

Actualizing Ihsan: The Historical Evolution and Contemporary Adaptation of Sufi Orders

Mewujudkan Ihsan: Evolusi Historis dan Adaptasi Kontemporer Tarekat Sufi

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Abstract

This research examines the evolution of Sufism as the practical actualization of ihsan (spiritual excellence), tracing its development from an ethical-ascetic orientation to speculative-philosophical dimensions, its institutionalization into global Sufi orders (tariqah), and its contemporary adaptation mechanisms. The central research question is: How did the diverse streams of Sufi thought, rooted in the concept of ihsan, historically evolve and institutionalize, and what strategies enable them to maintain relevance in a globalized, modern world, particularly in Southeast Asia? This study employs a qualitative library research method with a historical-phenomenological framework. Data is synthesized from foundational Islamic texts like the Hadith, classical Sufi works such as Al-Ghazali's Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, Rumi's Matsnawi, and Ibn 'Atha'illah's Al-Hikam, modern academic books, and recent peer-reviewed journals. The findings indicate that Sufism, far from being a marginal phenomenon, is a central and dynamic dimension of Islam rooted in the tripartite framework of Islam-Iman-Ihsan. It has evolved through distinct historical periods: formative (9th-12th c.), consolidation during major empires (15th-17th c.), and reformist (17th-19th c.). Its enduring vitality lies in the adaptive capacity of the tariqah structure. In the contemporary era, Sufi orders demonstrate remarkable resilience by embracing digital technologies, engaging in inter-religious dialogue, and continuing a tradition of cultural hybridization. This adaptability ensures Sufism's continued relevance as a living tradition for actualizing ihsan in the modern world.

Keywords: Sufism, Tariqah, Ihsan, Historical Evolution, Modernity.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji evolusi Tasawuf sebagai perwujudan praktis dari *ihsan* (keunggulan spiritual), melacak perkembangannya dari orientasi etis-asketis ke dimensi spekulatif-filosofis, pelembagaannya ke dalam tarekat-tarekat sufi global, serta mekanisme adaptasi kontemporer. Pertanyaan penelitian utamanya adalah: Bagaimana keragaman aliran pemikiran sufi,

yang berakar pada konsep *ihsan*, berevolusi dan terinstitusionalisasi secara historis, dan strategi apa yang memungkinkannya mempertahankan relevansi di dunia modern yang terglobalisasi, khususnya di Asia Tenggara? Studi ini menggunakan metode kualitatif studi kepustakaan dengan kerangka historis-fenomenologis. Data disintesis dari teks-teks dasar Islam seperti Hadis, karya-karya sufi klasik seperti *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* karya Al-Ghazali, *Matsnawi* karya Rumi, dan *Al-Hikam* karya Ibn 'Atha'illah, berbagai buku, artikel dan jurnal-jurnal yang sesuai dengan objek penelitian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Tasawuf, yang jauh dari fenomena marginal, merupakan dimensi sentral dan dinamis dalam Islam yang berakar pada kerangka tripartit Islam-Iman-Ihsan. Ia telah berevolusi melalui periode-periode historis yang berbeda: formatif (abad 9-12), konsolidasi pada masa kekaisaran besar (abad 15-17), dan reformatif (abad 17-19). Vitalitasnya yang langgeng terletak pada kapasitas adaptif dari struktur tarekat. Di era kontemporer, tarekat-tarekat sufi menunjukkan ketahanan yang luar biasa dengan memanfaatkan teknologi digital, terlibat dalam dialog antaragama, serta melanjutkan tradisi hibridisasi budaya. Kemampuan beradaptasi ini memastikan relevansi Tasawuf sebagai tradisi hidup untuk mewujudkan *ihsan* di dunia modern.

