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Negotiating Identity and Hybrid Spirituality: The Dynamics of the Congregation of the Asy-Syahadatain Order in the Urban-Digital Landscape

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Abstract:

This study examines the dynamics of religiosity of the Asy-Syahadatain congregation in an urban landscape, focusing on the adaptation and negotiation of identity amidst modernity and digitalization. The congregation, originally rural-based in Panguragan, Cirebon, has now expanded to urban areas such as Bandung and Jakarta due to social mobility and economic migration. Using a qualitative approach with a case study design, this study applies the theories of symbolic interaction, social identity, and digital religion through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document studies. The results show that the Asy-Syahadatain congregation has undergone significant transformation without losing its core Sufi teachings. Key rituals such as the dhikr of the Shahadatain and the aurodan are maintained but adapted in form and media. A hybrid spirituality phenomenon has emerged in which the congregation combines physical gatherings with digital platforms such as WhatsApp and YouTube. The congregation's identity has shifted from a communal-rural one to a flexible spiritual-urban one that still relies on the authority of the sanad. Furthermore, the tarekat serves as social and moral economic capital through collective almsgiving practices and cross-class and generational solidarity bound by the value of brotherhood. Theoretically,

this research confirms that the tarekat is not a stagnant entity but rather an adaptive spiritual community capable of navigating urban and technological pressures while enriching the study of contemporary Nusantara Sufism.

Keywords: contemporary religiosity, digital religion, social cohesion; urban Sufism.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of religiosity in Indonesia is currently undergoing an increasingly complex transformation in line with social, political, economic, and cultural developments. From the reform era to the digital era, shifts in the fabric of society have triggered the emergence of new ways of expressing religiosity. Factors such as globalization, urbanization, and increased access to information technology have become major catalysts accelerating the fragmentation and rearticulation of forms of religiosity. This transformation not only touches on normative doctrinal aspects but also extends to the practical realm of how people understand, practice, and experience religion in their daily lives. In the contemporary sociological landscape, forms of religiosity previously considered marginal are now beginning to gain a foothold in the public sphere through more personal and hybrid discourses. As Adam Possamai (2005) argues, postmodern societies tend to adopt a more flexible and individualized spirituality, referred to as "hyper-real religion." This phenomenon is characterized by a blending of traditional religious teachings with personal spiritual experiences and popular cultural symbols (Possamai, 2005). In Indonesia, this is reflected in the emergence of various new spiritual groups and religious communities that offer alternative spiritual identities amidst a modernity often considered devoid of meaning.

Rapid urbanization has created new social spaces that are highly pluralistic, competitive, and often individualistic. In large cities, individuals are exposed to an extraordinary diversity of values, but on the other hand, they also experience high levels of life pressure due to the fast pace of work and weakening social cohesion. Anthony Giddens (1991) calls this condition a characteristic of late modernity, where social life is marked by complexity, uncertainty, and high reflexivity. This condition triggers a disorientation of meaning and a loss of identity in modern society (Giddens, 1991).

Following the thinking of Peter L. Berger (1999), modernity has forced individuals to “make choices” in religion; religion is no longer automatically accepted as a legacy of tradition, but rather as the result of a selective individual existential search (Berger, 1999). In a situation that Zygmunt Bauman (2001) calls “Liquid Modernity,” the need for spiritual community becomes very urgent as individuals lose their moral anchors and traditional identities. In this space, the tarekat (Islamic order) exists as a spiritual oasis that provides a sense of belonging and moral direction for urban communities (Bauman, 2001).

The revitalization of Sufi orders in urban spaces demonstrates that modernization does not kill Sufi spirituality, but rather encourages the emergence of new forms that are more responsive to the challenges of the times. Julia Day Howell (2001) notes that urbanization actually transforms Sufi orders into more open, adaptive, and communicative ones. Sufi orders, once synonymous with homogeneous rural areas, have now metamorphosed into a hybrid urban religiosity. One prominent phenomenon is the Jamaah Tarekat Asy-Syahadatain, which combines elements of classical Sufi tradition with an open approach to the city's socio-cultural plurality (Howell, 2001).

Religiosity in the urban context has also shifted to what Bryan S. Turner (2011) calls "religious consumerism." Modern societies tend to choose and design their own religious practices based on their psychological, social, and cultural needs. This is evident in how urban congregations provide spaces for spiritual reflection tailored to urban lifestyles, such as the use of digital technology for dhikr (remembrance) and da'wah (preaching). This digitalization creates a "networked religion," where religious identities are formed and negotiated through interactive digital networks (B. S. Turner, 2011).

The study of the Asy-Syahadatain Order as part of the dynamics of contemporary religiosity in Indonesia has attracted the attention of various researchers from various perspectives, ranging from historical to sociological to cultural. The pioneering research by Martin van Bruinessen (1994) provided an important foundation for the typology and network of orders in Indonesia, explaining how Sufi orders function as dynamic social actors in Muslim society. Although his study is macro, Bruinessen provides an initial framework for understanding how orders maintain their continuity amidst changing times (Bruinessen, 1994).

In the context of urbanism, Julia Day Howell (2001) in her study "Sufism and the Indonesian Islamic Revival" noted the phenomenon of the revival of Sufism in urban Indonesia. Howell argued that urbanization does not kill Sufi spirituality, but rather encourages the emergence of new forms of Sufi orders that are more inclusive, modern, and adaptable to digital technology (Howell, 2001). This is in line with the view of Bryan S. Turner (2011) who introduced the concept of "religious reflexivity," where modern society processes religious teachings in a personal and reflective manner as a response to existential alienation in big cities (B. S. Turner, 2011).

Specifically regarding the Asy-Syahadatain Order, Moh. Rosyid (2019) traces the history of its founding by Habib Umar in 1947 in Cirebon. Rosyid emphasized that the uniqueness of this order lies in its central practice, which utilizes the two sentences of the shahada as the core of spiritual and mystical transformation. This research provides an important foundation for understanding the ideological basis of the congregation before their diaspora to urban areas (Rosyid, 2019).

