



## Ulama Networks And The Development Of The Syattariyah Sufi Order In Sumatra The Seventeenth To The Twenty-First Century

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### Abstract:

The Syattariyah Sufi order is one of the tariqas that played an important role in the development of Islam in Sumatra through networks of scholars and intellectual traditions. Syattariyah scholars functioned not only as practitioners of Sufism, but also as agents of *da'wah*, community leaders, and guardians of local intellectual heritage. This study aims to analyze how scholarly networks shaped, strengthened, and reproduced the continuity of the order in Sumatra through teacher-disciple relationships, the transmission of knowledge, and socio-religious roles. The method employed is a qualitative-historical approach with library research on Sufi manuscripts, genealogical chains of transmission (*sanad*), scholarly works, and academic literature. The findings show that the Syattariyah order developed as a regional network of scholars connecting Aceh, Minangkabau, and Palembang through traditional educational institutions, the circulation of manuscripts, and the legitimization of spiritual lineage. This article emphasizes the uniqueness of the Syattariyah order as an institutionalized socio-intellectual system that is adaptive to colonialism and modernity, and remains relevant in shaping local Islamic identity into the contemporary period.

**Keywords:** Syattariyah Sufi Order, Ulama, Intellectual Networks, Local Islam.

### Abstrak:

Tarekat Syattariyah merupakan salah satu tarekat yang berperan penting dalam perkembangan Islam di Sumatra melalui jaringan ulama dan tradisi keilmuannya. Para ulama Syattariyah tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai pengamal tasawuf, tetapi juga sebagai agen dakwah, pemimpin masyarakat, dan penjaga warisan intelektual lokal. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis bagaimana jaringan ulama membentuk, menguatkan, dan mereproduksi keberlangsungan tarekat di Sumatra melalui relasi gurumurid, transmisi keilmuan, serta peran sosial-keagamaan. Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif-historis dengan kajian pustaka terhadap manuskrip tarekat, silsilah sanad, karya ulama, serta literatur akademik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Tarekat Syattariyah berkembang sebagai jaringan ulama regional yang menghubungkan Aceh, Minangkabau, dan Palembang melalui institusi pendidikan tradisional, sirkulasi manuskrip, dan legitimasi sanad. Artikel ini menegaskan keunikan tarekat Syattariyah sebagai sistem sosial-intelektual yang terlembaga, adaptif terhadap kolonialisme dan modernitas, serta relevan dalam membentuk identitas Islam lokal hingga masa kontemporer.

**Kata Kunci:** Tarekat Syattariyah, Ulama, Jaringan Intelektual, Islam Lokal.

## INTRODUCTION

The Syattariyah Sufi order first developed in the regions of India and Persia before spreading to the Malay-Indonesian archipelago through ulama who maintained transregional connections, particularly via the pilgrimage (*hajj*) routes and educational networks centered in major Islamic learning hubs such as Mecca and Medina. In Sumatra, the dissemination of this order was closely associated with prominent figures such as Shaykh Burhanuddin of Ulakan in Minangkabau and Shaykh Abdul Rauf as-Singkili in Aceh, both of whom are

recognized as early transmitters of Syattariyah Sufi teachings.<sup>1</sup> They were not merely practitioners of the order; rather, they established Islamic educational institutions, produced scholarly works, and cultivated intellectual relationships with their students, thereby forming sustained networks of Islamic scholarship.<sup>2</sup>

The presence of the Syattariyah order in these regions can be traced through textual and institutional sources. In Aceh, Syattariyah teachings developed within the *dayah* (Islamic boarding schools) under the guidance of Shaykh Abdul Rauf as-Singkili, as reflected in his seminal work *Umdat al-Muhtājīn*, which became a key reference for Sufi instruction in the seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup> In Minangkabau, the center of the Syattariyah order was rooted in *Surau* Ulakan, founded by Shaykh Burhanuddin, which continues to serve as a locus for ritual practice and the transmission of the order.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, in Palembang, the influence of the Syattariyah order is evident in Malay-Jawi manuscripts and in the ulama networks associated with the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate during the eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

When compared to other major Sufi orders such as the *Naqshbandiyah* and *Qadiriyyah*, which also exerted significant influence in the archipelago, the Syattariyah order demonstrates distinctive characteristics. Doctrinally, it integrates elements of both philosophical and practical Sufism within a relatively moderate framework that remains open to local contexts.<sup>6</sup> In practice, the Syattariyah order exhibits flexibility in accommodating local customs, as exemplified by the Minangkabau principle *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah* (custom founded upon Islamic law, Islamic law founded upon the Qur'an). Furthermore, the order played a role in cultural resistance to Dutch colonial hegemony, particularly through educational institutions and religious rituals that fostered communal solidarity.<sup>7</sup>

