RITUALS OF ISLAMIC SPIRITUALITY

A STUDY OF MAJLIS DHIKR GROUPS IN EAST JAVA
Rituals of Islamic Spirituality
A Study of Majlis Dhikr Groups in East Java

Arif Zamhari
Islam in Southeast Asia Series

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Foreword

This beautiful study by Arif Zamhari offers a rare glimpse into the practices of Islamic spirituality in contemporary Java. Dr Zamhari focuses on three distinct groups in East Java who gather under the inspired religious leadership of a notable kyai to invoke the Divine Names in the remembrance of God (Dhikr Allah). Each of the groups is remarkably different yet they adhere to a common tradition that has deep historical roots. At present, these groups are the popular manifestation of a resurgent devotional Islam – an open, active, and engaging form of Sufi worship.

Dr Zamhari’s study also provides remarkable insights into the working of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) at a grass-roots level. Each of the groups, which Dr Zamhari designates as Majlis Dhikr, has established itself under the broad umbrella of NU orthodoxy. Yet none of Majlis Dhikr has been given the formal recognition of mu’tabarah that NU has accorded tarekat such as Naqshabandiyah, Qadiriyyah, Shattiriyah or Tijaniyyah. Indeed the issue of recognition has arisen primarily in relation to just one of these groups, the Ṣalawat Wāḥidiyat; the other two groups, the Īstighāthat Iḥsāniyyat and the Dhikr al-Ghāfīlin, are even less formally constituted.

Thus in studying Sufi devotional practice that occurs outside the bounds of organized tarekat, Dr Zamhari has had to develop an appropriate terminology to locate such diverse groups within a pertinent frame of reference. His efforts are as innovative as they are revealing. Although these groups and others like them can not be considered as tarekat, they share much in common with tarekat and are part of a spiritual continuum that is closely linked to the tarekat tradition on Java. As Dr Zamhari makes clear, to understand Islam on Java, it is essential to perceive the full spectrum of its religiosity.

This book leads into the world of tasawuf – the mystic teachings of Islam. Dr Zamhari devotes considerable attention to an exegesis of critical concepts underlying the spiritual practices of the Majlis Dhikr and the interpretative basis for these practices within orthodox teaching. At the same time, he is able to tie his exegesis to a living tradition. He is also able to show how kyai act as charismatic religious leaders and to provide a portrait of some of these remarkable ulama.

Dr Zamhari’s portrayal of the kyai who founded the three Majlis Dhikr that he examines – Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf, the founder of Ṣalawat Wāḥidiyat, Kyai Abdul Latif Muhammad, known as Gus Latif, founder of Īstighāthat Iḥsāniyyat...
and Kyai Hamin Jazuli known as Gus Mik, founder of the *Dhikr al-Ghafilin* – is a study in contrasts. The deep spirituality and learning of each of these kyai is evident; their genealogical ties within the NU community are made clear, and yet their individuality and their differences in religious approaches are particularly notable. The kyai of NU are a diverse group.

The person of the kyai is central to the development of these Sufi groups and each has its base in a particular pesantren. Dr Zamhari is able to weave all of these elements together – personal, sociological and theological – in a clear, coherent and sympathetic exposition.

Dr Zamhari’s ability to create this work is based on his intimate knowledge of East Java and of its pesantren community. Dr Zamhari was born in Lamongan and educated there at Madrasah Bustanul Ulum before taking up further study in Malang at Pesantren Miftahul Huda, then at Pesantren Sabilurrasyad and, thereafter, at IAIN Sunan Ampel Malang. He did his PhD in the Department of Anthropology in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at the ANU from 2003 to 2007 and has since returned to Indonesia where he lectures at different institutions: at UIN Malang, Ma’had Aly Al-Hikam, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah and Paramadina University in Jakarta, and at IAIN Sunan Ampel in Surabaya.
Dedications

To my parents who always encouraged me to seek knowledge
And to those who always fill my life:
My beloved wife, Yuni Arovah,
My son, Balya Muhammad Izzat,
My daughter, Taliah Aqilah Farnaz,
My baby, Muhammad Haikal Makarim
Acknowledgments

Alhamdulillah, all praises due to Allah, I can finally complete this study and my study. I would like to acknowledge several people in Australia and Indonesia for the contribution they made to this study. I would also like to apologise to anyone whom I forget to mention here.

First of all, my thanks go to the Australian government who offered me sponsorship through Australian Development Scholarship (ADS) for conducting my study. I am grateful to Australian government for this funding. Without this funding, it would not have been financially possible for me to come to study at The Australian National University. I am also grateful for the kind assistance I received from the AusAid liaison officers at ANU: Carol Laslett, Louise Jackson, Debra Reed, Anthony Bowden, and Stephanie Black, thank you all very much.

I owe great debt to Professor James J. Fox who has been my principal supervisor since I began my studies in the Department of Anthropology, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University. I would like to thank him for his considerable assistance at important moments of my study. Before studying in Australia, I met him first time at the Anthropology Conference at the University of Udayana, Bali. I remember that at that time, even though I never met him before, he seemed to me like a guru who is always interested in his murid’s study. I cannot forget that he was the first professor in Australia who gave me a strong recommendation before formally applying for an ADS Scholarship and studying at the Australian National University. As my principal supervisor he even visited me during my fieldwork in Kediri. His guidance has continued even while he was on leave at Harvard University. He is like a father who always cares for his children.

My Co-Supervisor on this work, Prof. Kathryn Robinson, has also been very helpful to me in many respects. She initiated several informal meeting and discussion before I presented my paper at the International Conference at The National University of Singapore (NUS). During this informal discussion, I received invaluable feedback from her and from other participants. The discussion with her before and after midterm seminar has shaped my idea about Majlis Dhikr groups in Indonesia. She also helped me with information regarding literature and seminars which are closely related to my field. I would like to express my thanks to Ibu Kathy.

In addition to Professor Fox and Professor Robinson, my advisor on this work, Prof. Virginia Hooker (Mbak Nia), has been very helpful to me. I would like
to express my thanks for her patience and attention. Her deep understanding of Indonesian Islam and Indonesian Islamic texts has enriched my perspective of the subject. She not only provided me with references which are related to my subject but also sent them to my mail box. I also thank my advisor Dr Greg Fealy for his assistance especially in dealing with Indonesian terms and providing me with literature on Islam.

There are too many people in Kediri to whom I am indebted. Without their willingness to spare their time and to share their perceptions with me, it would not have been possible for me to complete my study. I express my thanks to the family of Pak Mahmud and Ibu Mahmud, especially Mbak Ati and Mas Mughni, who have introduced me to Pesantren Jampes, Kediri. My deep thanks go to friendly people such as Gus Latif Muhammad (the leader of Ihsaniyyat group), Kyai Misbah (the senior kyai in Jampes), Kyai Zainuddin (the vice leader of the Wahidiyat group), Kyai Saiful (from the Dhikr al-Ghafilin group), and Gus Fahri Fauzi (the leader of the Dhikr al-Ghafilin group) for their deep understanding of Islamic ritual. These persons are busy persons with their students, family and ummat; however they generously shared their time and ideas with me and enthusiastically answered my questions.

My thanks also go to those who have always been kind and willing to help me in the department of Anthropology: Prof. Mark Mosko, as the head of department; Ben Cauchi, the late Leon Nolan and Chris Thomson who were always willing to help with IT problems; Fritha Jones, Penelope Judd and Ann Buller who were really kind and helpful and shared their warm friendship; and the administrator of the department, Fay Castles who was always been lovely and kind.

I also thank to Drs. Syu’aib Mallombasi, the Director of the State of Islamic Studies (STAIN) Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi who has given permission me to leave my duties as a lecturer. He and his family gave me a warm place when I firstly came to Kendari and supported me to study abroad.

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My beloved wife, Yuni Arovah, has supported me during my studies in Canberra. She has given me enormous power to complete my studies. I realise how difficult her life in Australia has been with two kids and a new baby born in Canberra during my final period of study. My three little sweeties: Balya Muhammad Izzat, Taliah Aqilah Farnaz, and Muhammad Haikal Makarim have been a great inspiration for me during my study in Canberra. I dedicated my work to them.

Finally, my parents, Abah and Umi, and Mbah have given their love and support to me when I have faced difficulties in my study. I dedicate this work to them. Thank you all for praying for me.
Abstract

This study attempts to elucidate the emergence of forms of Islamic spirituality in Indonesian Islam identified as Majlis Dhikr groups. Despite the increasing popularity of Sufi groups (tarekat) among Indonesian Muslims, these Majlis Dhikr groups have proliferated on Java in the last two decades both in urban and rural areas. These groups have attracted followers from a wide social base to their practices, hence contributing significantly to the improvement of religious performance among Indonesian Muslims. The diverse aspects of these Majlis Dhikr groups are examined in this study: their rituals and teachings, their understanding of their rituals, their contestation with critics and opponents, their strategies to disseminate their teachings and expand their membership, their role in the preaching Islam among Indonesian Muslims and the role of the pesantren in developing these groups.

Detailed analyses of specific Majlis Dhikr illustrate how these groups consider themselves as an alternative way for Indonesian Muslims to experience Islamic spirituality. Careful examination of their rituals, teachings and their theological debates with other Muslim groups reveals how Majlis Dhikr groups regard their activities as legitimate ritual practices that are in accordance with the legacy of Islamic Sufism based on the interpretation of the Qur’anic and the Prophetic tradition.

This study examines how Majlis Dhikr are used by Indonesian Muslims as another institution to maintain Islamic tradition in Indonesia in general and among Javanese Muslims in particular.
### Abbreviations and glossary

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<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>‘Ālim</td>
<td>a learned person</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Ain al-yaqīn</td>
<td>vision of certitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amal jariah</td>
<td>contributions of wealth to facilitate the carrying out of God’s purposes, for which the reward continues after the contributor’s death</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Ujb</td>
<td>self proud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Ulamā’</td>
<td>Muslim scholars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Uzla</td>
<td>seclusion, lesser retreat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Ilm al-yaqīn</td>
<td>knowledge of certitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Āmil</td>
<td>employees of zakat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abangan</td>
<td>nominal Javanese Muslims; the term is used in some areas of Central and East Java and sometimes has negative connotations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adab</td>
<td>courtesy</td>
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<td>Ahlusunnah wal Jama’ah</td>
<td>Sunni distinguished from the Shi’ah; in Java this refers to traditional Islam which basically follows Ash’arite theology, Shāfi’ite fiqh, and al-Ghazālī’s Sufism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akhlāq</td>
<td>Islamic morality, ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akhlakul karimah</td>
<td>good behaviour based on Muslim values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Fātiḥat</td>
<td>The first chapter of the Qur’ān</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alun-alun (Jav.)</td>
<td>town square</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amar ma’rufnahi munkar</td>
<td>enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asmaul Ḥusnā</td>
<td>the beautiful names of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athar</td>
<td>report of the Prophet’s Companions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auliyaullah</td>
<td>the saints of God, friends of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barakah</td>
<td>blessing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bay’at</td>
<td>vow of allegiance to a Sufi leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berjamaah</td>
<td>in unison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bid’ah</td>
<td>innovation within Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bid’a sayyiat, ḍalālat</td>
<td>innovation within Islam categorized as illicit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bisikan gaib</td>
<td>unseen whisper believed to come from God and Angels</td>
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<td>Bupati</td>
<td>the Chief of Executive of the District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dā‘ī</td>
<td>male preacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dā‘iyyat</td>
<td>female preacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dakwah</td>
<td>Islamic propagation</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDII</td>
<td>Dewan Dakwah Islam Indonesia (The Indonesian Council for Islamic Preaching)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhikr</td>
<td>repetitive prayers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dosa besar</td>
<td>cardinal offence</td>
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<td>Du’ā</td>
<td>Islamic prayers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dukun santet</td>
<td>sorcerer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fana’</td>
<td>annihilation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faqīr</td>
<td>the needy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fatwā</td>
<td>legal opinion, edict</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fisabilillah</td>
<td>persons who struggle in the cause of Allah</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fiqh</td>
<td>Islamic jurisprudence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuqahā</td>
<td>Muslim jurists, singular form of Faqih</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gemblengan</td>
<td>a form of invulnerability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghārim</td>
<td>a debtor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghairu</td>
<td>non-recognised; it is used to refer to Sufi groups which mu’tabarah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gus or Agus</td>
<td>a title used to address sons of kyai in most Javanese pesantren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadas besar</td>
<td>impurity that requires a Muslim to carry out a full ritual ablution (A., ghusl) as for example after having a wet dream or sexual intercourse with one’s spouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadas kecil</td>
<td>impurity that requires a Muslim to carry out a minor ablution (A., wuḍū‘) as for example after passing wind, urinating, and defecating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadith</td>
<td>a documented tradition purporting to preserve the decisions, actions, and utterances of the Prophet Muhammad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadith qudsī</td>
<td>a documented tradition containing revelation from God phrased in the Prophet’s own words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haji</td>
<td>the pilgrimage to Mecca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halal</td>
<td>lawful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haqīqat</td>
<td>ultimate goal and final stage of the mystical path of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
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<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haqq al-yaqin</td>
<td>real certitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḥasad</td>
<td>jealous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḥaul</td>
<td>anniversary of the birth of the founder of a Sufi order or of a kyai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hisāb</td>
<td>reckoning stage in the hereafter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Himmat ‘āliyat</td>
<td>a high-aiming endeavour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husn al-zann</td>
<td>to think well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husn al-khātimat</td>
<td>good death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibadah</td>
<td>worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibn sabīl</td>
<td>wayfarers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iḥlāṣ</td>
<td>sincerity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iḥsān</td>
<td>goodness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ijāza</td>
<td>a license or an authorization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ijtihad</td>
<td>independent judgment based on recognized sources of Islam on legal or theological question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilmu</td>
<td>knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilmu kekebalan</td>
<td>invulnerability power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imām</td>
<td>leader of communal prayers or dhikr ritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imān</td>
<td>faith, belief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insān al-Kāmil</td>
<td>The Perfect Man; Sufis regard Muhammad as The Perfect Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam kaffah</td>
<td>a comprehensive Islamic practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iasnād</td>
<td>chain of transmitter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Istighāthat</td>
<td>dhikr ritual that mentions some of the Ninety Nine Attributes of God and other prayers; it is commonly conducted among Nahdlatul Ulama members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Istighfār</td>
<td>requesting God’s forgiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Istighrāq</td>
<td>the state of immersion in God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Istijrāj</td>
<td>miracles given by God to non-Muslims just to spoil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Istikhāra</td>
<td>A particular prayers conducted to seed guidance from God when one is faced with a problem to which no solution is apparent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Istiqāmat</td>
<td>Steadfastness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaranan (Jav.)</td>
<td>hobby-horse dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jawara</td>
<td>expert in martial arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jodoh</td>
<td>soul mate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juru kunci</td>
<td>custodian of tombs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karamah</td>
<td>miracles performed by Muslim saints</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kesakten (Jav.)</td>
<td>potency; supernatural power</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kesembuan</td>
<td>healing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ketua</td>
<td>chairperson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khâriq al-‘âda</td>
<td>extraordinary deeds performed by Muslim saints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khadam</td>
<td>assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalifat</td>
<td>vice-regent; the successor of the Shaikh of a Sufi order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khamr</td>
<td>alcohol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khataman</td>
<td>graduation in a pesantren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khilâfiyyat</td>
<td>disputed matters in Islamic teachings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khurafat</td>
<td>myth; superstition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khusû’</td>
<td>feeling of intimacy with and remembrance of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiblat</td>
<td>the particular direction toward Mecca that Muslims face when they perform prayers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitab kuning</td>
<td>‘yellow books’ that signify the classical Arabic texts used in Salaf pesantren (traditional pesantren)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurban</td>
<td>sacrifice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyai</td>
<td>Javanese name for ‘ulamâ’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leang-leong</td>
<td>Chinese dragon dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ma’rifahbillah</td>
<td>Gnosis of God, the highest spiritual experience obtained by those who practise Sufism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ma’rifat</td>
<td>divine gnosis; intuitive of knowledge of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhhab</td>
<td>Islamic legal schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madrasah</td>
<td>Islamic high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Âliyat</td>
<td>Islamic elementary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madrasah</td>
<td>Islamic secondary school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thanâwiyyat</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Maḥabba</td>
<td>Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahr</td>
<td>dowry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majlis Dhikr</td>
<td>Dhikr group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maksiat</td>
<td>immoral acts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manâqiban</td>
<td>reciting a particular Sufi saint’s biography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maqâmât</td>
<td>stations on the Sufi path to gnosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masyumi</td>
<td>Majelis Syuro Muslim Indonesia (Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mau’izat al- hassanat</td>
<td>religious lecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miskîn</td>
<td>the poor</td>
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<tr>
<td>MTQ</td>
<td>Musabaqah Tilawatil al-Qur’an, competition in reciting the Qur’an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mu’allaf</td>
<td>people who convert to Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mu’tabarah</td>
<td>recognized; this term is used to refer to Sufi group which have a chain of transmission back to the Prophet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mubādhir</td>
<td>useless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mubāh</td>
<td>permitted deeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muballîgh</td>
<td>Islamic preacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mufassir</td>
<td>exegete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mujaddid</td>
<td>a Muslim reformer; it is believed that he or she comes at the end of every century to revitalize Islam and save society from moral and spiritual decadency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mujāhada</td>
<td>striving, an intense spiritual effort that leads to levels of spiritual ecstasy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muqaddam</td>
<td>deputy of a renowned Sufî master, leader of a regional branch of Sufi order</td>
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<tr>
<td>Murabbi</td>
<td>spiritual teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Murîd</td>
<td>a disciple of a Sufî master</td>
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<tr>
<td>Murshid</td>
<td>a leader of tarekat group (Sufî group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mustaḥîq</td>
<td>people who are eligible to receive zakat (tax)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musyâhdat</td>
<td>spiritual vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naḥw</td>
<td>Arabic grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narkoba</td>
<td>narcotics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninja</td>
<td>popular term used in Indonesia to refer to dangerous shadowy figures with martial arts ability who are believed to carry out executions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NU</td>
<td>Nahdlatul Ulama (Revival of the Religious Scholars, Indonesia’s largest Islamic organization)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuzûl al-Qur’an</td>
<td>Revelation of the Qur’an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyadran</td>
<td>visiting tombs to fulfill a vow after having made request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyai</td>
<td>wife of a Kyai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONH</td>
<td>Ongkos Naik Haji (the cost of pilgrimage to Mecca)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Orang nakal: bad individuals
Orang pangkat: Nobles: persons with positions, titles
Orang pinggiran: marginalized people
Orang ruwet: difficult people
PAN: Partai Amanat Nasional (The National Mandate Party)
Pancasila: The Five Basic Principles; the ideological and political foundation of the Republic of Indonesia
PDIP: Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle)
Pejabat: government officials
Pendopo: the office of the Chief of Executive of the district
Kabupaten: the office of the Chief of Executive of the district
Pengajian umum: general religious lecture
PERSIS: Persatuan Islam (Islamic Union)
Pesantren: Islamic boarding schools
Pesantren salaf: Pesantren which still use classical Arabic texts in their curriculum
PKB: Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (The National Awakening Party)
Preman: local hoodlums
Qutb: literally means ‘the Axis, Pole’; in Sufi traditions this term refers to the spiritual pole of the age, the supreme saint of a given epoch
Rabi'at al-'Alam al-Islāmiy: The Islamic World League; the name of an Islamic organization established in Saudi Arabia
Rabi'at: one’s heart’s connection with a Sufi master; this should be conducted in the ritual of Sufi groups
Ramaḍān: name of the month in the Islamic calendar during which Muslims are obliged to fast
Reog: tiger-masked dance
Ridā: contentment
Riqāb: freed slaves
Riya’: vainglory, showing off
Ruh: spirit
Ru’ya al-ṣadiqa: true vision
Ruwatan: a sacred ceremony in the Javanese tradition to ward off misfortune
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Glossary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Şāliḥīn</td>
<td>virtuous Muslims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Şabr</td>
<td>patience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Şahabāt</td>
<td>The Prophet Companions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Şalawāt</td>
<td>invoking the blessing on the Prophet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Şaraf</td>
<td>Arabic morphology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sāmi‘īn</td>
<td>listeners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabu-sabu</td>
<td>opium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaf al-şāliḥīn</td>
<td>pious forebears, early generation of Muslims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salafī</td>
<td>Muslim groups that follow the Prophet and the next three generations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampah</td>
<td>the dregs of society</td>
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<tr>
<td>masyarakat</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Santri</td>
<td>students of pesantren, pious Muslims in Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selapangan</td>
<td>thirty five days; term used to denote a cycle in the Javanese calendar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semaan</td>
<td>listening carefully to the recitation of the Qur’an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadaqat</td>
<td>charity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shafā’at</td>
<td>intercession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shahāda</td>
<td>witness of faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shahādatain</td>
<td>the two sentences of the declaration of faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharī’at</td>
<td>Islamic Law, the formal aspects of Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirk</td>
<td>polytheism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shuhadā’</td>
<td>martyrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shukr (gratitude)</td>
<td>gratitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silsilah</td>
<td>a chain; spiritual genealogy of a Sufi master or of a Sufi community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sū’ al-khātimat</td>
<td>bad death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunnah</td>
<td>The Prophetic Tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sunnat</td>
<td>recommended deeds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunnatullah</td>
<td>The Custom of God</td>
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<tr>
<td>Syuriahi</td>
<td>supreme religious council in an Indonesian Muslim organisation such as NU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ta’awwudl</td>
<td>Islamic phrase to seek refuge from Satan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tābi’īn</td>
<td>Successors of the Companions of the Prophet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tābi’īt al-tābi’īn</td>
<td>Successors of the Successors of the Companions of the Prophet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tārikh</td>
<td>Islamic history</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Rituals of Islamic Spirituality**

**Tabib**  
Muslim healer

**Tahmîd**  
reciting the phrase of praise to God

**Tahajjud**  
optional night prayers

**Tahayyul**  
superstition

**Tahlîl**  
recitation of la ilâha illa Allah; a ritual commonly practised to ask forgiveness for deceased Muslims.

**Takabbur**  
pride, arrogant

**Takhalluq bi akhlâq al-rasûl**  
to imitate the Prophet’s ethics

**Tarekat**  
a Sufi group

**Tasawwur al-shaikh**  
to visualize the master, a ritual that is carried out by the followers of some Sufi groups (tarekat)

**Tasawwuf**  
Sufism, mystic knowledge

**Ţariqat pl. turūq**  
method of spiritual education practiced by a Sufi master or Sufi order

**Tasbîh**  
a phrase to glorify God

**Taubat**  
repentance

**Taushiyah**  
religious advice

**Tawhîd**  
Islamic theology; knowledge of the Oneness of God

**TPA**  
Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur’an, Qur’anic Kindergarten

**Umarâ’ (sing. Amîr)**  
Arabic term for government officials

**Ummat**  
Islamic community

**Wâjib**  
obligatory deeds

**Wali**  
saint of God

**Wasîlat**  
intermediary

**Wirid**  
routine program of dhikr

**Wusûl**  
attainment of union with God

**Yaqdhah**  
wakening state, in active mind

**Yaum al-İŞâb**  
The Day of Judgment

**Zakat fitrah**  
poll tax

**Zakat profesi**  
wealth tax

**Zuhud**  
asceticism
This work contains many Arabic words and names. For writing these Arabic names and words, I use the system of Arabic words and names used by Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University.

<table>
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Short: a = ´ ; i = ; u = ' 
Long: ـ a = ـ ; ـ i = ـ ي ; ـ u = و 
Diphthong: ay = ا ي ; aw = او
Maps

Map.1. Indonesia

Map.2. East Java
Map.3. Residency of Kediri
Chapter I

1.1. The Significance of the Study

This is a study of developments in Islamic spiritual practice in East Java. It focuses on groups organized with the specific purpose of chanting of various Islamic litanies. The study of these groups, designated by the name, Majlis Dhikr, is a neglected area of research within the study of Islamic ritual groups in Indonesia. In contrast to the abundance of studies of Sufi groups (I., tarekat), such as Tijaniyah, Qadiriyah, Naqshabandiyah, Qadiriyah wa Naqshabandiyah, and Shatariyah, there has not yet been any comprehensive study devoted to examining the development of Majlis Dhikr in the Indonesian Islamic context. This lack of research is, unfortunately, accompanied by negative images of these groups. Nahdlatul Ulama, as an organization, does not accord these groups official recognition as mu’tabarah. Many Indonesian scholars and other Muslim groups consider these Majlis Dhikr to be local tarekat that lack silsilah (proper genealogy of transmission, isnād) or to represent unorthodox or pseudo-Sufi organizations. Often these groups have been considered syncretic because they incorporate strong local elements, both in their ritual and in their teachings. For the Indonesian Salafi group, the ritual practices of Majlis Dhikr are considered as bid’ah (innovation within Islam) because they claim that they have no sanction in the Prophetic tradition.

One reason that Majlis Dhikr groups are not considered to be mu’tabarah (recognised) is that they do not meet the criteria laid down by the Jam‘iyyah Ahl al-Thariqah al-Mu’tabarah, which was established in 1957 under the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) organization as the forum for recognized Sufi orders in Indonesia. One of these criteria is that a group can only be regarded as mu’tabarah if its wirid or ritual practices can be traced through an unbroken line of links between its murshid and the Prophet, and its teachings and doctrines should be relevant to the Islamic law (A., shari’at) (Turmudi 2003:65). Any Islamic group, which does not meet these criteria, cannot be regarded as mu’tabarah.

Although the teachings of Majlis Dhikr groups conform to shari’at, nevertheless, according the Jam‘iyyah, they do not have an unbroken line of links between their founders and the Prophet. In other words, the Prophet never practised the wirid used by these groups and never passed it to the founders through a genealogy of spiritual leaders. As a result, for the Jam‘iyyah, no Majlis Dhikr group can be regarded as an acknowledged Sufi order (I., tarekat yang mu’tabarah) because they do not have such links.
A similar response to Majlis Dhikr groups, especially for the Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat group, was given by Kyai Machrus Ali, a prominent ‘ulamā’ with a Nahdatul Ulama background, who regarded the Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat group as a non-mu’tabarrah group because of its lack of direct connection between the founder of the group and the Prophet. According to him, the founder of Wāḥidiyyat established and practised his ritual based on his encounter with the Prophet in a dream. According to Kyai Machrus, dreams cannot be used as a theological basis for establishing a tarekat.

The Dutch scholar Martin van Bruinessen has categorised Majlis Dhikr groups such as Wāḥidiyyat as local tarekat whose practices and rituals are inseparable from those in some other mystical groups (I., golongan kebatinan). As a result of this notion, seemingly influenced by a Geertzian idea of Javanese Islam, Bruinessen considers Wāḥidiyyat and the like as spiritualist and syncretic movements (gerakan-gerakan kebatinan yang sinkretis) which has eventually prompted several tarekat, such as Qadiriyah, Naqshabandiyah and other mainstream tarekat to establish the NU-affiliated Jam‘iyyah Ahl al-Thariqah al-Mu’tabarrah as an institution to disassociate themself from such syncretic groups (Bruinessen 1992:171).

Likewise, Lukman Hakim, one of the members of a prominent tarekat group in Indonesia, has maintained that Sufism or tasawuf cannot be practised without joining an acknowledged tarekat (tarekat yang mu’tabarrah). He argues that the practice of tasawuf without being member of an acknowledged tarekat (I., bertasawuf tanpa tarekat) and without the supervision of a spiritual master (A., murshid) can only lead to a superficial level of spiritual experience (A., ‘ilm al-yaqīn) and can never reach ‘ain al-yaqīn and haqq al-yaqīn. In other words, in order to attain the deepest level of spiritual experience (A., haqq al-yaqīn), Muslims should affiliate with an acknowledged tarekat whose ritual is clearly derived through an unbroken line of links connected to the Prophet. The implication of this notion is that any Islamic spiritual group including any Majlis Dhikr group, which does not have a spiritual genealogy going back to the Prophet, cannot be used as a means to practise tasawuf. Lukman Hakim has argued that

Those who practise Sufism without tarekat only attain the experience of ‘ilm al-yaqīn. They never reach ‘ain al-yaqīn and haqq al-yaqīn. This is because they only believe (I., yakin) based on their theoretical philosophy. They do not believe practically (I., secara amaliah), even though they claim that they believe secara amaliah. In fact, this belief happens only in their imagination, as if they believe secara amaliah.

1 Interviewed with Lukman Hakim, Jakarta, 24 July 2005.
A stronger rejection of the rituals and practices of the Majlis Dhikr groups which has emerged over the last two decades comes from the supporters of Indonesian Salafi groups which are strongly influenced by Wahabbism, a reform movement aimed at purifying Islam of local accretions. For instance, Abu Amsaka and Jawas, who champion the Islamic puritan movement in Indonesia, have argued that the ritual practice of Indonesian Majlis Dhikr groups mostly falls into the practise of bid’ah. They criticise these groups mainly because of the way they recite dhikr vocally in a group. In their view, such a practice is not sanctioned by the teachings of Qur’an, which urges Muslims to recite dhikr quietly (Amsaka 2003:85; Jawas 1423:150-51).

In contrast to these various critics, I will argue in this study that although Majlis Dhikr groups have been strongly criticised by other Muslims groups as not mu’tabarah, or as pseudo-Sufism or as bid’ah, nevertheless the existence of these groups is significant. The fact that these groups have attracted many followers demonstrates that the interest of Indonesian Muslims in joining these groups is strong and is increasing. Despite the increasing popularity of Sufi orders (tarekat) among Indonesian Muslims, these Majlis Dhikr groups have not only expanded and introduced their ritual and teachings widely but have also continued to gain new followers in both rural and urban areas.

Understanding these Majlis Dhikr groups becomes particularly important in the context of the Islamic preaching (I., dakwah Islam) in Indonesia. These groups have attracted followers from a wide social base to their practices, hence contributing significantly to the improvement of religious practice among Indonesian Muslims who were not strict in their daily observance of Islamic practice. Based on their understanding of the teachings of tasawuf, instead of rejecting nominal Muslims, these Majlis Dhikr groups have shown respect for and accommodation to all kinds of cultural symbols used by these Muslims groups. In doing so, the presence of these Majlis Dhikr groups in the landscape of Indonesian Islam has contributed to narrowing the gap between santri Muslims and nominal Muslims, who have long been ideologically opposed to one another. This study of Majlis Dhikr groups thus sheds light on increasing Islamic spiritual life and practice in Indonesia.

My research also explores the role that Majlis Dhikr groups are playing in improving the quality of interfaith dialogue and searching for a harmonious religious life in Indonesia. This important role can be seen from the fact that these groups allow the followers of other religions to share in and experience their rituals without asking them to convert. This respectful attitude toward followers of other religions can be attributed to a deep understanding of Islamic Sufi teachings, which strongly emphasise respect for people as human beings.
and God’s creatures, irrespective of their religion. Without doubt, this tolerant attitude and emphasis on the spiritual aspects of religiosity are needed to create a peaceful religious life in Indonesia.

Contrary to accusations by other Muslim groups that Majlis Dhikr groups are practising bid’ah, are syncretic and represent pseudo-Sufism, these groups have, in fact, been strongly influenced by orthodox tasawuf teachings, and the members of these groups operate in the framework of mainstream Sufi practices. For example, many of the terms and symbols used within the teachings of Majlis Dhikr groups are adopted from similar Islamic terms and symbols commonly used by acknowledged Sufi groups. Moreover, most of the teachings of Majlis Dhikr groups result from their response to, and interpretation based on the two sources of Islamic law, that is, the Qur’an and hadith, as well as the views of other prominent Muslim Sufi scholars. Therefore, instead of practising bid’ah and carrying out syncretic rituals, I argue in this study that these groups have creatively interpreted and adapted the Qur’anic and hadith teachings in order to make themselves relevant in a mainstream Indonesian Islamic context. These groups also claim that the aim of their rituals is to attain closeness to God, which is also similar to the aim of the ritual practice conducted by tarekat groups. These Majlis Dhikr groups can thus be utilized as another means for Indonesian Muslims to seek spiritual closeness to God.

Another significance of this study is that it challenges Geertz’s research on the development of Sufism in Muslim-majority countries. In his view, economic development and the expansion of modern sectors in many Muslim countries will result not only in the demise of Sufi orders in those countries but also lead to the triumph of Muslim scripturalist groups. Research conducted by Julia Howell has proved the inaccuracy of Geertz’s prediction. According to Howell, despite their challenge and rejection by Indonesian Muslim revivalist or reformist groups, Sufi groups in Indonesia have not only shown signs of vigorous growth but also have attracted an increasing diversity of participants (Howell 2001:722). Not only has there been a proliferation of Sufi orders in current Indonesian Islam, but also a proliferation of other Islamic spiritual groups, such as Majlis Dhikr groups, in both rural and urban areas.

As far as I am aware, no comprehensive or specific studies have been conducted on Majlis Dhikr groups in Indonesia. Since scholars have erroneously regarded these groups as Sufi groups (tarekat), these groups have usually been discussed in studies either on general topics such as urban Sufism or Sufi groups in Indonesia, or on the religious revival in Java. In fact, Majlis Dhikr groups are not the same as Sufi groups (tarekat). As a result, little attempt has been made to provide a critical analysis of the teachings and rituals of these groups in the
context of Islamic Sufism, how they disseminate their teachings or how they respond to various aspects of practical Sufism, as well as how these groups regard their rituals as legitimate practice within Islam.

In comparison, as M. Bruinessen has observed, the quantity and the quality of studies of tarekat (Sufi group) has proliferated during the last decade of the twentieth century, following the increasing popularity of tarekat in many parts of the Islamic world including Indonesia. Since the 1990s, people have witnessed an abundance of the works about Sufism in different regions, such as the Middle East, South Asian, Southeast Asia, West Africa, East Africa, and even, Europe. In addition, several international scholarly conferences on Sufism have been held to discuss different Sufi groups, as for example conferences on Naqshabandiyah (Paris 1985), Bektashiyah (Strasbourg, 1986), Malamatiyah (Istanbul, 1987) and Mawlawiyah (Bamberg, 1991), and a debate between proponents and opponents of Sufism held in Utrecht in 1996. In response to this increasing interest in Sufism, several big publishers such as Hurst & Co., Curzon Press, and E.J. Brill have published books on Sufism. E. J. Brill, the renowned publisher of ‘The Encyclopaedia of Islam’, is preparing to publish TheEncyclopaedia of Sufism(Sujuti 2001a:xv). All this indicates an increasing scholarly interest in Sufism.

Likewise, studies of tarekat in Indonesian Islam gained popularity among Indonesian and Western researchers during 1990s and the early part of the current century. Publications include those by as AG. Muhaimin (1995; 2006), Endang Turmudi (1996; 2006), Howell (2001), Martin van Bruinessen (1992), Sukamto (1999), Sujuti (2001), Zamkhasari Dhofier (1982; 1999), and Zulkifli (2000). Among these studies, Zamakhsari Dhofier’s study of pesantren traditions is regarded as a pioneering and important examination of Islamic traditional practices including the history and practice of the Qadiriyah Naqshabandiyah in Rejoso Jombang, East Java. This group is presently one of the orders with the largest following in Indonesia. In his study, Dhofier argues that tarekat have been an important means of spreading Islam since the early period of Islamization in the Indonesian archipelago. Through the leadership of the kyai in pesantren, tarekat have spread Islamic teachings among Javanese in particular. Furthermore, pesantren have become places for providing the leadership of tarekat. This can be seen in the case of Pesantren Tebuireng in Jombang, which has played an important role in providing most of the influential leaders of Qadiriyah Naqshabandiyah in East and Central Java. All of these figures were graduates from this pesantren, even though Pesantren Tebuireng is not a pesantren tarekat (Dhofier 1999: 151).
Another important study on *tarekat* was conducted by a Dutch scholar, Martin Van Bruinessen. His work might be considered as the most complete work that has ever been written on the Naqshabaniyah order and its networks, particularly in Indonesia. According to Bruinessen, Naqshabandiyyah is significant because it is the most internationalised of orders compared to other *tarekat*, having branches in many countries including Yugoslavia, Egypt, Indonesia and China. In Indonesia, moreover, this *tarekat* has three important branches with different names: Naqshabandiyyah Khalidiyah, Naqshabandiyyah Mazhariyah and Qadiriyah wa Naqshabandiyyah. Qadiriyah wa Naqshabandiyyah is a combination of two *tarekat* set up by the Indonesian Sufi, Ahmad Khatib Sambas, who taught in Mecca in the mid-nineteenth century. In Java in particular, the Naqshabandiyyah *tarekat* has attracted many followers in Central Java (Semarang, Girikusumo, Rembang, Blora, Banyumas, Purwokerto and Cirebon), the southern areas of East Java (Kediri, Blitar, Madui, Magetan) and in Madura. It is important to note here that most of the leaders or *murshid* of Naqshabandiyyah *tarekat* in Java belong to *pesantren*. They use their *pesantren* as a basis to spread the teachings of the *tarekat*. In other words, *pesantren* still play an important role in spreading the Sufi teachings and recruiting new members to the *tarekat*.

Muhaimin’s study of the Islamic traditions of Cirebon has also greatly contributed to the understanding of the origin and the spread of Shattariyah and Tijaniyah *tarekat*. Tijaniyah is considered the fastest growing *tarekat* in Java. Like Dhofier, Muhaimin argues that Islamic traditions in Cirebon and probably elsewhere in Java has been maintained within Javanese Muslim society through the combination of *pesantren* and *tarekat* (Muhaimin 1995:355). It is not an exaggeration to say that those institutions are the hallmark of traditional Islam in Java. In line with this, looking at *Pesantren* Buntet in Cirebon, Muhaimin observes that the *pesantren* has become the base for both Shattariyah and Tijaniyah. As argued by Muhaimin, not only has Buntet become an important door-way for spreading Tijaniyah in Java, particularly West Java, but it has also become the model of a *pesantren* able to accept the practice of two different *tarekat* groups, something that is not found in other *pesantren* in Java. The *kyai* responsible for making *Pesantren* Buntet the centre of two *tarekat* were two brothers, *Kyai* Anas and *Kyai* Abbas. *Kyai* Anas was the leader of the Tijaniyah long before his brother *Kyai* Abbas was initiated into this group. *Kyai* Abbas was able to break the Tijaniyah rule which requires individuals to abandon their previous order before joining Tijaniyah. *Kyai* Abbas joined Tijaniyah while still affiliated with Shattariyah. Later, he became a *muqaddam* (leader) of Tijaniyah (Muhaimin 1995:353).

Turmudi’s study of the changing leadership roles of *kyai* in Jombang has also added to the scholarly literature on the political dynamics of *tarekat* in Java.
Even though this study focuses on local pesantren leadership, it also considers the significant role of tarekat in several pesantren in Jombang. Turmudi examines how kyai who lead tarekat are involved in politics. Like Dhofier, Turmudi focused his attention on the influential Sufi group, Qadiriyyah wa Naqshabadiyyah in Jombang which was the first tarekat in Java to initiate a new tradition of establishing a political relationship with a ruling political party. Kyai Musta’in Ramli, the leader of the Qadiriyyah wa Naqshabandiyah group in Jombang, supported the ruling party, Golongan Karya (GOLKAR) prior to the 1977 general election. His involvement in politics was seen in various ways by his followers. Some kyai who were members of the tarekat considered Kyai Ramli’s political affiliation with GOLKAR as a violation of NU’s commitment to support PPP (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, The United Development Party), which was seen as the representative of Indonesian Muslims. As a result, these kyai withdrew their support for Kyai Mustain’s group by establishing new tarekat groupings in Pesantren Cukir in Jombang and Pesantren Kedinding Lor in Surabaya. In contrast, Kyai Mustain’s obedient followers regarded his involvement with GOLKAR as a new strategy to engage in the wider political context. This view was supported by Kyai Musta’in’s wife who argued that the defection of her husband occurred because he had seen another way to achieve the political ends of ‘the Islamic struggle’. While Kyai Mustain wanted to avoid further division in the Islamic community, his defection to GOLKAR nevertheless resulted in the splitting of Qadiriyyah wa Naqshabandiyah into three different groups, namely, a Rejoso group, a Cukir group and a Kedinding Lor group (Sujuti 2001a:71). Turmudi’s study of the leadership of kyai in tarekat shows how the involvement of kyai in politics can lead to changing loyalty among followers. Although the authority of a kyai to influence his followers’ political affiliation is not absolute, nonetheless many followers do indeed follow their kyai’s example.

Adding to his predecessors’ attempts to understand Java’s pesantren traditions, Zulkifli’s work, The Role of the Pesantren in the Maintenance of Sufism in Java (2002) addresses the issue of the transmission of tasawuf teachings through prominent scholars such as Shaikh Nawawi Banten, Shaikh Mahfudh Termas and Kyai Kholil Bangkalan. Kyai Nawawi was a student of Shaikh Ahmad Khâtib in Mecca, and both are regarded as important figures in teaching and practising rituals associated with tasawuf, even though they reportedly did not join a tarekat. Kyai Kholil Bangkalan was also an important figure whose influence is evident among a generation of distinguished Javanese kyai.

The importance of Zulkifli’s study lies in his comparison of two of the most important pesantren in Java, Pesantren Tebuireng in East Java and Pesantren Suryalaya in West Java. He looks at the role and strategies of the leaders in both
pesantren in the development of the Qadiriyah wa Naqshabandiyah. Zulkifli argues that the two pesantren have different roles in the maintenance of Sufism in Java. Pesantren Tebuireng, established by Kyai Hashim Ash’ari, is known as a pesantren shari’at, yet it maintains the teachings of Sufism including sincerity, asceticism, modesty, patience and the Sufi rituals such as prayers, dhikr, and wirid. Through the figure of Kyai Hashim Ash’ari, this pesantren has played an indirect role in the spread of the Qadiriyah wa Naqshabandiyah in East Java, controlling the practices of the leaders and the followers of the group and preventing them from deviation from orthodox Sufi teachings. Not only that, this pesantren has also produced the leaders of Qadiriyah wa Naqshabandiyah, since most of the murshid of the group in Java are graduates from pesantren Tebuireng. In contrast, Pesantren Suryalaya, represented by the figure of Shaikh Abdullah Mubarak, known as Abah Sepuh (‘The Old Abah’), and his successor, Ahmad Shohibulwafa Tadjul Arifin, known as Abah Anom (‘The Young Abah’) have maintained Sufi traditions by establishing their pesantren as the centre of Qadiriyah wa Naqshabandiyah. Under the leadership of Abah Anom, Qadiriyah wa Naqshabandiyah has attracted many followers, not only from other regions in Indonesia but also from other countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore.

Important information about the diversity of the followers of tarekat in Java derives from research conducted by Howell, Subandi, and Nelson (2001) in several branches of Suralaya’s Qadiriyah wa Naqshabandiyah. Comparing the results of a previous survey of members of the tarekat in 1990 with a survey carried out in 1997, their study makes clear that this group has experienced dramatic growth in membership during Suharto’s New Order regime and the range of its membership has been extended from villagers to educated urban professionals and managers. This study also reveals an increase in women members of the tarekat compared to the previous period.² Therefore, Howell et al. suggest conducting further research on different groups of tarekat, focusing on analysing the membership in terms of age, education and gender.

All of these studies show that tarekat and pesantren are not separable institutions in maintaining Islamic traditions in Java. Most pesantren in Java function as places to mould students with Islamic knowledge, while some also function as an instrument for the recruitment of members of a tarekat, each of which is organized around the figure of a particular scholar and teacher (kyai).³ None of these studies, however, analyse specifically the rise of Majlis Dhikr groups,

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² These findings are unlikely to be true of other tarekat groups.
³ See James J. Fox’s foreword in Zulkifli’s work of ‘The Role of the Pesantren in the Maintenance of Sufism in Java’ (2001)
which also use *pesantren* to spread and maintain their rituals and teachings. These groups should be taken into account in the analysis of the maintenance of traditional Islam within the Javanese Muslim community.

Julia Howell’s study on Sufism and the Indonesian Islamic revival is pioneering research which helps particularly to understand the new trends in Sufism developing in urban areas (Howell 2001). Howell argues that in the latter part of twentieth century, numerous *tarekat* experienced new growth with new kinds of participants. She suggests that traditional Sufism in Indonesian during this period has undergone institutional innovation and modification to accommodate social needs. Since her study focuses on the development of Sufism in urban areas, particularly in Jakarta, Howell does not specifically examine the increasing development of *Majlis Dhikr* groups in other parts of Indonesia.

Inspired by Julia Howell’s work, Ace Hasan Syadzily’s work (2005) on the figure of Arifin Ilham, an urban preacher, and his *Majlis Dhikr* group has also added to an understanding the development of Islamic ritual groups, especially in urban areas. Similar to Howell, Syadzily finds that the participants in the *dhikr* ritual held by Arifin’s group are mostly middle class urban residents who are relatively well-established economically and educationally. Since the focus of this work is to show that modernization and secularisation do not necessarily lead urban people to set aside religion, his study does not specifically look at how this *dhikr* group or its members consider their ritual as a theologically legitimate practice within Islam. In addition, this book did not critically analyse the response of members of this group to important issues concerning its specific practices.

Ahmad Syafi’i Mufid, a researcher in the Agency for Religious Research and Development at the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, recently conducted another important study on Sufism in Indonesian Islam. His work is about the role of *tarekat* Qadiriyah Naqshabandiyah in the north coastal area of Java in improving the religiosity of Javanese people in that area. He concluded in his work that Javanese people in the area have readily accepted the teaching of Sufism because it is relevant to their worldview. As a result, he claims that this process of Islamization mirrors the process of Islamization in the Malay Archipelago many centuries ago, which also involved Sufi inspiration. Although Mufid included the study of Islamic spiritual groups other than *tarekat* in his research such as *Ṣalawāt Wahidiyat* group, he did not analyse critically the teaching of these groups nor how they creatively establish their teaching by interpreting the Qur’an and hadith (Mufid 2006).
This work is designed to contribute to the body of work of those scholars who have discussed the proliferation of Islamic spiritual groups in contemporary Indonesian Islam. It aims to fill a gap in the literature by examining how Indonesian Majlis Dhikr groups regard themselves as legitimate groups within Islam. A more specific question related to the rituals and teachings of these groups is to what extent these rituals and teachings are related to the teachings of the Qur’an and hadith and the general teachings of Islam and orthodox Sufism. As regards the preaching of Islam, the question is what strategies these groups use to disseminate their teachings to other Muslims. As these Dhikr groups derive from the context of the pesantren, another question is what role pesantren play in facilitating the development of these Majlis Dhikr groups.

1.2. The Understanding of Tasawuf, Tarekat and Majlis Dhikr Group in Indonesian Islam

For the purpose of this study, it is important to explain important terms such as tasawuf, tarekat, and Majlis Dhikr (or Jama’ah Dhikr), which have been used interchangeably by researchers on Indonesian Islam. This explanation is necessary to understand the phenomenon of the proliferation of various Islamic spiritual groups within the Indonesian Islamic context and the development of studies about Islamic spiritual groups in Indonesia.

As far as the definition of tasawuf is concerned in classic Arabic understanding, this term was defined variously by Sufi scholars. Al-Qushairy (d. 475/1074) (2002:337-41) in his book al-Risālatand Al-Hujwiri (d.1082)(1997:43-55), in his book Kashf al-Mahjūb, enumerate the various definitions of tasawuf put forward by different Muslim Sufi. These diverse definitions of Sufism demonstrate how difficult is to provide an exact definition of tasawuf. Perhaps, because of this difficulty, Chittick argues that it is difficult to distinguish which Muslims have been Sufi and which have not (Chittick 1995). Closer examination of these definitions shows that they are concerned with the practical aspects of the inner life which have eventually formed a body of knowledge. When tasawuf became a particular form of knowledge, like other categories of Islamic knowledge such as fiqh, hadith, and Islamic theology (kalam), it comprised theoretical teachings that needed to be put into practice. Therefore, as a form of knowledge, tasawuf was named as ‘ilm al-bātin (the knowledge of the inner self), a term used in opposition to other traditional sciences, such as the study of hadith or Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), which were known as perceptible knowledge (A., ‘ilm al-ţāhir)
The word *tasawuf* is frequently defined in broad terms in Indonesian Islam. For instance, citing Trimingham, Syafi’i Mufid defines *tasawuf* as the spiritual teaching, knowledge and practices of Muslim individuals or groups for the purpose of purifying the spirit in order to approach God. Another definition is given by Julia Howell who has defined *tasawuf* as personal intensification and interiorization of Islamic faith and practice. These broad definitions thus encompass not only the spiritual practices of *tarekat* (Sufi groups) but also the practices of others, including *Majlis Dhikr* groups, as well as study groups and intensive courses on practical *tasawuf* which all aim at the purification of soul in approaching of God.

So, the term *tasawuf* is able to accommodate a range of meanings which are put forward by different groups. Expanded terms such as modern *tasawuf* (I., *tasawuf modern*), and positive *tasawuf* (I., *tasawuf positif*), have recently been introduced in the literature of *tasawuf* study in Indonesia. Thus *tasawuf* is no longer restricted to the description of practices by *tarekat* (Sufi groups).

The term *tasawuf modern* was first introduced by Hamka in the study and practice of *tasawuf* in Indonesia. Using this term, Hamka tried to disengage the concept of *tasawuf* from the concept of *tarekat*. Moreover, by introducing this term, Hamka criticised Muslims who practise *tasawuf* as a way of avoiding worldly matters and regarding them as unimportant (Hamka 1990:5-6). For Hamka, *tasawuf* should be understood in its original meaning, that is,

> as a method to ‘leave off offensive behaviour and to take on praiseworthy manners by purifying the self, improving and training the stature of human personality, renouncing greed and caprice and controlling the sexual desire from exceeding what is normal for a sound individual’ (Hooker 2006:103-4).

Inspired by the idea of *tasawuf* put forward by al-Ghazālī (d.1111) in his book *Iḥyā’Ulūm al-din*, Hamka urged Muslims to cultivate the inner spiritual life within the outer forms of religiosity. Hamka considered this as an urgent need, particularly to achieve a deeper emotional richness of devotion. Based on his interpretation of *tasawuf*, Hamka is regarded as the person responsible for popularising *tasawuf* to the educated urban middle class in Indonesia.

Another term introduced by Indonesian scholars is *tasawuf positif* (positive *tasawuf*). This term has become popular within the study of Indonesian Islam following the increasing interest in *tasawuf* among urban Muslims and well-to-do cosmopolitan Muslims. Similar to the idea of *tasawuf modern*, the concept of *tasawuf positif* aims to make the practice of *tasawuf* more an individual responsibility rather than heavily relying on the guidance of *murshid*.
(masters) of particular tarekat. This kind of tasawuf stresses individual effort to mould praiseworthy manners without joining a particular tarekat. Those who champion the idea of tasawuf positif actively promote what they regard as practising tasawuf without tarekat (Sufi groups) (I., tasawuf tanpa tarekat). Instead, they can independently practise and actively learn tasawuf teachings through intensive courses or workshops, and religious study clubs as is evident in urban organisations such as Yayasan Paramadina, Yayasan Tazkiyah, ICNIS (Intensive Course and Networking for Islamic Science), Pusat Pengembangan Tasawuf Positif dan Klinik Spiritualitas Islami (Centre for the Development of Positive Tasawuf and Clinic for Muslim Spirituality), and IiMAN (the Indonesian Islamic Media Network). According to the initiators of tasawuf positif, Muslims can practise tasawuf positif since many Muslims tasawuf scholars have actively practised and deeply understood the teaching of tasawuf even though they never joined any tarekat (Anwar 2002:13-16).

Another term that is important to elaborate further in this study is tarekat. This term is widely used in Indonesian Islam to refer to the practice of tasawuf in particular communal ritual through ‘an organised Sufi order’. According to the pesantren tradition, tarekat can be divided into two kinds: tarekat ‘ammah (the general way), pious acts which are continually practised with good intention, and tarekat khassah (the specific way) relying on certain ritual dhikr which are performed with the guidance of a murshid who is linked in his knowledge through a spiritual genealogy going back to the Prophet Muhammad. This form of tarekat has formal requirements. For example, in order to become a member of such a tarekat, disciples should make a vow of allegiance (I., baiat or talqin) to the master of the tarekat concerned. Through this baiat, disciples (murid) put themselves under the guidance of the murshid to purify themselves in their approach to God (Aqib 1999:98). The baiat is an important condition for the validity of the spiritual journey of murid. It is commonly believed in the tarekat world that following the tasawuf path without the guidance of a murshid is like following this path under the guidance of Satan.

The proponents of tarekat are convinced that a murshid has an important role in the spiritual development of his murid. Without the guidance of a murshid, a murid cannot obtain authentic spirituality. The proponents of tarekat claim that if there are Muslims who claim that they have achieved wusul or ma’rifat (gnosis), in the absence of a murshid to guide them, what they have achieved consists of the whispers and tricks (I., tipu daya) of Satan. It is believed in the tarekat world that without the guidance of a murshid, Muslims cannot distinguish between the whispers of God and his Angels and the whisper of Satan.
In this study, I use the term Majlis Dhikr to refer to groups who practise reciting dhikr and Salawātin unison (I., berjamaah) in order to achieve perfection and closeness to God with no structural connection to any tarekat order. Comprehending the term Majlis Dhikr as used in this study is important, particularly to approach and analyse the current proliferation of Islamic spiritual groups in Indonesia.

In this argument, I differ with scholars such as Bruinessen (1992), Dhofier (1999), Turmudi (2003), Mufid (2006), and Abdurrahman (1978). For example, Majlis Dhikr groups do not require followers to take an oath (baiat) to the leader of these groups. In other words, exclusive membership is not recognised. People are able to join Majlis Dhikr groups and practise their dhikr without taking an oath of allegiance to the leader of any particular group. As a result, people can voluntary join one group while also being members of other Majlis Dhikr groups, something which is not, generally, possible for members of tarekat in Java.4

Another obvious difference from tarekat is in the dhikr recited by Majlis Dhikr. The dhikr text recited by these Majlis Dhikr are generally created by their leaders or taken from dhikr formulas taught by the Prophet or widely practised by previous prominent ‘ulama’. In contrast, dhikr formulas recited by tarekat orders are claimed to have been transmitted by a series of unbroken links between the mursyid and the Prophet. Unlike tarekat, the members of Majlis Dhikr groups are also able to practise the group’s ritual intermittently without any sanction, even though the leaders of these groups recommend members to practise the ritual continuously.

Distinguishing clearly between the Majlis Dhikr groups and other Islamic spiritual groups in Indonesia is critical to an analysis of the position of these Majlis Dhikr groups in the context of current Indonesian Muslim life. The proliferation of Majlis Dhikr indicates that such Majlis Dhikr have been accepted by Indonesian Muslims as an alternative vehicle to practise the teachings of tasawuf.

4 In the past, there were no clear cut boundaries between numerous different tarekat either in their doctrines and ritual or their memberships. Disciples did not necessarily adhere to one tarekat; they could become a member of different tarekat and take allegiance to different murshid of those tarekat. The best exemplar of this was Muhammad Yusuf al-Maqqassari (1037-1111/1627-99) the seventeenth century Malay Sufi, who affiliated himself with several tarekat such as Qadriyah, Khalwatilah and Naqshabandiyah (Azra 1992:420-27). Kyai Abbas form Pesantren Buntet, Cirebon, can also be added in this category as a Kyai who joined two different tarekat, Shattariyah and Tijaniyah.
1.3. The Variety of Majlis Dhikr Groups in Java

Despite the increasing popularity of tarekat among the Javanese, Majlis Dhikr groups have also gained popularity in many rural and urban areas in Java over the last two decades. Like tarekat, these groups offering a new mode of Islamic ritual practice have captured the interest of people of various ages and genders from villagers to well educated persons, and even a number of national elites. In contrast to the tarekat, which necessarily require members to aged forty or more to be able to practise its ritual, Majlis Dhikr groups do not have this requirement. As a result, in several Majlis Dhikr groups, one might easily find persons categorised as teenagers and even children following and practise the rituals of the group.

The presence of Majlis Dhikr is evident in the landscape of Indonesian Islam. Several such groups have been set up in Java during the last two decades. Most of these have been established by Islamic leaders (I., kyai) who have strong connection with pesantren. As a result, the activities of these groups cannot be separated from those of pesantren. However, some groups have been set up by independent Islamic leaders who do not have a strong affiliation with a particular pesantren. As far as the organization of these groups is concerned, most have organizational structures with branches in many regions, while others do not have an organizational structure. To give an overview of the range of these groups, this subsection will briefly introduce the Majlis Dhikr groups in Java that have attracted large numbers of followers and participants in their rituals in recent years.

One of these groups is the Majlis Dhikr al-Maghfira which was established in 1984 by Ustadz Haryono (b. 1970) from Pasuruan, East Java. This group has a home base in Pesantren Al-Madinah, Pasuruan, East Java (Haryono 2006:xxxii). Before establishing his group, Ustadz Haryono was known as a tabib (an Islamic healer) who was able to heal sickness using alternative methods which are unknown to the medical world. For instance, before healing his patients, he asked them to provide a goat. Using his spiritual power, he transferred the patients’ disease to the goat, and then slaughtered the goat. He still uses this method and many other healing methods to cure his patients. Perhaps because of his profession as a healer, his group is known by his followers as Majlis Dhikr Penyembuhan (The Healing Dhikr Group). Before becoming widely known nationally, this group initially conducted its ritual from house to house (dari rumah ke rumah) and in several small village mosques, attended by only a few people. Since 2000, the ritual of this group has attracted thousands of people, and can now only be held in mosques with a large park or in a sport stadium. This group now conducts dhikr ritual in forty eight towns throughout
Indonesia (Damarhuda and Mashuri 2005:74) and in Malaysia, Brunei and Singapore. During my research, the ritual of this group was widely broadcast by national and local television. In Surabaya, East Java, this group is sponsored by JTV, a local TV station owned by the Jawa Pos Media Group, which always broadcasts Ustadz Haryono’s dhikr ritual when it is held in cities in East Java. This Majlis Dhikr group conducts its ritual by reciting the Ratib al-al-Haddad, a prayer composed by a famous Hadrami Muslim saint, ‘Abd ‘Allah Ibn ‘Alawi al-Haddad (d.1720) consisting of a collection of Qur’anic verses, a declaration of belief, praise and exaltation of God, and particular invocations.

Another group is Majlis Dhikr al-Dhikra, which was established by a young Muslim preacher Arifin Ilham (b. 1969). During his youth, Arifin Ilham was a proponent of the religious ideas of Muhammadiyah, who strongly criticized reciting vocal dhikr, especially after the five daily prayers, as is popularly done among Nahdlatul Ulama’s members. However, after suffering severe sickness because of a snake bite, he began to realize the importance of reciting dhikr, and he popularised the vocal recitation of dhikr in unison (I., berjamaah). This group was initially established in 1999 from a small group of seven people who recited dhikr weekly in the Al-Amr bi al-Taqwa mosque in Mampang Indah, Jakarta. This group has now attracted the attention of thousands of Muslims, mostly in urban areas, who attend its ritual. In order to organise this group, Arifin Ilham established an organization consisting of an executive board (I., Dewan Tanfidhiah) and a consultative board (I., Dewan Syuriah). With this organization, this group serves not only as an institution for conducting dhikr ritual but also as an institution to provide social services for the community. For example, one of the units in this group, Titian Keluarga Sakinah, gives advice to teenagers and adults on family and marriage matters. Other units established in this group include a Panti Asuhan Yatana Az-Zikra (orphanage), the Tasbih magazine and a Tim Khadimatul Ummah (Team for Social Service) (Syadzily 2005:50-54).

Like other Majlis Dhikr groups, Arifin Ilham’s group recites several dhikr formulae taken from the Qur’an and hadith such as ta’awwudl, tasbiḥ, tahmīd, tahlīl, several short chapters of the Qur’an, Asmaul Husna (the beautiful names of God), and the exaltation of the Prophet (I., salawat nabi). This ritual is conducted after a short lecture (I., taushiyah singkat) by Arifin Ilham. It is interesting to note that participants are strongly encouraged to wear white clothes and white caps (I., peci haji) during this ritual (Syadzily 2005:67). In 2003, this group successfully held the dhikr ritual entitled Indonesia Berdzikir in the Istiqlal mosque, the biggest mosque in Southeast Asia. This ceremony was attended by senior Indonesian politicians, several Indonesian Muslim leaders, and thousands of people from the Jakarta area. The increasing popularity of
Arifin Ilham and his group among Indonesian Muslims nationally has been strengthened by wide publicity in the media. For example, the activities of Arifin Ilham and his group are widely reported on by Indonesian electronic and print media. Like Abdullah Gymnastiar (known as AA Gym), a famous young Muslim preacher, Arifin Ilham’s face and his dhikr activities regularly appeared on national television programs during the period of my research. Furthermore, cassettes and CDs of his tausiyah (I., ceramah, religious lecture) and dhikr ritual are readily found in many music shops. His face is also visible on the covers of many books in big bookshops in Indonesia such as Gramedia and Gunung Agung bookshop.

The Ṣalawāt Ṭāhīdiyyat group is another important Majlis Dhikr group in Java, with members in many cities throughout Indonesia and also overseas. This group was set up in 1963 by Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf, believed by his followers to have experienced a dream of the Prophet. Focusing its ritual on the recitation of Ṣalāwa (the exaltation of the Prophet), the group has set up branches in many cities in Indonesia, with its central board in Kediri, East Java. In order to spread its teachings, beside using Kedunglo pesantren as a home base, this group has established an organizational structure which consists of a central board office with representatives in provinces, regencies, sub-districts, and villages, something which has not been done by other Majlis Dhikr. The highest authority and decision-making body in the Ṭāhīdiyyat is in the hands of Kyai Abdul Latif Madjid, the son of the founder, who acts as the guardian of the Ṭāhīdiyyat and as the head of its foundation and organization. Among tarekat groups, Ṭāhīdiyyat is considered by some to be an unacknowledged tarekat (ghairu mu’tabarrah) since it does not have an unbroken chain of transmission that can be traced back to the Prophet. Despite its popularity, this group keeps no official record of the number of its members.

Another significant Majlis Dhikr group is called Istighāthat Iḥsāniyyat. Compared to the two previous groups, the Istighāhat Iḥsāniyyat is a relatively group, established in Kediri in 1999 by Kyai Abdul Latif, a kyai from Pesantren Jampes, Kediri. The ritual of this group focuses on the recitation of dhikr formulae written by Kyai Abdul Latif. This ritual is not only held regularly at several Muslim saints’ graves, but also in other places in East Java, Central Java and Bali. Unlike Ṣalawāt Ṭāhīdiyyat group, Iḥsāniyyat does not have an organizational structure to spread its teachings. Nevertheless, it has several coordinators in various regions who facilitate events held by the group in those regions. This group was established initially to cater for those categorised as orang ruwet, nominal Muslims, and those negatively categorised as the dregs of society (sampah masyarakat), such as those who were previously addicted to narcotics (I., narkoba), alcohol, ecstasy tablets, and opium (sabu-sabu).
Ihšāniyyat thus accommodates cultural modes prevalent among such people in its dakwah strategy. For instance, this group allows Javanese popular arts such as the horse dance (J., jaranan), tiger-masked dance (I., reog), music of Malay Orchestras (I., Orkes Melayu), Chinese dragon dance (leang-leong), and ruwatan to be performed on its annual anniversary.

Another important Majlis Dhikr group in Java is Dhikr al-Ghāfili>n which was established in 1973 by the late Kyai Hamim Jazuli (Gus Mik) who was seen as a controversial kyai. The ritual of this group is held at several Muslim tombs in Kediri, East Java and many other places throughout Indonesia. This ritual is often combined with Semaan al-Qur’an, a recitation of all the chapters of the Qur’an by memorizers, followed by other participants called sāmi’in (literally, listeners). This group has now established many branches in many cities in Java and other islands, attracting numerous members from different social levels. The group even holds its annual ritual in the Yogyakarta palace (Alun-alun Utara), where a member of the palace’s family acts as its coordinator. Since the death of Kyai Hamim Jazuli, this group has been independently run by different leaders, each with their own followers. The exact number of its followers is unknown since no official record is kept of its membership.

1.4. Meaning and Implications of the Classification: Mu’tabarah

In the study of Islamic practices, the concept of mu’tabarah might be known only in the context of Indonesian Islam, particularly within the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) tradition. This term literally means ‘recognised’ and ‘legitimate’. However, it is used by NU not only to refer to particular books that can be appropriately used as literature in the NU’s pesantren and as references on which to base religious legal opinions, but it is also used to refer to particular Sufi groups which can be joined by NU members.

According to this concept, books that can be categorised as mu’tabarah are those which are compatible with the doctrine of Ahlussunnah wal Jama’ah (Muhammad 2004:77), a doctrine which is strongly held by the NU members as the basis of their religious practices. According to this doctrine, those books should conform to one of four madhhab (Islamic legal schools) in matters of Islamic jurisprudence; in matters of Islamic theology they should follow the teachings of Abu Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī and Abu Maṣūr al-Māturīḍī, and in matters of tasawuf they should comply with the teaching of al-Ghazālī and Junaid al-Baghdādī. In addition, another criterion used to identify books as
mu'tabarah in the NU tradition is the credibility of their authors. According to Kyai Misbah, a senior leader of pesantren Jampes in Kediri, particular books (I., kitab kuning) can be considered mu'tabarah as long as their authors meet four criteria. Firstly, they must be learned persons (A., ‘ālim). Secondly they must have displayed good behaviour (I., akhlakul karimah). Thirdly, they must express a high-aiming endeavour (A., himmat ‘āliyat) to follow the practice of the Prophet. Fourthly, they should display refined speech when discussing others’ opinions.5 Based on these criteria, books written by Ibn Taymiyyah and his student, Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jauziyah, for example, are rarely found in NU’s pesantren literature and curriculum because these authors do not use refined speech. Instead, they usually use provocative and abusive language in expressing their disagreement with other Muslim scholars’ views. Books such as Bidayat al-Mujtahid written by Ibn al-Rushd, and Subul al-Salam written by al-Shanâ‘âni are not used in pesantren curricula or as references because these authors are Shiites, a group which is different from Ahlussunnah wal Jama’ah.

The concept of mu’tabarah is also applied to the practice of tarekat (Sufi groups) under the umbrella of NU. It is used by an association founded in 1957 under the NU umbrella and known as Pucuk Pimpinan Jam’iyat Ahli Thoriqoh Mu’tabarah (Central Executive Committee of the Association of Members of Respected Tarekat Orders) to identify Sufi groups that can be joined by a member of NU based on the criteria laid down by this association (Jam’iyat). These criteria make clear that the teachings of the tarekat must conform to the Islamic Law (A., shari’at) and the wirid practised by the tarekat must have a spiritual genealogy (I., silsilah) going back to the Prophet. Turmudi argues that these criteria were established by the Jam’iyah to ensure that the wirid were not invented by the founders of tarekat, but were practised by the Prophet himself. Any tarekat that does not meet these criteria is not recognized or not given the ‘respect’ accorded to other tarekat (A., ghairu mu’tabarah), and as a result should not be joined by NU members (Turmudi 2003:65).

It is clear that the concept of mu’tabarah is significant in regard to the ritual practices among tarekat members because it cannot only give strong legitimacy for tarekat groups involved in the Jam’iyah but can also enhance the members’ faith in their rituals and teaching. Furthermore, by using the concept of mu’tabarah, those groups involved in the Jam’iyah can make a clear-cut distinction between their rituals and various other ritual practices considered incompatible with Islamic law (Dhofier 1999:144). In other words, the concept of mu’tabarah is internally effective to protect these groups from other unorthodox spiritual groups.

5 Interview with Kyai Misbah, Kediri, June 2005.
Nevertheless, the concept of *mu’tabarrah* used by the *Jam’iyyat* has not prevented the proliferation of ritual groups which are incompatible with the criteria laid down by the association. For instance, at one of its official meetings held in 1957 in Magelang, Central Java, the association declared that *Tarekat* Shiddiqiyah, headed by an NU kyai, could not be regarded as *mu’tabarrah* because it does not have an acceptable *silsilah* and *murshidship*. Despite this decision, *Tarekat* Shiddiqiyah keeps growing and recruits many members from different regions, particularly in East Java and Central Java (Qawa’id 1992:89). It also continues to operate like other recognized *tarekat*.

In fact, the concept of *mu’tabarrah* was debated within NU before the *Jam’iyyat* was formally founded. For example, in its 6th Congress on August 1931 held in Cirebon, NU faced a difficulty in determining whether or not Tijaniyah could be regarded as being *mu’tabarrah* so that its teachings could be practised by NU members. This problem arose due to the fact that some of the participants of the Congress considered that the Tijaniyah did not have an acceptable *silsilah* because the founder of this group Aḥmad al-Tijānī (1737-1815), who lived in North Africa and founded his group in 1781-2, claimed that he received the *wird* for his *tarekat* from the Prophet when he was fully conscious and in active mind (A., *yaqūdhat*), not dreaming. Another objection to the Tijaniyah is related to its teaching that the Tijaniyah followers will be given a place in paradise without passing the reckoning stage (hisab), and that they should give up their membership in their former orders (Pijper 1987:89). Despite strong objections from some of its members, after a long and exhausting debate, the Congress chaired by Kyai Hasyim Asy’ari eventually declared that the Tijaniyah can be considered *mu’tabarrah* (Muhaimin 1995:345). Instead of referring to the criteria of *silsilah*, this decision was based on the notion that the litanies including *dhikr*, *Ṣalāwāt* and *istighfār*, practised in Tijaniyah ritual are compatible with Islamic teaching (Bruinessen 1995:108). In other words, even though the Tijaniyah does not have an acceptable *silsilah* that can be traced back to the Prophet, its litanies are legitimate and can be practised by Nahdlatul Ulama members; the Congress was silent about the *tarekat*’s more extreme claims (Pijper 1987:97).

It is interesting to analyse why NU, in its 6th Congress, agreed to consider the Tijaniyah as being *mu’tabarrah* based only on the content of its litanies, despite strong objections from within the NU circle. The decision was made by NU to put an end a conflict which threatened to divide the organisation. As mentioned by Bruinessen, both apologists and proponents of Tijaniyah were members of NU and had close relations with NU leaders. Kyai Anas, the *Muqaddam* (leader)

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6 This *tarekat* was established by Kyai Muchtar Mu’thi in early 1950s in Ploso, Jombang, East Java.
7 During this period, al-Tijani claimed that he received a waking vision of the Prophet who taught him the litanies for his new order.
of Tijaniyah was a leading member of NU as well as being the student of Kyai Hasyim Asy’ari, the founder of NU. To maintain the unity of the organisation, NU accommodated both sides and allowed them to coexist peacefully. Moreover, this decision was taken because NU did not want to offend Kyai Abbas (1879-1946) who was the host of the Congress and the elder brother of the Muqaddam of Tijaniyah, Kyai Anas (Bruinessen 1999:721-22).

