

Chapter II: Innovation or Aberration: *Majlis Dhikr* in Contemporary Indonesian Islamic Discourse

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

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

1 As Bruinessen observed, Ahmad Khatib (1852-1915), a West Sumatra Muslim scholar who spent his life in Mecca, was an outspoken critic of Naqshabandiyah. He and other West Sumatran reformers vigorously charged the teachings of *tarekat* and its practices with misleading *bid'ah* and heresy. From 1906 to 1908 he wrote three polemical treatises about Naqshabandiyah which have been used as the main references for subsequent debates and criticism toward the group. Those three writings include '*Izhāru Zaghī al-Kādhībīn fī Tashabbuhihim bi al-Shādiqīn*' ('Revealing the falseness of the deceivers who wear the mask of truth'), '*Al-Āyāt al-Bayyināt li al-Munsifīn fī Izāla Khurafāt ba'dh al-Muta'assibīn*' ('The true evidence of virtuous persons for eradicating the superstition of the fanatics'), and '*Al-Asāif al-Battār fī Maḥqī Kalimāti Ba'dl Ahl-al-Ightrār*' ('The cutting sword that fights the words of the arrogant') (Bruinessen 1994: 110-13).⁷

2.1. Source of Disputes: Understanding the Concept of *Bid'ah* (innovation within Islam) within Indonesian Islam

Polemical debates on theological matters have become a general phenomenon among Muslims around the world, including in Indonesia. For those who are familiar with the history of Islamic thought in Indonesia, polemical debates on religious matters have characterized Indonesian Islamic thought from the formative centuries of the coming of Islam to the present.² The root of these polemical debates is mainly on the question of orthodoxy and authenticity in Islam. This includes the question of whether particular religious practices can be categorized as a part of Islamic orthodoxy or whether they can be considered as new practices in Islam, which have no sanction either in the Qur'an or hadith, leading their performers to be labeled with misguidance.

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

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

2 The 16th and the 17th centuries were seen as periods when disputes in Sufism among Malay Muslim scholars occurred in the Islamic Malay world. The ideas of philosophical Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī introduced by Hamzah Fansuri (d. 1590) and his student Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī (1575-1630) which had been prevalent in Aceh for a century were challenged by the orthodox notions of Nur al-Dīn al-Ranirī. The views of Hamzah and Sumatrānī were subject to accusations of heresy by al-Ranirī (Azra 1992:379).

by Indonesian Muslims for centuries. Throughout the twentieth century, the vehement rejection of Sufi practices among reformist groups represented by Muhammadiyah spread widely. In line with their idea of purification, Muslim reformist groups saw in Sufism a toleration of local idolatry, the excessive veneration of a spiritual master, and a hierarchical structure which led to deviation from devotion to the Oneness of God (I., *tauhid*). According to them, all of these practices had no sanction either in the Qur'an and hadith. These reformist groups regarded Sufism as 'the Islam that is not Islam' (I., *Islam yang bukan Islam*) (Howell 2001:706).

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

3 Along with the idea of accommodation of spiritual Islam, it was in this Congress that Muhammadiyah realized the importance of implementing the strategy of *Dakwah Kultural* (cultural Islamic preaching). This strategy was officially enforced in the subsequent Congress in 2000 in Jakarta and in the *Sidang Tanwir* Muhammadiyah in Denpasar January, the 24th- 25th 2002 . This strategy was taken by Muhammadiyah because the puritanical *dakwah* strategy that has been applied by Muhammadiyah preachers since its inception did not accommodate the Indonesian traditional culture and its positive values (Tanthowi 2003:131-32).

In contrast, PERSIS seems to have retained its trademark as the Islamic organization which has consistently stressed the importance of puritanical Islamic *dakwah*. PERSIS, which has been known as the most radical of Islamic organizations in its rejection of spirit beliefs, *adat* rituals and traditional Muslim practices with no sound basis in the Qur'an and hadith, propagated its views under the theme of purifying belief, worship, and ethics (I., *Islahul Akidah, Ibadah, and Akhlak*). Moreover, as argued by Shiddiq Amien, the chairman of PERSIS, currently, the biggest challenge of its *dakwah* project is concerned with the spread of superstition (*tahayyul*), illicit innovation within Islam (I., *bid'ah*) and myths (*khurafat*), often shortened to TBC (which stands for 'tuberculosis') but also concerned with SIPILIS (Indonesian term for 'syphilis') which stands for secularism (I., *sekularisme*), pluralism (I., *pluralisme*) and liberalism (I., *liberalisme*). The SIPILIS is regarded by PERSIS as an ideology that has degraded the truth of Islam as a divine religion since PERSIS claims that its proponents regard all religions as equal (Amien 2005).

