The changing piety and spirituality: a new trend of Islamic urbanism in Yogyakarta and Surakarta

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Abstract

The prevalence of urban spiritualism is on the rise among residents of major cities. One observable manifestation of urban spiritualism is the growing number of diverse social recitation gatherings. The present research looks into four distinct profiles of assemblies that have emerged in the urban areas of Yogyakarta and Surakarta. The four assemblies comprise Muslim United and Teras Dakwah. In Surakarta, it is worth noting the presence of two prominent organisations, namely Majelis Ar-Raudhah, established by Habib Novel Alaydrus, and Majelis Busytanul Asyiqin, founded by Habib Syech Assegaf. This study elucidates the techniques employed by the aforementioned four assemblies to disseminate moderate religious knowledge within urban circles, as well as their respective reactions to the evolving spiritual dynamics observed within urban communities. The present study employs a qualitative methodology, specifically a field study approach. The findings of this study suggest a shift in the dominance of religious authority among renowned ustadz and habaib figures. By endorsing the dissemination of widely recognised da'wah conducted by these prominent individuals, it contributes to the enhancement of religious literacy among urban populations. The study findings also interpret the santrinisation and piety activities observed in urban communities as a tangible expression of the veracity of religious teachings.

Urban spiritualisme kalangan urban di kota-kota besar demikian meningkat. Indikasi yang bisa dilihat dari kehadiran urban spiritualisme adalah munculnya berbagai majelis pengajian. Penelitian ini mengangkat empat profil majelis yang berkembang di kota Yogyakarta dan Surakarta. Empat majelis itu antara lain, Muslim United, Teras Dakwah. Sedangkan di Surakarta, terdapat Majelis Ar-Raudhah yang didirikan Habib Novel Alaydrus dan Majelis Busytanul Asyiqin, yang didirikan Habib Syech Assegaf. Riset ini menjelaskan bagaimana empat majelis di atas mendiseminasi pengetahuan agama yang moderat sehingga bisa diterima di kalangan urban dan respon empat majelis di atas terhadap dinamika spiritualitas masyarakat urban yang semakin dinamis. Penelitian ini berbasiskan kualititatif dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi lapangan. Hasil kajian ini mengargumentasikan mulai bergesernya otoritas keagamaan yang didominasi para ustadz terkenal dan figur habaib. Dengan mengedepankan dakwah populer yang diusung para figur tersebut turut meningkatkan literasi pemahaman agama

masyarakat urban. Temuan penelitian ini juga melihat adanya santrinisasi dan aktivitas kesalehan masyarakat urban sebagai wujud kebenaran ajaran agama.

Keywords: *Urban spiritualism; Congregation; Ustadz; Habaib; Religious teaching*

Introduction

The manifestations of spirituality exhibited by urban communities always provoke controversy and spread to the public. Religion seems like a practical solution at a time when societies are experiencing the challenges of recurrent globalisation. On the other hand, religion is the meeting place between God and various life issues.[1] In this article, we take the presence of Islam in Yogyakarta and Surakarta as the case study for examining how the urban-based Muslim civic society organisation develops its influential piety. These two cities were chosen because of the diversity of the people living there, the constant change and development of the city, and the rapid growth of industrial areas. Both cities have become small metropolises, but, at the same time, their societies have become inseparable from globalisation. Social practices within the society are entwined with an appropriate religious ethos. Religious consciousness is a non-negotiable necessity for urban populations in the current millennium. Yogyakarta and Surakarta are particularly militant against religious teachings. The emergence of consciousness cannot be separated from the prioritisation of transcendental and ascetic attitudes, which are far more important than dealing with worldly death.

This article explores the development of the urban-based Quranic recitation community, such as Muslim United and Teras Da'wah, which are established in Yogyakarta, and also attempts to explain the Islamic phenomenon that has emerged in the last decade. The two

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[1]Lyn Parker, "Religious Education for Peaceful Coexistence in Indonesia?", *South East Asia Research*, Volume 22, Number 4 (2014), 487–504.

da'wah movements were initiated by a handful of young people from Yogyakarta who wanted a relaxed discussion of Islam as well as an easy way to disseminate religious knowledge to the public.[2] The two urban recitations above attempt to present themes familiar to urban societies and also take on a different role and differentiation of da'wah from the others. Purification of da'wah and politicisation of Islam are no longer of interest as the religious expressions of urban communities are beginning to change.[3] Urban society tends to want to enjoy Islam in a relaxed and understandable way.[4] Muslim United and Teras Dakwah are **just bridging the social intimacy of urban society**.[5] Therefore, the package of Islam is easy to digest and offers a doctrinal populism that does not adhere to rigid doctrines.

