



Salafi Movement in Greater Bandung after Reformation (1998–2025): Role and Impact on Local Social and Cultural Transformation

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Abstract: This study analyzes the development and influence of the Salafi movement in Bandung since the post-Reformation period (1998–present) through an interdisciplinary approach combining History, Sociology, and Anthropology. It traces the movement's genealogy from a da'wah phenomenon to a significant social force in the public sphere. Theoretically, Ralf Dahrendorf's Conflict and Resistance Theory is used to examine tensions between Salafi groups and traditional religious authorities, highlighting how struggles over authority and influence generate polarization and local resistance rooted in cultural identity. Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory illuminates the duality of structure: Salafi agents employ democratic spaces and information technology to spread their ideology, while their actions gradually reshape norms, religious practices, and lifestyles in Bandung society. The research employs a qualitative field case study. Historical data were gathered through archival research and oral histories to map infiltration phases; sociological and anthropological data were collected via participant observation and in-depth interviews with movement leaders, local communities, and academics. Findings indicate that the Salafi movement in Bandung is not monolithic but adaptive to societal dynamics. It has produced social transformation, including shifts in religious consumption, changes in lifestyle, and redefinitions of grassroots social relations. While triggering horizontal conflict (Dahrendorf), the movement also demonstrates agency (Giddens) by creating new subcultures that now constitute part of Bandung's sociological diversity in the modern era.

Keywords: conflict theory; Indonesia's Reformation; Salafi; social transformation; structuration.

1. Introduction

Religion is essentially a way for humans to discover and construct meaning in life and in the reality around them. However, in the modern context marked by the acceleration of science, technology, and complex social dynamics, the meaning of life is increasingly difficult to grasp in simple terms (Rahman, 2025). The continuous and unceasing development of the human mind gives rise to changes in understanding of values, norms, and culture. On the one hand, this demonstrates humanity's immense potential to reflect on revelation and the universe; on the other, rapid change often gives rise to uncertainty, uncertainty, and even intellectual turmoil within society. In this situation, religion faces the challenge of remaining relevant and providing direction. Islam, as a divine teaching, provides guidance for life through the Qur'an and Sunnah (Maladi & Wahyudi, 2021). However, these teachings require interpretation and ijtihad from scholars to be applied contextually in real life. The role of scholars is crucial as guardians of scientific authority and guides for the community, preventing confusion. Da'wah, as an instrument for disseminating values, is not only the duty of the Prophet Muhammad but also the collective obligation of Muslims to call to good and prevent evil. In practice, da'wah requires strategy, organization, and sensitivity to social conditions, as Ali ibn Abi Talib emphasized: truth without a system can be defeated by organized falsehood. In Indonesia, the diversity of religious understandings has given rise to various typologies such as substantialism, formalism, and spiritualism. All three represent different ways of understanding and practicing Islam, whether through an emphasis on values, formal symbols, or inner experience. This dynamic demonstrates

that Muslim religiosity is pluralistic, contextual, and continuously evolving in response to changing times (Magnis-Suseno, 2013).

The emergence of spiritualist groups in Indonesia was accelerated by rapid socio-economic changes, leading to psychological disorientation among some segments of society. Dissatisfaction with substantialist and formalist approaches, perceived as lacking spiritual depth, also fueled the search for alternative spiritual paths, as experienced by Al-Ghazali, who found religious meaning in Sufism. Spirituality is seen as the root of religion, stemming from an awareness of the spiritual dimension of life. In Islam, this tradition is known as Sufism, which has existed since the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his companions. Meanwhile, the Salafi movement developed through the purification preaching pioneered by Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab in Najd (Yusuf, 2014).

Religiosity is the application of religious values that one believes in. If someone can apply their religious values in their daily life, they will achieve peace in their religion. According to Jalaluddin, religiosity is a state within a person that encourages them to behave according to their level of devotion to religion (Mulyadi & Adriantoni, 2021). Therefore, a person can be said to be religious when they can practice their religious values in their daily life. Furthermore, Emha Ainun Najib defines religiosity as follows: "Religiosity is the core quality of human life, and should be interpreted as a feeling of longing, a desire for unity, a desire to be with something abstract (Jabrohim, 2003).

Religiosity, or religious attitudes, can manifest in various forms. According to Djamaludin Ancok and Fuat Nashori Suroso, religiosity can be manifested in various aspects of life, not only in the form of worship (rituals), but also in all activities driven by religious feelings, not only in the form of visible activities that can be seen by the eye, but also in invisible activities that occur in a person's heart (Ancok & Suroso, 2011). Religiosity is often identified with religiousness. Religiosity can be interpreted as the extent of knowledge, the strength of faith, the degree of practice of worship and rules, and the depth of appreciation for the religion one adheres to. This is what is manifested in everyday behavior.

Normatively, an individual's religious intensity should ideally be directly proportional to the intensity of their social relationships or tolerance. This means that the higher a person's religious level, the higher their tolerance level. However, in reality, these variables are often uncorrelated. Religion is often interpreted superficially and textually. Religious teachings are simply memorized without being put into practice in daily life. Religion is even merely used as a formality and identity without understanding the true values and teachings of the religion. In practice, several factors influence a person's actions. One of these is external factors, namely the environment, including the physical, economic, political, and so on. These environmental factors are often the most dominant in shaping a person's behavior, including those characterized by religion.

