



Javanese Sufism: A Semiotic Analysis of Sunan Kalijaga's *Suluk Linglung*

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Abstract: This research explores the phases of the spiritual journey in *Suluk Linglung*, a work by Sunan Kalijaga, through a semiotic analysis. *Suluk Linglung* is a piece of literature that contains the teachings of Sufism, characterized by Javanese elements. This Suluk reports the spiritual journey of a highly revered Javanese saint, Kanjeng Sunan Kalijaga. The term 'linglung' in the Javanese vocabulary implies confusion, indecision, or a condition full of doubt. It represents a dilemma, indicating existential confusion. There are phases in the spiritual journey that are laden with symbols and can be interpreted from a Sufism perspective. Hence, this Suluk becomes intriguing to study using semiotic methods. The study results reveal five phases of the spiritual journey, which are abundant in meaning: First, the meeting with Sunan Bonang. Second, Ascetic Practice on the Riverbank. Third, Laku Ngidang. Fourth, Hajj Pilgrimage to Mecca. Fifth, Meeting with Prophet Khidr.

Contribution: Discovering the style and phase of Sunan Kalijaga's spiritual journey. The language used in *Suluk Linglung* is a language full of symbols. With semiotics, we can do a deeper 'interpretation'. That Sunan Kalijaga's practice was not merely a physical practice, but also an inner practice that was expressed using a deep and poetic literary language.

Keywords: *Suluk Linglung*, Sufism, Semiotics

Introduction

Suluk means a path or journey towards inner perfection. In the terminology of the Qur'an, *suluk* is associated with *faslukī* as inscribed in surah al-Nahl verse 69, *faslukī subula rabbiki dhululan*, which means, 'tread the path towards your Lord that has been made easy for you.' In Javanese literature, *suluk* signifies teachings, a philosophy of finding the relationship and unification of humans with God. The term *linglung* in Javanese vocabulary implies confusion, indecision, a condition full of doubt, or something lacking direction and certainty¹. In the *suluk*, it is narrated that Sunan Kalijaga found himself in two very different worlds: being the son of a nobleman and an idealistic robber. This situation represents a dilemma and leads to existential confusion.²

Suluk Linglung is a Sufi teaching composed by Sunan Kalijaga, which records the phases of the spiritual journey in discovering the meaning of perfect knowledge or actual teachings. These teachings of Sunan Kalijaga are based on the Duryat book, composed by Imam Anom, and referred to as *Suluk Linglung*. The *Suluk Linglung* details the journey of Sunan Kalijaga in seeking genuine faith, from his time as a famous robber known as *Brandal Lokajaya*, his meeting with Kanjeng Sunan Bonang, and finally studying under the True Teacher, Prophet Khidr.

Such a journey is typical in the context of someone being groomed to become a saint and always involves the role of Prophet Khidr, who holds the most crucial position as the authority that ordains someone as a saint. As a classic work of Javanese Islam, which marks the acculturation between Islam and Javanese culture, *Suluk Linglung* has been studied by many researchers. Discussions and studies related to *Suluk Linglung*, some of them:

First, research was conducted by Edris Zamroni et al., with the title "Values Ngudi Kasampurnan Sunan Kalijaga As A Basis of Religious Moderation Education." The background of this research reveals that Indonesia faces the challenge of radical ideological infiltration, which tends to conflict and use religion to divide the life of the nation. This research aims to explore the values of *ngudi kasampurnan* taught by Sunan Kalijaga to become the basis for strengthening religious moderation in the education system. Using the hermeneutic-phenomenological research method, this study is based on the

¹ "Linglung," n.d., <https://www.kamusjawa.net/arti/kata/linglung.html>.

² Imam Anom, *Suluk Linglung Sunan Kalijaga*, trans. Muhammad Khafid Kasri (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1993).

manuscript of *Suluk Linglung* Sunan Kalijaga and the teachings that are still held by his descendants and students (Demak community). The results showed that philosophically, the values of *ngudi kasampurnan* teach about restoring human understanding as creatures who should not feel the most righteous and superior among others, regulating mental balance as a psychological basis for education, prioritizing character and morals as a sociological basis for education, and preserving and developing the nation's noble traditions as a cultural basis. The implication is in packaging education that is friendly to differences in religion and belief, even in practice based on certain madhabs or social organizations.³

Second, Umi Maulidatus Sa'adah et al.'s research entitled "Moral Concept in *Suluk Linglung* from Lawrence Kohlberg's Perspective." This research investigates the moral principles embedded in *Suluk Linglung* and its correlation with the theories put forward by Lawrence Kohlberg, a leading Western psychologist famous for his work on moral development. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this research relies on library research methodology for data collection, mainly utilizing the document study method. Data analysis was conducted through descriptive analysis techniques. The results of this study reveal that *Suluk Linglung* summarizes Sunan Kalijaga's spiritual journey to achieve intellectual perfection on the importance of moral behavior in various aspects of human life, including relationships with the Divine, interactions with fellow beings, and self-reflection. By juxtaposing the moral insights from *Suluk Linglung* with Kohlberg's theoretical framework, this study contributes to a comprehensive understanding of moral development across different cultural and philosophical contexts.⁴