Kata kunci: *Tasawuf, Tarekat, Ihsan, Evolusi Historis, Modernitas*

Introduction

Tasawuf, or Sufism, originates from the very essence of Islamic teachings, namely *ihsan* (spiritual excellence). This foundation is affirmed in fundamental hadith narrated by 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, in which the Angel Jibril engages in a dialogue with the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to explain the pillars of religion. The hadith outlines the framework of Islam as consisting of three inseparable aspects: *Islam* (outward submission), *Iman* (inner belief), and *Ihsan* (spiritual perfection). When asked about *Ihsan*, the Prophet responded:

أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ

“You should worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you do not see Him, then indeed, He sees you.”¹

This prophetic definition lies at the very heart and ultimate aim of Tasawuf a spiritual discipline and science focused on the purification of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) and the refinement of character in order to attain constant awareness of the Divine Presence. As the practical embodiment of *ihsan*, Tasawuf seeks to cultivate a direct experiential knowledge of God through various methods, such as *dhikr* (remembrance of God) and the transmission of teachings through spiritual lineages.²

Contrary to the view that often regards it as a marginal phenomenon, Tasawuf has historically been at the heart of mainstream Islam and has continued to evolve globally.³ It is not a separate entity from the normative framework of Islam; on the contrary, Tasawuf is deeply interconnected with Islamic theology and law, aiming to realize inner purity and the ethical teachings embodied in the Qur'an.⁴ Its influence has deeply permeated the religious and cultural landscape across the Muslim world, including Southeast Asia, where it has been a formative force for over 500 years.⁵

However, over the course of its development, Tasawuf has undergone significant evolution. It began as a movement of individual asceticism, then progressed into an ethical (*akhlaqī*) orientation, and eventually expanded into more speculative-philosophical (*falsafī*) dimensions ultimately leading to the formation of various organized

¹ Abû al-Husayn Muslim bin al-Hajjâj al-Qusyairî al-Naisâbûrî, *Sahih Muslim* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1992).

² J Hill, “Sufism Between Past and Modernity,” in *Handbook of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Lives*, vol. 1 (Department of Anthropology, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 55–80, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32626-5_9.

³ Hill. “Sufism Between Past and Modernity,”

⁴ P L Heck, “Sufism – What Is It Exactly?,” *Religion Compass* 1, no. 1 (2007): 148–64, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8171.2006.00011.x>.

⁵ K Aljunied, “Sufi Warriorism in Muslim Southeast Asia,” *Sociology Lens* 37, no. 4 (2024): 502–16, <https://doi.org/10.1111/johs.12474>.

Sufi orders (*Tarekat*).⁶ Academic studies often categorize these currents separately. However, there remains a gap in comprehensive analyses that trace the full trajectory of this evolution from thought to institution and identify the specific adaptive mechanisms that have enabled these *Tarekat* not only to survive but also to thrive in the contemporary era.

Therefore, the central research question guiding this paper is: How has the diversity of intellectual and practical currents within Tasawuf rooted in the concept of *ihsan* historically evolved from ethical to philosophical orientations, become institutionalized into various *Tarekat*, and what adaptive mechanisms have enabled them to maintain their relevance in a globalized modern world, particularly in Southeast Asia? This article argues that the enduring vitality of Tasawuf stems from its ability to institutionalize spiritual experience within the flexible framework of *Tarekat*, which are capable of adapting to shifting historical and technological contexts.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using the method of library research. This method is chosen for its suitability in conducting an in-depth analysis of texts, concepts, and historical narratives that form the core of Sufi studies. Data is collected from a wide range of primary and secondary sources to construct a comprehensive and multilayered argument.

The analytical framework employed is historical-phenomenological. The historical approach is used to trace the diachronic development of Sufi thought and institutions, dividing them into key periods in order to understand how the context of each

⁶ A T Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period*, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Department of History, University of Maryland, College Park, United Kingdom: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85213925395&partnerID=40&md5=57f7c3b64804ce5b0a2719600b9984ff>.

era shaped their doctrines and practices.⁷ Meanwhile, the phenomenological approach is employed to interpret the essential structures of Sufi experience and teachings as expressed in its sources, focusing on the meanings behind key concepts such as *ihsan*, *sulūk*, and other ritual practices.⁸

The primary data sources include foundational texts that form the pillars of the Sufi tradition, such as *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* by Al-Ghazali, *Matsnawī Ma'nawī* by Jalaluddin Rumi, and *Al-Ḥikam* by Ibn 'Aṭā'illah al-Sakandari. Secondary sources consist of books, articles, and a corpus of peer-reviewed academic journal publications, with a focus on works from the past decade to ensure relevance to contemporary discourse.

Result and Discussion

The Historical Evolution and Intellectual Pillars of Tasawuf

The development of Tasawuf can be mapped through several distinct historical periods, each supported by the monumental works of its key intellectual figures.

