



Navigating the Political Terrain: How Political Contestation among National Sufi Ulama Shaping Political Preferences of Muslim Society in Indonesia

The involvement of Sufi Ulama of Tarekat Qadariah-Naqshabandiyah (TQN) Jagaraya in political contestation provides a distinct approach to introduce the presidential candidates they supported in the 2019 Indonesian presidential election. In contrast to the conventional guru-disciple attachment, the Sufi ulama adopt various strategies to modify the standpoint of their *Tarekat* member and align it with particular political tendencies. The intent of this study is to identify the strategies implemented by the Sufi ulama to collect support for their preferred political candidates within the *Tarekat* community. By utilizing a qualitative methodology, this study revealed various strategies used by those ulama in introducing political leaders, yet additionally taking the congregation's view regarding its process into consideration. Kiai Raga, with his traditional religious intellectual background, adopts traditional methods of gathering tarekat members who are interested in traditional *tarekat* rituals. Kiai Alam, on the other hand, embraces digital media to promote his political stance. These two varied methods by the two national Sufi Ulama display a dynamic combination of invention and adaptation, reflecting their diverse efforts to accommodate the political preferences of their respective *tarekat* members.

Keywords: Sufi Ulama, Political Identity, Tarekat

Keterlibatan ulama sufi Tarekat Qadariah-Naqshabandiyah (TQN) Jagaraya dalam kontestasi politik memberikan pendekatan yang berbeda dalam memperkenalkan calon presiden yang mereka dukung dalam pemilihan presiden Indonesia 2019. Berbeda dengan keterikatan guru-murid yang konvensional, para ulama sufi mengadopsi berbagai strategi untuk memodifikasi sudut pandang anggota tarekat dan menyelaraskannya dengan kecenderungan politik tertentu. Penelitian ini bermaksud untuk mengidentifikasi strategi yang diterapkan oleh para ulama sufi untuk mengumpulkan dukungan bagi kandidat politik pilihan mereka di dalam komunitas Tarekat. Dengan menggunakan metodologi kualitatif, penelitian ini mengungkapkan berbagai strategi yang digunakan oleh para ulama tersebut dalam memperkenalkan para pemimpin politik, namun juga mempertimbangkan pandangan jemaah mengenai prosesnya. Kiai Raga, dengan latar belakang intelektual keagamaan tradisionalnya, mengadopsi metode tradisional untuk mengumpulkan anggota tarekat yang tertarik dengan ritual tarekat tradisional. Di sisi lain, Kiai Alam menggunakan media digital untuk mempromosikan sikap politiknya. Kedua metode yang bervariasi dari kedua ulama sufi nasional ini menunjukkan kombinasi dinamis antara penemuan dan adaptasi, yang mencerminkan upaya mereka yang beragam untuk mengakomodasi preferensi politik anggota tarekat masing-masing.

Kata kunci: Ulama Sufi, Identitas Politik, Tarekat

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Introduction

Sufi order (i.e. *Tarekat*) is traditionally known as religious teaching that focuses on the spiritual development of Muslims. Sufism's fundamental doctrine emphasizes the simplicity of life by distancing themselves from worldly concerns. It has been emphasized that a Muslim's heart must be cleansed of worldly impurities in order for him to remain connected to God.¹ Individuals are required to practice the Islamic *Syariat* along with *Tarekat* as religious path for cultivating Islamic spiritual devotion and recognizing God's presence through the hearts. Scholars consider Sufi order as a traditional scripturalist Islam since most of Muslims lived in rural area whose submit to this practice and retrieve from modernity.² Because of this Sufi ideal, the *Tarekat* community is generally known to abstain from socio-political matters.

