

## Reinventing *Wihdat al-Wujūd*: Locality, Cultural Catharsis, and Spirituality of *Majelis Shalawat Muhammad* in East Java

Rubaidi Rubaidi,<sup>1\*</sup> Husna Jamaludin,<sup>2</sup> Dwi Setianingsih<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Islamic Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia;

<sup>2</sup>Department of Economics, Kulliyah of Economics and Management Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; <sup>3</sup>Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia

### Abstract

This paper examines the teaching of *Wihdat al-Wujūd* in *Majelis Shalawat Muhammad* in Surabaya and Bojonegoro from 2011 to the study period. As a Sufi “organization,” *Majelis Shalawat* under Gus Kahar and Gus Mursyidin (*murshid*) learned the Sufi thoughts on Ibnu ‘Arabi doctrine. This article was established on qualitative research using participatory techniques, in which the author was deeply involved in the *Majelis Sahalawat*. On the one side, this paper explores the Sufi education system of Gus Kahar and Gus Mursyidin from ‘*lelaku*’ or *riyādah*. The result of the inquiry presented a connection between the sanad and Sufi scholars in Java. On the other hand, Sufi thought in various *Majelis Shalawat* indicates a strong *Wihdat al-Wujūd* thought. This article argues that the thought of *Wihdat al-Wujūd* continuing living from time to time is proven by the thoughts of the two *murshids* in *Majelis Shalawat Muhammad* in East Java. These two *murshids* do not directly use the term *Wihdat al-Wujūd*; instead, the term *ahad* or *ahadiyah* is more frequent, which is synonymous with *Wihdat al-Wujūd* doctrines of Ibnu ‘Arabi. It also emphasizes that Indonesian Sufism denotes the importance of locality and cultural catharsis within Javanese Muslim’s spiritual practices.

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\*Corresponding Authors: Rubaidi Rubaidi (rubaidi@uinsby.ac.id), Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Jemur Wonosari, Wonocolo, Surabaya City, East Java 60237 Indonesia.

*Tulisan ini meneliti tentang ajaran Wihdat al-Wujūd pada Majelis Shalawat Muhammad di Surabaya dan Kabupaten Bojonegoro sejak tahun 2011 hingga sekarang. Sebagai “organisasi” sufi, majelis shalawat di bawah kedua murshid; Gus Kahar dan Gus Mursyidin, mereka mengajarkan pemikiran sufi yang berisi doktrin Ibnu ‘Arabi. Artikel ini didasarkan pada penelitian kualitatif dengan teknik partisipatif, dimana penulis terlibat secara mendalam dalam majelis shalawat tersebut. Tulisan ini, di satu sisi, mengkaji sistem pendidikan sufi yang dilalui kedua murshid selama ‘lelaku’ atau riyādah mereka. Ditemukan bahwa, ada hubungan sanad antara kedua murshid dengan ulama sufi di Jawa di era masing-masing. Di sisi lain, pemikiran sufi keduanya di berbagai majelis shalawat menunjukkan pemikiran Wihdat al-Wujūd yang kuat. Artikel ini berargumen, bahwa, sebenarnya pemikiran Wihdat al-Wujūd terus hidup dari waktu ke waktu dan ditemukan dalam pemikiran dua murshid di Majelis Shalawat Muhammad di Jawa Timur. Kedua murshid ini tidak secara langsung menggunakan istilah Wihdat al-Wujūd, tetapi lebih sering menggunakan istilah Ahad atau Ahadiyah yang identik dengan ajaran Wihdat al-Wujūd Ibnu ‘Arabi. Hal ini juga menekankan bahwa tasawuf Indonesia, dengan menyerap ajaran-ajaran sebelumnya dari seorang Guru Sufi, menunjukkan pentingnya lokalitas dan katarsis budaya dalam praktik spiritual Muslim Jawa.*

**Keywords:** *Majelis Shalawat Muhammad; Indonesian sufism; Wihdat al-Wujūd; Ibnu Arabi; locality*

## Introduction

Muhyiddin Muhammad ibn Ali Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Abdullah al-Hatimi, more popular as Ibnu ‘Arabi (560 H /1165 AD - 638 H / 1240 AD), was a prominent Sufi from Andalusia, Spain today. His reputation in Islamic Sufism appeared due to his *Wihdat al-Wujūd* concept. Before or after the ‘Arabi life period, there were no controversial Sufism concepts but the *Wihdat al-Wujūd*. Pros and cons are always vividly visible in the Muslim world regarding the doctrine. Schimmel, a prominent scholar on Sufism studies, reacted, “this, however, is more a theosophical speculation than a true mysticism in the classical sense” (Schimmel, 1975).

Ibn ‘Arabi’s *Wihdat al-Wujūd* spread influence to next-generation Sufi. Almost none of them completely distance themselves from ‘Arabi’s thoughts. Ibn ‘Arabi’s works have been criticized for centuries and can be found in Arabic, Turkey, Malay, or even in Javanese pegon – the Persio-Arabic Script. A great mystical poet, Jalaluddin al-Rumi, cannot escape al-

'Arabi's influence. Similarly, other mystical poets such as al-Iraqi, Jami, al-Jilli, and Shabistari also inherited 'Arabi's domination. 'Arabi's ideas went across continents, from Morocco, Turkey, and the Indonesian Archipelago; across faiths, from Christian philosophers to European mystics in the medieval age. The work of Lully and Dante presents strong 'Arabi's influence, such as what Palacios delivered in *Islam and The Divine Comedy* and Abenmasarra (Affifi, 1939; Muthari, 1985). Uftade, one of the Ottoman's Sufi, in his works entitled *Vakiat*, mentioned al-'Arabi's more than 40 times in various discussion topics. He claimed that he had met 'Arabi several times in his dreams (Munji & Çeyhan, 2018).

