

Mediatizing Tradition: The Role of Tengku Dayah in Shaping Digital Da'wah in Contemporary Aceh

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Abstract

The development of digital media has changed the global communication landscape, including in the religious realm. Social media has become a powerful tool to spread teachings and influence people's views. However, this phenomenon challenges traditional religious authorities in reaching people increasingly exposed to digitalization. This study examines the transformation of Tengku Dayah, a traditional Acehese scholar, who switched from physical da'wah to digital platforms, especially social media, in response to the demands of the digital era. Using a qualitative approach and case study methods, this study shows a paradigm change in the acceptance of social media as a da'wah tool while maintaining spiritual integrity, changes in the da'wah space also change the way and pattern of communication to be more relaxed and interactive according to the choice of platforms such as TikTok and YouTube. This research offers practical implications that support the transformation of Tengku Dayah's digital da'wah in the face of the constraints of the digital divide, with targeted digital literacy training programs and student support also being an effective solution, different from previous digital da'wah research that emphasized adoption trends, this study uniquely dissects the internal ethical dilemmas and adaptation strategies of tengku, which enriches the understanding of the sustainable relevance of tengku. Based on the socio-religious context of Aceh, these insights advance the study of digital religion and offer practical implications for traditional Islamic authorities.

Keywords;

Transformation, Tengku Dayah, Digital Era Preaching, Aceh

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tengku Rasyidin had just finished delivering da'wah live through the Tiktok platform on a Monday night in early October 2024, 312 people participated in da'wah online that night, this live da'wah became Tgk Rashidin's routine agenda every Monday and Saturday, the audience came from various regions and even from Malaysia, his da'wah was also recorded and uploaded on the You Tube platform. Tengku Asnawi Arakundo and Tengku Waled also did the same activity through the YouTube platform. Almost all Tengku Dayah in Aceh have started to preach using social media. Tengku Rasyidin had just finished delivering da'wah live through the Tiktok platform on a Monday night in early October 2024, 312 people participated in da'wah online that night, this live da'wah became Tgk

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The phenomenon of delivering da'wah through social media has become a daily scene of tengku dayah in Aceh, community activities are increasingly dense, residences far from balee tengku dayah, and the increasingly massive penetration of digital media in the lives of the people of Aceh today are a series of reasons that encourage tengku dayah to switch to social media.

In line with the findings presented by Meyer dan Moors (Meyer & Moors, 2005) , The religious process has always been mediated, the media has allowed changes in the way religion is present in the public space, religion is no longer limited to only being present in religious institutions but also spread through the media, which allows for wider interaction with society, this phenomenon is also said to be Stig Hjarvard(Hjarvard, 2008) , Hjarvard points out that mediatization affects not only the way religion is disseminated, but also how religion is practiced, understood, and integrated into modern life.

Several scholars have conducted research related to the adoption of digital media by ustadz and traditional scholars to convey religious teachings (Hilmi, 2021), in his article Hilmi highlights how preachers in Indonesia are adapting to the development of digital media, leveraging the power of audio-visual, digital algorithms, and YouTube's distinctive interactivity to reach a wider and more diverse audience, especially the younger generation who live in a fluid and fast-paced information landscape, while Nasir(Nasir, Rizal, Basri, & Pabbajah, 2024b), Talking about changes in the facilities and spaces of da'wah and tengku dayah education in Aceh, which used to be only in Meunasah, Bale beut and Mosque, has now been transformed according to the times through cafes, and social media. Rina Angriani (Angriani & Faridah, 2023) This article reviews how language style affects the effectiveness of the da'wah message conveyed to the audience, especially the younger generation who are the main target of the channel. Muhammad Choirin (Choirin, Guleng, Arbi, & Maulan, 2024) This article highlights how preachers use digital learning and online media to spread Islamic messages in an increasingly digitized society.

Other research has also explored how various digital media inform Islamic discourse, religious practices, and da'wah activities(Barendregt, 2009; Bunt, 2009; Heidbrink & Miczek, 2010). These three articles highlight how the transformation of religious people in using technology to strengthen faith, spread teachings, build communities and even be political, digital media today is not just a tool, but has become a cultural and ideological space.

The works of scholars that have been studied generally discuss da'wah innovations in digital media, but have not deeply highlighted Tengku Dayah's transformation in facing a new da'wah space, aspects such as the struggle within Tengku, the negotiation of religious authorities amid the dominance of popular digital figures, and cultural challenges in adapting to the language and aesthetics of social media are still underappreciated. In addition, the role of dayah institutions and the ethical and accountability dimensions of digital da'wah from the perspective of Tengku Dayah have also not been widely explored. In fact, amid the acceleration of technology, Tengku Dayah is not only required to be present online, but also to reflect on the way they convey Islamic values while maintaining the message's depth of meaning and authenticity.

