

INSANIYAT

Journal of Islam and Humanities

Vol 10, Number 2, May 2026

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Published by Faculty of Adab and Humanities

Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta, Indonesia

Website : <http://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/insaniyat> | Email : journal.insaniyat@uinjkt.ac.id

e-ISSN : 2541-500X

p-ISSN : 2614-6010



INSANIYAT

Journal of Islam and Humanities

Vol. 10(2) May 2026



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<https://doi.org/10.15408/insaniyat.v10i2.50755>

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INSANIYAT

Journal of Islam and Humanities

Sectarianism in Aceh: Religious Authorities and The Aswaja Contest

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Abstract

This article investigates the sectarian tensions between the MPU (Ulama Consultative Assembly), the official forum of ulama in Aceh, and the MPTT (Tawhid Tasawuf Study Council), a Sufi community and tariqa (Islamic order). The study adopts a descriptive qualitative methodology, drawing upon news reports, publications, and relevant data pertaining to the conflict between the MPU and the MPTT prior to analysis. The research focuses on Abu Amran Waly, the MPTT, and the responses of the MPU of Aceh — notably several fatwas — concerning his Sufi teachings. The findings indicate that the conflict between the MPU and the MPTT is rooted in theological disputes and a contestation of religious authority. The MPU regards the MPTT as propagating erroneous doctrines, particularly as the influence of the MPTT extends to Java, Kalimantan, and Sulawesi, and even further to Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. It is evident that the theological and political-economic dimensions of the conflict are inextricably intertwined.

Keywords: Sectarianism; MPU (Ulama Consultative Assembly); MPTT (Tawhid Tasawuf Study Council)

How to cite: Ramli, & Romario. (2026). Sectarianism In Aceh: Religious Authorities and The Aswaja Contest. *Insaniyat: Journal of Islam and Humanities*, 10(2), 145-158. <https://doi.org/10.15408/insaniyat.v10i2.51797>

Introduction

Abu Amran Waly studied religion with his parents and teachers, who had an understanding of Aswaja. Abu Amran Waly, born in 1987, is the son of Abu Muda Waly (Muhammad Waly al-Khalidi, 1917–1961) and his third wife, Hajjah Raudhatinnor. Abu Amran Waly has seven half-siblings from different mothers. In 1972, Abu Amran Waly assumed leadership of Dayah Darussalam for ten years before establishing his own institution, Dayah Darul Ihsan. Since 2004, Abu Amran Waly has founded the MPTT to further expand his da'wah in the Aceh region, outside Aceh, and outside Indonesia. The success of Abu Amran Waly in establishing MPTT in various regions was due to his loyal students and followers. It is recorded that all districts in Aceh have MPTT posts (recitation centers), even down to the sub-district level. Apart from that, in areas outside Aceh, there are MPTTs, such as in Jakarta, Batam, Medan, Manado, Gorontalo, and Malaysia. In addition, MPTT marked it's



influence by establishing MPTT posts in each region and having a structure in each region known as the Wali Nanggroe.

The most phenomenal rejection of the MPTT was from Abu Muhibuddin Waly (1936-2012) and Abu Jamaluddin Waly (1945-2016), who seemed to be a reference for the Consultative Council of Ulama (MPU) Aceh to issue a decision against the MPTT. In 2017, the Aceh MPU issued Fatwa Number 4 of 2017 concerning the Mu'tabarrah Books of Monotheism in Aceh (Books that are legally recognized). In addition to attacking books that are considered to contain the teachings of Wahhabism, Shia, Mutazilah, and Liberal Islam, this fatwa also indirectly attacks the MPTT by declaring the books *Insan Kamil Abdul Karim Jilli* (1365-1424), *Fusus Al Hikam*, *Futuh Makkiyah Ibnu Arabi* (1165-1240), and *Kasyf Asrar Muhammad Saleh Al Minangkabau* (d.1933) as books that are *ghair mu'tabarrah* (not recommended for study). Where, as Sufism with a philosophical wing, these books become references for MPTT-I. In the same year, through the coordination meeting decision number 11 of 2017 concerning efforts to prevent heretical sects, the Aceh MPU again attacked the MPTT by forming a research team to study it because it was considered to have pros and cons. However, apparently, MPTT remains unaffected by the decision. Even when the Aceh MPU issued a *tausiyah* (recommendation) asking the Aceh government to stop MPTT activities, the Governor of Aceh, Nova Iriansyah, did not show any attitude.

In this case, it can be seen that the MPU upholds religious authority in determining a deviant movement, and this issue is not only theological but also political. That the religious authority maintained by the MPU has political goals and economic privileges, by declaring other movements as threats, is the MPU's strategy to maintain the status quo (Permana, 2021). This statement is reinforced by looking at the influence of the MPTT, which is spread across the Aceh region, making the MPTT politically and economically very profitable. In fact, several state actors and businessmen approached the MPTT with political and economic aims. Under the influence of this MPTT, MPU made the strategic decision that MPTT is a threat to society.

This article contributes to the theory of sectarianism initiated by Hashemi and Postel (2017) that sectarianism occurs not only because of Sunni-Shia differences, which are theological in nature, but also due to state political actors. Hashemi and Postel (2017) focus on studies of Middle Eastern countries that are mostly authoritarian, so state actors have a role in the formation of sectarianism (Hashemi & Postel, 2017). Hashemi and Postel's (2017) reading related to sectarianism, followed by Permana (2021), which shows sectarianism in Aceh. In 2001, after Aceh was inaugurated to implement sharia regulations, The Consultative Council of Ulama (MPU) had authority over religion in Aceh. After the 2004 tsunami and the Aceh and Indonesia peace agreement in 2005 in Helsinki, the Salafi movement slowly began to enter Aceh. The MPU, which is dominated by Aswaja, sees the Salafi movement as disturbing because it opposes the traditional Islam that Aswaja has practiced for a long time. The MPU gave a heretical fatwa against Salafi so that mass mobilization occurred; the next symptom affected Muhammadiyah, which was considered by the MPU to be the same as Salafi because it did not agree with traditional Islam that had been practiced so far in Aceh. The peak in 2017 was the burning of the Muhammadiyah mosque in Samalanga. This phenomenon strengthens the MPU as a religious authority in Aceh, and the Governor of Aceh is powerless and prefers to follow the fatwa issued by the MPU, even though it is against the constitution (Permana, 2021).

