

TRANSLATING SALAFI-WAHHĀBĪ BOOKS IN INDONESIA AND ITS IMPACTS ON THE CRITICISM OF TRADITIONAL ISLAMIC RITUALS

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia is a country with the largest Muslim population in the world and a unique nation that has diversity of tribes, cultures and religions. This uniqueness invites many scholars to observe the religious rituals performed by Muslims in the country. However, scholars do not sufficiently examine the current heated debates about the permissibility of the sacred rituals of Indonesian Muslims. This paper discusses undertakings in translating Arabic books by Indonesian Salafi-Wahhābī scholars and its impact on the increasing criticism against the various rituals practiced by traditional Muslims represented by Indonesian who mainly affiliated to the largest socio-religious organization in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU; the Awakening of Religious Scholars). Using the content analysis, this paper concludes that according to Salafi scholars, the rituals practiced by traditionalist Muslims such as slametan, tahlilan, manakiban and pilgrimage to local Islamic graves are regarded as heretic in the Islamic perspective. On the contrary, according to the traditionalist Muslims, these rituals, indeed, have a strong foundation in Islam. Facing the Salafi attacks, traditionalist Muslims make various efforts to defend their position and to protect their members from the Salafi influence and criticism. The sharp disagreements between Salafis and traditionalist Muslims are due to a different method in understanding Islam. The former tend to be more puritanical and textual, while the latter tend to be more contextual and adaptive to local wisdom. However, the differences of opinion rarely cause physical conflicts at the grassroots level as Indonesians Muslims have a long experience in maintaining harmony within society.

Keywords: *Islamic rituals; Indonesian Salafi; Nahdlatul Ulama; Arabic translation; ritual criticism*

INTRODUCTION

The life of Indonesian Muslims attracts the attention of scholars from various disciplines. Different aspects of their everyday life, especially in Java, have been described and analyzed by many scholars since several decades ago. Clifford Geertz, an American anthropologist who conducted research in East Java, Indonesia, in the 1950s, has categorized Javanese society into three variants, i.e., *abangan*, *santri*, and *priyayi*. The *abangan* religious tradition made up

primarily of the ritual feast called the *slametan* (gathering to ask God's blessing), of an extensive and intricate complex of spirit beliefs, and of a whole set of theories and practices of curing, sorcery, and magic, is the first sub variant within the general Javanese religious system. The *santri* is the sub-variant of the Javanese Muslims who is considered the purest variant. Meanwhile, the *priyayi* originally referred only to the hereditary aristocracy which the Dutch pried loose from the kings of the vanquished native states and turned

into an appointive, salaried civil service. This white-collar elite, its ultimate roots in the Hindu-Javanese courts of pre-colonial times, conserved and cultivated a highly refined court etiquette, a very complex art of dance, drama, music, and poetry, and a Hindu-Buddhist mysticism (Geertz, 1976: 5–6).

Generational shift occurred in the 1970s. In 1975, fifteen years after the publication of Geertz's work, Muchtarom underlined that the *santri* and *abangan* have significant impacts on social, political and religious life in Indonesia. He focused his research on the role of both variants as socio-religious groups and socio-political powers, especially in Surakarta and Yogyakarta (Muchtarom, 1975: 3–4). Meanwhile, the *priyayi* had lost the political privileges in the democracy era. The *priyayi* was only seen as personal lifestyle outside the political and religious orders (Nadeau, 1993). Although Geertz's distinctions are no longer clear-cut, remaining vestiges are still important in the continuing hierarchical social system of Java. One significant area is in the support for traditional Javanese spiritual beliefs, collectively known as *kebatinan* (spirituality); as with more major religions, there are several sects within *kebatinan* whose practices and beliefs closely resemble each other (Cochrane, 2009).

Moreover, Geertz's understanding of *slametan* as a "core ritual" in Javanese culture and as an animistic prototype intended to reinforce village solidarity is rejected by Woodward. According to him, *slametan* is a locally defined Muslim rite and the criteria Geertz employs to distinguish Islam from animism are misleading (Woodward, 1988). In fact, *slametan* is conducted not only by the *abangan* but also by the *santri* (Kistanto, 2016). It is true that Indonesian Muslims have several sacred and unique rituals that have been still conducted until now. This uniqueness is still interesting for many scholars to investigate. The *slametan* ritual has been observed from various aspect, i.e. the relationship between textual knowledge and its performance (Woodward, 1988), the women's roles in this ritual (Newberry, 2007), *slametan*

as tradition and identity (Kistanto, 2016), the role of *slametan* in the discourse of Javanese Islam (Boogert, 2017), and others. Meanwhile, other scholars investigate on *mawlidan* or commemoration of Prophet Muhammad's Birthday (Kapten, 1993), *tahlilan* or reciting *lā ilāha illallāh* (Sirait, 2016), *manakiban* or reading a saint hagiography (Saerozi, 2007; Millie, 2008a; Ta'rifin, 2009; Widiyanto, 2015), *ziarahkubur* or grave pilgrimage (Muhaimin, 2006; Tommy, 2008; Cochrane, 2009; Puspitasari et al., 2012; Alatas, 2014; Mujib, 2016), and *majelis dzikir* (Afif, 2009; Hidayat, 2010).

Generally, the above research findings have described processes of those rituals and other related variables but have not analyzed criticism against those rituals from other sub-variants of Indonesian Muslims. In fact, there are sharp disagreements among Indonesian Muslims about the permissibility of those rituals based on the authentic Islamic teachings. Ricklefs notes that by the late nineteenth century, Javanese society was polarized along religious and social lines in ways which do not appear to have existed before. For devout Muslims, there were both religious organizations, Muhammadiyah for modernists, and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) for orthodox followers of the Shāfi'ī school (Ricklefs, 2008) and known as traditionalists. The followers of Muhammadiyah members often criticize those rituals commonly practiced by NU followers or the traditionalists. For modernists, the rituals like *slametan*, *mawlidan*, *tahlilan*, *manakiban*, and *ziarah kubur* are not in line with the authentic Islamic teachings, so those rituals can be considered as *bid'ah* (heresy). The modernists have a slogan for *tajdīd* or renewal, always invite back to Qur'an and hadīth and avoid the local culture and anything that do not have strong *dalīl* or preposition in the Qur'an and hadīth (Nashir, 2016). The followers of Muhammadiyah or the modernists usually come from the middle class and urban areas. The modernists transmit their Islamic interpretation through their cadre-based institutions called the Mu'allimin, schools and colleges.

