

‘SALAFI SUFISM IN INDONESIA’S POPULAR MEDIA’¹

Julia Day Howell

Griffith University

j.howell@griffith.edu.au

Islam’s devotional and mystical tradition, Sufism (*tasawwuf*), is commonly cast as antithetical to Salafi Islam. Self-identified ‘Salafis’, with their ideological roots in anti-liberal strands of twentieth century modernist Islam, do commonly view Sufis as heretics propagating practices wrongly introduced into Islam centuries after the time of the pious ancestors (the Salaf). Yet reformist zeal that fixes on the singular importance of the Salaf (particularly the Prophet Muhammad and his principle companions) as models for correct piety can also be found amongst Sufis. This was anticipated in the ‘neo-Sufi’ reform movement in Sufi orders like the Naqsyabandiyyah prior to the twentieth century (De Jong and Radtke 1999; O’Fahey and Radtke 1993), and is becoming better known as a feature of certain contemporary Sufi movements in Asia Minor and South Asia (Howell and van Bruinessen 2007). However it has been little noted in Indonesia, and then only in connection with certain Sufi orders (Azra 2004; Bruinessen 1999). Popular Sufi spirituality outside the Sufi orders in the later twentieth and early twenty-first centuries is instead known for its

¹ This paper was presented to the 17th Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia in Melbourne 1-3 July 2008. It has been peer reviewed via a double blind referee process and appears on the Conference Proceedings Website by the permission of the author who retains copyright. This paper may be downloaded for fair use under the Copyright Act (1954), its later amendments and other relevant legislation.

liberal and eclectic colouration and for the criticism it has attracted from Salafis and other scripturalist modernists (e.g., Howell 2005, 2007a, 2007b; Shihab 2001).

This essay calls attention to the Salafi colouration of Sufism in two areas of Indonesian popular culture: television preaching, and the popular religious ‘how-to’ books and DVDs that make the preachers’ messages available for purchase and home study. I focus on the teachings of two of the best known Indonesian Muslim televangelists, Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (commonly known by the acronym ‘HAMKA’; b. 1908 – d. 1981) and M. Arifin Ilham (b. 1969), both of whom also happen to be champions of Sufism despite their association with the modernist Muhammadiyah movement. In what follows, after a brief introduction to the two preachers, I reprise Hamka’s defence of his Salafī *tasawwuf* and compare it to the ‘Islam klasik (Salafiyah)’ put forth by Arifin Ilham, Hamka’s distant successor on the silver screen and in popular print predication.

Introducing the Preachers

Hamka, a renowned scholar, is widely acknowledged as the first of the silver-screen celebrity preachers, having moved into that medium in the 1970s. However, decades before the television era, and before he established himself as a distinguished scholar of Islam, he engaged in religious outreach as a journalist, popular writer and editor, and even as a novelist. It was then, in the last years of the colonial period, that he wrote a series of magazine essays on the importance for modern Muslims of spirituality (in his words, ‘kebatinan’, ‘kerohanian’ or ‘tasauif’ – all used interchangeably). Shortly thereafter, in 1939, these essays were gathered into a book entitled *Tasauif Moderen* (‘Modern Sufism’), which has never been long out of print. That book made him one of the most important figures in the popularisation of Sufism amongst Indonesia’s modernising elites.

Hamka’s popular writing on Islam was part of his work as an activist in Muhammadiyah, the largest and most influential of Indonesia’s Islamic modernist organizations. Muhammadiyah, founded in Java in 1912, was the source of much strident criticisms of Sufism for most of the twentieth century. Although this stance

was not consolidated until the 1930s, from then until the mid-1990s Muhammadiyah proscribed many supererogatory rituals associated with the Sufi tradition (Burhani 2005; Ricklefs 2007:223; Howell 2001:712). Such practices, like the repetitive *zikir* litanies, were commonly used by traditionalist Muslims (i.e., those associated with the Nahdlatul Ulama [NU] organisation). Modernists branded them heterodox ‘innovations’ (*bid’ah*). Muhammadiyah also disapproved of the Sufi orders (I. *tarekat*; A. *tariqa*), over which many NU clerics presided.