Third, Mohammad Muslih et al.'s research titled "Sunan Kalijaga's Da'wah Strategy in *Suluk Linglung* and Its Implication to Indonesian Radicalism Movement." This research is based on Sunan Kalijaga's figure, a *dā'i* (Muslim preacher) who is creative in spreading da'wah; one of his da'wah media is through a literary work entitled *Suluk Linglung*. In the manuscript of *Suluk Linglung*, Sunan Kalijaga reflected two da'wah strategies, both of which are expected to be relevant in Indonesia today, reviewing many issues of radicalism. This literature

³ Edris Zamroni et al., "Values Ngudi Kasampurnan Sunan Kalijaga As A Basis of Religious Moderation Education," *Edukasi Islam* 12, no. 4 (2023): 3247–60, <https://doi.org/10.30868/ei.v12i04.5359>.

⁴ Umi Maulidatus Sa'adah and Isa Anshori, "Konsep Moral Dalam Suluk Linglung Perspektif Lawrence Kohlberg," *Journal of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought* 1, no. 2 (December 1, 2023): 168–77, <https://doi.org/10.15642/juit.2023.1.2.168-177>.

research uses qualitative research methods and Gadamer's hermeneutic approach for data analysis techniques, using content analysis techniques. The study results revealed that Sunan Kalijaga used two da'wah strategies: Sufistic and multicultural. These two strategies have implications for preventing radicalism and bringing up soft, friendly, and *rahmatan li-l'ālamīn* preaching.⁵

Fourth is Muhammad Safii's "Suntingan Teks *Suluk Linglung* Seh Malaya Karya Sunan Kalijaga" research. This research aims to present an edited text of *Suluk Linglung* Seh Malaya that is error-free. So that the text can be read and understood by the wider community, and the content of the text with content analysis, from this research, researchers found three editions of the manuscript: 1. Collection of R. Ay. Supratini-Mursyidi Collection, 2. Uijgerverij en Boekhaldel Surakarta-University of Indonesia, 3. Yogyakarta Sanabudaya Museum; therefore, *Suluk Linglung* Seh Malaya is classified as a Jamak Manuscript. This research uses a philological approach. The text study method is combined with the standard editing method of correcting errors using a dictionary or standardized rules. Then, from this research, the efforts of Seh Malaya or Sunan Kalijaga in seeking the perfection of life and gaining knowledge from Sunan Bonang.⁶

Fifth, Fatchullah Zarkasi's research is entitled "Tasawuf and Millennial Youth (In the Perspective of *Suluk Linglung* Sunan Kalijaga)" to discover the form of moral education. This research uses a qualitative method as a literature study, namely data collection that aims to analyze Moral Education according to Sunan Kalijaga in the work of *Suluk Linglung*. The results of this research are morals as a medium to receive divine guidance, morals as a means to obtain the benefits of knowledge, and morals as the primary practice.⁷

From the entire review of those previous studies, no one has analyzed using the semiotic method, and the significance of the signs in *Suluk Linglung* is revealed, which shows a phase of a spiritual journey rich in symbols. Before discussing *Suluk Linglung* as a work of Sufism, it is necessary to explain Sufism

⁵ Mohammad Muslih et al., "Sunan Kalijaga's Da'wah Strategy In *Suluk Linglung* and Its Implication to Indonesian Radicalism Movement," *EL-HARAKAH (TERAKREDITASI)* 23, no. 1 (June 16, 2021): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.18860/ch.v23i1.11672>.

⁶ Muhammad Safii, "Suntingan Teks *Suluk Linglung* Seh Malaya Karya Sunan Kalijaga," *Jurnal Haluan Sastra Budaya* 6, no. 2 (2022): 232–48, <https://doi.org/10.20961/hsb.v6i2.59875>.

⁷ Fatchullah Zarkasi, "Tasawuf And Millennial Youth (In the Perspective *Suluk Linglung* Sunan Kalijaga)," in *PROCEEDINGS: Dirundeng International Conference on Islamic Studies*, 2022, 57–74, <https://doi.org/10.47498/dicis.v1i1.1023>.

itself and its historical landscape so that the position of this work can be better understood.

Literature Review

Javanese Sufism and Its Historical Landscape

In the Sufi tradition of the Nusantara, with the advent of the Walisongo's propagation, the teachings of Sufism in cultural works became inevitable. *Suluk*, a literary work with *serat*, songs, or hymns, can convey Sufi teachings through prose or stories filled with symbols and meanings. Therefore, using theories about interpreting symbols, known as semiotics, becomes crucial.⁸