Meanwhile, the followers of NU tend to be more adaptive, accommodating local culture which is in principle considered by modernist Muslims incompatible with the value of the basic teachings of Islam. With the jargon of *al-muhāfazah ‘alā al-qadīm as-sālih wal-akhdu bi al-jadīd al-aslah* (preserving the old well and taking the new best), the followers of NU are able to carry out Islamization of religious rituals which the modernist’s circles considered heretics and not Islamic (Rosyidi, 2013). Therefore, the followers of NU usually practice the rituals such as *slametan*, *mawlidan*, *tahlilan*, *manakiban*, and *ziarah kubur*. For them, those rituals are not only allowed, but also can bring them reward and increase their faith in God. The traditionalist Muslims in general, come from the middle class down and live in the rural areas. While, the Islamic interpretation of traditionalists is spread and transmitted through their *pesantren* or Islamic boarding, *majelis taklim* or general lecture, schools, and colleges.

In the *khilāfiya* (the small differences) issues, there are often found the tensions between followers of NU and Muhammadiyah, the two biggest Muslim organizations in Indonesia, but the tensions do not cause physical conflict. On the contrary, the cooperation is more often found between both organizations members rather than conflict. This is because followers of both organizations are considered to have been embedded with Indonesia’s cultural and social contexts and not being directly dictated by any global Islamic organizations. Even in recent times, both organizations have become partners and supporters of the Indonesian government in maintaining the integrity and continuity of the political system of Indonesia. Although lately there are symptoms from some community members for replacing Indonesia’s political system with the *khilāfa* or caliphate system, both organizations are not interested to support the idea. Thus, Muhammadiyah and NU can be considered as two strong pillars in maintaining the continuity of Republic of Indonesia’s political system. Both organizations always show their

commitment not to replace Pancasila as the basis of the state.

However, the hot debates about the permissibility of carrying out the rituals more strengthen in line with the significant development of Salafi-Wahhābī community in Indonesia. The followers of Salafi-Wahhābī always promote their interpretation of Islamic teachings as the only truth. Indeed, they attack other Muslims such as the NU members who disagree with them. One of the media used to achieve this goal is the translated books from the Arabic, written by the prominent Saudi scholars. This paper is meant as an attempt to uncover the amount of material of the “attack” from the Salafi-Wahhābī supporters contained in the books translated from Arabic against religious sacred rituals practiced by NU followers.

On the other hand, this paper also describes how does NU respond and reply to the Salafi attacks and criticism? The discussion in this paper begins with a brief description of the new trends in presence Indonesian Muslims, and then the phenomenon of publishing the books translated from Arabic into Indonesian language. The main discussion of this paper is displayed in the form of the identification of sacred rituals practiced by NU members, and then, the discourse analysis is used to describe the attacks material in the sample books. The protests and backlashes from NU are also presented in this paper. Thus, the whole picture of the religious polemics between Salafi and NU can be described and analyzed objectively.

RESEARCH METHOD

The qualitative approach is employed for accomplishing this study. The primary data of this study consists from several books of Salafi-Wahhābī translated from Arabic and the books written by NU followers as response to critics of Salafi-Wahhābī. The data are collected by using purposive sampling. The key concepts of Islamic rituals are used as the criteria for choosing the relevant samples. Meanwhile, the qualitative content analysis is applied for analyzing data in

relation to their contexts. The research method employed within this study is a qualitative content analysis for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hashemnezhad, 2015).

The analysis process in this study consists of six steps, i.e. definition of the dimension(s) of type-building; definition of the logic of typology; inductive category development with those two aspects as category definition; revising of the inductive categories (types) and determine the ultimate typology; choosing representatives for the types; and describing those types by summarizing qualitative content analysis or inductive category formation (Mayring, 2014: 99-106).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Transnational Islam and New Trends of Islamic Discourse in Indonesia

At the end of the 20th century, precisely in 1998, there was a significant change in the political trend in Indonesia from the authoritarian new order regime under President Soeharto to the latest political direction that is better known as the reformation era. There was no substantive change in the political system of Indonesia in this reformation era, the change only took place in the political trend. The euphoria of freedom was felt by all citizens of the nation, including Indonesian Muslims. In the time of Soeharto regime, some Indonesian Muslims felt their political aspirations were blocked, but in the reformation era, they found the momentum to make it happen. Therefore, they established a number of political parties which openly declared as Islamic parties.

The 1999 election was the first democratic election in the reformation era with participation of 48 political parties, some of which embraced Islam as their basis of ideology or had a close links to Indonesian mass Islamic organizations. It is interesting to be noted, that most of Muhammadiyah followers were voters of PAN (*Partai Amanat Nasional*-National Mandate

Party), and the most of NU followers were voters of PKB (*Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa*-Party of National Awakening). Al-Hamdi gives the good description about the political attitude of Muhammadiyah elite in this era. According to him, there were four variants in the political elite in Muhammadiyah, i.e. transformative-idealistic, moderate-idealistic, realistic-critical, and accommodative-pragmatic. The variations were deeply influenced by two factors, i.e. sociological elite background and organizational (Al-hamdi, 2010).

Entering the 21st century, the life of the Indonesian Muslims was increasingly dynamic and open, not only in the political sphere but also on aspects of freedom to state their opinions and their religious interpretations or ideologies. In this era, a number of trans-national Islamic movements were increasingly visible to show their identity after so long went underground in the time of the Soeharto regime. For example, the KAMMI (*Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia*-United Actions of Indonesian Muslims Student) and the Partai Keadilan (Justice Party) were the current manifestations of the al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn network in Indonesia. HTI (Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia-Freedom Party of Indonesia) was evidence of the existence of a concrete direct connection with global Hizb at-Tahrīr. Meanwhile, the extension of Indonesian Salafi movement in Indonesia was an evidence of a relationship with Wahhābī's schools based in Saudi Arabia.