As social beings, humans cannot live alone; they need others in social life to achieve well-being. Therefore, a close relationship among fellow humans living in a pluralistic environment is essential. This relationship is then manifested in an attitude called tolerance. The attitude of tolerance toward this diversity is a mutual respect among fellow human beings across various aspects, including beliefs and social behavior. We should practice this attitude of respect every day in a dynamic and pluralistic society, so that our harmony and unity are not shattered. People who have an attitude of respect will not look down on others; they will see others as having the same abilities and opportunities to work and have high aspirations.

According to Sumartana, tolerance is an attitude of respecting the actions and beliefs of others without deviating from applicable rules. In a religious context, differences in understanding should be addressed with mutual respect. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also emphasized that the religion loved by Allah is the one that is upright and full of tolerance (*al-hanafiyah al-samhah*). In social reality, a sect often emerges as a movement claiming to be the solution to moral, economic, or political crises, even carrying the characteristics of a messianic movement promising salvation. Sociologically, such movements thrive in societies experiencing

decline. In Indonesia, some sects align with the mainstream and others differ doctrinally. In post-reform Bandung, the dynamics of the Salafi movement grew rapidly, influenced by the openness of society and the media's role in expanding the reach of da'wah.

The rapid development of cyberspace has led many pluralists to view the media as a neutral and free space, where anyone can voice their interests and disseminate information without limits. Therefore, various groups utilize the media to convey their religious beliefs and shape public opinion, seeking wider recognition. However, individuals without strong convictions are vulnerable to being influenced and provoked by the flow of information. In Indonesia, mass organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Salafi groups utilize the media to disseminate ideas and strengthen their following. The media has become an arena for ideological contestation, not merely a means of communication, but also a space for the production of meaning, the framing of issues, and the dissemination of social propaganda.

Salafi is a relatively young Islamic organization in Indonesia with a vision of purifying monotheism from practices considered doubtful. Their preaching is carried out extensively through mosques and media such as television, radio, and social media. They reject practices such as *tawassul* (circumambulation), grave visits, and the recitation of the Prophet's birthday (mawlid), which are common among Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), thus sparking theological polemics and mutual accusations. Differences are also evident in their understanding of verses about the attributes of God, with Salafis tending to be textual, while NU is more focused on *tafwid* (interpretation of the Islamic teachings). This study examines the dynamics of the Salafi movement in post-reform Bandung and its impact on the local community's social and cultural transformation.

The Salafi movement's view of doctrine has specific consequences, namely the birth of religious militancy without conditions or rigidity. This is actually very useful for understanding the religiosity of Muslims' internal circles. According to a very famous Muslim scientist, namely Ali Shariati, regarding the concept of social movements, he offers three schools of thought that must be synthesized within a person or group to realize a transformative social movement, namely (Syariati, 1989) First, the philosophy of existentialism, according to Shariati, must be adopted because it affirms human freedom, thereby placing the responsibility for all humanity on the existentialist. Second, according to him, Marxism has a revolutionary nature in carrying out social change by fighting the establishment, so this character must be present in Muslims to carry out social change. Third, he argues that Sufism can connect humans to God.

Another unique aspect of the Salafi movement lies in its methods, namely, its modern organizational management. This modernity is reflected in the organization's approach, which relies more on systems; it uses mass media to convey its message, particularly to its congregations and the broader Muslim community. Financially, the Salafi movement receives financial support from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries that adhere to Salafi ideology, giving them a financial advantage over other movements developing in the Bandung area. They established a radio station called Rodja, built mosques, and even founded educational institutions, though these are not significant.

This research focuses on the Greater Bandung area following the Reformation, which occurred from 1998 to 2024. The reason for choosing Bandung is that it is a very open, humanist, and peaceful area. Meanwhile, the selection of the post-Reformation period, because, after the Reformation, religious movements emerged rapidly, which previously, during the New Order era they seemed to have no space due to limited regulations issued by the New Order rulers. So after the fall of the New Order, religious movements sprang up like mushrooms in the rainy season, and one of them was the Salafi movement.

In the current era of information disruption, the dynamics of the Salafi movement in Greater Bandung are no longer based solely on conventional face-to-face da'wah (Islamic outreach) but have migrated massively to virtual spaces. This digital transformation has enabled puritan narratives to spread beyond geographical and social class boundaries, creating the phenomenon of "digital puritanism" that is instantly redefining the religious identity of urban communities. The

use of social media platforms, video streaming channels, and instant messaging applications has become the main engine accelerating the internalization of Salafi values, which in turn challenges the established cultural values and local traditions that have long been the foundation of life in Greater Bandung. The penetration of Salafi ideology, mediated by digital technology, has had a significant impact on the existence of local Sundanese art and culture, which tends to be syncretic and pluralistic. Local religious traditions, visual art expressions, and even traditional Islamic music have begun to experience contestation and even rejection because they are considered inconsistent with the principles of purification. This phenomenon creates a unique cultural tension: on the one hand, local communities strive to maintain their heritage identity, but on the other, they are exposed to the currents of new, puritanical and technological identity changes. Therefore, this research is crucial to reveal how this cultural and artistic transformation takes place amidst the flow of digitalization, as well as how the patterns of adaptation and resistance of local communities in facing the hegemony of this movement.

2. Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive-analytical approach to deeply understand the dynamics of the Salafi movement in Greater Bandung. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to comprehensively explore social realities through data in the form of words, narratives, actions, and symbols, rather than statistical figures. The focus of the research is directed at social meanings, cultural practices, and the processes of change that occur in post-Reformation society. Thus, this study does not simply describe phenomena but also interprets them within the framework of relevant social theories (Moleong, 2019). Theoretically, this study utilizes Anthony Giddens' structuration theory to examine the dialectical relationship between agency and structure, where the social actions of the Salafi community are understood as practices that simultaneously reproduce and transform social structures. Furthermore, Ralf Dahrendorf's conflict theory is used to examine the dynamics of conflict, resistance, and distribution of authority in the relationship between Salafi groups and local communities. This approach is strengthened by sociological, anthropological, and historical perspectives to capture the phenomenon interdisciplinarily (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

The research location was purposively determined in the Greater Bandung area and several areas in West Java associated with the development of the Salafi movement. Data sources consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through field observations, in-depth interviews with internal and external figures, and digital observation of da'wah activities on social media. Secondary data included organizational documents, scientific literature, historical archives, and demographic data from relevant agencies.

Data collection techniques included limited participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation studies as a form of triangulation. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which encompasses data reduction, data presentation, and continuous conclusion drawing. To ensure data validity, this study employed triangulation of sources, methods, theories, and inter-researcher relationships. Verification was carried out continuously using an inductive approach, ensuring that the conclusions drawn were truly grounded in empirical facts and had accountable academic validity (Sugiyono, 2021).

3. Results and Discussion

Ideological Foundations of Cultural Contestation

a. *Salafi Aqidah and Manhaj as a Critique of Local Cultural Islam*

The emergence of the Salafi movement in Greater Bandung can be understood not only as the emergence of a new religious pattern, but also as a form of ideological critique of the cultural Islamic patterns that have long been rooted in Sundanese tradition. The fundamental difference lies in the way they interpret *aqidah* (belief) and *manhaj* (methodology). For Sundanese people, religious practices harmonize with local culture and are passed down from generation to

generation. In contrast, Salafis offer a paradigm of purifying monotheism as the primary benchmark for the validity of teachings, thus deeming some local traditions in need of correction or abandonment. This pattern aligns with the character of fundamentalism, which is oriented towards returning to the teachings of the early period, considered the most authentic (Tridarmanto & Soetapa, 2002).

Salafi fundamentalism in Greater Bandung operates as a deliberate project of cultural change, viewing tradition not as local wisdom but as an obstacle to purified piety. Criticism of practices such as tahlilan (religious gatherings), grave pilgrimages, and maulid (the celebration of the birth of the Prophet) is positioned as an effort to construct a new, text-based, transnational identity. For the Sundanese, these rituals hold social and spiritual significance that foster solidarity. However, from the perspective of the Salafist Manhaj, these practices are deemed to lack strong legitimacy from early Islamic sources and are therefore categorized as heretical. This difference gives rise to social tensions, even conflict within families and neighborhoods. The authority of traditional kiai (Islamic scholars) is challenged by a scripturalist model of authority that draws more heavily on Middle Eastern literature. Consequently, cultural transformation in Greater Bandung takes place through a sharp identity contestation between dialogical cultural Islam and exclusive textual Islam (Argenti, 2019). Salafism functions as a disintegrative force because it rejects the dialectic between Islam and Sundanese tradition, thus giving rise to a dichotomy between groups that maintain the heritage of their ancestors and those that pursue "pure Islam".

The clash between Salafi and cultural Islam in Greater Bandung is evident in the practice of grave pilgrimages. For locals, pilgrimages are a form of respect and tawasul (religious offering), while for Salafis, the practice is seen as potentially leading to idolatry. This difference gives rise to social divisions, including a tendency to establish separate communities and mosques. Criticism of local traditions also forms a new, transnational identity, evident in changes in symbols, clothing styles, and lifestyles. Through modern media, the preaching of purification is widely disseminated, despite its aim of returning practices to the early days of Islam. This has resulted in cultural alienation, a polarization of authority between traditional kiai (Islamic scholars) and scripturalist ustaz (Islamic teachers), and social fragmentation in the public sphere of Greater Bandung (Tualeka, 2017a).

This cultural reorientation involves a profound process of internalization. Salafi institutions in areas like East Bandung and Cimahi not only teach religious texts but also produce a counterculture that aligns with secular modernity and traditional Islam. The use of social media as a tool for da'wah (Islamic outreach) has become crucial in spreading this new aesthetic. Through professionally produced digital content, the "Sunnah" lifestyle is presented as an elegant, modern, yet puritanical alternative. This creates an appeal for Bandung's urban middle class, which is searching for a sense of identity amidst the often-confusing currents of globalization.

The process of adopting a new identity in individuals can be understood through motivational theory as a drive originating from internal and external factors to achieve specific goals. This drive directs individual behavior to meet needs and achieve desired satisfaction (Andjarwati, 2015). In the competitive urban context of Bandung, the unclear boundaries between tradition and pure teachings often give rise to existential anxiety. The Salafi movement presents itself by offering a clear black-and-white understanding (halal-haram, sunnah-bid'ah) that provides a sense of psychological security. Individuals who join the Salafi movement in Greater Bandung experience a shift in identity from ritual-heavy Sundanese Islam to a more textual and strict form of religiosity. Many feel they have gained a "new consciousness" after abandoning traditional practices now viewed as theologically problematic. Consequently, social relations change; they tend to build new social networks within their own communities. Salafi institutions serve as spaces for the formation of collective identity, not only in worship but also in lifestyle and internal solidarity. Despite facing resistance from traditional groups, this movement survives by strengthening its independent ecosystem. The transformation that occurs is selective, depending on the social characteristics of each region.

