

TRADITION AND MODERNIZATION: DIALECTICAL TENSIONS IN CREATIVE RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF THE SUNDANESE URBAN COMMUNITIES

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Abstract. This study focuses on the religious construction of Sundanese urban communities in the city of Bandung, West Java, Indonesia, which is characterized by dialectical tensions between the need to preserve tradition and the desire to adapt to modernization. These tensions have led to the emergence of various forms of creative and ambiguous religious and cultural practices. The study is based on ethnographic research conducted among the Sundanese urban communities in Bandung, using literature documentation, observations, and interviews as data collection methods. The study findings reveal that the religious practices of Sundanese urban communities are shaped by the diverse elements of urban life. The religious practices are ambiguous due to the dialectical tensions between preserving tradition and adapting to modernization, rationality and irrationality, personal freedom and communal identity, and cultural wisdom values and exclusive Islamic teachings. The unique urban-cultural religious phenomena, such as urban Sufism, hijra (South Asia) movements, religious-identity politics, or the preservation of Sundanese cultural rites with Islamic content, are examples of the religious creativity that emerges as a result of the communities' understanding of the application of faith in the midst of ideological cultural traditions and pragmatic interests. The study results offer a sociological perspective on the modern life of Sundanese urban communities, where the application of theological-traditional values of religious teachings and pragmatic-modern values of urban life leads to creative constructions.

Keywords: creativity, modernization, religious dialectics, Sundanese urban communities, tradition.

Introduction: sociological dialectics of urban communities

The study of urban society, in the past, had a limited scope, with religion being considered a complementary aspect of cultural diversity studies (Rüpke, 2020b). This perspective was influenced by Max Weber's narrow viewpoint, which saw cities as places for human rationality and democracy, and considered religion a source of human irrationality that hindered progress. However, subsequent developments have led to an acknowledgment of the role of

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religion, especially religious practices and faith, in the formation of cities and urban communities. Weber (2005) recognized that several religious tenets influence the pattern of capital accumulation needed by society for production and industrialization. Despite the narrative of secularization and disenchantment, community religiosity continues to take root in the depths of urban life (Holton & Turner, 2010). Therefore, the outdated perspective that religion is not aligned with scientific truth and is a hindrance to progress fails to consider the positive contributions religion can make to urban societies and the diverse ways it can influence the lives of urban communities.

The emergence of various religious phenomena in urban spaces, especially the religious practices of immigrants and the presence of global religious actors, supports this condition. Anthropologist Stephan Lanz argues that the changing perspective of urban society toward religion requires a redefinition of the term “urban religion”. According to Lanz, religion for urban society must be seen as a specific element integrated with lifestyle, imagination, infrastructure and materials, culture, politics, economy, various forms of life and work, community formation, festivals, and celebrations. The diversity in urban communities is a continuous creative process in which people interact with religious teachings and mutually influence one another, resulting in production, transformation, and mutual definition (Lanz, 2014).

Religion is not a static entity that is simply practiced as understood by traditional rural communities. In urban communities, religion is encountered in a way that may cause tension. Religious practices are shaped by the interaction between religion and its adherents. Therefore, what may be considered ordinary to rural communities can be perceived as extraordinary to urban communities, or vice versa. For example, the ability to read the Quran fluently may be a common skill in some Indonesian villages, but it can be extraordinary and meaningless to urban communities. Different perspectives on values and short-term goals in life contribute to religious tension and rationality in urban communities. According to Rüpke (2020b), these changes in religious practices observed in urban communities can be attributed to at least two factors. Firstly, the emergence of the post-secular era, where religion is considered a key element of societal super-diversity resulting from complex social processes and hegemonic categorical situations such as the discourse on Muslim identity in contemporary European society. Secondly, globalization has not only led to urbanization and pluralization, but also to the emergence of trans-local cities, allowing major religions to shape and influence the existence of local religions.

The diversity of urban communities creates opportunities for creativity, innovation, and complex forms of religious practice. However, religious practices in urban communities are not necessarily completely rational. The social-bureaucratic rationality, as proposed by Weber, does not necessarily apply to religion in urban communities. This can be seen in various religious phenomena found in the life of people in Bandung that are inconsistent with rational characteristics. Examples of these phenomena include the commodification and commercialization of religion in various forms, the strengthening of religious sentiments in society, the emergence of urban Sufism, and the strengthening of religious symbols and political identity. These phenomena highlight a gap between religious practices in urban communities and rationality.

