New Faces of Indonesian Sufism: A Demographic Profile of Tarekat Qodiriyyah-Naqsyabandiyyah, Pesantren Suryalaya, in the 1990s

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Though once doubted, there is now a growing recognition of continuing importance of Sufi currents in Indonesian Islam. Not only is there increasing acknowledgment that much of what was once read as 'Hindu-Buddhist' in Indonesian popular and court ritual is actually Sufi, with close parallels in other Muslim countries (Hodgson 1974, 551; Woodward 1989), but there are a number of recent reports that more specialised Sufi practices and institutions are enjoying remarkable popularity (Hasan 2001; Hasbullah 2000; Van Bruinessen 1992).[1] These reports concern not just modern adaptations of Sufism through private Muslim educational institutes, formally organised prayer groups, TV programs, internet-mediated religious education, workshops and the like, but traditional Sufi orders (*tarekat*).

The continued vitality of the *tarekat* is perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Indonesian Sufism's new visibility, in so far as it has been associated by Muslim Modernists throughout the twentieth century with a heretical and doomed traditionalism. This view has been reflected in the writings of influential Western scholars, particularly at mid-century. Thus the noted Islamicist A.J. Arberry commented in his classic work *Sufism*, that Sufi orders in many places were continuing to attract the 'ignorant masses, but no man of education would care to speak in their favour' (1950, 122).[2] Likewise, the prominent social scientists Ernest Gellner (1984) and Clifford Geertz (1960, 1968) showed the impress of strong Modernist Muslim influence in their modelling of Islamic societies at mid-century. Both expected that economic development and the attendant expansion of the modern sectors of Muslim-majority countries would spell the demise of the Sufi orders there and insure the triumph of the Modernists' narrowly conceived legalism (or as Geertz dubbed it, 'scripturalism').[3] In this

construction, modern city people, educated in the state school system or Muslim Modernist schools, would reject not only heretical worship of local spirits and indigenous customary laws that violate Islamic law. The 'modern' Muslim would also reject Sufi orders with their supposedly 'irrational' devotions: emotive prayers, the veneration of saints and cultivation of mystical awareness.[4] Instead, they thought, Muslims of the modern era would limit themselves to a staid, scripturalist piety, performing the obligatory daily prayers and observing Islamic laws (A. *syariat,* I. *syariah*) governing everyday social life. Thus Geertz judged that any surviving Sufi orders, with their intense devotionalism and mystical exercises, would be confined to the rural hinterlands amongst its peasant remnants.[5]

Looking at the Indonesian case at mid-century, it appeared likely that any surviving impulse towards experiential religiosity amongst more cosmopolitan people, especially Javanese Indonesians, would be siphoned out of Islam proper, into the independent mystical groups (*golongan kebatinan).* These groups provided alternative arenas for mystical practice outside Islam, despite legal moves against them, starting with the Presidential Decision No. 1 of 1965. That same Decision, by fully legitimising Hinduism and Buddhism, opened yet other avenues for pursuing interests in mysticism by turning to a completely different religion, but one with historical and cultural significance in the areas of the former Indic states (cf. Howell 1982, 511-516; Lyon 1980).[6] Thus in the late 1960s and 70s a variety of social pressures appeared to be discouraging Muslims from interest in mysticism, or, if this was not compelling, to draw them into other, clearly non-Muslim arenas to pursue their interests.

Nonetheless, more recent scholarship testifies to the continued presence of Sufi orders in the Indonesian social landscape.[7] Writing in the later 1970s and early 80s, scholars like Madjid (1977), Abdurrahman (1978) and Dhofier (1980, 1982) inaugurated a new generation of ethnographic studies of Indonesian *tarekat,* demonstrating their continued association with the Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), which had been the vehicles for the religious instruction of youth in the premodern period.[8]

To the extent that the viability of the *tarekat* has been tied to that of the *pesantren* as agents of eventual recruitment of *tarekat* members,

there was indeed reason to predict a dim future for the *tarekat* at mid-century, as *pesantren* faced increasing competition from the growing state school system. However extensive government support for the religious schools, including enhancement of their secular curriculum, has helped to revitalise the *pesantren* and maintain one of the social supports for their directors, some of whom are simultaneously *tarekat* masters (*syekh, mursyid*) (Dhofier 1980).

Van Bruinessen (1992) takes an even stronger position in his study of Indonesia's largest and most pervasive order, the Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah. Tracing its origins and spread in Indonesia, he has argued that this order actually enjoyed more or less continual growth over the two and a half centuries since its first arrival in the archipelago. He acknowledges factors that from time to time have eroded support. These include Dutch colonial surveillance, the chastisements of the Modernists from the turn of the twentieth century, the Wahabbi domination of Mekka, a principal centre of Naqsyabandi instruction, under 'Abd Al-'Aziz ibn Sa'ud in 1924 and the implication of *tarekat* in party politics in the final years of the colonial period. Nonetheless he argues that these same factors stimulated adaptive responses (Van Bruinessen 1992, 114-117) and holds that the long-term picture, even through the middle of the twentieth century, has been one of gradual expansion of the *tarekat* movement.

