

## Islamic Law Reform: Achieving Grace through Tahlil & Tawasul

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### Abstract

*The study's originality lies in its balanced approach to the highly debated practices of tahlil and tawasul within Indonesian society. Unlike previous works that often align strictly with these practices' legalistic critique or cultural defense, this research comprehensively explores these practices, integrating legal and societal perspectives. By employing a qualitative, descriptive exploratory method supported by an extensive literature review, the study goes beyond the surface-level debates to uncover the more profound cultural and social significance of tahlil and tawasul. The study fills a gap in the existing literature by addressing the lack of nuanced discourse on these practices, particularly regarding their evolution from religious rituals associated with death to broader expressions of local wisdom and community bonding. It offers a fresh perspective on how these practices can be understood as religious customs and vital elements of social cohesion and cultural identity in Indonesia. Furthermore, the study bridges the divide between opposing views by advocating for mutual respect and recognizing tahlil and tawasul as part of the rich tapestry of Islam in the country. This approach contributes to the ongoing conversation about the role of local traditions in Islamic practice, promoting a more inclusive understanding that acknowledges the diversity of religious expression within the Muslim community.*

**Keywords:** *Tahlil, Tawasul, Islamic Law,*

### INTRODUCTION

*Tahlilan and tawasulan* are essential practices within Islamic worship that often spark lively discussions among scholars in Indonesia. These rituals do more than honor the



deceased; they offer Muslims ways to connect with the divine, asking for blessings and support through sacred texts and intermediaries like saints. *Tahlilan* brings people together to recite the Qur'an and pray for those who have passed<sup>1</sup>, reinforcing a shared belief in the afterlife. *Tawasulan* involves reaching out to God through these saints or prophets to seek His grace.

These practices are deeply woven into the fabric of Indonesian culture, evident in homes and mosques nationwide. Despite their popularity, there's a healthy debate among scholars about their authenticity in relation to core Islamic texts. Some see these rituals as expressions of true Islamic faith and community support, while others view them as departures from traditional teachings.

The conversation about *tahlilan* and *tawasulan* is vital as it helps balance respect for tradition with modern interpretations of Islamic law. By studying these practices further, scholars can help unify the community's understanding of them, ensuring they align with both historical values and contemporary expectations.<sup>2</sup> Future studies might compare how these rituals are performed in different regions and explore their theological bases to clarify their role in Islam today. This research is crucial for maintaining a dialogue that respects heritage and evolving religious perspectives.

The legal discourse surrounding the permissibility of *tahlil*, *tawasul*, and even visiting gravesites has long been a source of contention, with arguments for and against them. Those who support these practices often base their legitimacy on arguments derived from the Qur'an or Hadith.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, opponents draw on the same

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<sup>1</sup> Mutimmatul Faidah, "Pilgrims' Spiritual Practices at The Tomb of Sunan Giri During the Covid Pandemic;" in *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, vol. 618 (International Joint Conference on Arts and Humanities (IJCAH) 2021, Surabaya, Indonesia: Atlantis Press, 2021), 1010–14, <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.211223.177>.

<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Anwar Idris and Qona'ah Dwi Hastuti, "Konstruksi Tahlil Keliling Selama Bulan Ruwah," *Living Islam: Journal of Islamic Discourses* 3, no. 2 (December 31, 2020): 387–401, <https://doi.org/10.14421/lijid.v3i2.2417>.

<sup>3</sup> Sholikah and Nurotun Mumtahanah, "Kontribusi Kebangsaan Kiai Hasyim Asy'ari: Membangun Relasi Harmonis Islam Dan Indonesia," *Akademika* 15, no. 1 (July 1, 2021): 36–50, <https://doi.org/10.30736/adk.v15i1.515>.

sources to argue that such activities are unnecessary or futile.<sup>4</sup> Despite this ongoing debate, one of the most critical aspects to consider is that the differences in scholarly opinions within Islam can be seen as a form of mercy.<sup>5</sup>

In Indonesian society, *tahlil* and *tawasul* are not only legal matters within Islamic law<sup>6</sup> but have become entrenched customs, passed down through generations as religious ceremonies filled with prayer.<sup>7</sup> Viewed solely through a legal lens, a consensus may never accept these practices due to the divergent views. However, when examined from the perspective of local wisdom, these activities hold significant historical importance.<sup>8</sup> Local wisdom across Indonesia reflects a rich tapestry of cultural customs<sup>9</sup> that coexist with the religious values of Islam, which are based on absolute truths from Allah.<sup>10</sup> As a result, the recitation of *tahlil* and *tawasul* has formed distinct groups that have spread throughout the archipelago.<sup>11</sup> Initially, *tahlil* and *tawasul* were recited together after a death, a custom found in Indonesia and the broader Melayu community.<sup>12</sup> These events, which include prayers for Allah's forgiveness and mercy for the deceased, have evolved into

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<sup>4</sup> Aunillah Reza Pratama and Masruchin, "A Local Qur'anic Scholar and His Critique on Religious Practices of the Javanese Muslims," in *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, vol. 492 (1st Raden Intan International Conference on Muslim Societies and Social Sciences (RIICMuSSS) 2019, Bandar Lampung, Indonesia: Atlantis Press, 2020), 1–6, <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.201113.001>.

