Sufism in Indonesia and Its Impact
On the Revival of the Islamic Social Da'wah

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Abstract

This study focuses on the role of Sufism in the revival of Islamic social da'wah in Indonesia. Unlike public da'wah, which is mostly dominated by the reformist and political engagements, Sufi orders (ṭuruq) embody integration of spirituality, ethics, and civic responsibility in more balanced ways.

Using historical trajectories and comparative case studies of the Qadiriyyah-Naqshbandiyyah, Syattariyah, Sammaniyah, Idrisiyyah, and the Papua minority networks, the article illustrates the evolving Sufi da'wah in Indonesia from ritual exclusivity to social practice. Iḥsān, adab, khidmah, and ikhlāṣ rehabilitation, economic empowerment, education, and peacebuilding, which are grounded on Sufi principles of focus on the constituents of I. Sufi orders have mediated between civic involvement and the sacred traditions of Islam. In doing so, they have given subtle resistance to ideological Islamism and neoliberal religiosity, as well as constructing an inclusive Muslim public.

This study is the first of its kind to explore the practice of da'wah as a reintegrative spiritual policy in education, promoting Sufi ethics towards Sufism, welfare, civic Sufism, and interfaith engagement in the post-Islamist period.

Keywords: Sufism; Neo-Sufism; Islamic *da'wah*; Social welfare; Indonesia; Spiritual praxis; Muslim publics

Sufisme di Indonesia dan Dampaknya Terhadap Kebangkitan Dakwah Sosial Islam

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Abstrak

Artikel ini menelaah pengaruh sufisme terhadap kebangkitan kembali dakwah sosial Islam di Indonesia. Jika selama ini dakwah publik kerap dikuasai orientasi reformis maupun politik, tarekat sufi (*ṭuruq*) menampilkan jalur alternatif yang memadukan kedalaman spiritual, pembentukan etika, dan tanggung jawab kewargaan.

Berdasarkan kajian historis dan studi kasus komparatif—meliputi Qadiriyyah-Naqshbandiyyah, Syattariyyah, Sammaniyyah, Idrisiyyah, hingga jaringan minoritas di Papua—artikel ini menunjukkan bagaimana dakwah sufi Indonesia berevolusi dari ritual eksklusif menuju praksis sosial. Prinsip-prinsip sufi seperti *iḥsān* (keunggulan), *adab* (etika pergaulan), *khidmah* (pengabdian), dan *ikhlāṣ* (ketulusan) menjadi dasar normatif bagi program rehabilitasi, pemberdayaan ekonomi, reformasi pendidikan, serta inisiatif perdamaian. Dengan memediasi tradisi sakral, keterlibatan sosial, dan struktur negara, tarekat sufi menghadirkan resistensi senyap terhadap Islamisme ideologis maupun religiositas neoliberal, sekaligus membangun ruang publik Muslim yang inklusif.

Artikel ini berkontribusi secara teoretis dengan merumuskan ulang dakwah sebagai praksis spiritual reintegratif, dan secara praktis dengan menawarkan implikasi kebijakan dan pendidikan untuk mengintegrasikan etika sufi dalam bidang kesejahteraan, kewargaan, dan lintas iman pada era pasca-Islamisme.

Kata Kunci: Tasawuf; Neo-Sufisme; Dakwah Islam; Kesejahteraan sosial; Indonesia; Praksis spiritual; Publik Muslim

1. Introduction

Over the past twenty years, Sufism has markedly revived and reemerged within Muslim urban and transnational centres, particularly where devotion and observance are publicly displayed and arranged under post-Islamist reconfigurations. Sufism, contrary to the overly simplistic portrayal of Sufis' withdrawal into mysticism, is now acknowledged and characterised as a responsive, problem-solving social and ethical phenomenon of modern Sufism (Ephrat, 2023). Sufi groups in the U.S., Europe, and the Middle East have adapted their teachings to navigate the moral uncertainties of life within a neoliberal framework. In this context, spirituality serves as a form of social support, ethical renewal, and even interfaith engagement. In South East Asia, notably Indonesia, this revival is linked to what Salvatore & Eickelman (2006) term the "civilising" influence of Islam within public life, where religious morals and social governance are intertwined. This article responds to this global shift by exploring the role of Indonesian Sufism in revitalising da'wah as an ethical and social practice, rather than merely as proselytisation.

The Islamic activism that stems from Indonesia, after the public transformation in democracy of the year 1988, state-funded, has an Islamic-focused public activism that expands heavily funded da'wah activities that are still in their infancy. This expansion has, however, not been without its distortions. Within the past decade, Indonesia has been marked by a form of Ethical Fragmentation; analytical frameworks of public Islamic activism have been overshadowed by identity politics, alongside neglecting the importance of iḥsān and polite behaviour towards excessive religiosity. 'Public Islam' has still been concerned with the promotion of civic virtues that foster public polemic of religion and maintain social harmony. Public religiosity has, however, been marked by the excessive spectacle of social media. Public Islam has still been concerned with the promotion of social divisions as ruptures of religion. As Ştefan (2008) argues in the critique of modern social sciences, engaging in any ethical practice that is traduced as a form of virtue signalling acquires an ethical tradition that is undeniably hollow. In the context of Indonesia, the practice of da'wah invokes morals that are deliberately unattended for a capitalistic sociopolitical agenda.

With all of these in mind, Sufism also provides balance. In the archipelago, Sufi orders have embraced the inner discipline of the spiritual path and the active outward community service. Sufi leaders (mashāyikh) have led the way in the integration of devotion and religion with the social and pedagogical spheres, from the early Islamization during trade and scholarship to the anti-colonial and post-independence nation-building (Abdurahman & Badriza, 2021a). Sufi orders, and particularly members of the modernist and Salafi quarters, have been attacked for backward and superstitious beliefs. Their endurance, however, requires new scholarly attention and suggests an adaptive capacity.

