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Sufism and Peace: The Profile and Role of Shaykh Husamuddin in the Deradicalisation Program

Suratno^{1*}

¹ Graduate Program of Islamic Studies, University of Paramadina Jakarta

* Corresponding Author: suratno@paramadina.ac.id

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Abstract: This article examines the contribution of Sufism to peace by studying the role of Shaykh Husamuddin Martin Mayer in the deradicalisation program in Germany. Shaykh Husam has a unique background as a convert (Muallaf), Sufi figure, anthropologist and peace activist. This study used a qualitative method in which the data were obtained through documentation studies and interviews. Data were analysed using the theory of the Sufism Peace Paradigm and the eight Stages of Psychosocial Development theory. This study revealed that Sufism correlates and could contribute positively to creating peace. This is evident in the profile of Shaykh Husam, a convert (muallaf) who then became a murshid of the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order (NHO) and is active in the deradicalisation program in Germany. In his opinion, Sufism can function as a coping mechanism that is effective for today's social, political and religious challenges, including deradicalisation & peace programs, such as *peace-making, peace-building, and peace-keeping*.

Contribution: This study contributes to revealing the role of sufism in creating peace and a deradicalisation program initiated by Shaykh Husam in Germany.

Keywords: sufism; peace; Shaykh Husam; deradicalisation

Introduction

Jason Webster (2014), in an article published by The Guardian on October 23, 2014, entitled *Sufism: A Natural Antidote to Fanaticism*, emphasised how Sufism has naturally become an antidote for fanaticism and even religious violence. Discourses on peace-making, counter-extremism, and deradicalisation inspired by Sufism have generated interesting debates and become new discourses in modern approaches to peace, religious pluralism and non-violence. Of course, Sufi figures are not like social scientists, but the Sufi concept of plurality, as well as Islamic teachings and narratives that are peaceful and counter-extremism, are critical to be discussed and disseminated.¹

In his book entitled *"Two Faces of Islam: Saudi Fundamentalism and Its Role in Terrorism"*, Stephen Schwartz (2003) explains that Sufism as a "mystical branch" of Islam has often been confronted with violent extremism, exclusivism, puritanism, xenophobia, and religious fascism. According to him, in the context of the United States, the first research-based Sufi activism in terms of ideology can be traced to post-9/11 views and debates about the caliphate, jihadism, migration, *hakimiyya* and other things that drive Muslims to religious extremism and even violence. Since then, Sufi figures and Sufism experts have often appeared in the global media and academic spaces to participate in efforts to counter violent extremism, intolerance, etc.²

Nowadays, in an era where Muslims face waves of sectarianism and religious extremism sweeping the global Muslim community, Sufism is often seen as a panacea or medicine for this dangerous disease. Extremist Muslim groups such as Al-Qaeda, ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), Jemaah Islamiyah and the like have harmed the spirit of brotherhood among Muslims and with members of other religions previously built by Sufi figures long ago. Suppose we acknowledge this and feel the need to revitalise Sufism in a world filled with hatred among religious communities, which has become conflict and acts of violence. In that case, all parties, including academics, social activists, government and other parties, must support the development of Sufism, especially among Muslims and in society in general.

For this reason, this article will elaborate on the topic of Sufism and peace in the West by studying the figure of Sheykh Husamuddin Martin Meyer (b. 1968), from now on Sheykh Husam. Apart from being a Muslim convert and now a murshid of the tariqa, Shaykh Husam was selected to be the subject of

¹ Jason Webster, "Sufism: 'A Natural Antidote to Fanaticism,'" <https://www.theguardian.com>, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/oct/23/sufism-natural-antidote-fanaticism-the-sufis-idries-shah>.

² Stephen Schwartz, *The Two Faces of Islam: Saudi Fundamentalism and Its Role in Terrorism* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2003).

this article as he also plays a vital role in the deradicalisation program of Muslim extremists in Germany, especially in the state of Hesse. Specifically, this paper will psychosocially analyse Shaykh Husam's profile and his role and contribution to peace, primarily his deradicalisation program.

Literature Review

Some studies regarding Sufism and peace have been carried out so far, although with various focuses and differences of opinion. Studies on Sufism in the West, including its relation to the issue of peace, have also received considerable attention from experts. However, the focus on psychosocial studies on Sufi figures such as Shaykh Husamuddin Meyer and his role in peace in this paper is still very limited. According to Jamal Malik et al. (2006)³ in their book entitled "Sufism in the West", the increasing prevalence of studies on Sufism is related to the fact that since the new millennium or the 2000s, Sufism has indeed developed quite rapidly in the West. This fact goes hand in hand with the increasing Muslim diaspora in the West coming from Muslim countries and the growing number of converts to Islam or Muslim converts in Western society.

In fact, Malik, in the book, optimistically states that Sufism, both intellectually and sociologically, can eventually emerge dominantly to become the mainstream face of Islam itself, namely Islam, which does not only emphasise religiosity and spirituality but also is tolerant and *rahmatan lil-alam*. According to Malik, this is possible, apart from the potential for Sufism through the nature/character of its teachings and rituals, it is also due to the failure of political Islam as Oliver Roy's thesis (1998) in his book entitled "The Failure of Political Islam".⁴

Simuh (1995),⁵ in his book entitled "Javanese Sufism: Transformation of Islamic Sufism to Javanese Mysticism," explains that the accommodative and compromising approach taken by Sufi ulama by not emphasising the aspects of purification, puritanisation and formalisation of religion has resulted in the spread of Islam by the Sufi ulama and tariqa ulama which is more flexible and collective. According to Simuh, this ultimately makes Sufism more readily accepted by the community because it can go hand-in-hand with old traditions that previously existed and were practised for generations by the local population without provoking tension or conflict.

