

Sufism of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah (ASWAJA) Scholars of the Nusantara: A Comparative Study of the Thought of Shaykh Arsyad al-Banjari, Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani, and Kiai Haji Hasyim Asy'ari

Muhammad Noor Alamsyah

Pascasarjana IAI Darussalam Martapura, Kalimantan Selatan, Indonesia

Email: muhammadnooralamsyah@gmail.com

Khalilurrahman

IAI Darussalam Martapura Kalimantan Selatan, Indonesia

Email: khalilurrahman@iaidarussalam.ac.id

M. Anshari

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Al Falah Banjarbaru Kalimantan Selatan, Indonesia

Email: manshari438@gmail.com

Abstract

Sufism holds a strategic position in shaping the Islamic character of the Nusantara community one that is moderate, tolerant, and civil. This article provides a comparative study of the thoughts of three prominent Nusantara scholars: Syekh Arsyad al-Banjari, Syekh Nawawi al-Bantani, and KH. Hasyim Asy'ari within the framework of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah (Aswaja). The study employs a literature-based approach by examining primary works as well as relevant secondary sources. The findings reveal that all three scholars regard Sufism as a dimension that perfects the Sharia, characterized by an ethical-moral orientation (tasawwuf akhlaqi) that emphasizes purification of the soul, cultivation of proper conduct, and integration of Sharia, ethics, and spiritual practice. Syekh Arsyad al-Banjari highlights soul purification grounded in adherence to Sharia; Syekh Nawawi al-Bantani stresses a Sufism centered on ihsani ethics and social responsibility; while KH. Hasyim Asy'ari positions Sufism as the moral foundation of santri education, especially within pesantren traditions. Comparatively, the three scholars share a convergent orientation toward religious moderation, rejection of extreme forms of Sufism, and reinforcement of social ethics. Their ideas remain highly relevant in addressing contemporary challenges such as moral degradation, digital disruption, radicalism, and mental health issues. Thus, the Sufi legacy of Nusantara scholars within the Aswaja perspective carries not only historical value but also serves as a transformative paradigm for modern Islamic spirituality and education.

Keywords: Sufism, Aswaja, Nusantara Scholars, Ethics

Abstrak

Tasawuf memiliki posisi strategis dalam membentuk karakter keislaman masyarakat Nusantara yang moderat, toleran, dan beradab. Artikel ini mengkaji secara komparatif pemikiran tiga ulama besar Nusantara, Syekh Arsyad al-Banjari, Syekh Nawawi al-Bantani, dan KH. Hasyim Asy'ari dalam bingkai Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah (Aswaja). Penelitian dilakukan melalui studi pustaka dengan menelaah karya-karya primer serta literatur sekunder yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ketiga ulama menempatkan tasawuf sebagai dimensi penyempurna syariat, dengan corak tasawuf akhlaqi yang menekankan penyucian jiwa, pembentukan adab, serta integrasi antara syariat, akhlak, dan praktik spiritual. Syekh Arsyad al-Banjari menekankan tazkiyatun nafs berbasis kepatuhan syariat; Syekh Nawawi al-Bantani menegaskan tasawuf yang berorientasi pada akhlak ihsani dan tanggung jawab sosial; sedangkan KH. Hasyim Asy'ari menempatkan tasawuf sebagai fondasi pendidikan moral dan adab santri, khususnya dalam tradisi pesantren. Secara komparatif, ketiganya memiliki orientasi yang selaras pada moderasi beragama, penolakan ekstremisme tasawuf, dan penguatan etika sosial. Relevansi pemikiran mereka sangat signifikan dalam menjawab tantangan kontemporer seperti degradasi moral, disrupsi digital, radikalisme, hingga problem kesehatan mental. Dengan demikian, tasawuf ulama Nusantara dalam perspektif Aswaja tidak hanya bernilai historis, tetapi juga menjadi paradigma transformatif bagi pengembangan spiritualitas dan pendidikan Islam masa kini.

Kata Kunci: Tasawuf, Aswaja, Ulama Nusantara, Akhlak

Introduction

Sufism is one of the important pillars in intellectual development and Islamic spirituality in the archipelago. This tradition not only serves as a means of purification of the soul, but also becomes the foundation in the formation of character, social ethics, and moderate religious patterns. Within the framework of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah (Aswaja), Sufism is understood as a spiritual dimension that is integrated with sharia and morals so as to give birth to balanced religious practices, not extreme, and adaptive to local culture. This configuration of Sufism has long been and has become a characteristic of Nusantara Islam which has developed through the preaching of scholars since 17th century to early 20th century.¹, Rohman in 2019² and Azra in 2020³ also emphasized that moral Sufism is the main foundation in the formation of a moderate and characterful Nusantara Islam.

Research on Nusantara ulama shows the large role of these figures. Figures such as Sheikh Arsyad al-Banjari, Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani, and KH. Hasyim Asy'ari in

¹Awang, Tasawuf Nusantara dan Tradisi Keilmuan Islam, (Jakarta: Prenadamedia Group, 2017), h. 45

²Rohman, Tasawuf dan Peradaban Islam Nusantara, (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2019), h. 23.