Tasawwuf, in the Javanese context, is most prominently brought about by Walisongo. Walisongo itself, as a group of ulama and Sufis, does not have a single and homogeneous character. Each member of the Walisongo council has their own characteristics according to the tendency of their background and the process of practice he has taken. In general, however, the walisongo can be categorized into two broad patterns: the *putihan* and *abangan*.⁹ The *putihan* group taught Islam per the Qur'an and Hadith, practiced Islamic law strictly, and tended to be closer to Islamic Fiqh. Sunan Giri represented the guardian of this group.¹⁰ The *abangan* group, on the other hand, were the guardians who came from the sons of aristocrats, who in their daily lives and practices lived very close to Javanese culture, which was closely related to Hinduism and Buddhism.¹¹ The style is closer to mystical practice. So the Islamic teachings they conveyed were mixed between old beliefs and new beliefs, as well as in rituals and procedures for worship. The Wali Abangan group here includes Sunan Kalijaga.¹²

Before the arrival of Islam, the religious style of Indonesian society was mystical, so when Islam arrived, it became natural and natural when the style of

⁸ Abdul Munir Mulkan, *Islam Jawa: Mistik, Etika, Dan Politik Santri* (Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana, 2000), 48..

⁹ M.C. Ricklefs, *Mystic Synthesis in Java: A History of Islamization from the Fourteenth to the Early Nine-Teenth Centuries* (Novalk: East Bridge, 2006), 8.

¹⁰ M.M. Solichin, *Walisongo: Rekonstruksi Sejarah Dan Dakwah Islam Di Jawa* (Jakarta: Pustaka al-Kautsar, 2010), 80..

¹¹ Zulfan Taufik and Syafwan Rozi, "Perennialism and the Religious Common Platform of Mystical Tradition in Java," *Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Mysticism* 10, no. 2 (December 23, 2021): 193–208, <https://doi.org/10.21580/tos.v10i2.8439>.

¹² Hasanu Simon, *Misteri Syekh Siti Jenar* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2005), 65.

Islam in Indonesia, especially Java, was mystical. Especially the Islam taught by the Javanese noble saints.¹³

Sunan Kalijaga was the most steadfast wali in teaching Islam using a cultural approach. Acculturation occurred in Sunan Kalijaga's proselytizing system. He utilized culture as a medium of da'wah, which made him unique. Sunan Kalijaga affixed Islamic elements and teachings in *wayang* (a traditional Javanese puppet theatre play form). In addition, he also created many *serat*, *suluk*, *kidung*, *tembang*, *mantra* (kinds of Javanese literature), and *wayang* stories as a medium for preaching Islam.¹⁴

There are two *serat* containing Sunan Kalijaga's mystical experiences that are best known to the public and studied in books, namely the *Serat Dewaruci* and *Suluk Linglung*. *Serat Dewaruci* was written when Sunan Kalijaga was still young, while *Suluk Linglung* was written when Sunan Kalijaga reached a mature age and gained *kasampurnan* (perfection) knowledge.¹⁵

Suluk Linglung becomes an important *serat* because it contains Javanese mystical teachings with Sufism patterns, which are Sunan Kalijaga's thoughts when he had learned *kasampurnan*. This makes *Suluk Linglung* important to study to explore the treasures of Javanese Sufism-based thought.

Methods

Semiotics, as a field of study, was formulated by Charles Saunders Pierce (1839-1914), and it is a theory concerning signs. Pierce's semiotics was developed from his interest in investigating how people think, leading him to conclude that semiotics is synonymous with logic.¹⁶

Umberto Eco provides an understanding that a sign is anything that represents something else. Thus, language itself is also a system of signs. Text, as a language medium, is also a structure of signs. In his concept, a sign has three components: the signifier (the marker), the signified (the one marked), and the

¹³ Nurcholis Madjid, *Bilik-Bilik Pesantren: Sebuah Potret Perjalanan* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1998), 23.

¹⁴ Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama: Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII & XVIII* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2013), 55.

¹⁵ M. Hariwijaya, *Islam Kejawa* (Yogyakarta: Gelombang Pasang, 2006), 282.

¹⁶ Abdul Basit, "Health Communication in The Quran: Charles Saunders Pierce's Semiotic Analysis," *Jurnal Komunikasi, Malaysian Journal of Communication* 33, no. 4 (December 20, 2017): 76–88, <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2017-3304-05>.

referent.¹⁷ Simply put, the signifier is the form, the signified is the meaning, and the referent is the thought or concept. In its application, each word is a form (signifier), while the meaning of that word is the signified, which is highly dependent on the referent or the thought that connects the signifier with the signified (the subject interpreting the sign).

In Pierce's terminology, this is referred to as the sign triangle: the word is the form (signifier) referred to as the representation.¹⁸ The meaning, or signified, is the object being represented. Meanwhile, the idea or referent, the thought that connects the word with its meaning, the signifier with the signified, or the representation with its object, is called the interpretant.

The *Suluk Linglung* is examined using semiotic analysis; first, since the object of study is text, and second, many symbolizations can be treated as signs requiring interpretation. This study limits itself to broadly defined symbols, not the technical terms found within the teachings of the *Suluk Linglung*. Scrutinizing the teachings with their rich and abundant technical terms necessitates a more detailed approach and diverse analysis. The scope and content of the teachings within the *Suluk Linglung* are vast, deep, and dense. Therefore, this study is intended merely to analyze the broad phases of its journey, which is also interesting when viewed from a semiotic perspective.

