

# 1.3. Yanwar Pribadi Book Review BKI Volume 175 Issue 1 2019.pdf

*by Yanwar Pribadi*

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Muhammad Adlin Sila, *Maudu': A Way of Union with God*. Acton: ANU Press, 2015, xviii + 146 pp. ISBN: 9781925022704, price: USD 38.00 (paperback).

In *Maudu': A Way of Union with God*, Muhammad Adlin Sila explores a community of descendants of the Prophet Muhammad (*Sayyid*) in the village of Cikoang (Takalar Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia). The community was established by Sayyid Jalaluddin al-'Aidid, a Hadhrami trader cum religious teacher thought to have dwelled in nearby Gowa in the seventeenth century. On the occasion of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (*mawlid*), Sayyid Jalaluddin founded an order of Sufism (*tariqa*) known as *Tarekat Bahr ul-Nur*, whose mystical teachings expound the doctrine of *Nur Muhammad* ('Divine Light of Muhammad'), that is, the coequality of Creation, Muhammad, and the Quran. As a consequence, its teachings put a tremendous emphasis on *Maudu'*, the local name for *mawlid*. Most studies on Hadhrami communities in Indonesia deal with social stratification and its conflicts (Jacobsen 2007; De Jonge 1993; Slama 2014), identities and integration (Mobini-Kesheh 1999; De Jonge 2004; Jacobsen 2008; Slama 2011a), and trans-national/local networks and diaspora (Slama 2011b; Al Qurtuby 2017). Less scholarly attention has gone to the communities' rituals. Hiroko Kushimoto (2013) stands somewhat alone in describing the entanglement between Hadhrami communities and *mawlid* celebrations in Malaysia. Sila's work in the context of Indonesia is similar in scope.

The book consists of two parts. The first part deals with the origins of the kinship system and religious identity of Hadhrami Sayyid Arabs in Cikoang. He argues that their system of marriage that emphasizes genealogical compatibility has made the Sayyid socially exclusive. Consequently, it diminishes their reciprocal interaction with the local masses, which has prevented them from becoming Makassarese in terms of their titles, language, marriage policies, and kinship system (p. 3). In the second part, the author discusses religious frictions between Cikoang Muslims and local people belonging to modernist Muhammadiyah organization. Sila indicates that the former practice a tradition of mystical discipline (*tasawuf*) and regard genuine spirituality (*ma'rifatullah*) as the perfect way of worship based on love, as well as a method to gain proximity to Allah. In expressing their love towards Allah and hoping to gain *ma'rifatullah*, Cikoang Muslims celebrate *Maudu'* annually, whereas Muhammadiyah Muslims only encourage the rituals prescribed by Quran and Hadith and those ratified by Islamic laws (*Sharia*) (p. 5).

In Chapter 1, the author describes the two social strata in Cikoang: Arab Sayyids and *Jawi* or non-Sayyid (pp. 13–14). The former makes a clear identity distinction in order to exhibit their elite descent. Consequently, they appear

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to have more power and influence than the latter. Next, the author investigates the history of Cikoang's Sayyid community in Chapter 2, exploring Bugis-Makassar manuscripts (*lontara*) in conjunction with traditional stories transmitted orally by local elders. These local sources reveal why Maudu' was conducted and which socio-cultural traditions originate from the *tariqa* and other Islamic teachings. Chapter 3 describes the foundations of socio-cultural aspects of the Sayyid. Here, Sila explores the origins of the Sayyid's social stratification in Cikoang, the naming system, and the marriage system which underpin their kinship system. The author maintains that the Sayyid are traditionally associated with spiritual matters and Makassar's original nobility (*Karaeng*) with secular matters (p. 42). In Chapter 4, the author examines religious arguments over popular beliefs and practices, revealing two main religious orientations. The first is 'Cikoangese,' as adhered to by Sayyid and Jawi people. They identify themselves the heirs of long-standing religious practices from Sayyid Jalaluddin and his successors. The second belongs to 'outsiders' (but also includes some Cikoangese), who have obtained religious knowledge through modern educational institutions such as Muhammadiyah. The Cikoangese are protective of their identity, even when it influences their social relations with other Muslims (p. 72).