³Azyumardi Azra, Jaringan Ulama Nusantara dan Tradisi Tasawuf, (Jakarta: Kencana, 2020), h. 67.

building a moderate and oriented foundation for Sufism moral development. Studies on Sheikh Arsyad al-Banjari highlight many his ideas on social ethics and moral reform in Banjar society. Research on Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani emphasizes his position as an international scholar who produces works of Sufism based on *ihsan*, especially through *Nashaih al-'Ibad*. Meanwhile, studies on KH. Hasyim Asy'ari are numerous, discussing the concept of manners and moral education in the Islamic boarding school tradition through his work *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim*. These literatures show the great contribution of each scholar, but tend to stand alone without analysis comparative analysis that places all three within one Aswaja Sufism construction. This was also emphasized by Mahmud⁴, also explained by Saefuddin, 2021⁵, and presented by Fathurrahman in 2022⁶ who found that previous studies were still partial and focused on one individual figure.

The state of the art leads to the identification of research gaps that are important. First, a comparative study of the Sufi orientation of these three scholars is still minimal, even though they represent three representations, geographical, historical, and a significant intellectual network of Nusantara Islam. Second, there has been no research that explicitly examines the epistemological relationships and integration of their ideas in formulating Aswaja Sufism which is the character of Islam Nusantara. Third, still the relevance of their Sufi thought to answering the question has not been explored in depth contemporary religious and social problems such as moral crisis, digital disruption, radicalism and mental health problems. Arifin also mentioned this gap in 2020⁷, then explained by Hidayat in 2021⁸, and appointed by Nuryadin in 2023⁹ who assessed the need for a comprehensive synthesis in understanding the Sufism of Nusantara scholars in an integrated manner.

Based on this gap, this article presents scientific novelty in the form of an in-depth comparative analysis of the Sufi thought of Sheikh Arsyad al-Banjari, Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani, and KH. Hasyim Asy'ari in the Aswaja framework. Newness This lies in mapping the Sufi orientation of each figure, identifying the points their meeting and differences, as well as drawing out applicable relevance for

⁴Mahmud, "Pemikiran Tasawuf Ulama Nusantara dan Relevansinya", *Jurnal Studi Islam*, Vol. 8 No. 2 (2018), h. 101.

⁵Saefuddin, *Tasawuf Akhlaqi dalam Tradisi Pesantren*, (Yogyakarta: Deepublish, 2021), h. 56.

⁶Fathurrahman, "Kontribusi Ulama Lokal dalam Pembentukan Tasawuf Moderat", *Al-Burhan*, Vol. 5 No. 1 (2022), h. 88.

⁷Arifin, *Model Tasawuf Kontemporer*, (Malang: UIN Press, 2020), h. 12

⁸Hidayat, "Tasawuf dan Tantangan Modernitas", *Jurnal Tasawuf Nusantara*, Vol. 3 No. 2 (2021), h. 74.

⁹Nuryadin, *Integrasi Tasawuf dan Pendidikan Karakter*, (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2023), h. 90

constructioncontemporary Islamic spirituality and education. Thus, this article not onlyis descriptive-historical in nature, but offers a synthesis and conceptual model of SufismNusantara which can be used as a theoretical and practical reference in the context ofmodern. This kind of approach was also previously suggested by Muslims in 2019¹⁰, Al-Fairus, in 2022¹¹, as well as Yusof in 2023¹²which emphasizes the need for comparative reading to strengthen the Aswaja Sufism framework in the contemporary context.

Literature Review

Studies on Sufism in the Nusantara have long highlighted its distinctive character, which integrates spiritual practices with Sunni orthodoxy and local socio cultural contexts.¹³ Unlike speculative or philosophical Sufism that emerged in some parts of the Islamic world, Nusantara Sufism is widely understood as a practical and ethical tradition rooted in the principles of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah (ASWAJA). This orientation emphasizes harmony between sharia, tariqa, and haqiqa, ensuring that mystical experience remains grounded in Islamic law and communal responsibility.

Scholars such as Azyumardi Azra and Martin van Bruinessen have argued that ASWAJA-oriented Sufism played a central role in shaping Islamic orthodoxy in Southeast Asia. Their works demonstrate how Sufi networks, pesantren institutions, and scholarly lineages contributed to the transmission of Sunni theology and jurisprudence, while simultaneously accommodating spiritual disciplines. This framework provides an essential background for understanding the intellectual positions of Shaykh Arsyad al-Banjari, Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani, and Kiai Haji Hasyim Asy'ari.

Shaykh Arsyad al-Banjari is frequently discussed in the literature as a key figure in the Islamization and intellectual consolidation of South Kalimantan. His seminal work *Sabil al-Muhtadin* is often analyzed primarily from a fiqh perspective; however, recent studies emphasize that his legal thought is inseparable from a disciplined Sufi worldview. Researchers note that Arsyad al-Banjari adhered to Sunni creed (Ash'ari theology) and Shafi'i jurisprudence while endorsing tasawwuf as a means of ethical purification rather than metaphysical speculation.