The presence of the trans-national Islamic movements in Indonesia has made the Islamic discourse in Indonesia more complex to be discussed. In the past, the polemic of Islamic discourse was represented by Muhammadiyah and NU, but now increasingly crowded due to the newcomers. Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn in Indonesia prefers to carry the ideas of Islamic society proposed by Hasan al-Banā and Sayyid Qutb via a more adaptive propagation with the political system in Indonesia. Therefore, they established the *Partai Keadilan* (Justice Party) as a vehicle to fight for their aspirations in the Parliament, and an organization of cadre like KAMMI on the

realm of the Indonesian universities. In the same time, HTI always promoted the *Khilāfa* political system as the only solution over the deterioration of the Muslims in all fields. HTI followers choose their struggle outside the Parliament, because the democracy or the political system in Indonesia was considered as not Islamic, and a product of Western pagan thought.

Apparently, the Salafi movement in Indonesia was not interested in carrying the political discourse openly. The Salafi followers were more interested in the religious discourse to promote Wahhābī's thought or ideology regarded as the only true interpretation of Islamic teachings. It was true, there was a portion of the Salafi group aspired to embody the theocratic political system, and the Islamic sharia should be practiced strictly by all citizens. This is the influence from the ideological network with the global terrorist organization, al-Qaeda. A number of terror events in Indonesia since the beginning of the 21st century until recently were executed by followers of radical Salafi influenced by the ideology of al-Qaeda and Islamic State in Iraq and Syria or ISIS (Ken, 2016; Abdullah and Salleh, 2015). Meanwhile, most of the supporters of the Salafi movement in Indonesia were more affected by the Islamic interpretation promoted by the Wahhābī scholars of Saudi Arabia. It is interesting to be noted that Salafi had established several *pesantren* to spread their ideology (Irham, 2016).

The presence of three newcomer variants of Islam has changed the constellation and the competition of Islamic interpretation in Indonesia. Uniquely, the NU and the Muhammadiyah which was previously involved in a covert competition in promoting their own interpretation, are now more blissful and often seen holding hands in facing "ambushing" of the Islamic thought or ideology carried by al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn, HTI and Salafi-Wahhābī, especially in maintaining the ideology of Pancasila (state ideology of Indonesia) and the political system as a final consensus of all Indonesian founding fathers and regarded as most suitable for Indonesia. Muhammadiyah members are now more lenient in valuing the religious

tradition or rituals practiced by NU members.

In fact, there is an idea proposed by some elites of Muhammadiyah to appreciate the local cultures usually practiced by NU members (Al-Hana, 2011). Even in some areas like Kotagede Yogyakarta, Muhammadiyah members have involved actively in *tahlilan* ritual (Sirait, 2016). Surprisingly, the tension of different interpretations is more intensive between Salafi and NU, especially in the field of religious rituals practiced by followers of NU. Salafi attacks against NU are conducted through a variety of ways, either through a series of oral lectures, radio and television broadcasts, YouTube channels, as well as through a number of book publishing, especially the Arabic books written by the *ulama* of Saudi Wahhābī and translated into Indonesian language.

Transmitting and Translating Wahhābī-Arabic Books in Indonesia

Islam is the religion that cannot be separated from the Arabic language because the primary sources of its teachings are the Qur'an and the hadīth that written in Arabic. These sources are described and explained by Muslim scholars into several branches of Islamic teachings, and in the first time, all of Islamic teachings or sciences such as *'aqīdah* (Islamic faith), *tafsīr* (interpretation of Qur'an), *'ulūm al-hadīs* (sciences of hadīth), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), and Sufism, are originally written in Arabic. The utterances pronounced in *salāt* or prayer are also Arabic. Thus, all of non-Arabic Muslims like Indonesian must learn Arabic if they want to understand and comprehend Islamic teachings. However, not all of Muslims in the world can speak and understand Arabic for several reasons. There is linguistically gap, and to meet the needs of Muslims around the world in understanding the Islamic teachings, several Arabic books are translated into languages, one of it is in Indonesian language. Thus, the translation is one of the methods for transmitting Islamic knowledge from the Middle East as a center of Islamic religion to the rest of the Islamic world as a periphery.

Indeed, the translation of Arabic books in Indonesia had been done for a long time. Bruinessen notes that in the 16th century, there were several Arabic books translated into the Javanese language brought to Europe (Bruinessen, 1999: 27–28). In addition, the translation was one of the strategies or methods for learning the classical Arabic books named *kitab kuning* in the NU *pesantran* (Bruinessen, 1990). The efforts of translating and publishing the books from Arabic into Indonesian language has rapidly increased since the Indonesian independent. In 1956, a publisher named Bulan Bintang was established in Jakarta, as a pioneer Islamic publisher in providing translated books to meet the needs of teaching materials at Islamic universities in Indonesia at the time. In the 1980s, it was very easy to find the books translated from Arabic in the bookstores throughout Indonesia. This was because of an important role of some Islamic book publishers such as Mizan, Gema Insani Press, Alkautsar, and others (Munip, 2010).

Finally, at the beginning of the 21st century, dozens of Islamic book publishers were founded which led to the ‘flood’ of the books translated from Arabic with various themes of discussion. The establishment of several Islamic book publishers was further motivated by the aim to spread a certain Islamic ideology to Indonesian society through the publications. For example, Pustaka Thoriquil Izzah was the publisher that promotes the ideology of HTI. Itisham Cahaya Umat, Tarbiyatuna, Rabbani and Era Inter Media were examples of publishers that promote the ideology of al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn. Meanwhile, Darul Falah, Darul Haq, and Pustaka Imam Syafi’i were examples of publishers that in line with the ideology of Salafi-Wahhābī. Each of these publishers produced the books translated from Arabic, in addition to the works or books written by Indonesian scholars themselves.

