



## Mediated Tarīqat Qādiriyyat wa Naqshabandiyyat in the Digital Era: An Ethnographic Overview

This article examines the utilization of online media among members of Tarīqat Qādiriyyat wa Naqshabandiyyat in strengthening their existence. As an integral part of the Islamic revival in Indonesia, sufi orders are facing remarkable challenges and opportunities in maintaining their teachings in the digital age. Nevertheless, previous studies observed sufi orders as traditional communities that would be exterminated by the pace of modernization and globalization. This article argues that sufi orders may survive in the internet of things era, contrary to preceding discourses. Based on ethnography research, both online and offline, the authors found out that sufi orders could adapt, develop, and innovate using online media. TQN's use of online media through various platforms illustrates sufi orders' adaptive efforts to the internet-based era. TQN's online media provide pieces of information on Islamic and sufism teachings, news, schedule of activities, and fundraising. Even though TQN members' being active in cyber environments, they resist online asceticism thus leverage vertical-personal obedience, conservative authorities, and sacred rituals. These practices done by TQN members illuminate its identity as authentic sufism online. Premises shown in this paper may enrich the scope of study within the relationship of sufi orders and the Islamic-cyber environment, especially in the Indonesian context.

**Keywords:** Tarīqat Qādiriyyat wa Naqshabandiyyat; Online sufism; Islamic-cyber environment

Artikel ini mengamati pemanfaatan media daring di kalangan penganut Tarīqat Qādiriyyat wa Naqshabandiyyat dalam rangka memperkuat eksistensi mereka. Sebagai bagian integral dari kebangkitan Islam di Indonesia, komunitas tarekat menghadapi peluang dan tantangan besar untuk mempertahankan ajaran di zaman digital. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa tarekat mampu bertahan di era yang serba digital, berbanding terbalik dibandingkan dengan kajian-kajian sebelumnya. Berdasarkan penelitian etnografi, baik secara luring dan daring, penulis menemukan bahwa ketahanan tarekat-tarekat dapat beradaptasi, berkembang, dan berinovasi dengan memanfaatkan media daring. Pemberdayaan media daring oleh TQN di berbagai platform mengilustrasikan upaya adaptif tarekat-tarekat atas era berbasis internet. Media daring TQN menyajikan berbagai informasi mengenai ajaran keislaman dan tasawuf, berita, agenda kegiatan, dan penggalangan dana. Sekalipun anggota-anggota TQN aktif di lingkungan siber, mereka menolak praktik bertarekat secara daring sembari memperkuat ketaatan vertikal-personal, otoritas-otoritas konservatif, serta ritual yang sakral. Praktik-praktik yang dilakukan oleh TQN memperkuat identitasnya sebagai sufisme daring yang autentik. Berbagai premis yang dipaparkan di dalam makalah dapat memperluas wilayah kajian mengenai hubungan antara tarekat dan lingkungan siber-Islam, khususnya pada konteks keindonesiaan.

**Kata Kunci:** Tarekat Qādiriyyat wa Naqshabandiyyat; Sufisme Daring; Lingkungan siber-Islam

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nggi.ac.id**Dates:**Received 25 Des. 2020  
Revised 16 Feb. 2021  
Accepted 02 Apr. 2021  
Published 15 Apr. 2021**How to cite this article:**Taufik, Zulfan and  
Muhammad Taufik. 2021,  
'Mediated Tarīqat  
Qādiriyyat wa  
Naqshabandiyyat in the  
Digital Era: An  
Ethnographic Overview'  
*ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu  
Ushuluddin* 22(1), 35-43.  
[https://doi.org/10.14421/  
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## Introduction

Sufism (*taṣawwuf* in Arabic) has become an integral part of the Islamic revival in Indonesia in recent decades. Around the 1980s and 1990s, mass media had reported that the urban middle class is involved in spiritual organizations, including sufi orders (*turūq*, *ṭarīqat* singular). The rising numbers of *ṭarīqat* in the Indonesian archipelagos show that spiritual teachings could exist even though being criticized by modernist-puritan groups, who later received public recognition as orthodox Islam.<sup>1</sup> Some of the early 20th century theologians and historians redefine sufi orders as groups of rural grassroots communities that will be eroded in the modern era.<sup>2</sup> Eventually, these arguments and theories may reduce the vitality of sufism in the contemporary context.

