

A PRELIMINARY SURVEY ON ISLAMIC MYSTICISM IN JAVA

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Abstrak

Berbagai praktik mistik telah berkembang di kalangan masyarakat Jawa. Kemunculan praktik tersebut sebenarnya dapat dilacak dari konteks sejarah masuknya Islam ke Indonesia, dan Jawa pada khususnya. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi Islam dan mistisime di Jawa, yakni menjelaskan rasionalitas dari penerimaan komunitas Muslim atas penyebaran mistisime Islam dan penyebaran mistisime Islam itu sendiri di Jawa. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa mistisime Jawa tumbuh subur dalam hampir setiap sendi kehidupan; di lingkungan keluarga istana, pesantren, grup kebatinan, dan di tingkat publik secara umum. Hal ini terjadi karena Islam yang sebenarnya diperkenalkan ke Indonesia dan Jawa, khususnya, adalah Islam yang dirumuskan sebagai Islam mistik. Mistisime Islam lebih mudah berkembang sebagaimana ia juga dapat menyesuaikan diri dengan pemahaman publik masyarakat Jawa.

Kata kunci: Islam, mistisime, Jawa,

Abstract

Various mystical practices grew in the Java community. Genealogically, the emergence of these practices in Java can be traced from the history of the advent of Islam to Indonesia and Java in particular. This article aims to explore the history of Islam and mysticism in Java, it explains the rationality of acceptance of the Muslim community against the spread of Islamic mysticism and the development of Islamic mysticism in Java itself. This article concludes that Javanese mysticism thrive in almost all walks of

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life, namely: the royal family, boarding school, kebatinan group, and the general public. This occurs due to the mystical-patterned Islam which presented to Indonesia and Java in particular. Islamic mysticism is more capable to evolve as it can adjust to the public understanding of Javanese society.

Keywords: *Islam, mysticism, Java*

Introduction

According to Downes, mysticism is one of the two most important elements in religion, together with religious institutions. Mysticism as an experience, also known as the mystical experience, is widespread in religious communities; indeed, according to Evelyn Underhill almost all religions include such aspects. Mysticism has been described as the most interesting study of human spiritual awareness and has been the subject of research in a wide range of fields. Mysticism has also developed parallel to religious institutions and the idealism of mystics has played an important role in religious institutions and in social life.¹ Whereas according to Paul Douglas Lecture,² mysticism is one of four aspects of religion: magic, membership, morality and mysticism “the four M’s of religion”. These four M's are considered paths to salvation; by following them, one is believed to be able to find salvation in one's social and personal life. Mysticism thus has an important role in human life, particularly among religious people, but its terminology and existence has led to much debate among scholars.

Mysticism is part of specific and unique religious experiences, and as such it has drawn the attention of numerous academics and writers. Wainwright became interested in discussing mysticism owing to the multitude of literature on religion dealing

¹ William Philip Downes, "Mysticism", *The Biblical World*, vol. 54, no. 6 (November 1920), p. 619.

² Randall Collins, “H. Paul Douglas Lecture the Four M’s of Religion: Magic, Membership, Morality and Mysticism,” *Review of Religious Research*, vol. 50, no. 1 (September 2008), p. 5.

with it.³ Studies of Indonesia also show that mysticism is a part of the history of religious developments in Indonesia.

The development of Islam in Indonesia, especially in Java, shows the influence of the mystical tradition. The birth of Islam in Java is influenced by the growing of Islamic mystic through the works of Acehnese Sufis as written by Hamzah Fansuri, Shamsuddin Passai, and Nuruddin Arraniry from Samudra Pasai.⁴ The works were so spread to Cirebon and extends to Java. This deployment is indicated by *Suluk* literary works (mystical literary) and even political-religious terms of *manungaling kawulo gusti* which has replaced the concept of *devaraja* (God-King) that has been developed in Java at an earlier time.⁵ It is believed that God is considered down temporarily from the heaven to inhabit the human body. These doctrines develop in Indonesia through the *ngelmu tasawuf* or mysticism. This concept teaches that every human being who exercises charity and doing a pious contemplation will achieve the gift of closeness to God, but only the king who received the dignity of this divinity. People get this Divine blessing. It is symbolized in the names of kings, special dates, hierarchy king and the people, immortalized in the inscriptions, temple, *kakawin*, *babad*, embodied in *gerebeg* ritual, carnival, dance of *Bedhoyo Ketawang*, and disseminated continuously in a puppet show (*wayang purwa*).⁶

The development of mysticism in Indonesia does not stop at the royal court. Proved that Islamic mysticism or Sufism spread among common people, and thrive in groups of psychotherapy (*kelompok kebatinan*) as Subud and Sumarah as studied by Geels⁷

³ William J. Wainwright, "Mysticism and Sense Perception", *Religious Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3 (September 1973), p. 257.

⁴ Harun Nasution, *Falsafah dan Mistisisme dalam Islam* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1992), p. 56.

⁵ Simuh, *Sufisme Jawa Transformasi Tasawuf Islam Ke Mistik Jawa*, 2nd ed. (Yogyakarta: Benteng Budaya, 1996), p. 42.

⁶ Rachmat Subagya, *Agama Asli Indonesia*, 1st ed. (Jakarta: Yayasan Cipta Loka Caraka, 1961), p. 79–83.

⁷ Antoon Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1997).

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and Stange.⁸ This article will examine the term of mysticism and Islamic mysticism, its influence on morals, reasons for the acceptance of Islamic mysticism, how it developed in Java, and where these mystical traditions exist in Java.

Understandings of Mysticism and Islamic Mysticism

For many members of the public, mysticism (also commonly known as *mistik* in Indonesia), is often understood in the context of odd or illogical happenings such as *santet* (black magic) and meetings with supernatural or spiritual creatures. Mysticism is also frequently tied to mysterious events or experiences. Academically, Zarrabizadeh⁹ argues that, although numerous thinkers have attempted to define mysticism, none have been able to formulate a definition which includes all aspects of mysticism. His research notes that the term *mysticism* became controversial in the second half of the 20th century because various writers used different subjects for their research. Zarrabizadeh attempts to catalog definitions of mysticism put forth by such famous thinkers as W.R. Inge, William James, Evelyn Underhill, and Robert C. Zaehner, as well as by encyclopedias. He then analyzes these definitions to determine their comprehensiveness (i.e. the extent to which they encompass various aspects of mysticism). Zarrabizadeh finds that most writers only examine mysticism from a single perspective, for example by identifying mysticism as experience or even in terms of its relationship with doctrine. He criticizes each definition as tending to not encompass all aspects of mysticism. Even the definitions otherwise considered comprehensive are, on further examination, found to suffer from inaccuracy, to the point that different definitions must be used to complement each other. At the end of his article, Zarrabizadeh notes that mystical experiences cannot be separated from the traditions and environments of the

⁸ Paul Stange, *Kejawen Modern: Hakikat Dalam Penghayatan Sumarah*, (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2009).

⁹ Saeed Zarrabizadeh, "Mendefinisikan Misticisme: Sebuah Tinjauan atas Beberapa Definisi Utama", *Kanz Philosophia* vol. 1, no. 1, (November 2011), p. 93-105.

mystics themselves—i.e. the background experiences which shape them.¹⁰

As stated above, definitions vary greatly, and as such no single definition can sufficiently encompass all understandings of mysticism in all its aspects. However, to see or trace mysticism as a phenomenon in human lives, writers and researchers must limit themselves to one definition—even if that definition does not cover all aspects of the subject—or determine a specific aspect of mysticism to be researched.

Some, or even many, of the definitions of mysticism used refer to the union of humans and God or a supernatural being. This is similar to the definition found in the *Kamus Umum Bahasa Indonesia* above, which identifies *mistik* (and, by extension, mysticism) as a subsystem found in almost all religions and religious systems which is intended to fulfill humanity's desire to experience and feel in unison with God and provides *tasawuf* and *suluk* as examples.