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

There is no doubt that the spread of the world wide Salafi movement has been inspired ideologically by the most puritanical Islamic sect, Wahabbism, developed by Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb (1703-1792). The aim of the Wahabi movement has been to fight the superstitions and Sufi devotional practices prevalent in Arab society, which are considered as misleading *bid'ah*, as well as to attack un-Islamic behaviour by Muslims. Although Wahabbism was distinguished from Salafism in older academic discourse, contemporary Salafism can be seen as reorganised Wahabbism since its opponents invariably refer to the thoughts formulated by Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim al-Jauzī (1292-1350) and Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb and rely on contemporary Wahabbist '*ulamā*' such as 'Abd al-'Aziz 'Abd Allah bin Baz (d.1999) and Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albani (Fadl 2005:74; Noorhaidi 2005:24-25). According to Fadl the word Salafi, however, did not become associated with the

Wahabbism creed until the 1970s. The word Salaf initially means predecessors, but in this context, Salaf usually refers to the period of the Prophet, his Companions, and their successors. The word Salafi means people who follow the Salaf. This word can also connote authenticity and legitimacy. Therefore, any religious movement that claims authenticity in Islam may easily exploit the term for its purposes (Fadl 2005:75).

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

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

4 The Masyumi party was the biggest Islamic party in Indonesia. In 1960, Soekarno banned the party because some of its activists were involved in the PRRI (regional rebellion) against him.

including *zuhud* (asceticism), *wasīlat* (reliance on an intermediary), *rabīṭa* (one's heart's connection with a Sufi master), and *'uzla* (withdrawing from society) are not found in the Islamic teachings (Jaiz 1999:132).

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

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

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

The first group defines *bid'ah* as innovation or creation of something which has no precedent. Based on this definition, every innovation or creation in religious matters that has no precedent during the lifetime of the Prophet can be regarded as *bid'ah*, regardless of whether it is good or bad. This definition is justified by the fact that the derivatives of root *b-d-'* are often used to signify either

good or bad things. Therefore, with this definition, Imam Shāfiʿī, the founder of Shāfiʿite school of Islamic law, argued that there are two kinds of innovation in religious matters. The first one is the innovation which contradicts the teaching of the Qurʾan, the example of the Prophet, His Companions and Successors, or the consensus of Muslims scholars; this is illicit and objectionable *bidʿah*. The second one is the innovation in religious matters which is not evil in itself and does not contradict those authorities and may be good or praiseworthy (Fierro 1992:205-06). ʿIz al-Dīn Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām (d.660/1262), a prominent scholar of Shafiʿite school, came to distinguish *bidʿah* according to five legal norms depending on whether or not it violated a revealed text, a judiciary consensus or a Companion’s report (A., *athar*) (Hallaq 2001:536-537). These categories include 1) mandatory innovation (A., *bidʿah wājiba*), 2) prohibited innovation (A., *bidʿah muḥarrama*), 3) recommended innovation (A., *bidʿah mandūba*), 4) reprehensible innovation (A., *bidʿah makrūha*), and 5) permissible innovation (A., *bidʿah mubāḥa*) (Rispler 1991:324)

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

The Indonesian Salafi group follows this second group in defining their concept of *bidʿah*. Therefore, for this group, every new practice in religious matters which is not sanctioned by the Qurʾan, hadith and juridical consensus among Muslim scholars can be categorized as illicit innovation. Following Ibn Taymiyyah’s view, they argue that every good innovation in worship which does not have clear evidence (A., *adillat*) is unlawful (Jahar 1999:46). Their definition of *bidʿah* is based on the belief that Islam is a perfect religion. For them, the perfection of Islam as religion can be conceived from the fact that Islam regulates not only major matters but also small matters such as the ethics of entering a toilet or a house. Because of this perfection, they believe that Islam has already explained everything in all matters of worship including its ways, forms and conditions (Amsaka 2003:36). In order to prove the perfection

of Islam, like previous Muslim reformist groups, the Indonesian Salafi cite the Qur'anic verse (5:3), 'This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.' For the Salafi, this verse is evidence of the perfection of Islam. Therefore, based on this verse, Islam does not need any accretions in the matters of worship because it has been completely prescribed in the Qur'an and hadith and at the same time there is no need for reduction in the matters of worship. Further, the Salafi argue that those who add new ritual practices in the matters of worship are like those who do not only believe that God has completed Islam as a religion but also believed that the Prophet has not completely delivered the message of God to his people (Amsaka 2003:32).