In fact, the books translated from the Arabic are not always published in the printed edition, some of them prefer the e-books version which can be easily downloaded and distributed for free from the websites. For example, websites that promote the ideology of Wahhābī are very generous in

providing and sharing the books translated from Arabic for free, some of the well-known websites are <https://www.islamhouse.com/en/>, shirotholmustaqim.wordpress.com, and others. At least, 211 Salafi books can be found in those sites, most of them are Indonesian editions. Moreover, the several sites of Indonesian Salafi are linked to each other. It seems that Salafi-Wahhābī followers are very serious in campaigning Wahhābī ideology in Indonesia through the translation of Arabic books written by their prominent scholars such Muhammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz bin Bāz, Muhammad Nasir ad-Dīn al-Albāni, Sālih al-Fauzan, Muhammad bin Sālih al-Uthaimin, and others.

There is strong evidence that the Government of Saudi Arabia is the sponsor of the translation activities. This is proven by the website of <https://www.islamhouse.com/en/> which turned out to be managed from Riyadh Saudi Arabia. This site is presented in the multi language interface and provides hundreds of e-books about Salafi-Wahhābī which have been translated into various languages, such as English, Urdu, Malay, Indonesian language, Indian, and others. In the case of the books translated into Indonesian language, several Indonesian students in Saudi Arabia have pivotal role. They are actively involved in managing the site, translating the book, editing and distributing the books. One of them is Eko Haryanto Abu Ziyad who is the editor of number of books. Generally, the e-books are poor in layout and cover illustration. The quality of translation is not satisfactory, in which the target language (Indonesian language) still influenced by the source language (Arabic). The translators tend to use the literal translation in translating the Arabic. The translation is not copyrighted. Anyone can download, print, reproduce and share the books with other people. Even in the website, there is a menu that contains a number of recommended books to be printed in Indonesia.

Criticism against Traditional Islamic Rituals

Ritual is an established form for the religious

ceremony; an act or series of acts done in a particular situation and the same way each time. In general term, a ritual is a sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place, and performed according to set sequence. The ritual can be observed in all aspects of human daily life, however, many scholars regard ritual as the main focus in the study of religion and culture. The notion of ritual is often associated with a context of particular religion or tradition. There is a definition of ritual as repeated, customary procedure, associated with religion and involving at least two human participants (Kreinath, Snoek, and Stausberg, 2007: 18), and ritual is essentially expressive and symbolic, and that what distinguishes it from other aspects of human behavior (Kreinath, Snoek, and Stausberg, 2007: 25). No matter which definition of ritual is used, it is obvious that not every society or subgroup appeals to ritual activities in the same way and to the same degree (Bell, 2009: 176).

As a religion, Islam has the regulations, rules, and rituals related to worship and how the human beings should interact with God. Basically, this worship is a ritual that all Muslims must practice as an expression of their obedience to the God. Based on the level of obligation, this worship can be classified into *fard ‘ain* and *fard kifāya*. *Fard ‘ain* is the ritual that must be run by every Muslim who has fulfilled certain conditions, such as *salāt* or prayer, fasting, hajj, and others. Meanwhile, the *fard kifāya* ritual is the collective duty that must be done by Muslims in one region. If some Muslims have performed this ritual, then other Muslims in the region will be free from such ritual. An example of a *fard kifāya* ritual is the procession of corpses from bathing, praying, and burying. In general, the procession of *fard ‘ain* and *fard kifāya* rituals has been arranged in the Qur’an and exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad, and then detailed again in a number of the *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) books as results of *ijtihād* (intellectual effort) of the qualified scholars.

In addition to the ritual distinction above,

there are other rituals that are not regulated in detail in the Qur’an or hadīth. The rituals are included in the additional ritual categories which in practice are based on the creativity and *ijtihād* of the Muslims themselves. The influence of local tradition also appears in the procession of various rituals in this category. The very sharp differences among Muslims are often found in valuing this type of ritual. In Indonesia, this type of ritual has flourished and growth until now. Some examples of rituals that fall into this category are *slametan*, *tahlilan*, *mawlidan*, *manakiban*, and others. The following describes how the books translated from Arabic published by Salafi-Wahhābī criticize the rituals practiced by traditional Muslims represented by NU followers.

The Habits Performed before and after Salāt

Most of the traditional Muslims in Indonesia are adherents of ash-Shāfi‘ī (767-819 AD) in the field of *fiqh* which governs how the implementation of worship like *salāt* or prayer. The domination of Shāfi‘ī schools is proven by the *fiqh* books studied in boarding schools of NU as the basis for regeneration. Practically, there is no significant difference in the movements of *salāt* practiced by the NU followers and the Salafi-Wahhābī. Small differences only occur in a particular movement in *salāt* like *sujūd* (prostration). Salafi criticism is more focused on activities undertaken by NU followers before and after *salāt*. In some NU’s mosques, after the call to prayer, there is a habit to sing the praises to God and *salawāt* (the blessings) for Prophet Muhammad, known as *singiran* (Mawardi, 2006), through loudspeakers while waiting for *iqāma* (call for starting *salāt*). Meanwhile, the other worshipers pray *Sunnah qabliyya*. Against such habits, Salafi-Wahhābī criticizes the *singiran* as a *bid’ah*, because it is not exemplified by the Prophet and his companions.

Surprisingly, in 2014 a book translated from Arabic was published by Aqwam, one of the Salafi publishers to attack this issue. The book is *Belum Shalat Sudah Keliru* (Before praying, You are Mistaken) which one of the discussions

in the book is about the prohibition of singing praises before *salāt*. For Salafi-Wahhābī, reciting or singing praises to Allah and *salawāt* while waiting for *iqāma* or the presence of a prayer imam is not only prohibited but is considered a sinful act (As-Sa'id, 2014). The hard criticism is certainly denied by the NU. For NU, the habit of singing praises to God and *salawat* for the Prophet Muhammad is a good deed that should always be done on various occasions, including on waiting for the congregational prayer to begin. It is true that there are no direct examples of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, but in fact what the NU members doing is believed to be good deeds, as many *dalīl* or propositions suggest for reciting *dhikr* and *salawāt* (Abdushomad, 2008).