Indonesia is a particularly interesting case study due to its diverse geography. The Sufi orders here are not uniform. The Qadiriyya–Naqshbandiyya networks in Java and West Sumatra, for example,

organizationally and publicly, do very different things than the Sammaniyah in South Sulawesi and the Syattariyah in coastal Sumatra. Some have established close relationships with state institutions, using their legitimacy to provide social programs, while others have embedded themselves more independently within local cultural contexts. This site's diversity provides fertile ground for exploring how ethical concepts like iḥsān and adab are translated into diverse fabrications of daʿwah, such as spiritual rehabilitation centres, economic empowerment, and environmental care.

Current Islamic studies derive direct benefits from the focus of this particular monograph on Indonesian Sufism in two respects. A residual binary in the literature classifying Islam as "mystical" and "activist" has remained unchallenged. Sufism can operate as a form of public ethics. The actors of modern Sufism often find themselves on the margins of personal spiritual cultivation and social activism, and resist the private/public dichotomy of the tradition (Kangiyeva, 2025). As Westfall (2024) proposes regarding the post-Islamist Muslim public, the public sphere sets a stage for the intersection of moral authority and civil engagement. The author shifts the focus of Sufi orders, such as public Sufi orders, from daʾwa to the practice of moral reintegration as daʿwah. Two research questions guide this inquiry:

1. How have Indonesian Sufi orders reshaped *daʿwah* into an ethical-social praxis that addresses the moral and social needs of contemporary Muslim life?
2. What conceptual and practical contributions do these Sufi engagements make to the renewal of Islamic *daʿwah* in the post-Islamist era?

Responding to these questions requires a systematic and comparative approach. This article uses a literature-based analysis to develop the conceptual framework and draws upon foundational Sufi texts (such as al-Ghazali's Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn), along with secondary literature in Islamic studies, sociology of religion, and social ethics. This is integrated with comparative studies of select Indonesian Sufi orders, including TQN Suryalaya in West Java, the Syattariyah in Pariaman, the Sammaniyah in Wajo, the Idrisiyyah in Tasikmalaya, and newly emerging Sufi networks in Papua, each selected for their unique styles of public engagement. The analysis, by comparing these cases, seeks to trace the patterns and differences in social contexts regarding the application of ethical norms.

There are six parts in the argument. This introduction is followed by Section 2, which reimagines Islamic da'wah within a Sufi ethical paradigm, elaborating the importance of *iḥsān, adab, khidmah*, and *ikhlāṣ* as fundamental motives for religious activism. Section 3 documents the history of Sufi orders in Indonesian society and how they transformed from mystical brotherhoods to active phenomena in the public sphere. Section 4 presents the comparative case studies demonstrating the diverse ways in which the Sufi orders culturally and institutionally adapted their *da'wah*. Section 5 synthesises these connections as "reintegrative spiritual praxis," aiming to situate Sufi da'wah within the current discussions around post-Islamism and civil religion. Finally, Section 6 provides final remarks

regarding the theoretical and policy implications of Sufi ethics concerning the Sufi-informed renewal of Islamic da'wah.

The purpose of the article is to situate the Indonesian Sufi experience within the global revival of Sufism, which in turn offers a case for the evolving structure of the religious demographic social order. It addresses students of modern Islam, practitioners of Islamic social work, and religion policy experts on the ethical dimension of public religious engagement. It does, however, suggest a notion which is contestable, Islamic da'wah.

2. Sufism and the Islamic Social Da'wah: Conceptual Reformulation

Despite critical contributions to da'wah today, the argument that da'wah today remains constrained by the act of da'wah being defined as primarily information dissemination remains. The dominant mode in Indonesia of doing da'wah has been in the manner of 'tabligh'—linear message-based ways of communicating or convincing audiences of certain theological or legal issues (Budi Rahman Hakim, 2023a). Even though *'tabligh'* constitutes a form of da'wah, the priority accorded to it has the propensity to confine da'wah to an act of information transmission, devoid of the social-ethical context within which the audience is located. As such, the skewed mode of doing da'wah 'tabligh' is likely to facilitate a religiosity that is 'reactio'—self-defensive to challenges to orthodoxy, or performative to be seen to be pious in a space of religio-cultural norms. 'Reactio' in this regard fails to bring about the civility and moral persona which Islam has been famous for instilling.

This is too narrow a view from a Sufi perspective. Sufism has never regarded da'wah as merely oratorical persuasion, but rather as a tradition of constant, active devotion—living and ethically existing in divine presence and manifesting its ethical outcomes in social life. Relatively speaking, the link between da'wah and the concepts of tarbiya and ta'dīb is not one of separation but of interconnectedness and intertwining, such that da'wah is not simply tarbiya and ta'dīb, whose success is measured only by oratorical skills but by change that disrupts minds and communities. The aim of redefining da'wah from a Sufi angle is to reorient it around four related core elements: iḥsān, adab, khidmah, and ikhlāṣ. These are not abstract ideas but vital values that shape individual conduct and societal behaviour.

Iḥsān: *Excellence in Presence before God*

During the ḥadīth of Jibrīl, the Prophet Muhammad defines *iḥsān* as thinking 'to worship God as if you see Him, and if you do not see Him, know that He sees you.' Al-Ghazali and other Sufi exegetes regard iḥsān as the ultimate depth of religious observance, transcending islām (submitting oneself to God's will) and īmān (belief in God and His Messengers) in depth and transformative possibility (al-Ghazali, Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn). Within the ambit of da'wah, iḥsān shifts the emphasis from external persuasion to inner righteousness of the da'i who then, in all her righteous behaviour, is the message itself, the integrity of which invites to be imitated. Abou-Taleb (2023) observes that *iḥsān* is an 'aesthetic of virtue' which presents virtue as a mode of

beauty in action and character. In the advanced Sufi orders of Indonesia, *iḥsān* is responsible behaviour and disciplined remembrance *(dhikr)*, selective words (i.e., choosing words carefully), and other modes of responsible behaviour reflecting an integrated religious life.

