

Living Sufism: Journal of Sufism and Psychotherapy

Diterbitkan oleh Program Studi Tasawuf dan Psikoterapi
Fakultas Ushuluddin Universitas Annuqayah (UA) Guluk-Guluk, Sumenep
Volume 4, Number 2, Desember 2025, 84-101, E-ISSN: 2964-9188
<https://journal.ua.ac.id/index.php/ls/index>

The Implementation of Social Sufism in Philanthropic Practices: The Utilization of Zakat and Infaq during the Colonial Period

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Received	Revised	Accepted	Published
08 October 2026	23 November 2025	01 December 2025	17 December 2025

Abstract

This study examines the implementation of social Sufism in Islamic philanthropic practices during the colonial period in Indonesia. The study is motivated by the socio-religious conditions of Muslim communities under colonial rule, which continued to demonstrate solidarity, social concern, and self-reliance through philanthropic practices rooted in Sufi spiritual values, even though the social dimension of Sufism has often been marginalized in academic discourse. This research aims to understand the role of social Sufism in shaping the orientation and patterns of Islamic philanthropy during the colonial era. Employing a qualitative approach, this study adopts library-based research with a historical perspective, collecting data through a systematic review of relevant classical and modern literature and analyzing it using content analysis to interpret the relationship between Sufi teachings and philanthropic practices within their socio-historical context. The findings reveal that social Sufism had been practiced since the early arrival of Islam in Indonesia, although during the colonial period it had not yet been conceptually systematized and Sufism was largely understood as a discipline of self-restraint from worldly inclinations. Nevertheless, Islamic philanthropic practices during the colonial era demonstrate that Islamic spirituality extended beyond individual piety and actively contributed to the social and economic welfare of the Muslim community. Islamic organizations such as Sarekat Islam, Jam'iatul Khair, Al-Irsyad, Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, Persatuan Islam, Mathla'ul Anwar, and Al-Washliyah emerged as concrete manifestations of grounded Sufism through the utilization of zakat, infaq, sadaqah, and waqf (ZISWAF), thereby

positioning Islamic philanthropy not merely as charitable activity but as a socially oriented movement aimed at communal welfare during the colonial period.

Keywords: *Social Sufism, Islamic Philanthropy, Colonial Period, Social Solidarity, Community Welfare*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji implementasi tasawuf sosial dalam praktik filantropi Islam pada masa kolonial di Indonesia. Kajian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh kondisi sosial-keagamaan masyarakat Muslim pada masa penjajahan yang tetap menunjukkan semangat solidaritas, kepedulian, dan kemandirian melalui praktik filantropi yang berakar pada nilai-nilai spiritual sufistik, meskipun dimensi sosial tasawuf kerap terpinggirkan dalam kajian akademik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami peran ajaran tasawuf sosial dalam membentuk orientasi dan pola filantropi Islam yang berkembang pada periode kolonial. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian pustaka (library research) dan pendekatan sejarah, dengan pengumpulan data melalui penelusuran literatur klasik dan modern yang relevan serta analisis isi (content analysis) untuk menafsirkan keterkaitan antara ajaran tasawuf dan praktik filantropi dalam konteks sosial-historis kolonial. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa praktik tasawuf sosial telah berlangsung sejak awal masuknya Islam di Indonesia, meskipun pada masa kolonial konsep tasawuf sosial belum terformulasikan secara sistematis dan tasawuf masih dipahami sebagai ajaran pengendalian diri dari kecenderungan duniawi. Namun demikian, praktik filantropi Islam pada masa kolonial memperlihatkan bahwa spiritualitas Islam tidak berhenti pada tataran individual, melainkan bergerak aktif dalam membangun kesejahteraan sosial dan ekonomi umat. Lembaga-lembaga Islam seperti Sarekat Islam, Jam'iatul Khair, Al-Irsyad, Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, Persatuan Islam, Mathla'ul Anwar, dan Al-Washliyah menjadi manifestasi nyata tasawuf yang membumi melalui pemanfaatan dana zakat, infak, sedekah, dan wakaf (ZISWAF), sehingga filantropi Islam berkembang tidak sekadar sebagai aktivitas karitatif, tetapi sebagai gerakan sosial yang berorientasi pada kemaslahatan umat pada masa kolonial.

