

## Tracing the Footsteps of Palembang Sufis from the 18th Century to the 20th Century AD

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### ABSTRACT

Sufism is one of the channels for the entry and development of Islam in the archipelago, apart from being an important part of the spiritual dimension of Islamic teachings, it cannot be separated from the role of ulama as the central figure in the series of dissemination, teaching and existence of Sufism itself. Therefore, this research is aimed at tracing the Sufism scholars in the Palembang city area during the 18th century to the 20th century AD. This cannot be separated from the long history of the Palembang sultanate Dar al-Salam which is central to the development of Islam in the South Sumatra region. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with a literature study approach by searching for literature related to Palembang scholars who are involved in the flow of Sufism. This research shows that Palembang, one of the largest Islamic sultanates in the archipelago, also has scholars who concentrate on tawhid, sharia and tasawwuf. The findings of this research also provide information related to the scholars of Sufism who have been less well known by the people of Palembang itself, besides that there are also several schools of Sufism that are spread and practiced to this day such as the Samaniyah order, the Qodiriyah and Naqsabandiyah orders, the Shattariah order and other orders.

**Keywords:** Ulama, Sufism, Palembang

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cultural development of Islam in Indonesia, especially in Palembang. In this context, the 18th to 20th centuries AD were an important period for tracing the journey of Sufi scholars in this region. During that period, Palembang not only functioned as a center of trade but also as a center for the dissemination and development of knowledge, including Sufism. Sufi scholars in Palembang played a significant role in shaping the character of society and strengthening the influence of Islam through spiritual teachings and profound religious practices. By studying these scholars, we can understand the social, political, and cultural dynamics that occurred

### INTRODUCTION

Sufism, or Islamic mysticism, has been an integral part of the historical and

in Palembang during this period. This paper aims to examine the traces and contributions of Palembang's Sufi scholars from the 18th to the 20th centuries, as well as how their teachings influenced the local community in terms of religious views and daily life. Thus, we can understand the important role of Sufism in the history of Islam in Indonesia and its impact on the people of Palembang to this day.

Palembang is an important part of the history of the archipelago, known not only for the Sriwijaya Kingdom but also as a center of Islamic civilization from the 17th to the 19th centuries AD. The golden age of the Palembang Dar al-Salam Sultanate shows how the scholars not only studied various scientific literature but also presented a value system derived from a combination of theology, sharia, and ethics. This can be seen from historical records in which the Palembang scholars were able to build relationships with all elements of society regardless of ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds. According to (Rochmiantun, 2018b), this was not only a means of preaching but also a form of relationship that bound fellow social beings. (Adil & Harun, 2020) said that Palembang scholars had become a center for Islamic studies from various parts of the country, ranging from Sumatra, Java, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, and even from other countries such as Malaysia, Brunei, Thailand, Yemen, and others (A. Hadi, 2022). In relation to this, Syamsu (1956) describes the role of scholars as not only spiritual figures but also role models in society. Therefore, scholars are often associated with the figure of umara (leader) in community life.

Islam entered the archipelago through the "path of Sufism." Researchers, orientalists, and Indonesian scholars agree that Sufism played the most important role in the spread of Islam in this region. Islamic

teachings influenced by Sufism, with their mystical understanding and interpretation, were in harmony with the cultural background of the local community, which was influenced by Hindu-Buddhist asceticism and syncretism of traditional beliefs. In addition, Sufi orders often showed a more tolerant attitude towards such traditional thinking and practices. This is what led Johns to describe Islam as a religion that was present at that time with a mixture of Indian and Persian influences, which then mixed with various local religious practices, including animism and Hinduism, although perhaps unintentionally.

Although Sufism is often viewed negatively, especially by Orientalists and modern scholars, it has proven to be the main gateway for the spread of Islam in Indonesia. Moreover, over time, Islamic mysticism or Sufi-style Islam has continued to develop and find a more established form. In the 18th century, important Islamic institutions emerged, such as meunasah in Aceh, surau in Minangkabau and the Malay Peninsula, and pesantren in Java. These institutions generally retained the characteristics of Sufism in their teachings and practices. The face of Islam in South Sumatra was greatly influenced by the Sufi tradition, as demonstrated by the important role of Abd al-Shamad al-Palimbani, a figure born in Palembang. Abd al-Shamad, as stated by Azra, was one of the most influential Malay-Indonesian scholars in the network of 18th-century scholars. Through his works, al-Palimbani not only spread the teachings of neo-Sufi figures, but also encouraged Muslims to wage jihad against European nations, particularly the Dutch, who sought to encompass Muslim political entities. In addition, Abd al-Shamad was a major supporter of the Sammaniyah order, which flourished not only in Palembang but also in various other regions of the archipelago. This is why, according to Azra, al-Sammani (founder of the

Sammaniyah order) and the Sammaniyah order became central topics in the writings of subsequent Palembang scholars. For example, Muhammad Zen Syukri, a Palembang scholar who lived until the 21st century, is considered the successor to the Sammaniyah order tradition. His works often refer to the writings of earlier scholars of the order, including the works of Abd al-Shamad al-Palimbani.