Thus contemporary problems faced by the contemporary successors of sufi orders have arisen. Martin van Bruinessen believes that sufi orders shall evolve when modernization reaches society.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, sufi orders can survive in modern times due to the continuous adaptations of their members against cycles of times.<sup>4</sup> Various sufi orders reflected their extend beyond Asia

and the Middle East.<sup>5</sup> However, these communities yet facing challenges in establishing their presence in the context of the digital era. This phenomenon ignites debates regarding the implications of the internet and online media on the religious life.

The influence of technology on sufism can be seen, for example, from social accounts and websites that disseminate various informations. Numbers of literature on this subject illustrate that the incoming cyber environment has brought transformation for religious life. This illustration could be drawn in Dawson and Cowan (2004)<sup>6</sup>, Højsgaard and Warburg (2005)<sup>7</sup>, Setiansah (2015)<sup>8</sup>, and Fakhruroji (2019)<sup>9</sup>. This new form of religious life begins with the reconstruction of its identities and patterns, the dissemination of information on religion, and the reshaped relationship between online religious practices and offline ones.

In some cases, a study conducted by Schmidt (2004) on the European sufi order shows the authority and charismatic personality of Shaykh Kabbani and his Grand *Shaykh* play a central role in the appearance of Naqshabandi on the

<sup>1</sup> Martin van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell, eds., *Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam* (London: IB Tauris, 2006); Julia Day Howell, "Sufism and the Indonesian Islamic Revival," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60, no. 3 (2001): 701–729; Zulfan Taufik, "Sufisme Perennial Pada Masyarakat Perkotaan: Kasus Padepokan Thaha Jakarta," *Jurnal Penelitian Keislaman* 11, no. 1 (2015): 1–16; Dadi Darmadi, "The New Flourishing Vivacity of Contemporary Indonesian Islam," *Studia Islamika* 8, no. 1 (2001): 205–210; Din Wahid, "Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam," *Studia Islamika* 10, no. 3 (2003): 191–198.

<sup>2</sup> Itzhak Weismann, "Sufism in the Age of Globalisation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, ed. L. Ridgeon (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 257–281.

<sup>3</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, "Saints, Politician and Sufi Bureocrats: Mysticism and Politics in Indonesia's New Order," in *Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam*, ed. Martin van Bruinessen (London: IB Tauris, 2006), 111.

<sup>4</sup> Zulfan Taufik, *Wajah Perennial Sufisme Perkotaan Indonesia* (Tangerang Selatan: Onglam Books, 2017); Marcia Hermansen, "Hybrid Identity Formations in Muslim America: The Case of American Sufi Movements," *The Muslim World* 90, no. 1/2 (2000): 158–197; Jamal Malik and John Hinnels, eds., *Sufism in the West* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Sean Foley, "The

Naqshbandiyya-Khalidiyya, Islamic Sainthood, and Religion in Modern Times," *Journal of World History* 19, no. 4 (2008): 521–545.

<sup>5</sup> Andrew Rawlinson, "Sufism in the Western History: A Primary Outline," *Falsafeh* 37, no. 2 (2009): See; Catharina Raudvere and Leif Stenberg, eds., *Sufism Today: Heritage and Tradition in the Global Community* (London: IB Tauris, 2009); Julianne Hazen, "Contemporary Islamic Sufism in America: The Philosophy and Practices of the Alami Tariqa in Waterport, New York" (SOAS-University of London, 2011); Suha Taji-Farouki, *Beshara and Ibn 'Arabi: A Movement of Sufi Spirituality in the Modern World* (Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Lorne L Dawson and Douglas E Cowan, eds., *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> M. T Højsgaard and M. Warburg, *Religion and Cyberspace* (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> Mite Setiansah, "Smartphonisasi Agama: Transformasi Perilaku Beragama Perempuan Urban Di Era Digital," *Jurnal Komunikasi* 10, no. 1 (2015): 1–10.

<sup>9</sup> Moch Fakhruroji, "Digitalizing Islamic Lectures: Islamic Apps and Religious Engagement in Contemporary Indonesia," *Contemporary Islam* 13, no. 2 (2019): 201–215.





internet.<sup>10</sup> Websites created by the members of Naqshabandi order illustrate that traditional religious messages could be spreaded using the modern media. Regarding the urgency of the internet for the expanse of sufism order, Milani and Possamai (2013),<sup>11</sup> Piraino (2016),<sup>12</sup> and Dudoignon (2020)<sup>13</sup> found that the cyber environment has become the most critical and valuable media for some sufi orders in showing their existence.