This study focuses on the MPU, which issued a heretical fatwa against the Tauhid Tassawuf Study Council (MPTT). In contrast to the Permana case regarding the MPU, Aswaja accused the Salafi-Wahhabis of deviance. In the case of MPU's deviant fatwa against MPTT, fellow Aswaja MPTT founder Abu Amran Waly is a charismatic cleric who is the son of prominent Acehese cleric Abu Muda Waly.

Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, analyzing the collected data, interpreting it, and then narrating it in the text. The study in this study uses data from documents in the form of online media, books, articles, and the internet related to MPTT and MPU. Data was obtained from online observations in seeing how the sectarian issue between MPTT and MPU in the mass media, referring to the fatwa document issued by MPU against MPTT, and MPTT's response to the MPU fatwa. The data in this study was supplemented with a number of books written by Abu Amran Waly, the founder of MPTT, to see the purpose of establishing MPTT, in addition to seeing the role of Abu Amran Waly's relationship with the local government in maintaining MPTT. This study is supported by previous research that discusses MPTT. The existing data was then collected and analyzed using a sectarianism perspective. This sectarianism theory refers to Hashemi and Postel, who argue that sectarianism can occur within groups that have the same understanding, in this case MPTT and MPU, who have an understanding of Aswaja, but the presence of political actors determines how sectarianism occurs (Hashemi & Postel, 2017). In this case, sectarianism between MPTT and MPU is seen from their relationship with the government, how MPTT maintains itself and strengthens its group by making several areas of Aceh Sufi Tauhid cities that are embedded with MPTT symbols, while MPU asks the Aceh government to cancel MPTT activities such as International Muzakarah (International Symposium) to speed up the development of MPTT. The data in this study is strengthened by tracing the beginning of the conflict between Abu Amran Waly and his brother, especially Abu Jamaludin Waly, who openly criticized the deviant teachings of MPTT in the book he wrote, which was then followed by Abu Mudi Mesra (born 1949), who founded Tastaifi (Sufism, Tauhid, Fikih) as a rival to MPTT. In defending the MPTT, Abu Amran Waly asked for a decision from the Indonesian Ulema Council and the ulama in Java to issue a statement that the teachings of the MPTT were not heretical.

Result and Discussion

Naqsyabandiyah Order in Aceh: History and Actors

In 1939, Abu Muda Waly returned from overseas to West Sumatra, where he studied with Syekh Abdul Ghani al-Khalidi (1811-1961) from Bangkinang, Riau. Abu Muda Waly made recitations, then founded an Islamic boarding school, which later became a large Islamic boarding school in Labuhan Haji, South Aceh, under the name Darussalam Islamic Boarding School. In the early development of the tarekat, Abu Muda Waly raised three main disciples: *First*, Adnan Mahmud (1905–2011) from Manggeng, Southwest Aceh, who founded the Ashabul Yamin boarding school in Bakongan. *Second*, Qamaruddin (1915-1993) from the Teunom sub-district, Aceh Jaya Regency, who founded a pesantren in Tanah Aboe *Third*, his eldest son, *Abu Muhibuddin Waly*, who later became the successor of Abu Muda Waly.

During his time as the leader of the Naqsyabandiyah Order, Abu Muda Waly did not force his students to join the order. Abu Muda Waly has many students who mainly come from areas that are not conducive because of the Darul Islam movement, he appointed them as *caliphs*. Many of the *caliphs* who were there were qualified to become *murshid*, but because of Abu Muda Waly's short age (he died in 1961, at the age of 44) he did not have time to appoint them as *murshid*. Abu Muda Waly's position was later replaced by his eldest son Abu Muhibuddin Waly who later appointed Abu Muda Waly's students to become *murshid* in the Naqsyabandiah order. The appointment of Muhibuddin Waly's *murshid* cannot be separated from the context of winning Partai Golongan Karya (The Party of Functional Groups) in the elections in the 1980s, at which time Acehnese voters mostly supported the Islamic-based Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP, United Development

Party). In subsequent developments the Naqsyabandiah order has murshids in every city district in Aceh and has many followers (Sehat Ihsan Shadiqin, 2021).

Second, Abu Jamaluddin Waly is the younger brother of Abu Muhibuddin Waly, who has been involved in politics all his life. At the age of 22, he became a member of the Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat-Gotong Royong (DPR-GR, People's Representative Council of Mutual Assistance) in Aceh Province. In the 1960s, he joined the Masyumi Party, then became a member of the Indonesian Parliament until 1998, when he joined the United Development Party (PPP). In 1999, Abu Jamaluddin Waly returned to Aceh and focused a lot on religious activities. Finally, Abu Amran Waly is the son of Abu Muda Waly but has a different mother than Abu Muhibuddin Waly and Abu Jamaluddin Waly. Abu Amran Waly became a leader at the Darul Ihsan Islamic boarding school, Labuhan Haji, which is still in the same area as the Darussalam Islamic boarding school, which his father founded. Abu Amran Waly took the Naqsyabandiah order from Shaykh Labai Sati (1908-1973), who was a friend of Abu Muda Waly. His political career had been with the South Aceh DPRK from the Golkar Party in the 1980s for a period, then he left politics and focused on Islamic boarding schools and preaching to the community (Sehat Ihsan Shadiqin, 2021). Abuya Amran Waly was also appointed as a murshid by Aidarus (1926–1989), the son of Abdul Ghani al-Kanfari (1811–1961), who had previously served as the murshid of Abu Muda Waly and Abu Muhibuddin Waly. On October 18, 2020, Alaidin Athori (son of Aidarus) testified that he heard directly from his father that he had appointed Abu Amran Waly as *murshid* of the Naqsyabandiyah order. Such a statement dispelled the allegation that Abu Amran Waly was a murshid who did not have a *murshid* (Ghany, 2020).

