

Study on the implementation of *sulook* at the Darussalam Alwaliyyah Labuhan Haji Islamic boarding school in Aceh

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ABSTRACT

Sufism is a method of spiritual education aimed at shaping individuals with a deep sense of the divine. Education is not merely about the transfer of knowledge, but also the shaping of character through consistent spiritual practices. Dayah Darussalam Al-Waliyyah in Labuhan Haji implements Sufism through the practice of *sulook* as a tradition of the Naqshbandi order to draw closer to Allah through dhikr, tawajjuh, and the control of worldly desires. The objective of this study is to understand how Sufi practices are carried out in the *sulook* tradition in Aceh. The research method employed is ethnography, in which the researcher actively participates in the research process. The findings reveal the presence of Sufi practices within *sulook*, as the stages of *sulook* are intrinsically linked to Sufism for instance, the teachings emphasize patience, diligence, and a focus solely on worship. Thus, since the *sulook* contains elements of Sufism, the study of Sufism is inherent in the practice of the *sulook*.

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Introduction

Islamic education is one of the key aspects in shaping a superior generation with a deep understanding of religion and noble character (Aziz et al., 2025). Specifically, Islamic education is physical and spiritual guidance based on the principles of Islamic teachings (Mursal Aziz, 2025). Sufism literally derives from the word *shuuf*, which means "wool." At that time, Sufis wore clothing made of sheep's wool as a symbol of humility. In technical terms, Ibn Khaldun defined Sufism as one of the branches of Islamic jurisprudence that emerged later in Islam. Its essence lies in diligent worship and detaching one's attention from all things other than Allah, placing hope solely in Allah, rejecting worldly adornments, and abhorring matters that lead people to the allure of material wealth and worldly grandeur, while seeking solitude on the path to God through seclusion and worship (Dr. Hj. Sri Mulyati, MA, et al., 2011).

ufism is an integral part of Islamic teachings that emphasizes the purification of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) and drawing closer to Allah through both outward and inward practices. In his monumental *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, Imam al-Ghazali explains that spiritual education aims to shape individuals capable of attaining the rank of *insan*

kamil through noble character and self-control. Sufism is also a method of spiritual education aimed at shaping individuals with a profound awareness of the Divine. Education is not merely about the transfer of knowledge but also the cultivation of character through consistent spiritual practices. (Zainul Arifin, et al., 2025)

Muhammad Muda Waly Al-Khalidi, may Allah have mercy on him, in his book *Tanwirul Anwaar* explains that Sufism is “a fardhu ain science a science that identifies what nullifies the reward of acts of worship, such as showing off, seeking praise, self-admiration, arrogance, and other traits condemned by Islamic law.” Five similar points are also presented by Arifbillah Al-Mursyid Sheikh Abuya Amran Waly Al-Khalidi, who defines Sufism as “a means to treat or eliminate the diseases of the nafs, for there is no sound nafs afflicted with disease except that of the Prophets and Messengers.” The diseases of the nafs are the evil traits of the nafs that prevent one from possessing noble character, such as: envy, arrogance, love of the world, hypocrisy, *riya*, *ujub*, and so on. These can be eliminated by purifying the heart of all attachments other than Allah, by engaging in spiritual communion with the Divine Presence, for we believe that everything within ourselves and in this universe comes from Allah, the Almighty and Exalted.

As with other Naqshbandi Khalidi orders in Indonesia, the most important ritual in this order is *sulook*, or “*sulook*” in the Acehnese language. Consequently, this order is often referred to as the “*sulook* order” that is, an order that conducts *sulook* for its followers. In fact, many members of the order are more familiar with “*sulook*” than with the “order” itself. They more often say “*tamong sulook*” (to participate in *sulook*) rather than “*tamong tarikat*” (to join the order). Indeed, many members understand “*sulook*” to be synonymous with a specific Islamic ritual that is essential for a Muslim to perform and Muslim women. They seem unconcerned with the Sufi order within which *sulook* is practiced. Yet it is clear that *sulook*, in its sense as a specific form of worship within a Sufi order, is a practice uniquely characteristic of the Naqshbandi-Khalidi order. This means that only members of the Naqshbandi order perform *suluk*; it is not a general form of worship practiced by the wider Muslim community. Consequently, it is impossible for someone outside the order to perform *sulook* in the same manner as its members do. (Sehat Ihsan Shadiqin, 2023).

