Transnational and Local Tariqa: Spread and Political Attitudes

Muhammad Ichsan Rifqi

UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia
muhammad_ichsanrifqi23@mhs.uinjkt.ac.id

Abstract

This article aims to examine Sufi orders as both transnational and local movements, focusing on the interactions between local and transnational orders and their strategies in shaping political stances in the countries where their teachings are propagated. The study employs a qualitative method with a library research approach. The findings indicate that the dissemination of Sufi groups occurs through various channels, including proselytization, trade, diaspora migration, and the utilization of digital technology. In determining their political positions, Sufi groups consider three main factors: (1) resistance to colonialism, (2) the protection of Sufi identity when they are a minority, often relying on state support and policies, particularly amid rising Islamic orthodoxy, and (3) responses to threats from radical groups. Initially traditional and individualistic, these orders have transformed into a form of neo-Sufism that balances worldly and spiritual concerns, thereby enabling participation in both local and global politics. The study provides nuanced insights into the adaptability and global role of Sufi orders, highlighting their capacity to navigate diverse socio-cultural contexts, build transnational networks, and contribute to interfaith and sustainable community dialogue. These findings provide valuable insights into the resilience of Sufi movements and their potential contributions to addressing contemporary global challenges.

Keywords: *Sufism, Transnational tariqa, Local tariqa, Spread, Political attitudes.*

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji tarekat sufi sebagai gerakan transnasional dan lokal, dengan fokus pada interaksi antara tarekat lokal dan transnasional serta strategi mereka dalam menentukan sikap politik di negara tempat ajarannya berkembang. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan library research. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penyebaran kelompok tarekat dilakukan melalui berbagai

jalur, termasuk dakwah, perdagangan, migrasi diaspora, dan pemanfaatan teknologi digital. Dalam menentukan sikap politik, kelompok tarekat berpegang pada tiga pertimbangan utama: (1) perlawanan terhadap kolonialisme, (2) perlindungan identitas sufi ketika menjadi kelompok minoritas melalui dukungan aparat dan kebijakan negara, terutama di tengah meningkatnya ortodoksi Islam, dan (3) respons terhadap ancaman kelompok radikal. Tarekat yang awalnya bersifat tradisional dan individual telah bertransformasi menjadi bentuk neo-sufisme, yang menyeimbangkan kepentingan duniawi dan ukhrawi, sehingga memungkinkan keterlibatan dalam politik lokal maupun global. Temuan penelitian ini memberikan pemahaman yang mendalam mengenai kemampuan adaptasi dan peran global tarekat sufi, serta menyoroti kapasitas mereka dalam menavigasi konteks sosial-budaya yang beragam, membangun jaringan transnasional, dan berkontribusi pada dialog antaragama serta masyarakat yang berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini menawarkan wawasan penting untuk memahami ketahanan gerakan sufi dan potensi kontribusinya terhadap tantangan global kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: *Tarikat, Tasawuf transnasional, Sikap politik, Penyebaran, jaringan.*

Introduction

The dynamics of Sufism continue to evolve and adapt to the changing times. Today, the Sufism school has spread to all corners of the world. In general, this school is formally institutionalized in a movement called tariqa, or, for the Indonesian people, tariqa. Since the Middle Ages of Islam, Sufi orders began to spread to various regions in different countries. Until the era of the nation-state, Sufi orders still existed in various countries, both in countries with a Muslim majority and in countries with a Muslim minority. According to A.H.R. Gibb, as quoted by Azyumardi Azra, after the fall of Baghdad, Sufis played a major role in maintaining the integrity of the Muslim world. They faced a tendency to fragment the caliphate into Arabic, Persian, and Turkish linguistic territories.[1] Azra argued that in the Indonesian context, the Sufi path is the main route for the spread of Islam to Nusantara. This phenomenon became a representation of the Sufi order movement that spread throughout the countries of the world in the Middle Ages.

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[1] Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad 17 & 18* (Kencana, 2013), 16.

Based on the preceding data, the tariqa has undergone a transformation from a regional movement to a transnational phenomenon. This shift is evidenced by its expansion across national borders and the establishment of tariqa groups in various host countries. Subsequently, these tariqa groups implement their teachings and rituals, which have been adapted to the local context, facilitating acceptance by the indigenous population. In certain instances, the tariqa's doctrines become integrated into local practices, embraced by the host community.[2]

Torsten Tschacher's study of the Tamil Muslim diaspora in Singapore exemplifies the dynamics of transnationalism by elucidating how religious and cultural practices transcend national boundaries. The initial exclusive veneration of the Nagore Dargah Sharif tomb by the Tamil Muslim community, despite its status as a replica of the Indian original, and its subsequent adoption by the broader local Muslim population, demonstrates the fluidity and adaptability inherent in transnational religious identities. Furthermore, the visits of Sufi figures from India, including those associated with tariqas such as the Qadiriya, to Singapore to reinforce spiritual connections underscore the active maintenance of cross-border networks.[3] This case highlights the simultaneous and sustained social, cultural, and spiritual linkages that characterize transnational communities, reflecting how diasporic groups negotiate and reproduce their religious heritage beyond the confines of the nation-state.

The tomb of Sayyid Husein bin Abu Bakr al-Alaydrus in Indonesia served as a significant site for the Hadrami diaspora community. Initially, the annual *haul* event, a commemoration of the

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[2] Hamdan Adib, "Potret Integrasi Islam Dan Budaya Nusantara Di Era Walisongo," *Risâlah, Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Studi Islam* 7, no. 2 (2021): 245, https://doi.org/10.31943/jurnal_risalah.v7i2.179.

