



TRANSNATIONAL SUFISM AND ANTI-COLONIAL RESISTANCE IN INDONESIA

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Abstract: This study addresses the limited scholarly attention devoted to the role of the tariqas in Indonesia's anti-colonial resistance, especially in scholarship on Sufism that treats its doctrinal and spiritual dimensions separately and fails to adequately account for its transnational networks. It aims to map the regional distribution of Sufi orders, analyze transnational connections, and uncover the political functions of tariqa networks in anti-colonial resistance against Dutch colonial rule in the 19th–20th centuries, considering that linking the organizational structures of cross-island tariqa networks with global Islamic centres. Drawing on Weber's theory of charismatic authority, Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome concept, Snow's frame alignment theory, the PRISMA-guided systematic literature review of 30 articles published between 2015–2025, the results show that four major Sufi orders—Qadiriyyah, Naqshbandiyyah, Syattariyyah, and Khalwatiyyah—were connected to the Haramain, India, and Cairo through sanad and the hajj pilgrimage, through bonds of bai'at that created transcendental loyalty mobilized in the Java War, the Menteng War, and the Cilegon Rebellion. This research develops the concept of rhizomatic techno-spiritual agency to explain the dual capacity of Sufi organizations to simultaneously operate across spiritual and political domains.

Keywords: Tariqas, Anti-Colonial Resistance, Transnational Sufism, Charismatic Authority, Rhizome Network

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Introduction

SUFI ORDERS (tariqas) played multifaceted roles as spiritual communities, educational institutions, and political actors. From the 13th century onward, Sufism became integral to the Islamization process across the archipelago, with itinerant mystics and established orders facilitating the incorporation of Islamic

teachings into diverse local cultural contexts.¹ By the 17th century, centers such as Aceh and Samudera Pasai had emerged as major hubs of Sufi learning, producing influential scholars whose writings and networks shaped regional Islamic thought and practice.² These transnational connections intensified through pilgrimage routes, manuscript circulation, and scholarly exchanges linking the archipelago to Mecca, Medina, Cairo, and Indian Sufi centers.³

The political dimensions of Indonesian Sufism became particularly pronounced during the colonial period, when tariqa networks mobilized resistance against Dutch rule. Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, Sufi teachers and their disciples participated in armed uprisings, social movements, and sustained opposition to colonial governance across Java, Sumatra, Sulawesi, and Kalimantan.⁴ The organizational structures of tariqa, characterized by hierarchical authority, initiation rituals (*bai'at*), and dense social bonds, provided effective infrastructure for collective mobilization that transcended local kinship and class divisions.⁵ Yet, despite this historical significance, the relationship between transnational Sufi networks and anti-colonial resistance in Indonesia remains incompletely mapped in contemporary scholarship.

Research with the theme of Sufism in Indonesia until now still dwells on two different poles, namely between doctrinal-spiritual developments, and the second is or case studies of

¹ Rizqa Ahmadi. "The Politics of a Local Sufism in Contemporary Indonesia: A Closed Look at The Shiddiqiyah Tarekat." *Epistemé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 16, no. 1 (2021): 59-82.

² Saifullah Isri, "The development of tauhid-tasawuf in the archipelago of samudera pasai," in *Proceedings of the 1st Annual Conference for Muslim Scholars*, (2016): 456-470.

³ M. Marsuki, et al., , "The Network of Middle Eastern and Archipelagic Sufi Scholars: Tracing the Dynamics of Sufism Development in Indonesia," *Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Mysticism* 13, no. 2 (2024): 201-224.

⁴ Johan Wahyudhi, "Islam dan Gerakan Sosial: Studi atas Resistensi Guru Tarekat Menghadapi Pemerintah Hindia Belanda di Jawa Timur pada Akhir Abad XIX-Awal Abad XX." *Jurnal Sejarah Indonesia* 7 no.1 (2024): 31-42.

⁵ A. Mohiuddin, "Religious authority, sunnah and Sufi networks in Indonesia," *Public Anthropologist* 5, no. 2 (2023): 234-256.

certain localities. The problem is that this approach tends to ignore the macro dimension of the organizational structures of the tariqa. There has not been a systematic study that is able to map the distribution of the tariqas across islands as well as trace its transnational connections which lead to the actions of colonial political resistance. Although some recent literature reviews have begun to mention the role of Sufism in social change,⁶ Research with the theme of Sufism in Indonesia until now still dwells on two different poles, namely between doctrinal-spiritual developments, and the second is or case studies of certain localities. The problem is that this approach tends to ignore the macro dimension of the organizational structures of the tariqa. There has not been a systematic study that is able to map the distribution of the tariqas across islands as well as trace its transnational connections which lead to the actions of colonial political resistance. Although some recent literature reviews have begun to mention the role of Sufism in social change (Rohmawati & Zulkifli, 2024), there is still a literature gap to be found in mapping the political networks that link the mystical movement of Sufism in Indonesia with global Islamic centers. This gap must be overcome by understanding the anatomy of this network, the strategic position of the Sufism organization in the debate on political moderation and national integration in Indonesia today in order to be able to reveal its historical and sociological foundation.⁷

This systematic literature review addresses these gaps by pursuing three primary objectives. First, it maps the regional distribution of Sufi orders across the Indonesian archipelago, identifying key figures, tariqa branches, and organizational structures. Second, it documents the transnational networks connecting Indonesian Sufis to global Islamic centers through scholarly lineages, pilgrimage, and textual circulation. Third, it analyzes the political functions of these networks, particularly

⁶ Rohmawati, et al., "The Role of Sufi Orders in Social Change in Indonesia: A Systematic Literature Review". *Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Mysticism* 13, No 2 (2024):187-212.

⁷ Dudung Abdurahman. "Religious Moderation in the Tradition of Contemporary Sufism in Indonesia." (2020). 42–56.

their role in anti-colonial resistance movements from the 19th to early 20th centuries, while also examining their contemporary relevance for Indonesian society.⁸

Sufism played a foundational role in the spread of Islam throughout the Indonesian archipelago from the 13th century onward. Unlike regions where Islam arrived primarily through military conquest, the archipelago's Islamization occurred largely through trade networks, intermarriage, and the activities of Sufi teachers who adapted Islamic teachings to local cultural contexts.⁹ Early Sufi figures combined mystical practice with practical engagement in commerce, education, and political advising, making Sufism accessible to diverse social strata from royal courts to rural communities.¹⁰ This pattern of gradual, culturally adaptive Islamization meant that Sufi orders became deeply embedded in local social structures while maintaining connections to broader Islamic scholarly networks.