Adab: *Ethics of Relationships*

Sufism practice adab as more than manners; it is the all-embracing art of situating the self, the other, and everything within the parameters of divine order. This order outlines a code of conduct within the teacher/student relationship, among equals within a spiritual brotherhood, and between a Sufi and the society at large. Adab is an integral virtue that influences the work of social professionals, as described by Sufi-inspired Muslims (Budi Rahman Hakim, 2023). It shows how the professionals listen to the clients, manage disputes, and establish trust across varying religions or cultures. It is described in da'wah as 'gentle in the heart of discipline' and means the gentle, but strongly controlled temperament with understanding and love, which does not condescend nor force the wide-brush strokes that arrest many people. It also directed the da'i with knowledge not to gossip.

Khidmah: *Service as Spiritual Duty*

The value of *Khidmah*—service in the name of God—occupies a central position in Sufi education. For most orders, neophytes begin their education by performing humble service to society and internalising the saying that creation service is service to the Creator. This ethic reinterprets da'wah as an act of benevolence: feeding the destitute, educating the ignorant, nursing the sick,

and advocating justice are all invitations to God by exemplifying His mercy. Najah (2021) points to the possibility of introducing *Khidmah* in social welfare programs in Islamic universities and thus graduating students who view welfare provision as neither a Secular career nor an obligation but as a divine trust. The da'wah built into such service is typically more persuasive than speech because it appeals to people at the intersection of their needs and reminds them of the relevance of Islamic values to their well-being.

Ikhlāṣ: *Purity of Intent*

Unless accompanied by *ikhlāṣ,* the other values risk devolving into self-promotion or instrumentalism. Sufi teachers have long warned that the greatest risk in da'wah is corruption of intention—seeking reputation, influence, or material gain in the cause of religious service. The practice of *ikhlāṣ* is frequent self-examination *(muḥāsaba)* to ensure action is done in God's name alone. As used in present-day contexts in which political campaigns and media branding so often involve da'wah and in which funding rivalries ensue to further it, ikhlāṣ is a significant deterrent to preventing the commodification of religion. It is likewise an upholder of the credentials of the da'i: listeners will likely be convinced by one whose sincerity finds outward expression in upright, selfless action.

Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah *from a Sufi Perspective*

The incorporation of these values within da'wah naturally fits within the greater aims of Islamic law *(maqāṣid al-sharīʿah),* at least when given a Sufi

interpretation. While traditional maqāṣid theory centres upon the preservation of religion *(ḥifẓ al-dīn),* life *(ḥifẓ al-nafs),* intellect *(ḥifẓ al-ʿaql),* lineage *(ḥifẓ al-nasl),* and property *(ḥifẓ al-māl),* Sufi exegetes look to the underlying purpose of fostering closeness to God and harmony among His creation. El Khayat et al. (2024) suggest that in such an orientation, values such as maintaining human dignity *(karāma),* taking care of the soul *(ḥifẓ al-rūḥ),* refining the intellect, and fostering social cohesion become paramount. Daʿwah is measured here neither in terms of numbers of conversions nor legalistic observance but by how effectively it enhances the overall well-being of individuals and societies.

Bridging Sufi Ethics and Islamic Social Work

This Sufi-infused vision of daʿwah crosses in significant ways with Islamic social work values. Both are based on the duty to serve others as an act of piety, to advocate for justice and mercy, and to champion the vulnerable. Meirison et al. (2022) cite *taʿāwun* (mutual support) and *ʿadl* (justice) as key to Islamic social work values held in Sufi praxis. Mishra (2025) adds that spirituality in social work enhances empathy, adaptability to adversity (resilience), and moral clarity. Where Sufi daʿwah diverges is in raising up the interior transformation of the *daʿi* as a condition to effective service: the purification of the heart is repeatedly identified with society's correction. This stands in contrast to other programmatic forms of social work, which are likely to be more interested in institutional effectiveness than individual spiritual maturation.

Again, Sufi brotherhoods are prone to provide the organisational structure for concurrent daʿwah and social service: lodges (zāwiyas), pesantren, and community centres double as mosques or prayer-halls, schools and educational centres, and focal points of welfare provision. Indonesian centres have been pioneers in approaches to drug rehabilitation, micro-credit lending, disaster relief and preservation of the environment in overtly spiritual terms. By placing such activities within the parameters of daʿwah, they redefine summoning to Islam as a concomitant act of social service (Budi Rahman Hakim & Fajrur Rahman, 2023).

Filling the Gap between Ritual Mysticism and Civic Religion

This re-imagining seeks to transcend a longstanding absence in both scholarly and popular conceptions of Sufism. Sufism is idealistically presented on one level as a storehouse of esoteric ritual and poetic speech severed from the institutional challenges of modern societies. At the other extreme, civic religion—in the form of the employment of religious symbolism and institutions to foster national identity and social solidarity—tends to instrumentalise religion towards political aims and rob it of transformative depth. The Sufi paradigm of ethical-social daʿwah offers an alternative to these reductionisms. It retains the reflective character of the tradition so that action is produced by a spiritual foundation and yet encompasses the challenges of public life.

Kholidi et al. (2024) and Budi Rahman Hakim (2023b) define this as a form of "spiritual governance" in which

moral authority is exercised through service and example but not through propaganda or coercion. This is not a form of formal politics, but it is present in the everyday spaces where values are communicated—families, schools, bazaars, and localities. For a plural society like Indonesia, where diversity of religions is simultaneously a constitutional condition and an experiential given, this form of da'wah has the potential to transcend gaps across lines of faith without diluting Islamic identity. Focusing da'wah in terms of ethical-social praxis grounded in *iḥsān, adab, khidmah,* and *ikhlāṣ* and oriented in Sufi-aware *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, this exercise provides a theory of analysis applicable to the contemporary role of Indonesian Sufi orders. It explains how the orders balance private cultivation of the spirit and public moral guidance and how their activities may illuminate broader discourses in Islamic studies, religious ethics, and social policy. This is also preparation for the subsequent sections tracing the historical development of Sufi da'wah in Indonesia and comparing its diverse forms in the present.