Kata Kunci: Tasawuf Sosial, Filantropi Islam, Masa Kolonial, Solidaritas Sosial, Kesejahteraan Umat

Introduction

Islam entered Indonesia in a manner that was not foreign to the local communities. The early disseminators of Islam introduced it not merely as a set of religious rituals, but as a collection of values that were closely relevant to daily life. Its spread was carried out through cultural expressions that aligned with the traditions and character of the Nusantara society at that time. Sufism, which contains Islamic spiritual teachings and values, became the earliest aspect to be widely accepted due to its tolerant and flexible nature, making it easily conveyed through local arts and cultural forms. In the early period of Islamic dissemination, when the understanding of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) was not yet well-developed, the form of zakat most familiar to the people was zakat al-fitr. Its implementation was often conducted in a simple manner

without strict adherence to fiqh regulations, and in fact, many people understood zakat solely in the context of zakat al-fitr alone (Nasrudin, 2015).

The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of philanthropy through zakat, infāq, ṣadaqah, and hibah as forms of proper utilization of wealth for the welfare and dignity of humankind. These values are further clarified through the exemplary conduct of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Islam rejects the hoarding of wealth (Āl 'Imrān: 180; At-Tawbah), extravagance (Al-Isrā': 26), and fraudulent practices (Hūd: 85–86), while stressing the importance of lawful, honest, and faith-based economic endeavors (An-Nisā': 29) (Linge, 2015). However, in practice, these values are often not fully implemented in the social life of Muslim communities. Religious discourse that places greater emphasis on verbal preaching (bil-lisān) has led to philanthropic teachings not fully addressing the real socio-economic issues faced by the ummah. As a result, the substantial potential of zakat, infāq, and ṣadaqah has not been optimally utilized to improve the welfare of Muslims (Murodi, 2019).

In the contemporary context, the management of Islamic philanthropy continues to face various challenges. The 2023 report of the National Zakat Agency (BAZNAS) recorded that the collection of ZISWAF funds reached approximately Rp 33.4 trillion; however, this figure represents only about 10% of the estimated national zakat potential, which is projected to reach Rp 327 trillion annually. The distribution of funds remains largely dominated by consumptive assistance for the poor and needy, while economic empowerment programs have not yet become the primary focus. The National Zakat Index (IZN), which stands at around 0.62, indicates that zakat governance is categorized as developing, but has not yet been optimized to significantly enhance the economic independence of the Muslim community (BAZNAS, 2023). A similar pattern is evident in the beneficiary report of Dompot Dhuafa for the September 2025 period, which recorded 147,440 beneficiaries across 24 provinces. The largest distribution was allocated to the humanitarian and education sectors, while economic empowerment programs reached only 808 individuals. This reflects that Islamic philanthropy has indeed been widely implemented, yet its orientation toward long-term empowerment still requires significant strengthening (Dompot Dhuafa, 2025).

When traced back to the colonial period, the values of Islamic philanthropy reveal a strong social footprint within Indonesian society. In this context, social Sufism functioned as a source of moral strength that fostered solidarity, empathy, and concern for others. Social Sufism refers to a form of Sufi teaching aimed at generating tangible benefits for the broader community, characterized by efforts to constructively engage with worldly life, balance material and spiritual needs, and ground Sufi teachings in everyday social practices (Asmani, 2019). The development of social Sufism cannot be separated from the colonial conditions in which Indonesian society faced limited access to education, social mobility, and economic resources. In the educational sphere, for

instance, there were three classifications of educational systems: schools exclusively for European children, indigenous education based on European systems, and Islamic education that was institutionally separated from the Dutch colonial education system (Nasution, 2016). Amid such colonial oppression, ulama and Sufi communities developed Islamic philanthropic practices—such as waqf, sadaqah, and zakat—as strategies to help communities preserve their dignity while simultaneously strengthening local economic resilience (Jahar, 2015, 2016; Supratno, 2023; Tabroni, 2017). This demonstrates that Sufism is not merely concerned with individual spiritual purification but also embodies an active social orientation in striving for the collective welfare of the ummah.

Etymologically, the term *tasawuf* originates from Arabic and is the verbal noun (*maṣḍar*) of the verb *taṣawwafa–yataṣawwafu–taṣawwufan*, which derives from the word *ṣūf*, meaning “wool.” This term emerged because, in the early period of Islamic dissemination, figures who sought to purify their hearts and souls from worldly traits chose to live simply, distancing themselves from luxury, and wearing garments made of wool as a symbol of humility and modesty. Consequently, they came to be known as *ṣūfī*, and from this, the term *tasawuf* developed to describe the teachings of spiritual purification and closeness to Allah Swt. (Badruzzaman, 2023).

