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Symbolism of Ismullah and Local Wisdom of Cirebon: Visualization of Perfect Prayer in the Cirebon Kaprabonan Manuscript

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Abstrak

Naskah-naskah Islam memainkan peran krusial dalam melestarikan warisan intelektual dan spiritual komunitas Muslim, termasuk dimensi simbolis dan esoteris pendidikan Islam. Namun, kajian terhadap naskah-naskah Syattariyah di Jawa, khususnya yang mengeksplorasi visualisasi simbolis praktik ritual, masih terbatas dan cenderung berfokus pada deskripsi filologis atau transmisi doktrinal daripada makna interpretatif. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis konstruksi simbolis Sholat Sempurna dalam naskah Kaprabonan Cirebon dan mengeksplorasi relevansinya dengan pendidikan spiritual kontemporer. Desain penelitian kualitatif digunakan dengan menggunakan analisis naskah, analisis isi, dan interpretasi hermeneutik yang dipandu oleh filsafat bentuk simbolis Ernst Cassirer. Analisis ini menunjukkan bahwa setiap tahapan salat berkaitan dengan elemen-elemen simbolis Ismullah (الله): berdiri sejajar dengan Alif, ruku' dengan Lam pertama, sujud dengan Lam kedua, dan duduk dengan Ha. Struktur ini membentuk kerangka simbolis yang menghubungkan gerakan tubuh, kesadaran spiritual, dan kesatuan metafisik dengan Tuhan. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa sistem simbolik ini tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai kerangka ritual, tetapi juga sebagai model pedagogis untuk menumbuhkan kesadaran spiritual, keseimbangan etika, dan disiplin kontemplatif. Lebih lanjut, interpretasi simbolik Sholat Sempurna mencerminkan nilai-nilai moderasi Islam (wasathiyah) yang seimbang dan inklusif, yang menghubungkan kedalaman spiritual dengan kearifan budaya dan harmoni sosial. Studi ini berkontribusi pada kajian terkini dalam pendidikan Islam, studi Sufi, dan simbolisme agama dengan menunjukkan bagaimana tradisi naskah lokal dapat menginformasikan wacana kontemporer tentang spiritualitas, toleransi, dan pembentukan karakter.

Kata Kunci: *Manuskrip Islam, Metodologi Pendidikan, Sholat Sempurna, Simbol Ismullah, Tarekat Syattariyah,*



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Abstract

Islamic manuscripts play a crucial role in preserving the intellectual and spiritual heritage of Muslim communities, including the symbolic and esoteric dimensions of Islamic education. However, studies on Syattariyah manuscripts in Java, especially those exploring symbolic visualization of ritual practices remain limited and tend to focus either on philological description or doctrinal transmission rather than interpretive meaning. This study aims to analyze the symbolic construction of the Perfect Prayer (*Sholat Sempurna*) within the Kaprabonan manuscript of Cirebon and explore its relevance to contemporary spiritual education. A qualitative research design was employed, using manuscript analysis, content analysis, and hermeneutic interpretation guided by Ernst Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms. The analysis demonstrates that each stage of the prayer corresponds to symbolic elements of the *Ismullah* (الله): standing aligns with *Alif*, bowing with the first *Lam*, prostration with the second *Lam*, and sitting with *Ha*. This structure forms a symbolic framework linking bodily movement, spiritual consciousness, and metaphysical unity with God. The findings indicate that this symbolic system functions not only as a ritual framework but also as a pedagogical model for cultivating spiritual awareness, ethical balance, and contemplative discipline. Furthermore, the symbolic interpretation of *Sholat Sempurna* reflects the balanced and inclusive values of Islamic moderation (*wasathiyah*), connecting spiritual depth with cultural wisdom and social harmony. This study contributes to current scholarship in Islamic education, Sufi studies, and religious symbolism by demonstrating how local manuscript traditions can inform contemporary discourse on spirituality, tolerance, and character formation.

Keywords: *Educational Methodology, Islamic Manuscripts, Ismullah Symbol, Perfect Prayer, Syattariyah Order*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic manuscripts are a vital part of the intellectual history of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago, serving as a medium for transmitting religious teachings, spirituality, and Islamic education from one generation to the next. Islamic manuscripts are a vital part of the intellectual heritage that plays a crucial role in preserving the knowledge, spirituality, and culture of the Muslim community. These classic religious manuscripts are of great importance as cultural heritage and must be protected and utilized for the development of culture (Nurdin, 2015). This manuscript not only functions as a medium for documenting Islamic history but also as a primary source in the development of Islamic education and religious practices (Fahmi, 2023) and the implementation of learning models that utilize Islamic manuscripts to instil Islamic values in students at IHEI (Herman, 2018; Syaifuddin et al., 2025). One important aspect of the manuscript is how Islamic teachings are presented in the form of texts that are full of symbolism and Sufi values (Kartanegara, 2005). It can be seen in various manuscripts originating from the Cirebon Palace environment, especially those relating to the teachings of the tarekat.

In Indonesia, particularly in Java, the Islamic scholarly tradition developed through a network of ulama (Islamic scholars) and Sufi orders (tariqas), connecting global centres of scholarship with local contexts (Azra, 2024; Fathurahman, 2003). This intellectual tradition exists not only in the form of normative texts such as fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) or tafsir (community interpretation), but also in Sufi manuscripts containing symbolism, spiritual practices, and methodologies for inner development within the tarekat framework.