<sup>5</sup> A. Jauhar Fuad and Muhammad 'Arifuddin, "Deradicalization in Textbooks of Islamic Religious Education Material with Radicalism in Schools," *Jurnal Intelektual: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Studi Keislaman* 11, no. 1 (April 25, 2021): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.33367/ji.v11i1.1579>.

<sup>6</sup> Hanum Jazimah Puji Astuti, "Islam Nusantara: Sebuah Argumentasi Beragama Dalam Bingkai Kultural," *Inject (Interdisciplinary Journal of Communication)* 2, no. 1 (January 10, 2018): 27–52, <https://doi.org/10.18326/inject.v2i1.27-52>.

<sup>7</sup> Farichatul Maftuchah and Sidik Fauji, "The Ceremony Buka Luwur Sunan Kudus in the Perspective of the Study of Islamic Culture," *Ibda': Jurnal Kajian Islam Dan Budaya* 18, no. 2 (November 18, 2020): 271–87, <https://doi.org/10.24090/ibda.v18i2.3800>.

<sup>8</sup> Mohammad Zamzami 'Urif, "Local Wisdom Dalam Tafsir Nusantara: Studi Atas Kitab Tafsir Al-Ibriz Karya KH. Bisri Mustofa," *Kontemplasi: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 7, no. 2 (December 30, 2019): 336–74, <https://doi.org/10.21274/kontem.2019.7.2.336-374>.

<sup>9</sup> Sri Purwaningsih, Thiyas Tono Taufiq, and Muhammad Faiq, "Living Hadith in the Bari'an Ritual of Sidodadi Society," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 22, no. 2 (July 2021): 387–402, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2021.2202-06>.

<sup>10</sup> Muchlis Bahar, "Ijtihad 'Izzuddin Bin Abdussalam about Bid'ah and Its Relevance to Local Wisdom in Indonesia," *Endless: International Journal of Future Studies* 5, no. 1 (June 3, 2022): 349–61, <https://doi.org/10.54783/endlessjournal.v5i1.67>.

<sup>11</sup> Mudjahirin Thohir, "Islam and Local Wisdom: The Study of 'Islam Nusantara' in the Cultural Perspective," ed. B. Warsito, D. Sutningsih, and F. Muhammad, *E3S Web of Conferences* 359 (2022): 1–5, <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202235904004>.

<sup>12</sup> Muhammad Yusri Salleh Yusof and Mohd Anuar Ramli, "Local Wisdom of Tahlil and Tunggu Kubur Practices in Death Custom among The Malays in Malaysia," *Umran: International Journal of Islamic and Civilizational Studies* 8, no. 2 (June 29, 2021): 39–48, <https://doi.org/10.11113/umran2021.8n2.396>.

established Islamic practices. Over time, these prayers have been recited after death and in other traditions, such as Nadran.<sup>13</sup> However, *tahlilan* and *tawasulan* have become more prominent than other traditions.<sup>14</sup>

Based on the above explanation, this study profoundly explores how the renewal of Islamic law on *tahlilan* and *tawasulan*, through a local wisdom approach, can create mercy for the people of Indonesia and the global community. This approach is part of Islamic law from the perspective of *al-'urf* (customary practice) and *al-adat al-muhakkamah* (established custom). The findings provide guidelines and insights into how *tahlilan* and *tawasulan* can be permitted within Islam, addressing the central question of how the renewal of Islamic law can related to *tahlilan* and *tawasulan* through local wisdom approaches to create mercy for Indonesian society and the global community.

## METHODOLOGY

From the background above, the main issues are whether *tahlilan* and *tawasulan* are part of *ibadah mahdah* (prescribed worship) or whether they are only *furu'iyah* (customary practices) and how the practice of *tawasulan* and *tahlilan* is viewed from Islamic law so that they can be a blessing for the Islamic community in Indonesia.

The study addresses the ongoing debate regarding the legal permissibility and cultural significance of *tahlilan* and *tawasulan* in Indonesia. Despite being widely practiced both after death and during other religious occasions, these rituals are subject to conflicting opinions among Islamic scholars, with some arguing for their legitimacy based on Qur'anic and Hadith sources and others viewing them as unnecessary or even contrary to Islamic teachings. The crux of the issue lies in reconciling these divergent views within the framework of Islamic law and local wisdom. This study seeks to explore how renewing Islamic legal perspectives on

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<sup>13</sup> Lingga Utami, S. Ramadhan, and Rengga Akbar Munggaran, "The Role of Nadran Tradition as a Maritime Education Based on the Local Wisdom," vol. 1, 1 (Oisaa: Journal of Indonesia Emas, 2018), 1–7, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:182072106>.

<sup>14</sup> Tb. Ace Fahrullah et al., "The Local Wisdom of the Sundanese-People on Culture, Language, and Arabs in Sumedang District," *Sosiohumaniora* 24, no. 3 (November 4, 2022): 313, <https://doi.org/10.24198/sosiohumaniora.v24i3.39628>.

*tahlilan* and *tawasulan* through the lens of local cultural practices (*al-'urf* and *al-adat al-muhakkamah*) can promote mercy and harmony within Indonesian society and beyond, providing a comprehensive understanding of how these practices can be integrated into contemporary Islamic jurisprudence.