[3] Torsten Tschacher, "From Local Practice to Transnational Network: Saints, Shrines and Sufis among Tamil Muslims in Singapore," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 34, no. 2 (2006).

deceased, provided a space for pilgrimage and communal gathering. This event was particularly crucial for the Hadrami diaspora, as it facilitated the remembrance of their genealogy through the records inscribed on the tombstones, reinforcing their historical and familial connections.[4]

Following the colonial period, the *haul* event transformed, as noted by Ismail Fajri Al Attas. It evolved into a medium for integrating the Hadrami community into the newly independent Indonesian state, fostering a sense of Indonesian identity alongside its continued function as a genealogical link to the Alawiyah tariqa. Moreover, the *haul* became a platform for establishing communication and building networks with residents, particularly through interactions with kyai in Jakarta.[5] This dual function of the *haul* event exemplifies the dynamic interplay between transnational cultural continuity and local integration, characteristic of transnationalism, as diaspora groups negotiate their heritage and belonging while adapting to their host country's sociopolitical context.

At the end of the 19th century, the tomb of Sayyid Husein bin Abu Bakr al-Alaydrus served as a crucial link between the Hadrami community and the Ottoman Empire, then under the rule of Sultan Abdul Hamid II. The Sultan, pursuing a foreign policy based on Islamic unity (*ittiḥādul Islām*), sought to establish networks with Muslim countries, including Indonesia, which was then under Dutch colonial rule. This effort was marked by the opening of an Ottoman consulate office in Batavia in 1883, facilitated by the Hadrami community, which laid the foundation for early Indonesian-Ottoman relations. Evidence of this connection includes a letter requesting financial assistance from Sultan

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[4] Frial Ramadhan Supratman, "Makam Sayyid Husein Bin Abu Bakar Al-Aydarus: Jaringan Spiritual Usmani Di Indonesia Akhir Abad Ke-19," *Afkaruna*, 2016, 177.

[5] Ismail Fajrie Alatas, "Pilgrimage and Network Formation in Two Contemporary Ba 'Alawi Hawl in Central Java," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 2014, 300.

Abdul Hamid II for the repair of the tomb, which was granted, demonstrating the established cross-border spiritual network. Research by Supratman further highlights the role of the Alawiyah network, whose member Sayyid Fadl served as the Sultan's advisor, in fostering these spiritual ties.[6]

This historical connection between the Ottoman Empire and the Hadhrami Alawiyah community exemplifies the transnational spiritual networks that linked Muslim societies across vast geographies, and highlights the strategic political role that tariqas played in fostering Islamic unity and facilitating diplomatic relations within the broader framework of late 19th-century Muslim political activism.

In the modern era, Sufism undergoes a reconstruction of the concept, which is later known as neo-Sufism. The term was introduced by a contemporary Muslim scholar, Fazlur Rahman. According to Fazlur Rahman, neo-Sufism is *a reformed Sufism*. Rahman campaigned for this movement as a Sufi movement that balanced spiritual piety and social piety.[7] With the concept of neo-Sufism, a Sufi can take on a role in the world of politics.

The political stance taken by the Tariqa group is diverse, whether through military means or diplomacy. Azra said that the diverse political attitudes shown by the tariqa are complex and not simple things.[8] Therefore, a more in-depth study of this discussion is needed.

Based on the above background, it is crucial to analyze the political stances demonstrated by both local and transnational Sufi orders. Consequently, this study will focus on two primary areas. First, this research will examine the role of Sufi orders, both local

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[6] Supratman, "Makam Sayyid Husein Bin Abu Bakar Al-Aydarus: Jaringan Spiritual Usmani Di Indonesia Akhir Abad Ke-19," 177.

[7] Aksa, "Gerakan Islam Transnasional: Sebuah Nomenklatur, Sejarah Dan Pengaruhnya Di Indonesia," *Yupa: Historical Studies Journal*, 2017.

[8] Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad 17 & 18* (Kencana, 2013), 386.

and transnational, in political movements at both the regional and global levels, along with the considerations that inform their political stances and the objectives they seek to achieve. Second, this study will investigate the processes by which these orders disseminate their teachings and establish interconnected networks, thereby qualifying as "transnational" entities, and the subsequent impact of these networks on the political decision-making of Sufi adherents.

This research will contribute to the existing literature by exploring the capacity of Sufi orders to disseminate their teachings across various countries while maintaining connections with their central headquarters. Furthermore, it will examine the political stances adopted by these orders as a means of adapting to the specific contexts in which they operate.

This research employs a qualitative method, which allows for a comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon being discussed. In data collection, this study involves literature research, as the data are entirely in the form of library materials, including books, articles, and documents relevant to this research.[9]

In this study, examples of local and transnational tariqa will be examined to assess their political attitudes towards the situations they face. To examine the phenomenon of transnationalism, researchers employ the theory of transnationalism, which refers to the activities and networks of a group that crosses national borders through non-governmental actors or international organizations, including religious communities such as the Tariqa.[10] The historical approach is also employed to examine the development and evolution of Sufi orders over time. The Theory of Cultural Hybridity can be used to examine how they interact with local cultures or customs. This theory explains the process of creating new identities through the

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[9] Mustika Zed, *Metode Penelitan Kepustakaan* (Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2004), 1.

[10] Ani Widyani Soetjipto et al., *Transnasionalisme: Peran Aktor Non Negara Dalam Hubungan Internasional* (Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2019), 22.

interaction between local and global cultures. This theory is used when discussing issues of migration, globalization, imperialism, and neocolonialism.[11] This theory is relevant to the phenomenon of transnationalism, in which immigrants from Islamic countries or Muslim-majority countries bring tariqa.

History of the Emergence of the Tariqa in Islam

When discussing the history of the emergence of the tariqa, this discussion will not be separated from discussions related to Sufism. Al Suhrawardi explained that etymologically, Sufism is derived from the word shuf, which means "woolen cloth." This etymology is based on Sufi clothing made of woolen cloth, which suggests that the wearer has abandoned their love for worldly affairs, symbolizing the nature of qana'ah by resisting hunger and struggling in spiritual affairs. They also devoted themselves to reverence for their teachers and focused on the hereafter.[12]

Other opinions are indifferent to Sufism, with the muhajirin who live modestly in Medina, who always gather in the foyer of the Prophet's mosque, called *ahlu shuffah*. This group is called *Ahlu al-shuffah* because they always gather in the foyer of the Prophet's mosque. The simple and pious way of life demonstrated by the Muhajirin is an inspiration to other Muslims. People who practice a way of life similar to that of the muhajirin are called Sufis, while their teachings are referred to as Sufism.[13]

Suhrawardi stated that there are more than a thousand definitions for this term. However, in general, these various definitions encompass or incorporate the meanings of shafa', which means sacred, and *wara'*, which means extra care not to violate religious boundaries. And *ma'rifah,* which means knowledge

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[11] Iqbal Hilal et al., *Poskolonial:Hibriditas (Teori Dan Praktik)* (Selat Media, 2023), 40.

