

The Tradition of Basuluk: Its Influence on the Religious Understanding of Naqshbandi Order Followers in Padang City

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Abstrak

Suluk merupakan suatu kegiatan dengan cara mengasingkan diri atau menenangkan diri pada tempat yang sunyi dan tenang, dengan melakukan amal ibadah seperti berzikir, melaksanakan shalat, berpuasa, beristigfar, dan amalan-amalan lainnya. Kegiatan suluk ini merupakan salah satu bentuk kegiatan yang dilakukan oleh para jema'ah atau pengikut dari Tarekat Naqsyabandi, salah satunya adalah Tarekat Naqsyabandi di Kota Padang. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode sejarah dengan melakukan analisis kepada studi kepustakaan (Library Reseach). Sama halnya dengan jama'ah atau pengikut Tarekat Naqsyabandi di Kota Padang, suluk ini juga menjadi salah satu tradisi bagi aktivitas spiritual keagamaan jemaah atau pengikutnya, yang dilakukan selama 2 kali dalam 1 tahun. Dengan adanya kegiatan suluk yang dianggap sebagai tradisi yang selalu dilakukan oleh para jama'ah atau pengikut Tarekat Naqsyabandi di Kota Padang, berdampak positif bagi perkembangan pemahaman keagamaan para pengikut Tarekat Naqsyabandi di Kota Padang, karena mereka bisa lebih fokus dalam mempelajari tentang agama, beribadah, memperbaiki diri, dan amalan-amalan lainnya, dengan dilakukan ditempat yang tenang dan jauh dari keramaian.

Kata kunci: tradisi suluk, pengaruh, pemahaman keagamaan.

Abstract

Suluk is an activity by isolating oneself or calming oneself down in a quiet and calm place, by carrying out acts of worship such as reciting dhikr, performing prayers, fasting, making istigfar, and other practices. This suluk activity is a form of activity carried out by the congregation or followers of the Naqshbandi Tarekat, one of which is the Naqshbandi Tarekat in Padang City. The method used in this research is the historical method by analyzing literature studies (Library Research). Similar to the congregation or followers of the Naqshbandi Order in Padang City, this suluk has also become a tradition for the religious spiritual activities of the congregation or its followers, which is carried out twice a year. With the suluk activity which is considered a tradition that is always carried out by the congregation or followers of the Naqshbandi Tarekat in Padang City, it has a positive impact on the development of religious understanding of the Naqshbandi Tarekat followers in Padang City, because they can focus more on learning about religion, worship, improving oneself, and other practices, should be done in a quiet place and away from crowds.

Keywords: suluk traditions, influence, religious understanding.

INTRODUCTION

Padang City is a region well-known for its rich cultural heritage and strong Islamic traditions. One of the manifestations of this is the practice of the Naqshbandi Order, which continues to develop among the local community. Central to this practice is the tradition of *suluk*, a

spiritual method or path undertaken to draw closer to God (Ade Selvia, Elfita Yulianti, Feldisa Wulandari 2022:121). The word *suluk* derives from the Arabic verbal noun of *tsalaka*, *yusliku*, *salikan*, which means "to follow a path or a process." Meanwhile, *khalwat* originates from the verbal noun of *khala*, *yaghlu*, *khalwatan*,

meaning “to withdraw or to seclude oneself” (Basyrul Muvid 2016:78). Within the context of the Naqshbandi Order, *suluk* refers to a spiritual journey or process undertaken by a disciple to achieve purity and perfection. It involves a series of spiritual practices, self-discipline, and inner development aimed at drawing nearer to God (Heru Nuvo Liantara 2021:37).

In Padang, the teachings of the Naqshbandi Order have particularly flourished in Pasar Baru, Pauh District, and later expanded into other areas such as Lubuk Kilangan, Koto Tengah, and Indarung. Within these regions, the Naqshbandi Order is widely recognized for the practice of *suluk*, which is obligatory for its disciples (Zahar 2023). This practice has become a tradition within the Order, serving as the primary means through which the teachings and rituals of the Naqshbandi path are transmitted to its followers in Padang. The process of *suluk* is guided by a *mursyid* (spiritual master) who acts as the spiritual leader, while the *surau* serves as the central place of practice, known locally as *surau urang basuluak* (Toda 2024). The practice of *suluk* has had a significant impact on the religious understanding of the disciples, enabling them to concentrate deeply on studying religion while distancing themselves from worldly distractions.