Kyai Abbas was also an important figure who bridged the gap between the followers of Tijaniyah and other tarekat. Several years after the congress, despite being the murshid (leader) of Shatariyah, following his brother, Kyai Abbas took an initiation in Tijaniyah and then became the muqaddam (leader) of Tijaniyah. (Muhaimin 1995:350). According to the teaching of Tijaniyah, once Muslims become members of the Tijaniyah, they should abandon their previous tarekat. However, Kyai Abbas did not abandon his former tarekat and even became the leader of two tarekat. Without doubt, this unique position of Kyai Abbas broke the strict Tijaniyah rule which necessitates its members abandon previous tarekat. Kyai Abbas might have deliberately taken this position to put an end to the dispute over the exclusiveness of Tijaniyah and, as result, this might have helped to put an end to greater conflicts which threatened the unity of NU organisationally. Until now the mu’tabarah status of Tijaniyah has remained unshaken and it was one of forty six tarekat mu’tabarah considered as mu’tabarah in the Congress held by the association on 26th-28th February 2000 in Pekalongan, Central Java (Anonymous 2000:222).8

It is clear that in an emergency situation, the concept of mu’tabarah can be negotiated and interpreted by the important figures in the NU. These key figures are significant in deciding whether particular tarekat can be regarded as being mu’tabarah or not, based on their understanding of the general concept of Ahlussunnah wal jamaah embraced by NU members. Part of this understanding is that preventing evil takes precedence over any consideration of gaining benefit from something (A., dar’ul mafa>sid muqaddam alā jalb al-maṣālih). This notion, which is taken from Islamic legal theory, might have inspired the NU leaders to decide on the status of Tijaniyah. Therefore, instead of considering Tijaniyah to be non-mu’tabarah on the basis of the criteria prevalent in the organisation, the leaders of NU found a compromise formula which not only allowed the followers and opponents of Tijaniyah to coexist peacefully, but also avoided a possible conflict threatening the unity of NU organisationally.

8 See Appendix
Chapter I - Introduction

1.5. Sufism in the Pesantren Tradition

The forms of Islam that first came to Malay Archipelago were probably colored by Sufi doctrine and practice. It is no historical coincidence that the first century of the Islamization of South Asia (the thirteenth century) was the golden period of medieval Sufism that saw a proliferation of Sufi orders (tarekat). Thus, for example, al-Ghazālī, the proponent of orthodox Sufism, died in 1111; Abd al-Qādir al-Jaylānī to whom the teachings of the tarekat Qadiriyah are attributed, died in 1166; a year later saw the death of Abd al-Qahir al-Suhrawardī with whom tarekat Suhrawardiyah is associated; Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā, the founder of tarekat Kubrawiyah and the key influential figure of the Naqsabandiyah order died in 1221; Ibn al-‘Arabi whose thoughts and teachings greatly influenced Malay Sufi thinking died in 1240; Abu al-Ḥasan al- Shadhīfī who originated from North Africa and established the Shadhiliyah order died in 1258 (Bruinessen 1994a:2).

In Anthony Johns’s view, individual Sufi and Sufi orders played an important role in the Islamization of Malay Archipelago beginning in the thirteenth century. After the fall of Baghdad in 1258, there began a wave of active Sufi wanderings that did much to unify the Islamic world (Johns 1961:14). The teachings of Sufism founded fertile ground within indigenous religions and belief. The indigenous population could easily accept mystical thoughts of Ibn ʿArabi because they were closely related to the previous Indic mystical ideas prevalent in the region. In addition, the Sufi ideas of the Perfect Man (A., Insān al-Kāmil) and of sainthood (A., wilāyat) gave a mystical legitimation to local rulers enabling them to use these notions for political or economical reasons. Instead of radically changing traditional beliefs and practices, Sufism emphasized the continuity of indigenous tradition and belief, coloring them with Islam. Al-Attas argues that it is the characteristic of Sufism to allow non Islamic elements within Islamic Sufism providing that they do not contradict Qur’an revelation (Al-Attas 1985: 171).

The second wave of Islamic intellectualism that influenced Sufism in the pesantren tradition was brought by ‘traditional’ Muslim scholars who studied in Mecca and Medina during the early nineteenth century. It was in this century that intellectual links between the heart of Islam in Middle East and the Malay world experienced greater consolidation. Due to the easing of restrictions on the hajj and the improved of availability in transport, more students from Southeast Asia, particularly from Indonesia, were able to study in Mecca and Medina. Many prominent Indonesian ‘ulamā’ studied there during this period: Shaikh Akhmad Khāṭib Sambas (d.1875), Shaikh al-Nawāwī al-Bantānī al-Tanari (d. 1897), Mahfūḍz al-Tirmīsī (d.1919), Ahmad Rifa‘ī Kalisalak (d.1875), Kyai
Saleh Darat (1903), Kyai Khalil Bangkalan (d.1925), Kyai Hasyim Asy’ari (d.1947) and Kyai Asnawi Kudus (d.1959) Rahman (1997:94). Three prominent Indonesian ‘ulamā’, Shaikh al-Nawawī al-Bantānī, Shaikh Akhmad Khātib Sambas and Kyai Mahfūdż al-Tirmiṣī, who taught at the Ḥaram mosque in Mecca shaped the intellectual traditions of the pesantren because almost all kyai from prominent pesantren in Java studied with these ‘ulamā’ (Bruinessen 1994b:137).

This wave of intellectualism placed great emphasis on the reconciliation between Sufism and shari‘at. This can be seen clearly from texts taught in the two holy cities –Mecca and Medina – during the period. As observed by Snouck Hurgronje, the primary texts on Sufism taught at the Haram mosque in Mecca were the works of al-Ghazali (Zulkifli 2002:24). During this period, there was a change in the theological orientation of Sufism and other Islamic knowledge in the pesantren. For example, mystical texts containing the theosophical or philosophical mystic ideas of Wahdāt al-Wujūd and Martabat Tujuh were no longer taught in many pesantren. L.W.C. van den Berg who conducted research in a number of pesantren in Java and Madura in 1880 and compiled a list of Arabic texts used in these pesantren indicates that books containing Wujūdiyah doctrine or Insān al-Kāmil (the ‘perfect man’) teaching were absent from the curriculum. Instead in those pesantren with direct contact with the center of orthodoxy, most texts on Sufism were dominated by Ghazālī’s works or commentaries on them (Bruinessen 1994b).⁹

Another salient feature of the second wave of intellectualism coming to Indonesia was the growth of Sufi orders in Indonesia. The growth of Sufi orders during the period was made possible because of the increase number of pilgrims performing the hajj. Several Sufi orders played an important role in anti-colonial rebellions during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The nature of the second wave of intellectualism contributed significantly to the development of Sufism in pesantren. Key pesantren affiliated with Sufi orders were: Pesantren Darul-‘Ulum in Rejoso, Jombang; Pesantren Sawapulo, Pesantren al-Fitrah both in Surabaya (Sujuti 2001b: 59); Pesantren Suralaya in Tasikmalaya, West Java (Zulkifli 2002: 71); Pesantren Al-Falah, Pegantongan in Bogor, Pesantren Mranggen in Central Java, Pesantren Ploso in Jombang (Dhofer 1978:141) and Pesantren Buntet in Cirebon (Muhaimin 1995). On the other hand, other pesantren that chose not to affiliate themselves with Sufi orders nevertheless focused on the study of Sufism: Pesantren Langitan in Tuban, East Java; Pesantren Lirboyo in Kediri, Pesantren Blok Agung in

⁹ Bruinessen speculates that in some pesantren works on Wahdāt al-Wujūd or the seven grades of being may have been given to select students.
Banyuwangi, Pesantren Kajen in Pati and many other pesantren. As a result of these different responses, the community of pesantren generally distinguish between Sufi and the followers of Sufi orders (ahli tarekat). They base this argument on the fact that al-Ghazali was a Sufi but he never belonged to a particular Sufi order (Zulkifli 2002: 30).

Regardless of their strategy, Sufism is an important subject in pesantren. The inclination towards Sufism shown by most pesantren is closely related to the fact that pesantren are institutions that aim not only to transfer Islamic knowledge but also to transfer values (akhlaq). Sufism provides a set of moral and religious values which are needed by pesantren to mould the character of their students and develop their spiritual life. As a result, aspects of tasawuf are often taught under the heading of akhlaq (Islamic ethics) and sometimes it is hard to distinguish the teachings on akhlaq from those of Sufism. Pesantren traditions require not only the understanding of the teachings of Sufism through the Sufi texts but also require the implementation of those teachings into practice under the guidance of a teacher. This understanding of Sufism in the pesantren tradition is relevant to the definition of tasawuf as put forward by some kyai such as Kyai Shohibulwafa Tajul Arifin, known as Abah Anom who stated that ‘tasawuf cleanses the heart’s passion and its heinous inclinations by teaching exercises to control passion, to develop a noble character and to follow the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad as persistently as possible.’ Similarly, Kyai Shamsuri Badawi defined tasawuf as the purification of the soul from disgraceful characteristics (Zulkifli 2002:27).

Among the Sufi texts taught in pesantren, al-Ghazālī’s works are most prominent. Bruinessen who carried out research on the Arabic classical books (I., kitab kuning) used in pesantren concludes that Sufism texts taught in pesantren are dominated by Ghazali’s works such as Ihya‘ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn, Minhāj al-‘Abidīn and Bidāyat al-Hidāyat (excerpted from his Ihya‘) (Bruinessen 1994b). Some pesantren such as Pesantren Darunnajah, Bendo, Pare, Kediri; Pesantren Bustanul Ulum, Batoan, Mojo, Kediri and Fathul Ulum, Wagean, Kepung, Pare, Kediri specialize in the teaching of Ihya‘. In most pesantren, Ihya‘ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn holds high rank. It is seen as the final stage of an intellectual journey that involves the the study law and theology. This book is taught to those students who have finished their study in formal classes in pesantren.

The reason why Ghazali’s works on Sufism have dominated the teaching of Sufism has to do with the doctrine of Ahlussunnah wa al-Jama‘ah prevalent in pesantren, particularly those affiliated with NU, that strongly emphasize the balance between Islamic Law and Sufism. These pesantren adhere to the teaching of Imam al-Junaid al-Baghdādī and al-Ghazālī. Al-Ghazālī is regarded
as the Muslim scholar who succeeded in harmonizing and reconciling orthodox Islam (the exoteric dimension of Islam) with the mystical ideas of Sufism (the esoteric dimension of Islam). This can be seen clearly in his magnum opus *Ihya‘ Ulūm al-Dīn, Minhāj al-‘Abidīn* and *Bidayat al-Hidāyat*. 
Chapter II: Innovation or Aberration: 
*Majlis Dhikr* in Contemporary Indonesian Islamic Discourse

Some Indonesianists have predicted that the practice of *tarekat* prevalent in the rural areas would disappear following the proliferation of Islamic modernist movements in Indonesia. This prediction, however, proved to be unfounded. Surprisingly, not only has there been an increase and expansion of Sufi orders in Indonesia, there is also currently a rise of other Islamic spiritual groups, such as *Majlis Dhikr* groups together with various Islamic spiritual courses. These groups have also undergone an increase in membership. Besides those categorized as peasants who have increased their interest in these groups, the urban middle class, together with many educated Muslims, have been attracted to join these groups.

The proliferation of these new Islamic spiritual groups has raised strong criticism and has prompted polemical debates regarding the validity of their ritual practices. This criticism can be conceived as a continuation of previous religious debates on the teaching of Sufism which were first put forward by the supporters of puritanical Islamic groups in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries.\(^1\) In a broader context, these debates constitute an integral part of the internal debates which has taken place in the Islamic tradition for several centuries. Therefore, in this chapter, I will examine the main factors that have led to these polemical debates on the ritual practices of *Majlis Dhikr*. I intend to discuss the views of both the proponents and opponents of *Majlis Dhikr* in contemporary Indonesia.

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\(^1\) As Bruinessen observed, Ahmad Khatib (1852-1915), a West Sumatra Muslim scholar who spent his life in Mecca, was an outspoken critic of Naqshabandiyah. He and other West Sumatran reformers vigorously charged the teachings of *tarekat* and its practices with misleading *bid’ah* and heresy. From 1906 to 1908 he wrote three polemical treatises about Naqshabandiyah which have been used as the main references for subsequent debates and criticism toward the group. Those three writings include ‘*Izhārū Zaghl al-Kādhibīn fī Tashabbbuhīhim bi al-Shādiqīn* (‘Revealing the falseness of the deceivers who wear the mask of truth’), *Al-ʿAyāt al-Bayyīnāt li al-Munsīfīn fī Izāla Khurāfāt baʿdh al-Mutaʾassībin* (‘The true evidence of virtuous persons for eradicating the superstition of the fanatics’), and ‘*Al-ʿAsāiʿ al-Battār fī Mahqi Kalimātī Baʿḍī Ahl-al-Ighṭār*’ (‘The cutting sword that fights the words of the arrogant’) (Bruinessen 1994: 110-13).
2.1. Source of Disputes: Understanding the Concept of  *Bid’ah* (innovation within Islam) within Indonesian Islam

Polemical debates on theological matters have become a general phenomenon among Muslims around the world, including in Indonesia. For those who are familiar with the history of Islamic thought in Indonesia, polemical debates on religious matters have characterized Indonesian Islamic thought from the formative centuries of the coming of Islam to the present. The root of these polemical debates is mainly on the question of orthodoxy and authenticity in Islam. This includes the question of whether particular religious practices can be categorized as a part of Islamic orthodoxy or whether they can be considered as new practices in Islam, which have no sanction either in the Qur’an or hadith, leading their performers to be labeled with misguidance.

The rise of Islamic purification and reformism movements in the early twentieth century in Egypt strongly influenced similar movements among Indonesian Muslims (Fealy et al. 2006:43-44). For instance, the ideas of reformism initiated by Al-Azhar’s scholars such as Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1839-97), Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905) and his successor, Rashīd Riḍā (1865-1935) attracted new generations of Indonesian Muslims to come to Cairo as an alternative to Mecca (Fox 2004:2-3). Inspired by these ideas, Muḥammadiyah (1912) and Persatuan Islam (Islamic Union, PERSIS) (1923) were the first modern Indonesian Muslims organizations that championed the call for a return to pristine teachings of the Qur’ān and the Prophet, the abandonment of various traditional practices deemed to be tainted with *bid’ah* (innovation), *tahayyul* (superstition) and *khurafat* (myth), and the call to conduct *ijtihād* (independent judgment based on recognized sources of Islam on legal or theological question) by reference to the Qur’ān and hadith. Without doubt, these themes, in turn, have not only been directed toward ‘nominal Muslims’ who remained practising their traditional ritual practices but also toward ‘traditionalist’ Muslim groups and Sufi groups (*kelompok tarekat*) who were alleged by reformist groups to be practising innovation in their rituals (Fox 2004:4; Howell 2001:705).

The struggle to purify traditional, local custom and alleged *bid’ah* in belief and practice, threatened the rituals of Sufi groups which had been practised

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2 The 16th and the 17th centuries were seen as periods when disputes in Sufism among Malay Muslim scholars occurred in the Islamic Malay world. The ideas of philosophical Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabi introduced by Hamzah Fansuri (d. 1590) and his student Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī (1575-1630) which had been prevalent in Aceh for a century were challenged by the orthodox notions of Nur al-Dīn al-Ranirī. The views of Hamzah and Sumatrānī were subject to accusations of heresy by al-Ranirī (Azra 1992:379).
by Indonesian Muslims for centuries. Throughout the twentieth century, the
devoted rejection of Sufi practices among reformist groups represented by
Muhammadiyah spread widely. In line with their idea of purification, Muslim
reformist groups saw in Sufism a toleration of local idolatry, the excessive
veneration of a spiritual master, and a hierarchical structure which led to
deviation from devotion to the Oneness of God (I., tauhid). According to them,
all of these practices had no sanction either in the Qur’an and hadith. These
reformist groups regarded Sufism as ‘the Islam that is not Islam’ (I., Islam yang

However, during the last decade of twentieth century, Muhammadiyah seems
no longer to stress its puritanical dakwah. Instead, Muhammadiyah has given
more emphasis to social and cultural dakwah than puritanical dakwah. As a
result, Muhammadiyah no longer fiercely challenges alleged bid’ah rituals
that had previously accused the Nahdlatul ‘Ulama community, nominal
Muslims and followers of Sufi groups of carrying out. Instead, Muhammadiyah
has begun to consider ‘Sufism’ in its dakwah. For example Munir Mulkhan,
a Muhammadiyah activist, as quoted by Howell, argues that in its National
Congress held in Aceh 4-5 July 1995, in Banda Aceh,3 Muhammadiyah began
to consider the importance of the inner aspect of Islamic teachings that used
to be the subject of its criticism. Inspired by Hamka, to implement this notion,
Muhammadiyah has revitalized and accommodated the spiritual teachings of
Sufism without asking its members to join particular Sufi groups and without
lessening its character as a modern and rational organization. The Congress,
for instance, encouraged Muhammadiyah members to develop community
ritual life by performing prayer and dhikr according to the Prophetic tradition
(I., sunnah) and by promoting tahajjud prayer (night prayers), especially for
strategic groups in the middle class, such as managers and executives in large
cities. According to Mulkhan, this strategy was taken due to the fact that the
Muhammadiyah’s previous dakwah strategy had failed to convince nominal
Muslims to set aside rituals seen by reformist groups as bid’ah, such as the
Sufi practices of dhikr and wirid (Howell 2001:712). Furthermore, Martin Van
Bruinessen, in his foreword of Mahmud Sujuti’s book, even observed that there
are members of Muhammadiyah who have joined tarekat, even though they are
not numerous (Sujuti 2001:xiv).

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3 Along with the idea of accommodation of spiritual Islam, it was in this Congress that Muhammadiyah
realized the importance of implementing the strategy of Dakwah Kultural (cultural Islamic preaching). This
strategy was officially enforced in the subsequent Congress in 2000 in Jakarta and in the SidangTanwir
Muhammadiyah in Denpasar January, the 24th- 25th 2002 . This strategy was taken by Muhammadiyah
because the puritanical dakwah strategy that has been applied by Muhammadiyah preachers since its inception
did not accommodate the Indonesian traditional culture and its positive values (Tanthowi 2003:131-32).
In contrast, PERSIS seems to have retained its trademark as the Islamic organization which has consistently stressed the importance of puritanical Islamic dakwah. PERSIS, which has been known as the most radical of Islamic organizations in its rejection of spirit beliefs, adat rituals and traditional Muslim practices with no sound basis in the Qur’an and hadith, propagated its views under the theme of purifying belief, worship, and ethics (I., Islahul Akidah, Ibadah, and Akhlak). Moreover, as argued by Shiddiq Amien, the chairman of PERSIS, currently, the biggest challenge of its dakwah project is concerned with the spread of superstition (tahayyul), illicit innovation within Islam (I., bid’ah) and myths (khurafat), often shortened to TBC (which stands for ‘tuberculosis’) but also concerned with SIPILIS (Indonesian term for ‘syphilis’) which stands for secularism (I., sekularisme), pluralism (I., pluralisme) and liberalism (I., liberalisme). The SIPILIS is regarded by PERSIS as an ideology that has degraded the truth of Islam as a divine religion since PERSIS claims that its proponents regard all religions as equal (Amien 2005).

Along with the current worldwide growth of the Salafi movement in the latter part of twentieth century, puritanical themes of dakwah have regained currency in Islamic activism in Indonesia. Like Muhammadiyah and PERSIS, as Noorhaidi has argued, the main concern of Indonesian Salafi is to purify tauhid (the doctrine of the unity of God), by calling for a return to strict religious practices and by putting emphasis on individual integrity. With this concern, the Indonesian Salafi movement stresses the need to call Indonesian Muslims to return the pristine Qur’anic and hadith teachings and to avoid any practices deemed to be tainted with bid’ah, superstition, and myths (Noorhaidi 2005:24-25). With these campaigns, the Indonesian Salafi movement not only rejects Sufi devotional practices but also other ritual practices such as those of the Majlis Dhikr.

There is no doubt that the spread of the world wide Salafi movement has been inspired ideologically by the most puritanical Islamic sect, Wahabbism, developed by Mūhammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (1703-1792). The aim of the Wahabi movement has been to fight the superstitions and Sufi devotional practices prevalent in Arab society, which are considered as misleading bid’ah, as well as to attack un-Islamic behaviour by Muslims. Although Wahabbism was distinguished from Salafism in older academic discourse, contemporary Salafism can be seen as reorganised Wahabbism since its opponents invariably refer to the thoughts formulated by Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim al-Jauzi (1292-1350) and Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and rely on contemporary Wahabbist ulamā’ such as ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ‘Abd Allah bin Baz (d.1999) and Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (Fadl 2005:74; Noorhaidi 2005:24-25). According to Fadl the word Salafi, however, did not become associated with the
Wahabbism creed until the 1970s. The word Salaf initially means predecessors, but in this context, Salaf usually refers to the period of the Prophet, his Companions, and their successors. The word Salafi means people who follow the Salaf. This word can also connote authenticity and legitimacy. Therefore, any religious movement that claims authenticity in Islam may easily exploit the term for its purposes (Fadl 2005:75).

The Indonesian Council for Islamic Preaching (Dewan Dakwah Islamiah Indonesia, DDII) is one of the Islamic organizations in Indonesia whose characteristic is Salafi. The DDII, which was established in 1967 by ex-Masyumi party⁴ (Partai Majlis Syuro Muslim Indonesia) members, has a strong connection not only with the Saudi Arabian government but also with the Islamic World League (Rābiţa al-‘Ālam al-Islāmiyy), an organization which is regularly funded by the Saudi Kingdom and often seen as part of a campaign to spread the strict ideology of Wahhabism across the world (Noorhaidi 2005:30-32). With this strong connection, it is not surprising that DDII is mainly concerned with the propagation of Islam and the purification of Islamic belief, attacking practices deemed as bid’ah. Initially, this organization attacked Indonesian Shi’ite groups but in recent years it has regularly criticized the idea of Islamic modernism, liberalism, and neo-modernism (Jaiz 2004:214-35).

Hartono Ahmad Jaiz is one of the most outspoken proponents of DDII who actively calls for the implementation of pristine Islamic teachings as sanctioned by the Qur’an and hadith. He is also a prolific writer on several issues including political Islam. Most of his works, however, are polemical, and to some extent apologetic. He, for example, wrote a book which specifically attacks Sufi practices and rituals which have been widely conducted by Indonesian tarekat groups. According to Hartono, these practices and rituals are tantamount to the practices conducted by polytheists (I., orang musyrik) because none of them was practised by the Prophet and His Companions. In his view, reciting vocal dhikr, and silent dhikr, a ritual which has become the main ritual within tarekat groups is deemed as a novelty which can be categorized as illicit innovation (I., bid’ahyang sesat) because all such practices have no sanction in the Qur’an and hadith. He has lamented that despite these polytheistic rituals, Muslims scholars who have deep understanding of Islamic knowledge keep practising these rituals. He specifically considers that all technical terms as used in Sufi teachings such as shari’at, ḥaqīqat, and ma’rifat have no precedent either in the Qur’an and hadith. Not only that, the method used in the practices of tarekat

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⁴ The Masyumi party was the biggest Islamic party in Indonesia. In 1960, Soekarno banned the party because some of its activists were involved in the PRRI (regional rebellion) against him.
including zuhud (asceticism), wasīlat (reliance on an intermediary), rabīta (one’s heart’s connection with a Sufi master), and ‘uzla (withdrawing from society) are not found in the Islamic teachings (Jaiz 1999:132).

Meanwhile, along with the proliferation of Majlis Dhikr groups in urban areas, other proponents of the contemporary Indonesian Salafi thinking strongly criticize the reciting of vocal dhikr in unison (I., zikir berjamaah) practised by those groups. Like previous criticism addressed to Sufi practices, the objection of the Salafi toward the reciting of vocal dhikr in unison is partly related to the fact that this kind of ritual is claimed never to have been practised by the Prophet and the first generation of Muslims (A., salaf al-sālihīn). Since this ritual was supposedly never been conducted by the Prophet, it can be considered as bid‘ah (innovation). Based on certain hadith, the Salafi believe that since every innovation is misguidance, it cannot be practised. Likewise, since the reciting of dhikr in unison is considered as bid‘ah, it cannot be practised as part of worship (I., ritual ibadah).

The roots of the Indonesian polemical debates on religious matters particularly concerning the validity of reciting vocal dhikr in unison can be traced back to different views and understanding of the concept of bid‘ah in Islam. These debates on the definition of bid‘ah among Indonesian Muslims are inseparable from the same debates in the history of Islamic theology involving Muslim theologians several centuries ago. Differences in defining the concept of bid‘ah, in turn, lead to the differences in defining whether a ritual practice can be justified in the light of the Qur’anic and Prophetic teachings or whether it is considered to be un-Islamic ritual and not supported by Islamic law; they also relate to whether or not practices, which were never carried out by the Prophet during his life, are able to be practised by His followers.

The differences in understanding the term bid‘ah can be attributed to the Prophetic hadith which reportedly stated that every innovation is misguidance and all misguidance leads into hellfire. Citing the book Fatawa Azhariyah (1997) Muhammad Niam has argued that Muslims can be divided into two broad groups as far as their approaches in defining the concept of bid‘ah. The first group approaches the term bid‘ah from an etymological perspective and the second approaches it from a terminological perspective (Ni‘am 2007).

The first group defines bid‘ah as innovation or creation of something which has no precedent. Based on this definition, every innovation or creation in religious matters that has no precedent during the lifetime of the Prophet can be regarded as bid‘ah, regardless of whether it is good or bad. This definition is justified by the fact that the derivatives of root b-d-‘ are often used to signify either
good or bad things. Therefore, with this definition, Imam Shafi’i, the founder of Shafi’ite school of Islamic law, argued that there are two kinds of innovation in religious matters. The first one is the innovation which contradicts the teaching of the Qur’an, the example of the Prophet, His Companions and Successors, or the consensus of Muslims scholars; this is illicit and objectionable bid’ah. The second one is the innovation in religious matters which is not evil in itself and does not contradict those authorities and may be good or praiseworthy (Fierro 1992:205-06). ‘Iz al-Dîn Ibn ‘Abd al-Salâm (d.660/1262), a prominent scholar of Shafi’ite school, came to distinguish bid’ah according to five legal norms depending on whether or not it violated a revealed text, a judiciary consensus or a Companion’s report (A., athar) (Hallaq 2001:536-537). These categories include 1) mandatory innovation (A., bid’ah wâjiba), 2) prohibited innovation (A.,bid’ah muharrama), 3) recommended innovation (A., bid’ah mandûba), 4) reprehensible innovation (A.,bid’ah makrûha), and 5) permissible innovation (A., bid’ah muba’ha) (Rispler 1991:324)

In contrast, the second group defines bid’ah as all newly invented activities in religious matters which are believed to be part of religion but in fact not part of religion. Some of the proponents of this group argue that bid’ah can be applied only in the matters of worship. Therefore, following this definition, they argue that every innovation in matters of worship can be labeled as misguidance and therefore cannot be categorized as recommended or permissible innovation as argued by the first group. In other words, this group implements the term bid’ah as indicated by the Prophetic hadith cited in regard to any kind of innovation; all such innovation is misguidance. This group bases its argument on the prominent view of Malik Ibn Anas (710-795), the founder of Malikite school of Islamic law, who stated that Muslims who innovate something in Islam while deeming it to be a good innovation thus allege that Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) has concealed part of God’s message.

The Indonesian Salafi group follows this second group in defining their concept of bid’ah. Therefore, for this group, every new practice in religious matters which is not sanctioned by the Qur’an, hadith and juridical consensus among Muslim scholars can be categorized as illicit innovation. Following Ibn Taymiyyah’s view, they argue that every good innovation in worship which does not have clear evidence (A., adillat) is unlawful (Jahar 1999:46). Their definition of bid’ah is based on the belief that Islam is a perfect religion. For them, the perfection of Islam as religion can be conceived from the fact that Islam regulates not only major matters but also small matters such as the ethics of entering a toilet or a house. Because of this perfection, they believe that Islam has already explained everything in all matters of worship including its ways, forms and conditions (Amsaka 2003:36). In order to prove the perfection
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of Islam, like previous Muslim reformist groups, the Indonesian Salafi cite the Qur’anic verse (5:3), ‘This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.’ For the Salafi, this verse is evidence of the perfection of Islam. Therefore, based on this verse, Islam does not need any accretions in the matters of worship because it has been completely prescribed in the Qur’an and hadith and at the same time there is no need for reduction in the matters of worship. Further, the Salafi argue that those who add new ritual practices in the matters of worship are like those who do not only believe that God has completed Islam as a religion but also believed that the Prophet has not completely delivered the message of God to his people (Amsaka 2003:32).

According to the Salafi, in matters of worship people are not able to create new rituals of worship except ones that have been prescribed by God and His Prophet. The types, forms and ways of worship cannot be derived by human reasoning, even though they are being used to obtain closeness to God, such as reciting vocal dhikr in unison (I., zikir dengan suara dan berjamaah) and other ritual practices as in Sufi groups. These types, forms and ways of worship have to be conducted in accordance with the revelation from God. In other words, one should do precisely what the Prophet did based on revelation. In this regard, the Indonesian Salafi hold the view that in the matters of worship everything is prohibited except that which is commanded (Amsaka 2003:53). In contrast, in worldly matters, everything is permitted except that which is prohibited. Therefore, in line with their definition of the concept of bid’ah, the Salafi believe that innovation in matters of worship is misguidance and illicit and its innovators (A., mubdi’) belong in hellfire (Jaiz 1999:18).

For the Indonesian Salafi, conducting any ritual worship to obtain closeness to God has to be based on a precise order as prescribed by the Qur’an and hadith. In their view, if such ritual practice as reciting vocal dhikr in unison can be used to approach God, then God would have ordered the Prophet to conduct that ritual because there was no obstacle during his lifetime to conduct it. As a result, conducting some practices which were never practised by the Prophet, even though for the purpose of obtaining closeness to God, can be seen as changing and thus violating the teaching of God (Shiddieqy 1983:41).

The view of the Salafi group on the matter of worship becomes, however, problematic when it is used to explain the case of zakat from personal income (I., zakat profesi, wealth tax), which is currently widely practised among Muslims worldwide. The practice of zakat from personal income (I., zakat profesi) is categorized as a matter of worship (I., ibadah) but was never practised as such during the lifetime of the Prophet and His Companions. Since there can be no
addition or reduction in the matter of *ibadah*, *zakat profesi* can be categorized as *bid’ah* according to the definition held by the Salafi. Yet despite its innovation, almost all Muslims agree to practise *zakat profesi*. No one will argue that those who practise *zakat profesi* should be cast into hellfire because they have conducted *bid’ah* in worship.

As a consequence of their definition of *bid’ah*, the Indonesian Salafi strongly stress that those who practise innovation will be charged with fierce punishment in the hereafter as stated by the Prophet through his many hadith. For example, one hadith states that the perpetrators of innovation will not obtain any reward from their own good virtues such as their prayers, fasting, pilgrimage and their charity (Shiddieqy 1983:24-28).

In contrast to Salafi group, the proponents of *Majlis Dhikr* define *bid’ah* as religious ritual which was not known during the Prophet’s lifetime. Moreover, for them, *bid’ah* can also be defined as accretion to or reduction of religious matters that has occurred after the period of the Prophet with no permission from God and His Prophet (A., *shari’*). In other words, every single practice that has no sanction explicitly and implicitly during the period of the Prophet can be considered as *bid’ah* (Badruzzaman 2003:30-31; Satori 2003:107). With this definition of *bid’ah*, the proponents of *Majlis Dhikr* believe that every Muslim who conducts the practices of *bid’ah* will be punished with painful torment in the hereafter as described by several hadith. However, in their view, not all *bid’ah* will be accorded this punishment and only those practices categorized as illicit (A., *bid’ah sayyia, dalāla*) will be charged of the punishment. In contrast, those who conduct practices categorized as praiseworthy innovation will not be charged with severe punishment. Thus according to Badruzzaman, the *Shari’at*board member of *Majelis Zikir al-Dhikra*, if Muslims perform the praiseworthy innovation sincerely, they will gain good rewards. (Badruzzaman 2003:54). In other words, the proponent of *Majlis Dhikr* argue that in regard to the new practices, one should not judge them as negative *bid’ah* without carefully looking at whether or not these new practices contradict Islamic Law (*Shari’at*). If these new practices contradict the Sunnah of the Prophet, this is an innovation which is an error (A., *bid’ah dalāla*), while if these novelties are not evil in itself and do not contradict the authority of Islam, this is unobjectionable novelty (A., *fahādhihi bid’ah ghairu maẓmūma*) (Badruzzaman 2003:38).

The category of *bid’ah* used by the proponents of *Majlis Dhikr* follows the ideas proposed by the great legal scholars, Imām Shāfi’i (d.204/819), Abū Zakaria Yahya ibn Sharaf al-Nawawi (d.676/1277), Abd al-Haqq al-Dahlawi. In the view of Badruzzaman, one of proponents of *Majlis Dhikr*, the categorization of *bid’ah* proposed by Imam Shāfi’i stems from his deep understanding of one of the
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The authoritative hadith attributed to Prophet’s Companion, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, reported that when he asked Muslims to perform prayers in unison during the last nights of Ramaḍān (A., qiyām al-layālī Ramaḍān) something that had never been done by the Prophet during his lifetime. ‘Umar noted that this practice as favourable bid’ah (A., ni’mat al-bid’a hadhihi). According to the proponents of Majlis Dhikr, it can be inferred from this statement that ‘Umar admitted that some bid’ah are favourable and some are not. Based on ‘Umar’s saying, Imām Shāfi‘ī held the opinion that new practices can be categorized as praiseworthy (A., bid’ah maḥmuda) (Badruzzaman 2003: 39-40).

In regard to misleading bid’ah, Imām Shāfi‘ī was reliant on the Prophetic hadith which reported that whoever performs misleading bid’ah not preferred by God and His Prophet, will incur sin. Therefore, Badruzzaman argued that based on ‘Umar’s saying, it can be inferred that not all bid’ah can be categorized as misleading as argued by the Salafi. In his view, if all bid’ah are considered as misleading, the Prophet would not have specifically mentioned only those who practised misleading bid’ah as sinful. As argued by Badruzzaman, it can plausibly be inferred that along with misleading bid’ah, there must be non-misleading bid’ah (Badruzzaman 2003: 39-40).

In addition to Imām Shāfi‘ī, al-Ghazālī (d.1111) argued that not all bid’ah is prohibited. The bid’ah which is prohibited is only that which clearly contradicts the hadith and rejects the prescriptions of Islamic law. Something categorized as bid’ah can become obligatory under particular conditions providing that there is a condition which causes the change (Hasan 2006:236).

In addition, the proponents of Majlis Dhikr also refer to the view of ‘Iz al-Dīn ibn ‘Abd al-Salām (d.660/1262) who classified bid’ah according to a legal classification on a scale from one to five: 1) mandatory innovation (A., bid’ah wa‘jibat), 2) prohibited innovation (A., bid’ah muharramat), 3) recommended innovation (A., bid’ah mandūbat), 4) reprehensible innovation (A., bid’ah makrūhat), and 5) permissible innovation (A., bid’ah muba‘ha). In other words, new practices should be weighed in the light of these five principles. In this case, if practices can be considered as recommended innovation, they can be practised by Muslims and cannot be considered as bid’ah in its negative sense. In contrast, if these new practices are categorised as prohibited innovation, Muslim are prohibited to practise them and as result, this innovation can be considered as negative. Therefore, for the proponents of Majlis Dhikr, based on these categories, the practice of reciting vocal dhikr in unison cannot be categorized as bid’ah in its negative sense because it is sanctioned by the
Qur’an and hadith (Badruzzaman 2003:42-43). This ritual practice might fall to the categorization of recommended innovation or even mandatory innovation as proposed by ‘Iz al-Din ibn ‘Abd al-Salām.

For the proponents of Majlis Dhikr, if every novelty is regarded as bid’ah, then everything that has resulted from the well-established process of legal decisions through the independent interpreting of legal sources (I., ijtihād, A., ijtihād) should be regarded as bid’ah because it is not clearly mentioned in the Qur’an and hadith. If this is the case, they question the significance of ijtihād which was strongly urged by the Prophet upon his Companions in the situation where there is no clear text to be found. If the result of ijtihād is regarded as bid’ah, it would contradict the Prophetic tradition which reported that if a judge passes judgment and makes use of ijtihād, and he is right, then he will have two rewards, whereas if he makes a mistake, there will be only one reward. In this regard, the proponents of Majlis Dhikr give an example of the practice of almsgiving (I., zakat). In this matter, as a result of their interpretation (ijtiha2), Muslim scholars have required every Muslim to pay their zakat on rice, banknotes (I., uang kertas), and cows (cattle), even though paying zakat on these things was not known during the lifetime of the Prophet. Nevertheless, this new practice has been accepted by Muslim scholars without deeming it as bid’ah (Badruzzaman 2003:51-52).

The argument put forward by the proponents of Majlis Dhikr on the matter of bid’ah is similar to that of Kyai Hashim Ash’ari, the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama’. Quoting the view of Syaikh Zaruq, Kyai Hashim Ash’ari said that when authoritative Muslim scholars put forward their views, these views cannot be considered as bid’ah because they deduce law by conducting ijtihād without transcending the limit (Asy’ari 2005:168). Therefore, according to the proponents of Majlis Dhikr, all legal matters that come under the category of ijtihād cannot be categorized as bid’ah. If they should be considered as bid’ah, they have to be conceived of as praiseworthy bid’ah.

2.2. Theological Debates on Dhikr Ritual

The strong criticism put forward by Indonesian Salafi has mainly been addressed to the reciting of vocal dhikr ritual in unison (I., berjamaah) conducted by Majlis Dhikr groups in urban areas, especially in Jakarta. Currently, the growth of these groups is apparent in the Indonesian capital city. Among these groups, one of the best known are the Majlis Dhikr group Al-Zikrah led by Arifin Ilham,
the *Dhikr* healing group (I., *Majlis Dhikr Penyembuhan*) established by Ustadz Haryono, and *Manajemen Qalbu* guided by the popular Indonesian preacher, Abdullah Gymnastiar, known as AA Gym (Watson 2005:776).

The prominence of these *Majlis Dhikr* groups is evident in the current landscape of Indonesian Islam due to the intensive publicity of Indonesian electronic and printed media which regularly report on their activities. During my research, most Indonesian TV stations had at least one program on their schedule for Islam that dealt with the activities of these groups. In addition, books, cassettes and CDs produced by these groups are readily available in both large and small bookshops throughout Indonesian cities. Several bookshops, like Gramedia and Gunung Agung, set up special display tables for AA Gym’s works.

AA Gym’s and Arifin Ilham’s activities have specifically attracted criticism from the Salafi. To criticize the *dakwah* strategy of AA Gym and Arifin Ilham’s *dhikr* groups, Indonesian Salafi have written books which have been widely circulated in many Indonesian cities. For instance, Abdurrahman Al-Mukaffi wrote a book entitled *Rapot Merah AA Gym, MQ (Manajemen Qalbu) di Penjara Tasawuf* (A Red Report on AA Gym, MQ [The Management of the Heart] in the Prison of Sufism) which has become a bestseller and has been reprinted six times. This book is mainly intended to criticize the *dakwah* themes and spiritual experiences presented by AA Gym which the author considers as part of the misleading *bid’ah* that has contaminated the purity of Muslims’ belief. The book, whose foreword was written by Hartono Ahmad Jaiz, an outspoken proponent of DDII was published by Darul Falah, one of publishing houses which specializes on publishing Salafi books.

In regard to the Arifin Ilham’s *Majlis Dhikr* group, Abu Amsaka, one of the outspoken proponents of Indonesian Salafi group wrote a book entitled *Koreksi Dzikir Jama’ah M. Arifin Ilham* (Correction of M. Arifin Ilham’s *Dzikir* in Unison). In fact, this book is aimed at responding to two books, the one entitled, ‘*Hikmah Dzikir Berjamaah* (The Benefit of Reciting *Dzikir* in Unison) written by M. Arifin Ilham and Debby M. Nasution, and the other, *Hakikat Dzikir, Jalan Taat Menuju Allah, Rahasia dan Kiat-kiat Mensucikan Jiwa dalam Upaya Meraih Hidup Bermakna* (The Essence of *Dhikr*, The Way of Obedience Toward Allah, Secrets and Methods to Purify the Soul in an Effort to Achieve a Meaningful Life) written by M. Arifin Ilham. Like Mukaffi’s book, Amsaka’s book is also published by Darul Falah. Like al-Mukaffi, Abu Amsaka rejects all ritual practised by Arifin Ilham and his group. Without conducting research on the activities of the group, the author personally accuses Arifin Ilham of using his group as a means to run his business and to achieve material interests.
(Amsaka 2003:51-52). Abu Amsaka is convinced that the ritual of Majlis Dhikr conducted by Arifin Ilham and his group has no strong legal basis so that it can be considered bid’ah that should not be practised by good Muslims.

Several aspects of the rituals of Majlis Dhikr have fed a polemical debate involving the proponents of these groups and Indonesian Salafi. These aspects include the reciting of vocal dhikr (I., zikir dengan suara), the recitation of dhikr in unison (I., zikir dengan berjamaah) and the recitation of dhikr by crying (I., zikir dengan menangis). Here I present the responses of the proponents of dhikr group (A., Jamaah Dhikr) who have been accused by the Salafi of performing bid’ah.

The main objection of the Indonesian Salafi group toward dhikr ritual performed by Arifin Ilham and his group is related to the fact that the ritual of his dhikr is not only recited vocally (A., jahr) but it is also recited in unison (I., berjamaah). Abu Amsaka finds that neither the Qur’anic teachings nor the Prophetic tradition supports such practices. Therefore, in the interpretation of Abu Amsaka, such practices constitute a flagrant violation of divine law as prescribed in the two primary sources of law, the Qur’anic revelation and hadith (Amsaka 2003:24). Following his definition of bid’ah, Amsaka argues that such practices are considered as being misguided (I., sesat) and misleading (I., menyesatkan). Abu Amsaka doubts whether Arifin Ilham and his group have sincerity in performing such vocal dhikr ritual. He explains this as follows:

…that event exudes a smell of bid’ah, even though it has been attended by the highest status of religious teachers (I., ustadz yang paling ustadz) or the highest status Muslim scholars (I., ulama yang paling ulama); that event is full of bad odour for the purity of Islamic practices and the effort of following the Qur’an and Sunnah, even though the participants at the event have used the most fragrant and expensive perfumes; that event is far from deep sincerity with God, even though its participants’ clothes are all white (Amsaka 2003:201-02).

In criticising Arifin Ilham, Abu Amsaka argues that Arifin Ilham and his colleagues made use of general Qur’anic verses on dhikr to legitimize their activities. Abu Amsaka maintains that those general verses need to be interpreted specifically in the light of other Qur’anic verses on the ethics of praying and dhikr. For Abu Amsaka, general verses should be interpreted by using specific verses; he believes that this is the best method to understand the meaning of the Qur’an. Without this interpretation, people cannot understand the meaning of the Qur’an properly. By this argument he considers what Arifin Ilham practices with his dhikr group is far from the true understanding and meaning of Qur’anic verses. To criticize Arifin Ilham’s dhikr ritual, Abu Amsaka cites several verses
of the Qur’an which according to him can be used to cast doubt on the ritual conducted by Arifin Ilham. For instance, Abu Amsaka cites the specific verses on the ethics of prayer and dhikr as follows,

Call on your Lord with humility and in private: for God loveth not those who trespass beyond bounds. (7:55).

And bethink thyself of thy Sustainer humbly and with awe, and without raising thy voice, at morn and at evening; and do not allow thyself to be heedless (7:205).

Abu Amsaka laments the fact that Arifin Ilham does not cite these verses in his book. Abu Amsaka accuses Arifin Ilham of unfairly dealing with the book of God (A., kitabullah) by hiding information about these verses intentionally. Those verses, Abu Amsaka argues, clearly mention that dhikr should not be performed loudly and in unison to be heard by other people or broadcast widely by TV stations (Amsaka 2003:80-83).

In explaining those verses, Abu Amsaka cites several authoritative exegetes (A., mufassir) such as Ibn Kathir (1301-1373) in his Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘Azim (The Noble Qur’an), al-Qurtubi (d.1273) in his Al-Jami’ Li-Ahkam al-Qur’an (The Compendium of Legal Rulings of the Qur’an) and Jalal al-Din al-Mahalli (d.864/1459) and Jalal al- Din al-Suyuti (849/1445-911/1505) in their book Tafsir al-Jalalain (Tafsir of the Twin Jalals). Amsaka points out that, all of the exegetes (A., mufassirun) have interpreted the Qur’anic verses (7:55) to mean that praying (I., do’a) should be recited in the secrecy of one heart. Likewise, in order to interpret a particular verse (7:205), Abu Amsaka quotes the interpretation of the authors of Tafsir al-Jalalain who argue that the meaning of the verse is that Muslims should remember God within their hearts secretly, humbly submissively and fearfully. Abu Amsaka also quotes Ibn ‘Abbās who says that the meaning of the verse is that a person should recite dhikr which can only be heard by the reciter. Based on this interpretation, Abu Amsaka concludes that the methods and the ethics of reciting prayer (do’a) and dhikr should be conducted fearfully, humbly, and without reciting loudly (Amsaka 2003:96).

Moreover, Abu Amsaka criticizes Arifin Ilham who relies heavily on hadith rather than relying on the Qur’an to support his argument on the permissibility of performing vocal dhikr ritual in unison. In his book, Arifin Ilham uses the hadith attributed to one of the Prophet’s Companions, Ibn ‘Abbās, to support his vocal dhikr ritual (I., dengan bersuara). The hadith is as follows:
‘Ibn ‘Abbās said that in the time of the Prophet people recited vocal dhikr after prayers. He also said, ‘I knew that they have finished prayers because I heard their voice of dhikr (narrated by Bukhari and Muslim).

Amsaka asks Arifin Ilham why he uses a hadith narrated by Ibn ‘Abbās and ignores those verses which clearly mention the recitation of prayer and dhikr without raising one’s voice. Without a doubt, Amsaka believes that the Qur’an which was revealed by God provides a stronger basis for ritual than a hadith which was narrated by a human. Therefore, in this matter, instead of using the hadith, he argues that the Qur’an should be used as the first authority and as a valid basis for any ritual (I., ibadah) before any hadith. Again, Amsaka explicitly accuses Arifin Ilham of involving personal interest to popularize his group by intentionally concealing those verses which are contradictory to his dhikr ritual practice (Amsaka 2003:99).

In regard to the hadith attributed to the Prophet’s Companion, Ibn ‘Abbās, used by Arifin Ilham as the basis of his dhikr ritual, Abu Amsaka makes a special comment. Quoting Imam Shāfi‘i, the text of the hadith should not be interpreted as if the Prophet regularly recited vocal dhikr after the five daily prayers. Instead, the hadith should be understood to indicate that the Prophet recited vocal dhikr for the purpose of teaching dhikr to his Companions and that he did not practice it as a habit. Therefore, Amsaka concludes that this hadith cannot be regarded as a theological argument for practising dhikr vocally and in unison (Amsaka 2003:105-106).

As a final argument that reciting vocal dhikr was not sanctioned and practised by the Prophet, Amsaka quotes the Prophetic hadith saying that the Prophet asked his Companions to lower their voice because they did not pray to a deaf man and someone invisible but to The Knower of All, The Hearer of All, and The Closest of All.

In addition to the fact that no Qur’anic verses or hadith sanction the reciting vocal dhikr in unison, Abu Amsaka believes that such vocal dhikr ritual practice is also susceptible to being a form of showing off (A., riya’) which is strongly condemned by God. It will be even more susceptible if the ritual practice is broadcast by national television involving advertising and capital investment. In this regard, according to Abu Amsaka what Arifin Ilham performs with his group can be seen as a part of the commercialization of a product which needs to be advertised openly through the media based on consumer demand. This practice, as Abu Amsaka argues, is far from a pure and comprehensive Islamic practice (I., Islam kaffah) and it is not free from economical interests. Abu Amsaka regrets this strategy of dakwah (Amsaka 2003:167). In line with this,
Abu Amsaka argues that instead of urging Muslims to observe virtues openly, Islam gives emphasis to the merit of concealing virtues from others’ sight. For Amsaka, concealing one’s virtues is a necessary condition to allow Muslims to become sincere (I., ikhlas) (Amsaka 2003:169).

Apart from theological criticism of the dhikr ritual conducted by Arifin Ilham, Abu Amsaka also criticizes the cover of Arifin’s book. Arifin Ilham has put his picture on the cover of his several books. Amsaka asks why Arifin Ilham does this. Amsaka was convinced that the reason is to expose Arifin’s name, which is becoming famous, in order to obtain personal and business advantage. Abu Amsaka (2003:160) writes as follows:

This is understandable, particularly from a business consideration, what is the best way to increase the product so that it can be easily accepted by consumers, purchased and spread, and then wait a return that can be put in the pocket. This is what we call the world of business, that is, the world of gaining advantage.5

In addition, from the perspective of pure Islamic theology, putting a picture on the front cover of a book can lead to the establishment of a cult surrounding Arifin Ilham which will eventually jeopardize the purity of the Islamic faith. Furthermore, Abu Amsaka worries that this picture will be treated just as the statue of Lata, one of the gods worshipped by unbelievers during the first period of the Islam in Mecca. Lata was a virtuous and generous person at that time. After he died, people put his statue next to the Ka’bah and they worshipped it (Amsaka 2003:162). Abu Amsaka urged that Arifin Ilham’s picture should not be put on his books’ covers, if he is really sincere in his dakwah. Amsaka adds that removing the picture from the cover would protect Arifin Ilham from the worst thing that can happen such as a personality cult, self admiration (A., ‘ujb) and showing off (A., riya’). In this regard, Amsaka makes use of the concept of sadd dhar’i, that is, preventing evil before it materialises (Amsaka 2003:165).

Amsaka argues that putting a picture on the front cover of a book strongly contradicts the teachings of the Prophet. To support his argument, Amsaka cites a hadith reported by Bukhari and Muslim that the angels of God will not enter a house which has a painting or picture in it. Amsaka was convinced that this prohibition encompasses all kinds of representations either in the form of a statue, a painting, or a picture (Amsaka 2003:164).

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5 Hal ini dapat dimaklumi, terutama dari pertimbangan market dan bisnis, bagaimana kiat yang jitu untuk mendongkrak produk agar dapat mudah diterima konsumen, menyebar luas, dibeli lalu tinggal menunggu berapa keuntungan yang masuk kantong. Inilah dunia bisnis, dunia untuk mencari keuntungan.
Another strong Salafi criticism of Arifin Ilham’s dhikr ritual has to do with the weeping that occurs during the dhikr ritual. As far as this weeping is concerned, Abu Amsaka divides weeping into two categories. The first category is the weeping sanctioned by God which leads to an increase in the fear of God and the gentleness of heart, but not weeping which is intended for showing off to please others. The second category is pretentious weeping that is performed for the sake of gaining interest from other people (Amsaka 2003:187). In this regard, Abu Amsaka does not directly accuse Arifin Ilham and his group of performing pretentious crying. However, before judging the crying performed by Arifin Ilham and his group, Abu Amsaka gives the example of his friend who stopped weeping when he gave Friday sermons because he fear showing off to others. By comparison, Abu Amsaka adds, weeping shown during Arifin Ilham’s dhikr ritual is intentionally conducted from the beginning of the ritual until the ritual concludes without any attempt made to stop it (Amsaka 2003:209). From the comparison Abu Amsaka makes, it can be inferred that he categorizes weeping in the dhikr ritual as pretentious crying rather than crying to increase a sense of the fear of God.

Two books have been written in response to criticisms made by Abu Amsaka. The first book, entitled ‘Koreksi Zikir Keblinger: Kearifan Menilai Zikir Berjamaah Dan Bisnis M. Arifin Ilham, was written by Saefulloh M Satori and second book, entitled ‘Zikir Berjamaah: Sunnah atau Bid’ah’, was written by Ahmad Dimyath Michael Badruzzaman. Satori admits that, instead of fulfilling Arifin Ilham’s order, the aim of his writing is solely to clarify objectively the accusation of bid’ah made by the Salafi group toward dhikr ritual conducted by Arifin Ilham. Except for interviewing Arifin Ilham, the author had no previous contact with him. Therefore, Satori argues that his writing is far from subjective (Satori 2003:2-6). In contrast, Badruzzaman, one of the members of Majlis Dhikr al-Dhikra’s Supreme Islamic Council (I., Dewan Syuriah), wrote his book after he met Arifin Ilham who told him that there was a person who considered his dhikr ritual as illicit bid’ah which opens its participants to the threat of hell. With support from Arifin Ilham, Badruzzaman wrote the book to inform people about the status of dhikr ritual according to Islamic law; whether it should be categorized as illicit novelty (A., bid’a dalala) or whether instead it can be considered relevant to the Prophetic tradition (A., sunnat nabawiyat) (Badruzzaman 2003:vi). Therefore, the book was intended to reassure Indonesian Muslims that there is no fundamental problem with the ritual of reciting dhikr vocally and in unison.

Unlike Abu Amsaka who sharply criticizes Arifin Ilham, Badruzzaman calmly cites several arguments taken from the Qur’an, hadith, and from the views of Muslim scholars to support his belief in the permissibility of reciting dhikr
vocally and in unison. He does so without personally criticizing Abu Amsaka. In relation to reciting *dhikr* in unison, Badruzzaman offers different views from the ones presented by Amsaka. Badruzzaman, a proponent of *Majlis Dhikr* ritual argues that the recitation of *dhikr* in unison is sanctioned by God for both male and female Muslims based on several Quranic verses and hadith. He identifies several of these Qur’anic verses which sanction *dhikr* ritual such as 3: 191, 33:41, and 33:35. All of these verses use the plural form of *dhikr* rather than a singular form to signify the order of the remembrance of God. As argued by Badruzzaman, this indicates that the recitation of *dhikr* in unison is lawful and cannot be regarded as misleading innovation (*A., bid’a ḍalāla*).

In order to support his argument on the permissibility of reciting vocal *dhikr* in unison (*I., berjamaah*) Badruzzaman goes on to make use of several hadith that endorse this practice. According to him, there are a lot of hadith that sanction this kind of ritual. However, in order to answer the accusation of the Salafi group, he mentions only ten hadith in his book. To make it clear his argument on this matter, I quote two hadith as follows:

None of the group of people sitting at one gathering (*A., majlis*) in which they recite *dhikr* to God and then they stand up (after finishing reciting *dhikr*) except the Angels of God say to them: ‘Stand up, indeed God has forgiven your sins and has replaced your bad deeds with good ones.’

God will say in the hereafter, ‘all groups will know which one is the most honourable. The Prophet was asked, ‘Oh! Prophet, which one is the most honourable group?’ He said, ‘The group of *dhikr* gathering (*A., majlis dhikr*)’.

Badruzzaman argues that the word ‘*majlis*’ and ‘the group of people’ mentioned in these hadith indicates that the reciting of *dhikr* was conducted in unison during the Prophet life (Badruzzaman 2003). Moreover, Badruzzaman also mentions one hadith in which the Prophet not only urged Muslim to practise *dhikr* but he also was actively involved in a *dhikr* gathering among his Companions (Badruzzaman 2003:69). Based on these hadith, he maintains that instead of being considered *bid’ah*, the reciting *dhikr* is unanimously recognized as part of the Prophetic tradition (*I., sunnah*). As a result, Muslims cannot charge someone who practises this kind of *dhikr* as an innovator (*I., pelaku bid’ah*) (Badruzzaman 2003:72-73).

In addition to Qur’anic verses and hadith, Badruzzaman also cites the views of well-known Muslim scholars about the permissibility of practising *dhikr* in unison. It is interesting to note here that Badruzzaman not only quotes the views of classical Muslim jurists and scholars but also quotes modern Muslim
scholars on this matter. He, for instance, refers to Sayyid Sābiq, the Egyptian Muslim scholar and Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy, the Indonesian ‘reformist’ Muslim scholar who frequently criticizes religious rituals practised by ‘traditionalist’ Indonesian Muslims and who promotes pristine Islamic ritual in all of his books. As cited by Badruzzaman, Sayyid Sābiq argues that the Prophet recommended his followers to sit in dhikr gatherings (I., majlis dhikr). Similarly, Ash-Shiddieqy points out that it was desirable (I., sangat disukai) to hold gatherings (halaqa-halaqa) to recite dhikr and to make people accustomed to the recitation of dhikr in these gatherings (Badruzzaman 2003:70-71). It is likely that Badruzzaman quotes these two scholars intentionally to show that such scholars, to whom most modernist Indonesian Muslims generally refer, consider the recitation of dhikr in unison as recommended ritual.

Another issue which becomes the main concern of Badruzzaman is the recitation of vocal dhikr (I., dhikr bersuara). With regard to those who deny the permissibility of this practice, like Abu Amsaka, Badruzzaman also make use of a Qur’anic verse, several hadith and the views of Muslim scholars to deal with this issue. He cites one verse in particular as follows:

And when you have performed your holy rites, recite dhikr (by mentioning the name of God) as you remember your fathers, or yet more intensely. There are some people who say, ‘Our Lord, give to us in this world’; such people will have no part in the hereafter.

In elaborating on this verse, Badruzzaman cites several exegetes. He, for instance, refers to Ahmad Mustāfa al-Marāghi (d. 1952) and Ahmad al-Ṣāwī al-Mālikī (d.1825) who stated that after completing the pilgrimage, Muslims are urged to recite dhikr as they used to mention their fathers and even louder.

According to Badruzzaman, even though the verse mentioned above is particularly related to dhikr ritual conducted after performing the pilgrimage, nevertheless the meaning of the verse is not confined to the ritual during pilgrimage. In other words, the meaning of the verse can also be considered in a general context because the text used in the verse is general such as fadhkuru Allāh(you should recite dhikr by mentioning the name of God). In this regard, Badruzzaman bases his argument on the Islamic legal theory that ‘the fundamental guide is the universality of text, not the particularity of text’ (A., al-Ibra bi umūm al-lafzī lā biḥusūs al-sabaib). With this theory, Badurzzaman argues that reciting dhikr with a raised voice is not only recommended for those who perform pilgrimage ritual (I., ibadah haji) but also recommended for those who do not perform pilgrimage ritual (Badruzzaman 2003:83). Apart from the verse, Badruzzaman also presents the argument taken from a hadith
as explanation of the universality of the verse. In this regard, he uses the hadith attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās who heard the Prophet recite dhikr after prayers. This hadith, Badruzzaman adds, indicates that the Prophet used to recite vocal dhikr at that time so that Ibn Abbas could hear it. It is based on this hadith that several Muslim jurists such as Ibn Hajjār al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1448) and Abu Zakāriya Yahyā ibn Sharaf al-Nawāwī (w. 676/1277) considered the reciting dhikr with a voice as recommended practice (Badruzzaman 2003:84).

Another Prophetic tradition used by Badruzzaman is the one which mentions the Prophet asking Muslims to recite dhikr until hypocrites said they were showing off (riyā’) and another version which says until people regarded them as crazy. Badruzzaman interprets this hadith to mean that the Prophet urged his followers to recite dhikr vocally. This interpretation is based on the fact that the accusation of showing off and being crazy would not have been attributed to those who recited dhikr, if they recited silent dhikr. Therefore, Badruzzaman is convinced that the recitation of vocal dhikr is a unanimously recognized part of the Prophetic tradition. Badruzzaman, quoting al-Nawawī’s view, argues that Muslims should not stop reciting vocal dhikr and silent dhikr just because of fearing others’ accusation of this practice as a form of showing off (Badruzzaman 2003:86).

After presenting his argument taken from Qur’anic verses and hadith, Badruzzaman specifically comments on a particular verse used by those who reject the permissibility of reciting a vocal dhikr. The verse, as quoted by Amsaka, is as follows:

> And bethink thyself of thy Sustainer humbly and with awe, and without raising thy voice, at morn and at evening; and do not allow thyself to be heedless (7:205).

This verse seems to prohibit Muslims from reciting vocal dhikr particularly as understood by the phrase without loudness in words. Badruzzaman maintains that it seems that this verse contradicts the previous hadith. Therefore, in this regard, referring to Islamic legal theory, Badruzzaman tries to arrive at a compromise between the verse and the hadith that recommends reciting vocal dhikr by arguing that complying with one of two seemingly different texts is better than complying with nothing (Badruzzaman 2003:88).

Like Amsaka, Badruzzaman uses an authoritative exegesis to interpret the verse. In this case, he quotes Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372) arguing that the word without loudness in words means that it is recommended to recite dhikr without shouting and with using an extremely loud voice. Based on this interpretation,
Badruzzaman points out that basically reciting vocal dhikr is recommended, and hence, there is no contradiction between the Qur’anic verse and hadith. Rather than prohibiting Muslims from reciting vocal dhikr, this verse, according to Badruzzaman only prohibits them from reciting dhikr in an extremely loud fashion (Badruzzaman 2003:90).

In addition, Badruzzaman goes on to respond to a hadith used by Amsaka to refuse the permissibility of reciting vocal dhikr. It was reported in the hadith that the Prophet asked his Companion to lower his voice because he did not pray to a deaf God. In elaborating on this hadith, Badruzzaman again cites the view of the Muslim scholar, Shihab al-Dīn al-Qaṣṭallānī (d. 923/1517) who argued that in the hadith the Prophet only prohibited his Companion from reciting excessively vocal dhikr (Baddruzzaman 2003:90).

In regard to crying during the recitation of dhikr, unlike Abu Amsaka and Ibn Mukaffī, Badruzzaman allows such practice providing that people cry because of fearing of God and out of admiration for the greatness of God. According to him, both the Qur’an and hadith endorse Muslims to cry when they recite dhikr and recite the Qur’an. In this regard, there are several Qur’anic verses and hadith together with the views of Muslim scholars that endorse the practice of crying while reciting the Qur’an and while reciting dhikr. According to Badruzzaman, all of these are enough to refute those who regard crying during dhikr as innovation and showing off. Accordingly, Badruzzaman strongly laments those who regard crying during dhikr recitation as conducted by Arifin Ilham as showing off. This accusation, according to Badruzzaman, is the result of prejudice (I., prasangka buruk) against other Muslims. Without doubt, negative thinking toward other fellow Muslims must be avoided by Muslims because it contradicts the teaching of the Qur’an and the Prophet (Badruzzaman 2003:101).

Badruzzam regards those who reject recommended practices conforming to the Prophetic tradition and regard them as illicit innovation as not in compliance with the teachings of the Prophet. As a result, these persons, according to Badruzzaman, cannot be regarded as followers of the Prophet. In line with this, he stresses that Muslims should not easily make the charge of practising bid’ah toward rituals practised by their fellow Muslims just because they themselves do not know that these rituals are recognised as a part of the Prophetic tradition.

Satori is also responding to Amsaka’s criticism by referring to arguments taken from the Qur’an and hadith. However, Satori, in his book, specifically focuses on criticizing an ideology held by the Salafi. According to the Salafi, the three generations who followed on after the death of the Prophet – the Companions (A., ṣaḥābāt), the Successors of his Companions (A., tābi‘īn), and the Successors of the Successors (A., tābi‘it al-tābi‘īn) – are the best model for Muslims. These three generations are known in the Islamic literature as Salāf al-Ṣāliḥ. This interpretation is based on the fact that the Prophet mentioned that the best of his followers (ummat) were those of the three generations after his death. However, Satori argues, that several Muslim scholars have made a different interpretation of the meaning of this hadith particularly in regard to how many years are necessary to count as one generation. If one generation can live for one century, it would take three hundred years from the first generation to the third generation after the death of the Prophet. In Satori’s view, the life of the Prophet’s followers during the three hundred years after the death of the Prophet cannot be considered as ideal. This is partly because during this period different heretical sects appeared and there occurred the murder of some Companions. As a result, Satori points out that with their dark side, this period cannot be idealized as the best of all legal sources, as the Salafi believe. There is no clear argument in the hadith mentioning that this salaf period should be regarded as a reference in legal matters (Satori 118-123).

2.3. Conclusion

It is clear that the difference in the views regarding ritual practice between the Indonesian Salafi and the proponents of Majlis Dhikr can be traced back to their different interpretation of the concept of bid’ah. The Salafi believed that all rituals categorized as bid’ah should be considered to be misleading and their perpetrators should not be tolerated. For them, in order to be good Muslims, it is essential to avoid such bid’ah in worship (I., ibadah). In this regard, efforts should be made to purify Muslims from this bid’ah as part of dakwah which is strongly recommended by Islam (Al-Mukaffi 2003:xxvi). With this belief, the Salafi regard the practice of reciting vocal dhikr in unison as misleading bid’ah but also consider that its performers should be brought to the right path and to authentic Islamic teachings (Al-Mukaffi 2003:x). In contrast, the proponents of Majlis Dhikr believed that their vocal dhikr ritual in unison has a strong basis both in the Qur’an and hadith. For that reason, such ritual cannot be considered bid’ah because its theological basis can be found in both sources of Islamic conduct. For the proponents of Majlis Dhikr, rituals can be considered bid’ah, if the Qur’an, hadith, the practices of Prophet’s Companions, and the consensus
of Muslim scholars (I., ulama) neither support nor mention these rituals. In this context, the consensus of Muslim scholars also derives from their use of *ijtihad*, which is strongly supported by the Prophet.

In the matter of *dhikr*, both Salafi and the proponents of *Majlis Dhikr* similarly base their arguments on the Qur’an and hadith. Closer examination of their views shows that both Salafi and the proponents of *Majlis Dhikr* seem to agree that *dhikr* is recommended by God and the Prophet. However, one side considers that *dhikr* can be practised in unison, whereas the other side argues that *dhikr* can only be practised individually (I., secara perorangan). Differences among them on the way to recite *dhikr* are due to different interpretations of the Quranic verses and the texts of hadith. In the case of *dhikr*, we do not know exactly how the Prophet recited *dhikr*. All we know is that reciting *dhikr* was practised by the Prophet’s Companions and the Prophet agreed with their practice. Therefore, I would argue that if people have different views on interpretable matters, they cannot be regarded as in violation of Islamic teachings nor considered to practise misleading bid’ah because of their understanding on these interpretative matters. The results of interpretation of religious matters categorised as interpretable cannot be regarded as an absolutely true. As argued by Quraish Shihab, the Qur’an and hadith cannot provide an absolute interpretation. Only God and His sayings are absolute, and only a few of the interpretations of these sayings can be regarded as absolute (Shihab 1996:497-98).
Chapter III: The Intellectual Response of Indonesian Majlis Dhikr Groups to Some Aspects of Their Ritual Practices

Although the Majlis Dhikr groups that I have studied cannot be categorised as recognized tarekat (tarekat mu’tabarah), their ritual practices have been strongly influenced by tasawuf teachings. For example, the dhikr ritual practised by these groups is similar to the ritual that has long been practised by other tarekat groups. It is important to note that the members and the leaders of these Majlis Dhikr groups claim that although the dhikr that they recite do not possess a chain of transmitters (A., sanad) like the dhikr ritual in other Sufi groups (I., tarekat), their aim is similar, namely, to attain close proximity to God and to gain tranquillity of heart. Moreover, they argue that the rituals practised by these groups have a strong basis in the Qur’an, hadith and the notions of Muslim scholars. Apart from the dhikr ritual, these groups also teach and practise some aspects of tasawuf which have been written and practised by earlier Muslim Sufi. Therefore, instead of accusing these groups of introducing innovation (I., bid’ah) within Islam and performing syncretic practices, I argue that they can be regarded as groups that still preserve and maintain the continuity of Sufi practices in Islam. As a result, their practices and rituals fall within the framework of Islamic Sufi practices and Islamic traditions. To support my argument, this chapter will explore how and to what extent these groups interpret and respond theologically to certain aspects of their ritual practices. Several topics discussed in this chapter will answer whether the belief and the ritual of Majlis Dhikr are relevant to the Islamic teachings and Islamic Sufi practices. Furthermore, these topics will give an understanding of the common ritual practised in the Majlis Dhikr groups.

3.1. Ṣalawāt As a Means to Approach God

In Islamic traditions, taṣliyyat or Ṣalawāt means the invocation of God’s blessing upon the Prophet Muhammad. Some Muslim scholars argue that the word Ṣalawāt can be translated differently according to the subject of Ṣalawāt. For example, if the subject of Ṣalawāt is to God, Ṣalawāt implies that God will give His blessing and mercy. On the other hand, if the subject of Ṣalawāt is Angels, Ṣalawāt means they will pray and ask God to forgive the Prophet; while if the subject of Ṣalawāt is people, it could mean that they are asking God to give His
blessing to Muhammad (Shihab 2006:333). More broadly, the word Ṣalawāt or tašliyyat can be used to refer to the repetition of a blessing phrase, sallawāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam, God bless him and give him peace. This blessing formula is always recited whenever the name of the Prophet Muhammad is mentioned (Robson 1936:365; Schimmel 1985). This practice is strongly recommended by the Prophet who said that those who do not recite the blessing formula when his name is mentioned can be regarded as extremely stingy (A., bakhil). As a result, Muslims recite the blessing phrase after the name of Muhammad is mentioned to avoid being regarded by their Prophet as not generous with their practice.

The place of Ṣalawāt among pious Islamic practices is important. Unlike other prayers, it is clearly mentioned in the Qur’an and is performed by God and His Angels for the Prophet Muhammad. The Qur’an says that God and His Angels send blessings to the Prophet, ‘O! you who believe! Send your Ṣalawāt to Muhammad and salute him respectfully’ (33:56). Based on this verse, even though there are thousands of prayers and poems intended to obtain Muhammad’s intercession, the most efficacious is to ask God to bless Muhammad and his family by reciting the Ṣalawāt just as God and His Angels did. It is actually believed that a prayer to God without this invocation is useless. In other words, Ṣalawat is considered to be necessary for the granting of a prayer request.

There are numerous records of Prophetic sayings (hadith) that strongly stress the importance of reciting Ṣalawāt. For example, the Prophet said, ‘He who sends blessings on me once, Allah sends blessings on him ten times and removes from him ten sins and raises him by ten degrees.’ The Prophet also mentioned that the persons who will be closest to him on the Day of Judgment are those who give Ṣalawāt most to him. On another occasion, the Prophet said that whoever sends blessings to him ten times in the morning and ten times in the evening will have his intercession on Judgment day. Moreover, the Prophet said that he will be able to hear someone’s Ṣalawāt to him in his tomb, and God will support his worldly and other worldly affairs and the Prophet will be his witness and intercessor on the Day of Judgment. These hadith all indicate that sending blessing to the Prophet will result in great rewards for the reciters.