Several definitions identify mysticism as an experience through which individual humans become one with God, The Ultimate Being. Meanwhile, in the understanding of Virginia Woolf, the root of mystical experience can be found in the union with something noble, in the recognition of something numinous which is timeless in nature, transcendent, and offers intensified meaning.¹¹ Meanwhile, for Akhilanda,¹² mysticism can be concluded to be direct and intimate knowledge of the Supreme Being, including mechanisms for mystics to approach God and methods for finding the Divine Being. Mystics who have studied diligently and devoutly will feel themselves approaching a state of divine being.¹³ In such conditions, mystics consider themselves to

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

¹¹ Julie Kane, "Varieties of Mystical Experience in the Writings of Virginia Woolf", *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 41, no. 4 (1995), p. 332, doi: 10.2307/441534.

¹² Swami Akhilananda, "Mysticism and Altruism", *Journal of Bible and Religion*, vol. 16, no. 2 (April 1948), p. 89.

¹³ *Ibid.*

feel, to touch, and even to become one with God.¹⁴ Findlay¹⁵ writes that all forms of mysticism include doctrines, practices, and experiences of ecstasy which have consequences for practitioners' self-identities in the search for the ultimate mystical unity.

Nasution¹⁶ writes that, in general, mysticism is a form of awareness through which communication and dialogue can occur between the human soul and God; this is often promoted through self-isolation and contemplation. In Islam, such mysticism is often termed *tasawuf*; the Orientalists, meanwhile, refer to it as Sufism, a term which excludes all forms of mysticism practiced by other religions. According to Hajjaj,¹⁷ *tasawuf* is generally understood to refer to a universal mystic tendency based in a rejection of worldly living (asceticism) and intended to build a connection (*ittiṣāl*) with *al-mala' al-a'lā*, the source of all goodness, emanation, and illumination. For Lie,¹⁸ this "mystical union" is active in nature. It is a religious attitude in which the faithful takes a more active and dynamic role in seeking out oneness with God. Mysticism is thus a deliberate practice, and as such understandings of mysticism must also be connected with clear explanations of the steps which mystics must take.

One explanation of the stages or mystical path which must be followed is included below:¹⁹

1. longing for God
2. awakening of the soul
3. purgation or repentance
4. contemplation including silence, prayer, concentration
5. illumination and sense of the Divine Presence

¹⁴ Downes, "Mysticism", p. 621.

¹⁵ John Findlay, "The Logic of Mysticism", *Religious Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2 (April 1967), p. 153.

¹⁶ Nasution, *Falsafah*, p. 56.

¹⁷ Muhammad Fauqi Hajjaj, *Tasawuf Islam & Akhlak* (Jakarta: Amzah, 2011), p. 3.

¹⁸ Halie Daniel Lie, "Analisa Kritis Terhadap Pandangan *Unio Mystica* Ditinjau dari Teologi Perjanjian Baru", *Veritas*, vol. 2, no. 3 (October 2001), p. 223.

¹⁹ Downes, "Mysticism", p. 621.

6. "the dark night of the soul or the mystic death", periods of pain and doubt.
7. a unitive state, perfect union with the God.

The seven steps above are similar to the four stages of *tasawuf* (Islamic mysticism, also known as Sufism) study, namely the stages through which one must undergo to achieve *makrifat* (complete surrender to God), the peak of all mystical experience. These four stages are identified as *syari'at* (Islamic law), *tarekat* (road to truth), *hakikat* (essence) and *makrifat*.²⁰ To become a mystic is to become a diligent and obeisant worshiper of God without becoming subservient to worldly living. More than that, *tasawuf* as mysticism refers to developing a good and appropriate public mindset (*akhlakul karimah*).²¹

Simuh explains that mysticism follows four stages, identified as distance, concentration, illumination, and *insān kāmil*.²² He explains these stages as follows:

1. Distance, meaning freeing oneself of the tyranny of *amarah* (anger) and *lawwāmah* (biological urgings) and slavery to worldly objects. This is intended to expedite the attainment of a clean heart that is free of the shackles of temptation and thinks only of humanity's connection to God. By distancing themselves, mystics can become leaders for themselves and for the world (*khalīfah fil arḍ*); this brings with it prosperous life.
2. Concentration, meaning to focus on the light and to remember (*ẓikr*) God. Concentration through *dzikir* is used to reorient material realities towards the center of awareness (i.e. to attain illumination).
3. Illumination, meaning the condition which is attained after concentration and *ẓikr* have been successful in eliminating sensory awareness. An appreciation for the supernatural is

²⁰ Majmuddin, *Akhlak Tasawuf I: Mukjizat Nabi, Karomah Wali Dan Ma'rifah Sufi*, (Jakarta: Kalam Mulia, 2011), p. 137–12.

²¹ Simuh, *Sufisme Jawa*, p. 31–33.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 12-22.

developed, which reaches its peak in the condition of *makrifat*.

4. *Insān Kāmil*, namely the condition of a mystic who has reached the peak of *makrifat*. Mystics who have reached this peak condition are known as "perfect humans" who have been chosen to communicate with the supernatural realm. Such mystics are also known as holy persons who radiate with the attributes of the Divine and are considered God's representatives on Earth. They are believed to shine with the light of the Prophet Muhammad and to have a variety of supernatural powers (*karomah/saktisme*). The goal of Sufism is thus to become a *wali* or God's representative on Earth—a *Waliyullah*, a person capable of attaining *makrifat* and holding direct dialogue with God.

From this discussion, it can be concluded that mysticism is closely related to an awareness among mystics of the need to actively undertake specific actions until they attain a level of awareness which permits them to become one with God or the Supernatural. By doing so, mystics become "clean" and "perfect" individuals who are capable of holding dialog with God and, in the social sphere, representing God on Earth and positively shaping the mindset of the public. As an experience of becoming one with God, mysticism is heavily intertwined with individual experiences, and as a result many terms have emerged to refer to mystical experiences. Mysticism in this case is not limited to a sense of unity with God; such an understanding is considered too narrow, and only appropriate for a *waḥdat al wujūd, al ḥulūl* or pantheist view. More broadly, mysticism deals with spiritual and sensual aspects, with all the feelings which arise from belief in and love for God.²³

In conclusion, it can be said that mysticism is individual-inner-experience as well it has outer-implications in relation to other people and society. Therefore, mysticism often associated with morality.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 5

Mysticism and Morality

There has been complex discussion of the connection between mysticism and morality, both at the individual and social level. This section will explore this discussion and how mysticism is interconnected with individual and social mores. Academics have had differing views regarding the connection between mysticism and morality. Some argue that there is a connection, others say that there is not, and still others appear neutral on the issue. These three views are supported by their own arguments.

According to Danto, the connection between mysticism and morality is a neutral one. Wainwright makes a similar statement: "mystical experience is neutral with regard to morality". Differences occur because of different mystical experiences and interpretations. Mystical experiences appear unintelligible because they are located outside the domain of grammar, and it is insufficient to understand them by the categories implicit within them. One word can serve to bridge facts and values, and moral objections often influence the vocabulary used in describing mystical experiences.²⁴

That mysticism does not mean silence has been argued since the beginning of the 20th century. Lyman, for instance, wrote that the interconnection of mysticism and reason allow individuals to become creative, because religions are paramount in shaping creative individuals. From a Christian perspective, the Divine's significance is to understand that Jesus is the greatest manifestation of moral and historical creativity.²⁵ The social aspects of mysticism can also be found in the writings of Proudfoot, who offers two interpretations of religion involving the mystical and the numinous. The mystical involves direct relations which shed the possibility of ethical prejudice, whereas the numinous involves discussion following ethic criteria. He also formulates a third interpretation,

²⁴ Arthur C. Danto, "Ethical Theory and Mystical Experience: A Response to Professors Proudfoot and Wainwright", *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 4, no. 1 (Spring 1976), p. 39.