Contemporary religious phenomena in urban communities, such as those found in the city of Bandung, show that religious practices are strengthened in urban areas compared to rural areas. Despite the perceived rationality of urban society, religious practices with their various aspects and symbols are actually stronger than in more conservative and mystical rural communities. The experience of urban communities suggests that religion cannot be viewed as solely personal or concerned solely with moral issues, but must also include rational aspects of human life. Community religious practices combine seemingly contradictory elements to create new practices. This religious dialectic makes the religious practices of urban communities both ambiguous and creative. The theology of urban communities is not fully rational and avoids definitive theological categories, making it difficult to properly recognize and categorize the religious practices of these communities.

Studies on the religious practices of urban communities have been conducted by various researchers, including Goffary (2021) and Kusumalestari (2020), whose studies highlight the trend of instant piety through hijra movements in the city of Bandung and the practice of commodification of religion. Goffary's (2021) study on the Hijra Youth Movement in the city of Bandung revealed that religious movements among urban youth capitalize on the sense of disillusionment and disorientation experienced by young people. The hijra movement, in particular, has been successful in offering a sense of purpose and direction to individuals who may feel lost in the fast-paced modern world. The movement provides an alternative to the materialistic and competitive values of modernity, offering a path to instant piety and the promise of a blessed life. This highlights the appeal of religious movements that promise a sense of belonging and purpose in a world that can often feel chaotic and uncertain. However, it is important to recognize that these movements can also perpetuate power imbalances and inequalities, and a critical perspective is necessary to understand the impact of such movements on individuals and society.

The importance of religiosity in the life of urban communities is also evident in the findings of James' (2015) study, where appropriate theological interpretations of religious teachings can be significant drivers of the transformation of urban society. Another study by Dias (2019) argued that religious institutions such as social-religious organizations, mosques, churches, the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Indonesia), and other institutional devices should take on secular roles to contribute to the life of urban communities in the post-religious era. This can be achieved by implementing movements that strengthen the work ethic in society. While Shannahan's (2019) study shows that urban society is not characterized by secularism as predicted. Religion and spirituality continue to play significant roles in urban life, particularly in constructing self-identity amidst a sense of alienation. This research also confirms that post-secular religious communities have the opportunity to create a liberation theology model that arises from the current conditions of urban society.

Another study by Greenway and Monsma's (2021) presents an interesting perspective, explaining that when cities and urban communities are connected with religion, they become a unique phenomenon. The city is often identified as a place of immorality ("citadel of sin"), where religion should not exist, as human rationality is the driving force. However, in several religious allegories, the city is also considered the embodiment of religious ideals about an advanced, prosperous, and civilized life ("city of God"). Thus, the study of urban theology should be adaptable by incorporating dynamic elements from urban life.

The influence of religion on urban communities also can be seen in various aspects of life, such as education, tourism, infrastructure development, and cultural values. For example, Permana et al. (2018) found that religious educational institutions, such as the SMA Daarut Tauhiid Boarding School Putra, Indonesia, can change the behavior, values, and architecture of urban communities. Similarly, Susanti et al. (2020) showed that religion can be a basis for developing tourism in urban communities, as seen in the construction of the Mahmud religious village in Bandung. Lim and Padawangi's study (2008) highlights the interconnection between urban spatial planning and ideological, religious, and cultural values. The resulting buildings and public spaces can influence certain cultural and religious images on the community and the city itself. Additionally, the phenomenon of urban Sufism is an important feature in the transformation of Islamic culture in urban society, as emphasized in studies by Howell (2012), Mustofa (2012), and Nurani (2018). The teachings of Sufism, which emphasize peace, morality, and a more substantial view of religious matters, make it attractive to urban communities, especially the millennial generation.