1 قال "البخيل من ذكرت عده وأخرج أحمد والترمذي عن الحسيبي بن علي رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم..."

2 ‘Verily prayer will be jammed between heaven and earth and it cannot ascend at all until you give Ṣalawat on your Prophet’ (Narrated by Al-Tirmidzi).

3 وأخرج البيهقي في الشعب والخطيب وابن عساكر عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم "من صلى على عند النبي سمعته ومن صلى علي ناننا كفى أمر دنياه واخترته، وكانت له شهيدا وشفيعا يوم القيامة..."
As far as these rewards are concerned, Muslim theologians have argued that they can be achieved by Muslims if they send blessings to the Prophet with sincerity and full consciousness (A., *khudūr al-qalbi*) and without neglect. In contrast, other Muslims theologians and Sufi, such as ‘Abd Wahhāb al-Sha’rānī (b. 898/1493), pointed out that ten merits achieved as result of sending blessings to the Prophet could also be achieved by those who recite *Ṣalawāt* with neglect. Nevertheless, those who recite *Ṣalawāt* with full consciousness will obtain many more rewards known only by God (al-Nabhani, n.d.: 57).

However, the importance of *Ṣalawāt* in the Islamic tradition prompted questions about the usefulness of sending blessings for the Prophet since his status was already perfect (al-Nabhani, n.d.: 44). Muslim theologians have responded differently to this question. Al-Nabhani argued that after *adzan* (the call to daily prayers) has been performed, the Prophet asked Muslims to pray for him so that God would give him eternal rights of intercession and raise him to the highest rank as God had promised. If this prayer is granted by God, al-Nabhani argued, then God will give the Prophet eternal rights of intercession and raise him to the highest rank. Therefore, al-Nabhani concluded, the Prophet will benefit from the blessings given by Muslims to him.

However, Ahmad bin Mubārak argued that God commands Muslims to send blessings to the Prophet Muhammad for the benefit of themselves, not for the benefit of the Prophet. Mubārak likened this to a generous man who gives his servants a piece of land to cultivate without asking for any reward. All the harvest thus goes to the servants. In a similar way, all rewards of *Ṣalawāt* are for those who send the blessing, not for the Prophet himself. However, these rewards can only be achieved by the reciters of *Ṣalawāt* because of their pure faith (*imān*), which results from the Prophet’s light (A., *nūr Muḥammad*). In other words, all the rewards attained by Muslims come from the Prophet himself. Mubarak made an analogy to the ocean and rain. The process of rain begins with the evaporation of water from the ocean. Then, rain falls on the continent and flows back into the ocean via the rivers. The rain water flowing into the ocean does not, therefore, add to the volume of the oceans water (al-Nabhani, n.d.: 45).

Another theme related to *Ṣalawāt* is whether it is lawful or not to add the word *sayyidinā* (our Lord) in the blessing phrase, such as *Allāhumma sallī ‘alā sayyidīna Muḥammad*. Ibn Taymiyyah (1263 – 1328) did not support the practice of adding the word *sayyidinā* before the name Muhammad, either in daily prayer or other prayers, because the Prophet never said that should be done. In contrast, other Muslim theologians, such as al-Suyūṭī (1445-1505), urged Muslim to add *sayyidinā* before the name of Muhammad. Al-Suyūṭī stated that
even though the prophet, in his hadith prohibited his Companions from doing this, the prohibition was mainly due to his modesty. The Prophet expressed his dislike of arrogance in his hadith which stated, ‘I am a sayyid of the sons of Adam and I am not arrogant.’ As a result, when his Companions asked him how to send blessing to him, he taught them the blessing phrase without the word sayyidina before his name. Nevertheless, al-Suyūṭī argued that one of the ways Muslims can show their respect for the Prophet is to send the blessings phrase to him by adding the word sayyidina before his name. This is partly because God has prohibited Muslims to address the Prophet without a title. Al-Suyūṭī cited the verse of the Qur’an which said that, ‘make not the calling of the Messenger (Muhammad) among you as your calling one of another (al-Nūr 24: 63). In addition to this verse, al-Suyūṭī also cited the well-known statement attributed to Ibn Mas’ud, the Prophet’s Companion: ‘Beautify your blessing to your Prophet’ (al-Nabhani, n.d: 39-40). Therefore, the use of the word sayyidina in the blessing is supported by the Qur’an and the practices of the Prophet’s Companions.

In addition to the text of the Ṣalawāt blessing taught by the Prophet, there have been various other versions throughout Islamic history, recorded not only by his Companions but also by other pious Muslims. Al- Nabhani categorized the first kind of Ṣalawāt as Ṣalawāt ma’thūrat that were taught by the Prophet as reported in his ḥadīth, while he categorized as ghair ma’thūrat all the texts of Ṣalawāt not taught by the Prophet (al-Nabhani, n.d: 344). Muslims theologians have questioned which of these two categories of Ṣalawāt conveys more rewards. Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy (1904-1975), argued that all Ṣalawāt taught by the Prophet through his words are more valued than other texts because they have been taught directly by the Prophet. He maintained that these Ṣalawāt are more prominent than those composed by others. For Hasbi, other Ṣalawāt composed by other Muslims can be considered to be innovations (bid’ah) because they not only contain exaggerated adoration of the Prophet but are not mentioned in hadith. Therefore, if Muslims recite these kinds of Ṣalawāt, they cannot be regarded as reciting Ṣalawāt and thus will not be able to obtain any rewards and benefits from their recitation. To support his argument, Hasbi cited the view of al-Suyūṭī saying that the best Ṣalawāt to recite was the Ṣalawāt usually recited on the occasion of tashahhud (sitting position of the second unit of prayer). If people recite this Ṣalawāt, they can be regarded as having recited Ṣalawāt but if they recite anything else, it will be doubtful whether they have recited Ṣalawāt (Ash-Shiddieqy 1964:70). In other words, any texts of Ṣalawāt which were not taught by the Prophet cannot be regarded as Ṣalawāt.

Other Muslim theologians like al-Sakhāwī (831-902) were opposed to this view, arguing that the Prophet has taught many ways to send blessing to him as
recorded in different hadith. According to his Companions and the Successors of His Companions (A., tābi‘īn) this indicates that neither the way to send blessing nor the text of the blessing is confined to the texts taught by the Prophet. Therefore, al-Sakhāwī argued, those who have been endowed by God with eloquence of language are allowed to compose Ṣalawāt that describe the Prophet’s dignity. In this matter, al-Sakhāwī based his opinion on the well known statement attributed to the Prophet’s companion, Ibn Mas‘ūd, who said, ‘beautify the blessing upon your Prophet, because you do not perhaps know this blessing was offered to the Prophet’ (al-Nabhani n.d: 346).

In explaining his agreement with al-Sakhāwī’s view on this matter, al- Nabhani said that the objective of Ṣalawāt or sending blessings to the Prophet is to glorify him because he still needs the mercy and blessing of God, despite his highest rank in the eyes of God. In this sense, al-Nabhani argued that the texts composed by his Companions and other Muslim scholars (A., ulama’) should contain exaltation and glorification of the Prophet to meet the objective of Ṣalawāt. Therefore, al-Nabhani believed that these texts of Ṣalawāt would indeed lead to an increase in reward because of the glorification as well as the recitation of the Ṣalawāt itself. When someone asked al-Nabhani which one of the two kinds of Ṣalawāt lead to more rewards, he answered that this question was difficult to answer categorically because both are likely to provide rewards. Both have their own merits. According to al- Nabhani, one of the benefits of sending Ṣalawāt composed by the Prophet’s Companions and Muslim scholars is to increase the eagerness of reciters to glorify the Prophet as well as to remember his beautiful characteristics. Al-Nabhani considered that this eventually would lead the reciters to increase their reciting of Ṣalawāt to the Prophet as well as their love of the Prophet. According to al-Nabhani, these are the greatest benefits of reciting those texts of Ṣalawāt. Moreover, most of the texts composed by Muslim scholars (A., ‘ulamā’) were dictated by the Prophet in visions either in their dreams or while awake. Al-Nabhani pointed out that because the Prophet had guaranteed that people can have dreams about him and that if they see the Prophet in a dream, he must be the real Prophet because Satan is unable to resemble him, the texts of Ṣalawāt dictated by him in dreams are legitimate because they must be from him (al-Nabhani, n.d: 347).

The recitation of Ṣalawāt also has a significant role in Sufi practices. It is believed that the blessing phrase of Ṣalawāt can be used as a means for Muslims to attain wusul or ma‘rifatullah (the knowledge of God) and to obtain spiritual experiences. As mentioned by ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Mustafā al-Idrūs, ‘it is difficult to find authoritative Sufi masters (A. murshid) who are able to help disciples (I., murid) to attain wusul or ma‘rifatullah at the end of this age.’ For al-Idrūs, the only possible way for Muslims to achieve wusul is by reciting
Ṣalawāt. Al-Idrus argued that unlike other virtues, which might be granted or might not be granted by God, requests made by reciting Ṣalawāt must be granted by God; the Prophet will reply with the same prayer whether it is recited in a conscious or an unconscious state (Sa’id 2004:6). Moreover, like reciting the Qur’an, the reciting of Ṣalawāt can give rewards to its reciters even if they do not understand the meaning of the text. Ahmad Sāwi stated that Ṣalawāt can be used as a means to approach God without any particular masters or transmitters (A., isnād) because the master of Ṣalawāt and its transmitter is the Prophet himself. By contrast, litanies such as dhikr and wirid, which are recited with the purpose of approaching God in some Sufi orders require the guidance of masters who have attained the highest Sufi states. If these dhikr are recited without the guidance of a master, the devil will interfere, so people will not derive any benefit from the practice at all (Sawi n.d:287).

3.1.1. Majlis Dhikr Groups’ Understanding of Ṣalawāt

The members of Majlis Dhikr groups in Indonesia also believe that it is obligatory for Muslims to recite Ṣalawāt as an expression of their love and their gratitude to the Prophet. For them, the Prophet has sacrificed his life and time bringing his followers from the age of darkness (A., jahiliyyat) to the age of lightness and in bringing them from sadness to happiness in this world and the hereafter. In other words, according to them, the Prophet was the most loving person toward his followers. Moreover, they argue that if it was not for him, there might be no other lives in this world. As a result they feel that they are immeasurably in debt to the Prophet. This notion arises from their understanding of a well-known statement attributed to God who said to Adam, ‘If it were not for Muhammad, I would not have created you.’ It is in this sense that they should ask blessing from God by reciting Ṣalawāt to the Prophet; rewards will then be given not only to the reciters of the Ṣalawāt but also to other people surrounding them as well as other creatures such as jinn.4

Therefore, for Indonesian Majlis Dhikr groups, the reciting of Ṣalawāt is not simply an oral recitation of the blessing phrase for the Prophet but should be seen as a means to communicate spiritually with the Prophet (A., ta’alluq bi jānibi al-nabi). For example, according to a member of the Wâḥidiyyat group, communicating with the Prophet can be performed in two ways: ta’alluq sûriyy (outward relationship) and ta’alluq ma’nawiyy (spiritual relationship). The former can be achieved by, firstly, completely following what the Prophet has ordered and completely avoiding what he has forbidden as well as maintaining

a good relationship with other people, and all human beings. Secondly, by experiencing the state of oneness in the love of the Prophet by reciting Ṣalawāt, continuously remembering the Prophet’s fine qualities followed by love and longing and the recitation of the life stories of the Prophet together with poems which can help people to increase their love for him. The second way (ta’alluq ma’nawiyy) can be done, firstly, by visualizing the image of the Prophet. Of course, this way of communicating can only be done by those who have experienced a visionary dream of the Prophet or have met him when awake. Those who have not experienced this simply imagine his fine personality followed with full of passion and compliments. If they have performed the ḥajj, they can imagine historic places in Mecca and Medina where the Prophet used to teach his followers. After this, they should internalize the concept of Bihāqiyyat al-Muḥammadiyah, which means that the origin of all creatures is from the Light of Muhammad (Nūr Muḥammad). This notion is based on the statement attributed to God that ‘I (God) created you (Muhammad) from My light and I created creatures from your light.’ To internalize this concept, people should imagine that anything they smell, see, and touch consists of Nūr Muḥammad. If they fail to visualize this concept, it is believed their mind’s eye must be veiled by the dirt of passion (I., nafsu). Moreover, for the Wāḥidiyyat group in particular, the simplest way to implement the concept of communicating with the Prophet is by increasingly reciting the phrase, yā sayyidī yā rasulullāh, which helps people remember the Prophet (Anonymous 1999:36-40).

In order to show respect to the Prophet, the Majlis Dhikr groups add the word sayyidīnā before the name of Muhammad when they recite the Ṣalawāt phrase. Some of them argue that it is considered stingy if Muslims mention the name of the Prophet of Muhammad without adding sayyidīnā, whereas when they address the president, they always add his title before his name such as Mr. President (I., bapak presiden). They believe that adding the word sayyidīnā before the name of Muhammad in the Ṣalawāt phrase is a courtesy (I., sopan santun), which is preferable to complying with the command. They also base their notion on the Prophetic tradition that Abū Bakr refused the order of the Prophet who asked him to lead prayers. In courtesy, Abū Bakr requested that the Prophet be the leader. Based on this story, members of Indonesian Majlis Dhikr groups add the sayyidīnā before the Prophet’s name, as a courtesy, ignoring the Prophet’s prohibition of the practice.

From the perspective of Indonesian Majlis Dhikr groups, the recitation of Ṣalawāt is an important aspect of their ritual practices. They fully understand that Ṣalawāt is a necessary condition for the granting of a prayer request. In other words, every prayer directed to God without adding Ṣalawāt is considered to be meaningless. It is for this reason that those groups include the blessing
phrase of .SQLite in their ritual practices. Some Majlis Dhikr groups urge that .SQLite be read hundreds of times. One group has even singled out .SQLite for their practice, and believe that the .SQLite is the easiest way to achieve wusul (ma’rifat) with God without requiring a perfect master (A., kamal al-mukammil), especially in the current situation where a perfect master is difficult to find. Another reason to recite .SQLite relates to the suggestion by Muslim scholars that .SQLite removes intense emotion, while other litanies (dhikr), can result in intensifying the emotion of the reciters. Adding .SQLite among other litanies according to these scholars, can therefore balance the effect of those other litanies.

As far as the benefits of .SQLite are concerned, Indonesian Majlis Dhikr groups, in common with other Muslim scholars, consider that reciting .SQLite can be used for worldly purposes and non-worldly purposes. More specifically, they argue that .SQLite can be used as a means to ask for the Prophet’s intercession in this world and the hereafter. In this world, the members of these groups ask for the Prophet’s intercession so that the Prophet can help them to succeed in their worldly endeavours. In this respect, one Majlis Dhikr group composed .SQLite for particular purposes and performed special rituals to obtain their particular needs. Moreover, they also believe that some .SQLite composed by Muslim scholars have particular benefits. For example, .SQLite Nariyat can be used to improve one’s livelihood (I., rizki); while .SQLite Munjiyat can be used for safety purposes. In the hereafter, they believed that the Prophet will give his shafa’at (intercession) to those who recite .SQLite and hence save them from trials of the hell.\footnote{Interview with Gus Latif, Kediri, September, 2004.}

In relation to the texts of .SQLite that must be recited, the Indonesian Majlis Dhikr groups use and recite not only the texts of .SQLite taught by the Prophet but also .SQLite written by other scholars. Unlike some Muslim scholars who forbid Muslims from reciting the latter, the Indonesian Majlis Dhikr groups regard those .SQLite composed by Muslim scholars have particular benefits. For example, .SQLite Nariyat can be used to improve one’s livelihood (I., rizki); while .SQLite Munjiyat can be used for safety purposes. In the hereafter, they believed that the Prophet will give his shafa’at (intercession) to those who recite .SQLite and hence save them from trials of the hell.\footnote{Interview with Gus Latif, Kediri, September, 2004.}

Since the meaning of .SQLite itself is prayer or supplication, it cannot be considered to be bid’ah if Muslims compose texts of .SQLite and recite the texts of .SQLite which were not taught by the Prophet. Like prayer, the Prophet only asked Muslims to pray, but he did not ask them to pray any particular prayers. In other words, the Prophet gave them the freedom
to recite various prayers. Furthermore, none of the Prophet’s hadith asked Muslims to recite Salawat as taught by the Prophet. God and His Prophet only asked Muslims to recite Salawat. The Prophet never asked them to recite only the texts of prayers from him. In this case, as long as they have ability, people can write their own beautiful texts of Salawat. However, I admit that the Salawat and prayer taught by the Prophet are more excellent than others.

Kyai Marzuki, a leader of a pesantren in East Java, shared Kyai Mughni’s view on this issue. Kyai Marzuki argued that Muslims can pray by using either text of prayers taught by the Prophet or texts from others. His view was based on the fact that according to Islamic law, all things are permissible (A., ibâhah) unless there is evidence of prohibition. In line with this notion, composing Salawat and reciting of these texts are permissible because no hadith prohibits Muslims from doing so. In addition to this argument, Kyai Marzuki categorized religious affairs into two categories. The first is ‘ibâda mahëdla, which means something ordained specifically by God in the Qur’an and by the Prophet in his sayings (hadith), including detailed instruction such matters as prayers, almsgiving, fasting during the Ramadhan month, and the pilgrimage (the hajj). The second is ‘ibâda ghair mahëdla, which means something ordained by God and his Prophet in general, but without specific mention of how to perform and practice it. Examples of this latter category are dhikr (chanting religious litanies), reciting Salawat and reciting the Qur’an. God and the Prophet only asked Muslims to recite these, but how many times was not specified. Therefore, Marzuki argues that Muslims are allowed to recite various texts of Salawat, recite as many pages of the Qur’an as they like, and perform dhikr as many times as they like.6

It is clear that on the matter of Salawat and related topics, Indonesian Majlis Dhikr groups have based their arguments on what has long been pointed out by the Prophet through the interpretation of other Muslim scholars. While following these Muslims scholars’ notions of Salawat, they also have creatively adapted those notions in relation to the context of their culture. The process of adaptation, however, cannot be regarded as a violation of the main teaching of Islam itself, since Indonesian Majlis Dhikr groups still refer to the Prophet tradition. What Indonesian Majlis Dhikr groups have done can thus be regarded as maintaining the Islamic tradition, a term used by Nashr to refer to something which incorporates both the message received by the Prophet Muhammad in form of the Scripture as well as that Islam, as a religion, absorbed according to its own genius and made its own through transformation and synthesis (Muhaimin 1995:13).

6 Interview with Marzuki, Malang, March, 2005
With this definition, they believe that what they practise is justifiable by the text of Qur’an and hadith.

3.2. The Concepts of Sainthood (Wali) and Miracle (Karamah)

The concepts of sainthood and karamah are another topic which has drawn Sufi groups and Muslim scholars into vigorous debate. Despite strong criticism from reformist Muslims toward these concepts, they have had an important meaning in Muslim religiosity. In order to look at their significance, this section will discuss these two concepts among Sufi theorists and Muslim scholars, and how Indonesian Majlis Dhikr groups have responded to and applied these concepts in their religious practices.

Radtke (1996:124) has argued that the existence of a special category of saints (waliyullah) who have a close relationship with God is nowhere mentioned in the Qur’an and the hadith. Although it might be true to say that a coherent and systematic theory of sainthood cannot be found in either the Qur’an or in the Prophetic period. I would argue that the Qur’an and the explanation of the Prophet have inspired a clearly articulated Islamic doctrine of sainthood introduced by early Muslim Sufi. In other words, the comprehensive and systematic theory of saint and sainthood was developed several centuries after the death of the Prophet. Nevertheless, the Qur’an mentions the word wali in many places, with various meanings including friends, protectors, supporters and close relatives. This word, for instance, is not only applied to God, who is the believers’ friend (7:196, 2:257 and 41:31), but also to Satan, whose attributes contrast with the attributes of God. The Qur’an also mentions the characteristics of waliullâh (friend of Allah) or auliyaullâh (pl. friends of Allah) who need not fear nor grieve (10:63). However, in the discussion of the concept of wali in Islam, some Muslim scholars seem to discuss only the definition and the meaning of the later, auliyaullâh.

To understand the meaning of the waliullâh as mentioned in the Qur’an, many Muslim interpreters of the Qur’an refer to the explanation of the Prophetic sayings (A., hadith) on this matter. For example, commenting on the word auliyaullâh in verse 10:63, al-Tabârî (d.310 H) in his book, Jami`al-Bayân fl Tafsîr al-Qur`ân, referred to two different hadith. Firstly, he noted that auliyaullâh (friends of God) are those who, when they are seen, cause people to think of God. Secondly, al-Tabârî pointed out that, when the Prophet’s Companions asked the Prophet about the identity of the friends of God mentioned in the
Qur’an, the Prophet answered that ‘they are servants of God who are envied even by prophets of God and martyrs. They love one another purely for God’s sake without any consideration of material gains. Their faces will glow with the light of faith and they will be seated on the podium of nur (Divine light). They will be without fear and grief when all people will be steeped in fear and grief.’ Then the Prophet recited the verse, ‘Behold! the friends of Allah are such that they need not fear nor grieve’ (10:62). Other Muslims exegetes (A., mufassir) like Al-Zamakhshârî (d. 538) in his book al-Kashshāf, and Ibn Kathîr (d.774) in his book Tafsîr al-Qur’ân al-Karîm, followed the definition of wali given by al-Ṭabârî. In contrast, referring to ‘Aţî ibn Abî Ṭâlib, Al Qurtûbî (d.671), in his book Al-Jami’ li Ahka’m al-Qur’ân defined auliya’ (plural form of wâlî) as people whose face is pale due to wakefulness, whose eyes look bleary because of crying, whose stomach is empty because of hunger, whose lips are dry because of chanting dhikr.

Based on their understanding of waliyullah derived from the Qur’an and the hadith, early Muslim Sufi specifically developed the idea of the friend of God (A., waliullah) in much detail. Al-Ḥâkim al-Tirmidhî (d. 898) is regarded as the first Muslim scholar to introduce the entire concept of the friend of God and friendship with God. Al-Tirmidhî was convinced that the ‘ulamâ’ are responsible for preserving the validity of orthodox theology of Islam, while preserving the spiritual heritage of Islam has been entrusted to the saints of Islam (A., auliya’ullah). When the prophethood ended, the latter came to be considered as God’s representatives on earth. According to Al-Tirmidhî, God chose forty elected auliya’ who divided into abdâl, siddiqin, umanâ and nusahâ to administrate and control the world after the death of the Prophet. Through these auliya’ the world exists. Whenever one of them dies, another follows after him and occupies his position so the number remain at forty. This succession will continue until the end of this world (Radtke and O’kane 1996:109). These forty saints have a chief who has the seal of friendship (A., khâtîm al-auliyya’) from God. He is the highest and the most perfect among the friends of God (Radtke and O’kane 1996:101). Elaborating this concept, al-Tirmidhî argued that God has chosen His prophets from His servants, and God has given preference to certain prophets over others. Among them, Muhammad is the seal of the Prophet (khâtîm al-anbiyya’). In this manner, God also has chosen one of His friends (auliyya’) above others. This concept of khâtîm al-auliyya’was new and had never been mentioned by previous Muslim Sufi, which made the work of Tirmidhî famous in later centuries (Schimmel 1978:57). Al-Tirmidhî’s concept of khâtîm al-auliyya’ was further developed by Ibn al-‘Arabî.

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Al-Tirmidhī defined two distinctive classes of friends of God, the Wali ʿhaqqullāh and the Waliullāh. Those categorized as Wali ʿhaqqullāh will be able to achieve nearness of God by undertaking worship of God and obedience to Him constantly without any intervening rebelliousness. In contrast, a Waliullāh is attracted to God by God and is a majdhūb, a person who is drawn from the place of divine closeness up to God Himself, to the highest of God’s realms (Radtke and O’kane 1996:124). This definition is based on the Qur’anic verses that state ‘And He takes possession of the righteous’ (7:196). This latter class of saints is called murād (the sought). While, the former class is called murīd (the seekers). These two categories of saints, as Tirmidhi argued, have different journeys to approach God. The ascent of Wali ʿhaqqullāh will end at God’s throne. They can approach God but not reach God Himself. In contrast, Waliullāh are able to reach beyond God’s throne (Gibb 1996:110).

However, al-Qushayri (b.376/986) argued that a true saint must have two qualities. The saint has to fulfil completely obligations to God, while being under the continuous protection and safeguard of God in good and bad times. Therefore, although a wali is not sinless (A., maṣūm), he or she is preserved from sin (A., mahfūz). Based on this definition, al-Qushayri stressed the significance of Muslim saints acting in a manner that is not in conflict with the divine law (Dahlan n.d:16).

Muslim scholars such as al-Jurjānī (d.1413) and Ibn al-Mudābighī defined saints (wali) as those who have achieved the Gnosis of God (ma’rifat), worship constantly, and avoid disobedience, and lower desires (Dahlan n.d: 16). In line with this, al-Yusi pointed out that no one could achieve the position (maqam) of wali without meeting four conditions: Firstly, they have to understand Islamic theology so that they can distinguish between the creator (A., khāliq) and the created (A., makhluq). Secondly, they should understand Islamic Law, either based on tradition or based on understanding of the Qur’an and the texts of Prophetic tradition. Thirdly, they should have good qualities such as sincerity (A., ikhlaṣ) and carefulness (A., waraʾ). Fourthly, they should be in a continual state of fear and never feel secure because they do not know whether they will be put in the group of fortunate people or unfortunate people in the hereafter.

It is clear from these conditions that saints should strictly observe the laws of shariʿat and other Islamic teachings. Therefore, if people claim to be wali but do not abide by shariʿat, most Muslim scholars do not consider them to be wali. For example, if such people were able to perform miracles, such as walking on water, flying in the air, travelling distances over the earth with supernatural
speed (A., tayy al-ard), these miracles might be attributed to black magic and the assistance of jinn and the like (al-Hujwiri 1997:227). Of such people, the 12th century theologian, al-Ghazālī said:

Undoubtedly, it is considered necessary to kill people who claim that they have a special relation with God which allows them to be free from observing the five daily prayers and allowing them to drink liquor and use the possessions of other people, as claimed by Sufi. Killing this type of persons is more preferable than killing a hundred infidels, because those people are much more dangerous than infidels (Bakri n.d:139).

One of the reasons why wali should abide by the laws of shari‘at is to warn people against those who pretend to be wali by performing miraculous deeds (A., khāriq al-‘āda), showing fine manners and fine talk (Dahlan n.d: 16).

The discussion of sainthood in Islam raises the question of whether or not saints realize that they are saints. In his book, al-Qushairi mentioned the disagreement among Sufi as to whether or not people are able to know that they are wali or not, but did not clarify his view on this matter (Dahlan n.d:16). However, al-Tirmidhi discussed the disagreement among Sufi and all of their arguments. In his own opinion, the friends of God are able to know that they are saints. He was strongly opposed to some Sufi who argued that it is not possible because if saints knew that they were wali, they would be sure of their salvation in the hereafter, which would result in a lack of willingness to worship. On this point, al-Tirmidhi pointed out that believers (mukminūn) must know that they are believers but do not know whether they will be sure of their salvation. In the same manner, saints know that they are saints, but they are not sure of their salvation in the hereafter. Moreover, al-Tirmidhi was opposed to those who asserted that saints did not know that they were wali because if they did, they would become victims of arrogance. On this matter, al-Tirmidhi argued that because of their position as saints of God, they would be protected by God from falling prey to arrogance (al-Hujwiri 1997:224-225). Other Sufi have argued that saints must be able to know their sainthood because God endows sainthood on His servants. Therefore, sainthood is a blessing from God and may be known to the recipient to increase his gratitude to God (Kalabadzi 1985).

Sufi have also discussed the question of whether or not saints know each other. Abdullah Ibn Sahl argued that although saints are veiled from the eyes of the common people, they are supposed to know each other (Sa’id 2004:27). Schimmel maintained that they recognize fellow saints without ever having met them (1978:202). In line with this, Abdullah Ibn Sahl argued that God only gives information about people’s sainthood to other saints and to those
who are able to obtain benefit from those saints. As a sign of God’s mercy to humankind, He veils His friends from the eyes of common people and keeps saints concealed from the public. This is not only because it is considered to be an infidelity if people recognize saints and then deny them, but also because it is considered sinful if people ignore saints after they recognize them (Sa’id 2004:27). In contrast to previous scholars, however, Abū Bakr claimed that no one is able to recognize people as saints of God during their life except God Himself. Nevertheless, Abū Bakr argued that people can be regarded as saints if during their life, those people have proper faith and show sincere conduct according to the Qur’anic and Prophetic tradition, and die in a state of faith (mukmin). In addition, if such people perform miracles, they can be considered to be wali and Muslims should respect them (Abu Bakar 2004:21-47).

The hierarchical rank of saints is well known in the Sufi traditions. There are different numbers of saints in each rank, orders of rank in the hierarchy and names of saints in the hierarchy. Among some of the hierarchies discussed in the Sufi tradition are the ‘outstanding’ (A., akhyār), the ‘substitutes’ (A., abdāl), the ‘devoted’ (abrār), ‘the poles’ (A., autād), the ‘chiefs’ (A., nuqabā`) and the ‘axis’ or ‘pole’ (A., qutb), also referred to as the ‘source of help’ (A., ghauth). Sufi theorists agree that the highest saint in the hierarchy becomes the leader of the saints. In the Sufi tradition the highest ranking saint is called the qutb (plural: aqtāb) or ghauth which some writers call al-qutb al-ghauth. He or she is the centre of the spiritual pole on whom other people depend. There is only one qutb or ghauth at any time. If that saint dies, he or she will be succeeded by another saint below him or her (Sa’id 2004). In this sense, the concept of qutb is similar to that of khātim al-auliyā’put forward by al-Tirmīdī.

Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha’rānī argued that the characteristic of this qutb is that his or her heart and mind always circles around (A., tawāf) God just as a pilgrim walks around the Ka’ba on a pilgrimage in Mecca. Moreover, he or she constantly witnesses God in every direction. However, this does not necessarily mean that God exists within this qutb. In addition, the qutb is believed to be the first person to face either calamity or receive the aid (I., pertolongan) given by God before it is given to the people. Al-Sha’rānī believes that the qutb bears such a heavy burden that he or she always has a headache. The qutb bears this heavy burden, distributes it among other saints below him, before it is finally distributed to other Muslims. As a result of this, people on this earth can exist. If the burden was not previously distributed by the qutb to his or her fellow saints and other Muslims, those who suffered from the calamity would vanish. Al-Sha’rānī’s view on this matter derives from his interpretation of the Qur’ānic verse saying ‘And did not God check one set of people by means of another, the earth would indeed be full of mischief, but Allah is full of bounty to all the worlds (2:251) (Sa’id 2004:30-31).
Whereas the theory of the hierarchy of saints was developed in the Sufi tradition, Ibn Taymiyyah was strongly opposed to it, arguing that this theory is based on invalid Prophetic sayings (hadith). He claimed that this theory could be considered an innovation (bid'ah) within Islam that should not be tolerated. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah proposed a different classification of saints which is taken from the Qur’an (al-Wāqī’at chapter). According to his classification, there are two hierarchies of saints: the highest is al-muqarrabūn and the second is ʾašāb al-yamīn. The first hierarchy includes those who are brought close by God. These saints always observe the worship of God, avoid His prohibitions, and perform all kinds of recommended deeds (A., nawa fil). The second category includes those who observe obligations and avoid God’s prohibitions but do not pay attention to recommended deeds. Ibn Taymiyyah thus argued that wāli could be drawn from Muslim scholars, workers, holy warriors (A., sabīlillah), traders and farmers as long as these people do not practise innovation (bid’ah) (Taymiyyah n.d-a:179).

The topic of saints in the Sufi tradition is closely related to the topic of miracles (I., karamah). Most Muslims theologians believe in the existence of karamah which encompasses supernatural deeds, miracles or extraordinary powers performed by saints who strictly observe the laws of shari’at. In this sense, as Taylor argued, every karamah always demonstrates a dramatic transformation and fantastic occurrence which human beings cannot possibly perform without the intervention of God’s power (Taylor 1998:128). However, Muslim theologians give different names to miracles performed other than by Muslim saints. For example, when such miracles or extraordinary powers are performed by prophets to support their mission, Muslim theologians classify them as mu’jīza. When such supernatural deeds are performed by pious Muslims, they call ma’ūnah. However, when such miracles are performed by those who do not abide by shari’at, such as infidels, impostors or impious people, these miracles are called istidrāj. This last type of miracles is deliberately given by God in order to show that these people are on wrong path.

Ibn Taymiyyah argued that sainthood has nothing to do with extraordinary deeds (khāriq al-ʿāda) or miracles. Although it is possible for Muslim saints to perform karamah, not all saints have this ability. Some saints might not be able to perform and to possess such karamah, and God does not bestow the ability on them (Taymiyyah 1999:15). Therefore, the performance of karamah is not a prerequisite of sainthood in Islam. According to Abū Ḥasan al-Shādhili, karamah cannot be sought either by chanting special dhikr or prayers; it is believed to be a blessing from God. In other words, saints are not the primary cause of miracles, but miracles can be performed with the intervention of God. In addition to this notion, if some one can perform karamah, this will not affect
the status of a person’s sainthood in the eyes of God. In other words, they do not necessarily achieve a higher status in the eyes of God than others who are unable to perform miracles. Some wali bestowed with this gift by God still feel cautious and ask God for refuge because this ability may make them subject to slander.

Most Sufis agree that instead of seeking karamah, people should make efforts to achieve steadfastness to improve their worship (A., istiqāmat). It is commonly accepted in the Sufi tradition that istiqāmat is better than a thousand karamah. According to al-Suhrawardi, for instance, seekers should accept this notion because many worshippers might be inclined to seek karamah because they have heard of the miracles performed by their predecessors as described in many hagiographical books. Sometimes, because they are unable to achieve karamah, they lose hope and begin to question the validity of their deeds. Al-Suhrawardi, therefore, argues that istiqāmat is very important in order to guide seekers to achieve the most essential objective of their worship and belief in God. In order to enhance the belief, God sometimes bestows miracles on His saints. However, al-Suhrawardi pointed out that it is probably because of their steadfastness, God unveils secrets and gives strong faith to seekers and saints, which can lead them to avoid passion (nafs) rather than giving them karamah. Miracles are therefore no longer needed because these saints have achieved the ultimate objective of their mystical path (Taymiyyah 1999:44-45).

3.2.1. The Concepts of Sainthood (Wali) and Miracle (Karamah) As Understood by Majlis Dhikr Groups

It is no exaggeration to say that the concepts of sainthood and miracles are an entry point to understand the practices of Majlis Dhikr groups in Indonesia. Like other Sufi groups, Indonesian Majlis Dhikr groups regard the concepts of sainthood and miracles as significant themes in their religious practice and belief. These two concepts have important meaning particularly in establishing the ritual and the teachings of these groups. Therefore, in order to understand Majlis Dhikr in Indonesia, people need to understand how these two concepts are understood by these Majlis Dhikr groups.

As argued by Gus Latif, a leader of Majlis Dhikr group Ihsāniyyat in Kediri, East Java, believing in the existence of saints (auliyā’) is compulsory for Muslims, since God and his Prophet spoke about these saints and their miracles in the Qur’an and in hadith. For Indonesian Majlis Dhikr, wali are generally understood to be those who are loved by God and are entrusted to be His
representatives on this world.\(^8\) Abdul Latif Madjid, a leader of Wâhidiyat, pointed out that a wali is a person whose role is to improve the condition of this world. The heart of a wali is always connected to God. As a result, a wali is not only able to spread the light of God (A., *nūr Allah*) over the world but also to help others to approach God.\(^9\)

Kyai Misbah, an older brother of Gus Latif from Pesantren Jampes, pointed out that wali can be divided into two categories. The first category is wali who are consistently devoted to God without the slightest indication of disobedience. The second category are wali who are protected by God. Kyai Misbah believed the former could be achieved by anyone through consistency of worship. In contrast, the latter cannot be sought because this status is given by God through His blessing. Such a person is sought by God to be His friend (A., *auliyā*)\(^10\) and is known as a *majdhub*, a person who is drawn from the place of divine closeness up to God Himself, to the highest of God’s realms. All such persons are chosen by God as wali, although they do not intend to become wali. With these categorizations, Kyai Misbah pointed out that saints are not limited to Muslim scholars; instead they may be chosen from farmers, traders and other ordinary Muslims, as long as they abide by Islamic laws. Consequently, people should not disparage other people because they do not know whether they are wali or not.\(^11\)

Like other Sufi, Indonesian *Majlis Dhikr* groups agree that the consistency of worship (I., *istiqa’amat*) is a primary requirement for wali. As a result, Muslims who do not undertake active worship (I., *ibadah*) and who commit sins cannot be considered as wali. In other words, as pointed out by Kyai Misbah, a major indicator of sainthood is the extent to which Muslims abide by Islamic Law. If they fail to follow the law, Muslims cannot be considered to be wali, even if they are able to perform miracles. Kyai Misbah told me that this is explained by most ‘ulama in order to prevent people from wrongly identifying wali. For him, the appearance of *khāriq al-‘āda* (lit. violates habits) and the popularity of a person but without constant worship cannot be regarded as signs of sainthood. Kyai Misbah stressed this important aspect because many people misunderstand wali. They think a wali is a person bestowed with supernatural powers whose guests ask for blessing. In addition to constant *ibadah*, Gus Latif added that people cannot be considered as true wali until they die with a *ḥusn al- khātimat* (a good ending). In line with this, Gus Latif argued that unlike prophets, the status of saint can be removed by God, if they do not abide by shari‘at. He stated:

\(^8\) Interview with Gus Latif, Kediri, January, 2005.
\(^9\) Interview with Abdul Latif Madjid, Kediri, February, 2005.
\(^10\) This is reminiscent of the two distinct classes of *wali haqqullah* and *waliullah* mentioned previously.
\(^11\) Interview with Kyai Misbah, Kediri, January, 2005
The status of prophets cannot be lost because they have received their status as prophet from the time they were born and God protects them from sins (ma’šhum). In contrast, since God does not protect wali from sins, God can remove their status. This can be described with this analogy: if I love someone, but he or she does not respect me, I will not love him or her anymore. The same is true if God loves or chooses persons as His wali (friends), but they never respect Him, God will not love those saints.12

Indonesian Majlis Dhikr groups strongly believed in the hierarchy of saints. Zainuddin, one of the senior leaders in Wāḥidiyat, believes that the highest level in the hierarchy is called wali qutb or ghauth hāḍza al-zamān. Although he could not name the qutb of his time, Zainuddin believed that these qutb have existed in every age. When one died, another saint will succeed him. However, Zainuddin believed that by practising particular prayers, Muslims might be able to know the identity of the ghauth of the age, depending on the purity of their heart. Moreover, qutb are considered to have received perfection (I., kesempurnaan) and a mandate from God so that they can perfect other people. They are so close to God that they are able to help other people who want to approach God. Zainuddin explained to me how these ghauth could bring people closer to God:

The closest person to God is a qutb or ghauth. They are so close to God that they ‘know’ where God exists. This closeness is obviously not in physical terms. As a result, they can help others to be near to God. Therefore, as explained by Jalaluddin al-Rumi, it might take two hundred years for people to approach God. However, if people approach these qutb who are able to approach God, they may take only two days.13

Zainuddin argued that in order to help people to approach God, these qutb should not meet people directly. Despite never meeting, these qutb are believed to be capable of bringing people to approach God and to know God (ma’rifah billah). Zainuddin explained that if these ghauth live at the place of sunset and people live at the place of sunrise, the ghauth are still able to teach people how to approach God.

Zainuddin, and his Majlis Dhikr members generally believe that if those ghauth have disciples, they must be able to give their spiritual light (A., nadrat, I., pancaran batin) to their disciples (I., murid) without meeting them. However, in

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12 Interview with Gus Latif, Kediri, January, 2005
order to receive this nadrat (spiritual light), disciples should be ready to accept it, by reciting particular prayers taught by their master. Zainuddin described the process of spreading nadrat (spiritual light) as follows:

Disciples are like those who turn on television, while ghauth is like a TV station. When the TV station broadcasts its programs, people can watch these programs if they turn on their television. If they sleep or turn off the TV, they will not be able to watch them.

The ability of the ghauth to give their nadrat is illustrated by the following story. Zainuddin told me that when he married his wife, Ima, he asked her to practise a specific ritual (I., mujahadah) for forty days, a precondition for any new member of the Waḥidiyyat group. However, his wife was unable to complete the forty days mujahadah. Later, she dreamed one night that Abdul Latif Madjid, a leader of Waḥidiyyat, visited her. In her dream, he asked Ima whether she had finished. She said that she had not yet finished the mujahadah. After this occurrence, Ima completed the forty days mujahadah because she was worried that Abdul Latif would ask again her about it. Zainuddin maintained that this event is evidence that Abdul Latif Madjid, who is believed by Waḥidiyyat members to be a ghauth, is able to give his nadrat to his chosen disciples. As well as helping people to achieve the Gnosis of God (maʿrifat billah), ghauth are believed, especially among Waḥidiyyat members, not only to be capable of attracting, lifting and strengthening people’s belief but also of withdrawing and weakening people’s belief.¹⁴

Furthermore, the Majlis Dhikr groups believe saints, even if they have died, are capable of providing intercession (A., shafāʿat) to living Muslims. Gus Latif told me that this is possible because their task is to help prophets, so they can give their intercession to other people. It is even thought that in their tombs, saints can hear people praying because they are still alive. They have only moved from this world to another and are still alive in the other world. The evidence for this belief, as Gus Latif argued, is taken from the practice of the Prophet Muhammad. When he passed Muslim tombs, Muhammad always prayed and greeted those buried in the tombs. This proved that the dead persons could hear the voice of living persons.

When asked whether saints know that they are saints, Majlis Dhikr members have different views. Kyai Mughni believes that saints do not know that God has chosen them as His saints.¹⁵ They do not realize that they themselves are saints. Kyai Mughni’s counterpart, Kyai Misbah, believes a notion prevalent

¹⁴ Interview with Zainuddin, Kediri, September, 2004.
¹⁵ Interview with Kyai Mughni, Kediri, February, 2005.
in Sufi tradition that since sainthood is a secret matter, no one knows saints, including the saints themselves, except other saints of the same status. He quoted the familiar phrase: *lä ya’rifū al-wali illa al-wali*(No one knows a saint except another saint). This is a strong belief in the pesantren tradition. Kyai Misbah made the following analogy:

No one knows *wali* except another *wali*. It is fair that students should be tested with students and car mechanics should be tested with other car mechanics.16

As a result of this, Kyai Misbah maintained that true *wali* never disclose their sainthood to anyone else. If they expose their sainthood, they can be considered as the extremely stupid. Since sainthood is the trusteeship from God, it should be kept secret and not told to anyone else.

In contrast, although he quoted the same phrase as Kyai Misbah cited, Zainuddin interpreted it differently. He argued that no one knows a saint except the saint himself or herself. Zainuddin based his view on the fact that some Muslim saints such as Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jaylānī and Ibn ‘Arabī knew that they were saints. According to him, some saints were even given the right to reveal their sainthood, some should conceal their sainthood, while others can choose either to expose or conceal their sainthood. Despite this, Hasyim Asy’ari, a founder of Nahdlatul Ulama, strongly condemned those who proclaimed themselves to be *wali* as happened in many Sufi orders. He maintained:

One of the temptations which could ruin Muslims in general is self-announcement of *murshid* (I., *guru tarekat*) and self-announcement of saints of God, even *wali qutb* or *imam mahdi*. When people proclaim themselves as *wali*, but never abide by the Prophet’s laws (*shariah*), they are liars. Those who proclaim sainthood are not real saints, they are only fake saints (J., *wali-walian*) because they reveal a specific secret (*sirr al-khusūsiyyat*) (Qomar 2002:49)

The discussion of sainthood among *Majlis Dhikr* members is inseparable from the discussion of *karamah*. Members of *Majlis Dhikr* are concerned with *karamah* because this term has often been linked with other terms such as *ilmu karamah*, *ilmu hikmah*, *kadigdayan karamah*, and *karamah sejati*, which have been used and advertised widely in particular Indonesian media. Responding to this issue, Gus Latif explained to me that there are two kinds of *karamah*. The first *karamah* is natural and is possessed by devout Muslims because of their intense devotion to God. This *karamah* happens merely because of God’s

16 Interview with Kyai Misbah, Kediri, January, 2005.
blessing and cannot be sought by Muslims. The second type of karamah is sought (I., yang dicari). For example, when devout Muslims practise and recite particular prayers and are then able to perform miracles (I., ilmu putih), this can be categorized as the second type of karamah. In contrast, if these miracles are performed by bad people (I., orang yang durhaka), this kind of miracle can be categorized as black magic (I., ilmu hitam or ilmu musyrik). Therefore, Gus Latif concluded that if those karamah discussed by the Indonesian media are sought and practised by good Muslims, then they can be categorized as ilmu putih.17

Based on this categorization, Gus Latif agreed with the general view of Muslim Sufi and theologians and argued that miracles (karamah) are not a prerequisite of sainthood. Unlike prophets equipped with mu‘jiza to spread Islam (A., tabligh) and to challenge unbelievers, saints do not have this task, so they do not need miracles (I., karamah). In other words, saints should not use karamah as a testament to their sainthood, while prophets should have mu‘jiza as a testament to their prophethood. Gus Latif argued that many Muslim saints who cannot perform miracles still frequently achieve the highest level of sainthood. Kyai Misbah, senior teacher in Jampes and Gus Latif’s older brother, pointed out that karamah is not the main objective of people’s worship of God. Kyai Misbah gave an example of a person who was able to perform a miracle by changing rice into gold nuggets by touching it but he did not wish to have such miracle and prayed to God so that he would not have such miraculous ability. This indicates that performing miracles is not the main objective of the person. Like other Muslim scholars, Kyai Misbah agreed that since the consistency of worshipping (istiqa‘mat) is more important than karamah, people should seek istiqāmat instead of karamah.

It is clear that in regard to the concepts of sainthood and karamah, Indonesian Majlis Dhikr groups base their views on the interpretation of the Qur’an and hadith and the notions of Muslim Sufi and other theologians. Therefore in term of these important concepts, Indonesian Majlis Dhikr groups cannot be regarded as violating the teaching of tasawuf.

3.3. The Concept of Tawassul

Seeking mediation (A., I., tawassul) has become a significant practice in the rituals conducted by Indonesian Majlis Dhikr groups as well as within Indonesian tarekat in general. It is not an exaggeration to say that without

17 Interview with Gus Latif, Kediri, January, 2005.
understanding this concept, people might not be able to understand the essence of the rituals conducted by Indonesian Majlis Dhikr groups. As observed by Millie (2006:98-108) in West Java, tawassul is a constituent part of many of these groups’ religious observances such as manakiban, the ritual reading of the signs of Allah’s favour (A., karamat) upon ‘Abd Qādir al-Jailānī, supplicating at graves (I., ziarah) and in some cases, religious study groups (I., pengajian). This concept has become a theological issue that has attracted hostile debates between proponents and opponents for centuries. Those who are opposed to the concept of tawassul vigorously attack and accuse the supporters of tawassul of practising bid’ah (innovation within Islam) and even, polytheism (A., shirk). In this section, I will explore how the concept of tawassul has been discussed and understood by its opponents and proponents. The understanding of tawassul among Indonesian Majlis Dhikr groups will also be discussed in order to reveal their intellectual and theological response to this concept.

The word wasīlat is mentioned twice in the Qur’an in chapter 5 verse 35 and chapter 17 verse 57 (al-Hilali 1996:124 & 320), and can be translated as ‘a means that can be used to gain nearness to God.’ Following this general meaning, tawassul or tawassulan means the use of wasīlat to obtain nearness to God. In fact, most Muslim theologians agree that a means (A., wasīlat) is needed in order to approach God. Nevertheless, when they come to the question of what kind of means can be sought, Muslim theologians cannot reach consensus. While the majority have agreed that in order to approach and invoke God, people are allowed to seek a means (tawassul) through their good deeds, including their prayers, fasting, and reciting of the Qur’an in hope of securing divine assistance, there is no consensus on wasīlat sought in other ways such as through the person of the Prophet himself, his dignity, or other pious Muslims (saints). More specifically, the debate on this matter revolves around the question of whether or not it is permissible to make the Prophet, after his death, the means of supplication with such phrases as allāhumma innī asaluka bi-nabiyyika (O Allah! I beseech You through Your Prophet), or bi-jāhi nabiyyika (By the dignity of Your Prophet), or even bi-Haqqi nabiyyika (For the sake of Your Prophet), and whether or not it is permissible to call on deceased pious Muslims or Muslim saints, other than Prophet, as the means of supplication.

Some Muslim theologians have denied the permissibility of seeking a means through the person of the Prophet himself after his death. Tāqiyyu al-Dīn Ahmad Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328), his students, Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyah (1292-1350), and the Salafi group, for example, regard this as shirk because no dead can be asked to invoke God. The case would be different if the Prophet were still alive. For Ibn Taymiyyah, to request the Prophet’s prayer during his lifetime and seek
a means (tawassul) through his prayer was a sign of good virtue and strongly recommended (Taymiyyah n.d-b:201-202). In this sense, Ibn Taymiyyah defines tawassul as seeking the Prophet’s prayer during his lifetime and his intercession (A., shafā’at) in the hereafter as well as seeking a means through pious Muslims’ prayer during their lifetime. Ibn Taymiyyah believed that this would not lead people to polytheistic behaviour because they would not worship the Prophet during his lifetime and he would forbid people from worshipping him. However, Ibn Taymiyyah worried that appealing to the Prophet, as a wasīlatto supplicate God after his death would lead people to make the Prophet the associate of God as well as the object of worship as Christians do when they worship Jesus Christ (Taymiyyah 1987:220-21). Ibn Taymiyyah was convinced that after the death of the Prophet, his Companions no longer sought a means to God through his person. To support his opinion, Ibn Taymiyyah presented the Prophetic hadith which said that ‘Umar ibn Khāṭīb used to seek tawassul through the Prophet, but when the Prophet died, ‘Umar ibn Khāṭīb sought tawassul through the prayers of ‘Abbas. Ibn Taymiyyah used this as evidence that tawassul can only be sought through the prayers of living persons, not through the prayers of deceased persons. If seeking tawassul through the person or the position of the Prophet was allowed, Ibn Taymiyyah argued, why did ‘Umar seek tawassul through the Prophet’s uncle, not directly through the Prophet whose status was higher than his uncle. (Taymiyyah n.d-b:201).

However, Ibn Taymiyyah still allowed people to supplicate God by mentioning the names of the Prophets, pious Muslims or saints whose dignity is high before God, providing that the petitioners emulate their pious deeds and follow instructions that are sanctioned by God. In this sense, Ibn Taymiyyah did not specifically require that those mentioned in supplication be living persons or dead persons. He pointed out that people are allowed to supplicate God by saying, ‘O Allah! I beseech You by Your Prophet, by the dignity of Your Prophet and by your saints.’ However, Ibn Taymiyyah argued that God did not grant the supplication because of the position of these pious Muslims. Instead, mentioning the dignity of those people was only meaningful if the supplicants complied with their teaching, which derives from God (Taymiyyah 1987:79-80).

The same argument was put forward by the prominent Salafi scholar, Muḥammad Naṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (d.1999), 19 who strongly opposed seeking 18 Annas narrated: Whenever drought threatened them, Umar ibn al-Khaṭīb used to ask Allah for rain through the mediation of al-Abbas ibn Abd al-Mutallib. He [Umar] used to say: “O Allah! We used to ask you through the means of our Prophet and You would bless us with rain, and now we ask You through the means of our Prophet’s uncle, so bless us with rain.” And it would rain.
19 In addition to ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ‘Abd Allāh bin Bāz (d. 1999), Muhammad Naṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (d. 1999) was an influential Salafi scholar whose fatwa (legal advice) has been referred by the contemporary Wahhabi authorities and the Salafi group. For his autobiography and his works and legal opinion (A., fatwa), refer to his website, http://www.alalbany.net/albany_serah.php, viewed 25 December , 10:54 am.
a means through the person and status of the Prophet. Like Ibn Taymiyyah, al-Albānī defines tawassul as seeking a means through the prayers of living persons by requesting them to pray. Therefore, seeking a means through the Prophet after his death is not proper. For al-Albānī, the Prophet can no longer hear and answer his followers who request him to petition God because he has moved to a place whose situation is not the same as in this world (Al-Albānī 1975:52-3). Although some hadith indicate that all the prophets of God are still alive in their graves and perform prayers, their place, according to al-Albānī, has particular laws and forms which do not follow the laws in this world and are known only by God. Therefore, al-Albānī claimed that the life of Prophet Muhammad before he died and after he died is different (Al-Albānī 1975:60-1). Like his predecessors, al-Albānī used the Prophetic tradition to support his argument. Based on this, he argued that wainnā natawassalu ilaika bi ammi nabiyyika (Now we ask you through the means of the Prophet’s uncle) a phrase in the hadith, must not be translated as seeking a means through the person or the status of the Prophet’s uncle. Instead, the word should be added to make the last part of the phrase read: bi (du’ā’) ammi nabiyyika, which means through the prayers of Prophet’s uncle.

Al-Albānī also used the following Prophetic hadith to reject the permissibility of seeking tawassul through the person and status of the Prophet:

A blind man came to the Prophet and said: “Invoke Allah for me that God help me.” The Prophet replied: “If you wish I will delay this, which would be better for you, and if you wish I will then invoke Allah the Exalted (for you).” The blind man said: “Then invoke God.” The Prophet said to him: īdhab ḍa fā tawadda’, wa salli ṭakatayn thumma qul -- “Go and make an ablution, pray two rak‘at, then say: “O Allah, I am asking you (as’aluka) and turning to you (atawajjahu ilayka) with your Prophet Muhammad (bi nabiyyika Muhammad), the Prophet of mercy; O Muhammad (ya Muhammad), I am turning with you to my Lord regarding my present need, I am asking my Lord with your intercession concerning the return of my sight (inni atawajjahu bika ila rabbī fī hajati hadhīh. Another version has: inni astashfīj bika alārabbī fī raddi basari) so that He will fulfil my need; O Allah, allow him to intercede (with you) for me (allahumma shaffījhu fiyya)” (narrated by Turmudhī and Ibn Mājah).

For al-Albānī, this hadith can not be regarded as a basis for allowing supplicants to seek a means through the person of the Prophet, even though this hadith contains the term binabiyyika Muhammad (with Your Prophet, Muhammad). This phrase, al-Albānī argued, should be read and interpreted as the prayers of the Prophet (bidu’āinanabiyyika Muhammad) for several reasons. First, the blind man came to the Prophet to request his prayer to God on his behalf because he
knew that the Prophet’s supplication was much more powerful than others. If the blind man had intended to seek a means through the person or the status of Prophet, he would not have come to meet the Prophet; and it would have been better for him to stay at home. Secondly, when the Prophet gave options, the blind man chose to ask for the Prophet’s prayer, as we can be read in the text of the hadith. Thirdly, the blind man again asked the Prophet to supplicate God for him. Fourthly, this hadith is commonly included by hadith scholars in a particular chapter on the miracles of the Prophet and his granting of prayers. Because of the Prophet’s prayer to God, the blind man could see again. Therefore, al-Albâni claimed that the blind man could not have recovered because of his supplication alone without Prophet’s prayer. If prayers alone were enough, other blind persons would use a similar prayer and be healed. However, the secret of the blind man’s recovery was the Prophet’s supplication (Al-Albani 1975:69-75).

Like his predecessors, Hartono Ahmad Jaiz, the proponent of the Salafi movement in Indonesia, argues that *tawassul* using the person of the Prophet is unlawful. Therefore, he condemns those who supplicate God by saying, ‘O my Lord! with the Elect One (Muhammad) make us attain our goals, and forgive us for what has passed (Ya râbi bi al-muṣṭafâ bâllîgh maqâṣidâna, wa îghîr râna mâ maďâ yâ wașî’a al-karamî). According to him, adding the phrase ‘with the Elect one’ (bi al- muṣṭafâ) can be regarded as taking an oath (I., bersumpah). Jaiz maintains that invoking created beings, such as angels, prophets and apostles, or places in making an oath while supplicating God is not permitted and can be considered as practising polytheism (A., shirk). Only the name of God should be used in taking oaths (Jaiz 1999:158).

By contrast, other Muslim scholars have supported the practice of seeking *tawassul* not only through the person of the Prophet but also by means of his dignity and the dignity of pious Muslims even if they have died. Ja’far Subhani, a Muslim scholar, for instance, wrote a whole book which focuses on defending *tawassul* practices from legal attacks conducted by Ibn Taymiyyah and Wahhabi groups. In this book, Subhani states unequivocally that seeking *wasilah* through the person of the Prophet and his dignity is lawful. Like the opponents of this kind of *tawassul*, Subhani used the hadith about the blind man to support his argument. He points out that the phrase in the hadith, ‘with your Prophet Muhammad’ (bi nabiyyika Muhammad) should be interpreted as meaning that the blind man sought a means through the Prophet, not through his prayer. To convince his readers of this, Subhani referred to another phrase in the hadith, ‘I am turning with you to my Lord’ (Ya Muhammad inni tawajjahu bika ilâ rabbî). He argued that ‘turning with you’ can be used as evidence that the blind man used the person of the Prophet as a means of his *tawassul* (Subhani 1989).
The proponents of the notion that one can use the person of the Prophet as a means state unequivocally that although the Prophet has died, people are allowed to seek a means through his dignity and prayer to supplicate God. To support their argument, they present some examples of tawassul using the person of the Prophet that were conducted by the Prophet’s Companions after his death. Al-Maliki (1946-2004), an hadith scholar who lived in Mecca, for instance, cited hadith narrated by prominent Companions of the Prophet. One of the traditions cited states that when a person had difficulty seeing Uthman ibn ‘Affan, the fourth Caliph, a Prophetic Companion called Uthman ibn Hunaif taught this person a prayer similar to the one taught by the Prophet to the blind man. The prayer is as follows (Al-Maliki 1993:70-1):

O Allah, I am asking you and turning to you with your Prophet Muhammad, the Prophet of mercy; O Muhammad, I am turning with you to your God so fulfil my need…

After reciting the prayer, the person was able to meet the Caliph to convey his need. For al-Maliki this tradition suggested that people should still seek a means to supplicate God through the Prophet, even though he had died.

Another Prophetic Companion’s tradition cited by al-Maliki is as follows:

It is narrated by Mālik al-Dar al-Dar’s treasurer, that the people suffered a drought during the successorship of Umar, whereupon a man came to the grave of the Prophet and said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, ask for rain for your Community, for verily they have almost perished.’ After this the Prophet appeared to him in a dream and told him: ‘Go to Umar and give him my greeting, then tell him that they will be watered. Tell him: You must be clever, you must be clever!’ The man went and told Umar, who said: ‘O my Lord, I will spare no effort except what is beyond my power!’

Al-Maliki was convinced that the transmitter of this tradition was regarded as sound by Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī, a prominent hadith scholar whose reputation in this field is outstanding. Furthermore, al-Maliki gave more evidence from an hadith as follows (Al-Maliki 1993:76-7):

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20 His full name is Sayyid Prof. Dr. Muhammad ibn Sayyid ‘Alawi ibn Sayyid ‘Abbas ibn Sayyid ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Maliki al-Hasani al-Makki. He was born in Mecca in 1365/1946. He finished his PhD at the Al-Azhar University, Cairo. He taught in the King Abdul Aziz University and The University of Ummul Qura, Mecca. He resigned after several years teaching in these universities. He then opened class in his own house and established an Islamic boarding school. He provided free education for his students. He also received students from many pesantren in Indonesia, most of which were affiliated with NU. He was regarded as the important figure by kyai and ulama NU in Indonesia because he was not proponent of Wahabism.
No sooner does one greet me than Allah sends back my soul so that I could return their greeting. (Narrated by Abu Hurarirah).

My life is an immense good for you: you bring up new matters, and new matters are brought up for you. My death, also, is an immense good for you: your actions will be shown to me; if I see goodness I shall praise God and if I see evil I shall ask forgiveness of Him for you.

Al-Maliki regarded these two hadith and the companion tradition as evidence that seeking *tawassul* through the Prophet after his death is legal. Al-Maliki believed that the Prophet is not only alive in his grave but also is able to pray to God for the benefit of his followers and can reply to their greeting. To convince his readers about the life of the Prophet after his death, Al-Maliki cited the verse of the Qur’an relating to the life of martyrs’ souls after their death. If people do not believe the Qur’anic verses about the life of the martyrs’ soul, they must distrust the Qur’an. If they do believe in the life of the martyrs’ souls, Al-Maliki said, why do they not believe that the Prophet and his Companions, whose status is much more higher than martyrs, are still alive (Al-Maliki 1993:117-8).

However, the vast majority of Muslim scholars warn people at the outset of their works not to believe that the Prophet himself can give benefit to, or harm others, in the same way as God while practising *tawassul*. Al-Maliki for example pointed out that to regard the Prophet as capable of this can be considered polytheism (Al-Maliki 1993:59). Kyai Hasyim Asy’ari (1871-1947), a leading Indonesian Muslim scholar and the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama, stated unequivocally that *tawassul* or *wasiyat* is just one of the ways to invoke God. *Tawassul* or *wasiyat* is mediation to approach God, and its ultimate purpose is to invoke God Himself rather than to invoke the object of *tawassul* (Asy’ari 2005:140). Similarly, Alā al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Dāwūd al-‘Aṭṭār (d.1324), a prominent Shafi’ite hadith scholar, pointed out that asking for God’s help through the mediation and assistance of the Prophet is fine as long as people are careful not to ask the Prophet himself to resolve the problem because only God has the authority and power to do this (Taylor 1998:213). Even the supporters of *tawassul* state that people should not believe that the Prophet, with his own power and strength, can change the predestination of God (I., *takdir*) (Abu al-‘Azayim 1981:24). Therefore, the proponents of this kind of *tawassul* warn that to prevent people from invoking a deceased person directly, laypeople should be guided by an expert to practise *tawassul* in a proper way.

From debates about *tawassul*, I can conclude that both sides base their ideas about the practice of *tawassul* in the Qur’an. To support their arguments, both sides also used similar hadith. However, they interpret the text of these hadith
differently and, as a result, the conclusions derived from the text differ. In these debates the proponents of tawassul through the person and the dignity of the Prophet also cite particular hadith which they regarded as sound, while the opponents of such tawassul regarded these same hadith as weak.

### 3.3.1. Understanding the Concept of Tawassul Among Majlis Dhikr Groups

Indonesian Majlis Dhikr groups are familiar with the concept of tawassul discussed by those Muslim scholars. For example, Kyai Zainuddin, one of the leaders in the Wâhidiyat group, gives a similar definition of tawassul to the one pointed out by other Muslim theologians. He is also well aware of the different interpretations of tawassul or wasilat and the argument about whether this should be practised only through living persons and pious acts or also through deceased persons. Zainuddin is the proponent of the latter notion. For him tawassul is a means to approach God either using pious acts (I., amal saleh), the person of the Prophet, or other pious Muslims.

In the discussion with me in his office about this topic, Zainuddin criticized those who have rejected tawassul through the dead. On this matter, he cited the Prophetic hadith relating to Adam who asked God for forgiveness by seeking a means through the Prophet Muhammad long before he was born. Zainuddin asked why people rejected the permissibility to seek a means through the Prophet after his death, while the Prophet Adam himself performed tawassul through the Prophet Muhammad, even though the Prophet Muhammad did not yet exist. Zainuddin maintained that Adam sought his tawassul through Muhammad’s spirit (I., ruh) not through his body. He thus stated unequivocally that this implied that the spirit of the Prophet Muhammad was alive both before his birth and after his death. Therefore, Zainuddin argued, following the practice of Adam, tawassul can be performed through the spirit of the Prophet after his death, even though his body no longer exists.

Zainuddin also criticized those who have confined tawassul to pious acts and have rejected tawassul through the person of the Prophet and his dignity. In his

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21. The Prophet said on the authority of Umar: ‘When Adam committed his mistake he said: O! my Lord, I am asking you to forgive me for the sake of Muhammad. Allah said: O! Adam, and how do you know about Muhammad whom I have not yet created? Adam replied, O! my Lord, after You created me with your hand and breathed into me of Your Spirit, I raised my head and saw written on the heights of the Throne: La Ilaha illa Allah Muhammad al-Rasulullah I understood that You would not place next to Your Name but the Most Beloved One of Your creation. Allah said: O! Adam, I have forgiven you, and were it not for Muhammad I would not have created you.’
view, people seek wasilat through the person of the Prophet because of their love of him. Since, love (A., mahabbat) of the Prophet is a pious act, Zainuddin argued that seeking wasilat through the person of the Prophet is similar to performing tawassul through a pious deed (I., amal saleh).

Zainuddin strongly supported such tawassul because this is the main practice of his Majlis Dhikr group. Tawassul practised by this group, he noted, is to ask the intercession (A, shafā’at) of the Prophet Muhammad either in this world or in the hereafter, and to ask him to supplicate God on behalf of the supplicant. This practice of tawassul is performed in the group by reciting the following phrase: ‘Ŷā Sayyidī yā Rasulallāh’ (Oh My Lord and Prophet of God). For Zainuddin, the purpose of this exclamation is to seek the intercession of the Prophet because he is the person created by God as the place to call on (I., mengadu). Zainuddin described the process of tawassul as follows:

According to an hadith, the Prophet said: ‘God has chosen a servant to become a place to call on, and the Prophet is the perfect person to be called on. He said that,’I will give my intercession to my umat who always call me.’ Calling the Prophet does not mean that we worship him and the supplication is not being made to the Prophet whose name is invoked, but to Allah. Just as when people come to a kyai asking him to supplicate God on their behalf. In this case, we do not consider the kyai whom we asking to be God.22

According to Zainuddin, practising such tawassul cannot be considered as superstition or polytheism because it is strongly recommended in the Qur’an. Zainuddin pointed out that people can only be accused of polytheism if they believe in the existence of another God. Zainuddin believed that as long as people practice tawassul under this framework: seeking the help of Allah through the Prophet without regarding him as God, they cannot be regarded as polytheist. Zainuddin believed that seeking a means through the Prophet or pious Muslims will make it more likely that supplicant’s prayer will be speedily answered by God. Gus Farih, a leader of Dhikr al-Ghāfilin group, supported this view. He argued as follows:

What is meant by wasilah here is that we believe that only God will help us and so we ask only Him for help. If we do not have such a conviction, our tawassul can be considered as idolatry (shirk). Therefore, if people say that asking Allah through dead persons is regarded as shirk, I would say that asking living persons can be considered as shirk too if we believe that these persons have the power to help. For example, when we ask a doctor to cure our sickness and we believe that the doctor, not God, can heal the sickness,  

this conduct can be considered as *shirk* too. Therefore, in *tawassul* we never regard people we use as a means in *tawassul* or as agents who can give help or assistance.

Asked why people still need a means to approach God if He is closer to people than their jugular vein, Zainuddin told me that although God is the Most powerful, He still relies on Angels and the Prophet to deliver His teachings.\(^{23}\) However, Zainuddin was reluctant to give this answer to support his notion of the permissibility of *wasi`lat* through the Prophet because this argument opens endless debate (I., *debat kusir*). Therefore, Zainuddin believed that if Islamic law (*shari`at*) acknowledges such *tawassul* practice, Muslims should accept and practise it, even though there are some different opinions on this matter.

Similarly, *Gus* Latif, one of the leaders of *Majlis Dhikr* in Kediri, also supported the practice of *tawassul* through the person of the Prophet and other pious Muslims after their death. He cited previous hadith that support the permissibility of such *tawassul*. He also pointed out that *tawassul* is needed in the supplication to God since this means that one’s prayer to God will be more easily granted than if no intermediaries are used. For him, this practice is important because those persons whose names are mentioned in *tawassul* posses high status, dignity, and respect in Allah’s eyes. By mentioning their names in the supplication, God will therefore give much more attention to one’s prayer. *Gus* Latif also said that since the Prophet, his Companions, Muslim saints (A., *auliyā’*) and other pious Muslims are the most beloved persons of God, if people love these persons by mentioning their names in their prayer, in return God will love those supplicants. In this sense, *tawassul* is closely related to the concept of *barakah* (blessing), since *Gus* Latif believed that these pious persons are able to spread *barakah* because they are the most beloved persons of God. This is similar to the notion put forward by *Kyai* Hasyim Asy’ari who interpreted the Prophetic tradition as follows, ‘People who love someone will be gathered [in the hereafter] with someone they love.’ For *Kyai* Hasyim Asy’ari, this hadith can also mean that people whose pious acts are relatively few who love someone whose pious acts are perfect will be gathered [in the hereafter] with the that person (Asy’ari 2005:27).

Although most leaders of *Majlis dhikr* groups are familiar with the concept of *tawassul* as described by Muslim theologians, some of their practices of *tawassul* are different from those of the theologians. During my attendance at the *dhikr* rituals held by these groups, I never heard the *tawassul* phrase such as *Allāhumma innī atawassalu bijāhi nabiyyika an taqdi hājāti* (God, verily I seek a means by the dignity of your messenger, fulfill my needs) used when those

\(^{23}\) In this context, Zainuddin said that God relies on Angels and the Prophet to deliver His teachings.
Majlis Dhikr groups performed tawassul. I only found one passage in the last part of a prayer in the SalawatWahidiyat group that could be categorized as a tawassul. This passage was:

In the Name of Allah the Beneficient and the Merciful. O Allah! For the sake of Your greatest name and with the dignity of Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him and with the blessings of ghauthi hādha al-zamān and his helpers and the rest of your saints OAllah! O Allah! O Allah! May Allah be pleased with them, may God deliver our call to the whole of universe and may God make deep impression on it. Verily, You are able to all things. And verily You are the Most deserved one to grant a request.

The phrase categorized as tawassul in the passage is: ‘For the sake of Your greatest name and with the dignity of Muhammad’ and the word ‘with the blessings of ghauthi hādha al-zamān and his helpers and the rest of your saints.’ Instead of using a tawassul phrase, other groups performed tawassul by reciting the names of people followed by the recitation of al-Fātiḥat (the first chapter of Qur’ān), for the benefit of the parties named. For example, in the dhikr ritual that I attended in one Muslim graveyard complex, the leader of the group Majlis Dhikr al-Ghāfīlīn recited the following:

To the presence (ilā ḫuddārati) of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him, next to the presence of my lord Syaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jailānī and Syaikh Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, and my lord al-Habīb ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Alwi al-Haddād, may God be pleased with them: al-Fātiḥat.

