

FIGHTING THE DEVIL: CONTESTATION BETWEEN *RUQYAH ASWAJA* AND *RUQYAH SYAR'IYYAH* IN JAVANESE CONTEXT

Mufti Rasyid¹, Muhammad Wildan Syaiful Amri Wibowo²

UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung¹, UIN Sunan Kalijaga²

E-mail: mufti.rasyid@uinsatu.ac.id¹, wildan.amri1999@gmail.com²

Abstract

This article examines the contestation between Ruqyah Aswaja and Ruqyah Syar'iyah in Javanese culture, highlighting how Islamic healing becomes a site of theological and cultural struggle. While both practices aim to expel spiritual afflictions such as devils, jinn, and sihir, they reflect opposing visions of Islamic orthodoxy. The Aswaja model, rooted in Nahdlatul Ulama traditions, often blends Qur'anic recitations with sholawat, sacred water, and local mysticism. In contrast, the Salafi-oriented Syar'iyah model promotes a purist, scripturalist approach that rejects local customs as bid'ah. Set against the backdrop of Java's syncretic spiritual culture, this contest reveals deeper tensions between tradition and reform, locality and transnationalism. The article argues that ruqyah is not merely a healing ritual but a battleground for religious authority and cultural legitimacy in contemporary Indonesian Islam.

Keywords: *ruqyah, aswaja, salafi, Javanese Islam, religious authority*

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji pertentangan antara Ruqyah Aswaja dan Ruqyah Syar'iyah dalam budaya Jawa, dengan menyoroti bagaimana penyembuhan Islam menjadi arena pertarungan teologis dan budaya. Meskipun kedua praktik tersebut bertujuan untuk mengusir gangguan gaib seperti setan, jin, dan sihir, keduanya mencerminkan pandangan yang bertentangan mengenai ortodoksi Islam. Model Aswaja, yang berakar pada tradisi Nahdlatul Ulama, sering kali memadukan pembacaan Al-Qur'an dengan sholawat, air suci, dan mistisisme lokal. Sebaliknya, model Syar'iyah yang berorientasi Salafi mengedepankan pendekatan puritan dan skripturalis yang menolak adat istiadat lokal sebagai bid'ah. Dengan latar belakang budaya spiritual sinkretis Jawa, pertarungan ini mengungkap ketegangan yang lebih dalam antara tradisi dan reformasi, serta antara lokalitas dan transnasionalisme. Artikel ini berpendapat bahwa ruqyah bukan sekadar ritual penyembuhan, melainkan juga medan pertempuran otoritas keagamaan dan legitimasi budaya dalam Islam kontemporer di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: *Ruqyah, Aswaja, Salafi, Islam Jawa, Otoritas Keagamaan*

Introduction

In Indonesia, the practice of *ruqyah* has long been believed as a solution for some supernatural problems. *Ruqyah* refers to the recitation of Qur'anic verses and prayers used in Islamic healing practices to treat illnesses believed to be caused by supernatural influences such as devil or *jinn* possession and black magic (*sihir*)¹. It is a well-established practice in Islamic tradition, with roots in hadith literature and classical jurisprudence. Nowhere in Indonesia is this practice more visible and contested than on the island of Java, where a deeply ingrained cultural tradition and superstition interweave with Islamic belief². Javanese cultural and religious environment is marked by a rich syncretism where Islamic teachings coexist with pre-Islamic animistic and mystical beliefs³. Local cosmologies embrace spirits, ancestral powers, and supernatural beings such as *jinn* and *genderuwo*. Spiritual healing practices addressing these unseen forces are widespread and culturally embedded⁴.

Within this context, two prominent models of *ruqyah* have emerged and increasingly come into contestation: *ruqyah aswaja*, associated with Nahdlatul Ulama's traditionalist approach and *ruqyah syar'iyah*, promoted by Salafi-oriented groups advocating a "purified" form of healing. The word *aswaja* stands for *ahlus-sunnah wal-jamaah*, a motto which is always associated with NU, meanwhile 'syar'iyah' refers to 'sharia' or Islamic principles. While both claim legitimacy through Islam, they differ sharply in their theological foundations, ritual methods, and understanding of religious authority, especially in the context of Javanese culture. *Ruqyah aswaja* is institutionalized through two main organizations: Jam'iyah Ruqyah Aswaja (JRA) and Keluarga Besar Ruqyah Aswaja (KBRA). Established in 2015, JRA promotes a healing model that combines Qur'anic recitation with *asma'* (special spiritual chants), *ijazah* (authorization from *kyai*), and Javanese mystical elements. Conversely, *ruqyah syar'iyah* is promoted by Salafi-influenced groups such as the Majelis Permusyawaratan Praktisi Ruqyah Indonesia (MPPRI) and Wahdah Islamiyah. These groups advocate a strict adherence to Islamic sources, reject syncretic practices, and emphasize *ruqyah* based solely on the Qur'an and Sunnah, against local customs perceived as *bid'ah*⁵. The rise of both forms of *ruqyah* reflects broader religious dynamics in contemporary Indonesia, especially in Java island. *Ruqyah aswaja* represents a localized counterbalance to the global spread of Salafi ideology, while *ruqyah syar'iyah* aligns itself with Islamic revivalism and religious purification. Since its inception, JRA has expanded rapidly across

¹ Putri Ameda and Mursalim Mursalim, "Penggunaan Ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an dalam Pengobatan Tradisional (Ruqyah) Pada Komunitas Jam'iyah Ruqyah Aswaja (JRA) di Samarinda," *Jurnal Ilmu Agama*, 26, no. 1 (2025): 76–97.