3. Historicizing Indonesian Sufi Da'wah: From Esotericism to Social Praxis

The historical trajectory of Indonesian Sufi da'wah reveals a remarkable transition from an esoterically oriented interiorism to an outwardly oriented praxis responsive to present-day Muslim publics. Far from an undifferentiated transition, this transition is a consequence of the dynamic interplay among spiritual epistemologies, political and social revolutions, and the Sufi orders' adaptive agency over several centuries.

Tracing this transition is vital to an understanding of today's renaissance of the revival of da'wah as an ethical-social movement in Indonesia in ways connected to post-Islamist sensitivities and the global return to Sufi spirituality.

Early Sufi Arrival and the Islamization of the Archipelago

Sufism arrived in the Indonesian archipelago in the 13th to 16th centuries on the wave of naval trade networks and cultural exchange between the Indian Ocean world, the Arabian Peninsula, and Southeast Asia (van Bruinessen, 1995). The first Sufi preachers—members of orders such as the Shādhilīyah and Qādirīyah—did not merely transplant theological teaching but embedded their message within indigenous cosmologies. As Azyumardi Azra's comparative history of Malay-Indonesian networks of ulama reveals, these Sufi preachers were assimilated into the ḥalqa of global Islamic scholarship while remaining responsive to indigenous systems of adat (Azra, 2004). Their da'wah incorporated the beautiful translation of metaphysics—tawḥīd, iḥsān, maʿrifah—into practical codes in ethics, in such a manner as to avoid confrontation with pre-Islamic religions. Earlier Sufi guides featured the ṭarīqa ilā Allāh as an esoteric tradition and social corrective. The Southeast Asian Silk Road Sufism is emphasised by Karimyan (2020) as having combined spirituality comprised of ritual performance of the dhikr with a concentration on social intercession, primarily in port towns where cultural diversity and commercial rivalry required moral arbitration. This combination of mystical training and social diplomacy established the precedent for Sufism's later public role.

Colonial Era: Sufi Resistance and Moral Education

Sufi orders under Dutch colonial administration were at once upholders of moral life and centres of anticolonial resistance. The tariqa was a "counter-public" sphere in which Islamic identity could be preserved and activated in relation to colonial cultural dominance (Abdurahman & Badriza, 2021). The Naqshabandīyah-Khalidīyah in Sumatra and the Qādirīyah-Naqshabandīyah in West Java were two of the orders active in facilitating local movements of outright resistance and at times intertwining spiritual discipline and guerrilla warfare.

The role of the Syattāriyah in Minangkabau, by way of illustration, extended well beyond ritual instruction to encompass leadership in *peperangan fi sabīl Allāh* in the context of colonial expansion. The framework of treating Sufi orders as simultaneously spiritual and sociopolitical organisations is particularly applicable here: the tariqa's moral pedagogy served a cultural bulwark function, reiterating ethical solidarity in the context of colonial assimilation (Rahman Hakim, 2025).

Sufi da'wah in such times complemented the task of moral education. In *zāwiya* affiliated to pesantren, these virtues of *ṣabr, ikhlāṣ,* and *zuhd* were inculcated as individual discipline and social armour. This blurring of inner purification and public opposition is an ideal explanation of Salvatore's (2006) "civic Islam"—intermingling religiosity and political social agency.

Post-Independence: Institutionalising Khidmah

With independence in 1945, the modernisation drive by the Indonesian state posed Sufi da'wah with challenges and opportunities. Most tariqas are oriented towards institutionalisation by introducing khidmah (service) into organisational activities such as educational foundations, health clinics, and co-operative businesses. The Idrīsīyah in West Java, e.g., developed from a mainly ritual community to a diversified community organisation with vocational education and microfinance programs. (Rasidin et al., 2023).

Similarly, the Sammanīyah network in Southern Sulawesi launched community agrarian programs and framed them as both economic empowerment and religious duty. This is characteristic of a broader trend in Sufi da'wah towards what Chittick (2000) calls "applied metaphysics"—applying the metaphysics of being to social morality and welfare programs.

Da'wah went overtly multidimensional at this time: alongside the traditional majlis dhikr and ḥalaqāt programs appeared education in literacy, disaster alleviation, and environmental campaigns. The tariqa thus rebranded themselves as mediators between state-driven developmental schemes and the moral ideals of Muslim citizens.

Key Orders and Their Distinctive Approaches

Sufi diversity in Indonesia is crucial to understanding forms of plural modes of da'wah. The West Sumatran Syattāriyah insist upon scriptural literacy and abidance by adab as a civil virtue. The Bantenese Qādirīyah supplement mediator positions in society with pilgrimage itineraries based

on baraka. The Naqshabandīyah—in their respective Mujaddidī and Khalidī branches—make political quietism interspersed with silent dhikr and selective action their priority.

The Sammanīyah in South Sulawesi, in their Hadrami mode of transmission, mix devotional gatherings with solidarity-based modes of the economy. The Idrīsīyah in Tasikmalaya represent an overtly reformist form and makes use of online media in their dissemination, but emphasises greatly *sharī'a*-compliance in the realm of the economy (Rasidin et al., 2023b). The continuum of forms validates the impossibility of defining Indonesian Sufi da'wah in terms of a given order or local tradition."

Genealogical Continuity: From Ahmad Khatib Sambas to Contemporary Murshids

The descent of present-day Sufi leaders from 19th-century founders such as Shaykh Ahmad Khatib Sambas underscores the enduring strength of spiritual lineage (silsila). Ahmad Khatib, founder of the Indonesian network of the Qādirīyah-Naqshabandīyah brotherhoods, synchronised devotional asceticisms of the Naqshabandī school with activist kindness of the Qādirī tradition. His disciples promulgated this hybrid form across Java and Sumatra and in the Malay Peninsula, planting da'wah in ritual and civil spheres (Howell, 2001).

Contemporary murshids in West Java, Papua, or South Sulawesi continue to balance the thin line between public communication and esoteric depth. This is no mere copying but "interpretive adaptation" in the opinion of Múnera-Roldán et al. (2024), in which traditional paradigms are re-tuned to address present challenges such as urban poverty, ecological destruction, and religious intolerance.

