THE DYNAMICS OF THE INDONESIAN HADRAMIS

ON THE *MAULID* CELEBRATION

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Abstract

This article seeks to explore the debate between two groups of Indonesian Hadhramis (Bā 'Alawi and non-Sayyid) concerning the *maulid* celebration. It is based on a qualitative research study. The data was collected through a combination of library research and field study. The fieldwork was completed in Surakarta by observing the *maulid* celebration of the Bā 'Alawi community in the city. The study results show the debate between the Sayyid and non-Sayyid communities surrounding the *maulid* has occurred since the early 20th century and continues until today. The first group, also known as the Bā 'Alawi, have consistently supported the *maulid* practice since the early 20th century, starting with the establishment of Jamiat Khair to several Bā 'Alawi preachers such as the ones in the Riyadh Mosque in Surakarta that are explained in this text. Regarding the second group, the *maulid* is promoted by the Al-Irsyad faction, which do not condemn the *maulid* but only criticize some practices within the celebration they regard as *bid'a*. In the present day, Al-Irsyad is separated into two groups: Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah and the Salafis of Perhimpunan al-Irsyad. This

article finds that the former preserves the old stance of the organization regarding the *maulid*. However, the latter has a stricter teaching on the *maulid*, stating it is *bid'a* and recommends its members and followers not to practice it.

Keywords: the *maulid* celebration, Hadrami, Bā 'Alawi, Al-Irsyad, debate.

A. Introduction

Hadhramis are an Arab people originating from the Hadhramaut region in Yemen. Their diasporic communities can be found around the world, including in Southeast Asia. Most Hadhramis arrived in the Dutch East Indies, present-day Indonesia, in the latter half of the eighteenth century (L.W.C. van den Berg, 1989; Mobini-Kesheh, 1999).

In terms of social status, Indonesian Hadhramis are categorized into two groups. The first group is the Sayyid (pl. *sada*) community who claim to be descendants of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Also referred to as the Bā 'Alawi, or "children of 'Alawī," they embrace the 'Alawīyya Sufi order and the Shafi'ī *madhhab* (Islamic school of law). The second group is the non-Sayyid community. They occupy a lower social rank than the Sayyids as they cannot claim lineage from the Prophet (pbuh). When the Hadhrami people left Hadhramaut, they brought this stratification with them to their new lands. Furthermore, it should be noted that differences between the Bā 'Alawi and the non-Sayyid not only in social life but also in religious discourse.

This article will discuss the dynamics between these two groups, especially concerning the debate around the *maulid* celebration. There are several recent works regarding the Hadhramis. Among them are those of Ismail Fajrie Alatas, whose master's thesis (2009) explored the development of the Bā 'Alawī in post-independence Indonesia. Additionally, he produced several articles (2011, 2014) and a doctoral thesis (2016) concerning the Bā 'Alawī. In the two-former works, Alatas discusses the Tariqa Alawiyya in the post-colonial era and the creation of *haul*, an annual death commemoration which has transformed from not only being a Bā 'Alawī festivity but also into a kind of public expression of Islam. In the latter work, Alatas describes the formation of Islamic religious authority, focusing on Bā 'Alawi figures such as Habib Lutfi bin Yahya from Pekalongan, Central Java. Similar to Alatas, Martin Slama has also written several articles with regard to the Bā 'Alawī (2011, 2014). In the first work, Slama compares Hadhrami groups on Sulawesi and on Java. While in the second, Slama discusses the up-and-down relationship between Hadhramis in Indonesia and their network in Hadhramaut. However, the works of both Alatas and Slama have thus far not explored the debate between the Sayyid and non-Sayyid in relation to the *maulid*.

Regarding the dynamics of the non-Sayyid community, Miftahuddin (2013) and Syamsul (2017) address the development of Al-Irsyad in the post-reformation era. These two works capture how the debate between the two factions of Al-Irsyad led to the creation of two separate organizations: Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah and Perhimpunan al-Irsyad. Yet, these two works did not discuss the dispute between the two bodies

dealing with a religious opinion, especially their stances surrounding the *maulid* celebration. In general, this study will fill the literature gap on the Hadhramis of Indonesia, particularly by giving information and analysis on the dynamic between the Sayyid and non-Sayyid pertaining to the *maulid*.

This article is based on a qualitative research study that combined library research and fieldwork. The library research was done by scrutinizing recent studies on the Hadhramis to find an explanation on their positions in connection with the celebration of *maulid*. The fieldwork was done in Solo in the span of two months from January to February 2018 by observing the *maulid* celebration at the Riyadh Mosque. In general, this article argues that the debate between the Sayyid and the non-Sayyid that exists today has occurred since the early 20th century. This article finds that the opinion of the non-Sayyid community related to the *maulid* is not a singular one. The Salafi faction is against celebrating the *maulid,* while reformists accept the celebration with some modifications.

This article will firstly discuss the historical background of Hadhramis in Indonesia and the dynamics within their community. The section afterward will discuss the different standpoints taken by Indonesian Hadhramis, particularly with regard to religious rituals, including the *maulid* celebration. The last two sections will discuss the reaction of the Bā 'Alawi to criticism of the *maulid* by the non-Sayyid community and how they are able to revive their network and movement to promote the *maulid* celebration amid the intense criticism. The last section will discuss the *maulid* celebration in Surakarta as part of the Bā 'Alawi's efforts to preserve and promote the *maulid* in the city.

B. The History of Hadrami Dynamics in Indonesia

As it is explained by several scholars such as Bujra (1967), Haikal (1986), Huub de Jonge (1993), and Mobini-Kesheh (1999), Hadhramis, especially the Bā 'Alawi, place great importance on preserving their cultural and religious traditions. They have a common belief that they are the biological heirs of the Prophet (pbuh). Additionally, they practice *kafā'ah* (equality) in marriage, meaning that Bā 'Alawi women can only marry men inside their community. When the Bā 'Alawi settled in the Dutch East Indies, this tradition was maintained. In addition, certain honorific names continue to be used by the Bā 'Alawi: '*Sayyid*' and *'Habib'* for men, and *'Syarifah'*, *'Habiba,'* or *'Sayyida'* for women (Boxberger, 2002; Mobini-Kesheh, 1999).

