



Socio-Religious Practices of The Asy-Syahadatain Followers

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Abstract. This qualitative research focuses on the description of how the social and religious practices of the followers of the Asy-Syahadatain tariqah make them unique compared to other tariqah. Observation was conducted in Munjul Village and Asy-Syahadatain Mosque Panguragan-Cirebon. Data collection was supported by in-depth interviews with eight informants. They are chosen purposively because they are the followers of the tariqah, who have pledged allegiance (*bai'ah*) to the murshid. The research found that there are practices that characterise the congregation of this order, namely *tawasulan*, grave pilgrimage, *kliwonan*, *nazhaman*, and wearing white clothes. All of these practices are considered as a form of *suluk* to get closer to the Creator. Meanwhile, the all-white clothing in every ritual is a reminder that eventually humans will finish with life and enter the *barzakh* carrying good deeds. The followers believe that all the practices taught by the teachers and murshids are teachings that are connected to the Prophet Muhammad.

Keywords: *Ash-Syahadatain, tawasulan, grave pilgrimage, kliwonan, nazhaman.*

INTRODUCTION

All religions exist on behalf of people to answer existential questions such as where they come from, why they are here, and what it all means. Religion, after the death of the prophet, then develops and often succeeds in providing structure, codes of conduct, and purpose for life, and Islam is no exception in its various institutionalised forms, such as tariqahs, mass organisations, majelis taklim, and even the state (Koopman, 2023).

Tariqah places a clear structure and hierarchy between murshid teachers and students with distinctive practices or dhikr, allegiance, ceremonies and regular meetings, including Tariqah Asy-Syahadatain which is the focus of this paper. Like religion itself, rituals and beliefs have been shown to foster social cohesion and group identity (Watson-Jones and Legare, 2016). It is true that

sometimes exclusive gatherings such as congregations have the potential to exclude others who do not share the same ideas. However, religion itself, more or less, does the same thing (Ardi and Budiarti, 2020). What is clear is that religion continues to advance and continue across various cultural transformations, from nomadic societies to permanent communities, from the agricultural revolution to the digital revolution. So, religious groups will always be relevant and adjust to the times.

At least in the short term, groups like tariqahs can certainly help people cope with stress, increase their optimism and resilience, while reducing the risk of depression, substance abuse, suicide and risky behaviour. This is because Sufism shares a common focus of religious mysticism that has a vision of improving the morals and ethics of society (Piraino, and Sedgwick [Eds], 2019).

Many people also enjoy significant social support in this group. In general, spiritual beliefs can bring people together who share similar values, give them a sense of belonging, and provide greater social support than not belonging to any group (Zahro, et al., 2021). In addition, many congregations also support various economic and education-based initiatives.

In general, every human being needs a support system in various facets of his or her life. Some of them take part in smaller community organisations such as Ibu Menggendong or Bapak Menyusui communities, larger community organisations such as NU and Muhammadiyah, or tariqah. So, gathering and grouping is human nature. Choosing to gather in a tariqah is the result of a person's free decision, which of course for the person concerned has significance and relevance in the course of his or her life.

The more modern a society becomes, the more complex their needs become, including the need for spirituality. Tariqah takes its position as a filler of that spirituality. Some people need tariqah as a way to fill their spirituality, others choose to join sectarian recitations, and some others seek it independently.

Looking at the growth of tariqah groups in Indonesia such as Asy-Syahadatain, people seem to need its presence. Asy-Syahadatain is a local tariqah product that exists, of course, intertwined with the context of the local community in which it was born. Basically, everyone will follow the tendency that suits their intellectual capacity, economy, education, social status, culture and economy, and political affiliation. This article will focus on the description of how the social and religious practices of the congregation of the Asy-Syahadatain tariqah make them unique compared to others. Make your introduction part in good reason, why you are studying in this field or topic.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach, which is research that produces descriptive data, in the form of written or spoken words and people and behaviour that can be observed. The advantage of qualitative is that the study is holistic and dialectical for the development of meaning through narration and interpretation. Meanwhile, data collection is carried out by in-depth interviews, and observations in the field. Both data collection techniques characterise the qualitative approach in addition to focus group discussions (FGDs) and sampling-based data collection (Hennink, et al., 2020).