[12] Muhammad Aqil, *Madkhal Ila Tasawwuf al Islami* (Darul Hadis, n.d.), 54.

[13] Rivay Siregar, *Tasawuf Dari Sufisme Klasik Ke Neo Sufisme* (Rajawali Press, 2000), 22.

of the essence or divinity of all things. Everyone agrees that this word is related to the root word *shafa*, which means "holy." In turn, the teachings on the purification of the heart, as contained in the Qur'an, will be the focus.[14] According to al-Ghazali, Sufism is a science that discusses how to attain the hereafter, or a science related to the heart, encompassing noble and reprehensible morals, as well as what is pleasing to Allah and what is not.[15] Based on the definitions of Sufism above, it can be understood that Sufism is an effort to balance between Sharia and essence, accompanied by moral karimah, where the pleasure of Allah is the ultimate goal.

In the early development of Sufism, practitioners engaged in spiritual teachings individually, without the benefit of formal institutions. However, by the 3rd and 4th centuries AH (approximately the 9th and 10th centuries CE), Sufi orders emerged to provide structured and collective frameworks for spiritual practice and guidance. These orders facilitated the systematic transmission of Sufi teachings and fostered a communal identity amid changing social and political contexts. Etymologically, the term "tariqa" means a path, method, or way, reflecting its role as a distinct spiritual methodology. Thus, the institutionalization of Sufism through tariqas arose as a response to the need for organized spiritual training and adaptation to evolving societal conditions.[16]

Amin al-Kurdy proposed three types of definitions of the tariqa in terms of terminology: (1). Tariqa is practicing *the shari'a* and living the essence *of the shari'a*, as well as avoiding things that can hinder the implementation of all the core principles and objectives *of the* shari'a. (2). Tariqa means following all *the commandments of the Shari'ah* and avoiding all its prohibitions with

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[14] Shihāb ad-Dīn Yahya ibn Habash Suhrawardī, *'awarif al Ma'arif* (al Tsaqafah al Diniyyah, 2006), 301.

[15] Aqil, *Madkhal Ila Tasawwuf al Islami*, 71.

[16] Miftakhur Ridlo, "Sejarah Dan Tipologi Tarekat Dalam Pandangan Tasawuf Dan Makrifat," *HUMANISTIKA : Jurnal Keislaman* 6, no. 2 (2020): 140, https://doi.org/10.55210/humanistika.v6i2.366.

all your might, physically and mentally. (3). Tariqa means carrying out the obligatory and sunnah things with all your might and avoiding things that are haram, makruh, and excessive in matters of mubah, with the guidance of a teacher who has reached the level of *ma'rifat*.[17]

Ridlo cited the results of L. Massignon's research, which researched the life of Sufism in several Islamic countries. Based on his research, he formulated two definitions in interpreting the term "tariqa," namely: (1). Tariqa is a spiritual education often carried out by Sufis that appeared in the ninth to eleventh centuries AD. (2). A tariqa is a group of people who are nurtured and supervised by a *murshid* (guide). The Tariqa evolved into a religious organization of Sufis, known by various names and numbers. The order is spread across East and North Africa, India, Iran, and Turkey.[18]

The definitions of tariqa by Amin Al-Kurdy and L. Massignon collectively highlight its dual role as both a spiritual discipline and a social institution. Amin Al-Kurdy emphasizes tariqa as a rigorous practice of Shari'ah, guided by a murshid, aimed at achieving spiritual knowledge and ethical embodiment, reflecting its nature as a personal path of transformation. Meanwhile, Massignon focuses on the tariqa as an organized community of disciples under spiritual guidance, functioning as a religious institution that fosters collective identity and transregional networks. Based on these definitions, the tariqa is understood as a spiritual path that helps individuals practice the teachings of Islam in depth, both individually and collectively. It is not only limited to acts of worship but also encompasses relationships with murshids and communities, enabling the widespread dissemination of Sufism across various regions of the world. Together, these perspectives illustrate how the tariqa integrates disciplined spiritual practice with

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[17] Amin Al-kurdy, *Tanwir Al-Qulub Fii Mu'amalati Alam Al-Ghuyub* (Al Hidayah, n.d.), 404.

[18] Miftakhur Ridlo, "Sejarah Dan Tipologi Tarekat Dalam Pandangan Tasawuf Dan Makrifat," *Humanistika: Jurnal Keislaman*, 2020, 141.

communal organization, serving as a vital framework for individual and collective religious life in Islam.

The development of the tariqa began with the development of Sufism practice first. Because, at that time, the practice of Sufism was still individualistic. The development of Sufism can be seen based on the following periodizations:

1. 1st and 2nd Centuries Hijri: The Beginning of Sufism

During this period, Sufism emerged as a response to social and economic changes after the death of the Prophet Muhammad SAW and his *Sahabah*. The life of people who tend to be hedonistic and materialistic gives rise to the *zuhud* movement as a form of reminder of the essence of life. During this period, Sufism was not organized in the form of a formal order. Sufism is better understood as the spiritual path of an individual that a *salik* (who takes a spiritual path) goes through to get closer to Allah. The primary focus during this period was on the practice of zuhud (asceticism), obedience to Sharia, and inner introspection. Famous Sufi figures in this period were Hasan Al Bashri (d. 110 AH/728 AD), who was the founder of the early concept of *zuhud* life, which became the basis of Sufism which introduced the concept of khauf (fear of Allah) and Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah (d. 185 AH): who developed the concept of *mahabbah* (love for Allah).