Studies related to Palembang scholars place more emphasis on the contribution of scholars in the dynamics of science (H. Nasution, 1995). The role of scholars has been recognized not only as a transition of religious rituals but also as a source of Sufism in line with the Islamic message carried by the Prophet Muhammad (Niswah et al., 2022; Rahman, 2018) (Hidayat, 2020; Taufiqur Rahman, 2019). As mentioned by (Maisyaroh, 2019), Sufism originates from a divine source so that humans can establish communication with one another. In the view of (Firdaus, 2020), Sufism is the first step in building harmony between religions, tribes, races, and ethnicities in society. In line with this, (Taufiqur Rahman, 2019) says that Sufism is actually the responsibility of every individual and group to avoid internal and external conflicts. Often, extremism becomes a big problem that stems from a lack of openness. Thus, Sufism has always been an important part of the changing patterns of society in various aspects, including the concept of Sufism taught and practiced by scholars.

This paper also aims to examine the scope of religious society from the 18th to the 20th centuries in Palembang and its surrounding areas. This is to see the role and contribution of Sufi scholars and to see how the community responded in terms of religion. In addition, this paper also aims to see the dynamics of the spread of Islam in the Palembang region, in terms of figures, history, background, and role in the social

reality of the community. All of these aspects are examined using Berger's theoretical approach in constructing society from three perspectives: background, factors, and implications of the role of Sufi scholars in Palembang. Therefore, there are at least several questions that can be asked in this paper, including: (a) What are the dynamics of the scholars and the development of Sufism in Palembang?; (b) What are the inhibiting and supporting factors for Sufi scholars in Palembang? (c) What is the impact of Sufi scholars on religious life in Palembang? These three questions are expected to provide insight into the role of Palembang Sufi scholars from the 18th to the 20th centuries AD.

This research aims to fill in the gaps by analyzing the concept of Sufism among Palembang scholars from the 17th century to the early 20th century AD, a period during which the Muslim community in Palembang was always able to resolve conflicts and differences within the community by promoting Sufism. It is hoped that this will serve as a bridge to explain how the concept of Sufism practiced by Palembang scholars has had a major influence on the values of Palembang society ( ). The history of Islam in the city of Palembang cannot be separated from the role of Sufi scholars. This is not only because it was part of the method of da'wah used in spreading Islam, but also because it became the foundation of life that mitigated religious conflicts in the Palembang region. As a result, Sufism has often become an integral part of religious social activities in various forms of acculturation between religion and culture. Often, through the role of Sufi scholars, various traditions from previous eras have been preserved by adapting the spiritual dimensions of Islam in their practices.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This paper uses a descriptive qualitative method with a literature study approach in the context of Sufi scholars, focusing on the collection and analysis of relevant texts, both from classical and contemporary works that discuss Sufi thought and practice. The process began with the identification of primary sources, such as Sufi books written by prominent scholars such as Sheikh Abdul Somad al-Palimbani, Sheikh Syihabuddin al-Palimbani, Sheikh Muhammad Azhari al-Falimabi, and others, as well as secondary sources that analyze their intellectual contributions in a social and cultural context. The researchers then conducted an in-depth study of the central themes in these works, such as the concepts of divinity, spirituality, and the relationship between humans and God, to explore Sufi thought that developed in the Islamic tradition.

The literature analysis also includes observations on the historical and social contexts that underlie the thinking of Palembang's Sufi scholars, as well as the challenges they faced at that time. Researchers can use text analysis techniques, including critical reading and interpretation, to identify patterns, themes, and meanings that emerge in the literature. The results of this study are expected to provide deeper insights into how Sufi thought contributed to spiritual and social development in Islam in Palembang society, specifically from the 18th to the 20th centuries AD. Taking into account existing references, this research can refer to sources such as *Manakib Syeikh Samman*, *Dalail al-Khairat*, *Ratib al-Hadad*, *Ratib Saman*, and other books that can be used as supporting data in this paper.

## DISCUSSION

### The Dynamics of Ulama and the Development of Sufism in Palembang

Palembang has a rich history that is interesting to study, one aspect of which is related to the ulama who spread Islamic teachings. This can be seen from a number of Sufi ulama who had a major influence on the development of Sufism in Palembang. They were not only known as ulama who were experts in religious knowledge, but also as figures who made significant contributions to the spread of Sufism in this city (Zulkifli, 1999). In addition, the dynamics of Sufi scholars in Palembang were also influenced by social, political, and cultural factors at that time. Some of the famous Sufi scholars in Palembang include Sheikh Abd Somad al-Palimbani, Sheikh Muhammad Azhari al-Palimbani, and Sheikh Syihabuddin al-Palimbani. They not only taught Sufism to the community, but were also active in fighting for social justice and diversity in Palembang. These factors influenced the dynamics of Sufism in Palembang, making it an important center of spiritual and intellectual development in the region.