²⁵ Eugene W. Lyman, "Mysticism, Reason, and Social Idealism", *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 8, no. 2 (April 1928), p. 186–87.

one which emphasizes that the social character of mystic experience is more comprehensive than the first two interpretations, and that these experiences correlate better to moral claims.²⁶

One definition of mysticism holds that it is closely related to psychology and philosophy. In its connections with personality, mysticism can be divided into two types: personal and impersonal. The personal aspect refers to whether or not mysticism deals with specific individuals or not, whereas the impersonal aspect refers to mystics' connections with a higher being (in monotheistic mysticism) or beings (in polytheistic mysticism). Impersonal aspects of mysticism, thus, refer to mystics' relationships with The Absolute, The All, Nothingness, or The Beyond.²⁷ Mysticism is closely related to human emotions and feelings, including love. For Buckham, love is the crown of the mystical life, a bond illustrating the perfection of unitive life. Love requires duality, meaning that individuals who have attained the highest level of awareness will have attained the greatest sense of mutuality, of giving and receiving. Mysticism, as an experience, is, at its most basic, about connections between individual and social personalities, between humanity and divinity.²⁸

Writers also disagree on the relationship between mysticism and morality. Wainwright criticizes the logical relationship between mysticism and morality after examining the connection between mystical awareness and altruistic actions. Challenging the assumption that there is a significant logical and epistemological relationship between mystical awareness and morality, Wainwright concludes that the two are only related significantly through psychology and society. Mystical awareness and morality, he writes, are not significant related logically or epistemologically.²⁹

²⁶ Wayne Proudfoot, "Mysticism, the Numinous, and the Moral", *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 4, no. 1 (Spring 1976), p. 3.

²⁷ John Wright Buckham, "Mysticism and Personality", *The Journal of Religion*, vol. I, no. 6 (November 1921), p. 608.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 612-613.

²⁹ William J. Wainwright, "Morality and Mysticism", *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 4, no. 1 (Spring 1976), p. 29-36.

Referring to Zaehner, Wainwright writes that mysticism has a positive effect and useful effect on the morality of all individuals involved. Mysticism reaffirms morality by strengthening practitioners' attitudes and dispositions with moral consequences, including charity, peace, the ability to be influenced, and the recognition of a transcendental truth.³⁰ Mysticism, both as a familiar and influential part of individual religious life and as an aesthetic and practice, is a mentality through which people recognize the Highest Reality using aesthetic and contemplative prayer. Thomas concludes that mysticism brings involved persons closer to the Highest reality, supports the development of social creativity, and remains firmly entrenched at the heart of religion. This shows the unity of social activities and religion.³¹ Humans have emotional expressions. Mystics, meanwhile, have expressions of divinity which redirect all energies and thoughts towards God.³²

Akhilananda also supports an understanding of the social effects of mysticism, dividing the practice into two types: contemplative and active. Contemplative mysticism experiences reality and attempts to change it in a non-active manner through altruism. This altruism is realized through good hopes, expressions of love, and a dynamic sense of humanity. Active mysticism, meanwhile, expresses its altruism through joint activities meant to realize divinity. Both types of mysticism have had extensive positive impact on society.³³

Buckham agrees that mysticism fulfills individual needs while at the same time having implications for other people. Mysticism as a concept focuses on building a relationship between humanity and God through illumination, peace, power, and holiness. Mysticism shapes attitudes and individual lives. Likewise,

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

³¹ Wendell Marshall JR Thomas, "The Truth of Mysticism", *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 4, no. 1 (January 1924), p. 60.

³² Swami Akhilananda, "Mysticism and Altruism", *Journal of Bible and Religion*, vol. 16, No. 2 (April 1948), p. 90.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

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mystical experiences directly influence the core of personality.³⁴ On the other hand, mystical experiences also develop selfhood, open channels with others, and allow for the closest interpersonal relations and the deepest and truest interpersonal bonds. As such, friendship, love, and harmony are all characteristic of mysticism. In mystical practices there is a sense of sacredness regarding reality, as well as a final goal which can be impossible to explain.³⁵ It is thus possible to conclude that mysticism builds bridges between personality and person, individual and society, human and divine.³⁶ If the crown of mysticism is love, then the bond of perfection in harmonious living and love requires a duality of self, a duality in unity. One's true personality comes from the highest level of awareness regarding giving and receiving. Mysticism is not the erasure of the personal, the human, or the divine, but rather unity.³⁷ The paths towards this unity are followed not only individually, but also organizationally.

Mysticism, as a spiritual experience, has an influence on morality, even among practitioners of different religions. Mysticism is considered to be an effort to gain a deeper understanding of religion and value its substance/content over form. It is the esoteric dimension of religion which allow dialogue between different religions and the erasure of religious divisions. In this, religion is understood to have two dimensions: (formal) exoteric, which deals with worldly dimensions and symbols, and esoteric, which deals with the substance of religion (including mysticism).³⁸

Recognition of mysticism can even be cross-religious. Islamic mysticism, for instance, may be observed by practitioners

³⁴ John Wright Buckham, "Mysticism and Personality", *The Journal of Religion*, vol. I, no. 6 (November 1921), p. 608, 610.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 610.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 615.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 612.

³⁸ Ahmad Wahidi, "Mistisisme Sebagai Jembatan Menuju Kerukunan Umat Beragama," e-journal.uin-malang.ac.id/index.php/ululalbab/article/2653, (2013), p. 2.

of other religions, as noted by Schimmel.³⁹ Mysticism is more of an effort to control or direct oneself. According to Schimmel, Islamic *tasawuf* is an esoteric method used to approach oneself to God, the Creator. *Tasawuf* teaches its followers to cleanse themselves of sin and all that God has forbidden, and to realize on earth good actions and attitudes. *Tasawuf* directs its followers to base their behavior on love for God, holding that this love will allow humans to love all others, be they animals, plants, or other humans.

Evidence of mysticism's strong social functions and implications also can be seen in the rationales used by the Muslims who follow the Pangestu faith in Salatiga. These people's mystical practices of have been discussed specifically by practitioners. They argue that religious rituals are unable to present truly meaningful religious practices. This lack of meaning is what pushed them, including the Muslims, to follow Pangestu mysticism. The organization's activities are considered sufficient to fulfill members' need to intensively communicate through meetings and gatherings. They are able to pay each other attention, receive good leadership, defend their organization, and find satisfaction in their religious practices.⁴⁰

From this above discussion, it may be concluded that mysticism has a role in self-management and capacity building, and that this has implications for one's natural and social environment. This can be understood as having greater meaning than simple religious ritual.

The Discourse on Mysticism Among Muslims

In academic research, mysticism has a broad range of definitions. Likewise, as an individual experience, mysticism is identified through varying definitions and forms of experience. All people can have their own definitions and understandings, and these may even be contradictory at times. Many writers have

³⁹ Umar Faruq Thohir, "Pemikiran Mistisisme Annemarie Schimmel," *Ulul Albab*, vol. 13, no. 2 (2012), p. 203–4.

⁴⁰ S. Suciati, "The Cohesiveness of Muslim Pangestu Members in Salatiga, Central Java," *Al-Jami'ah*, vol. 52, no. 1 (2014), p. 85–86.

attempted to explain the stages of mysticism and its implementation in life. Practices of mysticism vary greatly. Likewise, owing to the varied views and practices of mysticism, its position is frequently controversial, with vocal proponents and detractors. The presence of mysticism and mystical practices among religious groups has led to numerous views regarding mysticism. Even though mysticism is often considered by Muslim communities to be intended to attain devoutness, numerous mystical practices have been held to have gone past this laudable goal and deviated from formal Islamic doctrine (*tauhid*), particularly those which exhibit degrees of syncretism or which are often related to science. These varied views of mysticism can cause heated debate in communities, particularly when related to questions of belief and disbelief.⁴¹ Briefly, two major views on Sufism/*tasawuf* are held by Muslims: rejection and acceptance.