Discussions of the Naqshbandi Order in Padang are by no means new, as

many researchers have explored this subject. For example, Johan Septian Putra’s work, “*The Naqshbandi Haqqani Order and Socio-Religious Change in Padang Society, 2000-2021*” (Johan Septian Putra 2022), Elsa Diovera’s study, “*The Development of the Naqshbandi Order in Pasar Baru, Pauh District, Padang City (1984-2009)*” (Diovera 2011), and Wahid Rizki’s research on “*Syafri Malin Mudo: Biography of a Naqshbandi Order Mursyid in Pauh, Padang City*” (Rizki Wahid 2021). However, from these studies it can be seen that the specific issue of *basuluk* tradition and its influence on the religious understanding of Naqshbandi followers in Padang has not yet been addressed. Previous studies have tended to focus more on the overall development of the Naqshbandi Order or the influence of particular Naqshbandi leaders. In contrast, the present research seeks to examine the impact of *suluk* as a distinct tradition and religious practice undertaken by the followers of the Naqshbandi Order, as observed in several locations across Padang City.

METHODS

This study is fieldwork-based; therefore, the method deemed most appropriate for examining the influence of the Naqshbandi Order on the religious understanding of the people of Padang City particularly through its central practice of *suluk* or the *suluk* tradition, as observed in several

districts such as Lubuk Kilangan, Indarung, Koto Tangah, Bungus, and Pauh is the historical research method. This method involves several stages: heuristics, criticism or verification, interpretation, and historiography (Gottschalk 2008:39).

Beginning with the heuristic stage, the researcher seeks to collect as many sources and materials as possible related to the Naqshbandi Order in Padang City. In doing so, the researcher distinguishes between primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include interviews conducted with several *khalifahs* or successor teachers of the Naqshbandi Order in Padang, namely Buya Toda, Buya Yaqub, Buya Zahar, and Alfitman, as well as textual references such as manuscripts and books that discuss the Naqshbandi Order in the region. Secondary sources, on the other hand, consist of references relevant to this study, including books, journal articles, and previous research (Kuntowijoyo 1995:74-75).

The next stage is source criticism (verification), in which the researcher systematically evaluates the sources obtained during fieldwork. Source criticism is an essential process aimed at identifying potential biases, inaccuracies, or distortions within the materials, ensuring that the data used are reliable and credible for subsequent analysis and interpretation (Abdurahman 2007:54). In the context of this study on the teachings of the Naqshbandi Order, source criticism

plays a crucial role in safeguarding the accuracy and dependability of the information provided by informants during field interviews.

Following this is the interpretation stage, where the researcher analyzes and organizes the logically selected data to ensure its relevance and coherence with the research theme. This process aims to construct a holistic understanding of the development and influence of the Naqshbandi Order in Padang City. The researcher synthesizes fragmented pieces of information into a structured and comprehensive narrative that reflects the religious and cultural significance of the *suluk* practice.

The final stage is historiography (writing), which refers to the historical writing process. This step emphasizes the importance of chronology in presenting the development and influence of the Naqshbandi Order in Padang. Chronology plays a central role in producing a structured and contextualized narrative (Shamad 2003:20-21). Consequently, this work is not only a historical study but also serves as a framework for developing a deeper understanding of the complexity and relevance of the Naqshbandi Order and its influence in Padang City, particularly as seen through the practice of *suluk*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Influence of *Suluk* on Religious Life

Suluk has a significant influence in the field of religion, which can be observed through several factors, such as:

a. Improvement in the Quality of Worship

Within the Naqshbandi Order, individuals who diligently engage in *suluk* are recognized for their devotion and depth in worship. This is because their religious practices such as prayer, *dhikr*, and recitation of the Qur'an—are continuously enhanced. Through *suluk*, disciples of the Naqshbandi Order cultivate strong spiritual discipline.

b. Deepened Understanding of Religious Teachings

Through the practice of *suluk*, individuals can enrich their comprehension of religious teachings and the spiritual values embedded within them. This deeper understanding also enables them to apply these values in their daily lives.

c. Awareness of Moral Conduct

Suluk positively impacts moral awareness, guiding individuals to reflect upon their actions and discern between right and wrong. It helps nurture an ethical consciousness that directs behavior toward virtuous conduct.

d. Strengthened Relationship with God

Suluk is believed to be one of the most effective ways to draw closer to Allah SWT. Through practices such as meditation, *dhikr*, and other spiritual exercises, disciples can experience a deeper sense of divine presence in their everyday lives (Fathan Abidi 2021:345).