The previous studies have shown that the religious practices of urban communities are diverse and have various constituent elements. At times, the religious practices may seem rigid, exclusive, symbolic, and instantaneous, while at other times they may be inclusive, tolerant, and emphasize spiritual depth. The religion of urban communities also exhibits creative and pragmatic aspects, such as the hijra movement, utility-based social integration, the formation of a religious community, or imagery in which religion is an important identity and social capital. On the other hand, urban communities also emphasize the depth of religion, as demonstrated by the phenomenon of urban Sufism. This continuous dialectic indicates that the theological formulation of urban communities can change at any time. Therefore, this paper aims to provide a distinct perspective from previous studies by describing the dialectic of urban religious practices.

1. Methods

The theoretical approach for this study is a cultural sociology perspective, which examines the ways in which cultural practices and beliefs shape social life and identities. This perspective emphasizes the importance of understanding how culture is produced and reproduced, and how it influences individuals and societies (Swidler, 1986). This study also draws on the concept of "cultural hybridity", which refers to the mixing of cultural elements from different sources, and the resulting creativity and innovation that emerges from these encounters (García Canclini, 1995; Hall, 2003). This study also employs the perspective of sociology of religion, which explores the role of religion in shaping social life and identities. This perspective emphasizes the significance of understanding how religious practices and beliefs shape individuals and communities, as well as how social and cultural contexts influence religious expressions in urban environment (Day, 2014; Rüpke, 2020a).

This study utilizes an ethnographic method to investigate urban communities in Bandung city. Data were collected through literature review, observation, and interviews. The main sources of data for this study include literature documenting the culture of the people of Bandung city, Islamic theological literature, observation on religious phenomena in Bandung city, as well as interviews with three Islamic religious leaders in the city of Bandung to

enhance the author's understanding and analysis of the topic. The ethnographic method used in this study involves a deep immersion and engagement with the research participants, their culture, and their social context. The choice of ethnography as a research method is based on the argument that it allows for an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of the participants, and enables the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the social and cultural contexts that shape their religious practices (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007).

The research process began with preliminary observation and study preparation, where the researcher read and described the religious phenomena of urban communities in Bandung. This was followed by the study implementation, which involved three methods of data collection: literature documentation, observations, and interviews. The literature documentation involved a review of existing literature on the culture of the people of Bandung city and Islamic theology literature. This helped the researcher gain a comprehensive understanding of the cultural and religious background of the urban communities in Bandung. Observation was another method used to collect data. The researcher observed various religious phenomena and contemporary urban community behaviors in the city of Bandung. This method helped the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of religious practices in urban communities.

The third method of data collection was interviews with three Islamic religious leaders in the city of Bandung. These interviews provided valuable insights into the religious beliefs and practices of urban communities in Bandung and helped the researcher to enhance their understanding of the topic. The interviewees are prominent figures from three of the largest Islamic organizations in the city of Bandung, namely Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and Persatuan Islam. The interview results are intended to provide additional data and validation for the literature review and participant observation findings. During the interview process, the three key figures were accompanied by other organizational executives who also provided comments on the questions.

After data collection, the researcher proceeded to the data processing phase, which involved the organization, codification, and rationalization of data. This was followed by data analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. Finally, the results of the study were compiled and reported in a comprehensive report. The expected results of this study are to gain insight into the religious practices of urban communities in Bandung city and how these practices are shaped by their social and cultural contexts. The analysis of the data collected is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dialectical tensions that exist within the religious practices of urban communities and the creativity that emerges. The entire process of this study was conducted for 10 months, starting from February until the end of November, 2022.

2. The construction of Sundanese urban communities in Bandung city, Indonesia

The Sundanese urban communities generally perceive a close relationship and shared values between Islam and various forms of Sundanese cultural wisdom that have existed since ancient times. Hence, it is a tradition among the Sundanese people to assume that Islam is Sundanese and Sundanese is Islam, as exemplified in the expression "Islam and Sundanese like sugar and its sweetness" (in Indonesian: *Islam jeung Sunda ibarat gula jeung peupeutna*).

This sentiment is echoed by popular Sundanese figure, Hasan Mustapa, who stated: “Sundanese people were Muslims before Islam” (in Indonesian: *Urang Sunda mah geus Islam memeh Islam*). Such expressions suggest a strong connection between the Sundanese people’s traditions and Islamic values and teachings (Iskandar, 2001; Kahmad, 2006; Praja, 2005).

