



Negotiating Tradition and Innovation: The Transformation of TQN Khatibiyah in Contemporary Sambas of West Kalimantan

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Abstract: The continued preservation of religious traditions in modern Muslim societies raises questions about maintaining spiritual authority amid social changes. This study explores how Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas's spiritual legacy, founder of the Tarekat Qādiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya (TQN) in Sambas, West Kalimantan, Indonesia, has been retained and reinterpreted in contemporary contexts. While earlier studies have focused mostly on TQN's history, teachings, and rituals, less attention has been given to how its spiritual legacy is actively preserved and adapted. This study applies a qualitative historical method combined with ethnographic fieldwork. The data were then analysed with Anthony Giddens's structuration and Catherine Bell's ritualisation theory. The study reveals that the TQN legacy endures through *silsila*, doctrinal teachings, ritual practices, and the authority of the murshid. It also presents a three-part adaptive model, namely organisational openness, inclusive outreach, and digital dissemination that allows TQN Khatibiyah to reproduce inherited traditions while maintaining doctrinal consistency. The continuity and adaptation support each other, helping a modern Sufi order uphold its spiritual heritage amid social change.

Contribution: This study proposes a threefold adaptive model that explains how contemporary Sufi orders preserve spiritual continuity through organizational openness, inclusive religious outreach, and digital dissemination.

Keywords: Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas; TQN Khatibiyah; spiritual continuity; contemporary Sufism; digital dissemination

Introduction

Sufism constitutes an important dimension of Islamic intellectual and spiritual traditions.¹ Beyond its emphasis on inner purification, spiritual discipline, and cultivating closeness to God, Sufism has historically developed institutional forms known as ṭarīqā (Sufi orders), which function as organised systems for transmitting spiritual authority, teachings, and ritual practices across generations. Through these institutions, Sufi knowledge and traditions have been preserved, reproduced, and adapted within diverse social and cultural contexts throughout the Muslim world.² Particularly in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago, Sufi orders have played a significant role not only in spreading Islam but also in shaping local religious identities, educational networks, and communal religious practices.³

Before the emergence of the modern Saudi state, Mecca and Medina functioned as major centers of Islamic scholarship and transregional intellectual exchange. Scholars, pilgrims, and students from across the Muslim world gathered in the two holy cities to pursue religious studies and build scholarly networks. These networks facilitated the transmission of Islamic sciences, including Sufism and Sufi orders, to different regions.⁴ Upon returning to their homelands, students and pilgrims introduced and disseminated the teachings they had acquired, contributing to the development of various ṭarīqa traditions throughout Southeast Asia. Consequently, numerous Sufi orders such as the Qādiriyya, Rifā'īyya, Shāṭariyya, Khalwatiyya, and Naqshbandiyya became firmly established within the religious landscape of the Malay-Indonesian world. The Qādiriyya order, for example, was introduced in the 16th century by Hamzah

¹ Dina Le Gall, "Recent Thinking on Sufis and Saints in the Lives of Muslim Societies, Past and Present," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42, no. 4 (2010): 673–87, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743810000917>.

² J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971), 1–30; Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 99–130.

³ Martin van Bruinessen, "Studies of Sufism and the Sufi Orders in Indonesia," *Die Welt Des Islams* 38, no. 2 (1998): 192–219, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1570060981254813>.

⁴ Khan Shairani, "Shāh Walī Allāh Dihlawī (d. 1762): The Hajj Journey and Intellectual Scholarship Between India and Arabia," *Religions* 15, no. 11 (2024): 1378, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15111378>; Neda Saghace and Richard van Leeuwen, "Sufism and the Hajj: Symbolic Meanings and Transregional Networks; Two Examples from the 16th and 18th Centuries," in *Narrating the Pilgrimage to Mecca* (Leiden: BRILL, 2023), 91–112, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004513174_005; Van Martin Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren, Dan Tarekat* (Yogyakarta: Gading Publishing, 2012), 232–36.

Fansuri;⁵ the Rifa'iyya in the same century by the Gujarat-born scholar, Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānirī;⁶ and the Shaṭariyya by 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Singkīlī in the 17th century,⁷ among many others.

Among these orders, the Tarekat Qādiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya (TQN) occupies a distinctive and influential position. The order was formulated in nineteenth-century Mecca by Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas (1803–1875), a prominent scholar originating from Sambas, West Kalimantan. Through a creative synthesis of the Qādiriyya and Naqshbandiyya traditions, Sheikh Ahmad Khatib developed a unique spiritual system that his disciples and *khalīfa* (vicegerents) subsequently transmitted throughout Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and other parts of Southeast Asia.⁸ Today, TQN remains one of the most widely practiced Sufi orders in the region, with numerous branches tracing their spiritual lineage to Sheikh Ahmad Khatib and his principal disciples.⁹

Existing scholarship has extensively documented the TQN's historical development, doctrinal foundations, ritual practices, institutional networks, leadership structures, and socio-religious functions in Indonesia.¹⁰ More recent studies have further explored the order's adaptation to digital media, changing religious authority, and community-based social engagement, demonstrating the

⁵ Damanhuri, "Hamzah Fanshuri Tentang Konsep Wujud," *Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 1, no. 1 (2021): 56–73, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jpi.v1i1.10356>.

⁶ Abdul Majid, "Karakteristik Pemikiran Islam Nuruddin Ar-Raniry," *Substantia* 17, no. 2 (2015): 179–90, <https://doi.org/10.22373/substantia.v17i2.3990>.

⁷ Ahwan Fanani, "Ajaran Tarekat Syattariyah dalam Naskah Risalah Shattariyah Gresik," *Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 20, no. 2 (2012): 347–70, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ws.20.2.203>.

⁸ Martin Van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah Di Indonesia* (Bandung: Mizan, 1994), 236.

⁹ Cecep Zakarias El Bilad, *Tarekat Qadiriyyah Wa Naqsyabandiyah: Sejarah, Persebaran Dan Perkembangannya Di Pondok Pesantren Suryalaya* (Palangka Raya: Yayasan Zawiyah Miftahus Shudur, 2024), 27–35.

¹⁰ Endang Turmudi, "The Tarekat Qadiriyyah Wa Naqsyabandiyah in East Java and Islamic Politics in Indonesia," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 26, no. 2 (1998): 65–84, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1163/030382498X00166>; Julia Day Howell, "Sufism and the Indonesian Islamic Revival," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60, no. 3 (2001): 701–29, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2700107>; Mukhammad Zamzami, Fikri Mahzumi, and Abd A'la, "Tarekat and Politics in Indonesia: Contested Authority between Murshids in the Tarekat Qadiriyyah Wa Naqsyabandiyah in East Java," *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf Dan Pemikiran Islam* 12, no. 2 (2022): 187–208, <https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2022.12.2.187-208>.