In the Naqshbandi Khalidi order, the *sulook* retreat is held three times a year: “*Sulook* at Darussalam, during Ramadan, on the Prophet’s Birthday, and during the Hajj.” The number of days for this *sulook* varies greatly, depending on the *salik*’s own choice. During Ramadan, the *sulook* begins ten days before the start of Ramadan and ends on the last day of the month. A member of the order who wishes to undertake a ten-day *sulook* may begin on the first day of the *sulook* opening, or on the first day of Ramadan, or on the eleventh or twenty-first day of Ramadan. The same applies to those undertaking 20, 30, and 40 days; all are adjusted according to the number of days the *suluk* is open during that Ramadan. This differs from other months, such as the month of Hajj and Maulid. During these months, most *sulook* centers are only open for ten days, except for a few *dayahs* with a very large number of *sulook* participants, which open the *sulook* for the same number of days as Ramadan (Wiryanto, 2021).

The Naqshbandi Order is a simple order that is easy to practice. This order firmly adheres to the Sunnah of the Prophet and shuns innovation (*bid’ah*), abstains from bad traits, and embraces good qualities and perfect moral character. Those who are blessed with sincerity and patience must strive to ensure that nothing remains in their hearts except the “Known Essence” that is, Allah the Almighty (Asmaul Husna, 2019).

Sufism and *suloe* are closely intertwined because Sufism provides spiritual stages, while *suloe* implements them through a Sufi order; thus, *suloe* does not stand alone but serves as a means to realize Sufism. Within *suloe* lie the teachings of Sufism, making the connection between *suloe* and Sufism exceptionally strong. In the process of education and teaching, which serves as the spirit that sustains life, the most important aspect of a *pesantren* is not merely the lessons themselves, but also the spirit. It is that spirit that sustains life.

In his research titled “Transcendental Communication in *Suloe* Worship,” Muhammad Shiddiq Al Ghifari notes that the practice of *suloe* prompts individuals to reflect on the acts of worship they have performed during their time on earth. The primary goal of *suloe* is to nurture a disciple into a devout worshiper one who possesses both mental and spiritual strength and avoids all prohibitions. *Suloe* plays a significant role in intensifying acts of worship and in fostering communication with the Creator, as the practice most frequently performed is *zikir*.

In his research titled “Dang-dang tawoe bak Tuhan”: *Suloe* Tawajuh and Rural Sufism in Acehese Society, Sehat Ihsan Shadiqin states that two of these religious rituals are *tawajuh* and *suloe*. Followers of the order use these practices as part of their efforts to draw closer to Allah and seek inner peace in their lives, without a conscious effort to explore spiritual ideas through modern approaches, as is often done by urban communities.

In a study on the Asmaul Husna titled “Traditional *Suloe* Practices at the Darussalam Islamic Boarding School in Labuhan Haji Barat, South Aceh Regency.” For the participants, following *Suloe* is very meaningful and holds deep significance; however, the most important reason for them to participate in *Suloe* is to follow the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and to draw closer to Allah (SWT). They believe that through this practice, they can draw closer to Allah and increase their acts of worship not only obligatory acts but also recommended ones.

Compared to the studies mentioned above, this research differs because it focuses on the study of Sufism in the context of *Suloe* implementation. While previous studies also addressed Sufi values, this research specifically examines the implementation of *Suloe*.

The reason researchers chose to conduct their study at the Darussalam Al-Waliyyah Islamic boarding school is that it was the first place in Aceh where the *suloe* tradition was introduced, brought there by Abuya Muhammad Muda Waly Al-Khalidi. and it is also the main center for the practice of *Suloe* within the Naqshbandi order, featuring a structured program that has been in place since the time of Abuya Muda Waly. The selection of this location is strategic for obtaining the in-depth research results sought by the researcher. Therefore, the researcher is interested in conducting research at this Islamic boarding school.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is descriptive in nature and employs a qualitative research design. According to Sugiyono (2016), qualitative research is referred to as a “new method” because it has only recently gained popularity; it is also called a “postpositivist method” because it is grounded in the philosophy of postpositivism. This method is also known as an “artistic method” because the research process is more akin to an art form (less structured). The research method used is ethnography, which serves as an important foundation for further understanding (Kamarusdiana, 2019).