In this context, Tengku Dayah in Aceh has historically been accustomed to delivering da'wah through physical spaces such as meunasah, mosques and *balee*, starting to switch to digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. This shift reflects a broader trend of mediatization, where

religion is adapting and being transformed by media technology. However, this transformation raises important questions, how did Tengku Dayah navigate the transition from traditional to digital da'wah spaces, and what adaptation strategies allowed them to maintain spiritual authority as well as relevance in the digital age?

On this basis, this study aims to overcome the limitations of previous research by analyzing the phenomenon of transformation of da'wah delivery by tengku dayah in Aceh through social media, this study aims to answer the main question: How Tengku dayah in Aceh experiences a transformation in da'wah through social media, especially from the perspective of paradigm shifts, dynamics of interaction with digital audiences, changes in communication patterns, as well as preferences for the technology and digital platforms used? This study argues that the transformation of Islamic da'wah in the digital era has brought profound implications for how traditional scholars interact with the increasingly digitized religious public. In addition, this phenomenon has created a new dynamic in the relationship between scholars and audiences, which is characterized by two-way interaction and the openness of digital public spaces.

2. METHODS

This study examines the transformation of tengku dayah da'wah in Aceh, using a qualitative approach with a case study method to understand the complexity of the phenomenon of tengku dayah transformation in Aceh in a more in-depth way to understand in a specific case because of its uniqueness, not solely to build generalizations (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2017) combining scientific rigor and humanist sensitivity to obtain more optimal results, as well as a holistic and embedded approach that allows a comprehensive exploration of the transformation process of da'wah Tengku Dayah on social media, with a focus on the paradigm shift of da'wah, the dynamics of interaction with digital audiences, communication patterns used, as well as the selection of technology or digital platforms as a medium of da'wah, this method was chosen because it is able to capture contextual nuances, the experience of the research subject, and the dynamics and make room for the voices, emotions, and meanings behind the data.

Informants were selected on a purposive maximum variation basis (Pawito, 2007), with consideration of the age variation. Variety of social media platforms used when preaching, actively preaching on social media regularly and consistently, having the number of followers or digital interactions that show audience involvement and being recognized by the Aceh Ulema Consultative Assembly (MPU) as a representation of Tengku Dayah and Dayah students in Aceh who are involved in the production of da'wah, with this consideration thirteen informants were selected, Nine tengku identified through an online search and recommendations of the Aceh Ulema Consultative Assembly (MPU), as well as four students from related dayah for the perspective of intergenerational collaboration, were sufficient for thematic saturation (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

In-depth interviews with tengku and students collected data, non-participatory observation of tengku dayah da'wah content on social media, observations targeting technology interaction and audience engagement, recorded without checklist for natural insights, this step was followed by digital documentation, such as analysis of videos, captions, audience comments, and the type of platform used, which was carried out and recorded and then transcribed verbatim for consistency, temporarily. The analysis was carried out using a qualitative thematic analysis model (Braun & Clarke, 2006) By performing transcription and immersion to dive deep into the data to capture implicit meaning, data organization conducts open coding to find initial patterns, then the grouping of codes into main themes

such as communication patterns and adaptation strategies, the last is thematic interpretation, while the data validity stage is strengthened through source and technique triangulation techniques, as well as member checking to informants to ensure the accuracy of data interpretation.

To ensure scientific reliability, this article refers to the Lincoln & Guba criteria (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), ensuring credibility through triangulation and prolonged engagement, transferability with rich contextual descriptions, dependability process with audit trails and procedural documentation, and confirmability measures in the form of researcher reflexivity against positionality and bias. As a researcher who is an Acehnese resident and lives close to the dayah environment, I am well aware of the subjective position in data interpretation. Therefore, a reflection journal records the influence of background, emotions, and assumptions during the study. This approach ensures that the analysis remains critical yet humane.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 FINDINGS

The widespread influence of social media on lifestyle and information consumption in the community has profoundly changed the da'wah practices of Tengku Dayah in Aceh, prompting them to adjust da'wah strategies to seize opportunities and overcome emerging challenges. This research revealed that Tengku Dayah switched from delivering long and formal sermons in physical assemblies to creating interesting short da'wah content, such as 1-3 minute TikTok videos that combine humor with Islamic teachings to adapt to the fast and low-attention digital environment.

The tengku dayah also adopted interactive formats, such as live Q&A sessions on TikTok and YouTube, responding to audience questions in real-time, which is very different from the traditional monologue style. This adaptation reflects a strategic response to digital audiences' preferences for accessibility and speed and the need to compete with non-traditional preachers who leverage the reach of social media to disseminate alternative interpretations, often challenging Tengku Dayah's authority. Tengku Dayah's transformation efforts can be seen in the four main findings presented in this study :

1. Shifting Paradigm

The transformation of Tengku Dayah in Aceh in using social media as a tool for preaching has undergone a long process, starting with internal struggles among Tengku Dayah who initially resisted using social media. Tengku Dayah believed social media brought more harm than good, viewing it as a platform focused on worldly entertainment, news, and games, making it unsuitable for preaching.