The three figures above, who are the children of Abu Muda Waly, played a role in the sectarianism of the Naqsyabandiyah and Aswaja Orders in Aceh. Differences of opinion regarding the understanding of sufism taught by Abu Amran Waly received opposition from his brother Abu Jamaluddin Waly (A. J. Waly, t.t.). This sectarianism sharpened with the issuance of a decision from the North Aceh MPU declaring the teachings of MPTT Abu Amran Waly heretical, and the MPU even ordered a fatwa to burn books by Abu Amran Waly. A student of Abu Jamaluddin Waly, Tgk. Hasanoel Basry (Born, 1949), who is familiarly called Abu Mudi Mesra, founded Tastaifi (Tauhid, Sufism, Jurisprudence) to compete with the MPTT (Assembly for the Study of Tauhid Sufism), which is considered to only teach tashawuf (Sehat Ihsan Shadiqin, 2021).

Mursyid in the Naqsyabandiyah Khalidiyah Order and its Polemics

The Tarekat has clear rules for appointing a *murshid*. The congregation of the tarekat must gradually go through the ladder of *salik*, *caliph*, *munafis*, *vice murshid*, and *murshid*. A *murshid* is believed to have a deep understanding of the tarekat as a guide and determines who is entitled to become a *murshid*. Abu Muda Waly is considered to have the highest authority in the Naqsyabandiyah Khalidiyah tarekat hierarchy and has the authority to appoint a *murshid*. After the death of Abu Muda Waly in 1961, he was replaced by Abu Muhibuddin Waly on the grounds that he was the oldest child who had studied with Abu Muda Waly since childhood and followed where his father went. At the age of 19, Abu Muhibuddin was sworn in as a *murshid* by two teachers, namely Abu Muda Waly (his own father) and Abdul Ghani al-Kanfari (the teacher of his father). The appointment of Abu Muhibuddin Waly also came with the agreement of the Tarekat scholars at that time. Abu Muhibuddin Waly declared himself as *murshid al-'am* (*general leader*), considered the main *murshid*, because there were many *murshid* at that time. Only a mursyid has the authority to appoint another mursyid.; Abu Jamaluddin Waly, for example, appointed his brother Ruslan Waly (d.2012) as *murshid* even though he was deemed not to meet the requirements (Sehat

Ihsan Shadiqin, 2021)).

In 2012, Abu Muhibuddin Waly died, and the position of *mursyid al-'am* was replaced by his younger brother, Abu Jamaluddin Waly. In contrast to Abu Muhibuddin, the appointment of Abu Jamaluddin as *murshid al-'am* was not through the agreement of the tarekat scholars but just happened. This is because Abu Jamaluddin Waly is the biological son of Abu Muda Waly. In his life, Abu Jamaluddin Waly has mostly held positions as a politician in Jakarta for nearly 40 years, so his legitimacy as a tarekat leader is still considered lacking. During his time as a *murshid*, Abu Jamaluddin appointed mentors from North Aceh, namely Teungku Hasnoel Bashri and Teungku Zuhdi (Sehat Ihsan Shadiqin, 2021).

Apart from Abu Jamaluddin Waly, there is also Abu Amran Waly, a descendant of Abu Muda Waly, who has a different mother than Abu Muhibuddin Waly and Abu Jamaluddin Waly. Abu Amran Waly actively leads the tarekat as a *murshid*. Even though he had a career as the South Aceh as a member of Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah (DPRD, Regional People's Representative Council), it was only for one term. After that, Abu Amran Waly focused more on Islamic boarding schools and the MPTT organization (Sehat Ihsan Shadiqin, 2021). The *murshid* of Abu Amran Waly is also doubtful because he refuses to submit to the *murshid* of Abu Jamaluddin Waly. Instead of taking the order from Abu Jamaluddin, he preferred to take the order from Aidarus Ibn Abdul Ghani Al Kanfari, even though he also claimed to have received the sanad of his *murshid* from Abu Muhibuddin Waly.

Abu Amran Waly and MPTT

Abu Amran Waly al-Khalidi initially studied under Abu Muda Waly (his father), Zakaria Labai Sati (from West Sumatra), and Imam Syamsuddin (d. 1971) of Sangkalan, Southwest Aceh. He was appointed as a *murshid* in the Naqshbandi *ṭarīqa* by Sheikh Aidarus Kampar, the son of Sheikh Abdul Ghani al-Kampari. Academically, he also studied under Abu H. Daud Zamzami in Banda Aceh and attended several universities in Aceh, West Sumatra, and Malaysia, although he did not obtain a bachelor's degree. In the previous section, it was explained that the position of Abu Amran Waly became the most important part of the dynamics of the Naqsyabandiah Khalidiyah Order in Aceh. Especially because of the difference of opinion between his brothers, Abu Muhibuddin Waly and Abu Jamaluddin Waly. This section describes the profile of Abu Amran Waly and how he founded the Majelis Pengkajian Tauhid Tasawuf (Council for the Study of Tauhid Tasawuf), the MPTT's influence in Aceh, and the challenges faced by both the MPTT and Abu Amran Waly himself.

Unlike his brother Abu Muhibuddin Waly, who received a tarekat diploma from Abu Muda Waly, Abu Amran Waly received a tarekat diploma from his father's friend Zakaria Labai Sati from Malalo, West Sumatra. Labai Sati Malalo was the leader of the Darussalam Labuhan Haji Islamic boarding school when Abu Muda Waly died and his children were still studying (Sehat Ihsan Shadiqin, 2021). Abu Amran Waly has the goal of uniting Muslims of all ages. With his moderate and communicative preaching style, Abu Amran Waly was accepted by many circles. MPTT has become a medium for Abu Amran Waly to invite people to prepare for the afterlife by practicing monotheism and tasawuf (Misri A Muchsin, Abdul Hadi, Abdul Manan, 2021).