The *Suluk Linglung* Manuscript

The *Suluk Linglung* manuscript examined in this study is a copy of the original manuscript written by Iman Anom (1806 Caka/1884 AD), a close descendant of Sunan Kalijaga, published by Balai Pustaka in 1993. The manuscript has been transliterated into Latin letters by Muhammad Khafid Kasri. The only person trusted by R.Ay. Supratini Mursidi, the 14th descendant of Sunan Kalijaga, who preserved the original *Suluk Linglung* manuscript, to translate it.

Suluk Linglung is part of the Duryat book, an ancient manuscript written in Pegon Arabic letters, in Javanese. The paper is made of wood fiber, containing medical treatment using traditional herb leaves; *azimat* (a type of object or writing believed to possess supernatural powers, offering protection and warding off evil) in the form of *rajaḥ* in Arabic letters; prayers in Javanese and Arabic languages; and predictions of human fate based on *pasaran* days (the native

¹⁷ Wildan Taufiq, *Semiotika Untuk Kajian Sastra Dan Al-Qur'an* (Bandung: Yrama Widya, 2016), 29.

¹⁸ Taufiq, 32.

Javanese system groups days into a five-day week), etc.; and in the final chapter; it includes the life story of Sunan Kalijaga in *macapat* songs. This part of the *macapat* was then transliterated into Latin by Muhammad Khafid Kasri and translated into Indonesian.¹⁹

R. Ay. Supratini kept the original manuscript, and she considers it a sacred talisman so that only certain people can see and open it, even though she did not know its contents at first. Observation of ancient literary manuscripts also occurs in other manuscripts such as the *Wawacan Sunan Gunung Jati*, where the owner considers the manuscript as a sacred object and heirloom that no one can touch for fear of getting *kabadʔ*²⁰ (bad consequences). This kind of sacredness makes access to manuscripts difficult. This requires a solution.

The Semiotics of *Suluk Linglung*

In this semiotic study of the *Suluk Linglung*, ten significant signifiers in the spiritual journey of Sunan Kalijaga are selected, and they will be analyzed and interpreted. In semiotic theory, signifiers are chosen subjectively and depend on the researcher. The ten Signifiers are as follows:

1. Brandal Lokajaya
2. Sunan Bonang
3. Meditating by the River
4. Guarding the Staff
5. *Laku Ngidang* (Behaving Like a Deer)
6. Pilgrimage to Mecca
7. Crossing the Ocean
8. Prophet Khidr
9. Entering through the Ear
10. The Entire Universe is Contained within the Body of Prophet Khidr

These ten signifiers are referred to as representations or forms. These representations will produce the signified or the object of representation. Briefly, the objects represented or the signified are shown in the following table:

Representation (signifier)	Object Represented (signified)
Brandal Lokajaya	Negative existential role
Sunan Bonang	Gateway of guidance,

¹⁹ Anom, *Suluk Linglung Sunan Kalijaga*, vii.

²⁰ Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, *Wawacan Sunan Gunung Jati* (Jakarta, 1994), 1.

	An introduction, the key to avoiding confusion (<i>linglung</i>).
Meditating by the River	Sincerity in following the guidance. The river symbolizes the course of life.
Guarding the Staff	Firmness of heart in adhering to principles or guidance.
<i>Laku Ngidang</i> (Behaving Like a Deer)	Totality eliminates the human ego (<i>aku-kamanungsan</i>) by merging with nature, imitating the natural way of life like a Deer.
Pilgrimage to Mecca	The next stage is to undergo the peak ritual (the fifth pillar of Islam). Spiritual Mecca, the spiritual center that exists within the heart of a <i>mu'min</i> (the true throne of God)
Crossing the Ocean	Exploring all knowledge of reality, surrendering completely.
Prophet Khidr	The true teacher is the source of the perfect knowledge sought by Sunan Kalijaga—a teacher who will only meet students deemed worthy and ready.
Entering through the Ear	Readiness and acceptance to listen and understand.
The Entire Universe is Contained within the Body of Prophet Khidr	The manifestation of humans as the actual macrocosm.

After generating these ten signifieds, the idea of connecting the signifier with the signified is sought. The connector between the signifier and the signified is referred to as a referent or interpretant. The ten interpretants that connect the representations with their objects are shown in the table below:

Representation (signifier)	Object Represented (signified)	Interpretant
Brandal Lokajaya Sunan Bonang	Negative existential role Gateway of guidance, An introduction, the key to avoiding confusion (<i>linglung</i>).	In confusion (<i>Linglung</i>) First Teacher
Meditating by the River	Sincerity in following the guidance. The river symbolizes the course of life.	Initial Asceticism, Self- Reflection
Guarding the Staff	Firmness of heart in adhering to principles or guidance.	Obedience

