he initiated Raja Ali Haji, Raja Abdullah, and the royal family into the order. Raja Abdullah and Raja Ali Haji were soon to lead the Naqshbandi order<sup>31</sup> and contributed much to its swift development in this area.

The transmission of the Naqshbandiya order continued in the era of Abdul Wahab Rokan (1811-1926) who spread its network from Malay, especially Riau, to several regions in North Sumatra, even to Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei Darussalam.<sup>32</sup> In terms of the teacher-student line of transmission (*sanad keguruan*), Abdul Wahab Rokan's line came from Sheikh Sulaiman Zuhi, the leader of the

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<sup>29</sup> Muhammad Faisal, "Susur Galur Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Kepulauan Riau Berdasarkan Kitab *Kaifiyah al-Dziker 'Ala Thariqah An-Naqsyabandiyah al-Mujaddidah al-Abmadiyah*," *Perada: Jurnal Studi Islam Kawasan Melayu* 3, no. 1 (2020), 12-13.

<sup>30</sup> Raja Ali Haji, *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, Edited by Virginia Matheson Hooker (Kuala Lumpur: Fajar Bakti, 1982).

<sup>31</sup> Faisal, "Susur Galur Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah", 15.

<sup>32</sup> L. Hidayat Siregar, "Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah Syaikh Abdul Wahab Rokan: Sejarah, Ajaran, Amalan, dan Dinamika Perubahan," *Miqot: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman*, Vol. XXXV, No. 1 (2011), 69.

Naqshbandiyya order in Mecca.<sup>33</sup> Since he reportedly died at the very advanced age of 115, he managed to pass his knowledge on to many Malay Muslims.

Similar to the Riau-Lingga kingdom, the Naqshbandiyya order was supported by the Langkat kingdom, Dili Serdang, in North Sumatra. The eighth ruler in succession, Sultan Musa (1840-1893) accepted the Sufi teachings of Abdul Wahab Rokan and granted a large plot of land to the order, which is located in Padang Tualang near the city of Tanjung Pura in<sup>34</sup> the Langkat Regency, North Sumatra, bordering Aceh. Later on, this grant land was developed into a pilgrimage site which gradually morphed into the Babussalam Islamic Boarding School which served as a center for the Naqsyabandiyya order in North Sumatra.

The Naqshbandi chain of transmission has remained unbroken and continues until today. Based on the survey results, there are several Naqshbandiyya teachers who have a network of followers in Siak Regency, Palalawan Regency, Kampar Regency, and Rokan Hulu Regency, Riau. The two teachers who reside in Siak and Palalawan are Buya Abdul Ghani and Buya Zulkarnain. In addition, there is a non-sectarian Sufi teacher or representative of a pseudo-Sufi order model, namely Buya Abdullah Tsani in Palalawan Regency, in addition to Buya Musalmina or Buya Tejo who belongs to the Naqsyabandiyya Khalidiyya and resides in the Palalawan Regency.

Buya Abdul Ghani and Buya Zulkarnain have the same line (*silsila*) of teachers, namely Buya Abdusshomad bin Ja'far. Zulkarnain is the biological son of Buya Abdusshomad and received the license (*ijāza*) as a guide (*murshid*) from his father.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, Tejo or Musalmina has just opened a new branch with several teachers in

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<sup>33</sup> Rani Lestari, "Kampung Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah Babussalam, Besilam dalam Lintas Sejarah," *JUSPI* 1, no. 1 (2017), 3.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>35</sup> Both Buya Abdul Ghani and Buya Zulkarnain from the lineage are ranked at 38 and 39, respectively. Above them are (37) Sheikh Abdusshomad, (36) Sheikh Khalifah Mudo Mayong, (35) Sheikh Ja'far bin Khatib, (34) Sheikh Abdurrahman, (33) Sheikh Mahmuddin, (32) Sheikh Ismail al-Minangkabau. Sheikh Ismail had a continuous chain of transmission with several other tariqa masters in various Malay regions. It can be ensured that the transmission chain from Sheikh Ismail will reach the tariqa masters up to Prophet Muhammad. See, Anonymous, "Silsilah Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah al-Mujaddidah al-Kholidiyah," n.p., n.d., 1-2.

Aceh in 2020,<sup>36</sup> which is known as the Naqshbandiya Khalidiya order after receiving an *ijāza* as a successor (*khalīfa*) from his teacher in Aceh.<sup>37</sup> Since his spiritual retreat (*rumah sulūk*) is still new, the number of his followers is still small. Meanwhile, the second Naqshbandi teacher, Abdullah Tsani, passes his knowledge on in lecture gatherings (*majelis*) called Majelis Taklim Al-Sakinah (MTA).

### **Collaboration between Naqsyabandiyah Tarekat and TQN in Modern Riau**

At present, the Malay communities have cherished their traditions and held on to their cultural values. The traditional Malay society does not differ much from the traditional Javanese society, and both are based on Islamic teachings. There are two approaches used in the Malay community to maintain their traditions and culture; first, through cultural channels by instituting certain rituals and second, through the *tarekat* channel. The leading *tarekat* in the area is the Naqshbandiya order, whose practices have been passed down for generations among the Malay Muslims, and others such as TQN who have their own congregation of Javanese Muslims in Riau.

