

Foreword

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This is a study that calls for greater attention from a wider scholarly audience. It was originally submitted as a Master of Arts thesis in Asian Studies at The Australian National University (ANU) in 1998. It offers a fascinating case study of the Sayyid community of Cikoang in South Sulawesi – in particular, an examination of the role of the descendants of Sayyid Jalaluddin al-‘Aidid, a Hadhrami merchant-teacher of great authority and charisma who is said to have initially settled in Gowa in the 17th century.

Whether Sayyid Jalaluddin came directly from Hadhramaut or by way of Aceh, when precisely he settled in Gowa, or why he moved to Cikoang and later to Sumbawa is unknown. Instead this study investigates the contemporary consequences of his appearance in Sulawesi and the establishment of the community of his descendants. It focuses on the Sayyid community in Cikoang, their historical intermarriage and cultural association with the Makassar nobility leading to the creation, among other things, of a title system that differentiates between Sayyid Karaeng, Sayyid Tuan and Sayyid Daeng who together comprise over two-thirds of the local community.

Sayyid Jalaluddin’s legacy to the Cikoang community is the Tarekat Bahr ul-Nur whose mystic teachings expound the creation of the world from the ‘Nur Muhammad.’ A consequence of this teaching is an enormous emphasis on the celebration of Maudu’ (Maulid, or the Birth of the Prophet) as expressed in the local assertion: ‘My existence on this earth is for nothing but Maudu’.’ Every year this prompts the Cikoang community to hold one of the most elaborate and colourful Maulid celebrations in Indonesia.

If we are to appreciate the diverse historical sources of Islam in Indonesia, this is a study that deserves special attention.

For its author, Muhammad Adlin Sila, this study was a stepping stone to further research. He has now completed his PhD at ANU with a thesis, *Being Muslim in Bima of Sumbawa, Indonesia: Practice, Politics and Cultural Diversity*. This study of Bima and its religious history establishes him as a major researcher on the diverse traditions of Islam in eastern Indonesia.

The publication of this thesis is in line with the goal of the Islam in Southeast Asia series: to publish valuable research on Islam in Southeast Asia emanating from students at ANU.

There are two people who deserve special thanks in bringing this thesis to publication. The preparation of the manuscript from the original thesis was ably carried out by Dr Wendy Mukherjee who is a scholar of Indonesian Islam and a superb copyeditor. Dr Martin Slama, who is a scholar of the Hadhrami in Indonesia, played an important role in urging us to consider publishing this thesis.

This text is taken from *Maudu': A Way of Union with God*,
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