<i>Laku</i> (Behaving Like a Deer)	<i>Ngidang</i> Totality eliminates the human ego (<i>aku-kamanungsan</i>) by merging with nature, imitating the natural way of life like a Deer.	Second Self-Surrender	Asceticism,
Pilgrimage to Mecca	The next stage is to undergo the peak ritual (the fifth pillar of Islam). Spiritual Mecca, the spiritual center that exists within the heart of a <i>mu'min</i> (the true throne of God)	Heading Towards Spiritual Center	
Crossing the Ocean	Exploring all knowledge of reality, surrendering completely.	Total commitment to divine knowledge.	
Prophet Khidr	The true teacher is the source of the perfect knowledge sought by Sunan Kalijaga. A teacher who will only meet students deemed worthy and ready.	True knowledge that eliminates all confusion (<i>Linglung</i>)	
Entering through the Ear	Readiness and acceptance to listen and understand.	There is no debate or denial.	
The Entire Universe is Contained within the Body of Prophet Khidr	The manifestation of humans as the actual macrocosm.	Union of macrocosm and microcosm.	

The semiotic meanings are produced after obtaining the interpretants from these ten signifiers, resulting from the elaboration between the signifier, the signified, and the interpretant. The semiotic meanings are explained in the phase of Sunan Kalijaga's spiritual journey.

Phases of the Spiritual Journey

Phase One: Becoming Brandal Lokajaya

The first phase is confusion or *linglung*. This phase occurred when Sunan Kalijaga became a bandit (*brandal*) or robber, famously known as Brandal Lokajaya. Brandal Lokajaya represents the existential role Raden Said chose²¹ (Sunan Kalijaga's actual name) as a form of protest against the inequality occurring in the *Kadipaten* (Regency) led by his father.

²¹ Origin if the name Sunan Kalijaga, at Umar Hasyim, *Sunan Kalijaga* (Kudus: Penerbit Menara Kudus, 1974), 1–2.

Raden Said saw many of his people living in extreme poverty, yet they were pressured to pay tributes to the *Kadipaten*. He realized that his father, as the *Adipati* (Regent), had no other choice, as these tributes would also be submitted to Majapahit. As a subordinate regent to the king, he was powerless. Raden Said took the initiative to rob these tributes and distribute them to the people. This means his motive for becoming a robber was driven by his disappointment with the officials who oppressed the people, and his altruistic nature that had compassion for the people. However, in his actions, he did not find a solution to the problem. Instead, he became increasingly restless. Raden Said strived to obtain guidance on the true essence of human life. However, he felt his efforts had failed, and he did not succeed in finding what he was looking for. This journey is written in *Suluk Linglung* canto I, stanza 3:²²

"Ling lang ling lung sinambi angabdi, saking datan amawi sabala, kabeka dene nepsune, marmannya datan kerup, denya amrih wekasih urip, dadya napsu ingobat, kabanjur kalantur, eca dhahar lawan nedra, saking tyas awon perang lan nepsu neki, sumendhe kersaning Hyang."

"*Ling lang ling lung* (heart is doubtful, the mind is confused) still serving, even without any help, always tempted by lust, unable to overcome it, various efforts have been made for the end of life, able to overcome and cure lust, lest it happens too late, satisfied with eating and sleeping, for the heart will lose the war against lust, only Allah is the place to surrender."

Phase Two: Becoming a Disciple of Sunan Bonang

The encounter with Sunan Bonang marked the gateway of guidance that directed Raden Said on his spiritual journey. Sunan Bonang represents the gateway of guidance, the first teacher who paved the way for Raden Said's transformation into Sunan Kalijaga. As stated in canto I, stanza 7, of *Suluk Linglung*²³:

"Ling lang ling lung anagih tan olih, anenagih ngrejeg tanpa potang, kang tinagih meneng bae, pan nyata nora nyambut, kang anagih awira-wiri, tan ana beda nira, Syeh Melaya iku, wit pahurita atapa, mring Jeng Sunan Bonang kinen tengga kang cis, tan Kenya yen kesana."

"*Ling lang ling lung* (In a state of confusion), asking for wages without results, relentlessly demanding without a debt, the one demanded remains silent, for in reality there is no debt, the one who demands comes and goes, all of this is no different from Syeh Melaya himself when he began to study

²² Anom, *Suluk Linglung Sunan Kalijaga*, 2–3.

²³ Anom, 4.

and meditate, ordered by Kanjeng Sunan Bonang to guard the staff and forbidden to leave the spot."

The first method given was to instruct Raden Said to meditate by the riverbank. Canto 2, stanza 4, states²⁴:

"Anulya kinen angalih, pitekur ing kali jaga, malih karan jejuluke, sawarsa tan kena nendra, utawi yen dahara, tinilar mring Mekah sampun, dhumateng Sinuhun Benang."

"Then he was ordered to move, to meditate (reflect) by the river that would later become his nickname (Kalijaga = river guard); for a year, he was not allowed to sleep or eat, then left for Mecca by Sunan Bonang."

The condition given by Sunan Bonang was that the meditation should not be abandoned until Sunan Bonang returned to that place. Meditating by the river symbolizes a sincere commitment to following the guidance, an effort to contemplate life's journey as the river's water flows to the estuary. This is a form of self-awareness from someone genuinely determined to embark on a spiritual path. He was asked to sit quietly, reflecting on the river's flow, accompanied by the restraint of eating and drinking.