According to Zakaria al-Anshari, *tasawuf* is a discipline that studies the purification of the soul, the cultivation of noble character, and the establishment of balance between the external and internal dimensions of the self in order to attain eternal happiness. Meanwhile, Ahmad Zarruq explains that *tasawuf* focuses on the purification of the heart and total devotion to Allah. He distinguishes *tasawuf* from *fiqh*, which regulates outward actions and legal rulings, and from *‘aqidah* (theology), which affirms belief and faith. Thus, *tasawuf* plays a crucial role in refining the inner self, just as medicine preserves physical health and grammar ensures the correctness of speech. Furthermore, according to Imam al-Junayd, *tasawuf* is the process of cultivating virtuous character by abandoning all blameworthy traits and behaviors. (Isa, 2016). Meanwhile, according to Imam al-Junaid al-Baghdadi, *tasawuf* is the process of purifying the heart from base human traits, distancing oneself from worldly desires, and cultivating spiritual qualities within the self. *Tasawuf* guides a person to uphold the truth, perform deeds of eternal value, offer sincere counsel to others, remain faithful to one's covenant with Allah, and follow the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The central essence of *tasawuf* is self-purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), while its ultimate goal is the attainment of *ma‘rifah* (gnosis) of Allah, which leads to eternal happiness and salvation of the soul (Badruzzaman, 2023).

Tasawuf can be understood as an Islamic teaching that focuses on the purification of the heart and self-discipline in order to draw closer to Allah. In simple terms, *tasawuf* teaches individuals to improve their character, cleanse the soul from negative traits such

as arrogance, envy, and greed, and cultivate spiritual qualities such as patience, sincerity, and humility. Its ultimate goal is to attain inner peace and true happiness through a deeper connection with God.

Meanwhile, in the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*, the term “social” originates from the Latin word *socius*, meaning “companion” or “community.” In a general sense, “social” refers to matters related to communal life. In a narrower sense, it reflects an attitude that prioritizes collective interests over individual interests (Amiman et al., 2022). *Social tasawuf* can be understood as a form of *tasawuf* that does not solely focus on individual piety and personal spiritual purification, but also emphasizes concern for the social life of the community. This concept teaches that spiritual values should not remain limited to one’s personal relationship with God, but must be manifested through concrete actions that bring about social change. *Social tasawuf* originates from Islamic scholarly traditions, such as those developed in pesantren and Islamic higher education institutions, which attempt to contextualize *tasawuf* teachings within Indonesia’s social reality. In its development, *social tasawuf* does not advocate withdrawal from authority or public life; rather, it plays an active role within society, including in social, political, and developmental spheres. Thus, *social tasawuf* represents a form of spiritual responsibility integrated with social engagement to realize justice, public welfare, and collective well-being (Dewi, 2020).

Social tasawuf is a form of *tasawuf* that is oriented toward providing the greatest possible benefit for the wider community. The term “social” itself relates to matters concerning communal life, concern for the public interest, and efforts to support collective development. From this perspective, Islamic teachings such as zakat, hajj, and charity can only be effectively realized when Muslims possess adequate economic capacity, since improvements in education, health, and cultural advancement are also highly dependent on economic progress. The main characteristics of *Social tasawuf* include: the doctrinal view that *tasawuf* builds engagement with worldly life without rejecting it (philosophical-ontological dimension); the reinterpretation of teachings that balance material and spiritual needs (epistemological-methodological dimension); and the practical grounding of *tasawuf* teachings in everyday life to encourage social transformation toward the common good (axiological dimension) (Asmani, 2019).

Historically, the term *philanthropy* has undergone a narrowing of meaning, and is now often understood merely as the act of giving or donating to others. This activity is commonly associated with providing financial or material assistance to those in need. In Islamic teachings, such practices of generosity have long been recognized through the concepts of *zakat*, *infāq*, and *ṣadaqah* as concrete forms of Islamic philanthropy. However, in practice, the potential of these activities has often not been utilized optimally for the benefit and well-being of the Muslim community (Murodi, 2019). Philanthropy can be defined as a form of social giving oriented toward goodwill and human solidarity. In the

Islamic context, although the term *philanthropy* was not known in the early period, its meaning is reflected in various Arabic concepts such as *al-'aṭā' al-ijtimā'ī* (social giving), *al-takāful al-insānī* (human solidarity), *'aṭā' khayrī* (charitable giving), as well as the values of *al-birr* (righteous deeds) and *al-ṣadaqah* (charity), all of which convey a spirit of care and concern for others. (Linge, 2015).

Islamic philanthropy represents a form of social concern that encompasses *zakat*, *infāq*, *ṣadaqah*, and *waqf* (ZISWAF). This practice is understood not only as an act of worship, but also as a social mechanism to foster empathy, strengthen solidarity, and help address poverty and social inequality. Through the implementation of ZISWAF, Islam emphasizes the importance of justice and welfare for all members of the community. However, despite the rapid development of Islamic philanthropic movements, there remains a gap between their substantial potential and their actual implementation in practice. Various philanthropic programs have been carried out, yet their impact on improving community welfare has not been fully optimal—particularly in terms of sustainable empowerment and efforts to promote economic self-reliance (Anam et al., 2024).