² Robert W. Hefner, "Islamizing Java? Religion and Politics in Rural East Java," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 46, no. 3 (1987): 533–54, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2056898>.

³ Stewart Gordon, *When Asia Was the World: Traveling Merchants, Scholars, Warriors, and Monks Who Created the "Riches of the East"* (Grand Central Publishing, 2009).

⁴ Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (University of Chicago Press, 1976).

⁵ Maulana Achmad and Roudlotul Jannah Ummu Kulsum, "Pengobatan Islami Jasmani Dan Rohani: Studi Analisis Pada Keluarga Besar Jam'iyah Ruqyah ASWAJA (JRA) Kota Palembang: Studi Analisis Pada Jam'iyah Ruqyah ASWAJA (JRA) Kota Palembang," *ULIL ALBAB : Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin* 1, no. 11 (2022): 4078–87.

⁶ Dony Arung Triantoro et al., "RUQYAH SYAR'İYYAH: ALTERNATIF PENGOBATAN, KESALEHAN, ISLAMISME DAN PASAR ISLAM," *Harmoni* 18, no. 1 (2019): 460–78, <https://doi.org/10.32488/harmoni.v18i1.354>.

Java, gaining traction in NU-based communities. Some of the most prominent figures are Alauddin Shidiqy (Gus Amak), Sofyan Ilham (Abah Ilham), and Kyai Imron Rosidi. Meanwhile, ruqyah syar'iyah practitioners prefer to utilize social media, religious seminars (*dauroh*), and transnational networks to increase their influence. One of the main practitioners is Ustadz Muhammad Faizar, who has gained fame on Youtube with 2,75 million subscribers (as of May 2026). We must underline that the role of the media is very important.

Several studies have examined these practices in particular contexts. Zein (2022) analyzes the successful implementation of ruqyah aswaja in Tulungagung, East Java⁷. Warits (2023) explores its correlation with Qur'anic interpretation and pedagogy⁸. Maftuh (2019) critically evaluates the contestation among ruqyah practitioners in Kebumen, Central Jav⁹a. On the side of ruqyah syar'iyah, Triantoro et al. (2018) suggest that its popularity in Yogyakarta is partly driven by public dissatisfaction with formal health services¹⁰, while Harmuzi (2020) investigates its psychological benefits in Salatiga¹¹. Although these studies provide insightful accounts of ruqyah practices, they tend to focus on descriptive aspects—how ruqyah is practiced and its effects—without addressing the underlying tensions between ruqyah aswaja and ruqyah syar'iyah. This study addresses that gap by employing a theoretical framework that focuses on religious authority, orthodoxy versus syncretism, and the construction of Islamic identity that has emerged from this contestation.

This article explores the contestation as a microcosm of broader struggles within Javanese Islam. It argues that the dispute is not only about methods of spiritual healing but also about competing claims to define authentic Islamic authority and negotiate cultural identity. In the Javanese context, the contestation between traditionalist actors like Nahdlatul Ulama and reformist actors like Salafi groups offers a particularly rich case. By framing the ruqyah debate as a symbolic battleground, this study would reveal how ritual practices become arenas for negotiating religious legitimacy and authority in Indonesia's complex socio-religious landscape.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative methods approach to examine the contestation between ruqyah aswaja and ruqyah syar'iyah in the Javanese context. It utilizes critical discourse analysis (CDA) theory by Norman Fairclough. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is one of the theories in discourse studies. According to Norman Fairclough, discussions about

⁷ Muhammad KZ Zein, "RUQYAH SEBAGAI METODE PENGOBATAN BERBASIS SPIRITUAL: (Studi Jam'iah Ruqyah Aswaja Tulungagung)," *Hisbah: Jurnal Bimbingan Konseling Dakwah Islam* 19, no. 2 (2022): 152–78.

⁸ Abd Warits and Fathurrosyid, "RELEVANSI AYAT-AYAT RUQYAH JAMIYAH RUQYAH ASWAJA DENGAN TAFSIR MAFATIHUL GHAIB FAKHRUDDIN ARRAZI," *Jurnal Studi Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 2, no.1 (2023):

⁹ Rofik Maftuh, "Kontestasi Identitas Dalam Pengobatan Ala Nabi; Kajian Fenomenologi Atas Munculnya Jam'iyah Ruqyah Aswaja," *Jurnal Kajian Islam Interdisipliner* 4, no. 1 (2019): 59–76, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jkii.v4i1.1078>.

¹⁰ Triantoro et al., "RUQYAH SYARIYYAH."

¹¹ Harmuzi Harmuzi, "Studi Fenomenologi Ruqyah Syar'iyah Pengalaman Transformasi Kesehatan Mental Di Biro Konsultasi Psikologi Tazkia Salatiga," *IJIP : Indonesian Journal of Islamic Psychology* 2, no. 1 (2020): 112–35,

discourse begin with the belief that all human actions are associated with specific meanings, referred to as meaning operations. For Fairclough, discourse functions to reflect the world surrounding a particular society and also to transform the world as they see and understand it. What distinguishes this theory from other discourse theories and traditions is that its object of study is text, both spoken and written. After a text is read, the researcher then examines how the text is exchanged and developed within a discursive practice and social practice¹².