b. *Salafi Figures in Greater Bandung*

The heterogeneous and religious social structure of Greater Bandung created a fertile ground for the development of the Salafi movement. As the intellectual center of West Java, Bandung brought together local Islamic traditions with transnational puritanism. The emergence of Salafis was in response to the urban middle class's need for textual certainty about religious law and worship practices considered more authentic amid the complexities of modernity. Their network grew through strategic mosques, the establishment of educational foundations, and economic support from professional and entrepreneurial circles. This independent da'wah infrastructure produced influential figures who became references in the fields of faith and *manhaj* (Islamic doctrine), while also strengthening institutional consolidation. The personal authority of the *ustaz* (Islamic teachers) then transformed into institutional power through radio, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), and study centers. The existence of this network also transformed Bandung's socio-religious landscape by encouraging the standardization of religious practices and strengthening the boundaries between cultural and puritanical Islam. Despite triggering polarization, the Salafi movement demonstrated a high degree of adaptability to digital technology, making Bandung a dialectical space between Islamic conservatism and modern urban dynamics.

c. *Mapping Cultural Conflict in Religious Dynamics in Greater Bandung*

The cultural conflict that accompanied the development of the Salafi movement in Greater Bandung cannot be understood simply as doctrinal differences, but rather as a clash of two religious perspectives on the interpretation of tradition. The root of the problem is structural and cultural, reinforced by the dense geographic character of the Bandung Basin. Urbanization brought transnational puritanism, which directly confronted the Sundanese community, which maintained local religious traditions. This situation gave rise to friction in social space, as religious identity became a marker of group boundaries. Theoretically, this condition reflects a contestation of authority, namely the struggle for the legitimacy of religious interpretation in the public sphere, which often gave rise to exclusive attitudes and symbolic judgments between groups (Afriansyah, 2021).

For Salafists, religious authority must be based solely on the texts of the Quran and Hadith, while local communities view authority as charismatic and vested in the *kiai* (Islamic scholars) or *ajengan* (Islamic leaders). Tensions arose when the role of *kiai* in rituals such as *tahlilan* (religious gatherings) and pilgrimages was delegitimized, thereby extending the conflict beyond the technical aspects of worship to social structures that maintain harmony in East Bandung and the outskirts of Bandung Regency. Differences were also visible through visual symbols and religious language. Attributes such as ankle-length trousers or the *niqab* became markers of identity that separated groups. Labels like "*bid'ah*" or "*shirk*" were perceived as symbolic violence, triggering social fragmentation and a struggle for legitimacy in defining the true Islam in the public sphere (Fatmawati & Sholikin, 2020). In the Pasundan region, symbolic religious capital was traditionally attached to clerics (*kiai*) who mastered the yellow books and possessed a clear chain of knowledge. The Salafi movement then deconstructed this authority by offering a new legitimacy grounded in literal mastery of hadith and fluency in Arabic. Tensions arose when pulpits in Bandung were used to criticize local traditions, labeling them "inappropriate to *manhaj*," which fueled social wounds and community segregation.

This conflict extends to the digital sphere. Social media has become an arena for identity assertion and polarization, rather than dialogue. Rather than expanding rational public space, online da'wah has actually reinforced group boundaries and sparked counter-narratives from traditionalists in Greater Bandung (Supriadi, 2017). Conflict escalation in cyberspace tends to be sharper than physical conflict because it recognizes no geographical boundaries and leaves a permanent footprint. The narrative of "purification of faith" spread by Salafi da'wah accounts in Bandung often sparks heated debates in the comments section, revealing the depth of social tensions. Discourses that initially start locally can quickly become public issues, reinforcing the dichotomy between "followers of the Sunnah" and "experts of heresy." Consequently, voluntary social segregation has emerged through the formation of an independent ecosystem based on *manhaj* (methodology). This conflict does not always lead to

disintegration, but rather strengthens internal solidarity, creating a peaceful coexistence on the surface but harboring latent tensions within Greater Bandung (Tualeka, 2017b).

The Strategic Role of Salafis in Creating a New Culture

1. *The Role of Salafi Institutions in Cultural Reorientation and Identity*

The existence of Salafi institutions in Greater Bandung, from Islamic boarding schools to mosque study communities, plays a crucial role as "social formation spaces" in the birth of a new cultural identity. These institutions are not only centers for the dissemination of doctrine but also controlled arenas for the structured development of a puritanical lifestyle. Within these institutions, a process of detachment from local cultural influences deemed inappropriate takes place, accompanied by the instillation of an identity based on textual literalism. This development is carried out systematically through daily rules and the familiarization of religious practices. According to Social Construction Theory, the repetition of these values and symbols forms a habitualization that is then institutionalized and accepted as a shared reality by its followers (Sulaiman, 2016). In addition to physical institutions, social media has become a strategic instrument in disseminating Salafi cultural identity in Greater Bandung. This community demonstrates a high level of adaptation to digital technology by not only distributing sermons but also creating visual representations of ideal lifestyles, ranging from Islamic dress and strict gender relations to restrictions on entertainment, replaced with religious educational content. Repeated exposure to digital narratives shapes new perspectives that gradually shift perceptions of local traditions. Cultural practices previously accepted as normal are being questioned and abandoned. Social media accelerates the transformation of identity without direct physical involvement in institutions, resulting in a configuration of society that is geographically rooted in Pasundan but culturally oriented toward global puritanism.

Aesthetic standardization is a concrete manifestation of this process. Educational institutions and religious communities establish visual parameters of piety, encouraging a shift from local sartorial symbols to attributes associated with puritan identity. This shift is not simply a matter of fashion, but rather a strategy of social differentiation. Within the framework of Social Identity Theory, visual attributes serve as markers of group membership and as a boundary between ingroups and outgroups. Clothing becomes a medium for legitimizing "migration" and for gaining internal community recognition. The motivation of individuals transforming is generally intrinsic, namely, the search for moral certainty amidst the complexities of modernity. Salafi institutions offer a firm doctrinal structure and strong social support, fostering a sense of collective security. This process demonstrates a shift from cultural religious expression to a textual orientation of *manhaj*. Concepts of loyalty and the limitations of social relations reinforce exclusive collective identities, including in the regulation of gender interactions and social participation.

