

Beyond *Abangan-Santri*: *Majelis Sabilu Taubah* and New Hybrid Identities

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Abstract: This article seeks to discuss the emergence of new hybrid identities in the Sabilu Taubah *Majelis*, *Pesantren* Mambaul Hikam Blitar, led by Gus Muhamad Iqdam (Gus Iqdam). Gus Iqdam refers to his congregation as “*garangan*,” new identities that encompass a diverse group of individuals, including former gangsters, gamblers, alcohol consumers, and nightclub performers. Using a phenomenological approach, this article deals with the factors that attract the “*garangan*” group to participate in the Sabilu Taubah *Majelis* and how they represent their religious identity. This article argues that the “*garangan*” group is drawn to Sabilu Taubah’s *dakwah* due to its welcoming, millennial-oriented, engaging, and non-judgmental approach. Furthermore, the term “*garangan*” cannot be strictly classified as either *abangan* or *santri*, as suggested by Clifford Geertz’s thesis, nor does it fit the concept of “nominal Islam” as proposed by Merle Calvin Ricklefs. Instead, they embody a religious hybrid identity, existing in a liminal space—identifying as *santri* while simultaneously maintaining aspects of their former professions. In this way, they construct and express their religious identities.

Keywords: Majelis Sabilu Taubah, “Garangan”, Hybrid Identities.

Abstrak: Artikel ini mengkaji tentang kemunculan identitas hibrida baru di Majelis Sabilu Taubah, *Pesantren* Mambaul Hikam Blitar, yang diasuh oleh Muhamad Iqdam (Gus Iqdam). Gus Iqdam menyebut jamaahnya sebagai “*garangan*,” identitas baru yang mencakup beragam individu, termasuk mantan gangster, penjudi, peminum alkohol, dan penghibur klub malam. Dengan pendekatan fenomenologis, artikel ini coba menelisik faktor-faktor apa saja yang menarik kelompok “*garangan*” itu untuk gabung menjadi jamaah di Majelis Sabilu Taubah dan bagaimana mereka merepresentasikan identitas keagamaan mereka. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa kelompok “*garangan*” tertarik pada Majelis Sabilu Taubah karena gaya dakwahnya yang ramah, milenial, menarik, dan tidak menghakimi. Lebih lanjut, istilah “*garangan*” tidak dapat secara tegas diklasifikasikan sebagai *abangan* atau *santri*, sebagaimana tesis Clifford Geertz, juga tidak sesuai dengan konsep “Islam nominal” sebagaimana argumen Merle Calvin Ricklefs. Sebaliknya, mereka mewujudkan identitas

hibrida keagamaan, yang berada dalam ruang abu-abu—mengidentifikasi diri sebagai santri sekaligus mempertahankan aspek-aspek profesi mereka sebelumnya. Dengan cara ini, mereka membangun dan mengekspresikan identitas keagamaannya.

Kata Kunci: *Majelis Sabilu Taubah*, “*Garangan*”, Identitas Hibrida.



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INTRODUCTION

Agus Muhamad Iqdam (also known as Gus Iqdam) is a young preacher (*dai*) who has recently gained widespread attention due to his distinctive preaching style. He leads the *Majelis Sabilu Taubah* (ST) at the *Pesantren* Mambaul Hikam in Blitar, East Java. His sermons have attracted significant public interest, both through online platforms and in-person religious gatherings. Despite being relatively new—the Sabilu Taubah was established on December 7, 2018, with only seven initial members—it has experienced rapid growth. The assembly now draws thousands of participants from various regions across East Java, reflecting its increasing influence and appeal.¹

Interestingly, the conventional association of *pengajian* with the *santri* community does not appear to apply to the Sabilu Taubah. This assembly brings together individuals from diverse backgrounds, ranging from *abangan* to *santri*. The term *santri* generally refers to individuals who demonstrate personal piety and adhere strictly to *sharia* Islam.² In contrast, *abangan* refers to Muslims who are considered less observant of *sharia* and are often associated with syncretic religious practices.³

In the *Majelis Sabilu Taubah*, the term *santri* is not exclusively associated with individuals who exhibit personal piety or spiritual devotion. Instead, the *majelis* introduces the term “*garangan*” to refer to what it calls “*santri mbeling*”, those with backgrounds as gamblers, alcohol consumers, singers, street children, and others from similar social groups. This raises the critical question: can the term “*garangan*” be equated with Clifford Geertz’s *abangan-santri* classification or M.C. Ricklefs’ concept of *nominal Islam*?

This article has not identified any specific research that examines this issue from a phenomenological perspective, particularly by focusing on “*garangan*” as the primary subject of study. Existing research has predominantly explored aspects related to Agus Muhammad Iqdam’s *dakwah*, such as his rhetorical strategies in enhancing congregational religiosity,⁴ his use of social media for *dakwah*,⁵ his oral

¹ Muhammad Hamdani Hidayat, “Retorika Dakwah Agus Muhammad Iqdam dalam Upaya Meningkatkan Religiusitas Jamaah Majelis Taklim Sabilu Taubah di Ds. Karanggayam Kec. Srengat Kab. Blitar” (UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2022).

² Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (London: Free Press of Gleoce, 1964); Zamakhsyari Dhofier, “The Intellectualization of Islamic Studies in Indonesia,” *Indonesia Circle. School of Oriental & African Studies. Newsletter* 20, no. 58 (1992): 19–31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03062849208729783>.

³ Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, 1964.

⁴ Hidayat, “Retorika Dakwah Agus Muhammad Iqdam dalam Upaya Meningkatkan Religiusitas Jamaah Majelis Taklim Sabilu Taubah di Ds. Karanggayam Kec. Srengat Kab. Blitar.”

⁵ Reny Masyitoh, “Dakwah Melalui Media Sosial: Studi Dakwah Gus Iqdam Pada Majelis Ta’lim Sabilu Taubah,” *Mukammil: Jurnal Kajian Islam* 04, no. 01 (2023).

dakwah techniques,⁶ and the mass communication approach in his *dakwah*.⁷ However, these studies lack novelty and rigorous data analysis. Moreover, they do not employ a phenomenological approach nor specifically examine the “*garangan*” congregation as both a research subject and a representation of religious hybrid identity.