Furthermore, the activities of NU members after completing the congregational prayer is shaking hands each other. After that, they do *dhikr* (remembering God) together with a loud voice led by a prayer imām. This habit is also criticized by Salafi-Wahhābī through the following note:

“But one thing that should be understood for the problem of *salāt* is there any specificity shake hands after *salām* (greetings) in the *salāt*? The answer is the shake hands after such *salām* is not a habit of the Prophet Sallallāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam and his companion radiyallāhu ‘anhum. However, they have a habit of performing *dhikr* after *salām*, that is by reading *istighfār* three times and other *dhikr*” (Rumaysho, n.d.).

However, this habit of NU members also has strong arguments and considered not to violate the basic principles of Islamic teachings. For NU members, the habit of the handshake is a good behavior as an expression of mutual forgiveness among Muslims. Prophet Muhammad himself has said that: “The two Muslims who met then shook hands each other, then God will forgive the sins of both people before they part.” In the hadīth, there is no prohibition to shake hands after prayer. Therefore, NU members do not regard this habit as heresy. In relation to reciting *dhikr*, a writer of NU says after gives a several hadīths as basic arguments: “Raising the voice in *dhikr* when the congregation obligatory prayer

finished was happened at the time of the Prophet. This hadīth is narrated by Al Bukhari and Muslim” (Fateh, 2011: 31). This hadīth shows that they gather to reciting *dhikr* together with *jahr* (loud voice), because the silent *dhikr* is usually done individually (Shihabuddin, 2007: 219).

The Corpse Ritual

The ritual of the corpse is *fard kifāya*, the collective duty of Muslims in one region. Prophet Muhammad suggested to express the condolences by attending the family house of the dead to pray and to comfort the grief of the abandoned family. This activity is called *takziyah*. Among NU members, there is a habit of serving food and drink by the family of the dead to the guests who practicing *takziyah*. This is what the Salafi-Wahhābī strongly opposes. According to Salafi adherents, serving food and drink to the guests who attend *takziyah* is not allowed, because this is prohibited by the Prophet Muhammad.

“Then, it shows that gathering for the *takziyah* and providing food for the comings is the heresy that has no basis in religion, so that it must deny, and help to do it is the act of sin” (Fatwa, 2010: 11).

However, NU member has a distinct opinion on the matter. According to NU member, the habit of serving food and drink on the day of death is not prohibited in Islam, and it is beneficial to the dead spiritually because the food and drink is a form of *sadaqah* (charity) from the heirs whose reward will flow and be received by the dead in the grave.

“Serving food made by the dead family to people who come for *takziyah* or attending an invitation to read the Qur’an is permissible because it includes *ikrām ad-dayf* (saluting guests), and in Islam, this is something recommended. There was a man named Sa’ad, he asked the Messenger of Allah: ‘O Messenger of Allah, my mother died and I was not in that place, does it benefit for her if I give something for her?’ The Messenger replied: ‘Yes, Sa’ad’. Sa’ad said: ‘Thus, that my fruitful garden is my allotment for her’” (Fateh, 2011: 36).

The ritual related to corpses includes bathing, praying and burying. In general, there is no striking difference in the ritual among Muslims.

However, after the corpse is buried, NU members usually perform the *talqīn* ritual, namely teaching the dead about how to deal with the *Munkar* and *Nākir* angels who are believed in Islam will come to give some questions to the newly buried dead. Broadly speaking, the *talqīn* ritual begins when the funeral procession has been completed. The people stand around the tomb, then one of their religious leaders will begin the ritual by reading the book of *talqīn* written in Javanese and Arabic as follow:

“O..... Son of/daughter of..... Now you have left the world to the grave, so you do not forget your promise, that is no God besides Allah and the Prophet Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. Now, in a place where you do not know, there are the two angels will ask for a moment, do not be afraid to get up. In fact, the two angels are the same as the creation of God. When the two angels came to you and ask: ‘Men! Who is your God? What is your religion? Who is your Prophet? What is your beliefs? Where your qibla, and what are things you like most to say in your life and death?’ Let us be true and steadfast. Allah is my God, Islam is my religion, Muhammad is my Prophet, al-Qur’an is my holy book, Ka’ba is my qibla, the prayer of five times is my duty, all Muslims are my family, and I always in the belief that no god besides Allah” (Surabaya, 2011).

The *talqīn* is then closed with praying to God, asking Him to grant forgiveness and salvation for the dead.

For the Salafi, the *talqīn* ritual mentioned above does not have a solid foundation in the authentic Islamic teachings. The Prophet, the best companions and early generations of Muslims never did such ritual. Therefore, they assume that *talqīn* is *bid’ah*. Moreover, talking to a dead person is also useless because he cannot hear.

“Therefore, based on what has been said by the fuqahā’, then it is clear that the dead should not be a target with *salām* (greeting) and could not be invited to speak and the real purpose of the greeting is a prayer itself” (Al-Lusi, 2003: 165).

For the NU followers, the *talqīn* ritual is based on the argumentation, as follows:

“It is recommended to perform *talqīn* after the dead are buried perfectly. The hadīth which explains the permissibility of *talqīn* against the dead

is the hadīth narrated by al-Hāfiz Diya’uddin al-Maqdīsī in his book *al-Mukhtārah*. Regarding the status of the hadīth, al-Hāfiz Ibn Hajar said: ‘The transmitters are the trusted people’. The meaning of the *talqīn* is as mentioned in the hadīth. Its meaning is surely the angel *Munkar* and *Nakir*, one said to the other: ‘Let go, why we should sit near the one who has taught his *hujjah* (arguments to answer our question)’. So the benefit of *talqīn* is the dead will be free from the question of two angels, *Munkar* and *Nakir*” (Fateh, 2011: 84).

The Slametan and Tahlilan Ritual

The word *slametan* is derived from the Javanese “*slamet*” which means to be avoided from danger. Indeed, the word *slamet* is not original Javanese vocabulary, but it is borrowed from Arabic “*salāmah*”. This borrowed vocabulary has the same meaning as the original word. *Slamet* means also getting true happiness. Thus, the *slametan* ritual is conducted for pursuing safety and truly happiness. Geertz has described *slametan* ritual as the tradition of Javanese *abangan*, but factually the *slametan* is not only performed by the *abangan* variant, it also is performed by sub variant of *santri* namely traditional Muslim who are predominantly followers of NU. The *slametan* ritual is still carried out dutifully by traditional Muslims in rural Java.