In her work about the Hadhrami people in the Dutch East Indies, Mobini-Kesheh (1999) states that in the early decades of the 20th century, the Hadhramis progressed through education, organization, and literacy in a way that she describes as *nahdah* (an awakening)*.* This can be seen, for instance, in the establishment of the Jamiat Khair in 1901 (Haikal, 1986). As an organization initiated by the Bā 'Alawi, most of its boards were Sayyids. However, the organization also consisted of non-Sayyid members who joined but only became passive members uninvolved in the board structure. One of the reasons for the establishment of such an organization was the lack of opportunity Arabs had in obtaining a formal education (Noer, 1963). To encourage the progress of its educational institution, Jamiat Khair invited several teachers from the Middle East. One teacher, Syaikh Ahmad Surkati (d. 1943), was a Mecca-educated Sudanese man familiar with the

works of Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Ridha. Consequently, he favored the idea of *ijtihād* and was against the practice of *taqlīd* (Islamic reformism) (Abu Shouk, 2002).

In 1911, Surkati was brought to Java by Jamiat Khair to be its schools' inspector. After two years, the organization, pleased with his work, gave Surkati full authority to appoint teachers for its schools. Thus, Surkati requested more Sudanese individuals to help him with assessing the schools (Mobini-Kesheh, 1999; Noer, 1973). Alongside Surkati, the new teachers promoted the notion of Islamic reformism to the schools, as well as to the organization (Abu Shouk, 2002; Mobini-Kesheh, 1999; Noer, 1963). The strong influence of Surkati worried some people in Jamiat Khair, especially his appreciation of Islamic reformism. One of their objections lied in Surkati's belief that all Muslims were equal and that higher status could not be imparted on a person due to their lineage. Naturally, Surkati's point of view would threaten the social status of the Bā 'Alawi (Abu Shouk, 2002).

The falling-out between Surkati and Jamiat Khair would occur after an incident in Solo, Central Java, in 1913. The Bā 'Alawi objected to Surkati's suggestion of a marriage match between a *syarifah* (a daughter of a Sayyid) with a non-Sayyid man. Such a union was disapproved of as it went against the Bā 'Alawi interpretation of *kafā'ah.* Following that event, the relationship between Surkati and Jamiat Khair deteriorated. The Bā 'Alawi accused Surkati of advocating anti-Sayyid sentiment and opposing the teaching of Shafi'ī *madhhab* (Mobini-Kesheh, 1999; Noer, 1963).

Surkati's firm stance on certain religious opinions, like that in the instance above, would result in his forced resignation

from Jamiat Khair in 1914. The resignation of Surkati was then followed by the resignation of several of his followers within the organization, both non-Sayyid and Sayyid, who had shared the same views. Subsequently, Surkati and his followers established a new school, the *Madrasah al-Irshad al-Islamiyyah* (Islamic School for Guidance). This school was then converted into a foundation with the name of *Jam'īyyah al-Islāh wa al-Irsyād al-'Arabīyyah* (Arab Association for Reform and Guidance). Known as Al-Irsyad, the Colonial Government recognized the school in 1915 (Mobini-Kesheh, 1999).

In general, the establishment of Al-Irsyad shows the attempt of Surkati and the reformist Hadhramis to contest the religious authority of Jamiat Khair, especially the Bā 'Alawi. Throughout history, the authority of the Bā 'Alawi was believed without objection. This was due to the widespread belief that they are the descendants of the Prophet (pbuh). Departing from Islamic reformism, Surkati changed this idea by stressing Islamic orthodoxy through the revival of *sunnah* and the abandonment of *bid'a* (innovation). Surkati desacralized the title of 'Sayyid', a title originally claimed could only be used by the Bā 'Alawi. For Al-Irsyad and Surkati, the title 'Sayyid' was not a privilege reserved for the Bā 'Alawi (Mobini-Kesheh, 1999). The conflict between the two factions on this issue lasted for years, and the debate between them would be fought out in the publications of both groups. The fierce dispute between Jamiat Khair and Al-Irsyad demonstrates the quarrel over religious authority between the traditional Bā 'Alawi with the reformist Muslims of Al-Irsyad.

C. Al-Irsyad Criticism on the *Maulid* Celebration

In this section, I will explain the criticism of Al-Irsyad on the Bā 'Alawi's religious rituals, including the *maulid* celebration.

1. Religious opinion of Ahmad Surkati

Besides the criticism of Surkati and Al-Irsyad on the Bā 'Alawi's religious practices elaborated in the previous section (the *kafā'ah* and the use of the Sayyid title), several other religious practices and beliefs are criticized by Al-Irsyad. For example, a book by Surkati titled *Al-Masā'il al-Thalāth* (*The Three Problems*) discusses these issues. Surkati wrote this book after receiving an invitation to a debate. The debate was supposed to revolve around the three following topics: *ijtihād* (individual reasoning) and *taqlīd* (blind obedience), gravesite visitation and *tawassul* (intermediation)*,* and *sunnah* and *bid'a*. However, as the person who called for the debate did not show up, Surkati decided to publish the book as a response (Surkati, 1988).

As a reformist Muslim, Surkati always based his criticisms on the Qur'ān and hadīth. In explaining the three problems, he consistently pointed to the direct sources of the Qur'ān and hadīth, instead of the opinion of the *ulamā*. Therefore, with regard to the first topic of *ijtihād* and *taqlīd*, Surkati favored the former. In his book, he criticizes those who practiced blind obedience *(muqallid)* as he considers them not in line with the *salaf al-sālih* (the first three generations of Muslims) who did not practice *taqlīd*. According to Surkati, the *salaf al-sālih* tried to directly understand the Qur'ān and sunnah and not follow other Muslims' interpretation of these sacred

texts (Surkati, 1988). Naturally, his opinion is consistent with the typical reformist Muslim thinking that advocates returning to the Qur'ān and sunnah by practicing *ijtihād*.

Regarding gravesite visitation and *tawassul*, Surkati argues that visiting the grave is recommended by the Prophet (pbuh). However, the visit should exclude forbidden practices such as crying at the grave, *tawassul*, saint worshipping, seeking a blessing from the deceased, or making a sacrifice with the intention of being rewarded by the grave. He states that all these practices are considered *shirk* (idolatry) (Surkati, 1988). However, Surkati put emphasis on one particular custom widely practiced in the Dutch East Indies. This custom was saint worship, in which Muslims conducted a ritual around the grave by overpraising the deceased to garner a blessing to the visitors. Surkati considers the ritual a pagan practice, and he suggested Muslims avoid it as God forbids pagan practices (Surkati, 1988). It seems that this criticism was directed toward the Bā 'Alawi, who believe in a cult of saints.