2. 3rd and 4th Centuries Hijri: The Forerunner of the Tariqa

During this period, Sufism began to develop from moral development to a discipline that included a deeper spiritual dimension. Discussions about mystical relationships with Allah, such as *wushul* (continuous) and *ittihad* (unity), began to emerge. Currently, Sufism is divided into three branches of science, namely moral science, psychic science, and supernatural science. Famous Sufi figures in this period were Junaid al-Baghdadi (d. 297 AH/910 AD), who introduced a Sufism approach in line with Islamic law, and Al-Hallaj (d. 309 AH/922 AD), who explained the spiritual

experience through mystical symbolism.

Sufism's evolution toward deeper mystical concepts like *wushūl* and *ittihād*, alongside efforts to align these with Islamic law, marked its theological maturation and legitimization within orthodox Islam. This intellectual development, reflecting broader scholarly trends, ultimately shaped the tariqa into a formalized spiritual and institutional tradition.

3. 5th Century Hijri: The Beginning of the Emergence of the Tariqa

In the 5th century AH, there was a renewal in Sufism. Sunni Sufism flourished while philosophical Sufism began to sink, although it continued in certain circles. In this period, there was a dhikr group that became the forerunner of the formal order, and this group also attributed its spiritual sanad to certain Sufi figures. The formalization of Sufi groups into dhikr circles and tariqas can be linked to social needs for communal identity and structured spiritual guidance amid the fragmentation of the Islamic polity. The decline of philosophical Sufism and the rise of Sunni orthodoxy provided a conducive environment for Sunni Sufi orders to flourish as both spiritual and social institutions, offering cohesion and continuity in times of political decentralization.[19]

4. Fourth Period: 6th Century Hijri and Beyond: Tariqa as a Formal Institution

In this century, philosophical Sufism has undergone a resurgence in a more systematic manner, as evident in the works of Ibn Arabi (d. 638 H), such as *Futuḥāt al-Makkiyah* and *Fusus al-Ḥikam*. Philosophical Sufism is integrated with more organized spiritual practices, resulting in the tariqa as a formal institution with a spiritual structure and established methods. During this period, the tariqa had become formal, as exemplified by the Qadiriyyah tariqa spearheaded by Abdul Qodir Jailani (d. 561 H/1166 AD).

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[19] John Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Order in Islam* (Clarendon Press, 1971), 168.

The tariqa began to evolve into a spiritual organization with established rules, practices, and guidance from a murshid.

After the establishment of the Qadiriyah Order by Shaykh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani (d. 561 H/1166 AD), various other important orders emerged, including the al-Rifaiyah Order by Shaykh Ahmad Rifa'i (d. 578 H/1182 AD), the al-Kubrawiyah Order by Najmuddin al-Kubra (d. 618 H/1221 AD), the al-Syaziliyah Order by Abu Hasan al-Syazili (d. 656 H/1258 AD), the al-Naqsyabandiyah Order by Bahauddin al-Naqsyabandi (d. 791 H/1389 AD), Tariqa al-Syattariah by Abdullah al-Syattar (d. 831 AH/1428 AD), and Tariqa al-Khalwatiyah by Zahiruddin al-Khalwati (d. 799 AH/1397 AD).[20]

The re-emergence of philosophical Sufism, exemplified by Ibn Arabi's works, integrated metaphysical concepts with organized spiritual practices, reflecting a synthesis of intellectual and devotional currents. The establishment of major tariqas with codified rules, spiritual lineages (*sanad*), and murshid-led guidance corresponded with the sociopolitical context of expanding Islamic empires and the need for institutionalized forms of religious authority. These tariqas not only served as centers for spiritual training but also as social organizations that mediated between the individual, community, and state

As time has progressed, Sufism, as the spiritual dimension of Islam, has undergone significant transformations throughout its history. These transformations reflect the adaptation of its teachings to the prevailing social, political, and cultural conditions of each era. From individualistic practices to organized communities and, ultimately, to movements that embrace the social world, Sufism has continuously evolved to meet the challenges of the times without losing its core spiritual essence. This transformation of Sufism can be mapped across three distinct periods:

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[20] Rahmawati, "Tarekat Dan Perkembangannya," *Al-Munzir* 7, no. 1 (2024): 91–90.

1. Individual-Traditionalist Phase (1ˢᵗ to 5ᵗʰ centuries Hijri)

    In this early phase, Sufism emerged as a response to the moral decadence of society influenced by hedonism and the luxury of leaders. Sufism is in the form of an individual movement that focuses on the life of zuhud (asceticism) and self-cleansing from the world. Sufis adopt a simple lifestyle, prioritize worship, and avoid social involvement.

2. Formal-Guided Phase (6ᵗʰ to 7ᵗʰ centuries Hijri)

    In this phase, Sufism began to be organized in the form of a tariqa (*thariqah*), which was led by a murshid. The Sufism movement became more structured with the birth of the Qadiriyah tariqa by Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani (d. 561 H/1166 AD), followed by other tariqas such as Naqsyabandiyah and Syattariyah. This phase marked the transition of Sufism from an individual movement to a spiritual community with collective practice.[21]

3. Neo-Sufism (Modern Era)

    Neo-Sufism emerged as an effort to revitalize Sufi teachings and practices in the face of modern challenges and secularization, thereby enhancing their relevance, inclusivity, and responsiveness to the spiritual needs of Muslims in the 21ˢᵗ century.[22]

    Neo-Sufism introduces a new approach by integrating Sufism into worldly and social life. The main principle of neo-Sufism is a balance between individual spirituality and social responsibility. Sufis no longer only focus on god exclusively but also on their contribution to society and the environment. Fazlurrahman called this phase a Sufi renewal that is relevant to the needs of the modern world. In this phase, a Sufi who practices Sufism is very

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[21] Ahmad Fahrur Rozi et al., "Dinamika Transformasi Tasawuf Era Kontemporer: NeoSufisme Dan Gerakan Islam Transnasional," *Tasamuh*, 2024, 285–87.