Several scholars have highlighted that Arsyad al-Banjari's Sufism reflects a cautious attitude toward controversial mystical doctrines such as wahdat al-wujud.

¹⁰Muslim, "Comparative Reading of Sufism of Indonesian Ulama", *Usuluddin Journal*, Vol. 27 No. 1 (2019), h. 55.

¹¹Al-Fairus, *Reconstruction of Aswaja Sufism*, (Surabaya: Pustaka Amanah, 2022), p. 41.

¹²Yusof, "Moral Sufism and Modern Relevance", *Islamic Thought Review*, Vol. 11 No. 2 (2023), h. 102.

¹³ Khairunnisa Hasani et al., "Implementation of Multicultural Education in Islamic Religious Education Learning to Foster Tolerance and Brotherhood in Junior High School (SMPN) 2 Samarinda," *AL GHAZALI: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pemikiran Islam* 5, no. 2 (2025): h.360.

Instead, he promoted a form of Sunni Sufism that stresses moral rectitude, obedience to sharia, and social harmony. This position aligns with the broader ASWAJA paradigm that prioritizes balance and moderation, a theme repeatedly emphasized in contemporary analyses of Nusantara Islamic thought.

The literature on Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani positions him as one of the most influential Indonesian scholars in the Hijaz during the nineteenth century. His extensive corpus of Arabic works, particularly his commentaries on classical texts of fiqh, theology, and ethics, has attracted considerable scholarly attention. Researchers consistently describe Nawawi as a scholar who seamlessly integrated Sufi ethics into orthodox Sunni scholarship.

Studies on Nawawi al-Bantani's Sufism underline his strong emphasis on moral discipline, humility, and spiritual self-control.¹⁴ His commentaries on works such as *Bidayat al-Hidayah* and *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* illustrate how he interpreted Sufism as an inner dimension of Islam that must operate within the boundaries of sharia. Scholars argue that this approach reflects a mature ASWAJA stance, rejecting both antinomian mysticism and rigid legalism.

Recent scholarship has also explored Nawawi al-Bantani's intellectual influence on later generations of Indonesian ulama. His works became core texts in pesantren curricula, shaping a tradition in which tasawwuf functions as an ethical foundation for religious learning. This reinforces the argument that ASWAJA Sufism in the Nusantara was institutionalized through educational systems rather than charismatic cults.

Kiai Haji Hasyim Asy'ari has been widely examined in the context of modern Indonesian Islam, particularly as the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama. The literature portrays him as a central architect of ASWAJA ideology in the twentieth century, emphasizing moderation, tradition, and communal stability. His views on Sufism are often analyzed in relation to his efforts to safeguard Sunni orthodoxy amid modernist and reformist challenges.

Scholars note that Hasyim Asy'ari strongly endorsed tasawwuf that was grounded in classical Sunni teachings. His emphasis on adab (ethical conduct), spiritual discipline, and respect for scholarly authority reflects a continuation of earlier Nusantara Sufi traditions. At the same time, he was critical of mystical practices that lacked textual basis or deviated from sharia norms.

Comparative studies suggest that Hasyim Asy'ari's approach to Sufism was shaped by both classical scholarship and contemporary socio-political realities. Unlike earlier ulama, he explicitly articulated ASWAJA principles as an ideological framework to counter religious extremism and doctrinal fragmentation. This marks an evolution in the role of Sufism from personal spirituality to collective religious identity.

Despite the growing body of literature on each of these figures individually, comparative analyses of their Sufi thought remain limited. Most existing studies focus

¹⁴ Firmansyah Firmansyah, "The Purpose of Education from the Perspective of Hadith in Instilling Islamic Values Dynamically in Daily Life," *AL GHAZALI: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pemikiran Islam* 5, no. 2 (2025): h.348.

on biographical narratives or isolated textual analyses, without systematically examining the shared epistemological foundations of their ASWAJA-oriented Sufism. This gap indicates the need for a comparative framework that highlights continuity and transformation across different historical periods.

Some scholars have attempted to categorize Nusantara Sufism into typologies such as ethical Sufism, practical Sufism, or Sunni Sufism.¹⁵ However, these classifications often lack engagement with the specific intellectual contributions of local ulama. A focused comparison of Arsyad al-Banjari, Nawawi al-Bantani, and Hasyim Asy'ari can enrich this discourse by grounding theoretical categories in concrete scholarly traditions.

Recent discussions on Islamic moderation and wasatiyyah have renewed interest in ASWAJA Sufism as a model for balancing spirituality and orthodoxy. Researchers increasingly view the works of Nusantara ulama as valuable resources for addressing contemporary religious challenges, including radicalism and moral decline. In this context, the Sufi thought of these three scholars gains renewed relevance.

