ONLINE SUFISM AND REESTABLISHING RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY

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Abstract: Recent burgeoning assumptions claim that long-established traditional authorities are professed to diminish due to the rapid advancement of information media technologies. New and more flexible and democratic authorities have dismantled the abovementioned old power. However, contemporary social media transmission does not eradicate these religious authorities, particularly in the realm of Sufism. Sufi figures generally use cyberspace technologies to disseminate and reinforce their doctrines. Based on Weber's theory of charismatic authority, this study examined the authority features manifested by the Sufism figure Habib Luthfi bin Yahya from Pekalongan Indonesia on social media networks. It is encapsulated that the Islamic mystical school of thought is no longer maintained through direct or offline practices, but it has increasingly evolved into an online community. This study focuses on web-based content or online analysis, which means the focus of data collection is based on online sources. Through an analysis of particular usage of the internet and the media exposure about Habib Lutfi, the author explore the use of social media as an important vehicle for Habib Lutfi to strengthen the traditional religious authority.

Keywords: Media, authority, sufism, online, cyberspace.

Introduction

THE ACADEMIC community and the general public in the Islamic and Western worlds have devoted considerable attention to studying religious and media discourse. According to Eickleman and Anderson, the media significantly shapes cognitive capabilities. It alters and establishes new reading, listening, viewing, and event analysis habits. It aids in the formation of new public areas. It has become a forum for alternate viewpoints, particularly within the Islamic public sphere. Digital media

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evolves dynamically and attracts new audiences that traditional media systems cannot fully control.[1]

Anderson underlined the development of advanced technologies and media concerning conventional Islamic institutions such as madrasas are facing difficulties in integrating into the modern world regarding religious practice and religious belief. According to Eickleman and Anderson, media plays a critical role in widening the horizons of the Islamic audience in both local and global contexts.[2] Furthermore, Anderson emphasized that the media has contributed to blurring the boundaries between exceptionally literate religious elites and the particular Muslim community. The media's contribution inevitably forms a new transnational community-affiliated civil society spirit.[3]

The engagement between the media and religious communities began several decades ago, beginning with printed media and electronic technology such as newspapers, magazines, satellite television, audio cassettes, telephone dials, and the most advanced cyber technology in which the Internet is the dominant network. Since the 1980s, according to Meyer, religious communities have been networking via the Internet.[4] The research and knowledge on the relationship between religion and the cyber world have developed since then.

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[1] Dale F. Eickelman and J.W Anderson, *New Media in Islam World The Emerging Public Sphere* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 54.

[2] Dale Eickelman, "The Coming Transformation in The Muslim World," *Current History A Journal of Contemporary World Affairs v*ol.113 no. 172, (Juni 2000): 16-20. Education and communication, according to Eickelman, are the two fundamental drivers of change in the Islamic world. Throughout this study, he discusses rapid education in the Islamic world, including Morocco, Egypt, Oman, Turkey, Malaysia, and Kuwait, as well as the advancement of education, particularly in the field of Higher Education. In contrast to J.W. Anderson, "New Media in The Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere," *ISIM NewsLetter*, (Juni 2000): 39.

[3] Ibid., 2.

[4] Birgit Meyer dan Annalies Moors, *Religion Media and The Public Sphere*, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 2006), 2-5.

Meyer[5], Possamai, and Turner explain that religious expressions in the media, such as the cyber world, are flexible and liquid. Cyberspace provides a space for religion to constantly transform through the online interactions of its practitioners, giving rise to the term liquid religion, as previously conceptualized by Bauman.[6]

Liquid religion or Cyber territory[7] [as defined by Possamai and Turner in their article cited above] is a new area that removes the barriers that obstruct offline routes. Cyberspace is undeniably a global domain that negates the forms of local and national authorities or, in other words, entirely dismisses legal, cultural, and geographic boundaries. The cyber-world is a decentralized region where information freely exchanges, resulting in a discourse that reorganizes the meaning or notion of knowledge and authority.[8]

For instance, users or participants in the "virtual world" can freely express themselves. Users can easily hide their identity, origin, country, age, and gender. They voluntarily convey their religious ideas, thoughts, values, life principles, experiences, and emotions without being constrained by geographical boundaries or specific authorities. These circumstances prompt a reconsideration of the concept and limitations of authorities. It is also evident in the religious preferences of the millennial age, which tends to reject dogmatic belief systems in favor of religious and spiritual experiences over abstract theological justifications. In contrast to the past generation, who continue to adhere to certain doctrines, the dogmas are derived from traditional religious institutions.[9]

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[5] Adam Possamai and Bryan S.Turner, "Authority and Liquid Religion in Cyber-Space: The New Territories of Religious Communication," *ISSJ UNESCO* no. 209-210 (2014): 197-207.

[6] This term is used and can be traced back to Zygmunt Bauman's studies, which explain the distinction between fluidity and liquidity when explaining phenomena and social narratives that emerge in the modern world. Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 4th edition (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), 10.

[7] This term was first coined by Possamai and Turner based on the cited article above.

[8] Possamai and Turner, "Authority and Liquid Religion", 198-200.

[9] Ibid., 199.

Regarding authority, Turner believes traditional religious power is typically transmitted orally through centralized, top-down textual learning. Based on scriptural traditions, it is linear, hierarchical, and repetitive. The rise of global information technology has supplanted these old systems of religious authority in modern times.[10] Modern global information technology perfects the linear conventional communication pattern that characterizes traditional religious leaders, displacing it with more democratic and decentralized opportunities, such as debate, rejection, and freedom of criticism. Cyber-territory and fluidity enable users to develop alternative perspectives on religious activity, as it is intended to reach broader audiences and may satisfy their curiosity. All players have free and equal rights to express themselves and establish their viewpoint in an ample space. Thus, according to Turner, it differs from the past; in the contemporary cyber era, religious authority has become more democratic and open, no longer the exclusive domain of particular religious groups or leaders.[11] Meyer deemed the phenomenon the twenty-first century's most significant characteristic or "trademark". As previously noted by O'Leary, a distinguishing feature of the new millennium is when "faith meets technology" (religion finds technology).[12]

This paper examines the relationship between the media and religious authority. Nonetheless, this paper focuses on presenting a reflection that diverges from the previously mentioned theoretical conception, particularly regarding the presence of

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[10] Bryan S.Turner, "Religious Authority and The New Media," *Theory Culture and Society*, no. 24 (March 2007): 117-132.

[11] Bryan S.Turner, *Religion And Modern Society: Citizenship, Secularsation and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 215-220.

[12] Stephen D. O'Leary," Cyberspace as Sacred Space: Communicating Religion on Computer Network," *Journal of The American Academy of Religion* no.59 (Januari 1996): 781-808. A comparison of the massive influence of the mass media in the third millennium, especially on religion and politics, can also be seen in the article of *Manuel Castells, Communication Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 59. Moreover, in the Indonesian context, see Vibriza Juiswara, "Developing a Diversified Media Literacy Model in Analyzing False Information (Hoax) in Social Media," *Journal of Sociological Thought* vol.4, no.2 (August 2017): 51-65.

Sufism in Indonesia through the figure of Habib Luthfi bin Yahya. This paper questions whether the fast-paced, attractive impact of digital media and cyberspace, as claimed by scholars, have caused religious authority to cease being a centralized space and become a flexible and fluid area, thereby eliminating religious leader in the domain of Sufism? With the current growth rate of cyberspace connection establishment, will their existence fade from sacred public space? Can they coexist with the latest technological tools?