After this, the gathering recited the first chapter of the Qur’ān in unison. The leader of Majlis Dhikr then continued to mention other names followed by reciting al-Fātiḥat. However, Marzuki, a Muslim scholar in the State Islamic University in Malang, argued that reciting al-Fātiḥat for the benefit of deceased persons obviously could not be regarded as the practice of wasīlat. Instead, this practice can be categorized as paying respect to fellow Muslims and the most respected people, including the Prophets of God, Muslim saints, parents, teachers, and others. For him, according to Islam, respect for those people is not confined to their life but also continues after their death by sending them...
al-Fātiḥat for the benefit of the people named. Muslim theologians have widely discussed this practice within the context of giving presents to deceased persons by sending them al-Fātiḥat.24

It is clear that on the matter of tawassul, Indonesian Majlis Dhikr groups do not confine the concept of tawassul to living persons, their prayers and through pious acts. Tawassul can also be conducted through deceased persons who are considered to occupy a position of favour with, or close proximity to, God. It is for this reason that Majlis Dhikr groups conduct their rituals at Muslim tomb sites and other Muslim saints’ graveyards whose occupants are considered to have close proximity to God.

3.4. Sending the Merit of Pious Deeds to Deceased Persons

This topic is related to matters discussed within Islamic jurisprudence (I., fiqih) especially regarding the question of whether deceased persons can obtain benefit from the deeds of others. This question generates other questions. For example, can the living give the merit of their good deeds, such as reciting the Qur’an, charity (A., shadaqat), sacrifice (I., kurban), performing pilgrimage to Mecca (haji) and fasting, to deceased persons, and are deceased persons able to receive the merit of such pious acts. Within Islamic jurisprudence, this topic is categorized as a disputed matter (A., khilāfiyyat), and has been the subject of debates among religious scholars. Therefore, not all Muslims jurists (A., fuqahā) agree on the permissibility of such practice.

This topic is important to discuss further in order to understand the ritual practice of Majlis Dhikr groups in Indonesia because most of their rituals are concerned with giving the merit of pious acts (I., amal saleh) to deceased persons. Therefore, this section will focus on how these groups elaborate and approach this topic with reference to previous debates involving Muslim jurists.

The majority of religious scholars have argued that dead persons cannot benefit from the merit of others’ good deeds. They base their argument on the following verses from the Qur’an.

That no burdened person (with sins) shall bear the burden (sins) of another (53:38). And the man can have nothing but what he does (53:39).

On this Day (Day of resurrection), none will be wronged in anything, nor will you be requited anything except that which you used to do (36:54).

...He or she gets reward for that (good) which he or she has earned, and he or she is punished for that (evil) which he has earned (2:286).

The meaning of these verses is that people cannot bear the burden of another and people can only be rewarded because of the good deeds they have carried out themselves. For the supporters of this argument, these verses indicate that God is just toward His servants because He never punishes people for something that they have not done, and He will only reward people for their own good deeds. In the light of those verses, Imam Shaf’i, as cited by Ibn Kathir (d.774 CE), pointed out that the merit of reciting the Qur’an for the deceased cannot be received by them because it is not recited by those deceased themselves, but by others. Therefore, Imam Shaf’i argued, even though reciting the Qur’an is considered to be a religious virtue, sending its merit to deceased persons was never sanctioned by the Prophet and his Companions.25

How about the hadith of the Prophet that ‘When a person dies all his deeds are cut off except three; an ongoing charity (I., amal jariyah), beneficial knowledge, and a righteous child who prays for him or her’ (the deceased). Does this hadith acknowledge that deceased persons can benefit from prayers supplicated by others? In response to this, Ibn Kathir argued that all of the three kinds of deeds mentioned in the hadith are actually a result of the deceased persons’ own deeds when they were still alive, not a result of others’ deeds. For example, the decision to establish an ongoing charity (I., amal jariyah) such as a mosque or a school was actually made by the deceased persons before they died, so they are still able to receive the merit of their own deeds even though they have passed away.26 Likewise, persons who write a book from which others can obtain benefit are able to keep receiving the merit of their own deeds although they have died. Similarly, parents who educate their children to be righteous are able to benefit from the prayers of their children. In short, these kinds of deeds are a result of the deceased persons’ deeds when they are still alive. The hadith cited indicates that other than these kinds of deeds, deceased persons cannot benefit from the actions of others.

Another argument against the ability of a deceased person to benefit from the merit of others is based on a logical argument rather than the text of hadith or

26 Ibid.
the Qur’an. It is argued that God’s commands to His servants are part of an obligation that should be fulfilled by each person. This obligation cannot be transferred and fulfilled by others. For instance, God will not accept someone’s prayer if it is performed by others. Similarly, God will not accept someone’s repentance if it is performed by others. Those who support this argument draw the analogy of sick persons who cannot benefit from someone else taking a tablet on their behalf, or a thirsty person, whose thirst cannot be quenched if others drink on his behalf (al-Jauziyah 1999:211).

Moreover, it is argued that not all pious acts necessarily generate merit, and only God can determine their worth. In other words, merit depends on God’s gift. If God wishes, He will give the merit to anyone whom He wishes, but if He does not wish, He will not give the merit to anyone. If this is the case, how can people force God to give the merit of their pious acts to someone else. In other words, people cannot deliver the merit of their pious acts to deceased persons because that merit is fully in the power of God (al-Jauziyah 1999).

Other Islamic scholars have divided pious acts into two categories: the first, whose merit cannot be received by deceased persons, and the second which can. Examples of the first type include prayer, reciting the Qur’an and fasting. The merit of such deeds can only be obtained by their practitioners and such merit cannot be delivered to others. The second category includes returning deposited goods to the owner, paying a debt, charity, and making a pilgrimage to Mecca. The merit of such good deeds can be delivered to deceased persons because such deeds can be performed by others on behalf of people who are not able to perform them in person.

In contrast, other Muslim scholars such as al-Maliki, have responded that deceased persons can obtain benefit from the merit of others’ pious acts such as reciting the Qur’an, charity, fasting, and the hajj. He pointed out that the hadith cited above could not be used as an argument to decide which kinds of pious acts can deliver merit to deceased persons, and which cannot. Instead, al-Maliki agreed that it is true that deceased persons are cut off from performing certain actions that living persons do. He argued, however, that the text of hadith does not indicate that a deceased person is cut off from obtaining the merit of others’ deeds. For him, a pious deed is owned by the person who carries it out. If he or she gives the merit of this deed to another, the recipient will obtain benefit from it. Thus within Islamic jurisprudence, for example, if people die and they are in debt to others, their heirs can settle the debt on behalf of the deceased persons (Al-Maliki n.d:15).
Similar to al-Maliki, al-Jauziyah, a student of Ibn Taymiyyah, strongly criticized those who rejected the possibility of deceased persons benefiting from others’ deeds. He specifically countered the argument of those who said that since an obligation imposed by God is part of an individual’s responsibility, people cannot fulfil others’ obligation. For al-Jauziyah, this notion does not prevent God from allowing Muslims to give the merit of pious acts to other people because this is part of God’s grace for His servants. This is why, although the pilgrimage to Mecca and fasting are categorized as obligations for individual Muslims, the Prophet allowed Muslims to fulfil these obligation on behalf of others who could not do so including deceased persons. In al-Jauziyah’s opinion, transmitting the merit of deeds and giving benefit to those who are in need are religious virtues sanctioned by God. Therefore, he argued, transmitting the merit of pious deeds to deceased persons, who are cut off from doing such deeds and are thus most in need of others’ help, is even more beloved by God (al-Jauziyah 1999:225-6). To prove his point, al-Jauziyah cited two hadith which report that the Prophet allowed a man to fast on behalf of a deceased person who had fasting to make up. Another hadith cited by al-Jauziyah is a reliable hadith in which someone reported to have asked the Prophet about a month’s fasting his mother had missed before she passed away. The man asked the Prophet whether he should make up the fasting that his mother missed. The Prophet asked the man, ‘If your mother had a debt would you settle it for her?’ The man said that he would. The Prophet then said to the man that the debt to Allah has a greater right to be fulfilled (al-Jauziyah 1999:205).

Moreover, to convince his readers that deceased persons can obtain benefit from living persons, al-Jauziyah quoted another hadith which reported that the Prophet assumed that the dead could hear the greetings of the living because when they were addressed the spirits of the dead were returned to their body (al-Jauziyah 1999:15-6). He pointed out that if the deceased cannot hear the living, why did the Prophet ask Muslims to greet them when they visited Muslim tombs. al-Jauziyah argued that if people want to visit tombs, they should come bearing a gift dedicated to the dead, such as a supplication for the dead, alms offered on their behalf, or a righteous act bringing one closer to God. All of these acts can increase the dead’s happiness just as the living are pleased when a visitor arrives bearing a gift (Taylor 1998:189).

With regard to the division of pious deeds into those which can bestow merit on deceased persons and those which cannot, al-Jauziyah argued that this division finds no sanction in the Prophetic tradition. To prove this, he cited several hadith containing examples of pious acts which can be performed by people on behalf of others. In addition, he also quoted AbuHanifah’s opinion that Islamic law (A., shari’at) allows pious acts conducted by their doers to be
delivered to others. Abū Hanīfah argued that discouraging Muslims from giving the benefit and merit of their virtues to their parents and Muslim fellows in a time when they are in need could not be regarded as compatible with Islamic law (al-Jauzīyah 1999:228).

It is interesting to note here that al-Jauzīyah’s view on the legitimacy of deceased persons benefiting from the merit of pious deeds performed by living persons is not popular among Indonesian Muslims reformists such as Muhammadiyah, PERSIS (Persatuan Islam) and the Salafi groups. However on issues other than the issue of sending the merit of pious deeds to the dead, these groups invariably rely heavily on the opinion of both Ibn Taymiyyah and his student, al-Jauzīyah. Both scholars are often referred by these groups when they criticize religious practices conducted by the members of Nahdlatul Ulama and PERTI (Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah, The Association for Muslim Education), and al-Washliyah and accuse them of practising illegitimate innovation within Islam (A., bid’ah) and idolatry (A., shirk). In contrast, al-Jauzīyah’s view on this matter has been widely accepted by Indonesian Muslims groups such as Nahdlatul Ulama, al-Washliyah and PERTI.

3.4.1. The Majlis Dhikr Groups’ Understanding of Sending the Merit of Pious Deeds to Deceased Persons

Most of the leaders of Majlis Dhikr well understand that Muslim jurists have different views on the possibility of deceased persons receiving merit from others’ pious acts. Responding to this matter, Kyai Misbah cited the hadith and the verses used by those who reject this possibility. Like al-Maliki, Kyai Misbah based his interpretation of the texts of the hadith on common sense: deceased persons are no longer able to conduct any kind of deeds, whether pious or sinful, because they have passed away. Therefore, according to him, the content of the hadith describes deceased persons who are not able to do anything. However, the hadith implies that living persons are still able to send the merit of their pious acts to the deceased. Asked about the hadith stating that a righteous child (I., anak saleh) who prays for his or her deceased parents can bestow benefit on their parents, Kyai Misbah said that term ‘righteous’ was the main factor. As a result, only righteous children can assist their deceased parents with their prayers. In other words, if their children are not righteous, the parents cannot...

27 This Minangkabau-based traditionalist association was established in 1930. After Independence PERTI transformed itself into a political party. But today this organization is no longer a political party.
obtain any benefit from their children’s prayers. However, if others who do not have any familial relationship with the deceased are righteous and pray for the deceased, the latter can benefit from their prayers. Likewise, only charity accompanied with sincerity (I., ikhlas) can benefit its doer after they have died.28

Regarding the text of the verse, ‘and the man can have nothing but what he does (53:39),’ Kyai Misbah pointed out that this verse is right in the sense that deceased persons can only take their own deeds to the grave. However, for him, this verse does not prevent living persons from sending the merit of their good deeds to deceased persons. To illustrate this point, Kyai Misbah made the following analogy: although I had come to his house to interview him with only a pen and a notebook and have not brought a tape recorder, my brother could send me a tape recorder later.

Gus Farih, one of leaders of the Dhikr al-Ghafilin group, is also convinced that deceased persons can obtain benefit from prayers offered on their behalf. To prove his claim, Gus Farih also uses a method of reasoning by analogy (A., qiyās), quoting one of the Qur’an’s verses in which Abraham asked God for forgiveness for his parents and other believers until the day of Judgment. For Gus Farih, this verse indicates that Abraham asked God’s pardon not only for living believers during his time but also all believers after his time until the Day of Judgment, including all those who had died. He further argued that if the prayer of Abraham did not benefit deceased persons, God would not have revealed the verse. In addition, Gus Farid used another example to support his claim which he explained to me as follows:

One day the chairman of Muhammadiyah Youth Association in Kediri (Ikatan Pemuda Muhammadiyah) asked me whether our prayer can be received by deceased persons. The chairman asked me again, ‘If the prayer can be received by the deceased persons, can you show me the hadith which justifies that practice?’ I knew this young man wanted to ask me about the legitimacy of tahlilan [special ritual by reciting the phrase lailaha illa Allah person in unison for a deceased] that I practise. I said to him, if we have found evidence (I., dalil) justifying this view in the Qur’an, I think we do not need to find another dalil from an hadith, even though we can find another dalil from an hadith. As mentioned in the Qur’an, God teaches the Prophet to pray for his Muslim brothers who have preceded him. The prayer is as follows, rabbana ighfir lanā wa liikhwānīna al-lazdīnā sabaqūnā bi al-imān [Our Lord! Forgive us and our brethren who came before us into the Faith] (59:10).If the prayers of living person could not be received by deceased persons, God would not have taught this prayer to his Prophet. Meanwhile, argument from the hadith can also be found in the hadith narrated by Imam

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Muslim and Bukhari relating to the occasion when the Prophet visited Uhud and Baqi’s grave site. Firstly, the Prophet greeted the personages in those graves, saying assalaamu’alaikum, and the Prophet prayed for them. The word assalaamu’alaikum indicates that the Prophet chatted with the deceased persons and the prayer supplicated by the Prophet could be heard and its merit could be received by the deceased persons.

The members of the Wāḥidīyat group even believe that the merit of charity performed by living persons can benefit deceased persons. This can be seen from the courtesy (adab) of giving donations imposed by the group on its members. One of the adab is that before putting money into a donation box, members of this group should intend to give the merit of the donation to their families who are still alive or dead. This is due to the belief that donating to the Wāḥidīyat group can cause happiness and perfection of gnosis for living families and deceased families (Anonymous 1423:31-2). One of the members of this group, Dedey Firmansyah, a member of the group from Lampung, told the following story about the importance of delivering the merit of putting a money in a donation box (I., kotak amal) for his deceased father.

This story took place when I ignored the significance of putting money into a donation box for the Wāḥidīyat group. One day, I dreamed my father, who had passed away, came to me. His face looked sad. He was silent but tears dropped from his eyes. In that dream, I was extremely sad too. The more I approached my father, the louder he cried. Then I asked him, ‘Why are you crying?’ He did not reply to my question and kept crying. While he was crying, he answered my question, ‘Currently, I no longer receive your charity; pointing his finger to a donation box. Now, I feel tired. Do you leave me with this tiredness?’ (Rohani 2004:143).

There are many other stories told by the members of this group relating to the significance of putting some money into a donation box for deceased persons. These stories are stressed within the Wāḥidīyat group to encourage its members to donate more to the group.

3.5. Seeking Blessing (barakah, tabarruk)

The word barakah is an Arabic word meaning ‘divine blessing’ (Colin 1978:1032). According to the Qur’an, God can bestow blessings on particular people, places or times. For example, God blessed the persons of his prophets and his saints. In the Qur’an, God regards the night when the Qur’an was firstly revealed as a blessed night (A., lailat al-mubārakat). Moreover, places such as the Ka’ba
and Jerusalem are considered blessed places. In other words, *barakah* can be in persons, places, and time. Meanwhile, from the same root as *barakah* derives the word *tabarruk* which means seeking divine blessing by means of someone or something which has been blessed by God. Seeking *barakah* (J., *ngalap berkah*, A., *tabarruk*) is a popular practice among *Majlis Dhikr* in Indonesia and among *Nahdliyyin*, a term referring to members of Nahdlatul Ulama. In this section, I will discuss this practice by referring to Muslims’ interpretation of two sources of Islamic teachings, the Qur’an and hadith, and how this concept is interpreted and practised by the Indonesian *Majlis Dhikr* groups.

For the Salafi group, according to hadith and the Qur’an, *barakah* can be divided into two kinds: firstly, the *barakah* of physical essence (A., *dhat*) and secondly the *barakah* of righteous action and following the Prophet. For this group, the first kind of *barakah* is exclusively bestowed by the Prophet, including anything that is left from the body of the Prophet. It is argued that this type of *barakah* did not continue after the death of the Prophet. Therefore, none of his followers, including his Companions, had such *barakah*. However, according to this group, Muslims can still obtain his *barakah* by adhering to the Prophet’s commands and avoiding his prohibitions. In addition, after his death, everything that remains of the Prophet’s physical essence such as his hair can generate *barakah*.

Every Muslim can obtain the second type of *barakah*, if they act as commanded and avoid prohibited things following the example of the Prophet acted. In this sense, Salih (2007) argues that this second type of *barakah* comes not from the Prophet’s physical body but from following the Prophet’s guidance. In other words, as Ibn Taymiyyah argued, people can obtain this second type of *barakah* if they strictly follow the guidance of the hadith and the Qur’an as the Prophet has taught and ordered them. Therefore, the extent to which people can obtain this type of *barakah* is determined by the extent to which they abide by hadith and the Qur’an (Al-Maliki 1993:179-80). In other words, Muslim can obtain growth and increase in the reward of their actions because of following the guidance of the Prophet. For this group, the source of both types of *barakah* is God. No one can be blessed unless God gives a blessing. Therefore, people cannot decide if something or someone is blessed. In order to regard something as having *barakah*, as an Indonesian Salafi preacher, Abdul Qadir Djaelani noted, people should refer to God and his Prophet (Djaelani 1996:218).

In line with these types of *barakah*, Imran, a proponent of the Salafi movement in Indonesia, has argued that since only the Prophet has *barakah* of physical

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essence (dhāt), and this barakah was cut off after his death, no one after his
death can obtain this barakah. Seeking blessing (A., tabarruk) through the
physical essence of the Prophet only happened when the Prophet was alive.
After his death, Imran noted, none of his Companions practised such tabarruk.
For example, after his death, none of his Companions sought blessing from his
family, tomb, hair, or the water collected after washing his corpse. Therefore,
Imran pointed out that if Muslims today seek barakah from Muslim saints such
as Syeikh Abd al-Qādir al-Jailānī, his tomb and the tombs of other Muslims,
this can be considered bid’ah because it has no sanction in the hadith and the
Qur’ān (Imran 1990:61-2). Abdul Qadir Djaelani, another proponent of the Salafi
movement in Indonesia, even regards this practice as extremely reprehensible
form of innovation (A., bid’at dala’lat) which can lead its doer to infidelity. As a
result, Muslims should repent if they practice such tabarruk (Djaelani 1996:220).

Further, since the barakah of physical essence is exclusive to the Prophet,
Muslims cannot obtain barakah from the physical essence from people other
than the Prophet including righteous persons. However, Muslims can only
obtain barakah from the virtuous actions of righteous persons (I., orang saleh),
not from their physical essence. In other words, the barakah of the righteous
persons arises from their righteous actions, and it is because of these actions
that other people can feel their blessing. An example of such righteous actions is
calling people to goodness, and invoking God for them. Therefore, Salih regards
the practice of kissing the hands of righteous persons in the belief that they
contain physical blessing as a practice forbidden in Islam.

In contrast, al-Maliki recognized tabarruk as a practice in Islam which has
long been a subject of debate among Muslim theologians. In his opinion,
some Muslim theologians regard incorrectly those who practise tabarruk
with the Prophet, his remains, his family, Muslim saints and Muslim scholars
as practising polytheism (shirk). Al-Maliki defined tabarruk as the same as
performing tawassul toward God by means of places, persons and their remains.
Therefore, for al-Maliki, when performing tabarruk, Muslims should believe
that because of their closeness and their high status before God, Muslims can
obtain blessings from others. At the same time, Muslims should not believe that
anyone can bring goodness and reject evil without the will of God (Al-Maliki
1993:158).

In contrast to those who regard tabarruk as polytheism, al-Maliki, based on his
understanding of the Prophetic traditions, considered tabarruk as a permissible
practice, even as a legitimate practice (A., mashru’). For him, the greatest
tabarruk is the one possessed by the Prophet Muhammad. To support his notion,
al-Maliki quoted many hadith reporting that everything pertaining to the
Prophet, such as his hair, blood, sweat, saliva, and the water from his ablution was able to generate barakah. It is reported in the hadith that the Prophet’s Companions used to seek blessing through those things. For al-Maliki, seeking barakah through the Prophet was not confined to his lifetime. In contrast to the Salafi groups’ notions, al-Maliki cited several traditions of the Prophet’s Companions proving that after his death, they still sought barakah by means of the Prophet’s grave, podium, his house, his robe and places the Prophet touched (Al-Maliki 1993:167-77).

In support of this view, Imam Muslim (821-875), a prominent early hadith collector, narrated examples of tabarruk performed by ‘Umar Ibn Khattāb. One of these was that he kissed the Black Stone (A., Ḥajr Aswad) located in one of the corners of the wall around the Ka’ba because he saw the Prophet do it. When kissing the stone, ‘Umar said, ‘you are just a stone, if the Prophet had not done it, I would not have done it.’ On another occasion, Imam Bukhārī (810-870), a prominent hadith scholar, reported that when ‘Umar Ibn Khattāb was about to die, he told his son, Abdullah, to ask permission from ‘Aishat (the widow of the Prophet) to let him be buried beside the tombs of the Prophet and Abū Bakr (Al-Maliki 1993:158-81). Other Muslim scholars such as al-Ghazālī, al-Subkī, ‘Alā al-Dīn also supported the permissibility of seeking barakah through the Prophet after his death. They based this on the belief that God bestowed blessing on the Prophet so that his body could not physically perish in the grave (Taylor 1998:213).

For al-Maliki seeking blessing through the relics of the righteous and the Prophets is lawful because the Prophet practised it. To support his claim, al-Maliki cited the hadith narrated by a reliable hadith scholar, Imam Muslim, in which the Prophet was reported to have travelled with his Companions and stopped to take a rest at a place known as al-hijr, which used to belong to the community of Thamūd, a community who lived during the time of Prophet Ṣa‘līh (Shelah). The Prophet’s Companions prepared a meal and took water from that place. Then, the Prophet asked his Companions to throw away the water taken from the well at al-hijr and to give the meal to their camels. Instead, he asked his Companions to take water from the well from which the Prophet Ṣa‘līh’s camel used to drink (Al-Maliki 1993:178). In this hadith, the Prophet was reported to be seeking barakah through the well of the Prophet Ṣa‘līh rather than through Thamūd’s well because the Thamūd were known as a group of people who opposed Prophet Ṣa‘līh. This hadith, as argued al-Maliki, can be used to support the permissibility of seeking barakah through the relics of righteous persons (I., orang saleh) (Al-Maliki 1993:178).

30 Ka’ba is situated almost in the centre of the great mosque in Mecca (masji al-haram). All Muslims in the world should direct themselves to the Ka’ba when they perform prayers.
3.5.1. The Concept of Tabarruk As Understood by Majlis Dhikr Groups

In relation to tabaruuk, Indonesian Majlis Dhikr leaders define barakah as ‘increase’ (A., ziýādat) or ‘growth’ (A., namā’). In other words, Muslims who perform tabarruk are seeking an increase or growth in something such as their possessions, wealth, offspring or success. In line with this definition, Kyai Misbah, a senior leader among Majlis Dhikr groups in Jampes Kediri, told me that barakah is a quality that can lead to an increase in other qualities. However, for him, some qualities cannot grow or increase, as he explained in the following:

For instance, some people have mastered many kinds of Islamic knowledge. Nevertheless, the knowledge they have does not contain barakah because they use the knowledge for the benefit of themselves. They never spread and teach the knowledge for the benefit of other Muslims, such as teaching the knowledge to other people. Another example of barakah is someone who has a rice field. Even though the rice field is not large enough, these people can share their harvest with the needy. In this case, this rice field can be regarded as having barakah.

In this sense, something can be regarded as having barakah if it can generate further qualities and benefit for other people.

According to Kyai Misbah, there are two kinds of barakah. The first is a barakah which is dependent (I., disandarkan) on humankind. This type of barakah is similar to wasi>lat; hence a person who becomes the object of tabarruk serves as a means to ask God. In this sense, when people seek barakah from righteous dead persons, they should not ask the persons in the grave because the source of the barakah is God. Like the Salafi groups, Kyai Misbah pointed out that since it is only God who has the authority to give barakah to someone, people should ask for barakah to God rather than through righteous persons who do not have the authority to spread blessing. To further explain this, Kyai Misbah gave the analogy of people who ask for money from a particular person who does not have money. Even though that person is asked to give money, he or she will not be able to, because he or she does not have any. The same is true of righteous persons who cannot give barakah because they do not possess barakah since the source of barakah is in the hands of God. Kyai Mughni, another senior Kyai in Jampes, gave the following example of this kind of tabarruk:

Seeking tabarruk through pious persons is similar to tawassul. We just recite a prayer and send the merit of the prayer to the deceased pious persons with the hope that by our reciting we can obtain barakah from God. For example,
someone with difficulty in seeking a livelihood can easily gain a livelihood because of prayers recited at the tomb of those righteous persons. In this case, we do not invoke those persons for barakah because they have passed away and they cannot do anything; instead, we invoke God. In other words, in this practice, we only approach the most beloved persons of God and by this practice we can obtain barakah from God, not from those persons we have visited. Unfortunately, lay people have misunderstood this practice. They practise tabarruk by seeking barakah directly from the personage lying in the graves.

The second type of barakah is dependent on God. For Kyai Misbah this type of barakah is the best barakah to seek. Therefore, Kyai Misbah urged Muslims to ask God for barakah directly either in mundane matters (I., masalah duniawi) or heavenly matters (I., masalah ukhrawi). For example, in mundane affairs Muslims can ask barakah from God for their children to become righteous persons. Moreover, Muslims can invoke barakah from God for their wealth so that, even though it is not much, they can use it for useful purposes. Invoking barakah for wealth is stressed by Kyai Misbah because if the wealth does not contain barakah, even though it is much, it will not benefit the owner and others. For instance, people may spend their wealth on wasteful things (I., hura-hura), in which case, Kyai Misbah said, it is not useful. In heavenly matters, Muslims can ask God for barakah to increase the quality of their pious acts by imbuing them with sincerity. Kyai Misbah also argued that even though a pious act may be small, it can produce barakah if it is sincere.

 Asked why people should seek barakah through righteous persons before and after their death, the Indonesian Majlis Dhikr leader referred to similar practices performed by the Prophet and his Companions. Another reason for such a practice is that righteous persons, such as ‘ulama’, wali, and kyai have a high status before God. With their high status and their closeness, they deserve to be approached. For Kyai Misbah, seeking barakah through these righteous persons is conducted with the hope that God will bless supplicants so they may be able perform the same righteous acts as those pious persons. However, Tholhah Hasan, a Muslim scholar from Nahdlatul Ulama has warned that people should not incorrectly seek barakah through anyone whose righteousness is in dispute. Consequently, Muslims are not allowed to seek barakah through sacred sites where guardian spirits (I., pundhen-pundhen keramat), dukun-dukun or sacred things (I., benda-benda keramat) are worshipped (Hasan 2006:287).

31 The high status of ‘ulamā’, for example is shown in the hadith where they are described not only as heirs of the Prophet but also as trustworthy persons of God for His people.
Like Kyai Misbah, Gus Fahri defined *barakah* as increasing qualities (*J., tambahe keapian*) and gave the following example:

My grandmother used to be a fabric seller. She had many customers. However, she went bankrupt because the customers cheated her. They took material from her shop and promised to pay later, but they never returned to pay. Since all the stock in her shop was borrowed from her boss (*J., juragan*), the supplier, she had to pay him for all the stock. Unfortunately, she did not have enough money to pay her boss. She was very upset. She remembered that she had a piece of land in Ponorogo, which was given to her by her deceased parents as inheritance. She wanted to sell the land so that she could pay her boss. Even though she advertised the land, no one was interested in buying it. She remembered that the land used to belong to the late Mbah Muharram, so, she visited the tomb of Mbah Muharram and recited a whole chapter of the Qur’an. Before finishing the last part of the Qur’an she received a spiritual experience and could see the personage lying in the grave. One day later, she offered the land to Haji Maemun, a cow seller and the owner of land beside her land. Haji Maemun agreed to buy the land.

In his example, Gus Fahri described *barakah* as increasing a quality in the sense that his grandmother obtained *barakah* by reciting the Qur’an. As a result, she could obtain another quality, namely, she succeeded in selling her land.

According to Kyai Mughni, Kyai Misbah’s brother-in-law, seeking *barakah* through the Prophet and his relics was not confined only to his lifetime but also continued after his death. As Kyai Mughni explained to me that one can seek *barakah* through the Prophet after his death, for example, by reciting a blessing phrase (*Ṣalāwā*) to him. Since the meaning of *barakah* is growth, reciting a blessing for the Prophet can lead to an increase in a quality. In addition, one can seek *barakah* through his relics praying in three mosques, namely the al-Harām mosque in Mecca, the al- Nabawī mosque in Medina, and the al-Aqṣā mosque in Jerusalem. Kyai Mughni said that it is mentioned in a Prophetic hadith that by performing prayers in those mosques, God will increase the merit of the prayers a hundred thousand times compared to other mosques. Those three mosques, said Kyai Mughni, are regarded as blessed places and more efficacious than others because they are the places where the Prophet prayed. Since the source of *barakah* is God, Kyai Mughni argued that people could seek *barakah* through these mosques by invoking God directly, but not the Prophet.
3.6. Conclusion

It is clear that in some aspects of practical Sufism, Majlis Dhikr groups in Indonesia follow similar notions to those articulated by prominent Muslim scholars, Sufi and theologians. Leaders of Indonesian Majlis Dhikr groups attribute their notions to similar practices conducted by the Prophet himself, his Companions (A., šahabāt), the Successors of his Companions (A., tābi‘īn), and the Successors of the Successors (A., tābi‘it al-tābi‘īn). Therefore, the Indonesian Majlis Dhikr groups cannot be regarded as practising polytheism (shirk) or making innovation (bid’ah) because what they practise can be related to their interpretation of the main sources of Islamic law (A., shari‘at), the hadith and the Qur’an, and the practice of the Prophet’s Companions. If this interpretation differs from that of other groups of Muslims, one interpretation cannot be judged by another. Moreover, I argue that interpretations can be regarded as under the field of ijtihad, which means the use of all the capabilities of reason by particular Muslims in deducing interpretations from evidence from the Qur’an and hadith. If this is the case, one can expect different results of ijtihad among Muslims scholars. Muslims should not therefore claim that their own results of ijtihad are deemed to be true, while others’ ijtihad are false, because all of these will be justified later in the hereafter. If the result is true according to the meaning and purpose of God and the Prophet, then it will have two rewards. In contrast, if the result is wrong because it does not agree with God’s and the Prophet’s purpose, it will have only one reward.

Those who practise Sufism without tarekat only attain the experience of ‘ilm al-yaqi>n. They never reach ‘ain al-yaqi>n and ħaqq al-yaqi>n. This is because they only believe (I., yakin) based on their theoretical philosophy. They do not believe practically (I., secara amaliah), even though they claim that they believe secara amaliah. In fact, this belief happens only in their imagination, as if they believe secara amaliah.
Chapter IV: ‘Turn to God and His Prophet’: The Spiritual Path of the Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyat Group

This chapter examines a Majlis Dhikr group that defines itself not only as an alternative mystical path among other recognised Sufi orders but also as part of legitimate ritual practice in Islam. An assessment of how this Majlis Dhikr group known as Wāḥidiyat does this requires assessment of its history and the sources and the arguments from which the doctrine and the ritual practices of this group are taken, as well as the way this group disseminates its teachings to others. What I hope to show here is that although this Majlis Dhikr group is not regarded as a tarekat mu’tabarah (a recognised Sufi group) by Nahdlatul Ulama, it still belongs in the frame of the Sufi teachings practised by other international Sufi groups. Moreover, despite the fact that this Majlis Dhikr group has developed from classical Sufism, it is not identical with it, and offers a world view and ritual that distinguishes it from other Sufi groups in Indonesia.

4.1. The Foundation of Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyat

The word Ṣalawāt originally means ‘blessing’ or ‘grace’ of God. But according to Islamic tradition, the word Ṣalawāt refers to particular prayers or blessings to the Prophet Muhammad, which are therefore often followed by the word al-Nabi (the Prophet). The reciting of Ṣalawāt is part of Islamic teachings since it is revealed in the Qur’an and hadith. The recommendation to recite Ṣalawāt is primarily found in the Qur’an (33: 56) and hadith as follows:

Undoubtedly Allah and His Angels send blessings on the Prophet. O’ you who believe! Send upon Him Blessings and salute Him with all respect. (33:56)

On the Day of Judgment the nearest person to me, from amongst the people, would be the one who would have recited Ṣalāwat the most in this (mortal) world. (Tirmidhi)
There are many other hadith which stress the importance and the benefit of reciting Ṣalawāt to the Prophet. Although the Prophet mentioned only one particular kind of Ṣalawāt which is well known as al-Ṣalawāt al-Ibrāhīmiyyat\(^1\), according to one informant this does not necessarily mean that he forbade his followers from composing other Ṣalawāt. As a result of this, it is believed that every person is allowed to compose the text of a Ṣalawāt as long as it is dedicated to the Prophet. In this sense, there are a number of Ṣalawāt composed by Muslim scholars. Some of these are named according to the use of the Ṣalawāt, others according to their composer. For example, Ṣalawāt Nāriyyat or Kāmilat, composed by Sidi Ibrahim al-Nāzi,\(^2\) is believed to be able to make livelihood easier for those who recite it four thousand times (Ṣihab 2006:363). Another Ṣalawāt is called Ṣalawāt Munjiyyat since it is used to avert danger. Yet another Ṣalawāt is called Ṣalawāt Maṣiṣiyah since it was composed by ‘Abd al-Salām Ibn Maṣīṣ (d.1228), whose tomb in Morocco is an object of visitation and veneration. Other examples of this kind of Ṣalawāt are Ṣalawāt Bakariyyat, Dardiriyat, and Mirghaniyyat (Shiddieqy 1964:70). Therefore, it is commonly asserted by Wāḥidiyyat board members that there are two categories of Ṣalawāt: the first is Ṣalawāt Maṭhūra, which means that the text of the Ṣalawāt derives directly from the Prophet, and the second is Ṣalawāt Ghairu Maṭhūra meaning that the text was not taught by the Prophet, but it was composed by the Prophet’s Companions and Muslim ‘ulamā’ (Anonymous 1999b:63-71). Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat, therefore, can be added as an example of Ṣalawāt in this latter category since its text was composed by a Muslim scholar (i.e., ulama).

The origin of Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat is closely connected with the figure of the late K.H Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf, often called Kyai Madjid. He was not only the author of the Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat but also the leader of a pondok pesantren (Islamic boarding school) in Bandar Lor village, Mojoroto, in the city of Kediri, East Java. Among his followers he was regarded as ‘the source of help of his age’ (ghauth hādza al-zamān), a title accorded to the highest leaders of the Sufi hierarchy who govern the universe. An informant described his saintship like this:

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\(^1\) Al-Ṣalawāt al-Ibrāhīmiyyat is a text of the Ṣalawāt which was directly taught by the Prophet. This Ṣalawāt is called Ibrāhīmiyyat because its text contains praise not only for the Prophet but also for Abraham. Many different Hadith texts mention the text of the Ṣalawāt narrated by different figures (Muslim and Abū Dāwud, Muslim and Abī Mas’ūd, Al-Bukhārī from Abū Sa’īd) but all of them contain praise for Abraham. The text of the Ṣalawāt is as follows: Blessings be upon Muhammad and Muhammad’s family just as You blessed Abraham’s family and sanctify Muhammad and Muhammad’s family just as You sanctified Abraham’s family.

\(^2\) In Morocco, this Ṣalawāt is known as Ṣalawāt al-Nāziyyat. This name is much more appropriate than Ṣalawāt Nāriyyat since there is no word in the text of this Ṣalawāt signifying the word nār meaning fire.
The sainthood of Kyai Madjid Ma’ruf can be obviously seen from the light of faith shining from his works of Ṣalawāt. As noted by Shaikh Musthofa al-Thomum in his book entitled, *Manaqib al-Sayyid Muhammad Sirr al-Khatami al-Mirghoni*, indeed, the secret of the saint is within his hizb (litany, special prayer formula) and his station (maqam) can be seen from the composition of his shalawat (exaltation) on the Prophet (peace be upon him). And the attributes of the Prophet written in the composition of his Ṣalawāt constitute a degree and a station of such saints.

The sainthood of Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf was also been supported by some well-known kyai (religious leaders) in Kediri. For example, after looking for God’s guidance in the course of forty days’ meditation and eating only white rice (I. puasa mutih), Kyai Mubashir Mundir, who was himself known as a wali (saint) in Kediri, received an unseen whisper (I. bisikan gaib; A. ḥātif) saying that Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf was ‘the source of help of his age’ (A. ghauth al-aqta>b ha>dza al-zaman). Another figure who acknowledged the sainthood of Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf was Kyai Hamim Jazuli or Gus Mik, the founder of Majlis Dhikr al-Ghāfilih. He said that Kyai Madjid Ma’ruf was the rāis al-‘āriffin (the leader of the Gnostics and Saints). He even said that if Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qa>dir al-Jayla>ni> (1078-1166) was still alive; he would have practised Kyai Abdul Madjid’s Ṣalawāt (prayer).

Other support was given by Kyai Abdul Wahab Hasbullah, one of the founders of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). When Kyai Madjid offered people the Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyat, the entire audience invited for his son’s circumcision ceremony accepted the Ṣalawāt, including Kyai Wahab Hasbullah. He was reported as saying to the audience, ‘Kyai Madjid’s knowledge is very deep, like a well which is ten metres deep, while my well is only one to two metres deep.’ He continued to say ‘I will practise his Ṣalawāt.’ These acknowledgments gained from those who had high spiritual standing among the Muslim ummat were utilized by the newly born Wāḥidiyat to achieve legitimacy among its followers. These acknowledgments were documented in a book, and the followers of Wāḥidiyat are reminded of them at every official ritual so that their belief and surrender (A. tasli>m) to the Kyai Madjid Ma’ruf can be improved. Another reason for this might be to give the impression that not all kyai or ‘ulamā’ in Kediri disagreed with the founder of Wāḥidiyat; in fact, one of them who held a high position in the Nahdlatul Ulama organization accepted and practised the Ṣalawāt. This was particularly needed when Wāḥidiyat faced vigorous criticism from Kyai Machrus, the guardian of the Pesantren Lirboyo, Kediri.

Kyai Madjid’s father, Kyai Ma’ruf (b. 1852), was a charismatic and well-known religious scholar (‘ulamā’) in Java. Among the followers of Wāḥidiyat, he was
regarded as a wali, whose tomb in Pesantren Kedunglo has been an object of visitation and veneration. Although he was a scholar who mastered various disciplines of religious knowledge, he was well known among many pesantren communities as a kyai who possessed supernatural qualities (I., karamah). One of his reported supernatural qualities was that instead of praying in Arabic, he prayed in the Javanese language; but his prayer was powerful. The story about his extraordinary power was widely known in pesantren circles. He was a founder of Pesantren Kedunglo after studying in many pesantren, such as Pesantren Cepoko Nganjuk, Pesantren Langitan Tuban and pesantren of Kyai Shaikhanā Cholil Bangkalan, Madura. He also studied in the Holy City of Mecca under the supervision of the great Indonesian Muslim scholars who taught there such as Shaikh Kyai Nawawi al-Bantani from Banten, Shaikh Ahmad Khāṭib al-Minangkabawi from West Sumatra, and Shaikh Mahfudz al-Tirmīṣī from Pacitan East Java (Vety 2001:54-61). It is clear that Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf had a well respected genealogy (‘blue blood’). His status and religious authority was derived from his family tree as well as from the depth of his own religious piety. The kyai’s genealogy obviously played a part in building up his authority among his followers.

As the son of a kyai, Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf (1918-1989) learned religion firstly with his father Kyai Ma’ruf. Then he undertook further study in several pesantren. The first pesantren where he studied was pesantren Banjarmelati, in Kediri, under instruction of Kyai Shaleh, his grandfather. This pesantren is regarded as the oldest pesantren from which some large pesantren such as Pesantren Lirboyo and Pesantren Jampes are linked. He then moved to study in Pesantren Kemayan, twelve kilometres south of his home, where he spent about three years. As well as his study in these pesantren, he was said to have studied in a secular school until secondary level (Bawani 1981:1-31).

In 1959, his followers believed that Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf, as he was usually called, experienced the highest of spiritual moments when he received an invisible order (I., perintah ga’ib) or invisible caller (A., ḥatīf) to improve and rebuild people’s morality by means of a spiritual path that would bring them to the consciousness of God and the prophet. The invisible order, which was to affect his spiritual life, convinced him that people have suffered increasingly serious moral problems. This spiritual order is believed by his son, Abdul Latif Madjid in particular and by Wāḥidiyat members in general to have come from the Prophet Muhammad, who appeared to Kyai Abdul Majid Ma’ruf when he was awake (Madjid 2001). However, on another occasion his son has said that his father met the Prophet in a sleeping state (ruʾyat al-sāliḥat). His son was convinced that only those who had reached the highest spiritual state can experience a vision of the Prophet (Madjid 1999:10).
Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf was considered by his followers not only as *ghauth hādhā al-zamān* but also as the reformer (A., *mujaddid*) of his age. His followers believed that such a reformer of Islam comes at the end of every century to revitalize Islam and save society from moral and spiritual decadency. This belief is based on a Prophetic hadith. In line with this hadith, his followers maintain that after the death of Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf no other man can claim to be a saint (*wali*).

What Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf experienced with divine inspiration was not novel for Muslim reformers. Other reformers in previous centuries such as Shah Wali Allah of Delhi (1703-62) and Usuman dan Fudio of West Africa (1754-1817) received visionary dreams before reforming religious practice in their societies. Shah Wali Allah, for example, experienced a visionary dream in which he met the Prophet’s grandsons, Hasan and Husain. It was said that Hasan and Husain appeared to him, gave him a pen and clothed him in the Prophet’s mantle. Likewise, Usuman dan Fudio dreamed that ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jayḥānī, a great saint, in the company of the Prophet brought a green robe embroidered with the phrase, ‘There is no god but God and Muhammad is his Messenger’ (Sirriyeh 1999:5). For these reformers, these spiritual experiences gave a divine power so that their religious reformation would find firm legitimation. By the same token, the spiritual order from the Prophet experienced by Kyai Abdul Majdid gave a strong impression and justification to his followers that what he taught and wrote was actually permitted, and requested directly by the Prophet, not of the *kyai’s* own free will and decision. As Gilsenan (1973: 35) has observed ‘it is not uncommon for the foundation of a brotherhood to arise out of such a truth vision (A., *ru’ya al-ṣadiqa*).’ As a result, Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf did not face questions of legitimacy among his followers.

Through this spiritual experience, Kyai Abdul Majid Ma’ruf reportedly developed a deepening spiritual relationship with God and the Prophet and spent much time in contemplation and recitation of many kinds of *Ṣalawāt* such as *Ṣalawāt* *Badawiyah*, *Ṣalawāt Nāriyat*, and *Ṣalawāt Massisiyah*. In addition, he made an effort to focus his spiritual power on praying for the betterment of the Islamic life of Muslim community.

In 1963, Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf experienced another spiritual event. This invisible order urged him to do the same things. As a result of this, he endeavoured to improve his praying and proximity (A., *taqarrub*) to God. This resulted in a physical health problem, but he did not let this prevent him from continuously communicating with God.4 Not long after the second order, he received another spiritual command which was harder and accompanied with

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a threat. The threat was so great that he trembled with fear. This critical event shaped Kyai Majid’s commitment to begin to write litanies which would be useful for his society. He, then, wrote the text of the litanies that are called \textit{Wahidiyyat}. The first litany he wrote is as follows:

\begin{quote}
O! Lord as You are the right one, exaltation, peace, and blessings upon our Lord, and our intercessor, our beloved, our heart, Muhammad (peace be upon him) just as he is the qualified. We ask you O! Allah by his right to immerse us in the depth of sea of the oneness so that we cannot see, hear, feel, move and rest except with it. And we ask your perfect forgiveness O! Allah, your perfect amenity O! Allah, we ask for my perfect gnosis of you, and my perfect love to you, my perfect consent to you O! Allah. And exaltation, peace, and blessings be upon Him and His relatives and His companions as many as the number of things which is encompassed by your knowledge and included in your book, by your mercy, O! The Most Merciful of merciful people, all praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.
\end{quote}

Kyai Madjid Ma’ruf called this prayer \textit{S\text{alaw\text{a}t Ma’rifat} (The Gnosis Supplication), without explaining the meaning of \textit{ma’rifat}. He intended that those who read the prayer would be able to reach the state of \textit{ma’rifat}, which, according to Sufi scholars, is the highest station achieved by a Sufi. After writing the prayer, he asked some people to read it continuously. Among those whom he asked were Abdul Jalil, a senior person of Kampung Jamsaren, Muhtar, a market trader, and Dahlan, a Pesantren Kedunglo student from Demak, Central Java. After practising and reading the prayers, they admitted that they were blessed with a feeling of calmness and were much more conscious of God.

Within the same year, Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf composed another \textit{S\text{alaw\text{a}t} prayer. Although the composition of this prayer was shorter than previous one, it was believed that it can give more positive effects to its readers by improving their consciousness of God and the quietness of soul. The prayer is as follows:

\begin{quote}
... (Text of the prayer)
\end{quote}
Chapter IV

O! God O! The oneness, the One, O! the Finder, the Most generous. Exalt, peace, blessing upon our Lord Muhammad and his family in every glance of the eye and in every breath with as many as the knowledge of God and His stream of grace and His assistance (100 times).

He gave this prayer publicly to those who visited him regardless of their social background, asking them not only to read it but also to disseminate it to other people. Apart from this, he asked one of his students to write the Šalawāt and send it to other Muslim scholars (kyai) together with a letter recommending that this prayer be read by local people. In addition to his religious and preaching motives, he sent the prayer to many kyai perhaps because he needed them to assist in the dissemination of the prayer as widely as possible. This is understandable since kyai are regarded not only as teachers but also as living saints who are responsible for the spiritual training of people. In other words, as Woodward has argued, kyai play an important role in the religious lives of lay Muslims (Woodward 1989).

Pesantren Kedunglo held its weekly public instruction (pengajian umum) on Sufi doctrines and practices on Thursday night. The Sufi text used as a reference in the instruction was Kitāb al-Ḥikam written by Ibn ‘Athāillah al-İskandārī (d.1309). The reason why this Sufi book was more often chosen than the Sufi treatise such as Al-Ghazālī’s Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn, is because the book contains teaching about the struggle against nafs (lower soul) which is in line with Wāhidīyyat teachings. The participants in this instruction ranged from students to local people. Kyai Abdul Majdid Ma’ruf used the instruction as a means to introduce and explain his teachings on Šalawāt. On such occasions, Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf also explained in detail some aspects of Sufi doctrines which later become a pillar of his teachings. Not long after releasing the second Šalawāt, in 1963 at the weekly pengajian, Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf launched a third Šalawāt that he called Šalawāt Thalj al- Qulūb (The Cooling of the Heart prayer). He wrote the prayer as follows:

O! The Prophet, intercessor to creatures, blessing and peace of God is upon you, O! The light of creatures, O! The guidance of mankind, O! The source of mankind and O! the spirit of mankind, guide me and teach me because I am really a wrongdoer, I am meaningless without you, if you leave me I will be a destroyed person.
It was reported that he composed the Șalawāt Thalj al- Qulūb because after practising the Șalawāt Ma’rifat a number of people experienced jadhba (J., jadhab, attraction), a high spiritual experience in which a person can be exalted into a state of ecstasy and of union. The people who experienced jadhba or majdhūb (attracted) behaved in an uncontrolled way just like crazy people because of the overwhelming shock of ‘the unveiling’ (Schimmel 1978). But in the case of Wāhidiyat, they wept all the time after practising the Șalawāt Ma’rifat (Madjid 2001:21-27).

Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf then called those three prayer compositions Șalawāt Wāhidiyat. As implied in the first Șalawāt, the name Wāhidiyat was derived from al-Wāhid, one of the names of God (Asmā al- Husnā) which means The One (Qomari 2003:31-32). Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf used the name because, according to Muslim scholars, al-Wāhid has many purposes, namely to get rid of a feeling of confusion and anxiety and to increase a feeling of fear of God rather than of God’s creatures. Another reason might be that the use of God’s names in praying is strongly recommended by the Qur’an and the Prophet tradition so that God may grant the prayer. This is revealed in the Qur’an as follows:

And Allah’s are the best names, therefore call on Him thereby, and leave alone those who violate the sanctity of His names; they shall be recompensed for what they did. (7:180)

At the end of 1963, Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf invited many kyai and other notable figures who practised Șalawāt Wāhidiyat to discuss a topic related to Șalawāt Wāhidiyat. The meeting, chaired by Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf, produced several decisions including the composition of the text of Șalawāt, the method of reciting the Șalawāt, and the guarantee which was that: ‘If the Șalawāt is recited for forty consecutive days and there is no effect on heart at all, (the author) can be called to account in the world and the hereafter.’ All of this were printed as a pamphlet. It was not clear why Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf proposed putting this guarantee in the pamphlet. Qomari Mukhtar (2003), a member of Wāhidiyat, argues that the guarantee from Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf should be seen as a part of his guidance to his followers in order to take responsibility for any matters that they have done. Mukhtar maintains that this guarantee should not be interpreted as if Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf guarantees paradise to his followers in the hereafter. However, others might argue that the guarantee could be seen as a part of an advertisement for the power of the prayer. As a result, the guarantee would convince the readers and the followers that the Șalawāt Wāhidiyat can be a panacea for any problems

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5 ‘Menawi sampun jangkep 40 dinten boten wonten perubahan manah, kinging dipun tuntut dunyan wa ukhron.’
they face, if it is recited continuously for forty days. However, the guarantee is not found in the new printed text of Ṣalawāt. This might be due to the fact that the guarantee has prompted criticism from many kyai (religious leaders) in Kediri.

It took eighteen years to complete the composition and the ritual of Ṣalawāt Wahidiyat. This was not a short time to accomplish the teaching and the composition of Ṣalawāt Wahidiyat. In 1964, the first of a series of one week Wahidiyat camps was held bringing many delegations from cities in East Java such as Kediri, Blitar, Nganjuk, Jombang, Mojokerto, Surabaya, Malang, Madiun, and Ngawi. Activities were guided directly by Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf who gave a series of lectures about Ṣalawāt Wahidiyat for new preachers of Wahidiyat (da’i). As described by Mukhtar (1997), the first Wahidiyat camp was attended by many ‘ulama’ and kyai. However, not every participant came with the intention of learning the teachings of Wahidiyat. Some of them joined the camp just to test Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf on matters to do with the teachings of Wahidiyat. If Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf could give a satisfactory answer, then they would submit to him.

On the final day of the camp, Kyai Abdul Madjid explained the qualifications that disciples (murid) and spiritual guides (murshid) should have. As retold by Mukhtar, Kyai Madjid described these as follows:

A murshid should possess qualifications needed such as the capability to teach (tarbiyah) his murid, although they are in a very distant place. For example, if the murid stays at the sunset place and the murshid stay at the sunrise place, the murshid can teach them. In addition, the murshid should not hope for a murid’s possessions. Meanwhile, a murid should behave like a dead body (kalmayyit), and surrender completely to the master. Whatever a murid possessed should be given absolutely to the master, including the mind, time, energy, wife or husband (Mukhtar 1997:45).

Instead of accepting the title of murshid given by his disciples, Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf asked them, together with him, to come close to God, the Prophet and the Muslim saints (ghauth hāzda al zamān) because he did not posses the qualifications to become either a m–urshid or murid. Although he refused the title of murshid from his disciples, his disciples still awarded it to him. Furthermore, the followers of Wahidiyat (I., pengamal Wahidiyat) believed he was the only one who was able to bring them to the experience of ma’rifat (gnosis), intuitive knowledge of God (Yusuf 2003:2). In order to complete the Ṣalawāt, Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf introduced an exclamation phrase to the participants of the camp, and included it in the body of the text of the Ṣalawāt Wahidiyat. This exclamation was as follows: ‘Yā Sayyidi yā Rasūl Allah’ (O
Plate 4.1: The text of Șalawāt Wāḥidiyyat and its instruction how to recite it
My Lord and Prophet of God). The exclamation is believed by the member of Wāḥidīyat to have many purposes such as to purify one’s soul and to increase the calmness of the soul. In addition, members in the formal congregation who are unable to recite the whole text of Ṣalawāt Wāḥidīyat can recite the exclamation phrase, provided that they recited it for about the same period of time as the recitation of the whole text of the Ṣalawāt.

The exclamation phrase is familiar to the followers of Wāḥidīyat and has become their mark of identity. They usually use this phrase to welcome people. It is not only used as a part of the formal ritual of Wāḥidīyat, but also as a part of daily activities, either in the Wāḥidīyat headquarters or in Pesantren Wāḥidīyat. For example, if a student has a call from his or her parents or others, the operator will announce it through the loudspeaker first by reciting the exclamation phrase. The exclamation can be found on a small printed card or a sticker supplemented with the following advice:

Always read this phrase Yā Sayyidī yā Rasūl Allah orally or internally wherever you are every day for thirty minutes. This phrase can be used for various kinds of purposes, especially for purifying the soul and it can be practised by anyone.  

This card is distributed to people who attend to the formal ritual held in the Pesantren Kedunglo or when a member board of Wāḥidīyat makes an official journey to the branches of Wāḥidīyat throughout Indonesia.

In 1965, another prayer was introduced to the participants of the second Wāḥidīyat camp. This prayer consisted of a supplication for all the leaders of the saintly hierarchy, namely all ‘the help’ (ghauth) and ‘the axis’ (qutb), who have died. Kyai Abdul Madjid believed that although the ghauth has died, if God is willing, he can continue to give spiritual guidance and education to

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6 ‘Bacalah selalu dengan lisan atau dalam hati di mana anda berada kalimat Yā Sayyidī Yā Rasūlallah; usahakan dibaca setiap hari 30 menit. Dapat digunakan untuk segala macam kebutuhan terutama kejernihan hati dan ketentraman jiwa boleh diamalkan oleh siapapun tanpa pandang bulu.’
those who seek guidance. As a result, the ghauth will be able to help people to reach (A., ṭusuール) God. The belief in ghauth’s existence, is strong among the followers of Wāḥidiyyat, and it is one of the teachings of Wāḥidiyyat. The prayer was known among the followers of Wāḥidiyyat as istighāthah (appeal for aid). The prayer was as follows:

O! Ghauth peace of Allah is on you; teach me by God’s will, and O! My Lord radiate on me the radiation which can reach to His Highness.

In 1965, Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf also created another exclamation and asked his followers to recite it at the end of the prayer above. At that time he did not give any reason why this should be recited after the prayer. One of the followers believed that the only one who knew the reason and the secret of the exclamation was the author. At the beginning, this exclamation was not included in the printed text of Šalāwa Wāḥidiyyat. But, eight years later, not only was this exclamation included in the text, but it was also recited loudly while facing all four directions in turn. In fact, the exclamation was taken from the verses of Qur’an (17:8 and 51:50). Part of this exclamation phrase, ‘therefore turn to Allah’, was then taken as a symbol of this organization. The exclamation was as follows:

Therefore, Turn to Allah, and say: Truth has come and falsehood has vanished; surely falsehood is a vanishing (thing).

Two years later Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf launched another Šalawāt, which he did not name at the time. The new Šalawātis as follows:

O! Our God exaltation and peace be upon Muhammad, the intercessor of people, and His followers, make people immediately to be aware of the Lord of the Worlds. O! Our Lord, forgive our sins, ease our concerns, open our mind, and guide us, strengthen our brotherhood, O! Our Lord.
In 1971, before the first general election was held in the New Order era, he composed a new šalawāt without giving a name to it. This new šalawāt was similar to the previous one, but had a contextual meaning related to the political situation. In other words, this šalawāt was composed in response to the disastrous political changes affecting the lives of the Indonesian people and Indonesian Muslims, in particular. By reciting the šalawāt his followers were expected to be able to pass successfully through this difficult time. It was not clear whether political motives stimulated Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf to compose the šalawāt. But, according to an informant, the šalawāt Wāḥidiyat group was not involved in political activities and was not affiliated to any particular political party. The new šalawāt was as follows:

O! The intercessor of people and the Beloved of Allah, His exaltation and peace is on you, my efforts have been stuck, in my country. O! My Lord, take my hand and people (ummat).

In order to complete the šalawāt Wāḥidiyat, he composed two more prayers consecutively in 1972 and 1973, adding them to the final part of the šalawāt Wāḥidiyat. From 1972 to 1981, he made a number of revisions to the šalawāt Wāḥidiyat, before he decided to reprint it using Arabic script. According to the statutes of the organization (Chapter I: 1), šalawāt Wāḥidiyat is the name given to these prayers written by Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf, as printed in the šalawāt Wāḥidiyat pamphlet, including their method of recitation (Penyiar Shalawat Wahidiyah n.d:3).

It was believed by his followers that the many revisions and alterations of the šalawāt Wāḥidiyat made by the author contained particular spiritual mysteries (asrār), which were known only by their author and those particular people who had been given spiritual knowledge by the author.

4.2. External Conflict in Wāḥidiyat

When the founder of the šalawāt Wāḥidiyat was still alive, there was no little serious internal conflict among the board members of Wāḥidiyat which might threaten the unity of the organization. At that time, serious conflict

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7 Interview with Zainuddin, Kediri, September, 2004.
only occurred between the members of ṭāḥidīya central board and outsiders who questioned and criticized the validity of ṣalawāt ṭāḥidīya. In dealing with these critics, the members of the central board answered the criticism by finding arguments derived either from the Qur’an or hadith.

The most vigorous criticism faced by ṭāḥidīya during its formative years was from Kyai Machrus Aly, one of the members of East Java’s Provincial Supreme Religious Council (ṣyūriḥ) in Nahdlatul Ulama, and the guardian (pengasuh) of Pesantren Lirboyo, the biggest pesantren in Kediri. Although the founder of Pesantren Lirboyo and that of Pesantren Kedunglo had a familial relationship, the short distance between Pesantren Lirboyo and Pesantren Kedunglo sparked heated conflict between the two pesantren leaders. According to an informant, Kyai Machrus prohibited his students from reciting and practising the ṣalawāt ṭāḥidīya. The prohibition is still on display, written in Javanese-Arabic script on a large wooden plank on the wall above an entrance door of the pesantren mosque so that students of the pesantren can easily read the notice. The prohibition signed by Kyai Machrus Ali and Kyai Mazuqi Dahlan is as follows:

(1). All students are prohibited from reciting ṣalawāt ṭāḥidīya, (2) and from studying the books which are not suitable for their degree. (J., 1. Para santri dipun larang miridaken shalawat Wahidiyah, 2. Ngaos kitab ingkang diring pangkatipun)

I tried to ask the students about the reason behind the prohibition; however, they did not give me a satisfactory answer.

Few people know the reason behind the prohibition. However, one of the ṭāḥidīya board members argues that it was to do with the political preference of Kyai Machrus. He continued to say that since Kyai Machrus’s political party preference was Nahdlatul Ulama (NU was a political party until 1973), so he wished to include ṭāḥidīya, which had attracted many followers, as part of the NU party. Yet, he was not successful because Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf did not agree. As a result, Kyai Machrus banned his students from reciting and practising ṣalawāt ṭāḥidīya. However, this argument seems too subjective. It is unlikely that Kyai Machrus, who was known as a man of integrity, had such an intention. There could be a deeper reason for Kyai Machrus’s ban.

An official of the Branch of the Religious Affairs Department in Kediri argues that the ban was issued due to the fact that, according to Kyai Machrus, practising and reciting of ṣalawāt ṭāḥidīya could interfere with the students’
concentration in studying in the pesantren. This is partly because reciting and practising the Šalawāt Wāḥidiyyat not only takes a long time but it is recommended that it should be recited at each of the five daily prayers.

One of Kyai Machrus’s sons, Kyai Kafabi, agrees with this argument, saying that his father banned his students from practising Šalawāt Wāḥidiyyat because the main duty of the students was to study and learn rather than to deal with other issues. From the perspective of Kyai Machrus, learning and studying can be regarded as ‘tarekat’ (the way, path), possibly the best path.8

Another reason for the ban had to do with the guarantee given by the author of Šalawāt Wāḥidiyyat. Kyai Machrus continued to say that the author of the Šalawāt Wāḥidiyyat, Kyai Madjid, was convinced that those who recited his Šalawāt for forty days consecutively would be guaranteed paradise. For Kyai Machrus, such a guarantee violated Islamic teachings since the Prophet himself was unable to guarantee that his followers would reached paradise. Another informant9 explained Kyai Machrus’s ban by saying:

As a matter of fact, the author of Šalawāt Wāḥidiyyat is still a relative of Pesantren Lirboyo itself… at the first time Kyai Madjid Ma’ruf who was younger than both Kyai Machrus and Kyai Marzuki, suddenly shocked many ‘ulama’ who lived in Kediri with his tarekat. At first, the tarekat was legally accepted by those ulama’ since its teaching was to spread the reciting of Šalawāt. Preaching the reciting of Šalawāt is recommended and is not prohibited. But the thing that was not be accepted by Kyai Machrus in particular, and Pesantren Lirboyo in general, was related to the other added information which was characterized as lying (iftira’). For example, whoever recites for a certain number of days would be able to gain gnosis. Where does such information come from? This is only iftira’ (lying). Can we accept this information? Moreover, at that time there were many people who became mad after practising and reciting Šalawāt Wāḥidiyyat ...furthermore, Kyai Madjid Ma’ruf was said to have seen the real Prophet, just as a live person, not in a dream. We did not have any evidence of this event. And if someone experiences visionary dreams of the Prophet, the dream, according to Islamic Law, cannot be used as an argument (hujjat), since it cannot be proven. If he believed that the dream of the Prophet is right, it is his right to say that. Yet, the dream cannot be delivered as a legal opinion (fatwā). … Apart from that, the majority of Wāḥidiyyat followers were lay people who had no deep knowledge of shari‘at. As a result, if such people were selected as a leaders in their hometowns, they would do anything that they wanted to do because they felt that they had achieved the highest spiritual stage and had been able to achieve wuṣul (ma’rifat) with Allah.

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8 Interview with Kyai Kafabi, Kediri, February, 2005.
9 Interview with Kyai Idris Marzuki, Kediri, February, 2005.
The guarantee that Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf had printed in the first pamphlet of Ṣalawāt Waḥidiyat told followers that if they recited Ṣalawāt Waḥidiyat for forty consecutive days and there was no effect on their heart, Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf could be called on in the world and the hereafter. It is likely that this guarantee has been interpreted wrongly, as if the author was guaranteeing paradise for those who recite the Ṣalawāt for forty consecutive days. However, from the perspective of the Waḥidiyat board members, this guarantee should be seen as an expression of the responsibility of the author. In fact, there are many reasons why the guarantee should have been given by the author. Firstly, it was issued on the basis of thinking well of God (A., ḥusn al-zann), trusting in God’s kindness in response to the Ṣalawāt prayer of His servants. Secondly, the guarantee was based on ḥusn al-zann, to think well of the Prophet, that he would give intercession (shafa’at) to his followers. Thirdly, the guarantee was given as a result of ḥusn al-zann toward the Angels of God that they would certainly ask forgiveness for those who recited the Ṣalawāt. Fourthly, the guarantee was based on thinking well of Waḥidiyat followers, who tirelessly ask for the guidance and blessing of God. However, for Sufi who emphasize humility, the guarantee might be regarded as too exaggerated, therefore it raised strong criticism among ‘ulama’ in Kediri. Furthermore, as observed by Sodli (1990:29) the guarantee is opposed to the teaching of the Qur’an and hadith that people cannot take responsibility for others in the hereafter and they cannot guarantee happiness by practising a particular action. God alone will decide whether they will be bestowed with tranquility of heart or not. What people might do is to make every effort (Sodli 1990:29). However, the guarantee is no longer included in the current pamphlet. The removal of the guarantee was undertaken by the members board of Waḥidiyat, probably due to the fact that many ‘ulama’ raised objections to the guarantee.

An additional objection of Kyai Machrus towards Ṣalawāt Waḥidiyat had to do with its chain of transmission (A., isnād). This objection might be based on the knowledge of Prophetic traditions. According to this, a Prophetic tradition can only be regarded as a valid tradition if it has an unbroken chain of narrators or transmitters who are authoritatively linked directly to the Prophet. According to Kyai Machrus, Ṣalawāt Waḥidiyat did not possess a proper chain of transmitters (A., isnād min al-adillat) linking the author of the Ṣalawāt Waḥidiyat to the Prophet. Kyai Machrus argued that the transmitter of the Ṣalawāt Waḥidiyat was the author himself. Therefore, Ṣalawāt Waḥidiyat could not be considered as a valid Ṣalawāt and it could not be practised by others.10

In order to answer this criticism, the members of Ṣalawāt Waḥidiyat board maintain that an authoritative transmitter (A., isnād min al-adillā’) is not

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needed for every kind of Șalawāt, since the *isnād* is through the Prophet himself. In other words, every person who has the capability to compose a Șalawāt can also teach the Șalawāt to others without having an authoritative transmitter. This argument is frequently cited by the current leader of Șalawāt Wāḥidiyat. Furthermore, in order to answer the problem of transmitters in Șalawāt Wāḥidiyat, another member also published a family tree of the author that shows genealogical connection to the Prophet. Kyai Mundir, who is regarded as a respected wali (Muslim saint) in Kediri, created this family tree, but little is known about the method he applied to trace the genealogy of the author’s family. An informant told me that Kyai Mundir created the family tree on the basis of a divine inspiration. Therefore, the evidence for the family tree is not based on historical methods. The list of author’s genealogical descent from the Prophet is given as follows:

1. Fatimah bint Mūḥammad
2. Ḥasan bني ‘Alī
3. ‘Abd Allah Ṣādiq
4. ‘Alwī
5. Mūḥammad ‘Abd Allah
6. Aḥmad ‘Abd Allah
7. Ḥafīz Ilyās
8. ‘Alī ‘Raḥmat ‘Abd Allah
9. Muhammad Abu Ḥasan
10. Uthmān Karīm
11. ‘Alī ‘Ṣodiq ‘Abd Allah
12. ‘Alwī ‘Abd Aillah
13. ‘Abd Allah ‘Alwī
14. Mālik Muṣṭafā
15. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Karīm
16. Ǧazālī Ilyās
17. ‘Abd Allah Ǧazālī
18. ‘Abd al ‘Azīs ‘Abd Allah
19. Iḥsan Nawāwī
20. Hanafi Muṣa
21. ‘Abd al-Mālik Karīm
22. Zayn al-Dīn

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23. ‘Abd Allah Mūsā
24. ‘Abd al-Raḥman
25. Syāfi‘ī
26. Sālih
27. ‘Abd al-Razzāq
28. Syāfi‘ī
29. ‘Abdul Madji>d
30. Ma’rūf
31. Kyai ‘Abdul Madji>d

The purpose of presenting this family tree, is perhaps to convince others that the author was an authoritative person who could compose and teach the Salawāt Wāhidiyyat since he was a descendant of the Prophet. The reason for this is because within the pesantren tradition, the ‘ulamā’s authority and status is heavily derived from his family genealogy. In addition to this, the family genealogy can add to the authority of the author among his followers. As described by Woodward (1989:145) ‘a clear line of educational descent from the Prophet is one of the most important criteria for establishing a claim to the title of kyai.’ Nevertheless, a family genealogy is not relevant to answer the problem of isnād since it indicates only the genealogical ties of the author, while an isnād is related to the list of authoritative people who hear and receive messages from one to another linking back to the Prophet. The preservation of family trees linked to the Prophet is usually more emphasized among Arab families (sharifian families) in Indonesia.

Another objection to Salawāt Wāhidiyyat from many kyai in Kediri, and Kyai Machrus in particular, was that the author of the Salawāt reported that he received it from the Prophet Muhammad when he experienced a mystical dream. In such a case Kyai Machrus said that a dream cannot be regarded as an argument (A., ḥujjat) nor can it be delivered as a legal opinion (A., fatwā) for others. However, if the dreamer practises by himself what he received in the dream, Islamic law will guarantee it. To deal with this objection, the official board of Wāhidiyyat has written a history of Salawāt and put it in the statutes of the organization. It explains that the author received the order to write the Salawāt Wāhidiyyat when he was awake, not in a dream. However, some followers are convinced that the author of Salawāt Wāhidiyyat was asked by the Prophet Muhammad to compose the Salawāt.

As far as the visionary dream of the Prophet is concerned, Kyai Ali Mashuri, a Muslim scholar from Sidoarjo, argues that people should be careful about such dreams. In fact, the Prophet guaranteed that people can have dreams about him
and that if they see the Prophet in a dream, he must be the real Prophet since Satan is unable to resemble him. Therefore, having a dream about the Prophet can be justified in Islam. Nevertheless, despite the Prophet’s guarantee, one should be concerned about how far the dreamer has observed the normative piety of Islam (šarī’at). For example, if people claim to have met the Prophet in a dream but they have not observed the šarī’at properly, the dream cannot be regarded as a truth. Although dreams of the Prophet are possible for those who are pious and have the maqām (particular station in Sufism), the dream should not be told to others, even their wives, let alone to others for the sake of popularity.12

The spiritual dream of the Prophet has been used by Wāhidiyat, as Kyai Ali Mashuri argues, as an icon to spread its teachings and attract other followers. Although the aim of the Ṣalawāt is to achieve the knowledge of God and His Prophet (ma’rifat billāh wa rasūlihi), Wāhidiyat regards the spiritual experience (I., pengalaman ruhani) either in a dream or in a waking state as an important achievement for its followers. As a result, this spiritual experience is emphasized, and if followers have experienced it, they can tell others about the experience. With their consent, board members of Ṣalawāt Wāhidiyat have collected these spiritual experiences and published them in a book and in a magazine so that other followers can not only read the stories but also improve their reciting of Ṣalawāt Wāhidiyat, so they can achieve similar experiences.