Religion (Islam) serves as a common bond that unites Sundanese people when nothing else can (Kahmad, 2006; Sumpena, 2012; Suyatman, 2018). Religion is a communal space for shared identity and collective hope that transcends ethnicity. However, the integrative characteristics of Islam and Sundanese cultural values have undergone significant shifts in the context of the religious life of these communities. Globalization and rapid urbanization have changed the egalitarian, modest, kind, and patient nature of Sundanese-Islamic integration to accommodate the nature of life in urban society. The fast-paced, instantaneous, symbolic, and dialectical tensions of urban life have brought about changes in the practice of religion, which also reflects the society’s fast-paced nature and the desire for instant problem resolution. Additionally, the societal pressures of limitless competition and feelings of self-alienation have further contributed to this change.

The results of observations conducted by the researcher on the urban community of Bandung indicate several interesting religious phenomena, including: firstly, the hijra movement has emerged as an invitation for urban youth to return to Islamic teachings with a conservative interpretation. It is a movement that encourages young people to return to Islamic teachings with a conservative interpretation. The movement’s popularity can be attributed to the increasing sense of religiosity and the need to find a clear path to follow in a rapidly changing world. Secondly, there has been a significant increase in the number of religious study groups, *dawah* activities, and Islamic teachings in urban communities in Bandung. These groups and activities provide a space for people to learn more about Islam and engage in religious activities. This rise in religious activities can be seen as a response to the increasing need for guidance and a sense of community among urban residents. Thirdly, the rise of Islamic Sufistic teaching activities in urban communities, particularly from specific religious *tariqa* associations like Tarekat Qadiriyyah wa Naqsabandiyah, Tijaniyyah, Idrisiyya, Syahadatayn, and others, is also a noticeable trend in Bandung. This reflects a growing interest in the spiritual dimension of Islam, which emphasizes inner transformation and personal growth through spiritual practices. Fourthly, the massive spread of religious narratives through popular technology-based communication networks in urban communities is also a notable phenomenon in Bandung. Social media and other communication platforms have become powerful tools for spreading religious messages and ideas, especially among young people. This has led to the emergence of a new generation of religious influencers who use these platforms to spread their message. Finally, the use of religious symbols in a political context is also a trend that has been observed in urban communities in Bandung. This is a manifestation of religious identity politics, where politicians use religious symbols to gain support and recognition from the public. This trend has contributed to the growing influence of religion in politics and highlights the importance of religious identity in contemporary Indonesian society.

The responses of three religious leaders in the city of Bandung have validated several phenomena resulting from observational studies of urban religious practices and the inter-relationships between Islam and Sundanese as documented in previous literature studies.

The questions posed to the interviewees focused on three main issues: first, the religious phenomenon among Sundanese urban communities; second, the dialectical tension of religious practices and understanding in Sundanese urban communities; and third, the creative cultural-religious construction of Sundanese urban communities in Bandung city.

In terms of the first issue, the initial interviewee (S-1) expressed that the religious practices among Sundanese urban communities in Bandung city are on the rise. This is evident in the increased volume of Islamic teachings, the spread of Islamic discourse in society, and the prevalence of Islamic religious celebration festivals. According to S-1, several factors have contributed to this phenomenon, including the emergence of religious figures as new idols in society, the strengthening of religious narratives amidst socio-political events with religious nuances, and the polarization of society as a result of cultural-religious identity politics. S-1 also mentioned the commodification of religion through various symbols as part of popular culture that develops in urban society and the advancement of information and communication technology, which has opened up religious information channels that are easily accessible to the public. According to S-1, while there has been an increase in the volume of Islamic teachings and religious discourse, there is also a growing trend towards more inclusive and tolerant practices. S-1 stated:

“I believe that many people in Bandung city are embracing a more open and tolerant approach to religion. They are increasingly recognizing the importance of respecting diversity and accepting differences, which is reflected in the way they practice their religion. This is a positive development that should be encouraged and celebrated” (S-1, 24 October, 2022).

Some of these factors are considered factors that make a major contribution to strengthening religious values and practices in Bandung urban communities. Some of these factors are certainly not absolute, because as explained by the second interviewee (S-2), other situations that also contribute to the strengthening of religious practices, especially when considered from the psychological side of the local communities (Sundanese) who believe in the closeness between the values of Sundanese local wisdom with Islamic teachings. The source stated:

“Bandung society is indeed a Sundanese people. Even though today they are heterogeneous and influenced by the values of city life, their identity as Sundanese for the Bandung urban communities cannot be separated from the interrelationship of religiosity and the cultural identity of the Sundanese people. Strengthening Islamic practices in society, in other words, is only an affirmation of the relationship between the two” (S-2, 25 October, 2022).

