

The Philosophy of Sunni Sufism and Jurisprudence According to Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari: The Foundations of Sharia and His Attitude towards Ibahiyah

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Abstract: During modern spiritual dynamics, a dichotomy often arises between Sharia (Islamic law) and Sufism, accompanied by the spread of Ibahiyyah a school of thought that disregards formal religious laws in pursuit of *ma'rifah* (gnosis). The thought of Hasyim Asy'ari serves as a theological compass that preserves the authenticity of Islamic spirituality, ensuring that it remains grounded in legal discipline (*taklif*). This study aims to comprehensively analyze the concept of Sunni Sufism in the primary texts of Hasyim Asy'ari, dissect his critical arguments against spiritual deviations, and identify the contributions of his thought to the sustainability of moderate Islam in Indonesia. This qualitative, descriptive-analytical study is categorized as library research. The approach utilized is a biographical study focusing on the content analysis of *Hadratussyaikh Hasyim Asy'ari's* corpus of thought. Primary data were collected through close reading techniques of the texts *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim*, *Ad-Durar al-Muntatsirah*, *Risalah Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*, and *Al-Tibyan*. The analysis was conducted using textual and contextual interpretation techniques to identify the common thread between the aspects of Sharia, *tariqah* (the spiritual path), and *haqiqah* (the ultimate truth). The results of this study show that: (1) Hasyim Asy'ari's Sufism is a manifestation of Sunni Sufism that is fully integrated with Sharia through the concept of *Tariqah Tarbawiyah*; he views the

act of seeking knowledge (ngaji) as the primary instrument for attaining Allah's pleasure and positions authoritative texts as spiritual guides when a perfect master (mursyid kamil) is difficult to find. (2) His sharp criticism of Ibahiyyah serves as a "theological fence" to protect the authenticity of Sufism from spiritual liberalization, asserting that no matter how high a person's spiritual level is, it does not exempt them from legal obligations (taklif).

Keywords: Hasyim Asy'ari, Sunni Sufism, Sharia, Ibahiyyah.

1. Introduction

History records the profound contributions of Nusantara (Indonesian archipelago) ulama in integrating the exoteric (*sharia*) and esoteric (*sufism*) dimensions of Islam. At the forefront of this tradition, KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari presented a distinct form of practical Sufism (*tasawuf amali/suluk*) deeply rooted in the *manhaj* (methodology) of Imam al-Junayd al-Baghdadi and Imam al-Ghazali. His monumental role in developing this boarding school (*pesantren*) intellectual tradition was undeniably shaped by the rigorous mentorship of his teacher, Syaikhona Muhammad Kholil Bangkalan, who nurtured a generation of scholars who catalyzed Indonesian history. For the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama, Sufism was not a path of passive self-isolation, but a proactive-educational movement aimed at purifying the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) for the moral rectification of society. Through his works, he positioned Sufism as the mandatory third pillar within the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* paradigm, standing parallel to and maintaining equilibrium between the implementation of *sharia* and Sufi conduct.¹

However, throughout its historical trajectory, pure Sunni Sufism has constantly faced two contradictory, extreme challenges. On one hand, external pressure comes from textualist circles (*al-tayyar al-zahiri*), who tend to be rigid and utilize literal interpretations to label spiritual-order (*tariqah*) activities as deviations from the *sunnah*. On the other hand and far more perilous to the originality of the creed (*aqidah*) is the internal threat of *Ibahiyyah* (spiritual antinomianism). This deviant school of thought claims that a spiritual wayfarer (*salik*) who has achieved the station of ultimate truth (*haqiqah*) or gnosis (*ma'rifah*) is automatically exempted from religious legal obligations (*taklif*). Consequently, they permit what is forbidden and abandon obligatory acts of worship under the illusion that they transcend the law.²

The urgency of this research stems from the fact that the misconceptions (*shubhat*) of *Ibahiyyah* are not obsolete phenomena confined to the era of KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari, but rather a spiritual anomaly that continues to transform into the modern era. While during Mbah Hasyim's lifetime this deviation manifested as claims of *taklif* exemption for individuals who felt they had reached the pinnacle of *ma'rifatullah* (gnosis of God), in the contemporary era, this phenomenon has mutated into excessive (*extreme*) public reverence (*husnudzon*) toward specific figures possessing noble lineage (*habaib* or *sharif*). In the name of respect and the assumption of sainthood (*wali*), some segments of society tolerate or justify the behavior of certain individuals whose actions clearly violate the boundaries of formal jurisprudential law (*fiqh*). This cross-

¹ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Risalah Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah: Fi Hadits al-Mauta wa Asyrat al-Sa'ah wa Bayan Mafhum al-Sunnah wa al-Bid'ah* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, 1418 H), 12–15.

² Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Ad-Durar al-Muntatsirah fi al-Masail al-Tis'a 'Asyarah* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, n.d.), 8.

generational continuity of deviation underscores the pressing need to redefine the boundaries of legitimate spirituality.³

In this precise context, the thought of KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari, as articulated in his treatises such as *Risalah Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*, *Ad-Durar al-Muntatsirah*, and *Risalah al-Tasawuf*, attains its highest relevance. He stood firm in vehemently rejecting all forms of *Ibadiyah* and was highly selective in attributing the title of "Waliyullah" (Saint of Allah) unless there was robust evidence of strict adherence to *sharia*. For him, *sharia* is an absolute foundation that must never be abandoned until death, and no Sufism is valid without total adherence to the Qur'an and Sunnah.⁴ As a solution to this spiritual chaos, Mbah Hasyim's thought offers an integrative, "sharia-centric" (*syari'i al-artikaz*) model through the concept of the "Educational Path" (*Al-Tariqah al-Tarbawiyah*), wherein gnosis is pursued through the cultivation of moral knowledge (*akhlak*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*), rather than by dismantling them.⁵

In response to these problematic dynamics, this article entitled "The Philosophy of Sunni Sufism and Jurisprudence According to Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari: The Foundations of Sharia and His Attitude towards Ibadiyah" conducts an in-depth analytical study of Asy'ari's works to methodologically uncover his established spiritual boundaries and sharp critiques against the Ibadiyah movement. To achieve this, the research investigates how the concept of Sunni Sufism is integrated with sharia in Asy'ari's thought, as well as how he formulates his critique of Ibadiyah within this Sufistic framework. Ultimately, the reconstruction of this moderate (*wasathiyah*) Sunni Sufism model is expected to provide a substantial theoretical contribution to the sustainability of Sufi practices in Indonesia, ensuring they remain safeguarded from doctrinal and behavioral deviations.

Studies mapping the spiritual thought of KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari in Indonesia have been widely conducted from various perspectives. Abdullah Hakam explored the internal esoteric dimensions based on the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* tradition; however, his focus leaned heavily toward practical-methodological aspects such as *riyadhah* (spiritual exercises) and *mujadahah* (spiritual struggle) for self-discipline.⁶ Meanwhile, Moh. Lukman Hakim employed a comparative-historical approach to trace the genealogy of knowledge transfer between Syaikh Nawawi al-Bantani and Mbah Hasyim within the trilogy of Islamic teachings.⁷ Diverging from those two studies, this research operates within a theological-*aqidah* framework to map internal doctrinal conflicts resulting from the tension between obedience to *sharia* and the threat of *Ibadiyah*. The novel contribution offered here is a contrasting analysis regarding the *shari'i* boundaries in spiritual practices integrated into the concept of the "Educational Path" (*Al-*

³ For a contemporary context on spiritual antinomianism and neo-Sufism in Indonesia, see Martin van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Nusantara: Pengaruh, Penyebaran, dan Perkembangannya* (Jakarta: Alvabet, 2018), 45–50.

⁴ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Risalah al-Tasawuf*, manuskrip/kitab kumpulan karangan Hadratussyaikh (Jombang: Tebuieng, n.d.), 4.

⁵ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim fi ma Yaftaj ilaih al-Muta'allim fi Ahwal Ta'allumihi wa ma Yassahu al-'Alim fi Maqamat Ta'limihi* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, 1415 H), 22–25.

⁶ Abdullah Hakam, "Dimensi Esoteris Akhlakul Karimah dalam Manhaj Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari," *Jurnal Studi Islam* 14, no. 2 (2019): 145–160.

⁷ Moh. Lukman Hakim, "Genealogi Intelektual Pesantren: Melacak Jaringan Keilmuan Syaikh Nawawi al-Bantani dan KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari," *Tebuieng: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 8, no. 1 (2021): 34–52.

Tariqah al-Tarbawiyah), a vision of moderation in life (*wasathiyah al-hayah*), and the operational structure of practical Sufism in safeguarding the *ummah* (community) against religious liberalism across eras.

On the other hand, the pedagogical dimension of Mbah Hasyim's thought was also examined by Nasucha through an analysis of the text *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim* to address contemporary moral crises.⁸ However, that previous study strictly confined itself to the procedural-educational realm of values managed between teachers and students in formal institutions. This research steps further into the realm of theological ontology, where the act of seeking knowledge is not merely read as a character education instrument, but is reconstructed as a *shar'i* pathway toward a legitimate spiritual ascension (*wushul*) as well as a doctrinal shield against the infiltration of deviant movements.

Lastly, Afifuddin Dimyathi reviewed the construction of sharia-based Sufism deeply rooted in the Qur'an and As-Sunnah to maintain the integration between the esoteric and exoteric aspects.⁹ While Dimyathi's study tends to be internal descriptive-analytical, this research moves in a more critical-comparative direction by introducing the *Ibadiyah* movement variable as the dialectical opponent of *sharia*. The scientific novelty of this research is demonstrated through the mapping of a clear theological "demarcation line" to distinguish the position of a protected saint (*mahfuzh*) from a heretic (*zindiq*) deceived by spiritual desires, while simultaneously answering the challenges of the liberal illuminism phenomenon that frequently sidelights the law of *taklif* in the modern era.