Furthermore, Sunan Bonang also asked Sunan Kalijaga to guard a staff he had planted. This represents the firmness of heart in adhering to the principles of spiritual truth he was undertaking. The staff symbolizes *piandel*, a grip, and a tool guiding the journey. In the world of Sufism, the staff is a symbol of the *tarekat* (spiritual path). Someone who has sworn allegiance to a tarekat means they have decided to take and hold the staff. Sufi Sheikhs often use a staff (in the literal sense, a genuine wooden staff, as a support), along with a robe and turban, as a symbol that they have entered and embarked on a spiritual journey. Using a staff also follows the examples of the Prophets and Saints.²⁵ It is said that Imam Shafi'i used staff at a young age because the staff is a symbol of travelers. Utilizing a staff serves as a reminder that life in this world is akin to a journey toward the house of the hereafter. The staff was also the intermediary for the great miracle of Prophet Moses.²⁶

²⁴ Anom, 6.

²⁵ *Kenapa Para Nabi dan Wali Identik dengan Tongkat?*. <https://nu.or.id/nasional/kenapa-para-nabi-dan-wali-identik-dengan-tongkat-RPXqv>

²⁶ Najihatul Abadiyah Mannan, "Studi Stilistika Terhadap Tongkat Nabi Musa Di Dalam Al-Qur'an," *REVELATIA: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 1, no. 1 (May 27, 2020): 51–68, <https://doi.org/10.19105/revelatia.v1i1.3169>.

Phase Three: *Laku Ngidang* (Behaving Like a Deer)

Next is the phase following the completion of Sunan Kalijaga's meditation by the riverbank, which lasted for a year. Afterward, Sunan Bonang awakened him and ordered him to enter the forest to meditate like a deer (canto 2 stanza 17)²⁷:

“Pan angidang lampah neki, awor lan kidang manjangan, atenapi yen asare, pan aturu tumut nangsang, kadi turning kidang, yen asaba mapan tumut, lir kadya sutailing kidang.yen ana jamla udani, kang kidang lumayu gebras, Jeng Sunan amelu gebres, pan lumayu berangkangan. Kadi playunc kidang, wayang-wuyung datan kantun, anu ting solahe kidang.”

"To perform the *laku ngidang* (deer meditation), mingle with the deer, going to sleep, he followed the way of sleeping upside down, like how a deer sleeps, searching for food he followed the way of a young deer. When there were humans, the deer ran helter-skelter; Kanjeng Sunan Kalijaga also ran swiftly, crawling in his run, like how a deer runs, panting and ensuring not to fall behind, following the pace of the deer."

Spiritual practitioners commonly undertake *Laku Ngidang*. It may take a variety of forms. As for what was undertaken by Sunan Kalijaga, it was living as a deer would. This meditation represents a form of total unity with nature, living naturally like an animal, eliminating the ego as a human. Indeed, this practice can be considered strange and illogical. However, spiritually, there is undoubtedly an expected influence on the soul undertaking such a heavy practice as *Laku Ngidang*.

Phase Four: Commanded to Make a Pilgrimage to Mecca

The fourth phase involves the directive to undertake the pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca. Intriguingly, this phase is composed entirely of rituals anchored in Sharia law. This suggests that adherence to Sharia practices is indispensable even within the context of a spiritual journey. A frequent question that arises is: Does this directive to execute Sharia practices imply that Sunan Kalijaga had acquired knowledge in Fiqh (Islamic law), ranging from ablution and prayer to the peak requirement of performing the Hajj? Indeed, such directives are not handed out arbitrarily. This implies that before the issuance of the directive, the recipient must understand the procedures and possess knowledge of their fiqh. Furthermore, considering that the Hajj represents the zenith of Sharia law,

²⁷ Anom, *Suluk Linglung Sunan Kalijaga*, 10. Iman Anom, *Suluk Linglung Sunan Kalijaga*, Trans: Muhammad Khafid Kasri, et al. (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1993), 10.

encompassing prayer, ablution, and various recitations, it is evident that Sunan Kalijaga had a comprehensive understanding of the fiqh associated with prayer and similar practices.

There is a common presumption that ascetic practices and similar activities are incompatible with Sharia law. How can one adhere to Sharia while spending a year safeguarding a stick by a river? How can they attend Friday prayers? These questions often arise. However, such practices could be interpreted as a Javanese approach to conditioning the heart to accept Sharia. The directive to perform the Hajj in Mecca subsequently led Sunan Kalijaga to an encounter with Prophet Khidr, a mystical figure believed to be eternally alive and serving as a spiritual guide for prospective saints or devotees of God. Interestingly, Sunan Kalijaga never actually undertook the Hajj. As historical records affirm, Sunan Kalijaga did not perform the Hajj to Mecca throughout his lifetime.