One Sufi tradition that developed in Java is the Syattariyah Order. In the context of Cirebon, Kaprabonan became an important center for the transmission of these teachings, leaving an intellectual legacy in the form of manuscripts containing the teachings of the Perfect Prayer, as written by Sayyid Syaikh Pangeran Sulaiman Sulendraningrat. In these manuscripts, prayer is understood not merely as a ritual obligation, but as a process of unifying spiritual awareness through the symbolism of Ismullah (God). Each prayer movement is linked to the structure of the letters in the Ismullah, so that the practice of worship represents the seeker's journey toward spiritual perfection.

Symbolism in Islamic manuscripts is often used as a medium to convey deeper spiritual messages (Gusmian, 2003). The significance of philology in the context of Islamic manuscripts in the Indonesian archipelago highlights the importance of manuscripts as a source of the values, thoughts, and culture of past scholars (Luthfi, 2016). It is evident in various manuscripts originating from the Cirebon Palace, particularly those relating to Sufi teachings. The Cirebon Palace is recognized as a center for the dissemination of Islam, incorporating Sufi values into religious practice and education (Rosidin, 2017), as noted in research on the influence of the Syattariyah order in the Cirebon Sultanate (Erina et al., 2022). The Cirebon Sultanate has a long history of integrating the teachings of the Sufi Order, especially the Syattariyah Order, into its social and cultural structure, influencing various aspects of life in the Cirebon Sultanate, from royal institutions, education, arts and culture, to the spirit of resistance against colonialism (Azhari et al., 2021).

Although scholars have conducted studies on Islamic manuscripts in the Indonesian archipelago, research on the Kaprabonan manuscript remains limited and tends to be descriptive. Existing research has not yet deeply explored the symbolic construction of the teachings of the Perfect Prayer and their relevance to contemporary spiritual education. Thus, a significant research gap exists: the lack of studies that integrate

symbolic analysis, Sufi traditions, and educational approaches to interpret the teachings in the Kaprabonan manuscript.

Based on this gap, this study focuses on the main question: How is the symbolic structure of the teachings of the Perfect Prayer in the Kaprabonan manuscript constructed, and what relevance does it hold for the formation of spiritual awareness in the contemporary Islamic context? The purpose of this study is to explain the structure of Ismullah symbolism, the mechanisms of Sufi education in the practice of the Perfect Prayer, and its potential contribution to strengthening the spirituality of Muslims today.

To achieve these objectives, this research employs a qualitative-descriptive approach using manuscript study, content analysis, and a hermeneutic approach. Ernst Cassirer's theory of symbolic forms is used to interpret this manuscript not merely as a ritual text but as a symbolic system that forms a structure of meaning. This approach allows for an understanding that symbols are not mere representations, but rather instruments for the formation of consciousness and spiritual transformation (Cassirer, 1955).

Furthermore, the interpretation of the Kaprabonan manuscript is relevant to Islamic discourse in Indonesia, particularly in the context of strengthening religious moderation. The value of balance between sharia and reality, rationality and spirituality, and individuality and social harmony in the teachings of the Perfect Prayer demonstrates a correspondence with the principle of *wasathiyah*, which currently serves as a framework for strengthening the value of religious moderation. Thus, this manuscript is not only important as an intellectual heritage but also makes a tangible contribution to spiritual education and the formation of moderate and reflective religious character.

With this framework, this research is expected to strengthen the study of Nusantara Islamic manuscripts, broaden the perspective of symbolism-based Sufi studies, and contribute to the development of a model of religious education rooted in local traditions and relevant for contemporary Muslims.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design with a descriptive-interpretive orientation to examine the symbolic construction of *Sholat Sempurna* within the Kaprabonan manuscript. Qualitative design is appropriate because the study focuses on meaning, interpretation, and symbolic structure embedded in textual and ritual expressions rather

than numerical measurement. The descriptive-interpretive approach allows the text to be understood as a cultural and intellectual product situated within the Syattariyah tradition and its spiritual pedagogy. The research also utilizes manuscript study methodology and content analysis to systematically examine textual structure, terminology, and symbolic correspondences within the manuscript.

The primary source of this research is the Kaprabonan manuscript written by Sayyid Syaikh Pangeran Sulaiman Sulendraningrat, which documents the doctrine of *Sholat Sempurna* and the symbolic interpretation of *Ismullah* (الله). The manuscript is part of the Kaprabonan royal heritage and reflects the intellectual lineage of Syattariyah teachings in Cirebon. Secondary sources include scholarly works on Syattariyah teachings, the Islamic manuscript tradition, symbolic interpretation in Sufism, and relevant studies on the embodiment of prayer and metaphysical symbolism. These sources contextualize the manuscript within broader Islamic intellectual and cultural frameworks.

Data were collected through three main procedures: (1) textual reading of the manuscript to identify key symbolic concepts and ritual instructions; (2) extraction and organization of sections related to *Sholat Sempurna*, symbolic interpretation, and theological explanations; and (3) documentation of relevant terminology, diagrams, and textual emphasis (such as repetition, structural sequence, or symbolic formula). Notes were taken systematically to ensure completeness, and recurring symbolic terms or structural patterns were recorded for coding and analysis.