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

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

The view of the Salafi group on the matter of worship becomes, however, problematic when it is used to explain the case of *zakat* from personal income (I., *zakat profesi*, wealth tax), which is currently widely practised among Muslims worldwide. The practice of *zakat* from personal income (I., *zakat profesi*) is categorized as a matter of worship (I., *ibadah*) but was never practised as such during the lifetime of the Prophet and His Companions. Since there can be no

addition or reduction in the matter of *ibadah*, *zakat profesi* can be categorized as *bid'ah* according to the definition held by the Salafi. Yet despite its innovation, almost all Muslims agree to practise *zakat profesi*. No one will argue that those who practise *zakat profesi* should be cast into hellfire because they have conducted *bid'ah* in worship.

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

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

The category of *bid'ah* used by the proponents of *Majlis Dhikr* follows the ideas proposed by the great legal scholars, Imām Shāfi'ī (d.204/819), Abū Zakaria Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf al-Nawāwī (d.676/1277), Abd al-Haqq al-Dahlawī. In the view of Badruzzaman, one of proponents of *Majlis Dhikr*, the categorization of *bid'ah* proposed by Imam Shāfi'ī stems from his deep understanding of one of the

authoritative hadith. The hadith attributed to Prophet's Companion, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, reported that when he asked Muslims to perform prayers in unison during the last nights of *Ramaḍān* (A., *qiyām al-layālī Ramaḍān*) something that had never been done by the Prophet during his lifetime. 'Umar noted that this practice as favourable *bid'ah* (A., *ni'mat al-bid'a hādhihi*). According to the proponents of *Majlis Dhikr*, it can be inferred from this statement that 'Umar admitted that some *bid'ah* are favourable and some are not. Based on 'Umar's saying, Imām Shāfi'ī held the opinion that new practices can be categorized as praiseworthy (A., *bid'ah maḥmuda*) (Badruzzaman 2003: 39-40).

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

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

In addition, the proponents of *Majlis Dhikr* also refer to the view of 'Iz al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Salām (d.660/1262) who classified *bid'ah* according to a legal classification on a scale from one to five: 1) mandatory innovation (A., *bid'ah wājibat*), 2) prohibited innovation (A., *bid'ah muḥarramat*), 3) recommended innovation (A., *bid'ah mandūbat*), 4) reprehensible innovation (A., *bid'ah makrūhat*), and 5) permissible innovation (A., *bid'ah mubāḥa*). In other words, new practices should be weighed in the light of these five principles. In this case, if practices can be considered as recommended innovation, they can be practised by Muslims and cannot be considered as *bid'ah* in its negative sense. In contrast, if these new practices are categorised as prohibited innovation, Muslim are prohibited to practise them and as result, this innovation can be considered as negative. Therefore, for the proponents of *Majlis Dhikr*, based on these categories, the practice of reciting vocal *dhikr* in unison cannot be categorized as *bid'ah* in its negative sense because it is sanctioned by the

Qur'an and hadith (Badruzzaman 2003:42-43). This ritual practice might fall to the categorization of recommended innovation or even mandatory innovation as proposed by 'Iz al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Salām.

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

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

2.2. Theological Debates on *Dhikr* Ritual

The strong criticism put forward by Indonesian Salafi has mainly been addressed to the reciting of vocal *dhikr* ritual in unison (I., *berjamaah*) conducted by *Majlis Dhikr* groups in urban areas, especially in Jakarta. Currently, the growth of these groups is apparent in the Indonesian capital city. Among these groups, one of the best known are the *Majlis Dhikr* group *Al-Zikrah* led by Arifin Ilham,

the *Dhikr* healing group (I., *Majlis Dhikr Penyembuhan*) established by Ustadz Haryono, and *Manajemen Qalbu* guided by the popular Indonesian preacher, Abdullah Gymnastiar, known as AA Gym (Watson 2005:776).