The reason for selecting this research method is to allow the researcher to play an active role or be directly involved in the implementation of the sulok at Darussalam Al-waliyyah. This study was conducted over a period of one month to obtain more accurate data. Research type

- a. Since ethnographic research is not quantitative in nature, the type of data used pertains to behavior or culture, which cannot be measured. The primary data used consists of individuals within a specific cultural group that is the primary focus of the research. Secondary data, such as relevant literature, is also required but serves only as a theoretical reference. The most important data to be observed is the people within a specific community. (Iskandar, 2022)
- b. Data Sources In ethnographic research, data consists of unstructured accounts and must therefore be analyzed through the interpretation of meaning, beginning with observation, description, and explanation. The data sources for this study are oral and written sources. Oral data was obtained from indigenous communities directly involved in and following this way of life, as well as from community leaders knowledgeable about the history of these traditions. Written data, meanwhile, was obtained from government documents in the study area—such as village profiles or similar materials—and visual documentation in the form of images and videos, as well as various archives related to community conditions. (Pertiwi & Jailani, 2023).
 - a) Data Collection Techniques Ethnographic research is a type of research that does not rely on statistical calculations. This naturally means that ethnographic research must rely solely on observational data. Consequently, there are at least three methods of data collection, as follows: (Pertiwi & Jailani, 2023).
 - a. Participant observation is unique because it combines the researcher's participation in the lives of the people being studied while maintaining a professional distance. Observation is the act of observing activities and social interactions between the researcher and the community being studied. In this observation, the researcher engages in the daily activities of the people being observed or who serve as the research data sources. While conducting the observation, the researcher participates in the activities performed by the data sources and shares in their joys and sorrows. Through this participant observation, the data obtained will be more comprehensive, insightful, and reveal the underlying meaning of every observable behavior. (Sugiyono, 2016).
 - b. In-Depth Interviews In-depth interviews are generally tailored to the research objectives or questions. Whenever possible, audio recordings are made during the in-depth interview process in ethnographic research and transcribed immediately afterward to facilitate the analysis process (Sari et al., 2023).
 - c. Documentation Documents found within a group in a natural context (occurring in daily life). Documents regarding the community, participants, institutions, and cultural practices are crucial for achieving the objectives of ethnographic research in the field of psychology (Pertiwi & Jailani, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Time information	Activities	Implementation details
time 04:00-04:30 WIB early in the morning.	Wake up for tahajjud prayer.	It is performed in a group, with both male and female <i>sulook</i> participants.
Time 05:30-07:00 WIB Morning	First, perform the pre-dawn prayer, and then perform the dawn prayer and the missed dawn prayer in congregation, This was followed by the congregational Fajr make-up prayer, then devotional recitations after the prayer, and only then did they perform the tawajjuh.	It is performed in congregation by both male and female <i>sulook</i> participants; however, the pre-dawn prayer is performed individually.
Time 07:00-08:00 WIB	A sermon delivered by a teacher at Dayah Darussalam, focusing on <i>sulook</i> (the spiritual discipline of <i>sulook</i>)	Listening to the sermon together and discussing its content.
Time 08:05-10:30 WIB	The Dhuha prayer is followed by a fiqh study session; after attending the fiqh study session, the <i>sulook</i> participants are given time to either sleep or engage in other activities,	In this case, it is also done in a group setting, and the fiqh study session covers the chapter on <i>taharah</i> (purification); only after that do they engage in other activities, though these are still within the context of worship.
Time 12:38 – 14:40 WIB	It was announced that everyone should get ready to perform the Dhuhr prayer and then make up the missed Dhuhr prayer. After the Dhuhr prayer, there was a recitation of the Wirid, followed by Tawajjuh. After that, we continued with the Yasin wirid, reciting the Raja Salawat and the Badar Salawat. After a short break, the teachers of Darussalam delivered a dakwah to fill the time while waiting for Ashar.	The event was held as a group gathering, with everyone listening together to the message delivered by the teachers of Darussalam.

Time 16:00-15:30 WIB	Performing the pre-Asr prayer and the Asr prayer. This is followed by reciting Surah Al-Waqi'ah and Surah Yasin, and then continuing with tawajjuh.	The Qabla prayer is performed individually, while the Asr and Tawajjuh prayers are performed in congregation, meaning there is someone leading the prayer and someone serving as the imam.
Time 19:00-19:17 WIB	Maghrib prayer and the makeup Maghrib prayer.	Performed in congregation.
Time 20:00-22:22 WIB	Listen to the sermon, then perform the Isha prayer and the makeup Isha prayer, followed by tawajjuh, and then perform the Tarawih prayer.	Led by the caliph and performed in congregation by both male and female sulok participants.

The Sulok Method

Field observations indicate that there are times when *sulok* is practiced individually or collectively; for example, on Fridays there is a collective zikir session led by "Bunda" more precisely, the daughter of Abuya KM Tgk. H. Djamaluddin Waly to lead the collective zikir. However, this is attended only by female sulok participants, while the male participants perform Friday prayers at the village mosque near the dayah. After the collective zikir with Bunda, around 01:30 PM, it is followed by tawajjuh zikir, which is led directly by the khalifah or munafish to perform zikir collectively yet individually.