Ernst Cassirer's symbolic theory serves as the primary analytical lens to interpret the manuscript, not merely as a ritual guide, but as a symbolic system that constructs meaning. In Cassirer's framework, symbols function as cognitive structures that shape perception, identity, and metaphysical understanding rather than acting only as representations. Applying this framework, elements of *Sholat Sempurna*—movement, recitation, posture, and letter symbolism—are analyzed as components of a symbolic form that mediates spiritual consciousness and pedagogical transmission.

Data analysis followed a staged interpretive process, comprising symbol identification, coding and categorization, structural mapping, symbolic interpretation, and contextual integration. To ensure interpretive credibility, several strategies were used: (1) source triangulation by comparing the manuscript's content with other Syattariyah texts and authoritative commentaries; (2) theoretical triangulation by employing both symbolic theory and Sufi epistemology to avoid interpretive bias; and (3) researcher reflexivity to

maintain analytical transparency. Therefore, consistency in interpretation was maintained through repeated reading and iterative coding, which refined emerging symbolic patterns.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Symbolic Structures in Islamic Manuscripts in Pengguron Caruban Krapyak Kaprabonan

Islamic manuscripts in Cirebon, particularly those from Pengguron Caruban Krapyak Kaprabonan, are part of the intellectual tradition of Indonesian Islam, steeped in mystical and Sufi values. These manuscripts serve not only as a medium for documenting Islamic teachings but also as a means of transmitting esoteric knowledge related to the Sufi orders, particularly the Syattariyah Order. One prominent aspect of these manuscripts is the concept of "perfect prayer," which is not merely a ritualistic practice but is also understood as a mechanism for achieving higher spiritual awareness. In this context, perfect prayer is often associated with the symbolism of Ismullah (الله), which represents the relationship between humans and God in a deeper dimension.

The study of symbolism in Islamic manuscripts, which describes spiritual concepts in tarekat and Sufism studies (Kalsum, 2012), can be contextualized within the perspective of the philosophy of symbolism as presented by Ernst Cassirer in *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Volume Two: Mythical Thought*. According to Cassirer, symbols are not only literal representations but also constructions of the human mind that shape human relationships with transcendental reality. Therefore, the symbolic meaning of Ismullah in Islamic manuscripts from Cirebon can be considered a manifestation of the mythical way of thinking that structures the local community's understanding of religion.

In the manuscripts, perfect prayer is not merely understood as a ritual of worship, but rather as a means of attaining higher spiritual awareness. Prayer functions not only as a religious obligation but also as a tool for achieving inner peace and improving the quality of life through increased spiritual awareness (Fahrozi Smith et al., 2024). Every movement in prayer has a profound symbolic meaning, reflecting the relationship between humans and God. In Islamic manuscripts developed in the Pengguron Caruban Krapyak Kaprabonan area, perfect prayer is seen not only as a normative religious ritual, but also as a process of transcendence that leads a worshipper to union with God. This concept of perfect prayer is based on the belief that every movement and recitation in prayer has a symbolic meaning that embodies the essence of monotheism.

In the context of the Syattariyah order, prayer is a reflection of a spiritual journey that passes through various stages (*maqam*) toward perfection. The standing position in prayer, for example, is seen as a symbol of awareness of God's oneness, while the bowing (*ruku'*) means submission, and prostration signifies total surrender to God. Thus, perfect prayer is not only an outward expression of obedience, but also a path to a deeper inner experience of understanding the essence of divinity.

Islamic education within the Cirebon Syattariyah Order is unique in its delivery of Islamic material, particularly in the areas of monotheism and worship practices such as prayer. The material taught is not merely oriented towards normative-jurisprudential aspects, but also emphasizes a deep understanding of metaphysical and spiritual dimensions, framed within a symbolic system based on *Ismullah*. It aligns with the notion that education within the order aims not only to develop cognitive understanding but also to develop transcendental awareness (*ma'rifatullah*) through the appreciation of divine values.

The primary material in tauhid education taught by the Cirebon Syattariyah Order includes the attributes of Allah, specifically the "20 attributes," as well as the attributes of *Jalal* (greatness), *Jamal* (beauty), *Kamal* (perfection), and *Kohar* (absolute power). These attributes are then packaged in a content structure unique to the world of Sufism, namely *shari'ah*, *tarekat*, *hakikat*, and *ma'rifat*. This structure not only represents the stages in the Islamic spiritual path but also serves as an epistemological framework recognized by contemporary Islamic thinkers such as Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and Seyyed Hossein Nasr. In his work, *The Concept of Education in Islam* (Attas, 1999) emphasizes that true education in Islam is a process of internalizing manners that leads humans towards recognizing the essence and ultimately understanding of God.

Similarly, Nasr in *Knowledge and the Sacred* (Nasr, 1989) affirms that sacred knowledge is the result of an inner journey that begins from external reality (*sharia*) to esoteric understanding (*ma'rifat*). Thus, both implicitly and explicitly adopt this Sufi framework as a fundamental structure in understanding Islamic spirituality, science, and education." in a similar approach. These four stages are not only spiritual levels, but also epistemic and methodological frameworks in understanding the existence of God and human relations with Him.

In practice, all of the material on monotheism is not taught as mere doctrine, but rather through a symbolic approach. Students are introduced to the methodology of

symbolic systems as a medium for internalizing divine values into their personality and spiritual experience. This symbolic system also reflects a spiritual hermeneutic approach, as explained by Ernst Cassirer (Cassirer, 1994) in his theory about humans as animal symbolicum, namely, creatures who understand reality through symbols.