Within the colonial context, Syattariyah ulama networks contributed to the formation of culturally grounded resistance through education and ritual practices. In Minangkabau, Syattariyah *surau* functioned as centers of traditional Islamic education that preserved the authority of ulama against Dutch colonial intervention in the early nineteenth century, especially in the aftermath of the *Padri* War. In Aceh, *dayah* networks led by Sufi scholars served as centers of religious legitimacy for resistance against Dutch colonialism.<sup>8</sup>

The role of ulama in the development of the Syattariyah order cannot be separated from the broader social, political, and religious dynamics of Sumatran society. These ulama acted

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<sup>1</sup> Roni Faslah, *Corak Neo-Sufisme Ulama Tarekat Syattariyah: Studi Jaringan Ulama Nusantara Abad Ke-17*, 3, no. 2 (2016): 143, <https://doi.org/10.33650/at-turas.v3i2.186>.

<sup>2</sup> Dudung Abdurahmandan Syafian Nur, *Sufisme Nusantara: Sejarah Pemikiran Dan Gerakan* (Ombak, 2019), 20.

<sup>3</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII–XVIII* (Kencana, 2003), 192.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah Di Indonesia* (Mizan, 1992), 112.

<sup>5</sup> Yasirul Musyaffa dan M. Syukron Jazilah, *Pemikiran Tasawuf K. H. Raden Abdullah Bin Nuh Dan Relevansinya Dalam Konteks Kehidupan Era Modern*, (Pasuruan) 4, no. 1 (2025): 54, <https://ejournal.uiidalwa.ac.id/index.php/batuthah/article/view/2456/955>.

<sup>6</sup> Muhammad Noupal, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah Di Indonesia Abad 19 Dari Ortodoksi Ke Politisasi*, 22, no. 2 (2016): 297, <https://doi.org/10.19109/intizar.v22i2.943>.

<sup>7</sup> R Faslah, *Islam, Adat, Dan Tarekat Syattariyah Di Minangkabau*, 6, no. 2 (2020): 19, <http://ejournal.stisbima.ac.id/index.php/ittihad/article/view/32>.

<sup>8</sup> Christine Dobbin, *Islamic Revivalism in a Changing Peasant Economy: Central Sumatra, 1784-1847* (Curzon Press, 1983), 98.

not only as spiritual heirs but also as educators, community leaders, authors of religious texts, and mediators between local societies and the global Islamic world.<sup>9</sup> Strong teacher-disciple relationships gave rise to networks that were not only vertical but also horizontal, linking different regions through figures responsible for disseminating the teachings of the order.<sup>10</sup> Through these networks, the values and doctrines of the Syattariyah Sufi order were transmitted widely and sustained across generations.

This literature-based research on the Syattariyah Sufi order focuses on the role of ulama networks in its dissemination and development in Sumatra. The primary objective of this study is to trace the forms, patterns, and dynamics of Syattariyah ulama networks and to examine their impact on the socio-religious life of communities across various regions of Sumatra. Employing a historical approach, this article seeks to explain the strategic role of ulama in maintaining the continuity of Syattariyah teachings while simultaneously strengthening socio-religious structures amid changing historical contexts.

Previous studies on the Syattariyah order in several parts of Sumatra include Hamka's work on surau and Sufi orders in Minangkabau,<sup>11</sup> Azyumardi Azra's research on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ulama networks,<sup>12</sup> and Martin van Bruinessen's studies on the dynamics of Sufi orders in Indonesia.<sup>13</sup> However, most of these works tend to emphasize doctrinal aspects or the intellectual biographies of individual figures, and they do not explicitly examine how ulama networks functioned as the primary medium for the dissemination and consolidation of the Syattariyah order across different regions of Sumatra. Accordingly, this article proposes an approach that places greater emphasis on patterns of scholarly relations and networks of religious authority as strategies of dissemination and social transformation.

Although Azra<sup>14</sup> highlights the macro-level transregional networks connecting Nusantara and the Middle East, his analysis does not specifically map the internal mechanisms of particular Sufi order networks at the regional level in Sumatra. Similarly, van Bruinessen focuses more broadly on the dynamics of Sufi orders in the Indonesian context without closely examining teacher-disciple relationships, the circulation of manuscripts, and the educational institutions of the Syattariyah order across Aceh, Minangkabau, and Palembang.<sup>15</sup>

In contrast to earlier studies that generally situate the Syattariyah order within doctrinal, biographical, or regionally fragmented frameworks, this article offers a new perspective by conceptualizing the Syattariyah order as an interregional network of ulama across Sumatra,

<sup>9</sup> F Rahmatillah, "Jejaring Ritual Dan Perkembangan Fakultas Ushuluddin Dan Filsafat Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Darussalam Banda Aceh" (Skripsi, Fakultas Ushuluddin dan Filsafat, Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, 2023), 45.