However, not all Sufi scholars in Palembang shared the same views, and there were disputes among them regarding the interpretation of Sufism and the role of scholars in fighting for social justice. Some Sufi scholars emphasized spirituality alone without making any concrete contributions to the effort to create social justice in society (Herlina, 2019). This caused divisions among scholars and the community, and raised questions about the responsibility of scholars in fighting for social justice. Nevertheless, there are still many Sufi scholars in Palembang who are actively involved in various social and political activities to create positive change in society. They strive to combine spirituality and the struggle for social justice so that they can have a real

impact on the people of Palembang (Al-Kaf, 2019). Thus, the role of Sufi scholars in fighting for social justice in Palembang has become increasingly important and relevant in the context of social and political developments in the region. With the involvement of Sufi scholars in efforts to create positive change, the people of Palembang are becoming more aware of the importance of harmonizing spirituality and social justice (Briando, 2017). The impact is tangible, inspiring the younger generation to take an active role in building a fair and just society. Therefore, the role of Sufi scholars in fighting for social justice in Palembang cannot be ignored, as they are the main pillars in creating sustainable change.

In the 18th century, Palembang Dar al-Salam experienced significant development of Islam as a result of the Islamization process that began in the 7th century through trade routes between Arabia and Srivijaya (Nasution, 2001). Arab traders not only traded but also spread the teachings of Islam, which received support from local interactions, including marriages with local residents. This process continued until the 14th century, before the emergence of Islamic kingdoms that replaced the Sriwijaya Kingdom (Soli et al., 2022). During this period, the first mosque was estimated to have been built before 1660, marking the growth of the Muslim community in the archipelago. Although the spread of Islam was partly influenced by traders, there are doubts about their significant impact on the local population, which only began to be seen in the 12th and 13th centuries (Apriana & Heryati, 2021), when increased exodus and the development of Sufism encouraged the spread of Islam in the region. The Sultanate of Palembang Darussalam and Dutch colonization then accelerated the development of Islam in this area.

According to De Graaf, from the 15th to the 17th century, Javanese civilization had a significant influence on Palembang culture, connecting the socio-political and religious conditions in both regions. Tomé Pires noted the relationship between the Islamic port kings in Java and the rulers in Palembang who were influenced by Javanese power (Cortesão, 2017). At the height of the Demak Kingdom, Islamic leaders in Palembang felt connected to the Javanese Islamic dynasty (Dina, 2022). The 17th century was marked by Arab immigration to Palembang and the involvement of Arab scholars in government. Palembang developed into a center of Malay religious literature ( ) and experienced a wave of neo-Sufism in the 18th century, in which scholars such as Abd al-Samad al-Palimbani introduced Sunni Sufism (Choiriyah, 2018). Sheikh Abdul Samad al-Palembani, a famous student of Sheikh Samman, played an important role in spreading this order throughout the archipelago, especially in Palembang, through his teachings influenced by Sheikh Samman. Abdul Samad also became a central figure in spreading Sammaniyah Sufism in Malaysia and supported the development of the order in that region (Yani, 2014). His students, such as Sheikh Muhammad Aqib, have helped strengthen the presence of the Sammaniyah order in Palembang to this day (Ravico, 2018). The Sammaniyah order has had a major influence in providing moral and spiritual support to the community, contributing to social balance through active interaction. Muhammad Azhary bin Abdullah, a prominent student, played an important role in teaching this order in Palembang, making him an influential figure. Azhary passed on his knowledge to his son, Haji Abdullah bin Azhari, who also played a role in the development of the order and Islamic education.

Sheikh Abd al-Kerim from Banten also contributed to the spread of the Qodiriyah order in Indonesia, with various rebellions involving scholars, signifying the order's involvement in social struggles. The Qodiriyah and Naqsyabandiyah orders, popularized by Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas, experienced rapid development through treatises explaining the practices and genealogy of the orders, attracting the attention of many followers in Indonesia (Alawi, 2018). The genealogy of the Qodiriyah and Naqsyandiyah orders, especially those related to Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas and his influence in the archipelago. Sheikh Ahmad Khatib initiated several individuals, including Muhammad Murad and Syamsuddin, although there are differences in historical records (Zainurofieq, 2021). The Naqshbandiyah order, which was more organized, spread from India to the Haramain and had two caliphs in the 19th century. The center of Islam moved to Palembang in the 18th century AD, making it a center for Malay-language Islamic studies.

