The Different Challenges of 
*al-Ṭarîqah al-Naqsabandîyah* 
in Indonesia and Turkey

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**Abstrak**


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Introduction

Al-ṭarīqah al-Naqsabandiyah is well known Sufi order in Turkey and Indonesia, and it is the biggest Sufi orders in Turkey. The Sufi Order (or ṭariqah) is a fraternity of individuals who follow a particular school of Sufism under the guidance of a shaykh (spiritual master). A Sufi order can be seen as an institutionalized version of the individually oriented practices of the early Muslim ascetics.¹ The orders are typically named in reference to their founders, such as al-Ṭarīqah al-Qadariyyah referred to Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qâdir al-Jilânî, al-Ṭarīqah al-Shâdhiliyyah referred to Abû Hasan al-Shâdhili, and so forth. The Sufi orders typically link their shaykh, through a lineage of various shaykh, to ‘Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad and thus to Muḥammad himself. One exception to this is the al-Ṭarīqah al-Naqsabandiyah, which traces the chain of their spiritual masters to Abu Bakr, the first Caliph after Muhammad, and founder of this ṭariqa was Bahaeddin Naksibend of Turkistan (b. 1490).² Both Turkey and Indonesia have several ṭariqas. In Indonesia, for example, based on their national conference established by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in Semarang in 1981, they determined forty-five different Sufi orders accepted as members of Jam’îyah Abl al-Ṭarīqah al-Mu’tabarah and considered as providing a link to the Prophet Muḥammad,³ and al-Ṭarīqah al-Naqsabandiyah is one of them.

According to Dina Le Gall, al-Ṭarīqah al-Naqsabandiyah is one of the most widespread and enduring of all the Sufi orders (ṭariqah’s), and one of the better studied.⁴ Yet the presence and vitality of this ṭariqa in

³ Zamakhshari Dhofier, Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Tentang Pandangan Hidup Kiyai (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1985), 143.
the Ottoman world in the two centuries or so prior to the coming of the first Naqshbandi Mujaddidis from India around 1700 has been unduly neglected. Meanwhile al-Ṭariqah al-Naqṣabandīyah came to Indonesia in the 17th century which has closely related to the Mecca as the center of Indonesian Naqṣabandî. Shaykh Yūsuf Makassarī (1626-1699) was initially as the first disseminator of al-Ṭariqah al-Naqṣabandīyah in Indonesia.\(^5\) Then in the early 1850s, Shaykh Ismā‘īl Minangkabawī had successfully made this order as a strong religious organization socially.\(^6\) Seeing at the Turkish history, it is an important fact that al-Ṭariqah al-Naqṣabandīyah played significant social and political roles ranging from artistic and architectural influences and sustaining the educational system, to provide healing spaces and social networks of support for the poor and the marginal, to direct involvement in the structures of power.\(^7\)In Indonesia, al-Ṭariqah al-Naqṣabandīyah played social role as well as political role. It means that no study on Islamic society, and particularly that of Indonesia, ought to ignore Naqṣabandi’s ṭariqah roles in social and politics. The al-Ṭariqah al-Naqṣabandīyah, binding together individuals with a supernatural bond, was themselves a social power. It came to be associated in various ways with different strata of society. It was religious organization for mutual help, and a venerated shaykh could voice the people’s grievances and condemn tyranny and oppression. It assisted the poor, and ministered to the sick and travelers. But in fact, in actualizing their roles, al-Ṭariqah al-Naqṣabandīyah faced many challenges. Based on this fact, this paper aims to highlight the different challenges faced by al-Ṭariqah al-Naqṣabandīyah in Turkey and Indonesia related to the process of secularization in both two countries.

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\(^6\) Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naksyabandiyyah*, 98.

Turkey’s and Indonesia’s Secularization

Before discussing the challenges of al-‘Tariqah al-Naqsabandiyah in Turkey and Indonesia, it is helpful to start with a broad overview of Turkey’s and Indonesia’s secularization that have shaped the context of the challenges of al-‘Tariqah al-Naqsabandiyah. Both Turkey and Indonesia have different characteristics of secularization, but the issues of the secularization project are almost similar which is related to positioning the state-religion relations. The secularization in Turkey can be considered as assertive secularism; whereas in Indonesia the secularization can be called as passive secularism providing Pancasila as the basis of state.8