TQN's continuing vitality in contemporary Indonesian Islam.¹¹ In the specific context of Sambas, several studies have explored particular aspects of the local tradition. Hermansyah and Sulaiman investigated Sufi manuscripts authored by Sheikh Muhammad Sa'ad, a prominent disciple of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas.¹² Setiawan analysed the communication strategies TQN Khatibiyah used to introduce and promote the order to wider society.¹³ More recently, Umami, Yusrain, and Sartika examined the role of TQN Khatibiyah's *dhikr* practices in shaping emotional regulation among its followers.¹⁴ While these studies have contributed valuable insights into textual heritage, public communication, and spiritual practices, they have not adequately explained how the spiritual legacy of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas has been preserved, transformed, and transmitted through successive generations within his homeland.

Furthermore, contemporary studies of Sufism have increasingly highlighted Sufi communities' capacity to negotiate modernity, institutional change, and technological transformation.¹⁵ Nevertheless, relatively little attention has been paid to understanding how a local Sufi order simultaneously preserves its inherited spiritual traditions and adapts to contemporary social realities through organisational openness, inclusive religious engagement, and digital communication. This gap is particularly evident in studies concerning TQN Khatibiyah Sambas, which has undergone significant transformation under

¹¹ Toto Ahmad Sahid and Moh. Ali, "Transforming the Role of the Qadiriyyah Naqshbandiyyah Suryalaya Order in Rural Social Solidarity," *Khazanah: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Humaniora* 23, no. 2 (2025): 222–241, <https://doi.org/10.18592/khazanah.v23i2.18407>.

¹² Erwin Hermansyah and Rusdi Sulaiman, *Islam di Borneo: Jejak Tasawuf dalam Naskah Muhammad As'ad Sambas* (Pontianak: IAIN Pontianak Press, 2017).

¹³ Halim Setiawan, "Strategi Public Relation Tarekat Qadiriyyah Wa Naqsyabandiyah Dalam Mensosialisasikan Eksistensi Tarekat Di Kecamatan Sambas," *Syi'ar: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi, Penyuluhan Dan Bimbingan Masyarakat Islam* 3, no. 1 (2020): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.37567/syiar.v3i1.209>.

¹⁴ Riza Umami, Yusrain, and Enik Sartika, "Bimbingan Rohani Islam Melalui Metode Zikir Dalam Membentuk Regulasi Emosi Pada Jamaah TQN Khathibiyah Sambas Di Kecamatan Sambas," *Syi'ar: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi, Penyuluhan Dan Bimbingan Masyarakat Islam* 7, no. 2 (2024): 77–84, <https://doi.org/10.37567/syiar.v7i2.3155>.

¹⁵ Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 187–238; Paola Abenante and Fabio Vicini, "Interiority Unbound: Sufi and Modern Articulations of the Self," *Culture and Religion* 18, no. 2 (April 3, 2017): 57–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14755610.2017.1326689>.

the leadership of Sheikh Jayadi while continuing to claim continuity with the teachings and spiritual lineage of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas.

Beyond documenting the development of a single Sufi order, this study addresses a broader question concerning how religious traditions negotiate continuity and adaptation in contemporary Muslim societies. Across many Muslim societies, Sufi orders are increasingly required to maintain inherited forms of religious authority while expanding public engagement and adapting to new modes of communication. Examining TQN Khatibiyah from this perspective therefore contributes not only to the historiography of Indonesian Sufism but also to wider debates on how religious traditions sustain their authenticity through processes of continuity and adaptation.

This article argues that the contemporary development of TQN Khatibiyah should not be understood merely as the continuation of a historical Sufi tradition. Rather, it represents an ongoing process of preservation, reinterpretation, and reconstruction through which the spiritual legacy of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas remains relevant in contemporary society. To examine this process, the study employs Anthony Giddens's theory of structuration, which emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between agency and social structure.¹⁶ This perspective enables an analysis of how inherited Sufi doctrines, rituals, and spiritual lineages function as enduring structures while simultaneously being reinterpreted and transformed by successive generations of *murshids*. The study also draws upon Catherine Bell's theory of ritual, which emphasizes the dynamic and adaptive character of ritual practices in response to changing social contexts.¹⁷ Together, these theoretical frameworks provide a useful lens for understanding the interaction between continuity and change within contemporary Sufi communities.

The novelty of this study lies in three important aspects. First, it reconstructs the historical continuity of TQN transmission in Sambas from the period of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib's disciples to the contemporary leadership of Sheikh Jayadi. Second, it examines the preservation of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas's spiritual legacy through the analytical framework of structuration

¹⁶ Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), 25–28; Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 49.

¹⁷ Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 210.

theory, thereby contributing to broader discussions concerning agency and continuity in Islamic mysticism. Third, it demonstrates how openness, inclusive outreach, and digital dissemination have become important mechanisms through which a traditional Sufi order negotiates modernity without abandoning its spiritual foundations.

Accordingly, this study addresses three principal questions: (1) How has the spiritual legacy of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas been preserved within the TQN tradition in Sambas? (2) How has TQN Khatibiyah transformed inherited teachings and rituals through openness and inclusive outreach? (3) How has digital dissemination contributed to the contemporary development of the order? By addressing these questions, the article seeks to explain the historical continuity, institutional transformation, and contemporary relevance of TQN Khatibiyah as a living manifestation of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas's enduring spiritual legacy.

Literature Review

Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas and His Spiritual Legacy

Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas occupies a distinctive position in the history of Islamic mysticism in Southeast Asia. Although he spent most of his scholarly life in Mecca, his intellectual and spiritual influence extended far beyond the Hijaz through the extensive network of students and disciples coming from the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. He creatively synthesized the ritual practices and spiritual disciplines of the Qādiriyya and Naqshbandiyya traditions into a coherent system of spiritual training that later became one of the most influential Sufi traditions in Indonesia and other parts of Southeast Asia.¹⁸

His authority within the TQN tradition derives not solely from his position as its founder but also from the continuity of the spiritual genealogy (*silsila*) linking successive generations of *murshids* to him. In Sufi tradition, *silsila* represents more than a historical chain of transmission; it constitutes the principal source of religious legitimacy through which spiritual authority, ritual knowledge, and ethical discipline are inherited and reproduced across

¹⁸ Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Indonesia*, 89–93; Erwin Mahrus, Rosadi Jamani, and Edi Kushan Hadi, *Syekh Ahmad Khatib Sambas (1803–1875): Ulama Besar dan Pendiri Tarekat Qadiriyyah-Naqsyabandiyah*, 2nd ed. (Pontianak: Untan Press, 2013), 13–45.

generations.¹⁹ Consequently, preserving the *silsila* also means preserving the authenticity of the teachings and practices established by the founder.