Interventions also reach entertainment preferences through cultural filtering and the production of religious alternatives. Both formal and non-formal education function as systematic identity transmission, shaping ideological loyalties from an early age. Within the framework of cultural hegemony, this process works persuasively through the internalization of values accepted as normal, so that identity reorientation occurs without overt coercion but remains effective in establishing symbolic domination (Setiawan, 2018). Educational institutions serve as arenas for the production and reproduction of dominant values through mechanisms of consent rather than overt coercion. The curriculum, the authority of religious teachers, and the standardization of religious practices shape a collective awareness of the boundaries between legitimate and deviant teachings. The internalization process occurs subtly because students accept these values as normative truths rather than as debatable ideological constructs.

This cultural reorientation extends to the economic sphere through the establishment of a "Sunnah Market" ecosystem that encourages the consumption of sharia-compliant products, such as food, prophetic medicine, and non-bank financial services. Consumption activities are no longer understood solely as economic transactions, but as expressions of religious identity and support for da'wah (Islamic outreach). Product choices become symbols of piety and social differentiation, while internal business networks strengthen community independence and reinforce cultural segregation. These interventions

also enter the domestic sphere, transforming family relationships. New guidelines on parenting, gender segregation, and the rejection of traditions deemed heretical encourage a "cleansing" of household practices from old cultural elements. The orientation of action shifts from inherited customs to textual adherence. Tensions often arise within extended families who still adhere to cultural Islam, particularly within the Greater Bandung community with its strong kinship ties. Within the framework of cultural reproduction, this process shows how new values, symbols, and structures are inherited through formal and non-formal community-based education, thus forming a generation with an increasingly institutionalized identity orientation (Judijanto, 2025).

The family is the primary space for the intergenerational transmission of values, norms, and identity. When strong ideological intervention from external institutions occurs, the pattern of value reproduction within the family shifts. New values are introduced through daily domestic practices—parenting, child education, and family rituals—so that the identity of the next generation is shaped by new ideological references, no longer based on local traditions. This change triggers adaptation mechanisms within the family system. When a member undergoes a radical transformation, resistance often arises from parents or relatives. However, social support from the ideological community strengthens the individual's attachment to their new environment. Through intermarriage patterns within the same *manhaj*, a nuclear family is formed that is ideologically homogeneous and consciously limits the transmission of local culture.

This phenomenon demonstrates that puritanism does not reject modernity entirely, but rather utilizes it selectively. Formal education systems, digital media, and sharia economic strategies are adopted to strengthen da'wah (Islamic outreach), while the values of cultural pluralism are rejected. The result is a construction of "modern piety" that is textual in teaching but adaptive in its means. In the long run, this transformation forms a new institutionalized identity, emphasizes social fragmentation, and marks a significant shift in the sociological landscape of religion in West Java.

2. *The Role of Salafis in Facing Cultural Resistance*

The clash between the Salafi movement and traditional social structures in Greater Bandung extends beyond theological debates to touch on the foundations of local identity. Rejection from mainstream organizations and traditional leaders stems from concerns about the fragility of Sundanese social cohesion. Rather than confronting, the Salafi community has chosen a strategy of withdrawal and building a base on the fringes, using social pressure to reinforce internal loyalties and assert identity boundaries. Through spatial tactics and the strengthening of formal legality, they maintain their existence while shifting the arena of conflict from culture to the legal realm (Rokhlinsari, 2015). Salafi groups in Greater Bandung have maintained their survival by modifying social interaction patterns through charitable activities, health care, and economic support. The practical benefits residents have experienced have gradually softened ideological resistance. Meanwhile, they have built a self-sufficient ecosystem consisting of educational networks, internal markets, and closed communities that strengthen solidarity. They have also utilized digital space to expand their influence and establish new text-based authorities. The combination of economic independence, internal social control, and the dominance of online narratives has rendered external cultural pressures increasingly ineffective (Mighfar, 2015).

This approach demonstrates how symbolic influence is translated into social acceptance through concrete actions in the field of welfare. By providing economic assistance and responding quickly to crises, the Salafi community builds an image as a solution-oriented group rather than merely an ideological one. The independence of internal economic networks protects members from social pressure. Coupled with the legal legitimacy of their institutions, their social position is strengthened as conflicts are diverted to the legal realm, rather than open confrontation (Omar et al., 2026). This pattern demonstrates the ingenuity of exploiting the democratic system by using state legality as a primary shield. Through official documents, active communication with the bureaucracy, and an image of law-abidingness, the Salafi community gains administrative protection that dampens local opposition.

Conflict is shifted from the realm of custom to legal procedures. Bolstered by educational and economic independence, they build collective resilience that makes social pressure less effective, fostering a distant but relatively stable coexistence in Greater Bandung.