The rapid development of science and technology has brought significant changes to various aspects of life, including the economy, politics, culture, and education. In this context, education plays an essential role in preparing individuals to face the challenges of an ever-changing era. One form of social concern that continues to grow within society is philanthropy, namely the act of giving and helping others. Philanthropic activities can take various forms, ranging from mutual cooperation, community service, and social action, to humanitarian fundraising efforts. Such values of generosity are deeply rooted in Indonesian culture, where giving without expecting anything in return is not only part of religious teachings but also an expression of social solidarity. Therefore, philanthropy holds great potential to become a movement capable of providing solutions to various social issues within the community (Wulandari, 2024).

Research conducted by Munandar (2020) found that the Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah Order in Indonesia is not only oriented toward individual piety but also encourages its followers to actively engage in social life. The study shows that this Sufi order develops self-sustaining philanthropic traditions through practices such as almsgiving, mutual cooperation, and community support within pesantren activities. In addition, the research reveals that the tarekat collaborates with modern philanthropic institutions, one of which is through the "IBU BELLA" program in partnership with Rumah Zakat to develop the concept of World Digital Philanthropy, a philanthropic model that utilizes digital technology to optimize the collection and distribution of zakat. These findings affirm that Sufism within this order functions as a social force, as its spiritual teachings promote solidarity, empathy, and community empowerment (Munandar, 2020).

Social Sufism emerges from the awareness that the spiritual dimension of Islam is not only oriented toward the relationship between humans and God (*ḥablum minallāh*), but also toward the relationship among human beings (*ḥablum minannās*). In this context, social Sufism emphasizes the importance of actualizing religious values into concrete actions that benefit society. Sufi figures such as Al-Ghazali and Al-Junaid affirmed that the perfection of faith is not only reflected in ritual worship, but also in social conduct that promotes compassion, justice, and solidarity. Thus, social Sufism becomes a form of spirituality that is active and grounded, rather than merely contemplative. In Indonesia, the values of social Sufism are reflected in the teachings of tarekat orders, pesantren traditions, and religious practices that encourage empathy and mutual cooperation. This concept teaches a balance between personal piety and social responsibility, thereby positioning Sufi teachings as a moral force that nurtures communal solidarity.

Social Sufism and philanthropy are strongly connected in shaping Islamic character that does not solely focus on individual spirituality, but also encourages active involvement in promoting social justice and improving community welfare. During the colonial era, the values of social Sufism served as a moral foundation for the emergence of Islamic philanthropic movements that functioned as a form of cultural resistance against oppression and social inequality. Through practices such as zakat, waqf, and sadaqah, religious scholars and community leaders sought to build systems of solidarity capable of strengthening the people's economy while preserving human dignity.

Therefore, social Sufism represents a grounded form of spirituality that balances the relationship between humans and God (*ḥablum minallāh*) and the relationship among humans (*ḥablum minannās*). Building on this background, this article aims to analyze "The Implementation of Social Sufism in Philanthropic Practices: The Utilization of Zakat and Infaq during the Colonial Period," in order to understand how spiritual values were transformed into concrete social action and to examine their relevance for contemporary Islamic philanthropic systems.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing library research with a historical analysis framework (Sukmana, 2021). This approach is used to analyze and understand the implementation of social Sufism in the practice of Islamic philanthropy during the colonial period through the examination of various relevant literature sources. The study does not involve field data collection; rather, it focuses on the content analysis of a range of scholarly references, both classical and contemporary, that discuss social Sufism and Islamic philanthropic practices within the context of society.

The data collection technique in this research was carried out systematically through three main stages in order to obtain comprehensive and well-directed results. First, the literature identification stage, namely the process of tracing various library

sources that have direct relevance to the research topic, including classical works of Sufi scholars, academic books, and scientific journals that examine social Sufism and philanthropic practices in socio-religious contexts. At this stage, the researcher selected relevant literature to ensure the validity and depth of information. Second, the categorization stage, which involves sorting and grouping the selected literature based on emerging main themes such as the concept of social Sufism, forms of Islamic philanthropy, and socio-religious dynamics during the colonial era. This categorization helped the researcher to understand the relationships among the concepts and to map the connections between theories and practices that developed during that period. Third, the content recording stage, which includes examining, quoting, summarizing, and interpreting essential information from the selected sources. In this stage, the researcher noted key points that support the analysis, such as moral teachings found in Sufi works, historical data on Islamic philanthropic activities, and examples of the application of Sufi values in society. This process was carried out carefully to ensure that the interpretation remained consistent with the context of the sources and the aims of the research.