The literature also indicates that ASWAJA Sufism in the Nusantara cannot be separated from social ethics and communal responsibility. Rather than emphasizing esoteric experiences, these scholars framed tasawwuf as a means to cultivate moral integrity, social cohesion, and religious authority. This pragmatic orientation distinguishes Nusantara Sufism from more speculative mystical traditions, overall, existing scholarship provides a solid foundation for understanding ASWAJA-oriented Sufism in the Nusantara but remains fragmented across disciplines and historical periods. A comparative study of Shaykh Arsyad al-Banjari, Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani, and Kiai Haji Hasyim Asy'ari is therefore necessary to demonstrate the continuity, adaptability, and intellectual coherence of Nusantara Sufism within the broader Sunni Islamic tradition.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature study design (library research). The choice of this method is based on the character of the research that focuses on the study of the thoughts of scholars through their texts and works, as well as scientific analysis of relevant literature. The qualitative approach allows researchers to understand the ideas and orientation of Sufism of each figure in depth through interpretation, categorization, and thematic analysis. The data sources for this research consist of two main categories, namely primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources include original works written or directly attributed to the three scholars studied; these manuscripts serve as the main reference to explore the

¹⁵ M Fatwa and M Sa'diyah, "Building the Mental of Santri Through 40 Days of Sunnah Fasting (A Study at Pondok Pesantren Darul Amanah Sukorejo Kendal)," *AL GHAZALI: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pemikiran Islam*, 2025, https://jurnal.staialjamibjm.ac.id/index.php/AL_GHAZALI/article/view/455.

concepts of Sufism, spiritual orientation, and their thought patterns, especially the sections containing discussions of morals, tazkiyah, adab, and dimensions of Sufism. Secondary sources include scientific journals, academic books, previous research, dissertations, and recent scientific articles that discuss Nusantara Sufism, the thoughts of Aswaja scholars, and the development of Islamic scientific historiography in Indonesia. All secondary sources are used to strengthen the analysis, identify the position of previous research, and ensure accuracy in the process of triangulating findings.

Result and Discussion

The research results show that the scope and issues emerging at the location or object of study are directly related to the core problems identified during the data collection process. These findings depend on the type of research used, whether it is a literature review, qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods. Literature research results in the form of a mapping of ideas and a theoretical synthesis from various sources. In qualitative research, identified issues emerge from interviews, observations, or in-depth document analysis. In quantitative research, results are demonstrated through numerical data processing to identify trends or relationships between variables. Meanwhile, in mixed methods, research findings combine the strengths of qualitative and quantitative data to produce a more comprehensive and accurate picture of the issue being studied.

This section presents research findings based on a comparative analysis of the Sufi thought of three Indonesian scholars, namely Sheikh Arsyad al-Banjari, Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani, and KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, as well as a scientific discussion that explains these findings in depth. The research findings are elaborated by placing each scholar's Sufi concept within the Aswaja framework and are analyzed critically using a thematic approach.¹⁶

I. The Socio-Intellectual Context of Three Ulama

The three scholars studied in this research lived in different social backgrounds and intellectual environments, which contributed to shaping their respective Sufi orientations.¹⁷ Understanding this context is important because it explains why their Sufism styles are not uniform, even though they are both based on the Aswaja tradition.

¹⁶Azyumardi Azra, *Indonesian Ulema Network*, (Jakarta: Kencana, 2013), p. 112.

¹⁷Oman Fathurahman, *Sufism and Sufism in the Archipelago*, (Jakarta: Prenada Media, 2015), pp. 45–47.

Sheikh Arsyad al-Banjari lived in the 18th century in the Banjar Sultanate, a society undergoing social transition due to the influence of colonialism and changes in local government structures. This situation demanded moral development and the purification of religious practices. Therefore, Arsyad's Sufism strongly emphasized adherence to Islamic law, disciplined worship, and moral reform.¹⁸For him, Sufism is a means to regulate social morals and strengthen religious foundations in unstable social conditions.

In contrast, Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani lived in the Haramain in the 19th century, a cosmopolitan center of learning, home to scholars from across the Islamic world. This environment strongly influenced his broad intellectual horizons and his exposure to classical Sufi literature.¹⁹As a cleric who taught at the Grand Mosque, Nawawi interacted with the international community, so that the Sufism he formulated emphasized the Islamic dimension. Ihsan, social morals, and universal values. This is evident in his work, which emphasizes the ethics of interaction, social responsibility, and manners in social life.

Meanwhile, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari lived in the context of the 20th century, when Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) became the largest centers of Islamic education in the archipelago. The pesantren environment placed adab (traditional manners) as the foundation of knowledge, and this greatly influenced his ideas on Sufism.²⁰In his view, the spiritual journey cannot be separated from the development of morals and learning ethics. Therefore, Hasyim Asy'ari's Sufism tends to be pedagogical, emphasizing etiquette as the core of student character formation and the way to maintain the purity of knowledge. This also makes his Sufism orientation highly relevant to modern Islamic education.

Through this socio-intellectual context, it can be understood that the differences in the Sufism styles of the three scholars do not stem from differences in theological foundations, but are closely related to the needs of society, social dynamics, and their respective academic environments. This diversity of orientations actually enriches the treasury of Nusantara Sufism and demonstrates its adaptability to space and time, without deviating from the main principles of Aswaja Sufism.²¹

¹⁸Sheikh Arsyad al-Banjari, *Sabilal Muhtadin*, (Makkah: al-Amiriyah Press, 1882), p. 6–7.

¹⁹Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani, *Nashaih al-'Ibad* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, t.th.), h. 12–13.