This study used a normative legal method with a literature study approach. In this study, a novelty is produced about addressing the differences in *tahlilan* and *tawasulan* based on the different opinions among scholars, which is a blessing so that it can be used as a guideline in practicing whether to do *tahlilan* and *tawasulan* or not<sup>15</sup>. This way of study facilitates a nuanced understanding of the differing scholarly opinions, framing them within the broader context of Islamic jurisprudence and local customs. The findings offer valuable guidelines for practitioners regarding accepting and implementing these practices, thereby contributing to a more informed and harmonious approach to their observance.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### The Concept of *Tahlil* and *Tawasul*

In the context of *tahlil*, the Qur'an emphasizes the importance of tawhid, the belief that only Allah is worthy of worship.<sup>16</sup> Allah asserts His power and uniqueness in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 255, or Ayat al-Kursi. This verse is frequently recited during *tahlilan* as a reminder of Allah's singularity and unmatched power. *Tahlilan*, which involves reciting the phrase "*Lâ ilâha illâ Allâh*" (There is no god but Allah), serves as both a spiritual reminder and a highly recommended act of worship in Islam.

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<sup>15</sup> Yahya Zainul Muarif, "The Analysis of Islamic Law About The Differences of Friday Sermon with The Two Azan," *Jurnal Akta* 9, no. 4 (November 29, 2022): 393–401, <https://doi.org/10.30659/akta.v9i4.27663>.

<sup>16</sup> Syed Huzaifah Bin Othman Alkaff and Muhammad Haziq Bin Jani, "Contemporary Salafism in Singapore," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 41, no. 1 (January 2, 2021): 157–78, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2021.1894389>; Muhammad Sani Umar and Mark Woodward, "The Izala Effect: Unintended Consequences of Salafi Radicalism in Indonesia and Nigeria," *Contemporary Islam* 14, no. 1 (April 2020): 49–73, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-019-00441-y>.

On the other hand, the concept of *tawasul* is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an.<sup>17</sup> However, its basic principles can be inferred from Surah Al-Mâ'idah, verse 35, which encourages believers to be mindful of Allah and seek ways to draw closer to Him. Although *tawasulan*, through prayers to righteous people or the deceased, is not detailed in the Qur'an, the principle of *tawasul* can be understood as efforts to approach Allah through righteous deeds and good actions.<sup>18</sup>

Hadith literature provides additional context for *tahlilan*. Numerous hadiths reported in collections, such as those by Al-Bukhari and Muslim, advocate *tahlil* reciting as a cherished form of dhikr. The Prophet Muhammad PBUH stated that the phrase of tawhid, "*Lâ ilâha illâ Allâh*," is among the most beloved expressions to Allah, highlighting its significance in worship and spiritual practice.<sup>19</sup> Regarding *tawasulan*, while not explicitly mentioned as practiced in Indonesian traditions, hadiths describe *tawasul* in the context of prayer, such as invoking Allah through good deeds or seeking intercession from the Prophet Muhammad PBUH on the Day of Judgment. These hadiths provide a basis for understanding *tawasulan* as a component of prayer that aims to bring believers closer to Allah, even if the specific practices of *tawasul* seen in *tahlilan* are not explicitly detailed in hadith literature.

According to scholars from Al-Azhar University, *tahlilan* is generally accepted as a practice that aligns with Islamic teachings, provided it is performed with correct intentions and does not deviate from the principles of tawhid.<sup>20</sup> It is considered a valid form of worship as long as it does not incorporate practices not sanctioned by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH.

In contrast, the opinions regarding *tawasulan* among Al-Azhar scholars vary. Some accept *tawasulan* as a permissible form of prayer. In contrast, others are more cautious, especially when it involves invoking the deceased or attributing powers

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<sup>17</sup> Hasbullah Hasbullah et al., "Acceptance of the Existence of Salafi in the Development of Da'wah in Riau Islamic Malay Society," *Cogent Social Sciences* 8, no. 1 (December 31, 2022): 217–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2107280>.

<sup>18</sup> Al-Qur'an.

<sup>19</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim Chapter 48, Hadith 38, Hadith No. 2691*, n.d.

<sup>20</sup> Muhammad 'Ali Jum'ah, "Fatwa No. 2018 on Celebrating Prophet Muhammad's Birth," Egypt's Dar Al-Ifta, June 5, 2008, <https://www.dar-alifta.org/en/fatwa/details/6655/celebrating-prophet-muhammad's-birth>.

beyond human capacity.<sup>21</sup> The emphasis is often on adhering to the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah without adding new practices not supported by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH.

In contrast, fatwas from Egyptian fatwa institutions generally permit *tahlilan* if it does not include elements of *bid'ah* (innovation). These fatwas highlight that *tahlilan* is a beneficial form of *dhikr* (remembrance) if conducted with sincere intentions and not in conflict with Islamic law. For *tawasul*, Egyptian fatwas often distinguish between *tawasul* through good deeds and *tawasul* involving prayers to the deceased. *Tawasul*, through righteous actions, is deemed acceptable,<sup>22</sup> whereas invoking the deceased or attributing special powers to them is advised against.