In practice, Fairclough provides three aspects for analyzing a text using CDA. First, text analysis. This includes vocabulary choice, grammatical structure, cohesion, and text structure. Second, discursive practice analysis, which consists of two aspects: the production, consumption, and distribution of the text, and the interpretation of the text. This part is crucial to understanding the purpose of a text's creation, how it was produced, and how it is consumed and understood by its readers. Third, social practice analysis. This is the most important part of CDA because language/discourse is a part of social practice, and thus discourse is always socially constructed. To engage in a discursive practice, one must possess certain knowledge or beliefs that serve as tools to interpret a text and generate meaning from it.

Result and Discussion

In today's era, the media always play a critical role in any contest in this world, whether it is about politics, ideology, or religion. Therefore, the first thing to do in this research is finding social media posts, in this case Youtube, portraying the contestation between *ruqyah aswaja* and *ruqyah syar'iyah*. The researcher chooses eleven Youtube videos to analyze as follows:

No	Title of Video	Channel Name	Link
1	Ruqyah Aswaja Vs Ruqyah Wahabi	Muhammad Idrus Ramli	https://youtu.be/sI2lOcEawSc?si=ba38VCl0dsIDiwjU
2	Tanya Jawab Ruqyah Nabawiyah "Apa Perbedaan Ruqyah Aswaja dan Wahabi?"	Al Wafa Tarim	https://youtu.be/mVGdynUxK-I?si=mRLkbhrEKzFaf4-D
3	Terapi Ruqyah Wahabi Vs Aswaja (Cirebon)	Mas Doran	https://youtu.be/QszksqtDH5E?si=IEzPhkpsnUExsuKV
4	Guru Ruqyah Ustadz Faizar Terindikasi Wahabi	Santri Gunung	https://youtu.be/wA4YGKqTcgo?si=vWmLpOQjcrk4TvXG
5	Perbedaan Ruqyah	Ruqyah	https://youtu.be/vLfqi

¹² Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Polity, 2009).

No	Title of Video	Channel Name	Link
	Aswaja Vs Ruqyah Syar'iyah		gn2Of4?si=Kf7lpTuvO759ZEKO
6	Apa Perbedaan Antara Ruqyah dan Dukun	Achmad Mukafi Official	https://youtu.be/XYu hv9DpvQo?si=HzcL AoXbXSkk12Se
7	Praktik Ruqyah Syirik di Masyarakat	Akhyar Channel	https://youtu.be/oA3 wP5z4yFA?si=3Xbq Wdyc6RBjsthC
9	Ruqyah Syirik Ala Dukun	Hasbi Al Anshari	https://youtu.be/E4Ua A_z2Vto?si=zXFa5k XprDkkJhsl
10	Ruqyah Syirik Vs Ruqyah Syar'i	Muhammad Zunaidi Ruqyah	https://youtu.be/OB uobBsr9Y?si=268Lm GaqsTmSDI4O
11	Ruqyah Question: Awas Terjebak Pengobatan Berbau Syirik	Kang Anas	https://youtu.be/pPyR nUQ3b30?si=cKGt-Mr96mfV6OFv

Table 1. Youtube videos portraying contestation between *ruqyah aswaja* and *ruqyah syar'iyah*

Source: Research Findings

The table above presents eleven YouTube videos analyzed in this study. The first five videos (No. 1–5) were produced by individuals affiliated with Ruqyah Aswaja, while the remaining six videos (No. 6–11) were produced by individuals affiliated with Ruqyah Syar'iyah. To provide a more systematic and coherent discussion, the analysis is organized into three sub-sections based on Fairclough's framework of Critical Discourse Analysis: textual analysis, discursive practice analysis, and social practice analysis. This structure enables the study to examine linguistic features used and the processes of discourse production and circulation, as well as the broader socio-religious context in which the contestation between Ruqyah Aswaja and Ruqyah Syar'iyah takes place.

1. Textual Analysis

a. Defenders of Ruqyah Aswaja

The videos in this classification can be divided into two categories. The first category highlights differences among various forms of Islamic healing practices, while the second category explains the doctrinal and practical distinctions between Ruqyah Aswaja and

Ruqyah Syar'iyah. The first category is represented by the second video, whereas the second category is found in the first, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth videos.

The most prominent figure defending Ruqyah Aswaja is Idrus Ramli, through his YouTube channel, “Muhammad Idrus Ramli.” In the video, Ramli uses Sharḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd by Ibn Ruslān as the basis of his argument. At the beginning of the video, he discusses the legal status of several practices associated with Islamic healing, including ruqyah, *suwuk* (a Javanese term for spiritual healing), *jimat* (amulets), and *pengasih* (affection-attracting ritual). The video is intended to respond to another Muslim group that Ramli labels as “Wahabi,” or revivalist Muslims, whom he criticizes for categorically prohibiting various forms of Islamic healing rooted in local tradition. Ramli argues that the practices rejected by this group (*suwuk*, *jimat* and *pengasih*) are not necessarily outside Islam, because some of them, in his view, have textual foundations in Hadith.