Furthermore, the Alawiyah order, which has always been associated with the Bani Alawi group, has a lineage and title from Ahmed bin Isa Al-Muhajir, known as a prominent scholar who spread Islam, including in Indonesia through Sheikh Ahmad bin Abdullah, who was the predecessor of the Wali Songo (Munir, 2018). The order, which is a way of drawing closer to God by the descendants of Sayyidina Ali, emphasizes self-control and moral renewal, in line with Islamic teachings. The Alawiyah Sufi order, rooted in Muhammad bin Ali Al-Faqih al-Mukaddam, is known for its easier approach to dhikr and wirid, and is closely related to the Hadadiyyah Sufi order (Noupal, 1970). The main points of this order's teachings include purification of the heart and the practice of righteous deeds, based on the Qur'an, Sunnah, and the teachings of the salaf,

with the aim of achieving spiritual sovereignty and closeness to Allah (Muslim & Sa'adah, 2022).

### **Supporting Factors for the Development of Sufism in Palembang**

The factors supporting and hindering Sufi scholars in Palembang are very diverse. On the one hand, support from the community, which increasingly appreciates the role of Sufi scholars in creating positive change, is a major supporting factor. They are considered role models who can inspire and guide the younger generation to play an active role in building a more just and equitable society. On the other hand, there are also inhibiting factors such as resistance from parties who disagree with Sufi teachings ( ) that are considered controversial or incompatible with their views. There are several supporting factors that can accelerate the development of Sufism in Palembang. One of them is the support from the government and related institutions in facilitating Sufi activities.

In addition, active participation from the community in Sufism activities is also an important factor in strengthening the role of Sufism as an agent of change. Furthermore, an inclusive and open approach to various views and understandings of Sufism can also expand the reach of Sufism in Palembang (Rajab, 2018). With these supporting factors, Sufism in Palembang can continue to develop and make a positive contribution to the struggle for social justice. The government and relevant institutions need to continue to work together in facilitating Sufi activities so that they can provide optimal benefits to the community (Ravico, 2018). With active participation from the community, Sufi values can be widely disseminated and become an inspiration for positive change in society. In addition, diversity of views and understanding of Sufism also needs to be appreciated and

strengthened in order to expand Sufi preaching in Palembang and strengthen the role of Sufism as an agent of change that promotes the values of social justice.

Sufism, as a spiritual tradition in Islam, has experienced rapid development in Palembang. Several key factors have contributed to this progress. *First*, support from the government and related institutions has been crucial. This support has not only provided facilities for Sufism activities, but also created space for the community to actively engage in Sufism practices (Ravico, 2018). *Second*, active community participation has been a vital element in strengthening the role of Sufism. Community involvement in Sufi activities not only enriches their spiritual experience but also expands the reach of Sufi preaching (Kurniawan et al., 2022). Through this participation, the community can feel the direct benefits of Sufi values, which in turn motivates them to spread these teachings to their surroundings. *Third*, an inclusive approach to various views and understandings of Sufism is essential (Noupal, 1970). In the context of a diverse society, this approach allows Sufism to be more accepted and applied in various levels of society. With an open attitude, Sufi da'wah can reach groups that may have previously been unfamiliar with these teachings.

Interfaith cooperation and dialogue between religious communities are other important factors in strengthening the values of Sufism (Jamaludin, 2022). In a pluralistic society, interfaith collaboration can create a deeper understanding of Sufi teachings and how they can contribute to a harmonious religious life. This dialogue allows for a mutually beneficial exchange of ideas and experiences, so that Sufi values can be more widely accepted. An open and inclusive social environment is the foundation for the wider dissemination of Sufi teachings (Adil, 2018).

When people are in a supportive environment, they can more easily understand and internalize the spiritual values taught by Sufism. These teachings help communities to appreciate diversity and strengthen solidarity among individuals, creating closer bonds between community members (Suriadi, 2018). Sufi practices provide valuable lessons on wisdom in dealing with differences and conflicts. By practicing Sufism, individuals learn to be more tolerant and respectful of other people's views, which ultimately leads to more harmonious relationships. Awareness of the importance of social justice is also emphasized in Sufism, which teaches that every individual has the same right to be respected.

Networks of scholars and religious leaders play a very important role in spreading Sufi teachings and the values of justice and peace. They can act as role models in practicing Sufi teachings and promoting these values in society (Nurcahyati, 2003). With the support of these leaders, society will become more educated about the importance of diversity and tolerance. In addition, awareness of the potential for the misuse of religion in a political context is also an issue that needs to be addressed (Azra, 2013). Society must be trained to be more critical in responding to issues that link religion and politics. Quality education on tolerance and religious pluralism can be a preventive measure to reduce conflicts between religious communities (Munawati, 2020). By increasing public understanding of various beliefs, a more harmonious and peaceful environment will be created. This is very important for maintaining relationships between individuals and preventing conflicts due to misunderstandings. Through these efforts, Sufism will not only become a preserved cultural heritage, but also a solid foundation for building a more inclusive and mutually respectful society (Rajab, 2018).

Thus, Sufism can contribute positively to building social justice and creating a more just and prosperous society. Public awareness of Sufi values, accompanied by consistent practice, can bring significant changes to the social and spiritual life of the people of Palembang.

