

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, Qadiriyyah, Naqshabandiyah, Qadiriyyah wa Naqshabandiyah, and Shatariah, 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., *sharī'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 *sharī'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 Wāḥidiyat* group, was given by *Kyai Machrus Ali*, a prominent ‘*ulamā*’ with a Nahdlatul Ulama background, who regarded the *Ṣalawāt Wāḥidiyat* 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 *Wāḥidiyat* 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 *Wāḥidiyat* 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 *Wāḥidiyat* and the like as spiritualist and syncretic movements (*gerakan-gerakan kebatinan yang sinkretis*) which has eventually prompted several *tarekat*, such as Qadiriyyah, Naqshabandiyah and other mainstream *tarekat* to establish the NU-affiliated *Jam’iyyah Ahl al-Thariqah al-Mu’tabarrah* as an institution to disassociate themselves 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*).¹ 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 ‘*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*’. In other words, in order to attain the deepest level of spiritual experience (A., ‘*ḥaqq 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 ‘*ḥaqq 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'tabarrah*, 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 *The Encyclopaedia 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 Qadiriyyah 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 Qadiriyyah 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, Naqshabandiyah 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: Naqshabandiyah Khalidiyah, Naqshabandiyah Mazhariyah and Qadiriya wa Naqshabandiyah. Qadiriya wa Naqshabandiyah 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 Naqshabandiyah *tarekat* has attracted many followers in Central Java (Semarang, Girikusumo, Rembang, Blora, Banyumas, Purwokerto and Cirebon), the southern areas of East Java (Kediri, Blitar, Madiun, Magetan) and in Madura. It is important to note here that most of the leaders or *murshid* of Naqshabandiyah *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* Nawāwī Banten, *Shaikh* Maḥfūdh Termas and *Kyai* Kholil Bangkalan. *Kyai* Nawāwī was a student of *Shaikh* Ahmad Khātib 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 Qadiriyyah 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 Qadiriyyah 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 Qadiriyyah 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 Qadiriyyah wa Naqshabandiyah. Under the leadership of Abah Anom, Qadiriyyah 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 Qadiriyyah 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,

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 Indonesia 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* Qadiriyyah 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 Wāḥidiyat* 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-Risālat* and Al-Hujwiri (d.1082)(1997:43-55), in his book *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, 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-zāhir*)

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 *Ihyā'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 to approach 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 *Ṣalawātin* 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 voluntarily 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 ‘*ulamā*’. 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 Muḥammad Yūsuf al-Maqassārī (1037-1111/1627-99) the seventeenth century Malay Sufi, who affiliated himself with several *tarekat* such as Qadiriyyah, Kkhalwatiyyah and Naqshabandiyyah (Azra 1992:420-27). *Kyai* Abbas from *Pesantren* Buntet, Cirebon, can also be added in this category as a *Kyai* who joined two different *tarekat*, Shattariyyah and Tijaniyyah.

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 practising 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-Ḥaddād*, a prayer composed by a famous Hadrami Muslim saint, 'Abd 'Allah Ibn 'Alawī al-Ḥaddād (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 Yatama 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*, *tasbīḥ*, *taḥmīd*, *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.e., *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 Wāḥidiyat* 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 *Wāḥidiyat* is in the hands of *Kyai* Abdul Latif Madjid, the son of the founder, who acts as the guardian of the *Wāḥidiyat* and as the head of its foundation and organization. Among *tarekat* groups, *Wāḥidiyat* 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 *Istighāthat Iḥsāniyyat* is a relatively new 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 Wāḥidiyat* 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.e., *narkoba*), alcohol, ecstasy tablets, and opium (*sabu-sabu*).

Ihsāniyyat 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-Ghāfilīn* 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'īn* (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 Abū Ḥasan al-Ash'ārī and Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturidī, 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 *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid* written by Ibn al-Rushd, and *Subul al-Salām* written by al-Shan'ānī 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'iyyat 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'iyyat*). These criteria make clear that the teachings of the *tarekat* must conform to the Islamic Law (A., *sharī'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'iyyah* 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'iyyah* 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'iyat* 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*,⁶ 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'iyat* 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 1781-2,⁷ claimed that he received the *wird* for his *tarekat* from the Prophet when he was fully conscious and in active mind (A., *yaqdhāt*), 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*, *Ṣalawāt* 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)

6 This *tarekat* was established by *Kyai Mughtar 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'tabarrah* status of Tijaniyah has remained unshaken and it was one of forty six *tarekat mu'tabarrah* considered as *mu'tabarrah* 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'tabarrah* 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'tabarrah* 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 mafāsīd 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'tabarrah* 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

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* Qadiriyyah are attributed, died in 1166; a year later saw the death of Abd al-Qāhir al-Suhrawardī with whom *tarekat* Suhrawardiyah is associated; Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā, the founder of *tarekat* Kubrawiyyah and the key influential figure of the Naqshabandiyah order died in 1221; Ibn al-‘Arabī whose thoughts and teachings greatly influenced Malay Sufi thinking died in 1240; Abu al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī who originated from North Africa and established the Shadhiliyyah 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 ‘Arabī 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 Khātib Sambas (d.1875), *Shaikh* al-Nawāwī al-Bantānī al-Tanari (d. 1897), Mahfūd al-Tirmīsī (d.1919), Ahmad Rifā’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-Nawāwī al-Bantānī, *Shaikh* Akhmad Khātib Sambas and *Kyai* Mahfūdz al-Tirmīsī, 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 *sharī'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 Ḥaram 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 *Waḥdat 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 *Wujudiyah* 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 (Dhofier 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 *Waḥdat 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 (*akhlāq*). 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 *akhlāq* (Islamic ethics) and sometimes it is hard to distinguish the teachings on *akhlāq* 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 *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Āl-Dīn, Minhāj al-‘Ābidīn* and *Bidāyat al-Hidāyat* (excerpted from his *Ihyā’*) (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 *Ihyā’*. In most *pesantren*, *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Āl-Dīn* holds high rank. It is seen as the final stage of an intellectual journey that involves 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 to 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 *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn, Minhāj al-'Ābidīn* and *Bidāyat al-Hidāyat*.