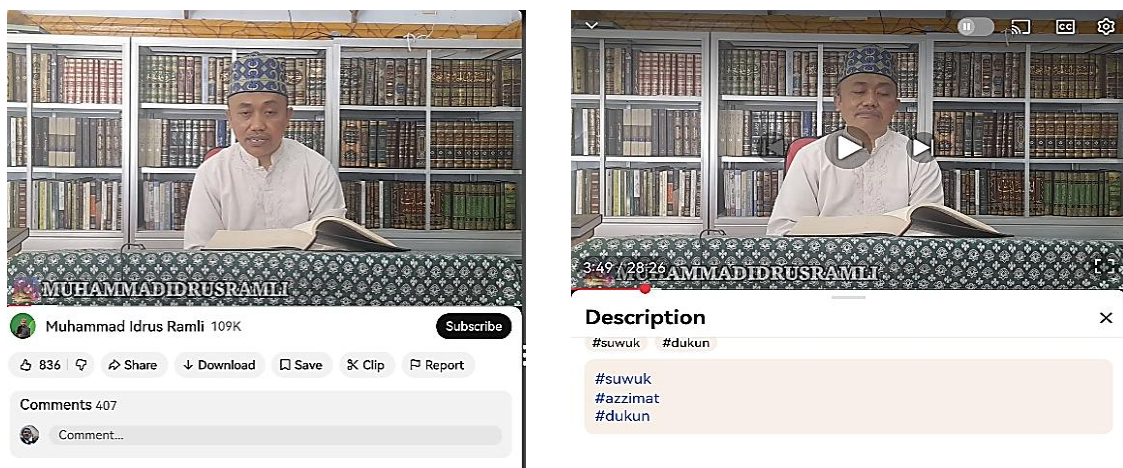


Figure 1 Idrus Ramli

The main reason why Idrus Romli permits certain forms of Islamic traditional healing appears around the third minute of the video. He argues that what is prohibited in Islamic traditional healing is not the use of local practices itself, but the presence “polytheistic elements” within the practice. Therefore, a healing practice originated before Islam or is rooted in local tradition may still be considered permissible as long as it does not contain polytheistic belief or intention. To support his argument, Romli refers to a narration in *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān* concerning *tiwalah* that refers to something resembling an amulet used by a woman to make her husband love her and not love another woman. He considers this practice prohibited because it involves magic. Romli also notes that such practices vary across regions. In the Javanese context, for example, he mentions magical objects such as thread and needles buried in places where a husband/wife pass, with the intention of preventing divorce. However, Romli emphasizes that not every form of *pengasih* is prohibited. Some practices are permissible, such as a wife wearing perfume, speaking affectionately, or dressing attractively to strengthen her husband’s affection. The key distinction lies in intention, method, and theological orientation. It is forbidden when it is directed to powers other than Allah or involves magical and polytheistic elements.



Figure 2 Ruqyah Aswaja by Al Wafa Tarim

The second video focuses more explicitly on the differences between Ruqyah Aswaja and Ruqyah Syar'iyah. Unlike the previous video, it does not display any healing practice, but instead it is like a QA (Questions-and-Answers) video, responding to the audiences. In this context, the religious scholar explains that what is often labelled Ruqyah Syar'iyah, although claimed to be strictly based on Islamic sacred texts and prophetic traditions, does not always follow the Hadith in a essence. For example, he argues that the practice of *mass ruqyah* cannot be directly found in the Hadith. By contrast, according to this perspective, Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah acknowledges the validity of beneficial customary practices as long as they do not contradict Islamic principles. The speaker further argues that claiming only one form of Islamic healing as the original or authentic model is a provocative act, because it delegitimizes other Muslim healing traditions that may also be religiously acceptable.

The third video emphasizes on how healing rituals are performed and how patients are treated. It explains what Ramli refers to as ruqyah syar'iyah and ruqyah aswaja, portraying ruqyah aswaja as wiser, more measured, and more ethically considerate in its treatment of patients compared to ruqyah syar'iyah. The video visually demonstrates healing practices (apparently a *ruqyah syariyyah*) in a rigorous and intense manner toward patients,. It deliberately juxtaposes this approach with other practice (apparently *ruqyah aswaja*) which is more prudent, gentle, and attentive to the well-being of those they treat. Through this framing, the narration not only highlights practical differences but also constructs a moral evaluation, suggesting that ruqyah aswaja is more “humane” than ruqyah syar'iyah



Figure 3 The difference ruqyah syar'iyah and aswaja in practice

In the fourth video, the creator accused Ustadz Faizar, who is known as a practitioner of ruqyah syar'iyah, as a Wahhabi. He argues that it is dangerous for netizens to be influenced by Wahhabi healers, citing Ma'ruf Khozin's book *Menolak Wahabi* (Rejecting Wahhabi) as a reference. According to the book, the Wahhabi movement is dangerous because it forbids any views that do not align with its teachings. However, the video does not specifically criticize or directly link Ustadz Faizar's healing practices to Wahhabi ideology. Meanwhile, the fifth content is similar to the second video. The creator explains the differences between the practice of ruqyah syar'iyah and Aswaja that have different *manhaj* and understanding of tauhid, which consequently leads to differences in their methods of ruqyah. He said that any practice that is not clearly mentioned in hadith should be avoided. This includes practices such as *tawassul* and *shalawat* that are not explicitly found in the Prophet's traditions.



Figure 4 Ustadz Faizar accusation as Wahabi.

On the other hand, within the Aswaja framework, reciting shalawat composed by ulema and practicing hizib are considered permissible. In terms of jimat (amulets), ruqyah Aswaja conditionally allows certain types under specific circumstances, whereas the ruqyah syar'iyah group strictly prohibits all forms of amulets. However, the ulema featured in the video does not clearly specify which types of amulets are regarded as permissible within the Ahlussunah tradition. Overall, this explanation is similar to the argument presented by Idrus Ramli in the first video.