### **Factors Hindering the Development of Sufism in Palembang**

Barriers to building tolerance and harmony among religious communities in other villages also need to be considered. One of the main barriers is the intolerance and injustice that still exist in society (Feriyanto, 2020). This can be an obstacle to efforts to build harmony among religious communities, because of the mistrust and tension between groups. In addition, a lack of understanding and knowledge about other religions can also be a barrier to strengthening tolerance and harmony among religious communities (Sarim Karimullah, 2023). Therefore, a more intensive approach to education and socialization is needed to overcome these obstacles. With a more intensive approach in the fields of education and socialization, it is hoped that the community will better understand and appreciate religious differences and develop a more tolerant attitude (Jamaludin, 2022). In addition, efforts to strengthen harmony among religious communities must also be supported by all parties, including the government, educational institutions, and the community itself. Thus, a harmonious and peaceful environment can be created in the multicultural community of Palembang.

Competition with other religious sects also needs to be addressed in a wise and polite manner (Vornika, 2013). All parties need to respect diversity of beliefs and refrain from actions that harm or demean the beliefs of others. All of this shows that by maintaining harmony among religious communities,

Indonesian society can continue to develop in harmony and peace (Azhari et al., 2021; Nasrullah, 2016). Furthermore, Nasrullah mentions that one of the things that needs to be avoided in maintaining harmony among religious communities is a misunderstanding of Sufism (Nasrullah, 2016). Misunderstanding can trigger conflict and disharmony among religious communities. Therefore, it is important for every individual to continue learning and deepening their knowledge about the religions around them. With the right understanding, it is hoped that people can live side by side in mutual respect and appreciation of differences in beliefs. Thus, mutual respect among religious communities will grow stronger and maintain harmony in society (F. M. Nur, 2022). In addition, a correct understanding of religion can also reduce misunderstandings and negative stereotypes about other religious communities (Zuhri, 2016). Thus, Indonesia can continue to develop in harmony and peace without unnecessary religious conflict.

For example, when an individual deepens their knowledge of Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism in their surroundings, they will be better able to understand the values and religious practices of each. This can help in building harmonious relationships with neighbors of the same religion and prevent conflicts arising from ignorance. Conversely, this can also happen when someone misinterprets the religious teachings they have learned, thereby causing conflict with other religious communities (Munandar et al., 2021; Sirait, 2016). Thus, a deep understanding of the relationship between politics and power with religion can help the community avoid getting caught up in games of interest that can harm all parties. Awareness of the potential for the misuse of religion in politics can also help the community choose leaders who truly prioritize the common interest and not just

certain groups. In addition, quality education on religious tolerance and pluralism can also be a preventive measure to reduce conflicts between religious communities. Thus, society can live in harmony and peace without being influenced by politics that exploit religion negatively.

### **The Implications of Palembang Sufi Scholars on the Social Reality of the 18th Century AD**

The implications of Palembang Sufi scholars on the social reality of the 18th century AD can be seen from their role in promoting tolerance among religious communities. They not only provided a better understanding of religious teachings, but also set an example in building harmonious relationships between religious communities. Thus, the contribution of Palembang Sufi scholars was not limited to the spiritual realm, but also had a significant impact in strengthening unity and religious diversity in society. Sufi scholars also provided social assistance to those in need regardless of religion or ethnicity, thereby creating an inclusive and supportive environment (M. F. Hadi, 2018). In addition, Palembang's Sufi scholars are also active in teaching the values of justice and peace, thereby making a major contribution to maintaining social stability and reducing conflicts between community groups (Rajab, 2018). Thus, the role of Palembang's Sufi scholars has an impact not only on individuals but also on the entire community in creating a more harmonious and peaceful life. Palembang Sufi scholars are the main pillars in building a prosperous and harmonious community. They not only provide spiritual guidance, but also fight for peace and justice in the community (Nilyati, 2015; Rajab, 2018). With the values they teach, Palembang Sufi scholars contribute to maintaining unity and harmony among citizens, thereby creating a safe and peaceful

environment for all. The simplicity and sincerity of Palembang Sufi scholars in providing social assistance has also inspired many people to do good deeds selflessly.

Sufi scholars in Palembang in the 18th century AD played a very important role in shaping the social order in society. They were not only religious figures, but also leaders who inspired others with their spiritual teachings and practices of virtue (Amalia & Hudaibah, 2022; Rochmiatun, 2018a). These scholars sought to create a harmonious environment where everyone could live side by side, regardless of differences in beliefs and backgrounds. Through Sufi teachings, they encourage society to appreciate diversity as a unifying force, not a source of conflict. In this context, Sufi scholars become bridges between different communities, encouraging constructive dialogue and mutual understanding. This shows that they do not only focus on spiritual aspects, but are also committed to improving the social welfare of society (Abdullah, 2018; M. Yunus, 2017; Sholihin, 2019). Through positive interactions, Sufi scholars create a space where human values can flourish and become the foundation for a better society.