However, the existence of *Tarekat Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah* in *Pesantren Jagaraya* (TQN Jagaraya), a prominent *Tarekat* in Indonesia, suggests that Sufi orders have a substantial influence on Indonesian socio-political dynamics. Previous studies pointed out how the growth of Sufi orders has been adapting to modernity and politics.³ In fact, many Muslims believe that *Tarekat* practice is essential in the religious life of modern Muslim cultures. One significant example is the renowned TQN Jagaraya,⁴ which has a long history of changing socio-religious landscape

in Indonesia. Notably, it is its teachings commitment to strengthen the understanding of moderate and tolerant religious traditions, and against radicalism and religious-based violence⁵ which has always been a national issue. The Fundamental doctrine by the *Murshid* of this order (called *Wasiat*) and social acts of the Sufi Ulama among the community reflect the link between the Sufi order and national politics. However, prior studies on TQN Jagaraya have primarily concentrated on the content of the *Wasiat*.⁶ Meanwhile, the direct involvement of the Sufi ulama in the political arena, which is centered of this article, has rarely been considered.

TQN Jagaraya is a nation-wide organization and even has some overseas members in Southeast Asia. This Sufi order was instituted at *Pesantren Jagaraya* near, West Java in 1905 by Kiai Nur (Nur, hold a title as *Murshid*). He was succeeded by his son, Kiai Salamah who hold a title as *Talqin*.⁷ Since the death of the two Sufi *gurus*, the spiritual practice of TQN Jagaraya has been led by Ulama in various regions entitled *Wakil Talqin*. Therefore, the Sufi Ulama entitled *Wakil Talkin* play essential role in guiding the spirituality of the congregation, including shaping their socio-political belief. For practical purposes, they shall be referred to as Sufi Ulama throughout this study.

This research is based on the political intervention of the Sufi Ulama of TQN Jagaraya

¹ Harun Nasution, *Filsafat Dan Mistisisme* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1978).

² Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

³ Dudung Abdurahman, "Diversity of Tarekat Communities and Social Changes in Indonesian History," *Sunan Kalijaga: International Journal of Islamic Civilization* 1, no. 1 (March 22, 2018): 61; Syamsun Ni'am, "Tasawuf Di Tengah Perubahan Sosial (Studi Tentang Peran Tarekat Dalam Dinamika Sosial-Politik Di Indonesia)," *Jurnal Multikultural & Multireligius* 15, no. 2 (2016): 123–137.

⁴ Julia Day Howell, Peter L. Nelson, and M. A. Subandi, "New Faces of Indonesian Sufism: A Demographic Profile of Tarekat Qodiriyyah-

Naqsyabandiyah, *Pesantren Suryalaya, in the 1990s*," *RIMA: Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 35, no. 2 (December 2001): 33–59.

⁵ Maghfur Ahmad et al., "The Sufi Order against Religious Radicalism in Indonesia," *HTS Theologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 77, no. 4 (2021).

⁶ Dodo Widarda, *The Relationship Between Religion and the State for the Sovereignty of the NKRI Study of Suryalaya TQN Murshid Thought in the Tanbih Text, Jurnal Studi Sosial Dan Politik*, vol. 4, 2020.

⁷ Howell, Peter L. Nelson, and M. A. Subandi, "New Faces of Indonesian Sufism: A Demographic Profile of Tarekat Qodiriyyah-Naqsyabandiyah, Pesantren Suryalaya, in the 1990s."





towards *Tarekat* members during the 2019 Indonesian presidential election. This situation exemplifies the patron-client nature of political connections between Sufi Ulama, *Tarekat* members, and national political figures.⁸ In particular, this study address at the political contestation between Kiai Raga (known as *Wakil Talkin*), who supports the presidential candidate Jokowi-Ma'ruf, and Kiai Alam, who supports the opposition, Prabowo, in shaping the political preferences of TQN Jagaraya members. These two Sufi Ulama are the two notable *Wakil Talqin* of TQN Jagaraya, having enormous social influence and religious authority across the whole community.