Views rejecting *tasawuf* can be found in numerous writings, including those of Al-Hushain and Numsuk.⁴² These writers, arguing that Sufis preach that they can ask God's intervention to attain their desires, conclude that Sufis are actually being embraced by Satan and thus falling from grace and rejecting God (*syirik*).⁴³ Conversely, views supportive of *tasawuf* include those of Majmuddin,⁴⁴ who holds that *tasawuf* is still be an Islamic teaching.⁴⁵ Another supportive view can be found in the research of Syukur, who writes that *tasawuf* could not possibly run contrary to Islamic teachings.⁴⁶ Similarly, Huda⁴⁷ identifies *tasawuf* as the

⁴¹ Hambali, "Pengetahuan Mistik Dalam Konteks Islam Dan Filsafat Ilmu Pengetahuan," *Jurnal Substansia*, vol. 13, no. 2 (Okt 2011), p. 216–18.

⁴² Ahmad bin Abdul Aziz Al-Hushain and Abdullah Mustofa Numsuk, *Kesestatan Sufi: Tasawuf, Ajaran Budha!* (Jakarta: Pustaka As-Sunah, 2013), p. 61.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

⁴⁴ Majmuddin, *Akhlak Tasawuf I*, p. 183–84.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁴⁶ Amin Syukur, *Tasawuf Kontekstual: Solusi Problem Manusia Modern* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2013), p. 8.

⁴⁷ Sokhi Huda, *Tasawuf Kultural: Fenomena Shalawat Wahidiyah*, (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2008), p. 21–61.

teaching of morals or honorable traits (*akhlak*) which should be practiced in everyday life to ensure optimal happiness.

These two views are wholly opposed to each other. One takes a rather extreme view because, among other reasons, it considers Sufis to be mistaken in their interpretation of a specific Qur'anic verse, which they interpret (slightly or very) differently than the interpretation offered by other *ulamas*. According to Hajjaj, this difference in interpretation should not be used as a basis for rejecting Sufism, as many Sufis also interpret this verse in accordance with the "valid" interpretation offered by the "objective" religious scholars.⁴⁸ From this discussion, it can be concluded that there are still many Sufi groups and others who undergo mystical experiences through *tasawuf* as part of Islam.

Acceptance of Islamic Mysticism

Different views accepting mystic practice and devotion have been put forth. These views have considered the historical connection between Islam and mysticism, including the relationship between Islam and previously existing social groups. Proponents have also argued that mysticism is universal and cross-religious, and that mysticism is still appropriate for Islamic teachings.

1. Historical Continuity

Historical continuity may occur in a plural society, and pre-Islamic traditions may continue to be practiced, albeit with some considerations. A review of the literature indicates that mystical traditions, in which mystics would spend their lives bringing themselves closer to God, were present even before the rise of Islam. This occurred in, for instance, Ancient India, both among Hindus and Buddhists. The Orientalists in the West refer to these mystics as Gymnosophists, as wise persons who wear little clothing; the Indian mystics generally covered half of their bodies. Similar mystical practices can be found among the Christians and the

⁴⁸ Hajjaj, *Tasawuf Islam & Akhlak*, p. 162.

Muslim Sufis who followed them. As a result, several writers have concluded that *tasawuf* in Islam is a continuation of mystical teachings which existed beforehand. Nevertheless, mystics themselves believe that their practices follow the example set by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. Although there are historical ties and similarities to pre-Islamic mysticism, *tasawuf* is held to be based in Qur'anic teachings and the Hadiths.⁴⁹ Majmuddin argues that Islamic attitudes towards pre-Islamic practices, including mystic traditions, are as follows.⁵⁰

- a. Preserving some teachings and traditions of pre-Islamic peoples while revising these teachings and traditions to be more appropriate for the Muslims practicing them.
- b. Eliminating some teachings and traditions of pre-Islamic peoples because these teachings and traditions were considered harmful to human dignity, health, social order, and everyday life.
- c. Creating new rules (i.e. rules which did not exist before) and thus promoting the perfection of Islam.

This understanding thus holds that, though *tasawuf* is similar to the mystical traditions of pre-Islamic cultures, this does not mean that *tasawuf* is not an Islamic teaching. *Tasawuf* is considered to still be an Islamic teaching.

The development of mysticism in Java has been influenced by the history of Islam's spread in Indonesia. Mysticism is certainly not foreign to the Indonesian people. For instance, the religious practices of the people of Gorontalo are colored by *tarekat* practices, as realized in more mystical religious ceremonies. These rituals are held to be a collaboration of Islamic and local culture. This is influenced by the strong understanding of *tarekat* among the ulamas who promoted Islam in Makassar. Recognition of

⁴⁹ Majmuddin, *Akhlak Tasawuf I*, p. 77.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

"Allahu Ahad" (Allah, the One) is manifested in classic *wirid* texts and in celebratory prayers.⁵¹

The spread of Islam in Java is similar. Islam spread in Java in the context of Hindu influence and strong local understandings. Islam, which was spread by Sufi traders, was able to accommodate local beliefs which were later realized in Islamic rituals. The *Wali Songo* (nine saints), who had been educated in Islamic schools, offered a compromise, in which Islamic teachings lived side-by-side with different traditions, to ensure peace and tolerance.⁵² The mystics approach to religion was considered more tolerant, adaptive, and open to other views, and as such it was considered the ideal medium for the meeting of religion and faith.⁵³ Conversely, emphasis on exoteric aspects would have offered only difference.

2. Mysticism as A Spiritual Need for Humans of All Religions

One view holds that *tasawuf* (Islamic mysticism), which contains within it understandings of the One Truth, of Wisdom, of Light, and of Love,⁵⁴ does not belong exclusively to Muslims. This practice is understood by its Muslim followers as a doctrine which must be followed by all in an attempt to become closer to God; for followers who are not Muslim, *tasawuf* is only identified as a series of teachings which need not be followed exactly, but rather absorbed and adopted as necessary. This can be seen, for instance, in Annemarie Schimmel's adaptation of the *tasawuf* thoughts of Rumi, who is considered a mystic teacher but not an Islamic teacher. Here, *tasawuf* is seen as mystical teachings which are

⁵¹ Mashadi, "Konteks Dan Corak Mistisisme Islam Dalam Tradisi Keagamaan Masyarakat Gorontalo," *Ulumuna: Jurnal Studi Islam*, vol. 17, no. 2 (Desember 2013), p. 259, 270.

⁵² Ridwan, "Mistisisme Simbolik Dalam Tradisi Islam Jawa," *Ibda'*, vol. 6, no. 1, (June 2008), p. 1,4.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁵⁴ Thohir, "Pemikiran Mistisisme Annemarie Schimmel," p. 217.

not limited exclusively to Islam.⁵⁵ This practice can be seen in both a religious and faith framework.

Tasawuf, as a form of spiritual experience, is not influenced by tribal, customary, racial, or religious limits. Spirituality, rather, can be understood as a religious expression which emerges within local religions, smaller sects, and even world religions such as Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism.⁵⁶ Spiritual life is considered inseparable from the mystical, in this case meaning the secret, the hidden, what in a religious context is identified as the relationship between humanity and God.⁵⁷ As a secret relationship, this experience cannot easily be understood by others. Nevertheless, there are also spiritual contemplations which are more practical in nature, such as those found in *yoga*.

One research finds that, as a form of knowledge which is not limited solely to Islam, mysticism as knowledge of God and a fundamental Truth may only be attained through *yoga*, through meditation, and through spiritual contemplation, rather than logic and the senses.⁵⁸ *Yoga*, as a form of mysticism, has more concrete goals: improving morality, physical health, mental stability, and spiritual awareness.⁵⁹ As such, meditation and *yoga* can involve people from various religious backgrounds.

Azyumardi Azra also notes that mysticism and *tasawuf* are not monopolized by traditional or past peoples. The rise of Sufism is connected to increasingly complex modern-day religious, social, political, and cultural factors, and the

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

⁵⁶ Ahmad Muttaqin, "Islam and the Changing Meaning of Spiritualitas and Spiritual in Contemporary Indonesia," *Al-Jami'ah* 50, no. 1 (2012), p. 24.