While the continued existence of Sufi orders, their identities and affiliations are now coming into clearer focus, there is as yet hardly any systematically collected data available on membership numbers in the orders and their demographic composition. And while there is some speculation about historical trends in membership numbers and social appeal, evidence upon which to found conclusions is thin. In the midst of the much-touted Islamic revival,[9] this is a remarkable omission, leaving a significant gap in the sociology of Indonesian Islam, and thus implying a significant weakness in political analyses that reference trends in Indonesian Islamic religiosity.

The data presented here begin to fill that gap. They provide rare numerical documentation of participation in a prominent Sufi order, the Tarekat Qodiriyyah Naqsabandiyyah (TQN) centred on Pesantren Suryalaya,[10] as it grew over the last years of the New Order period. The present analysis compares results of a membership survey done by

the authors in 1997 in two regional branches with their earlier survey in 1990. It shows, contrary to the expectations of some Western academics at mid-century and certain segments of the Islamic Modernist movement of the time, that in the 1990s overall numbers in the two regional branches surveyed were on the increase. Moreover, they were growing precisely in a period of rapid economic growth, and across the spectrum of occupation and education, that is, amongst both people involved in the most modern sectors of the economy and those in small farming and petty trading. They were even growing in urban areas, from which Geertz had expected the *tarekat* to disappear. Further, the findings of both surveys confirm Dhofier's observations that the *tarekat* are no longer a male preserve: women as well as men figure prominently amongst the members.

No other studies have been able to document such change over time with this degree of rigour. A small number of studies of Indonesian Sufi orders by other scholars have presented data on participation gathered through casual observation of group rituals at one point in time (cf. Dhofier 1980; 1982). Our previous analysis of 1990 memberships was able to infer growth in TQN Suryalaya memberships during the 1980s by examining responses to a question on length of membership in the order. But as a 'snap shot' of the organisation at a single point in time, that study could not directly establish that growth had occurred (Howell, Subandi and Nelson 1998). It is only the availability of the 1997 membership data and their comparison with data from the 1990 survey of the same regions that make possible this direct demonstration of membership growth over time.

Clearly, data from one order cannot by themselves support claims of a general revival of Sufism, or for a general growth in the popularity of Sufi orders amongst urbanites. Demographic studies of other orders and 'Sufi' groups would be needed to get a clearer picture of the vitality of Sufi orders in Indonesia today. This in turn would need to be set in the context of other social expressions of Islam associated with 'Sufism'. Also, it should also be noted that the particular order upon which this study has focused is one that has from its inception in the Indies had a strong reformist cast, perhaps positioning it more favourably than other orders through the era of scripturalist assaults on Sufi orders in this region.[11] However it is hoped that this study of TQN

Suryalaya will stimulate studies of memberships and participation in other Sufi groups so that a more broadly-based account of Sufism's appeal in contemporary Indonesia will become possible.

In such new assessments of the place of Sufism in Indonesian Islam today, it will be necessary to keep in mind the historical diversity of Sufi thought and forms of expression, including differences amongst Sufi orders with regard to philosophical orientation, organisational style, social engagement and political involvement. That diversity accounts for the breadth of Sufism's actual social appeal, both in the past and in today's highly complex and rapidly changing societies.

It is also hoped that this study will contribute to the revision of sociological models of Islamic societies that carry into the comparative study of Islam outmoded conceptions of religion and its relationship to 'modernity' and tend to encourage the stereotyping of both Sufism and Islam as a whole. Islam need not be narrowly *syariah*-oriented to be 'modern'. Put in somewhat more popular, if imprecise, terms, Islam need not be 'fundamentalist' to appeal to today's Muslims, including the younger generation. Documenting the recent growth of even one branch of a major Indonesian Sufi order in a time of rapid economic development, particularly amongst urbanites in the modern sector of the economy, broadens out notions of what it means to be a 'modern' Muslim. This in turn prompts us to identify and reassess our underlying assumptions about devotional forms of religion and their place in modern societies. At a time in world history when public perceptions of Islam have drastically narrowed as a result of media attention focused on Osama bin Laden's Wahhabi-inspired[12] Al Qaeda network, we do well to notice and reflect on the significance of the other new faces of Islam.

Survey Subjects and Methods

Tarekat Qodiriyyah Naqsabandiyyah (TQN), Pesantren Suryalaya, is a nation-wide organization and even has some overseas members, chiefly in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand (Anwar and Praja 1990).[13] The claim, made through its name, to two lines of spiritual descent simultaneously (both Qodiriyyah and Naqsabandiyyah) signals not merely the borrowing of practices from one of those two long-established and famous orders into the other, but, according to Van Bruinessen (1992,

89), the formation of a new order. At any rate, the usage of that distinctive name can be traced to Mecca in the mid-nineteenth century, where an influential teacher from West Kalimantan, Ahmad Khatib ibn 'Abd Al-Ghaffar Sambas, initiated, amongst others, many pupils from the Malay cultural regions of Asia. Through them the order spread across the Malay Peninsula and the islands of the East Indies, becoming especially popular in the Banten area of West Java, where it was implicated in 1888 in an anti-colonial peasant revolt (Kartodirdjo 1966).[14]

In the twentieth century, after the death of the Qodiriyyah-Naqsabandiyyah order's second principal, 'Abd Al-Karim of Banten, his successors conducted their affairs independently, establishing different lines sometimes identified by the seats of their religious schools or *pesantren*. Thus TQN Pesantren Suryalaya was instituted at a *pesantren* of that name near Tasikmalaya, West Java, in 1905 by 'Abdullah Mubarak (or Abah Sepuh). He was succeeded by the present principal (*khalifah* or *syekh*), his son K.H.A. Shohibulwafa Tadjul Arifin (affectionately known as Abah Anom).[15]