Thus, by practicing *suluk* actively, regularly, and with sincerity, individuals can experience positive effects in enhancing their religiosity and strengthening their spiritual consciousness.

The Implementation of *Suluk* in Padang City



Figure 1. Photo of Naqshbandi Order disciples in Padang City preparing to perform *Suluk*

The term *suluk* is more specifically used to denote spiritual practices within a *tarekat* (Sufi order). While *suluk* constitutes an essential stage in certain *tarekat*, not all employ the term to designate their system of spiritual training (Arskal Salim 2010:221). More broadly,

suluk refers to the process of drawing closer to Allah SWT (Satriani 2018:29). Within a *tarekat*, however, it signifies particular steps taken by disciples to attain deeper spiritual understanding and to reach higher levels of mystical realization (Muhammad 2015:35).

In the Naqshbandi Order of Padang City, the practice of *suluk* initially began at Surau Baru, the first *surau* representing the presence of the Naqshbandi Order in the city (Rahmat 2023). The implementation of *suluk* in Naqshbandi *surau* across Padang generally takes two forms: first, a 40-day *suluk* conducted one month prior to Ramadan; and second, a 20-day *suluk* held on ordinary days outside Ramadan. The schedule of *suluk* in these *surau* has its own distinct characteristics, usually beginning at 16:30 WIB and lasting until 06:00 WIB. The practice is more intensely focused during the night, commencing after Maghrib prayer and concluding after the dawn (*Subuh*) prayer (Toda 2023).

Before embarking on *suluk*, disciples are required to perform a ritual cleansing through *mandi tobat* (the ablution of repentance), symbolizing the intention to purify the heart and soul from past sins (Qodim 2022a:25). This is followed by the performance of *shalat sunat tobat* (the prayer of repentance), carried out with sincerity as an expression of self-awareness regarding one's sins. The process of *suluk* is governed by strict

regulations. Among these is the requirement that disciples remain within the designated space specifically, the second floor of the *surau*, which serves as the center of *suluk* activities (Malin 2024). They are also prohibited from meeting anyone except the *khalifah* or spiritual leader of the practice. This restriction is not merely an act of isolation but a deliberate measure to safeguard concentration and spiritual focus (Hafizi 2023).

Within *suluk*, limited interaction with others becomes a means of deepening the relationship with oneself and with God. This creates a space for profound introspection, enabling disciples to explore their spiritual dimensions without external distractions (Basyrul Muvid 2016:78). By adhering to and respecting these strict rules, Naqshbandi disciples experience the blessings inherent in every stage of their *suluk* journey. Such limitations are not obstacles but rather guiding paths that lead them toward greater closeness to God and deeper inner enlightenment (Heru Nuvo Liantara 2021:37).

The stages of *suluk* undertaken by the followers of the Naqshbandi Order in Padang City are carried out under strict rules and conditions that serve as both spiritual guidance and disciplinary framework (Alfitman 2023). The ultimate aim of the *suluk* is to achieve complete submission to the will of Allah SWT by

removing every trace of arrogance and hypocrisy, whether manifest or hidden. Before entering the spiritual journey, disciples are required to seek permission and supplication from their *shaykh*, as the blessing and prayer of the master are believed to strengthen their spiritual path. The process begins with deliberate withdrawal from daily interactions as a form of self-discipline, symbolizing detachment from worldly affairs in preparation for the inner journey. This stage is followed by purification through ritual cleansing of repentance (*mandi tobat*), which signifies both physical and spiritual purification.

At the commencement of *suluk*, disciples perform two units (*rak'ah*) of the repentance prayer (*shalat sunat tobat*) and are encouraged to engage regularly in voluntary prayers and constant *istighfar* (seeking forgiveness). Throughout the journey, the heart must remain dedicated to the remembrance of Allah SWT, fearing none but Him. Importantly, disciples are reminded to avoid the desire for extraordinary signs or miracles (*karamah*), focusing instead on the essence of remembrance. They must strive to remain in a state of ritual purity (*wudhu*) and cultivate inner concentration by contemplating the presence of the *shaykh*. Silence is highly valued, with speech permitted only during the act of *dhikr*. Even physical comportment is regulated: disciples are discouraged from leaning

against walls or other objects and are advised to bow their heads, keeping their gaze directed toward the ground as a sign of humility.