Historicizing Sufi da'wah in Indonesia reveals an abiding pattern: the interpenetration of spiritual cultivation and social change. From the earliest coastal preachers to the present-day digitally oriented murshids, Sufi orders have continuously redefined their mission in terms of fluctuating political economies and cultural environments. This redefinition is the key to their resilience and relevance and offers a living exemplar of how da'wah might be refigured from esoteric interiority to socially embedded praxis without surrendering its theological substance. For reasons such as these, the recent reflowering of Sufi da'wah in Indonesia is less a break than a revival— one possessed of historical antecedents in virtues of moral service (khidmah) and communal solidarities but responsive to the exigencies of a sophisticated, plural, and globalised Muslim society.

4. Comparative Cases: Sufi Orders and Their Public Roles

As the historical survey reveals the fluctuating trajectory of Sufi da'wah in Indonesia, the dynamic character of these shifts is thrown into sharper definition by descriptive analysis of specific tariqa and their public activities. The five cases considered here—TQN Suryalaya, Syattariyah of Pariaman, Sammaniyah of Wajo, Idrisiyyah of Tasikmalaya, and Sufi activism in Papua—record the diversity of institutional strategies, theological emphases, and sociocultural adaptiveness in recent Sufi praxis. Each case reveals the interpenetration of traditional spiritual heritages and

fluctuating social circumstances, and reveals the pragmatic pluralism of Sufi orders in functioning simultaneously in multiple public spheres.

TQN Suryalaya (West Java)

The Tarekat Qadiriyyah Naqshabandiyyah Pondok Pesantren Suryalaya (TQN Suryalaya) is probably the best-documented case of an Indonesian Sufi order systematising public service. Originally established in the early 20th century by Shaykh Abdullah Mubarok bin Nur Muhammad (Abah Sepuh) and then expanded upon by his successor Shaykh Ahmad Shohibul Wafa Tajul Arifin (Abah Anom), TQN Suryalaya's system of da'wah has routinely combined intensive spiritual discipline with active social outreach (Howell, 2007).

The Inabah Program—'return' in Arabic—began in the 1970s as a systematic method of rehabilitating drug abusers, teenage delinquents and later ex-militants. Adopting Naqshbandi muraqabah and Qadiri dhikr jahr, the program incorporates daily spiritual exercises and recitation of the Qur'an and moral guidance with on-the-job vocational training (Lua et al., 2020). Rehabilitation is articulated not only as detoxification but as *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the self), thus connecting individual transformation with spiritual responsibility.

Since the 1990s, Inabah has worked in cooperation with the National Narcotics Board (Badan Narkotika Nasional, BNN) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. These are typical of what Howell (2007) refers to as "state–Sufi symbiosis," in which government authority is bolstered by the moral capital of the tariqa and, in return, the order is afforded state resources and

endorsement. By the 2010s, TQN Suryalaya had established branches of Inabah across Indonesia and adapted its program to address not only narcotics abuse but also radicalised adolescents and former militiamen. The Inabah model exemplifies "ethical-social da'wah" inasmuch as Islamic outreach is measured by tangible social outcomes—changed individuals, reconstituted family relationships, and social reintegration—rather than proselytisation metrics. Mulyati & Nihayah (2020) observe that Suryalaya's method has been used to adapt other pesantren-based social rehab programs and has become the yardstick used to gauge Islam-based social work in Indonesia.

Syattariyah in Pariaman (West Sumatra)

The Syattariyah order in Pariaman offers another exception in which the da'wah is embedded in local cultural frameworks; here, the Minangkabau *adat basandi syara', syara' basandi Kitabullah* ("custom based on religion, religion based on the Book of God"). With antecedents in 17th-century Acehnese propagations, in West Sumatra, Syattariyah has been equated with religio-scholarly leadership and custody of moral teaching (Azra, 2004).

Da'wah in the Syattariyah pesantren of Pariaman is the combination of sharī'a-based morality and Minangkabau adat values. Moral education comprises ritual exercise—timely prayer, fasting, recitation of *ratib* Syattariyah—as well as social customs such as deferring to one's elders, agreement-based decisions (*musyawarah*), and reciprocal cooperation (*gotong royong*). This

combined education ensures values are not abstract ideals but active parts of quotidian life. The Syattariyah shaykhs are indebted to their double identity as *ulama* and custodians of the *adat* institutions. Marhaban & Mawardi (2023) note that the order's authority is enhanced by the fact that it has charge of communal ceremonies like *batagak panghulu* (initiation of the heads of the clans) and *alek nagari* (village festive occasion), incorporating elements of the recitation of the Qur'an and Sufi invocations.

By grounding *da'wah* on the cultural lifeworld of the Minangkabau, the Syattariyah succeeds in maintaining relevance without compromising doctrinal purity. The leaders of Syattariyah often intervene in disputes between government agencies and *adat* councils and act as cultural mediators. Baqri (2024) remarks that in doing so, it presents itself as a consolidating factor in local government and so brings Sufi authority in alignment with community resilience and social solidity.

Sammaniyah in Wajo (South Sulawesi)

The Sammaniyah order in Wajo exemplifies how Sufi *da'wah* might operate at the confluence of ecological stewardship, local politics, and religious guidance. With 18th-century Hadrami transmissions through Palembang as their origin, the Sammaniyah of Southeast Sulawesi have formed an overtly eco-spiritual ethos (van Bruinessen, 1995).

Sammaniyah *da'wah* in Wajo emphasises the Qur'anic concept of *khalīfah fī al-arḍ* (vicegerency on earth) as a mandate for environmental care. Agricultural practices promoted by the order—such as organic rice farming, water conservation, and sustainable

fishing—are framed as acts of worship. Meerangani et al. (2024) identify this approach as a form of "green *da'wah*" that embeds ecological ethics into spiritual life.

Sammaniyah *murshids* in Wajo often hold advisory positions in local government, particularly in environmental and cultural affairs. Their influence ensures that policy discussions incorporate moral-ecological considerations, bridging the gap between bureaucratic frameworks and community ethics. This arrangement reflects a hybrid authority model in which religious legitimacy supports policy implementation.