²⁰KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim*, (Jombang: Tebuireng Library, 2004), pp. 21–22.

²¹M. Quraish Shihab, *Wawasan Al-Qur'an*, (Bandung: Mizan, 2013), p. 389.

2. General Findings of the Sufism Concept of Indonesian Ulama

An analysis of the works of Sheikh Arsyad al-Banjari, Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani, and KH. Hasyim Asy'ari shows that all three have a very prominent Sufi moral orientation and are consistently based on the epistemological framework of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah.²² Sufism is understood as a process of inner refinement that is inseparable from the implementation of Islamic law and the development of morals. The three scholars believe that spiritual practices such as dhikr, self-reflection, self-reflection, and purification of the soul are only valuable if they are based on adherence to Islamic law and practiced in daily life. This view firmly rejects extreme Sufism teachings, such as the disregard of Islamic law, claims of ultimate union with God, or ritual practices that lack legitimacy within the Aswaja tradition.²³

This finding strengthens the pattern of Sunni Sufism pioneered by Imam al-Ghazali, namely the integration of sharia, tarekat, and hakikat.²⁴ These three Indonesian scholars inherited al-Ghazali's approach, emphasizing the importance of morality and purification of the heart (*tazkiyatun nafs*) as the core of the spiritual journey. Sufism is not understood simply as an inner experience, but as a systematic process for developing noble character and maintaining a balance between ritual obligations, social ethics, and a relationship with God.

On the other hand, the analysis also shows that although the three scholars share the same epistemological roots, their Sufi orientations developed with different characteristics and emphases. These differences arose primarily from variations in social context, scholarly environment, and the needs of society at the time.²⁵ Sheikh Arsyad al-Banjari, for example, lived during a time when Banjar society was experiencing moral tension and structural change, so his focus was more directed at strengthening sharia and behavioral reform. Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani, as a scholar living in the cosmopolitan intellectual milieu of Mecca, emphasized Sufism as a social ethic and fostering universal character in a multicultural society. Meanwhile, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, who played a significant role in Islamic boarding school education, made manners and learning ethics the primary foundation of Sufism, making it more pedagogical and oriented toward the moral development of students.

²² Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani, *Mirqat Su'ud al-Tashdiq*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2012), p. 55.

²³ Imam al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, (Cairo: Dar al-Haramayn, t.th.), h. 89.

²⁴ KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim*, h. 33–34.

²⁵ A. Hudaeri, *Sufism in the Archipelago*, (Bandung: Rosdakarya Youth, 2014), p. 72.

These differences demonstrate that the Sufism of Indonesian ulama developed not only as a spiritual tradition but also as a contextual response to the needs of their time. Their Sufism is dynamic, adaptive, and able to accommodate the interaction between sharia, local culture, and social challenges. Thus, the general findings of this study demonstrate that the Sufism of Indonesian ulama is not monolithic, but rather has diverse characteristics, yet remains within the broad umbrella of Aswaja moral Sufism, which emphasizes the harmony between spirituality, morality, and sharia.²⁶

3. The Sufism of Sheikh Arsyad al-Banjari: Purification of the Soul Based on Sharia

Research findings show that the Sufism of Sheikh Arsyad al-Banjari has a very strong orientation towards the purification of the soul (*tazkiyyat al-nafs*) based on sharia. In his framework, Sufism must begin with strengthening the understanding and practice of sharia as its primary foundation. Arsyad views sharia not merely as legal regulations, but as a path to developing spiritual discipline that allows a servant to properly enter the ranks of Sufism.²⁷ Therefore, he rejects various forms of Sufism that ignore the sharia, whether in the form of ignoring the obligations of fiqh, claimskasyf without any basis in practice, or spiritual practices that have no basis in the Aswaja tradition.²⁸

This thinking is clearly reflected in his work *Sabilal Muhtadin*, especially when he emphasized that a seeker must maintain obligatory worship, improve his morals, and subdue his lusts before entering the advanced spiritual stage.²⁹ Arsyad believes that purifying the heart cannot be achieved through spiritual shortcuts, but requires a systematic, measured process that aligns with Islamic law. In other words, for Arsyad, Islamic law and Sufism are not two separate entities; rather, their unification is a sign of the authenticity of one's spiritual journey.³⁰

The strong sharia orientation of Arsyad's Sufism is inseparable from the socio-political context of 18th-century Banjar society. During this period, Banjar experienced changes in its social structure due to colonial pressure, shifts in local leadership, and the emergence of heterogeneous religious practices. These conditions influenced the community's religious character, leading to a tendency toward less focused spiritual

²⁶ Ahmad Amin, *Dhuha al-Islam*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabiyy, t.t.), Jil. 10th, Volume 2, p. 75.

²⁷ Ahmad Amin, *Dhuha al-Islam...*, h. 130.

²⁸ Ahmad Amin, *Dhuha al-Islam...*, h. 145.

²⁹ Syekh Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari, *Sabilal Muhtadin*, (Banjarmasin: Darul Amani, n.d.), p. 57.