⁵⁷ Ali Yunasril, *Sufisme dan Pluralisme: Memahami Hakikat Agama Dan Relasi Agama-Agama* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2012), p. 167–68.

⁵⁸ I Made Sugata, "Mistisisme Yoga: Polarisasi Gerakan Spiritualitas Dalam Masyarakat Lintas Agama," *Pangkaja*, vo. 14, no. 2 (Agustus 2012), p. 179.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

tasawuf that has developed in the modern world is not only found in the conventional forms of *tarekat* organizations and personal-individual movements, but also in worldwide "new age movements". These developments have occurred both in the Muslim world and in Western countries where Muslims are minorities. The increasing variety of mysticism is influenced by the broad spectrum of views regarding *tasawuf* and *tarekat* themselves, the different areas from which *tarekat* comes, and the diaspora in Western nations (as recipients). Some *tasawuf* varieties cannot be placed in normal categories, and even in Java there are both *tarekat* varieties which fully conform to the Qur'an and the Hadiths as well as *tarekat* varieties which are considered wholly unrelated to the holy texts.⁶⁰

3. Accordance With Islamic Teachings

Affirmation of mysticism or *tasawuf* can be attributed to a belief that such mysticism does not run afoul of Islamic teachings. Views supportive of *tasawuf* include those of Majmuddin,⁶¹ who understands *tasawuf* as *sunnah* (accepted as Islamic but included in non-Qur'anic texts) and as the main form of charity available. The fact that the terms *tasawuf* and *Sufi* are not found in the Qur'an or Hadiths is attributed to *tasawuf* arising in the third century hijriah, after the time of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. During this time, Islamic scholars (the *ulama*) developed *tasawuf* and *suluk* methods both to improve the nobleness of the faithful and to fulfill the requirement for *zikr*. As such, *tasawuf* is not considered contrary to the Qur'an and the Hadiths. *Al-Suluk* can be understood as "following a path, entering a place" or "good deeds".⁶² This is similar to teachings of noble behavior

⁶⁰ Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren Studi Pandangan Hidup Kyai Dan Visinya Mengenai Masa Depan Indonesia* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2015), p. 215.

⁶¹ Majmuddin, *Akhlak Tasawuf I*, p. 183–84.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 153.

towards God, but is completed with a four-step process: *syari'at*, *ṭarīqat*, *ḥaqīqat* and *ma'rifat*.⁶³

Syari'at means following religious rules, obeying God's orders and avoiding that which He has forbidden. *Syari'at* involves changing human attitudes and behaviors so that one may cleanse oneself and do blessed acts.⁶⁴ *Ṭarīqat* is understood as a realization of *syari'at*, as a path towards the essence which is followed by avoiding that which is forbidden and disapproved of by God and by completing all that God requires and recommends. In following this path, one must receive the counseling of a leader (a Sheikh or Sufi) who has a specific goal in mind. It is in this context that *ṭarīqat* groups are established.⁶⁵ The essence, the truth, is recognized as the spiritual situation of a Sufi who has achieved his goal and witnessed signs of the divine through his heart's eye. This includes within it faith in God's truth, which is proven through the senses and logical appreciation of God's glory in the cosmos, which is further affirmed through the heart. Finding this essence is the beginning goal of *tasawuf*, with *ma'rifat* being the end goal.⁶⁶

Ma'rifat means knowledge or knowing; this highest level of the mystical journey refers to knowing God, to having the spiritual strength to believe in God's presence and His perfection. At this level, a Sufi experiences calmness of spirit and thought, with a greater harmony attained by higher levels of *ma'rifat*. The attainment of *ma'rifat* is realized through its radiance in all of one's actions and attitudes. One who has reached *ma'rifat*, for instance, will not decide something based on the real, because the real will not always be the correct or true. Likewise, one who has attained *ma'rifat* will not desire too many of God's blessings for himself, as this can lead to forbidden acts; there is no need for

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 137–39.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 139–48.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 148–49.

luxury in devotion. To attain such *ma'rifat*, the four stages must be followed in order; if not, the goal of *tasawuf* will remain forevermore unattained.⁶⁷

Another supportive view can be found in the research of Syukur, who identifies three types of *taṣawwuf*: *taṣawwuf akhlāqi*, *taṣawwuf 'amalī*, and *taṣawwuf falsafī*.⁶⁸ Similarly, Huda⁶⁹ identifies two types of *taṣawwuf*: *taṣawwuf falsafī* and *taṣawwuf Sunnī*, the latter of which contains both *taṣawwuf akhlāqi* and *taṣawwuf 'amali*. *Tasawuf akhlaqi* is the teaching of morals or honorable traits (*akhlāq*) which should be practiced in everyday life to ensure optimal happiness. Its teachings focus on three aspects:

- a. *Takhallī*, namely the stage in which one cleanses oneself of despicable properties.
- b. *Taḥallī*, namely making a habit of carrying out praiseworthy acts.
- c. *Tajallī*, namely the revelation of the Divine Light (*Nūr Ilāhī*) and destruction of human traits.

Taṣawwuf 'amalī is a practical guide for bringing oneself closer to the Divine. *Taṣawwuf 'amali* is conducted organizationally, and as such persons studying it receive guidance. *Taṣawwuf falsafī*, meanwhile, refers to *taṣawwuf* studies which are conducted philosophically and in detail. This combines the intuitive vision of *taṣawwuf* with the rationalism of philosophy. These types of mysticism, Syukur writes, in essence share a source: the focus on pure prayer and devotion to realize good and noble behavior (*akhlāq al-karīmah*) both individually and socially. As such, Syukur argues that *tasawuf* could not possibly run contrary to Islamic teachings. Nevertheless, it is important to ensure that mystical practices do not deviate.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 149–52.

⁶⁸ Syukur, *Tasawuf Kontekstual*, p. 8.

⁶⁹ Huda, *Tasawuf Kultural*, p. 21–61.

Because Sufi practices and traditions may be considered deviant, one modern Sufi figure from Turkey has offered an alternative path, one which he states is based entirely on the Qur'an. Nursi offers the essence through *Risālat al-Nūr*, which consists of four stages: impotence (*al-`ajz*), poverty (*al-faqr*), compassion (*al-syafāqa*), and reflection (*al-tafakkur*).⁷⁰ These differ from the seven or ten stages which are often found in general mysticism. According to Nursi, Sufism should be practiced in a manner that does not abandon *syari'at*, as *syari'at* offers wholeness both inside and outside Islam.⁷¹ These stages, thus, are more akin to *syari'at* reality, as taught by the Qur'an, than Sufi reality. Humans should be aware of their own impotence and poverty in the eyes of God. They must be aware of God as the All-Merciful and All-Compassionate. This awareness will direct humans' love for God by allowing them to, through reflection, meet with God the All-Wise.⁷²

Harun Nasution⁷³ states that Javanese mysticism may be influenced by Christian, Pythagoras, Plotinos, Buddhism, and Hinduism concepts. Christian mysticism teaches to retreat and live simply. Pythagoras teaches a concept that the physical body is a prison for the soul so that man needs to leave the world and do contemplation. Plotinus teaches the theory of emanation, which means that everything is the manifestation from God himself. Buddhism teaches about *nirvana*, leaving the world and contemplation; people must cleanse themselves by leaving the world and closer to God. Similar to other teachings, Hinduism also encourages people to leave the world and closer to God so that people get the unity of Atman and Brahman. In fact, to be influenced or not by these other religious mysticism, Islamic mysticism may

⁷⁰ Machasin, "Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and the Sufi Tradition," *Al-Jami'ah*, vol. 43, no. 1 (2005), p. 10.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁷³ Nasution, *Falsafah*, p. 59–61.