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that the diversity of congregants found in the Sabilu Taubah is not unprecedented in Indonesia. A similar phenomenon can be observed in the *Jamaah Maiyah* led by Emha Ainun Najib (Cak Nun), which was among the first to emerge in the country.⁸ However, a key distinction lies in the background of their respective congregations. The Maiyah is predominantly composed of activists, students, and intellectuals, with discussions often revolving around issues of nationalism, culture, and socio-political matters. In contrast, the Sabilu Taubah presents lighter, more accessible content, making it more appealing to a broader audience, primarily consisting of farmers, traders, labourers, and entrepreneurs.

This article explores the intersection of *dakwah*, the contestation of religious authority, and the role of new media as a central theme. In this context, previous studies on figures such as Habib Syech, Felix Siauw, and the broader digitalization of Islamic discourse provide essential groundwork. For instance, research on Habib Syech’s ability to bridge the divide between moderate Muslims and Salafi reformists,⁹ Felix Siauw’s success in promoting and normalizing fundamentalist Islamic narratives through virtual *dakwah*,¹⁰ and the broader shift of Islamic religious practices and expressions into the digital public sphere¹¹ all serve as critical references for this article.

RESEARCH METHOD

This article uses a phenomenological approach and focuses on the “*garangan*” group, who regularly attend to *pengajian* Gus Iqdam and are distributed across three cities: Blitar, Tulungagung, and Trenggalek. Specifically, this approach is employed to explore the underlying factors that motivate the “*garangan*” group to participate in the Sabilu Taubah and how they construct and represent their religious identity. Additionally, the phenomenological approach serves as a relevant methodological alternative for capturing their personal experiences. By emphasizing the subjective meaning of objective reality within the consciousness of the “*garangan*” group, this approach

⁶ Aisyatul Mubarakah, “Strategi Dakwah Bil Lisan Gus Iqdam dalam Meningkatkan Religiusitas Mad’u Melalui Majelis Ta’lim Sabilu Taubah,” *Tabsyir: Jurnal Dakwah dan Sosio Humaira* 04, no. 02 (2023).

⁷ Mohammad Rofiq, “Pendekatan Komunikasi Massa dalam Dakwah Gus Iqdam di Majelis Taklim Sabilu Taubah Blitar,” *Jadid: Journal of Quranic Studies and Islamic Communication* 03, no. 02 (2023).

⁸ Timothy Daniels, *Islamic Spectrum in Java, Islamic Spectrum in Java* (USA: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009).

⁹ James Edmonds, “Smelling Baraka: Everyday Islam and Islamic Normativity,” *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 36, no. 3 (2019).

¹⁰ Hew Wai Weng, “The Art of Dakwah: Social Media, Visual Persuasion and the Islamist Propagation of Felix Siauw,” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 134 (2018): 61–79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2018.1416757>.

¹¹ Gary R Bunt, *Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islamic Environments Are Transforming Religious Authority* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

provides insight into how they navigate their daily religious practices and identity formation.¹²

After data collection, mapping, and triangulation are conducted using the *NVivo* software. *NVivo*, which stands for *NUD*IST* and *Vivo*, is a qualitative data analysis software designed for organizing, managing, and supporting research projects involving non-numerical and unstructured data (*Non-Numerical Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching, and Theorizing*). Using *NVivo*, researchers implemented social media data mining on *Gus Iqdam Official* and *Sabilu Taubah*, collecting various forms of data, including textual transcripts (from messages and audio lectures), images, and videos. This data was then uploaded into *NVivo* for further coding and analysis, producing outputs such as tables, graphs, diagrams, and word clouds.¹³

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Intersection of Islam and New Media

The intersection of Islam and new media has resonated for quite some time. In a global context, this can be traced back to the 1980s, when the expression of religion in the online world began to emerge. The rise of online religion was driven by groups of religious enthusiasts with an interest in computers, who sought to express their religious interests digitally. According to Rheingold (1985), the early documentation of religiously oriented activities took the form of internet channels called Bulletin Board Systems (BBSs), as seen in a discussion on CommuniTree titled "Create your own religion." Not long after, online religious discussion forums began to proliferate. This led to the establishment of the first religious discussion channel on Usenet, "net.religion," which focused on topics related to religion, ethics, and the moral implications of human actions.¹⁴

This development was then followed by the emergence of religious studies in the public sphere, one of which was pioneered by José Casanova.¹⁵ In this context, the meeting of new media and religion has resulted in the phenomenon of the privatization of religion being transformed into a digital public sphere. This space allows for the production and reproduction of religious discourse, which continues to evolve. However, it must be acknowledged that the concept of the public sphere is not entirely new, as Jürgen Habermas had already employed it prior to Casanova.¹⁶

Subsequent studies began to emerge, focusing more on the context of Muslim societies worldwide. One notable work in this field is *New Media in the Muslim World*:

¹² Jonathan A. Smith; Paul Flowers; Michael Larkin, *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research* (London: Sage Publication, 2009).

¹³ Endah Tri Priyatni and Ani Wilujeng Suryani, "Pemanfaatan NVivo Dalam Penelitian Kualitatif NVivo Untuk Kajian Pustaka, Analisis Data, dan Triangulasi" (Malang, 2020).

¹⁴ Heidi A. Campbell, "When Religion Meets New Media" (London: Routledge, 2010).

¹⁵ Jose Casanova, "Public Religions in the Modern World" (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

¹⁶ F. Budi Hardiman, *Menuju Masyarakat Komunikatif: Ilmu, Masyarakat, Politik dan Postmodernisme Menurut Jürgen Habermas* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2013).

The Emerging Public Sphere,¹⁷ which provides a comprehensive analysis of the rise of Islam in the public sphere, particularly in Muslim-majority countries. This book effectively examines the role of new media in expanding the Islamic public sphere and facilitating transnational Muslim networks.