The Sriwijaya Kingdom era and subsequent rise of Samudera Pasai in northern Sumatra marked critical early phases of this process. By the 15th and 16th centuries, Pasai had become a center of Islamic learning where scholars from India, the Middle East, and other parts of the archipelago converged.¹¹ The Aceh Sultanate subsequently emerged as the preeminent hub of Sufi scholarship in the 17th century, producing major figures whose works circulated widely across the region.¹² This historical trajectory established patterns of transnational connectivity and local adaptation that would characterize Indonesian Sufism for

⁸ Dudung Abdurahman, "The Integration Perspectives for Historical Study of Indonesian Islam." *Tawarikh* 9, no 1 (2017): 9–22.

⁹ Muhammad Sabiq, "Social Solidarity and Religious Based Islamic Sufism of Khalwatia Samman Thareqah Community." *INFERENSI: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 17, no. 1 (2023): 23–44.

¹⁰ A. Nur, et al., "Sufism of Archipelago: History, Thought, and Movement," *Esensia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 18, no. 2 (2018): 133–156.

¹¹ Isri, "development of Tauhid-Tasawuf," 456–470.

¹² Muhammad Affan, "The Role of Sufis in Connecting Aceh to the Global Islamic Network in the 17th Century". *Islam Nusantara: Journal for the Study of Islamic History and Culture* 4, no. 2 (2023): 27–42.

centuries.¹³ These networks were reinforced through regular communal practices including dhikr (remembrance of God), suluk (spiritual retreat), and collective study of mystical texts.¹⁴

The social functions of tariqa extended well beyond individual spiritual development. Orders served as educational institutions where religious knowledge was transmitted through oral instruction, manuscript copying, and commentary on classical texts.¹⁵ They provided social welfare through mutual aid networks, mediation of disputes, and support for members facing economic hardship. Tariqa also functioned as sites of cultural production, generating devotional poetry, music, and ritual practices that blended Islamic and local traditions.¹⁶

The 18th and 19th centuries witnessed significant transformations in Indonesian Sufism, often characterized as the emergence of neo-Sufism. This term, though contested, generally refers to movements that emphasized stricter adherence to Islamic law (sharia) alongside mystical practice, rejected certain ecstatic or antinomian tendencies, and engaged more actively with social and political issues.²⁰ Key figures in this transformation included Abdus Shamad al-Palimbani and Nawawi al-Bantani, both of whom studied in the Haramain (Mecca and Medina) and returned to the archipelago with reformed teachings that balanced mystical experience with juridical orthodoxy.²¹

Neo-Sufi movements often displayed greater organizational coherence and political engagement than earlier forms of Sufism. The Naqshbandiyyah-Khalidiyyah order, which spread rapidly across the archipelago in the 19th century, exemplified

¹³ Wasino, et al., "A Historical Perspective of Sufism Networking in Asia: From India to Indonesian Archipelago." *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology* 17, no. 3 (2020): 761-74.

¹⁴ Nur Hadi Ihsan, "Sejarah dan Perkembangan Tarekat di Indonesia," *OSF Preprints*, (2023).

¹⁵ Abdulloh Hadziq and M. Muqronul Faiz. "Globalisasi Tarekat Sufi Di Asia Tenggara (Studi Peran Tarekat dalam Penyebaran Islam di Indonesia)." *Qolamuna: Jurnal Studi Islam* 9, no. 2 (2024): 84-95.

¹⁶ Abd Rasyid Nurhayati, & Nurdin Nurdin, "The Diaspora of the Sufis in Indonesia: Moving from Western to Eastern Islands." *International Journal of History and Philosophical Research* 9, no.1 (2021): 33-45.

this pattern with its emphasis on silent dhikr, strict adherence to sharia, and active involvement in social reform and political resistance.¹⁷ Similarly, the Qadiriyya wa Naqshbandiyyah order, which combined elements of two major tariqa, became particularly influential in Java and was noted by Dutch colonial authorities for its capacity to mobilize large numbers of followers.¹⁸ These reformed orders provided organizational models that proved effective for collective action, including resistance to colonial rule.¹⁹

Contemporary scholarship on Indonesian Sufism draws on several theoretical frameworks to understand the structure and function of tariqa networks. Social network analysis highlights how initiation rituals, teacher-student lineages (sanad), and regular communal practices create durable social ties that can be mobilized for various purposes.²⁰ The concept of translocality helps explain how Sufi networks maintained coherence across vast geographical distances through circulation of people, texts, and practices.²¹ Theories of religious authority illuminate how murshids' charismatic and genealogical legitimacy enabled them to command loyalty and coordinate collective action.²²

Recent work has also emphasized the adaptive capacity of Sufi organizations, their ability to respond to changing social, political, and economic conditions while maintaining core spiritual practices and organizational structures.²³ This adaptability helps explain both the historical resilience of tariqa through periods of colonial suppression and their continued

¹⁷ Roni Faslah, "Corak Neo-sufisme Ulama Tarekat Syatariyah: Studi Jaringan Ulama Nusantara Abad ke-17," *At-Turas: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 3, no. 2, (2016): 186-205.

¹⁸ Misbakhul Khaer. "Kebersinggungan Tarekat dengan Dunia Luar dalam Pandangan Martin Van Bruinessen," *Spiritualita* 6, no. 1 (2022): 27-38.

¹⁹ Rizal Fauzi, "Menggali Neo-Sufisme: Tradisi, Kritik Dan Relevansi Di Indonesia," *Hikamia* 5, no. 1 (2025): 45-68. <https://doi.org/10.58572/hkm.v5i1.93>

²⁰ Mohiuddin, "Religious Authority," 234-256.

²¹ Daud Lintang, et al., "Circulation of the Book of Al-Tuhfah Al-Mursalah Ila Ruh Al-Nabi: Translocality Study and Its Impact on Aceh's Muslim Community," *Hayula: Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Islamic Studies* 9, no. 1 (2025): 73-92, 2025.