The role of Sufi scholars is not limited to spirituality, but also includes significant social aspects. In this context, they become agents of real change in society. Through teaching and concrete actions, Sufi scholars seek to build awareness of the importance of interfaith harmony (Maryana et al., 2023; Riyadi, 2014). They often hold meetings and dialogues between various groups to create harmonious relationships. With this approach, Sufi scholars show that diversity can be a unifying force (Nasrullah, 2016). In addition, they are involved in various social activities that address the needs of the community, such as providing assistance to the less fortunate. These activities not only create bonds between individuals but also strengthen

mutual respect and appreciation among religious communities (Efendi et al., 2023; Mursalat & Munandar, 2022). Sufi scholars serve as effective mediators in maintaining social harmony amid existing differences, helping to build a more stable and sustainable society.

One of the main contributions of Palembang Sufi scholars is in providing social assistance to communities in need. By implementing religious teachings that emphasize the importance of mutual aid and solidarity, they are actively involved in social activities. Through this spirit, Sufi scholars often go directly to the field, distributing food and clothing to the poor. This is not just about providing material assistance, but also building a sense of caring among community members (Maulana & Irham, 2023). In this way, they create an inclusive environment where everyone feels cared for and valued. In addition, these actions also build awareness of the importance of sharing blessings among religious communities. Sufi scholars are a living example of religious teachings that encourage people to support one another, both in good times and bad. The social activities they carry out show that they play a role not only on a spiritual level, but also in efforts to improve the overall quality of life of the community.

In an effort to maintain social stability, Sufi scholars teach the values of justice and peace. They emphasize that peace is the foundation for a harmonious and prosperous life. In this context, Sufi teachings encourage people to respect differences and seek peaceful solutions to any conflicts that arise. Sufi scholars act as educators who help the community understand the importance of tolerance and mutual respect (Amboro, 2023; Janeko, 2021). They often hold lectures and discussions on current social issues, encouraging constructive dialogue among various groups. Through this approach, Sufi

scholars contribute to preventing social conflict. They demonstrate that religious teachings are not only for individual benefit, but also serve as a guide in building relationships between individuals and communities (Muzakkir, 2017). Thus, their role is vital in creating a peaceful and just society.

Amidst social challenges and changes, Palembang's Sufi scholars serve as moral pillars for the community (Sholihah et al., 2020). They set an example in behaving in accordance with religious teachings, which serves as a reference for many people. With this example, moral and ethical values are further strengthened in society (Rohana et al., 2018). Sufi scholars are active in educating the younger generation to grow into responsible individuals with noble character. Through lectures, teaching, and social activities, they teach the importance of good values in everyday life. These activities are not only limited to mosques, but also extend to various communities around them. In addition, Sufi scholars are also involved in providing religious education that promotes tolerance and understanding among religious communities. With this inclusive approach, they build a generation that is not only religious, but also has a high level of social awareness (Fajrussalam et al., 2020).

The presence of active Sufi scholars in society helps create an environment free from negative behavior. They set an example in their behavior and consistently practice religious teachings. Through good spiritual practices, Sufi scholars are able to inspire many people to avoid behavior that is not in accordance with religious values (Khotib & Mubin, 2019). In this case, they educate the community about the importance of living cleanly and ethically, both in personal and social life (Rohma, 2020). Sufi scholars also promote mutual respect and appreciation among fellow human beings, which

contributes to strengthening social cohesion. By being good role models, Sufi scholars strive to build collective awareness among the community to create a positive environment. These activities show that spirituality is not only related to an individual's relationship with God, but also includes healthy social interactions in society.

However, along the way, Sufi scholars also face challenges and risks. There have been several cases where Sufi scholars have been involved in financial scandals or deviant behavior that has damaged their reputation and the trust of the community (Al-Kumayi, 2016). Such cases remind us that not all Sufi scholars can be fully trusted. Therefore, it is important to conduct a rigorous selection process in choosing spiritual leaders who will provide guidance to the community (Rohma, 2020; Usman, 2019). The community needs to be more critical in assessing the behavior and integrity of scholars. This is to ensure that Sufi teachings are delivered by those who are truly committed and have integrity. Despite these challenges, many Sufi scholars remain consistent in providing benefits to the community. This shows that even though there are negative cases, there are still scholars who strive to carry out their mandate well.

Spiritual strengthening and character building are two important aspects of Sufism that are the main focus of scholars. They strive to guide people in achieving inner peace and true happiness through a closer relationship with God. In this context, Sufi scholars teach the importance of introspection and self-control in daily life (Mannan, 2018; M. Nur & Iqbal Irham, 2023). Through this guidance, people can learn how to improve the quality of their spiritual relationships and develop good character. With proper teaching, people are expected to be able to solve various life problems wisely and patiently. In addition, Sufism also teaches the values of

empathy and forgiveness, which are very important in building harmonious relationships (Damis, 2014). Thus, Sufi scholars are not only spiritual leaders, but also mentors who help people achieve a more meaningful life.