The second part of this paper also highlights the existence of the Bustanul Asyiqin congregation, founded by Habib Syech bin Assegaf and the Ar-raudhoh congregation, which was initiated by Habib Novel bin Alaydrus, two charismatic religious leaders in Surakarta. In particular, Habib Syech offers a form of proselytising easily accepted by the wider community. The shalawat, with its distinct voice, has changed the complexion of transcendental values between being close to Allah as the God and Prophet Muhammad PBUH (Peace Be Upon Him). He always invited the audience to praise the greatness of Allah.

His shalawat poetry reflected his affection for the Prophet Muhammad PBUH and Islam. Habib Syech is a popular preacher in almost all circles.

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[2]Ariel Heryanto, *Upgraded Piety and Pleasure: The New Middle Class and Islam in Indonesian Popular Culture*, *Islam and Popular Culture in Indonesia and Malaysia*, UK: Routledge, 2011, 60-82.

[3]James Bourk Hoesterey and Norshahril Saat, "Rebranding Islam: Piety, Prosperity, and a Self-Help Guru", *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, Volume 32, Number 2 (2017), 430–431.

[4]Elizabeth D. Hutchison, "Spirituality, Religion, and Progressive Social Movements: Resources and Motivation for Social Change", *Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work*, Volume 31, Number 1–2 (2012), 105–127.

[5]H. W. Dick, "The Rise of a Middle Class and the Changing Concept of Equity in Indonesia: An Interpretation", *Indonesia*, Volume 39 (1985), 71.

His rhetorical and artistic skills have made him a person who breaks the divide between religion and culture.[6] This is based on the Puritan belief that religion and art are mutually exclusive.[7] Moreover, Habib Syech is able to portray the flexibility of Islam while conveying the essence of the teachings acceptable to urban society.[8]

Then, the Ar-Raudhah congregation was founded by Habib Novel bin Muhammad Alaydrus. The Ar-Raudhah congregation constitutes a model of da'wah, beautifully packaged and presented in a modest, flexible, and tolerant way to those who follow it. A distinctive feature of the Ar-Raudhah congregation is that they constantly teach subjects related to daily life, such as Aqida, Sufism, jurisprudence, and the interpretation of the Qur'an. Like the Aswaja (Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamaah) congregation, the Ar-Raudhah congregation always invites the congregation to recite Shalawat, Tahlil, and Maulid Simtudduor at each reading.

The easy delivery and choice of wording in Habib's novel made a substantial impression on the audience. The character and Kharisma of Habib's novel lend legitimacy and approval to the interactive teachings of religious teachings. Habib Novel's status as *zuriyat al-rasul* (descendants of the prophet) changed the landscape of proselytising urban society's view that what Habib Novel preached came directly from Rasulullah.

In part, Islam's offer of modernity is evident in its people's ability to display an elegant Islamic pattern.[9] Unlike in the past,when studying religion had to go to Kyai or someone who had a strong religious faith,

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[6]Stig Hjarvard, "Mediatization and the Changing Authority of Religion", *Media, Culture and Society*, Volume 38, Number 1 (2016), 8–17.

[7]Pauline Hope Cheong, "The Vitality of New Media and Religion: Communicative Perspectives, Practices, and Changing Authority in Spiritual Organization", *New Media and Society*, Volume 19, Number 1 (2017), 25–33.

[8]Brian Larkin, *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere.*, *American Ethnologist*, Volume 29, Number 1 (2002),191-192.

