



## Echoes of Spiritual Greatness: A Review of *Manaqib* Sheikh Abdul Qadir Al-Jailani

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**Abstract:** The Book of *Manaqib* of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Al-Jailani, published in 2011, by Ajid Thohir, offers a significant contribution to the study of Sufi historiography by illuminating a genre that is often neglected in Islamic historical scholarship. Focusing on the hagiographic narratives surrounding Sheikh Abdul Qadir Al-Jailani—a central figure in the Qadiriyya Sufi order—the book systematically examines the various versions and traditions of *Manaqib* literature, highlighting their role in shaping religious identities and spiritual practices among Muslim communities, particularly followers of the Qadiriyya-Naqshabandiyya orders. Using historical research methods, the study analyzes the structure, authorship, and epistemological foundations of several key *Manaqib* texts, arguing that these works are not only important sources for understanding the development of Islamic historiography but also serve to strengthen communal ties within the fiqh and Sufi traditions. The book shows how the Book of *Manaqib* functions as more than a record of miraculous deeds and virtues; It is an influential vehicle for spreading Islamic values, fostering piety, and cultivating collective memory in various Muslim societies.

**Keywords:** Hagiography; Historiography; Islamic book; Religious identity; Sufism

### Introduction

Islamic historiography is a branch of scholarship that not only examines historical records of Muslims, but is also a reflection on how people interpret, remember and frame their past (Savenije et al., 2022). More than just documenting facts, historiography is a mirror of identity construction, cultural awareness, and intellectual dynamics throughout the history of Islamic civilization (Moqadam, 2023). In the current global context, when historical narratives often become a field of ideological struggle—whether in geopolitical conflicts, the rise of religious identities, or in the formation of postcolonial discourse—the study of Islamic historiography has become increasingly urgent to be carried out critically, reflectively, and contextually (Albrecht, 2021).

The fundamental problem in historiographic studies today is how to distinguish between history as scientific reconstruction and history as normative or even mythological narrative (Gangl, 2023). While global discourse tends to demand a fact-based approach to history, rationality, and rigorous academic methodology, many Muslim communities maintain traditions of spiritual history writing, such as *manaqib*, which are rooted in

religious experience, belief in *karamah*, and affective relationships with holy figures (Walsh, 1967). Herein lies the challenge and urgency of this research: to bridge two historical approaches that seem contradictory, namely scientific historiography and spiritual historiography.

One form of historiography that is prominent but often marginalized in academic discourse is *Book of Manaqib*, specifically *Manaqib Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani* (MSA). This book not only documents the biography of a charismatic Sufi figure, but also plays a central role in shaping the collective memory of the people, strengthening the solidarity of the tarekat, and spreading the values of Sufism to various corners of the Islamic world, including Indonesia (Hidayah, 2023). In the midst of the increasing need for a deeper understanding of the cultural and local dynamics of Islam, MSA is a clear example of how religious texts do not only live in scientific ivory towers, but also become part of social practices, religious rituals, and community identity formation (Thohir, 2011).

Interestingly, in the context of Indonesian Muslim society, especially in Java, *Book of Manaqib* experienced a very distinctive reading and reception. It is not just read as a historical source, but is ritualized, interpreted as a source of blessing, and even becomes a binding medium between society and the wider spiritual world (Syafiq et al., 2023). This phenomenon shows that Sufistic historiography, such as MSA, has epistemological and cultural dimensions that are no less important than formal historiography based on chronicles or dates.

However, until now, an in-depth study of MSA from a historiographic perspective is still very limited. Most studies only stop at spiritual or doctrinal aspects, without seriously examining the style of writing, narrative structure and historiographical value. In fact, a historiographic approach allows us to see to what extent this text reflects Islamic historical thought, how it frames spiritual authority, and how the events in the text are interpreted collectively in local Islamic culture (Kala, 2025).

Furthermore, in a global context that is facing a crisis of spiritual authority, identity disruption, and increasing extremism in the name of religion, understanding spiritual historiography models such as MSA can be an alternative in building religious narratives that are more humanist, transcendent, and based on compassionate values (Faitour, 2024). By tracing how history was written and transmitted in the Sufi tradition, we can find new ways of reading the past that not only emphasize facts but also meaning and value.

Thus, this research becomes very relevant and urgent: not only to fill the gap in the study of Islamic historiography, but also to expand our understanding of how text, history, and spirituality are intertwined in the lives of Muslims. The study of MSA will open new insights into the style of Sufistic historiography, as well as contribute to the development of a more inclusive and multidimensional Islamic historical epistemology.

Islamic historiography has been the focus of scholars for a long time, especially in distinguishing between factual, narrative and hagiographic models of historical writing. (Tosh, 2019) emphasizes that history is not just a compilation of past facts, but is also an interpretive process that constructs a meaningful narrative. Collingwood (Collingwood, 1999) even rejects the view that historians are only tasked with "discovering" facts, because according to him, history is an attempt to understand *Why* an event occurs, not just *What* happened.