<sup>10</sup> Mabda Dzikara, "Jaringan Keilmuan Guru Tharīqah 'Alawiyyah Di Betawi Abad Ke-19 Dan 20 M'" (Tesis, Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, 2020), 35.

<sup>11</sup> M Rusydi, *Transformasi Tarekat Syattariyah Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Masyarakat Di Desa Sanggaran Agung Kecamatan Danau Kerinci Kabupaten Kerinci*, 1, no. 1 (2021): 122, <http://repository.iainbengkulu.ac.id/7528/>.

<sup>12</sup> Lukman Hakim, dkk, *Analisis Historiografi Terhadap Pemikiran Azyumardi Azra Dalam Jaringan Ulama*, 18, no. 2 (2020): 517, <https://doi.org/10.31291/jlka.v18i2.795>.

<sup>13</sup> Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah Di Indonesia*, 247.

<sup>14</sup> Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII–XVIII*, 9.

<sup>15</sup> Martin Van Bruinessen, *Sufi Orders in Indonesia, Dalam The Oxford Handbook of Sufism*, Ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (Oxford University Press, 2014), 620.

constructed through mechanisms of scholarly transmission, Sufi lineages (*sanad*), manuscript circulation, and traditional educational institutions. Specifically, this study maps how Syattariyah ulama networks operated regionally between Aceh, Minangkabau, and Palembang through teacher disciple relations, the mobility of scholars, and the circulation of Sufi manuscripts. By tracing the interconnections among centers of Islamic learning such as *dayah*, *surau*, and *meunasah*, this article demonstrates that the spread of the Syattariyah order was not merely an individual spiritual process but an institutionalized socio-intellectual system. Furthermore, this study expands the analysis by incorporating socio-political dimensions and contemporary transformations of the order, thereby understanding the Syattariyah order not only as a historical legacy of Islam in the Malay-Indonesian world but also as an adaptive and resilient religious network that continues to shape local Islamic identities amid colonialism, modernization, and ongoing social change.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative historical approach, aiming to trace the development of the Syattariyah Sufi Order in Sumatra through networks of ulama who functioned as agents of dissemination and socio-religious transformation. This approach is chosen because it aligns with the nature of the data, which is narrative and interpretative, and oriented toward the reconstruction of past events that have influenced the formation of local Islamic social and religious systems.

The data sources in this study are divided into two categories: primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources include local Islamic manuscripts (*tariqa* manuscripts). The manuscripts examined originate from several collections, including the *Dayah* Tanoh Abee Collection (Aceh), the *Surau* Ulakan Collection (Padang Pariaman), and the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia.<sup>16</sup> The manuscript *Umdat al-Muhtajin* analyzed in this study refers to PNRI manuscript ML 401, while *Mir'at al-Mukminin* is obtained from a copied manuscript from the *Surau* Ulakan collection,<sup>17</sup> Other primary sources include works authored by Syattariyah ulama, genealogies (*sanad* of the *tariqa*), and biographical records of prominent *tariqa* figures. Among the important manuscripts examined are *Mir'at al-Mukminin* by Shaykh Burhanuddin Ulakan and *Umdat al-Muhtajin* by Shaykh Abdul Rauf Singkel. Secondary sources consist of books and scholarly journal articles that discuss the Syattariyah Sufi Order, networks of ulama, and socio-religious dynamics in Sumatra.<sup>18</sup>

Data collection is conducted through a systematic and focused literature review. This review covers relevant printed and digital materials, including local archives that preserve historical documentation of ulama and Sufi orders in Aceh, Minangkabau, and Palembang. The collected data are then analyzed using descriptive and analytical historiographical methods.

Manuscript analysis is carried out using a basic philological approach, which includes identifying the origin of the manuscripts, comparing contents across different copies, and verifying the scholarly lineage (*sanad*) recorded in the texts. This approach aims to ensure the

<sup>16</sup> “Katalog Naskah Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia, Jilid IV.,” n.d.

<sup>17</sup> Oman Fathurahman, *Filologi Dan Islam Indonesia* (Kencana, 2015), 73.

<sup>18</sup> Sirajul Uhad, “Dinamika Tarekat Syathariyah Di Sumatera Barat Tahun 1963-2020” (Tesis, Universitas Andalas, 2022), 35.

validity of the transmission of Syattariyah teachings and to avoid ahistorical interpretations of the *tariqa* texts.