³ Jamal Malik and John Hinnells, eds., *Sufism in the West* (London: Routledge, 2006).

⁴ Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (New York: Harvard University Press, 1994).

⁵ Simuh, *Sufisme Jawa: Transformasi Tasawuf Islam Ke Mistik Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Bentang Budaya, 1995).

Indeed, Mark Woodward et al. (2013),⁶ in their article entitled “Salafi Violence and Sufi Tolerance? Rethinking Conventional Wisdom,” put forward a slightly different thesis. Woodward argues that Salafi groups are not always radical and intolerant and spread violence, and conversely, Sufi groups are also not always tolerant of other Islamic groups. According to him, both Salafi groups and Sufi groups have the potential to become tolerant or to become extreme radicals and spread violence. This is based on Woodward’s historical analysis and contemporary cases from Southeast Asia and West Africa, where it turns out that there is no significant correlation between theology and a person’s violent tendencies.

However, Woodward’s opinion, as above, has received much refutation. Scholars claim that Sufism, in general, is sufficient to be regarded as the antithesis of extremism and violence in the name of religion. Alix Philippon (2020),⁷ for example, in his article entitled “Sufi Politics and the War on Terror in Pakistan: Looking for an Alternative to Radical Islamism?” states that Sufism promotes a friendly and peaceful Islam, rejects radicalism, extremism and even the use of violence.

Therefore, Alix Philippon (2018), in his writing entitled “We are peace-loving people”: Sufism, Orientalist constructions of Islam and radicalisation’, concludes that Sufism is adequate to be the antithesis of Islamic extremism and radicalism. In other words, I believe Sufism can be relied upon to bring peace to society. According to peace studies expert Johan Galtung (1990),⁸ the processes are divided into three: *peace-building*, *peace-making*, and *peace-keeping*.

Many articles have been published that specifically study Sufism in the European context. Khalid Duran (1991),⁹ in his article entitled “Muslim Diaspora: The Sufis in Western Europe”, provides an interesting report and investigation of Europeans who converted to Islam, their interest in Sufi teachings, and the interaction of these converted Sufis with other non-Sufi

⁶ Mark Woodward et al., “Salaf Violence and Suf Tolerance? Rethinking Conventional Wisdom,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 7, no. 6 (2013): 58–78, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26297065>.

⁷ Alix Philippon, “Sufi Politics and the War on Terror in Pakistan: Looking for an Alternative to Radical Islamism?,” in *Modern Sufis and the State*, ed. Katherine Pratt Ewing and Rosemary R. Corbett (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 140–60, <https://doi.org/10.7312/ewin19574-013>.

⁸ Johan Galtung, “Cultural Violence,” *Journal of Peace Research* 27, no. 3 (August 1, 1990): 291–305, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343390027003005>.

⁹ Khalid Duran, “Muslim Diaspora: The Sufis in Western Europe,” *Islamic Studies* 30, no. 4 (1991): 463–83, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20840053>.

Muslim groups. Meanwhile, Ottavia Schmidt's writing in Friedberg (1996)¹⁰ entitled "West-African Islam in Italy: the Senegalese Mouride Brotherhood as an Economic and Cultural Network" is the result of her research on the socio-economic network built by the Mouride Brotherhood in Italy.

Pnina Werbner (1996),¹¹ through her writing entitled "Stamping the Earth with the Name of Allah: Zikr and the Sacralization of Space amongst British Muslims", tries to explore the relationship between dhikr rituals and the idea of sacralisation of space among Muslims in Britain. N. Landman's (1992)¹² article entitled "Sufi Orders in the Netherlands: Their Role in the Institutionalization of Islam" investigates and examines the various roles played by Sufi orders among different ethnic communities in the Netherlands.

However, to the best of my knowledge, no study explores the studies of Sufi figures in Germany, especially Shaykh Husamuddin Meyer, especially those related to peace-building by applying deradicalisation programs for extremist Muslims. Hopefully, this article will contribute to religious anthropology, especially in studying Sufism as a dynamic living tradition rather than a mere historical phenomenon in the European context, often referred to as the new home of Sufism.

Theoretical Framework

This paper will at least use two theories, namely the Sufi Peace Paradigm Theory, according to Abdul Aziz Said (2001) and the theory of eight Psychosocial Stages of Man according to Erik Homburger Erikson (1950). The Sufi Peace Paradigm Theory will be used to analyse the role and contribution of the Sufi figure who is the subject of study, i.e. Shaykh Husam, in the deradicalisation program of extremist Muslims in Germany. According to Abdul Aziz Said et al. (2001),¹³ the concept of peace in the Western world generally has five paradigms: Paradigm Realist, World-order, Non-violence, Communication and Transformation. Meanwhile, in the Islamic context, there

¹⁰ Ottavia Schmidt di Friedberg, "West-African Islam in Italy: The Senegalese Mouride Brotherhood as an Economic and Cultural Network," in *Political Participation and Identities of Muslims in Non-Muslim States*, ed. W.A.R. Shadid and P.S. van Koningsveld (Kampen, the Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1996), 71–80.