In the *slametan*, the host invites the neighbors to present at his house. The host usually has prepared by laying out the mats, serving the food, and also the *berkat* (rice and others) that will be taken home by the participants. After all the invitations have been present, the host will convey the intent of holding the *slametan*, thanking the attendees, and not forgetting to apologize if the ritual does not give the best tribute to the audience. Typically, the host’s welcome speech is represented by another deemed appropriate, such as the head of the neighborhood or other community leaders. Next, the host appealed to Pak Kaum or Rois (a leader in *slametan*) to begin the ritual.

Usually, the ritual is begun with reciting sura *al-Fātiha* that “awarded” to the Prophet Muhammad, his companions, his descendants,

and all Muslims who have died, especially the ancestors of the host. Then, Pak Kaum leads to pray with Arabic that contains a plea to God for giving them salvation, health and happiness. When the Pak Kaum leads the prayer, the audiences support him by saying the word 'amen'. The *slametan* ritual is usually combined with *tahlilan* (the reading of *lā ilāha illallāh* and other standard prayers), and sometimes the ritual is begun with the reading of sura *Yāsin*, so the ritual is known as *yasinan*.

The *slametan* ritual is usually carried out in relation to specific events in the life cycle of Javanese people, or the activities that important in their life. Thus, among Javanese traditional Muslims, there are a number of *slametan* rituals, such as *slametan* of pregnancy, birth, marriage, and death. Specifically, the *slametan* of death is often held for 3 days, on the 7th day, 40th day, 100th day and 1000th day. In addition, the *slametan* is also performed as an expression of gratitude to God for the pleasure given to them, such as *slametan* for a new home, getting a new work, promoting in the work, and even for buying a new vehicle.

In view of the followers of the Salafi-Wahhābī, the *slametan*, *tahlilan* or *yasinan* are considered to have no basis in Islam. They regard the ritual as *bid'ah* and whoever doing the ritual as *ahl al-bid'ah* (actors of heresies), a designation that not liked by the ritual supporters.

"Yes, we tell that all of those (*tahlilan*, *salawātan*, *ziarah kubur*) are *bid'ah* and *khurafāt* attached to the teachings of Islam, but Islam disengages itself from it even though it is viewed favorably by most humans" (Al-Atsary, n.d.).

Firmly, NU followers do not agree with the Salafi's opinion above. For NU members, the *slametan* ritual is permissible, because in the ritual there are several good deeds, such as reciting Qur'an, *salawāt* to the Prophet, and other prayers. Furthermore, the rewards of reciting the Qur'an will be receipt by the dead. Likewise, in *tahlilan* or *yasinan*, the main purpose in reciting of Qur'an, *tasbīh*, *tahmīd*, *salawāt* on the Prophet, and so on is the prayer to Allah specifically for

the dead. All the recital of the *dhikr* read in this ceremony will surely be rewarded, many hadīth narrated it (Shihabuddin, 2007: 166).

The Mawlidan Ritual

The *mawlidan* is a ritual to commemorate the birth of Prophet Muhammad, which is usually filled with the reading hagiography of him. At least, there are several hagiographies of him that very popular in Indonesia, such as *Mawlid ad-dibā'ī*, the work of Abd ar-Rahmān ad-Dibā'ī (1461-1537 AD) and *Iqd al-jawhar fī mawlid an-nabiy al-azhar*, the work of Ja'far al-Barzanjī (1714-1764 AD). If it is the work of *al-Barzanji*, the *mawlidan* is often known as *barzanjen*. Likewise, it is known as *diba'an* if they read the work of ad-Dibā'ī.

The main purpose of the *mawlidan* is to show the love of Muslims to the Prophet Muhammad, and to gain his intercession for them (Ats-Tsaury, n.d.). Uniquely, the *mawlidan* ritual is not always held in *Rabi' al-Awwal* that believed as the birthday month of Prophet Muhammad, but it is also held in the other months. Moreover, the *mawlidan* ritual is also held routinely every night of Friday in rotation from a home to home. The ritual is also started with reciting sura *al-Fātiha*, and then continued with singing *salāwat* for Prophet Muhammad that usually accompanied with music tambourine. After that, one of the participants starts to recite the hagiography. The hagiography contains the journey of Prophet life and begins with the narration of Prophet Ancestors, the birth of the Prophet, and his miracles. When the reciter has finished in reading narration of the birth of the Prophet, the participants stand in unison as a symbol of tribute to the Prophet (Kaptan, 1993; Ta'rifin, 2009; Jati, 2012).

For the adherents of Salafi-Wahhābī, the *mawlidan* ritual has always been the targets of their criticism through a number of books translated from Arabic. There are some of the hard criticisms that necessary to be cited here.

"One example of heresies is celebrating the mawlid of Prophet Muhammad where some peo-

ple hold a celebration on 12 Rabi' al-Awwal to commemorate the birth of him. This act is bid'ah (heresy) that never carried out by the Prophet, his companions and al-Khulafa' ar-Rāshidūn, and was not celebrated by the Muslim community in the 2nd and 3rd Hijri centuries, because the act is bid'ah, likewise with commemorations of the birth of Sheikh Badawi, Sheikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jailānī, and others (Baz, 1995: 31).

Even if the mawlid celebration is followed with a prayer to ask for help and assistance to the Messenger of Allah, then the deed can be included to shirk to God" (Baz, 1995: 36). From the sharī'ah point of view, the celebrating the mawlid of Prophet Muhammad is not legitimate and also it has no foundation. If the celebrating the mawlid of the Prophet is prescribed in our religion, then surely this celebration has been organized by the Prophet, and of course, he would tell it to the people. Singing and standing in commemorating the mawlid of the Prophet can be included to the stupidity, likewise considering that the Messenger is coming at the time" (Al-'Uthaimin, n.d.: 1–2).

Nevertheless, supporters of the *mawlidan* ritual also have strong arguments that they refer to in carrying out the ritual.

