

## SUFISTIC EDUCATION BASED ON KARAMAH OF SYAIKHANA MUHAMMAD KHOLIL BANGKALAN

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### Abstract

#### Keywords:

karamah; sufi education; syaikhahana kholil; tasawuf

This article explores the model of Sufi-based education practiced by Syaikhana Muhammad Kholil of Bangkalan, a charismatic Islamic scholar renowned for his sainthood (*maqām al-wilāyah*) and spiritual charisma (*karāmah*). The study focuses on his approach to spiritual formation, which goes beyond formal-institutional structures and emphasizes the inner relationship between *murshid* (spiritual guide) and *murīd* (disciple). Using a qualitative descriptive method and literature review, this article reveals that Syaikhana Kholil's educational model was rooted in exemplary conduct, prayer, spiritual discipline, and deep mystical experiences. His karamah is seen not merely as supernatural phenomena, but as an educational tool for shaping the spiritual character of his students. This model reflects a form of esoteric and transcendental knowledge transmission, based on inner unveiling (*mukāshafah*). The study concludes that Syaikhana Kholil's karamah-based Sufi education represents a unique form of *tarbiyah* in the pesantren tradition, capable of producing intellectually and spiritually mature scholars and da'wah figures.

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### INTRODUCTION

Sufistic education is an integral part of classical Islamic tradition that emphasizes the purification of the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) through a spiritual approach. This form of education not only aims to cultivate individuals who are pious in their observance of sharia, but also wise through spiritual experience. Those who pursue Sufistic education, whether through a personal path of Sufism or within a collective *tariqah*, can ultimately attain a high spiritual level known as *ma'rifah*. In this phase, an individual achieves deep closeness to Allah (SwT.) and may, as a result of sincere devotion and spiritual consistency, be granted *karāmah* (Nasr, 1992).

The implementation of Sufi teachings can take two forms: individual and collective. Individual practice is expressed through the embodiment of Sufi virtues such as piety, trust in God (*tawakkul*), patience, gratitude, sincerity, and contentment (*riḍā*) in daily life. This practice aims to cultivate inner purity and profound sincerity. On the other hand, collective Sufism is pursued through affiliation with a *ṭarīqah*, a Sufi order that provides spiritual training through structured *awrad* (liturgical recitations), communal practices, and guidance from a *murshid* (spiritual guide) (Rahmatullah & Azhar, 2019). These two models constitute a significant part of the spiritual formation of *santri* in the *pesantren* environment, including within the educational system developed by Syaikhona Muhammad Kholil of Bangkalan.

Syaikhona Muhammad Kholil was a charismatic scholar from Madura, renowned as an integrator of Sharia sciences and the Qadiriyyah wa Naqshabandiyyah Sufi order. He introduced a moderate model of Ahlussunnah wal-Jama'ah Sufism that emphasized the harmony between Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and the practice of *taṣawwuf*, ensuring that affiliation with a *ṭarīqah* did not contradict the principles of Sharia. This approach reflects the dynamic and balanced nature of jurisprudence-based Sufism (M., 2013). The educational system he developed prioritized a balance between intellectual mastery and spiritual refinement, making the *pesantren* a holistic educational space that nurtures both the outer and inner dimensions of human development (Cholil, 2018).

Santri in this Sufistic educational environment are not only expected to master the classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), but are also encouraged to experience and internalize spiritual values through practices such as *dhikr*, *mujahadah*, and spiritual guidance. This aligns with the transformative Sufistic approach, in which spirituality is not merely studied but deeply embodied (Hamdani et al., 2023). As illustrated by the experience of the female Sufi figure Rabi'ah al-'Adawiyah, deeply internalized Sufi practices can cultivate profound spiritual awareness that transcends formal intellectual boundaries and gives rise to radical divine love (Qibtiyah et al., 2024). This highlights that Sufistic education, including that developed by Syaikhona Kholil, is inclusive and provides space for the spiritual actualization of anyone seeking true closeness to Allah SWT.

At the culmination of this educational path, a high spiritual state known as *ma'rifat* is attained—an intimate awareness of God's presence. Santri who reach this level are often granted *karamah*—extraordinary spiritual occurrences that result from a

life of piety, sincerity, and consistent worship rooted in pure intentions. Within Syaikhona Muhammad Kholil's Sufistic framework, *karamah* is not regarded as an objective, but rather as a natural outcome of a disciplined and Sharia-compliant spiritual journey (Cholil, 2018).

Specifically, research on Sufistic education based on the *karamah* of Syaikhona Muhammad Kholil has not yet been conducted. However, several studies are considered relevant to this topic. For instance, Awaluddin (2019) emphasizes that contemporary generations need to study and emulate Kiai Kholil's life journey and his dedication to seeking knowledge with sincerity and strong moral character. Similarly, Muhammad Takdir (2016) highlights Kiai Kholil's contributions in rooting Sufism in the Indonesian archipelago, which significantly influenced the development of Islamic character in the region and served as an inspiration for global civilization. The Sufi dimension practiced by Kiai Kholil reflects a form of *ma'rifah* intelligence that led him to the peak of spiritual enlightenment.