In the archipelago, the *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd* doctrine came along with Raden Abdul Jalil, popular as Siti Jenar (1404-1517 AD). According to several *Babad* summarized by Sunyoto, the chain of transmission of *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd* doctrine is through *Tarekat Akmaliyah* and *Syattariyah* (Sunyoto, 2017). This statement emphasizes that *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd*, *ḥulūl*, or *Ittiḥād*, have a valid chain of transmission under Sufi institutions. According to *Akmaliyah* Sufi Order, Hallaj al-Mansur and 'Arabi have connected chains to Abu Bakar al-Siddiq and the Prophet Muhammad (Sunyoto, 2017). The *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd* in the archipelago is not only represented by Siti Jenar in Java but also taught by many ulama in various places, such as; Hamzah Fansuri (1550-1607 AD) and Samsuddin al-Sumaterani (D. 1630 AD) in Sumatera (Miswar, 2016; Rasuki, 2019; Zar, 2015).

In Celebes and Borneo, the *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd* has widely existed since the eighteenth century. Syekh Yusuf al-Makassar was widely accepted as the prominent figure of *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd* in Celebes. In Borneo, the doctrine was spread by Muhammad Nafis Ibnu Idris al-Banjari. Traces of the teachings of *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd* Nafis al-Banjari are available in his work *al-Durr al-Nafis*. Due to the teaching of wujudiya, the Islamic Ulema Council (MUI) of Sungai Utara of South Borneo condemned the teachings as misguided and misleading (Mujiburrahman, 2013). Besides Nafis al-Banjari, the oral tradition of the Borneo Society mentioned Abdul Hamid

Abulung, a.k.a. Hallaj al-Mansur, who was sentenced to death by the Sultan of Banjar under the fatwa of Arsyad al-Banjari for the accusation of spreading *Wihdat al-Wujūd* (Mujiburrahman, 2013).

The doctrine of *Wihdat al-Wujūd* or *manunggale kawula-Gusti* of Siti Jenar became a sounding public discourse in Demak Sultanate from the 15th to 16th century. The doctrine gained many followers, from proletariats to aristocrats. In the manuscript of Negara Kretabhumi, Siti Jenar was followed by high ranks officials such as Ki Ageng Kebo Kenongo (Regent of Pegging), Pangeran Panggung, Sunan Geseng, Ki Lonthang, Ki Datuk Pardun, Ki Jaga Tingkir (Sultan Panjang), Ki Ageng Butuh, Ki Mas Manca, Ki Gedeng Lemah Putih, Pangeran Jaga Satru, Ki Gedeng Tedang, Pangeran Anggaraksa, Ki Buyut Kalijaga, Ki Gedeng Sampiran, Ki Gedeng Trusmi, Ki Gedeng Carbon Girang, Pangeran Cuci Manah, Pangeran Carbon, Ki Buyut Weru, Ki Buyut Kumlaka, Ki Buyut Truwag, Ki Buyut Tuk Mudal, Dipati Cangkuang, Pangeran Panjunan, Syekh Duyuskani/Pangeran Kejaksan, Pangeran Kejawanan, Dipati Suraneggala, Pangeran Mungsi, Ki Gedeng Ujung Gebang, Ki Gedeng Pangurangan, Ki Gedeng Ender, Ki Buyut Bojong, and Ki Buyut Kodokan (Sunyoto, 2017).

In the 17th century, a figure of Amongraga spreaded the *Wihdat al-Wujūd* within the Mataram Sultanate period of Sultan Agung. In the Serat Centini, Amongraga's original name was Jayengresmi. He was a descent of Sunan Giri (Wibawa & Siswanto, 2013). Mataram officials regarded him as a controversial figure spreading moral values in society and opposing power through the doctrine of *Wihdat al-Wujūd* (Wibawa & Siswanto, 2013). Due to the conflict with Sultan Agung, Amongraga was persecuted, but the *Wihdat al-Wujūd* kept surviving. In the 18th century, al-Mutammakkin (-1740 AD) lived in the period of the Kertasura Kingdom. Serat Cebolek mentioned the life of al-Mutammakkin. His manuscript entitled "*Arshu al-Muwahhidin*" explained Sufism doctrine, which is identical to *Wihdat al-Wujūd* (Mutamakkin, n.d.). Due to his teachings on the doctrine in society, the King of Kertasura called al-

Mutamakkin to account for the doctrinal substance, philosophic Sufism, and heretic mystics (Bizawie, 2017). Different from his predecessors, al-Mutamakkin successfully defended his arguments and stepped aside from the death sentence.

The teaching of *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd* keeps surviving in different parts of the Indonesian Archipelago until contemporary modern Indonesia. For instance, a previous study by Howell examined Thoha and *Pusaka Hati* in West Java, disseminating al-'Arabi's thoughts (Howell, 2001, 2007). Like Howell, this paper examines the reflection of *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd* within the tradition of *Majelis Shalawat Muhammad* in Surabaya and Bojonegoro. In the *Majelis Shalawat* Genealogy, al-'Arabi's thoughts passed over the chain of transmissions and deconstructed and recreated a new doctrine called *Aḥadiyyah*. The wujudiya spectrum of thoughts was handed down from KH. Muhammad Tamyiz to his successor, Gus Syamsu Dhuha, Gus Kahar, and now to Gus Mursyidin (initial name). These figures created are the *murshid* and transmitters in *Majelis Shalawat Muhammad*.

### Tracing the Theological Underpinning the *Majelis Shalawat Muhammad*

The phenomenon of the *Majelis Shalawat Muhammad* as a Sufi institution attracts attention from academics. The accentuation of practice-based education in the tradition of classic Sufism education continues to be preserved and maintained until now and has become its benchmark. A *murshid* must be qualified to inherit the teachings of makrifat, especially in *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd*. The *murshid* has a chain of ordering in knowledge and the struggle of knowledge application. The relationship between *murshid* and disciple makes a long process of Sufism training to inherit the knowledge and even complement it. A strict training was handed down over generations in *Majelis Shalawat Muhammad*, created a preserved Sufism genealogy until today.