On the second issue, the S-1 and third interviewee (S-3) stated that the religious practices of the Sundanese urban communities in Bandung city, like other urban communities, are indeed filled with various tensions. Religion can be practiced as a source of teachings with a certain pragmatic utility or practiced as a source of spiritual goodness and serenity of life. Some religious adherents can also adopt an attitude of faith in God without caring about rituals. Some others are just trapped in communal rituals without understanding the sacred values of religion. Everyone has different motives, levels of belief, understanding, and degrees of practice, which makes some people able to try to prove their faith by acting intolerantly and even anarchistically. The sources said:

“The religious beliefs of the urban communities are complex. This complexity often blurs the line between reward and sin. People can intend to worship God in work and then commit despicable acts. People can be kind at times and arrogant at other times. Religion can become an identity at one time and then be dumped in another context” (S-1, 24 October, 2022);

“If we look at it, the human conditions in the city are mixed with acceleration, boredom, alienation, pleasure, suffering, the desire for success, and the longing for the sacred, which make religious behaviors also unpredictable. The psychological pressure presented by city life makes it easy for people to experience a drought of meaning and spirituality. When there are certain moments where they feel they can contribute to religion, then these moments will be best utilized to cover up the void of meaning and spirituality even in discriminatory, intolerant, and even anarchic ways” (S-3, 27 October, 2022).

On the third issue, the S-2 and S-3 revealed that in principle, Islamic teachings are an integral part of the life of the Sundanese urban communities. Embracing and practicing religious teachings does not only have theological meaning but is also part of efforts to maintain tradition, cultural identity, and cultural values. However, considering that Sundanese cultural values have been replaced by modern values of city life, Sundanese urban communities must adapt by making creative efforts to maintain existing traditions while integrating them with religious teachings. This adaptation process can be seen from the implementation of traditional Sundanese rituals that are practiced in modern ways, such as traditional birth ceremonies, various traditional wedding ceremonies, and others, all of which are full of Islamic values. In this way, the Sundanese urban communities can preserve their traditions while at the same time caring for their Islamic beliefs in the midst of the modern life of the city of Bandung. The sources stated:

“The cultural characteristics of Sundanese urban society which are full of religious values, in accordance with the expression “Sundanese must be a Muslim” (in Indonesian: *Nyunda kudu Muslim*), and the modern values of city life, present a unique and creative religious model of Sundanese urban society. This condition makes the religiosity of the Sundanese urban communities must be reinterpreted. People can no longer see the religious pattern of society only based on two extreme perspectives, instead, there must be a certain continuum that is able to accommodate the middle category for various types of diversity in urban society” (S-2, 24 October, 2022);

“Practicing Islamic teachings is maintaining the Sundanese tradition itself which has local wisdom that is in line with Islamic teachings. But today’s urban Bandung community is experiencing a lot of changes. The cultural values that become the identity of the Sundanese people have been eroded by the modern values of city life. Therefore, practicing various traditional ceremonies with Islamic overtones, such as the traditions of Nenjrag Bumi, Puput Puseur, Ekahan, Ngeuyek Seureuh, Ngebakan, Ngaras, Ngerik, and others are the last resort to preserve what is left of these Sundanese values” (S-3, 27 October, 2022).

The interviews conducted with religious leaders in the city of Bandung validate the diversity of Sundanese urban communities, which can range from pragmatic to ideological or even apathetic. The interpretation of religious teachings is influenced by factors such as motives, basic religious modalities, and the context of their lives. This is closely related to the currents

of globalization and modernization that require urban dwellers to adapt to the demands of modern life as part of a global society. As a result, the religious practices of Sundanese urban communities are often seen as both creative and ambiguous. On the one hand, they seek to assert their religious identity, while on the other hand, they struggle to reject the inevitability of changes in urban life as a space for freedom of rational individual choices.