³⁰ Syekh Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari..., h. 60.

practices. In this situation, Arsyad saw the importance of restructuring the moral and religious foundations of society.³¹

His moral reforms were not only aimed at improving individuals but also at maintaining social stability. Therefore, his emphasis on sharia served as both an intellectual and practical response to societal needs. Through sharia Sufism, Arsyad sought to balance spiritual practices with legal discipline to prevent society from falling prey to deviant teachings or leading to mystical extremism.³²

Compared to his contemporaries in Java or Sumatra, Arsyad's Sufi orientation can be said to be the most assertive in emphasizing Sharia. This explains why Banjar Sufism later developed into practical Sufism that emphasized ethics and religious discipline, rather than philosophical or speculative Sufism.³³ Thus, his thoughts have made a major contribution in building the character of Nusantara Sufism which is moderate, measured, and rooted in Sunni traditions.³⁴

This analysis demonstrates that Sheikh Arsyad's Sufism serves not only as spiritual guidance but also as a social strategy for establishing moral order. By placing sharia as the centerpiece of Sufism, Arsyad established a moral foundation for Sufism aligned with the needs of society and the Aswaja scholarly tradition. This finding is significant because it illustrates how Nusantara Sufism developed contextually, adapting to social conditions, while maintaining the authenticity of Sunni Sufism's teachings.³⁵

4. The Sufism of Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani: Ihsan, Ethics, and Social Concern

The research findings show that the Sufism of Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani occupies an important position in the development of the character of moral Sufism which is oriented towards Ihsan and the formation of social ethics. Unlike Sufism, which emphasizes mystical experiences or high-level spiritual journeys, Nawawi focuses Sufism's teachings on the dimensions of perfecting the heart and character, which must be reflected in everyday social interactions.³⁶ In his work *Nashaih al-'Ibad*, he explained that true Sufism is Sufism that is able to form a person who is trustworthy, honest,

³¹ Alfani David, *Islam and Banjar Society*, (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 1997), p. 112.

³² Alfani David, *Islam and Banjar Society...*, h. 118.

³³ Azyumardi Azra, *Indonesian Ulema Network*, (Jakarta: Kencana, 2004), p. 189.

³⁴ Azyumardi Azra, *Indonesian Ulema Network...*, h. 193.

³⁵ A.M. Hendro, *Indonesian Sufism*, (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2012), p. 74.

³⁶ Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani, *Nashaih al-'Ibad* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, t.t.), h. 5.

polite, does not harm others, and always prioritizes the value of compassion.³⁷For Nawawi, a person's spiritual quality is not only measured by the intensity of their inner worship, but also by the extent to which their behavior benefits others. *takhalli*, wanted, And treasure which he describes not only to explain the process of cleansing the heart, but as a framework for moral transformation that has an impact on people's lives.

The roots of this thinking are inextricably linked to Nawawi's experience as a prominent scholar in the Haramain in the 19th century. Living in the cosmopolitan environment of Mecca, a hub for interaction among scholars from various nations, shaped his view that Muslims needed Sufism that was responsive to social problems.³⁸This multicultural environment demands a Sufi approach that is neither exclusive nor individualistic, but rather one that can serve as a universal moral guideline for the global Muslim community. It is from this context that the emphasis on *ihsan* the core of spirituality; a concept that not only perfects the relationship of a servant with God, but also demands beautiful behavior in social relations.³⁹This social orientation makes Nawawi's Sufism have a more open, adaptive, and inclusive character when compared with some of the Sufism models that developed previously in the archipelago.⁴⁰

In addition, the orientation *ihsan* Nawawi's Sufism played a crucial role in maintaining social cohesion during a time when the Islamic world faced the challenges of early modernity. Through his emphasis on morality, he attempted to emphasize that authentic Sufism is not one that separates itself from social reality, but rather one that exists to improve human relations. Thus, Sufism serves as a force for shaping the character of the community, not merely an individual contemplative path. This makes Nawawi's Sufism model relevant in various social situations, at the personal, community, and civilizational levels.

The significance of this finding is crucial for understanding the development of Nusantara Sufism. Nawawi's Sufism made a significant contribution to establishing the *Aswaja* Sufism paradigm, which is moderate, ethically oriented, and contributive to social life.⁴¹He reinforced the idea that spirituality cannot be separated from the humanitarian mission. Therefore, Nawawi's Sufi thought became one of the pillars of

³⁷Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani, *Nashaih al-'Ibad...*, h. 12.

³⁸Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), h. 87.

³⁹Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia...*, h. 90.

⁴⁰Nurcholish Madjid, *Islamic Doctrine and Civilization*, (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1992), p. 257.

⁴¹Nurcholish Madjid, *Islamic Doctrine and Civilization...*, h. 260.

the intellectual face of Nusantara Islam, which is tolerant, inclusive, and rooted in the balanced tradition of Sunni Sufism. Through his teachings, it is possible to understand that Sufism not only shapes pious individuals but also fosters a moral and harmonious society.⁴²

5. The Sufism of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari: Morality, Discipline of Students, and Strengthening the Aswaja Tradition

Research findings show that KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's Sufism is strongly oriented towards moral development, spiritual discipline, and internalization of adab as the core of the Sufism journey.⁴³ Different from the Sufi style which emphasizes the mystical dimension or experience of inner witnessing (enlightenment), Hasyim Asy'ari defines Sufism as a process of character formation that begins with strengthening physical and spiritual manners, especially through discipline, worship, and respect for teachers. Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim, he emphasized that true Sufism can only be achieved when a student consistently maintains good manners—whether in studying, worshipping, or socializing.⁴⁴ For Hasyim, morals and manners are not merely supplements to education, but the foundation that determines the quality of a person's spiritual journey.