Early Period (9th–12th Century)

Tasawuf emerged as a recognizable mystical tradition in the 9th century, spreading rapidly from its center in Iraq to other regions. This formative period was marked by the integration of Sufi teachings on spiritual purity with the popular veneration of saints (*awliyā'*), which gradually elevated the social status of Sufi piety within the broader Muslim community.⁹ In its early phase, the movement was primarily

⁷ See, for example, the periodization proposed by Karamustafa. *Sufism: The Formative Period*; Rachida Chih, "The Islamicate World, 1500-1800," dalam *A Companion to World History* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017); dan John O. Voll, "Sufism in the 18th and 19th Centuries," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁸ I Mannopov, B Rajavaliev, and Z Juraev, "Tasawwuf as Ethical Science: Embodied Pedagogy in the Poetics of Khoja Ahmad Yasawi," *Cogent Arts and Humanities* 12, no. 1 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2025.2521206>.

⁹ Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period*.

oriented toward *zuhd* (asceticism) as a reaction against materialism, which later evolved into an emphasis on *mahabbah* (divine love). This period also witnessed the emergence of diverse intellectual approaches, including the thought of influential figures such as al-Ḥallāj and Ibn ‘Arabī, whose works laid the foundation for the *falsafī* (philosophical) strand of Sufism.¹⁰

Amidst these developments emerged Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111 CE), widely known as *Hujjah al-Islām* (The Proof of Islam). After undergoing a profound spiritual crisis and intense doubt (*syak*), al-Ghazālī found certainty and inner peace through the Sufi path.¹¹ In his magnum opus, *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* (*The Revival of the Religious Sciences*), he systematically reconciled Tasawuf with orthodox Sunni theology. Al-Ghazālī demonstrated that Sufism was not a deviant teaching, but rather the soul and essence of the *sharī’ah* itself.¹² Al-Ghazālī mapped the Sufi path as a psycho-moral discipline, in which every outward act of worship such as *ṣalāh* (prayer) must be accompanied by inner presence of the heart (*khushū’*) as its spiritual essence.¹³ He elaborated on the spiritual stages (*maqāmāt*) that a *sālik* (spiritual seeker) must pass through such as repentance (*tawbah*), patience (*ṣabr*), asceticism (*zuhd*), and trust in God (*tawakkal*) all of which are deeply rooted in the Qur’an and the Sunnah.¹⁴ Thus, al-Ghazālī succeeded in elevating Tasawuf to a respected and accessible discipline within the broader Muslim community, laying a solid foundation for what came to be known as Ethical Sufism (*Tasawuf Akhlāqī*).

¹⁰ Mubaidi Sulaeman, “Pemikiran Tasawuf Falsafi Awal: Rabi’Ah Al-‘Adawiyah, Al-Bustamī, Dan Al-Hallaj,” *Refleksi Jurnal Filsafat Dan Pemikiran Islam* 20, no. 1 (2020): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ref.v20i1.2235>.

¹¹ Ahmad Zaini, “Pemikiran Tasawuf Imam Al-Ghazali,” *Esoterik: Jurnal Akhlak Dan Tasawuf* 2, no. 1 (2016): 150.

¹² Adib’Aunillah Fasya, “Konsep Tasawuf Menurut Imam Al-Ghazali,” *JOUSIP: Journal of Sufism and Psychotherapy* 2, no. 2 (2022): 153–66.

¹³ Al-Ghazali, dalam *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, menjelaskan bahwa shalat tanpa *khushu’* (kehadiran hati) ibarat tubuh tanpa ruh.

¹⁴ Zaini, “Pemikiran Tasawuf Imam Al-Ghazali.”

Middle Period (13th–17th Century)

During this era, Tasawuf underwent significant consolidation and institutionalization through the establishment of well-structured *Tarekat* (Sufi orders). It was within this period that two great Sufi figures emerged whose works continue to inspire millions to this day.