As the *tarekat* with the strongest presence in the area, the Naqshbandiya order plays the biggest part in keeping the traditions alive and offering a living model of a peaceful interpretation of Islam as part of the identity of the Malay Muslims. Historically, religious propagation has always been tolerant and accommodative of the local Hindu, Buddhist, and animistic cultures; thus, Islam was experienced as a transformative and inclusive, rather than a sectarian force in society.

As mentioned earlier, in the modern context, there are several *tarekat* teachers affiliated with the Naqsyabandiyah order and others with TQN. In the former, the chain of transmission goes back to the Malay *murshids* and through them to their teachers in Mecca and Medina, whereas the TQN chain includes several branches among Malay *ulama*, Javanese *ulama*, eventually linking them back to the same sources in the Haramayn. Therefore, the Naqsyabandiyah order in Malay is unique because the chain of transmission from the Malay

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with Buya Zulkarnain, a teacher of Naqsyabandiyah tariqa, Palalawan City, on 12 August 2022.

<sup>37</sup> Buya Tejo comes from Central Java. However, he spent several years studying in several pesantrens (Islamic boarding schools) in Aceh. Previously, he had learned from one of the teachers in Riau. Interview with Buya Tejo, on 11 August, 2022.

*ulama* is connected to their teachers in the Haramayn and Central Asia, including India.

Buya Abdul Ghani and Buya Zulkarnain are the two leading Naqshbandi teachers today.<sup>38</sup> Both have the same chain of transmission through Buya Abdusshamad, who is Zulkarnain's biological father and the teacher of Abdul Ghani. Although both currently reside in the Palalawan Regency, they have a retreat in Koto Gasip, which is not far from the capital of the regency, as *rumah suluk* in Siak and Palalawan. In the Koto Gasip *suluk* house, there are two graves of earlier Naqshbandi teachers; Shaykh Khalifah Mudo Mayong and Sheikh Ja'far bin Khatib.<sup>39</sup> After Abdusshomad passed away, the retreat was continued by Abdul Ghani and Zulkarnain and became their formal residence.

As the center of the Naqshbandiyya *tarekat*, the *suluk* house in Koto Gasip has several branches in several sub-districts, both in Palalawan and Siak. According to Afrizal, who is a descendant of Sheikh Mudo Mayong, there are at least 12 such *suluk* houses in both regencies.<sup>40</sup> These *suluk* houses are the centers of their spiritual activities, starting from ritual repentance bathing, repentance prayer, *suluk* activities, and spiritual focus (*tawajjuh*) that have to be performed according to set rules. Being the center in Koto Gasip, it becomes a point of the congregation from various *suluk* houses scattered across the area, including visitors from Pekanbaru, Rokan Hulu, and Kampar.

The followers focus on the practice of *dhikr* during their spiritual journey (*suluk*). The majority of the followers are members of the older generation known as *kaum tuwo*. Outside of the practice of *dhikr*, the Naqshbandi tradition does not emphasize a deep understanding of Sufi thought, despite it being taught by the teachers. Both Abdul Ghani and Zulkarnain, who are al-Azhar alumni, participate in various study groups and lectures in various mosques located in the two districts. Zulkarnain is not only the imam of the

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<sup>38</sup> Both are the teachers of the Naqshbandiyya Khalidiyya al-Mujaddidiyya Order which were inherited from the teacher of the predecessor's order and which continuously maintain the transmission of teaching, thought, and practical application of the intended order.

<sup>39</sup> Field observation report at the Koto Gasip *suluk* house, the center of Naqshbandiyya Order activities in both Siak and Palalawan districts, Riau, 11 August, 2022.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Ustadz Afrizal, on 11 August, 2022.

main mosque in Palalawan but also an active preacher in the mosque.<sup>41</sup> Both figures have a significant influence on the local Malay Muslims and entertain close relationships with government officials. According to Zulkarnain, the material he delivers in his lectures is more oriented towards Shari'a teachings because his audience comes from various educational backgrounds.

In the absence of Sufi thought being taught to the public, Abdullah Tsani took it upon himself to close this gap. Tsani has a scholarly chain of transmission (*sanad*) from the Naqshbandiya Khalidiyah order, namely from Buya Saleh Tuwo<sup>42</sup> and Buya Shaleh Mudo.<sup>43</sup> However, he did not establish a separate Sufi lodge; instead, he accepts *bay'a* pledges from new followers and conducts informal *dhikr* sessions in a more personal atmosphere. His students attend regular study groups (*tarekat taklim* or *tarekat 'ilmi*) and a separate study group called Majelis Taklim As-Sakinah (MTA) to teach Sufi thought. MTA is conducted a two-storey building located in the capital of Palalawan; the second floor being used as a congregation and study hall, while the first floor serves as the shaykh's living quarters.

MTA consists of Naqshbandiya Khalidiyah teachings and authoritative Sufi works like *Secret of the Travellers (Sirr al-Salikhin)* by Abdusshamad al-Palimbangi (1778).<sup>44</sup> This book, written in Arabic-Malay, contains an explanation of the *Revival of the Religious Sciences (Ihya' Ulum al-Din)* by al-Ghazali (1058-1111). In addition to Abdusshamad al-Palimbangi's work, Tsani also teaches *Uddat al-Banjari's*<sup>45</sup> and Nafis al-Banjari's books including *Fountain of the*

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with Buya Zulkarnain, a teacher of Naqsyabandiyah tariqa, in Palalawan City, Riau, on 12 August, 2022.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Buya Abdullah Tsani, in Palalawan City, on 12 August, 2022.