[22] Rizal Fauzi, "Menggali Neo-Sufisme: Tradisi, Kritik Dan Relevansi Di Indonesia," *Hikamia: Jurnal Pemikiran Tasawuf Dan Peradaban Islam* 5, no. 1 (2025): 5, https://doi.org/10.58572/hkm.v5i1.93.

likely to dive into the political current. Either participating in state bureaucratic affairs or in the form of *patriotism*, such as participating in the struggle for independence by fighting against the colonizers. Neo-sufism concept is in contrast to traditional Sufis who tend to be individual and stay away from the realm of politics and worldly affairs with *uzlah* (seclusion).[23]

Tariqa as a Transnational Islamic Movement

The concept of transnationalism can simply be defined as an activity that is carried out across national borders where one of the actors does not consist of state or government actors. In the transnational movement, certain actors play a significant role in the transnational process. It is stated that transnational movements have at least non-governmental actors.[24] These actors come from the community, both individually and in groups. Globalization enables people to move beyond national borders, giving rise to cross-border movements that exist in various countries. As for Islamic studies itself, the definition of transnational Islamic movements is no different from the definition of transnationalism in general, which is defined as an Islamic movement that crosses certain territorial territories/national boundaries that have non-governmental international institutional devices as a process of transferring ideas or ideas from other individuals or groups, as well as from one country to another.[25]

Transnational Islamic movements greatly influence the image of Islam in the global world. Whether it is a movement that is ideological, spiritual, or political. According to Jamhari and Jahroni,

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[23] Rozi et al., "Dinamika Transformasi Tasawuf Era Kontemporer: NeoSufisme Dan Gerakan Islam Transnasional," 288.

[24] Soetjipto et al., *Transnasionalisme: Peran Aktor Non Negara Dalam Hubungan Internasional* (Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2019), 22.

[25] Aksa Aksa, "Gerakan Islam Transnasional: Sebuah Nomenklatur, Sejarah Dan Pengaruhnya Di Indonesia," *Yupa: Historical Studies Journal* 1, no. 1 (2017): 1–14, https://doi.org/10.30872/yupa.v1i1.86.

the global condition of the world (including the Islamic world), which is entering the modern era, is the cause of the emergence of transnational movements. In addition to mobility and technology, other factors encourage the growth of transnational Islamic movements, including tariqa as a transnational movement. The Tariqa can be considered a representation of transnational Islamic movements, encompassing thought, spiritual, and political aspects.[26]

The Sufism movement, originating in the Middle East, expanded globally due to the mobility of Muslim communities. Key figures, including Sufi masters *(murshids)* and sheikhs, played a central role in establishing tariqa networks across various countries, including Indonesia. These non-governmental civil society actors facilitated the spread of Sufi teachings and practices, creating a transnational Islamic movement.[27] This process is characterized by the centralized leadership systems of these tariqa institutions, which function as non-governmental international entities. Furthermore, the Tariqa movement not only disseminated spiritual practices but also fostered the exchange of ideas and mutual understanding among individuals and groups worldwide.

The initial spread of Sufism from its Middle Eastern origins, facilitated by the mobility of Sufi masters (murshids) and the establishment of transnational tariqa networks, has been fundamentally reshaped by globalization and technology, accelerating both the pace and scale of these movements in the modern era.[28]

Several factors facilitate the spread of transnational tariqa: the first is the da'wah factor. This factor is a primary driver of the

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[26] Eka Rahayu, "Sufisme Dan Politik Di Indonesia: Studi Kasus Tingkat Partisipasi Politik Jamaah Kenduri Cinta Di Jakarta" (Universitas Indonesia, 2024).

[27] Salman Al Farisi, "Pengembaraan Ilmiah Dan Peran Syeikh Ahmad Khatib Al-Syambasi Aalam Penyebaran Islam Di Nusantara Melalui Thariqat Qadiriyyah Wa Naqsabdniyyah," *Living Islam: Journal of Islamic Discourses* 4, no. 2 (2021): 174, https://doi.org/10.14421/lijid.v4i2.2642.

[28] Rozi et al., "Dinamika Transformasi Tasawuf Era Kontemporer: NeoSufisme Dan Gerakan Islam Transnasional," 292.

spread of transnational orders across various countries, carried out by Sufis. Second is the trade factor. A Sufi travels to various countries by joining a merchant ship that is seeking to conduct business in his destination country. After arriving in the destination country, the Sufis spread their teachings to the local community. This factor can be seen in the history of the entry of Islam into Indonesia, which mentions the entry of Islam through the arrival of traders. The third factor is the immigrant factor. This factor is a common factor in the spread of transnational tariqa. Immigrants who come to a particular country, in addition to personal purposes (such as trade and study), also establish spiritual communities to practice the teachings of the tariqa they practiced in their home country.[29] The factor of hajj has occurred since the fifteenth century. At that time, many Indonesians went to Haramain (Mecca and Medina) to carry out the hajj. In addition, they also learned from prominent scholars there. Especially in the 16th century when the caliphate was in power. At that time, Indonesia had momentum in politics and trade with the Middle East.[30]

The initial interactions between Muslims from the Middle East and the Nusantara region can be traced back to the 9th century. While Azra suggests that traders did not significantly contribute to the subsequent spread of Islam, they nonetheless initiated early communication and diplomatic relations with the Middle East, specifically during the Umayyad Caliphate.[31] This is evidenced by a letter from the King of Srivijaya (a Hindu king) to *Khalifa* Umar bin Abdul Aziz. In this missive, the Srivijaya monarch conveyed gifts to *Khalifa* as a gesture of goodwill, requesting in return a representative to instruct him in Islamic principles and

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[29] Rozi et al., "Dinamika Transformasi Tasawuf Era Kontemporer: NeoSufisme Dan Gerakan Islam Transnasional," 294.

[30] Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad 17 & 18* (Kencana, 2013), 74.

[31] Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad 17 & 18* (Kencana, 2013), 28–29.

jurisprudence. This correspondence, as cited by Ibn Tibhrigirdi in his work *al nujum al dzāhirah fî muluk mishr wa al Qāhirah*, identifies the Srivijaya ruler at the time as Sri Indravarman.[32] However, the intensification of Islamic da'wah activities within the Nusantara did not occur until the 13th century, spearheaded by Sufi.