¹¹ Pnina Werbner, "Stamping the Earth with the Name of Allah: Zikr and the Sacralizing of Space among British Muslims," *Cultural Anthropology* 11, no. 3 (August 1996): 309–38, <https://doi.org/10.1525/can.1996.11.3.02a00020>.

¹² Nico Landman, "Sufi Orders in the Netherlands: Their Role in the Institutionalization of Islam," in *Islam in Dutch Society: Current Developments and Future Prospects*, ed. W. A. R. Shadid and P. Sj. van Koningsveld (Kampen, the Netherlands: Peeters Publishers, 1992), 26–39.

¹³ Abdul Aziz Said, Nathan C. Funk, and Ayse S. Kadayifci, *Peace and Conflict Resolution in Islam: Precept and Practice* (New York: University Press of America, 2001).

are four peace paradigms: Traditionalist, Reformist (Islah), Renewal (Tajdid) and Sufism. According to Said, the realist peace paradigm aligns with the traditionalist Islamic peace paradigm. The world-order and non-violence paradigms are correlated with the Islah paradigm. Furthermore, the communication paradigm aligns with the tajdid paradigm, and the transformation paradigm has been embodied in the Sufism paradigm.

Further, Said argues that the Western-style transformation peace paradigm aligns with the Islamic Sufi paradigm of peace because it focuses on using the power of love and the concept of human working unity to bring peace. In this paradigm, peace is not seen as a goal but rather as a process that must be managed based on principles emphasising positive peace. So, in the transformational and Sufi paradigms, there is a concept that the process determines the results and not vice versa. This means that if positive peace is the desired outcome in a particular situation, then the steps to be taken to achieve this should reflect the goals of positive peace itself.

Thus, Mohammed Abu-Nimer (2001),¹⁴ in his article entitled "Conflict Resolution, Culture and Religion: Toward a Training Model of Inter-Religious Peace Building", describes what he identified as four stages in the transformation of conflict through interreligious dialogue and in the fourth and final stage he explains, the result of a process of transformation that can be applied to all specific types of conflict. In the fourth stage, the participants must acknowledge the limitations and advantages of inter-religious meetings in peace-building. They feel benefit because of their ability to connect with other religions and get a new understanding of peace-building within their religion. Most participants became more confident and less threatened by other religions. They make agreements, restate commonalities, and define sensitive issues.

According to Abdul Azis Said (2001), the focus of this transformation paradigm is well represented in the seven stages of the Sufi path towards unity or peace. It should be noted that this path is transcendental and includes core Islamic values. The seven stages of the Sufi path include: (1) Repentance or conversion/*Tawba*, (2) Fear of the Lord/*Raw'a*, (3) Detachment/*Zuhd*, (4) Poverty/*Faqr*, (5) Patience/*Sabr*, (6) Trust or Self-Surrender/*Tawakkal*, and (7) Contentment/*Rida*.

Meanwhile, in this article, the theory of the eight stages of human psychosocial development will be used to analyse Shaykh Husam's profile as a Muslim convert and then as a Sufi figure/murshid tariqa. According to Erik

¹⁴ Mohammed Abu-Nimer, "Conflict Resolution, Culture, and Religion: Toward a Training Model of Interreligious Peacebuilding Title," *Journal of Peace Research* 38, no. 6 (2001): 685–704, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343301038006>.

Homburger Erikson (1950),¹⁵ psychosocial is a dynamic relationship between each individual's psychological and social aspects. So, human personality and character develop along with age. One of the most widely influential psychosocial theories is described in detail by the American developmental and psychological psychologist Erik Homburger Erikson. Erikson developed a psychosocial theory based on his research on mental and social development in children and its influence when growing up. There are eight psychosocial stages, according to him, as follows:

1. Building trust (Trust vs. Mistrust)/< 18 months
2. Building autonomy (Autonomy vs Shame and Doubt)/18 months-3 years
3. Initiative vs. guilt (Initiative vs. Guilt)/3-5 years
4. Feeling capable (Industry vs. Inferiority)/6-11 years
5. Building an identity (Identity vs. Confusion)/12-18 years
6. Establish closeness (Intimacy vs. Isolation)19-40 years
7. Adult (Generativity vs. Stagnation)/40-65 years
8. Maturity (Integrity vs. Despair)/>65 years

In this article, only three stages of the eight stages above will be used, i.e. stages 5, 6 and 7. This is for two reasons: (1) Stage 5, aged 12-18 years, is the stage (beginning) of searching for identity and, in the context of Shaykh Husam, is the turning point age to become a Muslim convert and (2) Stage 8 is not used because Shaykh Husam was born in 1968 and currently 55 years old so that stage 8, namely the stage of maturity (integrity vs despair) >65 years cannot be used as an analytical tool. Explanation of stages 5, 6 and 7 of the eight stages above are as follows.

The fifth stage is building identity in teenagers aged 12-18 Years. Identity conflict and role confusion occur in adolescence. This will affect his future life. A teenager may try out different roles to find the best fit. If successful, he will be able to maintain his identity consistently. What if they fail? A teenager may experience an identity crisis and be confused about the future they want. In addition, failure can raise doubts about one's abilities.

The sixth stage is establishing closeness in young adults 19 – 40 Years. In this psychosocial stage, humans focus on developing close and loving relationships with others. They will learn about dating, marriage, family building, and friendship. When love relationships with other people are successful, they can experience love and enjoy intimacy (a very close relationship). In contrast, those who fail will feel isolated.