"It was true that the mawlid celebration was never done by people during the life of the Prophet (peace be upon him), it was indeed bid'ah, but it was good bid'ah, because it was in line with the law of shara' and in line with the general rules of the religion. The nature of its bid'ah lied in the form of congregational gatherings, not in individual commemorating the birth of the Prophet. Because of his lifetime, every Muslim did it in various ways and forms even though it was not called 'celebration'. All of these were the ijtihād of scholars to gather people to commemorate the Prophet's mawlid collectively. So this bid'ah was a good bid'ah because of the many benefits of the ceremony" (Shihabuddin, 2007: 262).

The Manakiban Ritual

The next ritual that always criticized by Salafi-Wahhābī is the *manakiban* ritual, namely the reading of hagiography or *manāqib* (the book of saint miracles), and the most popular saint in Indonesia is 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jailānī (1077-1166 AD), although he is not an Indonesian. The popularity of al-Jailānī in Indonesia is likely related to the spread of the Qādiriya *tarekat* in Indonesia, the Sufi brotherhood attributed to

the Abd al-Qadir's name as its founder. Later on, the Qādiriya is combined with the Naqshbandi *tarekat*, founded by Bahā'uddīn an-Naqshabandī (1318-1389 AD), and the new *tarekat* is emerged which known as Tarekat Qādiriya-Naqshabandiya (TQN).

The pioneer of TQN is Ahmad Khatib Sambas (d. 1875 AD), a Sufi who was born in Sambas of Borneo and died in Mecca. The spread of TQN in Indonesia was forwarded by his pupil, Abd al-Karim Banten. TQN becomes the most popular *tarekat* in Indonesia because of its centers are in Java, i.e. Pesantren Suryalaya in Tasikmalaya, West Java; Pesantren Futuhiyah in Mranggen Demak, Central Java; and Pesantren Rejoso in Jombang, East Java (Bruinessen, 2000). The *manakiban* ritual is usually held in the regions where TQN members live. In the fact, there are dozens of Arabic books of al-Jailānī's hagiography (Ad-Duhaibi, 2007), but only a few are popular and translated in Indonesia. In West Java, the popular book is *Tafrih al-khātir* which is then translated into *Wawacan Kanjeng She* (Millie, 2008a). Meanwhile, in Central Java, the most popular is *al-Lujjain ad-dānī fī manāqib Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jailānī* by al-Barzanjī. The popularity of *al-Lujjain ad-dānī* in Java is proved by the discovery of several translated versions in Javanese such as *Lubāb al-ma'ānī fī tarjamah al-lujjain ad-dānī* and *an-Nūr al-burhānī* (Munip, 2018). Usually, the *manakiban* ritual is carried out by *tarekat* followers on the 11th day of every month within the Hijri calendar system.

The purpose of the *manakiban* ritual is almost the same as the *mawlidan* ritual, which is to expect the blessing of God through His beloved, i.e. Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jailānī (Millie, 2008b). In the view of supporters of *manakiban*, the position of al-Jailānī as *waliyullāh* (saint of Allah) is very close to God, so it can be a mediator to God. Therefore, the *manakiban* ritual is actually a part of the participant efforts in pleading for help to God. There are a number of testimonials from the participants about the positive effects of their presence in the ritual on improving their lives in health, economic and career.

For Salafi-Wahhābī, the *manakiban* ritual is considered to be the act of *ghuluw* (cult) or the profiling to someone that prohibited in Islam.

“Ghuluw to the prophet alone is not allowed, much less to those who are in a lower position than the Prophet like the righteous people. Even if we see in the history, we find that ghuluw to the righteous people causes the first appearance of shirk or infidelity in front of the earth” (Al-Hidayah, 2015).

However, for NU followers, the *manakiban* ritual is a form of *tawasul* with the righteous people that justified in Islam. Some of the hadīths used as arguments include: “If you feel confused in the face of a problem, ask for help to the inhabitant of the grave”(Al-Marāqī, 1962: 33). This hadīth is used as an argument to support the permissibility of *tawasul* with a deceased person.

“Imām Shafi’ī himself once said, “Surely, I have taken blessing from Abū Hanīfah, and come to his grave every day. If I have a wish then I pray two raka’at and then come to his grave and ask Allah to grant my wish on the side of his grave, soon afterwards I was granted.” See The History of Baghdad Volume 1, page 123 in the chapter on graves were in Baghdad” (Shihabuddin, 2007: 305).

The Ziarah Kubur (Grave Pilgrimage) Ritual

The next ritual that is often the target of Salafi-Wahhābī’s criticisms is pilgrimage or visiting to the grave of parents, relatives, righteous people and leaders who are considered to have great service for the advancement of Islam often known as *waliyullāh* or saint. Meanwhile, the tomb of *waliyullāh* is known as *makam keramat* (sacred grave). There are at least two goals that one would like to get when visiting a graveyard. First, if the graves visited are parents, ancestors or relatives, the purpose of the pilgrimage is to pray for them so that their good deeds are accepted and their sins are forgiven. Whereas if the grave visited is the tomb of the saint or *waliyullāh*, then the purpose of the pilgrimage is to *tawasul*, that is to plead to Allah through the righteous people who are considered to have a high position near to Allah.

Rituals of visiting the graves of parents,

ancestors or relatives are often performed by traditional Muslims every *Kliwon* Friday. They visit the grave individually and pray in front of the grave. The prayers are usually the recitation of the *sura Yāsin* and or *tahlīl*. By reading these prayers, they hope God will forgive the sins of those who are buried, receive the good deeds, and place them in heaven. In addition to the *Kliwon* Friday, the rituals of visiting the graves of parents, ancestors, and relatives were also held during the month of Sha’ban (in the Javanese calendar known as the *Ruwah* month) known as the *nyadran*. In some Javanese villages, the *nyadran* ritual is performed simultaneously by all villagers.