When Kyai Ali Mashuri was asked about his opinion of Wāhidiyat, he argued that since the founder of Ṣalawāt Wāhidiyat did not regard Wāhidiyat as a tarekat (Sufi order), the existence of the Ṣalawāt Wāhidiyat organization is acceptable as long as it intends to spread the teaching of Ṣalawāt reciting among people and also to improve the proselytization of Islam (da’wat wa al-irsyād). Although he agrees with the spreading of Ṣalawāt performed by Ṣalawāt Wāhidiyat group, he is opposed to the formal loud weeping ritual, which is commonly practised by many followers of Ṣalawāt Wāhidiyat using a loudspeaker. In his opinion, although crying while praying is sanctioned by Islam, and even recommended in some cases, such weeping should only be performed in quiet situations when people pray and practise ritual meditation individually.13

In contrast, the practice of weeping has become a symbol of the ritual practice of Ṣalawāt Wāhidiyat and it is emphasized in every ritual. According to Wāhidiyat teachings, weeping is allowed in Islam since it was practised by the

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13 Ibid.
Prophet Muhammad and Adam. The Qur’an and hadith even condemn those who are unable to weep (53:59-61). The Qur’an and the Prophetic tradition (hadith) speak about crying as follows:

And they fall down on their faces weeping, and it adds to their humility. (17:109)

These are they on whom Allah bestowed favors, from among the prophets of the seed of Adam, and of those whom We carried with Nuh (Noah), and of the seed of Ibrahim (Abraham) and Israel, and of those whom We guided and chose; when the communications of the Beneficent God were recited to them, they fell down making obeisance and weeping. (19:58)

Oh! Mankind cry, if you cannot cry, try to cry (narrated by Abū Dāwud from Anas)

The Prophet says: ‘two kinds of eyes which will not touch the fire of the hell are eyes which are crying due to fear of Allah, and eyes which are awake all night for the sake of fighting in the way of God (Sabilillah)’ (narrated by al-Ṭabrāniy).

It is argued that the weeping practised by Wahdiyat followers in formal Wahdiyat rituals is the kind of weeping that is intended for God and the Prophet. This crying has nothing to do with the loss of things. They cry because they feel that they have sinned against God, the Prophet, parents, relatives, teachers, leaders, and other creatures, and they are struggling for the consciousness of God and the Prophet (Anonymous n.d.-a:198-203).

However, the arguments derived from both the Qur’an and hadith above do not indicate how and where the weeping should be performed. In the case of Wahdiyat, the weeping is performed collectively and can be heard from distant places since it is broadcast by a loudspeaker facing in four directions. Opponents of this group always question whether the weeping is sincere and why it is necessary to weep collectively using a loud speaker. It is also likely that some objections to this broadcast weeping are based on the opinion that it can disturb the tranquility of public life.

Similar opinions have been voiced by Sayyid Rashīd Riḍā (1865-1935) who is known as a vigorous opponent of unlawful innovation (I., bid’ah). Citing Riḍā’s view, Rakhmat explained that weeping cannot be regarded as part of bid’ah if it is carried out to improve the humility of praying. He bases his view on the Prophet’s statement that ‘indeed, the Qur’an was derived in sadness and pain. If you recite it, cry. If you are not able to cry, try to cry.’ Riḍā further argues that
weeping will become a bad thing if it consists of ْرياء (showing off). In other words, people weep because they want to be regarded by others as having a deep sense of humility (Rakhmat 1998:111).

During the early years, ّسلاوات ْهيدیات received criticism not only from religious leaders but also from lay people. Examples of the criticisms include the following: that ّسلاوات ْهيدیات is a new teaching which is not sanctioned by the Qur’an and hadith, ّسلاوات ْهيدیات involves practices obtained from a jinn and the Nyai Roro Kidul[14], ّسلاوات ْهيدیات and its teachings is not based on the Ahlussunnah wal Jama’ah, the author of the ّسلاوات ْهيدیات has guided his followers to make a cult of the Prophet, and the ritual of weeping in ّسلاوات ْهيدیات is not part of Islamic teachings. These examples of criticisms can seen as evidence that ْهيدیات faced the problem of legitimation at the time of its founding.

4.3. Internal Conflict in ْهيدیات

Internal conflict among the board members of ّسلاوات ْهيدیات happened when this organization held its first major gathering in 1985. From 1964 to 1985 the ّسلاوات ْهيدیات had only a single organization, that is The Centre of ّسلاوات ْهيدیات Preaching (Pusat Penyiaran ّسلاوات ْهيدیات). This body was established to decide on organizational policy and to practise, spread, and develop the ّسلاوات ْهيدیات, to print the pamphlets of ّسلاوات ْهيدیات, and to arrange weekly teaching of al-ْHiermat[15] in the pesantren. Until the Indonesian government issued Law Number 8 (1985) about mass organizations and Pancasila as a sole foundation (azas tunggal), ْهيدیات did not have the same statutes that other organizations had. However, according to Law Number (8) 1985, chapter II, article 2, all mass organizations had to be based on Pancasila as their sole foundation. Article 4 of this chapter stated that all mass organizations were required to mention this base, as described in article 2 in their statutes (Anonymous 1985:468). In order to meet the Law, ْهيدیات held its first gathering to establish a new board and the statutes of the organization. Decisions made at this meeting included the determining of the organization’s statutes, the election of the members of ْهيدیات Struggle Advisory Board (Dewan Pertimbangan Perjuangan ْهيدیات or DPPW), which was later changed to The ْهيدیات Judgment Assembly (Majlis Pertimbangan ْهيدیات), and the election of The Centre of ّسلاوات ْهيدیات Preaching Board (Pusat Penyiaran ّسلاوات ْهيدیات, or PPSW) which was

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changed to The Committee of Șalawāt Wāhiḍiyat Preaching Board Centre (Panitia Penyiąar Shalawat Wahidiyah Pusat or PPSWP) and later changed to The Central Șalawāt Wāhiḍiyat Preaching Board (Penyiąar Shalawat Wahidiyah Pusat or PSWP). The first board functioned to develop, guide, direct, advise and supervise the activities of The Centre of Șalawāt Wāhiḍiyat Preaching. The board was chaired by Abdul Latif Madjid, the son of Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf and the second board was chaired by Kyai Muhammad Ruhan Sanusi, the senior kyai in Wāhiḍiyat.

Internal conflict emerged after the establishment of these two authoritative boards. Although the DPPW functioned to guide and supervise the PSWP, members of the latter thought the DPPW intervened too much in the practical affairs of the PSWP. The position of Abdul Latif Madjid Ma’ruf as the chairman of DPPW as well as the son of Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf, the author of the Șalawāt, gave him more authority and power to build up and direct PSWP. It was reported by an informant that Abdul Latif Madjid seemed to aspire to lead Wāhiḍiyat at that time. As a result, the members of PSWP felt that they were not be free to implement the policies of the organization. On the 7th May 1986, to solve the conflict between the two boards, Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf established a ‘team of three’ to seek a possible solution to the problem within Wāhiḍiyat. He, then, gave a solution to cope with the problem which is known as Wasiat 9 Mei 1986. In his wasiat, Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf stated:

The struggle of Wāhiḍiyat is like other Islamic struggles. Wāhiḍiyat is not like an inheritance [which can be given to the son of the author]. It is part of your right to make a struggle for Wāhiḍiyat. It is expected that all of you will be in unity until the Day of Judgment (yaumil qiya>mát). All members of Wāhiḍiyat preachers and members of Wāhiḍiyat Struggle Advisory Board [DPPW] and followers can be regarded as my representatives (wakil). Al-Wākil Athi>r al-Muwakkil. Every word and deed which can cause slander should be completely removed. For a large event in Wāhiḍiyat such as Mujāhada Kubrā and others, I asked that they be held in Kedunglo, if there is no obstacle.

However, this solution did not necessarily mean that the problem could be resolved. Instead, the tension between Abdul Latif Madjid and PPSW worsened when they had to decide whether or not Wāhiḍiyat should be registered legally with The General Director of the Social and Political Office in Jakarta in accord with Law Number 8. Abdul Latif Madjid argued that the registration was not important, and in most cases would restrict the organization. In contrast, PSWP members were convinced that Wāhiḍiyat would benefit from the registration since the government would not be suspicious of it. Registering the organization with the government and putting Pancasila as its sole foundation was inevitable not only for Wāhiḍiyat but also for other organizations, otherwise the regime
would ban those organizations by stigmatizing them as communist or as extremist Islam. Political analysts and observers at that time were convinced that the Law Number (8) 1985, which decreed this registration, was part of the overall strategy of the regime to weaken political rivals and dominate all aspects of Indonesian social life.

In order to resolve the problem, the two boards agreed to bring this case to Kyai Madjid. He, then, suggested that this problem should be resolved through a mechanism other than discussion (I., musyawarah), namely by invoking God through istikhāra prayers. This is a special prayer aimed at seeking guidance from God when Muslims face difficult options. Like a dream, istikhāra prayer has traditionally been an important aspect in the pesantren tradition and Islamic belief in general because it is recommended by Prophetic hadith. In order to know the result of one’s istikhāra prayers, after observing the prayer Muslims usually look for guidance by opening one page of the Qur’an and pointing randomly to one verse on the page. If the verse consists of goodness, it can be used as guidance. Alternatively, people can find the result of istikhāra prayers from a dream. For example, if they experience a good dream, then the dream can be the basis for a decision and action. The use of dreams as the basis of action for Muslims is possible because they believe that there is a distinction between false dreams and true dreams. According to the Prophetic sayings, false dreams are thought to be caused either by Satan or other evil spirits. In contrast, true or good dreams are thought to be caused by God or an angel.

Of thirty one people who were asked to perform the istikhāra prayer, nineteen people reported the result by putting their response in an envelope. The results were as follows: The response in one envelope could not be interpreted; one envelope was cancelled; four envelopes suggested that Wāḥidiyyat should not be registered; six envelopes asked that Wāḥidiyyat be registered; and seven envelopes were blank. Abdul Latif Madjid, however, refused to accept the result maintaining that the istikhāra prayer had to be repeated due to the fact that seven people did not receive guidance from God. Because of his son’s objection, Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf asked the seven members of board who had not received the sign from God during their previous prayer as well as one member whose response could not be interpreted to carry out istikhāra prayer again. In the end, the result of the istikhāra prayer revealed that six people received God’s guidance to register Wāḥidiyyat with the Director General of Social Political Office, while two people received God’s guidance not to register.

To implement the result of the istikhāra prayer, the organization of Wāḥidiyyat was be registered with the government. On September 8th 1987, The Social and Political Director of East Java officially registered Wāḥidiyyat as a social
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and religious organization and issued it with a registered number. However, according to Abdul Latif Madjid, the process of registration by PPSW violated an agreement made by the two parties. He actually agreed with the registration, but claimed that the registration carried out by the PPSW members was not only too soon after it had been decided at the meeting, but was done before the result of the \textit{istikhāra} prayer was revealed. The tension, therefore, did not automatically cease, since Abdul Latif Madjid continued to oppose the registration by rejecting the statutes of the organization and wrote a letter to all branches of \textit{Wāhidiyat} asking them not to discuss the registration or the statutes since they had not been resolved by the central board members of the \textit{Wāhidiyat}. As a result of this, Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf issued a letter that suspended the members of PSWP or MPW and asked the general members to nominate people for a new structure for the \textit{Wāhidiyat} organization. In this new structure, those that had been involved in the conflict could still become members.

This incident shows that, the problem in \textit{Wāhidiyat} happened as a result of the dissatisfaction and rivalry between two factions. The establishment of the new organization did not contribute to reducing the tension as long as those people involved in the conflict were still elected for the new structure. This was evident, particularly when the founder and the author of \textit{Ṣalawa>t Wāhidiyat} died in 1989 (Yusuf 2003). As a result, conflict between the two factions became even stronger and this contributed to the break up of the organization.

The conflict emerged again, even more strongly because the two factions found it difficult to agree on a successor to the founder. Abdul Latif Madjid was convinced that he was entitled to be the successor since he was the oldest son, although he was not the first child because he had other older sisters. In the pesantren tradition descent is important since knowledge and blessing are geneologically transmitted (Woodward 1989). In addition to this, his loyal followers were also convinced that he should succeed the founder, his father, although Kyai Madjid Ma’ruf did not clearly bequeath \textit{Wāhidiyat} to him. This conviction was based on the signs and gestures given by the founder, that could be interpreted as indicating that Abdul Latif Madjid would be his successor. For example, one informant told me that during the founder’s last illness, Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf designated Abdul Latif Madjid to lead the prayers in his absence on the fourth day of \textit{Mujāhada Kubrā}, a half yearly ritual in \textit{Wāhidiyat}, particularly the sunset prayer which Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf had always led during the \textit{Mujāhada Kubrā}. This was the last \textit{Mujāhada Kubrā} for the founder since he died ten days later.
This *Mujāhada Kubrā* was held for four consecutive days. From the first day to the third day, *Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf*’s family voted for the candidate to lead the sunset prayer. The informant maintains that Abdul Latif Madjid was elected as the leader of the sunset prayer for the first day, while his brother, Abdul Hamid and his relative, Imam Yahya were elected leaders on the second and third day respectively. Abdul Latif Madjid thus succeeded the founder as leader on both the first and the last day of the *Mujāhada Kubrā*. This could be interpreted as an indication that Abdul Latif Madjid should succeed the founder and was one way to convince followers that Abdul Latif Madjid was the most eligible person to succeed the founder of *Wāḥidiyat*. This event reminds us of the story of the succession to the Prophet. During his last illness, the Prophet designated Abū Bakr to lead prayer. Many took this gesture as an indication that Abū Bakr would succeed the Prophet. Upon the Prophet’s death, he was elected the first Caliph, by the acclamation of the people present at the meeting of *Saqīfat*.

According to the PSWP faction, before *Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf* was buried, his wife made an announcement at a meeting attended by the two factions. She explained that since the late leader had not given any last testament, two things had been left: first, the pesantren and second *Wāḥidiyat*. The female pesantren and the male pesantren would be given to Nurul and Abdul Hamid respectively, and the formal school of *Wāḥidiyat* would be given to Abdul Latif Madjid. Meanwhile, the organization of *Wāḥidiyat* would be run by all the children of the founder with the help of the members of the Central Board of *Wāḥidiyat*. All those in attendance agreed to the decision (Yusuf 2003:16-18). But according to another faction, Abdul Latif Madjid was not invited to the meeting. Therefore, he did not know about the announcement. Since the meeting was a family meeting, it was inappropriate that Abdul Latif Madjid was not invited, especially as he was the oldest son of the founder. The informant further said that in the meeting, Abdul Hamid was selected as the successor of the founder. This decision was valid for only a few hours since in the morning it was changed.

Without involving other members of PSWP (the Central Board of *Wāḥidiyat*) a second family meeting was held, and it was decided that Abdul Latif Madjid would lead Pesantren Kedunglo. According to his supporters, if he was selected as the leader of the Pesantren, he was the successor of the founder in *Wāḥidiyat* as well. As a result of this, his brother, Abdul Hamid, disputed the decision because the election of Abdul Latif Madjid as the leader of *Wāḥidiyat* had not been mentioned in the letter given to him. Therefore, instead of supporting the

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16 Interview with Zainuddin, Kediri, September, 2004.
17 Interview with Zainuddin, Kediri, September, 2004.
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election, he was only willing to obey the wasiat from his father which meant he had to oppose his brother. However, it is clear that Abdul Hamid was opposed to his brother, not because he had to obey the wasiat, but because in the second familial meeting he was not elected as the successor to Wahidiyat. If he strictly followed the wasiat of his father, he would have refused to be selected as the successor of the founder at the first meeting.

It is clear that the earlier decision was changed due to strong pressure from one of the members of the family, probably Abdul Latif Madjid, who was reportedly not involved in the first meeting. He wished to be the successor of the founder of Wahidiyat, and was entitled to succeed his father because he was the oldest son. As far as the election was concerned, he maintains that as a matter of fact his election had long been decided by his charismatic grandfather, Kyai Ma’ruf who was known as a wali. Abdul Latif Madjid recounted this in his weekly classes on Kitab al-Hikam many years after the death of Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’uf, when he explained about God’s promises which do not seem to be fulfilled. Quoting the words of al-Hikam,18 he maintained that this does not necessarily mean that God does not grant them. God might be suspending his promise, and will fulfill it later at the right time. He described the story as follows.

It was reported that before Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf died, Pak Joni (a newly converted Muslim from Flores) living in Tulungagung was told by Kyai Ma’ruf in his dream, ‘Jon, ask Latif and Yahya to see Madjid (the founder of Wahidiyat), and tell him that after Madjid Ma’ruf dies, Latif should become kyai in Kedunglo.’ After Kyai Madjid Ma’ruf died, in the family meeting at 21.00 pm, I was not selected as the kyai of Kedunglo. But after the second meeting at 2.00 am, I was selected as the successor of Kedunglo. Thus, the promise of God through the Kyai Ma’ruf came true after a few four hours… This is a real story. It has a witness, Ask Mbah Nyai Madjid Ma’ruf (the wife of the late founder), Pak Yahya, and Pak Joni. All of them are still alive…That is the promise of God. In the first meeting His promise was not fulfilled, but four hours later His promise was fulfilled (Madjid 1425 34-37).

There are many other stories which confirm Abdul Latif Madjid as the successor of Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf, and most of them are based on followers’ dreams (Rohani 2004). It is clear that in order to support his position, Abdul Latif Madjid not only used information taken from dreams but also borrowed an

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18 Ibn ‘Ata’illah states: ‘If what was promised does not occur, even though the time for its occurrence had been fixed, then that must not make you doubt the promise. Otherwise, your intellect will be obscured and the light of your innermost heart extinguished’ (‘Ata’illah 1978: 48).
authoritative person as a means to legitimise his election as the successor of the founder. He needed to explain the story to his followers since at the same time another faction questioned the validity of his choice as the leader.

This other faction was convinced that since the founder stated on the 9th May 1986 that Wāḥidiyat was not something which could be inherited, the sons or the relatives of the late leader could not proclaim themselves successors of the founder. In other words, the founder of Wāḥidiyat never publicly appointed his successor. Based on this wasiat, this faction maintained that the successor of the Wāḥidiyat leader should be voted on through a formal election involving all parties. This faction further argued that if a son of the founder proclaimed himself the leader of Wāḥidiyat, this could be regarded as deviation from the true teaching of the founder (Yusuf 2003:4). However, this argument was not convincing since this faction then gave their strong support to Abdul Hamid to lead an informal forum which was known as Milādiyat forum (birth), a name derived from the birthday of Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf. If this faction had been committed to their view, they would not have supported Abdul Hamid to establish the forum. Since the birthday of the founder was on Friday Wage (Javanese calendar), this new forum was held every forty days. This forum, inevitably, opposed the claims of Abdul Latif Madjid. The faction gave support to Abdul Hamid since he was the only one who was able to oppose the dominance of Abdul Latif Madjid in Wāḥidiyat. Furthermore, Abdul Hamid had strong ties with the faction because one of the senior members was his father-in-law. The establishment of this forum, therefore, sharpened the tenor of the factional rivalries. After that, Wāḥidiyat was filled with increasing tension and growing hatred between the factions. Each faction had its own loyal supporters. One informant told me that the conflict was so strong that it sometimes led to physical conflict among rival groups.

However, the alliance between Abdul Hamid and the faction did not last. Internal conflict between Abdul Hamid and his faction resulted in a split of the alliance. One informant speculates that this happened because Abdul Hamid was not satisfied with his position in the forum when he realised he was just a symbolic leader and that the real authority was still in the hands of the forum members, notably the former board of PPSW. As a result, he left the forum, at the expense of his relationship with his father-in-law and established a new organization named Milādiyat, which was legally registered in the Department of Justice. The headquarters of his organization is situated directly beside the Pesantren Kedunglo.

19 Interview with Zainuddin, Kediri, September, 2004.
Instead of joining the Abdul Latif Madjid faction, the remaining members of the forum, who were mainly former members of PSWP moved to the Pesantren al-Tahdhib in Ngoro, Jombang under the leadership of Ihsan Mahin, Abdul Hamid’s father-in-law. The reason given for this was to save the teaching of Wahidiyat from corruption. This faction, then, established a new organization but kept the same name, that is, Penyiar Salawat Wahidiyat (PSW). This name might have been deliberately used to give the impression that this was the true organization initially established by the founder of Wahidiyat. This group concentrated their activities in the pesantren. The organization also established many branches throughout Indonesia. Meanwhile, Abdul Latif Madjid succeeded his father and established a new organization named Yayasan Perjuangan Wahidiyah dan Pondok Pesantren Kedunglo (The Wahidiyah Foundation of Struggle and Kedunglo Islamic Boarding School), and occupied Pesantren Kedunglo.

The proponents of PSW believe that any organizations established after the death of the founder of Wahidiyat, irrespective of their names, are not in line with the teaching of Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf. Only the organization established by Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf, that is PSW has validity (Yusuf 2003:14). In other words, they argue that the true organization and the leadership in Wahidiyat is nothing but PSW, which has moved to Ngoro, Jombang. In order to assure its followers, one of the member of this group published a provocative book entitled ‘Aku Pengganti Muallif Salawat Wahidiyat (I am the Successor of the Author of the Salawat Wahidiyat) written by Muhammad Djazuli Yusuf. In this book Yusuf claims that organizations other than PSW have been established just for the sake of material gain rather than to implement the teaching of the founder. In his opinion, those who are not following the teaching of the founder can be regarded as rebellious students, and as a consequence their repentance cannot be accepted. He regards those who established another organizations as Kharijites, the name of Islamic theological sect which was opposed to the four official caliphs in the Islamic history after the Prophet died (Yusuf 2003:14-15).

In addition, the proponents of PSW argue that although Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf had died, he is the only great teacher who can bring the followers of Wahidiyat to wusul to God on the Day of Judgment. None of the Wahidiyat followers can equal Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf in his perfection as a murabbi (spiritual teacher). This means that although the followers of Wahidiyat are guaranteed to achieve a perfect level of spirituality within Wahidiyat, they have only achieved one aspect of Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf’s qualities, and at the same time their position remains as students of Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf. As a

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21 Kyai Djazuli Yusuf told me that ‘To save the struggle of Wahidiyat (perjuangan Wahidiyah), the organization had to be moved to Ngoro.’
consequence, anyone who proclaims himself the successor of the author, should not be perceived as perfect as the author since it is impossible for an heir to inherit all the properties and qualities belonging to the late author. The heir, however, might have one quality that the author had. This is like the Muslim scholars who have been regarded in the Prophetic tradition as the inheritors of the Prophet. As heirs of the Prophet, they do not inherit all the Prophet’s qualities and knowledge (Yusuf 1994:14-15). Yusuf put forward this view due to the fact that after the death of the author, following the emergence of several Wāḥidiyyat organizations, many followers of Wāḥidiyyat were confused about whom they had to entrust with their spiritual development. In this sense, the aim of this opinion was twofold; to give the impression to the followers that the new PSW established in Ngoro, Jombang was the official body to which they should submit to improve their spiritual qualities and to demonstrate that although the sons of the author led other Wāḥidiyyat organizations, they were not equal to Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf in their qualities.

The impact of these conflicts were strongly felt by Wāḥidiyyat followers in many regions. It was reported that many Wāḥidiyyat followers in Sumenep, Madura, were divided into two factions: those who followed the older generation (PSW) which still maintained the authority of Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf while not submitting to Abdul Latif Madjid, and those mostly of a younger generation who followed Abdul Latif Madjid. This conflict thus resulted in confusion among people on which group to join (Anonymous 1999c:36).

It is clear that each faction made their own judgment on the validity of their organizations. The first faction made its judgment by relying on the genealogical family, while the other used the official structural organization established by the founder. These conflicts show that any religious organization can be vulnerable to conflict if one of the proponents of the organization emphasises his or her own interest rather than those of the organization. The internal conflict in Wāḥidiyyat might not have happened if each faction had negotiated the quest for power by individuals without sacrificing the unity of the organization.

Plate 4.4: The Logo of Şalawat Wâhidiyat group (Penyiar Sholawat Wahidiyah, PSW) in Ngoro, Jombang.
4.4. The Teaching of Wāḥidiyat

The doctrine and rituals of Wāḥidiyat practised by its followers were created by Kyai Abdul Majid Ma’ruf, the founder of Wāḥidiyat. However, Kyai Abdul Majid Ma’ruf did not write any book explaining the doctrines of Wāḥidiyat. The only reference which can be relied on is based on the transcript of his instructions on Kitab al-Hikam published by the Wāḥidiyat Foundation in a book entitled Pengajian Kitab al-Hikam dan Kuliah Wāḥidiyah Ahad Pagi Oleh Al-Mukarrom Mbah KH. Abdul Majid Ma’ruf Qoddasallohu Sirrohu Wa RA (The Instruction of al-Hikam Book and the Sunday Morning Wāḥidiyat Lecture by Al-Mukarrom Mbah KH. Abdul Majid Ma’ruf Qaddasallohu Sirrohu Wa RA, 2001). This book is available only in the Wāḥidiyat shop in Kediri.

According to the author of Wāḥidiyat, Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyat is based on the Qur’an and hadith, the two basic sources of Islam, which consequently form the foundation of the teaching of Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyat. What is meant by the teachings of Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyat is the practical guidance for the inner life and the external life, drawing on aspects of Islamic law (shari’at) and ḥaqīqat (the truth) in the improvement of faith (imān) and in the mystical knowledge of God (ma’rifat), the observance of Islam, the actualization of iḥsān (goodness) and the implementation of morals (akhlāq).

It is clear from this definition that the teaching of Wāḥidiyat includes Islamic law (shari’at), morality (akhlāq) and the transcendent truth (ḥaqīqat or ma’rifat). These three aspects of the teachings are similar to the tripartite path to God which is widely known in Sufi traditions, that is shari’at, tariqat, and ḥaqīqat or ma’rifat. These three aspects of Wāḥidiyat teaching are regarded as like an essence and its nature, or like sugar and sweetness, neither of which can be separated. Therefore, people cannot ignore one of these three aspects and stress the others (Madjid 2000a:20). According to Kyai Abdul Majid, ‘shari’at without ḥaqīqat is emptiness, while ḥaqīqat without shari’at is invalid’ (Madjid 1423a:20-25). On the basis of this definition, the ultimate aim of Wāḥidiyat teachings is to achieve ma’rifat or wusūl with God. However, instead of using the word tariqat (the mystical path to God), the founder of Wāḥidiyat used akhlāq in his definition of the Wāḥidiyat teachings. He omitted the word tariqat because Wāḥidiyat is not categorized as a tariqat (I.: tarekat, sufi order) and he never regarded Wāḥidiyat as a tariqat. Moreover, if the word tariqat were mentioned in the teachings, it might raise objections from the leaders of established tarekat. Nevertheless, Kyai Abdul Majid Ma’ruf argued that

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22 Iḥsān means beauty, goodness used by Sufis to refer to an ideal state of worshipping God.

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**Wāhidiyat** to some extent can be regarded as a *tariqat* in its literal meaning, that is ‘a path’ to God, since it provides the way for those who seek closeness to God. He put it as follows:

Some one asked Kyai Madjid, ‘Excuse me Kyai, Is Şalawāt Wāhidiyat able to be categorized as a *tariqat*?’ He replied, ‘ Reciting Şalawāt is reciting Şalawāt. If the word *tariqat* refers to a Jam‘iyyat *Tariqat* (Sufi organization), Şalawāt Wāhidiyat cannot be regarded as a *tariqat*. However, it also can be regarded as a *tariqat*, because to *wusul* (reach) God can be done through as many paths as a number of creatures’ (Qomari 2003:101).

In the guidance book of the principle teachings of Wāhidiyat published by Yayasan Perjuangan Wahidiyah (Anonymous n.d.-b), Kyai Madjid Ma’ruf quotes a large number of verses from the Qur’an and hadith to support his teachings. As well, he refers to the thoughts of several famous Sufi such as Abu Ḥasan al-Shadhīli (1196–1258), al-Ghazzālī (1058–1111) and Imam Ibn ‘Ata‘illah al-Ishāqī (d. 1309), whose teachings have also been widely recognised among Sufi orders in Indonesia. Ibn ‘Ata‘illah in particular inspired and influenced Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf’s views in establishing the teachings of Wāhidiyat. By quoting these authoritative references, Wāhidiyat cannot be regarded as a deviant group. In addition, this gives the impression that the teachings of Wāhidiyat do not contradict the basic teaching of Islam, nor is it an addition to these teachings.

Indeed, Wāhidiyat teachings have very strong roots in Islamic doctrine. This is important since Wāhidiyat, as a new Islamic spiritual group, needed to clarify its position among other Islamic spiritual groups to avoid being regarded as deviant. This explanation was evidently effective because none of the Muslim organizations in Indonesia, including Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, the two biggest Muslim organizations, officially criticized the existence of Wāhidiyat. In 1977, the conference of Jam‘iyyat *Tariqat* Mu’tabara Nahdiyyīn (Federation of Recognised Tarekat of NU), the official Sufi order group established by Nahdlatul Ulama, decided that Wāhidiyat could be practised by all members of tarekat as long as this was in accordance with Islamic law (Qomari 2003:101).

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24 This Sufi leader’s full name was Abū Ḥasan al-Ḫāṣim al-Ǧabbār al-Šadhīfi. He founded the tarekat called Shadhiliyah. His teachings are widespread in North Africa and similarly present in the most of Islamic world, as far as Indonesia (Lewis 1971: 707-08).
25 Al-Ghazzālī’s full name was Abū Ḥāmid Mūḥammad ibn Mūḥammad al-Ṭūsī al-Ghazzālī. He was a prominent Muslim scholar, theologian, jurist, Sufi and religious reformer (Lewis 1965: 1038-40).
26 Among the works of this Sufi sage and scholar of 13th century Egypt, *Kitāb al-Ḥikam* is particularly noteworthy because of its universal value (‘Ata‘illah 1978:3).
Furthermore, strong support was received from the government, which provided an official letter issued by the head of the Attorney General’s Office (I., Kantor Kejaksaan Negeri) in East Java and Religious Research and Development Unit of the Ministry Religious of Religious Affairs in Jakarta. The Unit of the Ministry of Religious Affairs maintained that Wāḥīdiyat was allowed to be taught and spread to common people due to the fact that it is not part of Islam Jama‘ah, the name of a Indonesian Muslim organization which was officially banned by the Indonesian government. Strong criticism given to Wāḥīdiyat only came from local Muslim scholars, the effect of which was not significant in the spread of Wāḥīdiyat.

To begin our discussion of these mystical teachings, we will consider the book entitled Kuliah Wāḥīdiyat Untuk Menjernihkan Hati dan Ma‘rifat Billah Wa Bi Rasūlih SAW (The Wāḥīdiyat Teaching For Purifying Soul and Gnosis of God and His Prophet). In this book Kyai Abdul Majid Ma‘ruf emphasizes the importance of the teachings of Wāḥīdiyat including Li Allāh, Bi Allāh, Li al-Rasūl, Bi al-Rasūl, Li al-Ghauth, Bi al-Ghauth, Yu‘tī kullā dhī ḥaqqīn ḥaqqah, and Taqdim al-aham fa al-aham thumma al-anfā’ fa al-anfā’. He insists that these teachings should be implemented in the heart of Wāḥīdiyat followers during every activity and deed categorized as ‘ibādat (worship).

Li Allāh (for God), the first doctrine of Wāḥīdiyat, is considered the entry point for followers to practise the mystical path within Wāḥīdiyat. According to Kyai Abdul Majid, the meaning and the application of Li Allāh adheres to every inward and outward deed (I., amal lahiriah dan batiniah), either in the form of obligatory (A., wājib), recommended (A., sunnat) or permitted deeds (A., mubah), whether it has connection with God and His Messenger or is related to public affairs as long as it does not break the law of God and involves a pious intention (A., ikhlaṣ) to worship God without expecting any worldly and eschatological reward. In other words, Kyai Abdul Majid Ma‘ruf here stresses the importance of pious intent in every devotion to God without expectation of obtaining paradise or in fear of hell (Anonymous n.d.-a:317). But, Kyai Abdul Majid Ma‘ruf argues that followers are still allowed to hope for paradise and to fear hell providing that the hope is within the context of worship. In this sense, sincere and pure intentions are required to transform activities into worship. In contrast, every deed that is not performed solely to worship God falls to the desire of the lower soul (A., li al-nafs). Hence, if Muslims’ deeds are filled with this nafs, it will prevent them from obtaining the consciousness of God and His Prophet to which the Wāḥīdiyat teachings are aimed. He argues that this first doctrine can be compared with the doctrine of shari‘at, the first

27 Because of the ban, this organization firstly changed its name to LEMKARI and then changed to LDII, Lembaga Dakwah Islam Indonesia, Indonesian Islamic Preaching Board.
of the tripartite path to God (Anonymous n.d.-a:381). With this explanation, Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf stresses the importance of shari’at as the initial state for those who wish to enter the mystical path. His view on the importance of shari’at is not unusual as most traditional santri in Java maintain that all the requirements of shari’at should be fulfilled prior to entering upon the mystical path. Moreover, they argue that mystical path should be cultivated on the basis of outward piety (shari’at) (Woodward 1989:81).

The second doctrine of Wāhidīyat is Bi Allāh. What is meant by the doctrine Bi Allāh (because of Allah) here is that every person’s outward and inward aspects are nothing but the creation and action of God. This definition is derived from the verse of the Qur’an stating that ‘and God has created you and what you make’ (37: 96). As a consequence, one cannot claim to have strength and power to act and to do either something good or bad, since the power and strength belongs to God Himself. This verse is not interpreted from the perspective of predestination, but from the Sufi point of view. In fact, this doctrine is practised as the implementation of the phrase, ‘lā ḥaula wa lā quwwata illā bi Allāh: There is no power and might save in God (Anonymous n.d.-a:98). Quoting Sunan Kalijaga, one of nine Javanese Muslim saints, Abdul Latif Madjid explains that according to this doctrine ‘a human is like a puppet and the God is like a puppeteer’ (Madjid 1423b:29-33). As far as bad deeds are concerned, Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf maintains that unlike good deeds, bad deeds should also be based on the doctrine of Bi Allāh. Therefore, one should keep in mind that every bad deed can only happen because of God. However, this does not necessarily mean that people are permitted to do bad deeds, even though they are performed through Bi Allāh. Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf defines this doctrine a haqiqat, another of the tripartite ways to God.

Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf’s explanation of this doctrine largely follows Ibn ‘Aṭāillah’s mystical teachings on the importance of relying on the Divinity rather than people’s own actions and deeds, as he explains in al-Ḥikam. In elucidating the doctrine, Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf maintained as follows:

As a matter of fact, when we see, hear, feel, find, move, stay, imagine, think, and so on and so forth, we should feel within our heart that all of these can happen because of God’s command...if all activities are based on Li Allah-Bi Allah, they will be regarded as worship. In contrast, if all activities, including prayers, dhikr, are not based on Li Allah-Bi Allah, they will be worthless. They are just like a dead body which cannot give any benefits or harm (Anonymous n.d.-a:98)

With this explanation, Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf argues that if this doctrine is absent from the heart of someone, they will tend to follow their own desire (bi
al-nafs). As a result, they can easily claim that everything they do is because of their own strength and power. Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf is convinced that if this feeling increases everyday, people will become egocentric and proud (A., ‘ujb., ananiyya) which is believed to be the cause of moral decadence, deviation, hostility, and quarrels. In addition, people’s reliance upon their own strength and power will lead them to commit hidden polytheism (shirkhāfīyya) (12: 106). Therefore, he insists that it is incumbent upon every follower to purge the nafs of its evil attributes by applying the doctrine of Li Allaāh -Bi Allaāh, reciting Salawāt Wāḥidiyyat and striving (A., mujāhada) to ask forgiveness and guidance from God. He further maintains that once people manage to purge the nafs from their own deeds, they will come to a spiritual stage called waṣul (union) and ma’rifat (gnosis), both of which are the ultimate goal of Wāḥidiyyat.

The third doctrine of Wāḥidiyyat is Li al-Rasūl which means that every deed categorized as worship must be preceded not only with the doctrine li-Allah but also with an intention to follow the Prophet’s guidance. The aim of this doctrine is not only to improve the purity of intention (ikhlās), but also to keep in touch with the Prophet. Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf is convinced that if people apply this doctrine, God will bestow the feeling of intimate relationship with the Prophet, enabling them to imitate the Prophet ethics (takhalluq bi akhlāq al-rasūl) in every situation. Moreover, since the essence of observance requires the understanding of the observed in every situation, such an intimate relationship will lead people to achieve the intended observance of the Prophet (Anonymous n.d.-a). Like the doctrine Li Allāh, this doctrine can be categorized as shari‘at.

The fourth doctrine of Wāḥidiyyat is Bi al-Rasūl which means that every person’s inward and outward deeds which do not violate the law of God have to be believed as result of the Prophet. Moreover, Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf explains that all the creatures in the world were created by God’s mercy, which is given through the Prophet. Without him, the world would not have been created. The merit of the Prophet is not confined to the time during which the Prophet lived, but continues to the present. If the merit of the Prophet had stopped just for a second, people would have been nothing (Anonymous n.d.-a). This doctrine is basically elaborated from the concept of Nūr Muḥammad (the Light of Muḥammad), and it is also called al-Ḥaqīqat al-Muḥāmmadiyyat, which was first introduced by Ibn ‘Arabi (1165-1240) who developed more completely the doctrine of the pre-existence of Muḥammad before creation. According to

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28 Associating partners with God.
29 Al-‘Arabi’s full name was Muhhyi al-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn ‘Alī Ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-‘Arabī. He was the greatest Sufi in Islam. He was the most prolific of Sufi writers. The number of his works number more than 239.
the hadith qudsi, all creatures are created from Nūr Muḥammad which was created from the light of God (khalaqta min nūrī wa khalaqta al-khalqa mi al-nūrīka). Therefore, the world is a manifestation of that Light, and it emanated to Adam, the Prophets, and the Aqṣāb, the axis, all of which are the perfect Man (Insān al-Kāmil). However, the concept of Nur Muḥammad in the Wahidiyat is conceived only as a basis on which the followers of Wāhidiyat should relate to the Prophet. In his attempt to explain the concept of Nūr Muḥammad, Kyai Abdul Latif Madjid describes it as follows:

Wāhidiyat can be regarded as a Sufi group which follows the concept of Nūr Muḥammad. Not all Sufis, such as Hamka, can receive the teaching of Nūr Muḥammad. In Wāhidiyat, it can be described as the connection of cotton, thread and fabric. The cotton is God, the thread is Nūr Muḥammad and the fabric is all creation. In fact the fabric is nothing without the thread and the thread is nothing without the cotton.

Unlike the application of the doctrine of Bi Allāh, the application of this doctrine is confined only to good deeds which are relevant to the law of God. In contrast, bad deeds which violate the law of God cannot be deemed to be the merit of the Prophet. Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf argues that the application of this doctrine, therefore, leads people always to feel that God and His Prophet will watch them, and as a consequence they will not dare to do something which violates the law of God (Anonymous 1999a). This teaching reminds us of the concept of ḵaṣān which means, according to traditions of the Prophet, ‘that you worship God as if you see Him, for even though you do not see God, God always sees you.’

The fifth doctrine of Wāhidiyat is Li al-Ghauth (for the saint). The definition of this doctrine is that every good deed should be based on Li Allāh and Li al-Rasūl, followed by an intention to follow the guidance of the ghauth hadha al-zamān. The application of this doctrine in Wāhidiyat is confined to good deeds, not to bad deeds. This doctrine is derived from the verse of the Qur’an which is as follows:

…and follow the way of those who turn to me (in love): in the end the return of you all is to Me, and I will tell you the truth (and meaning) of all that ye did (31: 15).

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30 A hadith qudsi is a tradition containing revelation from God phrased in the Prophet’s own words (Saeed 2006:156).

31 Hamka’s full name was Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (1908-1981) He was author of the book entitled Tasawuf Modern. He considered responsible for introducing Sufi teachings among Indonesian Muslim reformists.
Here Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf interprets the word ‘those who turn to me (in love)’ in this verse as the Ghauth (the Help), a friend of God and the highest spiritual authority possessed by saints. Although they have passed away, they are believed to be able to give spiritual guidance to people. However, the names of the Ghauth are not mentioned in this doctrine, so we do not know how many Ghauth exist in this world according to the doctrines of Wāḥidiyyat. However, according to some followers, the Ghauth are Kyai Abdul Madjid and his son, Kyai Abdul Latif Madjid.

The next doctrine is Bi al-Ghauth. This is similar to Bi Allāhand Bi al-Rasūl, but also includes the belief that Ghauth gives spiritual guidance to Muslims, leading them to the consciousness of God and His Prophet, which in Wāḥidiyyat is usually called fafirrū ila Allah wa rasūlihi ṣalla Allāhu ‘alaihi wasallam ‘(Turn to God and his Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him). This consciousness is inherent within the hearts of Muslims who cultivate the ethics of God and His Prophet in themselves (takhalluq bi akhlaq Allah wa al-rasūl). The application of this doctrine in Wāḥidiyyat is intended not only to express gratitude to God but also to express gratitude to the Ghauth who transmits the grace of God to people. This is partly because the perfect expression of gratitude (A., shukr) to God requires the gratitude to those who cause the grace of God is be given. This teaching is based on the Prophetic tradition, ‘Those who are unable to express gratitude to people, will not be able to express gratitude to God.’ In this sense, a Ghauth is regarded not only as waṣīlat (intercessor) but also as nāib al-rasūl (a successor of the Prophet); and the Prophet is regarded as waṣīlat al-ʿuzmā (the great intercessor) who brings people to wṣūl (union) with God (Anonymous n.d.-a). In the case of Wahidiyyat, Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf as well as his son, Abdul Latif Madjid, are regarded by their followers not only as the Ghauth but also as perfect teachers (A., kāmil mukammil) who are able to be intercessors (A., waṣīlat) towards God and the Prophet. In his speech on the occasion of Mujāhada Kubrāin 2000, Abdul Latif Madjid also regards himself as a point of intercession for Wāḥidiyyat followers. He said this as follows:

Some one asked me, ‘Uncle, I recited this litany, why has it not been successful?’ I said to him, ‘Therefore you should take me as a mediator.’ He answered: ‘I did.’ And I said to him, ‘In that case, you have not given absolute submission to me. If you do not understand what total surrender means, simply recite this in the way I recite it’ (Madjid 2000a).

If Kyai Madjid Ma’ruf and his son are considered to be Ghauth, their followers then have to submit absolutely to their guidance.

Another doctrine of Wahidiyyat is Yu’tī kullā dhī ḥaqqīn ḥaqqahu (literally, meaning to accord rights to those who deserve them), which is interpreted
to mean that people should give priority to fulfilling their obligations rather than in claiming their rights. The fulfillment of obligations will result in the fulfillment of other rights. For example, children must fulfill their obligations to their parents, and parents have to fulfill their obligations to their children without claiming their own rights. In fact, this doctrine is reminiscent of al-Ghazâli who defines justice as giving rights to those who possess those rights. According to Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf, this doctrine will give a balance between the esoteric life and exoteric life. He puts it this way:

'It is not enough for us just to study imân musyâhada, as the early Sufis who merely focused on their ascetic life (zâhid) and their isolation (tajîd) so that they could not fulfil their duty as people of their nation (Anonymous 1425c:10-14).

The last doctrine of Wâhidiyat is taqdim al-aham fa al-aham thumma al-anfa’ fa al-anfa’. This doctrine is described as giving priority to fulfilling the most important matters as well as the most useful matters. This doctrine applies especially when people are faced with two important options. In this case, they should choose which one is the most important. If both options are important, then one should choose the option which is more useful. According to this doctrine, everything that leads to the consciousness of God and His Prophet is regarded as most important (aham) and everything which gives benefits others is regarded as the most useful (Anonymous 1425b:30). This doctrine is derived from Islamic legal theories which state that preventing damage should be prioritized over seeking benefit (dar’u al-mafâsid muqaddam ala’ jalb al-maşâlih) and that lesser injuries should be prioritized between two injuries (fi al-çarârain akhdhu akhâfihi mâ).

It is clear that the teachings of Wâhidiyat stress the importance of the internal components of religious life as well as the necessity of observing the outward ritual forms of Islam and of avoiding shirk khâfiy (hidden polytheism). The first six doctrines are closely related to managing one’s heart and intentions by emphasizing dhawqiyyat (mystical taste or sense), while the last two doctrines are concerned with daily activities which should also be fulfilled by Wâhidiyat members. Practising the doctrines of Wâhidiyat will not prevent them from being involved in social activities. Instead of encouraging passivity and withdrawal from worldly affairs, the followers of Wâhidiyat are required to become involved in public life, not only by performing their daily tasks but also by spreading Wâhidiyat to the community. In this sense, Wâhidiyat appeals to Muslim activism, since the fulfillment of worldly duties is seen as an integral part of its followers’ progress in their spiritual journey.
In addition to Wāḥidiyyat’s main teachings, Wāḥidiyyat followers are also introduced to philosophical and speculative aspects of Sufi teachings (tasawwuf falsafiy) such as fana’ (annihilation), mukāṣṣafat, musyāḥadat (vision), ʿilm al-yaqīn (knowledge of certitude), ʿāin al-yaqīn (vision of certitude), ḥaqq al-yaqīn (the real certitude), and different stations in the Sufi path (maqāmāt) including shukr (gratitude) ʿihlās (sincerity), ʿaṣr (contentment) mahābbat (love), and ḥusn al-zann (to think well of God). These stations are inspired mostly by al-Ghazālī’s Ihya’ al-ʿUlūm al-Dīn (The Revival of the Religious Sciences) which has been widely used in many other traditional pesantren in Indonesia. However, not all the Sufi ideas maintained by al-Ghazālī are fully introduced to Wāḥidiyyat followers, only those which are relevant to the teaching of Wāḥidiyyat are taught to them.

4.5. The Ritual of Mujāhada in Wāḥidiyyat: Spiritual Pilgrimage

Wāḥidiyyat is a Majlis Dhikr group which focuses on the reciting of Ṣalawāt which is believed to be able to provide a shortcut for people seeking Gnosis of God (A., maʿrifat bi-Allah) and the purity of soul. For Wāḥidiyyat to achieve wuṣūl (union) and maʿrifat bi-Allah is difficult for everyone, particularly without the guidance of a perfect master (A., murshid). Similarly, to find a perfect teacher (kāmil mukammil) is also not easy, particularly in this age. It is so difficult to attain wuṣūl and maʿrifat billah that some ʿulamā’ point out that only particular people who can do so. Nevertheless, Wāḥidiyyat claims to offers the easiest way to achieve wuṣūl and maʿrifat bi-Allah, that is, by reciting Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat during the mujāhada ritual. Quoting the words of Muslim scholars in the book entitled Saʿādat al-Dāraynī, Kyai Abdul Latif Madjid explains:

The easiest way to achieve wuṣūl maʿrifat to Allah particularly for those who have continuously committed sin, is by reciting istighfār (the forgiveness prayer) and Ṣalāwa (exaltation) towards the Prophet of God.

The practices and ritual of Wāḥidiyyat focus on the continual recitation of Ṣalawāt based on mujāhada. In Sufism, mujāhada, which originally meant striving, refers to an intense spiritual effort that may lead to levels of spiritual ecstasy. Meanwhile, in the case of Wāḥidiyyat, mujāhada is conceived as a method of reciting Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat in accordance with the methods and ethics taught by the author of the Ṣalawāt, including the implementation of

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32 This book is the greatest work of al-Ghazālī both in size and in the importance of its content. It consists of four volumes. This book has been taught in Indonesian pesantren for centuries.
the doctrines of Wāhidīyat, the imagination of the Prophet’s presence, and the deep feeling of sinfulness towards God (Anonymous 1989). In other words, in Wāhidīyat, mujāhada refers to an optimal effort to defeat passion (I., nafs; A., nafs) in order to establish the consciousness of God and His Prophet (ma’rifat bi-Allāh wa Rasūlihi or iman mushāhada) and to achieve wuṣūl to God.

It is strongly recommended that members of this group should follow the adab (courtesy) that imposed by the group before practising mujāhada or reciting the Ṣalawāt. First, people should be purified either from hadas besar (major impurity) or hadas kecil (minor impurity). Second, they should face the direction of Ka’ba in Mecca (I., kiblat). Third, if people perform mujāhada together (I., berjamaah), they should form a circle facing each other. Fourth, this practice should be based on the teaching of Wāhidīyat. Fifth, people should be inspired by the greatness of the Prophet by imagining that they sit in front of him. Sixth, people should feel full of sinful hoping for the God forgiveness and regretting their sinfulness. Seventh, people should be obedient to the Abdul Latīf Madjid, the leader of the Ṣalawāt Wāhidīyat group. Eighth, people should be inspired by the meaning of the text of Ṣalawāt while reciting it. Ninth, people should not be in a rush when recite the Ṣalawāt. When women menstruate, they are allowed to join the ritual and they can recite everything in the text of the Ṣalawāt but they should not recite the opening chapter of the Qur’an, al-Fātiḥat (Anonymous 1425a:23). 

During mujāhada, the followers of Wāhidīyat group, in Ngoro, Jombang are urged to visualize their master (A., taṣawwur al-shaikh), Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf. In contrast, I could not find the followers of Wāhidīyat group in Kediri practise the visualization of their leader, Kyai Abdul Latīf Madjid. This practice is very important to the Ngoro group, particularly to increase their love of the murshid (Yusuf 2003:61). This is partly because, although Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf has died, he is believed to be able to watch his followers as well as educate them spiritually. If the followers doubt the late founder’s ability to watch and educate them, they will be prevented from receiving his blessing. By visualizing the murshid, the followers become conscious of his presence, which will save them from nafs (passion) and increase their spiritual achievement. However, the ritual practices of Wāhidīyat do not determine the method for visualizing the murshid. Bruinessen (1992:85) points out that the visualization of the murshid is also practised by other international Sufi orders such as the Ni`matullāh order in Iran, the Naqshbandiyah order, and the Shatariyah order.

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33 An impurity that requires a Muslim to carry out a full ritual ablution (A., ghusl), as for example after having a wet dream or sexual intercourse with one’s spouse.

34 An impurity that requires a Muslim to carry out a minor ritual ablution (A., wudū’), as for example after passing wind, urinating, or defecating.
Since *muja'hada* has become an important part of *Wâhidiyat* rituals, it should be practised by those who want to join and those who have become members of *Wâhidiyat*. It is recommended that the number of one’s *muja'hada* be increased when one has become a follower. This ritual practice of *muja'hada* is conducted in various ways. For example, those who are about to join *Wâhidiyat* have to practise *muja'hada* for forty days consecutively. According to my informant, this kind of *muja'hada* constitutes the initial part of the *Wâhidiyat* ritual. This can also be regarded as a dowry (*mahr*), a word used to refer to an obligatory payment given by a husband to his wife before marriage. Like *mahr*, the forty days of *muja'hada* is an obligation for new followers. If they cannot recite the whole of *Šalawāt Wâhidiyat*, they must read part of the text. This allows those who cannot read Arabic fluently, to become followers of *Wâhidiyat*. Unlike the ritual practice in a Sufi order (*tarekat*), to become a member of *Wâhidiyat*, the candidate does not undergo an initiation rite *bay’at* (a vow of allegiance) to his or her master.

Other rituals of *muja'hada* are conducted in *Wâhidiyat* on the basis of a set schedule, such as *Mujahada Yaumiyyat* (daily), *Mujahada Usbu’iyyat* (weekly) *Mujahada Shahriyyat* (monthly, by the followers in each sub district, *kecamatan*), *Mujahada Rub’ al-Sanat* (quarterly, by the followers in each regency, *kabupaten*), *Mujahada Nisf al-Sanat* (half yearly, by all followers in one province), and *Mujahada Kubrā* (the great *Mujahada*). This last ritual is held twice a year at the centre of *Wâhidiyat* to commemorate the birth day of *Wâhidiyat* and the *Isra’ Mi’raj* (the night journey and the ascension of the Prophet) (Anonymous 1989). Apart from these kinds of *mujahada*, there are other kinds of *muja'hada* which are conducted for particular purposes such as *Mujahada Pertanian* (*Mujahada for agricultural matters*), *Mujahada Pengobatan* (*Mujahada for healing*), *Mujahada Kecerdasan* (*mujahada for increasing cleverness*), *Mujahada Keamanan* (*mujahada for security purposes*), *Mujahada Non-Stop* (24 hours *mujahada*, for improving remembrance of God and His Prophet), *Mujahada Pembangunan* (*mujahada for the inauguration of a building*) and *Mujahada Penyongsongan* (*mujahada for the success of an event*). Another type of *muja'hada* is conducted for particular events, such as a general election, the commemoration of the revelation of the Qur’an (*nuzul al-Qur’an*), Indonesian independence, and new year (Anonymous 1996).

These different uses indicate that the reciting of *Šalawāt Wâhidiyat* through ritual *muja'hada* is like a panacea by which all problems faced by people can be resolved. For example, one informant mentioned that his old grandfather suffered from acute hepatitis. His doctor could not do anything to cure the ailment and asked the grandson to bring his grandfather home. The grandson then asked all the members of his family to practise *muja'hada* every night
by asking a blessing of Abdul Latif Madjid’s karamah. As a result, the health of his old grandfather gradually improved. There are many other stories about miracles of mujāhada that have been experienced by the followers of Wahidiyat. These stories have been collected and published by Pengalaman Rohani Team (Spiritual Experience Team) either in the form of a book or magazine articles (Rohani 2004). These different forms of mujāhada are often used by Wahidiyat preachers to attract new followers.

Among mujāhada rituals conducted by members of Wahidiyat is the Mujahada Kubra, which is held twice annually. It is the most monumental event for all Wahidiyat followers. Since it is held at the central office of Wahidiyat in Pesantren Kedunglo where the tomb of the founder is located, it is to this mujāhada that all followers including men, women, youth and children flock to seek blessing and illumination (A., barakat wa nadra), either from Kyai Abdul Madjid, the founder of Wahidiyat or Abdul Latif Madjid. In order to seek blessing from the founder, the Wahidiyat followers usually visit his tomb and perform mujāhada there. The grave of the founder has become an important local pilgrimage site for his followers. Meanwhile, in order to seek barakah from Abdul Latif Madjid, they have to conduct a visitation (J., pisowanan). Pisowanan gives followers the opportunity to come and see the leader of Wahidiyat. Visitation is usually held in the morning after the dawn prayer. Before a pisowanan starts, all followers should sit in a long line so that they have a chance to shake hands with the leader and kiss his hand. Very often during pisowanan they cry hysterically and faint after succeeding in kissing the hand of their leader. Since both the late Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf and Abdul Latif Madjid are deemed to be saints (wali), for Wahidiyat followers visiting the tomb of Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf and shaking and kissing the hand of Abdul Latif Madjid offer intimacy with them. They convey a kind of blessing. As Werbner has argued, since a saint is regarded by Sufi followers as having divine sanctity which can irradiate them, to touch anything which is related to the saint is like absorbing his spiritual power (Werbner 2003).

Mujahada Kubra is a major event which involves followers from many regions throughout Indonesia and overseas as well. In order to avoid overcrowding, this event is divided into five sessions held over five days. The first session (Thursday evening) is for the preachers and board members of Wahidiyat from all levels of the organization, the second session (Friday evening) is for followers who are mothers, the third session (Saturday evening) is for followers who are young, the fourth session (Sunday morning) is for children, and the fifth session (Monday evening) is for followers who are fathers. Each session consists of a lecture on Wahidiyat, edicts (ītāwa) and instructions (I., amanah) of the leader and the mujāhada ritual. Although Mujahada Kubra is divided
into five sessions, each of which should be followed by particular people, most followers from cities outside of Kediri often participate in all sessions of Mujahada Kubra, regardless of the sessions. Those who join the ritual consist of different ages and genders (Anonymous 1999b). The fact that women can participate in the mujahada ritual confirms Howell’s observation that women are well represented in religious groups such as tarekat and are now active in the Majlis Dhikr groups (Howell et al 2001). This contrasts with previous times when the vast majority of those who joined tarekat were elderly people and men who had ‘abandoned their worldly interest’ (Dhofier 1999).

Plate 4.5: Female participants waiting for a pisowanan session

Plate 4.6: Female participants during a pisowanan session
Plate 4.7: Male participants at a Mujāhada Kubrā waiting for a pisowanan session

Plate 4.8: Male participants kissing their leader’s hand during pisowanan session
Plate 4.9: The participants at a Mujahada Kubrah praying at the tomb of Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf (the founder of the Wahdatiat group)

Plate 4.10: Children crying during Mujahada Kubrah ritual in Pesantren Kedunglo, Kediri.
The *Wahidiyat* lecture during *Mujahada Kubra* is usually given by an appointed preacher. The aim of this lecture is to increase the followers’ understanding and strengthen their loyalty to *Wahidiyat*. It is in this lecture that the preacher usually persuades the followers of the importance of reciting *Salawat Wahidiyat* and *mujahada*, telling of miraculous stories experienced by other followers. Only those who come early are able to sit near the stage to follow this lecture, others sit on mats outside the main location, where they can follow the lecture from a big video-link screen provided by the officials.

Unlike other Sufi orders which require their followers to have reached a certain age, in *Wahidiyat*, children are allowed not only to participate in *Mujahada Kubra* ritual but also to become *Wahidiyat* followers. Other Muslim groups object to this, arguing that the involvement of children in Sufi practice does not educate them since they are too young to experience and practise Sufi knowledge. As informed by Sodli, one of Muhammadiyah members compares the involvement of children in Sufism to asking a baby to eat hot chilli (Sodli 1990:28). In other words, it is argued that Sufi practices will harm the mental development of the children. In contrast, from *Wahidiyat*’s point of view, this involvement of children in *Wahidiyat* practices aims to introduce them to the awareness of God and his Prophet at an early stage of their lives, and as such, it is expected that this awareness will endure when they have grown up.
Plate 4.12: Female students crying during a prayer session in Mujāhada Kubrā ritual in Pesantren Kedunglo, Kediri
The reciting of Șalawât Waḥidiyat during Mujāhada Kubrā is conducted in unison (I. berjamaah) led by a leader (I., imam). It is interesting to note here that there are no qualifications for becoming an imam in the Mujāhada Kubra. Whether imam are men is not a big issue. Women can become imam for Mujāhada Kubrā, even though the participants of Mujāhada Kubrā are mostly male. Even adolescents and children can become imam as long as they can read the text of Șalawât Waḥidiyat fluently. Followers are expected to weep as an expression of their deep repentance during the mujāhada ritual. The louder they weep, the deeper is their regret of their misdeeds. According to the teaching of Waḥidiyat, inability to weep during mujāhada ritual indicates that person suffers from ‘stubbornness’ (kerasnya hati) and this stubbornness is as a result of sins.

After reciting Șalawât during mujāhada, the mujāhidin (the participants of mujāhada) perform the istighrāq ritual. According to Sufi teaching, this term refers to ‘the state of immersion in God’ as a result of dhikr’ (Trimingham 1971). In Waḥidiyat, the istighrāq ritual is a part of themujāhada ritual where the followers should be silent. During this time they must practise three kinds of istighrāq. The first is istighrāq waḥidiyyat, meaning that they have to concentrate and realize that everything in this world, including one’s life, is created by God. The second is istighrāq bi haqīqal-Muḥammadīyyat which means that everything that was created by God including oneself is as a result of the light of Muhammad (Nūr Muḥammad). The third kind of istighrāq is istighrāq ahadiyyat which refers to the state of immersion in God and the state of fana’ dhauqiyyat (Madjid 2000b:25-31). In his attempt to explain the meaning of istighrāq ahadiyyat, Kyai Latif quoted the definition of maḥabbat given by Junayd al-Baghdādi as follows:

…therefore those who love God (maḥabbat) are those who melt themselves within God which is called fana’ not manuggaling kawula marang Gusti (the union of slaves with God). As a result, all of their movements are in fact God’s movements…

At the end of reciting Șalawât in the mujāhada ritual, all the participants are required to stand facing the four directions in turn while reciting loudly the word ‘fafirṛ ila Allah (Turn to God). This ritual is performed to call humankind from all over the world to return to the path of God. This ritual follows a ritual conducted by the prophet Abraham. It was reported that when he finished building the holy Ka‘bah, he then called humankind to perform pilgrimage (hajj) standing at the top of the hill Qubays and facing all four directions in turn.

After the mujāhada ritual finishes, the last part of each session in the Mujāhada Kubrā is edicts (fatwa) and instructions (amanah) presented by the leader of
Waḥidiyat, Abdul Latif Madjid. The topic of the fatwā is chosen by Abdul Latif Madjid himself in accordance with the audience and the participants of mujāhada. He often delivers a speech which touches the heart of the audiences, leading them to weep. He very often comes to the location of the mujāhada after all the other parts of the ceremony have been completed. He walks from his house to reach the stage, followed by a group of people including his pramu (male assistants), official male members of Waḥidiyat, male security guards in semi-military uniform and one person holding a lamp at the front of group, even though it is day time. This group is followed by Ibu Nyai (the kyai’s wife) and his mother who are followed by pramu wanita (female assistants) and female security guards. When this group of people marches to the location, all the mujāhada participants are asked to stand in order to show respect for their leader. Most of them are weeping and shouting when they see their leader walk to the stage. The topic of his fatwa is not determined beforehand and as a result the audience does not know about the topic in advance.

Because Mujāhada Kubrā is a monumental event in Waḥidiyat, most of other mujāhada are also conducted around this event. For example, Mujāhada Penyongsongan is held in the pesantren forty days before the Mujāhada Kubrā is held. This mujāhada is conducted to ask God for the success of the Mujāhada Kubrā ritual. Other mujāhada are also held during the Mujāhada Kubrā such as Mujāhada Keamanan (mujāhada for security), Mujāhada Non-Stop (to keep remembering God), and Mujāhada Keuangan (mujāhada for raising money). The latter is held in order that this Mujāhada Kubrā can raise funding not only for the success of the Mujāhada Kubrā, but also for the preaching of Waḥidiyat. It is in this Mujāhada Kubrā that the followers of Waḥidiyat have a direct chance to contribute to the struggle for awareness of God and the Prophet within Waḥidiyat by putting some money into donation boxes (I., kotak amal). The places where these kinds of mujāhada are held are usually separated from the main hall of Mujāhada Kubrā and only those who are elected officially by the Waḥidiyat board can participate in these mujāhada.

During Mujāhada Kubrā, the followers also have a chance to give a voluntary donation for the struggle of Waḥidiyat by exchanging some money for a pack of sugar. The sugar, which is provided by the committee of Mujāhada Kubrā in the location, is believed to be efficacious for medical purposes. To use the sugar for medical purposes is very simple. One can add a teaspoon of sugar to water as a drink or mix sugar with food. The use of sugar as a means of healing (I., suwuk) is commonly practised in the local Sufi tradition. Other substances used for healing are water and salt. The sugar resembles normal sugar but it is provided by the committee after going through a process of special mujāhada, which is called Mujāhada Gula (obat) (Mujāhada for sugar medication). This mujāhada is conducted with particular prayers by individuals elected by the committee. It should be held for three consecutive days and nights without stopping.
Plate 4.13: The leader of Wāḥidīyat, Kyai Abdul Latif Madjid giving edicts (fatwa) in Mujāhada Kubrā.
Those who are involved in the mujāhada are not allowed to talk during the ritual. The mujāhada is divided into several phases, and each phase takes two hours and fifteen minutes. After finishing the mujāhada, the people involved in the ritual have to blow on sugar that they have been provided three times.

For Waḥidiyat followers the Mujāhada Kubrā held at the Waḥidiyat centre in Kedunglo can be seen as a pilgrimage which involves a process of ‘spiritual renewal and a renewal of personhood through contact with a sacred highly structured and complex set of symbolic operations which bring about the desired transformation both in moral persona of a pilgrim, including his or her acquisition of the desired sacred substances to be taken back on the journey home, and of the community’ (Werbner 2003). The annual Mujāhada Kubrā is regarded as the ultimate ritual in Waḥidiyat, functioning not only as spiritual renewal but also as a renewal of Waḥidiyat identity. In this sense, Mujāhada Kubrā can be compared with the great pilgrimage to Mecca. It is in such pilgrimage that Muslims from quite separate social backgrounds gather. As observed by Gilsenan (1993:17) in the pilgrimage ‘the collective quest of pilgrims for blessing or knowledge was one that gave form and substance to the idea of the umma. These pilgrimages served as channels of information.’ After returning from the pilgrimage, Muslims will feel that they have been born again in this world as a new person.

4.6. The Strategy to Preaching Ṣalawāt Waḥidiyat (Da’wah Waḥidiyat) in Implementing Sufi Tolerance: The Role of Pesantren

As Howell points out, ‘the pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) have been both the loci of tarekat and important sources of recruitment for them, with former pupils returning later in life to their old pesantren, or to another in the pesantren network, to undertake more weighty spiritual regimes’ (Howell 2001:705). This view might be valid only in the case of some pesantren which provide either the basics of Islamic teachings or the teaching of tarekat or a Sufi order. However, as Howell (2001), Zulkifli (2002) and Dhofier (1982) argue, although most pesantren in Java do not have a particular tarekat branch, the life in most pesantren still involves the practice of intimate aspects of Sufism such as reciting of dhikr and wirid. This is valid if Sufism is conceived not merely as the practices of a Sufi order but as ascetic and devotional practices that do not need to be involved with mystical way. Therefore, many students (santri) in those pesantren who join in the performance of collective dhikr and perform a particular wirid (chanting religious litanies) may not be members of a Sufi order.
This might be well explained by another expression that ‘a follower of tarekat is also a Sufi, but a Sufi does not have to be a follower of tarekat’ (Zulkifli 2001). Pesantren have thus played an important role in the maintenance of Sufi practices from the early days of pesantren in Indonesia.

Despite the fact that Wāhīdiyat is not a Sufi group, it nevertheless teaches and practises Sufi teaching as practised by other Sufi orders. In order to develop its teachings, Wāhīdiyat realizes that pesantren are a strategic means to disseminate its teaching. Therefore, pesantren are used not merely to teach basic religious knowledge, the Qur’an, law and theology, to mould Wāhīdiyat ‘ulama’ (Muslim scholars) who are the heirs of the prophets (A., warاث al-anbiya’) but also to create Wāhīdiyat cadres active in every aspect of life. To be more specific, the education system in the pesantren strives to mould wali yang intelek, intelektual yang wali: ‘intellectual saints’ (wali or ārif who also master secular knowledge), and ‘saintly intellectuals’ (scholars of modern knowledge who also have achieved ma’rifat). A similar vision is used particularly by pesantren which adopt a secular system of education as well as salafi pesantren methods. Pesantren Tebuireng in Jombang, for example, aims to train its students to become ulama intelektuil and intelektuil ulama (Dhofier 1999).

To implement this vision, Pesantren Kedunglo offers two types of education. The first type is an educational system which is in cooperation with the Ministry of National Education (I., Departemen Pendidikan Nasional), and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (I., Departemen Agama) offering courses ranging from elementary level to university level (SD, SMP, SMU and Sekolah Tinggi Ekonomi Wāhīdiyat and Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam). This system enables these various schools to receive educational subsidies from both the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The second type is a diniyah system which adopts pesantren methods. This system consists of several levels from Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur’an (TPA), Madrasah Ibtidaiyat (elementary school), through Madrasah Thanāwiyat (secondary), to Madrasah ‘Āliyat (high school). The characteristics of the diniyah system can be clearly seen from the texts used in the pesantren. Most of the texts are classical Arabic texts (I., kitab kuning) which are also widely used in many other pesantren salaf (traditional pesantren) and include Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), Arab grammar (Nahw and Saraf), theology (Tawḥīd), and the study of the Prophetic tradition (Ḥadīth), the knowledge of Ḥadīth (‘Ulūm al-Ḥadīth), Islamic history (Tārīkh), and Islamic ethics (Akhlaq). The texts are given to students in evening class in accordance with their level of study. In addition to the texts, other local subjects

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35 A Pesantren Salafī is a pesantren which still preserves the teaching of classical texts as essential education.
such as kewahidiyahan (Wāhidiyat lectures) and public speaking (I.,Praktek Khītābat or Pidato) are taught at all levels of education in Wāhidiyat. As argued by Abdul Mujib, a teacher in the pesantren, these two subjects, followed by the practice of the mujāhada ritual, give a firm grounding for students to achieve ma’rifat, the ultimate stage of Sufi practice and mould a cadre of Wāhidiyat who can fulfil the proselytization of Wāhidiyat.36

Although the pesantren has adopted the diniyah system, there is no segregation between female and male students in the classroom. Both are treated equally in terms of their rights to have an access to education. They are often involved together in pesantren activities such as sports, and Boy- and Girl- Scouts. Segregation is applied within pesantren only in the mujāhada ritual, the five daily prayers, and the weekly al-Ḥikaminstruction (Pengajian Mingguan Kitab al-Hikam). In contrast, the segregation of female and male students is strictly applied at other neighboring pesantren salaf such as Pesantren Lirboyo, Pesantren Ploso, and Pesantren Jampes for most of the students’ daily pesantren life.

In addition to the pesantren, another means used to cultivate the teachings of Wāhidiyat is through the establishment of a central organization. The use of this organization to spread the teaching of Wāhidiyat is considered important. This belief is inspired by the words of ‘Aṭī ibn ‘Abī Ṭālib, ‘the truth (al-haq) without organization will be defeated by the untruth (al-bāṭil) with organization.’ Therefore, since its inception, the founder of Wāhidiyat realized that the establishment of an organization was an important tool to facilitate the spread of his teachings. In the hands of his son, Kyai Abdul Latif Madjid, the management of the Wāhidiyat organization has been increasingly improved. According to a recent report, Wāhidiyat has established branches in seventeen provinces37 and over 125 regencies throughout Indonesia, and it has 300 cooperatives (koperasi Wahidiyah). Kyai Abdul Latif Madjid claims that Wāhidiyat also has several overseas agencies in Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, Netherlands, England, Saudi Arabia, France, Peru, and Australia (Melbourne) (Madjid 2001:21-27). Nevertheless, the exact number of Wāhidiyat followers and their social background are unknown because no official record has been made by the official board of Wāhidiyat, nor are new followers officially registered.