Pertaining to this issue, there are two common perspectives among scholars to understanding the relationship between Sufi Ulama in the political situation in Indonesia. First, it is focused on the political motivation for direct engagement of Sufi Ulama is founded on the objectives of constructing an ideal social order based on Islamic values. This earlier study⁹ suggested that such religious-political engagement as a type of struggle in establishing

society through political practices based on the idea of nationalism. Second, it is noticed how the contestation of Sufi Ulama in political activity through religious symbols affects the internal conflict among *Tarekat* members.¹⁰ However, academics are still puzzled as to how the process of action formation that underpins Sufi Ulama's efforts to foster the same preference among the community to select one of the political candidates works.

Therefore, employing Bourdieu's Action Scheme theory¹¹ this article attempts to elaborate

the construction of the religious-political acts of the two Sufi Ulama above for shaping the same political preferences among *Tarekat* members, as reflected on social religious activities and the *Tarekat* narratives among TQN Jagaraya. The following discussion on this article focuses on the process of identification with the cognitive structure of the two Sufi Ulama that mediates their political aspiration with social reality, as well as the constructed acts carried out by those two figures that captivate the attention of the *Tarekat* community.

⁸ James C. Scott, "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia," *American Political Science Review* 66, no. 1 (March 1, 1972): 91–113.

⁹ Amir Maliki Abitolkha, Muhamad Basyrul Muvid, and Maulana Arafat Lubis, "Revitalizing National Political Values Through The Socio-Political Movements Of The *Tarekat*: Studied at the Political Social Role of *Tarekat Qadiriyyah Wa Naqsyabandiyah* in Nusantara," *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 20, no. 2 (November 30, 2020): 373–398; Muhammad Faisal Hamdani, "Architecture And Politics (Study of *Tarekat* Preferences in the 2018 Gubernatorial Election)," *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal (BIRCI-Journal)* 5, no. 2 (2022): 83–93; M Thohar Al Abza, Kamsi Kamsi Kamsi, and Nawari Ismail, "The Sociopolitical Entanglement Of Sufism: A Geneological Approach to the *Tarekat Qadiriyyah Wanaqsyabandiyah* in Contemporary Indonesia," *Epistemé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 14, no. 2 (December 30, 2019): 215–234; Widarda, *The Relationship Between Religion and the State for the Sovereignty of the NKRI Study of Jagaraya TQN Murshid Thought in the Tanbih Text*, vol. 4, p. .

¹⁰ Mega Hidayati and Tito Handoko, "Revivalism of the *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah* in Changing the Local

Political Landscape of Rokan Hulu, Indonesia in Post-New Order," *FIKRAH* 9, no. 2 (December 22, 2021): 283; Welhendri Azwar and Muliono Muliono, "The Multifaced Politics: A Study on Polarization of Political Behavior of *Tarekat* Community in West Sumatera, Indonesia," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 60, no. 2 (October 21, 2022): 315–346; Mukhammad Zamzami, Fikri Mahzumi, and Abd A'la, "Tarekat and Politics in Indonesia: Contested Authority between Murshids in the *Tarekat Qadiriyyah Wa Naqsyabandiyah* in East Java," *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam* 12, no. 2 (December 1, 2022): 187–208.

¹¹ Cheleen Mahar, "'Pierre Bourdieu: The Intellectual Project,'" in *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu: The Practice of Theory*, ed. Richard Harker, Cheleen Mahar, and Chris Wilkes (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990); Bryan S. Turner and June Edmunds, "The Distaste of Taste," *Journal of Consumer Culture* 2, no. 2 (July 13, 2002): 219–239; Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge University Press, 1977); Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflective Sociology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992); Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of The Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).





Mapping the Arena Structure: Tarekat Doctrine on Politics.