Arifin Ilham is a current star. He was modestly successful off-screen in the late 1990s, and became famous on-screen after the turn of the twenty-first century when entertainment values eclipsed scholarly credentials in religious television broadcasting. Arifin is the creator of the phenomenon of the mega-mosque *Zikir Akbar* (broadcast religious services where thousands gather in the country’s grandest and most beautiful mosques to chant soulful litanies) and of a spiritual development program which he describes as ‘Islam klasik (Salafiyah)’ (‘classic [Salafi] Islam’) (Ilham and Yakin 2004:38).

Hamka’s Salafi Sufism.

The enormous variety of self-styled ‘Salafi’ movements notwithstanding, their core feature, as betokened by the name itself (derived from the Arabic word ‘salaf’, meaning ‘predecessor’ or ‘ancestor’), is the special importance these movements assign to the example of the Prophet Muhammad, his companions and the second and third generations of the Prophet’s followers (the ‘pious ancestors’ or ‘Salaf’). The Qur’an and the example of those ‘pious ancestors’ as described in the Hadith, more than any later judgments in the classical schools of law and theology, are taken to be authoritative. Hamka, like his fellow modernists in Indonesia and elsewhere, devoted his scholarly labours to reassessing the Sunni heritage, including the classical schools of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), so that modern Muslims could clearly identify the true examples that the Prophet and other pious ancestors of the early days of the faith set for them.

Unlike most of his associates in the Muhammadiyah, who regarded *tasawwuf* as a late and corrupting foreign intrusion into proper Islamic practice, Hamka saw *tasawwuf* as

part, indeed the core (*inti*) (1962 [1952]:192), of authentic Islam. And the origins of *tasawwuf*, he argued, can be found in the devotional life of the Prophet himself.

Hamka's major works on *tasawwuf* (*Perkembangan Tasawuf dari Abad Keabad* ['The Development of Sufism from Age to Age'] and *Tasawuf, Perkembangan dan Pemurniannya* ['Sufism, Development and Purification']) demonstrate this. Thus these histories of Sufism start with the Prophet Muhammad's seclusion in the Hira Cave where he had his first revelation. Hamka takes this as an instance of the Prophet's frequent practice of *khalwat* (retreat, or temporary withdrawal from the concerns of everyday life). *Khalwat* is commonly practiced by Muslims, but especially by Sufis.

Hamka explicitly links what Muhammad was doing in the Hira Cave when he received his first revelation with practices that latter-day Muslims have identified with the Sufi tradition:

If we take careful note [of what Muhammad was doing] when [he] removed himself to the Hira Cave...and then we compare [this] with the lives of the Sufis [*ahli2 tasawuf*] who came after [him], we can easily see the similarities in their lives and those of the Prophet (1962 [1952]:21).

Hamka goes on to say that this is a recommendation for today's Muslims:

And we can align the path we follow, through our various exercises and struggles and feelings, with a pure spiritual life [such as theirs]...(1962 [1952]:21).

Hamka further recounts canonical stories of the Prophet's everyday life, showing how he modelled the classic Sufi virtues of living abstemiously (*zuhud*), patience (*sabar*) and gratitude (*syukur*). Even the Prophet's ritual observances, Hamka observed, modelled practices later associated with Sufis:

He wore very plain clothes, and ate only a slice of bread or a date accompanied by a swallow of water, and for his devotions, he woke in the

middle of the night [to pray], and sometimes also cried while praying; all [this] is an ideal life that is much yearned for [*amat dirindui*] by Sufis [*ahli2 Tasawuf*] (1962 [1952]:25).

Moving on to stories about the spiritual character cultivated by the Prophet's Companions (*Sahabat*), Hamka tells us that they followed the Prophet's example in living lives marked by 'plain living, abstemiousness, humility, and having simple wants' ('*sederhana, wara', tawadu' dan zuhud'*) (1962 [1952]:27). Again, he observes, these are qualities that followers of various Sufi paths in later eras have striven to strengthen in their characters as part of their basic spiritual training.²

In summary, Hamka shows that practices now commonly identified with *tasawwuf* helped constitute the spiritual lives (*hidup kerohanian*) of Muhammad and the other 'pious ancestors'.

Significantly, however, in his recounting of the spiritual lives of the Salaf he does not mention the practice of *zikir* (lit., remembrance; more broadly, constant recollection of God in everyday life, or in ritual litanies). Nonetheless, when discussing *tasawwuf* in the time of the renowned eleventh century Persian scholar Al Ghazali (1962 [1952]:125), Hamka does refer approvingly to *zikir* as a practice of 'remembering, or saying [to oneself the name of] Allah'. Hamka thus implies by omission that ritualised *zikir* practice (wherein short phrases from the Qur'an are repeated in large multiples) does not have any authorizing presence in the lives of the Salaf and is *bid'ah*, an heretical invention, whereas being constantly mindful of God ('remembering' Him) is, of course, laudable.