Data analysis in this study is conducted using a content analysis approach. This technique is employed to systematically and in-depth examine the literature in order to identify patterns, meanings, and relevance between the teachings of social Sufism and the practices of Islamic philanthropy within their socio-historical context. The analytical process is carried out through four stages: (1) data reduction by filtering and selecting relevant literature, (2) data presentation in the form of thematic descriptions, (3) interpretation of meanings based on social contexts and spiritual values, and (4) drawing conclusions regarding the implementation of social Sufism values in philanthropic practices during the colonial period, particularly in the early 1900s amid the rise of the Indonesian national awakening. Accordingly, this library-based research method is intended to achieve a comprehensive understanding of how spiritual values in social Sufism were actualized in concrete social actions, as well as their contributions to the development of Islamic philanthropy and the welfare of society during the colonial era.

The Implementation of Philanthropy During the Colonial Period

During the colonial era, the development of philanthropy experienced significant changes driven by the spirit of economic awareness and emerging nationalism. The colonial government, which did not interfere with the religious affairs of the local population, allowed philanthropic practices to develop independently. During this period, there was a transformation in zakat management, shifting from traditional forms to more structured systems through institutions such as pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), mosques, charity committees, and emerging modern organizations. Philanthropic activities that were initially rooted in religious practices began to be managed more formally to support community welfare and address various social issues (Fauzia, 2017).

The rise of Indonesian nationalism was marked by the establishment of *Budi Utomo* in 1908, founded by STOVIA students in Batavia. Although initially oriented toward Javanese interests, *Budi Utomo* soon began to inspire a collective awareness among the indigenous intellectual class, who felt compelled to fight for their rights under colonial rule. This awareness continued to grow when Indonesian students studying in the Netherlands recognized the colonial oppression they faced and formed the *Perhimpunan Indonesia* (Indonesian Association, PI) as a platform to advocate for independence and equality for all Indonesians. Through this movement, a spirit of nationalism emerged that transcended ethnic and regional boundaries, strengthening the determination to achieve independence from colonial domination (Supratno, 2023; Susilo & Supriyanto, 2024). Following the establishment of *Budi Utomo* and *Perhimpunan Indonesia*, the *Sarekat Dagang Islam* was founded, which later evolved into *Sarekat Islam*. This organization emerged as a response to social disparities among indigenous communities, the Dutch colonial administration, and Chinese traders. *Sarekat Islam* was established to strengthen the economic position of indigenous Muslims, who were marginalized due to the economic dominance of Chinese merchants supported by the colonial government. The organization's main mission was to uphold social justice, reinforce the economic capacity of Muslim communities, and broaden religious understanding among the public by emphasizing solidarity among Muslims and opposing prevailing injustices (Jahar, 2015, 2016). The leadership of *Sarekat Islam* (SI) in Kudus, the majority of whom were kretek (clove cigarette) entrepreneurs, actively contributed to funding publishing institutions and schools aimed at fostering nationalist sentiment. The financial resources utilized by *Sarekat Islam* came from various channels, including membership fees, *infaq*, and *sadaqah* collected from its members. Through these funds, *Sarekat Islam* was able to support activities that not only focused on economic empowerment but also strengthened nationalist movements advocating for independence and reducing colonial influence in Indonesia (Supratno, 2023; Tabroni, 2017).

In addition to *Sarekat Islam*, various philanthropic activities in the fields of education, da'wah, social welfare, economics, and health began to emerge as a result of Islamic reform movements that influenced Muslim leaders in Indonesia. Islamic institutions established during this period, funded through *Zakat*, *Infaq*, *Sadaqah*, and *Waqf* (ZISWAF), played a significant role in supporting communities across multiple sectors. The strong influence of these institutions was evident in their efforts to promote social welfare, enhance public education, and strengthen the economic capacity of the community, which in turn accelerated the struggle for Indonesian independence (Jahar, 2016). The institutions included, among others:

a) Jam'iatul Khair

Jam'iatul Khair was founded in 1905 in Jakarta by Arab-descendant communities, with the aim of making a significant contribution in the field of education. The main program of this organization focused on education without applying racial discrimination, thereby providing opportunities for all groups, whether indigenous Indonesians or Arab descendants, to participate actively. In this regard, Arab communities of *sayyid* lineage continued to play an important role in the development of *Jam'iatul Khair*, which also functioned as a means of advancing educational progress in Indonesia (Kausar, 2022). In addition to primary education, *Jam'iatul Khair* also implemented a program that sent young people to continue their studies in Turkey as an effort to broaden their insights and knowledge. Although this program did not operate optimally due to limited resources, it nonetheless provided opportunities for the younger generation to pursue higher education abroad. Despite the challenges and obstacles encountered in its implementation, the initiative to send students to Turkey remained an important step in strengthening the intellectual foundation of the Muslim community and the nation during that period (Sabarudin, 2015).