Sufi Ulama engagement in political activity takes Islamic teachings as the foundation for the action. Through their deeds, the Sufi ulama work as agents who facilitate the *Tarekat* community understanding the holy scriptures.¹² Their political acts therefore have to be in tune with the two primary concepts conveyed by the Koran and hadith, namely the principle of equality (*al-musawwah*) and the principle of justice (*al-adalah*).¹³ Referring to these two fundamental principles considers the development of piety, as an essential element of diverse religious acts that serve generating social prosperity for Muslims as the primary objective of political engagement. Islamic Sufism traditionally conceptualize political authority among Muslim has to be synergized with the fundamental values of *khalq* and *khuluq*. *Khulq* is the spiritual side of power, whereas *Khuluq* represents force in its outward manifestation.¹⁴ *Tarekat* place communal prosperity as the ultimate goal, both internally and outside. The Sufi Ulama, thus, are required to embody this doctrine in all of their political endeavours.

The realization of a civil society as the primary objective of Sufi engagement in politics also alludes to common *tarekat* ideologies. Evans Pritchard states that the Sanusiyah Order in Cyrenaica views tarekat principles as the foundation of its activity while fighting for societal rights.¹⁵ Azwar and

Muliono adopt the same argument defining the political practice foundation of Sattariyah and Naqshabandiyah *tarekat* devotees in West Sumatra whose political decision determined on the murshid fatwa.¹⁶ In this context, TQN members are relying on the testament (*Wasiat*) of Abah Nur.¹⁷ The fundamental beliefs maintained in numerous foundations derived from tarekat doctrines and fatwas issued by tarekat leaders are connected to power management, which relates to the advantages of religion and the state.

It is considered that the underlying doctrine of power management depends on the actors who govern it. The personal interest of each actor has implication on practices relating to managing authority that contribute to achieving common goals.¹⁸ Meanwhile, in the context of Indonesia's 2019 presidential election, actors ability in managing authority subjectively shaped Muslim voters engagement in the political process. They tend to view the political values of each presidential candidates based on their religious identity. Similar to that, TQN Jagaraya members indicate their political preference for candidates whose identified from the same *tarekat*. Herlambang and Kurniawan regard to this as a political identity that is perpetually embedded in the process of contestation involving religious symbols.¹⁹ This involvement derives from the conviction that their political credibility is dependent on their adherence to religion moral norms.

¹² Clifford Geertz, "The Javanese Kijaji: The Changing Role of a Cultural Broker," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2, no. 2 (January 3, 1960): 228–249.

¹³ Said Aqil Siroj, *Tasawuf Sebagai Kritik Sosial Mengedepankan Islam Sebagai Inspirasi Bukan Aspirasi* (Bandung: Mizan, 2006), accessed December 21, 2023, <https://onsearch.id/Record/IOS3107.50338>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948).

¹⁶ Azwar and Muliono, "The Multifaced Politics: A Study on Polarization of Political Behavior of Tarekat Community in West Sumatera, Indonesia."

¹⁷ Asep Salahudin, *Pangersa Abah Anom: Wali Fenomenal Abad 21 & Ajarannya* (Jakarta: Noura Books, 2013).

¹⁸ Yanuarius Seran, "The Role of Christian and Islamic Leaders to Strengthen Local Wisdom in Atambua," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 22, no. 2 (April 9, 2022): 278–298.

¹⁹ Saifuddin Herlambang and Syamsul Kurniawan, "Hegemony of Involvement of Tafsir in Political Identity," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 19, no. 1 (May 22, 2018): 83–96.





The Political Stance of TQN Jagaraya Sufi Ulama

In this particular context, the Sufi Ulama of TQN Jagaraya state their positions through social conducts, which indicates their assessment of certain aspects multiplied by the adequacy of social, economic, and cultural capitals. It reflects their experiences-shaped recognition that includes diverse sorts of capitals to reconstruct a new social space as a distinct mechanism.²⁰ Furthermore, this constructed experience would determine their social behavior in responding and perceiving the reality. Such encounters establish a value system that impacts the way individuals think and behave, which is utilized to differentiate themselves from others through cultural competition.²¹ Those capital is accumulated throughout the competitive process as a means of preserving authority in a certain social environment.²² Thus, the Sufi Ulama control over such capital, which has advanced as a function of their experience, impacts their decisions towards becoming further involved in political events.