<sup>43</sup> Buya Shaleh Mudo is a student of Buya Shaleh Tuwo. Although their names are the same, Buya Shaleh Mudo is not the child of Buya Shaleh Tuwo. Both of Buya Tsani's teachers are followers of the Naqsyabandiyah order but do not formally use the *suluk* or *tarekat*. They prefer to use the *tarekat taklim* or *ilmi* in teaching *tasawuf* to their congregation. This information was obtained from an interview with Buya Sudur, Palalawan Regency, on 10 August, 2022.

<sup>44</sup> Syekh Abdusshamad al-Palimbangi, *Sirr al-Salikin*, Vol. 1-4 (n.p.: Dār al-Ihyā' al-Kutub al-Arabīyah al-Indunīsīyah, n.d.).

<sup>45</sup> Syekh Muhammad al-Arsyad al-Banjari, *Sabil al-Muhtadin* (n.p.: Dār al-Maktabah al-'Arabīyah al-Indunīsīyah, n.d.).

Guided (*Sabīl al-Muhtadīn*).<sup>46</sup> According to Tsani, the teaching style in the MTA is not formal. In addition to teaching Sufi thought, it also includes other Islamic fields such as theology or Islamic monotheism, referring to the doctrines of Abu Musa al-Ash‘ari and Abu Hasan al-Maturidi, as well as the Shafi‘i school of Islamic jurisprudence.<sup>47</sup> These three Islamic disciplines form a kind of curriculum.

Apart from the three Sufi teachers mentioned above, the other Naqshbandiyya Khalidiyya teachers is Musalmina or Buya Tejo. He established a sufi lodge in Palalawan in 2020 and unlike Buya Abdul Ghani and Buya Zulkarnain he received the title of *kehalifa* from his Sufi teacher in Aceh. Musalmina, who is relatively young and charismatic, is expected to have much influence among the Malay and Javanese Muslims. In addition, his mastery of the reference books (*kitab kuning*) assures him authority in the Muslim circles.

Outside of the Malay *tarekat* of the Naqshbandiyya, there are several other *tarekat* in Riau; for instance, the Tarekat Qadiriyya and Naqshbandiyya (TQN). After the reform era, TQN has grown a wide network of followers that is not less significant than that of the original Naqshbandiyya *tarekat*. Most of TQN’s followers are Muslim immigrants from Kalimantan who are scattered in various districts in Riau. The population of Javanese Muslims in Riau has grown rapidly since the reform era due to rapid economic development. According to Muhammad Ridwan, the population distribution of Javanese Muslim immigrants, especially in Siak and Palalawan, is more than that of the local Malay Muslims.<sup>48</sup>

In contemporary Riau, the dynamics of the major *tarekat* have experienced a wide dispersion of their followers who no longer remain in the same area. Although TQN in Melayu has its own teaching lineage strengthened by the *sanad* lineage from Javanese scholars, the TQN congregation for a long time lacked followers from the Malay Muslim community. In modern times, both Naqshbandiyya and TQN followers have a cross-ethnic congregation. In Siak, Palalawan, Rokan Hulu, Pekanbaru, and others, TQN, in addition to the majority of its congregation coming from Javanese

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<sup>46</sup> Syekh Muhammad Nafis al-Banjari, *al-Durr al-Nafis* (n.p.: Dār al-Maktabah al-‘Arabīyah al-Indūnīsiyah, n.d.).

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Buya Abdullah Tsani, Kota Palalawan, on 12 August 2022.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Muhammad Ridwan, Vice Secretary of PCNU Siak Regency, 5 August 2022.

Muslims, also has a portion of its congregation coming from the Malay Muslims. Conversely, the Naqshbandiya *tarekat* has followers among the Javanese Muslim migrants. This migration influx resulting in mixed congregations that are readily accepted and accommodated is an interesting phenomenon in the *tarekat* and reflect their peaceful and inclusive culture and character.

The TQN lineage in Melayu comes from Shaykh Kalimantan Khatib al-Sambasi, a Kalimantan scholar who resided in Mecca in the 1850s. Today, TQN in Riau developed through the lineage of Shaykh Affandi (d. 1960), a student of Shaykh Siroj from Johor, Malaysia. Shaykh Affandi initially developed TQN in Bengkalis, then moved to Siak, Rokan Hilir, and Pekanbaru.<sup>49</sup> In Siak, TQN was developed by one of Sheikh Affandi's Javanese migrant students, KH. Abdul Mu'thi (1901-1977), in Bandar Sungai village, Sabak Auh district, Siak regency.<sup>50</sup> After KH. Mu'thi's passing, it was continued by his son, KH. Muhammad Sahil (1945-2014). In addition to pledging *bay'au* to his father, KH. Sahil was appointed as *murshid* by KH. Syarifuddin. Meanwhile, KH. Syarifuddin himself was none other than the son of Shaykh Affandi, who pledged his allegiance to KH. Mu'thi.<sup>51</sup> After KH. Sahil's passing, his son Gus Fuad Wibowo succeeded him.<sup>52</sup>

KH. Mu'thi and his son KH. Sahil's retreats became the centers of TQN development, subsequently continued by the latter's son, Gus Fuad. The TQN congregation grew rapidly in Bandar Sungai, Sabak Auh, Siak as well as the surrounding districts of Bengkalis Regency (i.e., Siak Kecil, Pedekik, Mengkiru, Belitung, Batu Panjang,

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<sup>49</sup> Masduki, Azni, dan Toni Hartono, "Perkembangan Komunitas Sufi di Dunia Melayu: Menelusuri Pola Komunikasi Pengikut Tarekat Qadariyah wa al-Naqsyabandiyah di Kota Pekanbaru" (Unpublished Field Research Report, Fakultas Dakwah dan Komunikasi UIN Sultan Syarif Kasim, Riau, 2014), 9.