The subjects of our 1997 survey, like those of the earlier survey conducted in 1990, were members of TQN Suryalaya in two ethnically Javanese regency-level branches: the Special District of Yogyakarta and the Regency of Tegal. Yogyakarta is a focus of the 'Javanist' *(kejawen)* heartland of the Javanese and Tegal is in the historically more strictly Islamic *pasisir* region bordering on the island of Java's north coast. The Special District of Yogyakarta, centred on the former court city, popular tourist centre and university town of Yogyakarta, has comparatively high levels of education, with nearly 16% having completed high school in 1990 and 3.01% holding some kind of university degree (Biro Pusat Statistik Indonesia 1990). The Regency of Tegal, a primarily farming region on the north coast of Java, centres on a much smaller administrative and commercial town of the same name. Its more provincial character is evident in the educational levels of its populace, with just 5.75% having completed high school in 1990 and only 0.58% holding some kind of university degree (Biro Pusat Statistik Indonesia 1990).

The first of the surveys, done in 1990 in conjunction with an in-depth study of spiritual practice, consisted of questions on members' social backgrounds (age, gender, place of residence, length of

membership) and level of initiation. These questions were administered with the help of local branch (*khotaman* group) leaders to all those considered to be active members of all branches in the two regions. In 1997, because of sensitivities within the organisation and in an increasingly delicate national political environment, the same questions on social background were asked, but members in 12 of the by then 39 local branches (*khotaman* groups) did not participate directly. Heads of those groups provided membership numbers from their records, but did not feel able to authorise the direct administration of questionnaires. It is nonetheless possible to draw some conclusions about the popularity or otherwise of Tarekat Qodiriyyah Naqsabandiyyah, Pesantren Suryalaya, in the two regions during the 1990s. To do this, we will first examine the findings on membership numbers, comparing the results of the 1997 survey to those of the 1990 survey, and then move on to look at the composition of the membership, considering location (urban vs. rural), levels of education, occupation, age and finally gender.

Membership Trends

Growth in numbers

The 1990 survey already provided some indirect evidence of recent dramatic growth in memberships. Our analysis of length of reported membership of participants in that survey showed that 94.4% of the 1990 members had joined since 1984. From in-depth interviews and participant observation we were able to establish that the apparent growth in numbers from that time coincided with a new impetus to recruitment and also a change in mode of recruitment since 1983. From that time, rather than relying on social networks centring on rural Islamic teachers, TQN Suryalaya began utilising the connections of prominent civil servants and educators; it became known among students through novel activities like seminars and campus discussion groups, such as alluded to in a broader context above (Howell, Subandi and Nelson 1998).

Comparing the 1997 survey results with the 1990 figures now provides direct evidence of strong growth in numbers in the 1990s. The 1990s growth presumably built on the upturn in numbers in the late

1980s suggested by the 1990 survey. Whereas 480 people participated in the full population survey of TQN in the two regions in 1990, in 1997, 677 members answered the survey questions and heads of the local branches that did not distribute the questionnaires reported an additional 745 members in their groups. This indicates a total 1997 membership of 1422, in comparison to a 1990 membership of 480, amounting to a near three-fold increase in size.

Even discounting the 1997 figures because they are in part based on memberships reported by branch heads rather than on individually completed questionnaires, the rate of growth would still appear to be considerable. The numbers in the actual survey of 1997 alone (677) are 141% of those in the 1990 survey (or nearly one and a half times those in the previous survey).

Background of Members

Urban vs. rural recruitment

The 1990 survey provided the first evidence that Sufism as taught by TQN Suryalaya was appealing strongly to urbanites. Even though the combined membership in the Regency of Tegal and the Special District of Yogyakarta was preponderantly rural, over a quarter of the membership (26.2%) was in urban branches.

The 1997 survey shows that this was no ephemeral influx: not only had numbers grown in urban areas by that time, but the proportion of the membership affiliated with urban branches had increased to just over a third (34%). Significantly, in the more parochial region of Tegal, a farming area with a small urban centre, TQN city memberships also increased, both in numbers and proportion (from 18.8% to 28.6%).

The more cosmopolitan Special District of Yogyakarta, which in 1990 had no rural branches, by 1997 had one, so technically the proportion of urban members declined to somewhat less than two thirds (62.6%) of the total. (See Table 1.) However, the new 'rural' branch, although outside the city boundaries, is nonetheless in a district bordering on the city and its members would have frequent dealings in the city proper. There is therefore a strong case for considering all the Special District of Yogyakarta *khotaman* groups as gatherings of urbanised people. In any case, the numbers in the Yogyakarta city groups affirm the continuing strength of Sufism's appeal to urbanites: TQN

numbers in those groups grew to around one and a half times the size of the 1990 membership (from forty to sixty seven). (See Table 1.)

