

## CHAPTER SIX

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### Concluding Remarks

This study has contained two sections. In Part One, Chapters One to Three, we observed that the exclusiveness of the Sayyid community of Cikoang, South Sulawesi is directly derived from the interplay between religious and social constructions. The religious legitimacy of the Sayyid is based on their descent from Sayyid Jalaluddin al-'Aidid in the early 17th century. His origins trace back to the Prophet Muhammad. It is this principle of descent which justifies the religious authority of the Sayyid over the Jawi and other non-Sayyid Makassarese. Strictly speaking, it is broadly held that for anyone to discard the theological decisions of the Sayyid is tantamount to rejecting the teachings of the Prophet himself: to dispute with the Sayyid is improper and to hate them is wrong.

Interestingly, given this obvious prestige, the Sayyid not only eclipse the Jawi in terms of religion but also in realms economic and political. The Sayyid are said to have dominated the election of village heads in the area over decades, particularly in Cikoang itself. The Sayyid are also among the major employers of the local people; the evidence for this can be easily found in Cikoang, Ujung Pandang and Jakarta.

It is the valuing of descent which underlies the Sayyid practice of *kafa'ah* in choosing marriage matches. To keep the bloodlines pure, they protect their daughters from marrying non-Sayyid men, in the knowledge that such marriages would disjoint their ties with the Prophet and lead to a state of impurity. The reverse principle does not apply to sons. Since it is through them that Sayyid status passes, they are freer in their choice of brides.

In Part Two of this study, Chapters Four and Five, the religious debate between conservative Cikoangese and the Muhammadiyah movement was discussed. Arguments originally derived from the question of who is right and wrong in their Islamic practices. Those who side with the unchanged practices of the past are labelled 'traditionalists' and those who stand for reform are called 'modernists'.

Many Indonesianists believe that religion in Indonesia has today become susceptible to ideals of literacy, nationalism and modernity. Those who follow local beliefs and customs may be considered to be people who 'do not yet have a religion' (In. *belum beragama*) or at least do not practise a complete implementation of their chosen faith. Waterson (1989) has observed a strong pressure for traditional beliefs to be redefined within the terms of the world religions, or for drawing a clear line of demarcation between local traditions and the 'proper' practice of the embraced religion.

On the other hand, the government must curb sentiments of extremism—especially Islamic extremism – while precluding any condemnation of 'over-secularising' the Indonesian people. This range of religious phenomena demonstrates the variety of manifestations of the world religions in Indonesia, within which Islam might have been seen to exist merely as a 'layer' superimposed on top of earlier traditions (Waterson 1989: 115). Under this paradigm the superimposition of, or juxtaposition between, Islam and local practice becomes evident in many parts of the Indonesian archipelago.

Many Indonesianists, both Indonesian and non-Indonesian, have explored the dynamic aspects of religions in modern Indonesia. The world religions are often viewed as transformations of each other or of other cultural domains (In. *adat*) (see Geertz 1960, 1984; and Woodward 1989 for Java; Abdullah 1966 for Minangkabau; Pelras 1985 for Makassar; and Kipp and Rodgers 1987). In other words, many Indonesian people would seem to profess syncretic beliefs.

Pelras (1985) regards such syncretic beliefs among the Makassarese to be the result of the penetration of Islam into local tradition, or *adat*, during the earliest period of its expansion. The current dispute regarding 'proper' Islamic practices between traditionalists and modernists in the religious arena of Cikoang is to be seen in this light. The tendency of Muslims in the 'periphery' to perpetuate their Islamic conduct, which they see as partner to their local tradition, is confronted by the modernists who insist upon the implementation of more orthodox practices.

The modernists maintain that the Cikoangese Muslims carry out their Islamic duties while still adhering to their local customs. They see the traditionalist practices as *bid'ah*, or heretical innovation. For instance, the traditionalist

Cikoangese hold that the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birth is the main tenet of their Islam on the grounds that the Prophet and Allah are one in mystical terms. They give precedence to the veneration of the Prophet and of their Sufi masters, the *anrongguru*, above any other observance.