Islamic manuscripts in Cirebon, particularly those from Pengguron Caruban Krapyak Kaprabonan, played a crucial role in transmitting the teachings of the Syattariyah Order. One prominent aspect of these manuscripts is the depiction of perfect prayer, associated with the symbolism of Ismullah (الله). One of the most concrete forms of this symbolic system can be found in the teachings of perfect prayer, namely prayer which is not only performed physically, but also represents the process of unification between consciousness, body, and God through the symbols of the letters in Ismullah (الله).

1. Within the framework of the manuscript and the teaching of religious education to his students, it can be understood that:
2. The letter Alif is interpreted as the standing position in prayer, symbolizing the shari'ah, which represents the external dimension of worship.
3. The first letter Lam is associated with the ruku' movement, as a symbol of tarekat, namely the beginning of the inner journey towards God.
4. The second letter Lam represents sujud, symbolizing haqiqah, namely the state of total submission to God and the realization of human existence.
5. The letter Ha is interpreted as sitting (tahiyyat), a symbol of ma'rifat, namely the highest spiritual state marked by awareness of God's presence in all aspects of life.

This symbolic framework enables the interpretation of prayer as a medium for spiritual transformation, rather than merely a ritual obligation. This process aligns with Paulo Freire's (2025) concept of conscientization, which involves education fostering critical and reflective awareness of reality. In the context of the Syattariyah Order, the reality in question is divine awareness manifested through symbolic contemplation in worship. Thus, perfect prayer education within the Syattariyah Order of Cirebon not only shapes individual morals and spirituality but also constitutes a form of epistemic system that combines the teachings of monotheism, worship practices, and symbolic approaches to integrate the physical and spiritual aspects of human beings. This approach enriches the treasury of Islamic educational methodology, particularly in the field of Sufism education. It is relevant to develop an alternative transformative education amidst the spiritual crisis caused by modernity and materialism (Primasari, 2017).

Through this system of symbols in prayer, students are encouraged to internalize the deeper values of monotheism. Perfecting the body within the framework of Ismullah aims to enable each individual to experience absolute unity with their Lord, where all movements of prayer become manifestations of Divine will. Ibn ' Arabī used letters as symbols in spiritual communication, highlighting the role of symbols in conveying mystical experiences that cannot be expressed directly (Miswari, 2017). Thus, tarekat education based on the symbolism of the letter Ismullah aims not only to improve the quality of worship but also to guide students toward a higher spiritual awareness on the path to God.

Furthermore, the symbolic system of Ismullah in the teachings of perfect prayer indicates that Islam Nusantara possesses its own hermeneutical tradition, no less rich than that of other Islamic traditions. The use of letter symbols in worship is not merely an artistic or cultural expression, but rather a manifestation of a profound mystical framework, demonstrating the symbiotic relationship between text, ritual, and spirituality. It reinforces the argument that this type of local Sufi education is a worthy alternative in contemporary Islamic education, which is seeking a way out of the crisis of values and spirituality.

In this context, the continuity between local mystical practices and modern symbolic philosophy is evident in the teaching of perfect prayer, internalised through the symbolism of Ismullah (God), which represents a practical form of the symbolic construction Cassirer refers to. Each letter in the name of Allah is interpreted esoterically and associated with a movement in prayer:

1. Alif: standing position (shari'ah)
2. First lam: bowing down (tarekat)
3. Second lam: prostration (essence)
4. Ha: sit tahiyat (ma'rifat)

This symbolic structure is not merely a pedagogical or illustrative tool, but rather forms an epistemological and methodological framework for achieving transcendental spiritual awareness (Cassirer, 2024). This is what Cassirer calls mythical thought (Cassirer, 1955), Symbolic thinking is not irrational, but operates through the interpretation of symbols to access the deepest meaning of reality, including the divine reality. The symbols in perfect prayer enliven the practice of worship as an existential experience that unites the body (jasadiyah), soul (nafs), and spirit (ruhaniyah). This reflects the understanding that

religion and spirituality in Cirebon Islamic society do not operate within a rational-irrational dichotomy, but rather within a unified symbolic system that shapes ways of thinking and acting in everyday life.

Symbolic education and the formation of transcendental consciousness are educational approaches within the tarekat (Islamic order) that emphasize not only the memorization of doctrine but also the instilling of values through symbolic experience, aligning with Paulo Freire's thinking on conscientization (reflective consciousness) (Freire, 2025). Here, education is not the transmission of static knowledge, but rather a process of spiritual and existential transformation that frees individuals from alienation—both from themselves and from God. In Cirebon manuscripts, especially those found in the Pasundan, Tegal, and Cilacap regions, the framework of the teachings of perfect prayer is written in local languages (Sundanese and Javanese), demonstrating how deeply this concept was inculturated in the cultural context of the local community. This strengthens the thesis that Cirebon people were not only *Homo Religiosus*, but also *Animal Symbolicum*, religious beings who understood God through the bridge of cultural and spiritual symbols.

The methodological and epistemological direction in Islamic Education, namely that the structure of Sufism consisting of shari'a, tarekat, hakikat, and ma'rifat not only reflects spiritual stages, but also becomes a methodological framework in Islamic education within the Syattariyah Tarekat environment.