¹⁵ Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (London: W.W. Norton & Co, 1950).

The seventh stage is adults aged 40 to 65 years. In the adult stage, they will focus on contributing to society and the next generation, including raising children. Those who succeed will feel useful because they can contribute to the future of society. Meanwhile, they will feel they have contributed nothing to the world if they fail. Eventually, they become stagnant and feel unproductive. The psychosocial theory of Erik H. Erikson conceptually contains conflicting positive and negative results. However, in practice, human psychological development forms the final result in how a person achieves balance in every stage of life he lives.

Shaykh Husamuddin's Profile

Shaykh Husamuddin, born in 1968 in Groß-Bieberau, was named Martin Mey and grew up in Odenwald. His father and mother worked as a psychologist and teacher. Little Meyer always got good marks in school and was interested in math and physics as his favourite subjects. Meyer passed the abitur (high school/high school graduation exam) in 1988 with an average grade of 1.3 (on a scale of 1 to 5, one is excellent, and five is poor). After graduating high school, Meyer enrolled in college and was accepted to Maschinenbau (Mechanical Engineering) at the Technische Universitaet Darmstadt. While waiting for the start of college, Meyer wanted to travel to a new, far and different place. At first, he wanted to go to Africa, especially Jamaica, but he could not get a plane ticket to Jamaica shortly. Finally, he bought a plane ticket to Luxor in Egypt. "In Egypt, I experienced culture shock," Meyer said. He was surprised when, at 5 a.m., he heard the call to prayer, and because it was the first time in his life, he considered it like "people screaming" (Milles Meier, 2018).¹⁶

It was a completely new and different experience in Egypt, although Meyer found it strange in some ways. Meyer fell in love after a few weeks there, especially with the people's warmth and way of life. He then returned to Germany to continue studying at the Studium des Maschinenbau/college in mechanical engineering. However, after being in Germany, he missed the friendliness in his interactions with people in North Africa. Finally, he decided to go again to Africa. This time, he did not go by plane but by riding his motorbike. Meyer went to North Africa with no destination, schedule, or precise date of when he would return to Germany. "Es war schoen, ohne jeden Termin zu sein/Travel was fun because (he felt free) where he did not have to make appointments all the time," Meyer said. After about three months, Meyer travelled around North Africa by riding his motorbike to Morocco, Algeria and

¹⁶ Miles Meier, "Quer Durch Afrika," accessed August 8, 2022, <https://www.sufi-braunschweig.de/Husamuddin-Meyer.htm>.

Tunisia. He returned to Germany from his second visit to North Africa. Meyer changed his subject of study at the university. He was no longer interested in studying mechanical engineering, instead preferring to study Islamic studies, anthropology and geography. Meyer explained that he decided to study those fields to “learn about the language and culture of the people of North Africa to understand them better”.¹⁷

So after his impressive life experience in North Africa, in 1990, Meyer decided to leave the Studium des Maschinenbau at the Technische Universitaet Darmstadt and switch to studying Islamic studies, anthropology and geography at Freiburg Universitaet. Meyer earned his bachelor’s degree in 1994. During his studies at Freiburg, Meyer also made many trips to Africa, including trips to Mali, Guinea and Senegal, where he admits that during those trips, he had “spiritual experiences” and experienced them directly “how Islam determines (regulates and changes) the life and behaviour of someone who adheres to it”. While in North Africa and associating with Muslim people there, Meyer felt surrounded by people “who showed sincerity, kindness, gentleness and humility and were implemented in real terms. Even more unique, Meyer saw this all happened because of their obedience and adherence to the teachings of the religion (Islam) they adhered to.”¹⁸

Meyer has spent some time during his undergraduate studies in North Africa, especially in Senegal.¹⁹ There, Meyer learned Arabic and Wolof, the country’s language. In Senegal, Meyer also met a woman he considered a “teacher”. The woman is the mother of a local friend. The woman, said Meyer, was also as old as her mother. Meyer credits the woman as a teacher for giving him an example of a pious life in religion. When Meyer talked about the woman, he never called her by her real name but always said “that woman”.

During his visit to Senegal, Meyer also met his future wife, a woman originally from Burkina Faso. There, the couple married in 1994, and at first, they chose to live together in Freiburg, where Meyer was completing his undergraduate studies. According to Meyer, his wife’s family was against their marriage at first. He said: “Just as Germans hear many bad things about Africa, Africans also hear many bad things about Europe, including Germany, for example, regarding crime, immoral life, sex-free and others. My wife’s mother initially did not want her daughter to live in such a country (Germany) either!”

¹⁷ Von Canan Topçu, “Glaubenslehre Hinter Gittern,” 2014, <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/rhein-main/gefaengnisseelsorge-glaubenslehre-hinter-gittern-13087256.html>.

¹⁸ Meier, “Quer Durch Afrika.”

¹⁹ Topçu, “Glaubenslehre Hinter Gittern.”