36 Interview with Abdul Mujib, Kediri, September, 2004.
37 These seventeen provinces are: East Java, Central Java, West Java, Lampung, North Sumatra, South Sumatra, Jambi, Riau, Bali, East Kalimantan, South Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, West Kalimantan, Gorontalo, NTT, Papua (Merauke), and South Sulawesi. [Interview with Zainuddin, Kediri, September, 2004].
The structure of Waḥidiyat’s organization follows the typical structure of other Islamic organizations, such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. It consists of a central board office, representatives in provinces, regencies, sub-districts, and villages. The aims of this structure are to build strong ties among the followers, who cannot directly consult with the central board, and to help coordinate activities according to the level of the organizational structure. Since the structure of Waḥidiyat involves a combination of organization and a foundation, the central board of Waḥidiyat comprises the head of the foundation who is also the head of the central organization and the guardian of the Waḥidiyat struggle (pengasuh perjuangan). It has a number of departments, including a department of regional affairs (departemen urusan wilayah/daerah), department of proselytization and development (departemen penyiaran dan pembinaan), department of women’s development (departemen pembina wanita), department of adolescent’s development (departemen pembina remaja), department of children’s development (departemen pembina anak-anak), department of finance (departemen keuangan), department of cooperative (departemen koperasi), department of education and culture (departemen pendidikan dan kebudayaan), and department of equipment (departemen perlengkapan). These departments
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are headed by pramu who are appointed directly by the head of Wahidiatn as pengasuh perjuangan (The guardian of the struggle). The leader of Wahidiatn argues that the structure of Wahidiatn is derived from his concept of ‘a state without land.’ In other words, he has established a structure which is similar to that of a state government in its function and purpose. Such a structure requires officials to show responsibility towards the followers. In turn, like the people of a nation, the followers should take responsibility for supporting the struggle within Wahidiatn.38

The highest authority and decision-making body in the Wahidiatn is, therefore, in the hands of Kyai Abdul Latif Madjid as the guardian of the Wahidiatn’s struggle and as the head of the foundation and organization. He is called Romo Yahi39 (the old kyai) among his followers. As Romo Yahi, for example, he can freely choose someone to be a pramu in a particular department, while at the same time he can replace one pramu with another if the pramu is regarded as an unsuccessful manager of his or her department. He also has the authority to set up new departments on the basis of the needs of the organization. Unlike other Islamic organizations in Indonesia such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, Wahidiatn does not have a board of advisors or a religious council which can control the head of the organization.

In order to support and run activities, the department of finance seeks and draws funding resources from many activities such as agriculture, cooperatives, printing, farming, stores, financial government assistance, as well as financial assistance from the followers. The financial assistance collected from the followers can be divided into three categories. The first category is income contribution (I., sumbangan pendapatan), that is, at least one percent of the followers’ income is taken for the organization’s funds every month. This can be taken from their daily income, monthly income or their occasional income. The second category is contributions taken from poll tax (I., zakat fitrah), wealth tax (A., zakat māl), and charitable gifts (A., ṣadaqat). The third category is income from donations which are given voluntarily by followers on a daily basis. These three categories of funding are provided by all followers who earn their own income. The officials encourage the followers to increase their donations (Anonymous 1424b:30-31).

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38 Interview with Kyai Abdul Latif Madjid, Kediri, January 2005.
39 Romo Yahi is the highest title in the Wahidiatn and given only to Abdul Latif Madjid as pengasuh perjuangan Wahidiatn (the guardian of Wahidiatn’s struggle). His pramu cannot use this title. They can only be called as kyai. In contrast, in many other pesantren salaf, kyai is the highest title given to the leader of pesantren.
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Figure 4.1 The Organizational Structure of Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyat.

Source: Interview with Kyai Zainuddin, Kediri November 2004
At one time, \textit{Wahidiyat} received financial aid from the government, even though with particular conditions, for example, that the aid should be free from any interest of government (at least, this notion was mentioned in the general program of the \textit{Wahidiyat} organization in 1998)\textsuperscript{40}. In fact, government financial assistance is a big issue for \textit{pesantren} particularly those categorized as traditional \textit{pesantren}. As Pranowo observed, refusing to accept financial assistance from the government might be regarded as demonstrating a close-minded attitude. On the other hand, the refusal of the kyai leaders of \textit{pesantren} to accept any governmental assistance for their \textit{pesantren} can be described as part of ‘a manifestation of the never-ending endeavor to achieve the self reliance, which is so essential to santri tradition’ (Pranowo 1991:39-55). Furthermore, the refusal of \textit{pesantren} to accept government assistance can be said to inculcate the value of \textit{ikhlas} (sincerity) which is part of Sufi teaching. It also avoids any intervention from the government, which might lessen the independence of the \textit{pesantren}. Currently, the head of \textit{Wahidiyat} does not want to receive any financial assistance from government. According to him, the reason is that no financial assistance from government can be free from corruption (I., \textit{pungutan liar}). If \textit{Wahidiyat} receives this assistance, it might be considered to be involved in such corruption. As a result, instead of receiving government donations, \textit{Wahidiyat} has developed other resources.

According to informants, followers are not forced by the central department of finance to give alms and money to the central organization of \textit{Wahidiyat}. Nevertheless, the followers are strongly encouraged to give donations, poll tax (\textit{zakat fitrah}), and wealth tax (A., \textit{zakat m\'al}, I., \textit{zakat pendapatan}) for the struggle of \textit{Wahidiyat}. The department argues that although it does not ask \textit{zakat} and donation from the followers, it only represents the \textit{Wahidiyat} organization’s rights, which are in the hands of its followers. In order to implement this policy, the department has officially given detailed instructions to its representatives at all levels regarding the methods of collecting donations.

According to Islamic jurisprudence, there is no obligation for Muslims to give \textit{zakat pendapatan} or \textit{zakat m\'al} (wealth tax) to close neighbours. But, in the case of \textit{zakat fitrah}, this should be distributed directly to the needy and the poor who live in the nearest place where the donors spend the first day of the month of Syawal. It is not to be given to an organization (Qardhawi 1995:411). To resolve this problem, the officials in \textit{Wahidiyat}, particularly the department of finance, regard themselves as mustahiq\textsuperscript{41}, so the followers can give their \textit{zakat}

\textsuperscript{40} General Program of The \textit{Wahidiyat} Foundation Struggle and Kedunglo Islamic Boarding School Kediri Regency, East Java Province (Program Umum Yayasan Perjuangan dan Pondok Pesantren Kedunglo Kodya Kediri Provinsi Jawa Timur (25 April 1998).

\textsuperscript{41} Mustahiq refers to people who are eligible to receive \textit{zakat}. The Qur’an describes eight groups of people who are able to receive \textit{zakat} including the poor (\textit{miskin}), the needy (\textit{f\’aqir}), employees of \textit{zakat} (\textit{am\'il}), those
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fitrah to the department, which has representatives at all levels from provinces to villages (Anonymous 1423b). Of the eight groups of people who are eligible to receive zakat (mustahiq), the department defines itself as sabilillah bi sabil al-khair or fisabilillah, rather than ‘amil as commonly practised by other institutions. For this reason, the amount of money collected from zakat is used mainly to support the Wāḥidiyat struggle, not for other purposes.

Another method to collect financial support from followers is through collection boxes provided to followers by the financial department of Wāḥidiyat. This box should be put in front of followers’ houses. It is highly recommended that the followers put some money into the box everyday with pure intention (I., ikhlas), regardless of the amount. The box will be collected by Imam Jama’ah (the village leader of Wāḥidiyat) on a weekly basis when the Mujāhada ‘Uṣbū’iyyat (weekly mujāhada) is held in the village. Fifteen percent of the money collected from either zakat or dana box (box donation) is taken to run the organization of Wāḥidiyat in the village, while the rest is kept by the Imam Jama’ah Induk (the main village leader of Wāḥidiyat). The Imam Jama’ah Induk is chosen from among the village leaders. The department of finance at sub-district level then collects the funds every month and passes them on to the department of finance at regency level. At the end of every month the funds should be given to the central department of finance after deducting the funds for the organization at the regency level (Anonymous 1423a:31-32).

The department of finance has an annual target of one hundred and twenty seven million rupiah (AUD$ 18,142,86) from zakat fitrah, twenty seven million (AUD$ 3,857,14) from zakat mal and one hundred fifty million (AUD$ 21,428,57)42 from donations. However, this amount is just a target, and in fact the amount of money from those sources is frequently less than the target. This is because followers have different views of zakat, based on their own madhab (Islamic law school) background. This influences their acceptance of the obligation to pay zakat through Wāḥidiyat. Furthermore, the various degrees of loyalty and submission of the followers to the leader affect the level of contribution of zakat and the proportion of donations from followers’ income (sumbangan pendapatan) given to the Wāḥidiyat (Anonymous 1424b).

According to one informant, the followers should give donations to the organization simply to express their gratitude, sacrifice and responsibility to help the organization in its efforts to bring Muslims to the consciousness of God and His Prophet. This is a hard task for the organization, which requires

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42 $AUD 1 = Rp 7000

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who have just embraced Islam (mu’alla‘), a debtor (ghārim), freed slaves (riqāb), those who struggle in the cause of Allah (fisabilillah) and wayfarers (Ibn sabi‘).
not only time, organizational management but also funds. Therefore, followers need to give financial assistance to the organization not only for the sake of the organization but also for the benefit of the followers themselves, particularly to improve their closeness to God and His Prophet. In other words, in order to achieve ma’rifat bi-Allah wa rasūlihi, the followers of Wāḥīdiyat should make an effort to use their ability, wealth, and knowledge to help the struggle of Wāḥīdiyat. All of these efforts should be directed to follow the guidance of Romo Yahi (the leader of Wāḥīdiyat). In this sense, sacrifice is strongly stressed within this group, and this has become a determining factor in measuring followers’ submission (A., taslim) to the leader of Wāḥīdiyat.

All Wāḥīdiyat followers have a responsibility to bring people regardless of their ethnic group, religious group or age, to the consciousness of God and His Prophet. In other words, they have a duty to spread the teaching of Wāḥīdiyat, including the Ṣalawāt Wāḥīdiyat, to other people including Muslims and non-Muslims. According to Slamet, a central Wāḥīdiyat official, spreading the teaching of Wāḥīdiyat to non-Muslims, is conducted without coercion. He added that, in many cases, they are interested in practising Wāḥīdiyat ritual after they face a difficult problem and they ask Wāḥīdiyat to solve it. In this case, Slamet pointed out that Wāḥīdiyat officials never asked them to convert to Islam.43 The opportunity to preach the teaching of Wāḥīdiyat and the Ṣalawāt is to be given by the founder not only to the official board members but also to the followers and other people. As a result, those who have received and practised Ṣalawāt Wāḥīdiyat can spread knowledge of the Ṣalawāt to others without asking for an ijāza (license) from the leader. With this feature, Wāḥīdiyat is, in effect, a missionary group which strongly urges its followers to spread the teachings of Wāḥīdiyat and the Ṣalawāt and to seek new followers. The missionary nature of Wāḥīdiyat was clearly reflected by Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf. For instance, he suggested to his followers on the 25th anniversary of Ṣalawāt Wāḥīdiyat that, ‘Within a month, every Wāḥīdiyat follower should recruit at least one new follower’ (Anonymous 1989:70).

In contrast, other Sufi orders, such as Qodiriyyah, Naqshbandiyah and Tijaniyah, require bay’at and ijāza for their followers. Only particular disciples who have received ijāza from their master are able to seek new followers. In line with this, there are three types of ijāza. The first is the lowest one given to disciples to practise tarekat. The second ijāza gives authority to disciples, as the representatives of their master, to guide others in practising Sufism. The third one is the highest ijāza, which authorizes the holder as Sufi master to offer initiation to novices (Bruinessen 1992:87).

43 Interview with Slamet, Kediri, September, 2004.
Despite the fact that all followers are responsible for spreading the teaching of Wāhidīyat and the Śalawāt, the Wāhidīyat organization has established a department of proselytization and development of Wāhidīyat which focuses on spreading the teaching of Wāhidīyat. This department is responsible for training Wāhidīyat male preachers (A. dāʿī), female preachers (A. dāʿīyyat) and cadres so that they can preach and offer true information concerning the teaching and the ritual of Wāhidīyat. One of the activities of this department is to give short courses and regular upgrading training for preachers, members of board of the organization, and followers at all levels. Such activities not only enhance members’ conceptual and practical understanding of Wāhidīyat teaching, but also prepare them to become skillful cadres who are able to fulfill organizational tasks.

According to the book entitled Bahan Up Grading Daʿī Wahidiyah Bagian B (Upgrading Materials for Wāhidīyat Preachers Part B, n.d.), the importance of spreading the teachings of Wāhidīyat can be compared with the duty to spread Islam (daʿwa Islāmiyyat) itself. The rationale of this notion is that the teaching of Wāhidīyat, in fact, contains an introduction to God and the Prophet which is also part of Islamic teachings. If that is the case, spreading Wāhidīyat to other people can be considered as the same obligation as spreading Islamic teachings. It is, therefore, claimed that the spreading of Wāhidīyat among other people is sanctioned by the Qur’anic verses and the Prophetic tradition. In turn, those who do not spread the teaching of Wāhidīyat can be regarded as violating Islamic teachings (Anonymous 1989:74). To support this argument, the following Islamic verses are quoted from the Qur’an and hadith:

And from among you there should be a party who invites to good and enjoins what is right and forbids the wrong, and these it is that shall be successful (3:104).

Those who are not concerned with Muslim affairs are not from their group (narrated by Ṭabrānī)

Surely those who conceal the clear proofs and the guidance that We revealed after We made it clear in the Book for people, those it is whom Allah shall curse, and those who curse shall curse them too (1:159).

The first verse cited here implies that the spreading of Wāhidīyat teaching is as obligatory as inviting others to be good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong (I., amar maʿrufnahi munkar). In contrast, the Prophetic sayings and the Qur’ān verses quoted here show that those who do not want to spread the teaching of Wāhidīyat can be likened not only to those who ignore other Muslims’ affairs but also to those who hide the clear proof and guidance that God has revealed. However, some people object to the obligation to spread
Waḥidiyat, particularly if it is justified by the texts from the Qur’an and hadith. They claim that the Qur’an and hadith text quoted here actually have a general meaning and do not therefore specifically refer to the spreading of Waḥidiyat.

As a Sufi missionary group, Waḥidiyat applies a strategy of preaching which draws its inspiration from the prophets’ preaching. The prophets of God were equipped with miracles (A., mu’jiza) by which they proved their truthfulness. Whereas others were incapable of doing the same, Kyai Abdul Latif Madjid told me that the oldest strategy for preaching Islam is based on miracles performed by the prophets for introducing God to the people (A., ummat). Those miracles were given to the prophets in order to respond to people’s needs. In line with this, the strategy of preaching in Waḥidiyat is intended to meet people’s needs, including all aspects of life such as the need to achieve ma’rifat bi-Allaḥ, quietness of heart, good health, and economic needs. Abdul Latif Madjid maintains that these are the main needs of human beings and they should be fulfilled by Waḥidiyat. Furthermore, he claims that Waḥidiyat has responded to all of these needs and has thus succeeded in attracting rural as well as urban followers regardless of their social group, age, political party and religious background. He put it this way:

All Praises are due to Allah. After practising Waḥidiyat, we have been imbued with capacities. We easily love God, we easily apply lillah and billah, and easily perform worship. Furthermore, owing to Salawat Waḥidiyat’s blessing (I, berkah) and the Prophet’s mediation, according to our colleagues’ reports, all praises are due to Allah, all of the people’s problems can be solved: their economic problems, health problems or whatever their problems are, if they pray seriously, God will answer their prayers giving them [a solution] from unpredictable ways and predictable ways (Madjid 1423b:9).

Other strategies and methods to preach and advertise Waḥidiyat include meeting people personally, explaining Waḥidiyat at meetings involving many groups of people, writing letters of dakwah, and spreading Waḥidiyat through newspapers, radio and television. Before applying these methods, all Waḥidiyat preachers should perform a special mujāhada to ask God for success in their efforts. It is also suggested that every follower of Waḥidiyat put such things as a Waḥidiyat calendar, the Waḥidiyat logo, the picture of Kyai Madjid Ma’ruf and Kyai Latif in their home and fly the Waḥidiyat flag wherever a ritual of mujāhada is scheduled to be held (Anonymous 1425c:10-14). This will make Waḥidiyat easily recognized.

The preaching of Wāḥīdiyyat as synonymous with the preaching of Islam does not prevent this group from being tolerant of other religious followers who wish to practise Šalawāt Wāḥīdiyyat. This group allows members of other religions to practise the Šalawāt without requiring them to convert to Islam. Other Muslim groups might object to this practice but it can be regarded as part of Wāḥīdiyyat strategy to spread the Šalawāt Wāḥīdiyyat while demonstrating the tolerant nature of Sufism in general toward other religious faiths. In this sense, Abdul Latif Madjid argues that members of other religions are not compelled to convert to Islam by practising Šalawāt Wāḥīdiyyat, but they are only asked to approach God. For him, the most important thing is that they want to recite Šalawāt Wāḥīdiyyat. When asked whether their good deeds (I. amal saleh) will be accepted by God if they were not Muslim, he replies that one should distinguish between the good deeds and prayers (A. duʿā) in relation to God. Good deeds are a matter of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), while prayers (duʿā) or Šalawāt do not belong under fiqh rules. According to fiqh rules, good deeds (I., amal saleh) will only be accepted by God if they are performed by Muslims, not by other religious believers. However, since prayers are not under fiqh provisions, the prayers invoked by other religious followers can be granted by God, even though they are not Muslims. They may even be infidels (I., kafir). Abdul Latif Madjid gives the example of a Javanese man who did not perform ritual prayers or other religious acts but who came to a kyai to study the knowledge of invulnerability (I., ilmu kekebalan). After some years, the man was able to master the ilmu kekebalan and became an expert (I., jawara). This example, according to Abdul Latif Madjid, can be regarded as evidence that the man’s prayers were granted (A., ijabah) by God although he was not a committed Muslim. Kyai Abdul Latif Madjid, further argues that to become a Muslim is matter of divine guidance (I., hidayah). Since it is a matter of hidayah, people cannot compel other religious faiths to convert to Islam. For Abdul Latif, people’s willingness to recite and practise Šalawāt Wāḥīdiyyat is also a result of guidance (I., hidayah) (Madjid 2001:25). It is for this reason that after practising the forty days Mujāḥadah, seventy Balinese Hindu followers were also able to participate at the ritual of Mujāḥadah Kubrā in Pesantren Kedunglo (Madjid 1424:18-22). Kyai Abdul Latif describes Wāḥīdiyyat’s tolerance of other religions as follows:

Wāḥīdiyyat followers need not become Muslims. Wāḥīdiyyat does not compel people, but we only ask people to approach Allah. It is not a problem if you are not Muslims, the most important thing is that you read the Šalawāt Wāḥīdiyyat…recently a non-Muslim from Metro practised for fifteen days. Everything has a cause. He had a problem which made him upset. Then he met with a Wāḥīdiyyat follower. The follower offered him Šalawāt Wāḥīdiyyat to read. After fifteen days his problem could be solved, but he did not want to convert to Islam.”
The inclusiveness and tolerance of Wahidiyat is not a unique phenomenon among Sufi groups elsewhere. For instance, there have been studies showing the inclusiveness and tolerance of Sufi groups and practices in South Asia. Saheb observes the inclusiveness and tolerance shown by a Sufi group in Nagore, India. Both Muslim and Hindus celebrate the anniversary of the death of the Sufi saint Sahul Hameed Nagore Andavar, known as ‘urs or Kanduri, and attend his tomb (Saheb 1998). Saheb’s conclusion gains support from Werbner who concludes that most Sufi myths in South Asia contain a story of tolerance, inclusiveness and peace (Werbner 2003:26). Werbner further shows that the shaikh Zindapir, a Sufi master of the Naqshabandi order in Pakistan, for instance, is typical of Sufi saints in that he stresses the importance of inclusiveness and tolerance towards other religious faiths. As quoted by Werbner, the Sufi saint maintains that ‘the ‘true’ Islam does not discriminate between people of different creeds and faiths.’ The shaikh respects and treats other religious followers with generous hospitality because they are human beings and he does this for the love of God alone and no one else (Werbner, 2003:95). The successful history of Islamization in India, central Asia, Anatolia and Africa also shows that Sufi groups have played an important role in the process of the preaching of Islam since they have accommodated to the spiritual environment which has existed in those regions (Rahman 1979) and demonstrated flexibility in adaptation to incorporate ‘local religious customs and belief into their eclectic fold’ (Gilsenan, 1973).

4.7. Spiritual Experience and Spiritual Authority in Wahidiyat

Spiritual experience (I., pengalaman rohani) is inseparable from Sufi tradition. The term spiritual experience could also be translated as miracles (A. karamat) experienced by a Sufi master or Sufi follower as a result of his closeness to God. Within the Sufi tradition, stories of miracles are well documented in Sufi hagiographical works that are responsible for the spreading of those miracles stories in Muslim societies. Most of these miracle stories tend to describe the extraordinary powers of saints that seem to surpass natural law (Schimmel 1975).

The main questions here are how the idea of spiritual experience (I., pengalaman rohani) is understood and what the role of this spiritual experience is among Wahidiyat followers. This section will discuss these questions by describing the role of the Wahidiyat spiritual leader and then analysing the stories of spiritual experience reported by the followers.
The fact that every Waḥidiyat follower is able to be a leader (imam) in an mujāḥada ritual does not necessarily mean that authority in Waḥidiyat can be shared with others. Rather, the spiritual leader in Waḥidiyat is Kyai Abdul Latif Madjid, who is the central leader of this Sufi group. All things to do with the group are centred on the leader. This includes not only organizational matters but also spiritual matters such as any pengalaman rohani experienced by his followers. In this sense, pengalaman rohani and unusual events that happen to the followers are perceived to be the result of the miraculous power (A. maziyyat) of Ṣalawāt Waḥidiyat and the miraculous intervention of their spiritual leader. These miracles thus prove his sacred quality. In other words, pengalaman rohani can be understood as what Ewing (1990:59) describes as a social phenomenon since it is believed that the spiritual experience has been directly brought about and its content shaped by the leader. In the case of Wahidiyat, those spiritual experiences can be achieved by the followers while awake, though they mostly occur in dreams. This fact has inevitably made the leader central to the devotion of his followers in seeking his barakah (blessing) and attaining spiritual experience.

Therefore, it is not surprising that beside the quietness of heart which can be achieved by practising Ṣalawāt Waḥidiyat, pengalaman rohani is also considered an important achievement. Furthermore, this is considered the highest achievement that most followers aspire to attain. For instance, commenting on a Waḥidiyat follower who had published his experience of a vision of the Prophet in a magazine, an informant told me that he wanted to have the same spiritual experience. Although he had been practising Ṣalawāt Waḥidiyat for a long time, he had not yet attained the same experience. This notion is also found elsewhere, such as in Egypt and Morocco, where miracle and barakah are not only a source of individual and group satisfaction but also based on dreams in which one finds refuge (Gilsenan 1992:95).

Within Waḥidiyat, those who have themselves attained and those who have known other people who have achieved a spiritual experience should report this to the official board of Waḥidiyat. This official instruction is mentioned in a leaflet as follows: ‘write your experience or others’ experiences as a result of mujāḥada and tell it to the official board’(Anonymous 1989). A special team called The Spiritual Experience Team (Tim Pengalaman Rohani) has been set up to collect accounts of spiritual experiences from followers. In order to ensure the validity of these experiences, the team gives the followers a form which asks them to state that the pengalaman rohani they experienced really happened. After obtaining consent from them, the team then publishes the experience in a book or magazine. These accounts are similar to hagiographical Sufi stories. However, not all of the followers agree to share their spiritual experiences.
with the team. Some are reluctant to describe their experiences because they fear they are displaying *riyāʿ* (showing off), which is strongly opposed to Sufi teaching in general and the teaching of *Wāhidiyat* in particular, since the latter emphasizes *ikhlās* (absolute sincerity). Moreover, in the Sufi tradition, any kind of worship followed by *riyāʿ* is considered not only as committing the greatest sin but also as meaningless and even dangerous. Some people also disagree with the publishing spiritual experiences because this may cause others who do not have such spiritual experiences to become jealous. On the other hand, others take the view that recounting spiritual experiences to the team only expresses a divine gift of grace (*A., taḥadduth bi al-niʿmat*).

In fact, the achievement of a spiritual experience or *karamah* is not the ultimate aim of *Wāhidiyat* and other Sufi practices. Indeed, according to Sufi teaching, if disciples practise Sufi teachings just for the sake of gaining *karamah*, they will be hindered (*A., mahjūb*) in their search to be near God. Some Sufi theorists have even warned that *karamah* constitutes a temptation given by God in order to test His servant (W.Ernst 2003:71). Nevertheless, stories of spiritual experiences are familiar among *Wāhidiyat* followers. This is partly because such stories are introduced deliberately to the followers, not only through official rituals such as *mujāhada* but also through the publication of the book entitled *Shalawat Wahidiyah dan Pengalaman Rohani* as well as through a certain section of the *Aham* magazine which contains the stories of spiritual experience or *karamah* experienced by the followers. Like other hagiographical Sufi books, the book focuses on stories of the miraculous powers of the leader, as well as the peculiarities of *Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyat*, and prophesy.

However, if we examine the stories of spiritual experience in the book, we find that the majority of stories feature the figure of the leader with his miraculous powers, most of which are experienced by the followers in a dream. Spiritual experiences after seeing the leader performing such miracles are seldom experienced while awake. The stories that followers tell can be divided into several themes. The first theme is to do with who is the *Ghaouth* (the Help) of this age, and who is the real spiritual successor of the *Wāhidiyat* leader after the death of Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma′ruf. Examples of stories with these themes are given below:

A day before the ritual of *Mujāhada Kubrā Rajab* 1424 H. was held, I visited Kyai Abdul Latif Madjid asking him to pray for me to be able to join my soul with the holy soul of the servant of God. After doing *mujāhada*, I slept and had a vision of meeting with four people with white robes. The oldest man among these four people asked me, ‘Who are you? He said to me, ‘I am the prophet Abraham, this person is the prophet Moses, and this person is the prophet Solomon.’ But, he did not introduce the fourth person. Then,
I asked him, ‘Why are all of you here, and not in paradise?’ He replied, ‘I and all the prophets are here because we follow and support the struggle of the Prophet Muhammad which is now given to the His Majesty Romo Kyai Abdul Latif Madjid.’ Abraham said, ‘He has a channel of Nur alA’zam (great light) which is directly linked to the Prophet Muhammad. …. ‘look at Kyai Abdul Latif Madjid whose light connects to the Prophet and spreads to the universe.’ I witnessed that at that time the light was really coming out towards the Prophet Muhammad. Abraham continued to say, ‘From now on, those who wish to wusul toward God and His Prophet without Kyai Abdul Latif Madjid will not succeed in their journey, and my companions do not mind and I keep supporting Kyai Latif Madjid.’

In the middle of 1998, I read a book on Sufism in the middle of the night. I fell asleep and had a dream of visiting Kyai Abdul Latif Madjid. He asked me to wait for him in the living room, while he went into his room. Then he came and saw me with two plates of rice. He asked me to have dinner. After having dinner he showed me a letter of decision (surat keputusan) written by the Prophet Muhammad. The letter mentioned that Kyai Latif is the successor of Kyai Madjid, the author of Salawat Wāhidiyat. He let me read the letter. I was impressed with the beauty of the paper and the writing of the letter. Suddenly the room where we met was filled with a pile of books, and he said to me, ‘The letter from the Prophet has been given to me, yet why do people want to replace me, that is impossible…’

…One night, I had a dream that I was in a large garden. The garden was the most beautiful garden I had ever seen. I walked into the garden to enjoy some flowers planted near the bank of a river. While I enjoyed the beauty of the flowers, I was surprised that I heard a voice from the river water saying, ‘Kyai Abdul Latif Madjid is gauth hadha al-zaman (the Help of this age). Then, another voice said the same thing, but the voice was spoken by flowers and subsequently the stones, fish, ground, and birds said the same thing as the water and flowers did. One day after experiencing such dreams I came and saw Kyai Latif Madjid. While I was sitting, he asked me, ‘Have you had any spiritual experiences, Ocin?’ ‘Tell me.’ ‘I have known it.’ It was strange that I could not tell him anything, I just cried loudly in front of him.

It is clear that these stories are told to give certainty to Wāhidiyat followers, particularly, to define who is the successor to the Wāhidiyat leadership after the demise of Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf. These stories also tell us that Kyai Abdul Latif Madjid is not only a valid leader but was also spiritually chosen by the Prophet Muhammad himself and the other prophets. Furthermore, during the period of internal conflict, these stories would have been effectively used by the proponents of Abdul Latif Madjid to convince other followers who were still in doubt about giving their allegiance to Abdul Latif Madjid rather than to another figure.
Other stories of spiritual experience relate the benefits and the miraculous power of reciting Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat and the curses which result from insulting Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat and the leader. Examples of these themes are as follows:

At first, I was reluctant to recite Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat because I was still a teenager and I studied in a university which is opposed to the teaching of Wāḥidiyyat. As my father urged me to practise Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat, I began to practise the forty day mujāhada. At day seventeen, I had a dream that I had died and lay in a grave alone. Suddenly two angels came to torture me. When these two angels were about to torture me, there was a voice saying, ‘Do not torture my follower.’ Suddenly, there was a gentleman standing in front of me. The two angels paid respect to the gentleman by bending their head to him asking: ‘Oh the Prophet why do you forbid us to torture this body?’ The Prophet replied, ‘[because] he is already practicing Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat.’ Then I woke up.

…there is a leader of the people who is strongly opposed to Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat in my village. He does not believe in the existence of Ghauth. This person came to me and said to me: ‘the Ghauth does not exist. The Ghauth is a fictional name created by Abdul Latif Madjid from Kedunglo, who wants to be respected by people since he does not have any positions in other established Muslim organizations…So it is better for you to leave Wāḥidiyyat and join other established organizations. Wāḥidiyyat is guided by Satan.’ After several days I met with his wife who behaved like her husband. After this occurrence, the leader and his wife suffered from disease for 100 days and he died after that. The wife died several weeks after her husband. They even experienced a tragic and critical moment before they died. It seems to me that the husband and wife died because of God’s curse after they insulted Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat and Kyai Latif Madjid.

Kyai Arif Iskandari is a kyai or imam in my village mushalla (place for prayer). He is well known for his kesakten (spiritual power). When we conducted a mujāhada ritual in the mushalla, he drove us out from the mushalla…We told this incident to the leader of the village, and because of this occurrence, the leader of village asked me and Kyai Arif to meet in the village office to discuss the incident. But, in the meeting, Pak Arif denied everything that he had done. As a result we were involved in a heated discussion with him. After this incident, Pak Arif suffered a serious illness which caused him to be sent to a hospital for a month at a high cost. From my point of view, this happened to him because of the miracle of Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat.

Like the previous stories, these stories are still related to the figure of the leader and the Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat. However, in these tales the leader of Wāḥidiyyat
and Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat are described by the followers as agents who not only bring about goodness for those who surrender (A., taslīm) themselves to the leader but also misfortune for those who oppose him.

Other stories are prophetic and involve the leader’s insight into things to come as well as into present circumstances. The following story by a female follower can be categorised as one such prophetic story:

At the beginning of Muharram month 1994, it was about 2.00 am, I woke up to perform night prayer (tahajjud) and ritual mujāhada. During mujāhada Kyai Abdul Latif Madjid came dressed in a suit. He asked me to sit down beside Mr. Karna Aji, and he sat in front of us as if he would marry us. He said to us: ‘I will give both of you a task.’ I and Mr. Karna were friends at university but we are in different departments. After experiencing the dream, I fell in love with him, but as woman I tried to hide the feeling. Finally, after some years Mr. Karna and I married. Then, Kyai Abdul Latif chose us as coordinators in the official board of Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat. At that time, I just shed tears because I remembered the dream that I had experienced several years ago.

According to the dreamer, this experience proves that Abdul Latif Madjid is not only able to understand the destiny of every follower but is also able to communicate with his followers wherever they are (Rohani 2004:156-58).

Another theme of spiritual experience stories is the assistance and help given by the leader in both minor and major occurrences in his followers’ daily life. The example illustrates Abdul Latif Madjid’s intervention in a problem some followers were facing.

Several weeks after practising Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat, I was working at a timber company. One day my company lost its motorcycle, which was kept in a warehouse. Because I worked at the warehouse, my boss was angry at me and at other workers who worked at the warehouse. He said to us: ‘If you cannot find the motorcycle, I will accuse you of stealing the motorcycle.’ In a state of confusion, I asked my friends to perform mujāhada after the midday prayers. We recited yā sayyidī yā rasūlallah for almost three hours. At the same time I focused my concentration (tawajjuh) towards Kyai Abdul Latif Madjid saying: ‘Romo Yahi please help us, if the motorcycle cannot be returned, we will be considered as a thieves.’ I asked my friend to keep saying nida’, ‘yā sayyidī yā rasūlullah’, while I kept focusing my attention on Kyai Abdul Latif. At 19.00 pm the stolen motor was returned to the warehouse in which we worked.

My wife was about to give birth. I brought her to Dr. Sahono Hospital in Kudus. According to the medical specialist, the blood pressure of my wife
had reached 200. As a result, my wife was to be given special treatment by a medical specialist and she had to move to a specialist room...when she was moving to the specialist room, I asked her to perform mujāhada. When she entered the room, she saw Kyai Abdul Latif lying on a bed. When she was about to occupy the bed, Kyai Latif disappeared. After medical assistants put my wife on the bed, they began to prepare surgical instruments. Within a few minutes, before the surgical process could be conducted, my wife gave birth easily without surgery. All medical assistants were surprised to see this occurrence... I then thanked Kyai Latif for hearing his follower who was in trouble.

Another story which can be categorized according to this theme is the story of a student of Pesantren Kedunglo who met Abdul Latif Madjid in a dream. In his dream, he was visited by Abdul Latif Madjid who removed a dirty grass root from his heart (Rohani 2004:67). Another theme included in the spiritual experience book is a story about the miraculous power of Kyai Abdul Madjid Ma’ruf, the author of Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat. Similar stories are often told about the current leader of Wāḥidiyyat. A tale with this theme is as follows:

After the fortieth day of Kyai Madjid’s death, I dreamed of attending a mujāhada ritual. At the location of mujāhada I was suddenly embraced by Kyai Madjid. He asked me to go to the bank of the Brantas. At the bank of the river he said to me, ‘Mujāhada Kubrā will become divided into two groups. One group appears good outwardly, but actually it is inwardly dark. Another group appears not so good outwardly, but it should be good, because he [the leader of this group] just cleared a path for justice.’ I asked him, ‘Who is that?’ He replied, ‘He is Gus Latif [Kyai Abdul Latif Madjid]. Suddenly Kyai Abdul Latif appeared in front of Kyai Madjid, and I paid homage to him, then I woke up.

These spiritual experiences can be seen either from the perspective of the Wāḥidiyyat followers or from the perspective of Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat as an organization. From the followers’ perspective, spiritual experiences achieved through dreams are significant in their social world not merely because of the content of the spiritual experience, but also because of the interactions between the followers and others in particular situations. In this sense, the spiritual experience can serve as one of strategies to resolve a conflict that the followers face. For example, through the spiritual experience, which is believed as a truth since it is sent by God via Abdul Latif Madjid, the followers are able to recognize who is the real Ghauth is and the successor of the author of Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat. Moreover, as Ewing (1990:60) observed, dreams or spiritual experiences can validate the relationship between a follower and a leader, either before or after he or she has met the leader. For instance, before becoming a member of Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyyat, one might be just an ordinary person. After experiencing a dream of seeing a man with white robes who seems to be exactly the same as the man to
whom he speaks, a person is much more confident that the leader of Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyat is the spiritual leader for whom he has been searching in his spiritual life. Alternatively, an encounter with the leader in a dream after a person has become a member of Wāḥidiyat, can result in enhancing his belief that he has been allowed by his leader to experience an ultimate experience which not all followers are able to have. This, in turn, can cause the follower to feel that he has undergone a fundamental change in his spiritual life. Furthermore, those spiritual experiences also reflect the follower’s wishes and goals. The followers may come to expect that the everyday world will be shaped by Abdul Latif Madjid as a Ghauth hadha al zaman, who can appear in person in a vision, and whose voice may be heard on every occasion.

From the perspective of a member of the official board of Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyat, those spiritual experiences play a significant role in increasing and enhancing the spiritual authority and charisma of the leader and Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyat among other Sufi groups. Strong charisma and spiritual authority are needed in order to increase the followers’ love (A., maḥabbat) towards their leader (Anonymous 1424a:38). This can then be used as a glue to build cohesion within the group. The role played by those spiritual experiences in Wāḥidiyat is similar to Werbner’s (2003:84) and Gilsenan’s (1973:33) observations that the secondary legends surrounding a saint, such as the personal dreams of his disciples and their vision of the saint and his encounter with the Prophet, enhance his charisma and add further lustre to his reputation. In line with this, the spiritual experiences collected in a book as in Wāḥidiyat can also be used as a means to attract other followers to join with Wāḥidiyat. This strategy might have been accepted partly because other Sufi groups also offer a spiritual path which has the same aim as Wāḥidiyat, that is, to attain quietness of heart.
Chapter V: The Veneration of Wali and Holy Persons: The Case of *Istighāthat Iḥsāniyyat*

This chapter highlights another *Majlis Dhikr* group that has creatively developed its own practices and formulae to obtain spiritual experiences and religious knowledge absent in conventional Islamic proselytization (*dakwah*). In this chapter, I will show how this group defines itself as an alternative mystical path among other established Sufi orders while retaining legitimate Sufi practices and how it plays an important role in the *dakwah* project of Islam. In this chapter I will describe the foundation of *Iḥsāniyyat*, examine challenges and rivalries involving this group, describe the ritual of *Iḥsāniyyat*, discuss the structure of *Iḥsāniyyat*, and analyse the strategy of its *dakwah* project in the light of Islamic Sufi teachings. This chapter will argue that although the group cannot be categorised as a *tarekat mu’tabarāh* (acknowledged Sufi orders) by Nahdatul Ulama, this group does attract a lot of people and it is acceptable to both nominal Muslims (*abangan*) and Muslim santri (strict Muslim). Therefore, this group bridges the Geertzian cultural contrast between *abangan* and santri.

5.1. The Foundation of *Istighāthat Iḥsāniyyat*

*Istighāthat* is an Arabic word meaning ‘calling for help’ or ‘appealing for help’ in a critical moment. In this sense, the word *istighāhat* can be distinguished from the word *istansara*, which also means to ask someone for assistance but not in a critical moment (Wehr 1966:434). The word *istighāhat* in its verbal form (*yastaghīthu*) can be found in five different verses in the Qurʾān (Al-Kahfi: 29; Al-Qaṣaṣ 28; Al-Aḥqāf: 17; Al-Anfāl: 9), all of which imply asking or seeking help at a critical moment.

However, within the Indonesian Islamic context, a term *istighāhat* (I, *istighasah*), refers to a compilation of prayers or litanies recited on a particular occasion which consists of an invocation for divine help with the repetition of the sacred names of God and other prayers. In this sense, *istighāhat* might be considered similar to the *dhikr* ritual (remembrance), which is widely practised by other Muslims communities in the country. The word *istighāhat* is usually used by those affiliated with the Nahdatul Ulama (NU) organization, rather than reformist organizations such as Muhammadiyah and PERSIS. The NU
has a particular *istighāthat* prayer which is usually practised and recited by its members when the organization is facing a problem or is holding a major organizational event. *Istighāhat* is frequently practised in NU pesantren and *kelompok pengajian* (religious gatherings) once a week.

According to *Kyai* Masduki Mahfudz, a chairman of the Nahdlatul Ulama religious board of East Java, the *istighāhat* ritual, which is widely practised by Nahdlatul Ulama members, was originally taken from the Sufi tradition, particularly the Qadiriyyah wa Naqsabandiyyah group in Rejoso, Jombang, East Java. The late *Kyai* Ramli Tamim, the leader of the order, selecting from various sources such as the Qur’an, the Prophet tradition and Muslim scholars’ books, compiled texts of *istighāhat* prayers. The leader of this *tarekat* told me that compiling these texts took a long time because the author had to perform a special fasting ritual for about forty days for each text. The aim of this ritual fast was not only to ask God to give guidance as where a text should be placed among other texts but also to ask Him to give a benefit for each text of prayer. This is partly because in Islam every prayer is believed to have its own particular function.

The *istighāhat* ritual is often carried out during the opening ceremony of a religious gathering conducted by the Qadiriyyah wa Naqsabandiyyah order. The *istighāhat* prayers collected by *Kyai* Ramli were first used by the East Java regional board of Nahdlatul Ulama. In 1996, the *istighāhat* ritual was conducted by the organization following information that there would be a great disaster in Indonesia. It was expected that by conducting the ritual, Indonesia would be saved from the disaster. Then, the idea to hold the ritual was brought to the central board of the organization in Jakarta and widely spread in other branches throughout Indonesia. As a result, the ritual has become popular and is used by this organization not only for religious purposes but also for political purposes. For example, in 2001, a major prayer session known as *Istighāhat Kubra* was held in Senayan, Jakarta to support the president Abdurrahman Wahid, former general chairman of the Nahdlatul Ulama, following his impeachment by the Indonesian parliament.

The word *istighāhat* is derived from the Qur’an and hence, the ritual *istighāhat* has a strong basis in the Islamic sources of law. The Qur’an states: ‘When you

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1 The combined *Qadiriyyat Naqsabandiyyat* order was established by Ahmad Khāṭīb Sambas (1802-1878). Dhofier as quoted by Mulyati (2004: 259) argues that during 1970’s, there were four centres of this *tarekat* in Java including Rejoso, Jombang, East Java led by *Kyai* Tamim; Mranggen, Central Java, led by *Kyai* Muslih; Suralaya, Tasikmalaya, West Java led by *Kyai* Shohibulwafa Tajul ‘Arifin (Abah Anom), and Pegantongan, Bogor, West Java led by *Kyai* Thohir Falak.
2 Interview with *Kyai* Masduki Mahfudz, Malang, January, 2005.
3 Interview with *Gus* Najib, Kediri, January, 2005.
sought aid from your Lord, so He answered you: I will assist you with a thousand of the angels following one another' (Al-Anfāl 8:9). Based on this verse, Kyai Mughni, a teacher in Pesantren Jampes, pointed out that the istighāthat ritual as practised by many Indonesian Muslims can be historically traced back to the Prophet himself. As described by Ibn Kathīr in his book, Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Kārim, according to the prophetic tradition, in the Badr war, the Prophet felt pessimistic about waging a war against the enemy because the Muslim troops only numbered three hundred, while the enemy’s troops numbered more than a thousand. It was reported that in this critical situation, the Prophet’s companions asked the prophet to ask help from God (istighāthat) to defeat the enemy. In his prayer, the Prophet said: ‘Oh! Lord, fulfill your promise to me, if these groups of Muslim perish, they will never worship you on this earth.’ It was believed that because of this istighāthat, the Muslims troops could defeat their enemy during the war.

Although the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has a specific istighāthat prayer, it does not officially and specifically give instruction to its members to recite and practise only that istighāthat prayer. As a result, each different community within NU might have different ways and formats of istighāthat prayer. Nevertheless, it is certain that most of these groups have similar objectives, namely, to ask for help and forgiveness from God through the combination of prayer and the repetition of the sacred names of God and dhikr. The Istighāthat Iḥsāniyyat group is one group among many others which has different ways and formats of istighāthat ritual compared to Nahdlatul Ulama.

The Istighāthat Iḥsāniyyat group was first set up by Gus Abdul Latif Muhammad (b.1968- ), a Muslim cleric from Pesantren Jampes in Kediri. The leader of this group is a grandson of Shaikh Ihsan Muhammad ibn Daḥlān, the author of the two volumes of Sīraj al-Ṭalībīn, a commentary on Al-Ghazālī’s Minhāj al-‘Abidīn Ilā Jannati Rabbi al-‘Alamīn and two volumes of Manāḥij al-Imād, a commentary on Zainuddin al-Malibari’s Irshād al-‘Ilābād (Mughni 1982:31). Gus Abdul Latif was born in the pesantren milieu where he spent most of his

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5 "أدبَّ ضَرُّ وَ عَفَّ وَ لَمْ يَنْفُقُ عَلَّى هَذَا لَدَهُ رَبِّكَ رَبِّي وَ لَمْ يَقْرَأْ مَا يَلْزِمُ عَلَّاهُ مِثَالًا وَ مُثَلًا" (Sūrah 58:1).

6 Sīraj al-Ṭalībīn is a Sufi book which is well known among Pesantren students in Java. It was written in 1932. This book was published for the first time, in 1936 by Al-Nabhaniyah publishing house in Surabaya, printed by a big publisher in Egypt, Mustafa al-Babī al-Halabī. The book that I have contains 1098 pages, published by al-Madinah, Surabaya. In the Pesantren Jampes, this book is taught only during the month of Ramadān.

7 This book written in 1940 has two volumes (1000 pages). When I was in the field, the book was first published by the family of the author. During Ramadān this book is taught to the student in Jampes. During Ramadān in 2006, Kyai Said Agil Siraj, taught the officials of Nahdlatul Ulama using this book in the prayer room of the Jakarta headquarters.
time studying religious subjects from primary and secondary to tertiary school levels. He never studied at a secular school. His father, Kyai Muhammad Ibn Ihsan was a Muslim cleric (I., kyai) in the pesantren as well as a Muslim healer (I., tabib), a person who could heal various illnesses by spiritual methods. After finishing his study at his father’s pesantren, Gus Abdul Latif held a teaching position at the pesantren. He taught spiritual healing subjects which were only followed by senior santri (students). Like father like son, he was also a tabib who received many guests who asked for healing or made other requests. He obtained expertise in spiritual healing through wandering from one teacher to another in Java. For example, he learned spiritual healing (I., ketabiban) from his uncle, Kyai Amin in Cirebon, West Java, Kyai Abdullah in Mantenan, Blitar, and Kyai Taraqqi in Malang, and studied tabarrukan (the obtaining of grace) with Kyai Abdul Hamid in Pasuruan, East Java.8

The Istighāathat Iḥsāniyyat group, which now has its central office in Kediri, was first set up in Banyuwangi. The selection of this regency in the eastern region of East Java for the first site for this group was not an accident. From July to November 1998, following the downfall of Suharto, several violent murders occurred in Banyuwangi in particular and many other regions in East Java in general. Ninja were believed to be involved in these violent murders. Local people believed that the killers of sorcerer (I., dukun santet) were ninja, trained killers who wore black masks and dark clothes when they killed their victims. The term ninja was first introduced by the press to identify those who had killed victims in other regions. At the beginning, the targets were dukun santet, but after several months, the range of victims became wider and included not only suspected dukun santet but also local Muslim clerics (kyai) and guru ngaji (Qur’an teachers). Data compiled by a Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) investigation team indicated that more than 147 suspected dukun santet were killed during September and October 1998 in Banyuwangi (Manan et al. 2001) along with another 105 victims in neighboring regions of East Java such as Jember, Sumenep and Pasuruan (Brown 2000). Forty percent of these other victims were identified as local Muslims clerics, Nahdlatul Ulama activists and guru ngaji (Wijayanta et al. 1998:12-13).

The situation certainly created panic among villagers in Banyuwangi. Although villagers intensified their vigilance, they found it difficult to identify the real killers. Consequently, suspicions increased as to the perpetrators of the killings in Banyuwangi. Moreover, this situation led most people, particularly Muslim clerics, to feel threatened because they felt that they might be future victims. This was not unreasonable because many Muslim clerics and guru ngaji were

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8 Interview with Gus Latif, Kediri, September 2004.
reported to have been killed at that time. It is common among traditional Muslims, when individuals feel insecure because of a threat, that they ask for specific help from kyai.

Plate 5.1: Gus Abdul Latif (Gus Latif), the founder and the leader of the Istiğhâhat Ihṣâniyyat group.
As described by Mansurnoor, local people will ask kyai for protection especially during a time of unrest and upheaval (Mansurnoor 1990). It was in this situation that Gus Abdul Latif, referred as a Gus⁹ and Agus because of his genealogy and kesakten was asked by local people to improve peace, security and trust among them. The first thing he did was to provide the local people with gemblengan, a form of invulnerability (I., kekebalan) by which he transferred a spiritual power so that they became invulnerable to sharp objects, fire and bullets. According to Gus Abdul Latif, cultivating invulnerability can provide a feeling of security because it can protect lives from murder. Due to the threat of murder, these practices were also conducted in other regions in East Java other than Banyuwangi.

The participants in the practice of invulnerability in Banyuwangi included not only those who were known as good people but also those considered bad individuals (I., orang nakal) by local people. The involvement of these individuals in gemblengan led to criticism from local ‘ulamā’. They worried that if those people were allowed to follow gemblengan, they would misuse their spiritual power. However, Gus Abdul Latif denied this, arguing that since the sense of insecurity was felt by everyone, gemblengan should be held both for good and bad people. For dakwah purposes, bad people should be involved in the gemblengan in order to bring them to the right path. In this sense, Gus Abdul Latif believed that people, including orang nakal, have their own sense of right (I., hati nurani). He argued that this sense would be touched if they faced a serious problem in their life and this would lead them to return to the path of God. In addition to this, the local ‘ulamā’ also asked him to obtain permission from the local government before holding gemblengan, otherwise the local police and security officials would arrest Gus Abdul Latif as had happened in 1965 when a lot of people who held gemblengan were arrested by local security forces. However, Gus Abdul Latif continued to hold gemblengan without permission from the police. The success of these gemblengan contributed to his popularity and influence.¹⁰ Services such as gemblengan and spiritual healing, rather than educational services, attracted many followers (Mansurnoor 1990).

One of his followers claimed that the success of gemblengan in Banyuwangi contributed to the improvement of peace within these regions. However, these improvements cannot be attributed solely to the gemblengan or Gus Abdul Latif’s role. Muslim clerics from NU asked the Ministry of Security and Defense, General Wiranto and the Indonesian Army Forces (ABRI) to discover the killers of the dukun santet and transparently investigate this situation so

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⁹ Term Gus is derived from Agus which means the son of Kyai. However, currently, the word Gus is also used to refer to those who have spiritual power.

¹⁰ Interview with Gus Abdul Latif, Kediri, January, 2005.
that it would not lead to social unrest (Rahim n.d.:16-20). The improvement of security in Banyuwangi was due to help from many people, including the local population of Banyuwangi.

From 1998 to 1999 was a period of turmoil in the Indonesian political landscape. The period was a political transition after the fall of Suharto’s regime in May 1998, followed by religious, ethnic violence and social unrest in many Indonesian areas. On 7 June 1999, the first general election after the downfall of the New Order regime was held to elect the House of Representative members from forty eight parties with different political ideologies.

Heated competition during the general election campaign in 1999 among political parties was felt not only in Jakarta but also in many other provinces and regions in Indonesia. Banyuwangi became an arena for political parties, including Islamic parties, to gain as many voters as possible. In order to attract voters, some political parties recruited charismatic Muslims scholars as vote getters whom they believed had a lot of followers but also had the ability to attract voters in the region. During the campaign, every Muslim scholar supported his own political party and, without doubt, this contributed to the tension among them. In addition, as maintained by Kyai Muhammad Syaiful Hisham, they also strongly condemned local government for having failed to maintain security in Banyuwangi. As a result, relations between them and government or among themselves worsened.

Kyai Muhammad Syaiful Hisham one Muslim cleric (A.,‘ulamā’; I., ulama) in Banyuwangi, believed that if the situation continued, more serious conflicts would break out, which would eventually threaten the unity of the social fabric in Banyuwangi. He came up with the idea of calling for unity among those ‘ulamā’ involved in the political contestation and the government under the banner of Pancasila, the Indonesian ideology. The government (umarā’), according to him, should become a partner of the ‘ulama’, and the latter should serve as advisors to the local government. Therefore, he argued that instead of criticizing and condemning the government, ‘ulama’ should help the government if it faced a problem in dealing with security in Banyuwangi. He put it this way:

The condemnation of the government conducted by ‘ulamā’ in Banyuwangi is not only useless but it is also destructive. Therefore, it is pointless to condemn the government… Be careful, we live in Indonesia whose national basis is Pancasila and under the symbol of Bhineka Tunggal Ika (The Unity in Diversity). We are all brothers. Many Muslims and Non-Muslims are involved not only in the GOLKAR Party, PKB (The National Awakening Party) but also in PAN (The National Mandate Party) and PDIP (The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle). If we struggle to do something
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[on behalf of Islam], why should we depend too much on a particular political party. Therefore, do not besmirch other parties because there are a lot of Muslims in those parties...do not tarnish GOLKAR, PKB and PAN because if we tarnish one in GOLKAR, it will be similar to tarnishing Islam itself, and thus, it will damage the prestige of Islam.

Based on this view, Kyai Hisham, tried to find the best way to prevent ‘ulamā’ from condemning the government by changing the political tension through religious activity which could involve government, ‘ulamā’ and local people. From the beginning, he intended to help the government establish a peaceful situation in Banyuwangi. He was asked by local ‘ulamā’ to seek a particular prayer which could be used to maintain peace in Banyuwangi after the Ninja and Dukun Santet tragedy. Kyai Hisham singled out Gus Abdul Latif because he was previously considered successful in holding gemblengan in Banyuwangi. In addition, he felt an affinity with him because both were classmates when they studied in Pesantren Jampes, Kediri. Therefore, Kyai Hisham chose Gus Abdul Latif. In this case, as observed by Mansurnoor, collegiate friendship developed at pesantren became an invaluable element in building a further network (Mansurnoor 1990).

Before composing the prayer, Gus Abdul Latif is said to have performed a particular ritual to seek guidance at his grandfather’s grave. His grandfather, Kyai Ihsan Dahlan is believed among his followers to be a Muslim saint (I., wali) and his tomb has become an object of visitation and veneration. Some of his followers believe that Gus Abdul Latif can communicate with the late Kyai Ihsan Dahlan. This is based on the fact that traditionalist ‘ulamā’ believe that communication between the pious dead and the pious living is possible (Pranowo 1991:47). After receiving guidance, Gus Abdul Latif offered a particular prayer to Kyai Hisham and asked him and other people in Banyuwangi to recite it in groups (I., berjamaah) or individually twice a month, once a week or everyday if needed. Before practising the prayer, Kyai Hisham submitted the prayer to Kyai Malik Ihsan Dahlan,11 and asked his consent because he was the senior kyai in Pesantren Jampes and one of Kyai Ihsan Dahlan’s sons who was still alive. Kyai Malik agreed with the composition of the prayer and added particular prayers to it.

Kyai Hisham brought the prayer to Banyuwangi and recited it together with seventeen people, who later became the first members of this new group. He, then, was elected by Gus Abdul Latif as a coordinator of the group in Banyuwangi. Establishing a new religious fraternity required a name to identify it from others. It was not easy to name and establish a new group, particularly

11 He has passed away when I returned to Australia.
among many other well-known Sufi orders and istighāthat groups which have existed for many years in Banyuwangi. Thus, the new group was challenged, not only to find a name which could attract the attention of a broad mass of people but also to offer a new type of fraternity which was not similar to others.

Gus Abdul Latif chose Iḥsāniyyat as the name of the group. The name Iḥsāniyyat was originally taken from the first name, Ihsan, of his grandfather, Kyai Ihsan Dahlan. The use of one’s grandfather’s name as the name of a Sufi order is unusual among Sufi orders. In Sufi tradition, the name of a Sufi order is traditionally taken from the name of their founder. For example, the Naqshabandiyah Order attributed its name to its founder, Bahā’ al-Dīn al-Naqshabandī, the Qādiriyah Order is attributed to Syeikh Abdul Qādir al-Jaylānī, the Shadilīyat Order is attributed to Abu al-Ḥasan al-Shadhīfī. Gus Abdul Latif argued that the use of his grandfather’s name for the istighāthat was because he was not only as well-known Muslim ‘ulama’ but also considered to be the saint of God (A., waliyullah) who could be used as an object of mediation (A., tawassul or wasi‘lat) by those who sought for closeness with God. Gus Abdul Latif mentioned that a means (A., wasi‘lat) is necessary for lay people to achieve the love of God. However, for him, to achieve the love of God is difficult because God is an unseen object. By contrast, lay people can only love something concrete. Therefore, loving those loved by God (I., waliullah) is the way for them to achieve the love of God.

Furthermore, there might have been another reason for Gus Abdul Latif to choose his grandfather’s name rather than his own name for the new group. He might have thought that other people would be unfamiliar with his name. So he chose Kyai Ihsan Dahlan’s since his grandfather had the reputation of being a prolific writer on Sufism and was an internationally well known ‘ulama’ who was acknowledged among other Sufi groups and the pesantren community. Therefore, naming the new group Iḥsāniyyat, would give the impression to the public that this group was closely linked to the legacy of Kyai Ihsan Dahlan and, as a consequence, this group would become better known.

The name Iḥsāniyyat was initially used for this new istighāthat group after Gus Abdul Latif experienced a visionary dream of meeting with Gus Mik, a well-known wali in Kediri. In his dream, Gus Abdul Latif received the late Gus Mik’s consent to the name of Iḥsāniyyat. It is clear that Gus Abdul Latif relied on this other well-known ‘ulama’, Kyai Hamim Jazuli, usually called Gus Mik, who was the founder of Dhikr al-Ghāfilīn which has many followers spread throughout Indonesia, to justify the foundation of his group. A dream,
particularly a good dream, can be used as the basis of action for Muslims since it is believed to be revealed by God. Therefore, although received in a dream, the consent from *Gus* Mik was important for this newly born group.

The consent from *Gus* Mik had various meanings for the followers of *Iḥsāniyyat*. Firstly, it showed that there was a close relationship and spiritual chain between their leader and *Gus* Mik. Secondly, only those who had a similar spiritual level to that of *Gus* Mik could gain consent from him. In this sense, the followers would think that *Gus* Abdul Latif was entitled to receive this consent because he had reached the same level of spiritual capacity as *Gus* Mik. Thirdly, by giving his consent, *Gus* Mik allowed *Gus* Abdul Latif to continue his efforts to improve people’s consciousness of God and the hereafter through the establishment of the *istighāθat* group. This would prevent *Iḥsāniyyat* from being considered as a competitor of *Dhikr al-Ghāflīn* in Kediri because *Gus* Mik, as the founder of *Dhikr al-Ghāflīn*, had given his consent to *Gus* Abdul Latif. All of these things contributed to enhance the authority of *Gus* Abdul Latif as well as his group among other groups.

Another challenge the group needed to address was to find a new model of *istighāθat* to distinguish it from other *istighāθat* groups. In dealing with this issue, *Gus* Abdul Latif, not only attempted to compose prayers of *istighāθat* which were not as lengthy as other *istighāθat* prayers, but also introduced vernacular rather than Arabic in the *istighāθat* ritual. Furthermore, he combined ritual *istighāθat* with interactive dialog on religious issues involving all participants in the ritual and he held cultural arts festivals such as *jaranan* (hobby-horse dance), *reog ponorogo* (tiger-mask dance), *barongsai* (a Chinese traditional dance), and *ruwatan*¹² and *dangdutan*.

*Gus* Abdul Latif established *Iḥsāniyyat* in Kediri on 9 September 1999, one year after the establishment of *Iḥsāniyyat* in Banyuwangi. This date coincided with the rumor among people that the day of judgment (I., *kiamat*) would occur on that date at 9:00 a.m. The inauguration of this group in Kediri was held in the graveyard of Kyai Ihsan Dahlan. The rationale behind this establishment was not just to follow upon the success of *Iḥsāniyyat* in Banyuwangi but also to respond to a request from some villagers who were addicted to drugs, alcohol and gambling. These people asked *Gus* Abdul Latif to help them escape from addiction. *Gus* Abdul Latif explained this as follows:

The first members of *Iḥsāniyyat* in Putih village consisted of eleven people. Those people asked me to cure them from inner illness and help them cease from wrongdoing (I., *maksiat*) they had done. They could not cure those

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¹² *Ruwatan* is a sacred ceremony in the Javanese tradition to ward off misfortune.
illnesses nor help themselves to cease from wrongdoing without help from God. As a result of their sincere wish, I established an Ihsāniyyat group in Kediri as a means of improving morality among the people in Kediri.

At the beginning, the activity of this group was simple. The ritual of istighāthat was led by Gus Abdul Latif once in a week at the Kyai Ihsan Dahlan’s tomb, followed by a small group gathering to talk about various topics. As the number of participants in the ritual grew, Gus Abdul Latif held interactive dialogues on religious topics based on questions from the audience before reciting istighāthat prayer.

At the same time, Gus Abdul Latif established a group called Paguyuban Tombo Ati (The Heart Healing Community). This group aimed to provide a venue to hold prayers and to discuss Islamic teachings and personal problems for those who were ignored, held in contempt by other religious leaders or regarded by others as local hoodlum (I., preman), the dregs of society (I., sampah masyarakat) and bad individuals (I., orang nakal). An informant told me that the members of this group consisted of drug users, local hoodlum (I., preman), drug traffickers, gamblers, drunks, and prostitutes. Gus Abdul Latif believed that instead of changing their behavior, tagging them with such labels as sampah masyarakat and orang nakal not only prevented them from returning to the right path but also from integrating with other members of society. Therefore, the main target of his appeal was to those described by Gilsenan as people ‘without a shepherd and those who were not touched and accommodated by the existing religious institutions’ (Gilsenan 1973:37). Moreover, Gus Abdul Latif insisted that those who were considered orang nakal actually had a strong desire in their hearts to be good and to follow the right path, but they did not know the way they should take in order to be a good or to resolve their problems. In dealing with these people, as Gus Abdul Latif argued, a gradual approach and a long-term strategy were needed.

Actually, the ritual held both at the Istighāthat Ihsāniyyat and the Paguyuban Tombo Ati was the same. Istighāthat prayers were recited in both groups. However, the name Paguyuban Tombo Ati was deliberately used to give the impression that the activity of the group could be attended by everybody, including those people who are still unfamiliar with istighāthat prayer. According to Gus Abdul Latif, this strategy was successful in attracting those who were fearful of attending istighāthat prayer. They realized that both the Ihsāniyyat group and the Paguyuban Tombo Ati had a similar objective. As a result, they were no longer fearful of joining the group. One of the participants of the Paguyuban Tombo Ati said:
As I realized that Tombo Ati was part of Istighâhat Iḥsāniyyat and both were led by Gus Abdul Latif, I joined the Istighâhat Iḥsāniyya without doubt. During the Tombo Ati ritual, I felt that Gus Abdul Latif paid his attention to me and helped me to solve my problems especially those to do with drug addiction.

5.2. Local Rivalry and Challenges

Although there are many other Majlis Dhikr groups and Sufi orders in Kediri, which provide similar ritual to that of Istighâhat Iḥsâniyyat, this group has hardly ever faced a serious challenge from those groups. In contrast, in Banyuwangi, this group faced serious challenges especially from local kyai. From its inception, the ritual of Istighâhat Iḥsâniyyat, held once every five weeks (J., selapanan) in Banyuwangi was attended not only by local people but also by many local kyai officially invited by the coordinator of the Istighâhat Iḥsâniyyat group. In fact, besides Gus Abdul Latif, local kyai contributed to attracting their followers to participate in the ritual.

As this new group in Banyuwangi made rapid progress and attracted many followers, this excited the jealousy and fear of other local ‘ulama’ in Banyuwangi. Because they were no longer involved by Istighâhat Iḥsâniyyat leader as official members of the group, these local kyai who had previously supported the establishment of the group in Banyuwangi withdrew their support. There can be little doubt that the real objections to this group was that it threatened the standing privileges of local kyai. This contributed to a rivalry that developed between the Istighâhat Iḥsâniyyat group and other groups.

As an informant observed, these kyai did not object to the Istighâhat Iḥsâniyyat, but they wanted the group to be run and led by local kyai without outside involvement. They argued that there were many kyai in Banyuwangi who were more capable of leading the Istighâhat Iḥsâniyyat ritual than those from Kediri. Moreover, they argued that because the ritual took place in Banyuwangi, it was more appropriate for this group to be run by involving kyai or leaders of pesantren who lived in Banyuwangi.

In dealing with these points, Kyai Hisham, the coordinator of the group, argued that he could not prevent Gus Abdul Latif, the author of Istighâhat Iḥsâniyyat prayer, from attending the Istighâhat Iḥsâniyyat ritual in Banyuwangi because he was the person who had given the ijâza (authorization, license) for the Istighâhat Iḥsâniyyat prayers. It was a courtesy that, as the recipient of the ijâza, Kyai Hisham should include Gus Abdul Latif in the Istighâhat Iḥsâniyyat.
Because Kyai Hisham regarded himself as a student of Gus Abdul Latif, even though both were colleagues, Kyai Hisham would not dare to destroy this teacher-student relationship. According to pesantren tradition, this relationship endures even after the teacher has passed away. If a student cuts this relationship, he will never obtain the sanctity of God through his teacher. It is for this reason that Kyai Hisham did not ask Gus Abdul Latif to stop attending the Istighāthāt Iḥṣāniyyat ritual in Banyuwangi, despite objections from many local kyai.

When consulted by Kyai Hisham about these objections, Gus Abdul Latif insisted that he and Kyai Hisham could not be separated in running the Istighāthāt Iḥṣāniyyat in Banyuwangi, and if others asked him to leave the group, he would withdraw the ijāza and dissolve the group. In the pesantren tradition the giver of ijāza (authorization) has the authority to withdraw ijāza from the recipient or to ask the recipient not to transmit the ijāza to others. For example, when the initiator of ijāza asks the recipient not to give it to others, the recipient should obey. If he or she ignores this rule, the ijāza will be no longer valid.

Kyai Hisham and Gus Abdul Latif needed to cooperate in order to obtain their objectives. On the one hand, Gus Abdul Latif needed Kyai Hisham as a liaison to spread the Istighāthāt Iḥṣāniyyat in Banyuwangi. His job as a religious books distributor allowed Kyai Hisham to make close contact with many leaders of pesantren. By approaching these pesantren leaders, Kyai Hisham succeeded in attracting a number local people to join with the Istighāthāt Iḥṣāniyyat ritual. It is for this reason that Gus Abdul Latif preferred him to be a coordinator of the group in Banyuwangi. Because Gus Abdul Latif solely determined the appointment of the coordinator, none of the members of the group could succeed Kyai Hisham. Therefore, Kyai Hisham needed Gus Abdul Latif to pave his way to control the Istighāthāt Iḥṣāniyyat group in Banyuwangi.

Another objection from the Banyuwangi kyai toward the Istighāthāt Iḥṣāniyyat group had to do with the involvement of this group in local politics. According to these kyai, some officials of the group used it for political and worldly interests by putting The Chief of Executive of the district’s name (I., bupati) on the advisory board. Those kyai worried that the bupati would use the group to increase his popularity. This anxiety was reasonable because the popularity of the bupati had decreased following strong criticism of his moral behavior. As a result, those kyai strongly rejected an invitation from bupati to hold the Istighāthāt Iḥṣāniyyat ritual in his office. Kyai Hisham took the view that those who lived in Banyuwangi should obey the leader of regency, so they should accept the invitation despite various objections. Without consent from those kyai, Kyai Hisham and Gus Abdul Latif held istighāthāt ritual in the bupati’s
office (i.e., Pendopo Kabupaten). This, of course, added to the kyai objections to Kyai Hisham and Gus Abdul Latif since the two ignored the opinion of the kyai in Banyuwangi.

As a result, some kyai who had previously supported the group established a new istighāthath group which did not include any kyai except those from Banyuwangi. In order to enhance its local nature, this new group was called Dhikr al-Shafā’at, a name which appeared to have been taken from the name of a local charismatic kyai in Banyuwangi, Kyai Muhammad Shafā’at. He was the founder of Pesantren Blok Agung, which is the oldest pesantren in Banyuwangi. Perhaps, the name of Shafā’at was used in the attempt to match the popularity of Iḥṣāniyyat. This group might have deliberately used the name of Kyai Shafā’at in order to attract local people to join this new group. But according to Kyai Fahrur Rozi, a secretary of the group, this name was originally taken from the Arabic word shafā’at which means blessing and healing (kesembuan). Those who recited Dhikr al-Shafā’at prayers were expected to be able to obtain kesembuan (healing) and shafā’at from the Prophet. In order to attract followers, this group offered rituals and prayers which are very similar to those of Istighāthath Iḥṣāniyyat. It also included some individuals who had become officials members of the Istighāthath Iḥṣāniyyat. One of the members of the Istighāthath Iḥṣāniyyat group claimed that this was done to lessen the popularity of Istighāthath Iḥṣāniyyat. In response to the new group, Kyai Hisham let his followers freely choose to join any group they wanted to. He argued that if the content of the prayers were good, he would let them join the Dhikr al-Shafā’at group.

The Istighāthath Iḥṣāniyyat group also faced another challenge from some kyai involved with the local branch of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in Banyuwangi. These kyai argued that since the activity of the group was closely related to istighāthath and most supporters of this group came from NU pesantren, this group should be integrated and reviewed regularly by NU. However, Kyai Hisham opposed that suggestion arguing that this group was not part of any organization, including NU, and did not use the symbol of NU, though it followed the spirit of Ahlussummah wa al-jama’ah upon which NU was established. Thus, this group was not opposed to either NU or its teachings. He further stated that if this group were integrated under NU, this would reduce its popularity among people from other social and political backgrounds. Furthermore, according to Kyai Hisham it would also affect the development of the group since each official member of NU had their own opinion about how to administer the group. In

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13 Interview with Kyai Fahrur Rozi, Banyuwangi, April, 2005.
this sense, Kyai Hisham was fully aware that if he allowed other local kyai or NU officials to review the Ihsaniyyat group, he would gradually lose his role to control the group. Therefore, he was strongly opposed to that plan.

In its hometown, the Istighâhat Ihsaniyyat had another competitor not from outside, but from one of the relatives of the leader of the Istighâhat Ihsaniyyat group himself. Gus Abdul Latif lived within Pesantren Jampes, which many other descendants of the founder of the pesantren also occupied. These descendents were not only entitled to live in the pesantren but also to use the legacy of the pesantren founder, including the founder’s name, for their own religious purposes. One of these descendents established another istighâhat group called Yamisda al-Ihsan. Yamisda stood for Shaikh Yahûda, Shaikh Mesir, Shaikh Isti’añat, and Shaikh Dahlan, all of which are names of ancestral kyai of Pesantren Jampes and are regarded as saints (I., wali). The leader of this group claimed the names of wali would lead to obtaining blessing (I., barakah). It is for this reason that the group was called by the names of these wali. In addition, the name Yamisda also gave the impression to the public that this group had much greater legitimacy than Ihsaniyyat since it had many transmitters, including Kyai Ihsan, and his father and grandfather.

Like Ihsaniyyat, the Yamisda group also had istighathat prayers as the core of its ritual. However, unlike Ihsaniyyat, this group used alumnae of the pesantren network to spread the istighathat. This was possible because Kyai Malik, the oldest kyai in the pesantren, recommended that his students and Pesantren Jampes alumnae recite the istighathat and develop it when they returned to their hometowns. As a result, this group developed branches in many regions in which these alumnae of the pesantren lived.