The theoretical framework employed to analyze the ulama networks is the intellectual network theory, as developed by Azyumardi Azra in his studies on the connections between Southeast Asian ulama and the Middle East.<sup>19</sup> Through this framework, the study seeks to understand how teacher-student relationships, the transmission of knowledge, and the mobility of ulama shaped socio-intellectual structures that transcend geographical boundaries and historical periods. This theory allows the analysis to move beyond individual biographies to trace networks of influence among ulama that sustain the continuity of *tariqa* teachings within society.

Overall, this methodological approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of Syattariyah ulama networks in shaping the social, educational, and religious structures of Sumatran society, as well as their contribution to strengthening local Islamic identity amid the forces of colonialism and modernization.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Historical Origins and Development of the Syattariyah Sufi Order in Sumatra (17th-21st Centuries)

The Syattariyah Sufi Order is one of the Sufi traditions that originated in the regions of Persia and India and later spread widely throughout the Islamic world, including the Indonesian Archipelago. Genealogically, this order traces its origins to its founding figure, Shaykh Abdullah Shattar, a Sufi from Transoxiana who lived in the fifteenth century. From his name emerged the term “Syattariyah,” which denotes a distinctive Sufi order characterized by a particular approach to mysticism that emphasizes direct and intensive spiritual experience. In *Umdat al-Muhtajin*, Shaykh Abdul Rauf affirms that the path of the Syattariyah Order is a “*ṭarīqah al-sulūk al-sarī‘ah*” (the path of rapid spiritual wayfaring), with a strong emphasis on silent remembrance (*dhikr sirr*) and awareness of divine unity (*tawḥīd*) as the core of Sufi practice.<sup>20</sup>

The spread of this order from Central Asia to India was largely facilitated by itinerant Sufis who combined missionary activities with spiritual practice within the local context of Indian Muslim societies. The Syattariyah Order later assumed a more systematic form under prominent Sufi figures in India, such as Muhammad Ghawth and Shaykh Baha’uddin. From India, the teachings of the Syattariyah Order spread to the Holy Cities of Mecca, where many ulama from the Nusantara pursued their religious education.<sup>21</sup> One of the main channels through which this order entered the Nusantara was the network of ulama who had studied in Mecca and Medina, such as Shaykh Burhanuddin Ulakan from Minangkabau and Shaykh Abdul Rauf as-Singkili from Aceh. These two figures played a central role in the dissemination of the Syattariyah Order in Sumatra from the late seventeenth century onward.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Hakim, dkk, *Analisis Historiografi Terhadap Pemikiran Azyumardi Azra Dalam Jaringan Ulama*, 517.

<sup>20</sup> Syekh Abdul Rauf as-Singkili, *Umdat Al-Muhtajin Ila Suluk Maslak al-Mufridin*, Ed. Oman Fathurahman (Pusat Bahasa, 2008), 45.

<sup>21</sup> Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah Di Indonesia*, 247.

<sup>22</sup> Faslāh, *Corak Neo-Sufisme Ulama Tarekat Syattariyah: Studi Jaringan Ulama Nusantara Abad Ke-17*, 23.

## The Arrival and Dissemination of the Syattariyah Sufi Order in Sumatra

The introduction of the Syattariyah Sufi Order into Sumatra cannot be separated from the dynamics of ulama networks that connected the centers of Islamic learning in the Middle East with the Nusantara during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Mecca and Medina, as the two holy cities, functioned as intellectual hubs that brought together scholars from various parts of the Islamic world, including India, Persia, and Southeast Asia. It was within these settings that the transmission of Sufi teachings among them the Syattariyah Order took place, from the shaykhs who were the inheritors of the order to their students, who later disseminated these teachings in their respective homelands.<sup>23</sup>

Among the key figures who pioneered the spread of the Syattariyah Order in Sumatra was Shaykh Abdul Rauf as-Singkili. He was a scholar from Singkil, Aceh, who studied in Mecca and Medina for more than nineteen years and received authorization (*ijāzah*) in various branches of Islamic knowledge, including Sufism. Within the Syattariyah tradition, Shaykh Abdul Rauf is known as a disciple of Shaykh Ahmad al-Qushashi and Ibrahim al-Kurani, two prominent Sufi figures who served as major conduits for the transmission of Sufi teachings to Southeast Asia.<sup>24</sup> After returning to Aceh, he developed the Syattariyah Order through *dayah* (Islamic educational institutions) and guided many students from different regions of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula.

Another prominent figure was Shaykh Burhanuddin Ulakan, a scholar from Ulakan, Pariaman, in Minangkabau, who is believed to have been a disciple or at least a spiritual successor of Shaykh Abdul Rauf. Shaykh Burhanuddin played a significant role in disseminating the Syattariyah Order to both coastal and inland areas of Minangkabau. He established *surau* that served as centers for Syattariyah education, one of the most notable being *Surau* Ulakan, which remains a well-known site of pilgrimage and spiritual activity for the Syattariyah Order in West Sumatra.<sup>25</sup> This *surau* became a base for training disciples who subsequently spread the teachings to various *nagari* (villages) throughout Minangkabau.

