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**Neither Caliph nor Imam:  
Şūfī Authority, Exile, and  
Political Theology in the  
Writings of Tuan Guru and  
Shaykh Yusuf of Makassar**



**20 MAY 2026**

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**ABDUR-RAZAAQ MAJAL  
(MASTRERS STUDENT)**





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Şūfī-ism (al-Taşawwuf) has been foundational to the development of Islam at the Cape of Good Hope since the seventeenth century. From the arrival of Shaykh Yusuf of Makassar (1626–1699 CE) as a political exile in 1694 CE, to the establishment of the first mosque and madrasah by Tuan Guru, Abdullah ibn Qadi Abdus Salaam (1710–1807 CE), Şūfī brotherhoods, practices, and epistemologies have shaped Muslim communal life in Southern Africa. Yet current scholarship on Cape Islam has predominantly centred on institutional history, legal development, and biographical hagiography, leaving the political theology embedded within the writings of these founding Şūfī masters largely unexamined.

This thesis attempts to address that gap through two original contributions. First, it undertakes the first systematic codicological and content analysis of Tuan Guru's Arabic manuscript *al-ma'rifah wa-l-īmān wa-l-islām*, reading it for its political theology, specifically its articulation of authority, justice, and the Muslim community under colonial rule. Second, it conducts the first comparative political-theological study of Tuan Guru and Shaykh Yusuf of Makassar, drawing on the author's prior manuscript analysis of Shaykh Yusuf's *Qurrat al-'Ayn* (Majal 2024).

The theoretical framework departs from Ovamir Anjum's authoritative typology of Islamic political theology, which identifies two dominant models: the ascending Sunnī caliphal tradition, in which authority flows upward from the Umma, and the descending Shī'ī imamate tradition, in which authority flows downward through divinely sanctioned lineage. This thesis argues that Anjum's framework contains a structural lacuna, the absence of Şūfī political theology as a distinct third model. In this third model, articulated by exiled masters under colonial rule, political authority derives neither from communal election nor genealogical succession, but from the Shaykh's *wilāyah*, his spiritual inheritance of the prophetic light (*al-Nūr al-Muḥammadī*), which constitutes a rival pole of legitimacy against which colonial governance is measured and ultimately found wanting.

The methodology is archival-historical and textual-analytical. Primary sources are Arabic manuscripts, translated directly by the researcher. The comparative analysis is further informed by Edward Said's reflections on exile as a critical vantage point and by the literature on African al-Taşawwuf as a tradition shaped by displacement, minority status, and hermeneutics of survival under non-Muslim rule.

The significance of this research is threefold. It makes an original primary-source contribution to South African Islamic history through codicological manuscript analysis. It introduces Şūfī Political Theology as a new analytical category to African Islamic studies — a category structurally absent from the dominant theoretical framework. And it establishes the Cape of Good Hope as a serious site of Islamic intellectual history, demonstrating that the political theology forged in exile by Tuan Guru and Shaykh Yusuf constitutes not merely a local curiosity, but a distinctive contribution to the broader tradition of Islamic political thought.