Concerning *tawassul* (intermediation)*,* Surkati regards this practice as *munkar* (evil). The basis for this condemnation is that, according to Surkati, neither the Prophet (pbuh) nor his companions practiced this ritual. He also states that the four *madhhab* founders did not practice *tawassul* either. Therefore, in his opinion, this ritual must be avoided (Surkati, 1988). Again, this criticism is presumably directed toward the Bā 'Alawi, who practice the ritual of *tawassul* in almost every religious gathering they hold.

On the third topic of sunnah and *bid'a*, Surkati firstly explains the definition of sunnah, which he regards as the Prophet's (pbuh) utterances and deeds aimed at explaining the verses of the Qur'ān. He then explains that Islam came from the Almighty Allah and was brought by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Therefore, in his opinion, there must be no addition by Muslims with regard to religious rituals. He also emphasizes that any addition to this 'perfect religion' can be considered *bid'a* and will lead people astray. In addition, Surkati also mentions that there can be no *bid'a hasanah* (good innovation), especially in religious matters (Surkati, 1988). Nevertheless, there were some religious practices of Muslims in the Dutch East Indies that were considered *bid'a* by Surkati. They are *ushalli* (uttering the intention), *talqin* (reciting when someone is about to die or after the burial), the practicing of *tahlilan* (praying for the deceased), and visiting the grave and *al-qiyām fi qissat maulid an-nabi* (the act of standing in the *maulid* celebration) (Affandi, 1976).

Regarding the *maulid*, it seems that Surkati did not reject the *maulid* celebration. As mentioned above, Surkati considered the act of *qiyām* during the *maulid* celebration as *bid'a*. Yet, he did not mention anything about the celebration itself. His religious stance on this issue can be confirmed by a *maulid* event that took place in Batavia in 1919. The *maulid* celebration was reported to be attended by some Irsyadis. However, when the participants of the *maulid* stood up during the *qiyām*, the Irsyadis remained sitting. Many Muslims criticized the actions of these Irsyadis in Batavia (N. Kaptein, 1993).

This occurrence provides us with valuable evidence that Surkati and the Irsyadi did not reject the celebration of the Prophet's birthday; instead, they only rejected the practice of the *qiyām* during the recitation. Moreover, this religious stance can be further supported by a report about a school belonging to Al-Irsyad celebrating the Prophet's birthday with a performance from the Boy Scouts in 1938 and 1939 (Mobini-Kesheh, 1999).

The position of Ahmad Surkati and Al-Irsyad on the *maulid* celebration is in line with Muhammadiyah figures such as Abdul Karim Amrullah, also known as Haji Rasul (d. 1945). Muhammadiyah (and Haji Rasul) did not forbid the celebration of the Prophet's birthday, as long as it kept in compliance with Islamic law. The only practice surrounding the *maulid* that was objected to by Haji Rasul was the *qiyām*. However, Muhammadiyah shifted its stance on the *maulid,* allowing the reciting of the *maulid* book of *Barzanjī* in 1986. Although, in the first decade of the 21st century, the organization forbade its members to recite the *maulid* book (As'ad, 2019).

2. The Break of al-Irsyad

What can be said about Al-Irsyad in recent times? Have they shifted their stance on the *maulid* as their fellow reformists the Muhammadiyah have? Al-Irsyad, recently split into two institutions: the first being Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah and the second being Perhimpunan Al-Irsyad. The schism of Al-Irsyad can be attributed to Salafi influences on the organization. The division began at one *pondok pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) of Al-Irsyad in

Tengaran, Central Java, which has been occupied by Salafi religious teachers *(ustad)*. The *pesantren* had been built by funding from Saudi Arabia. When it was finished, the Saudi government representative requested that Salafi teachers run the institution. Three ustads were appointed to teach and lead the *pesantren*: Ja'far Umar Thalib (b. 1961), Abdul Qadir Jawas (b. 1962), and Yusuf Usman Baisa (n.d.). These three teachers were all Hadhramis who were educated in the Middle East (Hasan, 2006).

The introduction of these teachers resulted in significant changes to the *pondok pesantren* and the organization itself. Concerning the *pondok pesantren*, the curriculum was adapted according to Salafi teaching. These ustads strictly implemented Salafi principles such as the prohibition of human and animal pictures, no paying respect to the national flag, no smoking or watching television, as well as the banning of music. These doctrinal rules concerned parents who noticed their children implementing at home the teaching of removing pictures, television, and radio they had received at the pesantren. Subsequently, the parents filed a formal complaint about this. After a meeting which was attended by the central board of Al-Irsyad, it was decided that the three Salafi teachers needed to be replaced. Following that decision, for a while, the *pondok pesantren* lacked leadership. As a result, the branch of Al-Irsyad in Semarang re-appointed one of the teachers, Yusuf Usman Baisa (n.d.), as the pesantren's director (Hasan, 2006). From this point on, Salafi's teaching had a strong reception among the Al-Irsyad's various branches, especially among the younger

generations. Accordingly, many branches of Al-Irsyad invited Salafi ustads such as Abdul Qadir Jawas (b. 1962) to give lectures (Miftahuddin, 2013). The spread of Salafi influences angered the central board of Al-Irsyad. This resulted in the issuance of a letter of dismissal by the then chairman of Al-Irsyad, Geys Amar (n.d.), to ten other central board members, including his vice-chairman Muhammad Bawazir (n.d.). These ten board members were regarded as adherents of Salafi thinking. Thus, according to Geys Amar, the dismissal of these ten members was intended to protect Al-Irsyad from Salafi-Wahabi influences (Rijal, 2017). By doing this, he wanted to keep the reformist-modernist style of Al-Irsyad as how Ahmad Surkati founded it.