The digital platform acts as the instrument to share, inform, and promote teachings on Islam and sufism. It may also reduce the socio-structural distance between a *murshid* (sufi master) and his disciples. Furthermore, the internet also becoming a new medium to live religious practices such as praying and public lecturing, especially for Naqshabandi Haqqani and Ni'matullahi orders.

As for the Indonesian context, there is no research to be found that explicitly examines the face of sufi orders on the internet. Just like in Europe and North America, some Indonesian sufi orders take advantage of the internet as a medium to expand their existence. One of the sufi orders actively using the internet is the *Tariqat Qādiriyyat wa Naqshabandiyyat*, abbreviated as "TQN". Many researchers have carried studies on TQN from anthropological<sup>14</sup>, philological<sup>15</sup>, and historical<sup>16</sup> perspectives. However, none have specifically looked at TQN's performance in "the internet of things" era. This sort of research is essential to illustrate the vitality of the Indonesian sufi orders.

This article examines the utilization of the internet and online media among members of TQN in strengthening their existence. Studies on the mediated sufi orders in the digital era are presumably a new trend of discourse. This kind of research illuminates the existence of online sufism communities in Indonesia and their significance to religious life worldwide. The research consists of ethnographic methods, both online and offline. The authors had carried the virtual ethnography method by observing websites, e-commerce, and social media of TQN-Center, a virtual community center affiliated to the sufi order *Tariqat Qādiriyyat wa Naqshabandiyyat Suryalaya*. The researchers had also performed some participatory observations and in-depth interviews with the secretariat of TQN Center and TQN News in Rawamangun, Jakarta from September to October 2019.

### Getting to Know TQN and TQN Center

*Tariqat Qādiriyyat wa Naqshabandiyyat* is a combination of two main sufi orders in Indonesia, which are *Qādiriyyat* order and *Naqshabandiyyat* order. The merging of these two orders was initiated by an Indonesian *murshid* of both orders named Shaykh Ahmad Khatib al-Sambasi (1802-1872). Al-Sambasi did not teach *Qādiriyyat* order and *Naqshabandiyyat* order as a single unity that had to be fully practiced in balance, even though each order has its method in terms of principles, rules, or teaching. Therefore, his teaching becomes a new order

<sup>10</sup> Garbi Schmidt, "Sufi Charisma on the Internet," in *Sufism in Europe and North America* (London: Routledge, 2004), 109–125.

<sup>11</sup> Milad Milani and Adam Possamai, "The Nimatullahiya and Naqshbandiya Sufi Orders on the Internet: The Cyber-Construction of Tradition and the McDonaldisation of Spirituality," *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion* 26, no. 1 (2013): 51–75.

<sup>12</sup> Francesco Piraino, "Between Real and Virtual Communities: Sufism in Western Societies and the Naqshbandi Haqqani Case," *Social Compass* 63, no. 1 (2016): 93–108.

<sup>13</sup> Stéphane A. Dudoignon, "Cyber-Sufism," in *Sufi Institutions*, ed. A. Papas (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 405–414.

<sup>14</sup> Khotimah, "Studi Sufisme Thariqah Qadiriyyah Wa Naqsyabandiyah Di Desa Madani Pulau Kijang Reteh Indragiri Hilir Riau," *An-Nida': Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 39, no. 2 (2014): 199–214.

<sup>15</sup> R. Aris Hidayat, "Makna Ritual Dalam Risalah Tarekat Qadiriyyah Naqsyabandiyah," *Jurnal Analisa* 17, no. 1 (2010): 105–115.