Figure 5, The creator differs both ruqyah syar'iyah and aswaja.

b. Defender of Ruqyah Syar'iyah

In the first video, Ustadz Abdul Somad clearly distinguishes between a shaman and a ruqyah ustadz or Islamic healer. For him, one of the clearest indicators for differentiating the two is the practitioner's religious piety. If the healer observes Islamic obligations, such as performing the five daily prayers, he may be regarded as a legitimate Islamic healer; conversely, if he neglects such obligations, his practice becomes religiously questionable. Ustadz Faizar uses the term **ruqyah syirkiyyah** to describe forbidden forms of ruqyah. He explains that several signs may indicate it, including: asking for the patient's mother's name, which he interprets as a form of humiliation because, in Islamic lineage, a person born from a lawful marriage is normally attributed to the father. He also criticizes healers who claim to see ghosts, arguing that such claims are not supported by Hadith. Other problematic practices include asking for the patient's personal belongings, such as shoes or underwear; requesting the patient's date of birth; asking for unusual animals to be sacrificed; writing **raja** or magical inscriptions; reciting words that the audience cannot understand; asking to meet the patient alone; giving objects to be buried in the house; and using eggs or other media in the healing process. He further emphasizes that a true Islamic healer cannot see the future.



Figure 6 Ustadz Abdus Shomad and Faizar explain the difference of ruqyah syar'iyah and syirqiyyah

Overall, these indicators are used by revivalist preachers to distinguish legitimate ruqyah from practices considered deviant or shirk-based. However, many of the signs mentioned by Ustadz Faizar do not directly contradict the arguments made by defenders of Ruqyah Aswaja, because both sides reject healing practices that involve shirk, magic, deception, or reliance on powers other than Allah.. He explains that *dukun* is a person who heals with traditional tools and praying with the language which is not understood by the audience. The explanation about *ruqyah syirkiyyah* also includes fake healing.



Figure 7 Ruqyah Syar'iyah defendants warn of the danger of ruqyah

The channel of Muhammad Zunaidi Ruqyah (see the second image above) explains the difference between ruqyah syar'iyah and ruqyah syirkiyyah, claiming shamans as the practitioners of ruqyah syir'kiyyah. Zunaidi's statement is based on the hadith which says that Prophet Mohammad doesn't forbid Muslims to come to a ruqyah healer as long as the practice is not polytheism:

لَا بَأْسَ بِالرُّقَى مَا لَمْ يَكُنْ فِيهِ شِرْكٌ

“No matter (you came to ruqyah) as long as there is no *polytheism* there.”

He claims that there are several indications of fake/ heretic ruqyah. The first indication is seeking help from Allah while also invoking spirits, which he considers as *shirk*. This can be seen, for example, among some practitioners who recite Qur'anic verses, but combine them with other elements. By contrast, proper ruqyah syar'iyah relies solely on clear, authentic, and religiously legitimate recitations. Zunaidi emphasizes that the correctness of the method is more important than the healing outcome itself. He argues that when Qur'anic verses and Sunnah-based prayers are mixed with non-Arabic, such as Javanese spells, the practice is transformed into *ruqyah shirkiyyah*. Another indication is the unusual, burdensome, or ritualistic requirements that have no basis in Islamic teachings. In the last video, the author warns readers against selecting improper healing methods but does not clearly the distinction between *ruqyah shirk* and *ruqyah syar'iyah*.

According to Dr. Firanda, ruqyah can be considered syar'iyah only when it fulfills several requirements: first, it must use verses from the Qur'an and supplications derived from the Hadith; second, it must be recited in a language that is understandable; and third, the patient and practitioner must firmly believe that healing comes only from Allah. Qur'an is not merely as a sacred scripture, but also as a source of solution for various problems in real life.¹³

From the explanation regarding of ruqyah videos above, there are some keywords which are taken from the ruqyah aswaja videos, the most used terms are: “wahabi” or “ruqyah wahabi”, *pengasih* and *suwuk*. Meanwhile, Ruqyah Syar'iyah also use specific words such as *ruqyah syirkiyyah*, *dukun* (shaman), and following to Quran and Sunnah. These terms are used by each group to legitimize their own authority while delegitimizing the opposing group in the context of ruqyah or Islamic healing.

2. Social Discursive Analysis

The contestation between Ruqyah Aswaja and Ruqyah Syar'iyah cannot be understood merely as a disagreement over healing techniques. Rather, it reflects a broader struggle over religious authority, Islamic authenticity, and the place of local culture within Indonesian Islam. In this discourse, both groups employ particular labels and classifications to construct their own legitimacy while questioning the religious validity of the opposing group. The Aswaja group tends to defend religious healing practices that are integrated with local

¹³ Mufti Rasyid and Ainun Munzidah, “Exploring 21st Century Learning Skills (4C Principles) in Qur'an,” *Al-Mada: Jurnal Agama, Sosial, Dan Budaya* 7, no. 4 (2024): 832–47.

traditions, whereas the Ruqyah Syar'iyah group tends to reject practices that, in its view, are not explicitly grounded in the Qur'an and Sunnah. The slogan of "returning to the Qur'an and Sunnah" is often used by reformists to purify Islamic belief and practice from bid'ah, the mixing of religious teachings with local cultural elements¹⁴.