²² Mohiuddin, "Religious Authority," 234-256.

²³ Rohmawati et al., "The Role of Sufi Orders," 187-212.

relevance in contemporary Indonesia.²⁴ Understanding these theoretical dimensions provides essential context for analyzing the specific regional distributions, transnational connections, and political functions documented in the following sections.²⁵

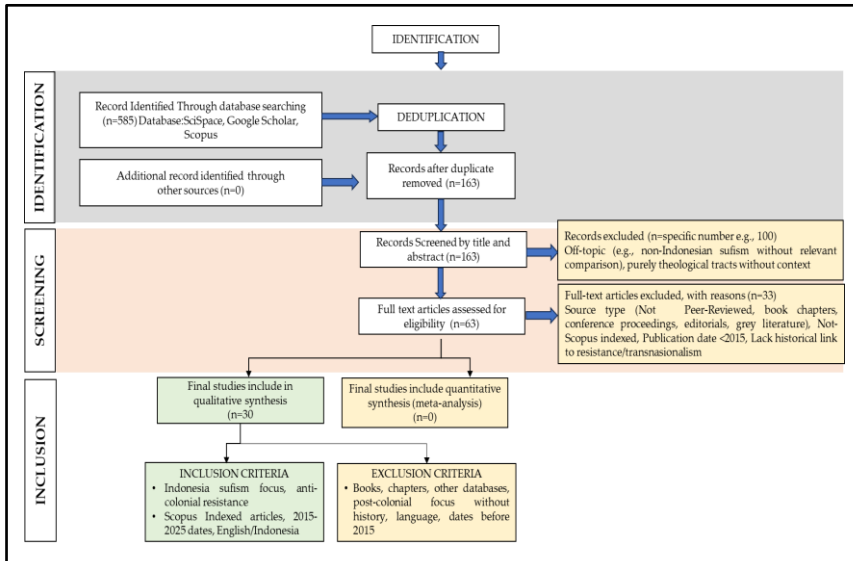


Figure 1. PRISMA guidelines for systematic literature reviews

Methodologically, according to the Figure 1 above, review follows PRISMA guidelines for systematic literature reviews. A comprehensive search was conducted across multiple databases including SciSpace, Google Scholar, and Scopus, using search terms related to Indonesian Sufism, tariqa networks, anti-colonial resistance, and transnational Islamic connections. The initial search yielded 585 papers, which were merged and deduplicated to produce 163 unique sources. Quality filters were applied to select Scopus-indexed journal articles published between 2015-2025, resulting in a final corpus of 30 papers that form the primary evidence base for this review.

The 30 selected articles underwent a qualitative thematic analysis to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within

²⁴ Dudung, "Religious Moderation," 42-56.

²⁵ Nur et al., "Sufism of Archipelago," 133-156.

the data.²⁶ The analysis followed a multi-stage process: first, an initial immersion in the texts through repeated reading to generate preliminary codes related to tariqa networks and anti-colonial movements. These codes were then collated into broader themes such as "transnational Islamic connections" and "historical resistance frameworks." To ensure the systematic rigor of the synthesis, a narrative synthesis approach was employed, which is particularly effective for aggregating diverse qualitative evidence into a coherent historical and sociological narrative.²⁷ This process allowed for the integration of findings across different historical periods and geographical locales within the Indonesian archipelago, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of Sufi influence on political resistance.

Regional Distribution of Sufi Orders across the Indonesian Archipelago

The spread of the Sufi order in Indonesia reflects the dynamic interplay between spirituality, social cohesion, and political resistance. In Java, orders such as Qadiriyyah and Naqshbandiyyah became centers of political mobilization against Dutch colonialism.²⁸ Meanwhile, Sumatra served as an intellectual gateway through doctrinal debates in Aceh, adaptive suluk practices in West Sumatra, and the spread of neo-Sufism Sammaniyyah thought through trade networks in South Sumatra.^{29,30} The region also exemplifies the translocal nature of

²⁶ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.

²⁷ M. Rodgers, et al., *Guidance on the Conduct of Narrative Synthesis in Systematic Reviews: A Comparison of Guidance-Led Narrative Synthesis Versus Meta-Analysis*. York: Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, University of York, n.d.. Accessed May 10, 2026.

²⁸ Rubaidi, et al., "Reinventing Waḥdat al-Wujūd: Locality, Cultural Catharsis, and Spirituality of Majelis Shalawat Muhammad in East Java," *Walisono: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 30, no. 1 (2022): 79-102.

²⁹ Ade Selvia, et al., "Praktek Suluk pada Ajaran Tarekat Naqshabandiyah Tahun 1905-2020 di Sumatera Barat," *Hijaz* 1, no. 3 (2022).

³⁰ Kariri and Ahmad Diki, "Gerakan tasawuf nusantara," *Aqlam:Journal of Islam and Plurality*, 7, no. 2 (2022).

modern Sufism. For instance, the Tariqah Naqshabandi Bayanullah (TNB) maintains organizational coherence between its center in Lombok and its various branches in Sulawesi through shared texts and regular communication.³¹ This interconnectedness allows orders to maintain their core spiritual identity while adapting to the diverse local cultures of the Sulawesi peninsula.³²

Kalimantan, specifically the Banjar region since the 18 century offers a unique case of how Sufism integrates with regional political structures and local ethics of Ghazalian ethics and Ibn Arabi's metaphysics.³³ Historically, these tariqas were not merely spiritual retreats but were deeply implicated in armed resistance against Dutch expansion.³⁴ Following the colonial era, Sufi leaders in South Kalimantan transitioned into roles as cultural brokers and community mediators, ensuring that Sufism remained a primary source of moral authority and social cohesion within the modern Indonesian state.³⁵

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³¹ Mark Woodward, "Tariqah Naqshabandi Bayanullah (TNB): Localization of a global sufi order in Lombok, Indonesia," *Review of the Middle East Studies* 51, no. 1 (2017): 55-65.

³² N.A. Rasyid, "Characteristics of Sufism Naqsyabandiyah Khalidiyah Tarekat in Indonesia: the Case of Central Sulawesi," *The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies* 8, no. 4 (2020).