Jalaluddin Rumi (d. 1273 CE), the poet of divine love, immortalized the teachings of Tasawuf in soul-stirring poetry. His monumental work, the *Matsnawī Ma 'nawī*, is an ocean of wisdom composed of approximately 25,000 verses, weaving together mystical insight, ethical reflection, and spiritual longing.¹⁵ For Rumi, understanding the world and attaining spiritual realization could only be achieved through love (*'isyq*), rather than solely through physical effort or intellectual reasoning.¹⁶ Love, in Rumi's view, is a cosmic force and spiritual energy that enables the human soul to transcend the ego and soar toward the Divine. He writes:

“This is Love (*'isyq*): to fly heavenward,
Every moment tearing a hundred veils.”¹⁷

His teachings, which became the foundation of the Mawlawiyyah Order, emphasize that true love leads one to see beyond outward forms and to discover the divine essence within all things.¹⁸

Meanwhile, Ibn 'Aṭā'illah as-Sakandarī (d. 1309 CE), the third spiritual guide (*Mursyid*) of the *Shādziliyyah* Order, preserved the essence of his order's teachings in his renowned work, *Al-Ḥikam* (The

¹⁵ Rosliana Rambe, “Konsep Tasawuf Menurut Jalaluddin Rumi (Analisis Terhadap Karya Fihi Ma Fihi)” (Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, 2021).

¹⁶ Nisa'atun Nafisah and Imam Muslimin, “Menelisik Filsafat Cinta (Sebuah Kajian Eksploratif Pemikiran Jalaluddin Rumi),” *Journal of Islamic Education and Social Science* 2, no. 1 (2023): 36–46.

¹⁷ Ulis Syifa' Muhammadun, “Konsep Isyq Jalal Ad-Din Ar-Rumi Dalam Matsnawi,” dalam <https://be-songo.or.id/konsep-isyq-jalal-ad-din-ar-rumi-dalam-matsnawi/>. diakses 29 Juni 2025.

¹⁸ Rambe, “Konsep Tasawuf Menurut Jalaluddin Rumi (Analisis Terhadap Karya Fihi Ma Fihi).”

Book of Wisdom).¹⁹ Unlike systematic treatises, *Al-Hikam* is a collection of concise, wisdom-laden aphorisms, crafted to guide spiritual seekers (*sālik*) along their inner journey.²⁰ The teachings in *Al-Hikam* encourage active engagement with the world while keeping the heart continually connected to God a path distinct from reclusive asceticism. Its central concepts include *tawakkal* (complete reliance on Allah) and the awareness that everything whether divine gifts or denials is a form of *ta'arruf* (divine self-disclosure) from God to His servant.²¹ One of his most well-known aphorisms states:

*"Relieve yourself from managing your affairs, for what has already been arranged by Another (Allah) does not require your interference."*²²

Al-Hikam serves as a timeless guide for attaining *ma'rifah* (gnosis) without abandoning one's worldly responsibilities.

Late and Modern Period (17th Century – Present)

Sufis have continued to play a vital role in religious and intellectual life during this period. New organizational styles emerged, and many Sufi masters led religious reform movements (*tajdīd*) while simultaneously organizing resistance against European imperialism.²³ Although Sufis are often perceived as pacifists, historical evidence reveals a more complex picture. In Southeast Asia, for instance, Sufi figures were actively involved in political movements and even called for jihad against colonial powers demonstrating that their spirituality did not necessarily entail withdrawal from worldly affairs.²⁴

¹⁹ Syekh Abdullah Asy-Syarqawi, *Al-Hikam Ibnu Atha 'illah as-Sakandari: Kitab Tasawuf Sepanjang Masa* (Jakarta: Turos, 2019).

²⁰ "Kitab Al-Hikam Ibnu Athaillah," dalam <https://www.qudusiyah.org/id/kajian/al-hikam/>, diakses 29 Juni 2025.

²¹ Ibnu 'Athāillah As-Sakandarī, *Al-Hikam* (Kairo: al-Maktabah al-Azhariyyah li al-Turots, 2012).

²² As-Sakandarī, 105.

²³ J O Voll, "From Saints and Renewers to Mahdis and Proto-Nationalists," in *The Wiley-Blackwell History of Islam and Islamic Civilization* (Georgetown University, United States: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), 499–518, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118527719.ch24>.

²⁴ Aljunied, "Sufi Warriorism in Muslim Southeast Asia."

Institutionalization into Tarekat: A Comparative Overview

The transformation of Tasawuf from an individual spiritual movement into a structured socio-religious institution is one of the most significant developments in its history. This process gave rise to *tarekat* organized spiritual paths guided by a spiritual master (*mursyid*). Institutionalization enabled teachings that were once exclusive or personal to become accessible to a broader audience. Each major Tarekat developed its own distinctive characteristics, reflected in its doctrines and ritual practices.