Within the Aswaja discourse, the term "Ruqyah Wahabi" becomes a central rhetorical label. On the Idrus Ramli channel, for instance, this term is used in the title of a video to identify the opposing group as "Wahabi." This labeling functions not only as a theological categorization but also as a delegitimizing strategy. By associating Ruqyah Syar'iyah practitioners with Wahhabism, the Aswaja discourse frames them as rigid, literalist, anti-tradition, and dismissive of long-established local Islamic practices. However, the term "Wahabi" itself is often used polemically and does not always reflect a precise historical or ideological understanding. It should be noted that "Wahhabi" is not always an appropriate label, as it originally refers to a religious-political movement associated with Saudi Arabia. Wahhabi scholars have historically been closely connected to the Saudi kingdom and are commonly associated with the Hanbali school of Sunni jurisprudence.¹⁵

In Indonesian public discourse, however, the term has often been broadened and used as a general accusation against reformist Muslim groups perceived as too strict and hostile to local tradition. This rhetorical use of "Wahabi" shows how religious discourse is shaped by social memory, ideological rivalry, and intra-Muslim polemics. In the beginning of 21st century, the influence of Muslim Brotherhood and Wahhabi thinking has been more prevalent where many Muslims seeking a "purer" form of Islam¹⁶. The term becomes less of a precise theological category and more of a symbolic marker used to draw boundaries between "local-traditional Islam" and "puritan-reformist Islam." Through this discourse, Ruqyah Aswaja positions itself as the defender of a culturally rooted Islam that respects the authority of kyai, classical ulama, ijazah, shalawat, hizib, and certain inherited healing practices, as long as these practices are not considered shirk.

By contrast, the Ruqyah Syar'iyah group constructs its authority through the language of purification, textual authenticity, and protection from shirk. Its discourse repeatedly emphasizes terms such as ruqyah syirkiiyyah, dukun, bid'ah, Qur'an, Sunnah, and tauhid. These terms create a moral and theological boundary between what is considered legitimate Islamic healing and what is classified as deviant or polytheistic healing. For Ruqyah Syar'iyah practitioners, a healing practice is acceptable only when it is clearly based on Qur'an and Hadith and methods that do not involve magical/ heretic objects.

A clear example appears in Muhammad Zunaidi's explanation of healing formulas that mix Qur'anic expressions with Javanese words. He criticizes expressions such as "minal jinnati waras," in which Arabic Qur'anic language is combined with the Javanese word waras,

¹⁴ Ahmad Faaza Hudzaifah and Muhammad Wildan Syaiful Amri Wibowo, "Dominasi Gerakan Salafi Di Pogung Dalangan Yogyakarta," *Nuansa: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Kemasyarakatan* 16, no. 1 (2023): 1–12.

¹⁵ Yuangga Kurnia Yahya et al., "Treatment of Non-Muslims in Moderate Saudi in Muhammad Bin Salman's Religious Reform," *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, no. 3 (2022): 76–100.

¹⁶ Greg Fealy, "ISLAMIC RADICALISM IN INDONESIA: The Faltering Revival?," *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2004, 104–21.

meaning healthy. For Zunaidi, this mixture indicates a problematic and potentially deviant form of healing because it combines sacred Islamic text with local incantatory language. From the perspective of Ruqyah Syar'iyah, such a practice risks transforming ruqyah into ruqyah syirkiyyah because it blurs the boundary between Qur'anic healing and magical spell. However, from the perspective of local Javanese Islamic culture, the use of Javanese language in healing may be interpreted differently: not necessarily as a sign of deviation, but as an expression of local wisdom, cultural intimacy, and inherited religious practice.

This contrast demonstrates that the conflict is not simply about whether ruqyah is Islamic or un-Islamic. Both groups claim to rely on Islamic sources and both reject shirk. The real tension lies in how each group defines the boundary of acceptable Islamic practice. Ruqyah Aswaja allows a broader interpretive space by recognizing the authority of ulama, local custom, and inherited religious traditions, provided that they do not contradict Islamic theology. Ruqyah Syar'iyah, on the other hand, narrows the scope of legitimacy by insisting that Islamic healing must be directly traceable to the Qur'an and Sunnah. Thus, the discourse of ruqyah becomes a symbolic arena where two models of Islam compete: one accommodative and culturally embedded, the other scripturalist and purification-oriented.

3. Practical Discursive and Social Practice Analysis

The different points of views are tried to be disseminated in the new media platform. The information which previously limited by presenting YouTube, becomes accessible for everyone. In Islamic medicine discourse, YouTube is the new ground of Islamic authority. It is because some netizen believe that traditionalist is true in this case while the other groups offend the opposite opinion. The contestation between Ruqyah Aswaja and Ruqyah Syar'iyah is not limited to face-to-face religious gatherings, pesantren forums, or healing sessions. It is increasingly mediated through digital platforms, especially YouTube. All the videos analyzed in this study were uploaded, circulated, and consumed through YouTube, making the platform an important arena for the production and negotiation of Islamic authority. In this sense, YouTube does not merely function as a neutral medium for storing videos; it actively shapes how religious knowledge is presented, distributed, contested, and legitimized.

This digital setting is significant because YouTube is one of the most widely used video platforms in Indonesia. According to GoodStats data, in 2025, slightly more than 65 percent of Indonesian internet users used YouTube as a platform for watching video-based social media content¹⁷. This percentage indicates that YouTube has become a highly strategic medium for disseminating knowledge, including religious knowledge. Therefore, the involvement of ruqyah practitioners and religious preachers in YouTube-based discourse should be understood as part of a broader awareness that digital media can expand religious influence beyond offline religious gatherings.