The influence of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib was further strengthened through the activities of his numerous *khalifa*, who disseminated the order in different regions of the archipelago. Among the best-known transmission lines are those of Sheikh Abdul Karim of Banten, Sheikh Ahmad Hasbullah of Madura, and Sheikh Ahmad Thalhah of Cirebon, whose successors established several major TQN centres in Java and Lombok.²⁰ Less widely discussed in existing scholarship, however, are the two transmission lines that returned to Sheikh Ahmad Khatib's own homeland through Sheikh Muhammad Sa'ad and Sheikh Nurdin of Sambas. These local lineages preserved distinctive ritual traditions while maintaining their spiritual connection to the founder, and eventually converged under the contemporary leadership of Sheikh Jayadi as TQN Khatibiyah.

In this study, spiritual legacy refers not simply to the historical inheritance left by Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas, but to the continuing transmission, preservation, and reinterpretation of his teachings, ritual practices, and spiritual authority across generations. This perspective moves beyond viewing TQN merely as a historical institution and instead understands it as a living religious tradition whose continuity depends on the interaction between inherited structures and the agency of successive *murshids*. Consequently, his legacy is manifested not only in the preservation of his doctrinal teachings and ritual practices, but also in later generations' capacity to reinterpret them in response to changing social contexts while maintaining their essential spiritual foundations. This understanding provides the conceptual basis for examining the emergence of TQN Khatibiyah as a contemporary expression of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas's enduring spiritual legacy.

¹⁹ Martin van Bruinessen, "Shari'a Court, Tarekat and Pesantren: Religious Institutions in the Banten Sultanate," *Archipel* 50, no. 1 (1995): 165–99, <https://doi.org/10.3406/arch.1995.3069>; Ali Muzakir, "Petunjuk Baru Silsilah Ahmad Khatib Sambas: Tiga Teks Tulisan Melayu," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 13, no. 2 (2015): 513–32, <https://doi.org/10.31291/jlk.v13i2.238>.

²⁰ Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah Di Indonesia*, 236–48; Bilad, *Tarekat Qadiriyyah Wa Naqsyabandiyah: Sejarah, Persebaran Dan Perkembangannya Di Pondok Pesantren Suryalaya*, 27–35.

TQN Khatibiyah as a Contemporary Development of TQN

Tarekat Qādiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya Khatibiyah is a contemporary branch of the Tarekat Qādiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya that developed in Sambas, West Kalimantan. Unlike most TQN communities in Indonesia, which trace their spiritual genealogy to the transmission lines of Sheikh Abdul Karim of Banten, Sheikh Ahmad Hasbullah of Madura, or Sheikh Ahmad Thalbah of Cirebon, TQN Khatibiyah emerged through two local transmission lines established by Sheikh Muhammad Sa'ad and Sheikh Nurdin, both of whom were direct disciples of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas. These two lineages preserved the essential teachings of TQN within Sambas for more than a century before eventually converging under a single contemporary *murshid*, Sheikh Jayadi.²¹

Despite its relatively recent institutional formation, TQN Khatibiyah remains firmly rooted in the doctrinal and ritual foundations established by Sheikh Ahmad Khatib. Like other branches of TQN, it preserves the essential elements of the tradition, including *dhikr* (remembrance of God), *talqīn* (the transmission of a specific spiritual formula by a spiritual guide to a disciple), *murāqaba* (contemplative practice of maintaining continuous awareness of God's presence), *silsila*, and the murshid's central authority in guiding disciples through successive stages of spiritual discipline.²² These characteristics distinguish TQN Khatibiyah as a continuation rather than a departure from the classical TQN tradition.

Contemporary Sufi traditions should not necessarily be understood as static reproductions of inherited forms. Rather, contemporary Sufi expressions may be contextualized in relation to older tendencies within the Sufi tradition, while also reflecting processes of adaptation and vernacularizing in response to changing social and cultural contexts.²³ While maintaining their doctrinal and ritual foundations, many contemporary Sufi orders have developed new organizational forms, patterns of religious engagement, and modes of

²¹ Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah Di Indonesia*, 236–48; Bilad, *Tarekat Qadiriyyah Wa Naqsyabandiyah: Sejarah, Persebaran Dan Perkembangannya Di Pondok Pesantren Suryalaya*, 27–35.

²² Ahmad Khatib Sambas, *Fath Al-ʿArifin* (Surabaya: Syirkah Bungkul Indah, n.d.); Rafid Sugandi, Ahmad Taufik Hidayat, and Yulfira Riza, "Naskah Fathu Al-ʿArifin: Sebuah Ajaran Tasawuf Tarekat Qadiriyyah Naqsyabandiyah," *Metahumaniora* 13, no. 3 (2023): 178–88, <https://doi.org/10.24198/metahumaniora.v13i3.48388>.

²³ William Rory Dickson, "Sufism and Shari'a: Contextualizing Contemporary Sufi Expressions," *Religions* 13, no. 5 (May 17, 2022): 449, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13050449>.

communication in order to sustain their relevance in modern society.²⁴ Within this broader perspective, TQN Khatibiyah may be understood as a contemporary expression of the TQN tradition, maintaining historical continuity by preserving its spiritual foundations while engaging with changing social realities. This study examines how continuity and transformation manifest in TQN Khatibiyah.

Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory

The main analytical framework for this study is Anthony Giddens's structuration theory, which examines the dynamics of continuity and change, moving from general patterns to the specific TQN Khatibiyah. Structuration theory was developed to counter the traditional dualism between structural determinism and theories of individual action, arguing that social life cannot be reduced wholly to either (or only) structures or human agency. Instead, social practices are constantly produced and reproduced through the reciprocal action of knowledgeable agents within structuring conditions that they engage with.²⁵

The central concept of Giddens's theory is the duality of structure. Structures are not external entities that merely constrain human action; they simultaneously enable and constrain social practices while being reproduced through those very practices. Structure therefore exists only insofar as social actors enact it in their routine activities. Consequently, continuity and change should not be understood as contradictory processes, but as mutually constitutive dimensions of social life. Social institutions endure because actors repeatedly reproduce established rules and resources while simultaneously reinterpreting and modifying them in response to changing historical and social circumstances.²⁶

Structuration theory has been widely applied to explain the transformation of social and religious institutions, particularly in understanding how traditions persist while adapting to modernity. Within religious communities, doctrines,

²⁴ John C. Thibdeau, "Enacting Mysticism in the World: Practical Sufism in the Tariqa Karkariyya and Alawiyya," *Religions* 16, no. 2 (January 22, 2025): 111, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16020111>; Howell, "Sufism and the Indonesian Islamic Revival"; Julia Day Howell and Martin van Bruinessen, eds., "Introduction: Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam," in *Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam* (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2007), 3–18; Rian Thum, "The Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya in China," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 34, no. 2 (April 2, 2024): 271–302, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186322000773>.

²⁵ Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis*, 49–95.