In the context of Sufi historiography, several studies, such as works (Schimmel, 2008) *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, and (Knysh, 2010) *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* has shown that narratives about saints and Sufi figures often blend historical reality and religious imagination. The *manaqib* genre occupies an important position as a form of "spiritual history" that holds a legacy of values, not just historical data. Hagiographic works such as MSA are part of "cultural history", in the words of (Burke, 2019), which functions to convey norms, ethics and visions of the world in traditional Islamic societies.

In Indonesia, especially in Java, the tradition of writing and reading *Manaqib Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani* has become a cultural phenomenon that is integrated with local religious practices. This text has an important role in shaping the identity of the tarekat community, strengthening the spiritual authority of the murshid, and instilling symbolic loyalty towards the founding figure of the tarekat (Rohmawati & Zulkifli, 2024). *Manaqib* texts are not only read but also ritualized, making them part of the collective religious experience.

Thus, studying MSA within the framework of Sufi historiography opens up strategic research space, both in seeing how the collective memory of the people is formed through spiritual narratives and in understanding how non-canonical historiography continues to play a vital role in the structure of Islamic scholarship and culture.

## Method

Research methods related to the historiography of existence *Book of Manaqib*, Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani MSA, this is identical to the method of studying History (Sa'adillah & Syauqi, 2023). By re-examining the reality of the text with its various dimensions, especially regarding the time of writing, about the existence and object of MSA's writing and others. The research is divided into two categories: methods and steps.

*First Category*, the research is directed at explanatory and exploratory historical realities in general regarding the development of (Islamic) historical writing in the classical and medieval periods, as well as positioning various types of Islamic historiography works that concern and are closely related to the emergence of MSA in particular. What is the background and motivation for writing it? Other aspects that complement this study are choices that continue to develop according to information needs and findings in the research field that is carried out (Thohir, 2011).

*Second Category*, the research he did directly entered the study of MSA texts specifically, with standards on the themes of historiographical research, such as; to see the motivation of his writing, categorize and analyze the structure of his writing, methodology, rhetoric of the written language used, sources and systematics of his writing. As a whole, it is possible to see the pattern and structure of the language, the main ideas contained in the text, the structure and organization of material reconstruction and others. Overall, it was studied simultaneously through primary and secondary sources with the following analytical approach: hermeneutics, philology, semiotics, etc. Functionally directed to answer how the historicity and significance of MSA are in Islamic historiography.

Several stages were carried out in focusing on the workings of historical research in this MSA research are as follows: *First* Heuristics, namely collecting written materials regarding various *Manaqib* books in general and MSA in particular from various types and styles of writing. *Second* Criticism, in several academic areas, it is necessary to express several differences of opinion for and against the various existences of MSA, then criticize and offer an approach that is considered the most objective in classifying types of MSA into models and types. *Third*, tracing the background of the writing, paradigm and epistemology, the figures who wrote, the style of the written language, the structure of the material, the methodology of writing, the sources used, etc. *Fourth*, comparing several MSA texts in their models and types. *Fifth*, re-criticize (*critical review*) against some MSA, especially in the survey and study of Islamic historiography. *Sixth*, see the development of MSA in its various variations, which realistically and significantly contribute to and enrich the richness of Islamic historiography (Thohir, 2011).