Historically, Muhammad Tamyiz (1920-1983), known as Mbah Tamyiz inherited three shalawat from his *murshids*, namely *Shalawat*

*Kubro*, *Shalawat Muhammad*, and *Shalawat Adlimiyah*. Mbah Tamyiz then handed down *Shalawat Kubro* to Syamsu Dhuha (1955-2003) as a direct disciple. Then, Syamsu Dhuha transmitted *Shalawat Muhammad* to Kahar (1962-2015) and *Shalawat Adlimiyah* to Mursyidin (1972-today). The majelis is named “*Shalawat Muhammad*” and embraces the three main theological standpoints:

“Tinggalen agomomu, golek’ono pengeran mu,” (leave behind your religion and seek for your God), Syamsu Dhuha stated (Mursyidin, interview, 9 September 2020).

The saying becomes the foundation of *Shalawat Muhammad*’s teachings. “Allah only has one character, the eternity, and other characters are given to human beings,”

Mursyidin stated. “There are ninety-nine configurations of asma’ al-Husna in human beings,” he added (Mursyidin, interview, 19 August 2020).

The first statement is the core of the Sufism tradition’s education system, known as *sālik* and *riyāḍah*. Then, the second statement is the final result of Sufism’s spiritual experience towards *wuṣūl* to God. In other words, the first statement is the methods, or *kaifiyah*, or *tariqah*, to achieve the final destination of *wuṣūl*.

“Tinggalen akal mu, tutupen Kitab mu,” (leave behind your logic and close your books), Kahar stated to his disciples within *pengajian* (Islamic teaching gathering) in Sidoarjo in 2015.

This statement was similar to what Syamsu stated before, representing *kaifiyah*, *tariqah*, or methods in the classic Sufism of *Majelis Shalawat Muhammad*. This system is opposite to the modern education system, which emphasizes rationale. The training in classic Sufism emphasizes trust and belief in mursyids without questioning. Therefore, logic and science must be temporarily left behind to avoid contradiction with mursyids. On a particular level, a *murshid* has a spiritual quality like the Prophet (al-Ghazali, 2005). Al-Jilli describes *murshid* in Sufism as a figure of al-Insan al-Kamil. Disciples cannot reach their mursyids’ self-existence.

Hence, disciples cannot question, protest, or postulate against *murshid*. A *murshid* is assumed to know all disciples' conditions similar to how Musa learned from Khidir.

Gus Mustakin emphasized, “one who still makes use of his rationale and science will never achieve makrifat” (Mursyidin, interview, 12 September 2020).

For years Syamsu, Kahar, and Mursyidin went through *zuhud* lifestyle. That journey was a long phase of Sufism training from *sālik* and *riyāḍah* with fortitude and patience. Syamsu illustrated the process in three phrases, “*Wani loro, kuat soro, betah loro*” (ready to hurt, struggle, and get ill). The phrase was rooted in total dedication to the *murshid* because he can guide the disciples towards *wasul* to the Prophet and God. Tamyiz, Syamsu, Kahar, or Mursyidin had never pursued formal education other than high school. They did not even go to *pesantren* for a long period. However, they practiced *sālik* and *riyāḍah* under their *mursyids*. Besides the guidance from *mursyids*, the disciples also sought knowledge from several *ulama* or *kiai* in *pesantren* with high-quality spiritual leadership. For instance, when Syamsu went through the process of *sālik*, he learned from *Kiai Hamid* of *Pasuruan* well known for his spiritual quality. *Kiai Hamid* welcomed Gus Syamsu by saying, “*Putuku teko, putuku teko*” (my grandson is coming) (Bedjo, interview, 19 August 2019). Even though, Syamsu had never studied in *Kyai Hamid pesantren* before.

Outside visiting prominent *kiai*, *ziarah* to several tombs of *wali*, people with the spiritual closeness to Allah, is another tradition within Sufi circles. In Sufism epistemology, those living cannot meet the deceased, *wali*, but those can learn from the *wali*. Justification for these beliefs is available in the *al-Qur'an* (e.g *Yūnus*: 62 and *Ali Imrān*: 3) and *al-Hadīth*. Kahar or Mursyidin recognized two spiritual epicenters of *Shalawat Muhammad* in *Raden Rahmat* (*Sunan Ampel*) and *Raden Ainul Yaqin* (*Sunan Giri*). According to Mursyidin, all predicates of *wali* cannot be separated from the “approval” from *Sunan Ampel*. In addition, *Sunan*

Giri in the Sufism hierarchy received the predicate “*Prabu Satmata*,” a similar title for Siti Jenar. Samsyu stated the process of *wuṣūl* of himself meeting with Allah and the coming of al-Qur’an into his heart. The process happened in the tomb of Sunan Giri (Bedjo, interview, 9 September 2019). Mursyidin implicitly stated that Sunan Giri asked him to go to a mountain, and he received lessons directly from the Saint (Mursyidin, interview, 9 September 2020).

Besides the ziarah to the tomb of Sunan Ampel and Sunan Giri, *Majelis Shalawat Muhammad*’s disciples also manage to ziarah to *Walisono* (the nine saints) tomb. Bedjo, a key person, and witness of the journey of *sālik* and *riyāḍah* of Tamyiz, accompanied Tamyiz for ziarah to several tombs of Islamic figures in the past. Most of the ziarah were on foot to Surabaya, Gresik, Lamongan, Tuban, Bojonegoro, Sidoarjo, Pasuruan, Malang, Mojokerto, Jombang, and Kediri. In Madura, the sites for ziarah are available in Bangkalan, Sampang, and Sumenep. The number of sites Mbah Tamyiz and Syamsu visited were countless. Kahar preserved this tradition and asked some disciples to come along. Bedjo stated that Tamyiz met Siti Jenar in a ziarah. “*Loh, Mas Jo mboten ningali Kanjeng Siti Jenar tah? Niku wau lungguh ten jejere njenengan*” (Mas Bedjo didn’t you see Kanjeng Siti Jenar? He was sitting beside you), Tamyiz said to Bedjo (Bedjo, interview, 9 September 2019).