While Hamka took pains to demonstrate that the Prophet and his principal companions undertook practices that Muslims would later identify as 'Sufi' (*tasawwuf*), he deemed that certain excesses and perversions (like ritualised *zikir*) had

² In one of the most common Sufi schema of graded spiritual striving the aspirant moves from *syariah* (merely conforming to religious law); through *tariqat* (undertaking specific Sufi disciplines to perfect the spiritual virtues and to refocus attention upon the Creator); to *hakekat* (opening of one's awareness onto a transformed understanding of God's being and presence); and finally to *makrifat* (the ultimate mystical realisation).

become insinuated into the *tasawwuf* tradition over time. He took it to be one of his key tasks to identify all those perversions so that they could be excised, and so that *tasawwuf* could be ‘restored’ to its ‘original condition’ (as per his title *Mengembalikan Tasauf ke Pangkalnja*).

He traces these perversions principally to the Sufi orders (*tarekat*). The spiritual masters or *syekh* of the orders initiated their students into knowledge of specific devotional techniques thought to reveal realms of spiritual experience otherwise not generally accessible; the *syekh* also acted as guides in those uncharted regions. This carried the hazard, as Hamka saw it, of the teacher slipping into *syirik* (polytheism), in effect, putting himself up as someone who had become closer to God than others, a ‘second to God’.

It is notable, however, that Hamka did not want to dissuade his fellow Muslims from cultivating a rich inner life and seeking to ‘lift the veils’ of material existence. He even refers repeatedly to ‘makrifat’ (the highest level of Sufi spiritual knowing) (e.g., 1962 [1952]:19, 22-23), and on occasion to ‘fana’ (being lost in God) (1962 [1952]). His objection was only to certain heretical practices commonly encouraged by Sufi orders, and to the idea that the *tarekat* and their *syekh*, were *necessary* to such spiritual unfoldment. In his view, the spiritual practices (*latihan jiwa*) (1962 [1952]:125) modelled by the Prophet Muhammad and his immediate successors, could be, and are better, practiced simply as an ordinary member of the Muslim community, without any connection to a *syekh* or *tarekat*.

His *Tasauf Moderen* was written to help people do that. It is a kind of do-it-yourself guide to personal and spiritual development. In it he expands on the spiritual disciplines of the Salaf, showing how in modern society one might strive, for example, to live modestly, remembering the importance of *zuhud*, and yet work hard to provide for one’s family and contribute to society, while yet understanding that undue focus on worldly concerns clouds perception of God’s guidance and closeness. In *Tasauf Moderen*, Hamka thus models in a modern, psychologised idiom, practices of independent ethical reflection similar to those in the second or *tariqat* stage of classic Sufi spiritual ascent.

In *Perkembangan Tasawuf*, which post-dates *Tasawuf Moderen* by more than a decade, Hamka also makes clear the importance to spiritual growth of both meditation and emotionally-charged contemplation of the glories of God, either in retreat or in the course of everyday life (1962 [1952]:19-23). He also explicitly asserts that such spiritual exercises can give rise to ‘strange experiences’, as they did for Muhammad and his Companions. Writing for his modern readers, he admits that ‘some people would say that the Salaf were just crazy [*gila*]’ (1962 [1952]:22), but no, he says, extraordinary things did happen to them. Hamka seems to be encouraging the reader to accept that cultivating a proper Muslim spiritual life, the way orthodox Sufis have, can open up a realm of esoteric experience. He explains how this is possible:

The great soul [*djiwa besar*] approaches God [*Tuhan*] and receives a fragment of the Light of guidance [*Nur hidayat*] from God. As such, the soul is hardly bound by time or shackled by space. For it, the secret lies open, and the veil of the whole world [is lifted] through the grace and permission of God... This is one example set by the people who have followed Sufi (mystical) Islam (Tasawuf [mistik] Islam)! (1962 [1952]:23)

Arifin Ilham’s ‘Islam Klasik Salafiyah’

Arifin Ilham rose to real national fame in 2001, more than a decade after the passing of his illustrious predecessor Hamka. An invitation in Ramadan of that year to lead prayers with extended *zikir* in Jakarta’s beautiful At-Tin Mosque before a live audience of 7000 and a home television audience of millions launched him into the world of celebrity televangelism (Syadzily 2005:36). As more invitations followed to conduct services including collective *zikir* at mosques with capacities of many thousands plus nation-wide television coverage, he rapidly became famous for his ‘*zikir akbar*’ (‘mega *zikir*’ or ‘grand *zikir*’).