Observation is carried out to find data directly on the object and subject of the observed event. In this case, researchers observed the congregation of Asy-Syihadatain tariqah performing various ceremonies and rituals. Observations were made at the Blok Pesantren-Munjul Village and the Asy-Syihadatain Mosque in Panguragan-Cirebon. Munjul village was chosen because in this place there is the largest pesantren affiliated with the tariqah, namely pesantren Nurul Huda. Similarly, the indigenous people in this place are 100% (except migrants) pledged allegiance to the mursyid of the tariqah. The Asy-Syihadatain mosque in Panguragan is also the centre of the major ceremonies of this tariqah.

Meanwhile, as a complement to observation, data were also collected through in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted in an unstructured and open-ended manner while still focusing on the issues of the subject and object under study. The informants were eight Munjul villagers and members of the congregation. Corbin and Strauss (2015) said that to provide sufficient data to obtain saturation the sample should be more than 6 informants.

Table 1. Data of Informants

NAME	GENDER	AGE
Fikriyah	Female	35
Idi	Male	62
Isah	Female	55
Adi	Male	34
Ujang	Male	31
Endang	Female	27
Dona	Female	17
Evan	Male	18

The results of the in-depth interviews were then analysed. The interviews themselves were obtained through face-to-face meetings. Furthermore, documentation techniques were used to complement the information that had

been obtained previously in the form of interviews and observations (Rose and Johnson, 2020). Documentation includes the use of written texts, both printed and digital, related to the information needed.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

History and Distribution

Tariqah Asy-syahadatain was founded by Habib Umar, who was born on 22 June 1888 and died on 20 August 1973. His father was a preacher from Hadramaut who spread Islam in the archipelago and his mother was a woman from Arjawinangun-Cirebon. Habib Umar is a descendant of Husain bin Ali. After learning the basics of religious knowledge from his father, in 1913 Habib began travelling from one boarding school to another: Pondok Pesantren Ciwedus-Kuningan (for two years), Pondok Pesantren Bobos-Cirebon, Buntet-Cirebon, then to Majalengka which was raised by KH. Anwar and KH. Abdul Halim. In this last pesantren Habib Umar spent five years (Suryani, 2013).

In 1923 Habib Umar returned to his village. Witnessing the state of the people who were accustomed to gambling and syncretism with the worship of ancestral spirits, he felt called to immediately put the knowledge he had learned into practice. One night, Habib Umar dreamed of meeting Syarif Hidayatullah and teaching him the "tariqah shahadat": "Ya Allah, ya Rasulullah. ya Sheikh alim mulang syahadat. Wetin saking Syarif Hidayat, abdi nuhun ilmu manfaat. (O Allah, O Messenger of Allah. O Sheikh Alim teaching the Shahadat. Sourced from Syarif Hidayatullah, I ask for useful knowledge)". Starting from this dream, Habib Umar founded a recitation congregation which was held every Friday night. By 1937, this recitation group gathered twenty members, known as "Pengajian Abah Umar" (Rosyid, 2018).

Seeing the increasing number of recitation activities and the habit of gathering at Habib Umar's residence, the Dutch government felt suspicious and considered the recitation a potential threat. Long story short, on charges of disturbing stability, Habib Umar was arrested and imprisoned. This arrest actually made the recitation congregation angry, and then they fought back. After three months in prison, Habib Umar was released. In 1940, Habib Umar made his residence a base for the struggle against the Dutch. At his residence, Habib Umar taught martial arts to the surrounding youth. On 24 August 1940, Habib Umar was arrested for the second time and his recitation was closed.

The Dutch government then offered cooperation, but Habib Umar refused. This refusal resulted in his re-arrest. On 20 February 1941, Habib was released again. After prison, Habib Umar became more active in the struggle against the colonisers. His struggle received a lot of support from the community and local

religious leaders, such as Kyai Ahmad Sujak (Bobos Palimanan), Abdul Halim (Majalengka), Syamsuri (Wanantara), Kiai Musthafa (Kanggraksan), Kiai Kriyan (Munjil), KH. Mukhidin, and KH. Abdullah.