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

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

In regard to the Arifin Ilham's *Majlis Dhikr* group, Abu Amsaka, one of the outspoken proponents of Indonesian Salafi group wrote a book entitled *Koreksi Dzikir Jama'ah M. Arifin Ilham* (Correction of M. Arifin Ilham's *Dzikir* in Unison). In fact, this book is aimed at responding to two books, the one entitled, '*Hikmah Dzikir Berjamaah* (The Benefit of Reciting *Dzikir* in Unison) written by M. Arifin Ilham and Debby M. Nasution, and the other, *Hakikat Dzikir, Jalan Taat Menuju Allah, Rahasia dan Kiat-kiat Mensucikan Jiwa dalam Upaya Meraih Hidup Bermakna* (The Essence of *Dhikr*, The Way of Obedience Toward Allah, Secrets and Methods to Purify the Soul in an Effort to Achieve a Meaningful Life) written by M. Arifin Ilham. Like Mukaffi's book, Amsaka's book is also published by Darul Falah. Like al-Mukaffi, Abu Amsaka rejects all ritual practised by Arifin Ilham and his group. Without conducting research on the activities of the group, the author personally accuses Arifin Ilham of using his group as a means to run his business and to achieve material interests

(Amsaka 2003:51-52). Abu Amsaka is convinced that the ritual of *Majlis Dhikr* conducted by Arifin Ilham and his group has no strong legal basis so that it can be considered *bid'ah* that should not be practised by good Muslims.

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

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

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

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

of the Qur'an which according to him can be used to cast doubt on the ritual conducted by Arifin Ilham. For instance, Abu Amsaka cites the specific verses on the ethics of prayer and *dhikr* as follows,

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

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

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

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

Moreover, Abu Amsaka criticizes Arifin Ilham who relies heavily on hadith rather than relying on the Qur'an to support his argument on the permissibility of performing vocal *dhikr* ritual in unison. In his book, Arifin Ilham uses the hadith attributed to one of the Prophet's Companions, Ibn 'Abbās, to support his vocal *dhikr* ritual (I., *dengan bersuara*). The hadith is as follows:

‘Ibn ‘Abbās said that in the time of the Prophet people recited vocal *dhikr* after prayers. He also said, ‘I knew that they have finished prayers because I heard their voice of *dhikr* (narrated by Bukhari and Muslim).

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

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

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

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

Abu Amsaka argues that instead of urging Muslims to observe virtues openly, Islam gives emphasis to the merit of concealing virtues from others' sight. For Amsaka, concealing one's virtues is a necessary condition to allow Muslims to become sincere (I., *ikhlas*) (Amsaka 2003:169).

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

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

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

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

5 Hal ini dapat dimaklumi, terutama dari pertimbangan market dan bisnis, bagaimana kiat yang jitu untuk mendongkrak produk agar dapat mudah diterima konsumen, menyebar luas, dibeli lalu tinggal menunggu berapa keuntungan yang masuk kantong. Inilah dunia bisnis, dunia untuk mencari keuntungan.

Another strong Salafi criticism of Arifin Ilham's *dhikr* ritual has to do with the weeping that occurs during the *dhikr* ritual. As far as this weeping is concerned, Abu Amsaka divides weeping into two categories. The first category is the weeping sanctioned by God which leads to an increase in the fear of God and the gentleness of heart, but not weeping which is intended for showing off to please others. The second category is pretentious weeping that is performed for the sake of gaining interest from other people (Amsaka 2003:187). In this regard, Abu Amsaka does not directly accuse Arifin Ilham and his group of performing pretentious crying. However, before judging the crying performed by Arifin Ilham and his group, Abu Amsaka gives the example of his friend who stopped weeping when he gave Friday sermons because he fear showing off to others. By comparison, Abu Amsaka adds, weeping shown during Arifin Ilham's *dhikr* ritual is intentionally conducted from the beginning of the ritual until the ritual concludes without any attempt made to stop it (Amsaka 2003:209). From the comparison Abu Amsaka makes, it can be inferred that he categorizes weeping in the *dhikr* ritual as pretentious crying rather than crying to increase a sense of the fear of God.

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

Unlike Abu Amsaka who sharply criticizes Arifin Ilham, Badruzzaman calmly cites several arguments taken from the Qur'an, hadith, and from the views of Muslim scholars to support his belief in the permissibility of reciting *dhikr*

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

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

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

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

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

In addition to Qur'anic verses and hadith, Badruzzaman also cites the views of well-known Muslim scholars about the permissibility of practising *dhikr* in unison. It is interesting to note here that Badruzzaman not only quotes the views of classical Muslim jurists and scholars but also quotes modern Muslim

scholars on this matter. He, for instance, refers to Sayyid Sābiq, the Egyptian Muslim scholar and Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy, the Indonesian ‘reformist’ Muslim scholar who frequently criticizes religious rituals practised by ‘traditionalist’ Indonesian Muslims and who promotes pristine Islamic ritual in all of his books. As cited by Badruzzaman, Sayyid Sābiq argues that the Prophet recommended his followers to sit in *dhikr* gatherings (I., *majlis dhikr*). Similarly, Ash-Shiddieqy points out that it was desirable (I., *sangat disukai*) to hold gatherings (*halaqa-halaqa*) to recite *dhikr* and to make people accustomed to the recitation of *dhikr* in these gatherings (Badruzzaman 2003:70-71). It is likely that Badruzzaman quotes these two scholars intentionally to show that such scholars, to whom most modernist Indonesian Muslims generally refer, consider the recitation of *dhikr* in unison as recommended ritual.