<sup>50</sup> KH. Abdul Mu'thi is a migrant from Kebumen, Central Java. He once studied at Pesantren Tebu Ireng, Jombang for 9 years under the auspice of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, then KH. Wahab Hasbullah, and the son of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, namely KH. Wahid Hasyim. He had travelled to Malaysia and Singapore before finally settling in the Bandar Sungai area, Sabak Auh District, Siak Regency, where he became a mursyid TQN from the Syekh Affandi line. See: Arwan, "The Role of KH. Abdul Mu'thi in the Development of Islamic Da'wah through the Qadiriyyah Wanaqsyabandiyah Order in Bengkalis," *An-Nida* 38, no. 1 (2013), 14-16.

<sup>51</sup> Masduki, Azni, dan Toni Hartono, "Perkembangan Komunitas Sufi di Dunia Melayu", 9.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Gus Fuad Wibowo, son and successor of TQN in Bandar Sungai, Sabak Auh, Siak, on 6 August, 2022.

and surrounding areas) and Meranti Regency (i.e., Topang, Tanjung Semak, Semukut, Selat Panjang, Sungai Kamal, and so on). Gus Fuad supports the TQN congregation by attending the *suluk* events in the regions, the *tawajjuh* and the *hawl*, which were held every year in the Madrasatul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School in Bandar Sungai.<sup>53</sup>

Apart from the TQN lineage of KH. Mu'thi in Kerinci Kanan District, Siak Regency, there is also a TQN under the guidance of KH. Muhammad Abdullah Qusman. Like KH. Mu'thi who comes from Java, KH. Qusman comes from Temanggung, Central Java. After participating in the transmigration program, he went to open a TQN branch in Siak as requested by his teacher,<sup>54</sup> KH. Mahfud bin Ali Tajul Arifin from Sawangan, Kebumen, Central Java. KH. Qusman had studied with two other students namely KH. Mansyur and KH. Sunyoto, and all three later moved to Siak, Riau. KH. Mansyur and KH. Sunyoto developed TQN in Dayun District, Siak. Meanwhile, KH. Qusman stayed in Kerinci Kanan District, also part of Siak.

Unlike KH. Mu'thi who shared the transmission line with *tarekat guru* in Melayu, KH. Qusman was instructed by scholars in Java. In the *tarekat* discipline, he studied under KH. Mahfud bin Ali Tajul Arifin, Kebumen and a TQN *murshid* who is influential in Java and various other regions in Indonesia, namely KH. Shohibul Wafa Tajul Arifin alias Abah Anom from Suryalaya, West Java. Up to this point, it is enough to understand the TQN lineage of KH. Qusman, which goes from Abah Anom to Shaykh Abdullah Mubarak Nur Muhammad, Shaykh Tholkhah, Shaykh Abdul Karim Banten, and Shaykh Ahmad Khatib al-Sambasi.<sup>55</sup> In other words, the TQN led by KH. Qusman has a clear *sanad*.

KH. Mahfud bin Ali Tajul Arifin had two other students namely KH. Ghazali and KH. Abdurrahman from Sepotong, Bandar Sungai, Siak. The four students of KH. Mahfud were planted in Riau, precisely in Siak. All four of them, according to proper *tasawwuf* tradition, received their robe (*khirqah*)<sup>56</sup> from KH. Mahfud as a

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Gus Fuad Wibowo, son and successor of TQN in Bandar Sungai, Sabak Auh, Siak, on 6 August, 2022.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with KH. Muhammad Abdullah Qusman, teacher of TQN, at Pesantren Riyadus Shalik, Kerinci Kanan, Siak Regency, 8 August 2022.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> *Khirqah* is a woolen robe traditionally bestowed by Sufi masters on those who had newly joined the Sufi path, in recognition of their sincerity and devotion. Interview

*murshid* in Kebumen. During the journey, two of the four students passed away; KH. Mansyur and KH. Qusman.<sup>57</sup>

KH. Mansyur, who was older than KH. Qusman, proceeded to establish a TQN branch in Riau, especially in Dayun, Siak. Under the leadership of KH. Mansyur the *tarekat* had already gained hundreds of followers scattered in Siak, Palalawan, and the surrounding districts. Some of KH. Mansyur's disciples who have been initiated and achieved transformation (*badal*) include KH. Suyoto, who has come from Kebumen and lived in Dayun, Siak. In addition, there is KH. Thayyib Firdaus as the chairman of PCNU Kabupaten Siak for two periods (2017-2022 and 2022-2027).

After KH. Mansyur passed away in 2009, KH. Suyoto became his successor along with several other disciples such as Fatkurrahman, they continued the TQN legacy inherited from their teacher. Fatkurrahman told that before his teacher had passed away, he entrusted him to continue the TQN activities in Siak and Palalawan. To carry out his teacher's wishes, KH. Suyoto first established the Hidayatus al-Shalik sufi assembly and then the Hidayatul Mubtadiin al-Syiyaqi Dayun boarding school.<sup>58</sup> According to KH. Suyoto's testimony, there were about 250 to 340 TQN followers living in the surrounding villages in Siak and Palalawan.