Furthermore, Hadiyansyah (2023) examined the socio-religious practices of the Asy-Syahadatain congregation and found that rituals such as tawasulan, pilgrimage, and wearing white clothing function as elements of social cohesion as well as identity markers that distinguish them amidst the plurality of society (Hadiyansyah et al., 2023). In terms of culture, Subaweh et al. (2020) analyzed the oral traditions of Aurodan and Nazhaman. They concluded that these traditions are not merely spiritual rituals, but symbols of cultural identity that combine Arabic, Sundanese, and Javanese values, which help the congregation maintain collective memory amidst the currents of modernity (Subaweh et al., 2020).

Aida Azzah Fadhilah's (2023) research in Jepara adds a new dimension by highlighting how the Ash-Syahadatain congregation negotiates socially in a new territory. She found that despite initial resistance due to differences in ritual symbols, the congregation was successfully accepted through positive impacts such as peace of mind and friendly social behavior (Fadhilah, 2023). Finally, from a digital perspective, Campbell & Tsuria (2016) and Rosfiyanti et al. (2024) emphasize that digital media has given rise to a "networked religion," where traditional authority is now transformed into digital authority through the use of YouTube channels and WhatsApp groups for dhikr activities (H. A. Campbell & Tsuria, 2016; Rosfiyanti et al., 2024).

Overall, these studies demonstrate that the Asy-Syahadatain Order is an adaptive entity. In the era of late modernity, society faces conditions characterized by high complexity, uncertainty, and massive reflexivity. Anthony Giddens (1991) explains that individuals in modern society no longer live within rigid social structures, but rather within fluid dynamics, which triggers disorientation of meaning and loss of identity. Conventional religious institutions are often considered too bureaucratic and formalistic, thus failing to touch the authentic inner experiences of modern humans (Giddens, 1991).

This condition is exacerbated by the phenomenon that Zygmunt Bauman (2001) calls "Liquid Modernity," in which individuals lose their traditional moral anchors (Bauman, 2001). As compensation, what Wade Clark Roof (1999) calls a "Spiritual Marketplace" has emerged, a condition in which pluralistic urban communities have wide access to choose forms of spirituality that are considered capable of providing emotional peace and a more intimate personal relationship with the Transcendent. In the midst of urban pluralism, religion is no longer merely inherited religiosity, but something that individuals actively seek and negotiate to fulfill their existential needs (Roof, 1999).

This research focuses on the dynamics of the Asy-Syahadatain Order, which was originally a rural-based spiritual community in Panguragan, Cirebon, since 1947. Through social mobility and economic migration, this community expanded into urban areas such as Bandung and Jakarta, which forced them to negotiate their identity to remain relevant amid the fast-paced, technology-driven urban lifestyle.

The main focus of this research is how this order developed a "Hybrid Spirituality" model, namely an effort to maintain the core of Sufi teachings while adapting to modern media. This negotiation covers two main areas; first, lifestyle negotiation, where members of the order in the city engage in identity "code-switching." They can appear as urban professionals during the day, but return to being disciplined students of the order at night. They integrate Sufi values into profane spaces, such as holding "after-office dhikr hours" in cafes or public spaces in the city.

Second, negotiating digital technology, namely within the framework of "Digital Religion," the Asy-Syahadatain Order does not reject technology, but rather utilizes it as a "spiritual bridge." They use WhatsApp groups, YouTube, and live streaming to transmit teachings, thus creating a "Networked Religion" that connects congregations across geographical boundaries. Despite adapting media and space, this order consistently maintains its core teachings (continuity), namely the Dhikr of the Syahadatain. Traditional authority based on the sanad is maintained as a countermeasure to the risk of banality in digital religion, ensuring that technology only functions as a wasilah (intermediary) and not the ultimate goal.

Research on the Asy-Syahadatain Order is highly relevant because this community has successfully transformed significantly from a rural-based spiritual community to an urban setting without losing its core Sufi teachings. They developed a "hybrid spirituality" model, combining physical activities in assemblies with digital spaces through WhatsApp, YouTube, and live streaming. This phenomenon confirms that the order has not stagnated in modernity but has instead transformed into an adaptive spiritual community capable of managing urban and technological pressures. Through this case study, this article will explore how religious identity is being reflectively reconstructed in contemporary urban society.

In examining the dynamics of the Asy-Syahadatain Congregation in urban spaces, Peter L. Berger's theory of the Social Construction of Religion is a highly relevant analytical tool.

Berger, particularly in his work The Sacred Canopy (1967), views religion not as a static entity that simply falls from the sky, but rather as a reality constructed socially through a continuous dialectic between humans and their world. This theory helps explain how the tarekat community constructs a "sacred canopy" that provides meaning for human existence amidst the complexities of the modern world, which often experiences spiritual crises (Berger, 1967).

According to Berger and Luckmann (1967), the process of social construction occurs through three simultaneous dialectical moments: externalization, objectivation, and internalization (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), namely; first, externalization is a human effort to project himself into the world through physical and mental activities. In the context of the Asy-Syahadatain Order, this process began in 1947 when Habib Umar bin Isma'il bin Yahya projected his spiritual vision through the Syahadatain study group in Panguragan, Cirebon. He not only taught dhikr, but also established educational and social units, such as the Asy-Syahadatain Islamic Boarding School in 1951, as a physical manifestation of his spiritual ideas. This is the moment where Sufi teachings were "released" into a tangible social reality.

Second, objectivation occurs when the products of this externalization begin to be viewed as objective realities beyond the individual. Religious practices such as the Dhikr of the Syahadatain, Aurodan, Nazhaman, and the Haul ritual then crystallize into established traditions. Symbols such as the wearing of white clothing become an objective visual identity for the congregation. At this stage, the teachings of the Asy-Syahadatain Order have become a social institution with its own authority and structure, no longer dependent solely on the physical presence of its founder.