¹⁷ GoodStats Data, "Platform Video yang Sering Ditonton Pengguna Internet Indonesia 2025," GoodStats Data, accessed May 6, 2026, <https://data.goodstats.id/statistic/platform-video-yang-sering-ditonton-pengguna-internet-indonesia-2025-ywETB>.

The strategic use of YouTube can also be seen from the number of subscribers owned by several key figures involved in this discourse. For instance, Muhammad Faizar has approximately 3 million subscribers, Muhammad Idrus Ramli has around 109,000 subscribers, and Muhammad Zunaidi Ruqyah has around 16,200 subscribers. These numbers demonstrate that the contestation between Ruqyah Aswaja and Ruqyah Syar'iyah is not a marginal discussion, but part of a wider digital religious discourse consumed by thousands, and in some cases millions, of viewers. The fact that their videos regularly attract thousands of viewers further shows that Islamic healing has become an important topic within Indonesia's online religious sphere.

YouTube provides both groups with access to a wide audience beyond their immediate religious communities. Through video titles, thumbnails, preaching styles, comment sections, subscriber networks, and algorithmic recommendations, ruqyah discourse becomes part of a wider digital religious marketplace. Practitioners and preachers do not only explain their views; they also perform authority before an audience. In this context, subscriber counts, video views, comments, and shares become forms of symbolic capital that strengthen the public legitimacy of each actor. A preacher with a large audience may be perceived as more authoritative, while a video with high engagement may be seen as more socially relevant or persuasive.

This digital context changes the nature of religious authority. In earlier periods, Islamic authority was often mediated through pesantren, mosques, majelis taklim, books, or direct teacher-student relationships. In the current media environment, authority is increasingly constructed through visibility, rhetorical performance, and online engagement. A preacher who appears persuasive, confident, and scripturally informed in a video may gain authority among viewers, even without direct personal contact. Similarly, a practitioner who demonstrates healing rituals or warns against deviant practices can influence public perceptions of what counts as proper Islamic healing.

From the perspective of Fairclough's discursive practice, the production of these videos involves particular choices of language, framing, and audience positioning. Ruqyah Aswaja content often frames local healing practices as part of the broader Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah tradition. It uses references to classical ulama, hadith, ijazah, shalawat, and local terms such as suwuk, pengasih, and jimat to show that traditional healing can remain within Islamic boundaries. This discourse attempts to reassure traditionalist audiences that their inherited practices are not automatically deviant. It also seeks to defend local Islamic authority against the charge of bid'ah or shirk.

Meanwhile, Ruqyah Syar'iyah content is produced through a different discursive logic. It emphasizes warnings, religious boundaries, and the danger of spiritual deception. Its videos frequently classify healing practices into legitimate ruqyah and ruqyah syirkiyyah. Through this classification, the audience is encouraged to become cautious, selective, and suspicious of healing practices that involve shamans, amulets, unclear mantras, ritual conditions, or local mystical elements. This discourse constructs the practitioner of Ruqyah Syar'iyah as a guardian of tauhid who protects Muslims from hidden forms of shirk.

At the level of consumption, audiences do not merely receive these messages passively. Viewers interpret the videos through their own religious backgrounds, cultural experiences, and ideological affiliations. Traditionalist viewers may see Ruqyah Aswaja videos as a necessary defense of local Islamic heritage against puritanical attacks. Revivalist or scripturalist viewers may interpret Ruqyah Syar'iyah videos as a needed correction against syncretic practices that have long been normalized in society. Thus, YouTube becomes a space where viewers participate in the reproduction of religious boundaries by liking, commenting, sharing, defending, or attacking particular interpretations.

At the level of social practice, this contestation reflects broader tensions within contemporary Indonesian Islam. The debate over ruqyah is connected to larger questions: Who has the authority to define Islamic orthodoxy? Can local traditions be Islamized and preserved? Should Islamic practice be purified from all cultural elements not explicitly found in scripture? How should Muslims distinguish between local wisdom and shirk? These questions show that ruqyah is not only a therapeutic practice but also a cultural and theological field in which Indonesian Muslims negotiate the relationship between Islam, locality, and modern religious reform.

Therefore, the digital circulation of ruqyah videos contributes to the mediatization of Islamic authority. Religious healing is no longer discussed only in private healing encounters but is publicly debated in a highly visible online space. Through YouTube, both Ruqyah Aswaja and Ruqyah Syar'iyah transform their healing practices into public religious arguments. The platform amplifies their differences, enables polemical labeling, and expands the audience of intra-Muslim contestation. In this process, ruqyah becomes a digital battleground where theological claims, cultural identity, and religious legitimacy are continuously negotiated.

Conclusion

This article has shown that the contestation between Ruqyah Aswaja and Ruqyah Syar'iyah is not merely a debate over Islamic healing methods, but a struggle over religious authority, authenticity, and the place of local culture within Islam. Through Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, the study finds that both groups use specific vocabularies to legitimize themselves and delegitimize the other. Ruqyah Aswaja uses terms such as "*Ruqyah Wahabi*," *suwuk*, *pengasih*, *jimat*, *shalawat*, and *ijazah* to defend a culturally accommodative model of Islamic healing. In contrast, Ruqyah Syar'iyah uses terms such as *ruqyah syirkiyyah*, *dukun*, *shirk*, Qur'an, Sunnah, and tauhid to promote a purification-oriented model of healing.