Visualization of Perfect Prayer and Transcendental Consciousness

Prayer is a form of transcendental communication between humans and Allah SWT, namely the relationship between reason, reason and intuition from the perspective of Islamic thought (Nasr, 2006) not merely a ritual obligation, but also has a transcendental dimension that connects humans with God (QS. Al-'Ankabut: 45), becomes a means of maintaining morality by preventing abominable and unjust acts, and brings good fortune to those who are devout in carrying it out (QS. Al-Mu'minun: 1-2); in addition, prayer performed at predetermined times (QS. Al-Isra': 78) is not only witnessed by angels but also functions as a path to forgiveness of sins (QS. Al-Hijr: 98), thus making it a key element in the formation of spiritual awareness and the scientific improvement of the quality of human life. Through prayer, individuals not only carry out a series of physical

rituals, but also experience a profound spiritual journey, which can be scientifically analyzed through various disciplines (Mardiyah & Isnaini, 2023).

The visualization of perfect prayer is a symbolic representation of the movements, recitations, and inner state of worship in accordance with Islamic law. This visualization not only serves as an educational tool but also has a deep meaning as a form of conveying spiritual messages and religious values. Within a semiotic framework, visualization can be understood as a sign system that shapes and creates meaning, including in the context of worship. Charles Sanders Peirce proposed that a symbol is one type of sign in a triadic model consisting of a representamen (the physical form of the sign), an object (what the sign represents), and an interpretant (the meaning resulting from the relationship between the representamen and the object). These three elements work together in the process of semiosis to produce meaning.

Meanwhile, in the semiotic theory developed by Ferdinand de Saussure, a sign is seen as the result of a relationship between two main components: the signifier and the signified. The signifier refers to the physical or material form of the sign, such as an image, sound, or word. At the same time, the signified is the concept or meaning that the interpreter understands. Saussure emphasized that the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary and formed through social agreement and cultural construction (Dwi Agustin, 2023).

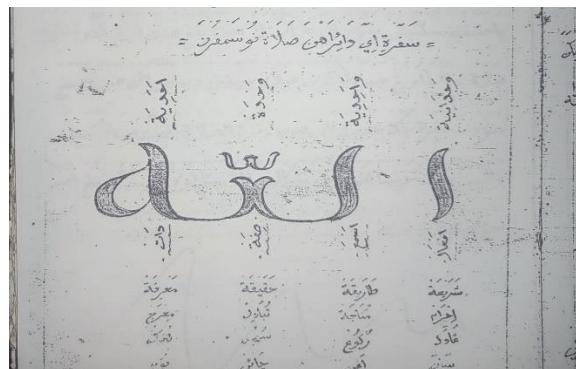


Figure 1. Document of the Perfect Prayer Region in a Sundanese language manuscript owned by a student from the Pasudan region

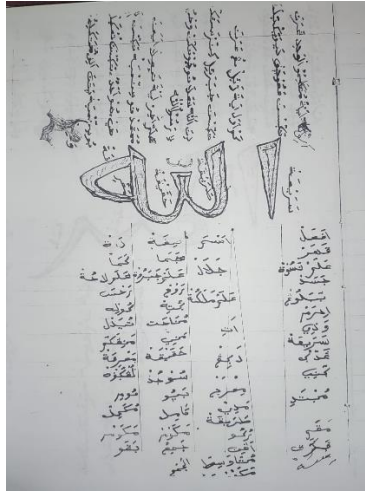


Figure 2. Document of the Perfect Prayer Region in a Javanese manuscript owned by a student from the Central Java region of Tegal

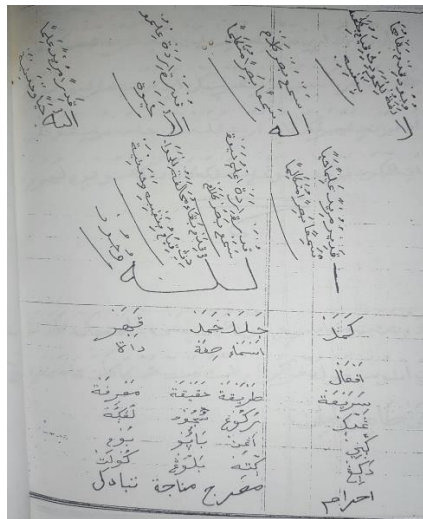


Figure 3. Document of the Perfect Prayer Region in a Javanese manuscript owned by a student from the Cilacap Region of Central Java

The Visualization Table of the Symbol of Ismullah in the Perfect Prayer of the Syattariyah Order, as in the manuscript, depicts the integration of symbolic meaning in the structure of prayer movements according to the Syattariyah teachings in the Kaprabonan Kraton Cirebon:

Table 1. Integration of Symbolic Meaning in the Structure of Prayer Movements

No.	Ismullah Symbol	Fill in Each Symbol
1	Ha (ح)	The letter Ha represents the symbol of sitting in prayer. Within Hu are the following elements: 1. Hu Ahad, Ahadiyah, 2. The level of Ma'rifah, Dzat, 3. The attribute of Qahar, the attribute of Being, 4. The nature of Lahut, Rasa, Tubadil,