Theoretical Review of Online Media and Religious Authority

Before further exploring the expression of Habib Lutfi's Sufism in the online realm, some religious and media-related theoretical concepts facilitate the positioning of Habib Luthfi's Sufism in the online media domain. Karaflogka[13] examines the large number and variety of religiosity-related information on Internet, which piques her interest in recognizing and classifying the applications and functions of religion circulating in cyberspace. Religious discourses in the online stream are categorized as Objective and Confessional.[14] The confessional category covers the official websites of diverse religious communities and groups and depicts various belief systems and spiritualities; moreover, as positions, authorities, and perceptions of religious leaders, religious leaders, or religious organizations, how these perceptions are modified through the use of big or small-scale online spaces.[15] This notion serves as the theoretical foundation for analyzing Habib Luthfi Bin Yahya's performance on online media pages.

This classification is consistent with the concept proposed with the term online religion and is distinct from inline religion.

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[13] Anastasia Karaflogka, "Religious Discourse and Cyberspace," *Religion* 32, (2002): 229-291.

[14] Ibid. The objective category is frequently referred to as a "educational site" because it contains and generally describes the field's events, assumptions, concepts, issues, religious theology, and religious studies (off-line). Typically, this sort of religious discourse also focuses on the study of religious texts, which describe the relationships between religious texts or documents and are extensively published on the websites of universities, academic institutions, and scholarly publications.

[15] Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion: A critical Appraisal of Religious Discourse on The World Wide Web* (London:Equinox, 2007), 264.

Religion Online focuses on information, perceptions, teachings, and specific belief systems published by religious communities, individuals, and certain authorities such as churches, organizations, and individuals, which are also available offline. Meanwhile, inline[16] religion or cyber-religion refers to a metaphysical expression of spirituality that exists exclusively in cyberspace and is more of virtual reality. In this setting, the Internet manifests as a more horizontal than vertical "environment." In the domain of "inline" religion, there is no authority or hierarchy associated with meaning. Internet is no longer fragmented as a medium or "message"; instead, it is integrative as both a means and a message. In the meantime, the primary characteristic of the internet network is that the authority loses its power. Consequently, the mainstream topics discussed frequently exceed religious norms and some political and authority limitations.[17]

Meanwhile, Dawson and Cowan perceived online religion as more akin to a website or tool associated with various religious groups and traditions. It consists of thousands of websites originating from religious communities, such as mosques, temples,

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[16] Ibid. Karaflogka presents a set of methodological and reflection tools to investigate e-religion in various forms of religious discourse in cyberspace. Karaflogka also explained the facts about the comprehensive level of accessibility and diversity of media users. It emphasized that many people cannot access the internet. However, some quickly get privileges and convenience to access the internet, whereas the last group is the group that dominates the e-religion discourse. Numerous factors, including poverty, age, disability, gender, geographical location, education, and infrastructure, influence internet access disparities. Karaflogka argued that e-religion discourse was utilized as a political and religious weapon against the government and established religious groups, resulting in a response of censorship and control from the government and religious organizations.

[17] Ibid. Karaflogka also emphasized that the in-line religion structure transcends certain political and authority boundaries. It has powers, rules, agendas, and codes of practice, which they regulate autonomously without intervention from outside powers, called the New Cyberreligious Movement. As New stated the use of new media to discuss religious issues and introduced new possibilities and alternatives in the sacred space. While the Cyber Religious Movement predominates and is on an online path, it has the potential to move and mobilize the human population in an offline protest against the religious establishment.

and synagogues, and commercial services offering various religious and commercial goods over the Internet. In other words, it includes all forms of religious activity on the Internet, which encourages various parties to undertake research on religion such that religious circles are aware of the dynamics and growth of religion on the Internet. [18] Internet users (spiritual surfers) are primarily invited to participate in religious practices through online faith. For instance, they provide online worship and prayer, online meditation, online mass, online puja rituals for Hindus, Tarot card reading services, and astrology services for fortune-telling. However, Dawson and Cowan emphasized that the depiction of the world's transition from offline to online highlights significant societal repercussions, particularly the emergence of an authority problem and an authenticity issue.[19]

Meanwhile, the term religious authority is a reasonably broad theoretical area. It is derived from two words, authority and religion, implying a relatively complex concept of authority and religion. The term "authority" itself has received much attention from various scientific disciplines in the social sciences, as well as the term religion. Therefore, "religious authority," as described by Kramer and Schmidtke, is an excellent notion. Both agreed that the religious authority range in Islam is large. It is an elusive term because the trajectory of Islamic history demonstrates that the concept of authority is exceptionally fluid and subject to change following the historical and cultural articulations that apply to the numerous varieties of life in Islam.[20] Kramer employed the term authorities in its plural form with the meaning to be able to represent the many sketches of religious authorities that apply in Islam.[21]

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[18] Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan ed. *Religion Online:Finding Faith on The Internet,* (New York, London: Routledge, 2004), 6-15.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Gudrun Kramer and Sabine Schmidtke, *Speaking For Islam: Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2006), 17-25.

[21] The scholarly discourse on Islamic authority is wide and varied. The concept of authority is quite fluid, and scholars have their own perspectives when translating its meaning in Islam. It can be found in the works of scholars, such as; Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph Religious Authority in The First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1-4.

According to Kramer and Schmidtke, religious authority refers to individuals, organizations, or institutions. The individual, organization, or institution has unique qualities gained through sustained effort, inheritance, or the community's determination to entrust them with authority. Religious authority is not a definite and permanent position; it is fluid and based on the community's recognition, appreciation, and approval. Additionally, religious authority in Islam is grounded in the Quranic text and the Prophet's sunnah. The ulama, notably Sufi academics, serve as sources and mediators between the Quranic text and the sunnah of the Prophet. Mastery of the meaning of the Qur'an and Sunnah requires textual study and spiritual experience. In the Sufi tradition, illumination is among the most valued deeds. Kramer and Schmidtke made a significant distinction in considering Sufism. The leader's authority is perceived and exercised very differently than the institution or authority of the ulama, where the religious authority represented by the clerical institution is acknowledged based on claims of voluntary obedience by its followers.[22]

Compared to Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought in A radical Age: Religious Authority and Internal Criticism* (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 2012), 7-15; Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam:Custodian of Change* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002), 39-42. See also Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "The Scope and Limits of Islamic Cosmopolitanism and The Discursive Language of The Ulama" in Miriam Cooke and Bruce B.Lawrence (ed.) *Muslim Networks From Hajj to Hip Hop*, (Chapel Hill, London: Universitas North Carolina Press, 2001), 89-92, or Gaborieau categorized Muslim scholars as Exoteric Muslim Ulama (*ẓahirī*) and Esoteric Ulama. See Marc Gaborieau,"The Redifinition of Religious Authority Among South Asian Muslim from 1919 to 1956," in *Varieties of Religious Authorities: Change and Challenges in 20th Century Indonesian Islam* edited by Azzumardi Azra, Kees van Dijk and Nico J.G Kaptein (Singapore:Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010), 2-10. Khaled Abou El Fadl, *God Knows The Soldiers: The Authoritative and Authoritarian in Islamic Discourse,* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2010), 11-23. In comparison to Khaled Abou Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name:Islamic Law Authority and Women,* (London: Oneworld Publication, 2001), 34-41.