Thereafter, Heidi A. Campbell contributed to this field of study by redefining the concepts of “religion” and “new media” within the context of contemporary society. She begins by examining Clifford Geertz’s definition of religion and then contextualizes it within the phenomenon of new media, particularly the internet era, which has become an integral part of modern life.¹⁸

With the rapid expansion of social media, the intersection of Islamic marriage and new media gained increasing prominence. Gary R. Bunt highlighted this shift by examining how Islamic religious practices and expressions transitioned from the broader internet to social media platforms. More specifically, he analyzed the emergence of hashtags (#) as markers of particular themes or content across various social media applications, which can become trending topics when widely shared on platforms such as *Twitter (X)* and *Facebook*.¹⁹

The aforementioned study also explores concepts related to the digital public sphere, *fatwas*, and the phenomenon of *jihad* in the digital sphere, all of which are closely linked to contemporary issues in Islam. The discourse on Islam and new media ultimately intersects with questions of religious authority—specifically, who holds the power to interpret religion and how that authority is exercised in influencing, guiding, or even compelling individuals to adhere to particular beliefs and behavioral patterns. In this context, Indonesia serves as a notable case study.²⁰

In essence, the relationship between Islam and new media refers to how Islam engages with and utilizes modern information and communication technologies. Many Muslim communities have adopted new media as a means to disseminate religious teachings, share Islamic knowledge, conduct *dakwah* campaigns, and connect with fellow Muslims globally. Social media platforms such as *Facebook*, *Twitter (X)*, *Instagram*, and *YouTube* have become essential channels for facilitating and expanding this phenomenon.

However, it is important to recognize that the use of new media in the context of religion also presents challenges and raises critical questions regarding authenticity, the interpretation of religious truth, and its impact on religious traditions. While modern technology can facilitate the dissemination of religious teachings more effectively, it can also generate anomalies and differences of opinion among diverse Muslim communities. This phenomenon is encapsulated in the concept of “Virtually

¹⁷ Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. (et.al) Anderson, “New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere,” ed. Jon W. Eickelman, Dale F. & Anderson, Second Edi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 1–18.

¹⁸ Heidi A. Campbell, “When Religion Meets New Media.”

¹⁹ Bunt, *Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islamic Environments Are Transforming Religious Authority*.

²⁰ Gary R. Bunt, *Islam in the Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), <https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v21i4.1749>; Bunt, *Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islamic Environments Are Transforming Religious Authority*.

Islamic,” a space where tensions may escalate as internet technology becomes increasingly accessible. Various transnational Islamic networks have demonstrated this by advocating for online *jihad* (e-jihad).²¹

Furthermore, the intersection of Islam and new media also raises concerns regarding individual autonomy. While digital technology appears to offer users the freedom to choose content across a wide range of topics, this freedom is, in reality, constrained. Unbeknownst to many, digital technologies continuously track user behaviors and preferences. Through the power of algorithms, new media subtly influence user choices, ultimately diminishing personal autonomy. This phenomenon aligns with René Descartes’ concept of *Genius Malignus*, which refers to a “evil demon”—an all-knowing and all-powerful entity that manipulates perceptions of reality. In the contemporary context, new media can be seen as a modern manifestation of Descartes’ *Genius Malignus*, shaping human behavior in ways that often go unnoticed.²²

In this context, the role of the *kiai* in integrating new media into *dakwah* becomes increasingly significant. Although modern discourse has at times underestimated the influence of the *kiai*, such scepticism is not new. Nearly six decades ago, Clifford Geertz expressed a similarly pessimistic view. Citing Geertz, Ronald Lukens-Bull initially suggested that the *kiai* was incapable of acting as a societal broker, bridging the gap between tradition and modernity. However, Lukens-Bull later challenged this notion, arguing that the *kiai* plays a crucial role in this process. Various modern approaches and imaginative strategies have been employed to help *santri* adapt to contemporary developments while maintaining their religious identity.²³

Thus, Gus Iqdam’s approach to *dakwah* through new media platforms such as *YouTube* and *Instagram* aligns with the theoretical frameworks discussed above. As argued in Bunt’s thesis, the rise of technologically literate religious scholars has reshaped the boundaries of traditional religious authority. Audiences can easily access Gus Iqdam’s virtual *dakwah*, whether through live broadcasts or Sabilu Taubah’s social media content. At the same time, the use of social media in *dakwah*, as practiced by Gus Iqdam and other religious figures, has introduced new dynamics of contestation within religious authority.²⁴ The competition between established and emerging authorities in the digital sphere ultimately expands the reach of religious discourse, appealing to a broader audience beyond traditional and less technologically engaged figures.²⁵

²¹ Gary R. Bunt, *Islam in the Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments*.

²² F. Budi Hardiman, *Aku Klik Maka Aku Ada* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2021).

²³ Ronald Lukens-Bull, *A Peacefull Jihad: Negotiating Identity and Modernity in Muslim Java* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

²⁴ Ismail Fajrie Alatas, *What Is Religious Authority? Cultivating Islamic Communities in Indonesia* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021).

²⁵ Gary R. Bunt, *Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islamic Environments Are Transforming Religious Authority* (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1163/21659214-00803009>.

Differentiation of *Abangan-Santri*, Nominal Islam, and “*Garangan*”

The terms *abangan* and *santri* are well-established in the study of religious anthropology in Indonesia. *Abangan* refers to a subculture within Javanese society, characterized by Muslims who continue to observe traditional rituals such as *slametan*, as well as beliefs in metaphysical and shamanic.²⁶ *Abangan* individuals are sometimes described as *Islam KTP*—Muslims in name only, who do not actively practice Islamic teachings. In contrast, *santri* are considered “devout Muslims” or “Javanese Arabs,” signifying their stronger adherence to Islamic principles and practices.²⁷

In this context, M.C. Ricklefs categorizes the *abangan* identity under the term “nominal Islam,” referring to individuals who rarely perform prayers but engage in certain rituals rooted in Javanese culture. The term *abangan* originates from the Javanese informal (*ngoko*) word *abang*, meaning “red,” which contrasts with *putihan*, a term associated with *santri* and their stronger religious adherence.²⁸ The characterization of *abangan* and nominal Muslims is also reflected in the popular preaching of Gus Iqdam at *Majelis Sabilu Taubah*.

The term “*garangan*” refers to members of the *Sabilu Taubah* who come from backgrounds involving activities such as drinking, gambling, pimping, working as song guides, or engaging in street life. While they identify as *santri* of Gus Iqdam, they continue to pursue various professions. They reject the label of *abangan* yet do not consider themselves fully deserving of the *santri* designation in its traditional sense.²⁹ Therefore, the term “*garangan*” does not directly correspond to the classifications established by Geertz or Ricklefs.