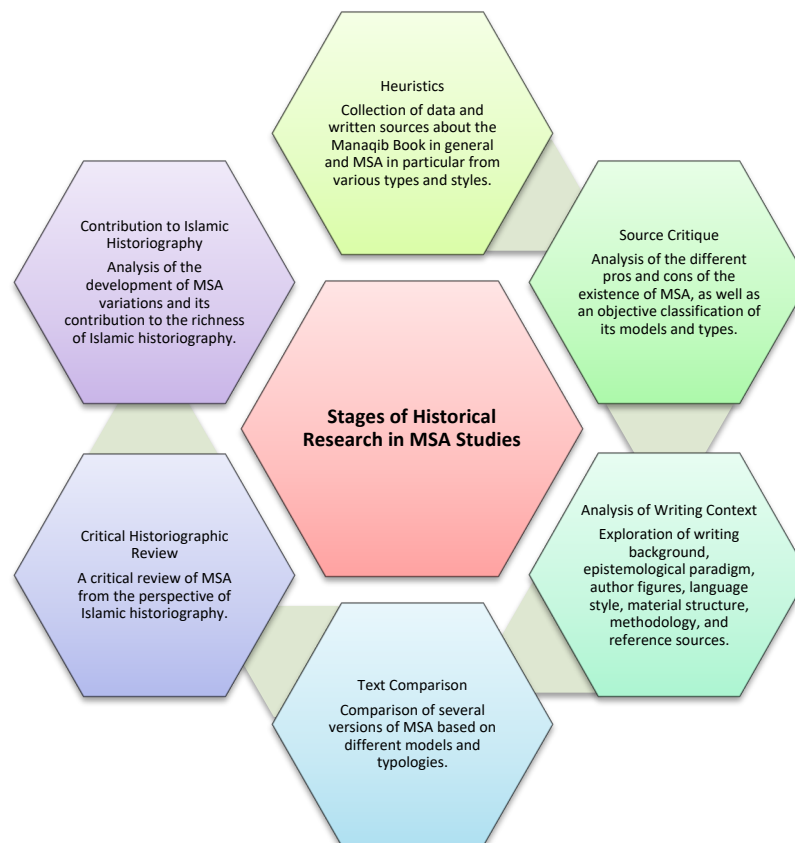


Figure 1. Stages of Historical Research in the Book of Manaqib Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani

## Results and Discussion

### Accumulation and Debate Around the Book of Manaqib Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani and His Study Approach

A writer, Khawaja Jamil Ahmad, has placed al-Jilani in first place as a Sufi figure. In this book Muslim figures are divided based on their profession and role in the development of life in the Islamic world; both as leaders, female figures, teachers, legal experts, Sufi figures and pious people, thinkers and scientists, poets and writers, artists, reformers, statesmen, conquerors, generals, historians and so on. He stated more firmly about the existence of Sheikh 'Abd al-Qâdir al-Jilânî and his role in history:

Abdul Qadir al-Jilani settled in Baghdad, and used the rest of his life to serve Islam and humanity. He was gifted with a fluent tongue as an orator. His lectures, rich in worldly and spiritual education, attracted many visitors, reaching 70,000 to 80,000 every time he gave a lecture. The leaders of the Abbasid caliphs, the caliph himself and converts who had embraced Islam were present... 'Abd al-Qâdir al-Jilânî took the middle path of Mansur's extreme spiritualism al-Hallaj and rationalism are embodied in him. His person is called "muhyiddin" the founder of religion. His life is simple and he spends his days praying and meditating... (Ahmad, 1988).

C.A. Qadir, provides an overview of the meaning of Sufism as part of the scientific paradigm in Islam (Qadir & Basari, 2002). He considered Sufism as a source of inspiration for true knowledge in the Islamic world, which originates from within humans and originates directly from God. Sufi practices in human self-development have been proven to be able to clarify the mapping in finding objectivity between the subject and the actual subject. He placed al-Jilani as a Sufi model who could contribute to the scientific paradigm of Islamic psychology. More clearly he stated:

Al-Jilani describes four stages of human spiritual development. The first is obeying the laws of the Sharia and trusting completely in Allah. The second is the area of purity, namely those who

fulfill their physiological needs only to a minimum, avoiding comfort and luxury and listening to their inner voice. The third is surrender, only surrendering oneself completely to Allah SWT. The fourth is *fana*, namely merging oneself with God after which one becomes *ma'rifah* to Him... like al-Ghazaly, al-Jilani also interpreted the texts. Al-Qur'an with mystical language, thus it has given a broader and deeper meaning to the words contained in the Holy Book. Even though it has given new meanings to Islamic rituals and teachings, it has never deviated from the official path of Islam (Qadir, 1989).

The placement of Syekh 'Abd al-Qâdir al-Jilani as the most influential Sufi figure in Islamic history by Khawaja Jamil Ahmad is not a simple claim, but rather reflects a historiographical construction rooted in recognition of the epistemic and ethical position of a Sufi in shaping the collective spiritual consciousness of Muslims (Faris, 2023). Ahmad doesn't just emphasize al-Jilani's popularity in public lectures attended by tens of thousands of people, but also underscored the unique balance between *shar'î* and *tariqî* aspects in his personality. Sheikh al-Jilani not trapped in the spiritual extremities of the Hallaj style, but also not lost in the dry rationalism of the Mu'tazilah style. It is an ideal representation of classical Islamic epistemology, namely the unification of knowledge (*'ilm*), charity, and *ma'rifah* in one system of knowledge that is unbroken from divine sources and prophetic ethics.

Al-Jilani's approach, which combines exoteric (*shari'a*) and esoteric (essence) dimensions, reflects the layered ontological system in Islam: from the symbolic to the spiritual level, as explained in Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas' Islamic epistemological theory. In this perspective, knowledge is not just a collection of data or rational propositions, but enlightenment of the ultimate meaning that is rooted in Tawhid and aims at knowing oneself and God (Mahmudin et al., 2021). Al-Jilani, in this context, was not only a Sufi teacher, but also a constructive epistemologist, discursive formation for the integration of science and spirituality. This characteristic distinguishes al-Jilânî Sufism from popular forms of spiritualism that are detached from the foundations of *shar'î* and prophetic ethics.