The 13th century witnessed a surge in Sufi influence, coinciding with the decline of the Abbasid Caliphate following the Mongol invasions. During this period, Sufis played a crucial role in preserving the cohesion of the Muslim world. The Sufi orders, by then established as stable and disciplined institutions, forged alliances with merchants, contributing to the formation of urban societies. These affiliations provided Sufis with the resources necessary for extensive maritime travel, thereby accelerating the expansion of Islam. This dynamic is particularly relevant to understanding the origins of Islam in the Nusantara, where the arrival of sheikhs and preachers from the Middle East is documented. Furthermore, the Sufis, having attained considerable charisma within their respective regions, often entered into marital alliances with the families of local rulers. Consequently, their descendants acquired elevated social status through their familial connections with regional leadership.[33]

In other cases, Muslim immigrants, in order to stay connected to their central communities in their respective countries, bring their spiritual practices to their places of migration, such as the tombs of saints Nagore Dargah Sharif or Shah Al Hamid in Singapore, which are brought by the Tamil Muslim immigrant community. This tomb is always visited every year by Sufis who come from India. Although the tomb in Singapore is only a replica of the original tomb in India, this tomb is a medium of spiritual connection with

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[32] Yusuf Ibn Tibhrigirdi, *Al Nujum al Dzāhirah Fî Muluk Mishr Wa al Qāhirah* (Darul Kutub, n.d.), 240 juz. 1.

[33] Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad 17 & 18* (Kencana, 2013), 17.

the center of their teachings in their home country, India.[34]

In Indonesia, there is a pattern similar to that in Singapore as done by the Tamil Muslim community. That is, the tomb of Sayyid Husein bin Abu Bakr al-Alaydrus became a spiritual link between the Muslim immigrant community of Hadhrami and his home country in Yemen. The recording of their nasab (now by Rabithah Alawiyah) is a form of the connection of their sanad or genealogy with the center of their teachings and descendants in the Middle East. For this reason, they held a haul, in addition to commemorating the day of the death of Sayyid Hussein bin Abu Bakr al-Alaydrus, this momentum was also used by them to gather between those who live in Indonesia and their families who came from Hadrami. In addition, this moment is also used to expand their network with kyai or local figures.[35]

The expansion of the Sufi order movement also existed in Europe, such as the Naqsabandi Haqqani tariqa in Europe, especially in Turkey, Germany, and Berlin. The Naqshbandiyah Haqqaniyah Order began to be known in Europe in the second half of the 20th century through its main figure, Sheikh Nazim al-Haqqani (d. 1435 H/2014 AD). As a charismatic spiritual leader, Sheikh Nazim actively traveled to Western and Eastern Europe, established communities, and introduced Sufism teachings adapted to the local context.

The spread of this tariqa in Europe took place through several important channels. First, Sheikh Nazim himself frequently traveled to various European countries such as England, France, and Germany, where he delivered lectures and provided direct spiritual guidance, thereby strengthening the network of the order. Second, the growth of the tariqa was also supported by diaspora

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[34] Torsten Tschacher, "From Local Practice to Transnational Network — Saints, Shrines and Sufis among Tamil Muslims in Singapore," *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 2006.

[35] Supratman, "Makam Sayyid Husein Bin Abu Bakar Al-Aydarus: Jaringan Spiritual Usmani Di Indonesia Akhir Abad Ke-19."

and immigration. Many of its early adherents in Europe came from Muslim communities of Middle Eastern and South Asian backgrounds. For instance, the Muslim community in Berlin has long been connected with the Turkish diaspora, which became an important basis for the development of this order. Third, the advancement of digital technology further facilitated the dissemination of its teachings. Through websites and social media platforms, Sheikh Nazim's students reached younger generations of Muslims in Europe, enabling the creation of cross-border spiritual connections and ensuring the continuity of the tariqa in modern contexts.[36]

The Naqshbandiyah Haqqaniyah Tariqa uses a model of a local community (Dergah) connected to a major center in Lefke, Cyprus. An example of such a connection is a community in Berlin led by Sheikh Eşref Goekcimen, who received a diploma directly from Sheikh Nazim in 1995. This community later developed into the Rabbaniyya Sufi Center, which became an important center for the order in Europe.

To attract new followers, this institute emphasizes the principles of inclusivity and universality in Sufism teachings. An example of the success of this approach is the community in Germany that actively opens spiritual centers for different ethnic groups and beliefs, strengthening cross-cultural social solidarity. This is exemplified by Sheikh Ahmed Tamim (leader of a Tariqa in Ukraine), who offers spiritual healing or ruqyah to anyone seeking recovery from and protection against malevolent jinn and sorcery. This spiritual treatment is also provided to non-Muslims suspected of being afflicted by evil jinn. To integrate with the local community, this tariqa uses English in its dhikr (remembrance of God) practices to aid understanding among residents.

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[36] Rozi et al., "Dinamika Transformasi Tasawuf Era Kontemporer: NeoSufisme Dan Gerakan Islam Transnasional," 292.

Based on this, the propagation model of the Naqshbandi-Haqqani tariqa, centered on a network of local Dergahs connected to a global hub in Cyprus, demonstrates the dynamics of transnationalism. Through the Berlin community and the expansion of the Rabbaniyya Sufi Center, the tariqa illustrates the effective building of cross-border networks. The strategy of inclusivity and universality of Sufi teachings, as shown through opening spiritual centers for diverse ethnic and religious groups, reflects the principle of cultural hybridity. This approach not only allows adaptation of tariqa teachings to local contexts but also enhances cross-cultural social solidarity. Using English in dhikr practices signifies a genuine effort to connect with local communities and promote cross-cultural understanding.

Therefore, the Naqshbandi-Haqqani tariqa not only spreads spiritual teachings but also creates cross-cultural bridges, highlighting the important role of Sufi orders in shaping transnational identities amid globalization. Regarding the political attitudes of local and transnational tariqas, the divide between mystical traditions (Sufism) and politics appears clear. Mystical paths, regardless of their specifics, usually focus on individual spiritual growth towards insan kâmil (the perfect human being), often emphasizing detachment from worldly matters. In contrast, politics is inherently linked to exercising power over populations (politeia) or pursuing citizens' interests (polis). Essentially, mystical traditions tend to be transcendental, while politics remain material and corporeal.