The philanthropic activities carried out by *Jam'iatul Khair* focused on providing educational assistance to Arab descendants who were unable to afford their own education. Through this support, the institution sought to reduce socio-economic barriers and provide equal opportunities for them to access a proper education (Darajat, 2024). *Jam'iatul Khair* obtained significant support from the *infaq* and *sadaqah* of wealthy Arab-descendant donors, which became the main source of funding for its various educational programs. These charitable funds not only helped accelerate the growth of the institution, but also improved the quality of education provided to Arab-descendant children who were unable to afford their schooling (Jahar, 2016).

b) Al-Islah wal-Irsyad

The Al Irsyad educational institution was founded on September 6, 1914, by Ahmad Surkati, out of frustration and dissatisfaction with existing efforts to advance education for Arab and indigenous communities. Previously, Ahmad Surkati had been a member of *Jam'iatul Khair*, but he decided to leave due to differing views on educational issues, particularly regarding the institution's approach. The decision to establish Al Irsyad reflected Surkati's determination to create an educational institution more in line with his vision of providing a better and more equitable education for the community (Cipta, 2020).

Al-Irsyad has successfully mobilized the intelligence of the Indonesian nation in the field of education by establishing various educational institutions open to all groups. While initially focused primarily on Arab Muslims, the institution quickly expanded educational access to a broader range of Indonesian Muslims. With a spirit

of inclusivity and a mission to educate the people, Al-Irsyad plays a vital role in shaping the nation's character through more equitable and quality education (Thalib, 2018). The educational process at Al-Irsyad is supported by funding from the ZISWAF (Islamic New Year) movement, which includes zakat (alms), infaq (donations), sedekah (charity), and waqf (endowments). Furthermore, funding comes from school fees paid by parents, which helps ensure the sustainable operation and development of the educational facilities (Jahar, 2016; Latief, 2013).

c) Muhammadiyah

The founding of Muhammadiyah was motivated by the inconsistency of Islamic practices developing in Indonesia with the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah, as well as the lack of adequate Islamic educational institutions to produce a quality generation of Muslims. Furthermore, weaknesses in Islamic leadership and the rise of interfaith missionary movements within Indonesian society also contributed to the birth of this movement. Pressure from the Western world, particularly Dutch colonialism, further exacerbated these conditions, leading Muhammadiyah to emerge as a reform movement that sought to address these issues by returning to pure Islamic teachings and establishing a better education system (Miswanto & Arofi, 2012; Nurhayati et al., 2018).

Muhammadiyah's social movement became increasingly visible through the establishment of the General Assistance for Misery (PKO) task force in 1923, which aimed to assist the weak and needy. PKO focused on establishing various social facilities, such as hospitals, orphanages, and poorhouses to provide shelter for the underprivileged. Furthermore, PKO was also involved in zakat collection, which became a crucial instrument in supporting these social programs. With this initiative, Muhammadiyah demonstrated its commitment to the welfare of society, especially the poor, and strengthened the role of zakat in promoting more equitable social change (Mulyani et al., 2024).

d) Nahdlatul Ulama

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) was founded on January 31, 1926, with the primary goal of improving the quality of Islamic education in Indonesia. As an initial step, NU focused on raising funds to build madrasas and schools, and facilitated educational awareness campaigns by visiting large Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) such as Tambak Beras, Denanyar, and Nganjuk. Through this program, NU strives to strengthen the role of Islamic boarding schools in educating Muslims and preserving existing Islamic educational traditions, while introducing more modern educational methods to address the challenges of the times. These activities also reflect NU's commitment to providing better access to education for the community, especially in remote areas (Ishak & Sulaiman, 2022).

Nahdlatul Ulama was founded with the primary goal of strengthening Islamic teachings, particularly those adhering to the ideology of Ahlu al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamā'ah. The organization is also committed to upholding moderate Islamic identity and traditions, while also prioritizing the unity of the Muslim community. Furthermore, NU prioritizes a spirit of nationalism in fighting for Indonesian independence and realizing a just and prosperous society based on Islamic values (Farih, 2016). Some forms of NU's reaction to colonial political power in the pre-independence period included: (1) Rejecting subsidies offered by the government for NU madrasas and the forced labor system (rodi) imposed on the Indonesian people; (2) Rejecting plans for a registered marriage ordinance; (3) Rejecting the formation of a militia; (4) Supporting demands for the formation of a parliament; (5) Carrying out social activities in the community; and (6) Educating religious mentality by establishing Islamic boarding schools (Jahar, 2016).

e) Persatuan Islam (Persis)

Persatuan Islam (Persis) was founded on September 12, 1923, by Muhammad Zamzam and Muhammad Yunus with the primary goal of improving the quality of Islamic education in Indonesia, particularly through the establishment of schools and Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). This organization is committed to spreading pure Islamic teachings based on the Quran and Sunnah, and developing education in accordance with these values. As a social movement, Persis is also active in championing a rational understanding of Islam oriented towards the advancement of the community, making education one of the primary means to achieve this (Niswah, 2014).