Kiai Raga and Kiai Alam, are the two prominent Sufi Ulama of TQN Jagaraya who has been actively engage in political debates. Their political standing constituted by their position as *wakil talqin* of Kiai Salamah, *the Murshid*, who was renowned for his political activities. Considering such a fundamental social capital, each of them has the capacity to develop new positions based on the structure of their individual experiences and other forms of acquired capital.

Kiai Raga grew up in the traditional religious environment of Pesantren Mulki, West Java, with a strong traditional Islamic education system that nurtured him into a religious figure with qualified religious knowledge expertise, particularly in the fields

of ilm al-Balaghah (eloquence science) and ilm al-Mantiq (logic science). His thorough understanding of Islamic knowledge led to the community recognizing him as the 38th head of Tarekat Qadariyah-Naqsabandiyah, succeeding Kiai Salamah. This symbolic capital is reinforced further by social and economic wealth. He is respected as the leader of a Pesantren covering 3 hectares area and owning 4 hectares of plantation land. The institution he manages not only contains a pesantren, but also formal educational facilities spanning from kindergarten (TK) to university level.

Kiai Alam is inversely related to such social habitus and capital of Kiai Raga. He grew up in urban environment and was exposed to modern technology advancement. this social setting led to educational preference that is more structured and updated. He went to a modern pesantren as a basis for expanding religious knowledge, which he continued overseas for his high education level. His intellectual background led to his recognition as an Islamic figure who mastered both religious knowledge and technology, resulting in building more modern management system of educational institutions. He founded a Quran Tahfidz Pesantren specifically for university students. In terms of institutional administration, his utilizing technology as a medium of dissemination and information has been displayed by the existence of the TQN Media Center for the Qadariyah-Naqsabandiyah Jagaraya congregation. Additionally, he owns oil palm farms and private enterprises engaged in providing Spiritual Training and Healing. The community widely recognizes him to be an Islamic preacher whose followers dispersed over several cities. He is regarded as a moderate national preacher who is capable of

²⁰ Mahar, "Pierre Bourdieu: The Intellectual Project," 44.

²¹ Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflective Sociology*, 68.

²² Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of The Judgement of Taste*, 114.





integrating religion and technology.

Political Contestation of the Sufi Ulama of TQN Jagaraya

The political contest between the two Sufi Ulama of TQN Jagaraya takes place in the social setting that has been transformed into a resource battleground. The activities that occur within the arena are attempts to differentiate oneself from others. As a result, each actor develops new dispositions.²³ They negotiate their capital as crucial actors by developing actions that attempt to modify the political views of the *Tarekat* members. Those political activities conducted by each of the Sufi Ulama, are separated by a classification system based on subjective evaluations and elements referring to their cultural conventions.²⁴ In this scenario, the Sufi Ulama's social experience and capital impose how the social acts created leads the decision-making process of the *Tarekat* members to the same option as the Sufi Ulama.

The primary component to developing a cohesive political voice is the existence of opposition or opposing differences. This is a significant fundamental indication of identity a commonality.²⁵ The identity resemblance between the presidential candidate and the *Tarekat* is a crucial factor that strengthens the Sufi Ulama's authority and position in political provisions within the congregation. This is accomplished by acts designed for introducing the persona and setting of the spiritual background of the political candidate he supports.