However, a historical perspective shows that the emergence of Sufism was partly a response to the conditions under rulers after the Prophet's death and the era of the Khulafa al Rashidin, such as the Umayyad. dynasty consolidated power and Islamic influence expanded, the rulers adopted a hedonistic lifestyle. This lifestyle diverged significantly from the principles exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad. Consequently, the nascent Sufi movement

(initially individualistic in nature) arose as a form of dissent, often expressed through practices such as *uzlah* (seclusion) and a rejection of the dominant social norms.[37] Throughout the history of Sufi orders, murshids have frequently adopted political strategies, both to advance their *da'wa* efforts and to safeguard the survival and continued existence of their tariqas, which could be threatened by governmental policies or social dynamics within their respective regions.

A salient example of this is the experience of the Naqshbandi order, particularly the Khaznavi branch embraced by the Kurdish community, which clashed with the Turkish government in the 1920. This conflict arose due to territorial restrictions and the prohibition of religious practices within the region, enforced by the secularist administration of Mustafa Kemal. The political response adopted was a rejection of the imposed political boundaries and the secular-nationalist ideology promoted by the state. They employed various means to preserve their religious practices, including clandestine crossings into the Syrian-Turkish border region. Their resistance was both symbolic and practical, centered on maintaining individuals' spiritual connections with their sheikhs, reflecting a pattern of non-violent resistance grounded in faith and loyalty.[38]

When developing their political strategies, Sufi orders focus on assessing the prevailing conditions and circumstances they face. Using the example of the Naqshbandi order on the Turkish-Syrian border, a complex interaction occurs between the tariqa and the state. The internal dynamics of Sufism are thus connected to external pressures exerted by the government. When taking a political stance, the tariqa usually considers three main conditions: first, when the state faces colonialism and imperialism; second, when the tariqa forms a minority needing external protection,

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[37] Ajid Thohir, *Gerakan Politik Kaum Tarekat: Peran Dan Dinamika Tarekat Qodiriyyah Naqsyabandiyyah Di Pulau Jawa* (CV. Hilmi Inti Perdana, 2015), 22.

[38] Ramazan Aras, "Naqshbandi Sufis and Their Conception of Place, Time and Fear on the Turkish-Syrian Border and Borderland," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 2018.

especially through government policies, to preserve its identity amid the rise of Islamic orthodoxy; and third, in situations where the state struggles with radical groups. This last condition is especially relevant in Syria and Pakistan, where Sufism has acted as an alternative ideology, promoting peace while also resisting Islamic fundamentalism.

The history of Indonesia's struggle against Dutch colonialism is rich with the significant roles played by Sufi figures and tariqas. Their involvement in the socio-political arena spanned multiple generations. The spirit of jihad was fostered by Abd al-Shamad ibn 'Abd al-Jalil during conflicts between Kedah and Patani against the Siamese kingdom. In the 19th century, tariqas were crucial in the anti-colonial movement, including the Banten rebellion of 1888, led by the Qadiriyah wa Naqsyabandiyah tariqa. Tariqa figures often served as both spiritual and social leaders, exemplified by Guru Bangkol in Lombok, who led resistance efforts following the Banten rebellion of 1891. The Padri War in Minangkabau, which Azra described as a major conflict, was influenced by the reformist teachings of the al-Sattariyyah tariqa in Aceh, introduced by Abdul Rauf al-Sinkili and spread throughout Sumatra by his student, Burhanuddin Ulakan. National figures such as Prince Diponegoro also played a significant role in resisting colonizers, although their specific tariqa affiliations remain unclear. Into the 20th century, tariqas continued to be vital elements in Indonesia's socio-political landscape, including through militant channels in various regions.[39]

The resistance movements against colonialism, spearheaded by various tariqa groups, were also evident across numerous regions globally. The Sanusiyyah order, under the leadership of Sayyid al-Mahdi and his descendants, engaged in armed resistance against the Italian colonial invasion. Naqshbandi-Khalidi shaykhs led resistance movements in various western regions against European

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[39] Syamsun Ni'am, "Tasawuf Di Tengah Perubahan Sosial (Studi Tentang Peran Tarekat Dalam Dinamika Sosial-Politik Di Indonesia)," *Jurnal Multikultural & Multireligius*, 2016, 128.

colonial aggression, as well as in the Central Asian region against the Russian occupation.[40] The widespread nature of these resistance movements, spanning multiple countries, suggests a pattern of mutual inspiration and influence among the tariqa groups in their opposition to colonialism.

Therefore, it is natural for the Dutch to consider that the Sufi order is very dangerous for their government. Snouck Hurgronje said that Sufi sheikhs are very dangerous to their government in Indonesia. Because what happened in Indonesia also happened in other countries, such as the resistance of the Sanusiah order in Algeria against the French colony. Therefore, the practice of tariqa at that time was prohibited by the colonials because they were difficult to regulate by the colonial government, so at that time, the practices and books related to Sufism were prohibited from circulating in the colonial government territory.

One prominent Indonesian Sufi who ardently championed the spirit of jihad against Dutch colonialism was Shaykh Abdul Somad al-Palimbani, then residing in Mecca. His deep concern and affection for Indonesia motivated him to correspond with the Mataram Sultanate, urging them to undertake jihad against the colonial forces. Al-Palimbani authored the treatise "*Nashihatul Muslimin wa Tadzkiratul Mu'minin fi Fadhail al jihad fi sabilillah wa Karamatil Mujahidin fi Sabilillah*," which advocated for resistance against colonial rule. This work subsequently inspired jihad movements across various regions of Indonesia. This also demonstrates the continuous transnational communication within the tariqa network, as evidenced by the letters exchanged between Shaykh Abdul Somad al-Palimbani in Mecca and recipients within Indonesia.[41]

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[40] Bisri Mustofa, "Munculnya Tarekat Baru Abad Pertengahan Hingga Kini," *AISE: Az-Ziqri Islamic Studies and Education*, 2021, 23.