Third, internalization is the process by which the objectified social world is drawn back into the individual's subjective consciousness through socialization. For urban congregations, internalization occurs when they absorb the meanings of dhikr and the values of ukhuwah (brotherhood) into their hearts. Moral values such as sincerity and humility taught in the tarekat become part of their personal identity, which then guides their actions in everyday life in the city.

Berger emphasized that the primary function of religion is to construct a meaningful world (nomoz) to counteract anomie, or the chaos of meaning. Amidst the currents of urban modernity characterized by plurality and secularization, individuals often experience disorientation and a loss of identity. Modernity forces individuals to "make choices" (the heretical imperative) because traditional belief systems are no longer automatically accepted.

In this context, the Asy-Syahadatain Congregation functions as an agent reshaping the structure of religiosity in the city through symbolic interactions. This community provides a "contemporary social cohesion space" that offers inner peace (sakinah) as an antidote to the pressures of urban life. Through collective rituals such as the great dhikr (remembrance of God) or haul (haul), the congregation experiences what Berger calls a process of strengthening the "plausibility structure," namely the social environment that supports and validates individual spiritual beliefs so that they remain steadfast in a secular world.

One of Berger's important contributions to the contemporary sociology of religion is his recognition that modernity does not eradicate religion, but rather triggers a desecularization or "re-sacralization" of public space in new forms. This is clearly seen in the Ash-Shahadahatain congregation, which has been able to adapt its social construction to the digital space.

In urban areas, religious constructions are not solely derived from formal institutions but are actively reproduced by individuals within specific communities. Urban congregations reflexively reconstruct meaning. They don't simply inherit traditions (inherited religiosity) but actively "choose" the tarekat (Islamic order) as their moral anchor. The use of social media such as WhatsApp groups and YouTube to broadcast dhikr (religious remembrance) represents a new form of externalization that extends the reach of the "holy sky" beyond the geographical boundaries of Cirebon to the global community.

Theoretically, Berger's approach suggests that the Sufi Order's survival in urban spaces is due to its ability to continually renegotiate and reproduce meaning. The Sufi tradition has not stagnated, but rather transformed into an adaptive spiritual community capable of managing urban and technological pressures. Through the dialectic of social construction, the order's values remain an objective reality providing moral guidance, while also a subjective reality providing meaning for its followers in the postmodern era.

METHOD

This research applies a qualitative approach with a descriptive-interpretive case study design. This approach was chosen because of its relevance and effectiveness in exploring in-depth the religious experiences, symbolic structures, social practices, and internal dynamics of the Jamaah Tarekat Asy-Syahadatain community, particularly in facing the pressures of urbanization (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As emphasized in the source, qualitative research allows researchers to capture complex and subjective religious realities through a "thick description" framework to understand the meanings formed by subjects through social interactions in specific historical and cultural contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017; Geertz, 1976).

Research Locations and Informants The research locations were focused on the initial centers of the tarekat at the Nurul Huda Islamic Boarding School (Munjul) and Panguragan Wetan, Cirebon, as well as the congregation network spread across urban areas such as Bandung and Jakarta. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, namely the selection of subjects based on specific considerations that include the tarekat leaders (mursyid and khalifah), active members from various age and professional backgrounds, and the surrounding community. The number of informants was determined flexibly based on the principle of data saturation, where data collection is stopped when the information obtained is sufficient and no longer produces new findings.

Data Collection Techniques The data in this study come from two types of data: primary and secondary. Primary data were obtained through participant observation, in which the researcher was directly involved in the congregation's ritual activities such as dhikr assemblies, aurodan, nazhaman, and haul to understand the symbolic dynamics from within. Furthermore, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore spiritual experiences, membership motivations, and the congregation's perceptions of religious authority in the urban-digital space.

Secondary data was obtained through a documentary study of the congregation's internal archives, dhikr guidebooks, nazham (prayer guides), and other da'wah documents. Researchers also utilized digital archives, including ritual video recordings, community social media accounts, and congregation WhatsApp groups, as additional data for analyzing the phenomenon of digital religion.

Data Analysis Techniques The data analysis process was carried out systematically using thematic analysis based on the Braun and Clarke (2006) model. The analysis stages included (Braun & Clarke, 2006): transcription of interview data and rereading of field notes. Coding of data fragments relevant to identity negotiation and social cohesion. Grouping codes into main themes (such as hybrid spirituality or moral economy). Interpretation of thematic meaning based on the established theoretical framework. Systematic preparation of the research results narrative.

This analytical approach was chosen because of its ability to bridge the gap between empirical realities in the field and broader theoretical interpretations of the sociology of religion. To ensure the validity of the data, researchers triangulated sources and techniques, and conducted member checks to validate the results of interviews with informants to ensure the credibility of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Traditional Roots and Spatial Expansion: From Panguragan to Urban Landscape

Tracing the roots of the Asy-Syahadatain Order tradition cannot be separated from the historical and cultural landscape of Cirebon as one of the important nodes of Islamization on the north coast of Java since the 15th century. Cirebon, under the influence of Syarif Hidayatullah (Sunan Gunung Jati), has prepared a "religious ecology" conducive to the emergence of local Sufi practices that dialogue with local customs. Within this long-term horizon, the Asy-Syahadatain Order was born as a unique Sufi expression that focuses on the appreciation of the two sentences of the shahada as a daily dhikr practice (Suryani, 2013).

The central figure behind the founding of this tarekat is Habib Umar bin Isma'il bin Yahya (or familiarly called Abah Umar), a local cleric who began mobilizing the congregation after Indonesian independence, precisely around 1947. Starting from regular Friday religious studies in Panguragan Wetan Village, Habib Umar's spiritual appeal attracted masses from various surrounding areas to study dhikr, tawasulan, and nazhaman shahada. Panguragan, which is geographically located in the lowlands of the north coast of Java, became a strategic seeding medium due to the open mobility of people and ideas on the regional transportation route.