Indeed, it was during his voyage across the ocean, symbolizing a journey towards divine truth, that Sunan Kalijaga met Prophet Khidr. The Prophet bestowed upon him profound spiritual wisdom. This wisdom is encapsulated within the *Suluk Linglung's* core teachings, which were imparted to Sunan Kalijaga when Prophet Khidr entered his body through his ear. This represents a mental readiness to accept all advice unquestioningly and without argument. Among these teachings, a significant portion related to Sunan Kalijaga's intention to perform the Hajj was elucidated by Prophet Khidr as follows (canto 4, stanza 1-2)²⁸:

"Lamun arsa sira munggah kaji, maring Mekah thuke ana apa, hya Mekah pan tilas bae, Nabi Ibrahim kruhun, ingkang yasa kang ponang masjid, miwah tilase ka'bah, kang arupa watu, gumanthung tanpa centhelan, apa iku kang sedya sira bekteni, dadi mangan brahala."

"If you intend to make the Hajj to Mecca, you must comprehend the true intent of this journey. Understand that Mecca is but a symbol! The former dwelling of Prophet Abraham constructed the Masjidil Haram's Ka'bah and embellished the Ka'bah with a black stone (Hajar Aswad) affixed to its wall. Is it the Ka'bah you aim to worship? If so, your actions resemble idol worship."

"Iya kaya idhepe wong kapisir, dene iya esmu ngangka-angka, trus madhep ming brahalane, nadyan wus haji iku, yen tan weruh paraning kaji, ka'bah"

²⁸ Anom, 19.

pan dudu lemah, kayu watu dudu, margone tan kanggo lunga, mring ka'bah yen arsa wruh ing ka'bah jati, jali iman hidayat."

"Your conduct mirrors that of non-believers, who create conjectures about the form of Allah, always focusing on their idol. Hence, even if you have completed the Hajj without understanding its true purpose, your Hajj will result in a profound loss. Understand that your destination, the Ka'bah, is not made of earth, wood, or stone but the *Ka'batullah*. This is the *iman hidayat* you must affirm in your heart."

Presumably, this was the essence of Sunan Bonang's directive to Sunan Kalijaga to undertake the Hajj. Sunan Kalijaga gained a deep understanding of the meaning and essence of the Hajj sharia. Furthermore, Sunan Kalijaga's entire journey led him to absolute faith, or in Sufi terms, the *maqām iḥsān*, where one attains the status of *Waliyullah* or the Beloved of God.

Enlightened Wisdom: *Iman Hidayat*

The juncture of Sunan Kalijaga's spiritual odyssey, where he meets Prophet Khidr, is a significant turning point in the *Suluk Linglung*, as it unravels the esoteric teachings of spiritual stewardship. This pivotal episode can be seen as the apotheosis of Sunan Kalijaga's spiritual expedition. The dialogue between Prophet Khidr and Sunan Kalijaga encompasses all the cardinal teachings of the *Suluk Linglung*. This narrative parallels the story where Prophet Moses receives wisdom from Prophet Khidr.²⁹ Both tales involve a journey, a quest, and an enlightening encounter. However, the teachings imparted to Prophet Moses are conveyed through symbolic events (the leaking boat, the slaying of a boy, and the restoration of a crumbling house). At the same time, Sunan Kalijaga's instructions are presented more straightforwardly.

The intent here is not to draw comparisons but to underscore the distinct pedagogical approach employed by Prophet Khidr. Regardless of the *Suluk*'s authenticity, whether it is an actual account, a reimagined spiritual journey, or a didactic narrative cloaked in fiction (a common technique in Eastern literature), the focus should be on the conveyed message rather than the factual accuracy of the events. Therefore, to decipher the primary teachings of the *Suluk Linglung*, a focused examination of the dialogue between Sunan Kalijaga and Prophet Khidr could prove insightful. This study seeks to dissect the phases of the narrative, which are symbolically fascinating. Additionally, an intriguing discussion

²⁹ Aminah, "Konsep Ilmu Ladunni Dalam Kisah Nabi Musa AS Dan Nabi Khidhr AS," *Al-Fath* 14, no. 2 (2020): 131–58, <https://doi.org/10.32678/alfath.v14i2.3674>.

regarding the faith of guidance could provide a valuable supplement to this analysis.

The concept of *iman hidayat* was first introduced as a query by Kanjeng Sunan Kalijaga, after undergoing various spiritual disciplines under the tutelage of Sunan Bonang. After a year of secluded meditation by the river during Sunan Bonang's pilgrimage to Mecca, Sunan Bonang directed Sunan Kalijaga to culminate his contemplative practice and acknowledged his spiritual leadership. "*Eh Jebeng, luwarana, jenenga wali sireku, panutup panatagama*"³⁰ (Son, draw your meditation close. You are now a *wali*, a herald of the faith.

*"Den becik gama nireki, agama pan tata krama, krama-Kramate Hyang Manon, yen sira pranata syarak, sareh iman hidayat, hidayat iku Hyang Agung, agung ing nugrahanira."*³¹

"Rectify the prevailing chaos. Religion is a code of conduct that manifests reverence towards the Omniscient God. Adherence to the law and the tenets of *iman hidayat* will lead you to divine guidance from the Almighty God, whose blessings are boundless."