[22] Kramer and Schmidtke, *Speaking For Islam*, 30. Compared to Heidi. A Campbell, "Who's Get The Power? Religious Authority and Internet," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Comuunication,* no.12 (2007):1043-1062. See also Heidi A. Campbell, "Religion and the Internet," *Journal Communication Research Trend,* no.26 (January 2006): 3-24, or Heidi A. Campbell, *When Religion Meets New Media*

In Weber's view, authority is associated with three ideal concepts: charismatic, traditional, and legal-rational authority. Regarding belief systems, charismatic authority is founded on a person's supernatural and innate capabilities. A charismatic leader is followed and obeyed by a nation or group because they believe they have "special gift and calling."[23] Thus, a supernatural power to change the past and the future.[24] In this study, Weber's approach to charismatic leadership is utilized to examine the indicators of authority within the setting of Sufism leader Habib Luthfi bin Yahya and the phenomena of his presence on social media networks.

It should be underlined that Weber distinguishes between authority (Authoritǎt) and power (Macht). Authority refers to a person's ability to lead without coercive actions. Authority is closely related to legitimacy and trust and the absence of coercion from certain powers to impose and define certain practices and beliefs. Authority was made on the idea of "loyalty" to legalize an established system in a community. It also established a position or role through specific historical and traditional contexts. Thus, Weber emphasized the "meaning" aspect of authority rather than the final result of authority.[25]

Sufism's religious communities and authorities, typically attributed to traditional religious leaders, use cyberspace technology to spread and boost their teachings. Consequently, this paper aims to examine the endurance format of religious authorities, particularly in the context of Sufism. This paper intends to present the perspective of Sufism spirituality in the online domain, which strengthens religious authority in Sufism institutions, by presenting the Indonesian Sufi figure Habib Lutfi Yahya via the online religion format or online religion as opposed to inline religion (Karaflogka 2002, 2007, Dawson and Cowan

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(London, New York: Routledge, 2010), 54-63. As follows, Heidi A. Campbell, *Digital Religion Practice in New Media* (London, New York: Routledge, 2013), 7-20.

[23] See Max Weber, *Economy and Society; Outline of Interpretative Sociology* Vol.2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 103. Compared to Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (London: Methuen 1996), 82.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

2004). In other words, this paper aimed to investigate religious authorities in the Sufism domain, which not totally faded in today's social media growth era.

Dynamics of Sufism, Religious Authority, and Media in Indonesia

The Sufism diaspora in Indonesia occurred several centuries before the Dutch East Indies colonization.[26] Bruinessen's[27] argument that there was a strong relationship between Middle Eastern traders and Sufis was supported by the fact that they work together to spread Islam in the archipelago.[28] As has been the case in other Islamic regions, Sufism has experienced ups and downs on the religiosity scale in Indonesia. Laffan describes the complexity of the Islamization process and Sufism's journey in the archipelago. It is crucial to note that during the early stages of Islamization, the court elites required the spiritual legitimacy they received from overseas saints or scholars connected to the Prophet's lineage pattern. In the 18th century, a wave of intellectual movements of Nusantara knowledge seekers drove them to educated city centers such as Medina and Cairo, following the spread of Islam in the archipelago. When Cairo was under the control of the Mamluks and the Ottomans, tensions began to arise between Medina and Cairo.

In contrast to the Medina tradition and the puritan teachings introduced to Indonesia, they preserved holy and sacred sites.[29]

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[26] Anthony Johns, "Sufism on Southeast Asia: Reflections and Consideration," *Journal of Asean Studies* no.26 Vol. I (1995): 169-180.

[27] Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat* (Yogyakarta: Gading Publishing, 2012), 225-249. In comparison to Azzumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan* Kepulauan usantara Abad XVII & XVIII, (Bandung: Mizan, 1999), 23-47. Typically, their strategy entailed directing their attention toward political elites through marriage and political alliances. These strategies facilitate their expansion and spreading of their beliefs. Moreover, the benefits for elites, Sufis, and tarekat members can provide sufficient spiritual strength to support their political positions.

[28] Martin van Bruinessen, "The Origin Development of Sufi Orders (Tarekat) in Southeast Asia," *Studi Islamica Journal For Islamic Studies* vol.1 no.1 (1994): 1-23.

[29] Michael Laffan, *The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and The Narration of Sufi Past* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011) 81.

Laffan explained that the conflict between Usmani forces and the Wahabi movement had an effect on Jawi scholars who studied in the Middle Eastern. Many became Wahabi supporters and brought their puritanical teachings home.[30]

Unquestionably, the Wahhabi have influenced a new religious style that is distinct from the tarekat circles. Sufism or tarekat has been marginalized in Indonesia's spiritual domain due to the popularity of Wahhabi influence, especially among moderate Muslims. Modernists reject Sufism which is claimed to be mixed with customary practices contrary to the Shari'a. However, people had changed their perspective toward Sufism in the 1970s compared to the stereotypes that existed decades before. In Indonesia, scholars and students play a crucial role in adapting modern urban Muslim patterns and standards to Sufism's essence.[31]

In the 1970s and 1980s, for instance, books on Sufism grew in popularity among university students. Urban Sufism narratives arisen and were envisioned by the academic community. Midway through the 1980s, a phenomenon occurred among the urban middle class that followed the tarekat. Perception toward Sufism shifted progressively. Similarly, tarekat and Sufism continued to garner the interest of Indonesian urban Muslim communities in the 1990s and after the fall of the New Order. This phenomenon demonstrated contrary to the previous decade, how cosmopolitan

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Laffan explained that interest in the Wahhabi movement among Jawi knowledge seekers began in the 18th century. In 1803, the Wahhabi movement obtained tribal allegiances and successfully eradicated Taif, despite Mecca's pilgrimage season having ended. People are prohibited and persecuted from engaging in activities that can lead to polytheism, such as seeking divine guidance (tawasul) from the saints or visiting their graves (pilgrimage).

[30] Ibid.

[31] Julia Day Howell, "Introduction: Sufism and Neo Sufism in Indonesia Today," *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affair,* Vol. 46 (2012): 1-24. See also, Julia Day Howell, "Sufism and The Indonesian Islamic Revival," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60, no.3 (Agustus 2001): 701-729. In comparison to Julia Day Howell in Repackaging Sufism in Urban Indonesia, *ISIM* 19, (2007): 21-23.

modern Muslim society can overcome its prejudice against Sufism.[32]

As evidenced by the high level of secularism that permeated the middle-class Muslim community, Indonesia's political and social climate continued to evolve during the Reformation period due to the New Order's economic development program. The middle-class Muslim community consists of the middle- and upper-class working class in the modern sector of the Indonesian economy, which fosters a cosmopolitan experience and way of life. This condition generates new demands in the Indonesian religious market.[33] The occurrence of social reform stimulates the production of spiritual market-responsive creativity. Therefore, contemporary cosmopolitan Muslims in Indonesian urban centers are encouraged to rework their religious construction and spirituality. Regarding the practice and study of their religion, urban Muslims in Indonesia are forming new powers and independence. Specific models of eclecticism in their religious experience are viewed favorably. Traditional spiritual practices such as meditation, wirid, litani, and remembrance, which once appeared superstitious and irrational to cosmopolitan modern Muslims, now seem enticing. It is even accepted as a form of religiosity and a component of modern life.[34] At this point, the construction of contemporary Sufism and religious authority projected via online media gained a new place and a growing proportion of the Indonesian religious market.