This dismissal was related to the second significant change in the organizational structure of Al-Irsyad. The Al-Irsyad members who disagreed with the dismissal decision held a significant congress in 1999. This congress resulted in the new Salafi faction of the Al-Irsyad central board. There were several attempts of reconciliation between these two factions of Al-Irsyad. However, all of these attempts failed. The conflict was then settled in court, with the court deciding in favor of the reformist faction. As a reaction to this defeat, the Salafi faction established a new organization called 'Perhimpunan Al-Irsyad' (Al-Irsyad Association). It was registered to the Ministry of Law and Human Rights in 2013. As can be seen from its name, this new organization still uses the word 'Al-Irsyad' with some modifications, especially to the old logo of Al-Irsyad (Rijal, 2017). Meanwhile, the

reformist faction kept its original name of Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah as Surkati registered it.

As put forward by Rijal (2017), this separation shows the struggle for authority between the reformist and Salafi factions of Al-Irsyad. The reformist faction mostly consists of the older generation, who wanted to maintain the organization's reformist-modernist style. According to them, the Salafi-Wahabi influences pose a threat to Al-Irsyad. They say these teachings were brought in by the younger generation of Al-Irsyad, who were educated at Salafi institutions in Indonesia and the Middle East. In response, Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah recently published a manual explaining the Al-Irsyad identity, which emphasizes the combination of religious knowledge and modernity (Rijal, 2017).

The other faction, Perhimpunan Al-Irsyad, wants to emphasize the purity of the organization by implementing strict religious interpretation, which includes separating boys and girls in school. They reject the older interpretations of Al-Irsyad, stating that they are influenced by the ideas of liberalism and pluralism (Rijal, 2017). Nowadays, many new Salafi ustads join Perhimpunan Al-Irsyad. These ustads, such as Firanda Andirja Abidin (b.1979), Khalid Bassalamah (b.1975), and Syafiq Bassalamah (b.1974), enjoy large followings on social media (Perhimpunan Al-Irsyad, 2019). They graduated from universities in Saudi Arabia and are positioned at the *fatwā* board of Perhimpunan Al-Irsyad. Firanda, who had led the board, graduated from the Islamic University of Madinah (Perhimpunan Al-Irsyad, 2019).

3. Different Interpretation of al-Irsyad on the Maulid Celebration

Pertaining to the schism of Al-Irsyad into Perhimpunan Al-Irsyad and Al-Irsyad al- Islamiyah, each of them offers a different interpretation on the legality of certain religious rituals, including the *maulid* celebration. This section will discuss each organization's opinion regarding the *maulid* celebration.

The opinion of Perhimpunan Al-Irsyad on the *maulid* can be seen through the statements of some members of the *fatwā* board of Perhimpunan Al-Irsyad on social media. As these preachers are quite famous online, their statements could be easily found. The first statement is from Firanda Andirja Abidin, the chairman of the *fatwā* board of Perhimpunan Al-Irsyad. This statement is a response to a question by one of his followers on the ruling of the *maulid* celebration. Firanda's argument is as follows:

> The *maulid* celebration is a religious ritual that was done neither by the Prophet (pbuh) nor his companions. Due to this reason, we do not practice the *maulid* celebration. Some people say that the *maulid* is celebrated because they love the Prophet, but the companions had a bigger love for the Prophet (pbuh) than us. However, they never celebrated the *maulid* (Salam Dakwah, 2014).

From the above statement, we can see that Firanda rejects the *maulid* celebration. Besides this statement, there are several other lectures of Firanda on social media where he states that the *maulid* celebration is *bid'a* and recommends to his followers not to practice it (Muslim Belajar, 2017; Tauhid Squad, 2016).

In addition to Firanda, another member of the *fatwā* board of Perhimpunan Al-Irsyad, Khalid Bassalamah, made the same argument on social media. When asked by one of his followers whether he was permitted to join the *maulid* celebration at the invitation of a friend, Bassalamah stated that he should not go as the *maulid* was never practiced by the Prophet (pbuh) (Hijrah, 2016).

Turning now to the opinion of Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah on the *maulid*, unfortunately, an official stance by the organization was unable to be found. However, some examples offer insight into what that stance could be. The first is a statement by the chairman of Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah during the *maulid* celebration in Jakarta in 2017. He states that the *maulid* celebration is commemorated not only to celebrate the Prophet's birthday but also to convey Islam as a religion that blesses the universe *(Islam rahmatan lil 'Alamin)* (Republika, 2017). Another example can be found on the Facebook page of an Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah primary school in Jember, East Java. On its Facebook page, the school posted about a speech contest for students that will be held to celebrate the *maulid* (Al-Irsyad, 2017).

From these two examples, we can conclude that Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah does not reject the celebration of the Prophet's birthday. The organization even celebrates it with some religious events, as seen in the example of the primary school. However, it seems that the *maulid* events celebrated by Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah are not the same as those of Nahdlatul Ulama, whose events include reciting the *maulid* book of *Barzanjī.* It can be inferred that Al-

Irsyad Al-Islamiyah follows the *fatwā* of Surkati who only rejects the practice of *qiyām* during the *maulid*, but not the celebration itself.

By comparing Perhimpunan Al-Irsyad and Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah, we can see that the two organizations have different religious positions regarding the *maulid* celebration. The former rejects the ritual by stating it is *bid'a,* and therefore, Muslims must not practice it, while the latter does not condemn the celebration. Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah celebrates the *maulid* by replacing the *maulid* recitation with religious lectures and gatherings. However, in terms of religious discourse, Perhimpunan Al-Irsyad has a greater significant impact on Indonesian Muslims. This can be seen in the many video lectures and articles by members of the *fatwā* board of Perhimpunan Al-Irsyad that can be found on the internet (Lentera Islam, 2016; Sang Pendoa, 2017). Furthermore, these *fatwā* board members routinely discuss and give their followers suggestions on certain rituals they deem *bid'a.* This is different from Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah, whose preachers I could not find many online videos or articles.

D. The Revival of Bā 'Alawi in Indonesia

This section analyzes how the Bā 'Alawi reacted to and defended the Salafi Hadhramis against criticism made toward them in regard to the *maulid* celebration.