The TQN Sufi Ulama staged different kinds of encounters between presidential candidates in the Republic of Indonesia for the

2019-2024 term and *Tarekat* members. Kiai Raga adopted a negotiating strategy modeled after Kiai Salamah's historical performs on the 1992 presidential election. Kiai Salamah is reported to have legitimized his support for President Soeharto by releasing the decree (*maklumat*) to the TQN Jagaraya congregation to vote for the Golkar party.²⁶ AB followed suit by publishing a decree on October 18, 2018 in support of the pair candidate of Joko Widodo-Ma'ruf Amin in the 2019 presidential election. Furthermore, the stipulation of this decree was considered a representation of Kiai Nur teachings (*Wasiat*) regarding the absolute necessity of a balance between religion and the state, which is reflected in the pair of Joko Widodo as a political leader and Ma'ruf Amin as a religionist.

Additionally, such an encounter was accomplished by personally presenting Ma'ruf Amin at the *manaqib* recitation forum conducted at the Jagad Rahmat Jakarta Islamic Boarding School on October 13, 2018 and at the Bandung Grand Mosque on July 6, 2018. More than a thousand *Tarekat* Qadariyah-Naqsabandiyah Jagaraya members attended each of the two significant traditional religious ceremonies. That resembled the political branding process conducted by Kiai Raga. He presented Ma'ruf Amin to the congregation by highlighting his ancestry as the grandson of Syaikh Nawawi Banten and a descendant of the Banten Sultanate.²⁷

A bond was intentionally formed between the prospective presidential pair Joko Widodo-Ma'ruf Amin and the congregation of *Tarekat* Naqsabandiyah-Qadariyah Jagaraya. The pair, who were accompanied by the National Coalition Team (TKN), paid an

²³ Ibid., 6.

²⁴ John Codd, "Making Distinctions: The Eye of the Beholder," in *An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu: The Practice of Theory*, ed. Richard Harker, Cheleen Mahar, and Chris Wilkes (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), 132.

²⁵ Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of The Judgement of Taste*, 468.

²⁶ Sekretariat Pondok Pesantren Suryalaya, "Kumpulan Maklumat Syaikh Mursyid TQN Pondok Pesantren Suryalaya, Pub. L. No. No. 36.PPS.V.1992, 33 .," 2010.

²⁷ Jagat 'Arsy TV, "Pilih Nomor 1 Ini Dia Sebagian Dari Alasan Kenapa Abah AOS r.a Pillih Kh Maruf Amin,Tntn Smp Selesai," YouTube Video, October 13, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pX8ZEDXpYGE>.





official visit to Jagaraya Islamic Boarding School. At its peak, TKN requested representatives from Tarekat Qadariyah-Naqsabandiyah to the Presidential Palace to pledge Jokowi's allegiance (*talkin*) as a member of the Tarekat congregation. Joko Widodo has thus formally become a member of the TQN Jagaraya.

Meanwhile, on the opposition side, Kiai Alam developed cultural alliance with presidential contender Prabowo Subianto-Sandiaga Uno. Prabowo made a visit to Jagaraya Islamic Boarding School which was openly received by the *kiai*. He was regarded as an experienced leader, despite the fact that his visit on February 4, 2019 was a mere pilgrimage and request for blessings.²⁸ Kiai Alam underlined Prabowo's affiliation with the congregation of TQN Jagaraya by paying a visit to Prabowo's private residence in Jakarta. When such a visit was publicly portrayed as a national meeting of *ustadz* and *kiai*, the association he established was legitimized.

In Addition, the chance encounter allowed him to converse with Prabowo regarding global challenges and their potential impact on the national economy and politics. Kiai Alam, therefore, utilized the same strategy as Kiai Raga, which conducted *talqin zikir* as an act of announcement that Prabowo had become a member of the prominent *Tarekat* member of TQN Jagaraya. The allegiance process received considerable media attention on social media. His political support for Prabowo was further cemented by his critical remarks against the former presidential policies, Joko Widodo, during his previous governance period, which were widely broadcast in the media.²⁹