In a *pengajian* led by Gus Iqdam, a woman named Nella identified herself as a “*garangan*” and a devoted as *ST Nyel*—the militant follower of the *Majelis Sabilu Taubah*. After consistently attending Gus Iqdam’s *majelis*, she shared that she had previously spent her Tuesday nights at karaoke venues. However, since joining Gus Iqdam’s *majelis*, she had become a regular participant. When asked about her reasons for attending, she explained that individuals like herself, whom she referred to as *kawulo garangan*, had begun to experience a sense of repentance (*maleh rodok taubat*).

On a separate occasion, the *TikTok* account “Santri KTP” uploaded a video featuring a man named Heri engaging in a discussion with Gus Iqdam. Heri, a resident of Blitar, admitted that he had a habit of consuming alcohol but continued to perform the five daily prayers. He then inquired about the Islamic ruling on intoxication. In response, Gus Iqdam stated that, for Heri specifically (though not for others), it would be preferable to continue praying even if he struggled with his drinking habits. During

²⁶ Daniels, *Islam. Spectr. Java*.

²⁷ Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1960); M. C. Ricklefs, *The Birth of the Abangan* (Netherlands: Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, 2006).

²⁸ Ricklefs, 2006.

²⁹ Interview with Dasin, Gigis, and Sindi, 2024.

the conversation, Heri requested that Gus Iqdam pray for his children to become pious. However, when Gus Iqdam advised him to reduce his negative habits to achieve his desired outcome gradually, Heri repeatedly interrupted the discussion. Eventually, Gus Iqdam provided him with money, at which point the conversation concluded.³⁰

In an Instagram post by *sabilu_taubah* on September 23, 2024, several activities were documented involving the “*garangan*” community, a group with a punk background that has been successfully influenced by Gus Iqdam’s *dakwah* efforts. One such event was the Smokday Riding gathering, organized by a motorcycle gang known as Racer Gank, which Gus Iqdam attended. The post highlights Gus Iqdam’s engagement with the “*garangan*” community by actively participating in their events while incorporating elements of *dakwah*. A large stage, typically used for punk or *koplo* music performances, was instead repurposed as a platform for the recitation of *salawat*. The event brought together a diverse group of young men and women, many of whom had tattoos, piercings, and wore non-traditional attire, including women without headscarves and in tight clothing. Despite their backgrounds, the atmosphere was transformed into a unified gathering of participants collectively engaging in *salawat*, creating a striking visual of devotion amidst a sea of black attire.

The examples above illustrate how the “*garangan*” community has emerged within the public, particularly in the digital public sphere. As an evolving identity, the image of “*garangan*” continues to represent Muslims who remain ambivalent in fully adhering to *sharia*. Rather than rejecting this tendency outright, Gus Iqdam embraces these individuals within a sense of communal togetherness while gradually guiding them toward a more complete practice of Islam. This approach indicates that while Gus Iqdam upholds the importance of *sharia* compliance, he advocates for it in a gentle and non-coercive manner. His *jamaah* believes that transformation and repentance are gradual processes that require time and effort, rather than immediate change.

Inclusivity and Millennial *Dakwah*

The *dakwah* model in the digital era can no longer be equated with conventional methods. In this modern context, the presentation and delivery of religious teachings have become crucial factors that cannot be overlooked. Even *dai* affiliated with Indonesia’s two largest Islamic organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, has adapted to this shift. One notable example is Ulil Abshar Abdalla, who introduced *Ngaji Ihya Online*. He is recognized as a pioneer of *ngaji* online, bringing the study of classical Islamic texts (*ngaji kitab*)—traditionally confined to *pesantren salaf*—into the digital sphere.³¹

³⁰ TikTok: Kacong Ulum/16-01-2024.

³¹ Wahyudi Akmaliah, “The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and Reclaiming Religious Authorities,” *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10, no. 1 (2020): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v10i1.1-24>; Wahyudi Akmaliah and Norshahril Saat, “From Liberalism to Sufism: Ulil Abshar Abdalla Gains Renewed Relevance Online Through Ngaji Ihya,” *Perspective: Researchers at ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute Analyse Current Events*, no. 91 (2022): 1–11.

Gus Iqdam implemented a similar approach at the Sabilu Taubah. Gigis, a member of the “*garangan*,” acknowledged that Gus Iqdam’s *dakwah* model differed from that of other *dai*. As someone who considered himself a disobedient Muslim, he described the presence of the Sabilu Taubah as a breath of fresh air. According to him, the *dakwah* model at the Sabilu Taubah emphasized a dialogical approach, incorporating humor to create a calm and welcoming atmosphere that resonated deeply with the *jamaah*. He further described the *dakwah* model at the assembly as “artistic,” highlighting its unique and engaging nature.³²

This perspective aligns with the statement of Sindi, another active participant from the “*garangan*” in the *Majelis Sabilu Taubah*. According to her, the Sabilu Taubah differs from other *pengajian*. Under Gus Iqdam’s leadership, she felt as though she had found a community that understood her identity. She emphasized that Gus Iqdam’s *dakwah* did not focus on condemning individuals as heretical, cursed, or sinful. Instead, the assembly fostered an inclusive and friendly environment. Additionally, the Sabilu Taubah remains open to everyone, welcoming not only Muslims but also individuals from other religious backgrounds.³³

On a different occasion, another active participant from the *garangan* in the *Majelis Sabilu Taubah*, expressed a similar perspective. Sabilu Taubah is not merely a religious study group but also a space where members of the “*garangan*” can socialize and connect. Having attended the *majelis* for approximately a year, he described it as a place where he had found a new sense of brotherhood. He emphasized that the assembly is highly inclusive, welcoming individuals from diverse religious backgrounds and identities. Additionally, he noted that the Sabilu Taubah is not only solely focused on religious studies but also incorporates various activities, such as motorbike touring, which further strengthens the sense of community. This, he explained, is what makes him feel comfortable and at home within the assembly.³⁴

The members of the “*garangan*” congregations perceive the *Majelis Sabilu Taubah* as representative of a millennial-oriented *dakwah*. They highlight the distinctive appeal of its *dakwah*, which is characterized by the use of humor, inclusivity, a relaxed atmosphere, and strategic dissemination through various social media platforms. They argue that Gus Iqdam’s approach to *dakwah*—marked by a style that resonates with millennial sensibilities—has garnered significant attention from the broader community and serves as a compelling draw for youth engagement. Furthermore, they acknowledge that for some observers, the *Majelis Sabilu Taubah* may appear unconventional, given its integration of religious recitation with diverse social activities and its inclusive attendance, which may include individuals such as former thugs, gamblers, alcohol consumers, Lady Companions (LC), disc jockeys (DJ), and others. However, members of the “*garangan*” emphasize that it is precisely this openness and informality that fosters a sense of comfort and belonging for them.³⁵

³² Interview with Gigis, 2024.

