

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.