Table 1. TQN rural and urban members, 1990 & 1997

Tegal			
1990	Rural	354 (81.2%)	Urban 82 (18.8%)
1997	Rural	407 (71.4%)	Urban 163 (28.6%)
Yogya			
1990	Rural	0 (0%)	Urban 44 (100%)
1997	Rural	40 (37.4%)	Urban 67 (62.6%)
Total			
1990	Rural	354 (73.8%)	Urban 126 (26.2%)
1997	Rural	447 (66.0%)	Urban 230(34.0%)

Social composition of membership: education and occupational backgrounds

Like the 1990 survey, the 1997 survey clearly shows that TQN Sufism had strong appeal among the sort of well-educated, cosmopolitan people once expected to eschew Sufism altogether or at least to find the *tarekat* uncongenial. This is evident in responses to the 1997 survey questions on education and occupation. Table 2 shows that those engaged in Sufi practices with TQN Pesantren Suryalaya covered the full range of educational backgrounds, including a strong representation of those with tertiary qualifications. Of those surveyed, 44 (or 6.5%) had undertaken university-level studies, five (around 1%) had completed an MA, and 1 even had a PhD.

Because of the missing data on some branches it is not possible to draw firm conclusions about changes in education levels during the 1990s. Nonetheless it appears from the data available that the proportion with no education was down (7.1% in 1997 compared with 19.7% in 1990) and that those with only primary school education was about the same (44.3% in 1997 compared with 44.8% in 1990). The proportion with junior high and high school educations also appeared to be up (38.4% in 1997 compared with 27.5% in 1990) and those with at least some tertiary education seemed to be up slightly (10.2% in 1997 compared with 8% in 1990).

Table 2. Educational Backgrounds of TQN members in 1997

Total Cases	677	
Group	Count	%
None	48	7.090
Primary	300	44.313
Junior	83	12.260
High	177	26.145
Tertiary	69	10.192

There is also a wide range of occupations represented in the 1997 survey (as in the previous one). TQN members in 1997 covered a spectrum from pedicab drivers and farmers to university lecturers and professionals. (See Table 3.)

Table 3. Occupational Backgrounds of TQN members in 1997

Total Cases	677	
Number of Categories	21	
Group	Count	%
Administrator	2	0.295
Cart Driver	4	0.591
Civil Servant	31	4.579
Clerk	2	0.295
Factory Worker	3	0.443
Farmer	173	25.554
Housewife	62	9.158
Labourer	21	3.102
Military	1	0.148
Office Worker	6	0.886
Group	Count	%
Pedicab Driver	2	0.295
Physician	2	0.295
Retired	16	2.363
Self-employed	140	20.679
Student	46	6.795
Teacher	44	6.499
Trader	83	12.260

Tradesperson	16	2.363
Undeclared	1	0.148
Univ. Lecturer	9	1.329
Village Official	13	1.920

Social composition of membership: age

Our survey suggests that Sufis in Java in the 1990s differed from images of Sufis in former times not only in education and occupation but in age. Geertz (1960, 182-184) described the *tarekat* he observed in the 1950s as activities for the elderly, and Dhofier also found this to be the case in the 1970s (though he took issue with Geertz in other respects). The 'vast majority' who joined *tarekat*, according to Dhofier (1980, 261), were 'old people'. Elsewhere he characterises people who join *tarekat* as the 'old' who have 'abandoned their worldly interests' (Dhofier 1980, 272).

In the 1990s the picture in TQN Suryalaya is quite different. Sufis in the regions of Yogyakarta and Tegal include substantial numbers of young and middle-aged people in addition to the older folk once thought to be the main practitioners of Sufism in Java. In the 1997 survey, reported ages ranged from 16 to 97, with a mean age of 44.85. The bulk of the membership surveyed in 1997 was between 35 and 64. (See Table 4.) Moreover, the younger age groups in 1997, as in 1990, outweighed the older age groups: those less than 60 were 74.2% of the membership in 1990 and 80.7% of the survey respondents in 1997. Even taking a lower age than sixty as a marker for the period when people begin to reorient their concerns from 'worldly' matters to more deeply personal spiritual concerns, TQN Suryalaya still had a strong majority of its membership in the socially active years: those less than 50 were 60.5% of the membership in 1990 and 57.9% of the membership in 1997.

It is the case that the especially heavy entry of young adults aged 20-24 evident in the 1990 survey (then 10.4% of the membership) had fallen off; that group was down to 8% of those surveyed in 1997. However youth representation in 1997 was still impressive in an activity once engaged in primarily by those of more advanced years.

The 1997 survey also shows a heavy weighting of members in the oldest age categories (60+) relative to the population at large, indicating

a continuation of the cultural pattern of taking up Sufism in one's later years. However, this category has decreased by 6% from 25.82% of those surveyed in 1990 to 19.35%. Nonetheless, the largest age bracket in 1997 (the 45- to 49-year-olds, making up 13.6% of those surveyed) is a little older than the largest age bracket in 1990 (the 40 to 44 year olds, making up 14% of those surveyed at the earlier date).

Overall the spread of ages in 1997 tends more towards a normal distribution than it did in 1990, although the non-participation of some branches in 1997 weakens this comparison. What we can say with confidence is that the Sufis of TQN in the 1990s included not only the expected strong numbers of older people, but sizeable numbers of young and middle-aged people once thought unlikely to be attracted to such religious orders.