²⁶ Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, 25–37.

ritual practices, religious authority, institutional norms, and systems of knowledge may be understood as social structures that shape collective religious life while simultaneously being reproduced and transformed through the actions of religious leaders and believers. This perspective is particularly relevant for the study of Sufi orders, whose historical continuity depends not only on preserving inherited teachings but also on the capacity of successive spiritual leaders to reinterpret and actualize those teachings in changing social contexts.²⁷

Catherine Bell's Ritual Theory

Catherine Bell's ritual theory provides a complementary framework for understanding continuity and change in the ritual practices of TQN Khatibiyah. Rather than viewing ritual as a fixed form of religious activity, Bell introduces the concept of ritualization, which refers to a way of acting that distinguishes certain activities from others.²⁸ This approach views ritual as part of social practice and examines how particular actions become recognised as special or religious. Ritual, therefore, is not simply an expression of religious beliefs but a practice shaped by particular social, cultural, and historical contexts.

A central idea in Bell's theory is that ritualization involves the strategic differentiation of practices. Certain activities become ritualized because they are performed in ways that distinguish them from ordinary activities.²⁹ Bell also emphasizes the importance of the body through her concept of the ritualized body. Through repeated participation in ritual, people learn how to act, behave, and understand their position within a particular religious tradition.³⁰ This process also helps maintain religious authority, hierarchy, and communal identity. This perspective is relevant to Sufi traditions, where practices such as *dhikr*, *talqīn*, and *murāqaba*, as well as the relationship between *murshid* and disciples, play an important role in transmitting spiritual teachings and authority.

Bell's approach also helps explain how rituals can maintain continuity while changing. Ritualization does not simply reproduce tradition in the same form. Ritual practices may be adjusted, reorganized, or given new forms in response to particular historical and social circumstances. Bell shows that ritual

²⁷ Giddens, 281–317; Rob Stones, *Structuration Theory* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 1–25; Ian Craib, *Modern Social Theory: From Parsons to Habermas* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 111–23.

²⁸ Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 69–93, 90–93.

²⁹ Bell, 90–93.

³⁰ Bell, 93–101.

can maintain connections to tradition while renegotiating or reinterpreting its elements.³¹ Therefore, continuity and change do not always contradict each other. Changes in a ritual's form or context do not necessarily mean its religious meaning or connection to tradition has been lost.

In this study, Bell's theory is used to examine how the inherited ritual practices of TQN Khatibiyah are preserved and adapted in contemporary contexts. Practices such as *dhikr*, *talqīn*, and *murāqaba* are understood as ritualized practices through which spiritual teachings, the authority of the *murshid*, and the spiritual legacy of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas are transmitted across generations. Changes in the accessibility, setting, and modes of transmitting these rituals are therefore not automatically understood as departures from tradition. Still, they are examined as ways ritual traditions may be maintained amid changing social conditions. In this sense, Bell complements Giddens: while Giddens explains the broader relationship between structure and agency, Bell clarifies how continuity and change unfold specifically within ritual practices.

Method

This study employs a qualitative historical approach supported by ethnographic fieldwork to examine the historical transmission, preservation, and contemporary transformation of the Tarekat Qādiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya (TQN) in Sambas, West Kalimantan. The historical approach reconstructs the transmission of TQN from Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas through his local disciples, particularly Sheikh Muhammad Sa'ad and Sheikh Nurdin, to subsequent generations of *murshids*, and its contemporary development as TQN Khatibiyah under Sheikh Jayadi. The historical inquiry follows four interrelated stages: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography.³² Ethnographic fieldwork complements this historical reconstruction by providing direct insights into how inherited teachings, rituals, and religious authority are practiced and negotiated within the contemporary TQN Khatibiyah community.³³

³¹ Bell, 123–24; Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, 210–52. Especially the discussion of "Tradition and Transformation" and "Ritual Change."

³² Louis Gottschalk, *Mengerti Sejarah* (Jakarta: Yayasan Penerbit Universitas Indonesia, 1975), 18–32; Dudung Abdurrahman, *Metode Penelitian Sejarah* (Jakarta: Logos Wacana Ilmu, 1999), 108.

³³ Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2007), 3–4.

Fieldwork was conducted in Sambas Regency, West Kalimantan, between 2024 and 2026. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and the examination of relevant historical and religious documents. Interviews were conducted with Sheikh Jayadi, the current murshid of TQN Khatibiyah, as well as several senior disciples and other individuals with direct knowledge and experience of the order's historical transmission and contemporary development. Informants were purposively selected for their knowledge, experience, and involvement in TQN Khatibiyah. Participant observation was conducted during the *khataman sughrā* (a shorter, more concise collective *dhikr* ritual) and *khataman kubrā* (a more extensive form of *khataman*) gatherings, as well as *talqīn dhikr*, allowing the researchers to observe how teachings, rituals, and patterns of religious interaction are practised in contemporary settings. All participants provided informed consent for the research aims. Secondary sources included manuscripts, historical documents, books, scholarly articles, and prior studies on Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas and the development of TQN in Sambas.

The data were analyzed through historical source criticism, triangulation, and thematic interpretation.³⁴ Oral accounts obtained from interviews were cross-checked with written sources and field observations to assess their consistency and historical reliability. The data were then organized chronologically to reconstruct the transmission of TQN across successive generations and thematically to identify patterns of continuity and transformation in its teachings, rituals, spiritual lineage, religious authority, organizational development, and modes of dissemination. This combination of chronological and thematic analysis enables the examination of both the historical continuity of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas's spiritual legacy and its reinterpretation in contemporary contexts.

The interpretation of the findings is guided by Anthony Giddens's Structuration Theory and Catherine Bell's Ritual Theory. Giddens's concepts of structure, agency, and the duality of structure are used to examine the relationship between inherited TQN structures, particularly its teachings, ritual system, *silsila*, and the authority of the *murshid*, and the agency of successive *murshids* in reproducing and adapting those structures. Bell's concept of

³⁴ Martha C. Howell and Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 60–68; John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of History*, 6th ed. (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2006), 88–112.

ritualization is used more specifically to examine how inherited practices such as *dhikr*, *talqīn*, and *muraqāba* are maintained and negotiated within changing social contexts. These two frameworks are used complementarily: Giddens explains the broader dynamics between inherited structures and the agency of religious actors, while Bell provides a more specific lens for understanding continuity and change at the level of ritual practice.

Results and Discussion

Preserving the Spiritual Legacy of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas

This study shows that Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas's spiritual legacy has been preserved within TQN Khatibiyah as a living tradition, reproduced across generations through the *silsila*, doctrinal teachings, ritual practices, and the murshid's enduring authority. Its continuity maintains rootedness while responding to social change.

Its contemporary development is marked by organizational openness, inclusive religious outreach, and digital dissemination. Rather than departures from tradition, these are adaptive strategies extending teachings and rituals to communities, demonstrating that continuity and transformation are complementary dimensions of Sufi tradition.