1. Revitalizing the Yemeni connection

From the work of van den Berg (1989) and Mobini-Kesheh (1999), we learn that a substantial number of

Hadhramis came to Indonesia in the latter half of the 18th century. The number of Hadhramis in Indonesia drastically increased in the 19th and 20th centuries, from only 4.992 people in 1859 (Java only) to 80.000 people in 1942 (Mobini-Kesheh 1999). In the later period, the connection between Indonesia and Hadhramaut was sustained through the Hadhrami diaspora in Indonesia's preference to send their children to Hadhramaut to study Islam. This relation was halted in 1967 due to Yemen's political situation, which involved its Southern region being occupied by a communist regime. As a consequence, the anti-communist Soeharto restricted migration between Indonesia and Yemen. This policy naturally altered the network connection between Hadhramaut and its diasporic community in Indonesia. The last migration from Hadhramaut to Indonesia was in the 1950s (Slama, 2014).

When the communist regime collapsed, and the two states of South and North Yemen were united in 1990, the connection between Indonesia and Hadhramaut was revived. There are two factors responsible for this revival. The first was the emerging charismatic preacher Habib Umar bin Hafiz (b. 1963). Since 1996, he has accepted many students from Indonesia and became the patron of many Bā 'Alawi figures in this country. The second factor was the Indonesian Bā 'Alawi's desire to reconnect with the land of its ancestors (Rijal, 2017).

Related to the first factor, Habib Umar is a son of a respected Bā 'Alawī' ulamā' in Hadhramaut. His father was killed during the communist regime that forced him to leave the country and stay in Saudi Arabia while studying. He returned

to Yemen after the unification in 1990 and then established his madrasah of Darul Mustafa in Tarim, Hadhramaut in 1996. One of the madrasah's aims is to maintain and protect the Bā 'Alawi's religious tradition, such as the daily recitation of the *maulid* book and the visit to the sacred tombs (Knysh, 2003). According to Knysh (2003), the emergence of Habib Umar and Darul Mustafa was a reaction to the growing development of their Salafi counterpart in north Yemen. This Salafi group was led by Shaykh Muqbil bin Hadi al Wadi'i (d. 2001), who revived the teaching of Salafism in Yemen. Muqbil established his madrasah of Darul Hadīth al-Khayriyya in the province of Sa'da in 1979. This institution then became one of the prominent centers of Salafi teaching in the world (Haykel, 2002). Many of his students were from Indonesia, one of the first being Jafar Umar Thalib. He went to Yemen after leaving the *pondok pesantren* Tengaran that is owned by the Salafi faction of Al-Irsyad. In 2000, Thalib declared a jihad war in the Maluku Islands with his paramilitary group called Laskar Jihad (Hasan, 2006).

The second factor that pushed the reconnection between Indonesia and Hadhramaut was the Bā 'Alawi in Indonesia's own initiative to re-establish relations with Hadhramaut. Efforts were advanced by figures such as Habib Anis bin 'Alwi al-Ḥabashī (d. 2006), a charismatic Bā 'Alawi preacher from Solo, Central Java. During his lifetime, he was considered one of the leading figures of the Bā 'Alawi in Indonesia. After the unification of Yemen, Habib Anis met with Habib Abdul Qadir Assegaf (d.2010), a Bā 'Alawi from Jeddah, during a *maulid* program in Seiyun, Yemen. Habib Anis shared with Habib Abdul Qadir how, in his opinion, most of the young Bā

'Alawi in Indonesia had forgotten their ancestors' teachings. To deal with this, Habib Anis asked for Habib Abdul Qadir's help in finding someone who could come to Indonesia, recruit students, and bring them to study in Yemen. He believed doing this would encourage a deeper understanding of Islam and the traditions of their ancestors among the young Indonesian Bā 'Alawi (Majelis Al-Munawwarah, 2017). Subsequently, Habib Abdul Qadir sent Habib Umar to go to Indonesia to carry out this mission. In 1993, Habib Umar went to see Habib Anis during the annual death commemoration *(haul)* of Habib 'Ali in Solo. Afterward, he brought students from Indonesia to study with him at his Darul Mustafa madrasah. The first batch of Indonesians to study with Habib Umar consisted of 30 students. Among them, 17 students were Bā 'Alawi, and the rest were indigenous Indonesians (Alatas, 2009; Rijal, 2016).

After four years of studying, these students returned to Indonesia and would hold religious gatherings in their hometowns. Just as Habib Umar faced the Salafi's growing influences in Yemen, his students also faced the same challenge of confronting Salafism in Indonesia. Knysh (2001) explains how Habib Umar, in his *dakwah*, minimizes the use of narratives surrounding the miracle of the saints used by the Bā 'Alawi. Moreover, he also emphasizes the importance of hadīth in his Sufi teaching. This is partly due to the dispute over religious authority with the Salafis, who mostly use a scriptural approach in criticizing the Sufi practices in Yemen. Furthermore, this style of *dakwah* is also employed by Habib Umar's students in Indonesia, who underline the use of the Qur'ānic and hadīth explanation in each of their *dakwah* programs. By implementing this approach, their religious

gatherings attract the youth who, as of late, have become more interested in Salafism (Alatas, 2009).

Today, the former students of Habib Umar belong to an interconnected network. They establish *pondok pesantren* and religious gatherings as well as promote Hadhramaut and Darul Mustafa as the center of Islamic studies in the Middle East. Many of them become the intermediary agents for selecting prospective students for Darul Mustafa. As a result, these days, many graduates of Habib Umar can be found in Indonesia. In East Java, for instance, there are more than 200 alumni of Darul Mustafa who actively promote *dakwah* through regular sermons or Islamic boarding schools (Rijal, 2017).

2. 'Street Sufism' and the Dakwah of Aswaja

Among Habib Umar's students, one of the most renowned ones, especially in the first decade of the 21st century, was the late Habib Munzir bin Fuad al-Musawa (d. 2013). He was among the first 30 Indonesian students who studied in Darul Mustafa. Upon returning to his birth country, he set up a weekly gathering in Jakarta. He went from one mosque to another or to his followers' homes to perform his *dakwah* lectures. Due to the program's success, in 2000, he established the religious gathering of *Majelis Rasulullah* (M.R.) (Guntur, 2013). This gathering was successful in terms of pulling the youth to his religious events.

One of the characteristics of Majelis Rasulullah, as is noted by Alatas (2009), was its scriptural approach of using hadīth and the Qur'ān to attract the youth. This method, as the youth, especially university students in

Jakarta, are familiar with the Salafi-reformist style. Using this style is also convenient for Munzir, particularly when defending some rituals criticized by the Salafi, such as *tawassul* and the *maulid* celebration.