Furthermore, C.A. Qadir, in his analysis of the contribution of Sufism to the world of Islamic scholarship, positions al-Jilani as a paradigmatic model in building an integral spiritual personality structure. The four stages of spiritual development described by Qadir—obedience to the *Shari'a*, asceticism, total surrender, and *fana'*—are a form of spiritual technology in the framework of self-formation, a concept that can be compared to Michel Foucault's thinking about technologies of the self (Foucault, 1988). However, in the Islamic tradition, self-formation does not lead to empty subjectivity or autonomous authenticity, but rather to dissolution into the transcendent Divine will (Faruque, 2021).

The social and historical role of al-Jilani as a public orator who was able to attract thousands of visitors to each sermon, including caliphs and converts, shows the important position of a Sufi as a symbolic agent in the public sphere of medieval Islam. If we use Pierre Bourdieu's theory of Field and Capital, al-Jilani has large and legitimate symbolic capital, so that he not only speaks as a spiritual individual, but also as an actor in the religious power structure—an informal institution that shapes *doxa* and *habitus* of Muslim society (Bourdieu, 1991). The spiritual authority he possessed was born not from state institutions, but from routinization of charisma, which is formed through consistent moral integrity and mystical depth (Barisione, 2023).

Al-Jilani's contribution to the interpretation of the Qur'an through a mystical lens cannot be understood as a deviation, but as a valid epistemic extension within the Islamic tradition. Both al-Jilani and al-Ghazālî show that the literal meaning of the verses of the Qur'an does not preclude the exploration of inner meaning (*ta'wîl*), which remains within the corridors of orthodoxy. In this case, al-Jilani was not only a spiritual reformer, but also an interpretation: he opened the horizons of understanding sacred texts to be deeper, more personal and existential without losing normative principles. This is in line with the concept of double hermeneutic in Paul Ricoeur's philosophy, where the reading of sacred texts not only produces objective meaning, but also existential transformation for the subject who interprets them (Ricoeur, 1981).

Thus, Sheikh al-Jilani has presented an integrative model in Islam: spiritual rationality, social piety, and inner transformation. In the contemporary era, when the crisis of meaning,

dehumanization and secularization erode the substance of human life, al-Jilani's Sufistic approach is very relevant (Youvan, 2024). He offers that the transformation of Muslims is not enough with institutional or ideological projects alone, but must start from inner transformation, through the path of knowledge that originates from the purification of the soul and closeness to God.

### **Biography and Prominence of Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani**

Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani is one of the most monumental Sufi figures in the history of Islamic civilization. For members of the tarekat, his name is not just a symbol of high spirituality but also an emanation of moral and charismatic authority that has shaped the global landscape of Sufism. In various *manaqib* books, such as *al-Fawa'id al-Mukhtarah* by Habib Ali Hasan Baharun, he was called Sulthân al-Awliyâ—"king of the saints"—a title that was not only symbolic, but also a representation of the hierarchical structure in the treasures of Sufism (Nurcahya, 2025).

Sheikh Abdul Qadir was born in the Jilan or Gilan region, one of the ancient provinces under the rule of Tobaristan, a Persian region which is now within the territory of modern Iran. His date of birth is recorded in many *manaqib* as the first night of the month of Ramadan in 470 AH/1077 AD, and he died in Baghdad on 10 Muharram 561 AH/1166 AD, at a very long age for those times - 91 years. Baghdad, which at that time was the intellectual and spiritual center of the Islamic world, was a silent witness to his life journey and spiritual struggle, including the establishment of his madrassa which would later become the forerunner to the development of the Qadiriyyah Order (Hakim, 2013).

Various *manaqib* noted that the signs of Sheikh Abdul Qadir's guardianship were visible even before his birth. His father, Abu Salih Musa al-Jangi Dust, a pious man descended from Hasan bin Ali, the grandson of the Prophet SAW, is said to have dreamed of meeting the Prophet Muhammad SAW, who came with his companions and mujtahid imams. In that dream, the Prophet conveyed the news that he would be blessed with a son who would be "my lover and the lover of God", and would occupy a high position of guardianship just as the Prophet occupied the position of prophethood (Akbar, 2018).

Not only that, in another *manaqib* narrative it is stated that a number of prophets also gave good news to Abu Salih, that his son would one day become Sulthânul Auliya', and all the 'infallible' saints and priests would be in his spiritual shadow. Those who submit to Sheikh Abdul Qadir will have their sainthood elevated, while those who are reluctant to submit will have their *karamah* revoked by Allah SWT. In this context, Sheikh Abdul Qadir is not just seen as an individual figure, but as the axis of global sainthood (*qutb al-aqtab*) which is the center of spiritual coordination for the saints (Nurcahya, 2025).