Sufism and Tarekat are gaining widespread acceptance in the current Indonesian Muslim religious community. It can be seen in the online media pages about Sufism and tarekat that the Indonesian Muslim community can access as widely as possible. This phenomenon enriches their religious experience and expands their options in a open and unrestricted religious market. In other words, the expression of Sufism exemplified by traditional religious authorities is not entirely invisible. The development of

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[32] Julia Day Howell," Modernity and Islamic Spirituality in Indonesia's New Sufi Network," in *Sufism and Modern Islam*, Martin Van Bruinessen and Julia D Howell ed. (London, New York: I.B. Tauris 2007), 227.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

online Sufism teachings, which are translated as a form of piety and social worship, is facilitated by technological advances in digital media. Therefore, through the media, Sufism and tarekat are no longer esoteric communities based on direct encounters between mursyids and students, ritual interactions, and oral instruction. Nonetheless, they expand to transform into virtual communities.[35]

On the other hand, the terrorist attacks On september 11 have increased global awareness of Muslim cyberspace, both within and outside the Muslim community. Since 2001, media networks have been flooded with Islamic content, which is an intriguing consequence of this development. Bunt illustrated a notable increase in the use of Islamic terms in the diverse scope of Islamic websites.[36] Similarly, Mark Bryson Richardson suggests that Sufism comprises a significant proportion of Islam's online presence, far more than in other Muslim circles.[37] Catharina Raudvere emphasized that, in reality, the virtual world is home to an extraordinary variety of contemporary Sufism expressions.[38] It displayed a diverse online representation of modern Sufism, ranging from the practice of emotional religiosity to the vast types of tarekat and their various branches.

Dr. Kiai Haji Luqman Hakim, the headmaster of the Raudhatul Muhibin Islamic boarding school in Cibinong, Bogor, manages www.sufinews.com, which is among the Sufi movements

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[35] Carl W. Ernst, "Ideological and Technological Transformation of Contemporary Sufism," dalam Miriam Cooke dan Bruce B.Lawrence ed. *Muslim Networks From Hajj to Hip Hop* (Chapel Hill, London: Universitas North Carolina Press, 2001), 91-99.

[36] Gary R.Bunt, *Islam in Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environtments* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), 126-130. See also Gary R. Bunt, *Virtually Islamic: Computer Mediated Communication and Cyber Islamic Environtments* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 71.

[37] Mark Bryson Richardson, "Cybertariqas: Sufism in The Diaspora, Identity and Virtual Community," *Islamica*, III/I (1999): 75.

[38] Catharina Raudvere dan Leif Stenberg ed. *Sufism Today Heritage and Tradition in The Global Community* (London: I.B Tauris, 2009), 7-10. It is still related to the development of Sufime today, especially the spiritual awakening of women through Sufism in Catharina Raudvere, The Book and The Roses: Sufi Women, Visibility, and Zikir in The Contemporary Istanbul (London: I.B Tauris, 2003), 21.

in this virtual context. Ustadz Halim Ambiya oversees the tasawuf underground page. Buya Yahya Zainul Ma'arif, the supervisor of the al Bahjah Islamic boarding school in Cirebon, is in charge of the www.buyayahya.co.id website. Nur Al-Wala Islamic Boarding School, Virtual Tasawuf Islamic Boarding School at www.nurulwala.co.id under the care of Dr. Haidar Bagir, www.majelishikmahalawiyah.net, a virtual association initiated by scholars, experts, and activists of Islamic da'wah from the Tariqah Alawiyah circles, specifically the descendants of Imam Alwi bin Ubaidillah.

The extensive use of social media in various Indonesian circles facilitates the spread of Sufism online. In 2021, the Ministry of Communication and Information of the Republic of Indonesia reported that 93 million people used the Internet. 95 percent of this population accessed social networks online. The expansion of social media in Indonesia is rapid.[39] This acceleration is supported by the growing use of mobile phones and smartphones. The features provided by smartphone-manufacturing companies enable users to engage in digital activities straightforwardly and comprehensively at a low cost. The results of a survey conducted by Global WebIndex as of January 2019 demonstrate this.[40]

Maulana Sheikh Habib Lutfi bin Yahya

As the Chair of JATMAN (Jam'iyyah Ahlith Tariqoh Al-Mu'tabarah An-Nahdliyah)[41] or the National General Chairperson

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[39] Retrieved from www.kominfo.ord, based on 2020 data on Kominfo, frequently access social media in Indonesia Youtube 47%, FaceBook 41%, WhatsApp 40%, Instagram 38%, Line 33%, BBM 28%, Twitter 27%, Google+ 25%, FB Messengger 24%, Linkedin 16%, Skype 15% and WeChat 14%. Visited on January 2, 2020.

[40] Retrieved from http://www.globalwebIndex.com. Visited on January 2, 2020.

[41] According to Bruinessen, the Sufi ulama have always been a part of the largest traditionalist organization in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama. However, they were not leaders or prominent figures in this organization. Modernists criticized the assimilation of kebatinan practices and tarekat traditions. Kyai Hasyim Asy'ari, the highest authority of NU, prohibited tarekat activities from his pesantren Tebuireng Jombang and preferred to focus on text studies, as was also the case in other NU pesantren. Although NU accommodates tarekat on the one

(Rois Idaroh) of the Mu'tabaroh Nahdhatul Ulama Association, one of the organization's autonomous bodies NU, Maulana Syekh Habib Lutfi bin Yahya is a representative of the traditional ulema. The concept of tarekat mu'tabarah is explicitly associated with the NU organization that represents orthodox Islam (Bruinessen, Howell, and Laffan), which differs from modernist and puritanical Islam in Indonesia.[42]

The official website for Habib Luthfi is accessible at http://www.habbluthfiyahya.net. This website manages all information on Habib Luthfi, including numerous tarekat activities. The website provides details about his whole name, Maulana Habib Luthfi bin Ali bin Hassan bin Yahya. Born on November 1947 in Pekalongan, Central Java. Habib Lutfi grew up among a family of scholars. Her mother is a "Sharifah," a noble title for women from the Hadrami community in Indonesia with a

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hand, it is undeniable that this has sparked controversy and debate within NU. The orthodoxy of certain tarekat is questioned, as found in Tarekat Tijaniyah in the late 1920s and 30s. Hence, Mu'tabarah emerged in the 1950s when many Sufi teachers sought an agreement called Jam'iyah Ahlit Thoriqoh Mu'tabarah. Mu'tabarah itself means "recognized." It depicted the ulama's urge to differentiate between orthodox Sufism and the mysticism of the kebatinan sect and local tarekat, which drew the ire of modernist Muslims and traditionalists. Sukarno supported the kebatinan, abangan, and local tarekat movements, which were suspected of having ties to communism and therefore received a terrible stigma. According to them, the NU tarekat ulama, the founders of Jam'iyah, had a strong enough orientation to be deemed mu'tabar. Not only according to Muslims who adhere to sharia, but also according to the legal constitution. Jam'iyah Ahlit Thoriqoh Mu'tabarah al Nahdliyah (JATMAN), explicitly affiliated with NU, was inaugurated during the internal conflict between Kiai Musta'in Romli and other NU Kiai regarding political affiliation in the Suharto era. Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning.*,490-498.

[42] Arifin assigned Habib Luthfi bin Yahya to the category of traditional ulama figures because of his closeness to the NU tradition and as a response to a relatively new form of urban Sufism that emerged in the urban Indonesian cities while emphasizing the core characteristics of traditional Sufism. Which are still maintained are the concept of bai'at (initiation) and continuous guidance by the spiritual teacher's oath, the continuation of the lineage of the spiritual teacher to the Prophet Muhammad, the organizational framework, namely the tarekat itself, and the central position of the murshid in the tradition. Achmad Zainal Arifin, "Re-energising recognised Sufi orders in Indonesia," *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* vol. 46, no. 2 (2012): 77–104.

family line that continues with the Prophet Muhammad. Habib Lutfi's mother's name is Sayidah Karimah Syarifah Nur Binti Sayid Muhsin bin Salim bin Sayid Imam Salih bin Sayid Muhsin bin Sayid Hasan bin Sayid Imam 'Alawi bin Sayid Imam Muhammad bin al-Imam 'Alawi bin Imam al-Kabir Sayid Abdullah bin Imam Salim bin Imam Muhammad bin Sayid Sahal bin Imam Abd Rahman Maula Dawilaeh bin Imam 'Ali bin Imam 'Alawi bin Sayidina Imam al-Faqih al-Muqadam bin Ali Ba'lawi.