Oddly, Arifin was not from the traditionalist Muslim (NU) community which commonly appended *zikir* litanies to the obligatory prayers (*shalat wajib*) and which supported *tawawwuf* learning and the *tarekat*. His father was a Muslim modernist active in the Muhammadiyah organisation in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, and he

did his early schooling in Muhammadiyah schools (Mujtaba 2004:35; Mintarja 2004:39ff). There he acquired some common modernist prejudices against Muslims who practice extended *zikir*:

One day, as Arifin told it, he and his father happened to pass a mosque where people used to recite the *zikir* litanies out loud together. Arifin said to his father, ‘They’re already in hell (*Mereka itu ahli neraka*). Doing it so loud and all, they’re making a great scene.’ ‘Yes yes, they’re wasting their time,’ said his father, agreeing with Arifin. (Mintarja 2004:41)

Nevertheless in his early teens he was taken with the notion of doing the rest of his secondary schooling in a traditionalist religious school, a *pesantren*. But he told his father he didn’t want to go to the old-fashioned kind ‘where the students go around in sarongs’; he wanted a *pesantren* ‘where they wear a tie and jacket’ (Mintarja 2004:40). His father acquiesced and sent him to a progressive *pesantren* in Jakarta for high school. Like Hamka, then, Arifin gained some familiarity with classical Islamic scholarship, even if he never probed that mine to anything like the same depth or breadth.

Instead Arifin cultivated a talent he discovered in high school for religious oratory, winning contests both at home and in Singapore. Then, after finishing a bachelor’s degree in International Relations from Universitas Nasional (Jakarta) in 1995, he drew on those talents to make a modest living out of preaching.

His *pesantren* experience notwithstanding, in his early years as a preacher Arifin remained opposed to any ‘Sufi’ elaborations of the required prayers (like ritualised *zikir*) and conducted his religious outreach entirely through sermonising. All that changed, however, after he was bitten by a poisonous snake in 1997. During his perilous recovery he had a series of dreams in which he was called to a mosque to lead *zikir* and saved his fellow Muslims from the snares of Satan (Mujtaba 2004:41). Thereafter he began leading services with collective *zikir* and extended *muraqabah* at his local mosque. In the *muraqabah* he guided those assembled in reflection on their sins and in repentance, often moving people to tears.

That format became the basis for his *zikir akbar*, the grand collective *zikir* (*zikir berjama'ah*) performed since 2001 by gatherings of thousands and viewed nationwide by many more on television. The somewhat distinctive way he conducts public *zikir* is also called 'zikir taubat' ('zikir of repentance'), signalling the importance of soulful self-reproach, such as he models in the *muraqabah* following the *zikir* litanies. 'Zikir akbar' and 'zikir taubat' have now become something like brands associated with the broader program of spiritual development that Arifin has elaborated, and, because of the controversial nature of collective *zikir*, defended (e.g., Ilham 2004:30). Like other celebrity preachers, Arifin has promoted his program for spiritual development not only in his sermons and talks, but in his popular books, videos and DVDs.

Arifin follows Hamka in arguing the specifically Salafi, and therefore orthodox, character of (proper) *tasawwuf*. To do this, Arifin, like Hamka, distinguishes between *tasawwuf* practices that he considers to have firm precedents in the lives of the pious ancestors, from Sufi practices that do not. Those that in his view do not, like praying to saints (*wali*) and using the *syekh* as intermediaries, are generally practices associated with the *tarekat*. Thus Arifin distinguishes 'sufi Salafi' ('Salafi Sufism') from 'sufi Sunni' ('Sunni Sufism'). By 'Sunni Sufism' he means the Sufism of the traditionalist *ulama* who, in his judgment and that of many modernists, have allowed Islam to be infiltrated by heretical foreign practices (Ilham and Yakin 2004:29-32). On this basis he confidently asserts that his program of Sufi-inspired spiritual development, unlike the Sufi techniques recommended by many *ulama* and the Sufi orders, is 'classic (Salafi) Islam' ('Islam klasik (Salafiyah)') (Ilham and Yakin 2004:38).