Abu Amran Waly founded MPTT on May 21, 2004, based on the law of the Aceh Besar Notary Body ratified by Mukhsin in Notarial Deed No. 14 of 2004. MPTT officially became an organization based in the South Aceh Labuhan Haji sub-district, Aceh. Structurally led by Abu Amran Waly. The foundation is based on Islam, the philosophy of Pancasila, and the 1945 Constitution, so it has the right to have branches in various parts of Indonesia (Misri A Muchsin, Abdul Hadi, Abdul Manan, 2021). MPTT itself is based at the Darul Ihsan Islamic boarding school, Pawoh Village, Labuhan Haji Tengah subdistrict, South Aceh, Aceh

Province. The presence of MPTT is also an answer to human existential problems, spiritual drought and people's lives which tend to become increasingly distant from religion (Manan, 2021). In 2021, MPTT-I made changes to the articles of association with a more detailed organizational structure through Notarial Deed No. 43 dated August 27, 2021, which was ratified by notary Cut Era Fitriyeni in Aceh Besar by making Sahal Tastari Waly (one of Abu Amran Waly's sons) the General Chair.

Since 2008, MPTT has not only developed in Aceh but also in areas outside Aceh, such as Medan, Batam, Jakarta, Bogor, Manado, and Gorontalo. As for neighboring Malaysia, MPTT is also developing in Trenggano. Abu Amran Waly consistently visits areas where there are followers of the MPTT (Sehat Ihsan Shadiqin, 2018). In each regional district, there are huts, gates, or monuments to show the existence of MPTT followers. Structurally, each district has a *wali nanggroe* (mayor) who is the leader in these areas. Currently, there are more than 30 *wali nanggroe* spread across various regions in Indonesia and Malaysia. The majority of *wali nanggroe* are in Aceh, where almost every district and city in Aceh has a *wali nanggroe* MPTT representative. The formation of the *wali nanggroe* also seems to be a satire on the Wali Nanggroe Aceh, Malik Mahmud Al Khaitar, because the 2010 MPTT ulama conference could not be held in Banda Aceh.

According to Abu Amran Waly, the establishment of the MPTT was based on a concern over the current condition of Aceh, which was different from its past glories. According to Abu Amran Waly, glory in the past can occur because Muslims carry out the teachings of monotheism. By reinforcing the teachings of monotheism, it is hoped that people will learn more about religion by increasing noble character and good deeds. Monotheism and sufism are two inseparable entities; sufism must have perfect monotheism; monotheism eradicates visible shirk, while sufism eliminates hidden shirk (Misri A Muchsin, Abdul Hadi, Abdul Manan, 2021).

According to Moch Nor Ichwan (2013), what Abu Amran Waly did was an alternative to the sharia discourse that had developed in Aceh province. Abu Amran Waly did not directly criticize the implementation of Islamic law, but he said to focus on sufism, which cleanses the heart and depends only on Allah. Because *shari'a* without *haqiqah* will make someone wicked. This state of wickedness leads to hypocrisy, and hypocrisy causes a lot of slander that leads to chaos. Sufism eliminates hidden *shirk*, while *shari'a* is only fixated on visible shirk. According to Abu Amran Waly, the experience of sufism must be directly proportional to its appearance and religious symbols. From Moch Nor Ichwan's experience, he stated that the MPTT congregation was critical of 'qanunization of *sharia*', and that qanunization can prevent a person from gaining spiritual experience (Ichwan, 2013). In early 2017, when the author attended an MPTT recitation at the Baitussalihin Mosque in Banda Aceh, Abu Amran Waly satirized people who claimed to be defenders of Islam. Abu Amran Waly stated that Islam is practiced, not just defended.

In filling out the MPTT study, Abu Amran Waly regularly toured the branch once every three months. The teachings of Abu Amran Waly contain philosophical ideas in the teachings of Sufism that are taught to the general public but are usually only taught to Sufi congregations and special groups. Abu Amran Waly's hope is that Sufism will not be misunderstood and even hated by Muslims (Sehat Ihsan Shadiqin, 2018). In a meeting in 2021 at the Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah Mosque in Meulaboh City, the author once heard that Abu Amran Waly felt he had to teach Sufi monotheism to ordinary people because few scholars would accept it. Abu Amran even challenged, are there MPTT members who, after hearing sufi monotheistic teachings, don't pray or become lazy? According to him, precisely through the teachings of Sufi monotheism, a person becomes light in worship and does good to other humans.

The sufism that Abu Amran Waly raised is different from the classical Sufi doctrine. Abu Amran reinterprets “*wahdatul wujud*” (unity of being) as a tasawuf philosophy that has been considered heretical. In this case, Abu Amran Waly wrote a small book that reviews the teachings of *wahdatul wujud* that can be understood by ordinary people (Sehat Ihsan Shadiqin, 2018). Regarding the teachings of *wahdatul wujud*, this reminds us of the teachings of the classical scholar Hamzah Fansuri, who received accusations of heresy from Nurudin Ar-Raniry, which led to the books of Hamzah Fansuri’s teachings being finally burned. The tragedy repeated itself, as the author will describe in the following section, when the ulama in North Aceh burned the books of Abu Amran Waly.