[9]Vedi R. Hadiz and Richard Robison, "Competing Populisms in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia", *International Political Science Review*, Volume 38, Number 4 (2017), 488–502.

urban societies are now practically present in a congregation,[10] each of which
has a different pattern. There are special ones discussing jurisprudence,
Islamic history, Sufism, interpretation, and so on. Therefore, with this
branding, the audience has to solely choose according to their preferences,
and even in certain situations, the personification of the Hijra becomes
a spirit to achieve the sweetness of faith.[11]

The depth of the meaning of life based on religion is an important
and unavoidable value.[12] Religious practices have become more stringent.
Urban societies are aware of how short life is and how the afterlife seems
very real. Relevance suggests that religion be removed from life and the
public sphere in the case of modernisation, social change, and economic
improvement.[13] Religion, on the other hand, not only is surviving but is
gaining momentum in urban communities. Religion can explode and even
proliferate into various expressions that create constructive attitudes of
religiosity and piety that are sensitive to social interests.[14]

After the Reformation, the religiosity of urban Muslim society changed
dramatically.[15] The rapid development of technology has broadened the
religious landscape. A variety of media, both television and social media,
have also spurred the emergence of new models of *da'wah*, and the

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[10]Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency, and Commodification
on the Landscape of the Indonesian Public Sphere", *Contemporary Islam*, Volume 3, Number
3 (2009), 229–250.

[11]Yuyun Sunesti, Noorhaidi Hasan, and Muhammad Najib Azca, "Young Salafi-Niqabi
and Hijrah: Agency and Identity Negotiation", *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*,
Volume 8, Number 2 (2018), 173–198.

[12]Azyumardi Azra, *Dari Harvard Hingga Makkah*, Jakarta: Republika, 2005, 122-124.

[13]Wahyudi Akmaliah, "The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and
Reclaiming Religious Authorities", *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, Volume
10, Number 1 (2020), 1–24.

[14]Heidi A. Campbell, *When Religion Meets New Media When Religion Meets New Media*,
United Kingdom: Routledge, 2010, 78-83.

[15]Saiful Mujani and R. William Liddle, "Muslim Indonesia's Secular Democracy", *Asian
Survey*, Volume 49, Number 4 (2009), 575–590.

attraction of the famous clergy (*ustaz seleb*) is increasingly loved by urban communities.[16] Television programming with religious nuances is gaining acceptance, coupled with the proliferation of urban recitation (*majlis zikir*) as an integral part of spiritual activity in urban communities.[17] This trend of piety has become a barrier against secular culture, whose infiltration is growing stronger. If religion does not become a strong pillar, it is feared that moral degradation will prevail in society.

This paper will focus on three parts. First is how the four congregations mentioned above provide sufficient space for the dissemination of moderate and easily accepted religious knowledge in urban communities. Second, how do the four congregations respond to the shifting dynamics of the urban communities' spirituality? Third, what are the four congregations doing in response to the current proselytising trend that maintains the fundamental Islamic teachings that urban societies readily accept?

The brotherhood and religious authority in urban religioscapes

Today's global developments have changed people's perspectives. Such a large population, especially in urban societies, has social, cultural, and spiritual implications. Such rapid modernisation "threatened" some civilisations in societies that seemed unprepared. Indonesia's Muslim population had reached 87% by 2010 and has been the largest Muslim population in the world,[18] showing the staggering fact that Indonesia is one of the most adaptable and consistent with its religious conditions. Indonesia has been successful in arranging different religious buildings.

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[16]Greg Fealy, *Ustadz Seleb: Bisnis Moral & Fatwa Online, Ragam Ekspresi Islam Indonesia Kontemporer, Mengonsumsi Islam: Agama Yang Dijadikan Jualan Dan Kesalehan Yang Diidam-Idamkan*, Jakarta: Komunitas Bambu, 2012.

[17]Inaya Rakhmani, "Mainstreaming Islam in Indonesia: Television, Identity, and the Middle Class", *Mainstreaming Islam in Indonesia: Television, Identity, and the Middle Class*, 2017, 1–216.

[18]"Https://Www.Pewresearch.Org/Religion/2010/11/04/Muslim-Population-of-Indonesia/", n.d.