However, after persuading his future wife's family, Meyer can finally change her mother-in-law's mind and allow her to live in Germany.²⁰

Currently, Meyer has been a Muslim convert since 1994. He earned a master's degree (S2) in Islamic studies, anthropology and geography from Freiburg Universitaet in 1998. Meyer has also fulfilled the fifth pillar of Islam, carrying out the pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj) in 1999. By his teacher, Meyer was given the additional name "Husamuddin", which means "Klarheit des glaubens/clarity of faith". Mayer and his wife now have five children aged 18, 16, 13, 10 and 5. They live in Wiesbaden, the capital city of the German state of Hessen. Meyer said they lived in Wiesbaden "for professional reasons" because Meyer and his family preferred rural life. Meyer has been working as a religious teacher as an Imam/murshid tariqa since 2008 until now. He has been a Muslim preacher in prison (JVA/ Justizvollzugsanstalt) in Wiesbaden and Rockenburg.²¹

Shaykh Husam & the Naqshbandi Haqqani Order (NHO)

Meyer is now more famous by the nickname Shaykh Husam. He currently serves as an imam and mentor in several communities of the Naqshbandi Haqqani Order in Hesse. Shaykh Husam was a student of Shaykh Nāzīm 'Adil al-Qubruṣī al-Ḥaqqānī (d. 2004).

The Naqshbandi are one of the most widespread Sufi orders in the world. The tariqa can be found in Kurdistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, Syria, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, Pakistan, China, Egypt and India. Over the last three decades, this tariqa has expanded widely in Europe and America, alongside other orders such as the Shadhiliyya, Chistiyya, Rifa'iyya, and Qadiriyya Orders. The name of the Naqshbandi Order comes from its founder, Shaykh Baha' al-Din Naqshbandi, which means the person who casts patterns on fabric. It symbolically also signifies the idea of drawing and instilling the name of God in the human heart.²² It should also be noted that the Naqshbndi was not an entirely new Sufi order because it is a continuation of other Sufi orders established earlier.

Sufi murshid, Shaykh Hisyam Kabbani (1995),²³ in his book entitled *The Naqshbandi Sufi Way: History and Guidebook of the Saints of the Golden Chain*, refers to this tariqa as the "Naqshbandi Golden Chain". Kabbani says that from the Abu Bakr era (d. 634) to the time of Abu Yazid al-Bustami (d. 875), it was called as-Siddiqiyya. From the Tayfur period, Abu Yazid al-

²⁰ Meier, "Quer Durch Afrika."

²¹ Meier.

²² Nazim Haqqani, *Mercy Oceans' Hidden Treasures* (Konya: Spohr Publishers, 1988), 256.

²³ Hisyam Kabbani, *The Naqshbandi Sufi Way: History and Guidebook of the Saints of the Golden Chain* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, Inc., 1995).

Bustami, to the period Abdul Khaliq al-Ghujduwani (d. 1179), it was called at-Tayfuriyya. Then, from Abdul Khaliq al-Ghujduwani to the time of Baha' al-Din Naqshbandi (1317-1388), it was named al-Khwajakaniyya.

Kabbani further explained that from the time of Baha' al-Din Naqshbandi to Ahmad al-Faruqi al-Sirhindi (1563-1624), it was known as al-Naqshbandiyya. From the period of Ahmad al-Faruqi al-Sirhindi to the period of Khalid al-Baghdadi (1779-1827), it was named al-Naqshbandiyyat al-Mujaddidiyya. From the time of Khalid al-Baghdadi to Ismail al-Shirwani (1787-1840), it was known as al-Naqshbandiyyat al-Khalidiyya. From Ismail al-Shirwani's time to Abd Allah al-Daghistani (1891-1973), it was al-Naqshbandiyya al-Daghistaniyya. Today, it is known as al-Naqshbandiyya al-Haqqaniyya.

According to Shaykh Husam (2013),²⁴ the Naqshbandi Haqqani Order is a sub-order of Naqshbandi which is attributed to the founder of the Haqqaniyah Foundation, Shaykh Muhammad Nazim Adil al-Haqqani (d. 2014). This foundation is based in Cyprus and has many followers across Europe, America, Asia, and Africa (more than 28 countries, including Indonesia). Many experts consider this tariqa a transnational order. In 1974, Shaykh Nazim Haqqani started his Islamic preaching in Europe, especially in England and Germany. After that, thousands of people converted to Islam and took an oath as followers of the Naqshbandi Haqqani Order.

Like other congregations, Shaykh Husam explained that the NHO also adheres to the teachings of *tawassul* (intercession), asceticism, patience, trustworthiness, *uzlah* (seclusion) and *khalwat* (solitude), and emphasises continuous *dhikr*. In addition, NHO also has its worship procedures, spiritual techniques and rituals. The principle of the NHO spiritual method is *dhikr Khafi*, done alone, and *dhikr Jahr*, done in the congregation. Apart from that, there are also daily NHO *dhikr* practices, which consist of *Mubtadi dhikr* (for beginner level), *Musta'd dhikr* (preparatory level), *Ahlul 'Azim dhikr* (established level), *dhikr to revive Ashrar* (inner heart) and *Khatm Khwajagan dhikr*. *Khatm* means closing/end, and *khwajagan* comes from the Persian language, Shaykh.