Sulok material

- a) There are also levels within sulok; there are nine levels in total, and the first level explains "ذكر إسم الذات". In the first level of the lataif of the heart, one recites seventy thousand zikrs a day and night; after four days, one moves on to the ninth level of the lataif, and during the zikir "إسم الذات" The prayer beads can be recited rapidly without stopping during tawajjuh, meaning they are not recited one by one.
- b) The second class is "ذكر لطائف سمبيلان" In this class, there are five places for zikir, namely قلب, سر, خفي, أختي, روح the number of zikr in Latifah قلب a total of one thousand times, the number of zikr in Latifah روح a thousand times, the number of zikr in Latifah سر a thousand times, the number of zikr in Latifah خفي a thousand times, and the number of zikr in Latifah أختي A thousand times each, so the total is nine thousand times; that is why it is referred to as "Nine," because each of the nine zikrs in this second category amounts to nine zikrs.
- c) The third class is "ذكر لطائف سبيلس" The eleven levels of remembrance are as follows:
 1. The number of dhikr in the latifah النفس الناطقة a thousand times
 2. The number of dhikr in the latifah جميع الاعضاء a thousand times
- d) ذكر النفي والاثبات

Zikir لا اله الا الله silently in one's heart, starting with three times, five times, seven times, nine times, eleven times, thirteen times, fifteen times, nineteen times, and twenty-one times, and concluding with محمد رسول الله and مقصودي ورضاك مطلوبني
الهي انت

e) ذكر الوقوف

Zhikir الوقوف is to focus solely on the essence of God, which is ليس كمثله شيء وهو
السميع البصير

f) ذكر مراقبه الاطلاع والمطلق (المراقبه الا ولي

It is Allah SWT who observes us, His servants, both outwardly and inwardly, at all times.

g) مراقبه وحدة الا فعال (المراقبه الثانيه

Our heartfelt acknowledgment that Allah SWT is the One and Only in all His actions means that everything that happens in this world ultimately comes from Allah SWT.

h) مراقبه المية (المراقبه الثالثة

Remember and deeply feel that Allah SWT is always with us.

i) التهليل

a total of seven recitations, each recitation لا اله الا الله Dua ucapan dengan lidah kalimat tujuh puluh ribu kali.

Discussion

In the context of religious life in Aceh, the Naqshbandi order only emerged and gained popularity there thanks to the efforts of Muhammad Waly (1917–1961) from Labuhanhaji (now part of South Aceh Regency). He was actually of Minangkabau descent; his family, like most other Minang ethnic groups of that era, migrated to Aceh in the late 19th century to preach and trade along the western coast of Sumatra (Muhajir al-Fairusy, 2016). He was born in Labuhanhaji and grew up among Muslims adhering to the Kaum Tuo ideology, who strongly opposed the intense “Islamic purification” movement led by the Kaum Mudo at that time. Consequently, during his childhood, he was sent to traditional Islamic boarding schools in the area led by Kaum Mudo scholars, such as Teungku Mahmud and Abi Lampisang. He later continued his education in Aceh Besar and met Abu Hasan Krueng Kale, who would later become his partner in the campaign for traditional Islamic schools of thought under the Perti umbrella. In 1937, he intended to continue his education in Egypt on a scholarship from the Aceh Study Fund, but while undergoing Arabic language training in Padang, he abandoned that plan and instead devoted himself to pesantren education alongside several key figures of the Kaum Tuo in Padang. There, he also received his certification and became a mursyid in the Naqshbandi Khalidi order.

After returning to Aceh in 1940, Muda Waly began to develop the Naqshbandi Khalidi order while also expanding the traditional Islamic pesantren education characteristic of the Kaum Tuo in his hometown of Labuhanhaji. He founded the Darussalam Pesantren, which later became a model for traditional pesantren in Aceh. Following the independence of the Republic of Indonesia, the Naqshbandi Khalidi order he developed grew increasingly popular and established a firm foothold within Acehnese society. As the network of Darussalam Pesantren alumni expanded, the practice of following the order spread throughout the community, becoming an

integral part of their religious life (Musliadi, 2013; Wiryanto, 2021). This order has several variations developed according to the region and the figures who led them (Shadiqin, 2021). One thing that binds them and serves as a commonality among all these orders is the practice of *sulook* and *tawajuh*, which they perform by applying the principle of *sir* in their *zikr*.