This is obvious during the Maudu' festival, which the Cikoangese believe is the time of obtaining *barakka* (Mak.; Ar. *barakah*; In. *berkah*) or Allah's blessing through the spirit of the Prophet. They also regularly visit the graves of their ancestors, bringing flowers and other offerings and burning incense to request *washilah* (Ar.; In. *perantaraan*), intermediary action or intercession in order to obtain blessings from Allah. This custom of visiting graves is mostly directed not towards spiritual communion but towards requests for prosperity and good fortune for themselves.

There are wider perspectives to all of this. Such visitations, or *ziarah*, are undertaken throughout the Muslim world, from Morocco to Indonesia, where the tombs of the saints are believed to be places to gain Allah's blessing (Woodward 1989: 68–69). Makruf (1995) identifies this visiting of a sacred tomb in the Javanese context as a way of linking one's 'intellectual chain' to the holy saints, for example, the Wali who brought Islam to Java. Makruf explains that in Javanese *nyekar* ('to strew flowers') is a synonym for *ziarah*, as is the term *sowan*, but this is more correctly understood as the visiting of a living person of higher social status in consultation of some matter. Makruf differentiates *ziarah* from *nyekar* and *sowan*: *ziarah* is carried out with the hope of gaining *barakah* through the mediation of the Wali, while *nyekar* and *sowan* indicate more material intentions. In Cikoang the practice of *ziarah* and the Pattumateang, or the ritual prayers for the dead, are other main issues of dispute between traditionalists and modernists.

Within the viewpoint of the modernists, Islam has to be purified from all pagan practices, such as any kind of veneration of the ancestors in asking Allah's blessings. These practices go against the authority of Allah as the only supernatural being to whom human beings should ask for reward, they maintain, and Islam discourages the use of *washilah* to importune Allah. The modernists view the practices of the Muslims in Cikoang as being nothing less than *shirk* or *musyrik* (Ar.; polytheism, the fundamental sin of associating other supernaturalities beside Allah). The modernists' point of view is undoubtedly based on the Qur'an itself, Surah *al-Ikhlās* (Sincerity) verse 112, which reads in its entirety:

Say: He is God, the One. God, the Eternal.  
He begot not nor was He begotten.  
And there is none comparable beside Him.

This short Surah is frequently recited in worship. It is the fundamental statement of the oneness of Allah and it brings the Muslims of Cikoang onto the horns of a dilemma: whether to follow the modernists' version of a 'pure' Shariah implementation of Islam, or to perpetuate their own practices associated with Sufi doctrines and local usages.

The argument is unsurprisingly not limited to the Cikoangese. We can find similar cases throughout the Indonesian archipelago, such as among the Minangkabau of West Sumatra.<sup>1</sup> Many Muslim scholars have weighed into the dispute between modernists and traditionalists. For instance, the famous *ulama* Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, popularly known as 'Buya' Hamka, adopted his father's solution regarding the local traditions of Minangkabau. Hamka is one of the modernist figures of Indonesia who has tended not to fight all traditional values, as many others did. One of Buya Hamka's (1984: 105–106) remarks is expressed in the following poem of the relationship between Syari'at, Islamic law, and *adat*, or local custom:

*Adat bersendi Syara'  
Syara' bersendi Kitabullah  
Syara' mengata, Adat memakai  
Syara' bertelanjang, Adat bersesamping  
Adat menurun, Syara' menaik*

Custom is based on the Law  
The Law is based on the Qur'an  
The Law states, Custom applies  
The Law is bare, Custom is well-clothed  
Custom descends, the Law rises above

This poem affirms that *adat* and Syari'at are closely related, as in the union of milk and water, rather than opposed entities. Indonesianists agree that *adat* and Syari'at have coexisted since Islam first put down its roots in the Minangkabau region. The thought here is that Syari'at is on the rise, steadily making clearer what is practised. But the verse bears no explicit markers of time, making it susceptible to the reading of a never-ending process in which Islam will continuously collaborate with what is found in local settings.