The Qadiriyyah Tarekat, founded by Syekh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jailānī (d. 1166 CE), emphasizes strict adherence to the Syariah, philanthropy, and a balanced integration of worldly and spiritual life. Its core ritual practices include vocal (*jahr*) dhikr and the recitation of *manāqib* (hagiographies) of the founder. These practices contributed to its widespread popularity across the Middle East, Africa, South Asia, and Indonesia especially in the form of a syncretic order known as Tarekat Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyyah (TQN).²⁵

In contrast to the Qadiriyyah, the Naqsyabandiyyah Tarekat, attributed to Syekh Bahā’ al-Dīn Naqsyaband (d. 1389 CE), centers on the principle of *khalwat dar anjuman* “solitude in the midst of society.” This teaching encourages followers to remain engaged in worldly life while maintaining inner awareness of God. Its main practices include silent (*khafī*) dhikr and *murāqabah* (contemplative meditation), a method that demands a high level of inner discipline and spiritual focus.²⁶ This tarekat has exerted a strong influence in Central Asia, Turkey, India,

²⁵ Asmaul Husna, Achmad Mahbuby, and Muhammad Rahmatullah, “Uniknya Memahami Tasawuf Dan Ajarannya,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Spiritualis: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam Dan Tasawuf* 10, no. 1 (2024): 32–45.

²⁶ A Ainul Yaqin and Badrun Badrun, “Tarekat Naqsabandiyah Dan Pembangunan Karakter Bangsa Dalam Masyarakat Jawa,” *Local History & Heritage* 2, no. 1 (2022): 45–52.

and also Indonesia, where it has played a significant role in shaping spiritual, social, and even political landscapes.²⁷

In South Asia, the Chishtiyyah Ṭarekat, introduced to India by Khawajah Moinuddin Chishti (d. 1236 CE), emphasizes divine love (*'isyq*) and service to creation (*khidmat-e-khalq*) as its primary spiritual path.²⁸

The most distinctive feature of this ṭarīqah is the practice of *samā'* listening to spiritual music or *qawwali* as a means to attain spiritual ecstasy and divine proximity.²⁹ This inclusive and tolerant approach has made the Chishtiyyah ṭarīqah highly influential in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, where it continues to shape popular devotional practices and interreligious harmony.³⁰

Meanwhile, the Shādziliyyah ṭarekat, founded by Syekh Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādzilī (d. 1258 CE), does not advocate seclusion or extreme asceticism. Instead, it encourages active engagement with the world as a means to attain *ma'rifah* (gnosis) and to express gratitude (*syukr*) toward God. Its well-known ritual practices include the recitation of *ḥizb* (devotional litanies) such as *Ḥizb al-Baḥr*, as well as intellectual study of classical texts like *Al-Ḥikam*.³¹ This ṭarekat flourished in North Africa and the Levant, and eventually spread as far as Indonesia, where it contributed to the intellectual and spiritual landscape of local Islamic communities.³²

²⁷ Abdulloh Hadziq and M Muqronul Faiz, "GLOBALISASI TAREKAT SUFI DI ASIA TENGGARA (STUDI PERAN TAREKAT DALAM PENYEBARAN ISLAM DI INDONEESIA)," *Qolamuna: Jurnal Studi Islam* 9, no. 02 (2024): 84–95.

²⁸ Limas Dodi and Amir Maliki Abitolkha, "From Sufism To Resolution: Examining the Spiritual Teachings of Tarekat Shiddiqiyyah As the Theology of Peace in Indonesia," *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies* 10, no. 1 (2022): 141–74, <https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v10i1.11260>.

²⁹ Dodi and Abitolkha.

³⁰ Hadziq and Faiz, "GLOBALISASI TAREKAT SUFI DI ASIA TENGGARA (STUDI PERAN TAREKAT DALAM PENYEBARAN ISLAM DI INDONEESIA)."

³¹ Dodi and Abitolkha, "From Sufism To Resolution: Examining the Spiritual Teachings of Tarekat Shiddiqiyyah As the Theology of Peace in Indonesia."

³² Aly Mashar, "Tasawuf: Sejarah, Madzhab, Dan Inti Ajarannya," *Al-A'raf: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam Dan Filsafat* 12, no. 1 (2015): 97–117.