Through Giddens's structuration theory and Bell's ritualization theory, the study shows how inherited structures, *murshid* agency, and changing ritual forms sustain religious authority and continuity. Its contribution is to demonstrate that preserving this legacy requires ritual continuity alongside organisational innovation, engagement, and strategic digital communication, without abandoning spiritual foundations. Comparative research across TQN lineages and other Sufi orders is needed to examine these dynamics across socio-cultural contexts. According to Sheikh Jayadi:

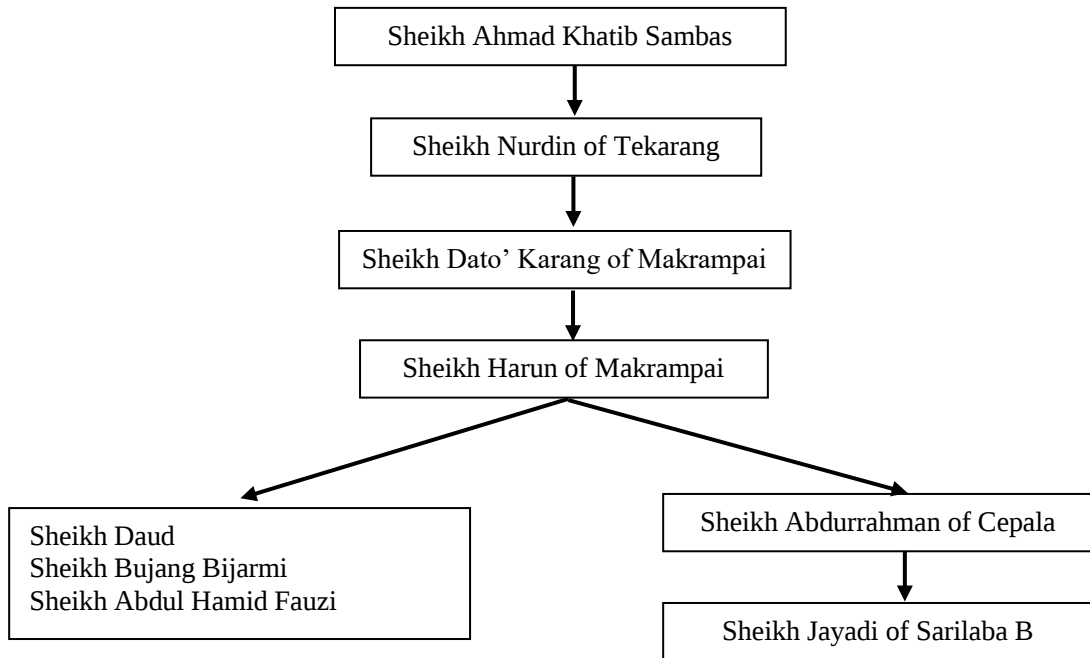
"I was entrusted by my teacher, Sheikh Abdurrahman, with continuing the teaching of Sheikh Nurdin's version of TQN in 2011. Then, in 2018, my teacher, Sheikh Bujang Jur'in, also permitted me to teach Sheikh Muhammad Sa'ad's version of TQN. I teach both versions to my disciples in stages: Sheikh Nurdin's version first, followed by Sheikh Sa'ad's. Only after they have learned both versions in full are the practices combined."³⁵

Sheikh Jayadi explained that Sheikh Nurdin taught *dhikr nafi-ithbāt* (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*) directed toward the seven *laṭā'if*, along with three levels of

³⁵ Interview with Sheikh Jayadi, May 2024.

murāqaba, but not *dhikr ism al-Dhāt* ("Allāh"),³⁶ (the silent remembrance of Allāh), *dhikr sirr* associated with the Naqshbandiyya element of TQN.

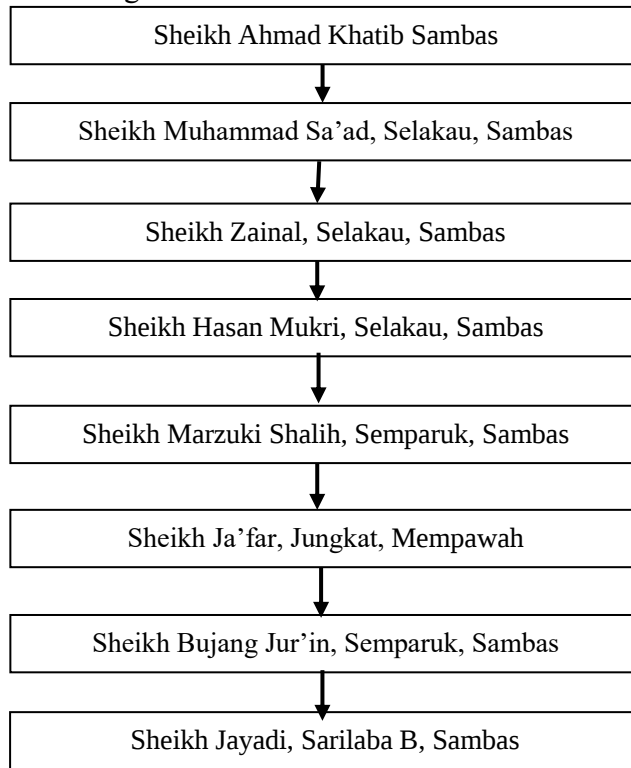
Table 1: The Spiritual Lineage of Sheikh Nurdin



By contrast, Sheikh Muhammad Sa'ad taught *dhikr naḥī-ithbāt* at *laḥīfa al-qalb* and *dhikr sirr* at the seven *laḥā'if*, along with twenty levels of *murāqaba*. Sheikh Jayadi later integrated these two lineages, both of which trace their authority to Sheikh Ahmad Khatib.

³⁶ Interview with Sheikh Jayadi, May 2024.

Table 2: The Spiritual Lineage of Sheikh Muhammad Sa'ad



According to Sheikh Jayadi, Sheikh Nurdin's tradition was known locally as Qādiriyya. In contrast, Sheikh Sa'ad was known as Naqsybandiyya, even though both derived from Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas, founder of TQN. Sheikh Jayadi later popularised the TQN name by integrating these distinct traditions in Sambas.

"The two versions do not contradict each other; rather, they complement one another. Sheikh Nurdin's version teaches seven levels of *dhikr naẓīthbāt*, which are not found in Sheikh Sa'ad's version or in the forms of TQN widely practiced in Java and other regions. Sheikh Sa'ad's version, by contrast, teaches only one level of this *dhikr*, as is generally the case with TQN elsewhere. In this sense, TQN Khatibiyah brings together the teachings of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib that had previously been transmitted through separate lineages."³⁷

The interview demonstrates that the *silsila* functions not merely as a genealogical record but as the principal source of spiritual legitimacy within

³⁷ Interview with Sheikh Jayadi, May 2024.

TQN Khatibiyah. Every *murshid* derives religious authority from an unbroken chain linking contemporary disciples to Sheikh Ahmad Khatib. From Giddens's structuration perspective, this spiritual linkage constitutes an enduring social structure that regulates religious authority, legitimizes leadership, and provides continuity across generations. Yet, this continuity is not automatic; it is continually reproduced through the agency of successive *murshids*, who preserve inherited teachings while responding to changing historical and social circumstances. Thus, the *silsila* represents dynamic reproduction rather than passive maintenance of tradition. This pattern contrasts with some contemporary Sufi contexts in which spiritual authority has been renegotiated. Golestaneh, for example, shows that some Sufi groups in Iran limit, delegate, or reject particular forms of *shaikh* authority while retaining broader connections to Sufi traditions.