2. Method

This research is library research, which is a type of study where the entire analytical process relies on collecting, examining, and tracking various literatures and written works closely related to the material object being studied. The approach used in this study is a qualitative-philosophical approach through a study of a figure's thought. This method was deliberately chosen because this research attempts to dissect the structure of KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari's theological and spiritual thought regarding the characteristics of Sunni Sufism, which is firmly bound to *sharia*, while analyzing his critical arguments against the deviant doctrine of *Ibadiyah* that leads to the revocation of the law of *taklif*.¹⁰

This qualitative study employs documentation, close reading, and thematic classification, drawing upon primary texts authored by KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari notably *Risalah Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*, *Ad-Durar al-Muntatsirah*, *Risalah al-Tasawuf*, and *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim* alongside secondary academic literature exploring his spiritual thought and the anti-Ibadiyah movement in the Nusantara. Utilizing content and textual analysis, the research deeply interprets these sources to extract the essence of Asy'ari's theological arguments and

⁸ Nasucha, "Aktualisasi Kitab Adab al-'Alim wal Muta'allim dalam Mengatasi Krisis Moral di Era Modern," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 11, no. 3 (2020): 210–225.

⁹ Afifuddin Dimyathi, *Tasawuf Berbasis Syariat: Integrasi Lahir dan Batin dalam Tradisi Intelektual Nusantara* (Surabaya: Imtiyaz, 2022), 89–105.

¹⁰ Sutrisno Hadi, *Metodologi Reseach*, (Yogyakarta: Fak. Psikologi UGM, 1990).

methodologically reconstruct his concept of the "Educational Path" (*Al-Tariqah al-Tarbawiyah*) as a spiritual fortress for Indonesian Muslims.

3. Results And Discussion

A. The Epistemological Construction of KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari's Sunni Sufism

Sufism (*tasawuf*) is the spiritual dimension of Islam that represents the manifestation of the station of excellence (*maqam ihsan*). As a broad domain, this discourse has generated a multiplicity of definitions among Islamic scholars (*ulama*), formulated based on the depth of their respective spiritual experiences. In general, the essence of Sufism can be classified into two primary dimensions: the theoretical (*'ilmi*) dimension and the practical (*'amali*) dimension. The theoretical dimension positions Sufism as an epistemological foundation to identify the conditions of the heart, with its locus of study centered on spiritual conceptualizations in the form of stations (*maqamat* spiritual stages toward Allah) and states (*ahwal* transient spiritual conditions).¹¹ Conversely, the practical dimension encompasses the concrete implementation of this theory in daily life through the manifestation of rigorous scrupulousness (*wara'*), whether in executing commands, avoiding prohibitions, or limiting permissible (*mubah*) matters strictly to the fulfillment of essential needs. Within the operational scope, *maqamat* such as repentance (*tawbah*), patience (*sabr*), asceticism (*zuhd*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), and contentment (*rida*) are achieved through optimal spiritual striving (*mujahadah*). Meanwhile, *ahwal* such as proximity (*qurb*) and profound love (*mahabbah*) are divine gifts (*mawahib*) that appear dynamically and non-permanently within the heart.¹² The ultimate end of this dialectic is the purification of the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*), which is actualized through spiritual exercises (*riyadhah*), the subjugation of base desires, and contemplation in solitude (*khalwah* and *'uzlah*).

In the Islamic intellectual tradition, the integration of knowledge and practice within Sufism is more commonly known as Sunni Sufism or Islamic Sufism. This tradition is a pedagogical framework (*tarbiyah 'ilmiyah*) aimed at curing internal maladies, purifying the soul from blameworthy traits (*takhalli*), and adorning it with praiseworthy characteristics (*tahalli*). From the Sunni perspective, a true Sufi is strictly obligated to stand upon a solid foundation of *sharia* and sincerely practice their knowledge. This principle aligns with the views of transitional Sufi authorities. Sheikh Zakaria al-Anshari asserted that Sufism is an intellectual instrument to understand the methods of soul purification and moral rectification, thereby enlivening both the exoteric and esoteric aspects to attain eternal bliss.¹³ This process involves purging the soul of chronic diseases such as arrogance (*takabur*), envy (*hasad*), and ostentation (*riya*) through *mujahadah* and disciplined spiritual management. Similarly, Sheikh Ahmad Zarruq emphasized that Sufism is the very essence and spirit of *sharia* itself, implying that there is no authentic Sufism without the backing of the strong pillars of Islamic law.¹⁴ As the founding figure of Sunni Sufism, Imam al-Junayd al-Baghdadi defined Sufism as a dynamic effort to break free from every

¹¹ William C. Chittick, *Sufism: A Beginner's Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2000), 61–66.

¹² Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Risalah al-Tasawuf*, manuskrip/kitab kumpulan karangan Hadratussyaikh (Jombang: Tebui reng, n.d.), 6–7. See also, Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī, *Kitāb al-Luma' fī al-Taṣawwuf*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1914), 41–43.

¹³ Abu Yahya Zakaria al-Anshari, *Ghayat al-Wushul ila Syarh Lubb al-Ushul* (Mesir: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, n.d.), 112.

¹⁴ Ahmad Zarruq, *Qawa'id al-Tasawuf* (Kairo: Dar al-Salam, 2005), 23–25.

base character trait toward noble character traits, utilizing the Qur'an and Sunnah as two non-negotiable pillars.¹⁵ Meanwhile, Imam Abu al-Hasan asy-Syadzili viewed Sufism as a means of spiritual training for total servitude to Allah and returning the soul to divine decrees a path that originates from knowledge and practice, leading to the attainment of divine gifts (*mawahib laduniyah*).¹⁶

In Islamic spiritual discourse, Sufism is positioned as the representation of the station of *ihsan*, oriented toward achieving direct connectivity (*shilah*) with the presence of Allah to attain ultimate happiness. Sufi authorities agree that the purification of the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) is an absolute prerequisite to guide human beings into His presence, considering that the soul reflects the purity of the Divine Essence, which requires a comprehensive process of guidance (*tarbiyah*) and internal training (*riyadhah*). Academically, the architecture of Sufism is classified into three main domains: Sunni (*akhlaki*) Sufism, philosophical (*falsafi*) Sufism, and practical (*'amali* or *irfani*) Sufism. Although they undergo methodological differentiation at the conceptual level, these three typologies possess an integrative meeting point and cannot be separated dichotomously in the practical-applied realm, as all three are rooted in a unilateral objective: spiritual approximation (*taqarrub*) to achieve the pleasure of Allah.¹⁷

Spiritual approximation in Sunni Sufism is realized progressively through the methodologies of *takhalli* (the elimination of blameworthy traits) and *tahalli* (the internalization of praiseworthy traits). The terminology of Sunni Sufism historically began to be institutionalized in the fifth century AH as a Sufi school of thought anchored in the Qur'an and As-Sunnah, affiliated with the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* doctrine, and adopting the Ash'arite theological methodology.¹⁸ The distinctive characteristic of this tradition lies in its commitment to the harmonization of the exoteric dimension (*sharia*) and the esoteric dimension (*haqiqah*).¹⁹ The Sunni Sufi tradition places the revealed text as the supreme judge; hence, all spiritual expressions (*dhawq*) must submit to the limitations of Islamic jurisprudential law (*hukum syara'*) and remain entirely free from innovation (*bid'ah*).²⁰

1. The Concept of Sharia According to Hasyim Asy'ari: The Absolute Standard and the Boundaries of Allah (Hududullah)

In the thought of KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari, *sharia* (the exoteric) and *haqiqah* (the esoteric) constitute an inseparable unity. *Sharia* serves as the existential foundation of Islamic spirituality; disregarding exoteric aspects for the sake of internal matters is deemed a departure from the essence of servitude (*ubudiyah*). The purification of the soul (*tazkiyah*) can only be achieved

¹⁵ Abu al-Qasim al-Junayd al-Baghdadi, *Rasa'il al-Imam al-Junayd*, ed. Ali Hassan Abdel-Kader (London: Luzac & Co, 1976), 45.

¹⁶ Abu al-Hasan asy-Syadzili, *Kawanan Hikam al-Isyraq ila Kull al-Shufiyyah fi Jami' al-Afaq* (Tunis: al-Matba'ah al-Tunisiyyah, 1332 H), 18–20.

¹⁷ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 4–5.

¹⁸ Abu al-Qasim al-Qushayri, *Al-Risalah al-Qushayriyyah fi 'Ilm al-Taṣawwuf*, ed. Ma'ruf Zurayq and 'Ali al-Baltaji (Beirut: Dār al-Khayr, n.d.), 45–48.

¹⁹ Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2011), 35–39.

²⁰ Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 116–120. See, Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern 'Ulamā' in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 132–135.

through spiritual striving (*mujahadah*), the path of which is delineated by *sharia*. Mandatory (*fardhu*) and supererogatory (*sunnah*) acts of worship act as a structure that safeguards the soul from losing its way in undisciplined claims of spiritual unveiling (*kasyaf*). For him, any *haqiqah* that contradicts *sharia* is void (*batil*). *Sharia* represents steadfastness (*istiqamah* the outward law), whereas *haqiqah* represents spiritual taste (*dzauq* the inward feeling). The integration of both forms the *manhaj* (methodology) of *wasathiyah* (moderate) Islam, which beautifully harmonizes jurisprudence (*fiqh*) with the purity of the heart.²¹

Sharia as the Absolute Standard in the Construction of Sufism

Hasyim Asy'ari asserts that *sharia* is the sole absolute standard to test the validity of any spiritual claim. There is no legitimate path of spiritual arrival (*wushul*) that bypasses the *sharia* of the Prophet Muhammad. *Sharia* is never revoked from a legally responsible Muslim (*mukallaf*) at any esoteric station (*maqam*); thus, every inspiration (*ilham*) or spiritual unveiling (*kasyaf*) must be weighed against it to protect the sanctity of religion from personal illusions. In modern Islamic thought, Mukhlis (2018) conceptualizes the ideas of Hadratussyaikh KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari as the ideal prototype of Sunni Sufism.²² The primary characteristic of this *manhaj* lies in its radical rejection of any form of dualism or dichotomous separation between *haqiqah* and *sharia*. For Hasyim Asy'ari, Sufism does not exist in a vacuum isolated from formal legal realities; rather, it manifests in the articulation of moral conduct that strictly and disciplinedly submits to the outward texts (*al-nushush al-zhahiriyyah*).²³

Through reconstructive analysis, the meaning of Sufism undergoes a repositioning from what was previously often accused of being passive-individualistic into an instrument of positive spirituality. This formulation does not lead its adherents to engage in extreme isolation (*uzlah* withdrawing from social dynamics), nor does it allow them to get trapped in *shathahat* the controversial utterances born from uncontrolled claims of spiritual ecstasy. On the contrary, the Sufism championed by Hasyim Asy'ari is actualized as a prophetic energy that drives transformative social action and productive labor. The spiritual depth of a Sufi is no longer measured by how far they abandon the world, but by how much tangible contribution and public benefit (*maslahah*) they bring to the *ummah* (community) while remaining firmly within the corridors of *sharia* law.