The dissemination of the order continued to expand into other regions such as Riau, Jambi, Bengkulu, and Palembang through disciples who possessed recognized scholarly and spiritual lineages (*sanad*) linked to these two principal figures. The Syattariyah Order also spread beyond Sumatra via port cities and trade routes that served as gateways for religious interaction among merchants, scholars, and Sufi communities.

Within the social structures of Minangkabau and Acehnese societies, the Syattariyah Order functioned not only as a religious practice but also as a social institution that played an important role in maintaining local Islamic identity. The *surau* and *dayah* that served as centers of Syattariyah activity functioned simultaneously as educational institutions, ritual centers, and sites for the regeneration of ulama.<sup>26</sup> Through this structure, the dissemination of the order proceeded in a systematic and institutionalized manner.

In general, the entry of the Syattariyah Order into Sumatra can be mapped through two main axes: Aceh as the initial gateway for direct transmission from the Middle East, and

<sup>23</sup> Faslāh, *Islam, Adat, Dan Tarekat Syattariyah Di Minangkabau*, 25.

<sup>24</sup> Suniah, "Kritik Terhadap Tarekat: Kajian Terhadap Pemikiran Sayyid Usman Bin Yahya" (Skripsi, Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, 2015), 35.

<sup>25</sup> Faslāh, *Islam, Adat, Dan Tarekat Syattariyah Di Minangkabau*, 30.

<sup>26</sup> Faslāh, *Corak Neo-Sufisme Ulama Tarekat Syattariyah: Studi Jaringan Ulama Nusantara Abad Ke-17*, 143.

Minangkabau as the center for the expansion of its teachings through networks of *surau*. From these two regions, the teachings of the Syattariyah Order spread to various areas in southern and eastern Sumatra. This process of dissemination took place through teacher-student relationships and social bonds based on ethnicity, kinship, and customary communities.

### **The Core Teachings of the Syattariyah Sufi Order**

Doctrinally, the Syattariyah Sufi Order possesses fundamental principles that distinguish it from other Sufi orders. One of its main characteristics is its emphasis on a rapid and direct spiritual path, in contrast to other orders that stress a more gradual and incremental process of spiritual advancement. The teachings of the Syattariyah Order promote specific forms of *dhikr* that are intensive in nature, accompanied by a profound understanding of the concepts of divine unity (*tawhīd*). In addition, this order emphasizes self-emptying, purification of the heart, and alignment with the divine will, which are pursued through spiritual disciplines and the practice of silent remembrance (*dhikr sirr*).

In matters of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and theology (*aqīdah*), adherents of the Syattariyah Order continue to adhere to the Shafī‘i school of law and Ash‘ari theology, in accordance with the broader *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah* tradition prevalent in the Nusantara. Spiritually, however, greater emphasis is placed on deep inner experience, with the spiritual master (*shaykh*) serving as the primary guide. Within this order, the lineage (*silsilah* or *sanad*) the chain linking teacher to disciple holds crucial importance, as it functions both as a source of spiritual legitimacy and as a means of transmitting the teachings.<sup>27</sup>

The teachings of the Syattariyah Order also contain doctrinal elements that are symbolic and metaphysical in nature. For example, the concept of the seven levels of existence (*martabat tujuh*) is employed as a framework for attaining *ma‘rifah* (gnosis), referring to the hierarchy of creation and the manifestation of God in the world. Nevertheless, in its practical application in Sumatra, these teachings were often adapted to local cultural contexts and articulated in simpler language and approaches, particularly in instruction conducted within *surau* and *dayah*.

In the Minangkabau region, the teachings of the Syattariyah Order developed through the *surau* system as both educational and spiritual institutions. In Aceh, the instruction of the order took place in traditional *dayah*, where collective *dhikr* and initiation (*bay‘ah*) into the order formed an integral part of the religious life of the community. The presence of the Syattariyah Order in Palembang is also documented in local manuscripts and in the activities of ulama who maintained networks with other centers in northern and western Sumatra.<sup>28</sup>

### **The Network of Syattariyah Sufi Order Ulama in Sumatra from the 17th to the 21st Century**

One of the most important factors in the growth and sustainability of the Syattariyah Sufi Order in Sumatra is the existence of strong networks of ulama established through teacher-student relationships, or chains of scholarly lineage (*sanad*). Within the context of a Sufi order, *sanad* does not merely refer to the transmission of knowledge, but also to the

<sup>27</sup> Zainal Hidayat, *Berkah Di Makam Wali: Narasi Kehidupan Khādim Tarekat* (Pustaka Pelajar, 2019), 28.