By contrast, Ihsaniyyat does not have a formal network which can be used to spread the istighathat. Students are not normally allowed to go out of the pesantren at night, so they rarely participate in the ritual of Ihsaniyyat, which is mostly held on Thursday nights at the pesantren family’s cemetery, situated outside the pesantren. Students are, however, allowed by the leader of Pesantren Jampes to take part in the ritual of Yamisda, held on Saturday nights at the cemetery or at the pesantren. Without doubt, Yamisda has benefited from this policy. Although it was not intended to prevent the progress of Ihsaniyyat, it did limit the spread of the Istighathat Ihsaniyyat only to those who are categorized as lay people, while those who are categorized santri have not been involved. Although in fact there has been latent competition between the two groups, a student of the pesantren denied the competition and did not see the emergence of Yamisda as a competitor of Ihsaniyyator vice versa. The student argued as follows:
Perhaps, outsiders see the emergence of two *istighāthah* groups within one *pesantren* as a rivalry between them. But, in fact there is a *hikma* or a blessing with the emergence of the two groups. The emergence of *Yamisda* will serve not only as a means for *Kyai Malik* to be active outside *pesantren* but also as a venue for alumnae to gather. Furthermore, the emergence of both groups has helped both to reach a wide area of preaching (*dakwah*). If there was only one group in the *pesantren*, it would be difficult to cope with the wide area of *dakwah*.\(^{14}\)

This response, put forward by a student on the emergence of the two groups in his *pesantren*, is a typical view of the *santri*. This view is based on positive thinking (*husn al-zann*) rather than negative thinking (*sūu al-zann*) toward teachers. This view is also part of the courtesy (*adab*) of students toward their teachers, which is a quality strongly stressed in the relationship between students and teachers in *pesantren*.

The rivalry among *istighāthah* groups occurred when each attempted to promote their group based on the genealogy of their leaders and founders. Had the leaders of these groups been integrated in one group, this group might have had greater potential for spreading *istighāthah* prayer among people.

### 5.3. The Ritual of *Iḥsāniyyat*

The central ritual of this group is the recitation of *istighāthah*. One of the leaders of this group stated that this ritual includes pronouncing the name of the *shaikh* or teacher as mediator in the ritual (*A.*, *tawassul*), remembrance (*A.*, *dhikr*), the recitation of *Ṣalawāt*, prayer(*A.*, *duʿāʾ*), and a request for forgiveness (*A.*, *istighfār*). All of these features are endorsed by Islam and regarded as *ibādat* (Muttahid 2004). *Ibādat* is understood by this group to refer to additional activities such as reciting the Qur’an, *tahlīl*, *tahmīd* and visiting tombs in addition to the five actions linked to the five pillars of Islam: the witness of faith (*A.*, *shahāda*), prayer, charity, fasting, and pilgrimage (Muhaimin 1995). In other words, *ibādat* in this sense is understood in its broader sense, which includes doing things that can be used as a means to seek God’s pleasure and to attain closeness to Him.

According to *Gus* Abdul Latif, all of these activities have a strong basis either in the Qur’an or the hadith. *Dhikr*, for instance, is a practice drawn from many references in the Qur’an explaining the excellence of the remembrance of God.

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(Al-Ahzāb: 41, al-Imrān: 191). In addition, the Prophet not only encouraged Muslims to practice dhikr but also explained that a reward could be earned by those who practice dhikr. For example, the Prophet said that when any group of people remembers God, angels surround them and mercy covers them, tranquility descends upon them, and God mentions them to those who are with Him (narrated by Muslim, Tirmidhī, Ahmad, Ibn Mājah, and Bayhaqī).

Another component of istighāthat is tawassul. This practice is understood by the group as pronouncing the names of ‘ulamāʾ or Sufi masters as mediators in supplicating God, irrespective of whether they are alive or dead. This practice is not intended to ask something from those people but merely to identify them as righteous persons in the view of God. Gus Abdul Latif has argued that, since these people are believed to be the most beloved of God, pronouncing their names in prayer, will increase the likelihood that God will grant the prayer. He made the analogy to a person who wished to meet a manager. If they are accompanied by a person who is closely known to the manager, the person is much more likely to attract the manager’s attention than if the person comes to the manager’s office alone. This analogy is widely used among kyai in Java. Other kyai object to this since in this situation people recognize the authority of the intermediary as much as that of the manager. In contrast, other kyai compare the tawassul to people who use spectacles to read the Qur’an. In this way, people can be said to view only the Qur’an, not the glass in their spectacles (Dhofier 1999).

The recitation of Ṣalawāt (invoking the blessing on the Prophet) is also part of the istighāthat ritual and it is sanctioned by God. Gus Abdul Latif argued that since every Muslim receives guidance from God by virtue of the Prophet, they should invoke blessing on him. Furthermore, quoting the verse of Qur’an, Gus Abdul Latif mentioned that indeed, as God and His Angels invoke blessing on the Prophet, so should people. In addition, the Prophet is the right person to whom blessing is given because he was believed to be able to provide his intercession (shafāat) both in this world and in the hereafter.

Another important element of the istighāthat is istighfār. Gus Abdul Latif mentioned that the istighfār was included as a formula to invoke God’s forgiveness. The importance of istighfār is well supported both by the Qur’an and the hadith because it is closely related to the concept of repentance (A., taubah). According to Sufi tradition, repentance (A., taubat), which is considered to be the first station (maqām) in Sufi practice, is required of all Muslims, since no Muslim is able to perform God’s order perfectly. Moreover, no one can be free from the intrigues of the devil nor from the lower soul’s (nafs) desire, which contributes to disobedience (Muhaya 1993:43).
To perform taubat, it is not enough just say istighfār, without following three requirements. Qushairī notes three essential conditions in order for repentance to be acceptable. The first is contrition for acts of disobedience. The second is the immediate abandonment of sin through fulfilling the obligation to refrain from disobedience. The third is the determination not to sin again (al-Qushayri 2002:111). This is similar to Gus Abdul Latif’s view that no son or daughter of Adam is immune from committing sins, and the best of those who have committed sin are those who repent from it. Moreover, it is believed that performing istighfār is able to purify hearts and get rid of sins.

The last component of this istighāthat is the prayer of supplication (A., du’ā’). This ritual is normally placed at the end of the istighāthat. It is at this time that people are urged to pray to God with the guidance of their leader, asking not only for their happiness in the hereafter but also for happiness in this life. As in other Sufi orders, du’ā’ is stressed in this group because it is considered to be the most important practice of the istighāthat.

The ritual of istighāthat is normally led by the leader of the group or his representatives at the tombs of holy people or other places such as in mosques, a village public hall (I., balai desa) and member’s houses. This ritual usually begins with a session called arwahan. As implied by this term, which is derived from the word meaning the soul of deceased person (I., arwah), this ritual involves the leader sending prayers or the al-Fātiḥat chapter to deceased persons at the request of the participants. However, in this session many people request the leader to recite al-Fātiḥat not for deceased persons, but for their own worldly purposes. For example, during this session participants have asked for success in the local regency elections, Indonesian football competition, earning money, the military tests, selling houses, or for the recovery from a chronic disease. Normally, these requests are written on a piece of paper and given to the coordinator a few minutes before the session begins. Asking for a share in the blessing (I., barakah) and intercession from the personage in the tombs, the leader reads the request and makes a prayer. In return, those who make these requests should give some money voluntarily to the coordinator. The amount of money is not determined. In the great ritual of istighāthat, the arwahan session can take a long time since many people make requests.

When the arwahan has been concluded, the next session will be a religious lecture (A., mau’izat al-ḥasanat) followed by interactive dialogue involving the participants and the leader. The topic of the lecture is not determined beforehand.

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15 This first chapter of the Qur’an is considered by Muslim scholars as the core of the rest of the Qur’an in term of the content of its message. Therefore, it is believed that reciting this chapter is like reciting all the chapters of the Qur’an.
and is usually based on the preference of the leader. On some occasions, the lecture is given and developed from questions asked by the participants. Therefore, the lecture could include various topics on Islamic subjects and individual consultations. Usually during a major ceremony or ritual held by Sufi orders, this kind of lecture does not allow the audience time to ask questions.

Plate 5.2: People using trucks to get to the Istighāthat Iḥsāniyyat ritual Banyuwangi

Plate 5.3: Female participants at a Istighāthat Iḥsāniyyat group ritual in Kediri.
After the religious lecture, the main ritual of *istighāthahat*, that is *tawassulan*, occurs. This consists in reciting the *al-Fātiḥah* chapter conveyed to the Prophet Muhammad, and from him in succession to his families, his companions, the generations after companions (A., *tābiʿin*), the generations after the *tābiʿi* (A., *tābiʿ al-tābiʿi*), the saints (A., *auliyāʾ*), Muslim scholars (I., *ulama*), and all virtuous Muslims (A., *ṣālihin*). Other prophets such as Adam and Eve, Khīḍr, Elias, Christ, are also specifically mentioned. Other names recited can include ‘Aḥī ibnAbīṬālib, the only one of the Prophet’s companions specifically mentioned in the list; Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī; ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jaylānī, the founder of Qadiriyyah orders; ‘Abd al-Salām Ibn Mashīsh (d.1228), the teacher of the founder of Shadhiliyyah orders; Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Abd Allah Ibn ‘Abd al-Jabbaʾr al-Shaḍhili (d.1258), the founder of Shadhiliyyah orders; Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad bin ‘Aliy al-Buʾni (d.1225), the author of *Shams al-Maʿārif* (The Illumination of Knowledge) which is the most widely read medieval Islamic treatise on talismans, and the magical square (A., *wifq*) in pesantren; ‘Abd al-Wahhaʾb al-Shaʿrānī (d.1565), the founder of Shaʿrānīyyat orders, and Abū Madyān al-Maghraʾbi (d.1197), the teacher of Ibn Mashīsh.

It is clear that some of the names cited during *tawassulan* are renowned names, which have important positions in the chain of transmission in various famous Sufi orders. Pronouncing these names during the *tawassulan* session does not mean that these names are considered as transmitters (A., *isnād* or I., *silsilah*) of the *Iḥsāniyyat* group. These names are cited to help to obtain blessing from those who are considered to be ‘the axis of saints’ (A., *Qutb al-Aqtaʿ*). It is believed that these saints, despite their death, ‘reside simultaneously in their tombs and in heaven’ (Woodward 1989). Moreover, they are also believed to be capable of becoming involved in the lives of those who pray (Ewing 1997:117).

Other names cited during the *tawassulan* session are the leader’s family ancestors including ShaikhYahūḍa, Shaikh Mesir, Shaikh Ujang Ṣāliḥ, Nyai Istiʿānah, Sheikh Daḥlān, Shaikh Iḥsān, Shaikh Muhammad, and Nyai Ḥasanah. Apart from the last two, these names are also cited during the *tawassulan* session held by the *Yamisda* group. The last two names are not mentioned by *Yamisda* because they are not regarded as family ancestors of the leader. Sheikh Muhammad was the elder brother and and Nyai Ḥasanah the sister-in-law of Yamisda’s leader, Kyai Malik, so their status in the group is considered less significant.

Among those family ancestor names, Shaikh Iḥsan is cited twice during the *tawassulan* session after reciting *al-Fātiḥah* for all deceased teachers of Pesantren Jampes, all deceased Muslim fathers, mothers, grandfathers, grandmothers, and all dead or live Muslims. For the *Iḥsāniyyat* leader, this name needs to be
emphasized in the ritual and should be given special attention because he is regarded as a transmitter (A., *sanad*) of this group (Muttahid 2004). According to the rule of hadith (A., *ulûm al-ḥadîth*), a *sanad* is understood to be the person who narrated the text of a hadith. The succession of these *sanad* starts with the last narrator and ends with the Prophet who spoke the hadith. It is not clear in this group whether or not Shaikh Ihsan is regarded as a *sanad* in the strict sense of this term. If he is, he should receive the *Istighâšât* formula through a chain of narrators which leads back to the Prophet. However, there seems to be no evidence that he has received this formula from the Prophet through a chain of transmitters.

After reciting *al-Фatihât* for Shaikh Ihsan, by asking for a share in his sacredness (A., *kara>mat*, I., *karamah*), blessing and secrets (A., *asrâr*), the *tawassul* session is closed with a prayer. Unlike rituals held by others Sufi groups, this prayer is recited in both Arabic and Javanese. It can also be recited in other vernaculars depending on the language of the majority of supplicants. The reason for using the Javanese language is to steady the supplicants’ hearts because all of them are Javanese and few of them understand Arabic. It is widely held in Sufi teachings that to invoke God, people should understand the meaning of the invocation because it will guarantee the success of the prayer. As al-Ghazâlî said, praying without understanding the meaning is like a parrot that can say anything but understand nothing. Even, in the five times prayers, understanding the meaning will contribute to improve the focus (A., *khusû‘*) of prayer. This prayer is as follows:

O! Allah I ask of your *taufiq* and guidance, your mercy and blessing, as well as your contentment and forgiveness for me and for my family. And Oh! Allah I ask you to ease all of my problems, to meet all my needs, to make all business successful for my family and myself. And I ask you to make me and my family happy both in this world and the world to come, to increase my livelihood and wealth which are blessed and useful, and I ask you to save me and my family from trials, misfortune, dangers and from all unpleasant things. And I ask you to answer all of my requests by virtue of the blessing, the miracle and the secrets of *al-Фatihât* chapter 17(Muhammad n.d.:7).

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16 The term *kara>mat*(plural *kara>ma>t*) is an Arabic word meaning the wonders wrought by Muslim saints for the good of the people as well as in proof of their own saintship. In Javanese the term *kara>mat* changes to *kerama>t* which refers to sacred place such as a holy grave or the shrine of a holy person.

17 ‘Ya Allah kulo nyuwun , kulo sekeluargo mugio panjenengan paringi Taufig lan Hidayah panjenengan, Rahmat lan Nikmat Panjenengan , Soho ridha lan pengampunan panjenengan , lan kulu nyuwun Ya Allah kulo sekeluarga mugio panjenengan gampilaken sedoyo urusanipun, hasil sedoyo hajatipun, sukses sedoyo usahaniipun, lan kulu nyuwun Ya Allah kulo sekeluargo mugio panjenengan dadosaken tiang ingkang bahagia donyo lan akhiratipun, kathah rizkinipun,kathah bondonipun ingkang barakahi lan manfaati, lan kulo nyuwun Ya Allah kulo sekeluarga mugio panjenengan selametaken saking fitnah, bala’ afat lan sedoyo perkawis ingkang mboten ngeremenaken. Lan kulu nyuwun Ya Allah mugio sedoyo panyuwun kulo kolowau panjenengan ijabahi sedoyo lantarar barokah, karomah, soho asroripun Surat a-Fatihah.’
This prayer is not the end of the ritual. Rather, this prayer is the beginning of the dhikr session that consists of the reciting of the first chapter of the Qur’an (al-Fātiha) forty times; the reciting of al-Ikhlas chapter eleven times; the reciting of istighfār phrase, استغفِر الله العظيم سبحان الله وحده (I beseech Allah’s forgiveness, the Magnificent, glory be to Allah and praise be to him); the reciting of the salāwa phrase a hundred times, أيها النبي ورحمة الله وبركاته السلام عليك (May the peace, the Mercy and the Blessing of Allah be upon you, O! Prophet); the reciting of Kalimat al-Tayyibat a hundred times, المبين لالله إلا الله الملك الحق (There is none worthy of worship except Allah, the sovereign Lord, the Truth, the Clear evident), the reciting of some of God’s names a hundred times, ياكفى يا ع的一切 بسم الله ياقتح بارزاق (In the name of Allah, O! the Opener, the Provider, the Most Sufficient, the Rich) and the reciting of hauqala phrase a hundred times, بابنا علني العظيم بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم لاحول وألا ولا أوملا (In the names of Allah the All Merciful and the All Compassionate, there is no change and power except through Allah). All of these formulae are recited vocally either by the leader or the participants. Eventually, the ritual is closed by a long prayer led by the leader.

It is important to note that the dominant feature of the dhikr ritual performed by this group is the recitation of God’s names taken from the best names of God (A., asma‘ul husnā). Although Muslim scholars have different opinions on the number of these names, it is widely held that there are ninety nine names. In addition to the use of His names focusing on his transcendence and power, this group also employs His names or attributes which imply His response to requests. For example, if one says Ya Fattah (the Opener), Ya Razzāq (the Provider), it would mean ‘be opening and be providing’. In other words, it is expected that by reciting these God’s names, divine aid in opening and providing a livelihood for humans is sought. This practice is sanctioned by God in the Qur’an, which asks people to invoke God using His names (al-‘Arāf : 180; al-Isrā’ : 110). It is expected that mentioning God’s attributes and his names in praying will cause the prayer to be granted by God, as well as creating optimism in the heart of supplicants (Shihab 1998:xxvii). However, particular Sufi orders such as the Hamidiyyah Shadhiliyyah order, recite God’s names but not in connection with questions and requests. According to Hamidiyyah Shadhiliyyah group, the proper purpose of dhikr is to focus on the Absoluteness of God, on His transcendent, Eternal Being, with no thought of material purposes (Gilsenan 1973:167-68). In contrast, in the Ihsāniyyat group, the participants are allowed to invoke God with respect to their own intentions.

The ritual of istighathāt is conducted in a group (berjamaah) on a weekly and five-week (J., selapanan) basis. It may also be practised daily by individuals at any time. The weekly ritual is usually held in places such as the tombs of holy
men or in some villages located in Kediri. These rituals are usually attended by a small number of people. On the other hand, the *selapanan* ritual is generally held outside Kediri and can be attended by a great number of people. In addition, the ritual is also specifically held in connection with the birthday of this group and the anniversary of the death of Muslim saints in the vicinity of Kediri such as Shaikh Ihsan Dahlan, Shaikh Muhammad and Nyai Hasanah, Shaikh Murshad, Shaikh Ali Laleyan (Pangeran Demang), and Shaikh Ageng Karanglo. Like the *selapanan* rituals, these rituals are held on the anniversary of the saints’ deaths and involve many members of the group from different regions.

Only the *selapanan* ritual of *istighāthāt* is followed by other cultural performances such as hobby-horse dances (I., *jaranan*), the tiger-masked dances (I., *Reog Ponorogo*), a Chinese traditional dances (I., *barongsai*), and *dangdutan*. On these occasions, a meal and special water are provided for the participants in the ritual. When the ritual has concluded, the committee that organized the ritual usually serves a meal from a general kitchen (I., *dapur umum*) set up in the location. The special meal provided during this ritual is rice served with eggplant vegetable curry. For the leader of this group this menu has a particular significance. According to him, the soft texture of eggplant symbolizes the softness of the heart after performing the *istighāthāt* ritual. Therefore, it is expected that reciting *istighāthāt*, can make the hearts of the participants soft and ready to receive guidance (I., *hidayah*) from God.

In addition to the meal, special water called blessed water (I., *air karamah*) is provided for the ritual participants at every entrance. To obtain this water people should voluntarily give a small amount of money. Before being offered to people, this water is specially prayed over by a group of selected *kyai* in turn so that this water is believed to have particular power (I., *karamah*) that can be used for many purposes. *Gus* Abdul Latif believes that this water can be used to heal or for other purposes because it has absorbed spiritually the sound waves of recited *dhikr*. In order to enhance the power of this water, a special prayer can be directed to it. *Gus* Abdul Latif argued that this practice was well supported by the fact that the Prophet himself carried out the same practice. It was said in a hadith that when one of the Prophet’s companions was sick, the Prophet gave him water while reciting a prayer. It is for this reason that in order to obtain blessing (barakah) during a *manāqiban* ritual (reciting a particular Sufi saint’s biography) or during a *istighāthāt* recitation held by some Sufi orders in Java, many participants bring a bottle of water from home, and place it in front of the ritual gathering with its lid open.
5.4. The Structure of the Group

Gilsenan, in his classical study on Saints and Sufi in Modern Egypt, used the terms, ‘organization’ and ‘association’ to describe the structure of Sufi orders. An organization emphasizes ‘a high degree of stratification on the basis of differential expertise and/or efficiency’. An organization is also characterized by ‘greater structural recognition of functional inequality’ and formal control based on ‘a hierarchy of authority statuses’. Another mark of organizations is that their holders are full time and fully paid. In contrast, an association is characterized by ‘looseness of structure with minimal development of a status hierarchy.’ Individual commitment in an association is also voluntary and egalitarian. Moreover, the appointment of officials is based on administrative convenience. He concluded that the majority of Sufi orders in Egypt could be placed on a continuum between association and organization (Gilsenan 1973:65-66). Sufi orders in Indonesia can also be shown to follow this typology.

However, Gilsenan’s typology cannot be easily applied to the structure of Majlis Dhikr groups like Istighāθat Iḥsaniyyat. Unlike many Sufi orders in Indonesia which have hierarchical positions such as master (murshid), vice-master (khalifah), and disciple (murid), in the Iḥsaniyyat group these positions are not recognized. Instead, Iḥsaniyyat only recognises a single position of leader who is regarded as a central figure (I., tokoh sentral) in this group. Although there are chairpersons (I., ketua) in some branches, they function only as coordinators for major istighāθat rituals (rutinan selapanan) and other rituals held in these branches. If the tokoh sentral cannot come to the ritual, these chairpersons will substitute for him to lead the major istighāθat (rutinan selapanan) ritual. These branch representative chairpersons are appointed directly by the central leader without any further qualification and without any limit on the time. As a result, they are immediately responsible to him. In this sense, the position of these representatives is not like the khalifat or naib in other Sufi orders who can function as intermediaries linking murid with murshid but also supervising the initiation of new murid on behalf of their murshid.

Because there is no intermediary person to link the members with the tokoh sentral, people find it easy to meet with him either privately or on public occasions. For example, prior to the weekly istighāθat ritual and at the end of the ritual, people can freely meet Gus Abdul Latif, in the relaxed context, sitting together and chatting (I., jagongan) with him. It is on this occasion that people can ask, consult, and discuss everything with their leader. Moreover, such occasions are sometimes used by the leader to give religious messages to his members informally. It is also evident on such occasions how the tokoh sentral...
demonstrates his sympathy and care toward his members by staying until midnight, if called upon to do so. In addition, if people want to consult privately, they can meet him directly in his house at any time or they can make a call through his assistants (J., khadam) to check on his availability.

As happens in many other Sufi groups, the exact number of members and their social background are unknown because the Iḥsāniyyat group keeps no official records, and the recruitment of new followers is not officially registered. The majority of its members come from the lower classes of society. Most of them come from rural areas rather than urban areas. The members of this group comprise not only elderly men and women but also younger people.

To become a member of Iḥsāniyyat, people do not need to take an oath or initiation (A., bay‘at, I., baiat) to the leader or his representative or pass a test. In other words, the mode of entry is voluntary, so people can recite and practice the wārid (dhikr formula) without asking direct permission from the tokoh sentral. Moreover, the Iḥsāniyyat group does not demand an exclusive commitment on the part of its members. Therefore, people can voluntary join this group while also being members of other dhikr groups. They are also able to practise the ritual of istighāthat intermittently without any sanction, even though the leader of this group recommends the members (jamaah) practise the istighāhat ritual continuously. In contrast, other Sufi orders require their members to take a vow of allegiance (bay‘at) to their shaikh or murshid, before they can recite a special dhikr and more aḥzāb (Trimingham 1971:186). Even Sufi groups such as Hamidiyah Shadiliyah (Gilsenan 1973:94), and Tijaniyah
demanded an exclusive commitment and allegiance from their members. For example, on joining the Tijaniyah order, people are expected to abandon their commitment to other orders. They will not suffer any harm if they abandon those orders. However, if they abandon their allegiance to the Tijaniyyah, they will experience harm and death (Sirriyeh 1999:17-18).

The relationship between the tokoh sentral and his members is not like the strong master-pupil (murshid-murid) relationship in many Sufi orders. The relationship is based on a general normative comportment (I., adab) as commonly practised in teacher-student relations in the Islamic learning tradition, while the relationship between murshid and murid in Sufi orders is strongly based on a complex set of adab as well as sanctions. Kyai Usman Ishaqi, a murshid of Qadiriyyah wa Naqshabandiyah order from Surabaya, mentioned in his book, al-Khulâsat al-Wafiyat fî al-Adâb wa Kaifiyyat al-Dhikr ‘inda al-Sâda al-Qâdiriyat wa al-Naqshabandiyyat, the adab by which the murid should completely respect their murshid. He put it this way:

You should respect your shaikh and believe outwardly (dhahir) and inwardly (batin) that without the help of the shaikh, your objective will never be obtained. You should not complain about what the shaikh has done, even though the shaikh may have done something which is unlawful in appearance. Instead, avoiding negative prejudice against the shaikh, people should be convinced that what the shaikh has done is clearly based on God’s orders. If you still do not understand this, you should think that this is because of your lack of knowledge in understanding the essence of matters. Sometimes what the shaikh has done seems to be blameworthy (madhmu’mat) in appearance; however in its essence what he has done is praiseworthy. You should surrender yourselves to him because challenging him is like a disease, which is difficult to cure… the murid who ask their shaikh about his behaviour will never prosper. In all your life matters either in their totality or in their details, in devotional aspects or cultural aspects, you should abandon your own choice because your shaikh has chosen for you. In short, you should surrender yourself to him. The annihilation in master (A.,fanâ’ fî al-shaikh) is an introduction to the annihilation in God (A., fanâ’ fî Allah)…You should not talk in front of your shaikh. When he asks you, instead of answering too long, you should answer the question precisely. This is partly because speaking too much in front of the shaikh will eliminate his veneration. Therefore, the excellent adab of a murid toward his shaikh is that he should be silent, quiet and pay attention to what the shaikh says and do that which contributes to welfare (al-Ishaqi n.d.:5-6).

This adab is relevant to the famous expression in the Sufi tradition, ‘Be with your shaikh like the corpse in the hands of the washer; he turns it over as he wishes and it is obedient’ (Trimingham 1971:187). This long practical adab instruction
in a Sufi order is always stressed, either by the murshid or his khāfīfah, especially on the occasion of initiation (A., bay’at) and some other occasions. In contrast, although the members of Iḥsāniyyah do not engage in such adab, they still pay respect to their tokoh sentral as a teacher. For example, it is very common for Iḥsāniyyah members to chat with their tokoh sentral after an istighāthāt ritual session until midnight. Sometimes they laugh if the tokoh sentral makes a joke about one of his members. According to the adab prescribed in the Sufi orders, none of these practices is allowed.

Since the highest authority in the Iḥsāniyyah is in the hands of the tokoh sentral as founder as well as guider of the group, every decision related to the group is determined only with his approval. For example, every activity is conducted by establishing a temporary committee, the members of which are recruited from capable group members on his approval. When those activities have been completed, the committee is responsible for reporting about these activities to the tokoh sentral. When tokoh sentral has approved and accepted the report, he officially dismisses the committee. If he cannot attend and lead the weekly ritual, he delegates his representative to lead the ritual. Without a mandate from him, no one dares to lead the ritual.

In order to support and run the activities of Iḥsāniyyah, this group does not have particular ways to gain financial funding. For example, it has never asked its members to give money regularly to the leader of the group. The only financial funding that can be obtained by this group comes from events such as ruwatan (a special ritual to cleanse people’s misfortune) and the regular istighāthāt ritual (I., rutinan istighathat selapanan). In an event like ruwatan, for instance, the event committee usually asks those who participate to give some money. Moreover, at another event such as a major istighāthāt ritual, this group can collect funds from the arwahan session, donation boxes, and air karamah provided to the participants. In order to be included in the arwahan session, people should give some money voluntarily to the coordinator of the session. Likewise, if they want to receive air karomah, they should give some money in return.

To encourage members of Iḥsāniyyah to give more alms, Kyai Hisham argued that prayers would be more easily granted by God if they are followed by alms and charity (I., sadaqah). The more people give the greater the chance their prayer will be granted by God. He described this notion to the members of Iḥsāniyyah by pointing out that ‘if someone wants to catch a big fish, they should have big fish bait.’ However, it is not clear what percentage of the money collected should be allocated to the group or given to the leader. It is therefore difficult to trace the stream of funding in this group because all financial matters
are discussed internally among a few individuals. As a result, the members and public have no idea how much money has been collected by this organization so far.

It is interesting to note that although this group has not included pesantren in its structure, pesantren have still played an important role in the spreading of this local group. In the case of Ihsāniyyat, the network of alumnae who graduated from Pesantren Jampes has played an important role in disseminating knowledge of this group. The position of Gus Abdul Latif as the leader of Ihsāniyyat, as a son of a kyai of the pesantren, and as an Islamic preacher (I., muballigh) has attracted many alumnae to invite him to give religious lectures in their home towns. On such occasions Gus Abdul Latif often introduces Ihsāniyyat to the participants. On many occasions, this group is deliberately introduced to the public as a group from Pesantren Jampes rather than from Kediri. In this way, Pesantren Jampes has become a part of the group’s structure. Pesantren Jampes has contributed to popularizing this group.

5.5. From Tombs to Mosques: Implementing Sufi Dakwah and Religious Tolerance

Dakwah is a Qur’anic concept that has been widely used and practised by Muslims. However, since this term has different connotations and understandings, Muslims in diverse parts of the world conceive the practice of dakwah in various ways. Even in Indonesian Islam, dakwah is applied and interpreted in different ways. Some people use the concept in ‘its restricted form (to apply only within Islam), while others use dakwah in its open form (for all of humanity).’ As Gade has explained, dakwah basically means ‘call to deepen one’s own or encourage others’ Islamic piety’ (Gade 2004:16).

For the leader of Ihsāniyat, dakwah is understood not only as encouraging others’ Islamic piety but also seeking the guidance of God (I., hidayah), which is necessary for the success of dakwah. It is in line with this definition that the ritual of Istighāthat Ihsāniyyat is combined with a religious lecture (A., mauizat al-ḥasanat). The first aim is to ask God’s guidance and then to deepen and encourage others’ Islamic piety. Gus Abdul Latif believes that without God guidance (I., hidayah), the objective of dakwah will not be perfectly achieved. Likewise, istighāthat without mauizat al-ḥasanat is like ibāda without knowledge (I., ilmu), which is considered worthless. To achieve hidayah entails the purification of one’s heart from negative worldly desire. This purification can be done through istighāthat which contains continuous worship and repentance.
When *hidayah* has been achieved, people can deepen their understanding of Islamic knowledge from any source. This form of *dakwah* has been practised by the group since Gus Abdul Latif realized that the *dakwah* of Islamic preachers in Indonesia has not contributed to the improvement of Muslims’ religious attitudes. This is partly because the practice of *dakwah* has placed too much stress on public lectures (I., *ceramah*), while ignoring the obtainment of *hidayah*. Gus Abdul Latif explained the importance of *istighâthat* in the *dakwah* project as follows:

Human beings consist of two aspects: a physical aspect (I., *jasmani*) and a spiritual aspect (I., *rohani*). Both of them constitute life in unity which needs different food supplement. The former will become healthy and functional if it is supplied with enough nutrition and vitamins. Likewise, the latter will be healthy and functional if it is supplied with enough nutrition and vitamins. This nutrition and vitamins can be gained from sincere worship and religious activities which can bring one nearer to God through *istighâthat*. However, most people have forgotten this spiritual need. In fact, if this spiritual need can be fulfilled, all social problems such as drug and alcohol addiction, as well as social crimes can be resolved.\(^\text{18}\)

Since its inception, this group has catered for those who are categorized as difficult people (I., *orang ruwet*) and marginalised people (I., *orang pinggiran*) though it is also open to other groups of people. *Ihsâniyyat* even attracted those who were previously addicted to narcotics (I., *narkoba*), alcohol, ecstasy tablets, and opium (*sabu-sabu*). According to Gus Abdul Latif, the reason for recruiting those people into the *Ihsâniyyat* group was that they had been ignored by other religious leaders in their *dakwah* projects. Instead of ignoring them, he stressed that these people should become the main target of Islamic *dakwah*. These people in his view were similar to government officials (I., *pejabat*), nobles (I., *orang pangkat*), and Muslims scholars (I., *ulama*) and these people should be treated patiently without labeling them as *orang nakal* or *orang ruwet*. However, some of Gus Abdul Latif’s colleagues have objected to such *dakwah*. They feared that if such people were involved, they could ruin their status as *Gus* or *kyai*. In response to this objection, he argued as follows:

The status of someone’s *kyaiship* will not disappear because of associating with bad people, thieves, and drug addicts. The status of a person’s *kyaiship* will be sustained so long as they maintain their consistency to conduct and hold their belief [religious belief]. Even if they associate with pious people but do not maintain their consistency, their status as *kyai* will decline.

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18 Interview with Gus Latif, Kediri, January, 2005.
Gus Abdul Latif further argued that the recruitment of orang ruwet in the dakwah project was based on the fact that the Prophet himself was very concerned about these people. The Prophet give his advocacy (A., shafā‘at) for those who committed capital offences (I., dosa besar). Gus Abdul Latif insisted that if ‘ulama‘ are considered the Prophet’s inheritors, they have to emulate him by welcoming, and embracing such people, and strengthening their Islamic piety rather than ignoring them. Therefore, in the context of dakwah he maintained that ‘people should guide those who cannot walk rather than guiding those who are capable of walking.’

Involving those people in the dakwah project can also mean that they should be regarded as respected people (I., orang terhormat) rather than as the dregs of society (I., sampah masyarakat). For Gus Abdul Latif, respecting them and involving them in the dakwah project will enhance their confidence, which ultimately contributes to their consciousness to return to the right path. One of his ways to increase their confidence is by asking them not to be upset by their past deeds. He maintained that if those people are willing to repent seriously, God will forgive all their past sins; God only loves those sinners who are willing to repent. Furthermore, he motivates them by saying that the repentance of those sinners could be likened to fertilizer made from animal feces, which is useful for plantations. Without this fertilizer, plants will not grow perfectly. Thus, he believes that because of those people, the status of other people before God can improve. Therefore, instead of condemning them, people should thank them. According to Gus Abdul Latif, this notion is based on the hadith which he described as follows:

‘Later, the flame of fire licks many Muslims on the Day of Judgment; no one including Muslim scholars (ulama) can prevent the fire. Suddenly, the Angel of Gabriel comes and brings water to extinguish the fire and it is out. The Prophet says to the Angel, ‘What sort of water did you bring to extinguish the fire?’ Gabriel answers, ‘I collected this water from the tears of those who regret their sins.’

Furthermore, to those who have committed sins and would like to repent, Gus Abdul Latif says, ‘Your rank (derajat) before God is higher than mine, because God loves much those who want to repent from their sins and only those who have sinned are able to repent.’

Here, Gus Abdul Latif’s positive opinion toward those who have committed sins relies heavily on the teaching of Sufism (I., tasawuf). Based on this teaching, people’s fate at the end of their lives is difficult to know: whether they will have a good death (A., ḥusn al-khātimat) or a bad death (A., sū‘ al-khātimat).
In this respect, some people may do good deeds during their life, but commit sins at the end of their life without having a chance to repent, so these people obviously die with süʿ al-khāṭimat. Furthermore, he argued that people should not underestimate those who have committed sins during their life, because they might have the chance to repent at the end of their life so that they may die with husn al-khāṭimat. Therefore, since people do not know their own fate, they should not underestimate others who are still sinning. In this sense, Gus Abdul Latif’s opinion is similar to Ibn Ata’allah who pointed out that, ‘Bad deeds (A., maksiat) which bring someone to obedience to Allah (A., tā’at) are much better than good deeds (A., tā’at) which are coupled with, and lead, to pride (A., takabbur) (Pranowo 1991:50).’

Another approach taken by Gus Abdul Latif to attract those orang ruwet into his group is based on the teachings of the Qur’an. For example, when approaching drunken people who ultimately succeed in stopping drinking, he never overtly prohibits them from drinking. He believes that if they have not received hidayah, they will not stop drinking. Therefore, since quitting drinking is a matter of hidayah, he allows them to drink but at the same time, he asks them to keep in their mind that God prohibits drinking alcohol. This strategy was inspired by the way the Qur’an gradually prohibited drinking khamr. As described in the Qur’an, the prohibition took place four steps: the first step is that the Qur’an just informed people that:

> And of the fruits of the date-palm, and grapes, whence ye derive strong drink (sakar) and (also) good nourishment. Lo! therein is indeed a portent for people who have sense [An-Nahl 16:67].

At the second step, when one of the Prophet’s companions reported that khamr can lead people to unconsciousness and bankruptcy, the Qur’an responded that:

> They will ask thee about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: ‘In both there is great evil as well as some benefit for man; but the evil which they cause is greater than the benefit which they bring.’ And they will ask thee as to what they should spend [in God’s cause]. Say: ‘Whatever you can spare’. In this way God makes clear unto you His messages, so that you might reflect [al-Baqarah 2:219]

In this verse, instead of explicitly prohibiting people from drinking strong liquor (A., khamr), the Qur’an only noted that the sin, which resulted from drinking khamr, was greater than its usefulness. At the third step, the Qur’an only prohibits people from drinking khamr while they are about to pray. The Qur’an explained that:
O! ye who believe! Draw not near unto prayer when ye are drunken, until ye know that which ye utter [al-Nisa’ 4:43].

At the fourth step, the Qur’an explicitly forbade people from drinking khamr because it is part of Satan’s handiwork. The Qur’an said that:

O! ye who believe! Strong drink and games of chance and idols and divining arrows are only an infamy of Satan’s handiwork. Leave it aside in order that ye may succeed. [al-Maidah 5:90]

All of these verses suggest that in order to prohibit khamr, God prescribed a gradual method rather than a direct method, and this method can be applied in dakwah projects. The application of this method is also stressed by the Prophetic tradition which encourages Muslims to behave according to God’s ethics (A., akhlaq Allāh).

In line with this method, Gus Abdul Latif allowed Javanese popular arts such as the hobby-horse dance (J., jaranan), tiger-masked dance (I., reog), dangdutan, Chinese dragon dance (leang-leong), and ruwatan to be performed on the annual anniversary of Iḥsāniyyat. Such Javanese popular arts within the framework of pesantren and Sufi group are unusual. These popular arts are closely associated with the abangan group (nominal Muslims), a group that is seen by some scholars as being always contrary to the santri group (devout Muslims). However, Gus Abdul Latif believes that these performances can be used as a means to propagate Islam among those nominal Muslims. He put it this way:

Holding jaranan on the anniversary day of Iḥsāniyyat could be seen as part of lisān al-ḥāfn the dakwah project. In other words, although without saying anything, I have shown to them that I can accept and accommodate those performances...As a result, we can bring the jaranan society or abangan group back to the Islamic path by respecting and appreciating them. If we have been accepted [by them], we can remove slowly the content of the performance arts that is prohibited by Islamic Law. If this succeeds, they can propagate Islam through the performance arts. 19

In response to this statement, the leader of the Lukojoyo Jaranan Group commented as follows:

As an ‘ulāma, Gus Abdul Latif was willing to watch our performance, without denouncing it. He, even, suggested we improve the quality of jaranan performance, whereas other ‘ulāma’ have regarded us as people who are outside of social norms (I., di luar norma sosial) (Hisbi:2004).

19 Interview with Gus Abdul Latif, Kediri, January, 2005.
This response makes clear that these people felt happy to be embraced by Gus Abdul Latif in his *dakwah*. Gus Abdul Latif often involved this group in organizing *istighāthat* rituals in their own area. As a result, they were not reluctant to join other rituals held in other places.

According to Gus Abdul Latif, there were objections among other ‘ulama’ towards those Javanese performance arts. Some ‘ulama’ objected to those performances, saying that those arts were un-Islamic. However, Gus Abdul Latif criticized those who regarded Javanese arts such as *reog* and *jaranan* or *jatilan* as sinful arts (*kesenian yang berdosa*), while others such as *qasidah* and *gambus* were considered to be Islamic arts (*kesenian Islami*). He questioned: ‘What makes those Javanese arts un-Islamic, whereas the latter are considered Islamic arts (I., *Islami*)?’ He argued that it is not fair to say that *jaranan* is an un-Islamic art, while *qasidah modern* is Islamic because it has an Arabic flavor. He argued that *qasidah*, in fact, must be considered as less Islamic than *jaranan*, since *qasidah* or *gambus*, even though they contain Arabic songs, always involve women who dance and sing. According to Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), watching dancing women and hearing women singers can lead to immoral acts (I., *maksiat*) rather than spiritual benefits (*manfaat*).²⁰

In fact, Gus Abdul Latif’s predecessor also allowed various Javanese popular arts performances. My informant mentioned that Shaikh Ihsan Dahlan, Abdul Gus Latif’s grandfather, included various popular Javanese arts when he conducted graduation (I., *khataman*) celebrations after he had finished reciting the whole chapters of *Ihyā’ Ulūmuddīn* and his works, *Sirāj al-Ṭālibīn* in his *pesantren*.²¹ At that time, Kyai Hasyim Ash’ari, the founder of the Nahdlatul Ulama organization, asked Kyai Ihsan about the involvement of these Javanese popular arts in the *khataman* celebration. Instead of answering, Kyai Ihsan Dahlan just opened his mouth. According to my informant, Kyai Hashim looked inside and saw the blue water of an ocean in Kyai Ihsan’s mouth. My informant argued that this blue water of the deep ocean remains pure and clean even though dirty streams of water from rivers flow into it. This blue water of the deep ocean thus also symbolized the depth of Kyai Ihsan’s Sufi practice that could purify all vices brought about by those Javanese popular arts. Gus Abdul Latif’s acceptance of Javanese popular arts showed that santri culture is not always opposed to Javanese indigenous culture. Furthermore, Gus Abdul Latif’s acceptance of Javanese popular arts reflects the nature of Sufi teachings which emphasizes continuity rather than change in local tradition and practices.

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²⁰ Interview with Gus Abdul Latif, Kediri, October, 2004.
²¹ Interview with Gus Abdul Latif, Kediri, October, 2004.
The involvement of Javanese performances in the Iḥsāniyyat group’s *dakwah* reminds us of Sunan Kalijaga, one of the nine saints (I., *Wali Sanga*) of Java, who introduced Javanese gamelan of *sekaten* (I., *gamelan sekaten*) in his *dakwah* in commemoration of Prophet Muhammad’s birthday (I., *maulid nabi*). The word *sekaten* is a Javanese word which is adapted from the Arabic *shahādatain* (the two sentences of the declaration of faith), the first pillar of the five pillars of Islam. Sunan Kalijaga used the story and actors in shadow puppet (I., *wayang kulit*) performances and creatively modified them to propagate Islam (Saksono 1995:91). In fact, as van Dijk (1998:225) has described, most *Wali Sanga* propagated Islam in Java with ‘tact and moderation and accepted existing culture wherever possible.’ They never touched, criticized or banned any sensitive issues and local customs in the society by rigidly imposing religious teachings, even though they lived in an *abangan-santri* society.

In addition to his tolerance toward Javanese culture and arts, *Gus* Abdul Latif also demonstrated his tolerance toward other religious followers. For example, he allowed a Christian to join regularly in the *istighāhat* ritual held by the Iḥsāniyyat group in Kediri without asking him to convert to Islam. *Gus* Abdul Latif further demonstrated his tolerance toward followers of other religious by praying sincerely for a Christian, at his request, for success in finding a new house. The reason for accepting this person as a member of the group is related to his *dakwah* strategy to show the tolerance and inclusiveness of Islam toward other religious believers. *Gus* Latif stressed that Islam and other religions have many more similarities than differences.22

Another reason to accept followers of other religions as Iḥsāniyyat members is to provide a bridge for interfaith dialogue and mutual understanding, which is essential in building religious life in Indonesia. The significance of this religious relationship can be concluded, for example, from a dialogue between a Christian and *Gus* Abdul Latif concerning a comment put forward by Abu Bakar Ba’asyir that, ‘We have to destroy America, and enemies of Islam in Indonesia’. The Christian felt threatened by Ba’asyir’s comment. In response, to this concern, *Gus* Abdul Latif said that every Muslim knows who Abu Bakar Ba’asyir is, and so one should not be worried by his threats. If this problem is not communicated in the frame of religious friendship, *Gus* Abdul Latif believed, followers of religions other than Islam will think that the majority of Muslims are like Abu Bakar Ba’asyir. Therefore, interfaith friendship and dialogue are important to reduce potential conflicts between religious beliefs because of misunderstandings. This mission is relevant to the motto of this group, that is, as a builder of a conscious and adhesive ummat (I., *pembina mental dan perekat umat*).

22 Interview with *Gus* Abdul Latif, Kediri, October 2004.
When asked about why he, as a Christian, was able to join with \textit{Gus} Abdul Latif and become a member of the \textit{Ihsāniyyat} group, the Christian replied that he joined because he saw wisdom in the figure of \textit{Gus} Abdul Latif. He said: ‘As a Christian, I need wisdom as well as happiness in this life, and I can find these from everyone, regardless of their religion.’ When he first joined the \textit{istighāthah} group and actively listened to religious lectures given by \textit{Gus} Abdul Latif, his parents worried that he would convert to Islam because of his closeness to the leader of \textit{Ihsāniyyat}. To convince his parents, he answered, ‘If I was born a Christian, I will die a Christian.’ In other words, he felt secure as a Christian because what he heard from \textit{Gus} Abdul Latif’s lecture (\textit{I., pengajian}) and advice was relevant to the universal ethic, which is also prevalent in other religious teachings. He described \textit{Gus} Abdul Latif as follows:

As a drug addict, I want to quit my addiction. However, no one including my close friends could help me to quit. Instead of helping me, they all left me alone with my problem. Actually, I need those who can hear and help me to ease my problem. Finally, I found a person who could help and listen my problem. The person is \textit{Gus} Latif. He is a wise man. I have spent many nights chatting with him until morning. He patiently heard my problem and gave advice to me. While he advised me, he never alluded to theological matters regarding Christianity’.

Although \textit{Gus} Abdul Latif pointed out that the recruitment of members was not the main objective of his group, nevertheless, as a \textit{Majlis Dhikr} group which is missionary in nature, \textit{Ihsāniyyat} inevitably needs to recruit as many members as possible and to spread its influence to others. The need to recruit new members was evident when I attended a major \textit{istighāthah} held in Banyuwangi, and \textit{Gus} Abdul Latif proudly said to me that although this group was only established a few years ago, it had successfully attracted a large number of participants. Moreover in every \textit{istighāthah} ritual, he specifically invokes God’s help so that \textit{Ihsāniyyat} can develop everywhere. Given the fact that various groups already exist in the region which offer programs such as \textit{dhikr}, reciting the Qur’an and \textit{Ṣalawāt}, the \textit{Ihsāniyyat} group needs to look for a distinct way to recruit members and spread its practice.

The first method used by the group to promote \textit{Ihsāniyyat} was to broadcast its events and programs on the radio. This method is not new among religious preachers. In fact, this method has been widely used by other Indonesian Islamic preachers and several \textit{dhikr} groups in Indonesia. Following the boom in establishing new TV stations in Indonesia in the 1990’s, famous national

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Interview with Andik, Kediri, October, 2004.
\item Interview with \textit{Gus} Abdul Latif, Kediri, November, 2004.
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preachers such as Kyai Abdullah Gymnastiar (usually called ‘Aa Gym), Kyai Ilham Arifin, Jeffri and Ustadz Haryono have all become widely known by Indonesian viewers through dakwah programs on particular TV stations. However, in the local context of Kediri, the use of radio stations by the Ihsāniyyat group to teach and spread Islamic teachings and local tarekat is quite new.

Initially, one of the biggest radio stations in Kediri, Wijangsongko FM radio, which is well-known for its programs of Javanese music and songs and keroncong music, invited Gus Abdul Latif to host a weekly interactive program called Sajadah (Sajian Amal dan Ibadah). This program was intended to provide listeners with a discussion of Islamic subjects ranging from Islamic jurisprudence and theology to Muslim daily life based on questions from listeners. This radio program could be heard by those who lived in Kediri but also by those who lived in other cities such as Tulungagung, Nganjuk, and Jombang. Unlike other radio and television programs on Islamic subjects, this program was presented in Indonesian and Javanese so that it could be easily followed by its listeners. Gus Abdul Latif realized that this program could be used as a means to introduce Ihsāniyyat and to announce its programs as well as to strengthen the unity of Ihsāniyyat members. For example, at the beginning or at the end of the program, he always addresses his listeners and followers as well as invoking the help of God so that He will help to promote Ihsāniyyat mission. In this way, as a leader of the group, he can communicate easily with his followers. For his followers who cannot visit him regularly, this program helps them to keep in touch with their leader.

A second avenue for making dakwah acceptable, especially to those categorized as orang ruwet, marginalized people (I., orang pinggiran) and nominal Muslims was through a dakwah project called ‘from tombs to mosques’ (I., dari makam ke masjid). This method involved conducting istighāthat rituals at several tombs of Muslim saints. Among ‘modernist’ Indonesian Muslims, this practice is regarded not only as an improper addition to religious ritual but also as a serious violation to the Islamic teachings verging on polytheism (shirk) because people may wrongly ask something directly from the deceased persons. The istighāthat in the Muslims tombs is usually held by this group at night. Fox maintains that Javanese people visit tombs at the appropriate times for various reasons, including ‘to nyekar, offer flowers (and incense), to pray, to make a request or to fulfill a vow after having made request (nyadran) and, in the process, to gain a share in the blessing (berkah), possibly even the potency (kesakten) of the sleeping one (Fox 1991:20)’. However, Gus Abdul Latif explained that the aim of visiting the tombs of Muslim saints is by no means to ask for something from
those buried within. By holding *istighāhat* rituals in those tombs, *Gus* Abdul Latif perhaps wanted to illustrate how to perform visits the tombs (I., *ziarah*) in a correct way so that people are not led to polytheism.

However, the main objective of holding *istighāhat* rituals in the tombs of Muslim saints rather than in mosques was to attract as many *orang ruwet* and nominal Muslims as possible to attend the ritual so that they could enhance their religious knowledge and practice. Since the tradition of visiting tombs is a well-established practice among Javanese, *Gus* Abdul Latif considered it easier to ask people to come to the tombs than directly to come to a mosque. When people understood the practices of Islamic teachings, they would be expected to come voluntarily to mosques.

As explained by *Kyai* Misbah, *Gus* Abdul Latif’s brother, another reason why the *Iḥsāniyyat* group held its *istighāhat* ritual at tombs rather than in mosques was because this procedure is actually justified by Islam. It is sanctioned by the Prophetic tradition because it can encourage Muslims to remember death (A., *dhikr al-maut*). According to the Sufi tradition, *dhikr al-maut* is one way which can lead to an increase in asceticism (A., *zuhd*) from the world as well as the purification of heart. In regards to *dhikr al-maut*, the Prophet Muhammad in his hadith asked Muslims to remember death abundantly and regarded those who frequently remember death as people of genius.25 As noted by al-Ghazālī in his *Ihya’ Ulūm al-Dīn*, the reason for the excellence of remembering death is because it can increase one’s preparation to face the world-to-come (al-Ghazali 1973:434).

Furthermore, *Kyai* Misbah has argued that some ‘ulamā’ consider the tombs of Muslim saints to be among the particular places in which people’s prayers to God must be granted (A., *maqām mustajābat*). In other words, the tombs of saints are considered efficacious places from which to offer prayer (I, *doa*). This notion, he asserted, in fact was relevant to several hadith, which state that the tombs of Muslims are part of the gardens of paradise (A., *rauf min riyād al-jannat*), whereas the tombs of unbelievers and hypocrites are part of the hollow of hell (*hufratun min ḥufar al-nīrān*).26 Based on this hadith, the ritual practice of *istighāhat* at the tombs of Muslim saints is both lawful and strongly recommended as a means to remember death.

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25 These hadith are as follows: (narrated Tirmidhi) [تاذللا مذاه ركذ نماورثكا] ‘Increase your remembrance to something which destroys the pleasant.’

26 Actually the original text of hadith he cited does not mention the tombs of Muslims and the tombs of unbelievers. The text of hadith, instead, states that the tombs [can become] paradise gardens or hell’s abysses. So, this hadith can be interpreted as tombs becoming gardens of paradise if people follow properly the teachings of religion during their life in the world, or the tombs can become the abyss of hell if people transgress the teachings of religion.
Another reason for holding the *istighāthat* ritual at the tombs of venerated Muslim saints is to ask for the intercession and blessing of these deceased pious saints. According to Gus Abdul Latif, since it is difficult to guarantee that people’s good deeds will be granted by God, these pious saints can be used as intercessors for the living so that God may grant people’s prayer because of these pious people. Therefore, for Gus Abdul Latif, it is necessary to venerate and love those saints who are beloved of God so that God will give His love to the people.

There are several Muslim tombs where this group holds its rituals. Most of these tombs are located in Kediri but some are in Bali while other include several tombs of the Nine Saints (*Wali Sanga*) in Java. In Kediri, for example, the *Iḥšāniyyat* group has held its ritual at the tomb of Shaikh Ihsan Dahlan, the Iḥšāniyyat leader’s ancestor, but also at the tombs of Raden Demang, Shaikh Mursyad, Shaikh Ali Lalean (Pangeran Demang), Shaikh Ageng Karanglo. These shrines are located in several regions of Kediri, enabling this group to attract people who live in the vicinity of these shrines. Interestingly, several tombs of Muslim saints in Kediri were also used by other local *tarekat* groups as ritual objects without raising any conflict and tension. When I attended a ritual in Shaikh Mursyad’s tomb, I met some one who had actively participated in one ritual held there by another group. He attended the *istighāθhat* ritual held by Iḥšāniyyat and had become a member of Iḥšāniyyat while also being a member of another group.27

Other shrines which have been subject to visitation and ritual, are located in Bali. Muslim tombs in Bali that have been said by local people and by this group to be Muslim saints’ tombs are the tombs of Ḥābib ‘Alī Bafaqīḥ in Negara, Pangeran Mas Sepuh (*Keramat Pantai Seseh*), Sayyidah Khadijah (Denpasar), Shaikh Abū Bakr al-Ḥāmid (*Keramat Kusumba*) in Klungkung, Ḥābib ‘Alī Zainal Idrus (*Keramat Kembar*) in Amlapura, Shaikh ‘Abd al-Jaflī (*Keramat Saren Jawa*) in Bangli, Shaikh Ḥābib ‘Umar Yusuf (*Keramat Bedugul*) in Bedugul, and Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir (*Keramat Temukus*) in Buleleng. During my visiting with Iḥšāniyyat pilgrims to these tombs, I found that one of these tombs, Pangeran Mas Sepuh’s tombs (*Keramat Pantai Seseh*), was not like Muslim tomb. The ornamentation of the tomb was like most Hindu tombs. Situated near to the beach, the tomb was also venerated by Hindus. Visits to these tombs and the tombs of *Wali Sanga* (The Nine Javanese Saints) are usually made on an annual basis including the tombs of Sunan Ampel in Surabaya, Maulana Malik Ibrahim in Gresik, Sunan Giri in Gresik (East Java), Sunan Draja in Draja, Lamongan (East Java), Sunan Bonang in Tuban (East Java), Sunan Kudus in Kudus, Sunan Muria in Muria (Central Java), Sunan Kalijaga in Central Java, and Sunan Gunung Jati, in Cirebon.

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27 Interview with Pak x, Kediri, August 2004.
Plate 5.4: Gus Abdul Latif (wearing a white hat) and the researcher (left) after conducting istighâthat ritual at the shrine of a Muslim saint.

Plate 5.5: The Y amisda group holding istighâthat at Kyai Ihsan Dahlan’s tomb.
Yet another method to attract people to join the Iḥṣāniyyat is through publishing a small book consisting of dhikr formulae written by Gus Abdul Latif, along with the general and particular purpose (khasiat) of these īstighāthāt formulae. As stated in this book, the general purposes of this īstighāthāt are as follows:

1. To reach closeness with God
2. For salvation of life in this world and life in the hereafter
3. For happiness and welfare in life in this world
4. For...
for removing sins (5) to obtain shafa’at from the Prophet Muhammad (6) as safeguard from jinn and satan (7) as safeguard from witchcraft (A., sihr) and sorcery (santet) (8) to facilitate all business (9) to facilitate all needs (10) to make successful all businesses (agriculture, commerce, farming, animal husbandry, and industry) (11) to facilitate the means of living (A., rizq) (12) to build a peaceful and harmonious family (I., keluarga sakinah) (Muhammad n.d.:17).

It is clear that the purpose of the istighāthat is not only for spiritual matters but also for ‘worldly’ matters. Explaining this cannot but help to attract people to join the group. This strategy is, in part, taken by Gus Abdul Latif to avoid attracting people to the dakwah project by emphasizing too much the karamah of the leader. In other words, every member of Iḥsāniyyat can practise and recite the formulae so that they can draw benefits for their life without depending on their leader. In this way, members of the group do not need to regard Gus Abdul Latif as a wali or Ghauth, constantly seeking blessings and karamah through physical contact. In fact, Gus Abdul Latif strongly criticizes the strategy of dakwah which stresses the karamah of the leader since it can undermine other preachers who do not possess the same qualities of karamah.

This book also notes that each formula has a particular and specific purpose if it is recited a specified number of times and in specific ways. For example, reciting the al-Fātihat chapter will help those who wish to succeed in their school exams as well as help them to strengthen their memory. This verse, according to this book, can also be used to help people who want to collect a debt so that they can get their money back. To do this, they should recite the chapter to the creditor 313 times. This practice should be performed for seven days consecutively at midnight or 10 pm. Another example is the specific purpose of al-Iḥlās chapter in the Istighāhat Iḥsāniyyat formulae. If this al-Iḥlās chapter is recited a hundred times for seven days at midnight and is followed by a particular prayer each time, this chapter increase a person’s charisma so that his or her boss or colleagues can respect and love them (Muhammad n.d.:17-30). To conclude, every single one of the istighāhat formulae has a purpose which is related to health, career, protection from evil spirit, husband and wife relationships, or seeking a soul mate (I., jodoh). In other words, the formulae of the istighāhat answer most people’s needs.

The tradition of using the collection of dhikr formulae for specific purposes in the Iḥsāniyyat group might be strongly influenced by the spread of books about ‘Islamic magic’ as well as works on medicine (A., tibb) and occult sciences (A., hikmat) which are widely used in Javanese pesantren. As observed by Bruinesssen, the book on hikmat usually contains symbols which are derived from pre-Islamic tradition, whereas the book on tibb usually uses symbols taken from
Qur’anic texts as amulets. Among the books used by santri are al-Ghazālī’s al-Awfaq, Ahmad ibn ‘Ali al-Brūnī’s Shams al-Ma’ārif al-Kubrā, Manbā’ usūl al-Hikma and Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jauzī’s Al-Ṭib al-Nabawīyy (Bruinessen 1990:261-262). In fact, during my research, the two works of al-Brūnī were taught by Gus Abdul Latif in Pesantren Jampes. When I asked about the particular meaning of the amulet, he explained by referring to al-Ghazālī’s al-Awfaq.28

Plate 5.7: The Book of Istighāṭat Ihṣāniyyat.

28 In addition to classical works on Islamic magic, medicine, and occult sciences, other works on similar subjects compiled and written by famous local tabīb are also used by some students in Javanese pesantren. Usually, in order to obtain access to these books, a student should individually seek ījāza for the book from its author. Local tabīb have compiled materials for their books on the basis of ījāza obtained from other tabīb or from their teachers. Some tabīb ask that individual students to stay for some days to be taught the content of the books, while other tabīb just give these books with their ījāza. These santri reciprocate with money to cover printing costs.
Chapter VI: The Awakening of the Negligent: 
The *Dhikr al- Ghāfīlin* Group

Chapter V highlighted the important role of the *Ihsāniyyat* group in developing and spreading Islam among nominal Muslims (*abangan*) by means of cultural approaches. In doing so, the group has adopted the ideas of Sufi *dakwah* and Sufi tolerance, which have been practised since the introduction of Islam to the Indonesian Archipelago. This chapter will look at the role played by another group in developing and spreading Islamic values among Muslims, the *Dhikr al- Ghāfīlin*. In contrast to the previous chapter, this chapter will focus on the leader of the *Majlis Dhikr al-Ghāfīlin*, *Gus Mik*, whose reputation and charisma as a *wali* raised controversy among Muslims in Indonesia. Despite this, *Gus Mik* played an important role in introducing Islamic values to particular groups of people who have been characterized as *orang-orang malam*, a term used to indicate people such as prostitutes, nightclub singers and nightclub visitors.

6.1. The Foundation of the group

The composition of the religious litanies (*dhikr*, remembrance of God) used by the *Majlis Dhikr al-Ghāfīlin* was closely associated with three well known *kyai* in East Java, namely, the late *Kyai* Hamim Jazuli known as *Gus Mik* from *Pesantren* Ploso Kediri, East Java; the late *Kyai* Ahmad Siddiq (from Jember), who was a former chairman of the Nahdlatul Ulama (*NU*) religious board (*Ketua Syuriah*); and the late *Kyai* ʿAbd al-Hamid (from Pasuruan). Indonesian Muslims, particularly from *NU*, believe that these three *kyai* possessed extraordinary miracle power (*karamah*) and divine blessings (*barakah*).

According to *Kyai* Ahmad Siddiq, all of these *kyai* contributed to the composition of the *Dhikr al- Ghāfīlin*. He said:

In fact this formula [the *Dhikr al-Ghāfīlin*] belonged to *Kyai* ʿAbd al- Hamid and *Gus Mik*. I only wrote and compiled it. However, I wanted to disclose the secret so that all my children understood that this formula was the work of three persons namely myself, *Gus Mik* and *Kyai* ʿAbd al- Hamid. First of all I went to *Kyai* ʿAbd al- Hamid. He gave me *ijazah* (authority) to recite the *al-Fāṭihah* chapter a hundred times together with the *Asmaʿul Husna* (The beautiful names of God). Then, I went to *Gus Mik* when he was in the Pak Marliyan’s house where we discussed the formula until 03.00 a.m. On that occasion, *Gus Mik* added to the formula by reciting *istighfāra* hundred times and *Ṣalawāt* three hundred times.
After asking permission from *Gus Mik*, Kyai Ahmad Siddiq recited the formula to Kyai ‘Abd al-Hamid. During this meeting, Kyai ‘Abd al-Ḥamid cried. According to Kyai Ahmad Siddiq the compilation process of this formula took place in the month of *Sha‘ban* and was first practiced in the month of *Ramadān*1972.

The founders of a Sufi group have often received *ilḥām*, a spiritual order, or experience a visionary dream of the Prophet Muhammad before they established or introduced publicly their formulae (*aurad*). Thus, Kyai Ahmad Siddiq not only received consent from two respected kyai or wali, he also received consent from respected deceased kyai through his visionary dream to improve and expand the practice of the *Dhikr al-Ghāfīlīn* litanies. He described his experience as follows:

I had a clear dream that after reciting the *Dhikr al-Ghāfīlīn*, my late brother Kyai Ahmad Qushairi Siddiq was waiting for me at a harbour when I disembarked from a ship. But I did not watch my ship. Then, he asked me to walk along with his friends, *habaib* (Prophet’s descendants). We walked together. It seemed that we walked in the city of Mecca. But he left me behind and I lost him. So, I asked his friend in Arabic: ‘Do you know Kyai Qushairi’s house?’ then he replied: ‘How can I not know him, when he always prays for you.’ Then I found Kyai Qushairi in the al-Ḥaram Mosque in Mecca and he said to me, ‘Certainly, when you lead the recitation of the *Dhikr al-Ghāfīlīn*, I always pray for you at this Ka‘bah’ (Siddiq n.d.:40).

Based on the consent he received in this dream, Kyai Ahmad Siddiq was much more confident to practice this *dhikr* formulae. Moreover, he claimed that although he did not promote and advertise this formula to the public, it attracted a large number of followers to practice the ritual of the group.

Kyai Ahmad Siddiq did not publicly launch the formula but only disclosed it to a limited number of people in Jember. Similarly, Kyai Saiful maintained that Gus Mik did not launch the formula to the general public because at that time many Muslims practiced *dhikr* formula given by Sufi orders. In 1983, *Gus Mik* only practised the formula personally in Tulungagung (East Java) and established a group called the *Dhikr al-Layliyyat*. However, this group did not attract many followers. Three years later, when friction occurred in some *tarekat* (Sufi orders) in relation to the succession of their leaders, *Gus Mik* began to introduce the formula of *Dhikr al-Ghāfīlīn* to the public after receiving consent from Kyai Arwani, one of the prominent *tarekat* leaders from Kudus, Central Java. It seems that *Gus Mik* sought an appropriate time to launch his new group.
In addition to the introduction of the *Dhikr al-Ghāfili>n*, Gus Mik also began to introduce *Khatm al-Qur’an* (I., khataman Qur’an) to the public. Previously, Gus Mik held the *Khatm al-Qur’an*, a particular event involving the recitation of all the chapters of the Qur’an, on the anniversary of his father’s death (A., ḥaul) and at graduations (A., imtihan) in Pesantren Ploso. During this ḥaul, the *Khatm al-Qur’an* not only included reciting the Qur’an (A., bi al-nazār), but also memorizing all the chapters of the Qur’an. The former was intended for general participants, whereas the latter was particularly intended for memorizers (A., ḥāfīz) who were invited to the haul. Gus Mik called this event semaan (Javenese word), a word which is derived from the Arabic word sami’a which means to listen or pay attention. Persons who listen are called sāmiin (listeners). People who came to the event were supposed to listen to the memorizers or reciters and correct them if they make any mistakes (Thoha 2003:266-67). The first semaan was held outside the pesantren in the house of Drs. Muhtadi, an Indonesian Bank Rakyat employee in Kediri, followed by the recitation of the *Dhikr al-Ghāfili>n*. Since then, the semaan ritual has been conducted together with the reciting of the *Dhikr al-Ghāfili>n*. This first semaan held outside the pesantren was attended by hundreds of people. Since then, other semaan have been held in various houses, not only in Kediri but also in many other cities in East Java and in other provinces. According to Abdul Qadir, one of senior leaders in the group, in 1990, a semaan was even held in the Yogyakarta palace to commemorate the fortieth day of the death of Hamengku Buwono IX.

Gus Mik named the semaan group Jantiko which stands for Majlis Anti Koler (anti loss group, I., anti hancur, anti mogok). Kyai Saiful, Gus Mik’s close friend explained to me that it was expected that by giving such a name, those who joined the group would limit their suffering a loss of spirituality in this world and the world-to-come. This name was inspired by Gus Mik’s conversation with a car mechanic, his close friend. One day, Gus Mik asked the mechanic whether an old car fuelled by kerosene that he had designed would break down. The mechanic replied: ‘Obviously not Gus, because this car is anti koler (I., anti hancur, anti mogok).’ Gus Mik then gave his group the name, Majlis Anti Koler. However, because of Kyai Dahnan’s suggestion, in 1989 the name was changed to Mantab, which means ‘strong’ and able to withstand a test (J., tahan uji) (El-Ahmad 1993). Abdul Qadir argued that the word Mantab stands for Majlis Tapa Brata, which means the place for remembering God, while Kyai Saiful argued that the word Mantab was taken from two Arabic words man and tāba, meaning a person who repents.

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1. This means the recitation of all chapters of the Qur’an by memorizers while the audiences listens to their recitation and makes correction if the memorizers make a mistake.
2. Interview with Abdul Qadir, Kediri, September, 2004.
The objective for establishing this dhikr group was based on Gus Mik’s prediction that a great disaster would occur in the year 2000. This disaster was not related to natural disasters such as earthquakes, flooding or landslides, but to a decline in the quality of Muslims’ spiritual life in connection with their ibadah to God. According to Gus Mik, because of the intensity of detrimental influences, Muslims would find it difficult to worship God sincerely (I., ikhlas). This disaster would affect all Muslims regardless of their social status, be they ordinary Muslims or ‘ulama’. Gus Mik argued that no one would be safe from this disaster except those who had a strong spiritual basis as a result of their consistent (A., istiqamat) religious practices. Furthermore, the people who would be saved from this disaster were those who always remembered God’s saints by praying for them, because praying for them would open the door of God’s blessing. Quoting a prominent Sufi, ‘Abd al-Qaadir al-Jaylani, Gus Mik was convinced that people who remembered God’s saints would obtain blessing from God. Therefore, by reciting the Dhikr al-Ghafilin, which includes praying for Muslim saints, people would have a strong basis to face the disaster.

Another objective of establishing the semaan group and using the Dhikr al-Ghafilin was to popularise (membudayakan) the recitation of the Qur’an and to start a movement of Qur’an recitation (I., tadarus al-Qur’an) in Indonesia. Kyai Saiful claimed that before this group was established, the memorization of the Qur’an was conducted only at particular events such as at the Qur’an recitation contests (I., Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur’an, MTQ) and other events in pesantren, which never attracted many participants. As argued by Kyai Saiful since the emergence of this group, it is not difficult to find such events in many cities in East Java and some other provinces on Java. The ritual is even held in many government offices (pendopo kota) in those cities, and is attended by many participants. For example, in the semaan held by this group on the anniversary of Gus Mik’s death (haul), which I attended, over a thousand people, men and women, from several regions in Java flocked to the semaan. The venue of the semaan occupied almost one kilometre of the main road located in front of Pesantren Al-Falah, Ploso, Kediri. When Gus Mik was still alive, the ritual of reciting the Qur’an attracted many government officials and political party leaders and was supported by the introduction of the Iqra’ recitation method nationally in 1992 and by the growing number of Qur’anic Kindergartens (I., Taman Pendidikan al-Qur’an) in Indonesia. This new use of recitation was regarded as a faster learning method than the traditional method (the Baghdadi method), enabling children less than five years old to read the chapters of the Qur’an with ease (Gade 2004:117).

Another goal in establishing the Dhikr al-Ghafilin, was to get people used to performing prayers collectively (I., berjamaah) and reciting prayers (I., doa)
or *dhikr* after performing communal prayers (I., *shalat berjamaah*), as well as to enliven the time particularly between *Maghrib* prayer and *Isha* prayer. All of these activities are included in the ritual of *semaan* and in the recitation of the *Dhikr* *al-Ghāfīlīn*. Those who join the *semaan* definitely practise such activities. As mentioned by Abdul Qadir, one of the *imam* in this group, it was expected that the *sāmi‘īn* (the participants in a *semaan*) should practise these activities when they return to their communities. According to *Gus* Mik, the goal of holding *semaan* was to obtain the blessing (I., *barakah*) contained in the Qur’an as well as to communicate with God. He believed that the words of the Qur’an contain blessings that can be obtained by those who recite and listen to them.

*Gus* Mik also mentioned that another objective in reciting the *Dhikr* *al-Ghāfīlīn* was to help people not only to face their problems in this world but also to face the Day of Judgment (A., *yaum al-ḥisāb*), the day in the hereafter when all people’s conduct will be judged. It is expected that God will give His love to those who recite the *Dhikr* *al-Ghāfīlīn*. *Gus* Mik explained the objectives as follows:

> Hopefully, the *Dhikr* *al-Ghāfīlīn*, which might become [our] spiritual force, could be our support in facing occurrences on the Day of Judgment. This is an important thing to remember. When we find it difficult to manage our wives and families, to create beautiful lives and when the signs of calamity come, this means that we are strongly urged to strengthen our spirit so that so that God will give His love to us. That’s it.