Sociologically, the 1947 event symbolized the creative response of the coastal Muslim community of Cirebon in restructuring their spiritual and social lives amidst the political fluctuations of the nation-state's transition period. The affirmation of the shahada as the primary spiritual "path" became a crucial differentiation; while other religious orders often focused on the ism dzat or specific dhikr sentences, the Asy-Syahadatain placed the two sentences of the shahada as the core of the ritual, guiding the congregation's ethical and spiritual practices in their daily lives (Hambali & Riyadi, 2022).

After the embryonic phase, Habib Umar took a significant step towards formalizing the organization by establishing the Asy-Syahadatain Islamic Boarding School in Panguragan in 1951. This Islamic boarding school not only functions as a center for religious teaching and the preparation of guidelines for practices such as "Auradh Thariqah Asy-Syahadatain", but also as a center for economic empowerment through training in farming, sewing, and self-defense skills (Rosyid, 2019).

The placement of centers in rural areas like Panguragan reflects the historical logic of Javanese tarekat, which utilizes the spaciousness of rural spaces to build network cohesion. From these centers, "tarekat knowledge" is imparted through ritual repetition and the exemplary conduct of teachers, creating an infrastructure of transmission that enables these traditions to endure across generations. Pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) become the primary engine for producing spiritual cadres who will later spread these teachings beyond their original regions (Sintia, 2016).

The development of the Asy-Syahadatain Order followed a systematic expansion pattern, which Martin van Bruinessen (1994) stated was closely linked to the mobility of ulama (Islamic scholars) and santri (Islamic boarding school) networks. This expansion can be divided into several phases (Bruinessen, 1994); first, the local satellite phase (Cirebon), where initial steps took place in the areas around Panguragan, such as Munjul, Astanajapura, Kapetakan, and Gebang. In Munjul Village, the congregation grew rapidly under the leadership of Kyai Khozin and other local figures who founded the Nurul Huda Foundation. Munjul emerged as a "key node" because it successfully integrated the order's religious function with its formal socio-educational function (Rosyid, 2019; Sintia, 2016).

Second, the regional phase (Central Java), through interpersonal channels, this congregation expanded into Central Java, including Jepara (Mayong Lor), Tegal, and Brebes. In Jepara, the congregation's presence since the early 2000s faced resistance due to differences in ritual symbols (white clothing and loud dhikr), but was eventually accepted after the community saw the positive impacts of the congregation's spiritual calm and friendly morals.

Third, in the urban phase of Bandung and Jakarta, the most significant transformation occurred when some pilgrims migrated to larger urban areas due to social mobility, education, and economic needs. The economic migration of workers and traders from Cirebon who settled in large cities brought with them the practice of dhikr (recitation of the Shahada), forming small communities in urban spaces.

The success of this regional expansion was driven by three main mechanisms (Nadya, 2022): first, the alumni network of Islamic boarding schools, where students who had completed their studies in Panguragan or Munjul returned to their hometowns and formed new dhikr groups. This pattern of dissemination was organic and based on a very strong teacher-student relationship (spiritual kinship). Second, the Caliphate system, in which Habib Umar appointed senior students as Caliphs in their respective regions. The Caliphs were tasked with maintaining the purity of the teachings and leading collective rituals at the local level, ensuring that geographically dispersed congregations remained tied to central authority. Third, economic migration and migrant workers: in industrial areas like Tegal or urban centers like Jakarta, dissemination occurred through interpersonal networks of traders and laborers from Cirebon. This created what is known as religious diffusion, where religion spread through social interactions in the diaspora.

Entering a pluralistic and competitive urban space, the Asy-Syahadatain Order no longer relies solely on physical meetings in prayer rooms (langgar) or Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). The emergence of new variants of urban religiosity has fueled the use of digital media such as WhatsApp, YouTube, and live streaming as a means of da'wah and consolidation. Digitalization allows congregations in large cities, hampered by distance and time, to stay connected to the spiritual center in Panguragan. This phenomenon has given rise to the "Hybrid Spirituality" model, where Sufi identities, originally communal-rural, transform

into flexible urban-spiritual identities. Although the space has shifted to digital, authority remains anchored in the well-preserved traditional sanad (H. A. Campbell & Tsuria, 2016).

The Transformation of Tradition in Modernity The expansion of the Asy-Syahadatain Order proves Julia Day Howell's (2001) thesis that urbanization did not kill Sufism, but rather encouraged the emergence of new forms that were more responsive to the challenges of modernity. This order successfully managed urban pressures while maintaining a distinctive identity, such as the all-white clothing interpreted as an eschatological reminder of death, while remaining adaptive in communicating with a heterogeneous society.

Theoretically, this expansion pattern suggests that the tarekat functions as social capital and a moral economy. Through its extensive network, the tarekat provides a social support system for its members who migrate to cities, thereby mitigating the existential alienation often experienced by urban communities. Thus, the Asy-Syahadatain is not merely a remnant of the past, but rather an adaptive spiritual community that continues to reproduce its traditions amidst the changing times.

Hybrid Spirituality in the Digital Space: A Spiritual Bridge for Urban Communities

The advent of the digital era has brought about profound changes in nearly every aspect of human life, including contemporary religious practices. For traditional communities like the Asy-Syahadatain Order, this transformation is not simply the adoption of technology, but rather an epistemological shift in how followers understand, practice, and disseminate Sufi teachings. The development of social media has transformed the landscape of religious communication, requiring traditional authorities to synergize with the open and fragmented digital space (Ichwan et al., 2024).

In highly mobile urban communities, regular physical attendance at religious centers (such as Panguragan or Munjul) is often hampered by distance, time, and a fast-paced work schedule. This situation has given rise to a phenomenon known as “Hybrid Spirituality,” a model of religious practice that combines physical activity in congregations with a digital presence through platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, and live streaming. This model allows the Sufi values inherited from Habib Umar bin Isma’il bin Yahya to remain relevant and accessible to congregations in large cities without severing their ties to their spiritual centers (Giddens, 1991).