Several previous studies have discussed the phenomenon of *karamah* within the Sufistic tradition, although not specifically referring to Syaikhona Muhammad Kholil of Bangkalan. For example, phenomenological research on *karamah* in Islamic education centered on the figure of Shaykh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani demonstrates that *karamah* serves to reinforce the integration of *tawhīd* (monotheism) and *fiqh* as two foundational pillars of Islamic spirituality. In this view, *karamah* is not merely an extrinsic miracle, but rather part of a systematic inner educational process (Linnaja & Syam, 2024). Additionally, studies on the Naqshbandiyyah *ṭarīqah* emphasize how the spiritual role of the *murshid* and the practice of *rābiṭah* give rise to *karamah* as a manifestation of faith and unwavering adherence to the *sharī'ah* within a communal spiritual framework (Nur, 2021).

Similarly, research on Sufistic values in character education reveals a strong continuity between the practice of values such as *dhikr*, *ṣabr* (patience), *tawakkal*, and *ikhhlāṣ* with the formation of personal spiritual ethics, although such studies do not explicitly address the concept of *karamah*. In light of these findings, the present article offers a distinct contribution by focusing on a *karamah*-based framework of Sufistic education within the *pesantren* milieu. This framework links spiritual formation methods with extraordinary spiritual experiences that are regarded as forms of spiritual legitimacy in the tradition of Syaikhona Muhammad Kholil of Bangkalan.

This research is expected to offer both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it aims to enrich the body of knowledge in the field of education, particularly within the domain of Sufistic (tasawuf-based) education, thereby adding new dimensions to the academic discourse in Islamic education. Practically, the findings are anticipated to serve as a valuable reference for various stakeholders and to make a constructive contribution to the broader development of educational thought and practice.

## **METHODS**

This study employs a qualitative approach, focusing on in-depth understanding without involving statistical analysis. As it is theoretical in nature, the research falls under the category of library research, emphasizing the exploration of relevant literature and other related sources (Alwi, 2013). Data collection was conducted through document analysis of various sources such as books, peer-reviewed journal articles, the writings of key figures, and other credible references that support the analysis of the research subject. Accordingly, the data sources consist of both primary and secondary materials.

Primary sources include a comprehensive investigation into the written works of Syaikhona Muhammad Kholil, such as original manuscripts, translations, commentaries (syarah), poems, hizb (litanies), and oral interviews with relatives or individuals closely familiar with his historical background. Among his notable works used as primary data are *al-Matnu asy-Syarif* (a foundational fiqh text), *as-Shilah Fi Bayani an-Nikah*, *Sholawat Syaikhona Kholil*, *Ratib Syaikhona Kholil*, a handwritten translation of *Alfiyah*, and *Isti'dadul Maut*. Secondary data, on the other hand, includes books and literature related to the research topic that were not authored by the figure himself, but by other relevant scholars or writers.

To analyze the collected data, the researcher employed thematic analysis, which aims to identify, explore, and organize the main themes emerging from the phenomenon under investigation. This approach is considered effective in qualitative research, particularly in studies that examine figures or ideas within the field of Islamic education (Erwin, 2020). In this context, the study focuses on the Sufistic education model based on the concept of *karamah* as practiced and exemplified by Syaikhona Muhammad Kholil of Bangkalan.

To ensure the validity of the data, two methods were used: source triangulation and peer discussion with individuals who possess historical knowledge of Syaikhona Kholil, including santri, local community members of Bangkalan, and living relatives of the cleric. Source triangulation was essential to verify the accuracy of data by comparing multiple sources.

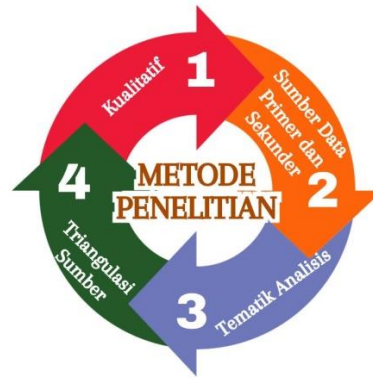


Figure 1: Research Methodology Framework  
*Source: Author's Compilation*

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Sufistic Education of Syaikhana Muhammad Kholil

The spiritual and intellectual journey of Syaikhana Muhammad Kholil played a vital role in paving his way into the realm of Sufism. His experiences traveling from one *pesantren* to another, both domestically and internationally, were profoundly transformative, as they shaped his behavior, speech, and attitudes toward spiritual life.

Syaikhana Kholil's spiritual experiences had a significant influence on how he interpreted and practiced Sufi teachings. This is because entry into the world of Sufism is essentially a subjective and intuitive journey, grounded in personal experience. In this context, one's spiritual experience as a practitioner of Sufism is part of a mystical ecstasy—an expression of striving to attain spiritual peaks (Carl W. Ernst, 2003).

Syaikhana Kholil adopted Sufism as a way of life through spiritual wandering from one *pesantren* to another. He was introduced to Sufi teachings during his early studies in Madura under the guidance of Bujuk Agung, also known as Syaikh Abdul Adzim. Syaikh Abdul Adzim, a scholar born in Mecca, was the first to introduce the Naqshbandiyyah tariqah to Madura and became Syaikhana Kholil's mentor in both exoteric and esoteric knowledge (Al-Kholilie, 2023).