### **The Practice of *Tahlilan* and *Tawasulan* in Indonesia**

In Indonesia, the practices of *tahlilan* and *tawasulan* represent a unique integration of local cultural elements with Islamic principles. *Tahlilan*, as a form of *dhikr*, is widely accepted and recognized within Islamic tradition for its role in reinforcing the core tenets of *tawhid* (oneness of god).<sup>23</sup> However, *tawasulan* often sparks debate due to its variable interpretations and applications. This practice, which involves seeking closeness to Allah through intermediaries or specific acts, is scrutinized by scholars from Al-Azhar University and Egyptian fatwa institutions. These scholars emphasize maintaining the purity of Islamic teachings and avoiding *bid'ah* (innovation).<sup>24</sup> They offer crucial guidance on ensuring that such practices align with the core principles of Islam and do not incorporate unauthorized rituals.<sup>25</sup>

The discussion of *tahlilan* and *tawasulan* in Indonesia reveals how religious practices can become intertwined with local customs. While *tahlil* is generally accepted as a

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<sup>21</sup> Jum'ah.

<sup>22</sup> Jum'ah.

<sup>23</sup> Muhammad Jamil, "Exploring the Qur'anic Literacy Tradition: A Review of Traditional and Modern Pesantren in Tuban Indonesia," *Fikri: Jurnal Kajian Agama, Sosial Dan Budaya* 9, no. 1 (June 15, 2024): 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.25217/jf.v9i1.4670>.

<sup>24</sup> Syamsul Rijal, "Pursuing Hijrah to Salafi Path: Urban Muslim Youth and the Quest for Self-Transformation in Indonesia," *Contemporary Islam*, August 10, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-024-00564-x>.

<sup>25</sup> M. Benussi, "Sovereign" Islam and Tatar 'Aqidah': Normative Religious Narratives and Grassroots Criticism amongst Tatarstan's Muslims," *Contemporary Islam* 14, no. 2 (2020): 111–34.

valid form of worship,<sup>26</sup> *tawasul* often intersects with cultural traditions that may not always align with strict interpretations of Islamic law.<sup>27</sup> This phenomenon highlights how religious obligations can sometimes become enmeshed with local customs, leading to practices that, while deeply rooted in local traditions, may not always have explicit bases in Islamic jurisprudence. Consequently, practices such as reciting *tahlil* and engaging in *tawasul* are seen as blending Islamic worship with cultural norms, reflecting adherence to religious duties and local customs.<sup>28</sup>

According to Ashar, a tradition can be considered good and acceptable if it fulfills two key conditions. First, it must not contradict the Nash, which includes the explicit and authoritative texts of the Qur'an and As-Sunnah. This ensures that any practice remains within the framework of Islamic teachings and does not deviate from core religious principles. Second, the tradition should align with reason, ethical values, and social welfare. It must not lead to disobedience, cause harm, or promote negative consequences for individuals or society. A tradition that fosters unity, moral development, and social harmony is more likely to be accepted within Islamic law. By maintaining these criteria, Islamic scholars and communities can uphold traditions that reflect both religious authenticity and contemporary relevance. This approach helps bridge the gap between cultural heritage and modern-day Islamic thought, ensuring that traditions contribute positively to spiritual and social well-being.<sup>29</sup>

A well-known tradition in Indonesia is that of *tahlil* or *tahlilan*. Along with that, a tradition of *tawasul* or *tawasulan* has become a polemic among modernists and

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<sup>26</sup> Muhyiddin Abdusshomad, *Tahlil Dalam Perspektif Al Quran Dan As Sunnah (Kajian Kitab Kuning)*, 1st ed. (Surabaya: Nurul Islam, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> Bambang Hariyanto, "A Discourse Analysis of Islam Nusantara in Said Agil Siradj's Speeches" (Western Sydney University, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.26183/MP90-ZN82>.

<sup>28</sup> Samsi Pomalingo et al., "Literacy of Islamic Thought: Contestation, Claim of Truth, and Polemic of Religion in Islam in Gorontalo, Indonesia," *International Journal of Cultural and Religious Studies* 1, no. 1 (December 14, 2021): 58–65, <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijcrs.2021.1.1.8>.

<sup>29</sup> Salim Ashar, "Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Islam Dalam Tradisi Tahlilan Sebagai Harmoni Sosial Masyarakat Sudimoro Megaluh Jombang," *Sumbula: Jurnal Studi Keagamaan, Sosial Dan Budaya* 6, no. 2 (December 22, 2021): 183–212, <https://doi.org/10.32492/sumbula.v6i2.4558>.



traditionalists<sup>30</sup> because they consider it wrong, even misguided. Many reasons are put forward by them,<sup>31</sup> including:

- a) It is regarded as a transfer of merit (transferring the reward of the *tahlil* reciter to those who have died), and this is contrary to the teachings of Islam;
- b) It is considered to cause people to sin easily because death can be redeemed by holding a celebration or *tahlilan* and so on, which is quickly done by those who are rich; and
- c) Giving charity to those who do not need it (in the form of blessings), not the poor, is considered wasteful and as an excuse with 1001 reasons and pretexts.

The three reasons mentioned above are undoubtedly acceptable on the one hand and unacceptable on the other. However, something is interesting about it all, namely the findings of Setiyarini<sup>32</sup> that along with the rise of *tahlilan* and *tawasulan* traditions in Indonesian society, there are *tahlilan* services. According to Setiyarini,<sup>33</sup> along with the prevalence of *tahlilan* and *tawasulan* traditions in Indonesian society, there are services for *tahlilan*. So, what exactly are *tahlilan* and *tawasulan*? According to al-Mu'jam al-Washit Dictionary, al-Munawwir, and others state that *tahlil* or *tahlilan* comes from the Arabic هَلَّلَ- يَهْلَلُ- تَهْلِيلًا أي قال: لا إله إلا الله which means reading the sentence of *Tawhid*, lâ ilâha illallâh, or “there is no god”, but Allah is part of the *dhikr* of Allah.