Likewise with his father's genealogy, continued to the Prophet Muhammad by the name and lineage of Habib Luthfi bin al Habib Ali, al Habib Hasyim, al-Habib Umar, al Habib Thoha, al Habib Hasan, al Habib Thoha, al Habib Muhammad Qodhi, al Habib Thoha, al Habib Muhammad, al Habib Sheikh, al Habib Ahmad, Imam Yahya Ba'lawy, al-Habib Hasan, al-Habib Alwy, al-Habib Ali, Imam Alwy al Nasiq, Imam Muhammad Dawileh, Imam Ali Maula Darrak, Imam Alwy al-Ghuyyur, Imam al-Faqih al-Muqaddam Muhammad Ba'lawi Imam Ali, Imam Muhammad Shahib Marbath, Imam Ali Khali Qasam, Imam Alwy, Imam Muhammad, Imam Alwy Ba'lawy, Imam Ubaidullah, Imam Ahmad al- Muhajir, Imam Isa al-Naqib al-Rumi, Imam Muhammad al-Naqib, Imam Ali al-Uraidhi, Imam Ja'far Sadiq, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, Imam Ali Zainal Abidin, Imam Husain ash-Sibth, Sayidina Fatima al- Zahra and Amirul Mu'minin Ali bin Abi Talib to Muhammad Rasulullah.

This genealogy can be found on Habib Lutfi bin Yahya's official website[43] or in a book he authored, *Berbicara Seputar Tarekat*.[44] The genealogy shows the continuity of the genealogical chain and the chain of spiritual knowledge to the Prophet Muhammad. Habib Lutfi stated that he was a descendant of the Prophet who had the privilege of presenting intimate knowledge derived from the Prophet's words and deeds through a lineage known as the dahabiya (golden chain), hence a chain of knowledge that was relayed among ahlul bait families.[45] It

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[43] http://www.habibluthfi.net.org Visited on January 3, 2019.

[44] Habib Luthfi bin Yahya, *Berbicara Seputar Tarekat* (Malang: Majelis al Khoir, 2012), 37

[45] Ismail Fajrie Alatas emphasized that through a lineage known as silsilah dahabiya, the descendants of the Prophet can represent intimate knowledge

confirms Habib Lutfi's status as a descendant of the Prophet and is crucial to his legitimacy as a tarekat leader.[46] According to Bruinessen, the lineage heritages that came to the Prophet and the validity of spiritual knowledge are the peculiarities of their authority in Sufism, which differs from tradition and other branches of knowledge in Islam (Bruinessen 2012, Kramer 2006, Schmidtke 2006). Despite Habib Luthfi's website appearing simple as it was not as attractive compared to other Tarekat such as Naqshbandi Haqqani or Tarekat Nimatullahi, it is pretty informative to the visitors. A photo of Habib Luthfi bin Yahya wearing a turban and robe on a green background is presented on the website's front page, completed by his fatwa and advice.[47] The website displays a complete profile of Habib Luthfi bin Yahya, including his education and family background, notably his father, al-Habib al Hafidz Ali al Ghalib. He went to salafiyah madrasa where his uncle, Sayid al Habib al Alim Husayn bin Sayid Hayim bin Sayid Umar bin Sayid Thaha bin Yahya, was one of his teachers. Habib Luthfi is also a descendant of Hadrami Pekalongan, Central Java. Almost all of the salafiyah madrasa teachers listed on the website are descendants of Hadrami, his close family, whereas Habib Luthfi is also a descendant of Hadrami Pekalongan, Central Java.[48]

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derived from the Prophet's words and actions (the golden chain). It refers to the transmission of knowledge from father to son within the ahl al-bait family circle, without the need for external meditation. Ismail Fajri Alatas, Becoming Indonesians: The Ba'lawi in The Interstices of the Nation, *DieWelt Des Islam Brill,* (2011): 48.

[46] Several branches of Tarekat in Java were not accepted at NU due to the lack of scientific genealogical evidence that links to the Prophet Muhammad.

[47] http://www.habibluthfi.net.org visited on January 3, 2020.

[48] See the significance of Hadrami Arab descent's political, religious, and economic influence in Indonesia. Laffan asserted that Abdul al Rahman al Masyhur of Tarim (1834-1902) stated that all of the Wali Nine were descendants of the Prophet and were descended from the family of a man named 'Alawi, whose grandfather migrated to Hadramaut in 951. *The Making....*19, Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning.....*225. See also Muhammad al Baqir, Pengantar Tentang Kaum Alawiyin in Allamah Sayid Abdullah Haddad, *Thariqah Menuju Kebahagiaan,* (Bandung:Mizan 1986), 21. Compared to Ismail Fajrie Alatas, *"Becoming Indonesians,"* 50.

He received higher education at the Salafiyah Islamic Boarding School. He kept wandering to places such as Benda Kerep, Cirebon, one of West Java's oldest Islamic Boarding Schools, and many other cities, including Indramayu, Purwokerto, and Tegal, before going overseas to Mecca and Medina. Habib Luthfi bin Yahya studied a variety of Islamic disciplines, including fiqh, tafsir, hadith, sanad, history, nahwu, tauhid, tasawuf, and ilmu nasab, as well as medical science. During his studies, he was granted a particular authority (a unique certificate), remarkably authority to pledge loyalty or become a murshid. He also obtained general authority (ijazah 'am), which provided him the authority to take allegiance and teach sharia, fiqh, tasawuf, hizib, and wirid.[49]

Habib Luthfi obtained a diploma to pledge allegiance or a mandate as a murshid after studying knowledge from various sects and Sufism circles. Among these tarekat are those from the Naqshbandiyah Khalidiyah and Syadziliyah al Aliyah Tarekat, which Habib Lutfi received through the continuation of the genealogy from al Hafiz al Muhadits al Mufasir al Musnid al Alim al Alamah Ghauts az Zaman Sayidi Sheikh Muhammad Ash'ad Abd Malik bin Qutb al Kabir al Imam al Alamah Sayidi Sheikh Muhammad Ilyas bin Ali bin Hamid.

Meanwhile, the Naqshbandiyah al Khalidiyah congregation of Sayid Sheikh Ash'ad Abdul Malik descend to his father Sayid Sheikh Muhammad Ilyas bin Ali bin Hamid from Qutb al Kabir Sayid Salaman Zuhdi from Qutb al Arif Sulaiman al Quraimi from Qutb al Arif Sayid Abdullah Afandi from Qutb al Ghauts al Jami' al Mujadid Maulana Muhammad Khalid to Qutb al Ghauts al Jami' Sayidi Shah Muhammad Baha'udin al Naqsyabandi al Hasni. Meanwhile, the Syadziliyah congregation of Sayid Sheikh Muhammad Ash'Ad Abdul Malik from al-Alim Allamah Ahmad al-Nahrawi al-Maki from the Mufti of Mecca-Medinah al Kabir Sayid Shalih al-Hanafi ra.