His struggle continued when Japan took control of the archipelago. At that time a law was issued that prohibited the teaching of Arabic literacy. Habib Umar rejected it because he considered the prohibition as an invitation to Muslims to abandon the Koran. Habib Umar considered this prohibition as an act of shirk.

After Independence, precisely in 1947, Habib Umar gave the name of his recitation group as "Jemaah Syahadatain". In 1951, Habib was summoned to President Soekarno to provide an explanation of the institution he led. After receiving Habib Umar's explanation, Soekarno allowed the establishment of the congregation. The congregation grew, reaching as far as Indramayu, Kuningan, Majalengka, Bobos, Palimanan, Sumedang, Kanggraksan, Munjul, Wanantara, Luwimunding, Tasikmalaya, Ciamis, Subang, Bandung, Tangerang, Cikampek, Bekasi, Brebes, Bumiayu, Pemalang, Pekalongan, Kendal, Kudus, Jepara, Demak, and Pati.

In 1952, Habib Umar established an Islamic Boarding School named "Syahadatain" located in Panguragan, Cirebon. By 1977, the pesantren had been equipped with Madrasah Ibtidaiyah and Tsanawiyah. The pesantren also taught skills education, such as sewing, farming, workshops, cooperatives, and pencak silat.

In 1960, the boarding school was suspended by the government because it was considered to be disturbing the community. The reason for the suspension was based on allegations and reports that Habib Umar's tawasul teachings were considered heretical. Indeed, Habib Umar's teachings require his congregation to make tawasul to the Prophets, Angels, Ahlu al-Bait, Guardians and Habib Umar himself every time after prayer. According to him, tawasul causes prayers to be answered.

In 1971, the congregation joined Golkar through GUPPI (Gabungan Usaha Pembaruan Pendidikan Islam). Since then, this congregation has spread to various provinces, namely West Java, East Java, Central Java, Lampung, Bengkulu, Jambi and Banjarmasin. In 1973, the congregation experienced a shock when Habib Umar passed away. As a result of Habib Umar's death, for a while the congregation experienced a leadership vacuum. It was only in 1976, when the government intervened, that a deliberation was held to elect a new leader. Until now, the exact number of the followers of this order is unknown because they do not have membership cards. However, it is estimated that no less than one million people joined this tariqah.

The teachings and beliefs of Tariqah Asy-Syahadatain

In practice, what is typical of the Asy-Syahadatain congregation is to perpetuate the recitation of the two sentences of shahada accompanied by reading shalawat three times after each maktubah prayer after salam (Fakhruddin, 2018). Meanwhile, to be abashly referred to as the Asy-Syahadatain congregation there are six stages, namely:

- 1) Baiat, which is a covenant of each to keep believing that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah and carry out all commands and leave all His prohibitions. Basically, bai'at is divided into five, namely the bai'at of Islam, the bai'at of hijrah, the bai'at of jihad, the bai'at of appointing a king, and the Tariqah Ash-Syahadatain. The allegiance in the Ash-Syahadatain congregation is the allegiance of a kamil murshid teacher, in this case Habib Umar. to his students to guide a teacher in dhikr, thought and belief to do God's commands and leave His prohibitions. Baiat is done by a teacher reciting the two sentences of the shahada, while the student follows with the attitude of the right hand placed on the forehead and the left hand placed on the chest right in the heart (Muthia'ah and Hasyim, 2016).
- 2) Practice praying dhuha and tahajud for 40 consecutive days with the aim of practising the sunnah of the Prophet. During the 40 days should not be interrupted or left behind at all. If the prayer is left behind (not 40 days) then it must be repeated from the beginning again. Al-habib Umar said in a poem: Tetepana dhuha tahajud hajat prayer. Pngen sugih selamat dunya akhirat. This means that if you want to be rich and safe in this world and the hereafter, then always pray dhuha, tahajud and hajat.
- 3) Thirdly, reading shalawat tunjina. This stage is also done for 40 days and the last day must be on the day and market of the birth of the person doing it. The number usually depends on the murshid who gives it.
- 4) Reading wirid which is routine and has a target, the number is based on the recommendation of the murshid/teacher. The recitation begins on Tuesdays after the Asr prayer until sunset, the number of recitations depends on the ability of the reader.
- 5) Reciting wirid karcis, which are recitations that are not counted in number and are not limited in time.
- 6) Reciting the Asmak nurul iman / true teacher. According to the beliefs of the congregation, if this asmak can be mastered, those who practice it will have supernatural friends and launch rizki. The recitation of the asmak nurul iman prayer is bismillahirrohmanirohim. Nabiyunal amirrun nahi fala ahad'dun, abaru fi'qoulin la'minhu falanammi. Huwaal'habihuladzi turja shafa'atuhu likhuli haullin minal ahwali muqtahimi. To master the