<sup>16</sup> Aly Mashar, "Geneologi Dan Penyebaran Thariqah Qadiriyyah Wa Naqshabandiyah Di Jawa," *Al-A'raf: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam dan Filsafat* 13, no. 2 (2016): 233–262; Ajid Thohir, *Gerakan Politik Kaum Tarekat: Telaah Historis Gerakan Politik Antikolonialisme Tarekat Qadiriyyah-Naqsyabandiyah Di Pulau Jawa* (Bandung: Pustaka Hidayah, 2002).





named *Qādiriyat wa Naqshabandiyat*, different from its two basic orders.<sup>17</sup>

The discussion focused on the TQN-Center affiliated with *TQN Suryalaya*. The TQN Center, as the name suggests, is the domain of activities for this sufi order located in Jakarta. This institution was inaugurated in February 2011 A.D. or Rabī'u al-Awwāl 1432 Hijri. The TQN Center uses al-Mubarak Mosque as its domain which is located on Balai Pustaka Baru I St., No. 29, Rawamangun, East Jakarta. This mosque is located in a crowd neighborhood. There are many stationaries, food stalls, and praying palaces nearby with a great number of visitors. This condition becomes a very strategic opportunity for expanding the existence of this order.

The establishment of TQN Center began alongside with the rapid growth of numbers of *TQN Suryalaya* members in the capital city. There are presumably an incoming new member (*ikhwan*—as TQN members are called) in each hagiography (*manāqib*) which is held in a large

space. The schedule book of hagiography in 2010 published by Yayasan Serba Bakti (YSB) Suryalaya Jakarta notes that there are 35 *manāqib* occurred in South Jakarta, 20 in East Jakarta, 14 in West Jakarta, 8 in North Jakarta, and 11 in Central Jakarta with a total of 88 assemblies annually. This number does not include half assemblies that do not want to be registered for several reasons.<sup>18</sup> Various activities have taken place in TQN Center according to one of its administrators namely courses, seminars, scholastic studies, daily prayer, visits, Quranic recitation, assemblies *manāqib*, and staying at the mosque or *i'tikāf*.<sup>19</sup>

### TQN's Cyber Environment

After the existence of the TQN Center, TQN Suryalaya is quite adaptive in utilizing online media to reach wider connectivity. To manage TQN Suryalaya's online basis, the TQN Center has a specialized team called TQN News. It is focus on managing TQN media and content on

<sup>17</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning: Pesantren Dan Tarekat* (Bandung: Mizan, 1995), 215; Asfa Widiyanto, "Embodying Popular Piety: Code of Conduct and Death Anniversary in the Tariqah Qādiriyah Wa Naqshabandiyah," *Ullumuna* 20, no. 2 (2016): 263–292; The spread of the TQN in Indonesia is estimated to have begun since the middle of the 19th century, precisely between 1853 when Shaykh Ahmad Khatib al-Sambasi's students returned from Mecca to Indonesia. In West Kalimantan, TQN was spread by two of his students: Shaykh Nuruddin and Shaykh Muhammad Sa'ad. However, because they did not go through educational institutions such as pesantren, this sufi order was only spread among the middle-class society hence it did not significantly progress.

In contrast to what happened in Kalimantan, the spread of the TQN in Java gained significant progress since those who spread the TQN were kyai's and pilgrims who generally had educational institutions, at least assemblies or *rabat* (spiritual guidance institutions). Thus, making it easier for them to develop it. Besides, there is a communication between them and their center in Mecca, either through the next pilgrims or through a letter or personal emissary of the shaykh, as was done by Shaykh Marzuki as Shaykh Abdul Karim Banten's emissary, who was in Mecca. Thus, the spread and development of the TQN could continue to be strengthened and developed.

Zamakhsyari Dhofier said that in the 1970s there were

four TQN centers in Java and all of them were affiliated with Islamic boarding schools: Rejoso, Jombang, East Java, led by KH. Romli Tamim who took Shaykh Ahmad Hasbullah's teaching; Suryalaya, Tasikmalaya, West Java, led by KH. Shohibul Wafa Tajul Arifin who took the teachings of Shaykh Tolhah Cirebon; Mranggen, Demak, Central Java, led by KH. Muslih Abdurrahman; and Pangentongan, Bogor, West Java, led by KH. Thohir Falak. The last two TQNs take Syekh Abdul Karim Banten's teaching. Through these teachings and links, TQN became one of the most popular sufi orders and had the most significant disciples, surpass the number of disciples of its rival sufi order, the Tariqat Naqshabandiyah Khalidiyah.

See Thohir, *Gerakan Politik Kaum Tarekat: Telaah Historis Gerakan Politik Antikolonialisme Tarekat Qadiriyah-Naqshabandiyah Di Pulau Jawa*, 116–7; Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Tentang Pandangan Hidup Kyai* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1985), 95; Sri Mulyati, *Mengenal Dan Memahami Tarekat-Tarekat Muktabarah Di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2006), 258–9; Mashar, "Geneologi Dan Penyebaran Thariqah Qadiriyah Wa Naqshabandiyah Di Jawa"; Zulkifli, *Sufism in Java: The Role of Pesantren in The Maintenance of Sufism in Java* (Jakarta and Leiden: INIS, 2002), 35.