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Sheikh Ahmad Khatib's legacy is likewise preserved through doctrinal teachings and ritual practices. TQN Khatibiyah maintains core teachings, particularly those contained in *Fath al-‘Ārifīn*, alongside *dhikr jahr*, *dhikr khafi*, *talqīn*, *murāqaba*, and spiritual discipline under the *murshid's* supervision. Although Sheikh Sa'ad and Sheikh Nurdin developed different pedagogical sequences, their traditions remain rooted in Ahmad Khatib's spiritual principles. Sheikh Jayadi subsequently preserved and integrated these traditions into the curriculum of TQN Khatibiyah.

"Each level of *dhikr* or *murāqaba* is transmitted through *talqīn*. Thus, a new disciple begins by learning Sheikh Nurdin's version of TQN. First, the disciple receives the *talqīn* of the *dhikr lā ilāha illā Allāh at laṭīfa al-qalb*. After reciting it 70,000 times, he receives another *talqīn* for the second *laṭīfa*, *laṭīfa al-rūhī*. This process continues successively until the seventh *laṭīfa li kulli al-jasad*."

"After completing the seven levels of *dhikr nafi-ithbāt*, the disciple is taught three levels of *murāqaba*. This completes Sheikh Nurdin's version of TQN. The disciple then undergoes the *khataman sughrā* ceremony before proceeding to the next seventeen levels of *murāqaba*. Upon completing these levels, the disciple undergoes the *khataman kubra* ceremony. Only then is the disciple taught *dhikr sirr* at the seven *laṭā'if*, followed by the *khataman wusṭā* (intermediate completion) ceremony. At this point, the

³⁸ Seema Golestaneh, "And the Master Answered?: Deferrals of Authority in Contemporary Sufism in Iran," *Iranian Studies* 56, no. 2 (April 28, 2023): 365–86, <https://doi.org/10.1017/irn.2022.63>.

entire course of instruction is complete, apart from several additional teachings."³⁹

These findings can be understood further through Catherine Bell's concept of ritualisation. Ritual practices are not merely repetitive religious activities but forms of action through which authority, communal identity, and tradition are continually reproduced, reinterpreted, and transformed.⁴⁰ Within TQN Khatibiyah, the repeated performance of *dhikr*, *talqīn*, and *muraqāba* not only preserves inherited ritual forms but also reinforces *murshid* authority, strengthens disciples' attachment to the *silsila*, and embodies Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas's spiritual teachings in everyday practice. Thus, continuity depends not only on historical transmission but also on the repeated enactment of ritual practices within the community.

The preservation of Ahmad Khatib's spiritual legacy, therefore, involves the interplay of spiritual authority, ritual practice, doctrinal transmission, and institutional continuity. TQN Khatibiyah maintains the foundations of his teachings while adapting them to contemporary religious life. Yet, preservation alone does not explain its contemporary development. Fieldwork also reveals significant changes in the order's relationship with wider society, particularly through organizational openness and broader public engagement. The following section examines these developments.

Openness

One of the most significant transformations in the contemporary development of TQN Khatibiyah is its growing openness to the wider society. Fieldwork indicates a shift from earlier patterns of religious transmission in Sambas, in which TQN teachings and rituals were generally practised within relatively limited circles of disciples. Under Sheikh Jayadi, the order has become more accessible through religious gatherings, communal *dhikr*, and introductory teachings, allowing wider communities to encounter the TQN tradition. This shift does not abandon the order's spiritual discipline but reflects a changed mode of presenting inherited teachings within contemporary social life.

Historically, TQN transmission in Sambas tended to remain restricted, particularly in ritual instruction and internal spiritual disciplines. This limited public visibility was shaped partly by memories of colonial repression of Sufi networks and by earlier *murshids'* reliance on close teacher–disciple

³⁹ Interview with Sheikh Jayadi, May 2024.

⁴⁰ Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, 210–52.

relationships. Consequently, the tradition was sustained primarily through interpersonal transmission rather than broader public engagement. One of Sheikh Jayadi's senior disciples recalled:

"Sheikh Jayadi and I both studied under Sheikh Abdurrahman. The difference was that I often struggled to understand what he was teaching. Back then, *talqīn al-dhikr* was always given individually and in private. Even if several of us came together, we would be called in one at a time, either into a room or behind a curtain, to receive the *talqīn*. Because of that, if I misunderstood something or missed part of the teaching, no one could remind me or explain it afterwards. So, after Sheikh Abdurrahman passed away and Sheikh Jayadi became the *murshid*, I went back to study with him. I wanted to relearn everything properly and complete the lessons I had missed."⁴¹

This limited and discreet pattern of TQN transmission during that period is reflected in Sheikh Jayadi's account:

"My teacher, Sheikh Abdurrahman, used to tell me that the Dutch were hunting Sheikh Harun and later by the Japanese. You know, he used to teach his disciples at night, and that made the Dutch suspicious. They thought he was planning some rebellion. They kept looking for his house, but somehow, they could never find it. Every time they tried to catch him, he managed to get away. Then, during the Japanese occupation, they were after him too... So that's probably why TQN was passed on so quietly in Sambas. Even in Sheikh Abdurrahman's time, things were still done that way. I guess people were still carrying the trauma from those days."⁴²

This historical context clarifies the significance of Sheikh Jayadi's openness. TQN Khatibiyah has become more socially accessible through public religious gatherings, while formal spiritual instruction remains structured through *talqīn* and guidance from the *murshid*. Thus, openness expands the social boundary of religious encounter without indiscriminately opening all levels of spiritual knowledge.

"Alhamdulillah, people in Sambas are beginning to know about TQN now. But it wasn't like that before. Back then, hardly anyone here knew about Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas. Only a handful of people had ever heard of him, even though he was already well known throughout the Malay-Indonesian world, and TQN had spread far beyond Indonesia. I used to study with Sheikh Abdurrahman at his house. After receiving the *talqīn*,

⁴¹ Interview with Sheikh Jayadi, May 2024.