According to Shaykh Husam, Shaykh Nazim also popularised the whirling dance (Whirling Dervish or Dervish Rumi) in congregational *dhikr*. In daily *dhikr*, there is *muraqaba*. *Muraqaba*, or meditation, aims to demonstrate constant presence in the Shaykh's reality. Shaykh Nazim also teaches love (*mahabba*). Shaykh Nazim always teaches us, "We have been ordered to love holy people, such as Prophets (*anbiya'*), their inheritors and *awliya* (beloved of Allah) and everyone who loves *awliya* & *anbiya*. Through

²⁴ Interview with Shaykh Husamuddin Meyer, Frankfurt am Main, 13 December 2013.

awliya, we will reach the love of Prophets. And through the love of the Prophets, we will get the love of Allah. So, love is the most important pillar of faith. Without love, there can be no faith.”²⁵

Shaykh Husam and the Deradicalisation Program

According to Shaykh Husam (2013),²⁶ apart from being a religious teacher and Imam/murshid of the Naqshbandi Haqqani Order, since 2008, he has also been a Muslim preacher in prison (JVA/Justizvollzugsanstalt) in Wiesbaden and Rockenburg where he was initiating and being involved in the deradicalisation program. His primary duty is to fulfil the need for spiritual-religious counselling of the prisoners. However, Shaykh Husam also helped overcome the discrimination, social injustice and identity crisis of many imprisoned Muslims, especially the second and third-generation Muslim migrant families in Germany.

According to Shaykh Husam (2017),²⁷ he defines these comprehensive tasks as providing "anger-prophylaxis". A holistic approach in Muslim spiritual counselling in JVA/prisons targets four main things: (1) identity problems, (2) Islamic education in general, (3) global political education, and (4) individual counselling. Shaykh Husam also applies the principles of the Naqshbandi Haqqani Order about love/*mahabba*, peace as a process, not as a goal and positive peace. In addition, he offers group discussions three times a week. The topic is sometimes determined by one of the groups, sometimes by himself. The issues are about religion, politics, and even personal matters. Apart from discussions, as a JVA/Prison Muslim preacher, Shaykh Husam invites Muslim prisoners to pray, especially the five daily prayers (can be alone & in congregation), reading and studying the Qur'an/Hadith/Story (*sirah*) of the Prophet SAW. They also perform ritual practices of the Naqshbandi Haqqani Order (for those who wish).

According to Shaykh Husam (2017),²⁸ Muslim imams and scholars see that Muslim extremists are looking for answers to questions related to their religious beliefs and expectations for their behaviour. Those questions are: (1) Should they migrate to a Muslim country or Islamic state like ISIS? (2) Is it lawful for Muslims who do not obey their faith to be killed? (3) Shall we kill them? (4) Is the victory of the ISIS caliphate because they are not too strict in carrying out religious teachings?

²⁵ Interview with Shaykh Husamuddin Meyer, Frankfurt am Main, 13 December 2013.

²⁶ Interview with Shaykh Husamuddin Meyer, Frankfurt am Main, 13 December 2013.

²⁷ Husamuddin Meyer, "Gefängnisse Als Orte Der Radikalisierung – Und Der Prävention?," 2017, <https://www.bpb.de/themen/infodienst/270445/gefaengnisse-als-orte-der-radikalisierung-und-der-praevention/#>.

²⁸ Interview with Shaykh Husamuddin Meyer, Frankfurt am Main, 13 December 2013.

To answer these questions, Shaykh Husam continued, Islamic education and teachings are needed that positively encourage Muslim identity so that they become immune to missionary efforts or da'wah propaganda by Muslim extremists. At-risk Muslims (or those with the potential to become extremists) must be equipped with the tools to analyse and reflect critically on the various interpretations of Islamic teachings. This will depend greatly on the role of the counsellors deemed sufficiently qualified to be accepted by the Muslims. The involvement of volunteers of the imam will not be enough to target and overcome hate ideologies. Muslim spiritualists in JVA/prison must be professionalised through education and training with specific targets and supervision or guidance. Of course, this, according to him, will also require time and funds.

However, Shaykh Husam (2013)²⁹ admits that spiritual-religious counselling in JVA/prison will not be able to replace the disengagement program because this counselling only reaches those who are willing to join it. More importantly, the spiritual-religious counselling program and the disengagement program should also go hand in hand and complement each other, especially concerning the presence of specific staff and the required team composition.

Psychosocial Reasons of Shaykh Husam: From Muslim Convert to Murshid Tariqa

The results of the psychosocial analysis of Shaykh Husam's profile using the theory of eight stages of psychosocial development of Erik H. Erikson are divided into three. *First*, at the Adolescence stage (10-19 years), Identity vs. Confusion, it is important to note that Shaykh Husam experienced a culture in Egypt. He also felt very impressed with the life of the Muslim community in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. He called these experiences "finding peace of mind" (Ruhe im herzen zu finden).

According to Shaykh Husam, the Muslims in Africa he met were "people who are very concerned about finding peace in their hearts". He said we cannot find this peace, which is a barrier if we are too attached to material things. Shaykh Husam was impressed after living in Senegal and Burkina Faso, like the locals with a simple and economical way of life. He said he only spent a few euros per day. He also repeatedly emphasised the willingness of the Muslims he met in North Africa to help each other in those countries because everyone knows that when we feel bad, we need someone else. Meanwhile, in Germany, people tend to trust more and only the state. According to him, this is something to be regretted. Shaykh Husam gives an analogy by recalling the

²⁹ Husamuddin Meyer, interview...2013.

parable of Jesus Christ, according to which it is more likely that a camel that has gone through the eye of a needle than a rich man can go to heaven.