science of *asmak nurul iman*, there are several steps that must be taken: (i) beginning with fasting for one day and one night, starting on Thursday, (ii) during fasting, the *asmak* should be recited 1000 times at midnight, (iii) when the fasting is over the practice should be recited only 3 times, after each of the five daily prayers, (iv) it is recommended that every Friday night the practice be recited 1000 times until meeting or hearing a supernatural voice speaking (*rijalul ghaib*). If *rijalul ghaib* deigns to meet the practitioner then it is not allowed to deify the *khodam*.

Furthermore, the ritual traditions in this *tariqah* follow much of the *fiqh* of the Syafii school (Fajar, 2021) and the *kalam* of Ash'ari. If observed from the outside, the practices of the congregation of this *tariqah* are more similar to those of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) organisation than other Islamic organisations such as Muhammadiyah or Persis, for example from the traditions of *tahlilan*, *marhabanan*, or *barzanji*.

Although spread in a number of areas in West Java, Jabodetabek, and later a small part of Central Java, *Tariqah Asy-Syhadatain* has not been incorporated into the Jemaah *Tariqah al-Muktabarah an-Nahdliyah* (Jatam) group, making it prone to being categorised as a *ghoiru muktabarah tariqah*. This *tariqah* was initially suspected until it was declared heretical, which resulted in the declarator Abah Umar being imprisoned. To secure the organisation, it joined the Golongan Karya Party (GUPPI) in the New Order era (Suryani, 2013).

Tawasulan

Tawasul in terminology is an attempt to get closer to Allah SWT by using *wasilah* (intermediary). The intermediary is a practice or someone who is close to Allah. In *Asy-Syhadatain*, the concept of *tawasul* is interpreted as an effort to get closer to God by intermediating (*wasilah*) the apostles, 25 prophets, 10 angels, *auliya* (saints), righteous people such as al-habib Umar, Siti Qurasyin, Nyai Lodaya, Fatimah Gandasari, Syarif Hidayatullah, Syaikh Dzatul Kahfi, Kuwu Sangkan, Endang Gelis, Rarasantang, Syaikh Abdurrahman, Syaikh Magelung, Hasanuddin, Sayyid Husain, Sayyid Uthman, Raden Fatah, Syaikh Rumajang, Syaikh Bentong, Syaikh al-Hadi, Syaikh al-Alim, Syaikh al-Khabir, Syaikh al-Mubin, Syaikh al-Wali, Syaikh al-Hamid, Syaikh al-Qawim, Syaikh al-Hafidh.

The practice of *tawasul* is also done by reading certain verses of the Quran, *dhikr*, and prayers that have been taught by al-habib Umar. Among the Quranic verses recited are al-Fatihah, as-Shaf 13, al-Ikhlash, al-Falaq, an-Nas, parts of al-Fath, at-Taubah 128-129, Thaha 25-28, verses of Kursi, al-Qadr, al-Fil, etc. Among the supplications recited are the two sentences of *shahada*, *shalawat*, *shahada umbrella*, *shalawat tunjina* (*munjiyat*), the supplication of Surat al-Fil, and *shalawat nuril anwar*. Among the *dhikr* recited are some *istighfar*, and

asmaul husna (Fakhruddin, 2018). For devout worshippers, they usually keep a list of these verses, dhikr and prayers in a printed book or memorise them by heart.