3. *Characteristics of the Salafi Lifestyle*

Salafi education emphasizes the purification of faith through a rigorous, textual internalization of teachings. The curriculum is separated from the general system to maintain purity of thought, with a focus on memorization of the Quran, hadith, and classical texts. The teacher's authority is dominant, and every argument must be based on valid evidence. Gender segregation is strictly enforced to maintain morality. History focuses on the early generations of Islam, while daily etiquette is detailed. The goal is to develop individuals who are obedient to the text, loyal, and militant in their adherence to the method. Politically, they tend to be non-participatory but obedient to the Muslim government as long as it does not violate sharia. Democracy is criticized, but state stability is maintained for the smooth running of da'wah. Loyalty is administrative, not cultural. They maintain the boundaries of faith in interfaith relations and prefer the "Islamization" of morality through social da'wah and public opinion rather than political parties. Salafi culture fosters a distinctive ethics, aesthetics, and lifestyle. Ethics emphasize religious language and moral discipline. Aesthetics are simple, with minimal depictions of living creatures. Clothing serves as a marker of religious identity. Entertainment is strictly filtered and replaced with da'wah content. Consumption is directed toward products that align with the Sunnah and the Prophet's guidance. Technology is leveraged for da'wah, while internal solidarity is strengthened through independent socio-economic networks.

The Dynamics of the Response of Religious Institutions and Authorities in Greater Bandung to the Salafi Movement

In the context of religious institutions in Indonesia, the dynamics between mainstream Islamic organizations and the Salafi movement demonstrate a complex yet profoundly complex nature. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), for example, since its founding in 1926 in Surabaya by KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Wahab Chasbullah, emerged as a response to global political and religious developments, particularly after the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate and the strengthening of Ibn Saud's power in the Hijaz. NU positions itself as the guardian of the Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah tradition and the system of *madzhab* (Islamic school of thought), while simultaneously upholding Nusantara religious practices such as *tahlilan* (religious recitation), *maulid* (religious recitation), and grave pilgrimages. Over time, NU has become known as a representative of moderate Islam that accommodates local culture without abandoning the basic principles of sharia. Although historically methodologically opposed to Salafi, which tends to be textual and purificatory, Salafi symbolic influence can still be found in some NU members, particularly in their dress styles and certain worship practices, without always being accompanied by a shift in organizational identity.

Unlike NU, Persatuan Islam (Persis), founded in Bandung in 1923 by Haji Zamzam and Haji Muhammad Yunus, has, from the outset, espoused a spirit of renewal and the purification of teachings. Its key figure, A. Hassan, emphasized the importance of returning directly to the Qur'an and Sunnah and rejecting blind imitation. Persis shares a similar spirit of purification with the Salafi movement, but has continued to develop as an independent Indonesian organization. Its distinctive characteristics lie in its tradition of intellectual debate, publishing, and formal education through Persis Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). In a national context, Persis participates in the national political system and does not identify itself with any particular transnational movement. Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah, founded by KH. Ahmad Dahlan in 1912 in Yogyakarta, is a modernist movement that integrates purification of teachings with educational reform and social services. Muhammadiyah was inspired by the thinking of Middle Eastern reformers such as Muhammad Abduh and Rasyid Ridha. While similar in its rejection of practices considered heretical, Muhammadiyah adopts a more rational, systematic, and contextual approach to national life. The phenomenon of some citizens showing more puritanical

tendencies does not necessarily change Muhammadiyah's institutional identity as an Indonesian modernist movement.

In West Java, the Islamic People's Union (PUI) emerged from the merger of two local movements, Persjarikatan Oelama and PUII, which focused on Sundanese Islamic boarding school-based education and da'wah. Despite its spirit of renewal, PUI remains accommodating to local traditions and does not identify itself as Salafi. PUI's position is often seen as straddling the line between traditionalism and modernism. The network of traditional Islamic boarding schools, represented by the Salaf Islamic Boarding School Forum (FPS) in Greater Bandung, serves to strengthen solidarity among Salaf Islamic boarding schools in preserving the traditions of turats and the Shafi'i school of thought. FPS tends to be critical of the Salafi approach, which is seen as providing little space for classical fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) but still prioritizes dialogue and strengthening internal education. Outside of Islam, communities such as the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI) and WALUBI emphasize the importance of tolerance, dialogue, and respect for plurality. Their criticism of Salafis generally concerns exclusivism and its impact on social relations, rather than solely theological differences.

Academically, the Salafi movement is understood as part of a transnational Islamic current that develops through educational networks, da'wah, and digital media. In urban areas such as Greater Bandung, the contestation of religious authority between traditional ulama and Salafi *ustaz* demonstrates the ongoing transformation of socio-religious structures that continue to evolve in modern Indonesian society (Setiawati et al., 2024). The development of Salafi thought has led to a shift in religious culture from local traditions to more textual and scriptural patterns, evident in clothing, lifestyle, and the decline of customary practices. Its da'wah emphasizes *tasfiyah* (religious education) and *tarbiyah* (education) through intensive study and digital media, with structured cadre formation targeting the younger generation in urban areas (Hidayat, 2012). Critically, some academics believe that the development of Salafi carries the risk of fostering exclusive and intolerant attitudes if its teachings are understood rigidly. This is feared to trigger polarization in a pluralistic society. Therefore, the phenomenon is understood as a complex socio-religious issue related to identity, authority, culture, and modern change (Muliono et al., 2019).