³³ Mujiburrahman, "Tasawuf di Masyarakat Banjar: Kesenambungan dan Perubahan Tradisi Keagamaan," *Kanz Philosophia* 3, no. 2 (2013): 153-183.

³⁴ Nurhayati and Nurdin, "The Diaspora," 33-45.

³⁵ Wasino et al., "A Historical Perspective," 761-74. Irsad Akil, "Kontribusi Ulama Sufi Dalam Keutuhan NKRI." *PUTIH: Jurnal Pengetahuan Tentang Ilmu dan Hikmah* 6, no. 2 (2021): 59-76.

³⁶ Mujiburrahman, "Tasawuf di Masyarakat Banjar," 153-183.

³⁷ Nurhayati and Nurdin, "The Diaspora," 33-45.

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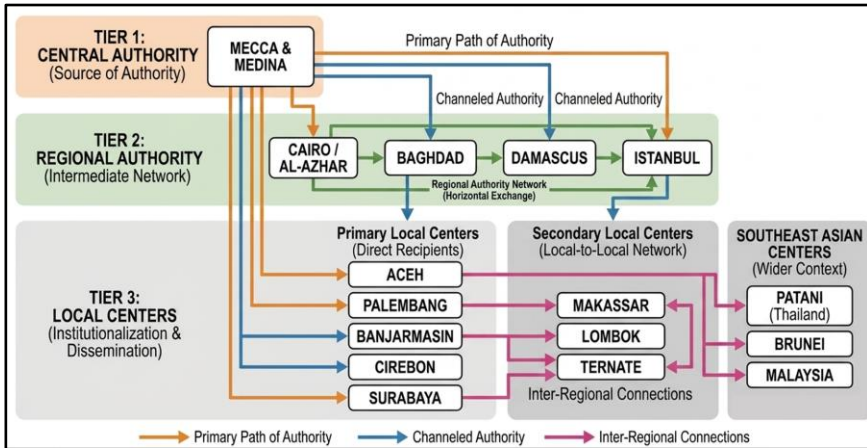


Figure 2. Regional Distribution of Sufism Across the Indonesian Archipelago

The hierarchical transmission of Islamic authority and the regional distribution of Sufism, as illustrated in figure 2 above, is structured into three interconnected levels that facilitate the historical flow of religious knowledge into the Indonesian Archipelago. At the apex of this system is Tier 1, the Central Authority, which identifies Mecca and Medina as the primary source of authority. This spiritual core initiates the dissemination process through a primary line of authority and various channels leading to both regional hubs and local centers.

The transmission then proceeds through Tier 2, known as the Regional Authority or Intermediate Network. This level consists of major intellectual centers including Cairo/Al-Azhar, Baghdad, Damascus, and Istanbul. These hubs are linked by a horizontal exchange network, allowing the circulation of scholarly knowledge across the Middle East before being transmitted to Southeast Asia.

The final stage of this process is Tier 3 (Local Centers), where the institutionalization and dissemination of Sufi

³⁸ Wasino et al., "A Historical Perspective," 761-74; Akil, "Kontribusi Ulama Sufi," 59-76.

teachings occur. This tier is subdivided into Primary Local Centers, such as Aceh, Palembang, Banjarmasin, Cirebon, and Surabaya, which serve as direct recipients of the authority from the higher tiers. From these hubs, the network expands to Secondary Local Centers like Makassar, Lombok, and Ternate through local-to-local networks. Finally, the reach of this spiritual web extends to the wider Southeast Asian context, encompassing Patani in Thailand, Brunei, and Malaysia. These various nodes are unified by inter-regional connections, forming a sophisticated religious infrastructure that defines the Sufi landscape across the archipelago.

Mystical Models, Practices, and Organizational Structures

The Indonesian archipelago hosts diverse Sufi orders, each with distinctive practices, doctrinal emphases, and organizational structures. The Qadiriyyah, one of the earliest orders to establish a presence in the region, played a foundational role in Islamization and developed strong associations with saint veneration and ethical Sufism.³⁹ Historical sources document Qadiriyyah's influence in Aceh, Java, and other regions from the 16th century onward, with the order's emphasis on the saintly model in spiritual pedagogy shaping broader patterns of Indonesian Islamic piety.⁴⁰

The Naqshbandiyyah order, particularly its Khalidiyya branch, became increasingly influential across the archipelago during the 19th-20th centuries.⁴¹ Distinctive Naqshbandiyyah practices include silent dhikr (dhikr khafi), rather than vocal remembrance, and suluk, a central element of spiritual formation. Longitudinal research on Naqshbandiyyah practice in Padang documents significant changes in suluk practices while core practices, such as silent dhikr, remain consistent.⁴²

The Syattariyah order, closely associated with Abdurrauf al-Singkili's 17th-century reforms in Aceh, emphasized integration

³⁹ Sabiq et al., "Social Solidarity," 23-44.

⁴⁰ Fauzi, "Menggali Neo-Sufisme," 45-68.

⁴¹ Faslah, "Corak Neo-Sufisme," 143-159.

⁴² Selvia, et al., "Praktek Suluk," 210-235.

of sharia and tasawuf within an orthodox neo-Sufi framework. Syattariyah teachings incorporated elements of Ibn Arabi's metaphysics while insisting on strict adherence to Islamic law, creating a model of orthodox mysticism that influenced subsequent Indonesian Sufi thought.⁴³

Khalwatiyah, particularly the Khalwatiyah Samman branch, developed a strong presence in Sulawesi with distinctive ritual practices and organizational features. Ethnographic research documents how Khalwatiyah Samman communities employ congregational rituals, distinctive dress including turbans, and staged initiation processes to create strong communal solidarity.⁴⁴

The Qadiriyyah wa Naqshbandiyyah, a syncretic order combining elements of two major tariqas, became particularly influential in Java during the 19th century. Dutch colonial authorities noted this order's capacity to mobilize large numbers of followers, with the Banten congregation documented as a source of concern as early as 1888.⁴⁵

Table 1. Sufi Orders (Tarekat) in Indonesia

Sufi Order	Region and Period	Key Characteristics
Qadiriyyah	Aceh & Java (16th Century+)	Focused on vocal dhikr, saint veneration, and ethical Sufism.
Syattariyah	Aceh (17th Century)	Known for integrating Sharia with Tasawuf (Orthodox Mysticism).
Naqshbandiyyah	Sumatra & Java (19th–20th Centuries)	Practiced silent dhikr (Khafi) and spiritual retreats (Suluk).
Khalwatiyah Samman	Sulawesi (19th-20th Centuries)	Emphasized congregational dhikr and communal solidarity.
Qadiriyyah wa Naqshbandiyyah	Java & Banten (19th Century)	A hybrid order combining both vocal and silent dhikr practices.