³³ Interview with Sindi, 2024.

³⁴ Interview with Dasin, 2024.

³⁵ Interview with Dasin, Gigis, and Sindi, 2024.

The results of the tabulation of the in-depth interviews conducted with the “*garangans*” subjects, when analyzed and processed using the *NVivo* data analysis software, yielded data visualized in the form of a word cloud, as illustrated in the image below.



Figure 1. Word cloud Dakwah Model of Gus Iqdam

The word cloud presented above is derived from the tabulation of frequently occurring terms mentioned by three members of the Sabilu Taubah during interviews concerning Gus Iqdam's *dakwah* model. Prominent words include "young people (*anak muda*)," "suitable (*cocok*)," "jokes (*guyonan*)," "Gus," and "emotionally comforting (*menyejukkan hati*)," among others. These frequently mentioned terms suggest that Gus Iqdam's *dakwah* approach—particularly within the Sabilu Taubah—has a significant emotional and psychological impact on its followers. His representation as a relatable figure for the youth, combined with a humorous and aesthetically engaging *dakwah* model, positions the Sabilu Taubah as an alternative religious forum, particularly appealing to individuals navigating a "grey identity" in terms of religious and social belonging.

The name Sabilu Taubah, which translates to “the path of repentance,” reflects the organization’s mission of inviting individuals toward spiritual transformation through gentle and non-coercive means. This approach is embodied by Gus Iqdam, who frequently employs a humorous and approachable style in his interactions, including with individuals from different religious backgrounds. For instance, in a dialogue with DJ Rara, a Confucian from Batam, he used the slang term “Login”—a colloquial expression referring to one’s conversion to a different religion—to lightly suggest the possibility of religious transition. During this encounter, which was documented on *YouTube*, DJ Rara received a prayer mat and a monetary gift of one million rupiah. Gus Iqdam referred to this gesture as a form of “bait,” indicating his strategic yet lighthearted method of engaging individuals with the teachings of Islam.³⁶

³⁶ YouTube: [Pesan Gus Iqdam untuk DJ Rara & Semua DJ di Indonesia](#),

On another occasion, Gus Iqdam emphasized that Sabilu Taubah functions as a large, inclusive family, asserting that the *pesantren* does not belong to him personally but to all of its students and participants. He frequently refers to the Sabilu Taubah as a “second home”—a spiritual refuge aimed at fostering a closer relationship with Allah SWT. In his *dakwah*, Gus Iqdam underscores the openness of the assembly to individuals from all walks of life, including farmers, ranchers, and religious scholars, promoting a message of equality, unity, and shared prosperity within the community.

A similar message of inclusivity was conveyed to a young Hindu man named Natrik Isnawan. Initially hesitant to attend a religious study session at Sabilu Taubah due to concerns about potential pressure to convert to Islam, he shared his doubts openly. In response, Gus Iqdam reassured him with a characteristic touch of humor, stating, “Relax, man, there are many Muslims KTP.” As with DJ Rara, Gus Iqdam extended a gesture of goodwill by giving Natrik a monetary gift, and emphasized that if he ever chose to embrace Islam, he would be welcomed—but if not, his presence was still valued. This interaction illustrates Gus Iqdam’s commitment to making Sabilu Taubah a welcoming space for individuals of all religious backgrounds.³⁷

Gus Iqdam’s statements serve as tangible examples of his approach to managing religious and cultural diversity within the Sabilu Taubah. This article indicates that many felt a sense of acceptance and were even more motivated to attend the assembly because of its inclusive atmosphere. This openness bears resemblance to the Maiyah congregation led by Emha Ainun Nadjib, widely known as Cak Nun, which also embraces individuals from diverse backgrounds without judgment. However, a key distinction lies in the rhetoric used: Gus Iqdam often employs colloquial or even pejorative terms such as “*garangan*” to refer to his followers—often in a humorous or satirical context—Cak Nun tends to use more affectionate and familial language, referring to those considered “sinners” as “my children” or “my grandchildren.”

According to Timothy Daniels, although he does not specifically examine the Maiyah led by Cak Nun, he offers a conceptual framework that closely parallels its characteristics. One key point of similarity lies in the central role of the *kiai*. Daniels refers to this role as “articulatory labor”—a capacity to bridge diverse social, cultural, and spiritual discourses.³⁸ In this regard, Gus Iqdam fulfils a similar function within the Sabilu Taubah. He is not only regarded by his followers as a *kiai* but also as a figure capable of empathetically understanding and addressing the varied concerns of individuals from a wide range of backgrounds. This ability to connect across social and religious differences reinforces his influential position within the community.

³⁷ Youtube: [Pemuda non-muslim ini heran...!? Teman" nongkrong dulu ndugal, berubah 180 derajat.](#)

³⁸ Daniels, *Islam. Spectr. Java*.

A key distinction between the Maiyah and Sabilu Taubah lies in the socio-demographic composition of their followers, as in prior research. The Maiyah, as analyzed by Timothy Daniels, comprises a diverse array of participants, including activists, students, men of culture, artists, and individuals from interfaith and interethnic backgrounds.³⁹ In contrast, the Sabilu Taubah is more homogenous in terms of socioeconomic background, predominantly consisting of farmers, ranchers, village youth, street children, and local rural artists. This difference is particularly evident when considering economic status: many of the Sabilu Taubah attendees come from lower-middle-class rural communities. The educational and social diversity found within Maiyah can be partially attributed to Cak Nun's personal background—he studied at Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM), was active in student movements, and is widely recognized as a cultural intellectual. Meanwhile, Gus Iqdam's influence emerges from a more traditional and rural Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) environment, which shapes the character and outreach of the Sabilu Taubah.

The distinction between the background of the congregation and that of its leaders further underscores the unique characteristics of the Sabilu Taubah. Unlike other Islamic study groups, which often exhibit diverse socio-economic compositions, Sabilu Taubah reflects a religious phenomenon more commonly observed in rural settings. Consequently, the congregation is predominantly composed of individuals from the lower-middle class.