<sup>18</sup> Han, "Sejarah TQN Center (TQNC)," *TQN News*, March 2, 2013, accessed May 25, 2021, <https://www.tqnnews.com/sejarah-tqn-center-tqnc/>.

<sup>19</sup> Andika, "TQN Center Activities," direct interview, October 7, 2019.





the online media.<sup>20</sup> The online media used is the mainstream media that almost all Indonesians use. Through this online media, TQN shows its existence in more innovative way. Below are the online media used by TQN Suryalaya's:

### A. Website

TQN Center manages [tqnnews.com](http://tqnnews.com) as the official website in widespreading news and information regarding to the order. Aside from the website, TQN Center also utilize media accounts such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. There are seven pages containing different themes on this website.

The first page is "homepage" which summarize latest news titles and information about social and humanitarian activities carried out by TQN Suryalaya and it's under bow organizations such as the TQN Da'wah Institute (LDTQN) and Mrs. Bella (TQN Suryalaya women's association). Through this homepage, it can be seen that TQN wants to highlight their identities which are not only concerned about spiritual life but also social life. The second page contains four different news such as national news, international news, journey notes, and opinion. *Kajian* (study) in the third page aims to discover about Islamic and sufism teaching. It is divided into three forms such as articles, audio, and video.

The fourth page, *Inspirasi* (Inspiration), contains various information related to the TQN profile in the Profile Tariqat subpage and quotes from TQN figures. The fifth page, *amaliah*, is divided into five sub-pages namely *tanbih*, *daily*, *weekly*, *monthly*, and *Rajab sunnah prayers*. There is a calendar that summarizes the information and agenda of the TQN Suryalaya Islamic Boarding School, which can be accessed by anyone interested in the sixth page. The last page is the donation with no more information because it is still under development.

Tqnnews.com uses a light color display and an eye-catching design. This user-centered

design provides convenience for young readers as well as the elderly. This website is complete in presenting interdisciplinary Islamic issues so it doesn't seem monotonous. TQN facilitates today's trends by posts some interesting quotes that can be easily shared on readers' social media accounts.<sup>21</sup>

### B. Social Media

In February 2020, TQN has 10,727 likes and 11,445 followers on Facebook and the number is still counting. From the observation, TQN's Facebook account is productive and gets quite a lot of responses from public including questions, statements, and compliments that are generally positive. In terms of content, they are still consistent with Islamic and sufism studies, and also some social issues.

TQN News Facebook account also routinely uploads schedules, teachings, and information related to their activities. However, there is no response given by the admin of this account to the public comments. This indicates that TQN actively shares information but is passive in direct discussions.

Twitter is a platform that is more widely used by young people and influencers in comparison to the another platform, Facebook. Twitter's characteristics allow users to make light tweets till weighty threads. Its flexibility seems to create TQN's Twitter account somewhat different than its account on other social media platforms. TQN News's Twitter account, which has 2,484 followers (As per February 4, 2020), has been around for the past decade. This is a long period of time for an account of a Tariqat to stand. This account is productive enough to write some tweets, although they do not do it every day.

Most of the tweets are inspirational quotes, sufi's life advice, prayers for good, information about activities, studies, discussions held by TQN, to some latest general issues. Contrast to the more formal language used on Facebook,

<sup>20</sup> Kholis, "TQN News' Administration," direct interview, October 8, 2019.

<sup>21</sup> Nugraha Ramadhan, "TQN News' Administration," direct interview, October 8, 2019.





language and greetings on the Twitter account of TQN News are more slang, such as the greetings of “bro”, “sis” and other language patterns. This indicates there is significant segment of people targeted by TQN News (young people). All in all, TQN adaptive effort’s deserves to be appreciated. However, there are still gaps that could ideally be filled to further strengthen the role of TQN in Twitter, for example by making threads to make more deeply bound to the disciples.