The core of this book, the festivals of the Sayyids, is described at length in Chapter 5. The author discusses disagreements over these lively festivals between Sayyids and non-Cikoangese, the latter mostly Muhammadiyah modernists. Maudu' is clearly very essential in the life of the Sayyid. One of their verses quoted by Sila reads: "my existence on this earth is for nothing but Maudu'" (p. 94). The modernists object to the Sayyid's interpretation of Maudu' as a ritual meal and an obligatory practice, regarding them as heresy (*bid'ah*) (p. 99). In addition to Maudu', this chapter also discusses a set of rituals to purify the deceased known as Pattumateang. The Sayyid believe that Pattumateang enables the living to transfer merit to the dead, while the modernists maintain that it is a *bid'ah* practice and pointless (p. 102). In Chapter 6 the author sums up his findings, mostly by presenting the clashing arguments from the Sayyid and the modernists over the interpretation of the rituals and practices discussed in previous chapters.

This book is important for at least two reasons. Firstly, it offers examples of the characters of Indonesia's still prevalent traditional Islam (recently often described as *Islam Nusantara*). Although the celebrations and rituals of Maudu' and Pattumateang are espoused by Hadhrami-descended Sayyid, they attest to localized practices and a long and ongoing process of Islamization. Secondly, it explores systems of contestation and accommodation between various forms of Islam. While many studies highlight the Arabic element in Indonesia's Sala-

fism, modernist movements, and religious conservatism (Hasan 2010; Fealy 2004; Abuza 2006; Chaplin 2014), this book demonstrates that Cikoang's Arab-descended people are precisely the traditionalists suffering from *bid'ah* accusations by modernist local Indonesians.

As regards the book's shortcomings, crucial discussions on Maudu' and Pattumateang only appear in Chapter 5, leaving the social stratification and religious frictions between the Sayyid and other communities unaccounted for in the earlier chapters. The relation between Tarekat Bahr ul-Nur and the Zaidiyyah sect of Shi'a Islam (*Shi'i Zaydi*) and notions of patron-client relationship do not appear proportionally in the book, despite frequent fleeting remarks. An emphasis to these two subjects would have enabled a more comprehensive understanding of the discussed rituals (Maudu' and Pattumateang) and the socio-cultural tensions between the Sayyid and the locals. The author's assertion that the Sayyid community is culturally Makassarese (pp. 41–42) conflicts with his interviewee's statement that the Sayyid consider themselves Shi'a in their marriage policy, Sunni in other beliefs and practices, and Cikoangese in the Maudu' ritual (p. 79). Without downplaying their Hadhrami origins, fanatical attitudes to genealogy, and notions of compatibility of marriage partners (*kafa'ah*), the Sayyid cannot simply be regarded as culturally Makassarese. Several mistakes and misspellings are scattered throughout the book, as well. Consider the following fragment: "... since the end of Suharto's New Order in 1989 (Hefner 1993; Liddle 1996; Fealy 1997)" (p. 10). The New Order ended in 1998, not in 1989, and the quoted authorities could therefore not have mentioned an event that happened after their works were published. The toponyms "Ujung Pandang" (p. 15) and "Irian Jaya" (p. 31) may have been the correct at the time of fieldwork, but not in 2015 when the book came out. Tomanurung is misspelled "Tumanurung" (p. 43), *di rumah* as "dirumah" (p. 44), and *keesokan* as "keesekon" (p. 45).

Nevertheless, the book is a very positive addition to scholarship on the Hadhrami community in Indonesia. Students and scholars of anthropology, history, and Islamic studies will find rich materials on religious expressions, rituals, and identities and an astute investigation of their role in everyday life. Sila offers avenues to engage with the Hadhrami community and their rituals, opening up comprehensive discussions about this eastern Indonesian community. This book casts a new light on the often misunderstood Arab community in Indonesia, who are frequently regarded as people with exclusively modernist, reformist, or even purist attitudes in the religious realm.

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