This sentiment is reflected in the statement of Tengku Dayah Imam during an interview:

"Meunyoe tangui media sosial, nyan akan leubeh merugoe, le that fitnah dan gosip nyang teuseubar, ureung-ureung nyang hana ilme agama nyang jeulaih pih geupeugah haba lam nyan, media sosial nyan hanya asoe hiburan duniawi, hana paih tangui nyan untuk tapeusampoe seruan-seruan keubaikeun lam agama" "If we use social media, it will bring more harm. There is a lot of slander, gossip, and people without proper religious knowledge speaking on it. Social media is filled with worldly entertainment and is not suitable for conveying calls to goodness in religion." (Tgk Imam, 2024).

This view was reinforced by Tengku Dayah Shalahuddin, who stated:

"Meungui media sosial nyan terserah bak ureung nyan, tapi harus ta ingat bahwa lam media sosial nyan le that hai-hai nyang jeut keu seubab geutanyoe rhet lam tindakan-tindakan nyang hana sesuai deungon tuntutan agama Seruan untuk tapeubuet nyang jroh, ta tinggai desya dan nyang jeuhet melalui media sosial nyan nakeuh nyang jroh dan jroh, tapi mandum na teumpat jih." "Using social media is up to the individual, but we must remember that there are many things on social media that can lead us to actions that are not in line with religious

teachings. Calls to do good, avoid sin, and reject evil through social media are good, but everything has its place." (Tgk Shalahuddin Muhammad, 2024).

From the statements of Tengku Dayah Imam and Shalahuddin, it is clear that Tengku Dayah in Aceh initially kept their distance and were reluctant to use social media for preaching. This reflects their cautious approach in choosing media to convey religious knowledge to the community. The resistance of Tengku Dayah toward social media is also evident in their policies prohibiting santri (students) from having social media accounts. As expressed by Imran, one of the santri in Aceh:

"Tengku Dayah sangat melarang kamoe santri bek na akun bak media sosial, telepon hanya digunakan untuk komunikasi ngon rakan dan keluarga, dilua kebutuhan nyan dilarang" "Tengku Dayah strictly forbids us santri from having social media accounts. Phones are only to be used for communication with friends and family; anything beyond that is prohibited." (Imran, 2024).

This sentiment was echoed by Amar, another santri:

," Kayem jih akan na sanksi keu ureueng nyang meulanggeh ngon aturan tengku dayah, kareuna tengku dayah kayem geubri peuingat keu santri bahwa media sosial nyan akan meupeugadoh geutanyoe dari mita ileumee." "There are usually sanctions for those who violate Tengku Dayah's rules. Tengku Dayah often reminds us that social media can distract us from seeking knowledge." (Amar, 2024).

These accounts show that Tengku Dayah set clear boundaries in interacting with social media, not only for themselves but also for their santri and the surrounding community. However, the rigid stance of Tengku Dayah toward social media began to soften over time. The massive social media penetration in society forced Tengku Dayah to adapt to the changing environment. They realized that traditional preaching methods were insufficient to reach the increasingly digital audience. As Tengku Muttaqien explained:

"Jameun ka meu ubah, jinoe mandum ureung pakek media sosial, ka leubeh mudah bagi awak nyan untuk mita macam-macam informasi, jadi ka troh watee tengku dayah pakek media nyoe untuk peusampoe dakwah droe, karena handphone pih nakeuh alat yang geucipta untuk kemudahan manusia, lagee neupeugah le Allah lam Al-Qur'an, surah . Al-A'la ayat 8 ,"

"Times have changed. Now, everyone uses social media, and it has become easier for them to access various information. It is time for Tengku Dayah to use this medium to deliver sermons, as mobile phones are tools created for human convenience, as stated by Allah in the Quran, Surah Al-A'la, verse 8." (Tgk Muttaqien, 2024).

Tengku Munawar shared similar sentiments, expressing concern over the declining attendance at traditional preaching gatherings: *"People today are increasingly busy with work, live far apart, and some have even migrated abroad, making it difficult for them to attend preaching gatherings. By using social media, the congregation can still follow the sermons we deliver, even if they cannot attend in person."* (Tgk Munawar, 2024). Muttaqien and Munawar highlighted how Tengku Dayah in Aceh has begun adapting to technological advancements and societal changes. Using social media as a preaching tool is a logical response to these developments.