Meanwhile, according to Alzamzami<sup>34</sup>, the *tahlilan* tradition is considered beneficial, including:

1. As an effort to *dhikr* and repent to Allah for oneself and relatives who have died;

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<sup>30</sup> Khoirul Anwar, *Berislam Secara Moderat (Ajaran Dan Praktik Moderasi Beragama Dalam Islam)* (Semarang: Lawwana, 2022).

<sup>31</sup> Akhmad Rizqon Khamami, “Nasionalis-Cum-Nahdliyin: A New Identity for Nominal Javanese Muslims,” *Contemporary Islam* 16, no. 2–3 (October 2022): 507–27, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-022-00505-6>.

<sup>32</sup> Dyah Ayu Setiyarini, “Jasa Tahlil Prabayar Desa Kampung Dalem Kota Kediri,” *Qawânin: Journal of Economic Syariah Law* 1, no. 1 (January 30, 2017): 26–41, <https://doi.org/10.30762/q.v1i1.484>.

<sup>33</sup> Setiyarini.

<sup>34</sup> Mutaqin Alzamzami, Sholahuddin Ashani, and Rizki Ade Syahputra, “Religious Social Values in the Wiridan Tradition in the Village of Lubuk Bayas, North Sumatra,” *Karsa: Journal of Social and Islamic Culture* 29, no. 1 (July 26, 2021): 64–97, <https://doi.org/10.19105/karsa.v29i1.2345>.

2. To strengthen the bonds of brotherhood between people, both those who are still alive and those who have died;
3. Reminding that the end of the world's life is death;
4. Remembering Allah with *dhikr*;
5. *Tahlil* is one of the effective media for Islamic da'wah and
6. It is a manifestation of love and calming the heart of the grieving family of the deceased.

Then what is done in *tahlilan*? The research of Setiyarini<sup>35</sup> explained that in *tahlilan*, there are 15 (fifteen) reading sequences, namely:

1. *Tawasul* Surah Fatihah for the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, his families, companions, salafus sholihin;
2. *Tawasul* Surah al-Fatihah for Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jaelany;
3. *Tawasul* Surah al-Fatihah to the lineage of *thoriqoh* (path in sufism) experts, for example, Shaykh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani;
4. *Tawasul* Surah al-Fatihah for the Wali Songo (nine saints in Java);
5. *Tawasul* Surah al-Fatihah for fathers, mothers, grandfathers, grandmothers, teachers, sheikhs or teachers, students, all descendants, Male Muslims, and Female Muslims, both of whom are still alive and who passed away;
6. Reciting Surah al-Ikhlâs three times. Some recite it 7, 9, 21, 33, and 41 times. Depending on the *hajat* (need) desired by the shohibul hajat;
7. Reciting Mu'awidzatain (Two Protective Surahs those are al-Falaq and an-Naas);
8. Reciting Surah al-Fatihah;
9. Reciting verses 1-5 of Surah al-Baqarah;
10. Reciting the verse of the chair (surat al-Baqarah: 255);
11. Reciting the end of surah al-Baqarah 284-286;
12. Reciting *Sholawat* to Prophet (*allahumma sholli ala shayyidina Muhammad*);
13. Reciting *Istighfar* (*astaghfirullahal 'adhiim*);
14. Reciting *Tahlil* (*la ilaaha illa Allah*); and

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<sup>35</sup> Setiyarini, "Jasa Tahlil Prabayar Desa Kampung Dalem Kota Kediri."

### 15. Reciting The closing prayer.

Apart from these readings, Muarif<sup>36</sup> stated that what is meant by '*Tahlil*' or what is commonly called '*Tahlilan*' in the language is someone who reads 'La ilaha Ilallah,' which means 'There is no god but Allah.' Hence, this word does not need to be debated. Meanwhile, in terms, many define '*Tahlilan*' as a series of prayers in which there are letters Yasin, al-Ikhlās, Mu'awidzataian, Kursi Verses, and so on, which all readings are in the Qur'an, While the word '*Tawasul*' is defined as a means and intermediary in achieving goals through prayer and pious people. Both of them are based on Prophetic hadith.<sup>37</sup>

### **Finding the Common Ground in the Debate between Moslem Scholars regarding the Existence of *Tahlil* and *Tawasul*.**

Buya Yahya (Muarif)<sup>38</sup> explains the law of *tahlilan* and *tawasulan*, quoting several scholars, such as:

1. Abdullah bin Umar narrated information from Imam Nawawi, saying that Sayyidina Abdullah bin Umar felt happy when, over his grave, the beginning and end of Surah al-Baqarah were read; and
2. Ibn Muflih al-Hambali narrated what is mentioned in the book 'Mubdi Syarah Muqni' in the chapter 'Prayer of the Janazah' it is stated that it is not *makruh* (prohibited) to read the Qur'an in the grave according to the more valid opinion of the two authentic narrations.<sup>39</sup>

Because of this, the law of *Tahlilan* can be permissible without the need for *bid'ah* (new tradition), especially by cursing and insulting, even though in the *tahlilan* method, there is a dish in the middle of the *takziyah* (visiting the graveyard). Rasulullah PBUH said, "Make food for Ja'far's family." H.R. Imam Tirmidhi<sup>40</sup>. Likewise, '*Tawasul*' is a good practice, even prayer in the way of *tawasul*. As a result,

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<sup>36</sup> Muarif, "The Analysis of Islamic Law About The Differences of Friday Sermon with The Two Azan."