The tawasul is usually performed in congregation in a circular position with a white cloth spread in the centre. The time of the tawasul varies from congregation to congregation according to local tradition. Some do it every morning on nishfu al-lail, some once a week, or once every eight (35 days). In Munjul Village the tawasulan tradition is usually carried out every Sunday night.

Grave Pilgrimage

Grave pilgrimage is one of the traditions of praying for and caring for the graves of ancestors. The tradition of congregational grave pilgrimage can be divided into two categories, namely by santri (Pesantren Nurul Huda) and local residents. For the santri (male and female), the tradition of congregational pilgrimage is not only carried out on Islamic holidays, but also in the momentum of commemorating national holidays, such as Santri Day.



Figure 1. The practice of grave pilgrimage with basil flowers in the Pesantren Block of Munjul Village-Astana Japura-Cirebon during Eid al-Adha (29 July 2023).

Meanwhile, for local residents, the tradition is usually carried out to coincide with Islamic holidays: in the afternoon on two holidays (Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha), before Ramadan, and every Thursday afternoon. Especially on the two holidays, residents will go to the grave with basil flowers (*Ocimum basilicum*). They will place a basil flower arrangement on the graves of ancestors they know,

usually the line up (father-mother, grandparents and so on) and sideways (uncles-aunts, grandparents' siblings and so on). The greater the number of ancestors, the more flowers will be down below. After praying at the graves of their closest family members, they will give a bouquet of basil flowers to the graves of other family members before going home.

According to informants, basil was Sunan Gunung Jati's favourite flower. Therefore, pilgrimage with a bouquet of basil flowers is not only a tradition among the Asy-Syahadatain congregation, but also residents of Cirebon and its surroundings.

Determination of Islamic Holidays

Unlike NU which compactly uses observation and Muhammadiyah with lunar calculations, the Asy-Syahadatain congregation observed in Munjul village is divided into two groups, some follow rukyatul hilal (Indonesian government) and some follow the hisab method. Therefore, the determination of the beginning of fasting and the celebration of Eid al-Fitr/Adha can be celebrated on different days. Those who are guided by hisab claim to follow the murshid teacher, Sayyid Gamal Yahya. The difference is not only among the people, but also among the clerics and their students.

However, the difference in the implementation of this holiday does not cause division. Those who follow hisab will usually pray in one of the dormitories in the pesantren environment, while those who follow the government (the majority) will use the Nurul Huda main mosque facilities.

Kliwonan

The kliwonan ritual is a tradition carried out by Tariqah Asy-Syahadatain for generations, in addition to recitation and tawasulan activities. The Kliwonan ritual is held once a month on Thursday which coincides with Friday Kliwon night held at the Asy-Syahadatain Panguragan Mosque. Kliwon is the name of the market in the Javanese calendar (which falls once every 35 days). In the Kliwonan tradition, the concept of lukat is known, which means to be abolished, cancelled, released, or cleansed, purified from all dangers so as to obtain safety.

The Kliwonan tradition is actually not the original property of the Asy-Syahadatain tariqah. The people of Cirebon and its surroundings have long held religious ceremonies on the night of Friday Kliwon. In fact, the Kliwonan tradition in the Asy-Syahadatain congregation only began after Abah Umar died (Yulia, 2021). At this event, pilgrims from various regions have started gathering since noon or afternoon and return home at midnight. They recite dhikr, invocation, introspection and prayer. At each event, the total congregation reaches tens of thousands.

The people of Munjul themselves mostly come to this place in groups renting minibuses, angkot, or motorbikes. The Kliwonan ritual reaches its peak when it is close to Islamic holidays. The congregation believes that following the Kliwonan tradition will bring blessings and strengthen the relationship between the congregation and the Mursyid and teachers.

Nazhaman

After Abah Umar passed away in 1973, the leadership (murshid) of the congregation was continued by his son Muhammad Rasyid (Abah Rasyid). After 20 years, the tariqah was led by his other son, Ahmad Ismail (Abah Mail) in 1993. Abah Mail led until his death and was succeeded by his son, Sayid Gamal Yahya (Abah Gamal/SGY) who leads the Asy-Syahadatain congregation until now (Rosyid, 2018).