⁴³ Faslah, "Corak Neo-Sufisme," 143-159.

⁴⁴ Sabiq et al., "Social Solidarity," 23-44.

⁴⁵ Khaer, "Kebersinggungan Tarekat," 27-38.

Anti-Colonial Resistance and Political Mobilization

The roles of tariqas in anti-colonial struggles across the archipelago during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was not merely a peripheral religious phenomenon but a highly organized subaltern political force. The tariqas transformed from a purification institution (*tazkiyatun nafs*) into a political tool of resistance that was able to shake the hegemonic stability of the Dutch colonial regime. This phenomenon can be understood in depth through the synthesis between empirical history and various *grand theories* of political sociology.

First, the model of resistance of the tariqa's model of resistance relies fundamentally on Weber's theory of charismatic authority,⁴⁶ in which the figure of the murshid (sheikh) is regarded not merely as an administrator, but as a holder of sacred spiritual authority capable of creating a bond of transcendental loyalty beyond the traditional boundaries of kinship and social strata. In the dynamics of Indonesian history, this manifests itself in a network of tarekat that provides organizational infrastructure beyond the boundaries of kinship and social strata.⁴⁷ According to Berger, this relationship created a sacred contract⁴⁸ that allowed large-scale mass mobilization through transcendental loyalty, as seen in the support of the network of orders for Prince Diponegoro in the Java War (1825–1830) through the dialectic of *the sacred canopy* as a space for the formation of socioreligious meaning, and was sharpened archetypally by Myss⁴⁹ as a commitment of the soul to the divine mission. In the dynamics of Indonesian history, this idea is empirically manifested through Kartodirdjo's analysis of

⁴⁶ Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 241-245.

⁴⁷ Khaer, "Kebersinggungan Tarekat," 27–38.

⁴⁸ Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 33-35.

⁴⁹ Caroline Myss, *Sacred Contracts: Awakening Your Divine Potential* (New York: Transworld, 2010), 48.

peasant militancy based on messianic hope,⁵⁰ as reflected in the legitimacy conferred by the Shattariyah tariqa network upon Prince Diponegoro as the 'Queen of Justice' during the Java War (1825–1830),⁵¹ as well as Bruinessen's thought⁵² regarding the tariqa as a social infrastructure that transformed religious initiation into a clandestine sacred political contract. This absolute loyalty enabled large-scale mobilization and the execution of commands with military discipline, without requiring a complex formal bureaucracy that is susceptible to detection by colonial intelligence.

Second, the Rhizomatic Network Model explains the resilience of clandestine organizations. The second model of tariqa resistance can be analyzed through the lens of the Rhizomatic Network Model and theories of clandestine organizational resilience, where organizationally this pattern refers to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's theory of the Rhizome structure which is non-hierarchical and different from centralistic organization.⁵³ This nature of the rhizome allowed the tarekat in regions such as Banten, South Kalimantan, and East Java in the period 1850-1910 to remain resilient even though their key leaders were arrested, because local cells (khalifah) were able to function autonomously as resilient social infrastructure.⁵⁴ Through these mechanisms, religious activities such as collective dhikr and manaqib recitation were transformed into camouflage for clandestine operations for logistical coordination and the transmission of messages of

⁵⁰ Sartono Kartodirdjo, *The Peasants' Revolt of Banten in 1888: Its Conditions, Course and Sequel: A Case Study of Social Movements in Indonesia* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), 140-145

⁵¹ Wahyudhi, "Islam dan Gerakan Sosial," 31-42.

⁵² Martin van Bruinessen, *Naqshbandiyah Orders in Indonesia: Historical, Geographical, and Sociological Surveys* (Bandung: Mizan, 1992), 85-88.

⁵³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, ed. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 6-10.

⁵⁴ Martin van Bruinessen, "Shari'a Court, Tarekat and Religious Brotherhoods in the Dutch East Indies," *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 38, no. 82 (1993): 44-46.

resistance, thus creating a "slippery" political entity that was impossible to map completely by the colonial bureaucracy.⁵⁵

Third, from the perspective of Snow's Frame Alignment Theory, the tariqa succeeded in aligning Islamic spiritual doctrine with the realities of socio-economic oppression,⁵⁶. Resistance to high taxes and forced labor (*rodi*) is reframed in an eschatological narrative: the struggle against injustice to uphold God's order. The concept of *jihad fi sabilillah* is redefined by tariqas such as the Qadiriyya wa Naqshbandiyyah (TQN) not only as an inner war against lust (*jihad al-akbar*), but also as a physical obligation to defend the dignity of the community (*jihad al-asghar*). The Cilegon Rebellion of 1888 is a concrete example in which the economic motivation of the peasants was sublimated into the spirit of martyrdom. For the followers of the order, death on the battlefield was the door to eternal salvation, a belief that destroyed the effectiveness of the death penalty threat of colonial law. Here, the tarekat functions as a provider of *moral economy* that opposes the exploitation of colonial capitalism.

Fourth, the *Dual-Track Strategy Model*. The resilience of the order forced the Dutch colonial administration to adopt a strategy based on Hurgronje's Orientalist thought.⁵⁷ Hurgronje applied sociological theory to map Islam in the archipelago, where he distinguished between "Islam of Worship" and "Political Islam". The Dutch colonial authorities used the *Dual-Track Strategy Model*, which controlled militant orders through intelligence surveillance and exile, while trying to adopt purely quietist forms of mysticism to keep the masses away from the radical influence of the Murshids. Hurgronje labeled the network of the tarekat as an epidemic of indigenous peoples because he realized that the strength of the tarekat lay in the Sheikh's ability to transform abstract theological principles into *direct action*. However, these de-

⁵⁵ Kartodirdjo, *The Peasants' Revolt of Banten*, 158-160.