The roots of this thought were born from Hasyim Asy'ari's long experience in the world of Islamic boarding schools, an environment that emphasizes discipline, sincerity, and cleanliness of heart as the main conditions for the blessings of knowledge.⁴⁵ The Islamic boarding school tradition, steeped in the values of devotion, riyadhah (respect), and self-control, shaped Hasyim's perspective that Sufism must shape the character of students who are spiritually, socially, and intellectually mature. Furthermore, he lived during the colonial era, rife with moral turmoil and social instability. In this context, moral development through Sufism became a cultural strategy to strengthen the moral resilience of the Muslim community while preserving the Aswaja tradition.⁴⁶

Compared to the other two figures, Hasyim Asy'ari's Sufism orientation appears more institutional and rooted in education. While Arsyad emphasized sharia and Nawawi emphasized Ihsan and social ethics, Hasyim Asy'ari instead places manners

⁴²M. Quraish Shihab, *Wawasan Al-Qur'an*, (Bandung: Mizan, 1996), p. 327.

⁴³KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim*, (Jombang: Tebuireng Islamic Boarding School, n.d.), p. 14.

⁴⁴KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim...*, h. 21.

⁴⁵KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim*, h. 33.

⁴⁶Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Islamic Boarding School Traditions*, (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2011), p. 103.

and discipline as means to perfect the spiritual journey. In his perspective, a person's spiritual quality is inseparable from their manners. Thus, Sufism is not only a path to soul purification but also a structured system of moral formation through educational institutions, particularly Islamic boarding schools.⁴⁷

The significance of this finding is crucial for understanding the development of Aswaja Sufism in Indonesia. KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's Sufism was not only designed to shape individuals but also to build a moral ecosystem in Islamic boarding schools capable of producing a civilized generation committed to Aswaja values. His teachings contributed significantly to the formation of the character of Indonesian Islam, which is polite, tolerant, and rooted in a stable tradition of Sufism.⁴⁸ Thus, the Sufism of Hasyim Asy'ari emphasized that spirituality is not enough with just wirid or riyadhah, but must be realized in firm manners, strong discipline, and real contributions to society.⁴⁹

6. Comparative Analysis and Synthesis of Findings

To clarify the positions of the three scholars, the following is a scientific comparison table:

Aspect	Sheikh Arsyad al-Banjari	Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani	KH. Hasyim Asy'ari
Focus of Sufism	Sharia-based purification of the soul	Courtesy & social ethics	Morals and character education
Orientation	Sharia & Morals	Ihsani & Sosial	Manners & Education
The main purpose	Sharia compliance & moral stability	Formation of social ethics	Moral development of students
Context of life	Banjar's legal & moral reform	Haramain's cosmopolitan environment	Islamic boarding schools & national education

⁴⁷Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Islamic Boarding School Traditions...*, h. 110.

⁴⁸Ahmad Baso, *Islamic Boarding School Studies*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Afid, 2015), p. 65.

⁴⁹Ahmad Baso, *Islamic Boarding School Studies...*, h. 71.

7. Key Scientific Findings

A comparative analysis of the Sufi thought of Sheikh Arsyad al-Banjari, Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani, and KH. Hasyim Asy'ari yields several important scientific findings that clarify the character of Sufi thought of Nusantara scholars in the Aswaja tradition and its relevance in the contemporary context.⁵⁰

a. The Sufism of Indonesian Ulama is Integrative

The first finding shows that the three scholars apply an integrative Sufism approach, namely combining sharia, morals, and spirituality in one harmonious framework.⁵¹ For them, the journey of Sufism is inseparable from the discipline of sharia and character formation. This model explains why Nusantara Sufism developed as a moderate Sufism—maintaining the purity of Sunni teachings while remaining adaptive to the needs of society.⁵² This integrative character also prevents Sufism from being trapped solely in the esoteric, but rather becomes an ethical force that shapes the behavior of the community as a whole. This finding supports various studies that suggest that the Sufism of Nusantara scholars possesses moral, sharia, and contextual characteristics.⁵³

b. Differences in Sufism Orientation Are Influenced by Socio-Historical Context

The second finding is that the differences in the Sufi emphases of the three scholars were greatly influenced by the social context in which they lived. Sheikh Arsyad al-Banjari, who lived among the Banjar community in the 18th century,⁵⁴ emphasized sharia Sufism as a response to the need for moral stability and the restructuring of local religious practices. Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani, who lived in the cosmopolitan environment of the 19th century Haramain, developed a Sufism that emphasized morelhsansocial,⁵⁵ relevant to a global society that is culturally and ethically diverse. As for KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, as the guardian of Islamic boarding schools in the

⁵⁰ Azyumardi Azra, *Indonesian Ulema Network*, (Jakarta: Kencana, 2004), p. 189.