There are the fundamentalists, traditionalists, and modernists, even though some refer to the *santri*, *priyayi*, and *abangan* groups as a bridge to seeing Islam in Indonesia from many perspectives.[19]

When grouped as above, nuances of polarisation emerge. It is even more interesting when *New Urbanism,* in the structure of urban society, is drawn into the religious discourse of urban society.[20] We propose different trends and perspectives to highlight this phenomenon. The concept of religious landscapes discussed in this paper is based on a network of congregations that are beginning to grow in urban areas.[21] The religious practices and narratives presented by these congregations often promote attitudes that comprehensively express the value of virtue and God-consciousness.[22] Social interactions with individuals take place on a larger scale in these congregations. A global rather than a local understanding of Islam has become the standard for promoting peace-loving Islam that can easily be practised in everyday life.[23]

The new onslaught of Islamised discourse is due to the process of touching the global agenda that Muslim groups want to establish as the ideological foundation that governs their Islamic identity in order to rise from the oppression that may have been felt so far.[24] The rise of transnational movements that existed after the reforms legitimised their

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[19]M. C. Ricklefs, "Rediscovering Islam in Javanese History", *Studia Islamika*, Volume 21, Number 3 (2014), 397–418.

[20]Atik Suprapti, "A Living Heritage Approach Toward Sustainability of Islamic City in The Northern Coastal of Java, Indonesia", *Journal of Architectural Design and Urbanism*, Volume 4, Number 1 (2021), 61–78.

[21]Stephan Lanz, *Assembling Global Prayers in the City: An Attempt to Repopulate Urban Theory with Religion*, *Global Prayers. Contemporary Manifestations of the Religious in the City*, Zürich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2014.

[22]Subijanto, "The Visibility of a Pious Public"...

[23]Issa Khan et al., "A Critical Appraisal of Interreligious Dialogue in Islam", *SAGE Open*, Volume 10, Number 4 (2020).

[24]F. Gregory Gause, *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn*, *Contemporary Islam*, Volume 2, Number 2 (2008), 165-167.

status as groups that seemed to be trying to resist state power,[25] gradually disintegrated into smaller groups of society, even undergoing cultural shifts that prioritised symbolism. It revealed the essence of religion and demonstrated its commodification in public.[26]

The ummah's adaptive strategy is currently moving towards adapting to the times. The elements that create a harmonious, fair, and tolerant society are absolutes. Muslim United and Teras Da'wah took on that role. Both congregations have the principle of presenting the path of social piety and building the capacity of the people, which no longer revolves around personal and transactional piety. The two congregations build intrapersonal relations and cooperation among various community groups. It aims to portray the narrative of inclusivism. Also, the contemporary adoption of Islamic values seems to be connected through the Congregations of the Bustanul Asyiqin and Ar-raudhoh. Congregational and clerical power became the basis for the two congregations mentioned above. The existence of the two congregations demonstrates the rapid process of institutionalising Islamic values, norms, and principles.[27] Based on this, patterns of institutionalisation have led to great changes in the social piety practised by preachers or religious figures.[28]

Consequently, religious authority has shifted in a different direction. In the past, the authority of religions was determined by the dominance of certain figures. However, in this study, the figures of Habib Syech and Habib Novel are attached to their characters. Both figures are classified as ulama.

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[25]Martin Van Bruinessen, *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the "Conservative Turn"*, Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the "Conservative Turn", Singapore: ISEAS Press, 2013.

[26]Andrew N. Weintraub, *Islam and Popular Culture in Indonesia and Malaysia*, Islam and Popular Culture in Indonesia and Malaysia, London: Routledge, 2011, 157-178.

[27]Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam"...

[28]Julia Day Howell and Martin van Bruinessen, *Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam*, Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam, London: I. B. Tauris, 2020.

On the other hand, in addition to these two figures having a strong religious and educational background, they are seen as part of a network of Tarim scholars and Al-rabithah al-Alawiyah (The Association of Alawiyyin), who represent the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH[29] Both Habib Syech and Habib Novel have built very strong community congregants. Both figures were also successful in getting the congregation familiar with their YouTube channel. Their congregations are always well attended, and the charisma of both ulamas provides an enjoyable forum. Wiktorowicz argues that, nowadays, religious texts fill the public sphere. Sometimes people are trapped in their doctrinal understanding when interpreting the Al-Quran and Hadith. It is impossible for the public to understand comprehensively how an Al-Quran or hadith exists, whether from a political or social background.[30] Thus, the presence of the four congregations mentioned above seeks to answer the complexities of interpreting scripture for society. Teras Da'wah, Muslim United, Ar-Raudhah & Bustanul Asyiqin Congregations have been described as 'entirely voluntary' in upholding religious teachings. They are also called the Guardians of Religion, and they try to legitimise truth claims that can be accepted by urban societies.[31]

For urban society Muslim United places mosques as central to activities. The religious axis is built on the ability to surrender one's potential for servitude only to Allah Swt. They see the opportunity as a means of upholding transcendental values as a whole. For Muslim United, the Mosque is a sacral building like it was in the time of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. It's not only used for carrying out worship, but the

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[29]Azyumardi. Azra, *Jaringan Ulama : Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII*, Jakarta: Prenada Media Group, 2004.