<sup>37</sup> Z.A Ni'mah, "Selawat Nabi in the Construction of Local Sufis and Revivalists in Indonesia," *Didaktika Religia* 8, no. 2 (2020): 311–34.

<sup>38</sup> Yahya Zainul Muarif, *Indahnya Memahami Perbedaan Para Ulama*, 1st ed. (Cirebon: Pustaka Al-Bahjah, 2023).

<sup>39</sup> Muarif.

<sup>40</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim Chapter 39, Hadith 121, Hadith No. 2216*, n.d.

'*Tawasul*' is an important part of a way to fulfill human wishes. However, for those who like to make *tawasul*, this method should be different from the correct thing, but this practice is only one of the many ways to get prayers answered.<sup>41</sup>

In her writing, Millie also emphasized that apart from *tahlilan*, *tawasulan* is a prayer ritual many Indonesian people perform when visiting graves, even in various ceremonies commemorating other Islamic holidays. However, many of these *tawasulan* practices need to be more understood, leading to deviations from the essence of the meaning of the *tawasul* itself. Likewise, *tahlilan*, besides reading the Qur'an and the prayers of *tawasulan*, are two religious practices that are a source of values and ethical norms of local wisdom<sup>42</sup>. Of course, they cannot be separated from shifts.

Hasyim & Nurfalah<sup>43</sup> assert that before *tahlilan*, *tawasulan* readings are usually held first, where *tawasul* means the practice of dedicating surah al-Fatihah to the Prophet Muhammad PBUH and his family, companions, *tabi'in* and his people, to scholars and devoted people. The next reading is reading Surah Yasin, followed by reading *tahlil* together. In this practice, Gaffar<sup>44</sup> emphasized that the Indonesian people often prefer to do things that are not urgent in religious worship. In contrast, those that are urgent are ignored. According to Aarsal<sup>45</sup>, it is true that local traditional values which have generally been carried out from generation to generation in Indonesia, such as *sedekah bumi* (charity tradition), *malam satu suro* (the night of Javanese calendar new year), *nyadran* (purification rituals before Ramadan), and so on, contain religious values, such as *ta'awun* (help each other). Or *gotong-royong* (togetherness), harmony,

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<sup>41</sup> Florian A. Lützen, "Entering the Prophetic Realm: 'Abd Rabbihī Ibn Sulaymān al-Qaliyūbī (d. 1968) on the Nature of Mediation (Tawassul)," *Religions* 14, no. 12 (December 8, 2023): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14121518>.

<sup>42</sup> Siddik Firmansyah and Marisa Rizki, "Shalawat Nariyah in the Perspective of Hadith: A Study of the Ma'ani Al-Hadith Approach," *Jurnal Islam Nusantara* 6, no. 1 (July 3, 2022): 92, <https://doi.org/10.33852/jurnalnu.v6i1.321>.

<sup>43</sup> Fuad Hasim and Yasin Nurfalah, "Pendidikan Spiritual Dalam Tradisi Istighosah Santri Pondok Pesantren Al Mahrusiyah III Ngampel," *El Bidayah: Journal of Islamic Elementary Education* 2, no. 2 (September 30, 2020): 89–100, <https://doi.org/10.33367/jiee.v2i2.1304>.

<sup>44</sup> Abdul Gaffar, "Rethinking the Religion/Secularism Binary in Global Politics," in *Religion in Motion*, ed. Julian Hensold et al. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 239–55, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41388-0\\_13](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41388-0_13).

<sup>45</sup> Thriwaty Aarsal, Dewi Liesnoor Setyowati, and Puji Hardati, "The Inheritance of Local Wisdom for Maintaining Peace in Multicultural Society," *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research* 15, no. 2 (April 4, 2023): 137–51, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JACPR-01-2022-0673>.

kinship, and cohesiveness are manifestations of local wisdom, which are filled with *tahlilan* and *tawasulan* readings later in the implementation of the event.

Meanwhile, in their research, Yusof & Ramli<sup>46</sup> stated that traditions like this do not only exist in Indonesia, but the Melayu community generally carries them out. The *tahlilan* and *tawasulan* ceremonies are carried out when there is a death to support them psychologically and emotionally so that they are strong, patient, and sincere after the deceased is left. In this context, Soenjoto<sup>47</sup> views that Islamic religious practices carried out in Indonesia, especially the Javanese people, cannot be separated from syncretism with the local culture,<sup>48</sup> which Hindu and Buddhist have adapted influences so that it is often referred to as *Kejawen Islam* (Javanese Islam).

This can be seen in the examples above. Likewise, the practice of Islamic religion in Bali, one of the Muslim minority communities in Indonesia, practices Islamic religion. Sulistiono<sup>49</sup> stated that what the Balinese Muslim community does in religious practice, which is not a matter of faith, tends to be more tolerant of the local culture. What do they do in carrying out their obligations as devout Muslims while maintaining local cultural values, such as obeying values, norms, ethics, beliefs, customary laws, and other rules practiced explicitly for generations by their ancestors.