2	Final Lam (ﻝ)	<p>5. Within the human self, symbolized by: Maningkem, Skin, Sitting, symbolized by: Earth</p> <p>6. Students: Mukammil</p> <p>The final letter "lam" represents the symbol of prostration in prayer. The final letter "lam" contains:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Law of Prostration, Revelation, 2. The Level of Reality, 3. The Attributes, and the Jamal. The Jamal Attributes comprise: Qidam, Baqa, Mukhalafatu lil hawadithi, Qiyamuhu binafsihi, and Wahdaniyah. 4. The Nature of Jabarut, Ruh, Munajah, 5. The human self is likened to: Semen, Bones, Prostration, symbolized by Water 6. Becoming a Kamil Student (the Perfect One)
3	Early Lam (ﻝ)	<p>The initial lam letter represents the ruku symbol. In Lam awl, there are materials:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lam Jalalah, Wa Ahadiyah, 2. Congregation level, 3. Jalal's characteristics in Jalal's characteristics are: Qudrah, Iradah, Ilmu, Hayat, Sama', Bashar, Kalam, 4. Malakut Nature, Like a Heart, Mi'raj, 5. In humans, it becomes Madi, Blood, Ruku' becomes a symbol of Wind 6. Mutawassit student level
4	Alif (ا)	<p>The letter alif represents the symbol of standing in prayer. Within the Alif are the following elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alif Mutakallimul Wahid 2. The level of Sharia is Wahdaniyah, while Alam Nasut is Afal 3. The Attributes of Kamal, which include: Qadiran, Muridan, 'Aliman, Hayyan, Sami'an, Basiran, Mutakalliman 4. Like a body, Ihram becomes: Wadi, Flesh, Standing, and becomes a symbol of Fire 5. Becoming a disciple: Mubtadi

This process not only forms a symbolic image but also serves as a contemplative medium in which body, mind, and spirit unite in the visualization of God's name. Students are taught to merge themselves into the light within the structure of Ismullah, uniting spiritually and symbolically. Therefore, when prayer is performed in this symbolic awareness, humans have merged into God's symbolic system, and the movements of worship are no longer human actions but rather acts of God Himself.

According to Cassirer, the highest moment in perfect prayer is when the body no longer has autonomy (Cassirer, 1994). All movement is called af'alullah, and the human self dissolves in the light of God's symbol. It is what Cassirer calls "symbolic reality," that

is, when symbols are no longer pointers but actual vessels of existential experience. The perfect prayer in the Syattariyah Order is a concrete example of how humans, as symbolic animals, shape their spiritual world through a system of symbols. By transforming their bodies into the letters of God, students experience a process of symbolic purification, where the boundaries between themselves and God dissolve. Symbols are no longer intermediaries, but existential meeting spaces between servants and their Lord. The concept of animal symbolicism was introduced by Ernst Cassirer, who views humans not only as rational animals (thinking creatures), but more deeply as symbolic creatures who live, think, and understand the world through symbols. These symbols are present in language, art, religion, myth, and ritual. Ernst Cassirer introduced the concept of animal symbolicism to describe humans as creatures who shape and understand the world through symbols. According to him, symbols are not merely a means of communication, but rather a way for humans to construct reality and their existence (Cassirer, 1994). In this sense, prayer visualization is not merely a depiction, but part of a process of meaning-making that enables the emergence of transcendental awareness through symbols as they are absorbed by human symbolic consciousness.

Integration of the Visualization of Perfect Prayer and Cassirer's Symbolic Philosophy

Table 2. Visualization of Perfect Prayer according to Ernst Cassirer

No	Aspect	Tradition of the Syattariyah Order (Cirebon)	Symbolic analysis according to Ernst Cassirer
1	Symbol ۞ (Ha) (Sitting Symbol)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ma'rifah Stage (unification with the Essence) • Aspects of divinity: Hu Ahad, Ahadiyah • Nature: Lahut (divinity) • Element: Earth • Body: Sitting, Maningkem (total submission) • Student Level: Mukammil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A symbol of totality and transcendence: this symbol reflects the highest stage of symbolic consciousness, where the individual merges with the meaning represented by the symbol—in this case, God. • According to Cassirer, humans construct the highest reality through symbols—here the gesture of sitting becomes an expression of metaphysical meaning. • The body as a symbolic medium becomes a "bridge" between the immanent and the transcendent.
2	Symbol ۝ (Final Lam)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essence Stage (in-depth knowledge of God) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symbol of recognition of divine identity: prostration is not just an act of worship but a symbol of total

(Symbol of Prostration)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspect: Wahdah, Jamal nature (Divine beauty) • Nature: Jabarut (spirit realm) • Element: Water • Body: Prostration • Student level: Kamil 	<p>surrender in the spiritual symbolic structure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cassirer states symbols are expressions of the inner world; here, prostration is a "symbolic language" that connects humans with the spiritual dimension.
3 Symbol ج (Early Lam) (Ruku' Symbol)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stages of Tarekat (inner journey) • Aspect: Wa Ahadiyah, the attribute of Jalal (glory) • Nature: Malakut (inner realm) • Element: Wind • Body: Ruku' • Student level: Mutawassit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symbol of the process of searching for meaning: bowing represents the movement toward self-awareness and divine awareness. • According to Cassirer, symbols are not static; they are dynamic and shape the development of consciousness. Lam Awal, at this stage, symbolizes a deeper spiritual transformation.
4 Symbol ا (Alif) (Standing Symbol)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharia stage (beginning of the spiritual path) • Aspect: Alif Mutakallimul Wahid • Nature: Nasut (physical) • Element: Fire • Body: Standing • Student level: Mubtadi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The initial symbol of symbolic consciousness: The Alif, as a symbol of "standing," is the initial representation of human symbolic consciousness. • In Cassirer's framework, this is the stage where humans begin to give meaning to the world through simple symbolic structures such as rituals, language, and gestures.