In sum, Arifin, like Hamka, uses the latitude offered by modernist Islamic exegesis, which skirts past the authority of the *ulama* and the classical schools of law, to define his own understanding a purified and therefore orthodox Sufism. As Hamka did, he justifies this purified Sufism by tracing the Sufi practices he recommends back to the Prophet and other pious ancestors. Arifin, like Hamka, also asserts that *tasawwuf* is positively needed by modern people because, both say, Sufi devotions and disciplines help people to actually sense the presence of God. Otherwise, their faith, supported

only by dry dogma and injunctions to obey religious law, is likely to falter (cf Ilham and Yakin 2004:33).

Arifin and Hamka do differ on the range of practices that they authorise. Arifin accepts a broader range. Hamka did not approve of ritualised *zikir*, either performed in private or collectively in public. In contrast, Arifin has made ritualised, collective *zikir*, even on a spectacular scale, the very trademark of his preaching.

Although Arifin validates a broader range of traditional Sufi practices as orthodox and highly useful for modern Muslims, in other respects his Salafi Sufism is narrower. Arifin promotes his 'Islam klasik (Salafiya)' to fortify a defensive, homogenous communalism and religious exclusivism. Hamka, in contrast, despite his long association with Muhammadiyah in the days when it supported campaigns for making Indonesia an Islamic state, placed much emphasis in his writings on *tasawwuf* on basic Islamic values that are also promoted in Western and other religious and philosophical traditions. In *Tasauf Moderen* he also emphasised the need for individual discernment of what constitutes pure-hearted motivation and the possible pitfalls of excusing selfishness and moral turpitude by glibly quoting religious law.

Arifin's emphasis on conformity to an unambiguously correct community norm is evident in his book *Indonesia Berzikir* ('Indonesia Joins in Zikir') (Ilham and Yakin 2004). Here it appears that the way God wants us to behave is, on the whole, already clearly understood by the Muslim community, and what constitutes virtue is unproblematic. Everyone can be held to the one standard, and the community rightly has an interest in doing so. Thus Arifin stresses that the Sunnah (or authoritative models for behaviour set by the Prophet) does not change over time, and he supplies copious examples of the punishments God has visited upon whole communities that throughout history and today have gone against His will. People who do not accept the message of the Prophet Muhammad are cast as dupes of Satan.

The approaches to Sufi practices that Arifin recommends also reveal an overbearing concern to promote conformity to unproblematic community norms and solidarity with a defensive corps of true believers. Thus in *Indonesia Berzikir* Arifin recommends cultivation of the classic spiritual virtues which Sufi aspirants undertake

to purify the heart of lower impulses. However he does little more than name those virtues (patience, humility, etc.) without, as Hamka did, recognising how it is possible to distort spiritual values by overdoing them or using a legal judgment on permissible behaviour as an excuse for one's own selfish desires or lack of initiative.

Arifin's check-list approach to spiritual work is also evident in the way he promotes the Sufi litanies (ritual *zikir*). Thus in *Indonesia Berzikir* he gives a numbered list of sixty boons that can be won by adding multiples of the *zikir* litanies to one's regular, required prayers. The list starts with 'repelling Satan and smashing his powers' and moves on through other benefits, tangible and intangible, such as 'attracting good fortune', 'inspiring love of God', and 'opening the doors of gnosis'. Some of these boons, we learn, come in greater measure to *zikir* practitioners than to Muslims who merely use the standard prayers or practice good works. This formulaic approach to salvation and divine favours, with different rewards and punishments for following certain rules and for using certain types and numbers of ritual performances, contrasts with Hamka's concern with individual character formation and striving towards spiritual realisation for its own sake.

Not only does Arifin urge a relatively formulaic approach to Sufi spiritual practice, but the value he sees in ritualised *zikir* is that it inspires 'obedience'. This is evident in his 2004 'best seller' *Hakikat Zikir, Jalan Taat Menuju Allah* ('The True Essence of Zikir, Road of Obedience to Allah'). Here we learn that *zikir* inspires diligent conformity to religious law by enabling practitioners to taste the deep spiritual gratification (*kenikmatan*) of feeling God's presence – an experience that then impels the practitioner to greater piety, which in turn inspires friends and family to follow suit (Ilham 2004:21-22). That will 'give birth to a society that is obedient and pious before Allah' (Hafidhuddin in Ilham 2004:12).