<sup>28</sup> Rahmatillah, “Jejaring Ritual Dan Perkembangan Fakultas Ushuluddin Dan Filsafat Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Darussalam Banda Aceh,” 30.

transmission of spiritual legitimacy that connects a *murshid* to the founder of the order and ultimately to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).<sup>29</sup>

Shaykh Abdul Rauf as-Singkili, as discussed above, was one of the key figures who served as the initial hub of the Syattariyah ulama network in Sumatra. From his center of learning in Aceh, he guided numerous disciples who later became agents of dissemination in their respective regions. This scholarly lineage is recorded in several ancient manuscripts and is further reinforced by oral traditions that continue to be preserved within Syattariyah communities.<sup>30</sup> Among his prominent disciples was Shaykh Burhanuddin Ulakan in Minangkabau, who subsequently transmitted the lineage of teachings to his own students along the western coastal regions of West Sumatra.

This network developed organically through educational institutions such as *surau* in Minangkabau, *dayah* in Aceh, and *pesantren* in Palembang. Each center of learning served a dual function: as a place for instruction in Syattariyah teachings and as a center for the training of disciples who would later be sent to other regions to spread the order.<sup>31</sup> The transmission of teachings occurred not only orally, but also through written works, particularly in the form of Sufi manuscripts composed in Arabic and Jawi. One notable example of manuscript circulation is *Umdat al-Muhtajin*, which was copied in Aceh in the late seventeenth century and later found in copied versions in *Surau* Ulakan and the Palembang region in the eighteenth century. This circulation demonstrates the continuity of transmission through the networks of Shaykh Abdul Rauf and Shaykh Burhanuddin.<sup>32</sup>

Several Sufi texts that served as key references for the Syattariyah Order in Sumatra include works authored by Shaykh Abdul Rauf himself, such as *Umdat al-Muhtajin*, as well as classical Syattariyah texts from India and Persia that were translated into Malay.<sup>33</sup> These works were repeatedly copied in various *surau*, used as teaching materials, and reflect the intellectual connections among ulama across different regions. The processes of manuscript copying and dissemination further strengthened scholarly networks and formed a kind of intellectual distribution system linking multiple areas.

Interregional connections within the Syattariyah network are evident in the mobility of ulama and disciples who traversed major regions such as Aceh, Minangkabau, and Palembang. Minangkabau scholars, for instance, often pursued their studies in Aceh before returning to establish *surau* in their home regions. At the same time, the influence of Syattariyah teachings from Minangkabau can be observed in manuscripts found in Palembang and Jambi, indicating continuity and cross-regional influence.

In Palembang, the network of Syattariyah ulama developed within the context of the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate in the eighteenth century, where Sufi scholars played an integral role in the religious structure of the court. Several Malay-Jawi Sufi manuscripts circulating in Palembang reveal a strong influence of Syattariyah teachings connected to

<sup>29</sup> Rusydi, *Transformasi Tarekat Syattariyah Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Masyarakat Di Desa Sanggaran Agung Kecamatan Danau Kerinci Kabupaten Kerinci*, 122.

<sup>30</sup> Damanhuri, "Akhlah Perspektif Pemikiran Tasawuf Abdurrauf As-Singkili" (Disertasi, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2011), 40.

<sup>31</sup> Rita Diana, "Jaringan Pendidikan Syekh Haji Bahauddin Tawar Dan Perkembangan Di Wilayah Kesukuan Singkil" (Skripsi, Fakultas Ushuluddin dan Filsafat, Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, 2018), 35.

<sup>32</sup> Anthony Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra: Atjeh, the Netherlands and Britain, 1858-1898* (Oxford University Press, 1969), 64.

<sup>33</sup> Damanhuri, "Akhlah Perspektif Pemikiran Tasawuf Abdurrauf As-Singkili," 306.

Minangkabau and Aceh. These relationships indicate that Palembang was not a peripheral region, but rather an important node within the Syattariyah ulama network of southern Sumatra.<sup>34</sup>

In many cases, disciples who have received authorization (*ijāzah*) in the teachings of the Syattariyah Sufi Order from their *murshid* carry this spiritual authority with them to establish new centers in other regions. They bring with them the *ijāzah* of the order, which displays a continuous lineage tracing back to the founder of the order and serves as an essential form of legitimacy within the Sufi tradition. This practice reinforces the identity of the order as a network that is hierarchical in structure yet inclusive in nature.