⁵⁶ David A. Snow et al., "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation," *American Sociological Review* 51, no. 4 (August 1986): 465, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095581>.

⁵⁷ Snouck C. Hurgronje, *Mecca in the Latter Part of the 19th Century: Daily Life, Customs and Learning of the Muslims of the East-Indian-Archipelago*, trans. J. H. Monahan (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 245-49.

politicization efforts often fail because for the adherents of the order, spiritual integrity is inseparable from social responsibility for justice.

Fifth, the Model of Passive Resistance and Cultural Independence (1900–1920). Entering the twentieth century, as colonial military power became more firmly established, the model of resistance of the order evolved into Passive Resistance. Referring to Scott's theory of the Hidden Transcripts, the institute created autonomous spaces in inland Islamic boarding schools that culturally rejected Western influenc. ⁵⁸ In South Kalimantan and some parts of Sumatra, networks of tariqas built independent economic and educational systems that broke the dependence on colonial structures. They rejected the acculturation of Dutch culture and continued to use the traditional initiation system as a way to maintain identity. This resistance is no longer in the form of an open armed attack, but rather a silent but massive civil disobedience, which ultimately lays the foundation for Indonesia's national consciousness in the future. This change in strategy from physical confrontation to strengthening the cultural base shows the adaptability of the order in dealing with the changing global political climate.

The new synthesis model that emerged from this analysis was the "Domatic Techno-Spiritual Agency", a mechanism in which the institute functioned not only as a vehicle for mysticism, but as a socio-political technology that transformed metaphysical energy into a decentralized empirical force. In this perspective, the transcendental loyalty Weber describes is not just blind obedience, but rather an internal communication mechanism that enables clandestine coordination without a single command center. The order created a hybrid space in which Berger's Sacred Canopy intersected with the Deleuzian Rhizome Structure, resulting in a cultural defense system capable of automatic "self-repair" when suppressed by colonial authorities. As a consequence, the order operates as a non-linear war machine that uses dhikr and ritual not only for spiritual escapism, but as an operational cipher to

⁵⁸ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 4–5.

maintain the integrity of the community from the penetration of Hurgronje's intelligence.

This strategy later evolved into the dialectic of liminal resistance, a condition in which the tariqa deliberately straddles the boundary between outward obedience and inner defiance in order to outwit the colonial bureaucracy. Through the synchronization of Snow's frame alignment, the tariqa succeeded in injecting a narrative of resistance into the deepest structure of the peasant consciousness, so that every act of economic resistance, such as tax refusal, becomes a sacred religious rite.⁵⁹ This phenomenon goes beyond Scott's concept of hidden transcripts because it not only hides the narrative of resistance, but transforms it into an "offensive symbolic capital" that paralyzes the rationale of colonial capitalism through the threat of martyrdom.⁶⁰ In the end, this model proves that the tariqas in the archipelago is the embodiment of an independent subaltern sovereignty, where spirituality serves as the primary political infrastructure that precedes and surpasses the conception of the modern nation-state.⁶¹

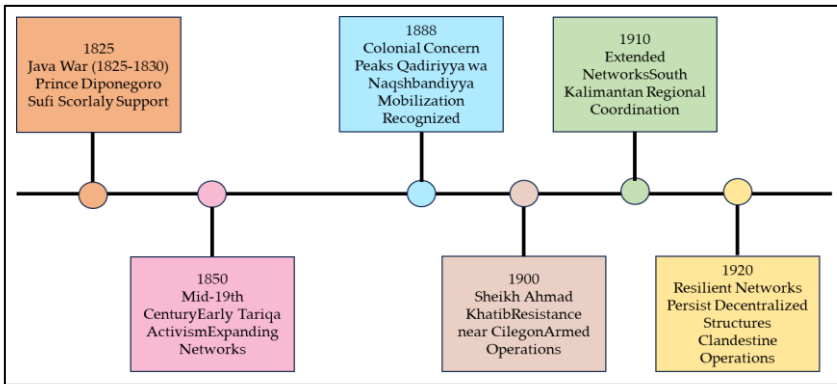


Figure 3. Timeline of Major Tariqa-Led Anti-Colonial Resistance Movements (1825–1920)

The timeline in Figure 3 illustrates the evolution of major Tariqa-led anti-colonial resistance movements in Indonesia from

⁵⁹ Snow et al., "Frame Alignment Processes," 465.

⁶⁰ Kartodirdjo, *The Peasants' Revolt*, 142.

⁶¹ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 4.

1825 to 1920, beginning with the Java War (1825-1830) supported by Sufi scholars under Prince Diponegoro. By the mid-nineteenth century (c. 1850), early *tariqa* activism had begun expanding its networks, leading to a peak in colonial concern by 1888 as the mobilization of the Qadiriyyah wa Naqshbandiyyah order had become a matter of official colonial concern. The movement continued into the early 20th century with armed operations led by Sheikh Ahmad Khatib near Cilegon in 1900, followed by the regional coordination of extended networks in South Kalimantan by 1910. Finally, by 1920, these movements transitioned into resilient, decentralized, and clandestine structures that persisted in their resistance against colonial rule. This series of heroic events confirms that the strength of the anti-colonial movement in the archipelago rests not only on military strategy but also on intellectual and spiritual connectivity that transcended geographical boundaries.

The transnational Sufi networks not only facilitated religious exchange but also systematically provided the organizational foundations that later enabled anti-colonial resistance across the Indonesian archipelago. Hadziq and Faiz demonstrate that Sufi orders possessed a religious authority that played a significant role in fostering anti-colonial spirit and shaping a *sufistic* and cultural Islamic style in Indonesia. They further reveal that the network of Middle Eastern and archipelagic Sufi scholars was created through trade, *da'wah*, marriage, arts, culture, and education, embedding Sufism deeply into the socio-cultural fabric of the region long before formal anti-colonial movements emerged.⁶²

The anti-colonial potential inherent in these networks was activated across multiple fronts. Kariri and Diki document how Sufi orders participated prominently in the Diponegoro War (1825–1830), where Prince Diponegoro was supported by *kyai*, *hajjis*, and the *pesantren* milieu, with *Kyai Maja* emerging as the rebellion's spiritual leader.⁶³ In Palembang, the Sammaniyah order led the Menteng War against Dutch forces in 1819, with Malay poetry depicting how the white-clad fighters prepared

⁶² Marsuki et al., "The Network," 201-224.