The Tarekat al Alawiyah al Idrusiyah al Atha´iyah al Hadadiyah and Yahyawiyah from al Alim al Allamah Qutb al Kabir al Habib 'Ali bin Husain al 'Athas, Afrad Zamanihi Akabir

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[49] http://www.habibluthfi.net.org

Aulia al Allamah al Habib Hasan bin Qutb al Ghauts Mufti al Kabir, al Habib al Imam 'Uthman bin Abdullah bin 'Aqil bin Yahya Bâ 'Alawi. Also, Ustadz al Kabir al Muhadits al Musnid Sayidi al Allamah al Habib Abdullah bin Abdul Qadir bin Ahmad Bilfaqih Bâ 'Alawi, also al Alim al Allamah al Arif Billah al Habib Ali bin Sayid Al Qutb Al Allamah Ahmad bin Abdullah bin Talib al 'Athas Bâ 'Alawi. The following are also al Alim al Arif Billah al Habib Hasan bin Salim al 'Athas Singapore, also al Alim Allamah al Arif Billah al Habib Umar bin Hafidz bin Sheikh Abu Bakar bin Salim Ba' Alawi.[50]

Meanwhile, the Qadiriyah Naqshbandiyah Tarekat of Sayid al-Imam 'Ali bin Umar bin Idrus bin Zain bin Qutb al Ghauts al Habib 'Alawi Bâfaqih Bâ 'Alawi State of Bali. Sayid Ali bin Umar from al Alim Allamah Auhad Akabir Ulama Sayid Sheikh Ahmad Khalil bin Abdul Lathif Bangkalan. Ra. The Tijaniyah Order of al Alim Allamah al Kabir Aulia al Kiram Ra´su al Muhibin Expert Bait Sayidi Sa'id bin Armiya Giren Tegal. Kiai Sa'id received from his two teachers, and the first was Sheikh Ali bin Abu Bakr Bâsalamah. Sheikh Sa'id received directly from Sayid al Alawi al Maliki. Sheikh Ali bin Abu Bakr Bâsalamah received from Sayid 'Alawi al Maliki.[51] By mentioning entire lineage and genealogy of Sufistic knowledge that Habib received from many prominent Sufism scholars, he confirmed that he had a legitimate lineage and genealogy of sufistic knowledge. This is to convince public that he has the legal right to attained a legal authority in the sufi world. Particularly his authority to his affiliation for mu'tabarah sufi orders which are under the auspices of the Nahdatul Ulama organization such as the Qadariyah, Naqsabandiyah Zaliyihah, Alawiyah, and Tijaniyah orders.

Habib Luthfi is widely recognized as a unifying and blessing for the diversity of spiritual practices by various Tarekat in Indonesia. According to the narration above, Habib Luthfi's attainment of scientific sanad, diplomas, and recognition as a murshid from various schools of tarekat is a privilege. It also elevates Habib Luthfi's standing among Indonesian tarekat

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[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

figures. [52] Due to the prevalence of the tradition of exclusivity in tarekat teachings, it is difficult to emerge at the local, national, and global levels. For instance, the Tijaniyah order once forbade its adherents to follow other tarekat.[53]The intellectual knowledge Habib Luthfi received where he studied contributed to Habib Luthfi in gaining trust of several tarekat schools within the mu'tabarah tarekat. In this perspective, charismatic authority is applicable. Weber underlined that the tarekat community adheres to the flow and perspective because Habib Luthfi is believed to have a special calling and capability that distinguishes him from other tarekat teachers.

The charisma and authority of Habib Luthfi are not confined to the Sufi, tarekat, and NU communities. Nonetheless, it spreads to various social groups and levels, from the lower class, grassroots, to the elite. It occurs in both offline and online settings. It is shown on the online page of Habib Luthfi. The photographs published to the website demonstrate Habib Luthfi's ability to develop conversational interactions and even cooperation with multiple parties. Photos and pictures posted online contain hundreds of features of Habib Luthfi interacting with the Indonesian elite community. Starting from the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo,[54] the Minister,[55] the Commander of the Indonesian Armed Forces,[56] the Commander of

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[52] Ismail Fajrie Alatas described in depth the lengthy process by which Habib Luthfi was recognized by internal tarekat figures and Ba'lawi/mansab scholars in Pekalongan, as well as by external parties from various tarekat and Kiai circles in Pekalongan and Central Java. In addition, he detailed the controversies and complexities of Habib Luthfi's lineage and spiritual scientific chains.Ismail Fajrie Alatas , "Aligning The Sunna and The Jama'a: Religious Authority and Islamic Sosial Formation in Contemporary Central Java Indonesia,"*Ph.DDissertation* Michigan University, (2016): 375-385.

[53] Arifin, *Re-energising recognised Sufi......*87.

[54] See the www.facebook.com page of Habib Luthfi bin Yahya which his official admin officially manages at tsaurii@yahoo.co.id. The photo was uploaded on January 8, 2017, when President Joko Widodo visited Habib Luthfi's residence in Pekalongan.

[55] Together with the Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs, Mahfud MD, it was uploaded on December 7, 2019.

[56] Together with the TNI Commander Marshal Hadi Tjahjanto on December 7, 2019.

the Indonesian National Police, and high-ranking political parties.[57] Habib's massive exposure to the media contradicted many arguments, this study shows that the rise of social media does not necessarily mean the decline of traditional Islamic religious authority, but it strengthens it. Habib's case suggest that Sufism is not static, it is willing to adopt technology and social media to support its activism.

Habib Luthfi's Facebook page is the most prominent social media instrument among other social media tools. All forms of Habib Luthfi's activities are actively uploaded to a media page managed by an administrator assigned by Habib Luthfi. Despite the fact that the official website, http://www.habibluthfi.net, has not been updated since October 2019, Facebook has more followers than Instagram and Twitter. Habib Luthfi's Facebook page displays designs with attractive features with reasonably detailed information, such as the presentation of his fatwa, various photos, and activities of Habib Luthfi, both local and national recitations, his meetings with national and international scholars, and recitations of the Prophet's birthday.

While Habib Luthfi's official website includes his profile, it also includes news and articles about his preaching activities, lectures, and other activities, such as his participation in the Rabithah Alawiyin Congress, the International Sufi Conference, and his collaboration with the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia. Indonesia's or Habib Luthfi's routine in preparation for Eid al-Fitr, as well as thousands of other activities. This page also includes videos of Habib Luthfi's activities, including lectures on the Prophet's birthday, national tausiyah, and speeches at the 2015 International Conference of Islamic Scholars (ICIS) State the Islamic University of Malang, and an interview with detik.com. A newsletter also allows online dialogue and discussion about various issues and problems the community faces.

A routine schedule of recitations and da'wah that Habib Lutfi performs on this website, such as the recitation of tariqah every Friday kliwon morning (Jami' al-usul al Tariqah al Auliya). Every Tuesday night, the book of al-Ihya Ghazali's 'Ulum al-Din is

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[57] http//www.habibluthfi.net uploaded on January 12, 2016.

recited. Every Wednesday morning, especially for women, the book of Fath al Qarib is recited. On Sunday morning, the Tasawuf recitation is held for mothers. Recitations for students at the aliyah level during Ramadan, as well as da'wah ilallah in the form of public recitations to various parts of Indonesia. The Maulid Kanzus[58] sequence is recited in over 60 locations throughout Pekalongan and the surrounding area.

Habib Luthfi's Instagram account @habibluthfibinyahya documents his various activities. The page has 224 uploads and has over 200 thousand followers. Among the topics covered are various tips, da'wah (for example, "Merah Putih Tidak Melupakan Sejarah"), tabligh akbar activities, and mass circumcision. The most recent Instagram activity is the Indonesia World Sufi Forum with the theme The Role of Sufism in Human Happiness and National Security, which was held on April 8, 2019, in Pekalongan, Habib Luthfi's residence, and received 9,921 visitors and 104 comments.