MPTT activities do not only contain recitations delivered by Abu Amran Waly but also joint *dhikr* called *ratéb siribèè* (thousands *dhikr*) which means doing as much *dhikr* as possible. This method is used so that the human heart depends on Allah SWT and is not negligent with world affairs such as wealth, position, and other statuses. Abu Amran Waly divides the level of *dhikr* into four categories. First, *dhikr ma’al ghaflah* (careless, negligent), namely, only *dhikr* using the tongue. Second, *dhikr ma’al yaqdah* (awake), namely, *dhikr* that begins to understand the meaning of *dhikr*, although sometimes it still thinks of other things. Third, *dhikr ma’al yaqdah* (conscientious), that is, *dhikr* full of attention without thinking about anything else. Finally, *dhikr ma’al hudhur*, which is the highest *dhikr* when the performer sees nothing but Allah. By *dhikr*, if the perpetrator reaches the third stage, then Allah SWT will grant his wish, and if it reaches the fourth stage, the intention of the perpetrator will be granted by Allah SWT. Abu Amran Waly reminded us that before doing *dhikr*, the perpetrator must have faith and feel himself to be the dirtiest, despicable, and sinful creature (Misri A Muchsin, Abdul Hadi, Abdul Manan, 2021).

Muzakarah Ulama (Ulama Congress)

The success of the MPTT with many followers was demonstrated by the holding of the first Muzakarah Ulama (Ulama Congress) on March 9–10, 2010 in Meulaboh, West Aceh. This activity shows the existence of MPTT and how big its influence is. Muzakarah Ulama were attended by MPTT followers from various regions of Aceh and Malaysia (Ichwan, 2013). Muzakarah Ulama activities carried out by MPTT were almost not carried out. Initially, the Muzakarah Ulama was to be held in Banda Aceh, the capital city of Aceh Province. Governor Irwandi initially agreed, but three weeks later, the governor suddenly withdrew support (Sehat Ihsan Shadiqin, 2021). This incident was actually inseparable from the lack of support from the MPU because every event in Aceh asks for permission not only from the police but also from the MPU. The MPU’s reason for not supporting it was because they did not know the contents of the teachings of the MPTT as conveyed in the letter. Even though the MPTT invited the MPU to attend the recitation in order to find out about the teachings being conveyed, the MPU did not comply with the invitation. In this case, it seems that the MPU doubts the legitimacy of the MPTT (Ichwan, 2013). MPTT was also looking for a solution because the invitations for the Muzakarah Ulama had spread, and support came from West Aceh Regent, Ramli MS. He is willing to pick up the participants from Banda Aceh and provide food and lodging. This incident marked the relationship between MPTT and the local government (Sehat Ihsan Shadiqin, 2021).

The second MPTT Mudzakarah was held again in 2012 in Selangor, Malaysia. The activity went smoothly without a hitch, and Abu Amran Waly’s position was well received because of the presence of a number of his students. The third conference was held again in Aceh, namely Blang Pidie, Aceh Barat Daya District, in 2014. This activity was supported by the Regent of Southwest Aceh by disbursing billions of rupiah in funds. Muzakarah activities in Southwest Aceh received opposition from clerics who protested because they were not

included in the Mudzakarah or clerics who were against the Abu Amran Waly movement. This protest was handled by the Regent of Southwest Aceh by funding dozens of clerics who protested going to Umrah (pilgrimage to Mecca) (Sehat Ihsan Shadiqin, 2021).

In addition, a conference was also held successively in Cibirong Bogor (2016), Gorontalo (2017), Banda Aceh (2018), Gorontalo again (2019) and Batam (2019). In 2020 and 2021, there will also be a Muzakarah in Aceh Singkil, but apart from being constrained by the COVID-19 outbreak and the refocusing of the Aceh Singkil regional government budget, there is also the refusal of a number of community leaders regarding the funds that the Regent of Aceh Singkil (Dul Mursyid) wants to disburse. In 2022, Muzakarah will be held in Gorontalo with the full support of the Regent of Gorontalo, Nelson Pomalingo.

In March 2023, the Muzakarah scheduled in Medan was canceled following opposition from representatives of several Islamic organizations, led by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) of North Sumatra. As an alternative, the Indonesian Women's Tauhid Tashawuf (P2T) Cadre Training — the da'wah wing of MPTT-I, which focuses on organizing and mentoring mothers and young women — was conducted in Aceh Singkil for one week in May 2023 (Rubaidi. Syaifuddin, 2023). A Muzakarah on monotheism and tasawuf subsequently took place in Ternate and Tidore in September 2023. Further Muzakarah events were organized by Sheikh Amran Waly in Luwuk Banggai, Central Sulawesi (June 2024), and in Padang, West Sumatra (September 2024).

Sectarianism: The Beginning of the Feud between MPU and MPTT

From the Muzakarah that were held, especially in the Aceh region, they always received opposition from local clerics who did not agree with the teachings of the MPTT, including the Muzarakah in Medan, which was canceled unilaterally by the MUI and North Sumatra Islamic Organizations because of a recommendation from the Aceh MPU (Rubaidi. Syaifuddin, 2023). In this article, we will review what caused local clerics to disagree with Abu Amran Waly and the MPTT.

One of them that is being debated among scholars is the interpretation of *huwa* (him) in the letter al-ikhlas, "*Qul huwa Allâhu Ahad,*" referring to the *dhamîr* (pronoun) of the Prophet Muhammad SAW as *al-Insân al-Kâmil*. This explanation, according to Abu Amran Waly, he got from the prominent scholar Sheikh 'Abdul Karîm al-Jîlî in a book entitled *al-Insân al-Kâmil fî Ma'rîfat al-Awakhir wa al-Awail* (Abd Al Karim Al Jilli, 2010). Based on the interpretation of *al-Ishârî* (something that can be defined), *al-Insân* can lead to *haqîqah* (truth), one of the four stages in Sufism: *sharia* (exoteric path), *tharîqa* (esoteric path), and *ma'rîfat* (last mystical knowledge) (Misri A Muchsin, Abdul Hadi, Abdul Manan, 2021). This case was later criticized by Abu Tu Min Blang-Bladeh (d. 2022), a charismatic scholar in Bireuen, North Aceh, who claimed that the teachings conveyed by Abu Amran Waly were misleading in the science of sufism. References originating from Syekh 'Abdul Karîm al-Jîlî, who teaches *wahdatul ujud* (the unity of being between man and God), are considered controversial by Islamic scholars. Tgk Ibrahim Bardan, who is familiarly known as Abu Panton (1945-2013), arranged a meeting with the North Aceh MPU on May 15, 2010 to discuss Abu Amran Waly's book. The contents of the meeting concluded that Abu Amran Waly's teachings were dangerous to society (Ichwan, 2013); (Ichwan, 2016) and (Muchsin, 2019). Until 2010 the North Aceh MPU issued a heretical fatwa against Abu Amran Waly MPTT, they even suggested burning teaching books and closing Abu Amran's recitation. This situation occurred in Banda Aceh, Aceh Besar, and Bireuen Regency (Sehat Ihsan Shadiqin, 2018). This MPTT deception is supported by Abu Jamaluddin Waly (Misri A Muchsin, Abdul Hadi, Abdul Manan, 2021) and his student Tgk. Hasnoel Basri, known as Abu MUDI Samalanga, a Mesra MUDI Dayah leader who has links with the Aceh Dayah