In subsequent developments, the educational activities run by Persatuan Islam (PERSIS) received significant support from funds collected through membership fees and community donations. This funding source enabled PERSIS to continue developing and expanding its educational network, particularly in West Java. The success of this donation and alms collection not only supported the operations of the Islamic boarding schools and schools established but also created a sustainable educational program that improved the quality and access to education for Muslims. This demonstrated the effectiveness of philanthropy in supporting social and educational endeavors, which are an integral part of PERSIS's vision and mission (Jahar, 2016).

f) Mathla'ul Anwar

Mathla'ul Anwar was founded on July 10, 1916, in Menes, Banten, against a backdrop of various forms of oppression, such as excessive labor, regulations detrimental to the community, and repressive pressure from the military. During the colonial period, the situation in Banten worsened, with many people engaging in

black magic. Social problems such as robbery, theft, gambling, drunkenness, and oppression of the community further exacerbated the situation (Aini, 2022). The contribution of zakat, infaq, alms, and waqf is clearly visible in the development of Mathla'ul Anwar's facilities and construction during its early days, where the role of the Koran teacher or kiai was crucial in mobilizing the community, both in the form of labor and funds to establish a madrasah, mushalla, or mosque. In addition to the zakat paid to the kiai once a year, the community also provided harvests such as rice, cassava, and bananas to support the kiai's needs and educational operations, and students often helped manage the kiai's rice fields and gardens (Jahar, 2016).

g) Al-Washliyah

Jam'iyatul Washliyah was founded on November 30, 1930, as an organization focused on educational, social, and religious development. The organization aims to advance Islamic education and improve community welfare through social activities. Furthermore, Jam'iyatul Washliyah is also active in fostering religious life and strengthening Islamic values within the community (Jahar, 2016). In its charter, Jam'iyatul Washliyah defines its primary objective as providing support to orphans, demonstrating a strong concern for the welfare of children in need. The name Jam'iyatul Washliyah itself reflects the meaning of 'connecting' and 'strengthening relationships,' symbolizing the spirit of unity and solidarity among its members and the wider community. The organization also views zakat as an instrument for overcoming capitalism, with the goal of creating a more social society, ensuring prosperity for all levels, and reducing poverty. Furthermore, the character development of its members and leaders is directed toward the application of civilized values, reflecting noble morals and ethics in social life. Al Washliyah also issues various fatwas supporting philanthropic activities, thus strengthening its role in socio-economic empowerment and generosity for the benefit of the community (Nurdin et al., 2023)

The Practice of Social Sufism during the Colonial Period

The development of Islamic philanthropic institutions during the colonial period, such as Sarekat Islam, Jam'iatul Khair, Al-Irsyad, Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, Persatuan Islam, Mathla'ul Anwar, and Al-Washliyah, demonstrates a concrete manifestation of social Sufism, a Sufi teaching that emphasizes the greatest benefit for the wider community. In this context, Sufism is not understood as a path away from the world, but rather as a spiritual energy to improve the social, economic, and cultural life of the community (Asmani, 2019). The philanthropic movement that emerged during the colonial era was an expression of the balance between spirituality and social action, between vertical worship to God and horizontal responsibility to fellow human beings.

Ontologically, social Sufism rejects the ascetic view that ignores the world, but instead views it as a field of charity that must be cultivated for the benefit of the people. This principle is reflected in the teaching of repentance, which involves restoring the rights of God and humankind in a balanced manner, serving as the ethical foundation for philanthropic movements. Historically, institutions such as the Sarekat Islam and Muhammadiyah have carried out the function of social repentance, namely, correcting the economic inequality created by colonialism by restoring the balance of rights between human beings. In NU Islamic boarding schools, this is also manifested in the generosity of kyai (Islamic clerics) towards the education of students, the Islamic boarding school, and the community (Yunan Atho'illah, 2023). *Qana'ah* is also an important value in this context: accepting and being grateful for Allah's blessings actively, not passively, which is manifested in hard work, entrepreneurial spirit, and economic independence of the people as carried out by Islamic organizations that build schools, hospitals, and educational institutions with the support of *zakat*, *infak*, *alms*, and *waqf* (ZISWAF) funds.