The discipline of *suluk* also requires constant vigilance against spiritual adversaries, namely the *nafs* (ego), worldly distractions, and Satan. Any visions, experiences, or disturbances encountered during the process are to be reported directly to the *shaykh*. Despite the seclusion, core religious obligations remain essential, particularly the observance of congregational prayers and the Friday prayer. To protect the contemplative atmosphere, disciples are instructed to avoid noisy environments and to minimize sleep, resting only when overcome by drowsiness and always in a state of ritual purity. Encounters or conversations with others are strictly regulated and permitted only with the approval of the *khalifah*.

Every spiritual sweetness or inner delight experienced during *suluk* is interpreted not as a personal achievement but as a form of *dhikr* transmitted by the *shaykh* or *khalifah*, which ultimately derives from the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Furthermore, maintaining bodily discipline is equally important, particularly the balance between hunger and satiety, which is believed to preserve physical health and sharpen spiritual receptivity. Above all, disciples are urged to sustain

the continuity of *dhikr* in accordance with the guidance of the *shaykh*. They must also resist distractions that arise from inner whispers or fluctuations of the heart, whether positive or negative, as such disturbances are seen as obstacles that diminish the full realization of *dhikr*.



Figure 2. Instructional text for Naqshbandi disciples, from the private collection of Alfin at Surau Baitul Makmur.

Within the context of the Naqshbandi Order in Padang, the practice of *suluk* holds profound significance in preserving the vitality of the *tarekat*. More than a general guideline for Sufi practitioners, *suluk* constitutes a distinct and essential stage of the Order, serving as a means by which the *mursyid* (spiritual master) nurtures the faith, discipline, and spiritual awareness of his disciples.

The Role of the Naqshbandi Order Leaders in Padang City

Sufi orders often involve the guidance of a spiritual master or leader, who is regarded as a mentor in the spiritual journey. Such a teacher plays a crucial role in directing the disciples, imparting teachings, and inspiring them to attain spiritual

perfection. The relationship between master and disciple in a *tarekat* establishes a strong and supportive bond that sustains their spiritual progress (Raji Al-Faruqi 1998:378-79).

The continuity of teaching within the Naqshbandi Order in Padang City is not merely confined to formal structures or organizational frameworks; rather, spiritual connectedness plays a central role in transmitting and sustaining the tradition. This connection is embodied in the *silsilah* (chain of transmission) that links each master to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). In the context of the Naqshbandi Order in Padang, the *silsilah* functions as an unbroken bridge, bringing disciples closer to the core of spiritual teachings and the values conveyed by the Prophet (Havizi 2023).

Thus, the preservation and continuation of Naqshbandi teachings in Padang City are not solely an organizational responsibility but also a matter of deep personal commitment, in which disciples and leaders alike strive to uncover and embody the true essence of the spiritual tradition.

CONCLUSION

In the Naqshbandi Order, *suluk* is a spiritual practice performed by its disciples with the purpose of purifying themselves from negative traits and serving as a means of drawing closer to

God. Beyond the religious aspect, *suluk* has a profound influence as it enhances the quality of worship, deepens the understanding of religious teachings, and strengthens one's spiritual connection with the Creator.

Specifically, within the Naqshbandi Order in Padang City, *suluk* plays a vital role not only in the spiritual lives of its adherents but also in shaping the city's social and cultural fabric. The practice reinforces religious identity, fosters strong social networks, and instills high moral values. Furthermore, the role of the *mursyid* (spiritual leader) is crucial in guiding disciples through the practice of *suluk*, ensuring that they attain spiritual purity and perfection. Thus, *suluk* is not merely a spiritual method but also becomes a foundation for sustaining and developing the Naqshbandi teachings, as well as serving as a source of spiritual inspiration within the community.

Moreover, because *suluk* is known for its structured and disciplined implementation, it has had a positive impact on the Naqshbandi Order in Padang City. This practice contributes to the emergence of generations with deeper religious commitment and heightened spirituality.

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