The religious authority of Tengku Dayah in Aceh has also been challenged. The emergence of Salafi preachers in Aceh over the past two decades has disrupted the religious authority traditionally held by Tengku Dayah. These preachers, skilled in using social media for preaching, have attracted the attention of urban communities. As Tengku Muttaqien noted:

"Bak media sosial lawet nyoe, na ureung-ureung nyang peugah haba teuntang agama tapi hana ilme dan menyimpang jioh dari ajaran Nabi Muhammad dan ulama geutanyoe awai. Tanyoe harôh tapeutheun dakwah awaknyan," "On social media today, some people speak about religion without proper knowledge, deviating from

the teachings of Prophet Muhammad and our early scholars. We must counter their preaching." (Tgk Muttaqien, 2024).

Tengku Ismunardi expressed similar concerns, emphasizing the duty of Tengku Dayah to correct religious teachings in line with the guidance of the Prophet:

"What is preached by those who claim to understand religion, such as maulid celebrations, tahlilan, and other practices, is presented as if it is correct, even supported by Quranic verses and hadiths. If this continues, it could harm the faith of the community." (Tgk Ismunardi, 2024).

Tengku Sulaiman also shared this view: *"Many of my santri or congregation members living outside the region or abroad have requested that Tengku Dayah preach on social media. They often see and hear sermons from preachers on social media, assuming what they say is correct, even though it deviates from true religious teachings."* (Tgk Sulaiman, 2024).

From these accounts, it is clear that the desire to maintain the religious authority long held by Tengku Dayah has driven them to become active on social media as a countermeasure to the rise of Salafi preachers. This contestation is particularly evident in the urban areas of Aceh. The acceptance of social media by Tengku Dayah in Aceh is closely tied to their internal role as religious figures. As Tengku Shalahuddin explained: *"Sidroe-droe ureueng nyang keuneuk pakek media sosial untuk peuseubar ajaran agama wajib dilee geupeuluroh niet gobnyan beutoi-beutoi demi Allah, mangat bek pamer.,"* *"Anyone who intends to use social media to spread religious teachings must first purify their intention sincerely for the sake of Allah, to avoid showing off."* (Tgk Shalahuddin Muhammad, 2024).

In addition to the issue of intention, Tengku Dayah also emphasized the importance of avoiding slander and unhealthy debates. As Tengku Muttaqien stated: *"Watëë geungui media sosial, sidroe ureuëng peugah haba agama geuhindari nibak geupeuseubar fitnah keu ureuëng laén dan geuhindari debat-debat nyang hana meuguna keu agama dan Masyarakat,"* *"When using social media, religious preachers must avoid spreading slander and engaging in debates that are not beneficial to religion and society."* (Tgk Muttaqien, 2024).

Guided by these principles, Tengku Dayah has begun to use platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram to deliver their sermons. They have come to recognize the need to adapt to the presence of social media for preaching, while maintaining strict rules to preserve the purity of their messages. Among the Tengku Dayah in Aceh who have embraced social media are Tengku Ismunandar, who delivers sermons on YouTube (YouTube, 2024), and Tengku Asnawi Arakundo, whose sermons on TikTok (TikTok, 2024) have gained popularity for their boldness. Tengku Muttaqien also actively uses Instagram for preaching.

2. Changes in Interaction Spaces

The shift in the preaching spaces of Tengku Dayah in Aceh in the digital era has moved from public to private spaces. Tengku Dayah, accustomed to speaking in front of large audiences, experiences a different atmosphere when transitioning to social media. The warmth and enthusiasm of the congregation in public preaching spaces are not felt in private digital spaces. As expressed by Tengku Dayah Abaty Muzakir:

"Suasana that beda watee meudakwah di mesjid dan bak media sosial , bak dayah lon jeut meurumpok, mumat jaroe dan meudiskusi tatap muka ngon jamaah, peulom mumat jaroe Nyan keuh wate phon lon dakwah bak media sosial, tapi jinoe ka biasa.," *"The atmosphere is very different when preaching in a mosque than on social media. In the mosque, I can meet, shake hands, and have face-to-face discussions with the congregation. When I started preaching on social media, I could not see them, let alone shake hands. However, now, I have gotten used to it."* (Abaty Muzakir, 2024).

Tengku Dayah Ismunardi echoed this sentiment:

"Preaching on social media feels like acting in a play. The congregation is invisible, but I must speak like people are before me. Sometimes it feels funny. That is why I only share recordings of my sermons in front of a live congregation on social media. This way, I can still feel the congregation's presence before me, and it feels better." (Tgk Ismunardi, 2024).

Tengku Dayah Fakrur Reza also shared a similar experience:

"The atmosphere is palpable when we preach in a mosque or an open field. Seeing the congregation's presence energizes me. On social media, it's very different. I must build my enthusiasm and energy, imagining the congregation's laughter when I share humor during my sermons." (Tgk Fakrur Reza, 2024).