Impact and Forms of Cultural Transformation

The presence of the Salafi movement in Greater Bandung is clearly visible through changes in lifestyle and cultural symbols that mark a pious identity. This transformation is not simply a matter of aesthetic dress, but rather a form of symbolic communication that distinguishes oneself from local cultural Islam. The use of robes, upper trousers, wide hijabs, and niqabs expresses adherence to pure textual interpretations. In adaptive Sundanese society, these visual changes create clear identity boundaries. The symbolic interactionist perspective explains that clothing functions as a social sign that constructs collective meaning, affirms group affiliation, and shapes distance and interaction patterns in daily life (Siregar, 2016). The lifestyle changes of the Salafi community in Bandung extend to gender relations through the practice of *infisal*, namely the separation of male and female spaces that replaces more fluid local interaction patterns. In consumption, they select halal products, interest-free finance, integrated Islamic education, and specific da'wah media, thus forming an internal ecosystem that strengthens cohesion. Differentiation of routines—clothing, social interactions, activities—fosters both solidarity and social boundaries. Attitudes toward traditional art have become more textual, triggering cultural distance. Sociologically, voluntary segregation and spatial fragmentation have emerged. Consumption has become an expression of identity and a moral economy, where ethical values frame socio-economic practices (Damayanti et al., 2020).

The impact of lifestyle changes is evident in the transformation of cultural symbols, particularly language. The use of Arabic terms in public conversation replaces local greetings and serves as both a marker of identity and social boundaries. This shift diminishes the role of the Sundanese dialect and traditional values of politeness. Views on the body also change through the practice of *tibbun nabawi* as an alternative to modern medicine, reflecting resistance to secular rationality. Identity tensions emerge

within families and traditional traditions. Digital technology is utilized as a “moral compass,” creating exclusive information spaces that reinforce habitus and the reproduction of community values (Setton, 2002). This transformation also affects the institution of the family through parenting practices that instill segregated values from an early age. In Greater Bandung, parents tend to choose Salafi-affiliated schools to limit outside cultural influences, thereby creating a space of ideological protection for the family. Children's education focuses on memorizing the Quran and Arabic, while local Sundanese culture is increasingly marginalized. Family authority shifts from traditional elders to figures considered most knowledgeable in religious texts, fueling intergenerational tensions. Recreational and leisure practices are redefined within the framework of sharia, forming an alternative culture that is exclusive and morally controlled (Endrizal & Hendri, 2018).

This transformation is also evident in the increasingly minimalist, functional arrangement of domestic spaces, which replace local artistic ornaments with religious symbols. Homes have transformed into enclosed educational spaces that reflect ideological identity, creating distance from a pluralistic society. Visual piety establishes a social hierarchy based on religious performance while simultaneously introducing strict internal surveillance. Socially, this change impacts rituals, interactions, consumption, and even language, creating a solid yet relatively exclusive community. Within the sociology of religion, this phenomenon demonstrates the strengthening of textual authority and the narrowing of cultural negotiation, making religious practice an arena for the production of meaning and the repositioning of symbolic power (Hannan & Abdillah, 2019). Cultural transformation in Greater Bandung occurs through shifts in meaning, ritual participation, and authority structures. Individuals exposed to purifying preaching remain within traditional families but reinterpret practices such as *tahlilan* as a social burden lacking theological legitimacy. This privatization of faith creates psychological distance and separates the sacred from local tradition. In urban public spaces, participation in collective rituals declines not because of formal prohibitions, but rather due to symbolic alienation when scriptural narratives dominate the mosque. Some traditions were not lost, but modified through “*sunnah*-ization,” placing local practices under the supremacy of the text.

This change coincided with the fragmentation of authority: accommodating *ajengan* figures faced off against legalistic, scriptural *ustaz* (Islamic religious teachers). Dual leadership triggered the de-traditionalization of knowledge and the emergence of claims to a single truth. Transformation also affected social space through voluntary segregation and the development of religious enclaves that strengthened internal solidarity but weakened cross-community social capital. In the realms of education and the family, the reproduction of purifying ideologies shaped generations with global textual loyalties, often displacing local cultural transmission. Overall, these dynamics reflect a gradual de-acculturation that shifted cultural Islam toward a more exclusive and fragmented doctrinal configuration (Susilowati & Indarti, 2018).

In areas such as Ciparay, Majalaya, and Soreang, Salafi da'wah faces structural obstacles due to the strong social capital maintained by the Ajengan (Islamic leaders). The community has a deep emotional and spiritual attachment to collective rituals such as *manakiban* and *rajaban*. The transformation that occurs tends to be peripheral; Salafi communities exist in small groups on the fringes, unable to penetrate the core of local culture. This situation suggests that traditional institutions that still function organically act as a kind of cultural immunization against the flow of transnational purification. Despite being categorized as low, Bandung Regency continues to experience transformation dynamics at a limited-adaptation level. In new industrial or residential areas on the regency border, encounters occur between immigrants bringing Salafi ideology and traditional local residents. The sociological map of this region reveals a cultural ceasefire line, where the two groups coexist spatially but are ritually separated. The transformation does not take the form of a massive shift in local beliefs, but is evident in the narrowing of public space for traditional rituals in certain areas.

The low transformation category in this region is also influenced by a paternalistic knowledge system. As long as local authority figures (*ajengan*) are still able to provide sociological meaning to

cultural rituals, Salafi narratives about heresy tend to be positioned as irrelevant outside voices. Thus, local cultural authority continues to function as a filter, selecting and dampening the penetration of new religious discourse into people's daily practices. This suggests that the cultural resilience of a region in Greater Bandung is directly proportional to the local authority's ability to maintain cohesion through cultural symbols. Bandung Regency, in this context, represents a region that has successfully engaged in defensive negotiations: cultural transformation has not completely stopped, but is held back by the thick layers of tradition and the strength of charismatic authority that remains at the local level.