Table 4. Age distribution of TQN members in 1997

Total Cases	677	
Group	Count	%
< 20	26	3.840
20-24	54	7.976
25-29	50	7.386
30-34	30	4.431
35-39	56	8.272
40-44	84	12.408
45-49	92	13.589
50-54	79	11.669
55-59	75	11.078
60-64	72	10.635
65-69	32	4.727
70+	27	3.988

Social composition of membership: gender

Further indication of the changing nature of Sufism's appeal in Indonesia is the involvement in TQN Suryalaya of substantial numbers of women. Up to the 1960s, Sufism was generally characterised as a male interest, as suggested by Geertz's rather dismissive image of the *tarekat*. This seemed to flow naturally from the association of the *tarekat* with

pesantren, which until the early twentieth century provided dormitories only for boys (Dhofier 1980, 38) and thereafter only slowly came to accommodate girls. Attendance of a boy at a *pesantren* might later in life facilitate his joining its *tarekat.* Further, it might be supposed that in times past it was not easy for women to set aside their domestic and income-generating activities (always closely associated with family responsibilities) to undertake special spiritual training. Nonetheless the gender complexion of the *tarekat* studied by Dhofier in the 1970s was already quite different from those observed by Geertz in the 1950s: 40% of those attending the weekly *tarekat* meetings at Pesantren Tebuireng in East Java were female (Dhofier 1980, 293) and more women than men were associated with the *tarekat* at Pesantren Tegalsari in Central Java (Dhofier 1980, 292).

The strong showing of women among the membership of TQN Suryalaya in Tegal and Yogyakarta in 1990 is in line with Dhofier's findings: no less than 44.2% of members were women. In 1997 the representation of women overall in the two regions was strong, but not as high as in 1990, having come down to 32.5%. (See Table 5.) However, it is not clear whether women were dropping out or men were just joining in larger numbers than women. In any case, in 1997 there were still impressive numbers of women in TQN, a type of organisation that in times past in Java was almost exclusively male. [16]

Table 5. Gender of TQN members in combined regions.

Total Cases	677	
Group	Count	%
Female	220	32.496
Male	457	67.504

In urban branches of TQN Suryalaya women's participation patterns seem to differ from those in rural branches. Thus in urban Yogyakarta there has been an increase in both the numbers and proportion of women members (up to 25.4% from 15.9%). (See Tables 6 & 7.)

Table 6. Gender of TQN members in urban Yogyakarta in 1997

Total Cases	67	
Group	Count	%
Female	17	25.373
Male	50	74.627

Table 7. Gender of TQN members in urban Yogyakarta in 1990

Total Cases	44	
Group	Count	%
Female	7	15.909
Male	37	84.091

In urban Tegal the numbers of women actually doubled (from 82 to 163), even though the proportion of women declined (from 58.5% to 42.3%), indicating that even though women were joining in increasing numbers, the number of men joining was increasing faster. (See Tables 8 & 9.) These figures are not affected by the omission of certain branches from the 1997 survey, since all of the non-participating branches were in rural Tegal.

Table 8. Gender of TQN members in urban Tegal in 1997

Total Cases	163	
Group	Count	%
Female	69	42.331
Male	94	57.669

Table 9. Gender of TQN members in urban Tegal in 1990.

Total Cases	82	
Group	Count	%
Female	48	58.537
Male	34	41.463

In contrast, in the rural branches of Tegal that did participate in the survey there are indications of a drop in women's participation. There both the total number of women and the proportion of women have fallen. (See Tables 10 & 11.) There is, however, insufficient information to judge whether the picture would be different if all branches had completed the survey.[17]

Table 10. Gender of TQN members in rural Tegal in 1997

Total Cases	407	
Group	Count	%
Female	129	31.695
Male	278	68.305

Table 11. Gender of TQN members in rural Tegal in 1990

Total Cases	354	
Group	Count	%
Female	157	44.350
Male	197	55.650

Conclusions

Our analysis of the 1997 survey of Tarekat Qodiriyyah Naqsabandiyyah, Pesantren Suryalaya, and comparison of the findings with those from the earlier survey in 1990 clearly demonstrate dramatic growth in the order during a period of rapid economic development under former President Suharto's New Order regime. Analysis of the earlier survey enabled us to infer that a sudden upturn in memberships began in the mid-1980s; the new survey showed that in the 1990s growth continued and accelerated even more rapidly. Taken together, the findings of these two surveys confirm reports in the popular media beginning in the late 80s and impressions recorded in a number of ethnographic studies in the same period, that the Sufi orders (traditional vehicles of Islam's 'inner' spirituality) began to enjoy a new spate of vitality precisely in this period of intense modernisation.

This evidence of growth in Sufi orders in the late New Order

period in Indonesia challenges us to reassess the assumptions underlying Geertz's and Gellner's influential sociologies of Islam in the modern world. Our findings run counter to their projections, according to which Sufi-style devotionalism would be displaced by narrowly legalistic or 'scripturalist' variants of Islam in countries undergoing rapid social change. Apparently the spread of formal education, enabling more people to read their holy books (even if in translation), and increased involvement with critical rationality in the growing modern sector of the economy do not exclusively favour the austere Islamic legalism of the early Modernists. Rather than a homogenisation of Islam around a staid formalism, we are witnessing, in Southeast Asia at least, a proliferation of markedly diverse styles of Islamic piety and the organisations that champion them (cf. Hasan 2000): from puritanical legalism to Sufi devotionalism and mysticism; from highly individualistic and privatised practice to communal living; from fundamentalist conservatism and even participation in Islamist violence, to highly contextualised liberalism strongly affirming religious pluralism and the secular state.