The accounts of these three Tengku Dayah illustrate how the preachers deeply feel mediated communication psychologically. Social media creates a distance between Tengku Dayah and their audience, diminishing the warmth of direct interaction with the congregation. Tengku Dayah has noted the loss of the sacredness of preaching spaces on social media. The shift to digital platforms has altered the atmosphere of religious gatherings. Congregants who attend mosques come with the intention and purpose of seeking knowledge, sitting solemnly to listen to sermons. In contrast, social media users often listen to sermons while multitasking, as highlighted by Tengku Dayah Rasyidin:

"Those who use social media are different from those who come specifically to listen to sermons in the mosque. Mosque attendees clearly show their thirst for knowledge; they come and sit seriously to listen. On social media, this is not visible. Social media users may intend to listen to sermons but often do so while engaging in other activities, such as shopkeepers serving customers or housewives doing kitchen work." (Tgk Rasyidin, 2024).

The abundance of content available simultaneously on social media makes it easy for users to lose concentration while listening to sermons. Tengku Dayah Sulaiman also raised this issue: *"There are many benefits to preaching on social media. Users can access sermons anytime, anywhere. However, sometimes users listen to sermons while watching other content or only briefly. Young users, in particular, tend to get bored quickly, reducing the impact of the sermons we deliver."* (Tgk Sulaiman, 2024).

Tengku Shalahuddin also addressed this concern:

"Adab leubeh manyang dari ilme, sidroe ureung yg deungoe dakwah harus menjaga adab, walau pengguna media sosial jeut kalon dan deungoe dakwah dipat mantong, adab dalam mita ilme harus tetap ada, bek deungoe dakwah sambil nonton acara laen atawa peugot buet laen, nikmat ilme akan gadoh nyoe remind keu usten of sosial media, nikmat ilme akan gadoh nyoe remind keu usten of sosial media." *"Adab (manners) is more important than knowledge. Those who listen to sermons must maintain proper adab. Even though social media users can watch and listen to sermons anywhere, the adab of seeking knowledge must still be upheld. Do not listen to sermons while watching other shows or doing other tasks, as this diminishes the blessings of knowledge. I often remind social media users to pay attention to this."* (Tgk Shalahuddin Muhammad, 2024).

As Tengku Dayah transitioned to digital spaces, they had to work hard to maintain their preaching spaces' religious and solemn atmosphere on social media. The temptation for users to view other content while listening to sermons risks stripping the spiritual essence from these digital preaching spaces. The heterogeneity of social media users' educational and socio-cultural backgrounds poses a challenge for Tengku Dayah in preaching online. The rapid development of social media technology and its widespread accessibility have resulted in a diverse user base. This diversity requires Tengku Dayah to carefully craft their sermon themes to reach all audience segments, as Tengku Dayah Rasyidin explained: *"Preaching on social media is like speaking to one person. I must carefully consider what I say to ensure my sermons resonate with social media users. When preaching in a mosque, I know my audience and their regional context, so I can tailor my sermons accordingly."* (Tgk Rasyidin, 2024).

Tengku Dayah must also adapt their language when preaching on social media. As Tengku Dayah Fakrur Reza noted, *"When delivering sermons on social media, I pay close attention to the language I use. I feel more comfortable preaching in Acehnese, as it feels more natural. However, I understand that not everyone on social media understands Acehnese, especially those living in urban areas. Therefore, I have to choose my language carefully when preaching online."* (Tgk Fakrur Reza, 2024). The diversity of social media users has prompted Tengku Dayah to select themes and languages that align with their audience's segmentation. This ensures that the sermons are well-targeted and understood correctly by social media users.

3. Communication Patterns

The synchronous communication pattern of Tengku Dayah in mosques has shifted to asynchronous communication on social media. This change in communication spaces has also impacted the communication patterns used. The synchronous communication pattern, typically employed by Tengku Dayah when preaching from the mosque pulpit, has now been replaced by an asynchronous pattern on social media. Social media users have warmly welcomed this shift in communication patterns, especially those who live far from Tengku Dayah and cannot attend preaching gatherings in person. As expressed by Abdurahman: *"Alhamdulillah, Tengku Dayah is now willing to use social media for preaching. Even though I live far from them, I can still follow their sermons through recordings, and I am very satisfied with this."* (Abdurahman, 2024).

Siti Maysarah shared a similar sentiment: *"I am very happy that I can still follow Tengku's sermons despite my busy schedule. I can't listen to sermons while working, as my boss might reprimand me. So, I often listen to sermons during my breaks at night."* (Siti Maysarah, 2024).