Further, he said, all languages in West Africa always include the word peace in their greeting (*salam*). The meaning of the greeting here is the sentence *Assalamu 'alaikum* (Peace be upon you). In that greeting, "Man fragt sich dort: Hast du den Frieden?/One asks himself, 'Do you have peace?'"

Second, at the Young-Adulthood stage (19-40 years): Intimacy vs Isolation: At this stage, Shaykh Husam has experience in studying Islamic studies at the undergraduate/S1 level in 1990-1994 and the masters/S2 level graduated in 1998 at Freiburg Universitaet and studied Sufism at the Naqshbandi Haqqani Order. Shaykh Husam also experienced a spiritual journey in Senegal, Guinea and Mali, which was said to be deeper than the experiences of his previous journeys. At this stage, he decided to convert to Islam in 1994, fulfil the fifth pillar of Islam, namely the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1999, and get married in 1994. Then, he had a family with a Muslim wife and five children. Shaykh Husam also has a regular job.

At this stage, as explained in the previous section, Shaykh Husam spent part of his bachelor's degree in Senegal in North Africa. There, he learned Arabic and Wolof, the country's language. He was fascinated by the people there. "Die hatten so wenig, und waren doch gut drauf/They live a poor/simple life but still look happy." People believe in God and are very "God-conscious." For example, Shaykh Husam told how he came across a broken-down car on a trip through deserts with some colleagues. The driver had nothing in his car to drink or eat. He and his friends then managed to fix the broken car. The driver was saved. Before even thanking his saviour, the driver prayed and thanked God for sending a saviour. Skaikh Husam said: "Dach hab ich gedacht, na, der ist ja gut, Da habe ich noch nicht so viel verstanden/I thought, well, that is good. It is just that I did not understand much at first."³⁰

Third, at the Middle-Adulthood stage (40-65 years), Generativity vs. Stagnation, Shaykh Husam experiences much success in his life. For example, with an improved career or work as a religious teacher, imam/murshid of the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order, and even since 2008, he has become a Muslim preacher at the JVA/prison. With all these activities, at this stage, he has visions and missions for a better life and to contribute to society. He is now 55 years old and renowned as an ethnologist and Muslim scholar who came to know Islam during his long journey through North and West Africa and his reflections and thoughts.

On many occasions, Shaykh Husam sometimes tells about his experiences going to Africa. For example, every Saturday, he is a guest at the

³⁰ Topçu, "Glaubenslehre Hinter Gittern."

cafe "Leib und Seele/Body and Soul" and is a speaker in the series "Erzaehlcafe/Story Café", which takes place there. On that occasion at the cafe, Shaykh Husam attempted to excite the audience through adventure stories by asking people with a mischievous and witty expression: "Wer von Ihnen kennt Timbuktu/Which of you knows Timbuktu?" He also admits, "Ich auch nicht/Neither do I."³¹

At the Erzaehlcafe cafe, Shaykh Husam sometimes talks about his experiences and activities in the JVA/prison in Wiesbaden and Rockenberg. He said that many young Muslims were sentenced to jail. He explained that the JVA/prison Director employed him as a preacher and priest, that is, as a prayer leader. He talked about young people in prison who could not speak German. He said that it is strange if we live in Germany and cannot speak German. He asked the audience, "How do you make a living for your life?". So, there are lots of question-and-answer sessions at the cafe. About 40 cafe visitors, who were dominated by women, asked lots of questions. Shaykh Husam said that sometimes, only some people agreed with his views after giving answers. If so, sometimes, he uses funny techniques to break the tension. For example, he repeatedly toyed with the idea of, for example, what if he later went back to Africa. Shaykh Husam then answered that Timbuktu (a place in Africa he had never been to) would be his favourite destination.

Shaykh Husam and Deradicalisation: From Sufism to Peace

According to Shaykh Husam (2013),³² when he returned to Germany after a trip to Africa in the mid-2000s, he became an imam in a small mosque in Wiesbaden. He made a living as a private teacher of Islam. When the Director of the JVA/Jung-Silberreis prison invited him to become a JVA Muslim preacher, he stated that he was ready to help but could not promise to continue his new activity. On Friday night, he rolled out a small rug in the prison chapel for the first time. Almost all the Muslim prisoners, around 100, came to pray at that time. Seeing their thirst for answers and rudimentary knowledge of Islam convinced him to return.

Initially, he was asked to become a JVA/prison Muslim preacher when Shaykh Husam was helping to awaken officials to the growing religious extremism in Germany. Since then, the Ministry of Justice in the German state of Hesse started hiring more Muslim clergy. In 2016, following the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels, the ministry significantly increased its budget for Muslim preachers in prisons and made them an essential element for the newly

³¹ Husamuddin Meyer, interview... 2013.