Social media within the Asy-Syahadatain ecosystem serves as a bridge connecting rural and urban dimensions. The use of this digital platform creates what Heidi Campbell (2013) calls networked religion, where religious identity is constructed through participatory and interactive digital networks (H. Campbell, 2013). WhatsApp groups have become the primary means for urban congregations to maintain coordination of daily dhikr (recitation) and the transmission of religious information. Through these groups, congregations can remind each other to maintain the dhikr of the Shahadatain, disseminate advice from their spiritual leaders, and even coordinate social assistance. The solidarity fostered here transcends geographical boundaries, allowing members in Bandung, Jakarta, and even abroad to maintain a sense of belonging to the community (H. A. Campbell, 2020).

YouTube and Live Streaming as Virtual Ritual Spaces: YouTube and its live streaming features have become important media for broadcasting major events such as Haul Habib Umar or large-scale dhikr assemblies. For congregants unable to physically attend, live streaming serves as a spiritual window that allows them to be "innerly present" in the ritual atmosphere (H. Campbell, 2013). This creates what Tim Hutchings (2017) calls a digital

ummah, a spiritual community connected through the internet but still possessing a strong collective consciousness (Hutchings, 2017).

The entry of the congregation into the digital space has given rise to challenges regarding mediated authenticity (Hoover, 2025; Rosfiyanti et al., 2024). The congregation's identity, which typically relies heavily on physical presence, the scent of incense, and the vibrations of collective dhikr, must now be negotiated in an audio-visual format. For the Asy-Syahadatain, this negotiation does not mean eliminating tradition, but rather creating a hybrid identity (Saputra & Rosidi, 2022). Urban members of the Asy-Syahadatain often practice "two worlds" simultaneously without feeling contradictory. They can be productive professionals during the day, yet remain diligent students of the congregation through YouTube access at night or during breaks (Giddens, 1991; Saputra & Rosidi, 2022).

As expressed by one of the congregation:

> *"Sometimes I join the dhikr via Zoom because I get home from work late. But I still try to attend in person when I have time"* (interview with Aulia, Jakarta 2025).

This statement emphasizes that digital media is positioned as a wasilah (intermediary), not as a total replacement for the authority of the mursyid and physical assembly (Bunt, 2018).

This phenomenon also reflects the emergence of "Urban Sufism," a more open expression of spirituality that utilizes cyber media as a means of preaching (Rosfiyanti et al., 2024). Hybrid spirituality allows the tarekat to no longer be exclusive, but rather become part of the Islamic lifestyle of modern urban communities thirsting for inner meaning (Howell, 2001; B. S. Turner, 2011). The remembrance of the shahadatain in digital spaces becomes a kind of spiritual breath, a spiritual respite amidst career pressures and arid urban individualism (Fitryansyah & Sofiyati, 2024).

Through digital platforms, symbols of the tarekat, such as white clothing and collective dhikr, are performed in performative religiosity. For example, using hashtags on Instagram or sharing dhikr videos on TikTok serve as markers of group identity in the digital public sphere (Blumer, 1969; Tajfel & Turner, 2004). However, the tarekat maintains strict boundaries: esoteric (inner) practices are kept confidential, while public rituals such as the aurodan and haul are broadcast widely to expand the reach of da'wah (Hutchings, 2017; B. S. Turner, 2011).

Despite its significant potential, the use of digital media as a spiritual bridge also carries the risk of fragmenting spiritual identity (H. Campbell, 2013; H. A. Campbell, 2020). There are concerns that digital rituals can become mere spectacles and lose the emotional depth and spiritual discipline typically gained through direct physical presence (Bunt, 2018; Rosfiyanti et al., 2024). Furthermore, the rise of algorithmic authority on social media sometimes leads to congregations being more exposed to popular YouTube figures than to the advice of local murshids or caliphs (Aviah Asmaul Husna & Hamid, 2025; Bunt, 2018).

In response, the Jamaah Asy-Syahadatain developed a selective adaptation strategy. The Mursyid and Caliph serve as bridges between traditional values and the dynamics of modernity (bridging leadership) (Lubis, 2023). They ensure that technology is used only to expand blessings, not to change the core teachings of the Sufi order (B. S. Turner, 2011). The digital collective identity remains bound by a valid lineage (sanad), so that even though the media is modern, its roots remain rooted in the orthodox tradition of Nusantara Sufism.

Sociologically, the success of the Asy-Syahadatain Order in developing a hybrid spirituality demonstrates that the order has not stagnated in modernity. Instead, it has demonstrated its ability to manage urban pressures by utilizing technology as an instrument of contemporary social cohesion. This cohesion is no longer mechanical (based solely on physical proximity), but rather organic-digital, where solidarity is built through a network of trust and spiritual values that transcends time and space (Durkheim, 1912; Rosfiyanti et al., 2024).

Thus, the hybrid spirituality in the digital space for the Asy-Syahadatain congregation is a manifestation of an adaptive and inclusive Islam. It is a conscious effort to create a "sacred canopy" amidst the hustle and bustle of urban concrete, ensuring that the light of the Shahadatain can still shine upon the hearts of the congregation, whether in the corners of Islamic boarding schools in the villages or in luxury apartments in the city center (Berger, 1967; Berger & Luckmann, 1967).

Negotiating Symbols and Code-Switching Identity

In the Asy-Syahadatain Congregation tradition, religious identity does not stop at the cognitive level or inner beliefs, but is strongly manifested through visual symbols attached to the congregation's bodies. The most distinctive characteristic of this congregation is the use of all-white clothing, including koko shirts, robes, mukenas, and turbans when carrying out ritual activities and daily worship (Hadiyansyah et al., 2023; Humas Masjid Ismuhu Yahya, 2025). From the perspective of Bryan S. Turner (2011), this practice is a form of embodied spirituality, where the body becomes the primary locus for sensory experience and religious expression (B. S. Turner, 2011).