During periods of environmental crisis, such as flooding or crop failure, Sammaniyah networks mobilize communal support through *zawiya*-based relief efforts, demonstrating the role of Sufi orders as first responders in rural contexts. Such interventions reinforce the order's spiritual and social contract with its followers.

Idrisiyyah (Tasikmalaya)

Budi Rahman Hakim (2023b) states that the Idrisiyyah order in Tasikmalaya is a trend of modernising Indonesian Sufism with the adoption of entrepreneurial activities guided by Islamic ethical systems. The order was developed in the mid-20th century, influenced by the Moroccan Idrisid dynasty, and since the 2000s, has evolved into organised Sufipreneurship (Siswoyo, 2023).

Idrisiyyah manages cooperatives, training centres, and business incubators designed to bring economic sustainability to members. The educational program blends technical education—such as digital marketing and product design—with

spiritual courses such as dhikr, muraqabah, and adab *al-mu'āmalah* (interacting ethics) studies. Financial empowerment is presented less as a worldly goal and more as an Islamic obligation to assist family and society.

Commercial life is a sphere of exercise of Sufi virtues in Idrisiyyah teachings: sincerity *(ṣidq)*, trustworthiness *(amānah)*, and humility *(tawāḍu')*. Commercial disputes are resolved by internal arbitration mechanisms of the tariqa so that life in the economy is always in accordance with spiritual ideals. This integration of entrepreneurship and tasawuf violates the usual dichotomy of spirituality and commerce and offers an ideal of ethical capitalism in a society in which Muslims are in the majority.

Besides the membership base, Idrisiyyah engages in community welfare through educational scholarships, post-disaster recovery and free clinics. These activities bring the order's da'wah to the general society at large, raising its public profile and demonstrating how spiritual discipline is reconciliable with modern-day socio-economic activism.

Sufi Presence in Papua

The Sufi tradition in Papua, while less institutionalised than in Sumatra or Java, presents a remarkable instance of non-confrontational da'wah in a pluralistic political and religious environment. Primarily cast in terms of itinerant teachers in connection to Qadiriyya and Naqshbandiyya brotherhoods, Sufi actors in Papua emphasise relationship-building more than large-scale conversion (Howell, 2001).

In minority situations among Muslims, Sufi da'wah is based on broad moral values—such as compassion, honesty, and humility—that are shared across religions. Public programs may include interfaith prayer meetings, cultural programs, and joint humanitarian projects. The exercises tend to instil trust and reduce sentiment about Islam as an alien or menacing force.

Through integration into local social networks, Sufi teachers contribute to what peacebuilding experts define as "soft infrastructure"— social trust, conflict resolution skills, and consensual moral vocabularies. Field observers describe Sufi ethics and the priority of the principle of rahmah (mercy) specifically as having a stabilising impact in locales at risk of communal violence.

Comparative Analysis

These five cases together show the pluralism of Indonesian Sufi da'wah. TQN Suryalaya reveals the scalability of spirituality-based rehabilitation; Syattariyah demonstrates the sustainability of culture-embedded moral authority; Sammaniyah bestows eco-spiritual governance; Idrisiyyah demonstrates the synthesis of spirituality and modern economy; and Papuan presence demonstrates the efficacy of non-confrontational ethics in plural societies. Analytically repeated modes are:

1. Contextual Adaptation – Each order adapts its public mission to the local socio-cultural conditions either by incorporation of adat, environment management, or entrepreneurial creation.
2. Hybrid Legitimacy – Legitimacy emanates from both religious lineage (silsila) and demonstrated service to the public, creating a loop

within moral credibility and social influence.

3. Service as Da'wah – Overall, in cases, khidmah—as a means of rehabilitating, financially strengthening, or facilitating dispute resolution—forms the paramount mode of outreach.

4. State–Sufi Partnerships – Collaboration with state authorities is best progressed in cases like TQN Suryalaya, but is present in varying degrees in other cases.

5. Resilience through Networks – Every order employs horizontal and vertical networks to bring in the resources, manage crises, and remain relevant in fluctuating socio-political contexts.

These customs verify that contemporary Indonesian Sufi da'wah is not an anachronistic remnant but an essential developing tradition with significant promise of moral-social transformation.

5. Reintegrative Spiritual Praxis: Rethinking Da'wah in the Post-Islamist Era

The post-Islamist turn in Muslim-majority nations has upended many of the customary parameters of Islamic da'wah. Where the latter half of the 20th century saw politicised Islamic movements attempting to redo public life through legislative and ideological dominance, the first few decades of the 21st century have been characterised by an emergent pluralistic ethos in religio-political activism (Aripudin & Junaedi, 2024). In Indonesia, this transition has brought Sufi orders *(ṭuruq)* to the fore again, whose modes of engagement are in direct opposition to the modes of engagement of doctrinaire Islamist groups. Rather than focusing on

political dominance, these orders have emphasised ethical cultivation *(iḥsān)*, communal fraternity, and a civic-spiritual ethos as their primary modes of religio-political engagement (Rahmah et al., 2024). This redefinition requires a theoretical reconceptualising of da'wah — one in excess of ritualistic versus political activist dichotomies, and instead anchors Sufism in a praxis of reintegration: rejoining spiritual interiority, public morality, and societal flourishing.

From Ritual Exclusivity to Civic Participation

The classical Sufi brotherhoods have been misrepresented as abidingly interioristic orders with esoteric rites disconnected from external social responsibilities (Trajanovski, 2021). As idealistic as these tendencies are, in part due to certain brotherhoods' shielding isolationism, local Indonesian case exemplars witness a development towards civic responsibilities. Projects such as the TQN Suryalaya's Inabah in rehabilitating drug abusers and former militants, Syattariyah's West Sumatra-based moral education by virtue of adat values, and Idrisiyyah's Sufipreneurship projects evidence a development in which ritual remains dominant but is now less disconnected from social engagement (Rusmana & Wan Ali, 2022; Budi Rahman Hakim, 2023; Howell, 2001).