This scriptural approach can be seen, for instance, in the question-and-answer column of the Majelis Rasulullah website. A question by his follower on the ruling of the *maulid* celebration, Habib Munzir answered by citing several Qur'ānic verses and hadīth on the legality of the celebration. The Qur'ānic verse and hadīth go as follows:

> Surah al-Maryam: 33
> "And Salam (peace) be upon me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive!" (al-Hilali & Khan, 1998).

> The hadīth:
> Abu Qatada Ansari (Allah be pleased with him) reported that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) was asked about fasting on Monday, whereupon he said: It is (the day) when I was born and revelation was sent down to me (Siddiqui, 2009).

By using these two explanations of the Qur'ān and hadīth, Habib Munzir concluded that celebrating the birthday of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was allowed (Majelis Rasulullah, 2012). In this regard, he was trying to tackle the *maulid* criticism of the reformists and the Salafis.

Moreover, Habib Munzir frequently invited his followers to religious rituals that have been preserved by the Bā 'Alawi until today, such as the visitation of gravesites and the *maulid* celebration. Majelis Rasulullah's

own *maulid* celebration is relatively large and attracts many people. Howell and Zamhari (2012) described the program as taking Sufism to the streets or 'street Sufism'. It is described as such because the *maulid* celebration of Majelis Rasulullah would block off streets in order to create more space for the event to be held. On its official YouTube channel, Majelis Rasulullah can be seen celebrating the *maulid* by reciting the *maulid* book of *Dhiyamul Lami'*, which was written by Habib Umar. Its *maulid* program consists of the full recitation of this *maulid* book, which is accompanied by the musical percussion group *banjari* (Majelis Rasulullah, 2013). However, even though there are other branches of Majelis Rasulullah outside the province of Jakarta, it seems that the *maulid* performance only covers the area of Greater Jakarta.

Another distinctive feature of Habib Munzir (as well as other Bā 'Alawi in Indonesia) is the *dakwah* for defending *aswaja (ahl sunnah wal jam'ah)*. Aswaja is a Sunni traditionalist version of Indonesia, one that is particularly used by Nahdlatul Ulama (N.U.). According to the organization, *aswaja* is defined based on three characteristics: in Islamic theology, they follow al-Ash'ari (d. 936) and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (d. 944); in Islamic law they adopt one of the four schools (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'ī, or Hanbali), and in Sufism, they apprehend the schools of al-Junaid al-Baghdadi (d. 910) and al- Ghazali (d. 1111). The term *aswaja* is used by the Bā 'Alawi (as well as N.U. members) to differentiate themselves from the reformist Muslims, especially the Salafis (Rijal, 2016). Defending *aswaja* for the Bā 'Alawi means opposing the

Salafis because, according to the Salafis, the Islamic theology of Asy'ariyah and Sufism deviates from the teaching of the first three generations of Muslims *(al-salaf al-sālih)* (al-Munajjid, *2009, 2014)*.

Habib Munzir's stance on *aswaja* can be found on the website of Majelis Rasulullah, which displays his statement after a man's question regarding guidance on how to strengthen his belief in aswaja theology. Pertaining to this question, Habib Munzir recommended the man to read his book on Islamic theology, which can be downloaded from the website (Majelis Rasulullah, 2010). Habib Munzir states that *aswaja* in Islamic theology refers to *takwil* (allegorical interpretation)*.* According to him, this interpretation is better when compared to another school of *tafwid* (relegation of matter to God). According to Munzir, the former is followed both by Imam Shafi'ī and Imam Bukhari (Al-Musawa, 2009). Furthermore, this *aswaja* rhetoric is widely used by Habib Munzir and Habib Umar, his students, and almost all Bā 'Alawis in Indonesia.

After Habib Munzir passed away in 2013, Majelis Rasulullah carried on his legacy by practicing the *maulid* celebration, which has continued until today by his brothers and other Bā 'Alawis in Jakarta. Habib Munzir and other Bā 'Alawi activities in Jakarta (for instance Majelis Nurul Mustofa and Al-Fachriyah Foundation) show how Bā 'Alawi preachers moved to revive religious activities after 2000, especially after the re-establishing ties with Yemen (Alatas, 2009; Al-Fachriyah, 2014; Rijal, 2016). In addition to that, they are actively working to promote the *maulid* celebration and defending this practice through their 'street Sufism' and online preaching.

Besides Jakarta, there are other Bā 'Alawi preachers elsewhere in Indonesia who revitalized their traditionalist rituals. Assuredly, this revival owes a debt of gratitude to the role of Habib Anis bin 'Alwi al-Ḥabashī of Surakarta, who suggested for Indonesia to reconnect with Hadhramaut. In his hometown Surakarta, Habib Anis is known for his efforts to preserve the *maulid* from the 1970s, as well as for inspiring the new style of *maulid* within popular culture in the 21st century. In the following section, I will discuss the *maulid* celebration in Surakarta, especially within the Bā 'Alawi community, whose practices were shaped by and inherited from Habib Anis bin 'Alwi al-Ḥabashī.

E. Hadhrami and the *Maulid* Celebration in Surakarta

Surakarta or commonly called Solo is a municipality that is located in the province of Central Java. It was the capital of *Karesidenan (regentschappen)* Solo, which consisted of seven cities: Boyolali, Karanganyar, Klaten, Sragen, Sukoharjo, Surakarta, and Wonogiri. Today, these cities are called Solo Raya (Greater Solo). The municipality of Surakarta has five sub-districts *(kecamatan)*: Banjarsari, Laweyan, Jebres, Pasar Kliwon and Serengan) and 51 villages *(kelurahan)*. The culture of the city is a mixture of traditional Javanese and Islamic. This is due to the existence of the Islamic Mataram kingdom that was founded in the 16th century. Ricklef (2007) describes the culture of the city as Islamic with a strong influence of Javanese identity. In recent times, Surakarta is known for its image as the bulwark of Islamic radical groups (Wildan, 2009). This image stems from the fact that Islamic radicalism

has been on the rise in the city since 1998. This is represented by some groups such as Front Pemuda Islam Surakarta (FPIS, Muslim Youth Front of Surakarta), Laskar Jundullah, Laskar Hawariyun, Forum Umat Islam (FUI), Majelis Mujahidin (MMI), and Jamaah Anshorut Tauhid (Wildan, 2008). In this city, we can also find the *pondok pesantren* Ngruki, some of whose graduates were affiliated with terrorist groups in Indonesia. In addition to that, several institutions in this city are affiliated with the Salafis, including radio stations and Islamic boarding schools (Sunarwoto, 2015, 2016), as well as the Islamic reformist movement of Majelis Tafsir al-Qur'ān (Sunarwoto, 2012; Zuhri, 2013).