In a socio-religious analysis, this model of spirituality is rooted in the typology of *Akhlaqi* Sufism, which positions the rituals of inward purification to always run in harmony within the strict boundaries of *sharia* through an organic-symbiotic relationship with *fiqh*. Jurisprudence (*fiqh*) is positioned as a regulative instrument that disciplines the mechanical-outward aspects of all physical limbs (*jawarih*), while Sufism acts as the internal engine to purify hearts (*tashfiyat al-qulub*) from moral diseases. Through this functional integration, Hadratussyaikh constructs the ideal methodology to build a balanced Muslim character (*al-insan al-mutawazin*). This formulation successfully prevents religious anomalies, ensuring that a Muslim does not fall trap

²¹ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Risalah al-Tasawuf*, manuskrip/kitab kumpulan karangan Hadratussyaikh (Jombang: Tebui reng, n.d.), 9–11.

²² Mukhlis, "Prototipe Tasawuf Sunni Nusantara: Analisis Integratif Syariat dan Hakikat dalam Pemikiran Hadratussyaikh KH. Hasyim Asy'ari," *Jurnal Teologia* 29, no. 1 (2018): 45–68.

²³ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Risalah Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, 1418 H), 24.

to a dry, legalistic formalism of *fiqh*, yet does not drift away into abstract mysticism that disregards *sharia*. The final output is the birth of a Muslim persona who possesses robust spiritual resilience alongside high social discipline in responding to the dynamics of the era.

Sharia as the Manifestation of the Boundaries of Allah (Hududullah)

Ontologically, *sharia* within the framework of Islamic thought cannot be reduced merely to an artificial, formal legal institution. *Sharia* is the objective manifestation of *hududullah* (the authoritative boundaries of Allah) comprehensively designed to enclose and regulate every aspect of human life ranging from domestic institutions (family) and the protection of the socio-economic rights of orphans, to the enforcement of distributive justice within the Islamic inheritance system (*faraidh*). Referencing the thesis of Wahbah al-Zuhayli, these theological boundaries are inherently not a legalistic burden (*taklif*) that emasculates human existential freedom. On the contrary, *sharia* must be understood as a determinant, mandatory instrument to attain the pleasure of Allah SWT while preserving universal welfare (*maslahah 'ammah*).²⁴

A deconstructive analysis of al-Zuhayli's work reveals that submission to *hududullah* is the primary indicator of the authenticity of faith.²⁵ When a servant violates or ignores these boundaries of *sharia*, they ontologically step out of the true essence of servitude (*haqiqat al-ubudiyyah*). The act of degrading *sharia* is judged as a form of self-subordination to the hegemony of caprice (*al-hawa*), which in turn plunges humanity into spiritual alienation and moral anarchy. Therefore, within this ontological lens, *sharia* acts as a demarcation line separating a straight, theocentric order from anthropocentric misguidance controlled by egoistic desires.

Sharia as a Barometer for the Validity of Sainthood and Miracles

To purify the spiritual path (*tariqah*) from the infiltration of pseudo-mysticism, KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari establishes a highly strict and rigid verification standard regarding the legitimacy of sainthood (*wilayah*). He asserts axiomatically that anyone who claims to have reached the degree of a saint (*wali*), yet deliberately (*'amdan*) casts aside or belittles *sharia*, makes a spiritual claim that is a monumental lie (*kadzib*) and a theological falsehood. Doctrinally, a true saint (*al-wali al-haqiqi*) is always under divine protection through the concept of *hifzh* a divine preservation that shields them from sins and outward legal violations. If, within their human dimension, a saint commits an oversight, the indicator of their sainthood will manifest in an instant spiritual drive to immediately seek the path of sincere repentance (*tawbah nasuha*).²⁶

This rigidity of discipline is not measured solely through obedience regarding major sins but is manifested down to the fragments of minor manners and etiquette (*al-adab al-shaghirah*). Hadratussyaikh contextualizes this principle by quoting the epistemic firmness of Imam Abu Yazid al-Busthami, who instantly cancelled his intention to study under a spiritual figure because that figure was caught spitting toward the *qiblah* (direction of prayer). This event serves as powerful proof (*hujjah*) that the collapse of outward etiquette is a direct reflection of a fragile esoteric foundation.

Furthermore, Hadratussyaikh positions *sharia* as the sole life path (*al-manhaj al-wahid*) that is absolute for attaining universal happiness in this world and the hereafter (*sa'adat al-*

²⁴ Wahbah al-Zuhayli, *Al-Fiqh al-Islami wa Adillatuhu*, vol. 12 (Damaskus: Dar al-Fikr, 2004), 20.

²⁵ Ibid., 22.

²⁶ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Ad-Durar al-Muntatsirah fi al-Masail al-Tis'a 'Asyarah* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, n.d.), 14.

darain). To prevent this *manhaj* from being negotiated by mystical subjectivity, its operationalization must be guided by valid and authoritative principles of the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*). As a representation of the Path of Allah (*Sabilullah*) and the Rope of Allah (*Hablullah*), *sharia* bears the crucial function as a protection system that keeps human existence consistent (*istiqamah*) upon the route of truth.

Through this legal instrument, Hadratussyaikh preventively fortifies the *ummah* against the dangers of the *Ibadiyah* (Antinomianism) doctrine. This school is a deviant spiritual sect whose doctrinal characteristics claim that legal obligation (*taklif*) can be dropped or ignored for a certain spiritual elite (*khawas*) who feel they have attained an inward intimacy with God. The destructive effect of this *Ibadiyah* ideology is fatal, as it triggers the deconstruction of *sharia*, moral anarchy, and legal nihilism within society.²⁷ As a methodological solution, Hadratussyaikh reasserts the authority of *usul al-fiqh* and upholds the principle of the permanence of *taklif* indiscriminately. For him, the *Ibadiyah* doctrine is a heresy that corrupts the religious order from within. The permanence of *taklif* is a non-negotiable principle that maintains the harmony of the spiritual and social cosmos in Islam, so that no inward *maqam* can legitimize someone to step outside the protective fence of *sharia* law.

In alignment with this mapping of thought, Dimyathi (2021) reinforces the epistemological structure of Hadratussyaikh KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari by conceptualizing the organic relationship between Sufism as the "spirit" and *sharia* as the "vessel" that cannot be separated.²⁸ In this perspective, the effort to revive the esoteric realm (Sufism) while neglecting the exoteric (*sharia*) is theologically categorized as an act of heresy (*zindiq*), a doctrinal deviation that destroys the essence of obedience. Dimyathi emphasizes that all articulations of spiritual experience and claims of internal essence must submit absolutely under the supremacy of jurisprudential law; thus, if any symptoms of mystical phenomena or spiritual behavior are found to violate these boundaries of formal law, that subjective experience is methodologically flawed and must be abandoned to preserve the integrity of *sharia*.

In the corridor of reconstructing Sufi orthodoxy, Fuad (2014) asserts that KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari's conception regarding the legitimacy of miracles (*karamah*) is inherently bound to the standard of outward piety a view reflecting the continuity of the classical Sunni Sufi *manhaj* from al-Qushayri and al-Ghazali.²⁹ Through this perspective, the primary indicator of sainthood is not measured by the manifestation of supernatural phenomena, but rather by consistency in practicing *sharia*, wherein steadfastness (*istiqamah*) is positioned as the greatest miracle (*al-karamah al-uzhma*). Therefore, Fuad underlines that any form of extraordinary occurrence (*khariq al-'adah*) that appears without being accompanied by absolute obedience to the *sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad SAW is theologically rejected as divine deception (*istidraj*), rather than a valid sign of sainthood.

²⁷ Ibid., 16–17.

²⁸ Afifuddin Dimyathi, *Tasawuf Berbasis Syariat: Integrasi Lahir dan Batin dalam Tradisi Intelektual Nusantara* (Surabaya: Imtiyaz, 2021), 112–125.

²⁹ A. Fuad Fanani, "Ortodoksi Tasawuf Pesantren: Melacak Genealogi Pemikiran KH. Hasyim Asy'ari Akhlaki-Sunni," *Jurnal Kebudayaan Islam* 12, no. 2 (2014): 175–190.

2. Sufi Characteristics of KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari

The Sufism of KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari represents a model of Sunni Sufism with a distinct *Rabbani* (divine-centric) character that reactualizes Islamic spirituality through a dynamic integration between the soul purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) methodology of Imam al-Ghazali and the moderation principle (*al-i'tidal*) of Imam al-Junayd al-Baghdadi. Its primary characteristics rest upon the consistent implementation of *sharia*, the transmission of intellectual lineage (*sanad*) through recognized (*mu'tabar*) schools of thought, as well as strict standardization regarding the concept of sainthood (*wilayah*) and the authority of a spiritual master (*mursyid*). This authority necessitates noble character, complete mastery of religious sciences, and disciplined daily spiritual exercises (*riyadhah*) such as seeking forgiveness (*istighfar*), sending blessings upon the Prophet (*shalawat*), and morning-evening remembrances (*dhikr*). He strictly forbade the lay public from following incompetent guides and recommended an educational spiritual method (*tarbiyah tarbawiyah*) through the study of the texts *Safinat al-Najah* and *Bidayat al-Hidayah* as a safe alternative.³⁰

The primary distinction of his Sufism lies in its theological firmness in responding to spiritual distortions and its commitment to the social dimension. Through the text *Risalah Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*, he vehemently critiqued the adherents of existential monism (*Wahdat al-Wujud*) who interpreted it reductively due to a superficiality of knowledge and condemned the *Ibadiyah* (antinomianism) doctrine which claims the revocation of the legal burden of *sharia* (*taklif*) for a servant who has reached the pinnacle of love (*mahabbah*). Instead of choosing a path of passive self-isolation (*uzlah*), Hasyim Asy'ari's Sufism is inherently interactive and socio-transformative; he asserted that true spirituality must run in tandem with social responsibility, unity, and cooperation (*gotong royong*) within society because human beings cannot live individualistically.³¹

First: The Integration of Sharia, Knowledge, and the Recognized Tradition of Spiritual Orders

The fundamental characteristic of KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari's Sunni Sufism rests upon the principle of steadfastness (*istiqamah*) toward the comprehensive implementation of *sharia*, which integrates the dimensions of worship (*ibadah*), creed (*aqidah*), and social transactions (*muamalah*) as the barometer for the validity of spiritual activities. This theological emphasis aligns with Imam al-Ghazali's view that any inward truth (*haqiqah*) that contradicts outward *sharia* is a manifest misguidance. Through the integration of the three pillars of religion (*Iman, Islam, Ihsan*), Sufism is positioned as the spirit that enlivens actions, while *sharia* becomes the formal regulatory framework controlling it. In Indonesia, Kiai Hasyim successfully executed a "codification of orthodoxy" by constructing the epistemic system of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* through the harmonization of Ash'arite theology, Shafi'ite jurisprudence, and Ghazalian Sufism, wherein the principle of legitimacy (*al-mu'tabarah*) is utilized as an epistemological instrument to safeguard the authenticity of intellectual lineage.³²

³⁰ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim fi ma Yaftaj ilaih al-Muta'allim fi Ahwal Ta'allumihi wa ma Yassahu al-'Alim fi Maqamat Ta'limihi* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, 1415 H), 30–32.