Ulama Association (HUDA)(Misri A Muchsin, Abdul Hadi, Abdul Manan, 2021) and the Aceh Ulama Council (MUNA), where Abu Muhibuddin Waly also misled Abu Amran Waly (Misri A Muchsin, Abdul Hadi, Abdul Manan, 2021). In this case, the three institutions that bring together scholars—North Aceh MPU, HUDA, and MUNA—agreed to declare Abu Amran Waly's teachings heretical. This statement was also supported by Abu Jamaluddin Waly as the brother of Abu Amran Waly, while Abu Muhibuddin Waly did not express support or defense of Abu Amran Waly's deception.

The attack on Abu Amran Waly was continued at a higher level through the Aceh provincial MPU. There are at least three MPU fatwas related either directly or indirectly to delegitimizing the MPTT. First, Fatwa Number 4 of 2017 states that the books of Abdul Karim Al Jilli, Ibn Arabi, and the like (which are recognized by the MPTT) are *ghair mu'tabar* books (not recommended) to be taught in Aceh. Second, the Decree of the MPU Coordination Meeting Number 11 of 2017, which said it would form a team to investigate MPTT teachings. Third, MPU Tausiyah Number 7 of 2020 asked the Government of Aceh to stop MPTT activities because they were considered to bring unrest among the people.

Receiving such rejection, MPTT did not remain silent and sought legitimacy from the Central MUI and the Director General of Islamic Community Guidance in Jakarta. The two institutions confirmed the thoughts of Tashawuf Abdul Karim Al Jilli in the Book of Al-Insân Al-Kâmil as a *mu'tabarah* book (recognized by *Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah*) and appreciated the teachings of the MPTT (Islam, 2000) and (LPBKI-MUI, 2020). In fact, to confirm this legitimacy, the MPTT managed to obtain remarks from the Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, Yaqut Cholil Qoumas, in Abu Amran Waly's latest book, *The Teachings of Tashawuf and Sufism* (A. A. Waly, 2021) and the revised edition of the *Translation of the Book of Manazil Sairin* (Abu Amran Waly, trans., 2021).

The case of sectarianism between the children of Abu Muda Waly and Aswaja can be seen through the eyes of sectarianism initiated by Hashemi and Postel (2017); sectarianism itself is defined as hatred of different groups. That sectarianism does not only occur between Sunni and Shia, who are theologically different, but also occurs within Sunnis themselves, as Hashemi and Postel have shown in the Middle East region. In the case of Aceh, sectarianism often occurs between Aswaja and Salafi-Wahhabis, who have different theological understandings (Permana, 2021). The polemic that occurred over Abu Amran Waly's misdirection by the North Aceh MPU, which was continued by the Aceh MPU, supported by his own brother, Abu Jamaluddin Waly, shows how sectarianism occurred so that some Acehnese people hated the MPTT group.

Sectarianism was getting stronger when Mr. Hasnoel Basri founded the Tastafi movement (Sufism, Tauhid, and Fiqh), which stated that Sufism must be accompanied by Jurisprudence. If you only tend to study Sufism, the problem of religious rituals will be neglected (Sadiqin, 2021). In certain areas, not all of them declared the teachings of Abu Amran Waly heretical. According to Muchsin et al., the people in Bireun Regency, North Aceh, Lhokseumawe City, and Langsa City were not affected by the controversy over the teachings of Abu Amran Waly; they generally tended to follow the views of their Islamic teachers. If their teacher accepts, they will accept; if their teacher refuses, they don't accept it (Misri A Muchsin, Abdul Hadi, Abdul Manan, 2021). However, sectarianism still occurs, such as the attack on the MPTT-I congregation in Southwest Aceh by blocking and throwing stones in 2020 (Antaraaceh, 2020).

The loudest statement was from Abu Amran Waly's own brother, Abu Jamaluddin Waly, who said that the monotheism of tasawuf developed by his younger brother could lead to polytheists and apostasy, even going astray, beyond the teachings of Judaism and Christianity. Abu Jamaluddin Waly wrote in his book *The Deviant Teachings* (Heretical

Teachings) that the words of *dhamîr huwa* that returned to Muhammad were heretical and misleading (A. J. Waly, t.t.). As a result, riots broke out between people in Aceh; for example, in Bireuen District, the community restricted MPTT tents, so that a khatib was banned from becoming an imam because he joined MPTT (Misri A Muchsin, Abdul Hadi, Abdul Manan, 2021). The climax was that in 2020 number 7, the Aceh Province MPU issued a *tausiyah* that explicitly asked the Aceh government to stop MPTT activities because they were considered to trigger chaos in society. The MPTT responded to this *tausiyah* by seeking support at a higher level.