Likewise, Agustina<sup>50</sup>, in research on Cirebon Wali and the legacy of the first Islamic empire in West Java, found that in addition to the religious practices of Muslim communities in the border areas of Central Java, apart from being integrated with local culture in religious practices it can also be seen from the ornaments of the

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<sup>46</sup> Yusof and Ramli, "Local Wisdom of Tahlil and Tunggu Kubur Practices in Death Custom among The Malays in Malaysia."

<sup>47</sup> Wening Purbatin Palupi Soenjoto, "Islam Kejawen as an Adoption of Local Wisdom and Islamic Development in Javanese Communities," *Shabih: Journal of Islamicate Multidisciplinary* 7, no. 1 (June 21, 2022): 67–76, <https://doi.org/10.22515/shabih.v7i1.4134>.

<sup>48</sup> Ridin Sofwan, H. Wasit, and H. Mundiri, *Islamisasi Di Jawa: Walisongo, Penyebar Islam Di Jawa, Menurut Penuturan Babad*, 1st ed. (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2004).

<sup>49</sup> Budi Sulistiono, Akhmad Yusuf, and Irvan Hidayat, "Local Wisdom in Muslim Social Community in Bali Province: A Study of Tolerance," in *Proceedings of the 2nd Internasional Conference on Culture and Language in Southeast Asia (ICCLAS 2018)* (Proceedings of the 2nd Internasional Conference on Culture and Language in Southeast Asia (ICCLAS 2018), Tangerang Selatan, Indonesia: Atlantis Press, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.2991/icclas-18.2019.15>.

<sup>50</sup> I H Agustina et al., "Local Wisdom in the Spatial System of the Palace, Indonesia," *IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering* 830, no. 2 (April 1, 2020): 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.1088/1757-899X/830/2/022077>.

location of the Keraton building tends to refer to Javanese puppet tradition. This means that not only are the religious practices of the Cirebon Muslim community integrated with local customs but they are also related to the Javanese puppet tradition palace-building model. Muslimin<sup>51</sup> even notes that Muslim religious practices in Indonesia are not only heavily influenced by local traditions, as mentioned above, but can also be seen in their daily lives, such as the use of wearing sarung in prayer and caps, *yasinan*, *halal bi halal* and so on, including *tahlilan* and *tawasulan*.<sup>52</sup>

In addition, said Faza,<sup>53</sup> the *tahlilan* and *tawasulan* ceremonies are led by certain people, such as clerics, *ustadz*, and Qur'an teachers; other than those not mentioned, the ceremony will usually not occur. Hidayah & Aini<sup>54</sup> also stated that in Islam, *al-'urf*, attributed to tradition, can be used as a legal provision, especially if the tradition is in the context of increasing piety and strengthening brotherhood. The values of truth and virtue contained in the tradition of *tahlilan* and *tawasulan*, which are usually accompanied by *yasinan*, *shalawatan*, and other events, become a unique Islamic tradition typical of the Indonesian Muslim community as a manifestation of the concept of *da'wah*.<sup>55</sup>

Because of this, often the renewal of Islamic law against existing realities, said Yusuf<sup>56</sup>, such as *tahlilan* and *tawasulan*, is the same as the recitation of *tahmid*, *tasbih*, and *takbir* which are then put together in a traditional *istighosah* (supplication mass

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<sup>51</sup> Abdul Azis Muslimin, "Islam Indonesia Local Wisdom Based on Sosio-Cultural Approach," in *Understanding Local Wisdom in Multidisciplinary Perspective from Local Relevance to Global Significance* (ICLAW: International Conference on Islam and Local Wisdom, Kendari: Advance Science Letters, Future Academy, 2017), 42, <https://repository.uin-alaududin.ac.id/11752/1/ICLAW.pdf>.

<sup>52</sup> Madchan Anies, *Tablil Dan Kenduri: Tradisi Santri Dan Kiai*, ed. Mahbub Djawaluddin (Bantul: Pustaka Pesantren, 2009).

<sup>53</sup> Yusron Faza Alfafa, "The Tradition of Reading Yasin's at the Gravel Visit in Slati Village, Larangan District, Brebes Regency," June 27, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/sk8bg>.

<sup>54</sup> Laili Nur Hidayah and Aini Adrika Fithrotul, "Yasinan Rabu Wage Masyarakat Dukuh Sambong Bojonegoro (Studi Living Qur'an)," *Tebureng: Journal of Islamic Studies and Society* 1, no. 2 (July 31, 2021): 153–69, <https://doi.org/10.33752/tjss.v1i2.1715>.

<sup>55</sup> M. Afnan Chafidh and A. Ma'ruf Asrori, *Tradisi Islami: Panduan Prosesi Kelahiran - Perkawinan - Kematian*, Khalista (Surabaya, 2006).

<sup>56</sup> Iskandar Yusuf, Umar Fauzan, and Noor Malihah, "The Effect of Dhuha Prayer and Istighosah on The Religious Character of Tsanawiyah Madrasah Students," *Nazbruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 3 (July 18, 2022): 920–27, <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v5i3.2392>.

prayer). Mahzumi & Fuad<sup>57</sup> stressed that *tawasul* on the Prophets and pious people through readings of the Koran and continued with *tahlilan* became a religious practice that seemed to be a necessity. In fact, according to Yusuf<sup>58</sup>, continuity in following the practice of religious worship, as mentioned above (*tahlilan* and *tawasulan*), can improve Islamic religious characteristics, besides being one of the ways to form moral improvement.