This development marks an expanded definition of khidmah (service) as an essential component of the spiritual path — no longer a meritorious action but an institutional duty of the Sufi tradition. Seen in this light, engagement with civic life is neither an add-on nor a necessary expression of wilāyah (spiritual

guardianship), thereby placing social responsibility in harmony with spiritual advancement (Siregar et al., 2024).

Quiet Resistance to Ideological Islamism and Neoliberal Piety

Under post-Islamism, Sufi groups in Indonesia have been focal points of low-key dissidence to two oncoming forces: ideological Islamism, in search of uniformity by political orthodoxy, and neoliberal piety, commercialising religiosity to be consumed in the marketplace (Yasih & Hadiz, 2023).

Contrary to belligerent activism, Sufi resistance finds roots in *tahdhīb al-nafs* (purification of the self) and communal fortitude, at times shying away from direct political discourse to adopt what Scott (1990) terms "infrapolitics" — low-key, everyday actions subverting entrenched power. For example, the Sammaniyah of Wajo exercise eco-spiritual administration prioritising ecological balance over extractive economic development and thus blocking neoliberal ambitions while maintaining spiritual stewardship of the earth (Montes, 2019). The Idrisiyyah order, in a similar manner, resists commodification of religiosity by injecting ethical considerations in adab in defiance of profit maximisation devoid of moral obligation.

This form of quiet resistance is typical of broader global Sufi strategies in which the fortification of moral character is a bulwark against ideological fundamentalism and market-driven religiosity (Ahmad et al., 2021). For Indonesia, these tactics equip Sufi actors to maintain moral authority while avoiding the divisive traps of identity politics.

Typology of Adaptive Sufi Da'wah Models

One significant theory-based contribution of comparative case study is the identification of three adaptive Sufi *da'wah* forms in present-day Indonesia, each of them shaped by their immediate socio-geographic and cultural environment:

1. *Rural-Embedded Model.* Found in orders like Syattariyah in West Sumatra or Sammaniyah in South Sulawesi, it blends *da'wah* with rural ways of life and agrarian local government systems and adat customs. Legitimacy is cultural guardianship-based, and community welfare programs are embedded in the rhythm of the seasons and in communal ceremonies (Azra, 2004).

2. *Urban-Professional Model.* As in Idrisiyyah in Tasikmalaya, the Urban-Professional Model is attractive to urban middle classes in Sufipreneurship, professional education and social entrepreneurship. Religion here is expressed in marketplaces and professional groups in which adab and *ikhlāṣ* are the competitive but principled rules of participation in today's economies (Hakim, 2023a).

3. *Digital-Translocal Model.* Gaining momentum in and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the digital-translocal utilises online technologies to create translocalities of community on the internet and to transcend geographical locales. Despite the risk of commodification and decontextualization it brings with it, it facilitates intercultural Sufi networks transcending national and sectarian borders (Rizki & Rusdi, 2024).

Through the creation of this typology, the analysis helps to refine the analytic vocabulary employed to assess Sufi activities in today's Muslim societies.

Mediating Roles between Sacred, Social, and State Domains

One of the typical features of post-Islamist Indonesian Sufi *da'wah* is functioning as an interlocutor among the state, society, and the sacred. Conventionally, an immense number of orders maintained their aloofness toward political power. Today, however, some orders redefined themselves as interlocutors in the best position to broker state institutions and grassroots societies.

The cooperation of TQN Suryalaya with the National Narcotics Agency (BNN) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs is an illustration of Sufi *da'wah* in action as a moral intermediary in government social programs (Howell, 2007). Similarly, Idrisiyyah's well-disciplined microfinance programs are in accordance with national poverty reduction goals but are free from polarising politics. This intermediary role is realised because Sufi authority is grounded in spiritual charisma *(barakah)* and real-world social service, so orders are in a position to collaborate with state agents while remaining independent (Alatas, 2006).

Moreover, in plural regions like Papua, Sufi networks have acted as non-statutory peacebuilders through non-confrontational modes of *da'wah*, fostering interreligious trust. This means Sufi organisations are in a position to fulfil the "moral broker" function where formal diplomacy is constrained (Howell, 2001).

Ethical Reconstruction of the Ummah

Lastly, the reintegrative spiritual praxis advocated by the Sufi orders of Indonesia has in consideration an ethical reconstitution of the ummah. This reconstitution cannot be achieved by mere moral exhortation, but rather is a system-wide re-centring of *iḥsān* and adab as public virtues to engender *ukhūwah* (brotherhood) across sectarian, class, and ethnic divides, and instilling khidmah as a communal civic ethic.

According to *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, the praxis reinterprets the aims of *da'wah* to include the preservation of human dignity, cultivation of mental and spiritual well-being, preservation of intellect from ideological abuse, and the upkeeping of communal coexistence (Al-Qaradawi, 2007). Thus, Sufi *da'wah* is neither mystical withdrawal nor a political tool, but an integrative praxis of building ethically strong societies.

For post-Islamist eras in which complacency regarding both hard-line Islamism and market-driven religiosity is widespread, such a paradigm offers a conceivable path to re-imagining Islamic public engagement. Through an intermingling of spiritual depth and civic obligation, Indonesian Sufi movements belong to an emergent discourse within contemporary Islamic thought — a discourse itself designed to bridge the sacred and the social in ways neither sacralizing nor subordinating one over the other (Hakim, 2023b; Turner, 2006).

6. Conclusion: The Future of Sufi *Da'wah* in Muslim Publics

The critique in this study has demonstrated that Indonesian Sufi

da'wah, if historicized and contextualised within the post-Islamist era, offers an unparalleled synthesis of spiritual intensity, social activism, and ethical brokerages. Challenging entrenched stereotypes of Sufism as an apolitical or existentially esoteric realm, these presented cases of Sufi orders — from rural agrarian Syattariyah and Sammaniyah to urban-professional Idrisiyyah and digital-translocal networks of TQN — indicate how Sufi groups have become adept at developing context-specific forms of religious activism. These interweave ritual performance and civic service, exist as subtle resistances to ideological Islamism and to neoliberal piety, and are used to broker relations amongst sacred, social, and state realms.