Tamyiz had several disciples, but only Syamsu owned the quality of a *wali*. He had thousands of disciples in *Majelis Shalawat Kubro*. He then appointed Kahar to continue his leadership. Kahar also had thousands of disciples in *Jama’ah Shalawat Muhammad*, but only Mursyidin finally inherited the Sufism chain of ordering genealogy. Syamsu and Kahar trained him as he stated “Gus Syamsu trained my syariat and Gus Kahar trained my tauhid” (Mursyidin, interview, 19 August 2019). “*Iki ngalah-ngalahi pendidikan militer*” (it was more severe than a military training), Mursyidin said (Mursyidin, interview, 19 August 2019).

According to Kahar, the essence of Sufism training is kitab *Yā Ayyuha al-Walad*, of al-Ghazali as the codes of conduct. “For five years, Gus



Syamsu must live under the beduk of Sunan Ampel mosque under the direction of Mbah Tamyiz” Bedjo stated (interview, 19 August 2019).

For years, Syamsu accompanied Tamyiz to visit tombs of holy people. For that period, Syamsu had been given two pairs of bakiak (wooden footwear) and white cloth -which was used to cover the tomb of Sunan Ampel- to wear. The journey from one place to another was managed on foot until the bakiak was damaged. For this reason, thousands of Syamsu’s disciples gave up in the *sālik* and *riyāḍah*.

“*Muridku ribuan. Sakmono akehe, ora onok seng weruh aku, ora onok seng isok nembus langit sap pitu, kejobo Kahar karo Mursyidin,*” (my disciples were thousands. They did not know me. None of them had arrived at the seventh level of the sky except Kahar and Mursyidin), Syamsu said (Bedjo, interview, 11 February 2020).

Kahar and Mursyidin also experienced heavy training of *sālik* and *riyadhah*. Since becoming a disciple of Syamsu, the youth of Kahar was dedicated to his *murshid*. Kahar initially desired the university, but Syamsu took away the money for the university enrolment (Kahar, interview, 17 July 2015).

For three years, Kahar lived separately from his parents. One day, he had someone deliver *ote-ote* (local snack) for his mother. Syamsu was very angry with the discovery and said,

“*Jipuk.... Jipuk maneh. Wong tuwo mu ora isok gowo awak mu neng pengeran. Aku seng isok gowo neng pengeran. Yo aku iki Pengeran mu*” (Get it (the snack). Your parents cannot take you to Allah. However, I can. So I am your God).

The sentence could be a test for Kahar from his *murshid*. At the end of his life, Syamsu asked for Kahar’s apology,

“*Aku jaluk sepuro ya. Awak mu wes tak apak-apakno tapi tidak pernah berubah akidah mu. Besok Aku melok awakmu*” (I asked for your forgiveness. I have tested you harshly but you still keep your faith) (Kahar, interview, 14 June 2015).

In the process of *sālik* and *riyadhah*, Kahar had to perform *ziarah* to several tombs of *wali*. He had two pairs of bakiak from his *murshid* and a cloth which used to cover the tomb of Sunan Ampel. In addition,

whatever the *murshid* asked from him, he made it available no matter how. Sometimes the *murshid* asked him for money or other stuff. Within the training, he even received corporal punishment or slanders from his *murshid* (Rubaidi, 2016).

One day, Barri, also a disciple of Syamsu, almost managed to kill Kahar due to misleading information from his *murshid*. His *murshid* was a great pretender (Bedjo, interview, 11 February 2020). “As long as your *murshid* never takes your rights, you are yet learning. “When your *murshid* takes your rights, he is starting to transmit knowledge silently,” Kahar stated while explaining the meaning beyond the training, punishment, or even slanders from his *murshid* (Kahar, interview, 14 June 2015).

The next generation, Mursyidin, had two *murshids*, Syamsu and Kahar. Mursyidin often received contradictory orders from his *mursyids*. To show his dedication to the *mursyids*, he had two jobs, and the salary was for the *mursyids*. Some were for Syamsu and others for Kahar, although Kahar finally managed the money for Syamsu (Mursyidin, interview, 9 August 2020).

Mursyidin’s training was slightly different from his *mursyids*. His *murshid* managed to visit tombs that Tamyiz visited. However, Mursyidin spent much time in two sites, the tomb of Sunan Ampel and the tomb of Sunan Giri. One day he misheard Syamsu’s order. He did *tirakat* in the tomb of Sunan Ampel every night instead of once a week as initially ordered, as Syamsu spoke very softly and was difficult to catch (Mursyidin, interview, 11 February 2020). His digestive system was bleeding because of that. He has been managing this ritual for 20 years until today. Another order from the *murshid* was to visit the tomb of Sunan Giri when the site had few visitors (Mursyidin, interview, 11 February 2020). This order was almost impossible because visitors were always crowding the sites. To take on the *murshid*’s order, Mursyidin came to the site from dawn to eight in the morning. When visitors came, he made his way out. Other disciples did not know what Mursyidin did.

All ziarah to the tombs was made on foot within towns. After Kahar passed away in 2015, Mursyidin continued the spiritual leadership of his mursyids.

### *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd* in the *Shalawat Muhammad's* Doctrine

The spectrum of Sufism thoughts in *Majelis Shalawat Muhammad* shows the influence of ideas by al-'Arabi, al-Hallaj, and Abu Yazid al-Bustami. Tamyiz' successors do not explicitly state the influence of thoughts. However, the doctrine of *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd* in al-Hallaj's and Siti Jenar's jargon "ana *al-Haqq*" appears in the successors' thoughts. Ibn 'Arabi didn't mention the word of *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd* directly. His students concluded and used this concept to explain his teacher's doctrines. Some of his students were; Ṣadr al-Dīn Qunawi (dead 1210 AD), Afif al-Dīn al-Tilimsani (dead 1291 AD), and Sa'd al- Dīn Hammuyah (dead 1252 AD) (Bistara, 2020).

Kahar, in many restricted forums, discussed Siti Jenar, Hamzah Fansuri, up to al-Mutamakkin. Mad, one of Kahar's disciples, had an order from the *murshid* to trace a Kitab written by al-Mutamakkin in Pati, central Java. He finally found out *Kitāb Arsh al-Muwahhidīn*. In the restricted forum, Kahar discussed the kitab in front of his several disciples (Mad, interviews, 22 July 2015).