On September 1, 2020, the Letter of the Directorate General of Islamic Community Guidance signed by Dr. HA Juraidi, MA, stated that the Naqshabandiyah Khalidiyah order brought by Abuya Amran Waly is still in the corridor of the *mu'tabarrah* order and understands the *Ahl Sunnah Wal Jamâ'ah* creed. In addition, the references used by the MPTT, such as the Book of Fushûsh Al Hikâm, Al-Insân Al-Kâmil, Sirr Al-Sâlikîn, and Kashf Ashrâr are legal treasure books for Muslims to study. On September 20, 2020, The Institute for Verification of Islamic Books and Content (LPBKI), the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), Jakarta, which was signed by Prof. Endang Soetari, issued an official statement that the Book of Al-Insân al-Kâmil Abdul Karim Al Jilli is a *mu'tabarrah* book that is in accordance with the principles of Islamic creed and Shari'ah (Islam, 2000) (LPBKI-MUI, 2020).

The most important support also came from Alaidin Athory Aidarus Ghany, Mursyid of the Naqshabandiyah Darussalam Riau Congregation, son of Aidarus (Mursyid of Abu Amran Waly), son of Abdul Ghany Al Kanfary (Mursyid of Abu Muda Waly and Abu Muhibuddin Waly), on October 18, 2020, who also stated support for the truth of the teachings of Sufism Abu Amran Waly Al Khalidi and that it is true that Abu Amran Waly was appointed Mursyid by his father, namely Aidarus Ibn Abdul Ghani Al Kanfari in 1986. Support was also given by Muhammad Bahauddin Ba'lawi (15/10/2020), KH Zein Chairman of the East Jakarta Darul Hasyimi Ta'lim Council, KH Zein Djarnuzi Leader of the Raudhah Al Hikam Bogor Islamic Boarding School (14/10/2020), Syekh Dhiyauddin Al Quswandhi Caretaker of the Sidoarjo Archipelago Tasbih Council (29/09/2020), and some support from scholars from several countries. Among those involved in the MPTT ulama deliberation was Tokku Hj. Ibrahim bin Mohammed from Malaysia, Sheikh Rohimuddin Nawawi Al-Bantani from Banten, Dr. Wan Fattani from Thailand, Sheikh Dr. Mazen Cherif from Tunisia, Sheikh Aziz El-Kobaiti Al-Idrisi from Morocco and Prof. Sheikh Mehmed Fadhil Al-Jaelani from Türkiye (Handoyo, 2022).

In this case, the conflict between MPTT and MPU is categorized as a conflict between sharia ulama (represented by the Ulama Dayah and MPU) and the Sufi clerics (represented by the MPTT). Shari'a clerics dominate Aceh by regulating the rules and policies of Islamic Shari'a Law; they also support the Wilayatul Hisbah (Sharia Police) and the Baitul Mal (Council of Treasury). The existence of the MPTT worries the Dayah clerics because they feel threatened by their position. Even though the influence of the MPTT is only in a small portion and sharia institutions are almost not involved (Misri A Muchsin, Abdul Hadi, Abdul Manan, 2021). In contrast to the statement above, in our opinion, the conflict between the MPTT and Dayah Ulama is not only between Sharia clerics and Sufi Ulama but also sectarian between sufi clerics. Abu Jamaluddin Waly himself is a murshid of Tareqat Naqsyabandiah Khalidiyah, as is his student Tgk. Hasnoel Bashri, who has been appointed murshid by Abu Jamaluddin Waly.

The influence of MPTT is not small, as evidenced by its spread from various parts of Indonesia to neighboring countries. Support for the MPTT and for Abu Amran Waly himself did not only come from ordinary people and politicians but also from several charismatic Acehese clerics, direct disciples of his father, Abu Muda Waly. The biggest support was

given by the late Syekh H. Abubakar Sabil or Abu Mursyid Meulaboh (d. 2004), Abu Zamzami Syam Singkil (d. 2013) and Teungku Abdul Wahab or Abu Matang Peurlak (d. 2021)

Several districts in Aceh pinned themselves as the City of *Tawhid Tasawuf* with the establishment of a large gate supported by the local government. The biggest gates are located in Meulaboh, Nagan Raya, Aceh Singkil, and Subulussalam City. As for several other areas, the MPTT symbol is pinned in the form of a monument with certain slogans, such as *Blang Pidie, the City of Faith*, in Blang Pidie City, *Aceh Selatan Berakhlakul Karimah* in Tapaktuan City, and *Bireuen, the City of Faith*, in Bireun City. Small monuments and gates can also be found around West Aceh, Nagan Raya, Aceh Jaya, and Banda Aceh. The massive resistance of the Aceh MPU has not relaxed the fact that the MPTT continues to expand its influence as if it had gone unhindered.

Efforts Against the Opposition: Political Support

In order to protect the MPTT, Abu Amran Waly approached the district government. Ramli MS, West Aceh Regent, protected the MPTT, which was initiated by Abu Amran Waly; in return, Ramli MS gained religious legitimacy as a leader and won the Pilkada with little capital. This alignment allowed Abu Amran Waly to hold a Muzakarah Ulama. Ramli MS's commitment to MPTT is evident from the use of the slogan '*City of Tauhid-Tasawuf*' for Meulaboh (Ichwan, 2013). Approaching the local government allowed the MPTT to survive; this support was expanded by Abu Amran Waly with the Regent of Southwest Aceh, Akmal Ibrahim, who wanted to become a candidate for regent for the second time, as well as the Regent of South Aceh, Husein Yusuf, who wanted to present a religious image. In 2011, Abu Amran Waly gave a speech at the Al-Falah Great Mosque of Pidie; this required the Pidie local government to give religious legitimacy to Abu Amran Waly and MPTT (Ichwan, 2013). In 2017, Abu Amran Waly indirectly provided support for Aminullah Usman and Zainal Arifin, who won the election and became leaders of the city of Banda Aceh (Sehat Ihsan Shadiqin, 2018). The purpose of Abu Amran Waly is not political but to preach to government officials and the public (Ichwan, 2013). MPTT support was also provided to Bintang and Salmaza (Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Subulussalam for the 2019-2024 period) and Dulmursyid and Sazali (Regent and Deputy Regent of Aceh Singkil for the 2017-2022 period).