³² Husamuddin Meyer, interview... 2013 .

created Deradicalisation in Corrections Program (NeDiC). According to Shaykh Husam, there are already Muslim preachers in all 16 prisons in the German state of Hesse.³³

Clementine Englert, a chief judge and the NeDiC coordinator at the Hessian Ministry of Justice stated that good spiritual-religious counselling in JVA/prisons would automatically positively impact deradicalisation programs. His department – not the Muslim association – carefully and thoughtfully selects and oversees the training of Muslim preachers, with Shaykh Husam serving as coordinator because he is considered the most experienced JVA/prison Muslim preacher. Shaykh Husam explains that everyday life works better in the Wiesbaden juvenile prison with him as the Muslim preacher. The impact is that prisoners feel heard because there is an imam, a Muslim priest, who can speak their language (Muslim prisoners). Another effect is that the prisoners think that the institution (the JVA/prison) has considered their faith/religion seriously and offers them ways to practice it through opportunities to pray and even discuss religious issues and other matters with Muslim clergy of the JVA/prison such as Shaykh Husam”.³⁴

According to Shaykh Husam, the prisoners have diverse backgrounds. There were refugees caught stealing phones, youths arrested for drug possession, and people who wanted to establish an Islamic state in Germany or join ISIS in Iraq and Syria. There was also a discussion with Shaykh Husam about the fear of recidivism and atrocities due to fighting in Syria and fleeing wars in the Middle East. According to Shaykh Husam, in a state of confusion and anger, many young people are vulnerable to a simplistic black-and-white worldview, leading to extremism and violence in the name of religion. There is also an identity problem. For example, prisoners who feel they are considered Turkish, Albanian or Bosnian by their German friends and, even though they are seen as German by their parents. In the end, they seem to be trapped in an identity conflict. If that is the case, Shaykh Husam sometimes simply answers, ““You do not belong anywhere; be a Muslim.” He said all he did was offer them a third way.”³⁵

Then, Shaykh Husam talks about Abdul. He is a convert and Muslim extremist who spent five years in prison on robbery charges. He used to be

³³ Isabelle de Pommereau, “To Fight Terrorism, a German Imam Makes Daily Trek to Pison,” *csmmonitor.com*, 2021, <https://www.csmmonitor.com/World/Making-a-difference/2021/0323/To-fight-terrorism-a-German-imam-makes-daily-trek-to-prison#>.

³⁴ Pommereau.

³⁵ Husamuddin Meyer, interview, 2013.

obsessed with becoming one of Germany's young jihadists. When he first met Shaykh Husam, he seemed angry and full of hatred for everyone. However, now he regrets himself. He has repented of his hatred. According to Shaykh Husam, Abdul is currently out of prison and living a normal life in multicultural and multi-ethnic German society by working as an artist.

According to Shaykh Husam, he also met Arid Uka. Uka was the Kosovar Albanian who shot two American airmen at the airport in Frankfurt, Germany, in 2011. This incident is considered the first deadly Muslim extremist attack in Germany. After Mohammed Merah, a French Muslim extremist of Algerian descent, rampaged through southern France the following year, a prisoner came to Shaykh Husam and told him what a great thing Mohammed had done. Shaykh Husam did this; "I looked at him for a long time and said, 'Did he do well? What is his kindness?'"

Shaykh Husam explained that there was a particular pattern according to the statements of the prisoners. They feel that Muslims are being bombed everywhere, in Afghanistan and Libya. Often, a deep sense of injustice lies behind the perpetrators of religious extremism. The prisoners asked whether terrorism is permitted in Islam. Shaykh Husam states, "I told them...No, Islam is the way to achieve inner peace, a good life here and beyond. Terrorism is against the Islamic way."

So, in the deradicalisation program, Shaykh Husam first wants to give prisoners peace of mind because if they are at peace with themselves and are satisfied, they do not need to commit crimes and even feelings of love/*mahabba* towards others they previously considered enemies. He says inviting them to pray and think is the most crucial way. In comparison, Shaykh Husam also discussed religion, social, politics, culture and other issues. However, he admits it is sometimes tricky for extremist Muslim youths to believe. Therefore, Shaykh Husam stated that he needed more than 14 hours per week allotted to him now. He criticised the German government, saying it was time to treat JVA/prison Muslim preachers like full-time Christian preachers.³⁶

Conclusion

The profile of Shaykh Husamudin Martin Meyer as a murshid of the Naqshbandi Haqqani Order (NHO), who plays an active role in the deradicalisation program in Germany, is concrete evidence of Sufism in

³⁶ Husamuddin Meyer, interview, 2013.

establishing peace. Shaykh Husam, born a Christian, became a Muslim convert at a young age due to experiencing spiritual turmoil after an accidental trip to Africa. He also dropped out of his engineering studies and switched to studying Islamic studies, anthropology and geography. Not only being a Muslim convert, Shaykh Husam is also interested in exploring the teachings of Sufism through the Nahqshbandi Haqqani Order.

As a murshid of NHO, Shaykh Husam is a direct disciple of Shaykh Nazim al-Haqqani, the founder of NHO. This tariqa has the concepts of *dhikr* and love/*mahabba*, which Shaykh Husam applied by making them the fundamental values and ideology in the extremist Muslim deradicalisation program in the JVA/prison in Germany. NHO also rejects all forms of extremism and violence in the name of religion, and this motivated him to get involved in the deradicalisation program as a form of contribution to creating peace as one of the critical teachings in Islam.

Shaykh Husam actively integrated Sufism into social life in Germany. However, he stated that he felt different from "Western" society. Furthermore, he wants to challenge the "wrong" interpretation of Islam, which accuses Islam of being a religion of violence. He also challenges fellow Muslims with extremist views that justify violence for their goals. For Shaykh Husam, the "true message" of Islam as found in the Qur'an, Hadith of the Prophet SAW, Islamic history, the teachings of the ulama or teachers, and the Sufi way of life, it turns out that Sufism in NHO can function as a coping mechanism that effective for today's social, political and religious challenges, including deradicalisation & peace program including *peace-making, peace-building, or peace-keeping*.

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S. is the sole author of this article

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