After the passing of KH. Mansyur, the influence of KH. Qusman began to grow in the Javanese community in Riau. To accommodate *suluk* and *tawajjuban* activities, he established a pesantren called Riyadus al-Shalik which also offered formal education. Under the guidance of KH. Qusman, the congregation continued to grow and soon reached the number of thousands, coming from various Javanese and Malay Muslim immigrant communities in Siak, Pelalawan, Bengkalis, Kampar, Meranti, Kuantan Singingi, and even Pekanbaru. The TQN congregation under the leadership of KH. Qusman, according to KH. Thayyib,

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with KH. Suyoto, the Badal of TQN and caretaker of Pesantren Hidayatul Mubtadiin al-Syiyaqi, Dayun, on 25 September, 2022.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> This data is sourced from field observations conducted on 10 August, 2022 at the boarding school owned by KH. Suyoto, in Dayun, Siak.

even came from Java, especially Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta, and Jakarta.<sup>59</sup>

The dynamics of TQN in Siak and Pelalawan significantly differ from TQN in Rokan Hulu. As described earlier, TQN in Siak has a strong historical dimension, both in terms of the teacher-disciple relationship among Malay *ulama* and *kiai* from Java. Meanwhile, other Tarekat in Rokan Hulu have less developed due to the strength of the Naqshbandiyya order. Rokan Hulu, known as the land of the thousand *suluk*, is greatly influenced by the Naqshbandiyya Tarekat starting from the era of the Riau-Lingga kingdom to the days of Shaykh Abdul Wahab Rokan, the first prominent *guru* of the *tarekat*, who had moved to the Langkat kingdom, Dili Serdang, North Sumatra and is strongly remembered in the Malay community.

Meanwhile, TQN continued to develop in Rokan Hulu, especially followed by Muslim immigrants from Java. The pattern of TQN in Rokan Hulu, as explained by KH. Syafruddin, Katib PCNU of Rokan Hulu Regency, is more individualistic and affiliated with other TQN centers outside Rokan Hulu.<sup>60</sup> KH. Syafruddin himself admitted to practicing TQN through the path of KH. Tajul Arifin alias Abah Anom, Suryalaya. Some other *kiai* from Java follow TQN through the path of Pesantren Darul Ulum, Rejoso, Jombang. Interestingly, some Javanese Muslim immigrants in Rokan Hulu also became TQN followers based in Pekanbaru, centered at the Nurul Huda al-Islami pesantren, founded by KH. Maqsudi, a *khalifah* of TQN from the line of Syekh Affandi, who was sworn in by Syekh Affandi's son, KH. Syarifuddin. The TQN branch in Pekanbaru has Javanese and Malay followers.<sup>61</sup>

## The Dynamics of Peaceful Islamization in Riau and Its Opponents

Based on the above, it can be argued that there was a relationship between the Sufi orders and the ruling elite, which is part

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<sup>59</sup> Interview with KH. Thayyib Firdaus, the Chairman of PCNU Siak Regency, at the Riyadus al-Shalihin boarding school, Kerinci Kanan, Siak, 13 August 2022.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with KH. Syafruddin, Secretary General of PCNU Rokan Hulu Regency, 23 September 2022.

<sup>61</sup> TQN in Pekanbaru has hundreds of congregants spread across Marpoyan Damai, KM 20 Garuda Sakti, TSM Sai (Pekanbaru), Rumbai, Sungai Pagar, and Tapung (Kampar Regency). See: Masduki, Azni, and Hartono, "Perkembangan Komunitas Sufi," 19-20.

of Malay Islamic culture. The relationship between the two is like the two sides of the same coin, which form a unified whole. The reality of the Sufi orders in the Malay world, within certain boundaries, is different from other regions in Indonesia, including Java. The phenomenon of the Sufi orders among the Malay people has its own characteristic features. Although Islam in Java is also heavily influenced by Sufi orders, this influence is more cultural in nature, meaning that it is a grassroots movement. Woodward noted the Islamization of the Mataram palace<sup>62</sup> but it had a distinctly Sufi nuance and it was not a top-down development as in the Islamic kingdoms in the Malay world.

The power relations between the Sufi orders and the kingdoms have been maintained through centuries and are still evident today. Because of this Rokan Hulu, Riau is known as the 'kingdom of the thousand *tarekat*'<sup>63</sup> which is largely due to the influence of Shaykh Wahab Rokan and the Naqshbandiya order. Furthermore, the contest between Hamzah al-Fansuri and Nuruddin al-Raniri is another proof of the strength of the power relations between the two parties. In al-Fansuri's time, philosophical Sufism based on the doctrines of Ibn 'Arabi enjoyed the support of the ruling elite. Conversely, al-Raniri's criticism of al-Fansuri's ideas emerged as the winner in this intellectual contest, also with the support of the ruling elite.<sup>64</sup>

Therefore, the *ulama* served as religious authorities in the community and were adorned with imposing titles (e.g., *datuk*, *tengku*, *bunya*); however, they entertained vertical as well as horizontal relations with the Malay community and acted as scholars, religious leaders, politicians, and ordinary subjects. One representation of this is depicted in the figure of Raja Ali Haji. In addition to being a king and a scholar, he was also well-versed in literature, law, and history as well as a member of the Naqshbandiya *tarekat*.<sup>65</sup> In the subsequent period, especially during the independence war, the Malay *ulama* emerged as

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<sup>62</sup> Mark Woodward, *Islam Java: Kesalehan Normatif Versus Kebatinan* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 1998).