One of the most amazing aspects of his birth story is the extraordinary event that occurred on the night of his birth. It is said that on that night, not a single baby girl was born in Jailan. All of the 1,100 babies born that night were boys, and all of them became Allah's guardians as the spiritual companions of Sheikh Abdul Qadir. This phenomenon is interpreted by scholars as a form *tajalli* (divine manifestation) of the glory and specialness of the station he will occupy in the future (Hakim, 2013).

Another popular story is that since he was a baby, Sheikh Abdul Qadir would not breastfeed during the day during the month of Ramadan. He only breastfed when it was time to break the fast. This phenomenon is believed by Sufis to be initial evidence that from the cradle, he has been given the ability to fast like an adult. This symbolically marks his purity from worldly desires and his spiritual readiness since infancy (Mushawwir, 2023). Some scholars even interpret this event as a form of "ontological fasting" - namely, fasting undertaken by the soul before having formal shar'î awareness.

In another *manaqib* book, it is also stated that on Sheikh Abdul Qadir's shoulders there are traces of the soles of the Prophet's feet. These marks are believed to be the footprints of the Prophet who set his feet when climbing the Buraq during the Isra' Mi'raj event. The scholars interpret this symbol as a sign that Sheikh Abdul Qadir has been spiritually "equipped" with the state of *mi'rajiyyah*, namely the highest station reached on the spiritual journey towards God. The footprints are a symbol that Sheikh Abdul Qadir was in the "footsteps" of the Prophet internally

and was the successor of the prophetic legacy (Thohir, 2011).

Sheikh Abdul Qadir's character does not only have a spiritual dimension, but also an intellectual one. He is a scholar of the Hanbali school of thought, who has breadth in fiqh, tafsir, hadith and kalam. His madrasa in Baghdad became a place of study for thousands of students from various Islamic regions, and from there the Qadiriyyah Tarekat tradition was born which later spread to the archipelago. His character as a spiritual educator integrated the dimensions of Sharia law with spiritual practice (*suluk*), making him a complete figure: a faqih, Sufi, and murshid who was influential across the ages (Mushawwir, 2023).

Thus, Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani is not only a historical figure, but a paradigmatic figure in the treasures of Sufism. The stories of *manaqib* are not just hagiographical stories, but symbolic and spiritual heritage that represent the noble values of Islam: sincerity, knowledge, spiritual depth, and moral leadership. So it is not surprising if he is made the qibla by many sects and is respected across sects and Islamic geo-cultural regions (Thohir, 2011).

### **The Book of Manaqib Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani in the Perspective of Islamic Historiography**

Tracing of growth roots and writing positions *Book of Manaqib* cannot be separated from the epistemic construction that is deeply embedded in Islamic tradition. Empirically and factually, deep narrative forms *manaqib* rooted in the pattern of stories of great figures in the Qur'an and Al-Hadith - namely stories of prophets, friends and other pious figures told in the format of exemplary stories (*uswah hasanah*). Writing *manaqib*, in a broad sense, is a continuation of the moral-didactic genre of religious historiography, where narratives about the lives of figures are used not merely to commemorate, but rather as a tool for forming the spiritual and collective character of Muslim society (Thohir, 2023).

Furthermore, *manaqib* does not stand alone as a spiritual discourse. It is directly connected to the historical process of writing Islamic history, which is known to be very dynamic, from the early days of Islam until it developed into an established discipline in various forms: starting from the sale, *maghazi*, *tabaqat*, until date in a chronic sense (Syarif, 2019). In this context, *Book of Manaqib* can be seen as a branch of Islamic historiography with a Sufi style, namely a model of historical writing that emphasizes aspects of spirituality, *karamah* and the example of Sufi figures, especially the *saints* and murshid order.

Methodologically, *manaqib* absorb elements of classical Islamic historiography but insert elements of typical Sufistic hagiography, which makes holy figures the center of meaning and social transformation (Alatas, 2016). In the context *Book of Manaqib Sayyidina Abdul Qadir al-Jilani* (MSA), for example, the writing is not merely a biographical chronicle, but also a symbol of the formation of spiritual authority recognized in various schools of thought and orders (Masrur, 2014). Writing like this often also functions as a tool for cultural legitimation and strengthening the network of Sufi communities across time and space.

In an academic framework, historical writing is known as historiography, which comes from a combination of the words "history" and "graphia" (writing), which literally means writing history. However, in scientific disciplines, historiography does not only mean the activity of writing history, but also the study of how history is written, by whom, in what way and for what purpose. In other words, historiography seeks to understand historical narratives as products of culture, ideology and power of their time (Tohir & Qadir, 2011).

In the Islamic world, historical writing is never neutral. Since the first century of the Hijriyah, Muslims have begun to record important events such as wars (*maghazi*), the life of the Prophet Muhammad, and the genealogy of prominent figures in *tabaqat* (Maftuhin, 2016). However, the scope of Islamic historiography does not stop at political or military aspects; it developed into a socio-religious study that accommodates the life histories of ulama, *zahid*, and saints, as a form of affirmation of the moral and spiritual values of the people (Bhamji, 2024).