³¹ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Risalah Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah: Fi Hadits al-Mauta wa Asyraf al-Sa'ah wa Bayan Maqhum al-Sunnah wa al-Bid'ah* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, 1418 H), 18–21.

³² Ibid., 26.

This selective orthodox stance is explicitly oriented as a rejection of the doctrine of the *Ibahiyyah* (antinomianism) adherents. This group claims the dropping of legal burdens (*suquth al-takalif*) and immunity from sin for a servant who is claimed to have reached the pinnacle of love (*dhurwat al-mahabbah*) toward Allah SWT. Kiai Hasyim pronounced this deviant mystical belief as a form of manifest disbelief (*kufir*) and misguidance, because for him, true Sufism must bear fruit in a grander level of obedience to *sharia*, rather than dismantling it.³³ On this basis, he designated *sharia* as the sole epistemic authority in verifying an individual's spiritual claims; thus, anyone who is outwardly proven to have stepped out of the corridors of Islamic law is judged to have been deceived by their caprice (*maghrur*) and is being tempted by Satan.

Furthermore, this standardization of *sharia* is rigidly applied to the criteria of sainthood (*wilayah*) and the legitimacy of spiritual order institutions (*tariqah*). A true saint (*al-wali al-haqiqi*) must fulfill the qualification of being divinely protected (*mahfuzh*) namely, always being under the continuous protection of Allah SWT from acts of disobedience, instantly turning to repentance (*al-tawwab*) if an oversight occurs, and wrapped in sincerity and humility (*tawadhu'*) without ever declaring their status to the public for worldly authority.³⁴ In the context of spiritual institutions, he established the absolute prerequisite that all teachings, practices, and etiquettes of a *tariqah* must possess a valid legal foundation (*mustanad*) from the Qur'an and Sunnah. He strictly prohibited the community from practicing deviant *tariqahs* that adopt rituals without valid proofs categorizing them as blameworthy innovations (*bid'ah madzmumah*) and asserted that a *tariqah* is merely an explanatory instrument to deepen the internalization of *sharia*, not an independent route to bypass it.

The essential characteristic of Sunni Sufism in the thought of KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari relies heavily on the principle of adhering to a school of jurisprudence (*al-tamadhhub*) and commitment to a recognized spiritual path as fundamental pillars in traversing the spiritual journey (*suluk*). In harmony with Imam al-Ghazali's thesis, the path of the Sufis is judged as the straightest *manhaj* because it successfully integrates the dimensions of knowledge and practice, with the strict caveat that valid Sufism must be bound (*muqayyad*) by the Qur'an, Sunnah, and the methodology of the righteous predecessors (*salaf al-salih*). Without this methodological attachment, a spiritual wayfarer (*salik*) will inevitably fall into theological deviance and behavioral distortion.³⁵

Within the landscape of Nusantara Islam, KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari acted as the architect of orthodoxy who methodologically and integratively codified the identity of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*. His epistemological contribution lies in the coherent unification of the three main pillars of religiosity: theological moderation (*wasathiyah*) of the Ash'arite and Maturidite schools, formal-legal commitment to the Four Madhhabs, and the spiritual-ethical dimension of Sunni Sufism architected by al-Ghazali and al-Junayd. The actualization of this intellectual movement aimed to protect the religious stability of the *ummah* from the penetration of extreme currents of thought, while simultaneously guaranteeing the continuity of intellectual transmission (*sanad*) down to the generation of the righteous predecessors.

³³ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Ad-Durar al-Muntatsirah fi al-Masail al-Tis'a 'Asyarah* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, n.d.), 19.

³⁴ Ibid., 22.

³⁵ Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 1 (Kairo: Dar al-Hadith, 2004), 55–58.

This obligation to follow (*taqlid*) the systematic methodology of a recognized Imam is binding for every Muslim who has not reached the rank of absolute independent reasoning (*al-ijtihad al-muthlaq*) to guarantee the validity of their deeds and avoid distortions of textual interpretation (*ta'wil*), although proportional flexibility to switch schools is still granted to the lay public (*al-'ammi*). This manifestation of adhering to a school culminates in an integrative "Trinity of Madhhabs," comprising the jurisprudence of the Imam al-Shafi'i school as the guarantor of outward legal validity, the theology of the Imam Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari school as the fortress for the purity of faith, and the Sufism of Imam al-Ghazali and Imam Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili as the methodology of soul purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) that injects esoteric substance (*Ihsan*) and noble character into formal worship.

The integration of knowledge is a fundamental requirement in Sufism to ensure that spiritual experiences remain within the corridors of *sharia* and avoid doctrinal deviations. KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari asserted that seeking knowledge is a binding obligation, even positioning knowledge concerning spiritual states (*ahwal*) and spiritual stations (*maqamat*) as an individual obligation (*fardhu 'ain*). To cultivate an ideal generation of Muslims (*al-insan al-kamil*), he designed an educational blueprint from an early age that prioritizes four main pillars of knowledge: the science of monotheism (*tawhid*), the science of the attributes of Allah, the science of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and the science of *ahwal* and *maqamat*. This vision aligns with the methodological rule of Imam al-Ghazali, which states that action without knowledge will not be upright, and the inward dimension is only valid if its outward dimension is legally sound according to *sharia*.³⁶ This scholarly rigidity is supported by Imam al-Junayd, who established the standard of memorizing the Qur'an and Hadith for a spiritual master, as well as Imam al-Shadhili, who positioned outward knowledge (the Qur'an and Sunnah) as the supreme judge to test the validity of spiritual unveilings (*kasyaf*) and inward experiences.

Furthermore, KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari formulated the standardization of a master's eligibility, which includes four primary pillars as the embodiment of Islamic moderation that blends the outward and inward dimensions. First, the master must master and practice *sharia*, wherein *fiqh* functions as an absolute ethical filter. Second, they must master the etiquettes of the spiritual path as a system of spiritual psychology (*'ilm al-nafs*) to guide disciples according to the levels of their souls. Third, they must attain the ultimate truth (*haqiqah*) as the fruit of direct spiritual taste (*dzauq*). Fourth, they must possess perfect sincerity as a binding pillar that protects the master from diseases of the heart such as vanity (*'ujub*), ostentation (*riya'*), and worldly ambition. This strict qualification of knowledge and character becomes a quality assurance that the spiritual relationship built stands solely for the sake of Allah SWT and is clean from pragmatic interests.³⁷

As a methodological solution for a wayfarer (*salik*) who wishes to follow a spiritual path but does not yet possess perfect intellectual capacity, or when a spiritual master who meets the scholarly qualifications above cannot be found, KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari strictly forbade them from studying under those with minimal knowledge. As an alternative, he recommended a path of independent learning through textual study, namely by deeply studying the text *Safinat al-Najah* by Sheikh Salim bin Abdullah for the branch of jurisprudence, and the text *Bidayat al-Hidayah*

³⁶ Ibid., 62.

³⁷ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Risalah al-Tasawuf*, manuskrip/kitab kumpulan karangan Hadratussyaikh (Jombang: Tebureng, n.d.), 15.

by Imam al-Ghazali for Sufi practices.³⁸ This model of following a spiritual path through the avenue of study, academic earnestness, and the consistent application of knowledge is what the researcher identifies as the concept of the "Educational Path" (*Al-Tariqah al-Tarbawiyah*). Through this approach, a teacher or guide is also demanded to continuously maintain an ethos of learning, consistently perform acts of worship, and not waste their lifespan outside of scholarly activities.

Second: Social Sufism, Community Engagement, and Worldly Well-Being

KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari asserted that interacting and blending with society (*al-ikhtilath*) is far more virtuous than self-isolation (*al-'uzlah*) for every Muslim who possesses the capacity to fulfill the rights of their fellow human beings and project public benefit. This vision aligns with the redefinition of asceticism (*zuhd*) by Imam Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili, who rejected the "desire for total withdrawal" (*shahwat al-inqitha'*) for the sake of chasing miracles (*karamah*), affirming instead that the essence of *zuhd* is emptying the heart of everything other than Allah, rather than physically severing ties with social reality.³⁹ KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's sharp critique against exclusive self-isolation was historically manifested when he sternly rebuked a worshiper who locked himself inside his house to manipulate public opinion into perceiving him as a Saint of Allah (*Waliyullah*) a motif driven by the pursuit of social status (*thalab al-jah*) that dismantles the foundational sincerity of Sufism. The characteristics of his Sunni Sufism vehemently reject egoistic piety and mandate social participation (*al-ijtima'*) as the primary pillar of the community's welfare.