West Bandung Regency (KBB) presents a hybrid and transitional map of cultural transformation. As a buffer zone connecting the economic center of Bandung with rural areas, West Bandung Regency serves as a meeting point between traditional Islamic moderation and puritanical radicalism. Theoretically, this dynamic can be analyzed through Homi Bhabha's Third Space perspective, where identity negotiations are ongoing and give rise to forms of religiosity that are not fully established. Within this framework, the community's cultural identity does not lie at a single pole, but rather moves in a fluid in-between space. This analysis shows that in areas like Lembang and Padalarang, cultural transformation does not progress linearly but fluctuates with population mobility. The growth of tourist areas and mid-range housing brings new urban cultures, accelerating the intersection of values. The flow of urbanization, tourism, and residential expansion creates space for intense interaction between newcomers and local residents, resulting in dynamic adjustments in patterns of religiosity and cultural expression over time.

On the one hand, traditional values such as mutual cooperation in celebrating Islamic holidays remain strong in villages. However, the presence of Salafi missionary institutions, which have begun establishing centers of knowledge in strategic areas, presents a "counterpoint" in the local religious landscape. This situation places the community in an ambivalent position: local traditions are still practiced, but Salafi perspectives are increasingly adopted in assessing certain aspects of sharia. Therefore, the transformation category in this region is classified as moderate, marked by a tense coexistence between old cultural structures and new purifying influences. One crucial finding in mapping cultural transformation in Greater Bandung is the phenomenon of ideological migration in industrial corridors such as Cimahi, Batujajar, and Dayeuhkolot. These areas show a relatively rapid acceleration of transformation. Sociologically, factory workers and formal sector workers in these areas are vulnerable to social alienation due to uprooting from their original cultural roots, the rhythm of industrial work, and the pressures of production relations. This condition encourages the search for spiritual compensation that offers discipline, certainty, and a new life structure.

This phenomenon can be interpreted through Karl Marx's thinking on alienation. Marx explained that workers in a capitalist system are alienated from their work, from production, and from themselves, thereby requiring an ideological escape. Religion, in his critique, often serves as a form of "false consciousness" that masks the reality of oppression while providing ethical legitimacy to structures of exploitation (Misbah, 2017). Salafi preaching, which emphasizes time discipline, adherence to texts, and a simplification of lifestyle, is considered in harmony with the mechanistic rhythm of industrial work. This alignment drives a cultural transformation in which the previously communal-traditional working-class identity gradually shifts toward a more scriptural, exclusive identity. This change not only affects religious practices but also shapes new perspectives on social and cultural relations outside the workplace.

A sociological map of industrial areas shows that factory mosques often serve as the primary entry points for this purification process. Consequently, workers' participation in local cultural activities in their neighborhoods has weakened, as their social energy and loyalty have largely been diverted to the *manhaj* community. This phenomenon confirms that economic-industrial factors act as catalysts, accelerating the pace of cultural transformation in the periphery of Greater Bandung. This work has enabled the development of an analytical matrix demonstrating the relationship between regional typology and the level of cultural transformation in Greater Bandung. The two variables that appear to drive change the most are the accessibility of digital information and the fragility of traditional

structures. In urban centers like Bandung, the decay of traditional structures has led to massive transformations that tend to replace existing practices. Conversely, in more rural districts, change has been peripheral and has not yet deeply penetrated society's cultural foundations.

Another emerging phenomenon is the cultural leap in buffer zones. Transformation does not always move gradually from urban to rural areas, but often leaps to new growth hubs such as industrial areas and mid-rise housing complexes. At these points, capital, networks, and ideologies accumulate, accelerating shifts in religious and social authority. This dynamic demonstrates that the flow of change follows economic and educational paths, not merely administrative boundaries.

This situation marks the emergence of morphological fragmentation in Greater Bandung. Formal territorial boundaries are no longer effective at stemming the spread of ideology, as the mobility of people, information, and institutions transcends them. Cultural transformation then forms pockets of varying intensity, depending on the strength of local structures and the degree of openness to global flows. The ongoing changes also reshape the community's cultural identity. Shifts are evident in ritual practices, patterns of authority relations, and even perspectives on social space and the future. Urbanization accelerates purification in some areas, while in others, traditional authority continues to function as a buffer. At the same time, ideological-spatial segregation manifests as increasingly distinct cultural "islands," creating a new arena of contestation between an inclusive, accommodating Sundanese identity and a growing tide of scripturalist puritanism.

4. Conclusion

Based on a historical, social, and cultural analysis of the dynamics of the Salafi movement in Bandung from 1998 to 2024, it can be concluded that this movement developed through a complex, context-specific process of transformation. The post-Reformasi era of 1998 marked a significant turning point, opening up space for civil liberties and enabling a more open articulation of religious ideology. In this context, the Salafi movement did not emerge as a single entity, but rather comprised various factions with different styles of da'wah and strategies. From its initial, limited, and clandestine nature, this movement evolved into a more institutionalized one through the establishment of foundations, schools, and religious study groups, while also using digital media to expand its da'wah reach. Sociologically, the emergence and development of this movement reflect changes in the structure of religious authority in Bandung's urban space. A dialectic emerged between traditional Islamic groups and new puritan groups, which sought to establish a basis of dominance through control of pulpits, educational institutions, and middle-class social networks. Within the framework of structuration, Salafi actors demonstrate a strong capacity for agency by reproducing new social norms and practices through lifestyles, hijrah trends, and more scripturalist expressions of religious identity. The social and cultural impacts are ambivalent. On the one hand, this movement strengthens moral discipline and religious ethos, especially among the urban middle class. On the other hand, a process of de-traditionalization emerges, triggering tensions with local Sundanese religious expressions. As a result, Bandung's social landscape becomes more fragmented, yet remains dynamic in the negotiation between transnational and local identities.

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