TQN’s instagram has the highest number of followers. In their instagram account, there are a number of highlights: (1) *manaqib* schedule, which contains their *manaqib* schedule activity; (2) *ngopi* (*Ngobrol Perihal Ihsan*) talks about good deeds, which includes video link schedules; (3) news, containing links or screenshots of the latest news; (4) events, that provide program posters or TQN activities; and (5) poll/ask, which is a question-answer media and polling.

The most attracted thing on TQN’s instagram is the poll/ ask features. This makes TQN’s Instagram much better in interact and communicate to their followers. The ask feature allows TQN to ask questions so that their followers can answer it, then it can be responded by the TQN. While the poll feature makes it easy for TQN to gather opinions from its followers. Thus, the followers will psychologically feel more appreciated. This situation can gradually form deeper bonds between TQN and its members. From a visual and design perspective, TQN’s instagram account is fresher and more up-to-date rather than the facebook and twitter. This feature really makes tariqat materials more acceptable for the public.

In other way, TQN also has its own official YouTube account. TQN’s YouTube channel takes a different position. On their YouTube, there is an opening video played automatically, entitled “How Does God Communicate with Humans?” This 1 minute 38-second video is a fragment of a study presented by Wahfiudin Sakam, explaining how God communicates with humans. This video describes the goals and

themes highlighted by TQN on its YouTube channel, called spirituality and theology.

The YouTube channel, which already has around 12,500 subscribers (January 12, 2020), reviews a lot of things related to sufi in Indonesia. Theological and sufism are presented in a simple form and language. The TQN’s YouTube channel consistently uploads its studies in the form of video according to their weekly schedule. For News & Information uploads every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; Rihlah on Tuesday; Question and Answer session every Thursday; Study & Tausiyah on every Saturday; and Manaqib & Khatam every Sunday.

### C. E-Commerce

The existence of TQN is not only on social media but also on electronic commerce. E-commerce was chosen as an independent TQN fund raising as the strategy to follow the trend and make the transactions easier. TQN has two e-commerce platforms, which are Tokopedia and BukaLapak.

TQN’s first e-commerce is Tokopedia, which was made in March 2018 under the name Toko Amaniah Kitab. This shop sells products such as Suryalaya boarding school books, Islamic books, classical Islamic books, and merchandise. From statistical data, it seems that this shop already sells around 900 products. The other e-commerce is BukaLapak, which was made in July 2018. The products offered here are more numerous and varied than those in the Tokopedia. The products are: classical Islamic books, sufism books, Suryalaya books, Quran with translation, and religious accessories such as clothes, hats, caps, turban, and perfumes. Both Tokopedia and BukaLapak have very good customer satisfaction ratings and good reviews. This point shows the level of adaptation and utilization of digital media that is good for the TQN.

### TQN as Sufism Online

In the context of religion and online media, Helland has made a distinction between religion





online and online religion.<sup>22</sup> Religion online is related to the information and content about religious movements or institutions, whereas online religion is related to online religious experience. More specifically, Piraino<sup>23</sup> has also categorized sufism online and online sufism when applying Helland's theory in capturing the existence of Tariqat in the West.

In traditional teachings, rituals of the religion are something that should not be questioned, and exclusively for the religion member. Religion is privacy that should not be brought up or discussed in public. However, along with the information and digital technology advances with its distinctive culture, religious practices have also transformed.<sup>24</sup> "What is meant by religion today is no longer what it once," as stated by Possamai.<sup>25</sup> With the development and expansion of the internet, religious organizations trying to establish their presence, control, and authority.<sup>26</sup> Religion knowledge is no longer secret, and even appears to have become a public commodity. Every spiritual technique, including sufism, is now accessible for individuals to find and learn.<sup>27</sup>

Sufism is a large part of the presence of Islam on the internet. Sufism started to grow in the internet from the mid-1990s. It indicates that sufi are able to use multidirectional media to reinvent the practices.<sup>28</sup> The paradoxical condition is shown by the sufi while trying to fight the social

forces of modernity using the modern tool (internet).<sup>29</sup>

TQN strategy to use the online media seems related to Helland's religion online theory or Piraino's sufism online theory. TQN uses online media as the instrument of promotion of sufism, reporting activities, information about their agenda, Islamic and sufism learning, ritual, and fundraisings. TQN on its social media only provides basic information and there is no space for online *bai'at* (pledge of loyalty). This can be seen from *talqin* agreement (*ijma'*) of TQN Suryalaya (March 22, 2013) where one of the points said, "Talqin Representatives (*bai'at*) are not allowed to give remotely (using electronic devices such as cellphones, internet, telecoms and so on) because in the process of *talqin dhikr*, between the giver of *talqin* with the person who is given *talqin*, they have to meet face to face and there must be sense between them."