Ihsan Yilmaz explained the differences between passive and assertive secularism by adopting the view from Ahmet T. Kuru.9 He stated that in passive secularism, the secular state plays a ‘passive’ role and while avoiding the establishment of any religions, it “allows for the public visibility of religion”.10 On the other hand, in assertive secularism, the state tries to exclude religion from the public sphere in addition to playing an ‘assertive’ role as “the agent of a social engineering project that confines religion to the private domain”.11 Because of different secularization projects in Turkey and Indonesia, it is clear the presence of different challenges faced by al-‘Tariqah al-Naqsabandiyah. Concerning to the state-religion relations, for example in Indonesia context, by passive secularization the state has obligatory public holidays for the

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11 Ibid.
majority Muslims as well as minority faiths. The state also recognizes six official religions, and accepts the presence of religion in public life and promotes the belief in God. In brief, it can be said that the state gives religious freedom to practice religious teachings in public spheres, including spiritual practices. On the other hand, in the context of assertive secularization in Turkey, the state campaign against traditional Islamic institutions, Sufi orders being one the chief targets. As the result, the state banned all Sufi orders in 1925, including al-Ṭariqah al-Naqsabandîyah.

The Different Challenges between al-Ṭariqah al-Naqsabandîyah in Turkey and Indonesia

Generally speaking, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century we saw the Sufi orders were attacked on all sides, but it was not this which made the difference from the past time. Attackers had never been wanting; their beliefs had been refuted, their practices condemned, their dervishes ridiculed and occasionally executed, and their šaykhs castigated. None of this abated their popularity to the slightest degree. What we have seen in our time has been a process of erosion set in motion through the twentieth-century spread of secularization, with consequent changes in the social order and the infiltration of secularist ideas. This process of change has so undermined the Sufi orders that in many parts of the Arab world in particular and other Islamic countries in general, they have declined.

Sociologically speaking, at the time, we have seen religion declined and displaced, or reduced from being the regulative principle behind life which should be sustaining and molding society, to become one among many aspects of social life, though receiving special recognition as a factor of differentiation within the universalism of secular culture. At the same time, Islam continues to be the guiding principle in the personal lives of vast numbers of people, and within

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12 Yavuz, Islamic Political, 139.
Islam the Sufi tradition will continue to fulfill its mission of maintaining the deeper spiritual values through the special linkage and relationship with the spiritual world that the ṯariqah represents. In the case of al-Ṭariqah al-Naqsabandiyah, the presence of different kind of secularization between Turkey and Indonesia led Naqsabandi’s shaykhs to respond the new challenges with different ways.

1. Naqsabandi’s Challenges in Indonesia

Naqsabandi ṯariqa in Indonesia faced challenges and attacks from Muslim reformers graduated from Mecca. The first challenge is critics came from Sâlim bin Samîr and Sayyid Uthmân. At the first time, actually they did not criticize ṯariqa as religious institutional but they criticized the shaykhs personally, because they claimed shaykhs as pseudo-Sufis. In 1852 Ibn Sâmir’s writings were focused to attack and criticize Ismail Minangkabawi personally. On the other hand, Sayyid Uthmân showed his angry to Naqsabandi’s shaykhs who had deep influence in Mecca, Sulaymân Zuhdî. He asserted that his critics to tasawwuf and ṯariqah because the shaykhs made people backward and failed to face the challenges from modernity.

After Muslim reformers criticized on Naqsabandi’s shaykhs, they continued to criticize the teachings of al-Ṭariqah al-Naqsabandiyah. They stated that Naqsabandi’s teachings and practices were lead people to practice bid’ah (innovation) and shirk (polytheism). These critics came from Ahmad Khâtib (1852-1915), he was famous ‘ulamâ’ (Muslim scholars) who stayed in Mecca and he also was well known because of his critics to adat law considered as matrilineal. In 1906-1908, he successfully wrote three books to criticize al-Ṭariqah al-Naqsabandiyah. Then his critics were answered apologetically by Naqsabandi’s shaykhs such as Muḥammad Sa’d bin Ṭanṭa’ and his student, Khâtib ‘Ali. They tried to prove that Naqabandi’s rituals have the basis from al-Qur’an and Hadith. The effect of debates was not limited among Minangkabawi people but it affected to all regions in Indonesia. Another critic on al-Ṭariqah al-Naqsabandiyah came from Aḥmad Khâtib’s student, Haji Rasul

14 Ibid., 258.
or ‘Abd al-Karim bin Muḥammad Amr Allāh. He is Hamka’s father. He wrote two risalah (articles) to criticize al-Ṭariqah al-Naqsabandīyah and Khāṭib ‘Ali. The debates continued until the early 1981 because Nakhabandi’s shaykhs also wrote some books and articles to answer their critics. One of the latest books was written by Haji Yahya bin Lakseman with the title Lisan Naqsabandiyyah.