Regarding the Hadhramis (both Sayyid and non-Sayyid) in Surakarta, based on a statistic from 1885, there were an estimated 71 individuals of Hadhrami origin in Surakarta, three of which were born in Hadhramaut. The rest were born on the archipelago (L.W.C. van den Berg, 1989). The latest estimation of the number of Hadhramis in Surakarta was conducted in 2001, with the number of people amounting to 3.874 (Suhadi, 2014). The Bā 'Alawi mostly live in the sub-district of Pasar Kliwon. This area was designated for Arabs due to the Dutch policy of the quarter and pass systems *(wijkenstelsel and passenstelsel),* which required Arabs to reside in one area separated from the local people (de Jonge, 1997). There are four major sites in this sub-district at which the Bā 'Alawi community usually gathers and interacts. The first is the school of the Islamic Educational Foundation of Diponegoro (Yayasan Pendidikan Islam Diponegoro, YPID), which was established in 1928 by Bā 'Alawi figures who were involved in Rabitha' Alawiyah (YPID, 2012), the Jami Mosque of Assegaf, the Riyadh Mosque, and the Khoir Mosque. The last three sites are the places at which the *maulid* is celebrated.

Among the three mosques, it is only the Riyadh Mosque that holds *maulid* every week. The Jami Mosque of Assegaf holds *maulid* annually on the 12th of the month *Rabī' al-Awwal*, the date on which the Prophet (pbuh) is believed to be born, and the Khoir Mosque holds it informally at the house of the imam, not inside the mosque.

Unlike the Javanese, who usually recite the *maulid* book of *Barzanjī* or *Diba'i*, Bā 'Alawis in Surakarta (and elsewhere) recite the *maulid* book of *Simthud Durar*. This choice is related to the fact that this *maulid* book is written by one of the charismatic Bā 'Alawi scholars of the Hadhramaut in 1913, Habib 'Ali bin Muhammad al-Ḥabashī (d. 1915). During his life, Habib 'Ali had conducted the celebration of the Prophet's birthday every Thursday night in the Riyadh mosque in the city of Seiyun in Hadhramaut (Boxberger, 2002). By using a *maulid* book authored by other Bā 'Alawi scholars, the Bā 'Alawi community emphasizes their authority and connection to the Prophet (pbuh) (Alatas, 2009).

Regarding the transfer of the practice of reciting the *Simthud Durar* to Java, it was the students as well as the descendants of Habib 'Ali bin Muhammad al-Ḥabashī who brought this practice to the Dutch East Indies. One of them was Habib Muhammad bin Idrus al-Ḥabashī (d. 1917), a student of Habib 'Ali and the first person who introduced *Simthud Durar* in Indonesia. He began in Cirebon before later moving to Bogor. Shortly before the end of his life, he moved to Surabaya where he regularly recited the *maulid* book of *Simthud Durar* (Umar Mauladdawilah, 2008). After his death, Habib 'Ali bin Abdurrahman al-Ḥabashī (d. 1968), also known as Habib Kwitang, continued reciting *Simthud Durar* in Jakarta.

Habib 'Ali first carried out the *maulid* in the Jamiat Khair headquarters, but then the practice was moved to a mosque in the village of Kwitang, Central Jakarta. In this mosque, he started to organize annual *maulid* celebrations in 1918, which attracted thousands of participants, both from Bā 'Alawi and Javanese people (Alatas, 2011; Pijper, 1934). Although this *maulid* occasionally attracted thousands of people, it seems that many participants came due to Habib 'Ali's charisma.

Simthud Durar was brought to Surakarta by Habib 'Alwi bin 'Ali al-Ḥabashī (d. 1953), the son of its author. He had moved to the Dutch East Indies after the death of his father. At first, he resided in Jakarta before moving to Semarang and then later settling in Surakarta. In 1934, he built a mosque with supplementary buildings which functioned as stores and houses. He named the mosque Riyadh after the mosque in the city of Seiyun that was built by his father. As his father was well known for his *maulid* book, many Bā 'Alawi in the Dutch East Indies respected Habib 'Alwi.

Consequently, many people came to his mosque to celebrate the *maulid* or seek his blessing. He died in Palembang in 1953, but his body was transported back to Surakarta and buried at the site of the Riyadh Mosque. After the passing of Habib 'Alwi, the *maulid* in the Riyadh Mosque was continued by his son, Habib Anis bin 'Alwi al-Ḥabashī (d. 2006). It was under the influence of Habib Anis that *Simthud Durar* became gradually well-known among Muslims. Following the footsteps of his grandfather in the Hadhramaut, a weekly *maulid* was conducted every Thursday night. To commemorate the author of *Simthud Durar,* every month of *Rabī` al-Thānī* (the fourth month of the Islamic calendar), the Riyadh mosque holds the annual death commemoration

(haul) of Habib 'Ali. In this event, the *maulid* celebration is performed with the recitation of *Simthud Durar* (for a detailed account of this *haul,* see Alatas, 2014; Slama, 2011). In 2014, the municipality of Surakarta incorporated this program into an annual governmental program under the framework of the policy of Solo as "the city of *shalawat*."

Below, I will explain the *maulid* celebration performed in the Riyadh Mosque every Thursday night. The data was taken through fieldwork that was done in January and February 2018. The celebration itself starts around 6:00 pm (after the *maghrib* prayer), but some people often arrive at the mosque several hours in advance. Usually, they first visit the graves of Habib 'Alwi and Habib Anis (besides the mosque), where they pray for the deceased and seek divine *baraka* (blessing). Other than that, people rest on the floor inside the mosque and wait. Half an hour before Maghrib time, the mosque's front yard is already full of motorcycles of people who want to join the *maulid* celebration (Fieldnotes, 2018).