The dissemination and teaching of Sufism is an important step in expanding spiritual understanding in society. Sufi scholars act as teachers who impart values of wisdom and love to their students (M. Mardjun, 2022). Through in-depth teaching, the community is expected to achieve a higher level of spiritual awareness. The scholars also help individuals find the path to the light of truth and wisdom (Mulyono & Tamami, 2022). By studying Sufism, people are expected to be able to overcome conflicts and tensions that arise in society. Sufism offers a holistic approach to dealing with life's problems, both internal and external. Through the practice of meditation and zikr, individuals can find inner peace and feel the presence of God in their daily lives (Munir, 2016). Thus, the teaching of Sufism is an integral part of building a society full of love and wisdom.

The establishment of socio-economic justice in Sufism teachings is an important element that must be emphasized to students. These teachings encourage the understanding that sharing wealth and helping others is the key to achieving mutual prosperity (Khotimah, 2017). Through these actions, Sufi students are expected to create a just and equitable society (Mursalat & Munandar, 2022). This also serves to reduce social inequality. In addition, Sufism emphasizes the importance of equality and mutual assistance among human beings. In this way, the relationship between individuals and God and fellow human beings becomes balanced. This concept shows that Sufism teachings are not only directed at spiritual pursuits, but also at the social obligation to help others. Students

are taught to become agents of change who strive to overcome injustice and inequality in society (Ulfah, 2016). Through sharing their blessings and helping one another, they can contribute to a harmonious and just environment.

In Sufism, students often form communities or groups that support each other. These groups usually focus on sharing wealth, providing assistance to those in need, and working together to create a fair social environment. However, there is a risk that some Sufi groups only care about their own members. When this happens, social injustice and inequality can increase because only certain groups benefit from Sufi practices (Qisom, 2023). This kind of partiality contradicts the principle of solidarity that should underlie Sufi teachings. Therefore, it is important for Sufi groups to expand their attention to the needs of those around them. By paying attention to the needs of the wider community, Sufi practices can become a means of improving social conditions and reducing inequality (Mus'if, 2018). This also highlights the importance of balancing the internal interests of the group with the public interests of society.

Resistance to colonialism and imperialism has been an important part of the history of Sufi groups in various parts of the world. Sufis have often been a source of inspiration and strength for oppressed communities to rise up against oppression. They combine the spiritual values taught in Sufism with the struggle against oppressive colonial powers (M. F. Hadi, 2018). In this context, Sufis proved that Sufism was not merely an individual practice, but could also have a broad impact in the struggle against injustice (Putra, 2012). Through this resistance, Sufi teachings could build solidarity and courage in fighting oppression. This shows that spiritual power can be a powerful weapon in the struggle against

injustice, as demonstrated by Sheikh Abdul Samad al-Palimbani (Saefullah, 2019). Thus, the struggle of the Sufis encompasses interrelated spiritual and political dimensions, in which they fight for justice and freedom for oppressed communities. Sufi scholars not only provide spiritual motivation, but also guide followers to actively resist oppression (Silawati, 2016). In this case, Sufism teachings serve as a guide in carrying out concrete actions against injustice committed by the authorities. However, there are also situations where Sufis are not always critical of the government. During the Umayyad Caliphate, some Sufis even supported authoritarian rulers and did not criticize their acts of injustice (Amboro, 2023). This shows that not all Sufis chose to stand against oppression, which indicates the complexity of their role in politics. Thus, the attitude of Sufis towards rulers and justice greatly depends on their interpretation of Sufism teachings.

In the context of Sufism, the role of Sufis in politics is not homogeneous. Each Sufi has a different understanding and interpretation of Sufi teachings. Some of them see support for the rulers as a form of submission and loyalty, while others believe that fighting injustice is an integral part of their spirituality (Nurdin, 2023). In this case, justice becomes a very important value in Sufi teachings. This debate reflects the diversity of thought within the Sufi community, where there is a challenge to harmonize spirituality with socio-political reality (Zaini, 2015). Society needs to understand that the Sufi attitude towards rulers can vary, depending on the context and individual understanding. Through this observation, we can realize that Sufism can serve as a tool to promote social justice, but it can also be misused to justify injustice.

The spread of moderate Islam promoted by Sufis also plays an important

role in promoting tolerance and peace. The concept of moderate Islam emphasizes interfaith dialogue, respect for differences, and rejection of extremism. In this context, Sufis can serve as agents of peace who unite communities divided by conflict. By emphasizing love, compassion, and forgiveness in their spiritual practices, Sufis demonstrate that Islam does not teach violence, but rather a doctrine full of understanding (Sidik, 2021; Syarif, 2021). Through these teachings, Sufis strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding among various religious groups. By practicing these values, it is hoped that Muslims can live together in peace and harmony, regardless of their differences. Their actions show that religious principles can be the foundation for social peace. The role of Sufis in creating peace can be seen when there is conflict between two religious groups (Rosyid, 2018). A Sufi has the potential to be a mediator to mediate disputes with wisdom and patience. Through an approach that prioritizes dialogue, Sufis can help reduce tensions and resolve conflicts. Here, the importance of mutual respect and understanding of differences is emphasized. However, there are also examples where a Sufi has failed as a mediator. Despite their good intentions, these Sufis were unable to overcome tensions and instead worsened the situation with their authoritarian attitudes. This shows that a Sufi not only needs to have good intentions, but also good communication skills in order to play an effective role in resolving conflicts. This mistake is an important lesson in understanding that success in mediating conflicts requires more than just good intentions, but also a deep understanding of the dynamics between groups.