Theoretically, this piece contributes to a redefinition of the theory of da'wah. Rather than defining da'wah as proselytisation or political activism alone, it is conceivable to define it as reintegrative spiritual praxis — an exercise in which ethical cultivation (*iḥsān*) and communal interest (*maṣlaḥah 'āmmah*) become inconceivable absent ritual piety. This redefinition expands the epistemological boundaries of Islamic religious activism, positing a paradigm neither overwhelmed by partisan politics nor essentialized into commodified religiosity.

Summary of Theoretical and Empirical Contributions

Theoretically, this study has three key contributions to the literature on Islamic movements and public religion. First, it identifies a typology of adaptive Sufi da'wah models — rural-embedded, urban-professional, and digital-translocal — distinguished by certain operational logics, sources of legitimation, and modes of public engagement. Secondly, it reveals the mediating role of Sufi institutions, positioning them as "moral brokers" with the ability to bridge grassroots moral communities and state institutions and civil society actors. Thirdly, it supplies an analytical vocabulary to understand "quiet resistance" in Islamic contexts and reveals how non-confrontative strategies incorporated in Sufi ethics are in a position to challenge hegemonic ideologies in ways that are non-polarising to the public.

Empirically, the study locates Indonesian Sufi *da'wah* in a longue durée historical context — from archipelago Islamization to post-independence welfare activism — in order to grasp how it has evolved to suit changing historical circumstances. The continuity of classical khidmah-oriented activism to contemporary social activism highlights in turn that neither is a departure from tradition but an evolution of an abiding spiritual ethic. Through documenting how orders such as TQN Suryalaya intermesh state cooperation on rehabilitation, or how Idrisiyyah integrates business ethics in entrepreneurial education, the study unveils the Sufi da'wah paradigm to be doctrinally solid and pragmatically adaptable.

Implications for Da'wah *Theory and Islamic Social Policy*

The implications for the theory of *da'wah* are massive. Sufi *da'wah* challenges the definition of Islamic outreach in terms of rhetorical persuasion or policy lobbying. Instead, it grounds religious engagement in *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the self)

as the principal locus of change, social change being a secondary but required outcome. This has methodological ramifications for Islamic studies: scholars are asked to broaden their range of analysis to include spiritual-ethical formation as a principal variable in the analysis of religious activism (Djakfar, 2018; Salvatore, 2006).

For Islamic social policy, the findings suggest introducing Sufi ethical frameworks to government has the potential to enhance the moral legitimacy and sustainability of welfare programs. Sufi ethics — emphasising *ikhlāṣ* (sincerity), *'adl* (justice), and *rahmah* (compassion) — are normative references capable of offsetting technocratic means to policy instrumentalism. For education, Sufi-based civic education may educate emotionally intelligent, ethically motivated citizens, and in welfare programming, the adoption of adab and communal solidarity may strengthen resilience to poverty and social fragmentation equally. (Samsudin, 2023).

Additionally, Sufi mediating capabilities are applicable in peacebuilding and conflict resolution in multi-faith contexts. Non-hostile conversation and reciprocal values are given emphasis by Sufis and render them effective mediators in areas where partisan or state actors are mistrusted by society.

Recommendations for Integrating Sufi Ethics in Welfare, Education, and Civic Life

This paper recommends a triple integration agenda to bring Sufi ethics into public life:

1. Vision of Integrating Welfare Policy. National and local welfare programs should coordinate with Sufi organizations established and proven to possess service delivery capabilities through moral education. For example, expanded collaboration by TQN Suryalaya's Inabah program and state rehab services might introduce culture-friendly and spiritually oriented frameworks of caring.

2. Educational Curricula Reforms. Sufi ethical pedagogy and formal Islamic education need to be integrated in Islamic schools from the pesantren to universities. This would involve the education of adab as a morality of daily life by intermingling tazkiyah praxis with civic proficiency in interfaith respect.

3. Civic Engagement Platforms. Sufi networks need to be integrated into multi-stakeholder civic processes on environmental sustainability, poverty reduction, and intercommunity discourse. Their long-standing habit of infusing religious life in quotidian moral economies predisposes them to broker contact among grassroots and formal institution actors.

This integration requires institutional design to ensure Sufi orders retain their independence in order to avoid having their moral authority used to achieve short-term political gains. At the same time, it encourages Sufi leaders to adopt open forms of governance so as to ensure their expanded public participation is accountable and inclusive.

Future Research Directions: Measuring Social Impact

While this study has mapped the structure and theory-based contours of

reintegrative Sufi da'wah, a quantitative measurement of its social impact is still needed. There are three such avenues deserving greater exploration:

- Longitudinal Studies of Influence: Tracing the influence of Sufi-organised welfare or educational programs over time through quantitative and qualitative assessments in an effort to establish the permanence of social change.
- Comparative Regional Analysis: Examining whether parallel adaptation modes exist elsewhere in Muslim-majority regions, such as West Africa or the South Asian region, and how local histories determine their public mission.
- Digital Engagement Indicators: Measuring the reach, depth, and commodification risk of digital-translocal da'wah platforms in post-pandemic situations. This sort of research would contribute to Sufi research and Islamic social theory and to larger discourses on religion and development. It would facilitate evidence-based alliances by policymakers, teachers, and religious leaders and improve replicability and validity in success cases.

The Sufi paradigm's long-term impact on Muslim publics is contingent upon how it combines spiritual interiority and civic responsibility, mediates rather than polarises, and bases social change on moral formation. As Islamist ideologies face crises in legitimacy and neoliberal religiosity has the potential to gnaw away at religious life's substance by transforming it into commodified ritual, the Sufi paradigm offers an abiding alternative: an integrative praxis in which service to God is inseparable from service to human beings. Adopted and strategically applied to policy, pedagogy, and civic life, Sufi *da'wah* may be determinative in fashioning a Muslim public sphere at once ethically oriented and socially inclusive — a possibility keenly needed in the richly textured moralities of the 21st century. (Hakim, 2024a; Rane, 2019; Waghid, 2019; Salvatore, 2006).

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