The network of Syattariyah ulama in Sumatra also functions as a bridge between local religious authority and the global Islamic scholarly system. Through this network, exchanges of ideas, pedagogical methods, and processes of refinement and adaptation of Sufi teachings occur in accordance with local contexts. Syattariyah ulama in Sumatra demonstrate a notable ability to translate complex metaphysical doctrines into everyday religious practices without diminishing their esoteric significance.

Up to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the network of Syattariyah ulama in Sumatra has not experienced significant decline; instead, it has shown a strong capacity to adapt to social change and modernity. In Minangkabau, *Surau* Ulakan continues to function as a spiritual and ritual center, marked by the annual *haul* commemorating Shaykh Burhanuddin, which attracts thousands of participants from various regions of Sumatra and Malaysia. This tradition illustrates that the Syattariyah network has endured not merely as a historical memory, but as a living religious practice that is continuously reproduced across generations.<sup>35</sup>

In Aceh, several traditional *dayah* still maintain limited instruction in Syattariyah Sufi teachings, despite operating within a religious landscape now dominated by formal institutions and modern curricula. This continuity demonstrates the flexibility of the order in negotiating processes of modernization without losing the authority of its *sanad* or its spiritual legitimacy.<sup>36</sup>

### **The Social and Political Roles of Syattariyah Ulama in Sumatra (17th–21st Centuries)**

The Syattariyah Sufi Order in Sumatra functioned not only as a spiritual network connecting disciples and teachers through scholarly transmission, but also played a significant role in shaping the social and political dynamics of local societies. Ulama affiliated with the order often assumed multiple roles simultaneously as religious authorities, educators, community leaders, and even figures of resistance against colonial rule.<sup>37</sup>

One of the primary contributions of Syattariyah ulama was in the field of traditional Islamic education. They established educational institutions such as *surau* in Minangkabau, *dayah* in Aceh, and *menasah* along the eastern coastal regions of Sumatra, which served as

<sup>34</sup> Jajat Burhanudin, *Ulama Dan Kekuasaan: Pergumulan Elite Muslim Dalam Sejarah Indonesia* (Mizan, 2012), 112.

<sup>35</sup> Martin Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren, Dan Tarekat* (Mizan, 1995), 234.

<sup>36</sup> Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII–XVIII*, 298.

<sup>37</sup> M. Alamil Huda Anwar Miftahul Khoiri, dan Nur, *Dinamika Pendidikan Di Pesantren Tebuireng Dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Masyarakat Jombang 1948-1975 M*, (Cirebon) 9, no. 2 (2021): 125, <https://www.syekhnrjati.ac.id/jurnal/index.php/tamaddun/article/view/8873>.

centers for the dissemination of Islamic knowledge as well as the teachings of the order.<sup>38</sup> These institutions functioned as spaces for the formation of disciples and for the internalization of Sufi values within the religious practices of the community. The curriculum encompassed *fiqh*, *tawhīd*, and *taṣawwuf*, delivered through a holistic approach that emphasized ethics, moral conduct, and social piety.

Beyond their role as educational institutions, *surau* and *dayah* also served as sites for the formation of distinctive local Islamic identities. Syattariyah ulama in Sumatra frequently acted as mediators who harmonized Sufi teachings with local cultural traditions, producing contextual expressions of Islam that remained firmly rooted within Sunni orthodoxy. Beyond their role as educational institutions, *surau* and *dayah* also served as sites for the formation of distinctive local Islamic identities. Syattariyah ulama in Sumatra frequently acted as mediators who harmonized Sufi teachings with local cultural traditions, producing contextual expressions of Islam that remained firmly rooted within Sunni orthodoxy.<sup>39</sup> Through religious activities such as study circles, collective *dhikr*, and celebrations of the Prophet's Birthday (*Mawlid al-Nabī*), Syattariyah communities strengthened social cohesion and provided moral guidance for society.

In the context of colonial history, some Syattariyah ulama also emerged as figures of resistance against foreign domination. In Minangkabau, for example, several Syattariyah scholars were involved in the internal conflict between the *kaum Padri* and the *kaum adat* in the early nineteenth century, before later becoming part of broader anti-Dutch struggles.<sup>40</sup> In Aceh, Syattariyah-affiliated ulama participated in religiously based resistance networks and provided spiritual legitimacy for armed struggle against colonial forces.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, in Aceh, networks of Sufi ulama, including those from the Syattariyah order, played an important role in conferring religious legitimacy upon *jihad* against the Dutch in the late nineteenth century, as reflected in sermons, fatwas, and teachings delivered in *dayah*. In Minangkabau, figures associated with the Syattariyah Order were also involved in mobilizing society in the aftermath of the *Padri* War, contributing to forms of cultural resistance against colonial domination.<sup>42</sup>

Although the Syattariyah Sufi Order was not the only spiritual force in Sumatra, its presence reflects both contestation and coexistence with other Sufi orders such as the *Naqshbandiyah* and *Qadiriyyah*. In many instances, relations among these orders developed in a spirit of peaceful competition and mutual complementarity. At certain moments, however, tensions also emerged, particularly concerning the legitimacy of teachings, claims to spiritual authority, and differences in methods of *dhikr* or *riyāḍah* (spiritual discipline).<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup> T Rama Mildawati & B, *Sejarah Perkembangan Islam Pada Masa Awal Hingga Munculnya Kerajaan Islam Di Aceh (Lembaga Pendidikan Islam Dan Tokohnya)*, 2, no. 1 (2024): 30, <https://doi.org/10.70184/cj62pb29>.