After the Maghrib prayer is finished, the *maulid* starts and is led by Habib Hasan bin Anis al-Ḥabashī (b. 1966). As the great-grandson of the author of *Simthud Durar*, many people, including the Bā 'Alawi, consider Habib Hasan the most authoritative person to lead the celebration. Imams of other Bā 'Alawi mosques (Assegaf and Al-Khoir) are often seen to attend the Riyadh Mosque to celebrate the *maulid*. Their participation shows the interconnectedness of the three Bā 'Alawi mosques, as well as the respect for the Riyadh Mosque as the center of the *maulid* activities in the city of Surakarta.

Before reciting *Simthud Durar,* Habib Hasan first reads the *tawassul* (Fieldnotes, 2018). By practicing *tawassul*, the

people believe that they can pray for the deceased and get a religious reward without being physically present near the deceased (Millie, 2009). After Habib Hasan recites all the names of the Bā 'Alawī' ulamā', he continues by reciting the first chapter of Al-Qur'ān *(al-fatihah),* which is then followed by a recitation by the participants. All the participants inside the mosque are men. Women were not seen to be present. However, according to one of my interlocutors, the female participants are located in a separate room so that the male participants could not see them (Personal communication with Mbah Soleh, 30 November 2018).

After the *tawassul,* the *Simthud Durar* is recited by Habib Hasan, together with several Bā 'Alawī who sit beside him and take turns in reciting the book. At this event, there are no Javanese who recite *Simthud Durar* along with the Bā 'Alawi. They only act as passive participants who listen and repeat some verses of the *Simthud Durar*. The book itself has 14 chapters. There are interludes after the imam has recited some chapters during which another person sings *qasidah* (Arabic poetry) (Fieldnotes, 2018).

When a person sings a *qasidah*, five *rebana* players accompany him. The instruments are not played every week. They are only used on the second and fourth Thursday nights of the month, while on the first and the third Thursday nights, the qasidah is sung without instruments. In terms of the number of participants, the *maulid* events with the *rebana* attract more participants than ones without. The *rebana* in the Riyadh Mosque uses the *banjari* style. It refers to the name of a city in Banjar, South Kalimantan, from which the style originated. The size of the *rebana banjari* is 30 cm. This

rebana style has been used in the Riyadh Mosque since the early 1980s. Before using *rebana banjari*, the *maulid* in the Riyadh mosque was only accompanied by two *duffs,* drums, which were brought from Yemen by Habib 'Alwi (Interview with Mbah Soleh, 15 January 2018).

After reciting Chapter 7 of the book, people stand up for the recitation of the chapter on *mahallul qiyām.* In this chapter, the leader and all the participants sing a text containing a poem expressing happiness for the birth of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). During the *qiyām*, one person passes around burning agarwood to the participants. The participants reach out their hands to the smoke of agarwood incense, and each of them wipes it to their faces. The incense of agarwood is commonly used among the Bā 'Alawi because it gives a sweet fragrance to the room. It is used not only in events like *maulid*, but also in their religious gatherings.

Moreover, one piece of bread and a glass of coffee with milk are distributed after the *qiyām*. One of the Hadhrami preachers then delivers a sermon for ten minutes with the topic of thankfulness to God. Following that, the recitation is continued and finished when all fourteen chapters are recited. Habib Ahmad closes the celebration by reciting a supplication. In total, the *maulid* lasts for almost two hours. The evening is ended by 'Isha prayer in congregation (Fieldnotes, 2018).

Apart from the weekly *maulid* celebration at the Riyadh Mosque, according to many Bā 'Alawis I encountered, the *maulid simthud durar* is performed at almost all big celebrations of the Bā 'Alawi, e.g., moving into a new house, animal sacrifice for a newborn baby *(aqiqah)*, marriage proposal, as well as a wedding ceremony. Among the events above, I had the chance to observe the *maulid* conducted during

the wedding ceremony of a Bā 'Alawi. In general, all of the above descriptions of the *maulid* in the Riyadh Mosque apply to the wedding ceremony of the Bā 'Alawi as well, including the fact that Habib Hasan leads it. The only difference is that in the *maulid* of the marriage event, the *qiyām* is followed by a marriage vow (Fieldnotes, 2018).

F. Conclusion

This article has described the arguments for and against the *maulid* celebration among Indonesian Hadhrami, both Sayyid and non-Sayyid. The former established the Jamiat Khair, while the latter established Al-Irsyad, who contested some religious rituals of the former, such as the *maulid* celebration. Al-Irsyad, who shared the view of other Islamic reformist organizations on the maulid, did not condemn the *maulid*, but was merely concerned about some of the practices within the celebration, especially the *qiyām*.

However, Al-Irsyad's stances shifted in the 21s century when Salafi figures infiltrated the organization and created a split within the group: the reformist of Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah and the Salafis of Perhimpunan Al-Irsyad. The main finding of this article has been that these two organizations have different religious stances on rituals, such as the *maulid* celebration. Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah preserved the stance of Ahmad Surkati to allow the celebration, while Perhimpunan Al-Irsyad gave a more strict opinion by stating that the *maulid* is *bid'a* and recommends its members and followers not to practice it.

Furthermore, the Bā 'Alawi community still maintains the *maulid* despite many criticisms, one of which comes from Al-Irsyad. The continuation of the *maulid* celebration is thanks

to the revival in the relationship between Indonesian Bā 'Alawī with their network in Yemen. One central figure was Habib Umar, who with many of his disciples preserved the *maulid*. One of them, Habib Munzir, took Sufism to the street and created a large *maulid* event that has attracted many people. Besides Habib Umar, Habib Anis of Solo also plays a special role in maintaining and inspiring other Bā 'Alawi to preserve their traditional practices, especially the *maulid* in Surakarta. As the grandson of the author of *Simthud Durar,* he successfully kept the ritual practices alive since the 1960s in the city.

For further research, more studies should be done on the *maulid* celebration held by the Bā 'Alawī community. As we have seen recently, popular preachers of the Bā 'Alawī use *maulid* as part of their *dakwah* strategy. Such preachers include Habib Syech bin Abdul Qadir Assegaf from Surakarta and his *shalawat* group of Ahbabul Mustofa, as well as Habib 'Ali Zainal Abidin with his group Al-Zāhir in Pekalongan. It is interesting to explore whether these groups preserve the old style of *maulid* or modify it to attract more participants to their religious gatherings.

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