It is told that one day, while teaching the 112th chapter of the Qur'an, Surah al-Ikhlās, Syaikh Abdul Adzim asked the young Kholil to recite it after an explanation. As

Kholil began with the first verse—*Qul huwa Allahu Ahad* (Say: He is Allah, the One)—the teacher suddenly stopped him and solemnly instructed him to “go and seek Allah directly.” This was not a literal command, but rather a symbolic initiation of the spiritual path (*suluk*), marking the beginning of Kholil’s journey toward *ma’rifatullah* (gnosis).

It is narrated that on one occasion, Syaikh Abdul Adzim—popularly known as Bujuk Agung—was teaching Surah Al-Ikhlās (the 112th chapter of the Qur’an) to the young Muhammad Kholil. After explicating the meaning of the surah, the teacher instructed Kholil to recite it aloud. As Kholil began with the first verse, *Qul huwa Allahu Ahad* (“Say: He is Allah, the One”), the teacher abruptly halted him and, with profound solemnity, commanded him to seek Allah directly. This directive was not to be interpreted literally, but rather symbolically—as the initiation of a spiritual journey (*sulūk*) that marked the commencement of Kholil’s pursuit of *ma’rifatullāh* (deep knowledge of God)(Saifur Rahman, 2001).

Shaykh Abdul Adzim’s directive to the young Kholil—“seek and find Allah” after reciting *Qul huwa Allahu Ahad*—carries a profound symbolic meaning that transcends its literal expression. It serves as an implicit encouragement for Kholil not to confine his pursuit of knowledge to Madura or a single teacher, but rather to expand his intellectual and spiritual horizons by studying with prominent scholars in Java and subsequently in Makkah. This command reflects the trajectory of *tazkiyatun nafs* (soul purification), which requires persistent inner struggle (*mujahadatun nafs*) and spiritual discipline to refine the heart toward the attainment of divine realization (*ma’rifatullah*). Historically, Syaikhona Kholil became widely known for his rigorous commitment to learning, as evidenced by his studies at several pesantren in Java—such as Langitan, Cangaan, Keboncandi, and Sidogiri—before continuing his scholarly journey to Makkah. There, he was mentored by notable scholars including Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani and spiritual leaders of the *Qadiriyyah Naqsyabandiyah* order (Cholil, 2018). This intellectual and spiritual odyssey ultimately culminated in the attainment of *ma’rifah*, as signified by manifestations of *karāmah*—such as his ability to witness the Kaaba through a small opening and reports of bilocative phenomena—serving as metaphysical signs of his intimate proximity to the God.

For Syaikhona Kholil, studying in Makkah constituted not merely an academic endeavor, but a profound spiritual and intellectual milestone. During that period, the journey to the holy land posed significant challenges—ranging from limited

transportation infrastructure to severe financial constraints—rendering it accessible only to those with exceptional resolve and unwavering sincerity. Yet for Syaikhona Kholil, the pilgrimage for knowledge to Makkah was not solely an effort to expand intellectual capacity, but also a form of deep *riyāḍah* (spiritual discipline). His journey symbolized an existential quest for meaning—an attempt to fortify *īmān* (faith), internalize the ephemerality of worldly life, and cultivate hope for divine grace. This synthesis of spirituality and scholarship illustrates that, for him, the pursuit of knowledge was not merely instrumental for becoming a religious authority, but served as a transformative pathway toward intimacy with the God (Takdir, 2016).

During his studies in Makkah, Syaikhona Kholil experienced profound spiritual inspirations that deeply influenced his Sufi practices in daily life. Under the guidance of numerous scholars both in the archipelago and in the Hijaz, he consistently engaged in *riyāḍah al-naḥs* (inner spiritual discipline), striving to cultivate patience, humility, and full submission to the divine will. His commitment to a simple and ascetic lifestyle, inspired by the teachings of Imam al-Ghazali—whom he greatly admired—was evident not only in his conduct but also in his daily routines. While in Makkah, he practiced a remarkable form of self-restraint, often consuming only watermelon rinds and drinking exclusively zamzam water for a span of four years. This act of extreme simplicity and spiritual focus astonished fellow students such as Shaykh Asnawi from Banten, Shaykh Ahmad Khatib from Minangkabau, and Shaykh Ahmad Yasin from Padang. Moreover, out of profound reverence for the sanctity of the ḥaram land, Syaikhona Kholil even chose to leave its boundaries whenever he needed to relieve himself, a gesture that reflected his deep spiritual sensitivity and respect for sacred spaces (Khoirul Ulum, 2023).

In the course of his studies in Makkah, Syaikhona Kholil demonstrated an extraordinary passion for learning that transcended material limitations. A well-known anecdote that illustrates his asceticism (*zuhud*) and persistence recounts how he used his own shirt as a medium for writing lessons. Each time he received a new lesson, he would write it on his garment, and after thoroughly understanding and memorizing the content, he would wash the shirt to use it again. This process continued throughout his study period, reflecting not only his sharp intellect and remarkable memory but also his unwavering commitment to the pursuit of knowledge despite limited resources. Notably, all of Syaikhona Kholil's clothing was white, symbolizing simplicity, purity of

intention, and his spiritual discipline. His journey of Sufism during this phase of learning strongly emphasized the values of *zuhud* (detachment from worldly pleasures), *wara'* (scrupulousness in avoiding the doubtful), and *faqr* (spiritual poverty before God) as essential components of the inner path of a true seeker of knowledge (Saifur Rahman, 2001).