Arifin and his supporters in his Al-Zikra Zikir Council (Majelis Zikir Al-Zikra) are now promoting his program of *zikir*-based piety nation-wide as a necessary means of protecting the nation from catastrophe. They have dubbed the national movement 'Indonesia Berzikir' ('Indonesia Joins in Zikir', like his book title). The justification for the movement is that Indonesia is in urgent danger. Weakened by materialism and intimidated by Western science and philosophies, he fears that Muslims are easy prey

to materialist critiques of religion like those of Karl Marx (Ilham 2004:74-77). ‘Sekularisasi’ (meaning something like society-wide atheism) is breeding corruption in business and government and sexual immorality in private life. So those Muslims who are lacking in piety *must* be reached and drawn into the movement. ‘There is no other way,’ Arifin insists, ‘Indonesia indeed has to *zikir*’ (Ilham and Yakin 2004:22).

Conclusions

This reprise of Hamka’s and Arifin Ilham’s Sufism helps us to see that in Indonesia as elsewhere in the world today the Sufi tradition is being reworked as ‘Salafi’, and this specifically for modern Muslims. Both these proselytisers (the one, famous for his scholarship and popular writing and latterly as a pioneer of television preaching; the other, a mega-star televangelist who effectively promotes his spiritual development program through books and DVDs) have arisen from the Muslim modernist community associated with the prominent voluntary organisation Muhammadiyah. Yet both have championed Sufism against substantial resistance from within that movement. Their Salafi construction of what they consider genuine, unadulterated *tasawwuf* is meant to answer modernist charges of heterodoxy that have been current in the Muhammadiyah movement for most of the twentieth century and persist today outside that movement as well.

These cases show that Salafi variants of Sufism have been successfully marketed through the mass media, including television. Like other new-style Muslim televangelists in Indonesia and the Middle East (both Salafi-Sufi and anti-Sufi Salafi) Hamka and Arifin seek to inflame religious recommitment through witnessing to gratifying spiritual experiences of God’s closeness and the guidance that can come with intensified piety. Unlike the new-style Middle-Eastern televangelists whose Salafism condemns Sufi practices, however, Hamka and Arifin actually promote some *tasawwuf* spiritual exercises as means to uncovering a well of inner spiritual life.

Arifin goes farther than Hamka in recommending not only disciplines of (moderated) asceticism, ethical striving and mindfulness of God, but ritualised ‘remembrance’ (*zikir*) using lengthy litanies in private prayer and communal worship. Also, the tone

Hamka's and Arifin's Salafi representations of Sufism is rather different. Hamka's is more individualistic, in keeping with his sense that modern Muslims must exercise a high degree of autonomy and personal responsibility in their religious lives, as elsewhere. Arifin, in contrast, emphasises conformity to a homogenous, exclusivist religious community. He skirts past problems of judgment in practicing the Sufi ethical disciplines, and values *zikir* practice as a spur to 'obedience'. Arifin's 'hell fire and damnation' preaching, exemplified by his stories of God's punishments of the disobedient and of Satan leading people to reject the true faith, further contribute to the tone of exclusivist communalism in his ministry.

Although Hamka promoted exclusivist practices like refraining from wishing Christians 'Merry Christmas', his major works on *tasawwuf* counsel against overweening sectarian pride, and respectfully recognise spiritual striving in many different religious and cultural traditions. The fact that he urges upon modern Muslims a way to deepen their piety (*tasawwuf*) using the non-sectarian vocabulary of human 'happiness' (*bahagia*) and 'excellence of character' (*keutamaan budi*), as he does in *Tasawwuf Moderen*, is also suggestive of a positive engagement with Western thought, rather than a hostile defensiveness which becomes more characteristic of Salafi movements in the later twentieth- and twenty-first centuries.

It is probably significant that Hamka began deploying the language of 'keutamaan budi' (excellence of character) in the nineteen-thirties when the civil servant class of the Dutch East Indies, the *priyayi*, had become alienated from their Islamic heritage and transferred their esteem to 'the *budi* [elevated character, intellect] and *kawruh* [knowledge] of the Dutch-transmitted age of European progress' and to the pre-Islamic culture of Java (Ricklefs 2007:212). As mentioned, up to the 1930s, there was a substantial *priyayi* presence in the Muhammadiyah, the modernist organisation with which Hamka was associated. The language of 'noble character' and his use of Western philosophy as well as Islamic scholarship to present the value of *tasawwuf*, demonstrated that the Javanists were not the only ones who could appeal to cultural cosmopolitans. Such an audience also exists today, alongside more defensive Salafis.