<sup>39</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *Surau: Pendidikan Islam Tradisi Dalam Transisi Dan Modernisasi* (LP3ES, 2017), 75.

<sup>40</sup> N Wonsela, "Kontribusi Kaum Paderi Dalam Modernisasi Pendidikan Di Minangkabau Abad XVII Awal" (Tesis, Program Magister Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam Fakultas Adab dan Humaniora Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, 2017), 182.

<sup>41</sup> Nur, *Sufisme Nusantara: Sejarah Pemikiran Dan Gerakan*, 95.

<sup>42</sup> Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra: Atjeh, the Netherlands and Britain, 1858-1898*, 120.

<sup>43</sup> Amir Maliki Abitolkha dan Muhamad Basyrul Muvid, *Melacak Tarekat-Tarekat Muktabar Di Nusantara* (Prenadamedia Group, 2020), 155.

In addition, Syattariyah ulama actively interacted with local religious institutional structures, such as councils of ulama, traditional customary leaders (*penghulu adat*), and Islamic political figures. In several regions, they served as mediators between religious authorities and the broader community, as well as intermediaries who bridged the norms of *shari'ah* with local customary practices. This demonstrates that the role of Sufi ulama extended beyond the spiritual realm to encompass social, cultural, and political dimensions, even into the postcolonial period.<sup>44</sup>

Overall, the social and political roles of Syattariyah ulama in Sumatra illustrate a dynamic and adaptive model of Islam in the Nusantara. They not only preserved Sufi values, but also employed them as instruments for societal transformation that remained responsive to local conditions and global challenges.

## CONCLUSION

This study affirms that the development of the Syattariyah Sufi Order in Sumatra from the seventeenth to the twenty-first centuries cannot be understood merely as an individual spiritual phenomenon, but rather as a historical process shaped by the strength of ulama networks. Through teacher-student relationships, the transmission of knowledge, and the mobility of ulama across regions, the Syattariyah Order evolved into a socio-intellectual network linking major Islamic centers in Aceh, Minangkabau, and Palembang. Key figures such as Shaykh Abdul Rauf as-Singkili and Shaykh Burhanuddin Ulakan functioned as central nodes in sustaining the continuity of the order's teachings through educational institutions, Sufi manuscripts, and the training of successive generations of ulama.

The Syattariyah Order was supported by systematic mechanisms of intellectual transmission, both through oral instruction and through the production, copying, and circulation of Sufi manuscripts such as *Umdat al-Muhtajin* and *Mir'at al-Mukminin*. Traditional educational institutions *dayah* in Aceh, *surau* in Minangkabau, and *menasah* in other regions served as centers for the regeneration of ulama, the internalization of Sufi teachings, and the distribution of spiritual legitimacy.

The network of Syattariyah ulama also possessed significant social and political dimensions. Sufi scholars not only maintained spiritual practices but also played vital roles in community education, the formation of local Islamic identities, and cultural resistance to colonialism. Through religious activities, educational institutions, and the conferral of religious legitimacy upon social struggles, the Syattariyah Order contributed to building communal cohesion and strengthening the position of ulama within the Islamic public sphere in Sumatra. Interaction with other Sufi orders, such as the *Naqshbandiyah* and *Qadiriyyah*, further illustrates dynamics of coexistence, contestation, and adaptation within the local religious landscape.

By positioning the Syattariyah Order as a transregional network of ulama operating through lineages (*silsilah*), manuscripts, scholarly mobility, and educational institutions, this study expands the analysis of Sufi orders beyond doctrinal and biographical approaches toward a socio-intellectual network perspective. The Syattariyah Order is thus understood not only as a historical legacy of Islam in the Nusantara, but as a living tradition that remains

<sup>44</sup> F Syariah, dkk, "Peran Ulama Dalam Partai Politik: Studi Di Kantor DPRD Kabupaten Tapanuli Selatan" (Universitas Islam Negeri Syekh Ali Hasan Addary Padangsidempuan, 2023), 112.

adaptive and resilient, continually shaping local Islamic identities amid colonialism, modernization, and ongoing social change.

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