dominate in this process. Islamic mysticism exists in the teachings themselves. To be traced from its history, it stands out that Islam developed in Indonesia is based on Islamic mystical insights. Although Harun Nasution said that there is a possibility of the influence of various views as Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, or even understanding as developed by Pythagoras or Plotinos, but the real potential of mysticism view already exists in the verses of the Qur'an itself.⁷⁴

The Early History And Development Of Islamic Mysticism In Java

During the early history of Islam, mystic tradition developed fertile, both during the time of the Prophet's companions and over the following generations in which the seeds of new understandings were sown. The followers of these mystic traditions were known as Sufis.⁷⁵ When Islam entered Indonesia and Java, it tended to have mystical or *taṣawwuf* influences. This statement is reinforced by Amin's conclusion⁷⁶ that early Islamic entry to Indonesia occurred together with the medieval developments in mystic knowledge and rise of the tarekat. One of the world-renowned mystic figures of the time was Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī, who developed *taṣawwuf akhlāqī*, which is acceptable under Islamic doctrine. Founders of *ṭarīqat*, including M. Abdul Qadir al-Jīlānī (of the Qādiriyah *ṭarīqat*), al-Najib As-Suhrawardi (of the Surahwardiyah *ṭarīqat*), Najmuddin al-Kubra (of the Kubrawiyah *ṭarīqat*), Abu Hasan al-Syadzili (of the Naqsabandiyah *ṭarīqat*), and Abdullah al-Syattārī (of the Syatariyah *ṭarīqat*) were alive during this time. Mystic traditions developed in many areas, including that which is now Indonesia.

Amin continues his explanation by arguing that some of the *ṭarīqat* which developed in Indonesia was in accordance with Islamic doctrine, while some of it was not. In his opinion, the early

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Baddrut Tammam, *Pesantren, Nalar Dan Tradisi*, 1st ed. (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2015), p. 98–99.

⁷⁶ Samsul Munir Amin, *Sejarah Peradaban Islam* (Jakarta: Amzah, 2015), p. 311–13.

Sartini, dkk.

development of Islam in Indonesia, in Aceh, was colored by *taṣawwuf falsafi* views from Hamzah Fansuri and Samsudin, which tended to deviate in their views of *waḥdat al-wujūd* and be pantheistic. However, later movements were considered faithful to Islamic doctrine, such as that launched by Nuruddin Ar-Raniri, who, with the support of the regime in power, launched a campaign to "cleanse" local Islamic practices. Abdurauf Singkel is also recognized as a major leader of al-Syattariyyah *ṭarīqat*, which emphasizes the importance of the *syari'at* path for *taṣawwuf*.

Why, though, has *taṣawwuf* developed readily in Indonesia? *Taṣawwuf* is an attempt to understand and give meaning to the spiritual dimension of Islam. *Taṣawwuf* is closer to the mystical experience, which is personal in nature. This mystical experience is an esoteric force which balances the formalistic and hegemonic exoteric forces in understanding and giving meaning to religious reality.⁷⁷ As such, *taṣawwuf* can be understood to as addressing the tendency of religion in Java, what Koentjaraningrat termed *Agama Jawi*, to feel shallow in the formal and exoteric dimension, centered only around the *slametan*, provision of offerings, and pilgrimage. People then sought out an understanding of the meaning of life and spirituality. This movement has often been known as *kejawen*.⁷⁸

According to Amin,⁷⁹ Islamic mysticism developed in Indonesia predominantly until the end of the 17th century. The wide range of interpretations which emerged in this *tasawuf* was considered fitting for the mindset of the people, which was influenced by Hindu/Buddhist ascetism and syncretism with local beliefs, dynamics, and animism. Practices of *ṭarīqat* were more compromising with traditional practices, even those which were fundamentally incompatible with a strict Islam. Conversely, because local populaces had long known beliefs and religions with mystic aspects, *taṣawwuf* was easy for Javanese people to accept. As stated by Azumardy Azra, there were "similarities" between the

⁷⁷ Tammam, *Pesantren, Nalar Dan Tradisi*, p. 99.

⁷⁸ Koentjaraningrat, *Kebudayaan Jawa* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1994), p. 399.

⁷⁹ Amin, *Sejarah Peradaban Islam*, p. 311–12.

Islam which first entered Indonesia and the mystic attitudes and syncretism practiced locally. This differed significantly from subsequent Islamization processes, which tended to eradicate "similarities" with the potential to cause social conflict.

The *taṣawwuf* elements of Islam were considered fitting for the religious experience and worldview of the Javanese people, who emphasized mental aspects of religion over physical ones. This fittingness can be seen in how, when *taṣawwuf* was brought to Java by members of the *tariqat* and developed into ceremonial religious practices, this practice tended to be harmonious rather than lead to conflict. They were realized in accordance with the Javanese tendency to realize religious motives and activities in formal ceremonies or religious rituals.⁸⁰ The folk religion of Java offered a fertile land for the growth of a mysticism which argued for the unity of the macrocosm and microcosm; both were understood as two aspects of a single object.⁸¹

This was subsequently proven by the rapid development of *tariqat* movements, which was supported by at least two factors. On the one hand, referring to the argument of Niels Mulder, this was caused by an awareness of *Kejawen* culture. On the other hand, it was caused by the uncertain conditions which followed independence, including the socio-cultural transformations, suffering, poverty, and social unrest.⁸²

Practices of Islamic Mysticism in Java

Practices of Islamic mysticism in Java can be found in various parts of society, categorized as follows: the noble elite, the *pesantren*, followers of *kebatinan* movements, and general society.

1. The Noble Elite

Among the elites in the royal palaces, mystic understandings can be found in the books produced by the palace writers. Javanese traditions and worldviews can be

⁸⁰ Masroer Ch. Jb., *The History of Java: Sejarah Perjumpaan Agama-Agama Di Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz Jogjakarta, 2004), p. 38.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁸² Koentjaraningrat, *Kebudayaan Jawa*, p. 402.

explored through the works of these authors, including *Jangka Jayabaya* and *Serat Kalatidha* by Ranggawarsita, *Serat Wedhatama* by Pakubuwono IV (the *sunan* [king] of Surakarta), as well as works written in the Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat Sultanate. Ranggawarsita's *Serat Kalatidha* is frequently considered to represent syncretic Javanese tradition, and is frequently labelled as a *Kejawen* text full of mystic teachings. Ranggawarsita was a *santri* who long lived within the traditions of the *pesantren*. The verses in his songs are filled with *kalimah tayyibah* and fundamental principles of both Islam and *taṣawwuf*.⁸³ *Serat Bayan Budiman*, by Mursyidi, a work contemporary to *Serat Kalatidha* which was written in Javanese script using a lyrical form, has also been categorized as having *tasawuf* influences. This text explains the concept of *ittihad* in Sufi tradition using the phrase “*warongko manjing curigo*”.⁸⁴

Among the best known and most controversial Sufistic views among the elite are those of Syekh Siti Jenar and Ki Ageng Pengging (also known as Ki Kebo Kenongo). Ki Ageng Pengging was the last descendent of King Brawijaya of Majapahit. He exiled himself and lived as a commoner, later revolting politically against the rule of the Demak Sultanate and the Wali Songo. Syekh Siti Jenar, meanwhile, was initially one of the Wali Songo's followers. His belief that *syari'ah* was no longer needed once one had reached the peak of union with God⁸⁵ led to war with other *syari'ah* experts, particularly Demak and the Wali Songo. Although his views were rejected, Syekh Siti Jenar's teachings still remain in the awareness of God and culture exhibited in various Muslims social lives. His teachings have even

⁸³ Abdul Munir Mulkan, *Syekh Siti Jenar: Konflik Politik, Dan Pergumulan Islam-Jawa*, n.d., p. 19–20.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

become popular among commoners, both within and without Java.⁸⁶

Syekh Siti Jenar was, as a person, more widely accepted in Sundanese Java, particularly Cirebon. He was kin to Syekh Nurjati, the first Muslim preacher in Cirebon and teacher of Syarif Hidayatullah. Syarif Hidayatullah, or Sunan Gunung Jati, was the King of Cirebon and also one of the Wali Songo. The grave of Syekh Siti Jenar is recognized by society as being next to that of Syekh Nurjati, in a single complex with *petilasan* (markers) of Sunan Giri, Sunan Bonang, and Sunan Kalijaga. The parents of Syekh Siti Jenar and Syekh Nurjati were descended from Amir Abdullah Khanudin, a seventeenth generation descendent from the Prophet Muhammad through Zaenal Abidin.⁸⁷ These historical figures and works of literature are but a sample of Sufistic views in Javanese literary and historical tradition.