As previously stated, the action tendency of those Sufi Ulama, Kiai Raga and Kiai Alam, in the political negotiation process

indicates the consideration of the *Tarekat* community preferences as a distinguishing mechanism from other candidates. There are two emerging trends in any endeavor to legitimate the presidential candidate in front of the TQN Jagaraya congregation. The first is the personal image element. Personal kinship and intellectual background were used to identify candidate capacity. The Tarekat congregation shares a religious identity, which is the second feature. By performing *baiat talkin* to both candidate pairings through separate actors, the legitimacy of the two presidential candidates as member of the extended family *Tarekat Qadariyah-Naqsabandiyah* Jagaraya was established. *Baiat talqin* performed by Kiai Raga and Kiai Alam indicate equal capital ownership in the same arena. In this sense, *baiat talqin* constitutes a deciding factor in distinguishing one candidate pair from another as a political mechanism of the Sufi Ulama of TQN Jagaraya in the 2019-2024 presidential election.

The fulfillment of acts by Kiai Raga and Kiai Alam through diverse trends reinforces the distinctiveness of the viewpoints created by their experiences. The constructed experiences as a habitus do not drive towards mechanical action, but rather toward measured action with an appraisal of the adequacy of the intended purpose.³⁰ Personal statement by Kiai Raga regarding Ma'ruf Amin lineage confirms his genealogical closeness to Kiai Salamah and Kiai Nur, both of whom were prominent spiritual figures in the *Tarekat of Qadariyah-Naqsabandiyah Pesantren* Jagaraya. Meanwhile, Kiai Alam crafted an image of an ideal leader who dominated the world discourse towards Prabowo by emphasizing the flaws of the former president in national policy implementation. The formation of such

²⁸ SP, *Interview*, Jagaraya, 22 June 2019

²⁹ HD, *Interview*, Jagaraya 23 March 2022

³⁰ Baruch Shimoni, "From Psychological Dispositions to Social Positions: Applying a Habitus-Oriented Approach

to Organization Development and Change," *Research in Organizational Change and Development* 29 (2021): 89–109.





discourse demonstrates the function of the regulatory system (disposition) in structuring the society such that the individual preference of the Sufi Ulama incorporates in them (bodily hexis), forming the same consciousness and behavior.³¹ Regulating the structure of public awareness to select the promoted presidential candidate is a strategy of dominance through social and cultural capital.

The Sufi Ulama utilize their diverse social capital as a means to subjugate congregational views to moral imperatives. A predisposition toward universal moral ideals serves as the foundation for evaluating subsequent behaviors that are responded to in the same manner.³² Political support statements in the form of decrees by the Sufi Ulama, *baiat talqin* as a symbol of allegiance, and affirmation in the form of participation at different *manaqib* recitations became the norm for Jemaah *Tarekat* to approve and legitimate the presidential candidate. The objectification of knowledge and capital in certain arena through acts perceived by the community is an instance of actor political interests being situated.³³ The situating process influence the congregation political preferences without taking into account theological and social concerns carried out by the Sufi Ulama.

The political inclinations of the Sufi Ulama of TQN Jagaraya, as manifested in different activities, serve to construct the condition of the *Tarekat* congregation in accordance with their proclivity for leader representation. Their modalities and

experiences become prominent in efforts to lure the public as a strategy for forming specialized groupings of voters (classes). The identification of religious leaders, which has been identified by different studies as an approach for politicians to secure votes,³⁴ is no longer the primary determinant. Instead of providing an instrument to impose decisions, the Sufi ulama's religious identity constitutes a component of the paradigm owned to establish a new class structure in politics.³⁵ The search to build a class based on capital and knowledge gained through experience is precisely the method by which the Sufi ulama *tarekat* binds the adherents.