From both sociological and theological dimensions, collectivity, mutual cooperation (*al-ta'awun / gotong-royong*), and unity are positioned as existential necessities because human beings are incapable of fulfilling their life needs independently. Quoting the Prophet ﷺ, he emphasized that Allah's assistance always accompanies the collective body (*al-ijtima'*), whereas isolation (*al-infirad*) only renders an individual vulnerable to spiritual distortions and satanic temptations.⁴⁰ Therefore, anchoring internal spirituality through unity and the bonds of kinship (*silaturahmi*) serves as the most robust instrument to cultivate love, drive national progress, reinforce governmental authority, and actualize state prosperity. Nevertheless, social interaction must remain anchored in selective ethical regulations when choosing interlocutors such as the righteous, the pious, and figures who preserve their personal dignity (*dhawu al-muru'ah*) while strictly forbidding all forms of mutual hatred (*al-tabaghudh*), envy (*al-tahasud*), and fragmentation.⁴¹

In the view of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, asceticism (*zuhd*) is never synonymous with completely severing ties from the world (*inqitha' 'an al-dunya*) or neglecting the livelihood of fellow creatures. On the contrary, his intellectual genius constructed an attentiveness toward the worldly welfare of students (*santri*) as an integral part of drawing closer (*qurbah*) and showing proper etiquette (*adab*) to Allah SWT. This construction represents an extension of the methodology of Imam al-Junayd al-Baghdadi, who viewed Sufism as a process of enlivening a

³⁸ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim*, 35.

³⁹ Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili, *Kawānīn Hikam al-Isyraq ila Kull al-Shufiyyah fi Jami' al-Afaq* (Tunis: al-Matba'ah al-Tunisiyyah, 1332 H), 34.

⁴⁰ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Risalah Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah: Fi Hadits al-Mauta wa Asyrat al-Sa'ah wa Bayan Mafhum al-Sunnah wa al-Bid'ah* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, 1418 H), 42–45.

⁴¹ Ibid., 48.

spirituality that mandates the fulfillment of the rights of fellow creations.⁴² This vision also strongly intersects with the thought of Imam al-Ghazali, who integrated spiritual exercises with the social obligations of sustaining livelihoods as a collective duty (*fardhu kifayah*) to prevent *zuhd* from transforming into a justification for unemployment.⁴³ Furthermore, it harmonizes with the firmness of Imam Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili, who forbade his disciples from abandoning their professions, arguing that a true gnostic (*arif*) is never veiled by creation from their Lord.⁴⁴

Grounded in these foundational principles (*usul*), KH. Hasyim Asy'ari conducted a theoretical reconstruction of the meaning of *zuhd* through the principle of equilibrium (*al-tawazun*). While Sufism is often pejoratively associated with the absence of worldly desire, he conversely urged educators to guide students toward achieving worldly success (*najah*) and prosperity (*falah*). This activity is positioned as a form of *adab* that perfects the essence of servitude (*'ubudiyah*), given that assisting in meeting the life needs of fellow human beings invites the help of Allah SWT.⁴⁵ Through this approach, the educational process provided by a scholar (*ulama*) does not merely touch upon the religious dimension (*hablun minallah*), but also encompasses worldly affairs (*hablun minannas*) so that both dimensions can achieve perfection simultaneously.

Epistemologically, the strand of Sufism championed by KH. Hasyim Asy'ari displays a character that is proactive, social (*ijtima'i*), and progressive (*taqaddumi*). He maintained that the true substance of *zuhd* is turning the heart away from emotional attachment (*ta'alluq*) to the world, not abandoning worldly activities that yield public benefit. This spiritual legitimacy is granted so that Muslims actively participate in building civilization and achieving distributive worldly success without slipping into the disease of materialism (*hubb al-dunya*). For the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama, worldly success is a noble instrument for righteous deeds as long as it is dedicated to the welfare of the *ummah*, meaning that the function of the *ulama* is not merely to educate future inhabitants of paradise, but also to cultivate successful leaders and professionals on the global stage.

Third: Moral Education, Continuity of Remembrance, and Righteous Deeds

The intellectual genius of KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari in *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim* is manifested through his success in correlating the accumulation of religious deeds with moral piety. Adhering to the foundational principles (*usul*) of the masters of the spiritual path (*aimmat al-suluk*) such as Imam al-Junayd, who mandated character (*akhlak*) as the essence of Sufism; Imam al-Ghazali, who constructed a system of spiritual discipline (*riyadhah*) to balance the heart; and Imam al-Shadhili, who emphasized the manifestation of proper etiquette (*adab*) he asserted that all religious expressions carry no weight in the divine scale unless adorned with beautiful character.⁴⁶ Praiseworthy character, internalized from an early age through the purification of

⁴² Abu al-Qasim al-Junayd al-Baghdadi, *Rasa'il al-Imam al-Junayd*, ed. Ali Hassan Abdel-Kader (London: Luzac & Co, 1976), 61.

⁴³ Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 2 (Kairo: Dar al-Hadith, 2004), 88–92.

⁴⁴ Al-Shadhili, *Kawanin Hikam al-Isyraq*, 37.

⁴⁵ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim fi ma Yaftaj ilaih al-Muta'allim fi Ahwal Ta'allumihi wa ma Yassahu al-'Alim fi Maqamat Ta'limihi* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, 1415 H), 50–53.

⁴⁶ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim fi ma Yaftaj ilaih al-Muta'allim fi Ahwal Ta'allumihi wa ma Yassahu al-'Alim fi Maqamat Ta'limihi* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, 1415 H), 12–15.

the heart (*tathhir al-qalb*), serves as the true barometer and indicator for the acceptability (*maqbul*) of a servant's deeds before Allah SWT in the Hereafter.

In an educational context, moral nobility is positioned as a *conditio sine qua non* (an absolute prerequisite) before knowledge can be absorbed and productively utilized. A student who successfully purifies their heart from the stains of deceit, resentment, and malice will possess high epistemic eligibility to receive the transmission of knowledge, strengthen retention, and unveil the hidden subtleties of science. This causal relationship forms a rigid chain wherein monotheism (*tawhid*) engenders faith (*iman*), faith drives the divine law (*sharia*), and *sharia* yields *akhlak*; thus, whoever lacks *adab* essentially lacks *sharia*, *iman*, and *tawhid*. This obligation for moral reform operates dualistically and must be initiated first by the educator by purifying their internal dimension from envy (*hasad*), arrogance (*kibr*), ostentation (*riya'*), and worldly motives, while cleansing their external tongue from backbiting (*ghibah*) and slander.⁴⁷

KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari asserted that steadfastness (*istiqamah*) in performing supererogatory devotions (*al-ibadat al-nafilah*) represents a methodological reconciliation of the spiritual path (*manhaj al-suluk*), grounded in the principle that deeds are the medicine and continuity therein is the cure. This conceptual framework aligns with the principle of Imam al-Junayd al-Baghdadi, who designated *istiqamah* as the essence of charismatic miracles (*karamah*) and positioned disciplined remembrance (*dhikr*) as the primary mandate toward divine proximity. This vision also finds a strong legacy in the "management of daily litanies" (*tartib al-awrad*) of Imam al-Ghazali, who likened consistency in action to drops of water capable of perforating a stone, whereas the interruption of deeds (*al-inqitha'*) only renders the heart arid and hardened.⁴⁸ Furthermore, this perspective intersects with the school of Imam Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili, who conceptualized *dhikr*, seeking forgiveness (*istighfar*), and invoking blessings upon the Prophet (*shalawat*) as protective instruments (*silah waqa'i*) against spiritual negligence. Based on this accumulation of views, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari positioned daily litanies (*wirid*) as spiritual nutrition (*al-ghidza' al-ruhi*) that must be consistently practiced by both educators and students to maintain the rectitude of educational dynamics.⁴⁹

In the practical dimension, the fundamental characteristics of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's Sufism manifest in a massive call to discipline supererogatory practices, both verbal (*qauliyah*) and physical (*fi'liyah*). Muslims are required to be consistent in reciting the Qur'an, establishing voluntary prayers and fasting, and continuously integrating *dhikr* between the heart and the tongue. Furthermore, he positioned *dhikr* as a psycho-spiritual therapy possessing specific therapeutic functions to cure various inner diseases. The most efficacious remedy for treating the heart in his view is through the consistent chanting of *istighfar* and *shalawat* upon the Prophet ﷺ, actualized during virtuous times (*al-auqat al-fadhilah*), particularly in the deep third of the night (*jauf al-lail*) and the early morning. Through this systematically documented routine of daily *dhikr*, the aspect of ritual piety transforms into a transformative force that preserves the mental health and spirituality of the *ummah*.

The construction of KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari's sufistic thought represents a unique prototype that synergistically integrates the methodologies of the leading figures of the spiritual

⁴⁷ Ibid., 22–24.

⁴⁸ Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 1 (Kairo: Dar al-Hadith, 2004), 104–108.

⁴⁹ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Risalah al-Tasawuf*, manuskrip/kitab kumpulan karangan Hadratussyaiikh (Jombang: Tebuireng, n.d.), 28.

path (*aimmat al-suluk*). He absorbed the substance of his thought from two classical schools, namely Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali and Imam al-Junayd al-Baghdadi, while simultaneously affirming that the sufistic practices of the Muslim community in Java rely fundamentally on the methodologies of Imam al-Ghazali and Imam Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili.⁵⁰ This spiritual affiliation shapes a dynamic brand of "practical Sufism" (*al-tasawuf al-'amali*), given that Imam al-Shadhili is widely recognized as a pioneer of Sufism who saw no contradiction between the spiritual journey (*al-suluk al-ruhi*) and fulfilling daily life obligations.⁵¹ The amalgamation of al-Ghazali's doctrine of heart purification (*tathhir al-qulub*), al-Shadhili's practical steadfastness (*al-istiqamah al-'amaliyah*), and al-Junayd's legal-sharia control (*al-dhabith al-syar'i*) transforms into a holistic methodology that integrates *sharia* and ultimate truth (*haqiqah*), alongside self-rectification (*tahdzib al-dzat*) and generating benefit for society (*na'f al-mujtama'*).

Fourth: The Synthesis of Al-Ghazali and Al-Shadhili's Thought

The epistemological roots of KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari's Sufism within the classical Sunni tradition serve as an absolute guarantee of his commitment to *sharia* orthodoxy, ensuring it does not slip into abstract philosophical pseudo-Sufism or pantheistic doctrines (*hulul*). Through strict theological compliance and jurisprudential discipline in accordance with the orientation of Imam al-Junayd al-Baghdadi, the gateway to the Ultimate Truth (*al-Haqq*) is rigorously controlled to ensure it remains firmly within the corridors of the Qur'an and As-Sunnah.⁵² This practical-applied characteristic is further reinforced by the Shadhili tradition in Java through its rejection of extreme self-isolation (*uzlah*), its focus on optimizing structured remembrance (*dhikr*) and daily litanies (*wirid*) without radical solitary retreats (*khalwah*), and the principle of equilibrium that places the world in one's hands, not in one's heart. Through this adaptive orientation, he successfully presented a sufistic vision that blends the depth of spiritual purification (*tazkiyah ruhiyah*) with the vitality of social action (*al-'amal al-ijtima'i*), rendering it highly compatible with the sociological structure of the community.