Sufism in *Majelis Shalawat Muhammad* boils down to the concept of oneness of Allah. This concept comes from *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd* of Ibnu al-'Arabi. However, only a few disciples are exposed to the conception by the *murshid* of *tarekat* in restricted forums after a pengajian. The forum then goes more strictly as the *murshid* only meets selected individuals to meet the *murshid* individually. Some disciples still remember pieces of conversation between them and their *murshid*. For instance, Syamsu Dhuha said "Kon kepingin ngerti al-Qur'an? Yo aku iki al-Qur'an. Kon kepingin ngerti Rasulullah atau Allah? Yo aku Rasulullah yo aku Allah iki," (do you want to know al-Qur'an? Here I am. Do you want to know the Prophet or Allah? Here I am the Prophet and I am Allah) (Bedjo, interview, 11 February 2020).

Syamsu's spiritual journey with Tamyiz achieved its peak when he was in the tomb of Sunan Giri. Syamsu met Sunan Giri, then he *wuṣūl* (meeting Allah) and he received al-Qur'an in his heart.

There are much more similarities between the teaching in *Majelis Shalawat Muhammad* and other Sufism circles. In one day, Syamsu told to senior disciples, “*Kon sembahyang eleng Aku wae wes apik. Arep eleng pengeran tah? Pengeran seng endi*” (when you pray and you remember me, it is fine already. Do you want to remember Allah? What is Allah like? (Bedjo, interview, 11 August 2017). From the substance, this statement is similar to the statement of KH. Mustain Romli (*murshid* of tarekat Qadiriyyah-Naqsyabandiyah) to his disciples. A disciple of Mustain then became a disciple of Kahar said, “if in the grave you are asked who your God is, just answer: Mustain. If you are asked who your prophet is, just answer: Mustain” (Nasruddin, interview, 15 June 2017). This statement is substantially quite identical with previous sufis' statement such as al-Hallaj and Siti Jenar.

When following his mursyids, Syamsu never learned kitab such as what santri (disciples) do in most pesantren. During the training of *lelaku* and *riyāḍah* spiritual exercise, there are two main steps every disciple must follow. First, there is a process of *fana'*, emptying individual passion and another symbol of selfness of human beings. Following *fana'*, there is a phase of *tajrid*, the internalization of God-ness characters into human being. Second, one must implement the meaning of verses in *Shalawat Muhammad* and al-Qur'an in human attitudes and real actions. In the first phase, there is an internalization process God (micro-cosmos) and human being (macro-cosmos), between “the One” with “the many”, or “the Absolute” with the possible”. This achievement positions someone to be “integrative” with God. Then, the next step makes one able to receive the “revelation” of al-Qur'an (Bedjo, interview, 19 August 2017).

Due to the spiritual journey, Kahar categorizes al-Qur'an into two kinds based upon its form, the “dry” and the “wet.” The dry one is in the form of mushaf al-Qur'an with text contents. Oppositely, the wet al-

Qur'an is an al-Qur'an entity coming into the heart of Sufi after implementing verses within the process of *sālik* and *riyāḍah*. Syamsu's statements, such as "I am the prophet," can be explained by al-Jilli in his concept of *tajalli*. According to al-Jilli, a Sufi on a specific spiritual level can achieve a "prophetic level," such as Prophet Muhammad. In his work, *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, al-Jilli stated in front of a selected disciple: "*ashhadu annī Rasūlullāh*" (I witness that I am the messenger of Allah). Then his disciples responded, "*ashhadu annaka Rasūlullāh*" (I witness that you are the messenger of Allah) (al-Jilli, 2010). According to al-Jilli, nur Muhammad can manifest in the self of Prophet Muhammad and Sufi, which Allah prefers. Prophetic characteristics and even God-ness characteristics emerged in Sufi, which nur Muhammad came to.

Essentially, al-Jilli's thoughts are quite similar to al-'Arabi's *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd*. Al-'Arabi begins his explanation with a statement, "Almighty God who created all things where He made Himself as the essence in all things (*a'yunuhā*)." This statement shows that al-'Arabi taught the philosophy of "a cosmism" upon wujud that the universe's genesis is no more than the shadow of the Essence beyond. Therefore, the Essence of prophethood is equal to the Essence of God. The Essence of prophethood is nur Muhammad in which after the prophet passed away, the nur can internalize into purified souls, such as al-Jilli or Syamsu in this context. The term "*tajalli*" or "teofani" or self-manifestation of God has long been popular in the Sufism world. Al-Jilli discusses the exposure of God through His actions (*tajalli af'āl*), His names (*tajalli al-asmā'*), his character (*tajalli al-ṣifat*), and His substance (*tajalli al-dhāt*). This concept has widely known in the tradition of tarekat al-Kubrawiyya (Bruinessen, 2010).

To get the sense of *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd* from a perspective of "absolute substance" as the Essence of all things, al-'Arabi argues that one must regard two foundational comprehensions, the idea of existence and the existence itself (Muthari, 1985, p. 70). According to 'Arabi, God is an absolute substance (*al-Wujūd al-Muṭlāq*) as well as a universal substance

(*al-Wujūd al-Kulli*), which is the Essence of the beginning and the ending of all existence. Outside God is relative and possible existence (*al-Wujūd al-Mumkināt*). Absolute substance as the resource of all genesis is the existence that is similar to the substance (*maujūd bi al-wujūd huwa' a'yunuhu*). In other words, this is a substance in which its existence is absolutely required (*wājib al-wujūd li Dhātihī*). God, as the absolute substance, must exist. Otherwise, others would never exist.