Such certain community associations imply a unique form of relation between Sufi Ulama and socio-political decisions. This association is founded on the notion that religion is an essential instrument for political negotiation.³⁶ Those fragmented Sufi ulama symbolized religious Islam incorporating social and cultural resources legitimized by religious experiences to shape new structures for their congregations by binding acts and decisions. Such of political inclinations, therefore, are regarded as noble and pious actions due to the act of joining a particular group through spiritual endeavors.³⁷ However, in this study, the presence of symbolic capital combined with the habitus to form the same perception with reference to the standard understanding of the congregation as a dominated class is the key factor that is significant in influencing the political choices

³¹ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 93–94.

³² Michael Halewood, "Class Is Always a Matter of Morals: Bourdieu and Dewey on Social Class, Morality, and Habit(Us)," *Cultural Sociology* 17, no. 3 (September 18, 2023): 373–389.

³³ Codd, "Making Distinctions: The Eye of the Beholder," 152.

³⁴ Timothy L O'Brien and Shiri Noy, "Political Identity and Confidence in Science and Religion in the United States," *Sociology of Religion* 81, no. 4 (September 21, 2020): 439–461.

³⁵ Shaheen Amid Whyte, "Islamic Religious Authority in Cyberspace: A Qualitative Study of Muslim Religious

Actors in Australia," *Religions* 13, no. 1 (January 12, 2022): 69; Ismail Fajrie Alatas, *What Is Religious Authority? Cultivating Islamic Communities in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021).

³⁶ Avi Astor, Marian Burchardt, and Mar Griera, "The Politics of Religious Heritage: Framing Claims to Religion as Culture in Spain," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 56, no. 1 (March 12, 2017): 126–142.

³⁷ Syafieh Syafieh and M. Anzhaikan, "Moderate Islam And Its Influence on Religious Diversity in Indonesia," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 23, no. 2 (March 1, 2023).





of the congregation.

Conclusion

In this study, the engagement of Sufi ulama in politics, which has traditionally been considered to be utilizing religious symbols by manipulating the spiritual guru-disciple connection, is discovered to be different. The findings of this study revealed that leveraging process of religious symbols adapted to the demands of class construction, which adapted to the congregation's perspective as an authority figure. The experience of the Sufi ulama of TQN Jagaraya generated through the combination of religious education and socioeconomic capital owned subordinates the political appraisal of the *Tarekat* members as the lower social class. Through differentiated efforts toward the development of the image of presidential candidates supported by each Sufi Ulama TQN Jagaraya, this process promotes a new structure in society with distinct social classes. The difference in strategies for obtaining congregational support used by Kiai Raga and Kiai Alam is the result of distinct patterns of innovation and improvisation that emerge as a result of different assessment methods. Experience and capital become the fundamental components in forming the number of classes that serve as the primary foundation for voting.

The discovery of the main elements in the political action of Sufi Ulama to influence the political decision-making of his *Tarekat* members as part of Indonesian citizens whose right to vote in the presidential election, is produced through the conception of social action introduced by Bourdieu. This concept effectively identifies the link between habitus and the area in which the forces that generate individual capital in operation function. However, this study restricts the interaction between the Sufi Ulama and the social space of *Tarekat* in general by neglecting to address the contestation of Sufi ulama in politics, resulting in the potential impact toward internal relationship within the *Tarekat Qadariyah-Naqsabandiyah* of Jagaraya. Thus, neglected

aspects in this study could serve as the foundation for future research to provide new perspectives that might confirm or evaluate this research conclusions.

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Competing Interests

This research is self-funded or does not receive any funding from religious organisations or interest groups that could have an impact on the findings.

Author's Contributions

This study was written in collaboration by the authors which All of them contributed to this paper. Santoso compiled the information and composed the article. Abdullah developed the theoretical framework as well as the study objectives. The final results of this research were evaluated by Yusuf, Zakariaz and Rahayu.

Ethical Considerations

This article adheres to the publication norm of not contacting any human or animal subjects.

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Data Availability

Data exchange has been demonstrated in writing.

Disclaimer

The ideas and findings in the paper are the author's, and copying or trading of this material is prohibited.

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