<sup>63</sup> Abduh, "Peran Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah Khalidiyah," 232.

<sup>64</sup> Ahmad Fairozi and Sulistiya Ayu Anggraini, "Wahdatus Shubud, Kritik al-Raniri atas Panteisme Ketuhanan", *Kanaz Philosophia: A Journal for Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism* 6, no. 2 (2020): 122-135. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20871/kpjipm.v6i2.91>.

<sup>65</sup> Rehayati and Fariyah, "Transmisi Islam Moderat," 177.

political and national leaders and had considerable authority and influence in society.<sup>66</sup>

However, the influence of the *ulama* in modern Indonesian politics has waned, especially in the post-reform era, and religious institutions including the *tarekat* no longer play such a central role in society. The power relations between *ulama* and the ruling elite are no longer parallel; power is no longer synonymous with the *tarekat*. Only out of political expedience the public profile of the *ulama* is raised; for example, during the regional elections (Pilkada), to gather party support among the voting public and raise the profile of individual candidates.

This change in the power relations between religion and state have consequences for Islamic practices in the public sphere. First, a democratic system of governance no longer guarantees or places kings and their descendants in positions of power, including local rulers such as governors, regents, and mayors. In Siak, Palalawan, and other regions in Riau some remnants of the past remain; however, the royal descendants no longer have privileged roles to play in political life, and they have to rely on their own efforts to make a living. Equally, modern Indonesians no longer look at the palace for religious guidance and do not identify with the royal household.

Second, in modern Riau the Naqshbandiyya order is led by the *kaum tuwo* or the old generation. This phenomenon is emphasized by Afrizal, one of the descendants of Khalifah Mudo Mayong, a Naqshbandi *guru* at the Koto Gasip *suluk* house in Siak.<sup>67</sup> Thus, in the eyes of the young millennials, the *tarekat* is not very popular due to its rigid adherence to ritual practices and strict hierarchy. So far, the *gurus* have not been able to innovate in a way that can attract the younger generation's attention, except in the case of Abah Anom who has attracted new TQN followers among the young professionals in Java, who make a large portion of the urban middle class.

Therefore, the Naqshbandiyya *tarekat* in Riau has a heavy burden in preserving Islamic tradition and culture. This burden has become even heavier with the arrival of radical Islamic organizations since the post-reformation era. The Malay Muslims in Riau which borders Padang, West Sumatra, have been closed off from various reformist movements for the last centuries; however, this changed in the 19th

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<sup>66</sup> Thamrin, *Antropologi Melayu*, 33.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Ustadz Afrizal, in Koto Gasip, Siak, on 11 August, 2022.

century when Tuanku Tambusai (1784-1882) brought the spirit of Islamic revival and reform to Rokan Hulu, but its resonance and influence were small and short-lived.<sup>68</sup> The subsequent post-reformation era was marked by the surgency of radical Islamic ideologies represented by various Islamic organizations.

The Salafi movement inspired by the ideology developed by Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792) in Saudi Arabia has taken roots in Pekanbaru, Siak, Palalawan, and other districts in Riau. The spread of Salafi ideas is achieved through the Islamic education institutions of the *ma'had* and *pesantren*. The *pesantren* in Pekanbaru affiliated with Salafi ideology are easily recognizable through their use of the names of the companions and the *tābi'in*; for example, Ma'had Abu Darda, Pesantren Ibnu Katsir, Pesantren Ibnu Qoyyim, Pesantren Ustman bin Affan, and Pesantren Imam al-Syafi'i.<sup>69</sup> Further, Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) was gaining ready acceptance before it was banned by the government, especially among the university students in Pekanbaru. A survey revealed that most young people agreed with the HTI's call for an Islamic caliphate in Indonesia, and the Khilafah Congress in 2013 in the al-Nur Great Mosque, Pekanbaru was attended by more than 10,000 sympathizers.<sup>70</sup>

The Justice and Prosperity Party (PKS) with connections to the Muslim Brotherhood (IM) in Jordan and Egypt also gained sympathy from Malay Muslims in Riau. The number of provincial legislative seats has increased significantly. In the Riau provincial legislative elections from 2015 to 2019, PKS only got three council seats; however, in the following five years the PKS council seats increased by more than 100 percent, resulting in seven council seats and an independent faction. In fact, in the 2018 Governor Election, the PKS coalition with the National Mandate Party (PAN) and the National Democratic Party (Nasdem) successfully escorted their cadre, namely

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<sup>68</sup> Ginda, "Aktivitas Dakwah dan Kepahlawanan Tuanku," 10-12.

<sup>69</sup> The Salafi group has a network of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) throughout Indonesia with the symbol of "sunnah" as the identity of the Wahhabi-Salafi ideology. The directory of Salafi boarding schools is compiled on a website called "Sekolah Sunnah" (Sunnah School), which contains a directory of Sunnah Schools throughout Indonesia. See, <https://sekolahsunnah.com/mahad-abu-darda-abu-darda-islamic-boarding-school>, accessed on 15 July 2022.