⁴² Interview with Sheikh Jayadi, May 2024.

we'd sit and chat. We didn't perform *dhikr* together as a group. The lessons weren't really taught in any particular order either. Among all the disciples, I was probably the one who visited him most often, even if I had to come by myself. That gave me plenty of chances to ask him again about things I didn't understand, or to ask about things he didn't explain in front of the other disciples."⁴³

Sheikh Jayadi explained his efforts to reconstruct TQN transmission and practice:

"A few years after Sheikh Abdurrahman entrusted me with this responsibility, his younger brother, Haji Sumar, said to me, 'Jay, how much longer are we going to keep our *ṭarīqa* hidden? You're still young, and you've been around and seen a lot. It's time for you to get out there. Go everywhere. Spread it! Maybe the old way made sense back then. It suited the circumstances. But now the time has come. Spread our *ṭarīqa* as widely as you can!'"⁴⁴

From that point onward, Sheikh Jayadi fundamentally transformed TQN transmission in Sambas from a passive to a more active and progressive model. Rather than waiting for disciples to visit him, he regularly travelled to their communities, where gatherings were held in private homes, mushalla, and public mosques. *Talqīn al-dhikr*, previously conducted privately, could now be performed openly, while collective *dhikr naḥf-ithbāt* was sometimes performed by hundreds of participants using loudspeakers.⁴⁵

From Giddens's structuration perspective, this development illustrates the murshid's agency in reproducing inherited religious structures under changing social conditions. The *silsila*, teachings, ritual disciplines, and murshid authority remain authoritative, while Sheikh Jayadi modifies how the tradition engages with wider society. Openness therefore represents structural reproduction through adaptation: inherited structures remain intact, but the social practices through which they are reproduced are adjusted to contemporary circumstances.

This transformation is particularly visible in the changing accessibility and social settings of ritual practices. Communal *dhikr* and religious gatherings may involve broader audiences, whereas *talqīn* continues to distinguish between general participation and formal spiritual initiation. Observations of *khataman*

⁴³ Interview with Sheikh Jayadi, May 2024.

⁴⁴ Interview with Sheikh Jayadi, May 2024.

⁴⁵ Observation in the *Khataman Kubro* and *Khataman Sughro* ceremony, November 2025; Interview with several disciples from the subdistricts of Tekarang and Tebas, City of Singkawang and Pontianak, November 2025.

sughrā, *khataman kubrā*, and *talqīn dhikr* confirm that greater accessibility has not eliminated the need for structured spiritual training. At the annual Haul of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas and *khataman* ceremonies, participants included disciples, prospective members, government officials, and religious leaders, while TQN's distinctive dhikr practices were performed publicly.

As one participant from Singkawang explained during a *khataman* ceremony:

"Not everyone here has received *talqīn al-dhikr* yet. I actually brought four friends with me who aren't TQN members. They've already been introduced to the *ṭarīqa*, though. If they feel ready after today's program, I'll invite them to receive the *talqīn*."⁴⁶

Catherine Bell's concept of ritualization helps clarify this development. Changes in a ritual's accessibility or social setting do not necessarily sever its connection with tradition; what matters is whether its religious character and authority remain intact. Within TQN Khatibiyah, broader access to communal activities coexists with the continued regulation of *talqīn*, *dhikr*, and *murāqaba* under the *murshid*. Thus, ritual boundaries have not disappeared but have been renegotiated in relation to a wider social environment. This supports Bell's view that ritual traditions can change in form, setting, and context while maintaining continuity with inherited structures.

Openness therefore represents adaptation without doctrinal rupture. Sheikh Jayadi has expanded the order's social accessibility and public visibility without eliminating the *silsila*, ritual hierarchy, *talqīn*, or *murshid* authority. Giddens highlights agency within inherited structures, while Bell explains continuity amid changing ritual contexts. By reducing social distance and expanding religious interaction beyond established circles, openness has also created conditions for broader and more diverse social engagement, leading to the next dimension: inclusive religious outreach.

Inclusive Religious Outreach

The growing openness of TQN Khatibiyah has led to broader, more inclusive religious outreach. Fieldwork shows that the order has expanded beyond serving its established disciples by creating educational institutions, strengthening community-based religious activities, and developing broader organizational networks. This transformation demonstrates that preserving Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas's legacy involves not only maintaining inherited

⁴⁶ Interview with a disciple, January 2025

teachings but also creating social spaces for their introduction and transmission. Under Sheikh Jayadi, the establishment of the TQN Khatibiyah Foundation, Pondok Pesantren Dar adz-Dzakirin, and Masjid Al-Khatibiyah has provided structured spaces for religious education, spiritual guidance, and community service. These institutions enable wider engagement while maintaining the order's spiritual identity. As Sheikh Jayadi explained:

"I've noticed that in Java and some other places, TQN has been developed alongside educational institutions. Here in Sambas, though, anyone who wanted to learn had to come to the *murshid's* house. After I was entrusted with this responsibility, I wanted to change that. So, in 2018, together with some of my disciples, we established the TQN Khatibiyah Sambas Foundation. Then, in 2022, we began building the Dar Adz Dzakirin Islamic boarding school and this mosque to serve as a centre for the *ṭaṇīqa*. That way, people would know where to find us."⁴⁷

This institutional development has also been accompanied by a significant expansion of TQN Khatibiyah's geographical and social networks. Field observations indicate that the order has established active communities across numerous subdistricts in Sambas Regency while attracting participants from neighbouring regions such as Singkawang, Mempawah, Pontianak, Bengkayang, Ketapang, and other parts of West Kalimantan. Participants in major religious activities include not only long-established disciples but also religious scholars, government officials, university lecturers, students, entrepreneurs, and members of the general public. This increasingly diverse participation reflects a transformation in the social composition of the order. It demonstrates that contemporary TQN Khatibiyah has become a religious community whose influence extends beyond traditional circles of disciples. One disciple from Ketapang Regency recalled:⁴⁸

"I first heard about this *ṭarīqa* through a post on social media from one of Sheikh Jayadi's disciples. I got interested, so I went to Sambas to receive *talqīn al-dhikr*. After I came back, I invited a few people from my village to learn about it, and we asked Sheikh Jayadi to come and visit us. Some of them took the *talqīn* straight away, while others waited until they'd come to a few more gatherings. Now he visits us every three months."

From Giddens's structuration perspective, these developments show how inherited religious structures are reproduced through new organizational

⁴⁷ Interview with Sheikh Jayadi, May 2024.

⁴⁸ Interview with a disciple, September 2025

practices and expanding social relationships. The *silsila*, ritual traditions, and *murshid* authority remain central, while Sheikh Jayadi exercises agency by developing institutions and networks that extend these structures to wider communities. Institutional expansion therefore represents not a departure from tradition but a new mechanism for preserving and transmitting Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas's spiritual legacy.

Field observations further show that broader outreach has not diminished ritual authority. Public activities distinguish general participation from formal initiation through *talqīn*, allowing participants to observe, learn, or seek guidance before becoming disciples. Bell's ritualization theory suggests that wider participation does not weaken ritual continuity when core practices remain regulated by the *murshid*, thereby reproducing communal identity and spiritual authority. Another disciple from Ketapang shared his experience:⁴⁹

"At that time, I went to Sambas because I was looking for a *murshid*. Before that, I'd met another spiritual group, but I soon realized they weren't what I was looking for. Then one day I heard that a *murshid* from Sambas was coming to our area. I got really excited and went to meet him. I sat in the gathering, listened to what he had to say, and watched how he guided people. *Alhamdulillah*, it didn't take long for me to realize he was the *murshid* I'd been searching for."