*Zuhud* is an inner state free from ambition for worldly pleasures (Kurniawan, 2022), and this attitude was clearly reflected in the life of Syaikhana Kholil, particularly during his years of study. He deliberately chose to eat very modestly—often consuming only watermelon rinds—not due to financial constraints, but as a form of spiritual discipline to detach himself from worldly indulgences. This demonstrates that *zuhud* is not defined by material poverty, but by an inner freedom from the desire for worldly attachments. Meanwhile, *wara'*—derived from the Arabic *wara'a-yari'u-wara'an*, meaning prudence (Miswar, 2017)—is understood in Sufism as the act of avoiding all matters whose legal status is doubtful, whether related to food, clothing, or behavior (Miswar, 2016). Syaikhana Kholil consistently practiced *wara'*, one notable example being his habit of leaving the haram land of Makkah whenever he needed to relieve himself, as a form of deep reverence for its sacredness. This illustrates his high level of spiritual caution and respect (*adab*) for holy spaces, reflecting the integration of outward action with inward ethical consciousness.

Meanwhile, *itqān* is interpreted as seriousness and precision in carrying out every activity, particularly in the pursuit of knowledge. This level of earnestness was reflected in the unique habit of Syaikhana Kholil, who recorded lessons directly on the clothes he wore. After memorizing and understanding the material, he would wash the clothes and reuse them, repeating the cycle throughout his study period. This remarkable practice not only reflects a deep passion and discipline in learning, but also illustrates the *maqām faqr*—a spiritual state of complete detachment from material reliance, characterized by minimalism, contentment, and total dependence on Allah alone (Miswar, 2017). Through such practices, Syaikhana Kholil demonstrated how Sufistic values such as *itqān* and *faqr* were not merely theoretical ideals, but fully integrated into his everyday life and learning journey.

### **Tarekat Syaikhana Muhammad Kholil**

The term *ṭarīqah* (plural: *ṭarāiq*) originates from Arabic, meaning path, method, way, school, stream, or a specific direction. In the context of Sufism, *ṭarīqah* has two



main connotations. First, it refers to a spiritual method in the science of purifying the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*), which guides an individual's inner journey (*sulūk*) toward closeness with Allah. Second, it denotes an organized system of spiritual discipline in the form of structured brotherhoods or fraternities among Sufis, often led by a spiritual master (*murshid*) and bound by specific rituals and teachings (Alifah Suryadilaga, 2016). In this framework, Syaikhana Muhammad Kholil's tarekat embodies both dimensions—personal inner refinement and communal spiritual training rooted in deep ethical and metaphysical principles.

In its historical development, the *ṭarīqah* evolved into a widespread Sufi religious organization encompassing various names and branches. It expanded across Southeast and Central Asia, East and North Africa, as well as into India, Iran, and Turkey (Miftahur Ridho, 2020). Despite the diversity of Sufi orders, several *ṭarīqahs* hold particular significance within the Madurese Muslim community. Among those actively practiced and widely embraced are the Naqshbandiyyah, Qādiriyyah wa Naqshbandiyyah, Tijāniyyah, and Shādhiliyyah orders (Martin van Brunessen, 2012).

Syaikhana Kholil was a pivotal figure in the spread of Islam in Madura during the 19th century. His influence extended beyond his role as a *faqīh* and educator; he was also a prominent Sufi whose spiritual authority shaped the religious life of the Madurese community. Among the various *ṭarīqahs* that flourished in Madura at the time, Syaikhana Kholil is believed to have maintained a non-formal affiliation with both the Naqshbandiyyah and Qādiriyyah wa Naqshbandiyyah orders. Although he did not formally establish a *ṭarīqah* branch, his teachings and spiritual practices reflected significant elements of these Sufi traditions.

Syaikhana Kholil's association with the Naqshbandiyyah Order can be traced back to his formative studies under Shaykh Abdul Adzim, a scholar widely known among the Madurese as Bujuk Agung. Shaykh Abdul Adzim was the pioneering figure responsible for introducing the Naqshbandiyyah Mujaddidiyyah-Mazhariyyah Order in Madura. Through him, Syaikhana Kholil inherited the core teachings and spiritual disciplines of the order. As a *murīd* and direct spiritual heir, Syaikhana Kholil received both *ijāzah* (spiritual authorization) and guidance, which later became the cornerstone of his own Sufi practice. The *sanad rūḥānī* (spiritual genealogy) of the Naqshbandiyyah Mudzhariyyah Order reaching Syaikhana Kholil can be schematically illustrated as follows:

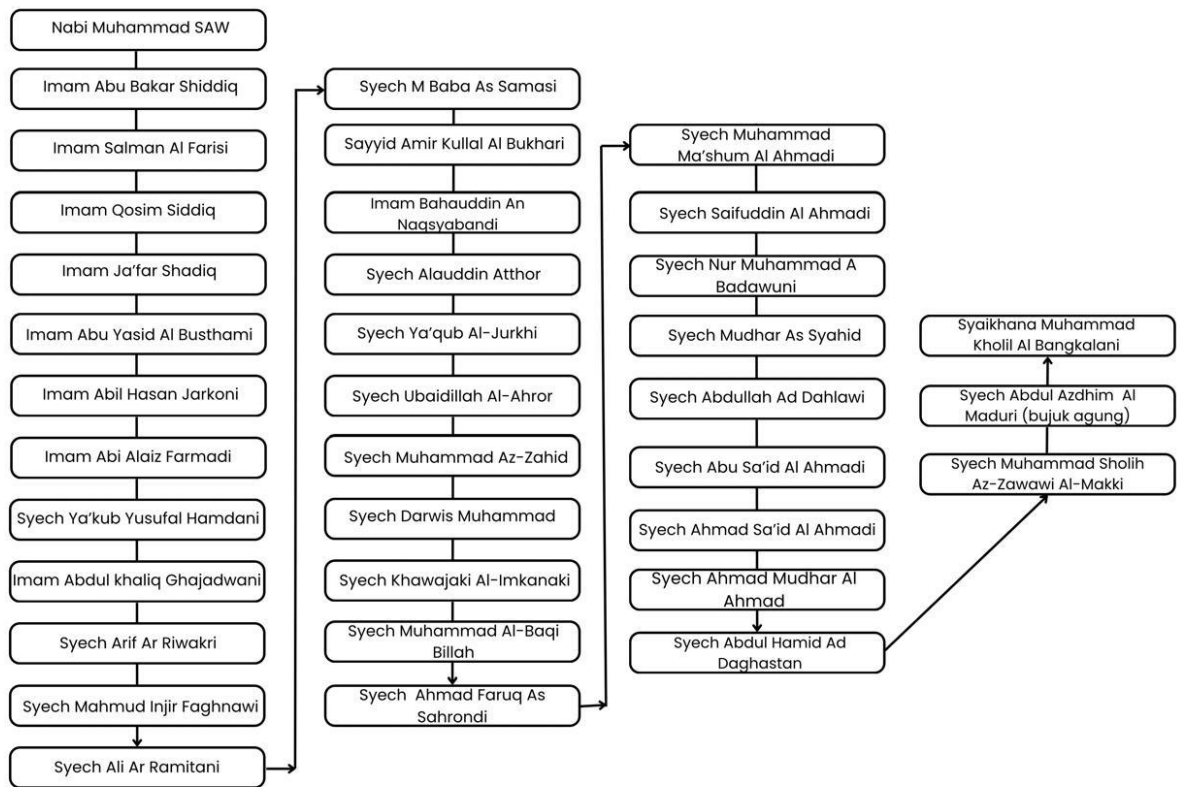


Figure 2: Scheme of Sanad Tarekat Naqshabandiyah Mudzhariyah Syaikhana Kholil  
 Source: *Author's Compilation*

Syaikhana Kholil's involvement with the Qadiriyyah wa Naqshbandiyah (TQN) Order began during his period of study in Makkah, where he became a disciple of Shaykh Ahmad Khatib Sambas, the founding figure of the TQN order in the Malay Archipelago. According to K.H. Shohibul Wafa Tajul Arifin (Abah Anom), the spiritual leader (*murshid*) of TQN Suryalaya, the dissemination of this tarekat was strategically divided by region: Shaykh Abdul Karim in Banten, Shaykh Tolhah in Cirebon, and Syaikhana Kholil in Madura (Alzani Zulmi, 2013). This account is further supported by Kiayi As'ad Syamsul Arifin, a student of Syaikhana Kholil, who affirmed that the tarekat practiced by his teacher was indeed the Qadiriyyah wa Naqshbandiyah (Saifur Rahman, 2001). Syaikhana Kholil's spiritual *sanad* in this tradition traces directly back to Shaykh Ahmad Khatib Sambas Khatib Sambas (Ajid Thohir, 2002), as illustrated in the following chain:

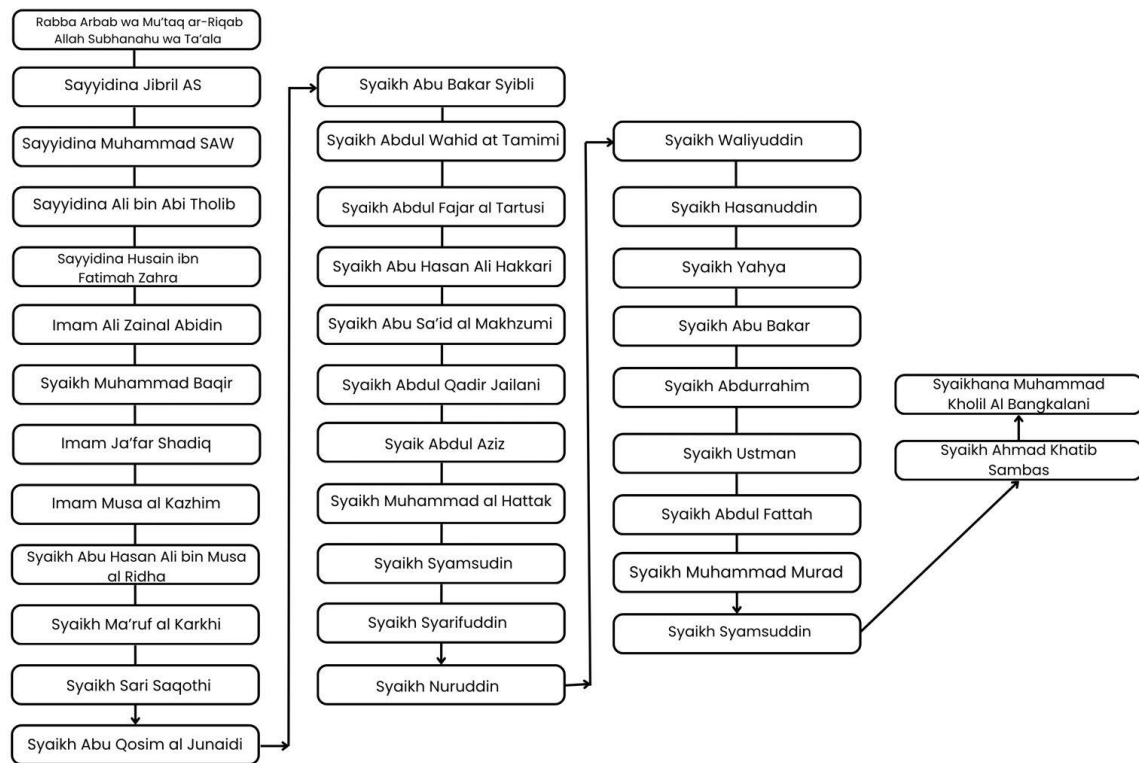


Figure 3: Sanad Scheme of Tarekat Qadiriyyah wa Naqsabandiyah Syaikhana Kholil  
Source: Author's Compilation

Syaikhana Kholil's involvement in two prominent Sufi orders—Naqshbandiyah Mazhariyah and Qadiriyyah wa Naqshbandiyah—illustrates that he was not formally affiliated with a single *tarekat*. As a spiritual guide (*murshid*), Syaikhana Kholil was not known to systematically teach a specific Sufi path, establish a distinct *tarekat*, or appoint an official *khalifah* as a successor within a formal organizational structure. His spiritual authority, therefore, was rooted not in institutional frameworks but in the depth of his religious knowledge, exemplary character, and widely acknowledged *karamah* (Bruinessen, 1992). This approach reflects the more fluid and context-sensitive nature of Indonesian Sufism, where spiritual leadership is often grounded in moral authority and charismatic influence rather than formal hierarchical legitimacy (Azra, 2013).

### Sufistic Education Based on the Karamah of Syaikhana Muhammad Kholil

In the context of religious life, a Sufi is often regarded as a pious individual—one who adheres strictly to the principles of *shari'ah* and exhibits a lifestyle that reflects the conduct of saints or even prophets (Mul Khan, 2000). The piety of such Sufis,

demonstrated through their sincere observance of religious obligations, is typically characterized by simplicity, humility, and unwavering devotion. These traits become visible markers of a Sufi's inner spiritual discipline and outward moral integrity.

Syaikhana Kholil's sincerity in pursuing the Sufi path led him to attain a high level of spiritual realization (*maqām al-ma'rifah*). Several *karāmah* attributed to him serve as evidence of his elevated spiritual status. He is regarded as having fulfilled the conditions of a *waliyullāh* (friend of God), capable of implementing divine law with complete devotion. Moreover, he was believed to have been endowed with the knowledge of *mukāshafah*—a form of spiritual unveiling that granted him insight into realities beyond ordinary human comprehension, including glimpses of the unseen future (Khoirul Ulum, 2023a).

Therefore, the Sufi dimension embodied by Syaikhana Kholil represents a form of *ma'rifah*-based spiritual intelligence that leads to the highest levels of spiritual realization. On this basis, the researcher argues that Syaikhana Kholil's attainment of *ma'rifah*—in his role as a *murabbī* (spiritual educator)—enabled him to nurture prominent Islamic scholars throughout the archipelago and to establish Madura as a center of intellectual and spiritual civilization during his era. Consequently, his approach to education may be understood as a form of *karāmah*-based education.

*Karamah* is the fruit of the saints' steadfastness (*istiqāmah*) in drawing closer to Allah. Although the saints themselves never seek such gifts, Allah has promised the most excellent rewards for His chosen servants (Mahya, 2022). *Karamah* refers to the extraordinary privileges granted by Allah to His pious servants or *awliyā'*. These privileges may manifest as foreknowledge of future events, immediate responses to supplications, or other phenomena that can only be experienced by those deeply beloved by Allah. Such beliefs are well accepted within the Ahl al-Sunnah tradition. As stated by Ibn Taymiyyah in *Aqidah al-Wāsiṭiyyah*, "One of the foundations of Ahl al-Sunnah is the belief in the *karāmāt* of the saints of Allah" (Siradj, 2017).