The use of white is not merely an aesthetic choice, but rather a "visual pedagogy" imbued with theological and eschatological meaning (Rosyid, 2019). For the congregation, white clothing is a constant reminder of death; a symbolic shroud that suggests that humans will ultimately return to the afterlife only with good deeds (Hadiyansyah et al., 2023; Rosyid, 2019). Furthermore, symbolically, white represents the purity of the soul (tazkiyatun nafs) and the pursuit of emulating the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (Humas Masjid Ismuhu Yahya, 2025; Rosyid, 2019). By wearing this clothing, group identity (ingroup) becomes very strong, creating a religious egalitarianism where differences in social and economic status dissolve before the Creator (Blumer, 1969; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

When pilgrims move from the homogeneous rural environment of Cirebon to the pluralistic urban landscapes of Bandung or Jakarta, the symbol of white clothing faces different interpretative challenges. In the villages, all-white attire is accepted as a natural expression of piety, but in urban public spaces, this symbol is often viewed ambivalently, conspicuously, or even associated with stereotypes of certain groups by outsiders (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

In this context, Erving Goffman's (1963) theory of Presentation of Self and impression management becomes highly relevant in examining how congregations manage their identities. Goffman explained that individuals always strive to control the image they project before a social audience (Goffman, 1963). For urban congregations of the Ash-Shahadah, the city's public space becomes a front stage that demands adjustments to avoid experiencing social stigma or being viewed as eccentric (Goffman, 1963; Hall & du Gay, 2011).

Many urban congregations face an identity dilemma: on the one hand, they desire to adhere to the traditions of their congregation, but on the other, they must interact within a secular and professional urban social system. This triggers a symbolic negotiation, where

congregations no longer wear white attributes rigidly at all times, but instead adapt their attire to the demands of their social context (Goffman, 1963; Hall & du Gay, 2011).

In response to the pressures of urban pluralism, the congregation developed a strategy known as identity code-switching. This concept describes an individual's ability to flexibly shift between two or more cultural identity systems. Urban members of the Ash-Syahadatain congregation practice these "two worlds" simultaneously without feeling any internal contradiction: they appear as productive professionals in modern work attire during the day, but transform back into disciplined students of the Sufi order in white robes when entering the assembly or religious study hall at night (Bhabha, 1994; Giddens, 1991; Saputra & Rosidi, 2022).

This negotiation gives rise to what is known as a hybrid identity (Bhabha, 1994; Saputra & Rosidi, 2022). As Homi Bhabha (1994) points out, hybrid identities emerge from the interaction between different cultural systems, producing adaptive forms of expression that remain rooted in tradition (Bhabha, 1994). Congregants might replace their long white robes with simple white shirts or simply wear white peci caps as a form of visual compromise at the office, yet maintain their inner substance through uninterrupted remembrance of the shahadatain (Blumer, 1969; Goffman, 1963; Lewis, 2015).

This adjustment was emphasized in an interview with a congregation member in Jakarta, who stated that in the midst of city life, what matters most is not the physical appearance of clothing, but rather intention and purity of heart. This indicates that the tarekat's identity has shifted from mere symbolic formality to a deeper spiritual reflexivity, where traditional values are "reinterpreted" to be compatible with the rhythms of modern life (Rosyid, 2019).

Despite the reduction in the use of visual symbols in public spaces, solidarity among congregations in urban areas has not weakened. In fact, this symbolic negotiation strengthens what is known as networked identity. Congregational social cohesion no longer relies solely on physical uniformity at all times, but rather on collective ritual memory and digital connectivity through WhatsApp groups or online assemblies (H. A. Campbell & Tsuria, 2016; Schielke, 2015; Wuthnow, 2023).

White clothing remains a sacred symbol in special spaces such as during Haul celebrations, pilgrimages, or kliwonan, where the entire congregation gathers physically to renew their social energy. It is during these moments that Goffman's "backstage" opens wide, and the congregation can fully express their authentic identity without the burden of judgment from the outside world (Durkheim, 1912; Goffman, 1963). The presence of thousands of white-clad congregations at the annual Haul event in Panguragan is evidence that this symbol continues to function as an effective boundary marker to maintain the continuity of collective identity (Durkheim, 1912; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

This sociological analysis confirms that the Asy-Syahadatain Order is not a community frozen in the past. They are an adaptive spiritual community capable of managing the "stigma" and pressures of urbanity through clever image management. By code-switching between professional and ritual attire, they successfully maintain social relevance in the city without sacrificing the "core" teachings of Sufism inherited from Habib Umar bin Isma'il bin Yahya (Goffman, 1963).

Overall, the symbolic negotiation of the congregation's attire demonstrates that religious identity in the era of liquid modernity is dynamic and negotiable. This identity is no longer automatically accepted as inherited, but rather is reconstructed reflectively by individuals as a moral anchor amidst the uncertainty of the city (Bauman, 2001; Giddens, 1991; B. S. Turner,

2011). The Ash-Syahadatain congregation proves that being "modern" does not necessarily mean being "secular" (Berger, 1999; Heelas et al., 2005; Howell, 2001). They are able to integrate traditional symbols into urban spaces through pragmatic adaptation strategies, creating a contemporary model of religiosity that is inclusive yet distinctive. This is what makes the congregation continue to function as an effective contemporary space of social cohesion, able to bridge the longing for deeper spiritual values with the complex realities of digital-urban life.

Social Capital and Moral Economy: Support Systems Amidst Urban Anonymity

Strong social cohesion within the Asy-Syahadatain Congregation is not only built through rituals such as dhikr and aurodan, but also through economic activities based on religious values. In this context, the congregation plays a crucial role as a vehicle for the formation of a moral economy, namely an economic system guided by spiritual ethics and social solidarity, rather than solely by the motive of material gain. This concept of a moral economy is rooted in the history of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago, where the values of justice, blessings, and mutual assistance (ta'awun) form the foundation of the community's economic activities (Chapra, 2016).