The analysis also shows that YouTube has become a new arena for negotiating Islamic authority. Through digital videos, both traditionalist and scripturalist actors disseminate their views, construct legitimacy, and shape public understanding of proper Islamic healing. In the Javanese context, this contest reflects a broader tension between local Islamic traditions and scripturalist reform. Therefore, ruqyah functions not only as a therapeutic practice, but also as

a symbolic battleground where Indonesian Muslims negotiate orthodoxy, cultural identity, and religious legitimacy.

References

- Achmad, Maulana, and Roudlotul Jannah Ummu Kulsum. "Pengobatan Islami Jasmani Dan Rohani: Studi Analisis Pada Keluarga Besar Jam'iyah Ruqyah ASWAJA (JRA) Kota Palembang: Studi Analisis Pada Keluarga Besar Jam'iyah Ruqyah ASWAJA (JRA) Kota Palembang." *ULIL ALBAB: Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin* 1, no. 11 (2022): 4078–87. <https://doi.org/10.56799/jim.v1i11.989>.
- Ameda, Putri, and Mursalim Mursalim. "Penggunaan Ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an dalam Pengobatan Tradisional (Ruqyah) Pada Komunitas Jam'iyah Ruqyah Aswaja (JRA) di Samarinda." *Jurnal Ilmu Agama: Mengkaji Doktrin, Pemikiran, dan Fenomena Agama* 26, no. 1 (2025): 76–97. <https://doi.org/10.19109/jia.v26i1.26740>.
- Data, GoodStats. "Platform Video yang Sering Ditonton Pengguna Internet Indonesia 2025." GoodStats Data. Accessed May 6, 2026. <https://data.goodstats.id/statistic/platform-video-yang-sering-ditonton-pengguna-internet-indonesia-2025-ywETB>.
- Fairclough, Norman. *Discourse and Social Change*. Polity, 2009.
- Fealy, Greg. "ISLAMIC RADICALISM IN INDONESIA: The Faltering Revival?" *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2004, 104–21.
- Geertz, Clifford. *The Religion of Java*. University of Chicago Press, 1976.
- Gordon, Stewart. *When Asia Was the World: Traveling Merchants, Scholars, Warriors, and Monks Who Created the "Riches of the East."* Grand Central Publishing, 2009.
- Harmuzi, Harmuzi. "Studi Fenomenologi Ruqyah Syar'iyah Pengalaman Transformasi Kesehatan Mental Di Biro Konsultasi Psikologi Tazkia Salatiga." *IJIP: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Psychology* 2, no. 1 (2020): 112–35. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijip.v2i1.112-135>.
- Hefner, Robert W. "Islamizing Java? Religion and Politics in Rural East Java." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 46, no. 3 (1987): 533–54. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2056898>.
- Hudzaifah, Ahmad Faaza, and Muhammad Wildan Syaiful Amri Wibowo. "Dominasi Gerakan Salafi Di Pogung Dalangan Yogyakarta." *Nuansa: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Kemasyarakatan* 16, no. 1 (2023): 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.29300/nuansa.v16i1.4018>.
- Maftuh, Rofik. "Kontestasi Identitas Dalam Pengobatan Ala Nabi; Kajian Fenomenologi Atas Munculnya Jam'iyah Ruqyah Aswaja." *Jurnal Kajian Islam Interdisipliner* 4, no. 1 (2019): 59–76. <https://doi.org/10.14421/jkii.v4i1.1078>.

Rasyid, Mufti, and Ainun Munzidah. "Exploring 21st Century Learning Skills (4C Principles) in Qur'an." *Al-Mada: Jurnal Agama, Sosial, Dan Budaya* 7, no. 4 (2024): 832–47. <https://doi.org/10.31538/almada.v7i4.4675>.

Triantoro, Dony Arung, Fathayatul Husna, and Afina Amna. "RUQYAH SYARİÇÖİYYAH: ALTERNATIF PENGOBATAN, KESALEHAN, ISLAMISME DAN PASAR ISLAM." *Harmoni* 18, no. 1 (2019): 460–78. <https://doi.org/10.32488/harmoni.v18i1.354>.

Warits, Abd, and Fathurrosyid. "RELEVANSI AYAT-AYAT RUQYAH JAMIYAH RUQYAH ASWAJA DENGAN TAFSIR MAFATIHUL GHAIB FAKHRUDDIN AR-RAZI." *Jurnal Studi Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 2, no. 1 (2023): 20–46. <https://doi.org/10.59005/jsqt.v2i1.238>.

Yahya, Yuangga Kurnia, Badrus Sholeh, and Mufti Rasyid. "Treatment of Non-Muslims in Moderate Saudi in Muhammad Bin Salman's Religious Reform." *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, no. 3 (2022): 76–100. <https://doi.org/10.3316/informit.T2024080800020200220160289>.

Zein, Muhammad Khafid Zulfahmi. "RUQYAH SEBAGAI METODE PENGOBATAN BERBASIS SPIRITUAL: (Studi Metode Ruqyah Di Jam'iyah Ruqyah Aswaja Tulungagung)." *Hisbah: Jurnal Bimbingan Konseling Dan Dakwah Islam* 19, no. 2 (2022): 152–78. <https://doi.org/10.14421/hisbah.2022.192-02>.