[30]Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, USA: Indiana University Press, 2004.

[31]Sukron Kamil, "Is Religion Compatible with Modernity? An Overview on Modernity's Measurements And Its Relation to Religion", *Insaniyat: Journal of Islam and Humanities* 2, Number 2 (2018): 85–108.

Mosque also has implications for strengthening economic and social capital. If you can bring the mosque to life, Allah will undoubtedly also help His servants. *The Real Masjid*, as they called it, is a reflection of the symbol of piety attached to the surrounding urban society. The plurality of understandings and diverse activities becomes its own dynamic. Also, the mosques are no longer owned by a group of parties. Nanang Saifur Rozi, the initiator of Muslim United, sees that the current perception of Islam must be taken in a more advanced direction. The friction of various ideologies, whether it is a radically nuanced ideology and so on, no longer directly intersects. But if it can, diversity becomes a binder, and Islam shows mercy to the corners of the universe.

The audience involved in these congregations has become *santri* from a different perspective. The meaning of santri here does not mean people who struggle every day with the yellow book and their daily lives in Islamic boarding schools. The classification of urban society as *santri* is a label that is indirectly attached to groups of people who are beginning to realise the importance of religious teachings in their everyday life. They accepted the doctrine as a necessity. In addition, they tried to practise scriptural doctrine in everyday life. The Islamisation that occurs in the above-mentioned assemblies no longer merely elaborates on the meaning of religion translated from the text into context. Moreover, the ongoing process of santrinisation has changed the landscape of patterns of the meaning of religious symbols, from the interpretation of teachings to the interpretability of urban social structures.[32] So that urban society is taught not only to interpret religious teachings but to practise according to the situation of the era where religion remains the fundamental foundation that influences human behaviour.

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[32]Asrori S. Karni, *Etos Studi Kaum Santri: Wajah Baru Pendidikan Islam*. Bandung: Mizan Pustaka, 2009.

Behind the moral panic of the urbanites

The existence of recitation, which transformed the social structure of urbanites, has strengthened the perception that a good understanding of religion is a necessity. Today, religion is becoming a necessary aspect in which it plays a strategic role as a model for the transformation of society in a better direction. The term Islamisation, as mentioned above, has positioned the congregation outside the pesantren. However, the role of the above assemblies is not much different from that of the pesantren. The congregations have become gathering places for diverse groups to carry out religious activities. In the 80s, the congregation was identified with the lower classes that attended. Thus, there has been a paradigm shift in the current millennial era. The congregation is not in demand among the middle class or even the urban elite. Traditionalists living in rural areas have coloured the contemporary Islamic situation by proposing a premise of religiosity that is quite simpler and fairly easier to organise. The premise is oriented towards tafaqquh fi al-din plainly by bringing in Kyai to teach religion.[33]

Rural communities are currently obsessed with the teaching of halaqah that first existed in classical times, and this model is organised in mosques. Later, halaqah evolved into a congregation that spread throughout Indonesia. The congregation was initially taught by a *kyai* who read and translated the book (in Arabic), which was then delivered to the audience.[34] Over time, these recitations were intensively organised by reviewing certain books and topics. Audiences were expected to listen carefully and take

[33]Azyumardi Azra, "Genealogy of Indonesian Islamic Education: Roles in the Modernization of Muslim Society", *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage*, Volume 4, Number 1 (2015): 85–114.

[34]Lukens-Bull, "Two Sides of the Same Coin: Modernity and Tradition in Islamic Education in Indonesia"Indonesia, seeks to negotiate modernization and globalization through the interface of an Islamic boarding school (pesantren.

notes. But sometimes, the audience did not pay attention to the lecture materials. They only listened to the rhetoric, so what was conveyed by the scholars was not imprinted at all. The preacher began by proposing Quranic arguments that were related to contemporary issues. Reflecting on such a situation, each preacher has a market tailored to the interests of audiences.