In response, Kanjeng Sunan Kalijaga sought clarification on the essence of *iman hidayat*. He respectfully implored, "*Syeh Malaya matur aris, kalangkung nuwun patik bra, kalingga murda wiyose, nanging amba matur Tuan, anuwun babar pisan, ing jatine sukma luhur, kang aran iman hidayat*"³² (Syeh Malaya, please elucidate slowly. I am deeply grateful and will highly regard all advice. However, I beseech you, master, to expound on the true significance of the noble soul, previously referred to as the *iman hidayat*).

Kanjeng Sunan Bonang offered an elucidation, defining the *iman hidayat* as a state of complete surrender and constant mindfulness of one's conduct, akin to one's original state at creation. Nevertheless, Sunan Bonang confessed his incomplete understanding of the *iman hidayat's* true essence. As a result, he directed Sunan Kalijaga to journey to Mecca to seek this wisdom. However, Sunan Kalijaga's pilgrimage to Mecca was preempted when he encountered Prophet Khidr on his way, who imparted the knowledge he sought.

³⁰ Anom, *Suluk Linglung Sunan Kalijaga*, 6..

³¹ Anom, 6..

³² Anom, 8.

The discourse on *iman hidayat* forms a crucial narrative, complemented by exploring specialized terminologies and metaphors in Prophet Khidr's teachings. Prophet Khidr elucidated (canto 5, stanza 13 and 15)³³,

"Birahi ananireku, aranira Allah jati, tanana kalih tetiga, sapa wruha yen wus dadi, insung weruh pesti nora, ngarani namanireki."

"Your existence stemmed from the desire of God's will; your presence signifies the authentic presence of God; God cannot be fragmented into two or three entities. I assure that whoever discerns the origin of their existence will abstain from self-glorification."

"Yen tanana sira iku, insun tanana ngarani, mung sira ngarani ing wang, dene Tunggal lan sireki iya Ingun iya sira, aranira aran mami."

"Had you not existed, I, Allah, would remain unknown and unmentioned; it is through you that my existence is acknowledged; hence, it appears as if I am unified with you. Your existence sprung from Me, Allah, mirrors My Entity's presence."

This explication harbors a profound secret of reality, an understanding that may elude many. It could be prone to misconceptions by the uninitiated. Therefore, such teachings are judiciously reserved for the spiritually and intellectually prepared ones.

Conclusion

Suluk Linglung ultimately becomes a kind of reportage or documentation of a spiritual journey that records essential symbols in a unique spiritual journey. A combination of Sufism and Javanese culture. Semiotically, this study does not analyze the details of the teachings in *Suluk Linglung* but only marks the outline of the markers passed and interpreted in constructing a spiritual journey. Answering the controversy about the validity of these things in the Sharia scale is not the purpose of the discussion.

In brief, it can be concluded that Salik's spiritual journey begins with a negative existential role, namely becoming a bandit, as a response to injustice, which indicates a confused condition. Then, there is a gate of guidance, which becomes a kind of introduction, a key out of confusion, namely the meeting with the first teacher (Kanjeng Sunan Bonang). With an earnest effort to follow the instructions, the Salik undertakes an initial *tirakat* (spiritual retreat), namely waiting for the *teken* (stick), the Guru, by the river, which symbolizes the flow

³³ Anom, 30.

of life, the result is introspection. The practice is practiced for days, in the heat and rain, to test the firmness of the heart in holding principles or instructions.

Furthermore, a great form of obedience, and a form of totality in eliminating the human ego (*aku-kamanungsan*), is in the next *tirakat*, namely the practice of *ngidang*, a practice of merging with nature, imitating the natural way of life like the Kijang, which results in an absolute surrender.

The next stage is to undergo the culmination of the ritual (the fifth pillar of Islam). Hajj to the city of Mecca is interpreted as a spiritual Mecca, namely the spiritual center in the heart of the believer (the true throne of God), a manifestation towards the Center of Spirituality, and a dive into all knowledge of reality. The result is the totality of entering the understanding of Divinity.

Divine knowledge can only be taught by a true *guru*, the source of the understanding of perfection that Sunan Kalijaga sought. A teacher who will only meet students who are deemed worthy and ready. It is this true knowledge that removes all indecision (*Linglung*). Meanwhile, Salik's readiness and acceptance to listen and understand are devoid of debate and denial. The result is the realization of man as the true macrocosm, the union of macrocosm and microcosm.

Thus, this suluk can be appreciated as a unique way of practicing tasawwuf that is unique to the archipelago (Java), and indeed includes the legendary great figure, the Walisongo, who is a native Javanese, with the visual of his surjan shirt and blankon, as famous in pictures and paintings: Kanjeng Sunan Kalijaga, Spiritual Master of Java.

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Author Contributions

N contributed to the research design, problem formulation, analyzing *Suluk Linglung* manuscripts, designing and writing in-depth theoretical studies. AB contributed to the research method and sourcing secondary sources, drafting the discussion and conclusion of the research report.

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