In the development of the thought of *Wihdat al-Wujūd*, Kahar relies on al-Qur'an and al-Hadith. He frequently cited two hadiths, “*Man ‘arafa nafsahu faqad ‘arafa Rabbahu,*” (who knows him/herself, he/she knows his/her God) and “*Man ‘arafa al-Ḥaqq faqad shahidahu fi kulli shay-in.*” (Whoever is able to witness God, he/she is able to see God in everything). These two hadiths explain the relationships between the absolute and the possible, where the absolute exists in every aspect of the possible. From this understanding, Gus Kahar explained the Essence of tauhid (oneness of God) through a simple description, such as: “The characteristics of Allah in not only ninety-nine. That characterization was made by scholars. Allah’s characteristics are many. Whatever we meet is substantially the characteristic of Allah. Human beings, plants, and the universe are the characteristics of Allah” (Rubaidi, report, 23 March 2015). This statement explains that Allah exists in every creation.

Kahar’s thought accommodates much influenced by al-Jilli. He manages logic structure based upon al-Jilli’s concept of *tajalli*. He argues that Allah creates His creation by developing *rūh* and *jasad* first, then *Asmā’*, *Ṣifāt*, and *Af’āl* of Allah penetrate the creation, making the new creation thinks about the existence of Allah (Rubaidi, report, 23 March 2015).

Kahar goes more deeply in explaining the essence of the possible (*al-Wujūd al-Mumkināt*). There are four elements of God-ness inside the possible: *Dhāt*, *Ṣifāt*, *Af’āl*, and *Asmā’*. Thus in Sufism, *asmā’* of Allah is not limited to the ninety nine (*asmā’ al-Ḥusnā*) because every creation in the universe represents *Dhāt*, *Ṣifāt*, *Af’āl*, and *Asmā’* of Allah.

Another foundation explaining the relationship between the Absolute and the possible, a hadith Qudsi, stated, “I am a hidden treasure. Then I want to be known, then I create creatures” (Sunyoto, 2017). ‘Arabi illustrates that the existence of the Absolute in relation to the Possible is like a reflection that bounces from its original form. Similar to al-’Arabi, both Kahar and Mursyidin illustrate the form of God with the term “mirror of taste.” A person’s appearance in the mirror is what is meant by *al-Wujūd al-Mumkināt*. Instead, the original form outside the mirror is *al-Wujūd al-Mutlāq*. *Al-Wujūd al-Mumkināt*, physically as seen in the glass, is not the original form of *al-Ḥaqq*. However, *al-Wujūd al-Mutlāq* cannot be witnessed whenever He does not show Himself in His *al-Mumkināt* form.

Essentially, the concept of “mirror” and “shadow” of al-’Arabi or “mirror of taste” in Kahar’s terms can explain the relationship between *al-Ḥaqq* and *al-Khalq*. Al-Ḥallaj and Siti Jenar stated “*ana al-Ḥaqq*”. Syamsu makes use of identical statements like what al-Ḥallaj and Siti Jenar did. In al-’Arabi’s view, *ana al-Ḥaqq*’s statement can be explained from two points of view. If it is seen as the essence of events, then it is called *al-Ḥaqq* (The Essence). Conversely, when it is viewed as an event that manifests from the essence, it is *al-Khalq*. Al-Ḥaqq is the One, and *al-Khalq* is the appearance (Muthari, 1985). In principle, both the One and the many are names for the Substance of One, similar to the words of al-Ḥallaj, Siti Jenar, and Syamsu. I met Kahar one time in Surabaya. He stated, “What if I say I am the Messenger of Allah. I am God” (Kahar, interview, 23 March 2015). He made the statement to me over coffee. At this meeting, Kahar wore shorts below the knee, a short-sleeved shirt, accompanied by sunglasses and a hat. At a glance, his appearance is no different from a middle-class, or businessman. Indeed, there was no sign at all that he was a waliyullah. Kahar, in layman’s language, explained that *ana al-Ḥaqq* means to unite the divine qualities in a person. Thus, one cannot see others only through physical appearance or clothing attributes.

From Kahar’s view, the meaning of *al-Ḥaqq* can be translated into several commentaries: First, when someone is looking at everything, he is

actually seeing Allah. The meaning of Allah here can be interpreted from *Dhāt, Ṣifāt, Af'āl,* and *Asmā'* in *al-Wujūd al-Mumkināt*. *Second*, all one's actions and movements are not personal actions but that coming from Allah. *Third*, in seeing all forms is none other than Him. So, there is an absence outside Him. Allah is single, no two or three. When someone reaches the level of *al-Ḥaqq*, according to Kahar, he does not need another intermediary. "I am feeling disturbed with that person. He interfered with my relationship with Allah" said Kahar. The person referred to by Kahar in his statement is none other than the Prophet Khidir. Some of the explanations of Kahar above align with the words of Sunan Bonang quoted from Serat Siti Jenar (1922): "The perfection is on the person with perfect makrifat, his views will disappear, nothing is seen, and he becomes a vision of God the Greatest. The worshipping turned into the worshipped. All his wills are lost because the Almighty has overcome him. There was no deliberate movement as a person because he had become blind, deaf, and mute. All vanished. All motion comes from God" (Sunyoto, 2017).

On the spiritual level, believed by someone who has become one with God (ana *al-Ḥaqq*), there is an implication in the meaning of heaven, hell, the afterlife, and so on. All abstract concepts, which generally are interpreted as stand-alone events coming after the phase of human death, are happening in this world. In Kahar's view, the essence of all these concepts actually exists in this world. In other words, the meaning of heaven, hell, the afterlife, or something else happens in the world when humans are still breathing out. This view of Kahar has been confirmed by Sunan Mojoagung in a debate with Siti Jenar, as stated in the Serat of Siti Jenar: "In our opinion, in the afterlife, there is no such thing as faith, monotheism, and makrifat. All this only exists here (in the world); there is no more in the afterlife. The true relationship between servant and God is revealed in praise and worship. Similar acts no longer exist in the afterlife. If people do not believe and do not know the 'true knowledge', they do not develop into perfect human beings" (Sunyoto, 2017).