In the Teras Dakwah, the topics of proselytising presented look diverse. The promotion of *hijra* and popular themes is a trend that is in demand in urban societies, mostly among young people. Perhaps by adjusting to the current conditions, the ustadz were asked to package their proselytising as attractively as possible in order to appeal to the youth. The issues of moral decline are packaged as comfortably as possible. In fact, the issues of civilisation and the militancy of the struggle in Palestine became a narrative that thrilled the soul of Muslims. Nevertheless, another theme that is less interesting is the notion that arranged marriages and the topic of young people is the trigger for the presence of pilgrims. At least in Teras Dakwah, the theme settings are tailored to the expertise of each ustadz. Proselytising in urban areas, as shown by Teras Dakwah, is an unusual shift. Usually, the mosque becomes a binding place for recitation to be held. Now, the garage or terrace can also be a place for recitations to be held. The choice of the name Teras Dakwah seems to be a keyword where the desire to present a flexible and open congregation for all circles can be realised. Another hope is that fragmentation of group exclusivity can be avoided and be beneficial to the people. In that regard, Teras Dakwah wants to present itself as a popular proselytising movement that is easily accepted by all circles. The battle of identity is intensifying at a time when globalisation is a narrative that allows Western cultures to intersect with the customs of intimacy. The impact it presents is enormous, especially if young people are not equipped with qualified religious knowledge.

Understanding religion is not enough with the intensification of doctrine. The doctrine will not work if the message displayed does not reflect the values in it. Therefore, the presence of speakers who have the competence to understand the problems of the community is needed. Religious messages are accurately conveyed with a smile, or, to borrow Howell's term, a smiling preacher.[35] The preacher is expected to bridge the needs of urbanites in accessing religious knowledge. Last but not least, in that context, the role of the internet is not hypocritical; publication is an important component in times when people need it. If audiences cannot attend, they will access YouTube and Instagram, so popularity becomes inevitable. Besides, Islam does not forbid popularity. At least in popularity, there is a productivity of piety that can draw one closer to God.

Civic religion and the desecularisation of space

Hedonism and materialism are often disputed according to religious views. These two aspects are contradictory to the attitude of piety shown by Muslim society today. Peter Berger presents the concept of secularisation as a narrative to focus on the trend in society that is beginning to be saturated with religious issues that are in turn often abused. Acts of terrorism underlie the attitude of public opposition to the existence of religion as the foundation of humanity. This assumption is a trend that comes to the fore but never ends up being discussed.[36] The West is often considered a trigger for secularisation due to the existence of attitudes that are against religious, social, and scientific advances. Spirituality was sued for obstructing the pace of science and technology. The marginalisation of transcendental aspects is often used as a pattern to distance morality as

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[35]James Howell, *The Beauty of the Word : The Challenge and Wonder of Preaching*, Westminster: John Knox Press, 2011.

[36]Dylan Reaves, "Peter Berger and the Rise and Fall of the Theory of Secularization", *Denison Journal of Religion* Volume 11 (2012), 11–19.

a principle from being faced with a variety of endless conflicts.

Urban society's admiration for clerical figures who teach the mechanism of introduction to religious doctrine has transformed the perspective of religious functionality into a social glue. People's fear of secular things slowly began to fade. Durkheim said that if religion serves as a social glue, it indirectly has implications for changing the role of religion as a controller of morality, and religion can be presented as an integrative force in uniting differences in the structure of diverse societies.[37] On the other hand, it is possible to offer a stronger and transcendental relationship to provide a basis for a sense of security in the midst of the uncertainties of life. As explained in Habib's novel, "*Human beings live in the world only temporarily. He merely rested for a while, and man continued his journey again to the eternal place, which is the hereafter.*"

It may not be beautiful when people talk about the truth without using religion as a foothold. Religion has revealed itself as a reality embodied in scripture. In the West, the development of secularism is unstoppable because of the rapid dominance of industrialisation and modernisation, which have implications for religion's receding from the practice of life. This was agreed upon by Ustad Pago, who conducted the congregation at Muslim United: "*They pursue the material and transience of the world.[...]. This world is a field for the hereafter, so do not separate religion from yours.*"

For urban Muslims, secularism is not only seen as a counterproductive narrative. Secularism can be observed from a variety of angles. Perhaps economic issues are interesting to watch. The economy is often a concern that is no less important. In Islamic teachings, the economy becomes the pillar of justice, which benefits the people. The establishment of a country depends on economic strength. Talal asad asserts that secularism is no