From Table 2, several integrative analytical notes emerge, including:

1. According to Cassirer, humans are animal symbolicum, creatures that construct meaning in the world through symbols.
2. The visualization of prayer movements in the Shattariyah is not merely a ritual, but a spiritual semiotic system, aligning with Cassirer's theory that symbols shape reality and human understanding of existence.
3. Every bodily movement (standing, bowing, prostrating, sitting) is a symbolic articulation of Sufi cosmology and an expression of consciousness through nonverbal language that is lived in practice.

Table 3. Integration of the Visualization of Perfect Prayer and Cassirer's Symbolic Philosophy

No	Aspect	Tradition of the Syattariyah Order (Cirebon)	Body as a Symbol	Ismullah as a Structure of Meaning	Melting in Symbols (Analysis by Ernst Cassirer)
1	ا (Ha) – Sit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The stage of Ma'rifah (unification with the Essence) • Hu Ahad, Ahadiyah • Alam Lahut (divinity) • Element: Earth • Student level: Mukammil 	Sitting and Maningkem (total submission): the body reflects total surrender	A symbol of union with the absolute reality of God, as the pinnacle of spirituality.	A symbol of totality and transcendence: the body as a bridge of meaning between humanity and God. This symbol represents the highest form of symbolic understanding.
2	ل (Final Lam) – Prostration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essence Stage (knowing God's nature in depth) • Wow, Jamal's character • West Java Nature • Element: Water • Student level: Kamil 	Prostration: the body becomes a symbol of absolute humility and inner surrender	A symbol of divine beauty and unity, where spiritual consciousness unites	Prostration is the symbolic language of the inner world, the highest form of spiritual communication; the body embodies the spiritual expression in a symbolic form.
3	ل (Early Lam) – Ruku.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stages of the Tarekat (inner journey) • Wa Ahadiyah, the nature of Jalal • Alam Malakut • Element: Wind • Student level: Mutawassit 	Ruku': a symbol of readiness to humble oneself in spiritual search	Symbol of the process of searching for meaning and awareness of God's greatness	Symbol as a dynamic process: ruku' is a transformation of consciousness through an ever-evolving symbolic experience.
4	ا (Alif) – Standing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharia stage (beginning of 	Standing: a symbol of readiness to	The initial symbol of awareness of	The initial stage of human symbolization,

	the spiritual path)	begin and stand before God.	divinity in its most concrete form	according to Cassirer, involves the formation of the structure of meaning from physical actions, such as standing, which serves as an initial expression of spiritual awareness.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alif Mutakallimul Wahid • Alam Nasut • Element: Fire • Student level: Mubtadi 			

Prayer is not merely a physical act of worship, but also a spiritual journey that leads humans toward union with God. The symbolism of the letters in the Islamic alphabet demonstrates how each movement in prayer represents a stage in the journey of spiritual awareness, from monotheism (Alif), obedience (Early Lam), submission (Final Lam), to perfection (Ha). In Islamic spiritual traditions, particularly in Sufism and theology, God's attributes are categorized into several main aspects, including Kamal, Jalal, Jamal, and Qahar.

The Relationship of the Four Attributes to Human Life in the spiritual journey, humans are expected to live up to these qualities in their worship and life:

1. Kamal teaches us to always strive for perfection in deeds and worship.
2. Jalal teaches us to submit and obey Allah's greatness.
3. Jamal teaches us to love and spread beauty in morals and deeds.
4. Qahar teaches us to recognize Allah's absolute and irresistible will.

This analysis shows that in the teachings of the Syattariyah order, prayer is not merely a physical ritual, but also a profound mystical experience. Through the visualization of the Ismullah symbol, the human body during prayer is likened to transforming into letters of light, representing a spiritual journey toward God. Islamic manuscripts in Kaprabonan, Cirebon, demonstrate that this concept has been taught and passed down through generations as part of Sufism-based Islamic education. With the right implementation strategy, this approach can be used as a more effective learning method in Islamic education, particularly in the teaching of Sufism and worship practices.

To apply symbolism in Islamic education as a spiritual learning strategy, from the perspective of Ernst Cassirer's theory of myth as a form of life, the symbolism in prayer applied in the Syattariyah order in Cirebon can be understood as part of the symbolic

system that shapes religious reality. Cassirer argued that humans live not only in the objective world but also in a metaphorical world shaped by language, art, religion, and myth. In this context, perfect prayer, symbolized by the Ismullah, is not merely a ritual practice, but also a mythological expression that shapes the spiritual consciousness of followers of the Shattariyah order.

In Cassirer's theory, myth cannot be separated from symbolism because myth creates meaning through symbols. Prayer in the Syattariyah order is filled with symbolism that constructs the structure of spiritual reality for its followers:

1. Standing (Letter Alif - ا): Representation of the oneness and steadfastness of monotheism which in myth means the beginning of existence and absolute unity.
2. Ruku' (Early Lam - ل): A symbol of spiritual awareness, reflecting myth as a medium of change towards a higher spiritual dimension.
3. Prostration (Final Lam - ل): The form of ego elimination and self-release in myth means sacrifice towards divine reality.
4. Sitting (Letter Ha - ه): The symbol of *baqa'*, indicates that the individual has completed the spiritual journey and reached a stage of perfection.