### Not only *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd* but also *Aḥadiyyah*

Ibn' Arabi was not the first originator of the concept of *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd*. He further refined the concept. This concept was previously popularized by al-Hallaj. Therefore, in some basic concepts, Ibnu 'Arabi is not just different from the viewpoint of al-Hallaj, 'Arabi even criticized it. Although al-'Arabi accepts the influence of al-Hallaj's teachings, especially of the theory of lahut and nasut, he disagreed al-Hallaj's dualism, the doctrine of *ḥulūl* and *ittihād*. Al-Hallaj states that the elements of lahut (the divine) and nasut (human) can be united under certain conditions of mystical experience in the form of an exchange of places (*ḥulūl*). 'Arabi rejects the unification and exchange of places between lahut and nasut. However, al-'Arabi confirmed al-Hallaj's famous statement, "*ana al-Ḥaqq*" in the sense that human beings and the universe are the extensions of God's verses and addresses, or as the revelation of His secret (Muthari, 1985). The role of al-'Arabi with the concept of *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd*, in some ways, contradicts the view of *ḥulūl* al-Hallaj. However, in fact, 'Arabi further refines the concept of *ḥulūl* (Feener, 1998).

Like the *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd* of al-'Arabi rooting in al-Hallaj, the concept of *Aḥadiyyah* was also coined by al-Jilli in his work *al-Insān al-Kāmil*. This concept is intended to explain his grand theory about *tajalli* (al-Jilli, 2010). The concept of *Aḥadiyyah* in al-Jilli's view is a ladder from someone's *tajalli* to *al-Ḥaqq*. As a ladder, the *Aḥadiyyah* is a phase of a Sufi to contemplate that he is a part of *al-Ḥaqq*. In other words, the *Aḥadiyyah* is the unity (*tajalli*) of the self-essence in a Sufi towards *al-Ḥaqq*. The concept of *Aḥadiyyah* in al-Jilli's thought presents the discourse of dzat only, and not yet in the area of *Asmā'*, *Ṣifāt*, and *Af'āl* (al-Jilli, 2010).

The core concept of *Aḥadiyyah* in the view of Kahar and Mursyidin intended here is in the *rūḥ*, the *quddusiyyah* or *rūḥullāh*. The physical body can be described as part of His *Dhāt*, *Ṣifāt*, *Af'āl*, and *Asmā'* inherent in humans. In contrast to al-Jilli, ahad is not the beginning of the

process towards *tajalli*, but rather the peak of *tajalli* itself. In other words, *Aḥadiyyah* can be interpreted as a sufi process of into *Dhāt*, *Ṣifāt*, *Af'āl*, and *Asmā'*. All attributes that exist in a Sufi's self is only *al-Ḥaqq* itself.

There are differences between *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd* and *Aḥadiyyah* in accordance to the *Shalawat Muhammad's* thoughts. Kahar argued that *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd* still recognizes the separation between the servant and God in which the servants immerse themselves in God. Siti Jenar's beliefs still place human beings as His creation. The key concept of *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd* is the will of *al-Mumkināt* to immerse into *al-Ḥaqq* (Mursyidin, interview, 9 September 2019). In opposition, *Aḥadiyyah* believes that God -with His will- immerses in the servants. There is no more *al-Mumkināt*, creation, or servant here in *Aḥadiyyah*. Ahad means that *al-Ḥaqq* manifests Himself into *al-Khalq*. "Everything is derived from my Ahad," said Mursyidin in a dialogue with Allah (Mursyidin, interview, 6 September 2020). "Everything in you and in your moral behavior is Allah," said Mursyidin. In different degrees, the emphasis on *Aḥadiyyah* is on the "will" of *al-Ḥaqq* as "subject," not as an "object" like in the *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd*. Therefore, another core thought of *Aḥadiyyah* is the eternity of *al-Ḥaqq* in *al-Khalq*. Mursyidin stated:

"Actually, we pray, we worship, or whatever, we worship Himself (in ourselves). Essentially, it seems to return to Allah within ourselves. One time I was shown the Ruhullah in myself. Yes, I am Allah in yourself. This is I am Allah who worship, Allah in yourself. It really happened when I prayed" (Mursyidin, interview, 28 December 2020).

In *Aḥadiyyah*, there is no longer an element of *al-Khalq*. All dimensions of *al-Mumkināt* have been completely merged into *dzat*, *asma*, *sifat*, and *af'al* of Allah. As in the dialogue between Siti Jenar and the delegate of Walisongo. Siti Jenar's response was "there is no Siti Jenar, there is only Allah," and "there is no Allah, there is only Siti Jenar" (Feener, 1998). This clause, both from Kahar's and Mursyidin's perspective, is that "Two Allah": Allah in Siti Jenar and Allah as His *dzat*. In the *Aḥadiyyah* conception, there is no longer partition between servants and Allah. Everything has been and is Allah Himself. The form of *al-*

*Mumkināt* has essentially become the essence of *al-Ḥaqq* Himself. The form of *al-Ḥaqq* in *al-Khalq* is thus united and cannot be distinguished and separated anymore. “At this stage, you will be able to understand the nature of wusta prayers, da’im prayers, and so on. “I cannot explain before you experience it yourself”, said Kahar.

Mursyidin added: “*Manunggale kawula-Gusti*” means awake manungso (human body) still serves Gusti (Allah). However, this is not intrinsically, meaning that humans and Allah are different parties. There are two divisions of Allah’ in *manunggale kawula-Gusti*, between human beings immersing Allah. However, actually, I am Allah Himself. I made a question to Allah about who actually human beings are and who I actually am. No human beings nor my mursyids answered the question. Allah Himself answered. Everything will get back to ahad (the Oneness), substantially immerse into *Rūḥullāh*” (Mursyidin, interview, 18 September 2017).