For the Asy-Syahadatain congregation, money is not merely an economic instrument, but a symbol of ukhuwah (brotherhood) and barakah (blessings) (Hazami & Azca, 2024). This practice is manifested through the voluntary infaq jama'i (collective almsgiving) mechanism carried out during each dhikr assembly (Chapra, 2016). The funds collected from this infaq are redistributed to support the welfare of members, such as aid for the sick, those affected by disasters, or educational assistance for underprivileged families. This demonstrates that the congregation's spirituality is active and social, creating what is known as a relational economy: an economic network based on meaningful social relationships, not simply cold market contracts (Hazami & Azca, 2024).

From a sociological perspective, the Asy-Syahadatain Order functions as a highly effective producer of social capital for its members. According to Robert Putnam's theory (2000), social capital encompasses three main elements: trust, norms, and networks. Within the Asy-Syahadatain community, spiritual trust in the spiritual leader and fellow congregants serves as a glue that enables collective cooperation to occur without complicated bureaucratic mechanisms (Putnam, 2000).

This solidarity is built through intense collective spiritual experiences, such as during the commemoration of the great haul in Panguragan, which brought together thousands of worshippers from various regions (Durkheim, 1912). Regular interactions in the zikir (remembrance) and tawasulan (religious prayer) assemblies create a deep sense of belonging, which then transforms into symbolic capital that provides moral legitimacy for members' actions (Howell, 2001). This social trust is crucial, especially for urban worshippers, as it provides moral security amidst the often competitive and uncertain urban environment (Howell, 2001; Ni'am, 2016). Through these networks, worshippers often help each other find jobs, provide capital for small businesses, or simply provide strong emotional support.

One of the unique strengths of the Asy-Syahadatain Order is its ability to foster solidarity across class and generations. In an urban space highly stratified by economic status and education, the order offers an egalitarian spiritual platform. This is symbolically reflected in the use of all-white clothing in rituals, which erases barriers of social status. In a gathering, a

prominent businessman, lecturer, or official can sit alongside a factory worker, a small trader, or a farmer, chanting the same dhikr (Agustiningsih et al., 2021).

This phenomenon creates a condition that Victor Turner calls communitas, a sense of egalitarian unity that arises from shared religious experience (Bruinessen, 1994; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; V. Turner & Abrahams, 2017). This cross-class solidarity ensures organic social redistribution: those with material advantages help those in need, consciously recognizing themselves as "brothers in the shahada" (Putnam, 2000; Rosyid, 2019). The tarekat's leadership structure, based on spiritual competence (charismatic authority), rather than formal power or wealth, further reinforces this egalitarian climate (Agustiningsih et al., 2021; Weber, 1978). Thus, the tarekat becomes a space where worldly hierarchies are dissolved by a shared spiritual awareness, granting each member a sense of equal dignity before God (Agustiningsih et al., 2021; V. Turner & Abrahams, 2017).

Life in large cities is often characterized by anonymity, individualism, and a weakening of traditional social cohesion (Roof, 1999). In these conditions, the tarekat community exists as a spiritual oasis or "symbolic home" for urban congregations (Bauman, 2001; Bourdieu, 1991). The tarekat provides what is called a spiritual kinship system, in which the relationship between teacher and student and among fellow congregants is understood as an extended family bond (Bruinessen, 1994; Howell, 2001).

For urban congregations experiencing existential alienation, involvement in the tarekat provides moral direction and peace of mind through the recitation of the Shahadatain, which serves as an antidote to life's stresses (Pasha-Zaidi, 2021; B. S. Turner, 2011). This social cohesion is maintained even though physical interaction in cities is less frequent than in villages. Through alternative mechanisms such as WhatsApp groups, online religious studies, and spontaneous social assistance, congregations build network-based solidarity that transcends distance and time. This solidarity allows urban individuals to maintain an anchor in their traditional identity amidst the fluid currents of modernity (Bauman, 2001).

Modernity and digitalization have not killed the tarekat's moral economy, but rather have given it a new medium. Currently, urban Ash-Syahadatain congregations are beginning to utilize digital technology to strengthen their support systems (Auliyah & Basuki, 2022). The use of QRIS for congregational alms, online fundraising (crowdfunding) for haul celebrations, and marketing congregational MSME products through social media are all forms of intelligent adaptation to the modern economy (Yasinatul, 2025).

These digital economic activities are still carried out based on the principles of barakah economics, the belief that sustenance shared sincerely will bring collective blessings to the entire congregation. Young urban congregations play a crucial role in this process, mediating the congregation's da'wah and fundraising in the digital public sphere, creating a synergy between traditional values and contemporary innovation (Eickelman & Piscatori, 2004; Saputra & Triantoro, 2021). This transformation demonstrates that the Asy-Syahadatain Congregation has successfully integrated spiritual and social capital, ensuring that social and economic support continues to flow to all members, whether they reside in the village center or in luxury urban apartments (Ni'am, 2016).

The social and moral economic capital within the Asy-Syahadatain Sufi Order demonstrates that this Sufi organization is more than just an isolated traditional dhikr group. It is a robust support system capable of addressing the challenges of poverty and urban individualism (Wuthnow, 2023). Through collective almsgiving, cross-class solidarity, and the use of technology, the order builds a humanistic social order, where spirituality energizes

shared well-being (H. Campbell, 2013; Hazami & Azca, 2024; Putnam, 2000). Asy-Syahadatain demonstrates that, amidst the arid anonymity of the city, spiritual togetherness can transform into a tangible and sustainable socio-economic force (Wuthnow, 2023).

Cross-Generation Solidarity: A Symbiosis of Tradition and Digital Innovation

In the sociological dynamics of the Asy-Syahadatain Congregation, social cohesion is built not only through shared spiritual identity but also through intense and symbiotic interactions between generations. Amidst the currents of urban modernity and the penetration of information technology, this congregation demonstrates extraordinary resilience by establishing intergenerational solidarity that is not rigidly hierarchical, but rather dialogical and participatory. This phenomenon demonstrates how the Sufi tradition, rooted in Cirebon's rural culture, is able to renegotiate its identity to remain relevant to the younger generation growing up in a digital ecosystem.