The existence of TQN as sufism online is also seen in the efforts to maintain religious control and traditional authority. The variety of information about doctrines and dogmas in TQN, is communicated in a top-down format. There is no room for users to engage in discussions and contribute their personal beliefs and opinions to the website and social media. Even if there is a room for discussion, it is limited for questions and appreciations only. Information presented on online media is controlled by TQN organizations using a one-

<sup>22</sup> Christopher Helland, "Online Religion/Religion Online and Virtual Communities," in *Religion on the Internet: Research Prospect*, ed. JK Hadden and DE Cowan (London: JAI Press/Elsevier Science, 2000), 205–224; Christopher Helland, "Online Religion as Lived Religion: Methodological Issues in the Study of Religious Participation on the Internet," *Online-Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet* 1, no. 1 (2005): 1–16.

<sup>23</sup> Piraino, "Between Real and Virtual Communities: Sufism in Western Societies and the Naqshbandi Haqqani Case."

<sup>24</sup> Setiansah, "Smartphonisasi Agama: Transformasi Perilaku Beragama Perempuan Urban Di Era Digital"; Fakhruroji, "Digitalizing Islamic Lectures: Islamic Apps and Religious Engagement in Contemporary Indonesia."

<sup>25</sup> Adam Possamai, *Religion and Popular Culture: A Hyper-Real Testament* (Brussels: P.I.E. Peter-Lang, 2005), 35.

<sup>26</sup> Christopher Helland, "Popular Religion and the World Wide Web: A Match Made in (Cyber) Heaven," in *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, ed. Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan (New York: Routledge, 2004), 23–35; Muhammad Muhammad and Mohamad Yusup, "Exegetic Cyberwar: Religious Dialectics In New Media," *Esensia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 20, no. 2 (2019): 171–182.

<sup>27</sup> Milani and Possamai, "The Nimatullahiya and Naqshbandiya Sufi Orders on the Internet: The Cyber-Construction of Tradition Andthe McDonaldisation of Spirituality."

<sup>28</sup> Dudoignon, "Cyber-Sufism."

<sup>29</sup> Mark Bryson-Richardson, "Cybertariqas: Sufism in the Diaspora, Identity and Virtual Community," *Islamica* 3, no. 1 (1999): 75.





way communication form. As Helland said, this form is usually established by official religions, which can be defined as “a set of beliefs and practices that are determined, regulated and socialized by organized religious groups”<sup>30</sup>. In other words, in the view of the creators of religion online, the internet is a medium for continuing control and their institutional structure online and a tool for sending their messages, not a place to discuss religious beliefs and practices.

### Conclusion

Tariqat Qādiriyyat wa Naqshabandiyyat (TQN) Suryalaya utilize the cyber environment as a medium for delivering news and activities. Therefore, its members rejects the concept of online *bai'at* which indicates their identity as an authentic sufism online—borrowing Helland’s terminology. Although the members of TQN Suryalaya and TQN-Center uses social media, they are completely different in comparison to another orders, especially the digital based ones, whose treat the internet not only for promoting and spreading information related to Islam and sufism but also carry out religious experiences within the users.

To conclude, this study shows how sufi orders make their significance to the Islamic cyber environment—especially in Indonesian context. Contrary to preceding discourses that observed sufi orders as traditional communities that would be exterminated by the modernity, this article argues that sufism orders (*tariqat*) are significant integral part of the Islamic revival in Indonesia.

### Acknowledgements

This article results from research supported by IAIN Bukittinggi. A draft of this article was presented at the 19th Annual International Conference on Islamic Studies (AICIS) of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Oct. 1-4, 2019.

<sup>30</sup> Helland, “Online Religion/Religion Online and Virtual Communities.”

### Competing Interests

None of the authors of this study has a financial or personal relationship with other people that could inappropriately influence or bias the content of the study.

### Author’s Contributions

Regarding to the process of this research, Z.T. wrote the original draft while M.T. reviewed the paper and collected the remaining data.

### Ethical Considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research, without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

### Funding Information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

### Data Availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

### Disclaimer

The views and assumptions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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