Kipp and Rodgers (1987) also conclude that in the interaction between Islam and local belief the two become fused. This is further evident in the work of Clifford Geertz on Java (1984: 127) who explores the concept of 'person' according to two sets of differences, one between *inside* and *outside* and the other one between *refined* and *vulgar*. The inside world or *bathin* (originally an Islamic and a Sufi

1 See Abdullah 1966..

term) can be achieved through religious exercises, known in Javanese beliefs as *poso* (In. *puasa*) or fasting and *tapa* or *semedi*, both meaning meditation, which then enable the person to control his or her emotional life.

On the other hand, the outside or *lahir* can be achieved through etiquette, which generates the person's social behaviour. The two realms are then put in a separate structure through which the difference between *refined* (In. *halus*) and *vulgar* (In. *kasar*) in the person's disposition will apply. What Geertz found interesting is that there is a 'bifurcated conception' of the person in Java: 'an inner world of stilled emotion and an outer world of shaped behaviour' (1984: 127–128). In Islam, these are also well known as *alam lahir dan bathin*. Most Javanese claim that the *bathin* of a person is far more important than their *lahir*, as it is the locus of divine capability (In. *ilmu bathin* or *ilmu laduni*). The Cikoangese also stress the greater importance of *bathin*. Many Sayyid explained to me that *bathin* is the source of bad and good things both: the good deeds of a person are a reflection of a clean or pure *bathin*, and vice versa.

Many Indonesianists believe that there has been historical interaction between pre- or non-Islamic mystical teachings and Sufism. Woodward (1989) maintains that this interpenetration was actively encouraged by early Muslim missionaries in Java as a bridge to winning converts. Before Islam became the predominant religion, concepts of *tapa* or *semedi* and the acquisition of *sakti*, divine power, originating from Saivite Hinduism were common spiritual goals among the Javanese. Woodward names such interaction as the 'harmonisation' of non-Islamic and Islamic principles.

Woodward then clarifies this process, stressing not how the interaction of non-Islamic elements and Muslim tradition takes place but rather how such elements are Islamically 'interpreted'. His overall point is that much (but not all) that has been considered to be *kejawen*, or Javanese syncretism (e.g. by Clifford Geertz 1984), is actually encompassed by Sufism. One example is the belief in the Prophet Muhammad as the 'Perfect Man' (Ar. *al-Insan al-Kamil*). In another instance, Muhammad is identified as Semar, the most important character in the Javanese *wayang* shadow puppet repertoire. Semar is said to have reached a state of divinity and thus to be the owner of pure *bathin*. Certain Javanese conceive of Semar as *nabi bathin*, the 'inner prophet' and the symbol of the union between humanity and divinity. Yet, because he has a physical shape, as traditionalists put it, he is not completely God. Thus they are precluding condemnations of *shirk* or *musyrik* (Woodward 1989: 223–225).

Throughout the Muslim world, the Sufis are known as those most responsible for popularising the celebration of the Prophet's birth, Maulid Nabi (e.g. Schimmel 1985). The modernists consider this festival to have combined local idioms with

Sufi doctrines. For example, as Maudu' is celebrated by the traditionalists in Cikoang, the local idiom is obvious in the provision of ingredients such as rice, chicken, coconut and egg in Kanre Maudu', the Maulid feast.

However, in Maudu' the use of *julung-julung*, the petty boats to carry the *kandawari* towers of offerings, might be wrongly seen as Cikoangese local usage, considering the fame of the Makassarese as boat builders and seafarers. Rather, the boat is the symbol of salvation both in Sayyid Ahl al-Bait and Sufi traditions. In Cikoang, the *julung-julung* become the symbol of Sayyid *kafa'ah*-based marriage practice that will guarantee salvation in this world and the hereafter (see Chapter Three). According to the traditionalists, the symbol of the boat also refers to the ark built by the Prophet Nuh, or Noah, to rescue living creatures at the time when flood inundated all parts of the world.