Gus Iqdam adopts an inclusive approach by welcoming individuals from all backgrounds, irrespective of religious affiliation, occupation, or social status. Notably, while he extends this openness to participants of different faiths, his sermons often include implicit messages of repentance. These messages are delivered through a combination of humor, respectful engagement with religious differences, and symbolic offerings or gifts, which may serve as subtle invitations to consider conversion to Islam.

Conversely, Gus Iqdam's *dakwah* model—characterized by the strategic use of social media and a peaceful approach to *dakwah*—aligns with the practices of contemporary Muslims. Within the context of modern society, as noted by Campbell, Muslims represent one of the many religious communities that engage with the internet to facilitate and enrich their spiritual experiences and religious practices.⁴⁰

In other words, Gus Iqdam's *dakwah* model is accompanied by an acceptance of various elements of modernity. The use of new media signifies the incorporation of technological advancements into the framework of religious outreach. This tendency toward embracing modernity is consistent with the perspective offered by Ronald Lukens-Bull. In his study of various Muslim groups in Java, Lukens-Bull concludes that the inclination to accept modernity is reflected in the *dakwah* strategies employed across a wide spectrum—from traditionalist NU *pesantren* to radical Islamic groups such as Laskar Jihad.⁴¹

³⁹ Daniels.

⁴⁰ Heidi A. Campbell, "When Religion Meets New Media."

⁴¹ Lukens-Bull, *A Peacefull Jihad: Negotiating Identity and Modernity in Muslim Java*.

Therefore, the phenomenon of Islamization in rural areas warrants greater scholarly attention. As articulated by Khamami in *Nasionalis-cum-Nahdliyin: New Identity of Nominal Muslim*, the process of Islamization in these regions has often been overlooked within academic discourse.⁴² This oversight has led to a neglect of the distinctive processes and transformations of religious identity that are deeply embedded in, and shaped by, local socio-cultural contexts.

The *dakwah* model employed by Gus Iqdam through the Sabilu Taubah reflects the core message of the Prophet Muhammad. His approach emphasizes tolerance and a moderate stance in religious practice. The Prophet is historically recognized not only for his comprehensive propagation of Islamic teachings but also for his ability to foster unity among diverse communities. For him, Islam served as a solution to the complex challenges facing society, rather than a source of additional conflict. In this light, the contemporary discourse on religious moderation—as a framework for guiding Muslims in fostering harmonious, horizontal relationships within pluralistic societies—resonates with the fundamental principles of Islam: moderation (*wasatiyyah*) and compassion. Islam, therefore, embodies ideals of beauty, justice, and social harmony, both within and across religious communities.⁴³

“Garangan”: A Representation of New Islamic Identities

The term “*garangan*” is a local expression frequently used by Gus Iqdam and members of the Sabilu Taubah congregation to describe the distinctive characteristics of their community. In the regional context of Kediri and Blitar, East Java, “*garangan*” colloquially refers to men who are known for teasing or engaging in flirtatious behavior with women.⁴⁴ According to the *Kamus Besar Jawa-Indonesia* (KBJI), the term originates from the Javanese language, where it denotes a civet—an animal known for its tendency to prey on snakes. Within the context of the Sabilu Taubah, the term has evolved semantically to refer to individuals with marginalized social backgrounds, including former street children, alcoholics, gamblers, nightlife workers, and others whose lifestyles are generally perceived as being at odds with normative Islamic teachings.

⁴² Akhmad Rizqon Khamami, “Nasionalis Cum Nahdliyin: A New Identity for Nominal Javanese Muslim,” *Contemporary Islam* 16, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11562-022-00505-6>.

⁴³ Husein Ja’far Al Hadar, *Tuhan Ada di Hatimu* (Jakarta: Noura Books Publishing, 2020).

⁴⁴ See, Endang Pergiwati, Seliweran di TikTok, Gus Iqdam Kerap Sebut Kata-kata ini, Apa Maknanya?

Based on the collected data, this article categorizes the various meanings associated with the term “*garangan*”, which exhibit considerable diversity. This semantic variation is illustrated in the word cloud presented beside.

The word cloud beside presents a collection of terms commonly associated with the concept of “*garangan*.” In the context of this study, the members of *Jamaah Sabilu Taubah* demonstrate various characteristics of “*garangan*” in



distinct ways. The frequent appearance of certain words in the word cloud suggests that “*garangan*” is closely linked to the identity of the *Jamaah Sabilu Taubah*. Words reflecting past behaviors and habitual actions, such as “naughty (*nakal/ndugal*),” “*bandar*,” “punk,” “singer (*biduan*),” and “drunk (*pemabok*),” highlight the negative aspects historically associated with “*garangan*.” Additionally, some terms signify a process of religious transformation, including “repentance (*taubat*)” and “progress (*berproses*),” indicating a shift from past behaviors to a more positive and spiritual direction.

The group referred to as “*garangan*” can be understood as part of the *Jamaah Sabilu Taubah*—individuals who are in the process of reforming their past behaviors. According to their own accounts, many members of this group still struggle to consistently perform obligatory prayers and are in the process of improving their adherence to Islamic practices. At times, they may even neglect certain acts of worship.⁴⁵ These characteristics align with what is commonly referred to in academic discourse as “nominal Muslims”—individuals who identify as Muslim but exhibit limited engagement with religious practices.

Anthropological studies on religion in Indonesia—particularly in Java—frequently use the term “nominal Muslims” to refer to the *abangan* group. For instance, in his analysis of the *abangan* and *santri* classifications, Ricklefs explicitly identifies the *abangan* as nominal Muslims, or what is colloquially referred to as “Muslim KTP”.⁴⁶ Similarly, Andrew Beatty also defines the *abangan* as “nominal Muslims,” highlighting their limited engagement with formal Islamic practices despite their Muslim identity.⁴⁷ However, Ricklefs argues that before the mid-19th century, the term *abangan* did not refer to a distinct social class or religious group.⁴⁸ In contemporary usage, the term “nominal Muslim” is often used interchangeably with other designations such as

⁴⁵ Interview with Dasin, 2024.

⁴⁶ Muslim KTP or Muslims in name only, not practical ritual piety. M. C. Ricklefs, *Islamisation and Its Opponents in Java: A Political, Social, Cultural and Religious History, c. 1930 to the Present* (Singapore: NUS Singapore, 2012).