[41] Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad 17 & 18* (Kencana, 2013), 372.

Following Indonesia's independence, several tariqa groups established affiliations with the government. A notable example is the Shiddiqiyyah tariqa in Jombang, which presented itself as a nationalist Sufi order, emphasizing the trustworthiness of its Islamic teachings as derived from its founder. A core doctrine of the Shiddiqiyyah order, enshrined in the bai'at (oath of allegiance) taken by its members, is the affirmation of love for the homeland (*hubbul wathan*). Furthermore, the Shiddiqiyyah tariqa flourished within the abangan community, known for its nationalist leanings. Affiliation with the government was deemed crucial for securing protection from the New Order regime, given that the Shiddiqiyyah tariqa was then considered heterodox. This situation was compounded by the fact that the tariqa's sanad was undocumented, resulting in its exclusion from recognition as a *tarīqah mu'tabaroh* (recognized tariqa) by *Jam'iyyah ahl al-Ṭariqah al-Mu'tabaroh al-Nahdliyyah* (JATMAN) and *Jam'iyyah ahl al-Ṭariqah Mu'tabaroh Indonesia* (JATMI).[42]

Shiddiqiyyah tariqa took a political step by asking for protection from the new order government, to avoid the dissolution of this tariqa, namely by making nationalism the basis of this institute. To show his obedience to the government, the murshid of this tariqa, Kyai Muchtar, always directed his followers to support the Golkar party, which at that time was a party of the government.[43]

At the international level, Sufi orders play a significant role in conveying the message of Islamic peace to the world, as exemplified by the Mawlawiyyah order through the works of Jalaluddin Rumi. This phenomenon, which Robert Irwin terms "global Rumi," highlights how Rumi is revered as a spiritual figure whose teachings are followed in numerous countries, spanning both the Middle East and the West. Interestingly, according to Irwin, this movement

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[42] Ahmadi, "The Politics of a Local Sufism in Contemporary Indonesia: A Closed Look at The Shiddiqiyyah Tarekat," 80.

[43] Ahmadi, "The Politics of a Local Sufism in Contemporary Indonesia: A Closed Look at The Shiddiqiyyah Tarekat," 81.

is not entirely tied to the formal institution of the Mawlawiyyah order, but rather involves individual entities that have adopted the concepts of Rumi's teachings, such as the Sufi dance or sema' introduced by the Mawlawiyyah order, which represents Rumi's thoughts on love and spirituality. Rumi also employs poetry as his primary medium for conveying his spiritual teachings. Metaphors such as wine and intoxication are frequently used to depict mystical ecstasy and union with the Divine, a common theme in Sufism. Rumi's message is widely embraced in both the Western and Eastern worlds as a symbol of inclusive Islamic peace. His teachings are often associated with interfaith dialogue, presenting Islam as a religion of love and compassion. Indeed, his work continues to inspire the building of harmony among nations in the modern era.[44]

Based on the foregoing discussion, the central role of Sufi tariqas in disseminating and preserving Islamic religious practices, as well as their contributions to the socio-political sphere at both local and global levels, has been confirmed. The tariqas' capacity to adapt to local cultures, as evidenced by the integration of their teachings with local wisdom, has proven crucial for their acceptance and sustainability within communities. This aligns with the concept of cultural hybridity, where tariqas not only adopt elements of local culture but also create unique and contextualized forms of religious expression.

Furthermore, the political stances adopted by tariqa groups, which are inherently dynamic and responsive to socio-political conditions, play a crucial role in maintaining their existence. These political choices, often reflecting strategies of adaptation and resilience, are also relevant to a transnational perspective. In the increasingly complex context of globalization, Sufi tariqas do not operate solely within the confines of the nation-state but are also engaged in transnational networks that transcend geographical and

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[44] Amir H. Zekrgoo, "Trans-Nationalism and Civilisational Identity: Rumi on Land, Language and Love," *Al Shajarah: ISTAC Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization*, 2023.

cultural boundaries. Their ability to interact with diverse actors and forces, and to adapt to changing environments, is key to their survival and influence in the modern era. Thus, Sufi tariqas, through cultural adaptation and dynamic political strategies, continue to play a significant role in shaping the religious and socio-political landscape, both locally and globally.

Conclusion

This research thoroughly examines the propagation and political roles of Sufi tariqas, emphasizing their impressive adaptability across various social and political settings. Analyzing the findings shows that the spread of Sufi tariqas, through channels such as proselytization, trade, diaspora migration, technology, and the Hajj pilgrimage, forms a complex, dynamic transnational network. The specific results reveal that the integration of Sufi tariqas with local cultures—like the adaptations of the Naqshbandi in Indonesia and the Naqshbandi Haqqani in Europe—not only highlights their flexibility but also their ability to connect with local values and traditions. In the political arena, the wide range of political stances among Sufi tariqas—from resisting colonialism to supporting governments—and their role in confronting radical groups demonstrate pragmatic strategies that allow them to survive and thrive amid shifting political landscapes. Their diverse political actions, from militant resistance to the use of soft power, exemplified by the Mawlawiyyah tariqa, showcase their capacity to employ various tools and approaches to accomplish their goals.es.

The significance of this research lies in a broader understanding of the adaptability, resilience, and global roles of Sufi tariqas. These patterns reveal that Sufi tariqas are not merely religious entities but also dynamic social actors responsive to the changing times. Their ability to integrate with local cultures, adapt to different political landscapes, and employ diverse strategies to convey their messages, demonstrates remarkable resilience. Furthermore, their

engagement in various channels of propagation, from the local to the global level, highlights their role as transnational agents contributing to interfaith dialogue, cultural exchange, and the formation of global identities. This research opens avenues for further studies on how Sufi tariqas, as significant social forces, can play a greater role in promoting peace, tolerance, and sustainability in an increasingly complex global context. Further studies could explore how Sufi tariqas can strengthen their capacity to adapt to contemporary challenges and contribute to the development of inclusive and sustainable societies worldwide.[]

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