Different from historical narratives of kingdoms such as *Negarakertagama* from the Majapahit period, which was more about glorification of power and writing *manaqib* focuses more on spiritual and ethical glorification (Ag, 2002). This is where the striking difference between Sufistic Islamic historiography and profane royal historiography appears: one is directed at

establishing divine legitimacy and vertical connection with God, the other at legitimizing worldly and genealogical power.

*Book of Manaqib*, especially those that examine great figures such as Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani, are ultimately not only historical texts, but also performative texts: they are read, recited, and lived in Sufi communities as part of spiritual practice and an instrument of social cohesion. In the long term, it also became the basis for the formation of local Islamic culture, as seen in practice reading *manaqib* in the Nahdliyyin community or Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah congregation in the archipelago (Basri, 2023).

It should be understood that in the context of early Islamic civilization, historical writing did not immediately become an established literary tradition. In pre-Islamic times until the beginning of prophetic preaching, Arab society relied more on oral power: a form of oral Tarikh, such as *al-Ayyam* (stories of great days, wars, and expeditions), as well as *al-Ansab* (genealogy), was the main way of recording history (Henninger, 2021). Important events, including the life journey of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, were originally transmitted through the memorization of narrators and poets. This is where the Date in its earliest form is part of a very strong speech culture.

It was only during the Abbasid dynasty—especially the 9th and 10th centuries AD—as rationalism strengthened and the Islamic scientific tradition developed institutionally in big cities such as Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo, the *Science of Date* underwent major transformations (Mühlbauer & Thiel, 2024). It entered the formal education system and began to be treated as a separate science with systematic methods, objects of study and writing principles. Figures such as al-Tabari (w. 923 M) in *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk*, al-Mas'udi in *Muruj al-Dhahab*, and Ibn Khaldun in *al-Muqaddimah* became the culmination of the development of Islamic historical epistemology. In their hands, history is not just a chronological report, but becomes an instrument for understanding the causes of social, political and civilizational change in mankind (Degroot et al., 2022).

Thus, Tarikh in the Islamic tradition is not only "remembering the past", but becoming a tool for read the meaning from events, recognize the patterns of the rise and fall of the people, and interpret the reality of the world in a transcendent framework. As part of natural science—in a broad sense that observes social and cultural phenomena empirically—Dateology exists as an instrument cultural *ijtihad*, as well as a witness to changes that position humans as historical agents and spiritual beings (Quadri, 2021).

For some Muslim historians, writing news about the past not only based on social and religious demands, but also on the doctrinal basis of the Qur'an has quite a strong influence. A number of letters and verses tell of their roles and behavior and a number of aspects relating to their life patterns and traditions. Everything is described concretely and realistically in the Qur'an, both regarding roles and behavior that are liked and those that are considered very bad or morally controversial (Thohir, 2004, 2014).

To a certain extent, figures in the Islamic world are highly appreciated by those who are under them, whether as their followers, students, or simply as their admirers. The following are several models and roots of the tradition of writing historical figures in Islamic historiography, which in the end have more or less influenced the writing of the *manâqib* book (hagiography), as a current model for the study of historical figures in the Islamic world (Thohir, 2012).

In the *Manaqib of Shaykh Abdul Qadir Al-Jailani*, the life history of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jailani is told from life until his death, as well as stories about his *karamah*. This literary work is considered very special in Javanese culture because it not only contains inspirational stories, but also contains blessings. In tarekat science, *manaqib* is defined as a life history record that tells amazing and hagiographic stories of pious people such as the Prophet or *auliya'* (lovers of Allah). This includes legends, sacred things, and advice written and compiled from the stories of students, family, and friends (Yulianti, 2023). Therefore, reading *manaqib* is considered a way to get closer to Allah through *munajat* and prayer.

His books are known as *al-manaqib* or *karamah* which are very famous. One of them is the karomah of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jailani, who has many followers throughout the Islamic world, especially in Indonesia. The privileges given by Allah SWT to Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jailani are proof that humans who are considered holy and chosen will receive *karamah* as proof of the



greatness of the Creator. The writing of *Manaqib* for saints in the Islamic world began in the 4th century H/10 AD and most of the writing tradition was carried out around the graves of the saints by grave guards or students who admired them (Thohir, 2011).

In the biography of the Prophet, we find many explanations about the life journey of the Prophet Muhammad SAW as well as descriptions of several miracles he describes (Nurcahya et al., 2025). In the book of *tabaqat*, many things appear that are not only aspects of biographical fragments but also about the features and personalities of the figures concerned.

Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jailani's book *Manaqib* has been studied extensively by Muslim and Western scholars, such as al-Zahabi, Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, Poerbatjaraka, Walther Braune, Snouck Hurgronje, and Drewes. *Manaqib* Sheikh Abdul Qadir explained that Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jailani was still a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad SAW through his daughter Fatimah. His mother was Fatimah binti Sheikh Abdullah as Sauma'i, a figure who was famous and glorified for her good deeds. It is also explained that besides being a Sufi figure, saint, and founder of the order, Abdul Qadir Jailani is also known as Muhyiddin (who revived religion). Sheikh Abdul Qadir mastered various kinds of knowledge, such as tafsir, hadith, fiqh, usul, nahwu and Sharaf (Nurcahya, 2025).

Hakim at-Tirmidhi is a Sufi figure who is quite clear in providing an overview of the concept of writing about the *awliya* of Allah in Islamic historiography (Mamatov, 2021). Conceptually, he is brave and firm in mapping out clearly and in detail who God's guardian is. This knowledge explains the existence of the contents of the MSA as important information. Even when the MSA writers mapped the status of Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani based on the perspective that had been built by the at-Tirmidhi concept (Isgandarova, 2024).

At-Tirmidhi defines a guardian of Allah as someone who is very firm in his closeness to Allah, fulfills certain requirements such as being *sidq* (honest and correct) in his behavior, being patient in obedience to Allah, fulfilling all obligations, maintaining laws and regulations, and maintaining his closeness to Allah (Yucel, 2023).

### **The Historicity and Significance of MSA in Islamic Historiography**

In the realm of Islamic historiography, the Book of *Manāqib* Shaykh 'Abdul Qādir al-Jailānī (MSA) occupies a unique and significant position, not merely as a hagiographic literary product, but as a form of narrative historicity that is closely attached to the Sufistic dynamics and religious cultural expressions of Muslim society, especially in the Indonesian archipelago. MSA not only narrates the life of a great Sufi figure, but also represents how the history of the figure is absorbed, interpreted and preserved through the medium of ritual, text and spiritual transmission in the context of the tarekat (Husna & Soeratno, 2013).

In empirical practice, the reading of the MSA by the congregation shows three typical historical phenomena. *First*, even though most practitioners of the reading tradition do not literally understand the contents of the texts they read—due to language or literacy barriers—they still view MSA as a source benefit, who has spiritual power. Assumption about blessings and benefits is formed through the authority of the tarekat teacher, who acts as an authentic mediator between the text and the spiritual experience of the student (Hidayati, 2022). Here comes the aspect *ilm al-ma'na* (the science of inner meaning) in the Sufism tradition becomes dominant: texts are not just read, but are implanted existentially through encounters between students and *murshids*.

*Second*, reading MSA is not just a literary activity, but is sacred in the form of a collective ritual that is equated with worship. In this context, the *manāqib* undergoes a transformation from a historical text to a performative text, acquiring liturgical and symbolic functions in community life. *Manāqib* reading is part of spiritual nurturing rites, which not only preserves the collective memory of the guardian, but also strengthens social cohesion through shared emotional experiences (Syafiq et al., 2023).

*Third*, narrative elements about to hang (miracles) in MSA are not seen as allegorical fiction, but are believed to be spiritual realities. The stories about miracles or extraordinary events told in this text were perceived by the people as expressions of the saint's glory, which they believed came from divine grace, not fabrication or literary hyperbole. This belief strengthens the function of the text as a source of spiritual legitimacy, not just as a historical narrative (Kolov, 2021).

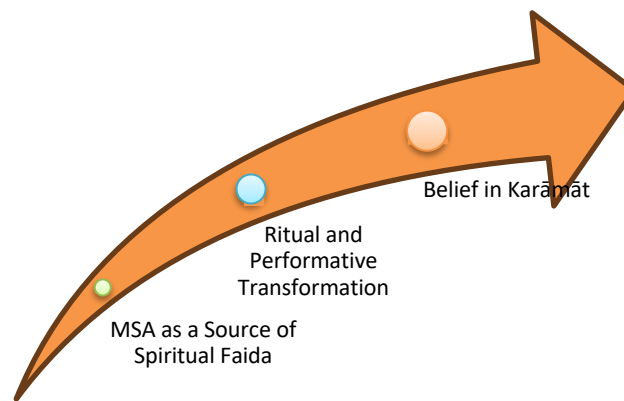


Figure 2. Metamorphosis of reading the Manaqib book into a ritual

In the context of the social history of Sufi institutions, MSA also has a close connection with the development of the institution *zāwiyah*, the place where this text is often read and taught. *Zāwiyah*, as an early form of a smaller Sufi religious and educational institution *khānaqāh*, functions as a center for spreading the order, a gathering place for the poor and students to do *zikr*, deepen inner knowledge, and practice the order. Often, the *zāwiyah* is named after its guardian shaykh, and in many cases, the name refers to great figures such as Shaykh Abdul Qadir Jailani, whose spiritual and intellectual influence has reached across regions and eras (Thohir, 2012).