<sup>70</sup> Gunawan Saleh and Muhammad Arif, "Persepsi Masyarakat Pekanbaru terhadap Pemikiran Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia," *Medium: Jurnal Ilmiah Fakultas Ilmu Komunikasi Universitas Islam Riau* 7, no. 2 (2019), 44.

the Syamsuar-Edy Natar Nasution pair, as governor-deputy governor.<sup>71</sup> Before the 2018 Governor Election, the PKS coalition succeeded in winning the regent and deputy regent in seven out of 11 districts.<sup>72</sup>

The growth of radical Islamic groups in Riau is evident from presence of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) and terrorist organizations like the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). In a joint operation of the Riau Regional Police, three individuals were arrested at the student activity center of the University of Riau (UNRI) on 8 June 2018, strongly suspected to be part of the ISIS network and later investigated by Densus 88 in Pekanbaru, Riau.<sup>73</sup> Like other radical Islamic organizations, FPI was eventually disbanded by the Jokowi government but had sympathizers and followers in all districts. In 2018, FPI sympathizers almost clashed physically with the All-Purpose Ansor Brigade (Banser) during the Kirap Seribu Negeri event organized by the Riau Province Regional Leadership of the Ansor Youth Movement (PW GP Ansor).<sup>74</sup>

Where other Islamic organizations and groups have failed to invite the local Muslims to Islam, TQN has succeeded in supporting a peaceful interpretation of Islam in Riau. TQN is not only a deserving competitor in the competition for influence in the region, it invites local Muslims from diverse backgrounds and absorbs them effortlessly into the *tarekat*. The Naqshbandiyya order and TQN are joined by local Muslims from various ethnic and social backgrounds. Although the majority of TQN's followers come from the Javanese

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<sup>71</sup> Amir Syamsuadi, Zamhasari, Sri Hartati, and Liza Trinawati, "Pragmatisme Partai Islam: Strategi Politik Terbuka Partai Keadilan Sejahtera dalam Pemilihan Gubernur dan Wakil Gubernur Riau tahun 2018," *JISPO: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik* 10, no. 1 (2020), 2.

<sup>72</sup> In the district head and deputy district head elections (Pilkada) between 2015 and 2017, the coalition supported by the PKS party successfully won the district head and deputy district head positions in 7 districts, namely; (1) Bengkalis, (2) Palalawan, (3) Siak, (4) Kepulauan Meranti, (5) Indragiri Hulu, (6) Pekanbaru, and (7) Kampar. However, they experienced defeats in 3 districts, namely; (1) Rokan Hilir, (2) Rokan Hulu, and (3) Dumai. Meanwhile, Kuantan Sengingi had not yet had an election until 2017. See, Syamsuadi, Zamhasari, Hartati, dan Trinawati, "Pragmatisme Partai Islam," 7.

<sup>73</sup> Poltak Partogi Nainggolan, *Kekhalifahan ISIS di Asia Tenggara* (Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2018), 60-61.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Purwoaji, the Provincial Chairman of GP Ansor of Riau, 22 July 2022.

Muslim community, there are also many Malay and Batak Muslims among them. Similarly, the Naqshbandiya *tarekat* also has followers from the Javanese Muslim community. This might suggest a certain dialectical tension between the two *tarekat*; however, externally the two groups have proceeded to work together to preserve traditional cultural heritage and protect the Muslim communities from the lure of radical Islamic organizations in the public space.

The dialectical role of these two *tarekat* is particularly felt by their leaders, especially those from the Malay Muslim community. Buya Zulkarnain, the son of Buya Abdusshomad residing in Palalawan and Siak, has come in direct conflict with the Salafi activists and other radical Islamic organizations trying to gain a foothold in Riau.<sup>75</sup> The same applies to Ustadz Abdusshamad, who fears that the extremist ideology taught in the schools run by Salafists will gradually erode the *Islam damai* lived and breathed in Riau for centuries.

Buya Abdullah Tsani and Buya Sudur support Zulkarnain in his struggle. Buya Tsani chose to spread the teachings of the Naqshbandiyya tariqa through *taṣawwuf 'ilmī* and establishing an education (*ta'lim*) council to instruct others in the ways of the Naqshbandiya Khalidiya. In his view, it is wrong if the *tarekat* only focuses on *wirid*, *dhikr*, *sulūk*, and *tawajjub* without educating their followers.<sup>76</sup> Buya Tsani was raised in the strict *taṣawwuf* tradition; yet he chose the knowledge path and began teaching Sufi thought to anyone willing to learn. He is convinced that this teaching approach is more effective than the traditional approach, as the Islamic principles and values can be accepted by the Malay Muslims irrespective of their backgrounds and strengthens their resolve to resist and oppose the radical ideas of the extremists.