These differences highlight how each *ṭarīqah* offers a unique form of “spiritual technology”, tailored to distinct temperaments and cultural contexts. Yet, all share a common purpose: to guide the *sālik* (spiritual seeker) on the path toward divine union.

Contemporary Adaptation and Relevance in Southeast Asia

In the contemporary world, Sufi *ṭarekats* continue to exhibit remarkable adaptability in maintaining their relevance. Southeast Asia, in particular, has become a dynamic arena for various innovative adaptive mechanisms, allowing these traditions to thrive amidst modern sociopolitical and technological changes.

1. Digital Revolution

The digital era has fundamentally transformed how Sufi practices and discourses are disseminated. *Ṭarekats* are no longer constrained by physical geography. For instance, the Tijaniyyah *ṭarekat* has adapted to digital platforms to redefine traditional epistemic categories, giving rise to concepts such as the “*boundless zawiya*” and “*limitless library*,” accessible to followers across the globe.³³

2. Interfaith Dialogue and Social Service

In response to the challenges of modern pluralism, many Sufi-inspired movements have focused on interfaith dialogue and social service. The Hizmet movement, rooted in Sufi principles, emphasizes education, dialogue, and community service as means to promote tolerance and cross-religious understanding.³⁴

3. Cultural Hybridization and Social Engagement

³³ A de Diego González, “The Limitless Zawiya and the Infinite Library. Rethinking the Epistemology of Contemporary Sufism and Digital Islamic Thought,” *Antipoda* 2025, no. 58 (2025): 179–99, <https://doi.org/10.7440/antipoda58.2025.08>.

³⁴ S Huda et al., “THE SUFI SPIRIT: UNVEILING THE DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL ALTRUISM IN THE GLOBAL INFLUENCE OF THE HIZMET MOVEMENT,” *Cogito* 17, no. 1 (2025): 169–95, <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-105005801129&partnerID=40&md5=b936a05a5a4b8cbc5780020fdda6d869>.

Sufi *ṭarekats* have historically excelled in cultural hybridization, facilitating dialogue between Islamic traditions and local cultures. In South Asia, for example, the Chishtiyyah *ṭarekat* successfully mediated among diverse communities and played a vital role in maintaining social harmony.³⁵ This capacity for acculturation continues to the present day, enabling Tasawuf to remain relevant across diverse cultural contexts. Additionally, the social role of *ṭarekats* also extends into the economic sphere as exemplified by the Idrisiyyah *ṭarekat* in Tasikmalaya, which established cooperatives as part of its economic dakwah movement.³⁶

Conclusion

The journey of Tasawuf, from a spiritual concept rooted in *ihsan* to a dynamic network of global *ṭarekat*, reveals a living tradition that continues to evolve. This study affirms that Sufism is not a peripheral phenomenon, but rather an integral dimension of Islamic civilization, shaped through clearly defined historical phases and supported by towering intellectual figures such as al-Ghazālī, Rumi, and Ibn ‘Aṭā’illah.

The answer to the research question lies in the remarkable capacity of the *ṭarekat* structure to institutionalize spiritual experience while maintaining adaptability. These institutions function not only as authentic channels for the transmission of doctrines and practices, but also as frameworks that enable continuous adaptation to contemporary challenges. In the modern era, Sufi orders have not merely survived they have thrived, leveraging the digital revolution, promoting

³⁵ M A Nizami, "THE CHISHTĪS AND CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTIONS IN MEDIEVAL SOUTH ASIA," in *South Asian Islam: A Spectrum of Integration and Indigenization* (Taylor and Francis, 2023), 31–50, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003439530-4>.

³⁶ Siswoyo Aris Munandar, "Tasawuf Sebagai Kemajuan Peradaban: Studi Perkembangan Sosial Dan Ekonomi Tarekat Idrisiyyah Di Tasikmalaya," *Harmoni* 22, no. 1 (2023): 208–33.

interfaith dialogue, and carrying forward their historical role in cultural hybridization and social engagement.

The ability of Sufism to transform from local mystical communities into a digitally connected global spiritual network is a testament to its enduring vitality. It continues to offer a path toward *ihsan* for seekers around the world, proving that its way is indeed a timeless path ever relevant, ever alive.

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