While Facebook receives the most visitors and intense online interaction, the information on Habib Luthfi's Facebook page is more frequently updated than on other media. The cover photo of Habib Luthfi's Facebook page depicts various activities with various groups, beginning with a photograph of him filling the recitation in the Kanzuz shalawat building, which was attended by thousands of people. His visits or activities of meetings and recitations were attended by various elite groups, beginning with former President Bambang Soesilo Yudhoyono, President of the Republic of Indonesia Ir. H. Joko Widodo, former TNI Commander Gatot Nurmantio, Kyai Ma'ruf Amin, along with videos and pictures of elite Indonesian and transnational Sufi figures such as Sheikh Nazim Haqqani and Hisham Kabbani.[59]

Habib Luthfi's recitations are frequently broadcast live on Facebook, allowing thousands of visitors to directly access the recitation through the media rather than traveling to the recitation location. Habib Luthfi's recitation in online media does not reduce

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[58] The term Habib Lutfi and his followers used to commemorate the birthday of the Prophet.

[59] The photos were uploaded randomly from November 2009 until now and can be seen at www.facebook.com.

the number of congregations offline. The online community broadens the network of the charismatic ulama's followers.

The online and offline congregations, such as recitations and da'wah by Habib Luthfi, are considered good deeds that provide blessings and goodness individually and collectively. Thus, it is believed that there is a change in the interaction pattern.

Initially, the congregation attempted to attend and meet face-to-face with Habib Lutfi to shake hands, obtain allegiance, pray, receive blessings, become students, and receive direct approval from Habib Lutfi. The media has transformed the pattern of seeking blessings, prayers, and remembrance into online blessing rituals, prayers, and remembrance, both individually and collectively, particularly for followers who do not have time to visit their residence or place of study. According to Karaflogka, Dawson, and Cowan, media access has transformed into a community, online congregations, online Koran, online knowledge seekers, and online blessing seekers, which emerged as a virtual community.

Several comments or responses from netizens, Habib Luthfi's online congregation, demonstrate this. For example, the live Kliwon Friday recitation was uploaded via Facebook from several accounts, including one in the name of Guroh Setyowati, a female follower from Surakarta, and was posted on 3 August 2019 with the caption "may it bring blessings." The account owner is unable to attend the Kliwon Friday recitation in person. She can, however, watch the online recitation that her husband uploaded via Facebook live broadcast. Another account, Munir al Hasimi of Cilacap, stated on the live broadcast Facebook page on September 7, 2019, "#greetings from Ploso." On November 16, 2019, Agus Yahya, the administrator of LWP NU Semarang, posted a direct account. "Even though I am still on duty," he said, "I'm listening to the tabarrukan maulana al Habib Luthfi." On December 21, 2019, an account named Eko Setiawan from Kudus commented: "asking Habib's blessings and prayers." "Assalamualaikum, Wr. Wb, asking blessings and prayer, Bah". Safa Fairuzabadi's account from Jakarta commented: "Masha Allah, Tabarakalloh", uploaded from the Facebook page on April 11, 2019. "Maulana Habib...I am asking blessings," M. Yusron Yuka's account dated May 3, 2019.

Banjarnegara account by Edi Haryato: "I had a dream last night about meeting Habib Luthfi and kissing his hand (so smells good). I'm not sure what that means ". Zusi Ana's account from May 16, 2019: "I am asking for blessings as I will be on the labor,...pray for a quick delivery, thank you."[60] The most recent information available is Habib Luthfi's recommendations regarding the Covid 19 virus outbreak, which was uploaded on March 27, 2020 and was liked by 10,296 people, with 209 comments and 1,550 shares. Netizens have left various comments on Habib Lutfi's Facebook wall, mostly asking for blessings and prayers.

The factors mentioned above have been transformed into a virtual activity that allows Habib Luthfi and his congregation to interact online. Religion possesses charisma and authority, which are acknowledged based on the adherents' eager devotion. According to (Karaflogka, Dawson, Cowan, Ernst, and Weber), religious authority in an online context is not only represented by interactions between individuals or between ulama and their congregations, but also by the religious hierarchy, where the ulama or religious leaders are at the top of the religious hierarchy.

Habib Luthfi is well recognized as a scholar who persuades his congregation by placing an emphasis on persuasion. Instead of employing fiery and flaming, provocative, judgemental, and blasphemous rhetoric, he employs a polite and kind eloquence to touch the hearts of his congregation. The charismatic presence of Habib is seen as a peacemaker among ulama, which brings the Indonesian Muslim community together.[61]

There are around 1.9 million people that follow Habib Luthfi on Facebook. The most recent post on the Facebook page is about the multaqoh Sufiyah event, also known as the International Sufi meeting, which took place in Pekalongan from April 8-10, 2019. The event described how Habib Luthfi's power enhanced his position, charm, and influence among the country. On his Facebook page, Habib Luthfi elaborated on how Jam'iyah Thoriqah in Indonesia as well as Indonesian murshids and scholars have attained a significant amount of notoriety in other

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[60] Habib Luthfi bin Yahya on Facebook
[61] See www.detik.com, January 12, 2020 edition.

countries or internationally. At the event, there were approximately 2,000 tarekat murshids from various parts of Indonesia and also ninety prominent ulama from around the world. The event-related post was liked by 6,700 users and received 149 comments and 799 shares via other links. Meanwhile, Habib Luthfi's Twitter account has approximately 136,000 followers and 2,870 messages, generating considerable excitement among internet users. Other media networks inside NU affiliates, such as www.NUonline.org, also contribute as connections to online sermons proclaiming Habib Luthfi's advise.[62]

On another occasion, photographs of Habib Luthfi wearing white long-sleeved shirts and white trousers can be viewed on other websites. Also on the eve of Eid al-Fitr in Pekalongan, Habib Luthfi volunteered with the local police to arrange and bring order to the hectic and dense flow of Mudik Lebaran, an Indonesian tradition.[63] Similarly, in the election of local and regional leaders, there is a photograph of Habib Luthfi wearing a t-shirt, jeans, and a cowboy hat, as well as a photograph of Habib Luthfi wearing striped army clothing and an Indonesian flag headband.[64] Due to his religious authority, Habib Luthfi does not maintain a distance from the community, as depicted in the photographs. Habib Luthfi uses the traits and symbols of the murshid in his public activities to extend and promote Sufism among the Indonesian people. Photographs and videos of Habib Luthfi performing on several musical instruments, including the piano and violin.[65]

Habib Luthfi's openness, moderation, and forward-thinking are shown by the widely published photographs in the online media. According to Habib Luthfi, Sufism is not exclusively for elderly God-seekers but is also open to women and young people. Habib Luthfi demonstrates a Sufism that is more

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[62] Habib Lutfi is one of the 500 most influential world Muslim figures in 2019 and 2020, issued by The Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Center Jordan. Habib Lutfi is included in the top 50 in the category of Ulama. Retrived from www.theworlds's500mostinfluentialmuslim.com Visited on March 3, 2020.

[63] Retrieved from https://youtube.com and www.instagram.com , visited on January 8, 2020.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Habib Luthfi's Facebook page

accessible, not remote, straightforward, and appealing to the young people. Habib developed MATAN, the Ahlu al Thoriqah al Nahdliyah student or student member of the NU tarekat, to accommodate the young participants.