Nor is there any simple alignment of forms of piety with social background. Our findings demonstrate that the devotionalism of a traditionally constituted Sufi order can appeal across the demographic spectrum of contemporary Indonesian society. Numbers in the TQN Suryalaya branches surveyed grew not just amongst villagers but amongst the *type* of people most tightly implicated in the social life of a modernising economy (well educated professional and managerial people).

It might be supposed that the Sufi orders, as 'traditional' religious institutions associated since at least the end of the nineteenth century in Indonesia with the peasant environment, would continue to appeal, if at all, only to those rural villagers left behind by rapid social change. However this study shows that this is not the case. TQN Suryalaya does continue to recruit strongly in rural areas, and the elderly are over-represented relative to the population at large (about one fifth of the memberships in the central Java branches surveyed). Nonetheless, urbanites, including younger people with 'good jobs' in the modern sector are joining in record numbers as well.

The survey findings presented here also help establish the attractiveness of *tarekat* to women. In contrast to the *tarekat* of the 1950s that Geertz described in his influential study of religion in Java, but

much like those *tarekat* studied by Dhofier in the 1970s, women were well represented in TQN Suryalaya in the 1990s, especially in urban areas. This suggests that as women have begun to enjoy more opportunities in society generally, so have they become more active in voluntary religious groups previously accessible mostly to men.

Our findings on TQN Suryalaya and a number of reports on other groups demonstrate that Sufi orders *can* appeal to a broad range of social types in modern Indonesia. However this may not be true of all orders or even all branches of one order. Further research could be fruitfully directed toward identifying the characteristics of *tarekat* that attract and sustain the participation of better-educated urbanites, younger people and women. Factors likely to be important include institutional features (e.g. relative openness or secretiveness of the organisation; how demanding its programs and practices are, etc.), perceptions of the orthodoxy or otherwise of the order (generally related to the amount of emphasis on the *syariah*), political connections, and the personal attributes of the master of the order (*syekh* or *mursyid*) and his regional delegates (in TQN Suryalaya, called *wakil talqin*). TQN Suryalaya, for example, could be called a relatively open order, in so far as initiation is offered in a short, public ceremony that requires minimal preparation, whereas other orders may require careful screening of aspirants, special preparations and a lengthy, secret initiation. TQN Suryalaya's *syekh,* moreover, is notably easy in his relationships with guests, not requiring rigid formalities and obeisances. City sophisticates may be suspicious of secretive groups with arcane initiations and social rituals of submission to the guru, and younger people still needing to consider their families and careers may shy away from groups that require high levels of exclusive commitment.

Not only has the relatively ease of social interaction and initiation into TQN Suryalaya *tarekat* kept down social barriers for urbanities, but the approach of city people to the rural *pesantren* in which its centre is located has been facilitated by several well-publicised social action programs. These include both agricultural extension activities in the local area and a drug rehabilitation program that has accommodated the fast-living children of well-to-do urbanities.[18] Programs like these both create networks through which urbanities have come into contact with the *tarekat* and help to reshape the image city people

sometimes have of *tarekat* as being other-worldly and escapist, and so incompatible with modern life. It would be useful to know whether other *tarekat* with substantial urban memberships have similar social programs that occasion the visits of city people to the countryside and help bridge the secular and spiritual worlds.

TQN Suryalaya can also be taken as a case where judicious political alignments have created a degree of security for its activities. It opposed the separatist Darul Islam movement in its home province of West Java in the 1950s, and under the New Order developed strong links with the government, supporting its quasi-party GOLKAR, and enjoying the patronage of high-level officials in both the provincial and national government.

The case of TQN Suryalaya thus invites further comparison with other Sufi orders. 'Traditional' Sufi orders clearly can be attractive to urbanites, to people fully engaged with family and career, to women as well as men. Future studies may be able to tell us how common this is and what sorts of organisational features, social environments, theological orientations and ritual practices make for their greatest appeal in contemporary Indonesian society.

In the meantime, it is appropriate to reassess what can now be seen to be false assumptions concerning the connection between styles of religiosity and modernity, assumptions that underlie the works of Gellner and Geertz referenced here and that still pervade much of more recent scholarship on Islam. This is the notion, persisting even after account has been taken of the more salient oversimplifications in Gellner's model,[19] that Sufism is inevitably linked with traditionalism and only narrowly *syariah*-oriented (scripturalist) Islam is compatible with modernity.

The association of Sufism with traditionalism can be attributed in part to the failure to grant sufficient significance to the philosophical, ethical and literary traditions underlying Sufi practice (leaving scripturalist religiosity as the apparently appropriate choice for the modern Muslim reading public). The stereotyping of Sufism as traditionalist also derives from the false equation of intensely devotional spirituality (a form Sufism sometimes takes) with 'irrationality', and of the mystical quest (a more heroic and perhaps less common Sufi undertaking) with 'mere magic'. Yet the non-rational need not be re-

duced to the 'irrational' or judged by the narrow standards of rational enquiry. Each has its own value and may find a place in the lives of 'modern' people.