Within the structure of the Asy-Syahadatain community, there is an organic yet strategic division of roles between senior and younger members (Durkheim, 1912). The older generation, often raised in traditional Islamic boarding schools and village religious studies, acts as the guardian of essential values and ritual authenticity (sanad). They hold the authority to ensure that spiritual practices such as the Dhikr of the Syahadatain, Aurodan, Nazhaman, and Tawasulan are maintained in accordance with the guidance of the previous murshid, Habib Umar bin Isma'il bin Yahya (Durkheim, 1912). For the older generation, physical togetherness and disciplined manners are key indicators of spiritual loyalty.

On the other hand, the younger generation, particularly those residing in urban areas like Bandung and Jakarta, act as media mediators and innovators. They bring new "cultural capital" in the form of technical skills in packaging tarekat traditions into contemporary digital platforms. These innovations include creating da'wah content on YouTube, distributing wirid (prayer chants) through WhatsApp groups, and packaging tarekat history in podcast form (Durkheim, 1912; Eickelman & Piscatori, 2004; Saputra & Triantoro, 2021). Through this role, the younger generation engages in what is known as a mediated tradition; they do not change the core teachings (continuity), but rather alter the way those teachings are distributed (change) to make them acceptable to a highly mobile urban audience (Hervieu-Léger, 2000).

This process is a form of negotiated tradition as conceptualized by Hervieu-Léger (2000), in which religious traditions are maintained not through the repetition of frozen forms, but through the adaptation of meanings that allow them to survive amidst social change. The older generation guarantees authenticity, while the younger generation ensures relevance (Hervieu-Léger, 2000).

This intergenerational symbiosis has given rise to what is known as a Spiritual Learning Network. This network operates in a two-way, mutually beneficial way. On the one hand, young congregants consciously position themselves as students, learning adab (traditional Islamic teachings), Sufi ethics, and spiritual depth from the kiai (Islamic scholars) and elders (Eickelman & Piscatori, 2004; Saputra & Triantoro, 2021). They understand that while religious information can be found online, the "soul" and spiritual authority can only be obtained through direct guidance and the transmission of the sanad (traditional Islamic chain) maintained by the older generation (Durkheim, 1912).

On the other hand, kiai (Islamic scholars) and senior figures are leveraging the technical skills and creativity of the younger generation to expand the reach of community da'wah in

urban public spaces and online (Eickelman & Piscatori, 2004; Saputra & Triantoro, 2021). Kiai who traditionally preached in prayer rooms (langgar) or Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) can now reach congregations in apartments or offices through the help of young people who manage live streaming of dhikr (recitation) and religious study groups. This creates a "bridging" leadership model, where traditional authority is not lost but instead transformed into a broader-reaching digital-spiritual authority (Eickelman & Anderson, 2003; Lubis, 2023).

In this network, Sufi values such as sincerity, humility, and brotherhood become the main glue (Weber, 1978). The solidarity that is built transcends age boundaries; they are united by a feeling of "being part of a large spiritual family" (Howell, 2001; Putnam, 2000). This is in line with Victor Turner's (1969) concept of community, where collective rituals such as Haul or Aurodan create an egalitarian atmosphere that erases generational and social status barriers (Bruinessen, 1994; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Although this symbiosis has been productive, challenges remain in the form of potential tensions in perceptions regarding the "totality" of religion (Durkheim, 1912; Hervieu-Léger, 2000). Older generations sometimes worry that the younger generation's flexibility in using digital media could diminish the spiritual depth and discipline of the congregation. Conversely, younger urbanites find the demands of rigid physical presence often difficult to meet amidst career pressures and the fast-paced pace of the city.

However, field findings suggest that these tensions did not lead to destructive fragmentation, but rather to selective adaptation (H. Campbell, 2013). The Asy-Syahadatain congregation developed internal criteria to distinguish between activities that could be digitized (such as general religious studies and history) and those that still required physical presence and secrecy (dhikr khafi or bai'at) (Hutchings, 2017).

This intergenerational solidarity ultimately strengthens the congregation's identity as a hybrid community, combining the Sufi traditions of Islamic boarding schools with digital modernity (Saputra & Rosidi, 2022). This identity is no longer confined to the geographic space of Panguragan, Cirebon, but has become a mobile and flexible networked identity (H. A. Campbell & Tsuria, 2016; Schielke, 2015). The younger generation ensures that the order has a "modern face" on social media, while the older generation ensures that the order's "traditional heart" continues to beat through the preservation of the sanad.

The symbiosis between senior and younger congregants within the Asy-Syahadatain Order proves that the Nusantara Sufi tradition is not a static entity, but rather an adaptive spiritual organism. The cross-generational solidarity formed through the Spiritual Learning Network enables the order to navigate the transition from an agrarian society to an urban-digital one without losing its essence. This is what makes Asy-Syahadatain a model of sustainable religiosity capable of nurturing inner depth amidst the hustle and bustle of a fluid postmodern world.

CONCLUSION

This research fundamentally proves that in the socio-cultural landscape of urban society, the Sufi Order (Tarekat) has not experienced stagnation or marginalization due to modernity. Instead, field findings indicate that the Sufi Order (Tarekat Asy-Syahadatain) has transformed into an adaptive spiritual community capable of creatively managing urban pressures, plurality, and technological advancement. This transformation invalidates the classic assumption of

secularization that predicted the decline of religion in urban spaces; instead, what has occurred is a desecularization, or re-sacralization, of public space through contemporary expressions of religiosity. This adaptability is evident in the emergence of a "hybrid spirituality" model, where congregations successfully combine physical ritual activities in congregations with intensive use of digital spaces. The use of WhatsApp groups, YouTube, and live streaming of dhikr (remembrance) is not merely a technical communication tool, but has become an extension of the sacred space, enabling congregations to stay connected.

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