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[37]Lise Ann Tole, "Durkheim on Religion and Moral Community in Modernity", *Sociological Inquiry*, Volume 63, Number 1 (1993), 1–29.

longer assumed to mean 'religion' alone. More than that, he identified that secularism involves worldly commitments such as tolerance, freedom of expression, democracy, and so on that are intertwined with human affairs in real life. For Talal, secularism wants humans to participate in order to create normalisation and balance, seeing that these aspects become the cohesion of civilisation.[38]

Economics is interesting to see because humanitarian governance lies in the extent to which economic justice is implemented. It non-religiously led transactions to become permissive. The advantage of such a large economic value is that it has become something that attracts people's sympathy. The complexity of this economic affair attracts the attention of urban Muslims. Therefore, the power of religious rationality is the answer to the worldly problem. So, a comprehensive understanding of the problem is needed. Regarding this problem, ustadz Dwi Tjondro Triono commented:

> It becomes a necessity if people can implement economic principles in accordance with Islamic law. The economic system of capitalism is rampant and monopolized by certain groups. Mass production is co-opted based on the interests of a particular group. Profits are left to the free market, thinking only about profit without relying on benefits and justice. So far, the economy has been managed unhealthily, especially during the pandemic, when commercial conditions were very sluggish. Therefore, we need a strong economic system. A strong economy must be supported by political stability and monetary conditions. So that further talks will solidify our knowledge of a more sustained Islamic economy.

The conflict between secularism and religion has caused quite a heated debate. In developed countries; as Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglewart explain,[39] a country's economic progress has nothing to do with

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[38]Sindre Bangstad, "Contesting Secularism/s: Secularism and Islam in the Work of Talal Asad", *Anthropological Theory*, Volume 9, Number 2 (2009), 188–208.

[39]Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, Cambridge: University Press, 2011, 232-246.

a particular ideology or belief. In that context, religion does not serve to regulate well-being and prosperity. Even religion seems to be ignored; it is placed in an invisible location because, for a secular society, religion cannot guarantee the future of its citizens. It is precisely in countries that are economically and politically guaranteed that the existence of religion is simply hypothesised.

On the contrary, if religion does have a role in the prosperity of a country, this is corroborated by the argument of Okrizal Eka Putra in his presentation at the Teras Da'wah: "*A strong country actually needs religion in it. Islam, for example, has a lot of values that can be expressed in real life and bring benefits to others.*" What Okrizal said was in line with Casanova's idea that today, religion no longer occupies a private space. Religious symbols are allowed to be displayed in public spaces.[40] This confirms that urban society has begun to play a role as a social agent and that religion is an important aspect of the development of a nation.

Faith-based activism and urban philanthropy

Today, the existence of philanthropy does not only confirm the spirit of generosity and diversity. Moreover, philanthropy, which was later brought in by the urban middle class, was a movement that first existed based on the influence of the socio-political situation before the independence era in the early 19th century. In the past, philanthropy was used as a movement of economic empowerment to revive welfare and reverse the decline caused by the colonial system that intervened in the common people. The development of economic enterprises for small people was looked into; in addition, strengthening efforts to help in the development of the country was initiated. This kind of thing continued into the New

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[40]José Casanova, *Global Religious and Secular Dynamics: The Modern System of Classification*, Washington: Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, 2019, 1–49.

Order era. The torrent of cosmopolitanism that began to flow in the New Order era created a compromise between political interests and economic activities that wanted to support the sustainability of state development. Philanthropic activities began to roll out, although until the late 80s, when the ICMI (Indonesian Muslim Scholars Association) was established. At least the voices of Muslims were intensively accommodated, and the first Sharia Bank (Bank Muamalat Indonesia) was established.[41]

With ICMI and Muamalat Bank, the importance of economic dissemination could be raised. The institutionalisation of philanthropy during the New Order period attracted the sympathy of Muslims throughout Indonesia and full support was given with the establishment of the BAZ (Badan Amil Zakat) and LAZ (Lembaga Amil Zakat) institutions, which were both founded by Muhammadiyah and Nadhlatul Ulama, as well as other non-governmental organisations, such as Dompet Dhuafa and so on.