These findings demonstrate that inclusive religious outreach has become one of the principal mechanisms through which TQN Khatibiyah sustains and extends the spiritual legacy of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas in contemporary society. Through institutional development, the expansion of regional networks, and broader community participation, the order has transformed itself from a relatively localised Sufi community into a more socially engaged religious movement while maintaining its inherited spiritual foundations. The combination of organizational expansion, ritual continuity, and wider public participation illustrates that preservation and transformation are not contradictory processes but mutually reinforcing dimensions of the order's contemporary development. Moreover, this expanding network of relationships has created favourable conditions for adopting new forms of religious communication beyond face-to-face interaction. The following section therefore examines how digital dissemination has further strengthened the transmission of TQN Khatibiyah in contemporary society.

⁴⁹ Interview with a disciple, September 2025

Digital Dissemination

The contemporary development of TQN Khatibiyah extends beyond organisational openness and inclusive outreach to the strategic use of digital communication to transmit Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas's spiritual legacy. Fieldwork indicates that digital media help maintain *murshid*–disciple relationships, introduce TQN teachings to wider audiences, and coordinate activities across geographically dispersed communities. Rather than replacing conventional transmission, digital communication complements established teacher–disciple relationships by extending inherited teachings beyond Sambas. Its development responded to the order's geographical expansion, which made regular face-to-face interaction increasingly difficult. Sheikh Jayadi consequently uses WhatsApp, video calls, and other online platforms to maintain contact, provide guidance, coordinate activities, and address questions concerning spiritual practice. Digital media also disseminate information about *dhikr* gatherings, *khataman*, and *haul* commemorations, helping dispersed members remain connected.

"If someone lives outside Sambas and wants to receive *talqīn al-dhikr*, but there's no *majelis* where they live, we can just do it over a video call. We've even had people from Brunei Darussalam. They came here for their first *talqīn*. After that, they moved up through the different levels by WhatsApp video call. But once they finish Sheikh Nurdin's version and are ready for *khataman sughrā*, they either have to come here, or I'll go to them."

"There's one disciple from Central Kalimantan who's almost finished Sheikh Sa'ad's version. He came here for his first *talqīn*, then did the higher levels by video call. He came back here for *khataman sughrā*, and for *khataman kubrā* he joined the ceremony in Ketapang because it's much closer to Central Kalimantan."

Sheikh Jayadi further explained:

"We've even had disciples from Sumatra and Sulawesi who've never been here at all. They found out about us through YouTube. Some of my talks were livestreamed, and clips from them were uploaded to YouTube. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I also shared a lot of my teachings on Facebook. That's how they got in touch with me and asked to receive *talqīn al-dhikr*."

The adoption of digital communication does not imply a transformation of the essential structure of TQN Khatibiyah. From the perspective of Anthony Giddens's structuration theory, digital media function as new resources through

which inherited religious structures are reproduced across wider social spaces. The *silsila*, the authority of the *murshid*, and the ritual disciplines of TQN remain the principal structures governing religious life. What has changed is not the structure itself but the medium through which these structures are enacted and maintained. Sheikh Jayadi's use of digital communication illustrates how a knowledgeable religious leader exercises agency by employing contemporary technologies to preserve continuity within changing social conditions. Digital dissemination therefore represents another form of structural reproduction through adaptation, enabling the spiritual legacy of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas to remain accessible to geographically dispersed disciples without altering its doctrinal foundations.

Field observations further indicate that digital communication complements rather than replaces embodied ritual practice. Fundamental rituals such as *talqīn*, *dhikr*, *murāqaba*, and *khataman* remain centred on the murshid's direct guidance. They are normally performed through physical participation within the ritual community. Digital platforms instead serve as media for preparation, communication, religious instruction, and maintaining spiritual relationships between formal gatherings. Catherine Bell's concept of ritualization helps explain this relationship. Changes in the medium of communication do not necessarily transform the ritual itself. The ritual continues to derive its authority from established ceremonial procedures and the recognised authority of the *murshid*, while digital communication helps maintain those ritual relationships across distance.

"I'm from Central Kalimantan. It takes about two days to drive from where I live to Sambas, so there's no way I could go there regularly. That's why I went there for my first *talqīn*. After that, all the higher levels were conducted via video call from the second to the seventh *laṭīfa*, and from the twenty muraqabah onward. Sometimes we used WhatsApp, sometimes Zoom or Google Meet. If I have questions or need some guidance, I send him a WhatsApp message or a voice note. I also like listening to his talks on YouTube. I only travel to Sambas for *khataman sughrā* and *khataman kubrā*. I've still got one more *khataman* to complete, so I'll have to go there again."⁵⁰

These findings demonstrate that digital dissemination has become a contemporary extension of the transmission process through which the spiritual legacy of Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas is preserved and reproduced. Rather than

⁵⁰ Interview with a disciple, March 2026.

replacing traditional forms of religious authority, digital communication strengthens the relationship between the *murshid* and disciples by overcoming geographical barriers while maintaining the essential structures of *silsila*, ritual practice, and spiritual discipline. Together, the findings show that the contemporary development of TQN Khatibiyah is characterised by three interconnected processes: organisational openness, inclusive religious outreach, and digital dissemination. These processes illustrate that continuity and transformation are not contradictory but mutually reinforcing mechanisms through which a living Sufi tradition remains relevant in contemporary society.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas's spiritual legacy has been preserved within TQN Khatibiyah not as static historical inheritance but as a living tradition reproduced and reinterpreted across generations. Its continuity is sustained through the preservation of the *silsila*, the transmission of doctrinal teachings, the continuity of ritual practices, and the enduring authority of the *murshid*. These dimensions maintain historical connection while enabling responses to changing social and historical circumstances.

The contemporary development of TQN Khatibiyah is characterized by three processes: organizational openness, inclusive religious outreach, and digital dissemination. Rather than departures from tradition, these constitute adaptive strategies through which inherited teachings and rituals reach wider Muslim communities. Openness reduces social distance, outreach expands institutional engagement, and digital dissemination extends spiritual guidance beyond geographical boundaries. Thus, continuity and transformation operate as complementary dimensions of a living Sufi tradition.

The study contributes to contemporary Sufism by showing, through Giddens's structuration theory, how inherited structures and the agency of successive *murshids* interact in reproducing tradition. Bell's ritualization theory likewise demonstrates that changes in accessibility, setting, and modes of transmission can sustain ritual authority and spiritual continuity.

The principal contribution lies in showing that preserving Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas's spiritual legacy depends not only on ritual continuity but also on organizational innovation, social engagement, and strategic digital communication without abandoning essential spiritual foundations. As this study focuses on a Sambas community, comparative research across TQN lineages and

other Sufi orders is needed to examine continuity, institutional transformation, and digital religious practices across socio-cultural contexts.

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All authors contributed equally to this research

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