The *karamah*-based education practiced by Syaikhana Kholil is a rare and exceptional form of spiritual education, as attaining it requires a profound and arduous Sufi journey. As a spiritual guide who had completed the stages of Sufism, Syaikhana Kholil exemplified the role of a *murabbi* who had reached the level of intuitive *ma'rifah* (*wāṣil*) and was thus able to lead his students toward spiritual realization (*muṣil*). As a result, both the physical and spiritual conduct of his students remained under his

constant guidance and supervision (Cholil, 2018). The most prominent aspect of Syaikhana Kholil's *karamah*-based education was his practice of offering prayers for his students and cultivating their hearts through inner spiritual doctrines.

In *Manaqib* Mbah Ma'shum Lasem, it is narrated that one day Syaikhana Kholil of Bangkalan instructed his students to construct a rooster cage, stating that a "hero" from Java would soon arrive. The following day, a young man named Muhammadun—later known as KH. Ma'shum Lasem—arrived at the pesantren at the age of 20. Syaikhana asked him to enter the cage, and with great humility and obedience, Muhammadun complied and sat squatting inside it. Syaikhana then declared to his students, "This is the rooster from Java I referred to, who will one day become the champion of Java" (Tim Redaksi PP Al-Ma'shumiyyah, n.d.). This symbolic expression later became a prophetic reality, as KH. Ma'shum Lasem rose to prominence as a revered scholar in Java, mastering numerous fields of Islamic knowledge and becoming a central figure in the development of *pesantren* and Islamic education (Baso, 2012).

Another story that illustrates the *karamah* and wisdom of Syaikhana Kholil Bangkalan involves his encounter with KH. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah, one of the founding figures of *Nahdlatul Ulama*. Prior to KH. Wahab's arrival, Syaikhana informed his students that a "tiger" would soon come to the *pesantren*, and instructed them to remain vigilant. Shortly thereafter, a slender, tawny-skinned young man appeared carrying a zinc suitcase and greeted the kyai. Syaikhana then exclaimed, "Come here, everyone! The tiger has arrived!" Alarmed by the outcry, the students emerged carrying various tools—swords, *celurit* (sickles), sticks, and even hoes. Frightened by the intense scene, the young man fled in fear. This event repeated for three consecutive nights. Yet, due to his unwavering resolve and deep desire to study, the young man returned secretly and eventually fell asleep beneath the *surau* bell in a state of exhaustion. In the middle of the night, Syaikhana approached, gently awakened him, and personally invited him to become his student. That young man was none other than KH. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah, who would later emerge as an intellectual "tiger" and a prominent figure in the rise of *ulama* in the Indonesian archipelago (Khoirul Ulum, 2023a).

K. H. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah was a Kiai who was very pious, marching, in debate, and became a pioneer of freedom of thought among santri, namely taswirul afkar. His profile is authoritative and his presence is always respected by friends and foes. This is what Syaikhana Kholil signaled as a tiger (Saifur Rahman, 2001).

Based on these two narratives, the *doctrine of the heart* (*ta'dib al-qalb*) practiced by Syaikhana Kholil represents a form of spiritual education designed to test the mental resilience and sincerity of his students. As a *murshid* (spiritual guide), Syaikhana possessed profound inner sensitivity that enabled him to discern the true intentions and spiritual readiness of those who sought his guidance. The seemingly unusual trials—such as asking KH. Ma'shum to sit inside a chicken cage or subjecting KH. Wahab Hasbullah to repeated rejections—cannot be interpreted literally. Rather, these experiences symbolize a process of *tazkiyatun nafs* (purification of the soul), aimed at cleansing the heart of base traits such as pride, greed, envy, malice, and *riya'* (pretentiousness). This pedagogical method reflects the *ma'rifah* (spiritual gnosis) that Syaikhana had attained through a profound *ruhānīyah* (spiritual) journey. In the Sufi tradition, a teacher is not merely a transmitter of intellectual knowledge, but also a cultivator of the soul, guiding students through transformative inner experiences. Thus, Syaikhana Kholil's *doctrine of the heart* is a form of *tarbiyah sufiyyah* (Sufi-based education) that shapes the spiritual character of seekers, preparing them to carry the responsibility of knowledge and *da'wah* with sincerity and humility.

Nevertheless, as a figure widely recognized for his *karāmah* and for having attained the station of sainthood (*walāyah*), Syaikhana Kholil's prayers are believed to possess extraordinary spiritual potency. This aligns with the general attributes of saints, whose supplications are often seen as manifestations of *karāmah*—divinely granted favors that transcend ordinary capacities (Saifur Rahman, 2001). As a *murshid*, Syaikhana Kholil consistently offered prayers for his students, at times even through subtle gestures. His unique pedagogical style reveals his role as a spiritual *murabbī*—an educator who nurtures not only intellect but also the soul through prayer and inner connection. In this way, he shaped his students to become inheritors of the *ṭarīqah* (spiritual path) he embodied, promoting an education rooted in spiritual depth and culminating in the attainment of *mukāshafah* (unveiling of divine truths).