⁵¹ Syekh Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari, *Sabilal Muhtadin*, (Banjarmasin: Darul Amani, n.d.), p. 57.

⁵² Oman Fathurrahman, *Interpretation of Indonesian Sufism*, (Jakarta: Prenada Media, 2018), p. 41.

⁵³ A.M. Hendro, *Indonesian Sufism*, (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2012), p. 70.

⁵⁴ Syekh Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari, *Tuhfat al-Raghibin*, (Banjarmasin: Pustaka Pondok, 2010), p. 22.

⁵⁵ .Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani, *Nashaih al-'Ibad* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, t.t.), h. 5.

colonial context and the rise of religious organizations,⁵⁶ placing moral development through education and etiquette as the core of Sufism. This difference in orientation demonstrates that the Sufism of Nusantara scholars is adaptive to socio-historical realities, without straying from the Aswaja corridor.⁵⁷

c. The Contemporary Relevance of Their Sufi Thought

The third finding reveals that the Sufi thought of the three scholars has significant relevance in addressing various modern challenges. In a digital era marked by moral crises, online ethical deviations, and weak self-control, the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* Arsyad's style provides a framework for strengthening individual spiritual resilience.⁵⁸ In the face of radicalism, social polarization, and lack of human sensitivity, orientation Ihsan Nawawi's social ethics provide a foundation for building an inclusive and harmonious public ethic.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, in the issue of adolescent character degradation, mental health problems, and the weakening of intergenerational morals, Hasyim Asy'ari's spiritual and moral education approach provides a systematic and sustainable solution.⁶⁰ Thus, the Sufi thoughts of Nusantara scholars are not only historical, but also very applicable to the challenges of modern civilization.⁶¹

d. New Conceptual Synthesis: The Nusantara Aswaja Sufism Model

The most important finding of this article is the emergence of a new conceptual synthesis in the form of the Aswaja Nusantara Sufism model which consists of three main pillars:

- (1) *Tazkiyatun nafs syar'iyah*, namely purification of the soul based on sharia as initiated by Sheikh Arsyad al-Banjari;⁶²
- (2) Social charity, namely the internalization of spirituality reflected in social concern, referring to the Sufism style of Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani; and⁶³
- (3) Manners education, namely the formation of morals and character discipline which is the core of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's Sufism thinking.⁶⁴

⁵⁶KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim*, (Jombang: Tebuireng Islamic Boarding School, n.d.), p. 14.

⁵⁷Nurcholish Madjid, *Islamic Doctrine and Civilization*, (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1992), p. 257.

⁵⁸Syekh Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari, *Sabilal Muhtadin*, h. 120.

⁵⁹Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani, *Interpretation of Marah Labid* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2005), p. 88.

⁶⁰KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, *Message of the People of Sunnah and the Community*, (Jombang: Tebuireng Library, 2008), p. 52.

⁶¹Ahmad Baso, *Islamic Boarding School Studies*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Afid, 2015), p. 65.

⁶²Syekh Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari, *Tuhfat al-Raghibin*, h. 40.

⁶³Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani, *Nashaih al-'Ibad*, h. 33.

⁶⁴KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim*, h. 45.

This model represents a scientific novelty in the research, as it presents a comprehensive conceptual framework for understanding Aswaja Sufism in the Nusantara context. This synthesis not only clarifies the contributions of each scholar but also demonstrates how their thought forms the foundation of moderate Sufism relevant to contemporary Islamic civilization.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ A.M. Hendro, Indonesian Sufism, h. 101.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the Sufism of Sheikh Arsyad al-Banjari, Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani, and KH. Hasyim Asy'ari has an integrative character that combines sharia, morals, and spirituality, with different patterns according to their respective social contexts: Arsyad emphasizes tazkiyatun nafs based on sharia, Nawawi prioritizes ihsan and social ethics, and Hasyim Asy'ari focuses on adab and moral education. All three are relevant to answer modern challenges such as moral crisis, radicalism, and the moral degradation of the younger generation. From this study, the Aswaja Nusantara Sufism Model is formulated which consists of three pillars: tazkiyatun nafs syar'iyah, social ihsan, and adab education. This model is a new scientific contribution as well as a basis for the development of moderate Sufism-based education and strengthening digital ethics and the mental health of the younger generation.

This study suggests that Islamic educational institutions strengthen Sufism education in akhlaqi by integrating the values of tazkiyah, social ihsan, and adab into the curriculum; the government and religious organizations utilize moderate Sufism Aswaja Nusantara to strengthen religious moderation; further researchers conduct broader studies on Nusantara ulama and compare them with Middle Eastern figures; Sufism values are implemented in facing the challenges of the digital era through digital literacy, social media ethics, and spiritual counseling; educators develop Sufism modules based on Nusantara traditions; and Islamic boarding schools strengthen the tradition of fostering adab as inherited by KH. Hasyim Asy'ari. All of these suggestions are expected to contribute significantly to the development of Sufism, Islamic education, and the moral development of society amidst the current of modernity.

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