What is similar to Woodward's (1989) position is that the Cikoangese beliefs and practices have demonstrable roots in the Sufi traditions, rather than being evidence of a resilience of pre-Islamic beliefs and practices. When it comes to the Muslim modernists, their primary objection seems to rest more on the fact that certain Sufi beliefs and practices – especially modes of veneration of the Prophet – are not doctrinally orthodox according to their criteria, i.e. are not ratified by the Syari'at, however much their own Syari'at practices may have been inflected by local idiom as well.

So the main point of difference between the modernists and the traditionalists lies in the significance of the ritual objects used in the Maudu' festival. The traditionalists believe that the inclusion of rice, chickens, coconut and eggs in the ritual of the shared meal is the only way, the obligatory way, to express their religious faith. They will feel humiliated if they do not do this, whereas the modernists are more flexible in this matter and are not restricted to particular ingredients.

Moreover, the modernists maintain that the main aspect of the celebration lies in the fact that it can be an occasion for the propagation of the Prophet's teachings. The modernists have free choice in this, since the Maudu' festival is not *fardhu* or *wajib*, obligatory under the law. It is not even *sunnah*, optional, but meritorious if performed. The central concern, then, is with the difference between the two parties in their respective construction of meanings around the Maudu' and how its observance achieves the objectives of the celebration.

The modernists agree that the Prophet Muhammad is a figure worthy of veneration. Practices instructed by him can lead to a mystical experience that leads the human heart to the key of nearness to Allah. In the Sufi doctrines, the veneration of the Prophet is the basis of the doctrine of Nur Muhammad, the divine light of Muhammad and his pre-existence with creation (Schimmel 1985).

What the modernists object to is the concept that the unity of the Prophet and Allah is paralleled by a Sufi unity of humanity to Allah, because this can lead to *shirk* or *musyrik* (Woodward 1989: 237).

In a final note, the modernists maintain that Muslims should base their religious practice on the scriptures – the Qur'an, Hadith and the Syari'at – whereas the traditionalists study Sufi doctrines as the basis for their religious practices. Syari'at-minded Muslims (or Scripturalists) and the Sufis have been two of the most significant agents in the development of Muslim tradition. Frequently they work together; at other times they are at odds.

Principally, the nature of debate between Syari'at and Sufism is that the Sufis tend to stress the mediation and veneration of saints or holy persons for asking Allah's rewards while minimising the significance of the law. The Sufis also give precedence to the importance of obtaining union between Allah and the individual human soul, no matter what method this might involve. As Gilsenan (1973: 5) puts it 'there are as many paths to God as there are children of Adam'.

Syari'at-minded Muslims, on the contrary, emphasise the implementation of their version of 'pure' Islamic practices in submission to Allah's will, so much so that they may be called *kaum puritan*, or 'puritans'. They believe that it is by performing the prescribed practices in a 'proper' way (according to the Syari'at) that nearness to Allah can be achieved. There is covert agreement here: both Sufism and the Syari'at aim *in principle* to come close to Allah; their differences lie in the course of implementation.

In the case of Sufism in Cikoang, the Cikoangese follow one of the many different kinds of orders as their *tarekat*, their 'pathway'. There is no need to seek a definition between 'proper' and 'improper' Sufi orders in terms of practice, because what is substantive behind the term *tarekat* is 'a variety of religious groupings bearing a variety of social meanings and functions in a variety of social, economic and political settings' (Gilsenan 1973: 5). Judging from most of the Sufi doctrines I have enquired into there does indeed exist a great variety, yet in Indonesia each generates from the same concept of the Divine Light of Muhammad. Thus, notions of process or *tarekat* may vary, but all are generally defended by reference to conventional sources based on recognisable, related utterances.