There are hundreds of publicly accessible videos from Habib Luthfi on his YouTube website. Several of these clips depict Habib Luthfi utilizing Indonesian state symbols, including the red-and-white flag, red-and-white headband, and others. In the video, Habib Luthfi analyzes discourses of nationalism. Habib Luthfi emphasized that loving one's homeland is part of Islam's and the tarekat's teachings. Similarly, he emphasized the importance of maintaining harmony among Indonesians of various religions, ethnicities, tribes, and languages, which is analogous to the variety of musical instruments, sounds, and strains and how playing these musical instruments can produce melodious strains.[66] Similarly, Indonesia's different circumstances will result in a powerful, unified, and harmonious nation. In the context above, it is not unreasonable to identify the Sufism teachings of Habib Luthfi as nationalism or national Sufism.[67]

Habib Luthfi, in his preaching, often uses simple utterances that are easily understood by the public instead of using esoteric and complicated Sufistic narratives. For example, when he interprets the meaning of Sufism, it means to purify or purify the heart that manifested in various stages. He encouraged beginning with small things, such as being accustomed to wearing clothes or entering the mosque with the right hand or foot or another sunnah of the Prophet, which are also part of Sufism.

Habib Luthfi also underlined the significance of the spiritual parts of sharia. He does not permit anyone to follow the tarekat without a firm foundation in Shari'a knowledge, particularly fiqh. It can be seen in the numerous quotes of Habib Luthfi, which are extensively posted on social media by his followers, including: "The most important thing is that you learn and practice zahir shari'a." Alternatively, while describing one of the maqm in

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[66] See www.youtube.org , NU Channel, www.KompasTV.org, www.ANTV. www.NewsPlus.com, www.TribunJateng.TV.com.

[67] Achmad Zainal Arifin, *Re-energising*, 85.

qana'ah and zuhud Sufism, for instance. "Qona'ah and zuhud are the analogous garments that shield us from mud that can stain us while laboring in the fields." Sufis view the world in this manner and strive to acquire strength through qona'ah and zuhud.[68]

As the world's leading agricultural nation, the following allegory portrays the majority Indonesian people working in agricultural fields.[69] The symbolic meaning is not as straightforward as some believe, particularly those unfamiliar with agriculture's lifestyle and environment. It is backed by other sociological academic concepts, such as Geertz's work with Javanese farmers. People who did not grow up in the same social background as farmers (peasants) negatively perceive those who work in the farming industry because they assume that farmers are illiterate. The negative perspective of farmers (or, on a broader scale, locals and Easterners) is in direct contrast to the formal economic culture formed in the capitalist industrial region of the Western world.

A farmer's job demands a lengthy procedure, hard effort, perseverance, patience, and thoroughness. It is typical for farmers to begin their work before sunrise and finish it before dark. They prepare the soil by plowing the fields under the blazing sun, which takes many days, and then sowing rice seeds to create fertile rice paddies. Following planting, the seeds are put in muddy, tilled soil. The rice-planted dirty area is then rinsed for several days and dried. It is repeated until the rice seeds flourish and are harvested.

Habib Luthfi employs the metaphor of the farmer to describe the circulation of Sufism, implying that the spiritual journey involves patience, perseverance, and effort. Similar to human's soul in achieving a clean and pure soul or mind, it must be forged

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[68] Habib Luthfi's preaching quotes can be seen on various websites www.suaraislam.com, https://ppssnh.malang.pesantren.web.id, www.liputanislam.com, www.laduni.id, www.muslimmoderat.net, www.dutaislam.com, www.wattpad.com, www.nu.or.id, www.santrionline.com

[69] According to data from the Badan Pusat Statistik 2020, the majority of Indonesians are farmers or engaged in the agricultural sector with a percentage of 35.1% compared to other occupations in other sectors. www.BPPS.go.id visited on March 20, 2020.

and cleaned. It takes land loosened by plowing and mashing to get good rice yields. It must be fertilized and weeded to remove all dirt and weeds that will harm its growth.

The narrative depicted in the quote above describes Habib Luthfi as voicing a persuasive approach full of moral authority that is commensurate with his audience of various social and occupational statuses. This format instills trust in Habib Luthfi's charismatic authority, so that external parties or audiences with intrinsic and autonomous aspirations voluntarily follow the flow and perceptions built by Habib Luthfi, which is consistent with Weber's concept of persuasive authority. The broadness of spiritual knowledge naturally formed Habib Luthfi's charismatic authority as a charismatic and unique ulama figure that he narrated with a clear, calm, gentle, polite, and peaceful communication pattern, accompanied by a strong line of lineage and scientific and spiritual chains.

Conclusion

Unquestionably, the activities of recitation, da'wah, lectures, and offline visits have been Habib Luthfi's mainstay in the past. Direct da'wah operations and encounters between congregations and scholars continue to contribute significantly to the Sufism network's cohesion and extension. Internet usage has become an enlargement of the "workspace" under Sufi teachings. The lectures of Habib Luthfi were recorded, edited, transcribed, and distributed across demographic, geographical, and temporal boundaries by his students. The above figure of Habib Lutfi's activities, lectures, da'wah, and guidance are circulated via hundreds of links, copied, and then passed from one link to another. The digital record can be accessed online via social media or messenger/VOIP; therefore, the Internet becomes a forum, and the central means of communication for the spread of Sufism brought by Habib Luthfi. The media has facilitated the rapid and unrestricted spread of all Sufi-related information, topics, and ideas throughout the congregation. It knits together through a virtual channel pass community-net-citizen formats such as online congregations, "online brotherhood," online allegiance, online blessings, and online recitations. For example, netizens who live in

a city send greetings and prayers to Habib Luthfi as a murshid and share spiritual beliefs with the congregation of netizens who live in different cities without ever meeting in person. Communication and virtual spiritual interaction between communities and ulama leaders of the tarekat resulted in the ulama's authority being strengthened, first offline and online. Many researchers believe the flexibility of virtual digital internet communication encounters has diminished this authority. On the other side, online media are now strengthening and expanding spiritual power and was previously only experienced offline.

In contrast, spiritual power and charisma in Sufism are drawn from the absolute will of God and are not self-generated. Nonetheless, they are strengthened by the knowledge of textual normative sources, including scriptures, hadiths, and prophetic history from the past. On his website, Habib Luthfi openly clarifies this point. This authority is earned by a lengthy spiritual process involving the acquisition of knowledge, the connection of genealogical knowledge or spiritual chains (silsilah) from a variety of reliable spiritual sources/teachers, and the fortification through lineal descent (lineal descent).

This form of spiritual power distinguishes religious authority within the sphere of Sufism from other forms of authority within Islam. This lineage was strengthened by a long journey and the pursuit for a spiritual master, spiritual wandering, culminating in the requirement of an official certificate to become a murshid. The process of imparting the mandate can take the form of direct gifting, dreams, inner illumination, or lifting the veil surrounding spiritual understanding (kasyaf). The experience of Habib Luthfi also demonstrates how he obtained a mandate as a murshid from numerous tarekat schools after a long journey to study with numerous teachers in multiple places. He was with his master Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Shaik Muhammad Ilyas, Sukaraja of Central Java, the longest. He studied with the instructor for twelve years. Habib Luthfi performed spiritual exercise (riyadoh) for years and khalwat (seclusion) for four years in his teacher's

residence under his teacher's instructions.[70] Thus, the charisma and power of Habib Luthfi are the results of a connection, a relationship, and the embodiment of heavenly gifts, genealogical ties, and scientific chains (silsilah) that continue to the great Prophet. Spiritual aspirations and pious practices honed it, so Habib Luthfi was regarded as a murshid with a pure heart, sharp mind, and profound spiritual insight, which gave rise to charismatic authority. This charismatic authority is gaining strength today, particularly as he reaches the virtual internet sphere.

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[70] Fajrie Alatas, *"Aligning The Sunna and The Jama'a,* 247-255. Fajrie Alatas elaborated in great depth on the complexities of Habib Luthfi's biography, including his ancestry.

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