⁶³ Kariri and Ahmad Diki, "Gerakan Tasawuf di Nusantara," 156-178.

for jihad fi *sabilillah* through collective *dhikr* and *ratib* until reaching a state of spiritual ecstasy. Hadziq and Faiz's research further shows that tariqa members engaged in active interaction across the Indian Ocean in the name of a broader orthodoxy, and that the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, along with subsequent increases in steam shipping, exponentially accelerated the circulation of Southeast Asian pilgrims and, with them, anti-colonial ideas.

The organizational forms that emerged from transnational Sufi networks proved remarkably adaptable to political mobilization. Sabiq and colleagues' ethnographic study of the Khalwatiyah Samman order in Maros, Sulawesi, demonstrates how contemporary Sufi orders maintain the same solidarity-generating mechanisms documented in historical resistance movements, collective *dhikr* and *wirid*, which cultivate shared devotion; gotong royong, which strengthens communal bonds; and institutional expansion through education and charitable activities.⁶⁴ The order's history in South Sulawesi reveals continuous strategic engagement with political authority, from confronting heresy accusations in 1931 to navigating relationships with monarchical, colonial, and radical Islamist forces through cultural accommodation, intellectual and theological argumentation, and the mobilization of broad follower bases as social capital.⁶⁵

Contemporary Implications for Indonesian Islamic Studies

What transformed transnational networks into enduring vehicles for anti-colonial mobilization was the unique configuration of religious authority that Sufism established. Mohiuddin explains that the combination of genealogical legitimacy (unbroken chains of transmission tracing back to the Prophet), charismatic authority (demonstrated spiritual mastery of the *murshid*), and institutional structures (*khalifa* networks across dispersed geographical branches) creates stable authority

⁶⁴ Sabiq et al., "Social Solidarity," 23-44.

⁶⁵ Muhammad Arif et al., "From Ritual Community to Political Actor: The Transformation and Power Strategies of the Khalwatiyah Samman Order in South Sulawesi," *Jurnal Al-Dustur* 8, no. 2 (December 2025): 121, <https://doi.org/10.30863/aldustur.v8i2.10445>.

formations that can persist through political upheaval.⁶⁶ This authority proved politically potent because it combined spiritual legitimacy with organizational efficacy, a fusion that Tarrow identifies as central to sustained contentious politics, where collective challenges based on common purposes and social solidarities engage elites and opponents in durable interaction.⁶⁷ The Dutch colonial response, including Hurgronje's policy of declaring inner mystical teachings (*hakikat*) and Sufi orders (*tarekat*) to be forbidden, only confirmed the threat these networks posed.⁶⁸

In essence, the transnational Sufi networks examined earlier provided not only ideological content but the very scaffolding for anti-colonial resistance: a pre-existing organizational infrastructure linking villages to urban centers, establishing teacher-student chains across generations, and embedding practices of mutual aid that Scott would recognize as the "hidden transcript" of subordinate group resistance.⁶⁹

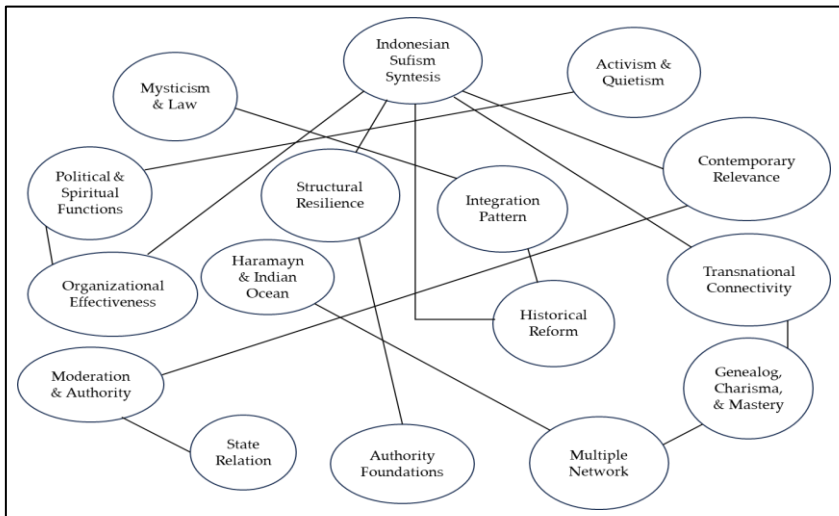


Figure 4. Synthesis of Key Themes: Integration of Major Findings from the Literature Review

⁶⁶ Mohiuddin, "Religious authority," 234-256.

⁶⁷ Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action, and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 23.

⁶⁸ Kariri and Ahmad Diki, "Gerakan Tasawuf di Nusantara," 156-178.

⁶⁹ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 4.

The synthesis of findings illustrated in Figure 4 demonstrates that Indonesian Sufism integrates historical Haramayn networks with structural resilience. By balancing mysticism and law with moderation, this framework ensures contemporary relevance and organizational effectiveness within diverse state relations.

First, the results of this study show that the transmission of Sufism to the archipelago did not depend solely on the Haramain (Mecca-Medina) as the sole center of authority, but also on the Indian Ocean network that operated through independent trade routes. This finding is very significant because it dismantles the assumption that Mecca is the only intellectual "qibla" for Jawi scholars. A comparison with studies that position the Haramain as the primary node reveals similarities in the recognition of the role of scholars such as Ahmad al-Qushashi and Ibrahim al-Kurani. However, these findings also challenge interpretations that understate the influence of the Indian subcontinent (e.g. Nuruddin al-Raniri who came from Gujarat). A key difference lies in the emphasis placed by previous research, which tends to separate the two pathways, whereas the present findings show that figures such as Abdus Shamad al-Palimbani were simultaneously connected to both networks. A new contribution of this study is the concept of multi-hub connectivity without hierarchy, which describes a Sufi network model that does not rely on a single absolute center of authority but rather on mutually reinforcing nodes. This theoretical refinement enriches *Wallerstein's* world-systems theory framework⁷⁰ framework by showing that the periphery (the archipelago) actually has the agency to select and synthesize various centers (Haramain, India, Baghdad, Istanbul) according to the local context.