Textually, *manāqib* such as MSA represent a typical form of Islamic historiography which is based on character narratives. It is a form of Islamic hagiography—a literary genre that combines elements of history, mythology, spirituality, and didactics. This work has close ties to the genre *sale*, *tabaqat*, And date of *al-awliya'*, but with an accentuation on the saintly dimension of magic and transcendence. In traditional Islamic societies, *manāqib* texts like this are one of the most effective ways to revive collective memory and convey exemplary values in the form of true stories packaged in spiritual nuances (Olomi, 2019).

In the Javanese and Banten communities, the existence of MSA has a wide space in the community's religious practices. MSA reading not only functions as a means of individual spiritualization, but is also believed to protect the community from harm and danger. Thus, this text becomes part of a cultural system that integrates spirituality, moral education, and collective protection through institutionalized forms of traditional ritual (Thohir, 2012).

By examining MSA from the perspective of its historicity and significance in Islamic historiography, we find that this text not only contains memories of a great Sufi figure, but is also a *situs epistemic*—a meeting space between history, spirituality, local culture, and religious authority. In this sense, MSA can be said to be an integral part of the dynamics of Islamic historiography, which is not only narrative and chronological, but also performative and transformative (Thohir, 2011).

### Historical Sources

Writing *Kitab Manāqib Syaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jailānī* (MSA) does not exist in a vacuum, but is rooted in various sources that show the richness of intellectual and spiritual traditions in Islam (Zen, 2022). As a historiographic text intended to narrate the greatness of a great saint, MSA constructs its historical framework by referring to various categories of sources, ranging from normative revelations (the Qur'an and hadith), to historical and spiritual testimonies from individuals who have direct or indirect closeness to the main figures appointed.

*First*, the primary source in the writing of MSA can be traced to Islamic normative references such as the verses of the Qur'an and the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. These verses not only function as a theological framework that underlies the view of guardianship and *karamah*, but also as legitimacy for the various spiritual phenomena experienced by Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani. Hadiths that allude to the virtues of saints and signs of sanctity are often used to reinforce the narrative (Thohir, 2011).

*Second*, the narrative sources that form the content of MSA come from various histories, which include direct statements from Shaykh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani himself, testimonies from his family members (especially his mother and sons), as well as from his main students who witnessed his life directly. These students, who also act as *rabbi* (narrator), record various events, sayings and behavior of characters carefully within the framework of Sufi *adab*. In many cases, they also record phenomena to hang which were witnessed by the wider community, thus giving a strong social-historical dimension to this text (Thohir, 2011).

*Third*, many spiritual expressions in MSA take the form of *shatahāt*—ecstatic expressions in Sufi experiences—as well as dialogue between the main character and his questioners or interlocutors, which often carry high symbolic, metaphorical and theological content. These expressions were recorded and compiled using a typical hagiographic narrative, which not only reveals events, but also contains esoteric and educative meanings (Thohir, 2011).

Important books like *Qalīd al-Jawāhir*, *Bahjat al-Asrār*, and several similar texts written by writers of the Qadiriyyah order and its affiliates became an important medium in the transmission and consolidation of MSA sources. In these works, the opinions and comments of the ulama regarding Shaykh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani are quoted and synthesized, both in the form of direct and indirect quotations from his statements, which are scattered in various treatises. The scholars who are sources of quotations are generally those who have a reputation for high scholarship and spirituality, and are affiliated with the Sufism tradition (Kars & Bahrani, 2021).

The authors of MSA and its derivative texts use these ulama's comments not only as narrative reinforcement, but also as instruments to explain the spiritual, theological and social aspects of Shaykh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani's sainthood (Mushawwir, 2023). Thus, these sources are not only informative but also interpretive, becoming a bridge between historical texts and the spiritual appreciation of Muslim communities.

By looking at the structure of these sources, it can be said that MSA combines two historiographical approaches: (1) traditional Islamic historiography, which is based on *sanad*, narration and ulama authority; and (2) Sufistic historiography, which prioritizes spiritual experience as a source of knowledge. This combination makes MSA not just a narrative text, but also a living religious and cultural document, which continues to inspire religious practice and spiritual reflection in various Muslim communities, especially in the traditional Islamic world, such as the Indonesian archipelago.

## Conclusion

The *Book of Manaqib Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani* not just a biographical narrative or a collection of *karamah* stories; it is a spiritual text that lives in the Islamic tradition, especially among Sufi and tarekat communities. Through the life story, teachings, prayers and *karamah* of Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani, this book functions as a bridge between the text and the religious experience of the people. It forms a collective awareness of Sufism values such as *tawakkal*, *zuhud*, and divine love, while strengthening the community's emotional and spiritual ties through the ritual of reciting *manaqib*. In this way, the book not only preserves the memory of a great saint but also becomes an instrument of spiritual transformation that continues to inspire the religious life of Muslims across generations.

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