The flexibility offered by social media allows users to continue enjoying Tengku's sermons. The asynchronous communication pattern Tengku Dayah uses greatly helps users stay connected to their preaching. The monologue-style communication of Tengku Dayah from the mosque pulpit has shifted to a more interactive style on social media. The communication style of Tengku Dayah on social media aligns with the interactive nature of these platforms. Social media users often use features like "Like," "Love," or other reaction emojis to express their feelings about a post. As Tengku Dayah Munawar explained: *"Preaching on social media is very different. We must stay connected with users, whether by speaking directly or simply replying to their comments. This makes them feel valued because we care."* (Tgk Munawar, 2024).

Tengku Dayah Rasyidin shared a similar view: *"Tengku should not get too absorbed in delivering sermons on social media, especially during live sessions. We must pay attention to the audience's condition like preaching in front of a crowd. The same applies to social media users. We must engage with them by directly addressing them or using images."* (Tgk Rasyidin, 2024).

Tengku Dayah has transformed their communication style from a monologue on the pulpit to a more interactive approach. This change is a response to the habits of social media users, who are more active in interacting, even though the communication is mediated. The shift from formal to relaxed and adaptive communication styles is another significant change. The formal and structured communication pattern of Tengku Dayah, characterized by long-duration sermons in mosques, has become less relevant on social media. Tengku Dayah has adapted its style to be more relaxed, aligning with the communication preferences of social media users. As Tengku Ismunardi stated, *"The content of sermons delivered to social media users should not be too serious. It should include more humor and be more relaxed, without rushing, because social media users generally prefer this style."* (Tgk Ismunardi, 2024).

Tengku Imam also emphasized this point:

"Tengku wajib takalon peu media nyang dipakek dan soe nyang kalon dakwah geuh, meunyoe leubeuh le aneuk muda maka dakwah geuh beu ringan, bek serius that, " *"Tengku must consider the media being used and the audience viewing the sermon. If the audience is mostly young people, the sermon should be light and not too serious."* (Tgk Imam, 2024).

From the statements of these two Tengku Dayah, it is clear that they have chosen a more relaxed communication style and tailored their themes to suit social media users. This ensures that the sermons remain engaging and can be followed by their audience.

4. Media Selection

Ease of use is a key preference for Tengku Dayah when selecting and utilizing social media platforms for preaching. Various considerations influence their choice of social media platforms, including user-friendliness. Limited knowledge and skills also play a role in this decision, as stated by Tengku Abati Muzakir:

"Peuguna media sosial, lon sesuaikan ngon kemampuan lon dan aneuk murid di pesantren Islam, aneuk murid umum jih leubeuh mudah pakek TikTok, ya lon pakek TikTok, karena awak nyan yang urus mandum, lon cuma harus pakek." *"I choose social media platforms based on my capabilities and those of my students at the Islamic boarding school. General students find TikTok easier to use, so I use TikTok because it handles everything. I just need to use it."* (Abati Muzakir, 2024).

Tengku Dayah Sulaiman expressed the same reason: *"The choice of social media is purely based on ease of use. The equipment I have is also limited—I don't own a camera for recording, only this mobile phone. So, we just start with what we have."* (Tgk Sulaiman, 2024).

Limited skills and equipment are key considerations for Tengku Dayah in choosing social media platforms. In most cases, Tengku Dayah is assisted by students in operating social media platforms; they only use them, and some even fully entrust their students with managing the platforms while they simply act as the main figure in the content. Popularity and trends are also crucial factors in their decision-making. Another reason for choosing certain social media platforms is their widespread popularity. Assuming that these platforms are widely used and liked, Tengku Dayah opts to use them for preaching. As expressed by Tengku Fakrur Reza: *"I use social media platforms that are commonly used by the public, making it easier for users to follow my preaching without having to download another application."* (Tengku Fakrur Reza, 2024).

A similar sentiment was shared by Tengku Munawar: *"If Tengku uses a platform that is not commonly used by our community, such as Telegram or others, it will first make it difficult for the public. Secondly, our preaching will be in vain because no one will see it. Choosing TikTok or YouTube is also because these platforms offer video features, allowing the audience to watch while enjoying the content."* (Tgk Munawar, 2024).

These statements from Tengku Dayah illustrate that the selection of social media platforms is primarily determined by public preference. They strive to provide convenience for social media users to continue enjoying the preaching without downloading additional applications, ensuring that the message reaches them effectively.