Second, the central findings explain how bai'at (initiation) and suluk (spiritual retreat) function as mechanisms for generating solidarity, which was subsequently transformed into anti-colonial resistance. The process operates through bai'at, where a disciple takes an oath of absolute allegiance to the murshid, so that this bond goes beyond kinship or class ties. When the murshid

⁷⁰ Wallerstein. *World-systems Analysis: An Introduction* (New York: Duke University Press, 2004), 45.

declared resistance against the Dutch colonial government a religious obligation (*jihad*), the entire network of disciples and caliphs was automatically mobilized. A comparison with Wahyudhi's study in East Java and Sabiq et al.'s study of Khalwatiyah Samman in Sulawesi reveals similar findings that the organization of the tarekat is indeed effective in mobilizing the masses. However, these findings criticize the position that considers quietist (non-political) orders a separate category. The difference is that these findings argue that the category of "quietist" is a colonial construction, where the tarekat that has never been involved in open resistance still has the *potential for latent resistance* due to the same structure of bai'at. A new contribution is the concept of the dual capacity of Sufi organizations: each order possesses two intrinsic capacities (spiritual and political), and external factors (such as colonial policies or post-colonial moderation) determine which capacity is activated. This is an update of Tarrow's (1994) theory of collective mobilization⁷¹ which usually looks only at the structure of political opportunity; this article adds the sacred structure (bai'at) as an independent variable.

Third, the findings reveal that the teachings of Abdus Shamad al-Palimbani, Nawawi al-Bantani, and Muhammad al-Samman are not merely doctrinal refinements (integration of *wahdat al-wujud* with sharia), but rather a strategic response to colonial penetration. because it challenges the conventional narrative that neo-Sufism was merely an internal movement within Islam. A comparison with Kariri and Diki, who view neo-Sufism as a theological synthesis shows similarities in terms of the substance of the teachings (emphasis on sharia practice). However, the findings of this study are sharply different from those of Rohmawati et al., who argue that the integration of mysticism and law has existed since the early period of Islam in the archipelago. The fundamental difference is that the results of this study prove that the emphasis on "orthodoxy" in the 18th-19th centuries was strengthened because the Dutch colonialists used accusations of heterodoxy (especially against *wahdat al-wujud*) to

⁷¹ Tarrow, *Power in movement*, 24.

discredit the tarekat. Scholars such as al-Palimbani responded by formulating a Sufism that was resistant to criticism—that is, one that did not leave metaphysical traces that were easily attacked. A further theoretical contribution is the concept of defensive orthodoxy an update of Scott's (1990) theory⁷² of resistance on *the hidden transcript*. Scott focuses on hidden resistance, while the findings of this study suggest that the tariqa developed a *seemingly orthodox public transcript* to protect *hidden transcripts* in the form of more esoteric mystical practices. This paved the way for a re-reading of the Nusantara Sufi texts as a documents of epistemic resistance.

Fourth, the most striking finding from the results of this analysis is the documentation of how the practice of Naqshbandiyyah suluk in Padang (1905-2020) was able to adapt to modernization without losing its essence. This can be done by identifying three mechanisms: (1) genealogical legitimacy (uninterrupted sanad to the Prophet), (2) adaptive charismatic authority of the murshid, and (3) ecological permeability, the ability to change the duration of the suluk from months to weeks, or to adapt in harmony with modern routines. A comparison with Selvia et al. shows similarities in the observation that dhikr khafi (silence) remains constant while the outer form changes. Woodward (TNB study) is also in line with the importance of telecommunication communication to maintain coherence across islands. Mohiuddin's focus on religious authority is also in line but more abstract. The difference of the results of this study is that it rejects the traditional vs. modern dichotomy that previous researchers often used. Instead, he offers the concept of flexible hierarchical resilience, an organizational model in which the hierarchy (murshid-caliph-disciples) remains spiritually rigid, but highly flexible in operational procedures and social adaptations. The finding proves that sacred structures are actually more resilient because loyalty is not based on material incentives but on transcendental bonds. Its strategic contribution, offering an alternative model for civil society organizations in an era of disruption, long-term stability does not require total flexibility, but

⁷² Scott, *Domination and the arts of resistance*, 5.

rather a combination of an unchanging core (principles, sanad) and highly adaptive periphery (method, duration, media).

Conclusion

This study concludes that the tarekat in the archipelago is not only a mystical community, but has also transformed into a central transnational socio-political network in the Dutch anti-colonial resistance from the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century. Based on the analysis of various literature references (2015-2025), it was found that the four main orders of the Qadiriyyah, Naqshbandiyyah, Syattariyah, and Khalwatiyah tariqas spread across the islands of Java, Sumatra, Sulawesi, and Kalimantan have been connected to Islamic scientific centers in Makkah, Medina, Cairo, and India through the route of Hajj, manuscript circulation, and a continuous chain of teachers (sanad).

Organizationally, the tariqas has a hierarchical structure based on the charismatic authority of the murshid and the bonds of bai'at that go beyond the bonds of kinship. This structure became the infrastructure of collective mobilization, as evidenced in the Java War (1825-1830), the Menteng War (1819), and the Cilegon Rebellion (1888). The concept of jihad coupled with resistance to taxes and forced labor, created an effective moral-economic framework against colonial hegemony.

Furthermore, the results of this study identify a model of rhizomatic resilience in which the tariqas is able to adapt and recover from oppression because local cells (caliphs) function autonomously. In the 20th century, the strategy shifted from open resistance to passive resistance based on education and independent economics in Islamic boarding schools. This finding proves that Indonesian Sufism has a dual capacity, namely spiritual and political which play a dual role based on historical dynamics.

In conclusion, the tariqas in the archipelago is a form of subaltern sovereignty that precedes modern nation-states. This historical heritage is relevant for contemporary Indonesia in understanding religious moderation, social cohesion, and the potential of religious organizations as resilient and adaptive agents of change. Further research is needed to map the network

of tariqas in the eastern region of Indonesia such as in the Spice Islands in Maluku, North Maluku and Papua.

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