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

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

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

According to Badruzzaman, even though the verse mentioned above is particularly related to *dhikr* ritual conducted after performing the pilgrimage, nevertheless the meaning of the verse is not confined to the ritual during pilgrimage. In other words, the meaning of the verse can also be considered in a general context because the text used in the verse is general such as *fadhkurū Allāh*(you should recite *dhikr* by mentioning the name of God). In this regard, Badruzzaman bases his argument on the Islamic legal theory that ‘the fundamental guide is the universality of text, not the particularity of text’ (A., *al-Ibra bi umūm al-lafẓi lā biḥusūs al-sabāb*). With this theory, Badruzzaman argues that reciting *dhikr* with a raised voice is not only recommended for those who perform pilgrimage ritual (I., *ibadah haji*) but also recommended for those who do not perform pilgrimage ritual (Badruzzaman 2003:83). Apart from the verse, Badruzzaman also presents the argument taken from a hadith

as explanation of the universality of the verse. In this regard, he uses the hadith attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās who heard the Prophet recite *dhikr* after prayers. This hadith, Badruzzaman adds, indicates that the Prophet used to recite vocal *dhikr* at that time so that Ibn Abbas could hear it. It is based on this hadith that several Muslim jurists such as Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani (d. 852/1448) and Abu Zakariya Yahya ibn Sharaf al-Nawawi (w. 676/1277) considered the reciting *dhikr* with a voice as recommended practice (Badruzzaman 2003:84).

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

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

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

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

Like Amsaka, Badruzzaman uses an authoritative exegesis to interpret the verse. In this case, he quotes Ibn Kathir (d. 774/1372) arguing that the word *without loudness in words* means that it is recommended to recite *dhikr* without shouting and with using an extremely loud voice. Based on this interpretation,

Badruzzaman points out that basically reciting vocal *dhikr* is recommended, and hence, there is no contradiction between the Qur'anic verse and hadith. Rather than prohibiting Muslims from reciting vocal *dhikr*, this verse, according to Badruzzaman only prohibits them from reciting *dhikr* in an extremely loud fashion (Badruzzaman 2003:90).

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

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

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

Unlike Badruzzaman, Satori in his book, *Koreksi Zikir Keblinger, Kearifan Menilai Zikir Berjamaah dan Berbisnis M. Arifin Ilham* (The Correction of Confusing *Zikir*, The Wisdom of Valuing *Zikir* in Unison and The Business of M. Arifin Ilham) focuses on criticizing Abu Amsaka's views. Like Badruzzaman,

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

2.3. Conclusion

It is clear that the difference in the views regarding ritual practice between the Indonesian Salafi and the proponents of *Majlis Dhikr* can be traced back to their different interpretation of the concept of *bid'ah*. The Salafi believed that all rituals categorized as *bid'ah* should be considered to be misleading and their perpetrators should not be tolerated. For them, in order to be good Muslims, it is essential to avoid such *bid'ah* in worship (I., *ibadah*). In this regard, efforts should be made to purify Muslims from this *bid'ah* as part of *dakwah* which is strongly recommended by Islam (Al-Mukaffi 2003:xxvi). With this belief, the Salafi regard the practice of reciting vocal *dhikr* in unison as misleading *bid'ah* but also consider that its performers should be brought to the right path and to authentic Islamic teachings (Al-Mukaffi 2003:x). In contrast, the proponents of *Majlis Dhikr* believed that their vocal *dhikr* ritual in unison has a strong basis both in the Qur'an and hadith. For that reason, such ritual cannot be considered *bid'ah* because its theological basis can be found in both sources of Islamic conduct. For the proponents of *Majlis Dhikr*, rituals can be considered *bid'ah*, if the Qur'an, hadith, the practices of Prophet's Companions, and the consensus

of Muslim scholars (I., *ulama*) neither support nor mention these rituals. In this context, the consensus of Muslim scholars also derives from their use of *ijtihad*, which is strongly supported by the Prophet.

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