On the other hand, the determination of leadership levels in *sulook* is closely linked to the level of study a *salik* has completed. A novice participant cannot be appointed as a *khalifah* because they lack the experience in performing the *zikir* that will be taught to their congregation. (Shadiqin, 2022). The *sulook* participants attending the program at *Dayah Darussalam al-Waliyyah* come from villages and even various cities. According to field observations, *sulook* participants include those from *Gayo Lues*, *Sigli*, *Banda Aceh*, *West Aceh*, and some from *South Aceh*; they bring diverse customs and traditions from each city, yet they unite in a place of worship *Dayah Darussalam Al-Waliyyah* where many now flock to participate in *sulook*.

The values of the *sulook* practice are that it is a noble activity through which a servant strives to draw closer to Allah. Humans are not immune to making mistakes in life; the *sulook* practice serves as a means to perform acts of kindness toward fellow humans and toward Allah SWT (Irsyaduna, 2024).

The results of the interview with Mrs. Nurjani indicate that Sufi principles are incorporated into the practice of *sulook*; before undergoing *sulook*, our level of devotion had already reached a certain stage. However, after completing *sulook*, we gain direct experience, where one has attained a higher level of consciousness—in the sense that we truly feel closer to God and become stronger and more confident in our worship.

Sufism and *sulook* are very closely intertwined because Sufism provides spiritual stages, while *sulook* implements them through a *tarekat*, so that *sulook* does not stand alone but serves as a tool to realize Sufism. Within *sulook*, there are Sufi teachings embedded within it, making the connection between *sulook* and Sufism so strong. In the process of education and teaching, the spiritual essence serves as the soul that sustains life. For what is most important in a *pesantren* is not merely the lessons themselves, but also the spiritual essence. It is that essence that sustains life.

In an interview with a female *Sulook* practitioner (Najwa), she stated that the *practice of Sulook and spiritual cultivation are closely intertwined. Sulook is a process of achieving spiritual awareness experiencing a transformation in one's way of thinking, feelings, and behavior leading to a greater focus on oneself and one's relationship with God. Meanwhile, Sufism is the study of experiences and the relationship with God.*

Furthermore, the results of an interview with the teaching council which also includes the *khalifah* (Ustad Baharuddin) during the *sulook* reinforce the above statement, namely that the practice of *sulook* is closely related to Sufism. *Sulook* can be viewed as a practical application of the conceptual teachings of Sufism.

The relevance between the two:

- a) *Sulook* as a method of purifying the soul (*Tazkiyatun Nafs*): Sufism aims to purify the heart (*tazkiyatun nafs*) in order to draw closer to Allah. Implementation of Sufi Teachings: If Sufism is the theory, then *suluk* is its implementation or practice; this includes the application of the concepts of *takhalli* (purifying oneself of blameworthy traits), *tahalli* (filling oneself with praiseworthy traits), and *tajalli* (the manifestation of divine light). Toward Closeness to Allah: Both Sufism and *suluk* share the same primary goal: drawing closer to Allah SWT.

- b) The Cultivation of Noble Character: Through *suloe*, a salik (one who practices suluk) refines their character in accordance with the etiquettes taught, which reflect the character of Sufism in daily life, even after the *suloe* process is complete. The unification of Sharia and Haqiqah: *Suloe* is a special path or passageway for unifying the teachings of Sharia, Tariqah, Haqiqah, and Ma'rifah into a single unified experience.

Conclusion

Studies of Sufism regarding the practice of *suloe* generally conclude that *suloe* serves as a method of spiritual education that integrates the aspects of sharia, tariqa, and haqiqa to attain the level of ma'rifat. Sufism is an integral part of Islamic teachings that emphasizes the purification of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) and drawing closer to Allah through both outward and inward practices.

In his monumental work **Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din**, Imam al-Ghazali explains that spiritual education aims to shape individuals capable of attaining the rank of *insan kamil* through noble character and self-control. Sufism is also a method of spiritual education aimed at cultivating individuals with a profound awareness of the divine. Education is not merely about the transfer of knowledge, but also the formation of character through consistent spiritual practices. It is implemented through the *tarekat*, so that *suloe* does not stand alone but serves as a tool to realize Sufism. Within *suloe* lies the knowledge of Sufism, making the connection between *suloe* and Sufism exceptionally strong.

In the process of education and teaching, which serves as the spirit that sustains life, the most important aspect of a *pesantren* is not merely the lessons themselves, but also its spirit. It is that spirit that sustains life. *Suloe* also focuses solely on worship without dwelling on worldly matters, and this is essential for maintaining our devotion during worship. The study of Sufism in the practice of *suloe* plays a crucial role in shaping one's character, attitude, and manner of speech, as *suloe* enables the cultivation of spiritual focus within an individual a vital aspect. Furthermore, the study of Sufism in *suloe* is essential for maintaining inner peace and emotional stability among those who practice it.

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