3.2. DISCUSSION

The transformation of Tengku dayah in Aceh in preaching on social media is a phenomenon

that does not only show the transition of the medium from physical space to virtual space, but marks a shift and needs to be understood as a complex and interdisciplinary process that is not only related to technological choices, but also concerns spiritual, cultural, and relational dimensions, to read the phenomenon using several frameworks: Hjarvard's theory of Mediatization of religion (Hjarvard, 2008) to explain how the media is not only a means of conveying messages, but also a cultural agent that helps shape religious content and practices. In a space that is increasingly liquid today. Eliade's theory of the sacred and the profane (Eliade, 1959) gives an image and shows an understanding that the sacredness of space is no longer exclusive to physical space, but also migrates to digital space which initially could be formed into a virtual assembly full of spiritual meaning, from Jenkins (Jenkins, 2009) with participatory culture theory, trying to read the transformation of *tengku dayah* in Aceh who is now an active participant in *da'wah* on social media, through interaction, response, and creative reproduction of religious messages, the transformation of *Tengku dayah* in Aceh can be read as a paradigm shift as explained by Kuhn (Kuhn, 2022). With Kuhn's view, we can see that *tengku dayah* in Aceh forms a new way of constructing *da'wah* which is conveyed as a response to current technological developments in order to maintain authority in the community and still be able to convey teachings and establish socio-religious relations through social media.

This study's results demonstrate *Tengku Dayah*'s efforts in Aceh to completely transform how they deliver sermons to the community, in line with the development of information technology. This transformation is not only about the methods and styles of preaching on social media but also involves changes in their attitudes and mindset. The context of this transformation can be seen in four key findings from this research:

First, there has been a significant paradigm shift among *Tengku Dayah* in Aceh regarding using social media for preaching. Despite initial resistance, the acceptance of social media as a tool for preaching illustrates the internal struggles *Tengku Dayah* faced in responding to societal and social media development. As highlighted by Hew Wai Weng (Hew, 2018), social media has become an inseparable part of people's lives, especially among urban communities. This situation has driven the paradigm shift among *Tengku Dayah*. This transformation aligns with Kuhn's theory (Kuhn, 1997), which involves reevaluating existing practices, emerging new methods, and forming new norms. However, the use of social media remains bound by an ethical framework of sincerity and the desire to serve Allah. As Campbell (Campbell, 2010) explains through the concept of the religious-social shaping of technology, this ensures that the paradigm shift does not compromise the spiritual integrity of *Tengku Dayah*'s preaching, even though the commodification of preaching is widely open on social media. On the other hand, as Knut Lundby (Lundby, 2013) suggests, by embracing social media, *Tengku Dayah* has successfully preserved their religious authority and ensured the relevance of their preaching in the digital era. Amidst the changing dynamics of the community, this has increased the epistemic dependence on *Tengku Dayah* in the use of social media.

Second, the change in interaction spaces highlights the communication challenges faced by *Tengku Dayah*. Unlike mosques, which are sacred spaces, social media is a profane space. Borrowing Mircea Eliade's (Eliade, 1959) terminology, this space lacks spiritual dimensions. However, social media also has the potential to become a sacred space depending on how it is used. This aligns with Meyer and Moors' (Meyer & Moors, 2005) argument that media always mediate religious processes. The role of media becomes a bridge for how religious messages are delivered and received by the community. However, the rapid flow of information and the allure of various entertainment on social media require the expertise, skills, and charisma of *Tengku Dayah* to capture the attention of social media users and

keep them engaged with the sermons. As emphasized by Hope Cheong and Turner (Cheong, Huang, & Poon, 2011; Turner & Nasir, 2016) the epistemic authority of religious leaders is key when interacting on social media. This authority must be combined with the ability to craft messages so that users can interpret them as intended by Tengku Dayah. However, as Stuart Hall (Hall, 2007) notes, the heterogeneity of the audience creates various possibilities for how information is received, ranging from full acceptance to outright rejection. Tengku Dayah must understand the diversity of their audience and tailor their messages to be effective and relevant.

Third, the shift in communication patterns to a more relaxed style in delivering sermons on social media can be seen as an adaptation to social media's interactive and flexible nature. Although social media, as Triveno (Trevino, Lengel, & Daft, 1987) points out, is less contextually rich compared to face-to-face communication, Tengku Dayah recognizes that social media's flexibility in terms of time and reach makes it an effective choice, especially for digital preaching. With the right communication patterns, these limitations can be minimized, allowing Tengku Dayah to maintain the relevance and effectiveness of their preaching. This choice of communication pattern is also part of the effort to strengthen the connection between social media users and Tengku Dayah's sermons. Social media users who enjoy following Tengku Dayah's sermons are generally former santri (students) or devoted followers, creating a homophilic environment on social media. As Gonzalo Rivero (Rivero, 2019) We can see that Tengku Rashidin online da'wah participants are virtual communities that actively interact because of homophilia, engagement of common values and interests among followers on the one hand is an advantage for tengku dayah. However, this homophilic effect tends to make da'wah cannot reach a wider audience for reasons of different views, for that tengku dayah must design an inclusive da'wah message, by using the language and theme of da'wah that can be accepted by various circles, especially young people and urban Muslims in Aceh.