Although historically KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari was not recorded as an official spiritual master (*mursyid*) of any specific spiritual order (*tariqah*), he consistently elaborated, codified, and provided rigid legitimacy regarding the existence of *tariqahs*, the position of a *mursyid*, and the formal qualifications of both.⁵³ Establishing these strict prerequisites for spiritual instruments was a preventive effort as well as a strategic measure to filter practices, protect the authenticity of intellectual lineage (*sanad*), and stem all forms of spiritual deviation among the *ummah*. Through this institutionalization, the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama successfully positioned Sufism as an active moral force operating at the very heart of society, wherein commitment to a spiritual path is positioned as a form of substantive transformation in the intention, theology, ethics, and life orientation of a spiritual wayfarer (*salik*).⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Risalah Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah: Fi Hadits al-Mauta wa Asyrat al-Sa'ah wa Bayan Mafhum al-Sunnah wa al-Bid'ah* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, 1418 H), 11–14.

⁵¹ Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili, *Kawanin Hikam al-Isyraq ila Kull al-Shufiyyah fi Jami' al-Afaq* (Tunis: al-Matba'ah al-Tunisiyyah, 1332 H), 45.

⁵² Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Risalah Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah: Fi Hadits al-Mauta wa Asyrat al-Sa'ah wa Bayan Mafhum al-Sunnah wa al-Bid'ah* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, 1418 H), 15–17.

⁵³ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Ad-Durar al-Muntatsirah fi al-Masail al-Tis'a 'Asyarah* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, n.d.), 25–28.

⁵⁴ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Risalah al-Tasawuf*, manuskrip/kitab kumpulan karangan Hadratussyaikh (Jombang: Tebureng, n.d.), 33.

3. Deconstruction of Orthodoxy: Epistemological Regulation and KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's Episteme of Critique Against Ibahiyah Thought

Within the landscape of Islamic theological and spiritual discourse in the Nusantara during the early twentieth century, KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari stood out as the primary fortress of Sunni Sufi orthodoxy through his rigid analytical critique against the phenomenon of *Al-Ibahiyyun* (religious libertarianism or permissivism). The *Ibahiyyah* current was conceptualized as a form of ideological deviation and destructive behavioral anarchy that exploited the jargon of spirituality to legitimize claims of the revocation of Islamic legal burdens (*suquth al-taklif*). This deconstruction of law was typically claimed to occur when a servant was deemed to have reached the highest station of ultimate inward truth (*maqam al-haqiqah*) or gnosis (*ma'rifah*). Historically, the genealogy of this thought is rooted in post-Islamic extreme syncretism in the Persian region which adopted liberative-communal traditions from the ancient Mazdakite movement, eventually manifesting as the Khurramiyah movement in 192 AH.⁵⁵ The remnants of this movement utilized the outward identity of Islam such as constructing mosques and proclaiming the call to prayer (*adhan*) merely as a social camouflage and administrative formality, while substantially rejecting the authority of exoteric jurisprudential law (*fiqh*) and permitting matters explicitly prohibited by the *sharia*. However, this genealogical lineage should be understood as a typological-heresiological classification employed by classicists rather than a direct, linear historical transmission. In the context of Islamic intellectual networks, there is no philological evidence or chain of transmission (*isnad*) linking these ancient Persian antinomian movements to the later development of mystical currents in Southeast Asia.⁵⁶

Chronologically, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari identified that this religious anarchy, mutating from ancient seeds, blossomed again in Java in the year 1330 AH (1912 CE). This religious symptom was triggered by mass ignorance among the public and the absence of qualified spiritual masters (*mursyids*) capable of properly and continuously integrating the science of *sharia*. Theoretically, the *Ibahiyyun* constructed a deviant epistemology by claiming that if a servant has achieved the pinnacle of love toward Allah (*ghayat al-mahabbah*) and their inward self is purified from negligence (*ghafilah*), then the commands and prohibitions of religion automatically cease to apply to them. Furthermore, they claimed total immunity from the torment of hellfire despite committing major sins (*kaba'ir*). The existence of formal outward worship, such as prayer (*shalah*) and fasting (*sawm*), was subsequently degraded and replaced solely by contemplation (*tafakkur*) and the refinement of inward character.⁵⁷

Anchoring his arguments in the authority of Sayyid Muhammad Murtadha al-Zabidi in *Sharh al-Ihya*, Hadratussyayikh explicitly dismantled this doctrine of *sharia* deconstruction based on false love. He categorized it as a form of manifest disbelief (*kufr*), atheism (*ilhad*), and heresy (*zandakah*) that absolutely expels the perpetrator from the fold of Islam.⁵⁸ This theological confrontation demonstrates KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's firmness in safeguarding the divine boundaries

⁵⁵ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Risalah Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah: Fi Hadits al-Mauta wa Asyrat al-Sa'ah wa Bayan Mafhum al-Sunnah wa al-Bid'ah* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, 1418 H), 18–20.

⁵⁶ Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern 'Ulamā' in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 132–135.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 22.

⁵⁸ Muhammad Murtadha al-Zabidi, *Ithaf al-Sadah al-Muttaqin bi Sharh Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 2 (Kairo: al-Matba'ah al-Maymaniyyah, 1311 H), 246–249.

(*hududullah*). For him, there is no spiritual station (*maqam*) in this world that can revoke the *sharia* obligations of a legally responsible Muslim (*mukallaf*), given that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as the human being with the highest degree of gnosis remained the most obedient servant in upholding outward worship until the end of his life.

Sociologically, the practical manifestation of the *Ibahiyyah* current encountered by KH. Hasyim Asy'ari on the ground materialized in several local mysticism movements or *Kejawen*. One of the most representative during that era was the *Hardopusoro* movement that developed in the Purworejo region of Central Java. This mystical movement demonstrated a strong intersection with *Ibahiyyah* ideology through the marginalization of exoteric jurisprudential rules in pursuit of pure inward realization, termed as the condition of *Moksa* or *Suwung* (absolute emptiness). Sociological and philological inquiries reveal that these antinomian features within *Hardopusoro* did not diffuse from Middle Eastern heterodoxies, but were independently generated through a local Javanese-Islamic hybridity. This phenomenon emerged from the esoteric radicalization of existential Sufism (*Wahdat al-Wujud*) interacting with pre-Islamic Javanese worldview,⁵⁹ which expanded rapidly as a cultural response to early twentieth-century colonial polarization.⁶⁰ KH. Hasyim Asy'ari completely rejected these traditions and provided a theoretical assertion that *Kejawen* stands outside the circle of Islamic Sufism due to the absence of a valid *sharia* foundation. He emphasized that spiritual expressions that clash with outward jurisprudential laws are contradictorily opposed to the disciplinary methodology (*manhaj*) championed by the scholars of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*.

To demolish the theoretical legitimacy of the *Ibahiyyun*, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari reconstructed the paradigm of Sufism in Indonesia upon the principle of *Ittiba'* (following the guidance of the Prophet) rather than *Ibtida'* (innovating blameworthy additions). Quoting the thought of Imam al-Ghazali in *Al-Arba'in fi Ushul ad-Din*, he asserted that the key to spiritual happiness and absolute inward salvation lies in complete compliance to follow the prophetic tradition (*ittiba' al-sunnah*) in every movement and stillness, even within daily customs.⁶¹ In this perspective, proving the degree of sainthood (*wilayah*) or proximity to Allah cannot be separated from the outward witness of strict compliance (*mutaba'ah*) toward the decrees of *sharia*. Therefore, any claim of spiritual achievement that contravenes jurisprudential law is positioned as a misleading spiritual delusion that holds no value before the Ultimate Truth (*Al-Haqq*).

This sharp critique launched by KH. Hasyim Asy'ari did not end at the level of theological debate alone; rather, it functioned as an ideological-defensive instrument to protect the purity of the *ummah's* creed (*aqidah*) from the penetration of deviant "philosophical Sufism" that adopted the theories of *Hulul* (incarnation) and *Ittihad* (unification / *Wahdat al-Wujud*).⁶² His synthesis of thought reinforced that inward worship can never become a substitution or replacement for outward worship; rather, it acts as its intrinsic perfection. Through this integrative protective

⁵⁹ P. J. Zoetmulder, *Pantheism and Monism in Javanese Suluk Literature: Islamic Mysticism in an Indonesian Setting* (Leiden: KITLV, 1995), 45–52; Simuh, *Sufisme Jawa: Transformasi Tasawuf Islam ke Mistik Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Benteng Budaya, 1998), 88–91.

⁶⁰ M. C. Ricklefs, *Polarising Javanese Society: Islamic and Other Visions, c. 1830-1930* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007), 210–214.

⁶¹ Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Al-Arba'in fi Ushul ad-Din* (Kairo: Al-Maktabah al-Tijariyyah al-Kubra, 1925), 89–92.

⁶² Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Ad-Durar al-Muntatsirah fi al-Masail al-Tis'a 'Asyarah* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, n.d.), 14–16.

approach, the function of Sufism was restored to its original station (*khittah*) as a filter for orthodoxy to maintain the purity of religion, while simultaneously ensuring that spiritual experience (*dzaug*) must submit to the authority of *sharia* to stem religious anarchy within the Muslim society.