Thus, the transmission of knowledge and spirituality within the *ṭarīqah* tradition as practiced by Syaikhana Kholil did not follow a structural-formal model, but rather unfolded through esoteric and transcendental means. His *karāmah*-based educational approach emphasized the internalization of Sufi values through exemplary conduct, inner guidance, and the deep spiritual bond between teacher and student. This method illustrates that Syaikhana Kholil did not merely cultivate the intellectual capacity of his

disciples, but also led them toward spiritual maturity. His model of *karāmah*-based education reflects a Sufi system of inheritance that does not depend on formal institutions, but instead rests on the spiritual integrity and heartfelt connection between the *murshid* and the seeker.

His inherent *karāmah* functions as a non-verbal pedagogical instrument that strengthens the students' faith and nurtures their submission to the spiritual formation process. In this context, the prayers and spiritual gestures of Syaikhana Kholil are not merely expressions of his intimacy with the Divine, but also serve as subtle forms of inner reinforcement and spiritual direction guiding his disciples toward Sufi enlightenment. Such an educational model transcends the mere transmission of intellectual knowledge, embodying instead the spiritual energy and transformative presence that characterize *karāmah*-based education.

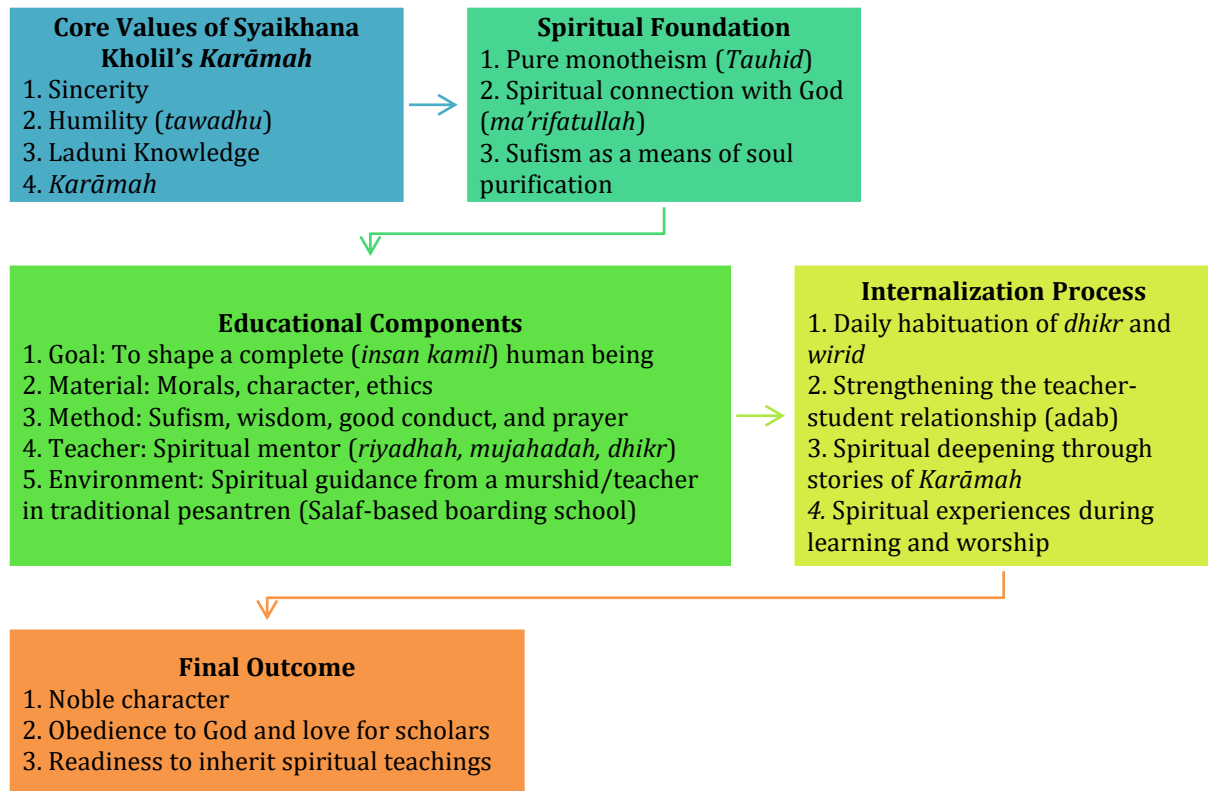


Figure 4: Diagram of the Internalization of Sufistic Education Based on Karamah

Source: Author's Compilation

## CONCLUSSION

The *karāmah*-based Sufistic education practiced by Syaikhana Kholil represents a model of holistic spiritual development in which the spiritual, intellectual, and moral

dimensions are harmoniously integrated. Through the power of *karāmah*, heartfelt supplication, and exemplary conduct, Syaikhana Kholil guided his students not merely to grasp Islamic teachings at a textual level, but to internalize and embody them as lived spiritual realities.

This educational model highlights the significance of the inner relationship between teacher and student, demonstrating that profound spirituality can serve as the core foundation in shaping a generation with noble character and meaningful contributions to society. Consequently, the Sufistic education inherited from Syaikhana Kholil remains highly relevant as a paradigm for character formation and spiritual cultivation within the framework of contemporary Islamic education. Future researchers are encouraged to further investigate the integration of Syaikhana Muhammad Kholil's Sufistic values into formal educational systems and assess their impact on the development of students' personalities in the modern context.

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