⁴⁷ Andrew Beatty, *Variasi Agama di Jawa: Sebuah Pendekatan Antropologi* (Jakarta: Murai Kencana, 2001).

⁴⁸ Ricklefs, *The Birth of the Abangan*.

“cultural Muslim” or “non-practicing Muslim,” reflecting varying degrees of religious observance within Muslim-identifying populations.”⁴⁹

Furthermore, Ricklefs describes the typical practices of *abangan* Muslims as including infrequent or nonexistent observance of daily prayers, an inability to recite the shahada or read the Qur’an, infrequent fasting during the month of Ramadan, and a general lack of concern for saving money to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca.⁵⁰ However, in contemporary contexts, this characterization appears increasingly inconsistent with the observed reality, as many individuals identified as *abangan* are now actively involved in various social and religious activities.

In fact, the *abangan* group in Indonesia continues to develop and express its religious identity in dynamic ways. Scholars have challenged Hefner’s study, which predicted the decline or disappearance of the *abangan* due to the spread of Islamization. Recent findings demonstrate that *abangan* religiosity persists and adapts within the context of contemporary Indonesian society.⁵¹ An Indonesian scholar later criticized Hefner’s thesis, arguing that empirical evidence shows the *abangan* group continues to exist in Indonesia. Rather than disappearing, the *abangan* have persisted and, in many cases, undergone a form of Islamization without losing their distinct cultural-religious identity.⁵²

Khamami refers to this group as “nationalists *cum* nahdliyin,” a term that synthesizes the identities of nahdliyin (followers of Nahdlatul Ulama) and nationalists, as articulated by the local community to express their religious identity. He argued that the term “nationalist” emerged from within the community itself as a way to describe individuals who identify as nominal Muslims.⁵³ This concept arose in the specific socio-cultural context of Tulungagung, East Java, a region located near the Sabilu Taubah.

Masdar Hilmy, another Indonesian scholar, criticized the theses of Indonesianists. He proposed a religiously hybrid identity in response to the two dominant theoretical perspectives on the *abangan*—the Geertzian and Woodward frameworks. Hilmy argued that individuals can, in fact, occupy both *santri* and *abangan* positions simultaneously, challenging the assumption made by Geertz and Woodward. He suggested that being a Javanese Muslim often involves navigating a space between these two categories, reflecting a more fluid and complex religious identity.⁵⁴

The characteristics of the “*garangan*” group identified by *Jamaah* Sabilu Taubah exhibit some similarities with the *abangan* and nominal Muslim groups. In general,

⁴⁹ Malise Ruthven, *Islam: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁵⁰ Ricklefs, *Islamisation and Its Opponents in Java: A Political, Social, Cultural and Religious History, c. 1930 to the Present*.

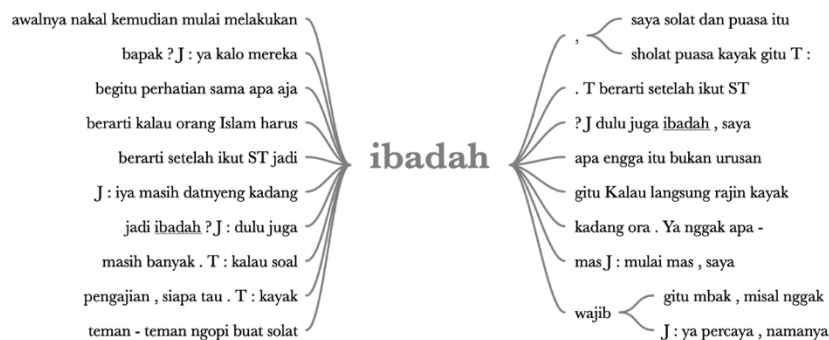
⁵¹ Robert W. Hefner, “Where Have All the Abangan Gone? Religionization and the Decline of Non-Standard Islam in Contemporary Indonesia,” in *The Politics of Religion in Indonesia* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2011).

⁵² Khamami, “Nasionalis Cum Nahdliyin: A New Identity for Nominal Javanese Muslim.”

⁵³ Khamami.

⁵⁴ Masdar Hilmy, “Towards a Religiously Hybrid Identity,” *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 12, no. 01 (2018).

some members of the “*garangan*” continue to engage in actions that contradict Islamic law, such as drinking alcohol and neglecting obligatory prayers and fasting. This behavior aligns closely with the definition of nominal Muslims as described by Geertz and Ricklefs, specifically the pure *abangan*. However, there is also a subset of “*garangan*” who assert that they are undergoing a process of transformation through the *Majelis Sabilu Taubah*. This transformation is evident through their responses during interviews, where they describe their daily worship practices.



Certain practices, such as the five daily prayers and fasting during Ramadan, are categorized as obligatory acts of worship in Islam. When asked about the intensity or consistency of performing these practices, some individuals respond with phrases like “*kadang ora*” (sometimes not), indicating irregular observance. Nonetheless, they often affirm the obligatory nature of these practices by stating, “Yes, I believe it is obligatory.” Others may respond with more indifferent remarks, such as “yes, it’s okay” or “it’s none of my business,” reflecting a range of personal attitudes toward religious obligations.

Comments on the impact of attending the *Majelis Sabilu Taubah* on the performance of obligatory worship reveal two distinct patterns. Some participants said they experienced gradual changes in their religious practice following their involvement in the assembly. In contrast, others asserted that their worship routines remained largely unchanged, indicating inconsistency or irregularity in performing obligatory acts of worship.

Regarding the question of whether a Muslim who does not perform obligatory worship can still be considered a Muslim, responses were relatively consistent. Many participants acknowledged the necessity of obligatory worship but emphasized a non-judgmental stance toward those who have not yet received guidance. Others affirmed the obligation while expressing empathy for individuals who are still in the process of religious development. These perspectives reflect a nuanced understanding of religious identity that does not align strictly with the traditional dichotomy of *abangan* and *santri* categories.⁵⁵

Upon closer analysis, the typology of *abangan* or nominal Islam, as proposed by earlier religious anthropologists, cannot be directly applied to the character of the

⁵⁵ Interview with Dasin, Gigis, and Sindi, 2024.