Of all the figures above, Abah Umar occupies the most special position. Not only did Abah Umar found and teach the practices, he also composed many poems or nazham-nazham in the Javanese dialect of Cirebon, which were hummed and later became guidance. As guidance, the nazham-nazham are often recited in various activities, such as in tawasulan, barzanji readings, lectures or even routine recitations that are held. Some call these Nazham Sayyid Umar's Nazham.

Some of the nazham are Abah Umar's utterances to his students, either during lectures or on other occasions, for example during small meetings with some of his students, while chatting, or at unexpected moments, when suddenly Sayid Umar felt the need to deliver nazham. After he spoke, his disciples or secretaries would write down the nazham and compile them individually. There were disciples who wrote them down immediately after Sayid Umar delivered them and others who wrote them down after they returned from meeting with Sayid Umar. Most of the nazham known to the disciples today were written down by Haji Yusuf of Indamayu. Haji Yusuf did not hear the nazham directly from the mouth of Sayid Umar, but from the mouth of Abah Umar's assistant, Ki Mudrik.

A number of notes from disciples were then standardised by comparing nazham written by other disciples, or asking Abah Umar's closest disciples, or Abah Umar himself when he was alive. Of the thousands of stanzas of nazham that Abah Umar recited, there are a number of stanzas that are widely recognised by the Asy-Syahadatain congregation, which are the main hymns in recitation assemblies, tawasulan, in religious gatherings, such as Muludan, Kliwonan, Suroan, and others. There are also nazham that are usually recited before the fard prayers. Not all the nazham that Abah Umar had recited were written down by his students. There are also some nazham that are quite famous, but are not

found in the nazham collection books compiled by Abah Umar's students and/or secretaries (Subaweh, 2019).

At a later date, Sayid Gamal Yahya collected a number of these nazham in one compilation and titled it "Collection of Nadham Sayid Umar bin Ismail bin Yahya". The book was printed very limitedly and published only for the internal circle of the Ashshadatain congregation, consisting of 274 pages with A5 paper size. Each page consists of approximately 20-22 nazham arrays. Thus, the nazham collection book contains approximately 5500 lines of nazham or verse (Hambali and Riyadi, 2022). Some of these nazham were composed in the form of songs accompanied by music and spread on several social media.

White clothing

The external appearance of the Asy-syahadatain congregation can be recognised by its all-white clothing (robe, turban, rida, prayer mat). The white robe and turban are worn by male worshippers on formal occasions.

Religion and rituals such as prayer, takziah and tawasulan. Meanwhile, the women wear white mukenah. They believe that white is the colour favoured by the Prophet Muhammad. The Asy-Syahadatain congregation claims that white symbolises purity. The colour white is also used by pilgrims during ihram and corpses (kafan) when they are buried.



Figure 2. Jemaah Asy-Syahadatain wearing white clothes during the funeral prayer procession at Nurul Huda mosque, Munjul-Astana Japura-Cirebon.

CONCLUSION

The ultimate goal of various rituals in Sufism is to realise a perfect human being and a Muslim personality that is favoured by Allah. For the Asy-Syahadatain congregation, all the good practices discussed above, namely

Tawasulan, Grave Pilgrimage, *Kliwonan*, *Nazhaman* are a form of suluk to get closer to the Creator. Meanwhile, the White Clothes are a reminder that eventually humans will be done with life and enter into the barzakh carrying good deeds. The congregation believes that all the practices taught by the teachers and murshids are teachings that are connected to the Prophet Muhammad.

Judging from the treasures of Nusantara Sufism, Asy-Syhadatain, which is thick with the colours of Indonesian Islam, is certainly contextual to the country's vision of education, which emphasises the development of Indonesian character based on the philosophy of Pancasila. So far, there is no Islamic science that is more fluid towards the colour of locality than philosophy and Sufism. Therefore, the government needs to support the understanding of the Islamic style that is close to the local culture, and one of them is in the Asy-Syhadatain tariqah.

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