Finally, Hamka's extraordinary description of the highest of the spiritual states, *makrifat*, as an experience of unity, not with God, but with all of God's creation and

thus a real experience of ‘peri-kemanusiaan’ (humanity beyond the bounds of nation or religion) again suggests at least a qualified spiritual universalism. Remembering his absolute commitment to the truth of the Islamic revelation and his lifelong efforts to teach proper practice of the faith, perhaps it is appropriate to understand Hamka’s *tasawwuf* as approximating the traditionalist perennialism of a Syed Hussein Nasr, insofar as it appears to recognise the universality of mystical unfoldment, but seeks to guide Muslims along their own straight path to it.

References

- Azra, Azyumardi. 2004. *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia : Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern 'Ulama in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Crows Nest, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin.
- Bruinessen, Martin van. 1999. Controversies and Polemics Involving the Sufi Orders in Twentieth-century Indonesia. In *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, ed. by F. de Jong and B. Radtke. Leiden: Brill, pp. 705-728.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2005. Revealing the Neglected Missions: Some Comments on the Javanese Elements of Muhammadiyah Reformism. *Studia Islamika* (Jakarta)12,1:101-130.
- De Jong, Frederick and Bernd Radtke (eds.). 1999. *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, ed. by F. de Jong and B. Radtke. Leiden: Brill.
- Hamka. 1962 (1952). *Perkembangan Tasawuf dari Abad ke Abad* [The Development of Sufism from Age to Age]. Jakarta: Pustaka Islam. (Also published under the title *Tasawuf, Perkembangan dan Pemurniannya*.)
- Hamka. 1972. *Mengembalikan Tasawuf Kepangkalnja* [Restoring Sufism to its Original Condition]. Jakarta: Panjimas.
- Hamka. 1997 (1939). *Tasawuf Modern* [Modern Sufism]. Singapore: Pustaka Nasional Pte Ltd.
- Howell, J.D. 2001. ‘Sufism and the Indonesian Islamic Revival.’ *Journal of Asian Studies* 60, 3:701-729.

- Howell, J.D. 2005. Muslims, the New Age and Marginal Religions in Indonesia: Changing Meanings of Religious Pluralism. *Social Compass* 52,4: 473-493.
- Howell, J.D. 2007a. Modernity and Islamic Spirituality in Indonesia's New Sufi Networks. In *Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam*, ed. by M. van Bruinessen and J. D. Howell. London: IB Tauris, pp. 217-240.
- Howell, J.D. 2007b. Repackaging Sufism in Urban Indonesia. *ISIM Review* 19:22-23.
- Howell, J.D. and M. van Bruinessen. 2007. 'Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam.' In *Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam*, ed. by M. van Bruinessen and J.D. Howell. London: IB Tauris, pp. 3-18.
- Ilham, M. Arifin. 2004. *Hakikat Zikir, Jalan Taat Menuju Allah*, rev. ed. Depok: Intuisi Press.
- Ilham, M Arifin and Syamsul Yakin. 2004. *Indonesia Berzikir*. Depok: Intuisi Press.
- Mintarja, Endang. 2004. *Arifin Ilham, Tarikat, Zikir, dan Muhammadiyah*. Jakarta: Hikmah.
- Mujtaba, Achmad Nawawi, ed. 2004. *Menggapai Kenikmatan Zikir. Fenomena Muhammad Arifin Ilham dan Majelis Zikir Az-Zikra*. Jakarta: Hikmah.
- O'Fahey, R.S. and Bernd Radtke. 1993. Neo-Sufism reconsidered. *Der Islam* 70:52-87.
- Ricklefs, Merle C. 2007. *Polarising Javanese Society, Islamic and Other Visions (c. 1830-1930)*. Singapore: NUS Press.
- Shihab, Alwi. 2001. *Islam Sufistik. 'Islam Pertama' dan Pengaruhnya hingga Kini di Indonesia*. Bandung: Mizan.
- Syadzily, Tb. Ace Hasan. 2005. *Arifin Ilham, Dai Kota Penabur Kedamaian Jiwa* [Arifin Ilham, the City Preacher Who Spreads Spiritual Tranquillity]. Jakarta: Hikmah.