Besi̇de critics from Muslim reformers, Naqsabandi  ṭariqa also faced some critics from Islamic organizations such as al-Irsyad (1913) and Muhammadiyah (1912). They criticized that al-Ṭariqah al-Naqsabandīyah to be specific and other  ṭariqa Hs in general led Muslims to innovation (bid‘ah), superstition (khurafat) and imagination (takhayyul). Perhaps Muhammadiyah is the most active organization attacking Sufi  ṭariqa s.

The critics from Muslim reformers and “puritanists” Islamic organizations led Naqsabandi’s shaykhs and other shaykhs from other  ṭariqa bs to join traditionalist Islamic organization such as Nahdlatul Ulama (1926) in Java and PERTI (1928) in Minangkabau. They joined the organization to respond Muslim reformers’ critics. Shaykh Jalâl al-Dîn, a khalīfa of Shaykh ‘Ali Rūḍâ of Jabal Abû Qubays claimed that the PPTI had been established as early as 1920, and that the initials then stood for Persatuan Pembela Thariqat Islam (Union of Defenders of the Islamic  Ṭariqa ). This organization seems to be attached to the Naqsibandi  ṭariqa and in the first Indonesian elections in 1955, a Sumatran Naqshbandi was elected to the national parliament as the sole representative of the  ṭariqa political party.

2. Naqsabandi’s Challenges in Turkey

The most challenges of al-Ṭariqah al-Naqsabandiyyah in Turkey came from the state. It is totally different with the challenges of al-Ṭariqah al-Naqsabandiyyah in Indonesia. This is because the secularization projects in Turkey led the state to control religion in public spheres. As one of its consequences, in 1925 the state banned all Sufi orders, including al-Ṭariqah al-Naqsabandiyyah which was the biggest Sufi orders in Turkey. At the time there were between 1,000 and 2,000 lodges in the
core of provinces of Anatolia and Rumelia (the Balkans). Especially in the capital of Istanbul, there were 305 Sufi lodges, 65 of which were Naqsabandi.

Brian Silverstein stated that in the Ottoman Empire until 1923 and briefly in the Republic of Turkey, Sufi orders were of major importance to social, political and economic life. But after the secularization, in 1925 the Republican administration proscribed the orders and closed their lodges. It has since been technically a punishable offence to be involved in a Sufi order – as shaykh (a title not recognized by the Turkish state) or as devotee – although a number of orders have continued to function in a somewhat ‘public secret’ fashion. Under Legal Code 677, the Republic closed Sufi lodges on November 30, 1925, later replacing them with the Halkevleri, or People’s Houses, which promoted radical secularization and obedience to the new state elite.

The most interesting question is why the state banned and closed Sufi orders. It seems that the Father of Turk, Mustafa Kemal wanted to modernize the country, to release it from the hold of what he felt were backward religious ideas. Annemarie Schimmel, one of the foremost scholars of Turkish mystical literature, agrees in part with Kemal's assessment of the majority of the Muslim fraternities (tariqahs) at that time, namely that it was very difficult for these institutions to respond to modernizing influences in the early twentieth century. Furthermore, she explained that

[at the same time,] . . . the institutions found themselves unable to respond to the need for modernization and changed outlook. Instead of fulfilling their centuries-old function as centers of spiritual education, they became headquarters of obscurantism and backwardness. That is why Ataturk abolished the orders in 1925 - a step that some of the leading personalities in the mystical hierarchy even approved of. They felt that the spiritual values of Sufism as taught by the poets of Anatolia would survive without the ruined framework of the orders - and perhaps in a more genuine way. And these values are, indeed, still alive.

At the same time, what Ataturk did not understand fully was that although the orders may have been backward and corrupted; their
abolition would not eradicate the Islamic values and practices on which they were founded. However, Schimmel’s statement that the values of the Muslim and Sufi teachers would not die with the abolition of the institutions has proven true. During the years of one-party rule in Turkey, religious sentiments and practices remained quiet and separate from the public sphere of politics.