Furthermore, Buya Sudur announces that the Naqshbandiya *tarekat* has branched into the reformed Naqshbandiya Mujaddidiya *tarekat* which takes a different approach and sets itself apart from the more traditional-minded TQN in Ahmad. TQN in Ahmad emphasizes the great respect the followers must have for their *gurus*, whether they are still alive or have passed away. Their *gurus* must never be questioned, trusted unquestioningly, similar to the saints (*anliya*). However, traditional practices such as visiting the graves of

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<sup>75</sup> Interview with Buya Zulkarnain, on 12 August 2022.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with Buya Abdullah Tsani, Kota Palalawan, on 12 August 2022.

illustrious figures is no longer popular among the Malay Muslims.<sup>77</sup> Buya Sudur's testimony is validated through the researcher's field observations at the Goto Gasip *suluk* house in Siak where the grave sites of *tarekat* teachers are no longer a meeting place of the congregants coming to the retreat for *suluk*.<sup>78</sup>

The tradition of visiting the tombs of Sufi figures is part of the *Islam damai* model. It contains moral messages such as humility, manners, respect for ancestors, and remembering death and the afterlife. The distinctive feature of peaceful Islam is formed through cultural approaches in the process of spreading Islam. Meanwhile, the spread of Islam through cultural approaches was generally carried out by Sufi scholars affiliated with the *tarekat* and loosely connected to the local heritage and pre-Islamic traditions. The process of Islamization through a cultural approach could be widely accepted by various layers of society without any significant conflict or radical change.<sup>79</sup>

On the other hand, the modern development of the Naqshbandiyya order in the Haramayn in the 19th century was originally the product of renewal and reform. This internal renewal began with Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624), who chose to declare himself as the one to reform the order. Unlike his predecessors, Sirhindi rejected the Sufi doctrine of *nahdat al-wujud* and brought Sufism closer to the Shari'a and branching into al-Naqshbandiyya al-Mujaddida and later on, under Sheikh Khalid al-Khalidi (d. 1827) into the Naqshbandiyya al-Khalidiyya, brought to Malay Riau by Ismail al-Minangkabawi (1712-1844) as a strictly orthodox Sunni *tarekat* whose female adherents were fully veiled.<sup>80</sup>

The orthodoxy of Sunni teachings as maintained in the Naqsyabandiyya Khalidiyya order became even more conservative under Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi (1860-1915) who was frequently involved in disputes with other Naqshbandi scholars in Minangkabau and Java. Ahmad Khatib insisted that all students had

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<sup>77</sup> Interview with Buya Sudur, the head of Religious Affairs Office (KUA) sub-district Ukui, Palalawan Regency, 10 August 2022.

<sup>78</sup> The report of the field observation results at the Suluk Koto Gasip house, the center of activities for the Naqsyabandiyah sect in both Siak and Palalawan districts, Riau, 11 August, 2022.

<sup>79</sup> Nurul Fajar Padhilah, "Toward Peaceful Islam: Jamaah Ahmadiyah Indonesia (JAI) as A New Social Movement," *Masyarakat: Jurnal Sosiologi* 22, no. 1 (2017), 37-38.

<sup>80</sup> Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Indonesia*, 99.

to thoroughly study *tawhīd*, *fiqh*, and *taṣawwuf* before being accepted into the *tarekat*, and that the lack of this fundamental knowledge of Islam would be an unlawful innovation (*bid'a*). He also criticized other elements in the order's tradition as *bid'a*; for instance, the practice of retreat (*raḥīṭa*) which has no legal basis in the Qur'an and hadith.<sup>81</sup> These differences in opinion between Ahmad Khatib and other Naqshbandi Khalidi scholars has an effect on the Minangkabau community, and the wider public were drawn into these religious and ideological disputes of their leaders and were forced to take sides.

Given the different development of the Naqshbandiyya *tarekat* in Riau, their ability to preserve the local Islamic tradition and culture was not as strong as in Java. After the era of Fansuri and al-Sumaterani, there were no more leading Sufi figures insisting on the philosophical model of Ibn 'Arabi, and the modern generation were firmly Shari'a oriented and much more orthodox in their views. Thus, the local ideal of *Islam damai* eventually gave way to more orthodox, which allowed more radical and extreme views to be introduced in society and become acceptable.

### Concluding Remarks

Following the above discussion it is concluded that TQN, dominated by Muslim immigrants from Java, plays an important role in transforming the pattern of Malay Islam in Riau from a Shari'ah-minded to a more *hakikat*-minded approach that is uniquely tolerant towards Malay traditions and customs. The effort to develop a more peaceful and accepting form of Islam that incorporates local culture and tradition was actually carried out earlier by the Qadiriyya order, but this transformation was interrupted by the 19th-century reform movement brought from the Haramayn. As a result, the Naqshbandiyya order became more oriented towards orthodoxy and the Shari'a than the spiritual dimension of reality, which weakened its ability to absorb local tradition and culture and made it less tolerant and flexible. This new emphasis on Islamic orthodoxy and rational principles later became a gateway for radical Islamic ideologies in Riau.

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<sup>81</sup> Ahmad Fauzi Ilyas, "Syekh Ahmad Khatib Minangkabau dan Polemik Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Nusantara," *Journal of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Societies* 1, no. 1 (2017), 101-104. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.30821/jcims.v1i1.1008>.

The ideological contestation between legal reform and authentic spirituality played out in the Haramayn had a perceivable influence in Riau where the *tarekat* leaders decided to put more emphasis on the Shari‘a. Breaking with the esoteric Sufi approach developed in Sumatra in the Ibn Arabi tradition by such illustrious figures as Hamzah Fansuri, the *tarekat* in Riau seemed to have lost its dynamism and uniqueness. However, TQN succeeded in its efforts to defend the traditional Sufi spirit of a tolerant and inclusive *Islam damai* which is more in line with the local culture and forms a strong bulwark against radical Islamist groups and their intolerant ideologies.

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### ***Interview***

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