Sheikh Amran Waly has also received support from Anwar Ibrahim, former Prime Minister of Malaysia, who in 2022 invited him to his residence and expressed his appreciation and support for his efforts in organizing the Muzakarah on Sufi monotheism. In 2023, Anwar Ibrahim also sent his congratulations and best wishes for the planned Muzakarah in Medan, although the event was ultimately canceled. Nowadays, Sheikh Amran Waly is also supported by Jamaluddin Idham, a member of the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR-RI) and a politician from the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), who has contributed several hectares of oil palm plantations, a sum of money, and an operational vehicle.

Theological Answers

Abu Amran Waly published so many notes related to the answers to these accusations and deceptions. Abu Amran Waly himself has published several books, most of which are collections of papers written and distributed to the MPTT congregation at each recitation. The contents of the book are in the form of main teachings, the story of the MPTT's journey, and the life of Abu Amran Waly, as well as answers to the growing accusations. Some of the works in the book *Translation of the Book of Manazil As-Sairin* (2016); *Papers of Abu Syekh H. Abu Amran Waly Al Khalidi in 2 volumes* (2019); *Treatise on Tawhid Tashawuf and Sufi*

Monotheism in 2 volumes (2020); and *Teachings of Tashawuf and Sufianism* (2021)

According to him, the scholars who misled the book of *Insan Kamil* and the like were incorrect because the book itself had developed in Aceh in the past (A. A. Waly, 2019). Likewise, the issue of returning *dhamîr huwa* to Muhammad, according to him, is an interpretation of the essence contained in the book of *Insan Kamil*. Insan, who has reached the mortal state (disappears of self-existence), is the form of Allah because the form of self has disappeared and there is only the form of Allah (Abd Al Karim Al Jilli, 2005)(Abd Al Karim Al Jilli, 2010) (A. A. Waly, 2019) and (Muchsin, 2019). According to Abu Amran Waly, the establishment of the MPTT itself aims to return people to clean knowledge, to clean things (the light of faith), and to clean worship(A. A. Waly, 2019).

The same goes for *wahdatul wujud*. According to Abu Amran Waly, *wahdatul wujud* is a spiritual teaching for those who understand zauq or rasa. Quoting the opinion of Ibn Athaillah, he explained that *wahdatul wujud* is knowing Allah when the servant is in a mortal state. Its use is to eliminate the forms of lust and self-existence so that God is eternal in his heart (A. A. Waly, 2021). In this case, Abu Amran Waly firmly stated that the Teachings of Tawheed Tashawuf are still in the true *Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah* creed, not eliminating them. With monotheism Tashawuf, the *Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah* faith is placed in *muthmainah* lust and our lust so that Asyhari and Maturidi theology is not misunderstood and misused (A. A. Waly, 2020).

Finally, through a media release of May 15, 2023, Abu Amran Waly explicitly stated that the words “*Muhammad is Allah*” are true in the book *Insan Kamil* Abdul Karim Al Jilli. A similar statement, namely, “You are the Truth in essence, Being in *Ta'yin* and *Taqyid*, is also in the book *Jawahirul Haqaiq* by *Syamsuddin Sumatrani*.” This statement does not necessarily state that Muhammad has become God (as alleged by MPU and Abu Abu Jamaluddin Waly), but this is a statement of nature where Muhammad/Insan is none other than Allah alone (Sumatrani, 2009) (Petranews, 2023). So, the statement that *Muhammad is Allah* is where Muhammad (and even the universe) is mortal, there only Allah exists.

Conclusion

Sectarianism that occurs between MPU and MPTT shows sectarianism between Aswaja in Aceh, which involves officials and businessmen. The MPU's deviant fatwa in Aceh has had a major influence on acts of civil violence against people or groups deemed heretical. MPU, as an Aceh government institution, has a power relationship in determining Acehnese Islam. The survival of MPTT from the heretical fatwa of MPU, Abu Amran Waly, was due to the support of officials in the regency and city by local businessmen. The presence of the MPTT is strongly felt in the West-South Aceh region, as indicated by the embedding of the city of “Tauhid-Tasawuf”. The MPTT's activities are funded by donations from entrepreneurs who are members of the MPTT.

MPU Aceh's rejection of MPTT is closely related to Abu Jamaluddin Waly's statement in the book *Aliran-aliran yang Menyimpang* (deviant teachings). Such *tausiyah ulama* (scholar recommendation) actually needs to be reviewed considering that at a higher level (the Indonesian Ulema Council, MUI and the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia), the MPTT teachings actually received approval. In fact, support for the MPTT also emerged from national religious figures who could serve as a comparison for the MPU to review their tausiyah.

In addition, the MPTT has also received support from charismatic Acehnese clerics such as Abubakar Sabil Meulaboh (d. 2004), Abu Zamzami Syam Singkil (d. 2013), and Teungku Abdul Wahab, also known as Abu Matang Peurlak (d. 2021). At the national level, Sheikh Amran Waly has also gained support from several NU scholars and figures, including

M. Adli Abdullah, KH. Zein Dzarnuzi, Dhiyauddin Al-Quswandhi, and Rahimuddin Al-Bantani. Support for Sheikh Amran Waly has likewise come from both local and national politicians. Notably, similar support has even come from Anwar Ibrahim, former Prime Minister of Malaysia.

Finally, although several rulings issued by the Aceh MPU have declared Sufi-philosophical works — such as *Insan Kamil*, *Fushus al-Hikam*, *Futuh al-Makkiyah*, and others — as *ghair mu'tabar* (not authoritative) and forbidden to study, in practice these books are studied by Muslims in many parts of the world. In fact, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Central MUI, the government of the Republic of Indonesia officially recognizes these books as *mu'tabar* (authoritative) and encourages their study.

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إصدار كلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية

جامعة شريف هداية الله الإسلامية الحكومية، جاكرتا-إندونيسيا

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