In addition to having a deep symbolic and philosophical meaning, the teachings of perfect prayer in the Kaprabonan manuscript also contain socio-religious dimensions that are important to be contextualized within the framework of religious moderation in contemporary Indonesia. In the context of the religious life of the Cirebon community, the symbolic teachings of perfect prayer in the Syattariyah Order not only function as an individual spiritual expression, but also as a medium for the formation of moderate social awareness. This teaching reflects the principles of *tawassuth* (middle way) and *tawazun* (balance), where the external dimension of worship (*sharia*) is harmonized with the internal dimension (essence and knowledge). The practice of Ismullah symbolism (الله) The Kaprabonan Sufi order, which combines bodily movement, spiritual awareness, and the values of monotheism, is a concrete manifestation of the balance between rationality and spirituality, between text and context, between religious experience and acceptance of social diversity (Syaifuddin et al., 2025). Thus, this order displays a moderate form of Islam, one that avoids extremism in any form.

Furthermore, the symbolic system in the Kaprabonan manuscript demonstrates how Islam Nusantara instils the values of *tasamuh* (tolerance) and *i'tidal* (justice) through local cultural language. Kaprabonan, as the spiritual and intellectual center of Islam in

Cirebon, developed within a multicultural environment—Javanese, Sundanese, Arabic, and Chinese—which fostered an open and accommodating Sufi tradition. The symbolic meaning of the letters in Ismullah, which depict the unity of body, soul, and God, can also be understood as a form of spirituality that teaches cosmic and social harmony. This awareness fosters an inclusive religious outlook and respects plurality, in accordance with the Islamic values of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (blessing for the universe), which are the foundation of religious moderation in Indonesia.

In the context of Islamic education, the symbol-based learning methodology in the Syattariyah Order has significant potential in fostering a more systematic spiritual awareness, utilizing symbols and rituals to deepen students' spiritual understanding (Syahidin, 2024). The letter system in Ismullah serves as a conceptual framework for understanding the meaning of prayer movements, where standing symbolizes the letter Alif, bowing symbolizes the first letter Lam, prostration symbolizes the last letter Lam, and sitting symbolizes the letter Ha. Thus, each stage of prayer is not merely a physical movement, but also has a deep spiritual dimension of meaning.

This approach offers new insights into modern challenges that often lead Muslims to spiritual crisis due to the influence of materialism and modernization. The symbolic method of performing the Shattariyah perfect prayer offers a reflective approach that can help individuals connect with the transcendental aspects of their lives. In modern Sufism studies, this approach is seen as an effective strategy for internalizing spiritual values in the era of globalization (Chittick, 2008).

As part of the local Islamic intellectual heritage, the Kaprabonan manuscript demonstrates that spiritual practices rooted in Sufism can serve as a vital resource in promoting religious moderation in the modern era. Symbol-based education in the Syattariyah Order cultivates a reflective and humble attitude, fostering awareness of the divine presence in every aspect of life. These values are essential for developing a peaceful, just, and adaptable character within the community, one that adapts to changing times without compromising its spirituality. Thus, the symbolism of perfect prayer is not merely a mystical or philological legacy, but also an epistemological model of Nusantara Islam, emphasizing the balance between faith, reason, and culture as the foundation for a moderate and harmonious religious society.

CONCLUSION

Cirebon Islamic manuscripts played a crucial role in transmitting the teachings of the Shattariyah Order through the symbolism of Ismullah known as the Perfect Prayer, in which each movement of prayer is visualized as part of Ismullah (اسم الله). This concept illustrates how Islamic education, particularly within the context of the Sufi Order (tariqa), can impart spiritual values through a symbolic approach grounded in traditional Islamic manuscripts. This visualization illustrates the human union with the spiritual dimension of prayer through the symbolism of the letters of Ismullah: Standing: Symbol of the Letter Alif (ا). Alif is the first letter of Ismullah and symbolizes the oneness of God (Ahadiyyah). Ruku: Symbol of the Initial Letter Lam (ل). The initial Lam in Islam symbolizes spiritual awareness and total submission to God. Sujud: Symbol of the Final Letter Lam (ل). This symbol reflects the peak of submission and selflessness (fana' fillah), where humans lose ego consciousness and remain only with the divine existence. Sitting: The Symbol of the Letter Ha (ه). Ha symbolizes the stage of spiritual perfection after undergoing the process of unification (fana'). Sitting in prayer symbolizes baqa', the continuity of spiritual awareness that brings humans back to worldly reality in a purer and more enlightened state. The manuscript explains that in the Perfect Prayer, the human body "melts" into the prayer system itself, replaced by the symbols that make up Ismullah, so that each movement reflects a specific metaphysical aspect. Prayer is not merely an outward ritual of worship, but also a spiritual process that involves the shedding of the physical body and its union with a deeper, symbolic meaning. Cassirer's perspective helps us understand how symbols contribute to spiritual awareness in Islamic rituals. Thus, this study confirms that the metaphorical approach to prayer in the Shattariyah Sufi Order not only has historical value but also contributes to spiritual understanding and Islamic education in the modern era.

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