It is the lack of such an awareness that has allowed intellectual prejudices about the transition of societies to modernity to be mobilised in scholarshop on religions, including Islam. Thus social theorists, both on the Marxist-inspired left and modernisation-theory right expected, well into the mid-twentieth century, that the 'irrationality' of religions would either spell their doom or drastically constrict their areas of social influence.

The embarrassments of the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979, the Catholic-based Solidarity movement in Poland and post-Cold War proliferation of religions of all sorts in the former Eastern bloc, to name but a few, have occasioned a thorough-going reappraisal of such 'secularisation theories', resulting in their being nearly entirely discredited in scholarly research by the end of the century (cf. Swatos and Christiano 1999). The events of September 11th, 2001, have finally brought this scholarly consensus into public consciousness.

Nonetheless, certain prejudices concerning the *kinds* of religion likely to be attractive to educated and cosmopolitan people remain. Western scholarship on the role of religion in political and social affairs is still heavily influenced by post-Enlightenment Protestant reconstructions of religion as a matter of faith and its intellectual defence. The experience of this type of religion in Western societies has strongly shaped scholarly representations of what are plausible modern forms of religious life. Perhaps Troeltsch (1931) alone amongst the classical sociologists of religion appreciated that a highly interiorised, 'mystical' religion could be compatible with the modern temper, indeed that it might well even turn out to be 'the secret religion of the educated classes' of Europe. His prescience has been belatedly appreciated by students of late twentieth century religious movements in Western societies (cf. Swatos 1983; Campbell 1978). Yet these revised assessments of 'mystical religion' in modern Western societies have not so far prompted a reappraisal of mystical traditions in Islam in the contemporary period, as perhaps they should.

As for emotive, devotional forms of religiosity (which Sufi orders also support), there is ample evidence for its compatibility with mo-

dernity. The most obvious example of this is the sensational growth of Pentecostal Christianity in the early twentieth century and its spread from the margins of American society into the middle classes by mid-century. Pentecostal Christianity is the fastest growing form of Christianity today, not only in economically struggling countries of Latin America and Asia, but in high growth countries such as South Korea and the People's Republic of China. These cases of Christian emotive devotionalism, taken together with the recent popularity in Western societies of non-Christian new religious movements featuring a mystical quest and our Indonesian Sufi example, must surely stand as a caution against assuming that experiential spirituality, whether Christian or Muslim, is incompatible with modern life.

Acknowledgements

The authors gratefully acknowledge grants received from Griffith University and the School of Asian Studies at that University, which made possible the field research on which this article is based. We also extend warm appreciation to all those members of Tarekat Qodiriyyah-Naqsyabandiyyah, Pesantren Suralaya, who generously gave of their time to help with this project. Finally, we offer our thanks to the anonymous readers, whose perceptive and detailed comments stimulated several significant enhancements of the original manuscript.

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Notes

1 For examples of reports in the Indonesian popular press see *Amanah* 36 (1987), (cover and pp. 6-10), *Ulumul Qur'an* I,1 (1989): 92-97 and *Gatra* 46,6: http://www.gatra.com/VI/46/LKH2-46.ht (2000).

2 Arberry (1950,122) softens his damning characterisation of overall 'decay' in Sufism (a down hill run since the latter fifteenth century) by noting that even now something worthy of admiration continues to emerge from the tradition, here and there:
'Yet while admitting the deplorable effects of superstition allied to mystification, it would surely be unjust to pretend that Sufism, even in the last stages of its decay, did not retain some noble and ennobling elements, or that its influence at its most degraded period was wholly evil. Though no doubt the majority of these professional mystics were either hypocrites or self-deluded, ... the movement never at any time lacked for a few sincere men of high principles and true faith, whose example shed a brave light in the surrounding darkness of ignorance and misery'.

3 Note that the Modernist Muslim opposition to Sufism, widespread in Indonesia for most of the twentieth century, was not so marked amongst some of Modernism's founders in the Near East. Thus, for example, Mohammed 'Abduh, the Egyptian Modernist reformer (1849-1905), was attracted to Sufism early in his life, and despite his later theological apprehensions, retained a sympathy for the mystical quest. Where Modernists opposed Sufism, it was on the grounds that it encouraged veneration of spiritual directors and hence violation of the 'oneness of God'. Van Bruinessen (1995, 109-111; 1999) has pointed out, however, that early in the twentieth century there was much self-criticism amongst the Sufi orders themselves, and a mindfulness of the need to guard against such heterodoxy.

4 The suspect devotions are prayers commonly added on to the obligatory five daily prayers (*sholat lima waktu*), particularly the highly repetitive prayers called *dzikir*. Although commonly used as part of

everyday religious life by non-Muhammadiyah (i.e. non-Modernist)-oriented Muslims, their usage is elaborated and intensified in the practices of *tarekat* members (along with other more discursive and emotionally evocative prayers for forgiveness, professing love for God, etc.). The *dzikir* consist of a single phrase (one of several familiar ones drawn from the Qur'an, such as the first phrase of the *shahadat*, or confession of faith), repeated a prescribed number of times (30, 100, 1,000 etc.). Because of their repetitive and rhythmic quality, they can be conducive to altered states of consciousness, but by no means all *tarekat* follwers use them for that purpose or to that effect.