B. The Genealogy of Ibahiyah Thought: From Classical Transition to the Movement in Java

1. Historical Roots and Theological Construction of Classical Ibahiyah: From Pre-Islamic Influence to Post-Islamic Evolution

Classical scholars utilized various terms to refer to groups that adopted the doctrine of *ibahah* (the legalization of prohibited matters). The most popular terminology directly addresses the core of their doctrine regarding the revocation of Islamic legal burdens (*suquth al-taklif*). The term *Ibahiyah* was employed by Abdul Muhsin and Imam al-Dhahabi to highlight the act of permitting prohibited matters (*istibahah al-mahzhurat*). Meanwhile, Imam Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari and Abdul Qahir al-Baghdadi used the designation *Ashhab al-Ibahah* to identify its adherents. In the domestic context of Nusantara, KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari used the Arabic plural form, namely *Al-Ibahiyyun*, in his text to refer to the followers of this school of thought.⁶³

In addition to its primary doctrine, some scholars also connected this group to its historical origins in Persia, namely the *Khurramiyah* (or *Khurramiyyah*) movement. Abdul Muhsin utilized the term *Al-Khurramiyah* to refer to the original name of this sect.⁶⁴ On the other hand, the historian Ibn al-Athir referred to it as the "Khurramiyah Religion" (*Dinu al-Khurramiyyah*),⁶⁵ a radical naming convention that is also supported by the records of Ibn Taghribirdi.⁶⁶ This specific categorization confirms that the level of extreme deviation they practiced led historians to consider it an independent religion completely outside the corridors of Islam, rather than a mere internal sect.

Conceptually, *Khurramiyah* is the historical designation of the movement's origin, whereas *Ibahiyah* is a descriptive name derived from the core of their belief system. Therefore, the deployment of both terms by the scholars refers to the exact same entity, namely the group that revokes the obligations of *taklif* and legalizes what Allah has forbidden.⁶⁷ Based on this tracing of classical Islamic literature, the doctrine of legalizing absolute freedom is proven to possess a long historical lineage divided into two primary eras: the pre-Islamic period and the post-Islamic period. This demonstrates that the thought was not a sudden phenomenon, but rather the reincarnation of ancient teachings under a new identity.

The roots of *Ibahiyah* thought first emerged during the pre-Islamic period in Persia through the Mazdakite movement (*Al-Mazdakiyyah*) under the reign of King Qubadh of the Sasanian Empire. The followers of Mazdak are recognized as the first communists and *ibahiyyin* in history, advocating for the abolition of private property and absolute freedom in social

⁶³ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Risalah Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah: Fi Hadits al-Mauta wa Asyrat al-Sa'ah wa Bayan Ma'fhum al-Sunnah wa al-Bid'ah* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, 2014), 11.

⁶⁴ Ali bin Nayef al-Syuhud, *Mawsu'ah al-Radd 'ala al-Shufiyyah*, vol. 19 (Malaysia: Dar al-Ma'mur, 2009), 160.

⁶⁵ Ibnu al-Atsir, *Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1997), 420.

⁶⁶ Ibnu Taghribirdi, *Al-Nujum al-Zahirah fi Muluk Misr wa al-Qahirah*, vol. 1 (Kairo: Dar al-Kutub, 1963), 278.

⁶⁷ Ali bin Nayef al-Syuhud, *Mawsu'ah al-Radd 'ala al-Shufiyyah*, vol. 19, 160.

relations. This doctrine of revoking obligations and satisfying physical caprice was embellished through propaganda termed *Khurramiyah* (something that pleases the soul). Because it was judged to destroy the social order, this movement was eventually suppressed en masse by King Qubadh's son, Anushirwan. However, after the establishment of Islam, this thought was reborn in the mountains of Azerbaijan in the year 192 AH (716–717 CE) under the name of the *Khurramiyah* sect, which was immediately countered through military suppression operations by the Islamic government under the command of Khazim bin Khuzaimah, as recorded by Shams al-Din al-Dhahabi.⁶⁸

This post-Islamic sect subsequently fractured into two primary factions: the *Ziyartiyah* and the *Babakiyah*. The *Babakiyah* faction became highly notorious for igniting a major rebellion against the Abbasid Caliphate under the leadership of Babak al-Khurrami, a Persian slave claimed to be the reincarnation of the previous leader's soul. Babak utilized a religious guise to revive ancient Mazdakism, consolidating power in Azerbaijan, and even dared to ally with the Roman (Byzantine) Emperor to attack Muslim territories.⁶⁹ Although it initially posed a severe challenge to the military of Caliph al-Ma'mun, this criminal movement which frequently legitimized looting and violating the *sharia* was ultimately crushed completely during the reign of Caliph al-Mu'tashim Billah through the strategy of General al-Afshin. The death of Babak in Samarra was widely welcomed by Muslims as the end of a doctrinal and security threat equal in severity to the terror of the Qarmatian and Assassin (*Hasyasyin*) sects.

The theological construction of classical *Ibahiyyah* or what has historically been frequently identified as the *Khurramiyah* group constitutes an esoteric (*batiniah*) theological framework resting upon extreme deviation via the manipulation of *sharia* laws through the method of esoteric interpretation (*ta'wil bathini*). The foundational doctrine within this theological construction is the revocation of religious obligations (*suquth al-taklif*), wherein they believed that the essence of true faith is limited merely to *ma'rifah* or recognizing the persona of the Imam. The logical consequence of this radical foundation was the birth of absolute legalization (*ibahah*) of prohibited matters and the total abandonment of all exoteric rituals established in Islam, such as prayer, fasting, and the pilgrimage (*hajj*).⁷⁰

In order to legitimize the dismantling of the *sharia* within this classical *Ibahiyyah* theological framework, they carried out a deviant reinterpretation by shifting the meaning of the pillars of worship and linking them exclusively to a human figure namely, their Imam. For example, fasting (*sawm*) was no longer understood as abstaining from food and drink, but was instead interpreted as the act of restraining oneself (*imsak*) from leaking or mentioning the Imam's name before those deemed unworthy. Similarly, prayer (*shalah*) was reduced merely to a form of spiritual supplication directed toward the Imam, and the *hajj* was esotericized as a physical journey to meet the Imam; a theological construction that completely corrupts the essence of worship that should be directed solely to Allah Subhaanahu wa Ta'ala.

⁶⁸ Syamsuddin al-Dzahabi, *Al-'Ibar fi Khabar Man Ghabar*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 236.

⁶⁹ Jamal Badawi, *Al-Syi'ah Qadimun: Al-Qishshah al-Kamilah li al-Madd al-Syi'i fi al-'Alam al-Islami* (Kairo: Dar al-I'lam al-Arabi, 1988), 124.

⁷⁰ Muhammad bin Abdul Karim al-Syahrastani, *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah)

2. *The Manifestation and Evolution of the Ibahiyah Doctrine: From Classical Construction to Religious Deviation in the Modern Era*

During the lifetime of KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari, various forms of radical theological legal infractions proliferated within Javanese society, primarily through the emergence of extreme doctrines such as *Hulul* (divine incarnation within creation), *Ittihad* or *Wahdat al-Wujud* (existential monism / the unification of the servant with God), and *Tanasukh al-Arwah* (metempsychosis / the reincarnation of souls). The zenith of this creedal deviation materialized in the doctrine of *Ibahiyah* or *suquth al-taklif*, an erroneous belief claiming that if a servant has reached the highest station of love (*maqam al-mahabbah*) toward Allah SWT, all legal obligations of the *sharia* are revoked from them. Furthermore, at the end of the year 1356 AH, a fatalistic claim emerged from a certain figure asserting that the *sharia* of the Messenger of Allah had officially ended and would no longer be valid in the following year.⁷¹

These deviations also penetrated the practical realm through the emergence of illegitimate spiritual orders (*tariqahs*) led by ignorant masters (*mursyids* lacking mastery of religious sciences) and the adoption of local mystical traditions such as the *Hardopusoro* current. Their spiritual practices overtly contravened the Qur'an and As-Sunnah, such as prohibiting the congregational Friday prayer in mosques, eliminating the Friday sermon (*khutbah*), and permitting *ikhtilat* (the illicit mixing of men and women). This phenomenon developed concurrently with the early periods of Kiai Hasyim's struggle to fortify the *ummah* and establish Nahdlatul Ulama.⁷²

Responding to the proliferation of deviations and extreme practices of self-isolation (*uzlah*) such as shutting oneself away due to satanic deception (*talbis iblis*) which triggers inward illusions (*ghurur*) where one perceives humans as possessing animal forms Kiai Hasyim firmly stated that the *sharia* is the sole metric to verify authentic spirituality. He prohibited the *ummah* from following any guide who stepped outside the corridors of the Prophet's law, while citing the monumental narrative of Imam Abu Yazid al-Busthami, who revoked his intention to study under a prospective teacher simply upon witnessing the figure spit in the direction of the *qiblah*. For Kiai Hasyim, no degree of sainthood (*wilayah*) is valid without steadfastness (*istiqamah*) upon the exoteric *sharia*, as the correct methodology of Sufism must absolutely rely on the guidance of the infallible (*ma'sum*) Messenger of Allah.⁷³

The contemporary manifestations of *sharia* deviation encompass several crucial dimensions. These range from the phenomenon of extremism (*ghuluw*) such as requiring ritual ablution (*wudu*) to recite specific litanies within the Tijaniyah order to a confusion of priorities manifested as excessive fanaticism toward a *mursyid* (as observed in the Qadiriyyah and Naqshabandiyah orders) that diminishes the noble status of the Prophet's companions. It also includes the disregard for the boundaries of *ikhtilat* during mass rituals such as *Maulid* and *Haul*. Furthermore, theological deviations manifest in the abuse of the concept of "good faith"

⁷¹ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Risalah Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah: Fi Hadits al-Mauta wa Asyrat al-Sa'ah wa Bayan Maqhum al-Sunnah wa al-Bid'ah* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, 1418 H), 9–14.

⁷² Petir Abimanyu, *Buku Pintar Aliran Kebatinan dan Ajarannya* (Yogyakarta: Laksana, 2014), 22; Mohammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Al-Tanbihat al-Wajibat liman Yashna' al-Munkarat bi Ism al-Jam'iyyah* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, n.d.), 8–9; Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Ad-Durar al-Muntatsirah fi al-Masa'il at-Tis'a 'Asyarah* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, n.d.), 7–8.

⁷³ Asy'ari, *Ad-Durar al-Muntatsirah*, 6, 8, 21–22; Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *At-Tibyan fi an-Nahyi 'an Muqatha'at al-Arham wa al-Aqarib wa al-Ikhwan* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, 1360 H), 16.