The success of *Gus* Mik in spreading and developing his group has been supported by the network of alumnae of Pesantren Al-Falah, Ploso, Kediri who are spread throughout Java. Wherever *Gus* Mik conducted his *dhikr* ritual, these alumnae strongly supported him and his group. This fact is not surprising, because in pesantren tradition, santri of pesantren are still regarded as ‘students’ of their pesantren, even though they have graduated and returned to their community. Alumnae of pesantren have strong emotional attachment with their pesantren. With this status they have to respect their *kyai* and his family even though they have returned to their home and become *kyai* in their respective community. *Gus* Mik’s position as the son of the founder of Pesantren Ploso deserved to receive support and respect from his father’s students who have returned to their community.

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6.2. The Ritual Practice of the Group

The ritual of this group focuses on the reciting of dhikr. In common with many other Sufi groups, dhikr for this group constitutes ‘a way or a rule of life’, which should be practised by its members to purify their soul (A., nafs) in order to approach God and be pious servants (I., kehambaan yang tulus). Gus Mik specifically said that the recitation of the Dhikr al-Ghayfiin formulae can lead to tranquillity and the strengthening of the heart as well as being a safeguard against the horror of the world and the horror of the day of resurrection.

According to the guide book for the Dhikr al-Ghayfiin (Anonymous n.d:2-30), this dhikr starts by seeking a means (A., wasilat) through the recitation of al-Fatiha, hundred times. The merit of this recitation is conveyed to the spirit of the Prophet Muhammad, Abdul Qadir al-Jaylani, Imam al-Ghazali, Habib Abdillah ibn ‘Alwi al-Haddad (the author of Rattib al-Haddad) and closes with the prayer of al-Fatiha. Those figures are mentioned in the formulae because they were believed by Gus Mik to be figures who continuously recited al-Fatiha hundred times every day. The section then continues with the recitation of Ayat Kursi and Asmaul Husna (ninety names of God), followed by a short prayer repeated ten times in unison.

In the second section, then, the al-Fatiha tawassul is recited again three times, specifically, to be conveyed to the spirits of God’s previous prophets, particularly those who have received the title of Ulul Azmi (those with firm resolution) such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad and Noah (46:34), and all the Angels of God. An exaltation known as Salawat Muqarrabin is recited for those Angels who are regarded as the closest Angels to God, including Gabriel, Michael, Isrofil, Azrael, the ‘Arsh Guardian Angels, and for all God’s Prophets. This Salawat Muqarrabin continues with the recitation of al-Fatiha three times whose merit is conveyed to the Prophet Muhammad and his wives, children, descendants, companions, ahl al-Badr (those who died in the battle of Badr) from either the Muhajiriin (the Prophet’s companions from Mecca) or the Anshar (the Prophet’s Companions from Medina), all the Prophet’s followers, martyrs (I., shuhadah), ‘ulama’, all Muslim saints, all the pious, all Muslim authors, participants’ grandfathers, grandmothers, fathers, and mothers. The next procedure is to recite al-Fatiha specifically directed to the Prophet Muhammad as the source of intercession (shafat). This is continued by the reciting istighfar one hundred times.

Then follows the recitation of al-Fatiha tawassul for the Prophet Khidr, the Prophet’s grandsons, Hasan and Husain, ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, and Fatimah, the Prophet’s daughter. The other people for whom al-Fatiha is recited include well
known Muslim Sufi, Prophetic tradition scholars, the founders of Sufi orders, of
the four schools of Muslim Jurists, Muslim saints both male and female, and all
Muslim authors, the Nine Saints of Java, Muslims saints of Madura and all the
participants of the group. The reciting of al-İfatat to these people is followed
by reciting the exaltation to the Prophet of Muhammad three hundred times
and tahfil (the recitation of la‘ilaha illallah phrase) hundred times. The Dhikr al-
Ghaflin closes with the recitation of the part of the kasidah burdah (odes) and
poetic Arabic (A., sha‘ir) prayers written by Gus Mik and Aļmad ibn ‘Umār ibn
Samt. The names of all the persons mentioned in this formulae are as follows:

- The prophet Muhammad
- ‘Abd al-Qađir al-Jailānī
- ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Alwī al-Ĥaddād
- Khidr
- Ḥasan b. Abī Țālib
- Ḥusain b. Abī Țālib
- Abū Țālib
- Fāṭimat
- Abd al-Qađir al-Jailānī
- Muĥammad Bahā al-Dīn al-Naqshabandī
- Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazāfī
- His brother Ahmād al-Ghazāfī
- Abu Bakr al-Shiblī
- ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Alwī al-Ĥaddād
- Abu Yazīd Țaifūr b. ‘Īsā al-Buştamī
- Muĥammad al-Ĥanafī
- Yūsuf b. Ismā’īl al-Nabhānī
- Jalāl al-dīn al-Suyūtī
- Abu Zakariyyā Yahyā b. Sharaf al-Nawāwī
- ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha‘ranī
- ‘Alī Nūr al-Dīn al-Shaunī
- Abu al-‘Abbas Aļmad b. ‘Alī al-Būnī
- İbrahīm b. Adham
- İbrahīm al-Dasūqī
- Shihab al-Dīn Ahmad b. ‘Umar al-Anşārī al-Mursī
- Abī Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Bușīrī
- Abu al-Ĥasan al-Bakrī
It can be seen clearly from the ritual of the Dhikr al-Ghaflin that it is dominated by the recitation of al-Fatihat during the tawassul sessions. This practice is closely linked to Gus Mik’s conviction that even though these people have died, they are still capable of hearing al-Fatihat conveyed to them by the living. As a result, God will give the merit of the recitation to them and, just like living persons, these deceased people will respond by praying for those who recite al-Fatihat.
It is interesting to note here that the individuals named include the founders of other respected Sufi orders such as ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jaylānī (d. (Qādiriyyah order), Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Āli b. Abdillah b. Abd al-Jabbār al-Syādīhī (d.1258) (Ṣāḥīlīyyah order), ‘AliMūhammad Bahā’ al-Dīn al-Naqṣābāndī (The Naqṣābāndiyah order), Ahmad b. Abī Ḥusain al-Rifā’īy (d.1178) (The Rifā’īyah order), Jalāl al-dīn al-Rūmī (The Mawlawiyah order), Abu Madyān al-Tilmisānī (d.1197) (The Madyaniyyah order) and Abu al-‘Abbaṣ Ahmad al-Badāwi (d.1276) (The Badawiyah order). Other names in the tawassul sessions are considered controversial Sufis, such as Ibn ‘Arabī and Husain b. Mansūr al-Ḥallāj, as well as the woman Sufi, Rabi’at al-‘Adawīyyat. Moreover, the Dhikr al-Ghāfīlīn group also puts in the formulae the names of those who have been important in the Shiite tradition including ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, Fāṭimat al-Zahrā’, and their sons, Ḥasan and the Martyr, Ḥusain. Indeed, the group characterizes these individuals as the youngest dwellers in Paradise.

It is interesting to examine why these names are included in the tawassul sessions. One informant told me that the Dhikr al-Ghāfīlīn group names these figures merely because these people are believed to be auliya’ (The Saints of God) who can spiritually help people to approach God. In this respect, Gus Mik put it this way:

In the world to come (I., akhirat) we will follow those respected ulama as well as those whose names were written in Dhikr al-Ghāfīlīn formula to whom we recited al-Fāṭihat (Ibad 2005:10).

This reason is similar to Kyai Ahmad Siddiq’s statement that those wali whose names are mentioned in the formulae have reached the highest station (A., maqām). Although the members of the Dhikr al-Ghāfīlīn group cannot reach their maqām, at least these wali can help them in the world to come. Kyai Ahmad Siddiq’s son told me that his father argued that those named are like those who travel by a first class train, while the group members were like passengers in economy class. The first class passengers occupy the front car which is served with special meals, while the economy class passengers occupy the rear car. Although these economy class passengers are not being served with special meals, they will arrive at the same destination as the first class passengers.  

Another logical foundation underpinning the practice of praying to God for those people mentioned in the formulae relates to the following Sufi teaching: ‘You should be with Allah. If you cannot be with Him, you should be with

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4 Interview with Gus Fahri, Kediri, January, 2005.
those who have been with Allah because these persons can bring you to be with Allah.’ According to Gus Mik, those who can bring someone to Allah might be alive or dead. In other words, Gus Mik believed those persons named in the formula could become a means to bring people nearer to God. This notion is relevant to the motto printed on the cover of Dhikr al-Ghāfīlīn litany book which reads ‘this litany is intended for those who are keen to be gathered with Muslim saints and pious people.’

It is strongly recommended that new members first recite the dhikr once a day for forty days consecutively. The formula should be recited for forty days because this is the minimal time necessary to show whether or not a Muslim’s good acts are able to be considered istiqāmat (steadfastness). In fact, for this group, the notion of forty days is taken from the Qur’anic teaching that after fasting for forty days consecutively, Moses received the Book from God. This practice is also based on the notion that good virtues can only be accepted by God if practised for forty days consecutively. In addition, forty days is also used by this group as a requirement for those who want to benefit from the formulae. For example, the leader of this group told me that one kyai practised the formulae for thirty eight days consecutively, but then missed the thirty ninth day. As a result, this kyai failed to gain any benefit; he therefore needed to restart the ritual from the first day.

To practise the ritual of the Dhikr al-Ghāfīlīn, people can practise individually or together in a group led by a leader (A., imām) elected by the Dhikr al-Ghāfīlīn leader. At an important event such as the anniversary of the founder of this group which I attended, this ritual was combined with a semaan event. At the event I attended, the dhikr formula was recited after the Maghrib prayer when the participants who were reciting from memory reached the final juz (section) of the the Qur’ān. The reciting of the dhikr formula took almost one hour. There was no particular position or separation between the leader and the members during the ritual. However, when the ritual is held at the tombs of local saints in Kediri, all the members face these tombs, while the leader of the ritual faces the members. Unlike rituals held by Sufi orders, no specific ritual dress is worn by participants and the leader. At the ritual I attended no one displayed the hysterical behaviour as is commonly found in the rituals held by other Sufi orders as result of the heightened tension in the different sections of their formulae. When the reciting of the dhikr formulae was complete, it was followed by the recitation the rest of the Qur’ān by memory, and the ritual closed with the Isha’ prayer.
As for the *semaan* event that I attended, this event began after completing the dawn prayer and ended at the *Isha*’ prayer. During this event, all chapters of the Qur’an were recited from memory by male memorizers (A., *ḥāfidhīn*) using a loud speaker. As usual they sat on a stage which was higher than the participants’ seats so that the participants could observe them easily. All the female and male participants in the *semaan* directly faced the stage. The position for female and male participants was separated during this ritual. Those who attended the *semaan* had to follow and listen carefully to what the memorizers recited by looking at their own Qur’an provided by the host of the event. In this way, the participants were not only able to correct the recitation of the memorizers, but they were also able to gain the merit of the recitation even though they just followed and listened because, according to the Prophet, both those who recite the Qur’an from memory and those who listen to the reciting are able to obtain merit. The reciting of the Qur’an in the *semaan* was conducted continuously, and was only stopped for the performance of obligatory prayers. After noon prayer (I., *Shalat Dhuhr*), the memorizers and all the participants had lunch together, which was provided by the host of the event. For an important event such as the commemoration of the death of the founder, the host provides lunch for all participants. Previously, my informant told me, when Gus Mik (the founder) was alive, it was recommended that the memorizers and all participants fasted during this event.

At the rituals that I attended, the leader of this group often gave a very short religious message to the participants at the end of the ritual and the *semaan*. The topic of the message was usually based on the preference of the leader. The leader often talked about the spiritual experience or *karamah* of Gus Mik, the founder of the group. It is likely that this was to keep him in the collective memory of the participants. This is partly because after Gus Mik died, no one, including his children could replace his popularity as a wali. Nevertheless, many members of the group still believed that the charisma of Gus Mik should be inherited by one of his sons. This is shown by the fact that after the ritual, most of the participants wished to meet and seek barakah from Gus Mik’s sons by kissing their hands. In order to do that, these participants sometimes stood for a long time waiting their turn to kiss the leader’s hand. Before Gus Mik’s sons led the ritual, some of his followers visited their home to ask for their barakah or to consult them about their problems.

In addition to holding the ritual on specific occasions like the anniversary of the death of particular Muslim saints and the founder, this group also conducted the ritual on a weekly basis and every *selapanan* (every five weeks) in a group. At the weekly event, the ritual was usually held at the household of the leader or at one of the tombs of Muslim Saints located in Kediri. The tombs which
provided a venue for the ritual included the tomb of Setono Gedong, the tomb of Muhammad Abdullah Umar (Sumber Dlingu, Kediri), the tomb of Ki Demang (Mbadal, Kediri), and the tomb of Shaikh Ihsan Dahlan (Jampes, Kediri). On the other hand, the major ritual held every five weeks (selapanan) was conducted at the Tomb of Saints (Makam Auliya’) at which Gus Mik was buried. The ritual held at his tomb could be attended by thousands of people, who travelled from all over Java to attend.

Gus Farih Fauzi, one of leaders of this group, told me that the first reason for holding the ritual at Muslim saints’ tombs was to remember death. Secondly, it was to pray for all Muslims. Thirdly, it was to gain blessing (barakah) since it is recommended to visit the tombs of pious Muslims to gain their blessing and to emulate their virtues in fulfilling religious duties. The fourth reason was to fulfil the obligation to parents and fellow Muslims who need to be prayed for if they have died. Fifthly, the ritual could express one’s respect to someone whom one has known and loved. Another was that the tombs of saints are efficacious places from which to offer prayer.6

In common with Sufi orders elsewhere, as in Pakistan and Egypt, the Dhikr al-Ghāfīlīn group focuses its activities at the tomb of its founder. Gus Mik’s tomb, called Makam Auliya’ is located on three hectares of land in Tambak hamlet, Ngadi village, Ploso subdistrict, Kediri. This site was chosen by Gus Mik in 1990. Like other tombs of Muslim saints in Java, the Makam Auliya’ consists of several mausoleums, a small mosque and is surrounded by kiosks which sell pamphlets and food (Fox 2002:161). Gus Mik expected that forty Muslim saints would be buried at that place, and he himself determined personages who would be given the privilege to rest in that place. It is said that previously there were only three tombs of Muslim saints on the site, including Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir Khairi (allegedly from Iskandariah, Egypt), Muhammad Ħirmān, and Shaikh ‘Abd Allah Sāliḥ (allegedly from Istanbul, Turkey). According to Abdul Wahid, the custodian of the tomb (juru kunci), these graves were first founded in the 1830’s by Seno Atmojo, one of Pangeran Diponegoro’s soldiers. People who lived around the site believed these old tombs had keramat. The three personages buried in that place were believed to be the first preachers of Islam in the region. It is reported that Gus Mik often spent much of his time visiting and meditating at that site (Jawapos 1993). Currently, there are fifteen personages buried there, including Gus Mik and Kyai Ahmad Şiddiq. In addition to the tombs of Wali Sanga, this site is well known as an object of veneration and visitation in Java.

It was not clear why Gus Mik had the idea to establish the Makam Auliya’. Only he knew the objective. Even one of his close companions never understood

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6 Interview with Gus Fahri, Kediri, September, 2007.
why the Makam Auliya was established. One possible reason relates to the notion pointed out by Ibn Abi Hajala that ‘it is essential to bury the dead close to persons whose righteous and grace is assured and as far from the graves of the sinful as possible.’ This notion is based on several hadith in which the Prophet asked Muslims to bury their dead near to deceased righteous Muslims rather than sinful people because the dead can be hurt by bad neighbours. In other words, just as in life, being close to bad neighbours could be injurious for the dead, being close to good neighbours can benefit them. This explains why when many Muslim saints were near to death, they asked to be buried near to the graves of other saints in order to obtain some of the saints’ barakah (Taylor 1998:47-49). Therefore, Gus Mik might have thought that those righteous Muslims should be buried together with other righteous Muslims in one tomb in order to receive the other saints’ barakah.

After Gus Mik died, the question arose as to who would have the right to decide the next personages or Muslim saints (wali) to be buried at the site. Gus Ali, one of Gus Mik’s close companions, argued that only Gus Mik knew about this and should decide who would be buried at the site. The fact that Gus Mik had died did not hinder him from spiritually determining the personages to be buried at the site. Gus Ali believed that before Gus Mik died, he had already informed some other wali that they could be buried at the site. However, it is difficult to know whether or not anyone received this information from Gus Mik. In addition, Gus Ali mentioned that those who have been prioritised to be buried at the site are all memorisers (A., ḥāfiz) who have been actively involved in the semaan. This criterion might have partly been due to the fact his group did not have a wali like Gus Mik to determine who could be buried at the site. However, the decision to give the memorisers the privilege of being buried at the site also raised difficulties. The criteria to determine which memorisers should be buried there is not clear. In addition to asking for spiritual guidance (I., petunjuk spiritual) from Gus Mik to solve this problem, Gus Ali finally used another mechanism, that is, through discussion (musyawarah) involving many respected Muslim scholars, to decide who should be buried at the site.

6.3. Gus Mik: a Living Saint and Controversial Kyai

Gus Mik was born in Kediri in 1941 and died in 1993. He was born in the Pesantren community because his father, Kyai Jazuli Usman (1900-1976) was the founder of Pesantren Ploso which became one of the centres of Islamic studies in East Java. Gus Mik is an important figure for the Dhikr al-Ghāfīlīn
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and the Semaan al-Qur’an. Indeed, it is almost impossible to study the group without recognising the figure of Gus Mik. This section will look at the position of Gus Mik, both within his group and within an Indonesian Islamic context.

Gus Mik was frequently seen by people and the media as a controversial Islamic scholar (I., kyai nyeleneh and nyentrik). This controversy was triggered by the fact that Gus Mik was frequently seen in night clubs, brothels, pubs and casinos in Surabaya. It was reported that Gus Mik regularly spent his nights at the Elmi Hotel, Surabaya. At such places, he was also frequently seen drinking black beer (I., bir hitam) with pub singers and visitors (Muryadi 1992:63). Some people and ‘ulama’ maintained that this was not suitable behaviour for an ‘ulama’ like Gus Mik and not acceptable in Islamic law. As an ‘ulamā’, he should not visit such places and drink alcohol, which is prohibited by Islamic law. If the ‘ulamā’ visited such places, it could cause misbehaviour among people because they might follow his conduct.7

Kyai Zainuddin, one of Gus Mik’s brothers could not explain Gus Mik’s controversial behaviour. Since Kyai Zainuddin did not witness Gus Mik’s actions outside the pesantren, he and his family still regarded Gus Mik as a model of the pesantren family member. Kyai Zainuddin argued that because he did not witness Gus Mik drinking alcohol, he could not make any comments on the matter. All he could say about Gus Mik was that everything that he did was difficult for others to emulate. According to Kyai Zainuddin, the objective of Gus Mik’s actions was to glorify Islam. If the methods he used were different from other ‘ulamā’, this was part of his ability that could not be copied by others (Rahmat 1993).

To deal with this controversy, one of the charismatic ‘ulamā’, Kyai al-Hamid, argued that Gus Mik’s actions were part of his Islamic preaching (I., dakwah). However, the way Gus Mik chose to preach Islam was not like other ‘ulamā’, who usually preached Islam through sermons (I., ceramah) in mosques, pesantren, and pengajian groups (I., majlis taklim). In contrast, Gus Mik conducted his mission by preaching Islam in places such as night clubs, brothels, casinos and hotel pubs which are commonly considered immoral places (I., dunia hitam and tempat maksiat) (Hidayat 1993). In this regard, Gus Mik admitted that he did not have a particular pesantren but considered those places to be his real ‘pesantren’. He described his mission as follows:

These places are my real pesantren. Most of my jamaah (followers) meet in those places. 90% of them have not said asyhadu yet (belum asyahdu), namely, those who always hang around at night with their psychological

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7 Interview with Kyai Saiful, Kediri, November, 2004.
problems. They are not good people (I., *bukan orang baik-baik*). I have never involved other *kyai* in these places because they wear *surban* [*kyai’s scarf*] (Muryadi 1992:63).

*Kyai* al-Hamid considered that, the mission of preaching Islam in such places was more difficult than preaching in other places because it often resulted in exclusion by other ‘*ulamā*’ and insults from people. *Kyai* Zainuddin, *Gus* Mik’s brother, agreed that ‘the night world of *Gus* Mik could not be reached by other *kyai*. I myself could not afford to carry out the mission as *Gus* Mik did.’ Not all ‘*ulamā*’ have been given a power by God to conduct Islamic preaching mission in such places. *Gus* Mik, according to *Kyai* al-Hamid, was one of the ‘*ulamā*’ whom God chose to give his spiritual power to perform that mission. As a *Jawa Pos* journalist, Sholihin Hidayat wrote, at such places *Gus* Mik met with many people including artists, singers, military officials, government officials, gamblers and alcoholics. Because of *Gus* Mik, many of them refrained from drinking and gambling and started to pray five times a day (Hidayat 1993a). One of those people was Erna Jaelani, a singer from Surabaya. She admitted that after meeting him she not only stopped singing in pubs but also avoided entering them. She then became a wedding stylist and opened a fashion shop in her carport (*Jawa Pos* 1993). Another famous rock singer from Bali who converted to Islam after meeting *Gus* Mik was Ayu Wedhayanti. She is now an active participant in every ritual of the *Dhikr al-Gha*fili>n and *semaan*.

One of *Gus* Mik’s students explained to me that the reason why *Gus* Mik mostly spent his nights in pubs, bars, and karaoke places with other visitors, prostitutes, and singers was to pray that they could return to the straight path since no other ‘*ulamā*’ wanted to pray for those people. For example, one day *Gus* Mik asked *Gus* Rofiq Siraj to accompany him to brothels in Surabaya. *Gus* Mik and *Gus* Rofiq Siraj spent all night reciting *al-Fātiḥat* many times until morning. As usual, after reciting the *al-Fātiḥat*, *Gus* Mik was approached by a prostitute who wanted to repent. This story was also told in an interview held by a journalist from *Matra* magazine. When asked about his controversial activities in pubs, *Gus* Mik replied that he just enjoyed those places. In addition, he was excited to emulate what has been practised by another Muslim ‘*ulamā*’, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, when he entered places entertainment which were forbidden by Islamic law. According to *Gus* Mik, it was reported that when Ibnu Hambal entered such places, he always prayed for the people there. One of Ibnu Hambal’s prayers was as follows:
O! Allah just as you have made these people have a party in this place, may these people also have a party in the world -to- come. Just as these people are happy in this place, I ask God to make these people happy in the world –to- come (akhirat).

Another reason why Gus Mik visited such places was to check whether or not his followers went there. When Gus Mik met any of his followers there, he claimed that although they were sitting in these places, they remained conscious of improving the recitation of al-Fātiḥah and remembering God. The sound of music did not prevent them from reciting al-Fātiḥah. Gus Mik was very proud of his students who were able to remember God and to draw close to Him not only in mosques but also in such places (Siregar 1992)

Gus Mik’s willingness to hear and receive prostitutes, sinners and gamblers might have been inspired by the story of a prostitute and a virtuous person mentioned in the Sufi book, al-Hikam. Because of his intensive worship of God, the virtuous person was endowed with the power of miracles (I., karamah). It is said that one of his miracles was that wherever he walked in the desert, a cloud shaded him so that he was protected from the hot sun. One day, a prostitute came to him so that she could receive God’s blessing. But the virtuous person refused the prostitute and asked her to go away. At that time, God said to the current prophet that He had forgiven any sins committed by the prostitute. God then withdrew the power of miracles he had given to the person and gave it to the prostitute.

Another interesting comment regarding Gus Mik’s behaviour was made by Gus Ali Mashuri, a senior kyai in East Java, who fully understood everything to do with Gus Mik. However, he never regarded Gus Mik as a saint (wali) because the title of wali can be known only by Gus Mik and God, and no one can give the title of wali to another. Based on this notion, Gus Ali argued that although Gus Mik committed acts considered by others as evils, he committed such acts without asking others to do so. Furthermore, Gus Ali pointed out that if God has given someone the highest spiritual position (maqam), this person would never be happy if other people praised him nor be sad if anyone insulted him. Praise and insults would not prevent such a person from obtaining God’s blessing. Gus Mik, according to Gus Ali, was one of those people on whom God had bestowed with the highest maqam.\textsuperscript{8} This can be seen by the fact that although other ‘ulamā’ regarded him as a ‘beer kyai’ and ‘bar kyai’ (I., kyai bir and kyai bar) who destroyed the image of Islam,Gus Mik never felt sad about this title and continued his mission of preaching Islam.

\textsuperscript{8} Interview with Kyai Ali Mashuri, Sidoarjo, Januari, 2005.
His son, Thābut, told me that *Gus* Mik preferred humiliation to praise, and always prayed for those who humiliated him. According to *Gus* Ali Mashuri, *Gus* Mik made himself an object of blame, while nevertheless believing that in the eyes of God he was considered good. In this sense, *Gus* Mik could be regarded as a Sufi who sought the glory of God through the gate of humbleness. This notion is relevant to something frequently taught by *Gus* Mik, that in order to obtain God’s blessing, instead of showing off their good deeds to others, people should hide their virtues and keep them a secret between themselves and God. According to *Gus* Ali, this is the highest teaching of Sufism, which not all ordinary people are able to practise. For him, this teaching, was in fact, deeply rooted in the story of Moses and Khidr\(^\text{10}\) in the Qur’an. This story tells us that Khidr was allowed by God to do things which seemed to be evil and

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9 Interview with Thabut, Kediri, November, 2004.  
10 This prominent figure plays a part in many legend and stories. His name is Balya ibn Malkan. Al-Khidr is his epithet which means ‘the green man.’ According to Sufi tradition, he is regarded as saint. Every age has its Khidr. His immortality is emphasized in Islamic tradition (Gibb and Kramers 1953:232-35).
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malicious in the eyes of lay people but had benefits later. Not every one can emulate Khidr and even the prophet of God, Moses, failed to understand what Khidr was doing.

Moreover, Gus Ali argued that what Gus Mik did could be compared with the teaching of the Malamatiyah Sufi group which required struggle to hide one’s virtuous and pious actions. As result, this group only showed bad qualities and became an object of blame by others (Gibb 1996:223). In line with this, al-Ghazālī wrote that in order to get rid of the love of pride (A., jāh), which, according to him, is dangerous for Sufi in their efforts to approach God, they may commit deeds which result in their status falling in the eyes of others. However, al-Ghazālī argued that they are allowed only to commit deeds which are categorised as permissible (mubāḥ), not those categorised as forbidden. In doing so they can feel secure in their camouflage and they be satisfied with the reception of God (al-Ghazali 1973:281).

Gus Mik fully realized that other people would question his activities in bars and pubs and regard his activities as violating Islamic laws. Asked why as a Muslim he drank beer in bars, he replied that he knew nothing about alcohol and only knew about mushkir, a kind of beverage that can make people drunk. He claimed that no one had told him whether beer can be categorised as mushkir. Therefore, Gus Mik argued that he could not prohibit (mengharamkan) the drinking of beer, even though this kind of beverage was commonly considered an intoxicant (I., memabukkan). However, he asked people not to drink beer because it caused health problems and also because it was expensive and useless (A., mubādhir). Gus Mik was concerned about the social effect of drinking beer. He argued that instead of spending money buying something so useless, people should use the money for other purposes such as helping the poor. Gus Mik asked his followers not to drink, even though he himself did not stop drinking because he drunk the beer as a means to maintain friendships with other people.

Gus Mik’s view of drinking alcohol can be clearly explained in the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence (A., fiqh al-Islām). All Muslim jurists mention that any drink which may cause drunkenness is prohibited. This notion is based on the Prophetic hadith, ‘if it intoxicates in a large amount, it is forbidden even in a small amount’ (kullu mushkīrin ḥarām qoṣīluhu wa kathīruhu). However, according to Abū Ḥanīfah, although both khamr and nabiḍh can cause drunkenness, there is a distinction between them. Khamr is a kind of drink made from wine, while nabiḍh is a kind of drink made from anything other than grapes. Abū Ḥanīfah argued that khamr (wine) was prohibited because of its essence, while nabiḍh was not. Therefore, people are allowed to drink nabiḍh as long as they do not get drunk on it (Qudamah n.d). Perhaps, based on Abū Ḥanīfah’s view, Gus Mik categorised beer as nabiḍh because it is not made from grapes.
Plate 6.2: Gus Mik with his followers in a pub in Surabaya.

Plate 6.3: Gus Mik chatting with Sultan Hameng Kubuwono X (The Ruler of Yogyakarta).

One of Gus Mik’s students maintained that because of his *karamah*, any beer that Gus Mik drank turned into spring water. Therefore, Gus Mik was never drunk although he consumed large amounts of beer. As regards gambling, an informant told me that while Gus Mik was often seen gambling with other gamblers, his purpose was to appeal to people to stop gambling. My informant was convinced that as result of his *karamah*, if Gus Mik gambled in particular places, these places would close and no gambling activities would be done there. This story was often told by his followers and it relates to the way Gus Mik appealed to other people to stop them from drinking and gambling.

Some of Gus Mik followers who accompanied him for many years found it difficult to judge what Gus Mik did. They believed that only God could understand Gus Mik’s conduct. Furthermore, Gus Mik never asked his followers to emulate his deeds. Therefore, one kyai whom I asked about Gus Mik preferred to think positively (A., *husn al-zanān*) rather than to think negatively (A., *sū’u al-zanān*) about what he did. In this respect, *husn al-zanān* is encouraged even if Gus Mik did conduct negative acts. On the other hand, if people think negatively about Gus Mik, when in fact his acts are positive, these people commit a sin because of this negative thinking.11

It is clear that the responses given by people about Gus Mik were based on the idea of *khāriq al-‘āda*, which is prevalent in the Sufi tradition. This term is given to those who can perform deeds that break the custom of God (I., *sunnatullah*). Gus Mik, for example, was believed by his followers to performing deeds which could be categorised as *khāriq al-‘āda*, so no one should emulate him. In this sense, Gus Mik was considered by his followers to be a wali who possessed *karamah* which in the Sufi tradition is closely related the idea of *khāriq al-‘āda*. In addition, the positive responses given to Gus Mik relied on *husn al-zanān*, according to which, every single act conducted by Gus Mik had the good purpose of spreading Islam (I., *siyar Islām*). His followers therefore believe that the success of Gus Mik in promoting the reciting of the Qur’an, *dhikr*, resolving people’s problems and stopping people from gambling and drinking alcohol far outweigh Gus Mik habit of drinking and visiting bars.

### 6.4. Gus Mik: His Karamah

Among his followers, Gus Mik was believed to be a wali sent by God to bring people to the right path. To fulfil this mission his followers also believed Gus Mik had been endowed by God with an extraordinary power (I., *kekuatan*

linuwih) called karamah. As a wali, what he did during his lifetime had religious significance. He was always guided by God, either through visions or dreams. With this guidance, he may have committed minor trespasses but he immediately repented. Although Gus Mik never regarded himself as an ‘Arif bi Allah (‘one who has Gnosis of God’), his followers believed that he reached the state of ma’rifat so that he could be regarded as an ‘Arif bi Allah. With this title he deserved to be a spiritual teacher (A., murshid) of the Dhikr al-Ghafilin group and no one could succeed him after his death. One of his followers even considered he had the same karamah, as was possessed by ‘Abd al-Qâdir al-Jailâni, the founder of the Qadîriyah Sufi group.

Stories about Gus Mik’s karamah are told and circulate by word of mouth. In order to keep the collective memory of Gus Mik alive among his followers, these stories are often retold during the ritual of the Dhikr al-Ghafilin especially on the annual anniversary of his death (haul). Most of these stories about Gus Mik’s karamah deal specifically with his miraculous powers. They serve as an important model of exemplary piety for his followers. Moreover, these stories about Gus Mik’s karamah increase his followers’ spiritual beliefs about him. As result, this improves their spiritual focus (A., tawajjuh). Some examples of his karamah were told to me by his close friends as follows:

First karamah: Gus Mik showed his karamah when he was a teenager. Unlike his two brothers who spent their time studying hard in the pesantren and had a normal life typical of the sons of a kyai, Gus Mik spent his time outside the pesantren travelling (J., keluyuran) everywhere. He left his hair uncut. He was often found fishing alone on the bank of the River Brantas. One day he walked along the river up to the city of Surabaya. During his wanderings, many people witnessed him walking on the surface of the water. He himself never realized that he had such karamah.

Second karamah: His parents worried about Gus Mik’s behaviour which was so different to his two brothers. As a result, his parents asked many kyai to give advice and pray for Gus Mik so that he would stop being eccentric (I., kenyelenehannya) and live a normal life. However, many kyai were reluctant to give advice and pray for Gus Mik. One day his parents asked Gus Mik to come and visit the mourning family of Kyai Romli, the late leader of Pesantren Darul Ulum and the Qadiriyyah wa Naqshabandiyah Sufi group in Jombang. His parents hoped that during this visit, they could ask kyai who attended the burial ritual to pray for their son. Gus Mik refused to come with his family to the funeral of Kyai Ramli. However, when his parents arrived at Kyai Romli’s, they found that Gus Mik had already arrived and was sitting at the side of Kyai Romli’s corpse.
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Third karamah: My informant told me that Gus Mik could understand things to come (J., weruh sandurungi winarak) – these things would happen a week, month or year later. For example, Gus Mik told my informant that he would perform the pilgrimage (hajj) some years later. My informant thought it would not be possible to perform the hajj, as he did not have the financial ability to undertake the journey. However, few years later, his friends gave him enough money to pay the cost of the hajj. After his first hajj, Gus Mik told him that he would perform a second hajj four years later. One year before this second hajj, my informant dreamed that he met Gus Mik and another person. This person wished to perform hajj with Gus Mik and offered to pay all the costs of the journey (I., Ongkos Naik Haji, ONH). However, Gus Mik declined this offer and instead, gave this offer to my informant. Gus Mik asked my informant to pray and not to think about the cost of the hajj. One year after experiencing this dream, my informant undertook his second hajj because two people gave him the money to cover the cost. This kind of karamah, according to my informant, was similar to that of ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jaylāni when he said in his manaqib that he knew everything that would happen in the upcoming weeks, months and years.

Fourth karamah: One day Gus Mik told my informant that he understood everything that would happen to my informant’s family for the next ten years. For example, Gus Mik forecast that my informant’s wife would give birth six years later. This forecast proved true when six years later my informant’s wife gave birth to her third child. Gus Mik also forecast that Kyai Ahmad Siddiq would experience a trial for six years. After six years Kyai Ahmad Siddiq succeeded in passing this trial and was nominated chairman of the National Board of Nahdlatul Ulama.

Fifth karamah: My informant believed that God endowed Gus Mik with one of His kun characteristics. Kun is an Arabic word which refers to an act of manifesting, existing or being. In the Qur’an, God commands the universe to be (‘kun!’) and it is (fayakūn). Someone who possesses this characteristic can predict that something will happen and it should happen. According to my informant, Gus Mik told him that he could make Kyai Salih, who was poor, a rich man. Before getting married, Kyai Salih was poor and pious person but after his married, he became a rich.

Sixth karamah: Abu Bakr Kalabadzi mentioned that it is widely believed among Sufi that a wali may possesses various kinds of karamah, such as being able to walk on the surface of water, talk with animals and appear in two places at the same time (Kalabadzi 1985:79). Gus Mik is said by his followers to have had the ability to appear in three places at the same time.
Farid, and Gus Muqarrabin said that when this group held semaan in Jember, Surabaya and Yogyakarta, Gus Mik appeared in all these three places at the same time. Because of this karamah, one of my informants rejected the claim that Gus Mik never performed a prayer during his life based on the fact that no one found him praying at prayer times. Since he could appear in three places at the same time, my informant pointed out that Gus Mik might not be praying at one place, but he might possibly be praying at another place.

Seventh karamah: One day Gus Mik wanted to visit Kyai Ahmad Shiddiq in Jember. At that time, Kyai Ahmad Siddiq was looking for citations from books, and Gus Mik brought a piece of paper with the citation texts that Kyai Ahmad Siddiq was looking for (Memorandum, 11/06/1993).

Eighth karamah: Gus Mik was believed to be capable of giving his followers solutions to problem. Adi Siswanto, a businessman from Sidoarjo, claimed that what Gus Mik ordered to him do when he had a difficult problem, contained a hidden meaning. Gus Mik gave him a solution which made him happy. This also happened to many other artists, businessmen, and government officials who sought advice and solutions from Gus Mik about their problems. An informant told of how his advice was always correct, even though it might at first have seemed puzzling. As an example, Oscar regretted not complying with Gus Mik’s advice. If he had done so, his business would not have failed totally. He at first thought it was not possible to follow Gus Mik’s advice.

Ninth karamah: One day my informant went out with Gus Mik to eat at a famous restaurant in Kediri. When waiters served Gus Mik with his favourite satay, Gus Mik told my informant that the waitress was not a virgin. On this occasion my informant believed that Gus Mik not only understood hidden things in the hearts of people but also recognised every sin that had been committed by others. In a similar story, Gus Mik and my informant attended a Dhikr al Ghafilin ritual in a pesantren, and sat in the front seats with other kyai. Among these kyai, there was one kyai who sat wordlessly in the corner. Gus Mik commented to my informant that this kyai was an extraordinary person because his heart always remembered death and God.

Tenth karamah: Kyai Farih Fauzi said that Gus Mik was absent from Friday prayer one day. A few hours later, Gus Mik arrived bringing a branch of fresh dates which had been taken from a date tree. This must have been taken from the holy land.

The moral message of these different Gus Mik’s karamah is the same: Gus Mik’s knowledge transcended place and time and penetrated the inners hearts of his
followers. However, his knowledge did not just signal his ability to foresee the future or to know what is in men’s hearts wherever they are, it was also part of God’s power and love, indicated by Gus Mik’s power to become involved in a bad environments without committing any sin in such places.

The most significant evidence of his karamah, which could be seen after he died, was his ability to attract many people to the ritual of Dhikr al-Ghāfīlīn and semaan. Although Gus Mik had died, the semaan and the Dhikr al-Ghāfīlīn still continued to attract many participants. This ability was seen by his companions and followers as part of God’s plan to send one of his servants to preserve the Qur’an from being forgotten. This initiative of Gus Mik to hold semaan al-Qur’an (memorizing the Qur’an) was often related to what God said in the Qur’an, ‘Verily, We, it is We Who have sent down the Dhikr (i.e. the Qur’an) and surely We will guard it (from corruption)’ (15:9). According to his companions, Gus Mik with his karamah was the preserver of the Qur’an itself. This notion is not difficult to understand. It was argued on the basis of the interpretation of the text of the Qur’anic verse in which God says we rather than I. According to common exegesis, when God uses we rather than I, it means that the process of His works involving humans. Therefore, when God says that we will preserve the Qur’an, this preservation involves humans. In this sense, Gus Mik was one whom God used to preserve the Qur’an.

6.5. Gus Mik: His Teachings

To describe and understand Gus Mik’s teachings comprehensively is a difficult task. This is partly because he was neither a writer who expressed his thoughts systematically in a book nor a preacher who explained in detail the teachings of tasawuf in front of his followers. Gus Mik chose to practise these teachings rather than explain them in detail to his followers. This can be seen through his advice given to his followers after the ritual of the Dhikr al-Ghāfīlīn was completed. Kyai Saiful, one of his close companions, told me that on such occasions, Gus Mik usually gave a short speech which took only five to ten minutes. Nevertheless, in this short time he could convey as the depths of tasawuf. For Gus Mik, the current concept of dakwah should stress giving an example in practice (A., lisan al-hal) rather than placing too much stress on sermons and lectures (Mantab n.d:8). Through his brief sermons, his followers could understand the moral and ethical ideas needed in their lives. For his followers, Gus Mik’s advice was easy to remember, even though its content was not easy to practise. In addition to tasawuf teachings, the topics of his advice were very broad, touching on many aspects of life. Therefore, this section will examine his teachings and analyse them in the light of tasawuf teachings.
One of Gus Mik’s teachings emphasizes the importance of Muslims keeping their pious acts (I., amal saleh) secret from other people. He asked his followers to conceal their pious acts, even though these virtues were little things such as praying for their hosts before visiting them. This teaching is simple, but in the context of tasawuf teachings it is important since it is closely related to the essence of people’s worship of their God. According to Islamic teachings, Muslims are required to worship God and perform good deeds sincerely (I., ikhlas). In other words, Muslims should worship and do good deeds to seek reward from God, and not for the sake of people’s praise (A., riya’). Based on this notion, all ibadah necessitates the purity of intention. As a result, if people perform good deeds, but have an intention other than seeking God’s blessing, these good deeds will be meaningless in the eyes of God. In fact, what Gus Mik taught on this matter was strongly based on Sufi teachings. For example, Ibn ‘Ata‘illah suggested to those who want to seek closeness to God:

‘Bury your existence in the earth of obscurity, for whatever sprouts forth, without having first been buried, flowers imperfectly’

After stressing the importance of pure intention and the hiding of virtuous deeds, Gus Mik asked his followers not to regard themselves as the purer and holier (I., orang yang paling suci) than others. Gus Mik pointed out that there are two kinds of people: First, people who feel that they are the most holy, clean, successful, and purest persons in the world, and secondly, people who feel that they are nothing. Instead of regarding themselves as very pure, Gus Mik asked people to inculcate a sense of worthlessness (I., rasa penghambaan) such as feeling guilty, humble, sinful, and full of weakness. With regard to this teaching Gus Mik said as follows:

We do not need to seek others’ faults and despise people around us who have gone astray (I., maksiat) because we cannot be sure that we are better than they are (Mantab n.d:1).

These feelings would increase people’s humility and willingness to ask for God’s forgiveness. However, Gus Mik admitted that imparting these feelings was difficult and needed continuous practice. He argued that this teaching was easy to explain but he himself found it difficult to practise. In this respect, Gus Mik always taught the following special prayer to his followers: ‘Oh Lord! We have wronged ourselves, if you forgive us not and have not mercy on us; surely we are of the lost.’

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13 Kita tidak perlu mencari kesalahan orang lain dan membenci orang-orang di sekitar kita yang melakukan maksiat.
As regards this teaching, my informant explained to me that if God wants to make people pious, He will endow them with knowledge of their weaknesses. My informant further mentioned that according to a hadith, the luckiest person is he who is always busy looking at his own weaknesses so that he has no time to look at other people’s weaknesses. According to my informant, people always look at others’ weaknesses because they feel that they have none. Gus Mik pointed out as follows:

In my village, I lived with different people, the most important thing to do is to remember God, do not regard yourself as holier than others, do not pay attention and seek out others’ fault, and have a good heart toward other people, these are the characteristics of the followers of the Dhikr al-Ghafilin.14

This teaching is supported by the Qur’anic text which asks people not to regard themselves as pure. Moreover, this teaching was elaborated further by Ibn ‘Ata’iullah who said in his book that sinful acts (maksiat) that make a person feel humble and ashamed are better than proper actions that give rise to pride (I., takabbur) and feelings of superiority.

In addition to hiding good acts, Gus Mik also stressed the importance of focusing people’s minds on always remembering God in all conditions, places and times. As reported by my informant, Gus Mik said that ‘When you engage with something, do not let this prevent you from remembering God and when you engage with someone, do not let them prevent you from remembering God.’ This notion, according to my informant, was practised by Gus Mik himself so he could undergo khalwa, a silent situation enabling him to communicate with God and to draw near to Him, even if he was in a noisy place such as a bar.15

Another piece of Gus Mik’s advice told to me by his son, Gus Sabut, was that ‘we should not make our neighbours jealous (A., hasad) of us.’ According to his son, this advice contained deep Sufi moral teaching, although it was difficult to practice, particularly today.16 In tasawuf teachings, envy is regarded as the worst of spiritual diseases. Al-Ghazālī defines hasadas the feeling of hate towards the goodness of others and desire for the elimination of others’ bounty (al-Ghazali 1973:185). Many Qur’anic texts and Prophetic traditions regarded hasad as a destructive force (A., muhlikat) which leads to the destruction of the good acts of envious people. Therefore, according to Qur’anic teachings, people

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14 ‘Kulo teng kampong niku sareng tiyang katath, Sing penting imut teng Allah, mboten runaos langkung suci ketimbang liyane, ora sempat melirik maksiati Wong Liyo, kaleh sinent-sinent nggadah manah ingkang sahe, ngih niku cirikhase pengamal Dzikr al-Ghafilin.’
should seek refuge in God from envious people (A.,ḥāsid) and from jealousy itself (al-Falaq:5). However, asking for refuge is not enough; people should act to stop others from being jealous of them. According to Gus Mik’s son, in order to avoid others’ jealousy, people should share some of their bounty (I., rizki) with others. For him, this is an important way to overcome the social problems in Indonesia, where many people tend to become selfish and ignore their less fortunate neighbours.

In relation to his previous advice, Gus Mik tried to console his followers who happened to be experiencing calamity, misfortune, or poverty. Gus Mik pointed out that these people should thank God rather than complaining about their difficulties. This is because living in such conditions can increase one’s awareness and remembrance of God. In contrast, if God determines that some should live in this world with happiness and wealth, this can make people easily forgetful of their God. Gus Mik not only advised his followers but he also practised what he advised. For example, when he suffered cancer he never complained about his illness to his companions. Instead of complaining to God, he always thanked God for his illness.

In supporting his followers who lived in poverty, Gus Mik said that every single person in this world is keen to be wealthy. In fact, however, those wealthy will become needy persons in the world-to-come. In contrast, those who are poor in this world and are patient with their poverty will become wealthy persons in the world-to-come. This notion was based on Gus Mik’s belief in the Prophet’s sayings that poor patient people will enter paradise five hundreds years earlier than good rich people. Gus Mik said:

The poor who can stand suffering, smile, be joyful, and always grateful are much more respected than anyone else. The pious poor are more excellent than philanthropists who have spent ninety nine percent of their wealth for the sake of God.¹⁷

The point of his advice was that people should be patient in all conditions, both in comfort and in hardship, and should always praise God by saying alhamdulillah (all praise due to God) (Mantab n.d:6). The poor should not demonstrate their poverty to other people, but should try to be like the Prophet Muhammad who never complained about his poverty. Gus Mik suggested that instead of submitting to their own fate, the poor should earn a living and obtain

¹⁷ Manusia fakir yang tahan uji, yang mampu tertawa, mampu menjadi periang, batinnya mensyukuri, ini lebih terhormat dari siapa saja. Termasuk orang dermawan yang sembilan puluh sembilan persen hak miliknya dibuang karena Allah, masih unggul fakir yang sholeh.
everything by lawful means (I., halal) (Mantab n.d:4). On the other hand, Gus Mik also recommended that other people should respect the poor (Mantab n.d:39).

Gus Mik also taught his followers how to love God correctly. Gus Mik pointed out that loving God was similar to the concept of taqwa, that is, avoiding what God dislikes and practising what God has instructed. However, in the context of loving God, avoiding what God has forbidden should not be followed by the fear of His torment, and practising what God has asked should not be followed by expectation of His paradise. All of these acts, according to my informant, should be conducted only to obtain His consent (A., ḫidā). On another occasion, Gus Mik stressed the importance of doing something which can cause God to give His love to his servants. This idea reminds us of the teaching of the Saint, Rabi’at al-‘Adawiyyat, who first introduced the idea of love in Sufi practice.

It is clear that the teachings that Gus Mik gave to his followers were deeply inspired by the teachings of prominent Sufi. Sometimes, he taught his followers about good conduct, positive attitudes, and morality taken from local tradition without making any religious reference, and presented this advice using their vernacular language. As a result, his followers who were mainly villagers easily understood this type of teaching.

6.6. The Group after Gus Mik

Kyai Saiful, senior ‘ulamā’ in the Dhikr al-Ghāfīlīn group, told me that before Gus Mik passed away, he did not give any message of advice (I., wasiat) to his children about who should be his successor as the leader of the Dhikr al-Ghāfīlīn group. Instead of choosing his successor from one of his sons, Gus Mik said that all the members of this group (A., samī’īn) and memorizers (A., khuffāz) involved in the group could be the next leaders. Several days before he died, one of his students asked him when he was critically sick in the hospital (Rumah Sakit Budi Mulya) in Surabaya, ‘Who will you choose as your successor to lead the group while you are being treated in this hospital?’ he replied, ‘Do you mean my successor after I die?’ Then the student did not dare to ask further (Hidayat 1993b). This situation without doubt confused Gus Mik’s followers. Kyai Saiful told me that although Gus Mik did not choose a successor, this does not necessarily mean that no one could succeed him as leader. Kyai Saiful believed that one of Gus Mik’s sons or his close friends had to become his successor. However, selecting the next leader of the group either from one of his sons...

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18 Interview with Kyai Saiful, Kediri, July 2005.
sons or his close friends was not an easy task for Gus Mik’s family. It was even more difficult to seek a leader who possessed the same charisma as Gus Mik. There were also questions regarding the mechanism of election; for example who might be chosen as the committee to conduct the election, which parties would be included within the election, and what would be the requirements needed to determine who would be candidates for Gus Mik’s position. Because of these difficulties, Gus Mik’s family and close friends have not yet decided who will succeed Gus Mik.

The absence of a sign from Gus Mik about his successor has given an opportunity to both his sons and the sons of Kyai Ahmad Siddiq to become involved in running and establishing their own dhikr groups. Kyai Ahmad Siddiq’s sons feel that since the group was established not only by Gus Mik, but also by their father and Kyai al-Hamid, they are also entitled develop the group after Gus Mik. Kyai Ahmad Siddiq was important figure in the establishment of the group. Gus Mik appointed him as a coordinator of the group for several years. Gus Mik took his position following Kyai Ahmad Siddiq’s death. Thus, Kyai Ahmad Siddiq’s role in developing the organisation of the group cannot be overlooked. His position as a leader of Nahdlatul Ulama, the largest Muslim organisation in Indonesia, attracted people from the Nahdlatul Ulama community to join the group.

During my fieldwork, eleven years after Gus Mik had died, all of his sons and several sons of Kyai Ahmad Siddiq were running their own groups (I., jamaah) which had similar names to the Dhikr al-Ghaffilin. At that time, there were seven large groups of Majlis Dhikr and several small groups with the same name in the hands of different leaders including Tajuddin Heru Cokro, Sabut Suwijan Pranoto Projo, Tijani Robert Saifunnawas, Orbar Sadewo Ahmad (see the genealogy of of Gus Mik’s family: Figure 6.1), Gus Farih Fauzi, Farid Wajdi (see the genealogy of Kyai Ahmad Siddiq’s family: Figure 6.2) and Gus Ali (Gus Mik’s close colleague). All of these groups had their own members and held similar dhikr rituals and semaan al-Qur’an regularly in cities in Indonesia. In some cases, three or four of these groups have been established in one city by different leaders.

These groups not only held most of their rituals at Muslim saints’ graves or holy graves situated in those cities, but also shared the same ritual venues at these graves. For example, when I visited Kyai Murshad’s grave, one of famous pilgrimage sites in Kediri, I saw a schedule board next to the Mosque mentioning two groups, one under the leadership of Gus Sabut (Gus Mik’s son) and the other under Gus Farih Fauzi (Kyai Ahmad Siddiq’s son) who were using the same venue for their ritual practice on different days. Specific venues
for rituals usually become exclusive to particular groups and not to others. For example, the complex of Muslim saints’ graves known as Makam Auliya’ Tambak in Kediri, where Gus Mik and many others personages including Kyai Ahmad Siddiq are buried has become the special venue for all Gus Mik’ sons but not for Kyai Ahmad Siddiq’s sons. In addition, each group holds their own activities to celebrate the anniversary of the group and the death of the founders. For example, in order to commemorate the anniversary of the death (I., haul) of Gus Mik, they celebrated on different days rather than on the same days. One group might hold their celebration one week after the date of Gus Mik’s death; others might celebrate his death one week later.

Commenting on the different leaders and groups, Abdul Qadir one of important figures in these groups, told me that having various group leaders with the same name is God’s blessing to the Dhikr al-Gha*fili>n and to members. The situation gives people more options to join a particular group with a particular leader. In addition, previously, he added, the ritual of dhikr and semaan was held once a week. Because of these different leaders, the reciting of the formula and semaan al-Qur’an can now be held as many times as possible within a week. Abdul Qadir himself joined the group of one of Gus Mik’s sons because of his respect for Gus Mik as a murshid (leader) of the group.19

Even though all of the founders of the Dhikr al-Gha*fili>n have died, the current leaders of these groups claim that the Dzikr al-Gha*fili>n groups have continued to develop rapidly. They claim that these groups have established branches in most cities in Indonesia. However, the absence of charismatic figures such as Gus Mik and Kyai Ahmad Siddiq has led the current leaders to find ways to encourage their followers to remember those figures. This happens in many Sufi orders (tarekat) in Java, particularly when the founders or senior leaders of these groups have died and no one, including their own children, possesses the charismatic qualities that their fathers had. This is one reason why stories about the founder’s karamah and religious advice are frequently told to the followers of the Dhikr al- Gha*fili>n on numerous occasions. In addition, some groups not only collect and publish the religious advice presented by Gus Mik but also print his picture so that he can be remembered by his followers. The formation of these groups under the same name following the death of the founders of the Dhikr al-Gha*fili>n has led to competing claims about which groups are more worthy of representing the founders to their followers. Some leaders have tried to identify their groups as distinctive and ‘authentic’ compared to others. For example, Gus Sabut, one of leaders of these groups, claimed that his father, Gus Mik, was not only the founder, a central leader (I., Tokoh Sentral), and spiritual master (A., murshid) of the group, but also the only one who created the formula of the Dhikr al-Gha*fili>n (I., Pencipta Tunggal Dhikr al- Gha*fili>n).

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19 Interview with Abdul Qadir, Kediri, September, 2004.
Figure 6.1. Kyai Hamim Jazuli’s (Gus Mik’s) Family.
Source : Biographi Kyai Djazuli Usman, n.d.
Figure 6.2. Kyai Ahmad Siddiq’s Family.
Source: Interview with Gus Farih Fauzi

According to Sabut, other figures like Kyai Ahmad Siddiq were asked by Gus Mik to write the formula of *Dhikr al-Ghařilin* but were not founders of the group. By doing this, Gus Sabut probably wishes to convince his followers and others that his group and his brothers’ groups are more authentic than other groups. He is also responding to Gus Farih’s claim that the *Dhikr al-Ghařilin* was established not only by Gus Mik but also by Kyai Ahmad Siddiq and Kyai ‘Abd al-Ḥamid who both contributed to its formula. Gus Farih told me that the formula was not created by Gus Mik alone but it was collected from one of prayers created by several prominent Muslim scholars and Sufi, and that Kyai Ahmad Siddiq was a compiler of those prayers. An example of claims made by these leaders can be seen clearly from a comparison of the covers of the manual published by their groups below:

The front cover of the manual of Dhikr al-Ghaﬁlīn (Plate 6.4) shows Gus Mik as the founder, Tokoh Sentral and murshid (the sole composer of the formula). In contrast, instead of putting the picture of his father, Kyai Ahmad Siddiq, on the front page or his own picture, Gus Farih puts the following long sentence indicating that his father was a compiler of the formula collected from one of the owners of these prayers with proper ijāzat (authorisation) (Plate 6.6):

The book was written by a person who is unjust to himself, the lowest human and who is the most in need of forgiveness from the Most-Forgiving, Haji Ahmad Shiddiq, born in Jember.20

Both books cite the motto of the group, which is that group is intended for those who want to gather with the saints and pious people. Plate 6.6 notes that Sabut Panoto Projo (the son of Gus Mik) is the coordinator of the Dhikr al-Ghaﬁlīn on Friday night Kliwon at Gus Mik’s grave. In contrast, Plate 6.8 has a picture of three founders. This is intended to show the public that Dhikr al-Ghaﬁlīn was the creation of these three persons: Kyai Ahamad Siddiq, Gus Mik, and Kyai al-Hamid.

Like their predecessors, these various dhikr groups do not have the structure of other modern organizations, equipped with a deputy leader, secretary, treasurer.

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20 Majmu’atun min ba’di aṣḥābi al-du’āl wa al-ijāza (it is collected from one of the owners of prayers and ijāzat). Katabahu al-zālimu ‘inafsīhi Aḥqaru al-bashari wa Aṣqarahum ilā ‘afwi al-Ghaﬀārī al-hāj Aḥmad Šiddiq al-maulūdī fi Jimbāra.
and registered membership. As a result, all the activities of these groups are controlled by the leaders of these groups. Some of these leaders even handle administrative matters personally. For example, during my fieldwork, a leader of one group sent a short message to invite me and my friends to one of the group’s rituals. These groups do not even have an office to handle activities and administrative matters. In order to hold a major ritual event such as the commemoration of a founder’s death, these groups usually form temporary committees. When these activities have completed their work, the leaders of the group then dismiss the committee.

The leaders of these groups do not have any particular method to obtain financial funding to support and run the activities of their groups. They rarely ask their members to give money and charity to them. However, they distribute donation boxes among their members during regular weekly or selapanan rituals. Money collected from these events will be used not only to operate these groups but also for the operating expenses at the particular places where these rituals are held, such as the electricity bill at a grave, for the custodian (i.e., juru kunci), and for cleaning fees. The leaders strongly encourage donations when the groups need funding for particular purposes. For example, when I was in the field, Gus Farih, a leader one of the groups, who held a regular ritual at the famous pilgrimage site of Mbah Wasil’s tomb in the city centre of Kediri, needed to buy another sound system because the participants in the ritual was so numerous that the old sound system in the inner area of the tomb was not powerful enough to be heard by participants sitting outside the area. Therefore Gus Farih urged his jamaah to donate money to the group to buy a new sound system.

6.7. Conclusion

This chapter has examined that the role played by the late Gus Mik in developing and maintaining the continuity of the Dhikr al-Ghāfi‘īn group. Through his charisma and karamah, Gus Mik was able to practice dakwah in an unusual way, i.e. among those categorised as orang malam, nightclub visitors and gamblers. However, after his death, his karamah and charisma could not be passed on to his sons. None of his sons or other leaders of these groups are able to engage in this unusual practice of dakwah. As a result, the leaders of the current Dhikr al-Ghāfi‘īn groups confine their dakwah activities to people who engage in the ritual practices of these groups.
Chapter VII

Conclusion

The main object of this study has been to examine the emergence of forms of Islamic spirituality in Indonesia identified as Majlis Dhikr. Various Majlis Dhikr offer similar Islamic ritual practices to those of the increasing popular tarekat in Indonesia. I have argued in this study that despite criticism from other Indonesian Muslims, the ritual practices of Majlis Dhikr can be legitimately accepted as proper Islamic ritual since the aim of these practices is to attain closeness to God and His Prophet. Throughout this work, I have presented a wide-ranging discussion of Majlis Dhikr groups. Most of their rituals are observable because they are widespread in many areas of Java. This discussion includes consideration as to how Majlis Dhikr groups regard their practices within Islam despite the criticism from Indonesian Salafi groups and members of Indonesian tarekat. I also consider the extent to which the teachings and ritual of Majlis Dhikr groups are related to the teachings of the Qur'an, hadith and Islamic teaching and orthodox Sufism. I then examine how Majlis Dhikr groups disseminate their teachings and the role of pesantren in spreading these groups. In this concluding chapter I summarise the findings of this study and offer answers to the research questions posed in Chapter I, emphasizing the contribution this work has endeavoured to make to the scholarly literature.

The prediction of some Indonesianists that Sufi groups, along with their rural Muslim scholar proponents, would disappear from the Indonesian landscape as Indonesian society modernised has proved to be flawed. This study has provided evidence that Majlis Dhikr have proliferated among rural and urban people and continue to attract new membership, following on the increasing popularity of Sufi tarekat. Not only have peasants increased their interest in Majlis Dhikr, the urban middle class and many educated Muslims have been attracted to join Majlis Dhikr groups. The central figures in these Majlis Dhikr groups are kyai (Muslim scholars) or ustādh (Muslim teachers) who have mostly graduated from pesantren. In contrast to the predicted decline in Sufism, pesantren have continued to produce Muslim scholars (kyai) both in rural and urban Javanese areas who play an important role not only in inculcating Islamic values and norms in the lives of Muslims but also in developing Majlis Dhikr as venues for practising Islamic ritual.

However, despite this, there have been criticism of the emergence of Majlis Dhikr groups as a new phenomenon of Islamic spiritual practice in Indonesia. The
most notable criticism comes from two different groups, either from supporters of tarekat or from members of Indonesian Salafi groups such as Dewan Dakwah Islamiah Indonesia (The Indonesian Council for Islamic Preaching, DDII). The followers of tarekat have particularly addressed the issue of the validity of isnad (transmission) in Majlis Dhikr, since such groups do not have an unbroken line of links between their founders and the Prophet. In contrast, the Salafi have criticised the way Majlis Dhikr groups recite dhikr vocally and in unison, and have charged them with bid’ah and heresy because such practices, it is claimed, were never practised by the Prophet and his Companions. Despite these criticisms, these Majlis Dhikr groups regard their ritual as legitimate practice that offers an alternative to tarekat for Muslims to practise Islamic spirituality. In responding to the issue of the isnad, members of Majlis Dhikr group have argued that their ritual does not necessarily need a chain of transmission (isnād) back to the Prophet since what they practise in their ritual, such as reciting Šalāwa, was strongly recommended by the Prophet himself. Furthermore, they argue that even though their groups are not regarded as mu’tabarah by the Jam’iyyah Ahl al-Thariqah al-Mu’tabarah, the Forum for tarekat mu’tabarah in Indonesia within Nahdlatul Ulama, this does not necessarily mean that their dhikr ritual should be prohibited since the aim of this ritual is similar to that of dhikr rituals conducted by tarekat, namely to attain closeness to God.

In order to prove that their ritual practices are legitimate, Majlis Dhikr groups have based their argument not only on the prescriptions of the Qur’an and hadith, but also on the views of authoritative Muslim scholars. Based on their understanding and interpretation of these sources, members of Majlis Dhikr groups believe that their ritual of vocal recitation of dhikr in unison is both lawful and sanctioned by God and His Prophet. Closer examination of the debates involving the proponents and opponents of Majlis Dhikr in Indonesia reveals that both parties base their arguments on the interpretation of Qur’anic verses, hadith and the views of Muslim scholars. In addition, both groups have similar views on the practice of dhikr, but they differ on the particular issue of whether the recitation of dhikr has to be conducted in unison and recited vocally or has to be conducted individually and quietly. Their differences are due to different interpretations of the textual evidence, not to presence or absence of textual evidence. As argued by Quraish Shihab, a renowned Indonesian exegete, in the matter of interpretation, no one can regard their interpretation as absolutely true, while regarding other interpretations as false. This is partly because when one group of Muslims gives its interpretation of a particular religious text, this is commonly challenged by another group of Muslims. The interpretation of one group of Muslims is therefore only absolute for them, but not for another group (Shihab 1992:219-220).
Different interpretations of some aspects of Islamic teaching will happen in part when Muslims discuss multi-interpretable texts of the Qur’an and hadith. In the case of debates about the dhikr ritual in Indonesia, therefore I argue in this study that both the proponents and opponents of Majlis Dhikr base their views on interpretable Islamic teachings; as a result one should not regard one group as being truly Islamic, while accusing the other Muslim group of practising bid’ah and superstition in this matter. Furthermore, I argue that interpretations can be regarded as belonging to the field of ijtihad which allows the use of all the capabilities of reason in deducing a conclusion based on the Qur’an and hadith. If this is the case, one can expect different results of ijtihad among Muslims scholars. Muslims should not therefore claim that their own results of ijtihad are deemed to be true, while others’ ijtihad are false, because all of such efforts will be justified later in the hereafter. If the result is true according to the meaning and purpose of God and the Prophet’s purpose, then it will have two rewards. In contrast, if the result is wrong because it does not agree with God’s and the Prophet’s purpose, it will have only one reward.

This study also offers important findings about the extent to which Majlis Dhikr groups comply with the teachings of the Qur’an, hadith and orthodox Sufism. In relation to this question, I have examined several aspects of Majlis Dhikr ritual, including their usage of Ṣalahawa as a means to approach God, their concept of sainthood (wali), seeking intermediaries (tawassul), sending the merit of pious deeds to deceased persons, and seeking blessing (tabarruk). In these ritual aspects, rather than innovating within Islam (i., melaksanakan bid’ah), Majlis Dhikr groups rely heavily on the prescriptions of the Qur’an, hadith, and the views of authoritative Muslim theologians. Interestingly, their theological responses in these aspects are similar to those prevalent in the practices of major Sufi groups in Java. Therefore, in this sense, despite their ghairu mu’tabarrah status according to the Jam’iyyah, Majlis Dhikr groups can be considered to be in accordance with orthodox Sufi teachings, which still stress the importance of the observance of shari’ā. In this sense, these groups can serve as an alternative venue for Indonesian Muslims to practice the inner aspects of Islam.

Majlis Dhikr groups in Java function as a venue for Muslims to practise dhikr ritual and to seek spiritual closeness to God; they also serve as institutions for deepening and preaching Islamic values (i., dakwah Islam). This study examines how specific Majlis Dhikr groups employ different strategies to do this. For instance, in order to spread its teachings in particular and to preach Islamic values in general, the Wâhidiyat group has been opened by its proponents to all people regardless of their age, cultural or religious background. With this strategy, this group accepts people from different religions to join and practise
the group’s ritual without asking them to convert to Islam. Further, in order to attract new followers, this group has stressed the efficacy of its dhikr formula not only to solve the problems commonly faced by people but also to effectively obtain ma’rifatullah (Gnosis of God), the highest achievement in Sufi practice.

In contrast, the Istighāthat Iḥsāniyyat, another Majlis Dhikr, uses a different strategy to promote Islamic values and teachings among Muslims. Since the Istighāthat Iḥsāniyyat group was established initially to attract those who have been categorised sociologically as marginalised people and theologically as nominal Muslims, it has tried to accommodate cultural aspects which are prevalent among these people into its dakwah. In line with this approach, this group allows Javanese popular arts such as the hobby-horse dance (J., jaranan), tiger-masked dance (I., reog), dangdutan, Chinese dragon dance (J., leang-leong), and ruwatan to be performed on the annual anniversary of Iḥsāniyyat. Including such Javanese popular arts within the framework of pesantren and Sufi group is unusual. Moreover, this group also applies the strategy ‘from tombs to mosques’ (I., dari kubur ke masjid) in order to attract people to join the group. They have found that it is easier to ask such people to come to the tombs than directly to a mosque. It is expected that once these people have enough Islamic knowledge and have practised Islam, they will voluntarily come to the mosque. Through such methods, the presence of these Majlis Dhikr groups in the landscape of Indonesian Islam has contributed to narrowing the gap between santri Muslims and nominal Muslims, who have long been ideologically opposed to one another. Moreover, in implementing Sufi dakwah and religious tolerance, the Istighāthat Iḥsāniyyat group also allows people from different religions to join the group without asking them to convert to Islam. This strategy helps to create a peaceful religious life in Indonesia.

Similar to the Iḥsāniyyat, the Dhikr al-Ghāfīlin group uses tombs as a venue for attracting members. Like the Iḥsāniyyat, in addition to holding a dhikr ritual at Muslim saints’ tombs, this group also gives religious lectures (ceramah agama) during the ritual in the expectation that people will not only gain spiritual enlightenment by reciting dhikr but also obtain knowledge of Islamic teachings and values. Furthermore, in order to spread its influence, this group accentuates the figure of the founder of the group as an icon to attract new members. This strategy is not unique among Majlis Dhikr groups whose current leaders are not as charismatic as their founders. The Dhikr al-Ghāfīlin group in particular seems to rely on this strategy because none of its leaders has the same capability as the late Gus Mik, the original founder of Dhikr al-Ghāfīlin who was known among people as a wali.
My study also clearly shows that pesantren have played an important role in the maintenance and the development of these Majlis Dhikr groups. Most of the leaders of these groups have graduated from pesantren, and they are mostly the sons of kyai from famous pesantren in East Java. As a result, they have used their pesantren networks to spread their groups. The networks of alumni of particular pesantren have been important in the dissemination of Majlis Dhikr groups to wherever these alumni live. In this way, some pesantren not only function as places for educating students about Islamic knowledge but have also become centres for the teaching and the propagation of Majlis Dhikr. Students of these pesantren are obliged to practise and join the recitation of dhikr held by these groups. One pesantren, Pesantren Kedunglo, where Majlis Dhikr ŠalāwaWāḥidiyyat is based, even obliges its students to propagate the teachings of the group when they have graduated and returned home.

The role played by pesantren in the maintenance and development of Majlis Dhikr indicates that they are effective places to maintain both the outer and inner aspects of Islam on Java. A similar role has been revealed by previous studies on the role of pesantren in the maintenance of Sufism in Java. Such studies have noted that pesantren in Java can be divided into two categories. The first maintains Sufism without being necessarily being affiliated with a particular tarekat, although they nevertheless practise dhikr and wirid as in tarekat, and apply Sufi teachings in daily life. The second category is that of pesantren that specialise in the teaching and the development of tarekat. This study has added another category of pesantren in Java, that is, pesantren that not only practise dhikr and wirid regularly but also organise and establish Majlis Dhikr groups and propagate these among people outside the pesantren.

One point which needs to be emphasised is that pesantren and tarekat in Java have been conceived by previous researchers as inseparable institutions for the maintenance of traditional Islam within the Javanese Muslim community. Most pesantren in Java function as places to mould students with Islamic knowledge, while some of them also function as instruments for the recruitment of members of tarekat, which are organized around the figure of a particular scholar and teacher. This study highlights the rise of new Islamic spiritual groups in Java, the Majlis Dhikr, which suggests that another institution should be taken into account when considering the maintenance of traditional Islam among Javanese.

It has been argued that Indonesia has undergone an Islamic revival since 1970’s (Howell 2001). This resurgence is measured by scholars in considering phenomena as diverse as the boom in the publication of books on Islam, the reinvigoration of Islamic political parties, the prevalence of Muslim fashion among middle class urban population, the growing number of mosques, the
appearance of new forms of student activity on university campuses, and the establishment of Islamic banking. This kind of representation of Indonesia’s Islamic revival puts too much emphasis on the outer aspects of Islam, while tending to ignore the increasing popularity of Islamic spiritual expression as articulated by the proliferation of both Sufi groups and *Majlis Dhikr* groups in urban and rural areas. This study has attempted to redress this imbalance by enriching perspectives on the development of Islam in Indonesia, while presenting another piece of evidence for Islamic revival in Indonesia.
Appendix

Names of Tarekat Considered As Mu’tabarrah by Jam’iyyat Ahl al-Tariqat al-Mu’tabarat al-Nahdliyyat in Its 9th Congress held in Pekalongan, Central Java. (26-28 February 2000)

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<td>Ahli Mulazamatil Qur’an wa Sunnah wa Dala’ilil</td>
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<td>47.</td>
<td>Khairati Wa Ta’limi Fathil Qaribi au Kifayatil Awami</td>
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