5 See especially Geertz's characterisation of the *tarekat* he observed in East Java in the 1950s (1960, 182-184). The preponderance of support for Modernist Muslim parties in urban areas in the elections of the mid 1950s, in contrast to the rural weighting of political support for the *pesantren* leaders' Nahdlatul Ulama organisation, has lent credence to this association of narrowly legalistic Islam with urban areas and mystical Islam with the countryside. However this association was probably already a feature of the later nineteenth century social landscape. Steenbrink, amongst others, remarks on it in his discussion nineteenth century Javanese *suluk* literature. Thus, referring on the *Suluk Abes*, he notes:

'... the poem reflects a perhaps somewhat paradigmatic conceptualisation of the religious landscape: official Islam is found in the city, the centre of power, where high-ranking people reside; mystical Islam is found in the countryside, which is the abode of the dark-skinned people of the farmland and the hermits of the forest'. (Steenbrink 1999, 692)

This picture, consonant with Gellner's paradigm of 'Muslim society', may, however, evidence a short-term adaptation to Dutch colonial pressures against Muslim clerics in cities in the later nineteenth century rather than a lasting dissociation of the *pesantren* and their *tarekat* from urban life (cf: Abdullah 1986).

6 Presidential Decision No. 1 of 1965, although best known for at last naming the religions that could be considered proper Indonesian religions under the Constitution, was also aimed at curbing the mystical groups. These were intended to 'return each to their own source' in the separate recognised religions (Howell 1982, 533). Nonetheless those groups that survived the pressures of the later 1960s won a degree of protection when rebadged as 'faiths' (*kepercayaan*) in the 1973 'Guidelines for the Course of the Nation' (GBHN) (Stange 1986).

7 For parallel examples in other countries that challenge the Gellner

paradigm, see for example, Benningsten (1985), Ewing (1997), Hoffman (1995) and Werbner (1998).

8 Later studies in this vein include, for example, Aziz (1996), Pranowo (1991a, 1991b), Mulkhan (1998, 2000) Shafi'i (1996) and Zulkifli (1994).

9 See, for example, Hefner (1997), Jones (1980), Liddle (1996, 622-625) and Muzaffar (1986).

10 Combining two lines of spiritual authority, Qodiriyyah and Naqsyabandiyah, TQN Suryalaya can in some sense be considered part of the Naqsyabandi movement, and it is treated as such by Van Bruinessen (1992, 89-97) in his history of the order in Indonesia.

11 Tarekat Qodiriyyah-Naqsyabandiyyah can be said to be reformist in the sense that it has strongly emphasised the importance of the *syariah* as a basis for all religious practice, even for the most advanced mystics. It also clearly rejected the suspect *wahdat al-wujud* teachings carried to the Indies by some orders, like the Syattariyah and Khalwatiyah (Van Bruinessen 1992, 109). Those teachings featured a monist understanding of ultimate reality and mystical experience by means of a radical construction of the doctrine of the Oneness of God (*tawhid*). This was nonetheless seen by many Muslims, including other Sufi orders, as violating the fundamental Islamic distinction between the Creator and His created, and likely to encourage not simply the honouring, but the worship, of spiritual masters as virtual 'seconds to God'.

12 The narrowly *syariah*-oriented Wahhabis have been amongst the most thorough-going critics of the *tarekat* and *tasawuf* literature that inspires more universalist interpretations of Islam (cf. Sirriyeh 1999).

13 On TQN Suryalaya, see also Nasution (1990), Saleh (1985), Soebardi (1978, 215-236), Van Bruinessen (1992, 89-97) and Zulkifli (1994, 85-116).

14 There is, however, no suggestion that Syekh Ahmad Khatib fomented the revolt, only that the *tarekat* network became a means of communication and mobilisation.

15 Abah Sepuh carried the Qodiriyyah Naqsabandiyyah line of spiritual authority via Kiai Tolha of Cirebon and also directly from 'Abd Al-Karim (Nasution 1990; Van Bruinessen 1992, 93-94).

16 The male character of *tarekat* in Java in times past appears to be a response to particular cultural and social circumstances. Elsewhere in Muslim world women have been active in Sufi movements where they often enjoyed greater equality and mixed more freely with men. See Keddie (1995; 251).

17 There were no rural branches in the Special District of Yogyakarta in 1990. In 1997, however, only 12.5% of rural members in the Yogyakarta region were women (less than half the figure for urban Yogyakarta branches and close to a third of the figure for rural Tegal).

18 The drug rehabilitation program began in 1977 at the main *pesantren* in Tasikmalaya, when the special needs of some students with severe behavioural problems were addressed by creating a special facility for them. In 1980 the treatment program was formalised under the name INABAH (Aen 1990, 393). The INABAH program was subsequently replicated by TQN branches in a number of other regions. By 1990 there were 22 INABAH facilities across the country (Aen 1990, 413).

19 Thus the Gellner model has already been appropriately criticised for its unwarranted presumption of uniformity in 'Islamic society' (significantly figured in the singular). It is well recognised that Islamic societies with large peasant agricultural sectors and state administrations extending far into the hinterland had different dynamics, and so rather different modern histories, than the predominantly tribal societies with small urban sectors that were taken as the primary referents in Gellner's work. Gellner's model has also been criticised by historians on the grounds that Sufism has never been a wholly distinct social phenomenon from *syariah* scholarship and legal consultation, as it appears in his model. The weighty *tasawuf* literature received numerous contributions from people who also had significant competence in the *syariah*, as well as in other areas of Islamic studies.

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