The connection between Javanese mysticism and the kings also can be seen in this research. Bukhori⁸⁸ examined the Islamic mysticism of Java through the eyes of Sultan Agung as presented in the *Serat Sastra Gendhing*. The works of Javanese men of letters have also been used as references for understanding that society's views of mysticism. However, it should be noted that mystical traditions were not only found in the palaces, but also among the common people, with spiritual groups and individuals practicing mysticism. Relationships between people and an unseen Divine are, by their very nature, highly individual and subjective. All mystics have different experiences, despite their awareness of a direct connection between humanity and God.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9-1-.

⁸⁸ Nasution, *Falsafah*, p. 56.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

2. *Pesantren*

Pranowo's research⁹⁰ into the *pesantren* in Tegalrejo, Magelang, has clearly indicated the lifestyles of the *santri* at these *pesantren*. Strict requirements for following Sufistic rituals, many of which resemble general Javanese self-control methods such as fasting, are set at this *pesantren*. These strict rules are generally enforced among *tarekat* groups which are led by a respected teacher or *mursyid* who is commonly known as a *kyai*.⁹¹

The mystical practices known as *tariqat* are frequently connected to their founders. The leader of a *tariqat* is frequently known as *syaikh* (Sheik). A *tariqat* generally includes *kaifiyyah zikir* for purifying the mind, a sense of kinship within the *tariqat*, ritual ceremonies, and social awareness. Leadership genealogy is important, as it is capable of determining the validity of a *tariqat*. Connections between teachers and students are likewise central, and as such face-to-face meetings between students and their teachers are maintained even when spiritual communications can be conducted through other means.⁹² In *tariqat*, teachers serve as guides and councilors who mediate between students and God, with whom they the students want to communicate. Teachers are even held to have full authority, both material and spiritual. However, this general view is not entirely accurate, as some of these guides (i.e. teachers) only describe themselves as "friends". Some *tariqat* are used by elderly members of society to attain better lives and stronger spiritual faith in their twilight years.⁹³

According to Dhofier, *tariqat* are organizations in traditional Islam which conduct specific practices of *zikr* and

⁹⁰ Bambang Pranowo, *Memahami Islam Jawa*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Alvabet, 2011), p. 181–235.

⁹¹ Koentjaraningrat, *Kebudayaan Jawa*, p. 407.

⁹² Mulyati, *Mengenal & Memaham Tarekat-Tarekat Muktabarah di Indonesia*, p. 6–11.

⁹³ Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren*, p. 216–21.

take an oath determined by the organizational leadership; in other words, Dhofier refers to a specific type of *tariqat*, a "tarekat organization". In *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), the term *tariqat* is more commonly understood as "the road to heaven" and promotes more ethical and practical interests than intellectual ones. *Tariqat* is considered an inherent part of the historical traditions which emerged even before specific *tariqat* organizations, and as such *tariqat* does not need to be identified within an organizational context. *Tariqat* in *pesantren* is grouped into two categories based on its practice: *tariqat* practiced according to *tariqat* organizations and *tariqat* practiced without following a specific *tariqat* organization.⁹⁴

In Indonesia, not all developments in *taṣawwuf* and *tariqat* can be categorized as *mu'tabar* (valid) according to standards implemented by the Nahdhatul Ulama.⁹⁵ The requirement for *tariqat* to be accepted by the Muslim community (specifically, the Muslims who follow Nahdhatul Ulama), is particularly important, and failure to meet this requirement will result in an application being rejected.⁹⁶

From a substantial perspective, the basis of acceptance is for a *tarekat* to follow the teachings of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and be in accordance with Islam, the Faith (*Imān*), and *Iḥsān* (the highest Islamic teaching, often equated with surrender). The first level of surrender fulfilling religious requirements simply because they are required. The second level of surrender involves conducting prayer and other religious requirements not simply because they are required, but because they are considered a central part of life. The third level of surrender involves dedicating oneself

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 212–13.

⁹⁵ Martin van Bruinessen and Julia Day (eds.), *Urban Sufism* (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 2008), p. v–vii.

⁹⁶ Sokhi Huda, *Tasawuf Kultural: Fenomena Sholawat Wahidiyah* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2008), p. 7–8.

to performing religious requirements and practices simply to become closer to God.⁹⁷

3. *Kebatinan* Groups

Mysticism has spread among the general populace through spiritual groups such as the Subud, examined by Geels,⁹⁸ and the Sumarah, examined by Stange.⁹⁹ Subud (Susila Budi Darma) and Sumarah are two major branches of *kebatinan* in Java. Subud developed in Semarang, whereas Sumarah and Sapta Darma developed in Yogyakarta.

There is also Paguyuban Ngesti Tunggal (Pangestu), which developed in Surakarta. These may be called "large branches" as they have more than 1.000 members each. Aside from these large branches, there are "small branches" with fewer than 200 members, including Penunggalan, Perukunan Kawula Manembah Gusti, Ilmu Kebatunan Kasunyatan, Ilmu Sejati, and Trimurti Naluri Majapahit.¹⁰⁰

Information on the various mystical views which have developed in Java is considered to be sourced to the poem *Nawaruci*. This poem, a *syair*, is considered a complete and comprehensive source of information on Javanese mystics' views regarding the relationship between humanity and God. In these Javanese mystic views, humanity is only a small part of the universe and the cosmos. Human life is metaphorized as only stopping for water (famously, "*urip kuwi mung mampir ngombe*") on the long path to becoming one with the Creator.¹⁰¹

The specific attitudes, lifestyles, and rituals which must be realized and followed by persons intending to undertake training under a religious leader or teacher are considered no different than the steps undertaken in Javanese *kebatinan*. The first step is having the desire and ability to release

⁹⁷ Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren*, p. 225–26.

⁹⁸ Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition*, 1997.

⁹⁹ Stange, *Kejawen Modern*, 2009.

¹⁰⁰ Koentjaraningrat, *Kebudayaan Jawa*, p. 400.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 403.

oneself from worldly goods; this is also known as *rila* (surrender), namely surrendering oneself to release all owned goods, as well as all thoughts, feelings, and desires for ownership. Such an attitude indicates the power of the mind and strength of faith. It is followed by the attitude of *narima*, of accepting one's fate with patience and true acceptance. Such an attitude may be obtained by living cleanly, simply, and practicing self-control and concentrating on meditation. Meditation, here, should be understood as stopping bodily functions and controlling one's desires in order to balance spiritual and physical life. Once someone has found freedom from life's worldly burdens (*pamudharan*), then that person has become one with God (*jumbuhing kawula-Gusti atau manunggaling kawula-Gusti*) and may no longer stay separate from the concrete world of humanity and other beings. Such persons have the duty of bringing beauty to the world (*memayu hayuhing bawana*) through conservation, good action, and responsible living.¹⁰²

Teachings in this Javanese mysticism do not differ much from the understanding of *akhlaqi tasawuf*, as explained by Huda.¹⁰³ *Akhlaqi tasawuf* is the teaching of morals or honorable traits (*akhlak*) which should be practiced in everyday life to ensure optimal happiness. Its teachings focus on three aspects: *takhalli*, *tahalli*, and *tajalli*, as explained above. To become a mystic, one must cleanse oneself of worldly desires, habituate oneself with acting in a noble manner, and not do harm to the world or humanity. Gathering with people who emphasize doing good is one common activity.