I have participated in the *nyadran* ritual in the village of Wonokromo, Pleret, Bantul Yogyakarta. The Muslim population of Wonokromo consisting of men, women, and children gathered together at Mosque known as the Patoknegoro Mosque which has links with Yogyakarta Palace. They listened to *tawsiyah* (religious lectures) of an ulama, followed by *tahlilan*. In the view of Javanese traditional Muslims, the *nyadran* is indeed an expression of the concept of *birr al-wālidain* or good acts for parents. Meanwhile, traditional Javanese Muslims also frequently do the ritual traveling in order to visit the sacred tombs. Among the most popular sacred tombs is the tomb of *Walisongo* (nine saints) who were considered very valuable in spreading Islam in Java (Mujib, 2016).

It is known, that the followers of Salafi-Wahhābī always oppose the grave pilgrimage and the dome above the tomb (Elaskary and Yun, 2017). Against the ritual, Salafi has own opinions as follow:

“Including apostasy in action is *tawwāf* (walking around) in the graves in order to be closer to whom in the graves or to pray for them (the inhabitants of the grave) or jinn. The praying, begging for help or vowing for the inhabitants of the graves is included as apostasy with words. But if the *tawwāf* in the graves with the intention of worship to Allah, then this act of heresy is not apostasy, because the person performs this with the intention of drawing closer to God for his ignorance (Baz, 1995: 24).

The deeds of today's worshipers in different parts of the world, such as appealing to the dead, asking for help or assistance to them are included as disbelief. As some of them said: 'O my sayyid, help me! I am by your side, heal my sickness, return my lost and fix my heart!' They pray to the dead whom they regarded as a saint and they forget God by associating Him with something else, so this is disbelief in a word, belief, and deed. Even some of them are asking for help from the Prophet from a distant place and region. They say: 'O Messenger of Allah, give me help!' Some others complain near to the grave of the Prophet: 'O Messenger of Allah, heal my sickness, give me help. Help us in the face of the enemy. You know the circumstances that hit us, so help us in the face of our enemies!' The Messenger of Allah did not know the unseen things. No one knows the unseen except Allah. And these deeds include shirk both in word and deed (Baz, 2011: 4).

At the time of the pilgrimage, the Prophet Muhammad never read the sura of al-Fātihah, as well as other sura from the Qur'an, then read it when the pilgrimage is *bid'ah* (Al-Lusi, 2003: 171).

Kuburi is a person who always comes to the grave of others who are considered as having *karāmah* (honor) like the graves of the saints and the righteous people with the aim of asking for *barakāh*, hints and so on" (An-Nabhani, n.d.).

For NU members or traditional Muslims, the visiting to grave is not prohibited, *bid'ah* or *kufur* (disbelief). It is true, that the Messenger never forbade the pilgrimage to the grave at the time when Muslims have not completely free from the influence of *jāhiliyya* traditions. However, when they have a strong belief in God, then the Messenger of Allah advised his companions to visit the grave. The suggestion applies to both men and women because this *hadīth* is not specified only for men (Shihabuddin, 2007: 145).

The ongoing attacks and criticism from Salafi-Wahhabi have made NU as an organization, to consolidate so that its members would not be affected by Salafi propaganda. At least there are two efforts that have been and are being done by NU, namely strengthening of internal solidarity and socializing its teachings to the outside world. Some efforts to strengthen internal solidarity are: Firstly, improving the curriculum and teaching

material of NU's interpretation of Islam that taught in its schools and *pesantren*.

Secondly, publishing a number of books that can be the basis or guidance for NU members in carrying out various rituals or habits that have been characteristic of them. Thus, they will be more stable in practicing their traditions and not easily influenced by the Salafi- Wahhābī propaganda. Thirdly, increasing the intensity of Islamic studies materials at *Majelis Taklim* (public preaching) in the areas which identified as the basis of NU supporters. Fourth, conducting training for trainers to produce the activists who will be the defenders of NU on the front line.

Meanwhile, some efforts in socializing NU's teaching or ideology are done by the expansion of media channels to convey NU's teachings to the public, such as through parabolic television broadcasting, radio broadcasting, and empowering official websites which include religious consultation rubrics. Naturally, many NU members participate actively in defending themselves from the "attacks" of Salafi-Wahhābī. Their participation is in the form of writing a counter book to match Salafi-Wahhābī's ideology and also in the form of posting their opinion on their personal websites or blogs.

CONCLUSION

Entering the 21st century, Indonesian Muslims experienced a number of significant dynamics of change. The condition of the political system, which was more open since the reformation era at the end of the 20th century, led to the emergence of a new trans-nationalist Islamic movements complementing the two pre-existing Islamic groups of traditionalists and modernists. The trans-nationalist group is represented by al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn, HTI, and Salafi-Wahhābī. Meanwhile, the traditionalist group is represented by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and the modernist group is represented by Muhammadiyah. There was small friction between NU and Muhammadiyah that occurred in the past, but currently the two organizations start to show cooperation against the "attacks" of

discourse from the trans-nationalist groups.

However, in the field of the interpretation of Islamic teachings, the fiercest discourse struggle occurs between Salafi-Wahhābī and NU. Through a number of books of Saudi scholars translated into Indonesian, Salafi-Wahhābī often makes sharp criticisms of the religious rituals practiced by NU followers. Almost all religious rituals that characterize the religious expression of NU followers are attacked by Salafi-Wahhābī, such as habits or rituals before and after salāt, singing praises and *salawātan*, *talqīn*, *slametan*, *tahlilan*, grave pilgrimage, *mawlidan*, and *manakiban*.

Although the contents of the Arabic books translated into the Indonesian language as the main reference of Salafi, it did not mention directly the rituals practiced by the NU followers. The Salafi-Wahhābī supporters always refer the books in attacking the NU rituals considered heresy, shirk, even the *kufur*. The massive movement of Salafi-Wahhābī propagation in attacking the rituals of NU members causes NU felt the need to consolidate themselves to fortify their members from Salafi-Wahhābī ideology. Some of the consolidation efforts are publications of books containing complete argumentation about the validity of their rituals, and also socialization their teachings through websites and blogs.

Finally, it seems that the different Islamic interpretations between Salafi-Wahhābī and NU remains fair and does not lead to physical conflict at the grassroots level. The history has proved that Indonesian people are able to manage well the differences of ethnicity, religion, and culture. Indonesia is a melting pot for all the diversity of its citizens, under the slogan of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, meaning diversity in unity.

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