Islam strongly encourages social activities, as stated in the Qur'an. Recently, philanthropy has been carried out to overcome various economic insecurities caused by uncertain social conditions.[42] Awareness of overcoming the problems of life difficulties and improving people's welfare is undeniable. Philanthropy is not only economic, but also social, e.g, education, health, and so on.[43] It is undeniable that philanthropy is increasingly arousing urban interest by playing a central role in it. Moreover, among urbanites, philanthropy has given birth to a movement of empowerment and utilisation of the potential for public participation in a wider scope. On the other hand, philanthropy has depicted a form

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[41]Yudi Latif, *Inteligensia Muslim Dan Kuasa: Genealogi Inteligensia Muslim Indonesia Abad Ke-20*, Bandung: Mizan Pustaka, 2005.

[42]Azyumardi Azra, "Filantropi Islam, Civil Society, dan Keadilan Sosial" (Pengantar), in Irfan Abu Bakar and Chaider S. Bamualim, *Filantropi Islam Dan Keadilan Sosial*. Jakarta: The Ford Foundation dan CSRC, 2006.

[43]Hilman Latief, *Politik Filantropi Islam Di Indonesia: Negara, Pasar, Masyarakat Sipil*, Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak, 2013.

of advanced civilisation that promotes social justice and collective and complete well-being. The importance of philanthropy was agreed upon by Habib Syeikh in one of the recitations he pointed out: "If later we want to be placed in heaven by Allah swt, then often you do pious charity. If we often help others, then Allah Swt will also help us."

The transformation of human values in Islamic teachings cannot be separated from the spirit of strengthening social capital for the realisation of a just and prosperous society. Marginalised groups, as mentioned in the Quran, imply that fellow beings of God care for each other and that there is volunteerism in helping and overcoming the difficulties of the other party. In that regard, Islam places collective welfare in a noble position. Defending this argument, Muslim United, on many occasions, has held a series of activities to improve the welfare of local residents by encouraging small traders to sell their food and beverages to gain profit.

In that regard, Muslim United often collaborates with various stakeholders, such as Dompet Dhuafa and, on past occasions, Aksi Cepat Tanggap (ACT). The daily routine of activities organised by Muslim United is quite diverse, ranging from Marbot Academy to various Islamic studies. Donations from the community always go to Muslim United. In that location, there is not only a mosque in which various activities and trainings are held. Every day, around 500-600 *santri* are present; consumption is required in the morning and evening. Practically every day, the funds needed to provide consumption are quite large, ranging from tens of millions every week. Especially on Mondays and Thursdays, pre-dawn meals and iftar are provided. Residents of the community who want to suhoor and break their fast are welcome to follow suit. What Muslim United does can be seen as a model of social capital, which is a foothold that welfare development must align with for sustainable social development.

Conclusion

The four congregations mentioned above have disseminated religious knowledge into a public space that is attractive to urban society. Religious authority has shifted from traditional institutions like pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) or madrasahs and *Kyai* to famous ustadz (Islamic preachers) and habaib figures. Religious authority has shifted from being exclusive to inclusive.

Religion has filled the public space with all its consequences. On the one hand, it has made knowledge accessible, and on the other hand, religion is presented as a primary need that cannot be denied. Teras Dakwah and Muslim United take a wider dakwah path; both of them tend to take the segmentation of dakwah that is attractive to urban society, easily accepted, and non-ideological, i.e., both Muhammadiyah and Nahdhatul Ulama. At the same time, Majelis Ar-raudhah and Busyatanul Asyiqin also managed to position Habib Novel and Habib Syech as religious authorities that are liked because they are amiable and humble, and their delivery is easily accepted. Also, because they are part of Bani Alawwiyin, they are highly respected by society, and their religious knowledge is highly recognised. The diversity of religious understanding in society is inevitable. People's literacy is also different, so there is a need for models for disseminating religious knowledge into various structures while still prioritising the urgency of the truth and the good tidings of religious teachings. Muslim United and Teras Dakwah seem to be able to package the dialectics of religious teachings into something easily understood. Synchronising text and context became a religious cognitivity that could be understood by urban society. The same goes for the Majelis Ar-Raudhah and Busytanul Asyiqin; the aspects of transcendentalism can be simply conveyed to the audience with figures. Both Habib Novel and Habib Syech are able to transform the prophetic spirit into something that can be applied in everyday life.

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