3. Religious creative practices of Sundanese urban communities in the tension between tradition and modernization

Previous interviews indicated that the religious practices of the Sundanese urban communities were a reflection of the community's theological beliefs. In Sundanese urban communities, with a conventional social system, the practice of religion (Islam) is considered something that continues to process like society itself. The Sundanese urban communities are built through a dynamic tension between the demands of maintaining traditional values and the changes brought about by the modernization of the city. This condition, in turn, forces the Sundanese urban communities to make creative efforts to maintain social balance in the pull of tradition and modernity.

The theological-religious understanding of Sundanese urban communities develops dynamically in tandem with the growth of scientific discourse and the spread of religious narratives and teachings in society. However, the characteristics of urban society prioritizing rationality, change, competition, and production often trap individuals in routines that erode the meaning and spirituality of their lives. Nevertheless, this fast-paced character also leads urban dwellers to seek quick solutions to address the problem of the shallowness of meaning and spirituality of life. As a result, religion is often taught, understood, and practiced in a symbolic and expedient manner. People quickly engage in sacred religious teachings before moving on to work and pursue worldly gains. Religion serves to fill the void of meaning and spiritual dryness and becomes an instant self-image and identity in various contexts such as politics, power relations, and cultural identity.

The Sundanese urban communities in Bandung display various creative religious practices, such as traditional Sundanese-Islamic ceremonies, urban Sufism, and hijra movements, resulting from the aforementioned condition. According to Baker (2013), this reflects the manifestation of urban theology, which is classified into two categories: arborescent and rhizomatic. In the arborescent category, religion is perceived as a vertical space for personal interaction with God and an individual choice. In contrast, religion is viewed as a horizontal practice that involves the community, serving as the highest binding identity that unites them. Such theological facets create a religious face that is both innovative and unclear. Religious teachings are believed to connect individuals with God on a personal level, and everyone is free to interpret their spirituality. Yet, religion also facilitates social connection and cultural identity affirmation. The character of the community is shaped by certain religious interpretations prevalent in society. Communities adopting rigid, exclusive, and conservative religious interpretations tend to exhibit a similar social and cultural character.

The dialectic between Sundanese existential values and religious teachings adapted to motives, interests, power relations, or cultural attachment causes Sundanese urban communities to

be both pragmatic and ideological. If exclusive and textualist religious teachings and interpretations are accepted, rigid attitudes may emerge towards differences in faith, resulting in intolerant and discriminatory actions, and conflicts between different faiths. In contrast, moderate, inclusive, and values-aligned interpretations of religion that accept differences in faith, teach plurality as a necessity, or promote other forms of teaching that are more tolerant and inclusive, can create creative religious practices that align with Sundanese local wisdom. However, realizing this moderate religious practice is often difficult given the interrelation of cultural wisdom with politics and religious power relations (also see Beyers, 2017; Minnema, 2014).

The tension between tradition and modernity is strongly influenced by the effects of globalization and the modernization of urban life. The demands for increased production and competition force individuals to work as effectively and efficiently as possible to survive in the city. Rationality becomes the driving force for autonomy and societal progress, and anything irrational that hinders progress and reduces autonomy is abandoned (Wagner, 2022). However, the demands of modern city life can also lead to boredom, loss of meaning, and exhaustion. This tension often drives urban residents towards religious teachings, which are seen as providing meaning that is missing from their routine lives. Interestingly, some individuals turn to various irrational practices, such as Sufistic or spiritual practices, as a solution to these dilemmas (O'Callaghan, 2017). Ultimately, religion and these irrational practices are internalized as a way to combat feelings of exhaustion, saturation, and a lack of fulfillment that cannot be found in city life.

The cultural and religious dialectic of Sundanese urban communities, including those in Bandung, creates ambiguous and creative socio-cultural and religious practices. These practices are shaped by various tensions, including the tension between modern human rationality and the demand for solutions to the meaning of life that present irrational alternatives, the tension between personal freedom of belief and the demands for the same cultural identity that reject diversity in interpretations and understanding of faith, the tension between local wisdom values that promote harmony and rigid and exclusive religious values and understanding, and the tension between the desire to exist in the midst of competition with feelings of boredom and fatigue over competition and the acceleration of city life. These tensions reveal the origins of creativity and ambiguity in religious practices in urban communities. There is no definitive solution to these tensions, and religion for urban society encompasses various forms of expression, lifestyle, celebrations, imagination, politics, profession, and productivity that shape personal and communal self-identity (Lanz, 2014). The dialectic of religious practices and various tensions in urban life will continue to experience certain changes and dynamics of development following changing conditions of life and times.