**Conclusion**

Based on above comparison, I try to reflect my understanding related the challenges faced by *al-Ṭariqah al-Naqsabandiyah* in Turkey and Indonesia. *Firstly*, in Turkey, where the secularizing movement of Mustafa Kamal brought about their prohibition in 1925, is an example of what has been taking place less spectacularly in other countries through the process of secularization; changes in the outlook and in the social order undermining confidence in former religious ways. So, *al-Ṭariqah al-Naqsabandiyah* was banned because they were politically dangerous, and it claimed to led Muslims into backwardness and did not able to respond to the modernity. On the contrary, in Indonesia these days we observe some prominent figures have shown their interest in Sufism on one hand, but certain Muslim reformers such as Salim ibn Samir, Sayyid Usman, Ahmad Khatib, and Haji Rasul criticized *al-Ṭariqah al-Naqsabandiyah* and claimed that it led Muslims to innovation (*bid‘ah*) and polytheism (*shirk*). In the similar way, “puritanists” organizations such as al-Irsyad and Muhammadiyah also criticized *al-Ṭariqah al-Naqsabandiyah* and claimed that this *ṭariqah* led Muslims to practice several things considered as innovation (*bid‘ah*), superstition (*khurafat*) and imagination (*takḥayyl*). From this explanation, it can be said that the rival of *al-Ṭariqah al-Naqsabandiyah* in Turkey is the state; whereas the rival of *al-Ṭariqah al-Naqsabandiyah* in Indonesia is Muslim reformer or puritan’s organization.

*Secondly*, in Indonesia, *al-Ṭariqah al-Naqsabandiyah* and other Sufi *ṭariqahs* are religious organizations which deeply concern to spiritual life. The social significance of *al-Ṭariqah al-Naqsabandiyah* was many sided but the religious significance was primary. It cannot be denied that to some
extent al-Ṭarīqah al-Naqṣabandīyah was fully blended with the saint-cult and living saints: exploiting it, in fact, represented the religion of the ordinary people. While in Turkey, the al-Ṭarīqah al-Naqṣabandīyah, became a significant element in establishing nation identity and became state’s opposition. We find leaders of al-Ṭarīqah al-Naqṣabandīyah aspiring to political power, and revolting against established authority. For example, Resat Halli mentions that between 1924 and 1938, there were 18 rebellions against the draconian policies of the state, and most were led by the al-Ṭarīqah al-Naqṣabandīyah.\textsuperscript{15} In Indonesian history, especially in the nineteenth century the Sufi orders were in the forefront of Muslim reaction against the expansion of colonialist powers. For example, al-Ṭarīqah al-Sammānīyah actively opposed the Dutch in Palembang in 1819 and in South Kalimantan in 1860. Al-Ṭarīqah al-Qadirīyah wa al-Naqṣabandīyah took part in the peasant’s revolt of Banten in 1888 and in 1891 in Lombok against Hindu oppression in Bali.\textsuperscript{16} In West Sumatra, where there is also a strong Naqṣabandi presence, strong resistance was shown in 1908 to Dutch presence by the Sattārīyah order. In addition, the Sanā’īyah in the late nineteenth century inspired the Achehnese war against the Dutch while its shaikh in Libya was fighting against Italian incursions there from 1914 to 1918.

Thirdly, in the context of Turkye’s secularization, building nation-state is more important, while in Indonesian context, purifying religion is more important. Thus, reformer Muslims attacked Naqṣabandi ṭarīqa, in order to purify religion. Fourthly, although al-Ṭarīqah al-Naqṣabandīyah or other ṭarīqabs suspected as the cause of Muslim backward, but it still has important roles in social and politics. In social life, al-Ṭarīqah al-Naqṣabandīyah can be regarded as Muslim identity which offers spiritual values. In politics, Naqṣabandi ṭarīqah and other ṭarīqabs can be functioned as political vehicle, to get voice in public election for example. It is because they have strong bonding relationship among ṭarīqabs followers with their shaikh.

\textsuperscript{15} Yavuz, Islamic Political, 139.
Since the nineteenth century, the general trend in the Muslim world was trying to rationalize or secularize many aspects of human life and develop their nation. The different of secularization projects in Turkey and Indonesia caused the different challenges faced by al-Ṭarīqah al-Naqsabandīyah. In Turkey, before the secularization occurred, al-Ṭarīqah al-Naqsabandīyah played significant roles in society, but in 1925 the state banned all Sufi orders. While in Indonesia, at the time, al-Ṭarīqah al-Naqsabandīyah faced the critics from reformer Muslims and Puritans Islamic organization. The main challenge of al-Ṭarīqah al-Naqsabandīyah in Turkey was closely related to the state’s efforts to control religion; whereas in Indonesia the main challenge was concerned to purify Islamic teachings from bid‘ab (innovation) and shirk (polytheism).

**Bibliography**