(*husnuzan*) toward individuals of noble lineage (*nasab*) or spiritual masters to legitimize overt acts of disobedience, alongside the birth of modern sects such as *Kejawen Maneges* in Tegal in 2008, which adopts the doctrine of *Wahdat al-Wujud* (*Manunggaling Kawulo lan Gusti*) while rejecting the intermediary role of prophets.⁷⁴

As a fundamental solution to these spiritual challenges, the reconstruction of Sunni Sufism based on the methodology (*manhaj*) of Hadratussyaikh KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari becomes an unnegotiable urgency. This *manhaj* asserts an axiological order wherein *sharia* is the root and Sufism is its fruit; thus, any claim to ultimate inward truth (*haqiqah*), spiritual taste (*dzaug*), or mystical unveiling (*kasyaf*) that contravenes the provisions of formal religious law is categorically judged as absolute deviance and pure heresy (*ilhad*). Reviving this integrative framework which unites soul purification with the supremacy of the Qur'an and As-Sunnah remains the sole scholarly fortress to filter contemporary spirituality from misleading syncretism, thereby ensuring that the internal dynamics of the *ummah* remain harmoniously aligned under the authority of revelation.⁷⁵

C. Comparative Dialectical Analysis: The Radical Response of KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari to Modern *Ibadiyah*

1. *The Dialectic of Sharia and Ibadiyah: The Clash Between Istiqamah and Unbounded Freedom*

The dialectic within the thought of KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari highlights the perpetual clash between methodological consistency (*istiqamah*) and behavioral decadence (*infilat*). In the classical era, various sects emerged attempting to sever the relationship between "ultimate reality" (*haqiqah*) and "exoteric law" (*sharia*) under the pretext of achieving the stations of *Ittihad* (unification) or *Hulul* (divine incarnation). This conceptual rupture catalyzed the birth of the *Ibadiyah* (antinomianism) movement, which advocated for the revocation of legal burdens (*suquth al-taklif*) for the elite circle of initiates (*khawas*). Historically, Kiai Hasyim confronted these cases by reaffirming that the *sharia* constitutes an immutable, absolute metric; no matter how pristine a seeker's (*salik*) spiritual state may be, they are never exempted from the obligation of adhering to the prophetic guidance of Muhammad ﷺ. Conversely, in the modern era, the *Ibadiyah* doctrine metamorphosed into the guise of "freedom of thought" and the marginalization of religious law under the pretext of "essential spirituality" or modernism. Kiai Hasyim analyzed this contemporary phenomenon as a structural continuation of historical deviations packaged within contemporary instruments, while emphasizing that *sharia* discipline remains the sole impregnable fortress capable of stemming moral collapse.

2. The Dialectic of the Revocation of Taklif: Between the Khurramiyah Movement and the Maneges Sect

Regarding its classical manifestation, KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari vehemently rejected the claim that religious commands and prohibitions automatically expire once an individual attains the "zenith of divine love" (*mahabbah*). Drawing upon classical intellectual authorities such as Abdul Qahir

⁷⁴ Interview with Ustadz Jauhari, January 13, 2026; Field Observations, Maulid and Haul Ceremonials; Interview with Kiai Zainul Arifin bin Abdullah, January 14, 2026; Ahmad al-Baghdadi, *Al-Tayyarah al-Ruhiyyah al-Mu'asirah fi Jawa* (Kairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 2014), 112.

⁷⁵ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Risalah ad-Durar al-Muntatsirah fi al-Masail al-Tis'a 'Asyarah* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, n.d.), 14.

al-Baghdadi,⁷⁶ he traced the genealogical roots of this deviation back to the ancient Persian *Khurramiyah* movement, which elevated absolute libertinism into a pseudo-religion. In the modern era, a structural parallel re-emerges within the *Maneges* sect (est. 2008 CE), which abolishes the intermediary role of the prophet while unconditionally embracing the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* (existential monism).⁷⁷ This dialectical analysis demonstrates that the *Ibadiyah* doctrine across both eras fundamentally seeks to obliterate the essence of servitude (*'ubudiyah*) in pursuit of a "divine claim." Kiai Hasyim's rigorous response establishes that the station of sainthood (*wilayah*) is never valid without the empirical evidence of exoteric obedience, and any claim to *haqiqah* that contravenes the *sharia* constitutes a form of perennial heresy (*zandaqah*).⁷⁸

3. The Dialectic of the "Mursyid": Between Structural Ignorance and Sacralizing Figural Fanaticism

Classical cases of deviation were structurally characterized by the widespread emergence of spiritual masters (*mursyids*) who were profoundly ignorant of *sharia* sciences, yet audaciously legalized abominations (*munkarat*) under the guise of "esoteric secrets" (*asrar batiniyah*). Conversely, the modern manifestation has shifted toward an extreme form of exaggeration (*ghuluw*) in sacralizing the persona of the *mursyid* (as observed within certain *zawiyahs* of the Qadiriyyah and Naqshabandiyah orders).⁷⁹ This modern trend goes as far as elevating the invocation of the master's name above the honor of the Prophet's companions or manufacturing parallel *sharia* regulations, such as mandating ritual ablution (*wudu*) as a strict legal prerequisite to recite the text *Jauharat al-Kamal*. This exposes the dialectical friction between the "authority of the text" (*suthath al-nass*) versus the "authority of the persona" (*suthath al-syakhsh*). KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari decisively resolved this debate in his treatise by affirming the absolute prohibition of following any spiritual guide who contravenes the *sharia*, thereby reconstructing the disciple-master relationship upon the foundations of epistemological rigor and jurisprudential depth rather than mere emotional sentimentality.⁸⁰

4. The Dialectic of Time and Legal Sources: Prophetic Abrogation Claims vs. Parallel Legislation

The classical period was punctuated by attempts to undermine the *sharia* through claims that its temporal validity had expired or through assertions that the Qur'an was no longer relevant to contemporary human realities. On the other hand, the contemporary era exhibits symptoms of deviation via the substitution of established prophetic litanies (*awrad masnunah*) with innovated litanies (*awrad bid'iyah*) that are arbitrarily elevated to the legal status of "obligatory" (*wajib*) or "prohibited" (*haram*) a phenomenon structurally identified as "parallel legislation" (*al-tasyri' al-muwazi*). This dialectical analysis proves that antinomian (*Ibadiyah*) groups consistently attempt to confine the *sharia* within rigid temporal boundaries to justify their escape from it. Conversely,

⁷⁶ Abdul Qahir al-Baghdadi, *Al-Farqu bayna al-Firaq* (Beirut: Dar al-Afaq al-Jadidah, 1977), 174–176.

⁷⁷ Petir Abimanyu, *Buku Pintar Aliran Kebatinan dan Ajarannya* (Yogyakarta: Laksana, 2014), 45; Ahmad al-Baghdadi, *Al-Tayyarah al-Ruhiyyah al-Mu'asirah fi Jawa* (Kairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 2014), 118.

⁷⁸ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Risalah Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah: Fi Hadits al-Mauta wa Asyrat al-Sa'ah wa Bayan Mafhum al-Sunnah wa al-Bid'ah* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, 1418 H), 12.

⁷⁹ Interview with Kiai Zainul Arifin bin Abdullah, January 14, 2026; Field Observations, Maulid and Haul Ceremonials.

⁸⁰ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *Ad-Durar al-Muntatsirah fi al-Masa'il at-Tis'a 'Asyarah* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, n.d.), 8.

Kiai Hasyim vigorously defends the eternal validity of Islamic law.⁸¹ He evaluates blind fanaticism toward the idiosyncratic views of a master who fabricates new legal codes (such as mandating *wudu* for acts other than touching the Qur'an) as a form of "veiled *Ibadiyah*," precisely because it entails inventing fabrications against Allah and altering His divine law.

5. Final Synthesis: Validating Sharia-Grounded Sunni Sufism

Through a comparative dialectical evaluation of the historical and contemporary cases, it is concluded that the methodology (*manhaj*) of KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari provides a highly precise critical metric to distinguish between authentic spirituality and religious deviation. Its primary objective is not merely to critique errors, but to systematically demonstrate that Sunni Sufism (*al-tasawwuf al-sunni*) is a framework that views *sharia* as the apex of *haqiqah* and recognizes *haqiqah* as the inner perfection of the *sharia*.⁸² This integrative synthesis successfully manifests an existential equilibrium that harmonizes the authenticity of revealed texts with contemporary temporal demands. Ultimately, it establishes the *sharia* as an unyielding protective fence that guards spiritual intuition (*dzauq*) from collapsing into religious anarchy or self-exempting antinomianism from the sacred laws of Allah SWT.

4. Conclusion

Based on the textual analysis of the original works of Hadratussyayikh KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari, this study concludes two fundamental points regarding the relationship between formal law and Islamic spirituality. First, KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari constructs Sunni Sufism as an integrative methodology (*manhaj*) that must absolutely rest upon the supremacy of the *sharia* and formal jurisprudential law (*fiqh*) to achieve the perfection of servitude (*tahqiq al-'ubudiyah*). In his view, there is no viable path to attain spiritual proximity to Allah (*al-wushul*) without a strict commitment to these legal boundaries. Through this approach, the pursuit of knowledge (*al-ta'allum*) is positioned as a primary internal worship of the heart as well as a scholarly instrument that safeguards the inward movements of the *ummah*, ensuring they remain within objective *sharia* parameters and are protected from the abstract subjectivity of mere spiritual taste (*dzauq*).

Second, his sharp critique of *Ibadiyah* (antinomianism) thought functions as an unyielding "creedal fortress" (*pagar akidah*) to protect the authenticity of Sufism from the dangers of spiritual liberalism. Kiai Hasyim consistently categorizes any claim regarding the revocation of religious obligations (*suquth al-taklif*) post-gnosis (*ma'rifah*) as a manifest form of disbelief (*kufir*) and perennial heresy (*zandaqah*). This vehement rejection constitutes a systematic effort to fortify the exoteric order of religion against deconstruction and the penetration of deviant esoteric interpretations (*ta'wil batin*). Consequently, the thought of Kiai Hasyim successfully reaffirms that internal piety can never be divorced from the moral discipline of the *sharia*, while ensuring that all expressions of Islamic spirituality must remain unconditionally subject to the absolute authority of revelation.

⁸¹ Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, *At-Tibyan fi an-Nahyi 'an Muqatha'at al-Arham wa al-Aqarib wa al-Ikhwan* (Jombang: Maktabat al-Turats al-Islami, 1360 H), 33.

⁸² Asy'ari, *Ad-Durar al-Muntatsirah*, 14.

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