From another perspective, the dialectic occurring in Bandung city indicates that urbanization has influenced religious practices and institutions, resulting in new religious movements, hybridity, and syncretism (Edwards, 2018; García Canclini, 1995; Hall, 2003). An important indication of this is the implementation of traditional Sundanese rituals, such as traditional birth and wedding ceremonies, which are practiced in modern ways and are infused with Islamic values. Celebrations of these traditional ceremonies, filled with prayers, symbols, and values reflecting Sundanese-Islamic traditions, represent creative cultural hybridity and syncretism in Bandung city. The syncretism of Islam and Sundanese is further reinforced

by religious institutions and their leaders who validate and facilitate various traditional ceremonies. In fact, religion (Islam) in Bandung city has become a significant contributing factor to the gentrification of certain areas through the construction of Islamic centers and other productive efforts, similar to what has occurred in Western societies (Day, 2014).

Urban life presents various challenges for individuals, making it difficult to determine the appropriate starting point and attitude towards life. This mundanity of life also makes it difficult for people to find peace and tranquility, as productivity and profit orientation are expected at all times (Tempest Williams, 2000). However, this condition highlights the need for religion in people's lives, which can be practiced and understood amidst various tensions. These factors become the basis for the religious creativity of people who integrate Islam and Sundanese culture, particularly in the city of Bandung. The religious practices in Bandung are in line with what Lanz (2014) described as urban religion, which emphasizes the mixture of various lifestyles, imaginations, infrastructures and materials, culture, politics, economy, professions, community formation, festivals, and celebrations in urban religious practices. These practices are continuously evolving and filled with tension between the demands of modern urban life, the desire for spiritual meaning, and the need for cultural identity that has been uprooted (Lanz, 2014).

The topic developed in the article and the research case are also important in the context of Western societies, despite the study being conducted in Bandung, Indonesia. Urbanization and cultural diversity are not limited to Indonesia or Southeast Asia, but are global phenomena that have significant implications for religious practices in Western societies. The diverse and complex nature of urban religious practices highlighted in the study is also evident in Western societies. By understanding the various constituent elements of religious practices, policymakers, practitioners, and researchers in Western societies can gain a deeper appreciation of the role of religion in shaping social, cultural, and political dynamics in contemporary societies.

The emphasis on the creative and pragmatic aspects of religion, such as social integration and community formation, is particularly relevant in Western societies, where religious communities are often seen as insular and disconnected from the wider society. The study's findings suggest that religion can be a source of social capital and can facilitate integration into broader urban communities, which has important implications for social cohesion and the promotion of diversity. The emphasis on the depth of religion, as demonstrated by the phenomenon of urban Sufism or hijra movement, is also relevant in Western societies, where there is a growing interest in spirituality and mysticism. Understanding how religious communities negotiate and reconcile traditional religious practices with contemporary urban realities is an important area of inquiry for researchers and practitioners in Western societies.

Conclusions

The religious practices of the Sundanese urban community are both creative and ambiguous. There are tensions between preserving tradition and adapting to modernization, between rationality and irrationality, between personal freedom and communal identity, and between Sundanese values and conservative religious values that prioritize boundaries and exclusivity. The theological understanding and religious practices of the community can appear friendly,

harmonious, and tolerant, but can also be cruel and intolerant towards differences in faith. Unique urban-cultural religious phenomena such as urban Sufism, hijra movements, religious-identity politics, and the preservation of Sundanese cultural rites with Islamic content, are the result of dialectics from the theological understanding of society in pragmatic faith competition and negotiation.

This study offers a sociological perspective on the modern life of Sundanese urban communities, as a creative construction of the application of theological-traditional values of religious teachings and pragmatic-modern values of urban life. The findings also provide an important insight into the religious practices of urban communities with strong cultural values. This study is significant for gaining a more comprehensive understanding of social phenomena and issues in urban communities related to their religious practices. It is essential to capture the changes and dialectics of urban communities, given the characteristics of urban life, which are creative, dynamic, changing rapidly, and filled with tensions.

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