It can even be said that *tawasul* and *tabaruk* are traditions that have been widely practiced by the Muslim community when praying at tombs. These two traditions, said Huda,<sup>59</sup> are often misunderstood as practices that lead to polytheism. In his findings, Huda<sup>60</sup> sees that the *tawasulan* and *tahlilan* traditions can be seen from four main aspects, namely (1) this tradition refers to a living hadith, (2) based on the type of traditional action, traditional actors want to continue to honor people who are considered 'holy' or 'wali' and or who are respected by preserving traditions that have been carried out for generations, (3) Affective action, showing that the perpetrators have an emotional bond with religious figures and the time of implementation (Friday night), (4) rational instrumental action, the perpetrators are consciously able to carry out the tradition, both in terms of human resources and financial aspects, and (4) value rationality, the perpetrators want to imitate the behavior of religious figures and get used to giving alms as well as want to instill the value of congregational solidarity.

## CONCLUSION

In the context of reforming Islamic law in Indonesia, which cannot be separated from the 'urf (customs) approach in deciding a legal product, then one of the practices of

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<sup>57</sup> M. Al-Qodhi Abi Saidil Mahzumi and A. Jauhar Fuad, "Spiritual Education Through Ziarah Tradition in Syaikh Syamsuddin Al-Wasil Town Kediri City," *El Harakah* 21, no. 2 (December 3, 2019): 237, <https://doi.org/10.18860/el.v21i2.7030>.

<sup>58</sup> Yusuf, Fauzan, and Malihah, "The Effect of Dhuha Prayer and Istighosah on The Religious Character of Tsanawiyah Madrasah Students."

<sup>59</sup> Nur Huda, "Living Hadis Pada Tradisi Tawasul Dan Tabaruk Di Makam Sunan Bonang Lasem Rembang," *Riwayah: Jurnal Studi Hadis* 6, no. 2 (October 27, 2020): 299, <https://doi.org/10.21043/riwayah.v6i2.8159>.

<sup>60</sup> Huda.



worship in the Islamic religion requires accommodation (syncretism) of elements of Islam and tradition ('urf) is the practice of *tahlilan* and *tawasulan*. Since ancient times, this practice of worship has been integrated into the tradition of post-mortem ceremonies, where after someone dies at night, the community gathers for *takziyah* by reciting the verses of the Qur'an which were previously recited by *tawasul* first in order to support psychology and increase the motivation left behind so that patient, sincere and steadfast. However, along with the many religious ceremonies of the Muslim community in Indonesia, the values of religious rituality are often integrated with local cultural values, not only in the recitations of *tahlilan* and *tawasulan*, which are recited at post-death events but more than that, when there are *yasinan*, *istighotsah* events, thanksgiving and so on.

The values of local wisdom, which are often strengthened in the practice of religious worship rituals of Muslim communities in Indonesia, are unique for the Muslim majority population in expressing their worship practices. Even with inter-religious and inter-religious tolerance, it is a blessing for the people. Even though there were disagreements between what was permissible and what was not permissible among the scholars, now it has dimmed and reduced the tension coupled with tolerance, togetherness, and helping each other, which is more substantive than opposing things that are *furu'iyah* (customary practices) in nature, such as *tahlilan* and *tawasulan*. It is hoped that by internalizing local wisdom, which is part of the uniqueness in the way of internal religious worship, especially Muslims, *ukhuwah Islamiyah* will be maintained, and *ukhuwah wathaniyah* will make the realization of grace for the people and people of Indonesia.

The reform of Islamic law in Indonesia often incorporates the 'urf (customs) approach in the formulation of legal products, including worship practices such as *tahlilan* and *tawasulan*. These practices have long been integrated into post-mortem ceremonies, where the community gathers for *takziyah* by reciting verses from the Qur'an, preceded by *tawasul*, to support the psychology and boost the motivation of those left behind. This demonstrates the significance of integrating Islamic elements



with local customs<sup>61</sup> in religious rituals<sup>62</sup>. Over time, religious values have increasingly merged with local cultural values in events such as *yasinan*, and *istighotsah*.

The integration of local wisdom into the worship practices of the Muslim community in Indonesia reflects the unique approach of the Muslim majority population to their religious observances. Despite disagreements among scholars regarding the permissibility of these practices, tensions have eased with growing tolerance and cooperation. By internalizing local wisdom as part of the unique way of religious worship, it is hoped that both *ukhuwah Islamiyah* and *ukhuwah wathaniyah* will be preserved, fostering grace and harmony for the people of Indonesia.

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<sup>61</sup> Fatin Nur Marhamah Zabidi, Norshariani Abd Rahman, and Lilia Halim, "Integration of Islamic Values for Environmental Conservation: An Analysis of School Textbooks," *Religions* 12, no. 7 (July 7, 2021): 509, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12070509>.

<sup>62</sup> Norshariani Abd Rahman, Fatin Nur Marhamah Zabidi, and Lilia Halim, "Integration of Tauhidic Elements for Environmental Education from the Teachers' Perspectives," *Religions* 11, no. 8 (July 31, 2020): 394, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11080394>;

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