Evidence of mysticism's strong social functions and implications can be seen in the rationales used by the Muslims who follow the Pangestu faith in Salatiga. These people's mystical practices of have been discussed

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 403–4.

¹⁰³ Huda, *Tasawuf Kultural*, p. 21–61.

specifically by practitioners. They argue that religious rituals are unable to present truly meaningful religious practices. This lack of meaning is what pushed them, including the Muslims, to follow Pangestu mysticism. The organization's activities are considered sufficient to fulfill members' need to intensively communicate through meetings and gatherings. They are able to pay each other attention, receive good leadership, defend their organization, and find satisfaction in their religious practices.¹⁰⁴

4. General Public

The entry of Islam into the hinterlands of Java led to Islamic values being transformed to conform to deep-rooted existing views. This "religious compromise" was considered incapable of offering spiritual satisfaction to practitioners. Rural populations thus nominally became Muslim, but continued to maintain religious understandings rooted in old worldviews and practice ancient rituals. These people, often known as the *abangan*,¹⁰⁵ continue to hold Javanese mystic beliefs.

Research by Roibin¹⁰⁶ has also examined the Javanese belief system, or *Kejawen*, which intersects greatly with mysticism and has given rise to many sects in Javanese society. In each region, Javanese people have different and unique guides for living, beliefs in their origins (cosmogony), social organizations, and myths. These views are often held to be proof of syncretic intersection between *Kejawen* and Sufism. This syncretism refers more specifically to the Javanese concepts of *sangkan paraning dumadi* (life direction) and *manunggaling kawula gusti*, as well as the Sufi concepts of *ittihad* and *ilhad*, which are crystalized in *wahdatu al-wujud*. A practical example of how general

¹⁰⁴ Suciati, "The Cohesiveness of Muslim Pangestu Members in Salatiga, Central Java," p. 85–86.

¹⁰⁵ Masroer Ch. Jb., *The History of Java*, p. 31.

¹⁰⁶ Roibin, "Mencermati Asal-Usul Kepercayaan, Religi, dan Agama Jawa Kuna."

society's views differ from those of the *santri* can be seen below.

Mystic understandings among the general populace, specifically in rural areas, are depicted by Pranowo¹⁰⁷ using the example of Tegalroso, which is located near the Tegalrejo *pesantren* in Magelang, Central Java. Pranowo explains that traditional Islam as found in Tegalrejo, with its myriad mystical characteristics, has created strong bonds between the local community and the *pesantren*, even though most members of the local community do not strictly practice religious rituals. Koentjaraningrat notes that rural communities are actually quite devout in reading religious and moral literature, a fact which is often forgotten or ignored. In the author's experience, several villagers owned and studied *primbon* (almanacs) containing Javanese life lessons. According to Pranowo, although most rural residents are nominal Muslims, they still have a strong commitment to Islam. Even though they do not offer regular prayers (*ṣalat*), when asked their religion they will immediately answer Islam. Unlike the *santri*, these rural populations emphasize different aspects or manifestations of faith. This supports Mulder's view that, among most Javanese, mysticism and mystic practice have a strong basis in culture.

Pranomo's research indicates that, even though villagers in Tegalroso do not regularly practice Islamic prayer, they have a strong commitment to Islam. One village official (*Pak Sudigdo*), who had never prayed in accordance with Islamic doctrine, continuously put forth issues of faith and good deeds, emphasizing these over Islamic rituals. For *Pak Sudigdo*, if one is yet unable to regularly pray, it is important to maintain faith in God and practice good deeds. For him, there is no point in praying if one's heart is not open to God. He also feels as though he has a sacred duty to bring his community closer to religious doctrine and provide

¹⁰⁷ Pranowo, *Memahami Islam Jawa*, p. 237–77.

infrastructure for religious practice. This commitment is supported by his belief that his position in the village was obtained, at least in part, because of the blessings and prayers of a *kyai*.

For rural residents, one's religious practice can be dynamic. If a Muslim has not begun praying regularly, it can be attributed to a realization or awareness which is not yet complete. The person in question does not "not pray", but rather "not pray yet". Religious practice is a process, rather than something which can be instantaneously realized. As such, many people may do devout acts and be committed to the oneness of God, but not yet pray regularly. For residents of rural areas, belief or faith in God is the first stage; conducting prayer and other religious commandments is the second stage. For rural residents, it is ideal for one to affirm one's Islamic faith in the first stage and then practice religious rituals in the second stage. People able to do so are considered special, as having *karomah* (mystical abilities), and thus have great influence in society. The greater one's piety, the greater society's respect, and the greater society's belief that one has mystical powers. Owing to this belief, there is sometimes the question as to why people have not yet begun to pray regularly.

The story of *Pak Rajiman*, a *dukun*, regarding his response to a *kyai*'s lecture is noteworthy. He agreed with the *kyai*'s statement that there was no use for a person with a tainted heart to pray five times a day (*jengkang-jengking sedino ping limo*). He believed that, even if one did not pray regularly, if one lived with a clean heart and positive actions, one was a good Muslim. For him, Islam meant salvation, peace, and thus only people whose hearts were filled with faith and whose deeds were positive could find peace. For *Pak Rajiman*, the power of a mantra used in healing depended on one's faith in God. The greater one's faith, the more powerful the mantra. He always attempted to convince patients that he was only a vessel, a "go-between" (*lantaran*),

and that the true healer of their ills was God. As such, for their mantras to be more effective, patients had to strengthen their own faith. For Pranowo, the mystical/magical practices of *Pak Rajiman* still refer to Islamic teachings. Although from an exoteric perspective there is variety in religious practice, from an esoteric perspective few differences are noticed by rural residents. Differences occur because of different points of emphasis in realizing the mental and physical aspects of Muslim religious practice. As such, Pranowo disagrees with the dichotomy between the *santri* and *abangan*. The spiritual practices discussed above may have even greater positive implications for local communities, as shown by the practices of *Pak Sudigdo*, *Pak Rajiman*, and the others.

The Sufistic views held by rural populations have a different point of emphasis than the views of the *santri*. In practice, these Sufistic views may be related to even more practical issues. Usep Taufik Hidayat researched neo-Sufistic views held to emphasize social aspects than Sufistic behavior in resolving problems within communities. This is practiced, for instance, by the mystics of Java, who are known as *wong tuwa* (old men) or *guru mistik* (mystical teachers).¹⁰⁸

Conclusion

Mysticism and Islamic mysticism are generally defined as efforts to become closer to God by following certain steps. In much literature, it is explained that bringing oneself closer to God will be followed by good attitudes and behaviors in the social sphere. Islam accepts such mystic teachings, through several considerations: as continuation of history, mysticism is a spiritual need of all religions, while an Islamic mysticism must be in accordance with Islamic teachings. More specifically, mysticism in Islam is known as Sufism or *taṣawwuf*.

¹⁰⁸ Niels Mulder, *Inside Indonesian Society: Cultural Change in Java* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2005), p. 78.

Islam and *taṣawwuf* developed rapidly in Indonesia because Islam entered the area when the world *taṣawwuf* movement was seeing rapid growth. These mystical views had similarities to those of the Indonesian people, particularly the Javanese. Furthermore, an awareness of Javanese culture (Kejawen) and the situation of society in the face of colonialism contributed to the fertile growth of such Sufistic views.

Mystical traditions in Java can be found in almost all levels of society. In the kingdoms, among the noble elite and intelligentsia it emerged as part of written tradition. Sufi views grew fertile in old *pesantren* where rituals, such as Javanese feasts, are practiced. The *taṣawwuf* movement in the *pesantren* emerged in the form of *tarīqat*. Furthermore, Islamic mystic understandings also developed among followers of *kebatinan* and among the general public; this can be partly connected to mystics who practiced healing. Further research into the Sufistic views of healers in Java would be interesting.

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