From the view of Mursyidin, one’s maqamat of faith in Sufism cannot be restricted merely in *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd*, for instance. There is *Aḥadiyyah* above *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd*. According to Kahar and Mursyidin, there are actually more levels above *Aḥadiyyah*. Restrictions on certain levels and ideologies in Sufism are more scientific areas. The relationship between *al-Ḥaqq* and *al-Mumkināt*, in its essence, cannot only be framed in the determination of certain concepts or theories. Only *al-Ḥaqq* and *al-Mumkināt* know for certain. In this context, Mursyidin emphasized: “O Allah, it is really that you can only create seven levels of skies and earths. Allah answered: No Mustakim, I am the greatest One and as broad as what you see. Hence, do not restrict anything in your views. Something that manifests in behavior can be interpreted as science. If something is still limited, it means it’s still in the form of science. If it is still based on knowledge merely, one cannot achieve makrifat. Because one can do anything, it’s because of Allah. No potential without the power of Allah. “*Lā ḥaula wala quwata illā billāh*” (Mursyidin, interview, 28 December 2020).

The essence of Sufism itself is nothing but a form of relations between *al-Ḥaqq* and *al-Khalq*, which is very private and confidential. In fact, even a *murshid* who guides a disciple for years will not know when the disciple has referred to *al-Ḥaqq*. The *murshid*'s assignment, as emphasized by Kahar and Mursyidin, only takes a disciple into the way of referring *al-Ḥaqq*. At the time a disciple achieves *wuṣūl*, only he and *al-Ḥaqq* know. Therefore, from an academic dimension, certain ideology (read: *Wihdat al-Wujūd*) is not static or final.

### **Intersecting Locality, Cultural Catharsis, and Spirituality in *Majelis Shalawat Muhammad***

To reflect on the study of *Majelis Shalawat Muhammad* and its nature within its local context, the development of Indonesian Islamic spirituality from the beginning was colored by two models of tradition. First, is union mystic (heterodox) mysticism, which is an understanding that allows the understanding of human unity with God. Second, is orthodox mysticism, which is a mysticism that is guided by the normativity of sharia. In other words, the development of Islamic mysticism in Java is related to two orthodox and heterodox mystical traditions (Machsum, 2019).

Again, *Majelis Shalawat Muhammad* and alike emphasize the contact of the previously Sufistic Islamic teachings with the Javanese culture, as mentioned above, has been woven, integrated, and buried in the folds of the human collective sub consciousness and imprinted into the way of thinking of the supporting community. In other words, the spirituality reflected in the literary texts and practices of Javanese not only instills culture but also instills a paradigm of thinking. This locality in the archipelago history of the archipelago can at least be a cultural catharsis and, in some aspects, maintain social harmony. Even in the future, the local color is still actual to perfect the process of catalyzing and developing culture.

Exploring the values of the spiritual tradition in the context of Javanese locality has an important role in reaffirming local cultural

identity. It is important, considering that the values of the spirituality tradition are a noble eastern culture that can be used as a buffer for national culture and, at the same time, can provide a distinctive characteristic for the identity of the Indonesian nation. In addition, the Javanese Islamic spirituality tradition also helps to color and determine one's mindset, way of thinking, and perspective on the religious values of plural humanity.

The case of *Majelis Shalawat Muhammad* should also be understood very closely in a discourse of locality and localization. Localization, according to Mulder, is a concept that explains that a cultural community that receives outside influences will absorb and restate foreign elements by forging them into their worldview (Mulder, 1999, 2005). This is most likely similar to what has formerly been stated by Eickelman that any religion's ideology and practice are elaborated, understood, and subsequently reproduced in particular places and at particular moments (Eickelman, 1982).

## Conclusions

As an ism, the dimension of Sufism is derived from the essence of Islamic doctrine. It is always up to date beyond the dimensions of time and place. Unlike other branches of Islamic discipline, Sufism has unique methods, enabling the purity of the teachings maintained over periods. The typical methods in question are the transmission of knowledge (teachings) through the continuation of sanad from *murshid* to *murshid*, never interrupted. Unlike other branches of Islamic scholarship, which are only passed on through the tradition of reading and writing, Sufism has a typical transmission in Sufism, which goes through inner language (*rūḥ*) from *mursyids* to disciples of the next generation.

This is a pre-requisite condition for the occurrence of knowledge transmission, which is a disciple is subject to the guidance of a *murshid* or *murshid*. In general, hereditary traditions in the world of Sufism are called "*sālik*" and "*riyāḍah*". Unlike the general scientific tradition, which

emphasizes reading and writing traditions, the “*sālik*” and “*riyāḍah*” traditions emphasize the practice tradition (‘*amaliyyah*). In this “*sālik*” and “*riyāḍah*” training, a disciple must submit without reserve to a *murshid* (murshid). This process is passed with unlimited duration of time. Only a *murshid* understands when a disciple has to stop and how far a disciple believes and serves his *murshid*.

A disciple will stop from the journey of “*sālik*” and “*riyāḍah*” when he has *wuṣūl* (immersed) to Allah and the Prophet. *Wuṣūl* is a symbolic form when a disciple has succeeded in reaching the level of *wali* Allah. At a certain level, one will get directed by the Prophet and Allah himself. With their soul perfection, certain people will be able to unite with *al-Ḥaqq*. At this level of Sufism perfection, the division of *al-Khalq* and *al-Ḥaqq* in someone can no longer be distinguished. This stage is known as *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd* in ‘Arabi’s, or *tajalli* in al-Sybli’s, or *ḥulūl* in al-Ḥallaj’s, or *ittihād* in al-Bustami’s.

As an academic discourse, both Kahar and Mursyidin not only stop at the *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd*. Both Kahar and Mursyidin contribute to the emergence of a new dogma called *Aḥadiyyah*. The views of Kahar and Mursyidin in *Shalawat Muhammad* reflect that Sufism in an academic context should not be static. The difference between the concept of *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd* and *Aḥadiyyah* lies in the relationship between *al-Khalq* and *al-Ḥaqq al-Ḥaqq*. In the concept of *Wiḥdat al-Wujūd* (*manunggaling kawula-Gusti*), *al-Khalq* tries to unite himself into the *dzat*, *asma*, *sifat*, and *aḥwal* of *al-Ḥaqq*. In other words, the subject is *al-Khalq*. On the other hand, in the *Aḥadiyyah* thoughts, *al-Khalq* is not the subject, but *al-Ḥaqq* is *al-Ḥaqq* unifies into *al-Khalq* permanently.[w]

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