The Cikoangese living in Jakarta, despite their adherence to the practices of *kafa'ah*, Maudu' and Pattumateang, are able to adopt a more critical attitude towards their religious orientation than their relatives in Cikoang. They are more tolerant of criticism from the modernists. They have allowed the establishment of a Muhammadiyah sub-branch in their settlement, which has not been the case in Cikoang. Due to the shortage of Sayyid there, they rarely obtain teachings



of Sufism from the Sayyid, their religious specialists at home (see Table 5). They obtain most of their knowledge from followers of other Sufi orders and general books on the subject, or they make a focused study of books telling of classical Sufi scholars such as Jalaluddin Rumi, Imam al-Ghazali, Ibn al-'Arabi and al-Hallaj.

There are at least two further findings that I drew from observing the Cikoangese in Jakarta: first, their knowledge of Sufism is no longer derived from an uncritical acceptance of theological decisions of their elders. One Sayyid Tuan, a holder of a university bachelor's degree and employed in Jakarta, said to me:

I am lucky that I no longer live in Cikoang. I would not be progressing as I feel I am now if I had not left Cikoang. Due to a lack of learning on Sufism of their own, the people there exaggerate Maudu' as the only religious practice most highly rewarded by Allah. Therefore, they emphasise the ritual aspect of the celebration rather than its mystical aspect. Now (I know that) doing contemplation can bring us close to Allah.

He then acknowledged that he prayed regularly five times a day, that he had made the pilgrimage to Mecca and he undertook other formal duties as did many Indonesian Muslims, while at the same time studying Sufism. For him, the practices set out by Syari'at and Sufism are all equally symbols of piety. My second finding is that, partly due to a declining sense of moral obligation and because of financial constraints, many Cikoangese in Jakarta feel less inclined to make the journey back to Cikoang to participate in the Maudu' festival.

Since opportunities to study the Muslim scriptures of the Qur'an and Hadith and Sufism are at present available everywhere, more and more Indonesian Muslims, including the Cikoangese in Jakarta, no longer rely for resolution of their religious questions solely on the capability of their traditional teachers. Particularly in Jakarta, many Islam-oriented foundations provide courses on Sufism. There is more opportunity for the Cikoangese to study Sufism for themselves. Many young Cikoang people in Jakarta feel that there is no need to enter into the long-lasting relationship of student and teacher. They still, however, maintain the Sufi ethos while focusing on the content of the doctrines.

To sum up concisely, the debate between modernists and traditionalists is an unending religious conversation. New political circumstances and conditions of modernity, as found in Jakarta, arise to affect the debate. Yet this does not mean that the Sayyid will eventually lose their identity either because of urbanisation or strong opposition by the modernists. Rather, *kafa'ah*, the Maudu' festival and the Pattumateang remain strong among the Cikoangese in Jakarta. Patji (1991: 158) observed that the Sayyid always manage to interact with the changing situations of Indonesian life. Their social integration is a 'continuing phenomenon'.



In addition and contra to the above, there has been a growing concern among the Cikoangese in Jakarta to adjust their traditional beliefs and practices by means of publishing the doctrines of Tarekat Bahr ul-Nur in printed form and circulating them among the heads of households. The production of these written teachings is intended to refresh and represent Sayyid Sufi orientation in the light of scholarly and modern thought and in order to emphasise the balance between the ritual and contemplative aspects of their Sufi practices.

In 1984 Tuan Hasan and other Cikoangese in Jakarta presented a replica of the Maudu' festival in Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (TMII), the Indonesian cultural theme park in Jakarta in 1984. He said that the 1984 occasion was held to introduce the festival to the people of Jakarta in the hope that it would eventually be recognised as one of the Indonesian Islamic traditions, and therefore should be preserved.

In the present day, the Indonesian government, notably the local authority in Ujung Pandang, has officially recognised the Maudu' festival as an integral part of South Sulawesi tradition. The celebration of Maudu' in Cikoang is said to have become one of the most popular tourist attractions and has supported the regional income of the Ujung Pandang authority in recent years. These opportunities have inspired the Cikoangese in South Sulawesi and in Jakarta to maintain the central practices of their faith and identity, even as they change in tune with contemporary Indonesian society.

This text is taken from *Maudu': A Way of Union with God*,  
by Muhammad Adlin Sila, published 2015 by ANU Press,  
The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.