“*garangan*.” This group does not fit neatly into either the *abangan* or *santri* categories. On one hand, they reject being labeled as *abangan*; on the other hand, they also do not perceive themselves as fully deserving of the *santri* designation in its traditional, devout sense. This ambivalence suggests the emergence of a distinct religious identity that falls between or beyond the conventional classifications.

The term “*garangan*” cannot be adequately understood through the conventional *santri-abangan* dichotomy. As members of the *Majelis Sabilu Taubah*, this group exists and thrives within the assembly without facing exclusion or judgment. Gus Iqdam consistently promotes a respectful and inclusive approach to religious repentance in his sermons, inviting all individuals to return to the path of faith with gentleness. As a result, the subject of this study frequently emphasizes that religious commitment should be viewed as an ongoing and evolving process.

The distinct identity differences between *santri* and “*garangan*” may suggest the presence of a clear boundary. However, adhering strictly to the traditional *abangan-santri* dichotomy is insufficient for understanding the complexities of contemporary religious identity in Java. The moderate perspective proposed by Hilmy offers a more nuanced framework for interpreting these evolving dynamics. In many instances, the identity of a Javanese Muslim today is a hybrid—part “*garangan*,” part *santri*—reflecting a position that lies somewhere in between. A Muslim from a “*garangan*” background may no longer feel constrained by the moral codes once enforced by their community, while also engaging in *santri*-style rituals and practices. Hilmy thus recognizes the existence of a “grey area,” where fluid and overlapping identities emerge. Within this context, a process of productive acculturation is evident, marked by ongoing exchanges and reconfigurations between *santri* and “*garangan*” identities.⁵⁶

The “*garangan*” exhibits characteristics typically associated with the *abangan*, as described by Ricklefs and Khamami. These include active participation in social and public religious⁵⁷ activities, as well as engagement in behaviors that violate Islamic law, such as consuming alcohol, gambling, and neglecting prayer. At the same time, the group also shares certain beliefs with the *santri*, particularly the view that a true Muslim must fulfil obligatory acts of worship. However, several informants in this study identify themselves as individuals who are still in the process of religious development.

As a public sphere,⁵⁸ *Sabilu Taubah* serves as a dynamic arena for the negotiation and exchange of *santri* and *abangan* identities. In line with Hilmy’s argument that ideological struggles within the public sphere have led to shifts in religious identity among Javanese Muslims, *Sabilu Taubah* functions as a site where members of the “*garangan*” group undergo an internal transformation of religious identity. They describe this process as a personal journey of “processing” toward repentance. On several occasions, the *Sabilu Taubah* has even welcomed formal religious conversions

⁵⁶ Hilmy, “Towards a Religiously Hybrid Identity.”

⁵⁷ Casanova, “Public Religions in the Modern World.”

⁵⁸ Casanova.

(from non-Muslim to Muslim). Simultaneously, Gus Iqdam embraces the diversity within his congregation and actively encourages the process of repentance. Reflecting Hilmy's insights, within the pluralistic environment of Sabilu Taubah, Gus Iqdam has succeeded in cultivating a public space that fosters constructive and meaningful exchanges, enriching the identities of *garangan*, *santri*, and non-Muslim participants alike.

The "*garangan*," *santri*, and other community elements converge within the *Majelis Sabilu Taubah*, forming an inclusive religious assembly that accommodates a wide range of motivations—from the pursuit of entertainment to sincere efforts toward self-improvement and the development of a more devout Muslim identity. Gus Iqdam has successfully cultivated a space that embraces, rather than excludes, religious and social diversity. Within this environment, the religious identity of the "*garangan*" group evolves in ways that transcend the conventional dichotomy of *santri* and *abangan*, suggesting the emergence of a more fluid and complex identity category.

In other words, the "*garangan*" group represents "new hybrid identities," as conceptualized by Homi K. Bhabha. He, in *The Location of Culture*, introduces the concept of hybridity as the emergence of a new cultural space in which multiple identities can engage in dialogue and mutual interaction.⁵⁹ More specifically, the "*garangan*" group within the *Majelis Sabilu Taubah* reflects what Stuart Hall describes as a diasporic identity—one that is fluid, dynamic, and continuously evolving. For Hall, cultural identity is not a fixed essence but a process of "becoming" rather than simply "being."⁶⁰

CONCLUSION

Gus Iqdam's *dakwah* in the Sabilu Taubah attracts a wide range of congregants due to its distinctive appeal. His *dakwah* model—rich in dialogue and humor, and characterized by his relatable demeanor as a millennial—plays a crucial role in cultivating the congregation's admiration. For the "*garangan*" group in particular, Gus Iqdam effectively presents Islam as approachable and inclusive, while consistently delivering messages of repentance. He complements this *dakwah* model with a strategic use of social media, leveraging new media platforms to extend the reach of the Sabilu Taubah across various regions in Indonesia. As a result, Gus Iqdam's influence continues to expand, drawing attention from non-Muslim communities, artists, public figures, and politicians.

Although other assemblies also embrace diversity, Sabilu Taubah demonstrates notable distinctions. The author compares it to *Jamaah Maiyah*, led by Cak Nun, highlighting differences in rural orientation, lower-middle-class socioeconomic base, and the contrasting personal backgrounds of Cak Nun and Gus Iqdam. These contextual factors have created favorable conditions for the emergence and growth of the "*garangan*" group within the Sabilu Taubah.

⁵⁹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

⁶⁰ Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," ed. David Morley, *Essential Essays* 02 (November 2, 1990), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11smnnj>.

This article concludes that the religious identity of the “*garangan*” group can no longer be adequately defined within the traditional *abangan-santri* dichotomy. Similar to the *santri*, members of the “*garangan*” group acknowledge the obligation to observe Islamic law, particularly in performing core religious practices such as the five daily prayers and fasting during Ramadan. However, they also admit to lacking consistency in fulfilling these obligations and to continuing participation in behaviors considered contrary to Islamic *sharia*, such as gambling and alcohol consumption.

The diverse religious expressions exhibited by the “*garangan*” group place them in a liminal or “grey area” position, which can be understood as a form of “new hybrid identities.” These identities transcend the pejorative classifications employed by earlier Indonesian religious anthropologists, such as *abangan*, *santri*, or nominal Muslim. Instead, the “*garangan*” group represents a fluid and evolving diasporic identity that resists fixed categorization.

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