From an epistemological-methodological perspective, the Islamic philanthropic movement during the colonial era embodied the spirit of *ta'allamu al-'ilmi asy-syar'i*, namely the importance of studying sharia knowledge comprehensively, including economic and social aspects. The founders of institutions such as Jam'iatul Khair, Al-Irsyad, and Persis recognized that religious knowledge must be translated into practical knowledge to educate the people and strengthen the community's economy. This demonstrates a methodological reinterpretation of Islamic teachings, where sharia knowledge serves as the foundation for social and economic development. In practice, asceticism became a spiritual guideline that encouraged philanthropists to be generous in donating their wealth for social purposes. They managed ZISWAF funds not for personal gain, but to free the people from poverty and ignorance.

The axiological dimension of social Sufism is evident in the application of values such as *tawakkal* (resignation), *ikhlas* (sincerity), and *mujahadah* (compassion) in socio-religious struggles. *Tawakkal* here does not mean surrender without effort, but rather surrender after making maximum efforts to build society. This is reflected in the steadfastness of organizations like Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which continued to strive to improve education and the welfare of the people despite facing colonial pressure. The value of *ikhlas* (sincerity) became a moral strength that kept them unyielding "to the last drop of blood" in their struggle for the nation's social and spiritual independence. Meanwhile, *mujahadah*, which involves restraining greed and egoism, frees Islamic philanthropic movements from narrow political motives, focusing solely on the welfare of the people and social justice.

Furthermore, *uzlah* (restriction) and *hifdzu al-auqat* (restriction) hold significant relevance within the framework of social Sufism. *Uzlah* does not mean total separation from society, but rather provides a space for reflection and contemplation before engaging in social improvement. The scholars who founded Islamic institutions often began their struggles with a process of self-purification and deep reflection so that their social movements were rooted in sincerity and spiritual wisdom. Meanwhile, *hifdzu al-auqat*, or the timing of the vertical relationship with God and the horizontal relationship with fellow human beings, was key to balancing religious and social activities. This was evident in the organization's work system, which focused not only on worship rituals but also on planned educational activities, *da'wah*, and economic empowerment.

Thus, the Islamic philanthropic movement during the colonial period can be understood as the embodiment of the comprehensive teachings of social Sufism, encompassing purification of the heart (*tazkiyah al-nafs*), social work, and national struggle. The spirit of repentance, contentment (satisfaction), asceticism (*zuhud*), *tawakkal* (religious surrender), sincerity (*ikhlas*), *uzlah* (compassion), *hifdzu al-auqat* (self-reliance), and *mujahadah* (religious struggle) became the moral foundation for Islamic figures and organizations in building a just and civilized social system. These teachings combined spiritual values with social ethics, giving rise to philanthropic practices that were not only charitable but also transformative.

Conclusion

The practice of social Sufism has in fact been present since the arrival of Islam in Indonesia; however, in its early development, the concept of social Sufism had not yet been systematically formulated, and Sufism was largely understood as a religious teaching aimed at restraining individuals from worldly inclinations. This condition is reflected in the implementation of social Sufism through philanthropic activities during the colonial period, which demonstrates that Islamic spirituality did not remain confined to the individual sphere but actively contributed to the development of the social and economic welfare of the Muslim community. Islamic organizations such as Sarekat Islam, *Jam'iatul Khair*, *Al-Irsyad*, *Muhammadiyah*, *Nahdlatul Ulama*, *Persatuan Islam*, *Mathla'ul Anwar*, and *Al-Washliyah* represent concrete manifestations of grounded Sufism—namely, a form of Sufism that does not withdraw from worldly realities but instead views the world as a means of devotion to God through service to fellow human beings. Through the utilization of *zakat*, *infaq*, *sadaqah*, and *waqf* (ZISWAF) funds, these institutions not only strengthened education and the economic capacity of the *ummah* but also instilled spiritual values such as repentance (*tawbah*), contentment (*qana'ah*), asceticism (*zuhd*), and sincerity (*ikhlas*) within social activities. Accordingly,

philanthropic practices during the colonial era were not merely charitable in nature but evolved into a movement of social liberation rooted in Sufi values.

Conceptually, social Sufism during the colonial period demonstrated the integration of ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions within Islamic teachings. Its ontology rejected an ascetic view that distanced itself from the world, its epistemology emphasized the importance of sharia knowledge that touches on social and economic aspects, while its axiology was embodied in concrete practices that balanced vertical and horizontal relationships. Values such as tawakkal (relief), mujahadah (religious trust), uzlah (compassion), and hifdzu al-auqat (compassionate trust) strengthened the character of the philanthropic movement, which was sincere, disciplined, and oriented toward the common good. With this foundation of social Sufism, the Islamic philanthropic movement during the colonial period succeeded in becoming a moral and spiritual force that supported the national struggle, while simultaneously bequeathing a paradigm for community development based on a balance between spirituality and social progress.

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