Intergroup dialogue is one of the main contributions of Sufis in creating a peaceful society. Through dialogue, they seek to eliminate the prejudices and stereotypes that

often arise between different groups. Sufis invite people to understand that differences are part of God's will and should be respected (Nawawi, 2021). In this way, they can create relationships of mutual respect and support. Intergroup dialogue also serves to reduce the potential for conflict that can arise due to differences in views. In addition, Sufis play a role in educating the public about the importance of empathy and tolerance. These teachings form the foundation for positive and healthy social interactions (Setyawan, 2016). By creating a space for sharing experiences and views, Sufis demonstrate that peace can be achieved through good communication and mutual understanding.

In an effort to maintain the integrity of Sufi teachings, Sufis also need to face external challenges. Sometimes, there is pressure from the surrounding environment that requires them to compromise the spiritual principles they adhere to. In this situation, Sufis must be able to navigate these challenges wisely. The tension between spiritual values and social demands can create dilemmas for Sufis (Istikhari, 2016). Therefore, it is important for them to have a strong understanding of Sufism in order to make the right decisions (Nurcahyati, 2003). They need to remain consistent in practicing their teachings without losing relevance to social reality. Through a deep understanding of their teachings, Sufis can face these challenges with confidence (Arvionita et al., 2023; Dannur, 2021). In difficult situations, their devotion to Sufi teachings can serve as a foundation for maintaining their commitment to the spiritual principles they adhere to.

## **CONCLUSION**

This article emphasizes the importance of the role of Sufi scholars in Palembang and their impact on the spiritual and social development of society from the 18th century to the present. Sufi scholars in Palembang,

such as Sheikh Abd Somad al-Palimbani and Sheikh Muhammad Azhari al-Palimbani, and other scholars not only functioned as teachers of Sufism, but also as agents of social change who fought for justice, tolerance, and diversity. Despite their differences in opinion, many scholars were active in social activities to create positive change in society. Factors supporting the development of Sufism in Palembang included government support, community participation, and an inclusive approach to various views. However, challenges such as intolerance, lack of interfaith understanding, and competition with other sects were also faced. In a social context, Sufi scholars play an important role in promoting social justice and helping to overcome injustice and inequality in society. Overall, Sufi scholars in Palembang contribute significantly to creating a harmonious and peaceful environment, as well as building awareness of the importance of the values of justice and solidarity. They serve as moral and spiritual pillars that help the community face social challenges and educate the younger generation about the importance of tolerance and harmony among religious communities. Thus, the role of Sufi scholars is very relevant in the context of social and political development in Palembang.

This article also highlights the contributions of Sufi scholars in Palembang from the 18th to the 20th centuries, who played an important role in the development of spirituality and local Islamic identity. Sufi scholars, who came from various backgrounds, including the sultanate, immigrants, and the local community, actively spread Sufi teachings that emphasized the values of sincerity, purification of the heart, and a personal approach in relating to God. They established educational institutions, produced religious writings, and integrated Islamic values into

the local culture, thereby creating harmony that strengthened the faith of the Palembang community even during the colonial period. In addition, this article makes a significant contribution to the field of *Islamic Studies* by documenting the rich intellectual and spiritual legacy of the Palembang scholars, providing insight into the importance of Sufism in shaping Islam in the archipelago. This article offers a historical and theological perspective that is useful for researchers to understand how Sufi teachings adapted to the local context while maintaining the universal values of Islam. Thus, this article enriches the literature of *Islamic Studies* through an in-depth analysis that highlights the important role of Palembang Sufi scholars in strengthening Islam Nusantara from time to time.

This study has several shortcomings, particularly in the limited availability of primary sources, which makes it difficult to reconstruct in detail the lives and thoughts of Palembang Sufi scholars from the 18th to the 20th centuries AD. Most of the information comes from secondary sources or records that are not always complete, so there is potential for bias or a lack of authentic data on the social and political contexts that influenced the development of Sufism in the region. In addition, this study does not sufficiently examine the interaction of Palembang Sufi scholars with scholarly networks outside the archipelago, even though this is important for understanding external influences on the development of local Sufism. Therefore, future researchers can explore local and international archives that may contain relevant documents, as well as conduct field studies to gain insights from oral traditions. A multidisciplinary approach, such as anthropology and sociology, can also enrich the analysis of the development of Sufism in Palembang.

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