Fourth, Tengku Dayah chose social media platforms based on their ease of use and popularity among the public. This choice reflects their strategy to ensure their sermons reach as many people as possible. In addition to considering their popularity among the public, using social media does not require a high financial investment; middlemen can produce sermon content using only smartphones and free editing tools, making sermons sustainable. The platform's viral potential amplifies the impact at no additional cost, as user-driven sharing and algorithmic push drive organic growth. This cost-effectiveness is particularly significant for Tengku Dayah, where the financial resources for traditional preaching methods may be limited.

This option is also related to a participatory culture, allowing two-way communication between the middleman and the audience, live chat and comment sections that are in the comments section on social media platforms as well as live chat allowing the Tengku Dayah to answer questions, clarify misunderstandings, and tailor the content to the needs of the audience, this interactivity builds a digital community, or "virtual ummah," which fosters a sense of community that is geographically dispersed. Tengku Dayah also utilizes user-generated content, to expand their message collaboratively, this phenomenon as conveyed by Henry Jenkins (Jenkins, 2009) Jenkins defines participatory culture as the way different people or communities act in their capacity as consumers as well as contributors and play a major role in shaping content on social media, this condition allows for the creation of a space for collaboration and shared contribution, where everyone can be part of a larger media ecosystem, on this side tengku dayah not only acts as a consumer of social media but has become a producer who acted as a preacher of the sermon.

Limited knowledge and technical equipment led Tengku Dayah to choose easy-to-use

platforms like TikTok and YouTube. This phenomenon suggests that usability and perceived benefits are the main principles in adopting technology, especially for users who do not have a strong technical background (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). Collaboration with students in managing social media operations is a smart choice (Van Dijk, 2006). Tengku Dayah's limited digital skills were overcome through the help of students, who are generally more tech-savvy. This collaboration, with students who act as a "digital bridge," allows Tengku Dayah to remain relevant in the digital era.

The digital divide is a real challenge Tengku Dayah faces in adopting social media for preaching. Although this can be addressed through intergenerational collaboration, the selection of user-friendly platforms, and adaptation to media characteristics, stakeholders need to focus on improving digital literacy and technological infrastructure for Tengku Dayah. This will maximize the potential of digital preaching, ensuring that religious messages remain relevant in the digital era. Using social media is a highly strategic step that Tengku Dayah must take in Aceh to expand their reach. As Patrick Eisenlohr (Eisenlohr, 2012) suggests, the media serves as a platform that extends religious spaces beyond traditional institutions, allowing religion to be accessed and practiced more flexibly within society.

In contrast to others, this study reveals the inherent friction in adapting local oral traditions to global visual media without sacrificing local identity. For future research and practice, these findings offer actionable strategies. Tengku Dayah can take advantage of tailored digital literacy programs, supported by institutions such as MPU Aceh, which focus on content creation and platform analytics to optimize reach without sacrificing substance.

Content production with santri must be formalized through dayah-based workshops, ensuring alignment with religious goals. In addition, developing a centralized da'wah platform that curates verified content can ward off misinformation while strengthening Tengku Dayah's voice. Researchers are advised to examine the long-term impact of these adaptations on the perception of religious audiences and authorities, broadening the discourse on digital religion. By addressing these practical and theoretical dimensions, this research enriches the understanding of the complex interactions of mediatization with traditional Islamic leadership, making a powerful contribution to the debate on religion and technology.

3. CONCLUSION

The transformation of tengku dayah in Aceh in using social media to preach shows changes that are not only technological, but also spiritual, cultural, and relational. This process shows a paradigm shift, as explained by Kuhn, where social media is not just a tool, but a new space that helps shape the way of thinking and conveying religious values. Through Hjarvard's theory of mediatization, Eliade's sacred-profane concept, and Jenkins' participatory culture, this study confirms that social media is a new field of da'wah that allows relationships, authority, and religious meanings to be reconstructed more flexibly while remaining spiritually valuable. Practically, the study results show that Tengku Dayah can adapt to social media through changes in communication styles, the selection of appropriate platforms, and collaboration with the younger generation. Technical limitations are overcome through efficient strategies and collaborative approaches, allowing da'wah to reach a wider audience, especially the urban young generation. Challenges remain, especially in maintaining message depth, religious authority, and dealing with heterogeneous digital audience fragmentation.

This research enriches the theory of religious mediatization in the local context and opens up space for critical reflection on the relationship between tradition and technology. In the future, it is

suggested that there be a special digital literacy program for tengku dayah, the development of a verified da'wah platform, and content production training that is integrated with Islamic values. Further research can explore the long-term impact of this transformation on the perception of religious authorities, as well as the dynamics of digital da'wah acceptance in an increasingly digital society; further research can also look at the da'wah activities of Tengku Dayah in the West and the interior of Aceh, which have not been explored. The limitations of the theory used to see this phenomenon are also a shortcoming in this article.

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