Hunting *Baraka*: The Spiritual Materiality and Material Spirituality

Reconfiguring the Indonesian Islamic Landscape

by

James Michael Edmonds

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved April 2020 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Shahla Talebi, Chair
Gaymon Bennett
Charles Haines
James Rush

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2021

ABSTRACT

Much of the anthropological and Islamic studies focus in recent years has addressed the shifting forms of Islamic piety across Muslim majority societies. The analysis of this shift in Islamic practice and belief has enveloped the changing sensibilities around technologies, social strata, democracy, law, and everyday life. In light of these transformations, after the fall of the Indonesian New Order in 1998, the performances of Islamic devotional songs (*salawat*) by Habib Syech bin Abdul Qadir Assegaf (Habib Syech) began bringing millions of people together across Indonesia, Malaysia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, South Korea, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. Although *salawat* has typically been performed in remembrance of the birth of Prophet Muhammad (*mawlid*) in localized celebrations. The performances of *salawat* by Habib Syech, on the other hand, occur fifteen or more times a month with crowds swelling to tens of thousands across multiple nation-states. Habib Syech's *salawat* performances furthermore appeal to and bring together diverse Muslim populations that have historically been more divided. Habib Syech's gatherings reveal how popular forms of piety are shifting in conjunction with profound societal changes in Indonesia and other Muslim communities.

In untangling the popularity of Habib Syech's gatherings, it was not until I became entangled in the rhythm of *salawat* that *baraka*, often translated as blessings, emerged as a slippery, elusive, and living helping propel the popularity of this phenomena. The guttural cries of my interlocutors (*baraka, baraka, baraka*) resonate and summon a methodology that takes the visible and invisible together in understanding the

concept and life of *baraka*. I, like my interlocutors, began hunting *baraka* as an alternative, living concept that challenges understandings of Islam in Indonesia driven by Islamic civil organizations, prescriptive vs everyday Islamic piety, and Western interpretations of the world as disenchanted. This dissertation is an exploration of new opportunities for understanding religion in the modern world that emerge from the ethnographic field through the life of *baraka*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to begin by expressing my most profound appreciation to Muhamad Ali; he was instrumental in providing me the resources and encouragement to start my study of Indonesia in 2010. Without his mentorship, I would have never begun my exploration of Islam in Indonesia. I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to my dissertation committee: Shahla Talebi, Gaymon Bennett, Chad Haines, and James Rush. Shahla Talebi kept me focused and was one of my biggest supporters throughout my Ph.D. Her academic support and kindness enabled me to see this project to its completion. Gaymon Bennett supported me in both personal and intellectual ways that words alone cannot express. No matter the time of day or night, Gaymon Bennett was always willing and excited to discuss my work or personal struggles; I am eternally grateful for these things. Chad Haines has always been a calming influence, and he has always pushed me to engage in academic and Islamic works of literature that stretch my capabilities. I am also thankful for the rich discussions over shisha with Chad. James Rush has never allowed my work to suffer from my lack of knowledge. Without his expertise and academic rigor, my dissertation and knowledge of Indonesia would have greatly suffered. I would like to additionally express my gratitude to Jason Bruner who has operated in the background of my academic journey providing feedback, encouragement, and bike rides. I must also thank numerous other Indonesianists who have supported my journey and intellectual thought: Peter Suwarno, Richard Fox, James Hoesterey, Mark Woodward, Timothy P. Daniels, Robert W. Hefner, Verena Meyer, Zainal Bagir, and Samsul Maarif.

I am incredibly grateful to Habib Syech bin Abdul Qadir Assegaf, his family, and my hundreds of interlocutors who accepted me into their lives during my ethnographic research. Habib Syech took me under his care as a member of his own family; I am deeply indebted to him for his willingness to entertain my questions and presence. He would often call me “wong desa” (village person) as I tried to understand *salawat* and Indonesian society. His patience, care, and humor made the constant travel and uncomfortably worth every moment. Although many of my interlocutors must remain nameless, I could not have completed this project without their willing participation and friendship. Habib Syech’s musicians, sound crew, and merchants treated me as one of them. I am deeply indebted to them for the moments where they feed me, clothed me, and helped me navigate *salawat*.

I am also grateful to the College of Charleston, Arizona State University (ASU) and University of California Riverside Religious Studies programs for their academic and financial support. Without their help, I would not have been able to undertake the many ethnographic trips to Indonesia, Malaysia, Taiwan, or Hong Kong. Additionally, I would like to thank the American Institute for Indonesian Studies, the ASU Center for Asian Studies, the ASU Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict, and the International Institute of Islamic thought for their financial and administrative support.

I would also like to acknowledge the emotional and social support of my chosen family. I cannot begin to express my thanks to Catur Septiadi, Anang Saparin, Marvin Wibisono, Mahadrika Fauzi, and Hammam Sanadi, who accepted me as a part of their Indonesian family and supported my human needs in Indonesia over the last ten years. Thanks also to my friends who shared this journey with me and acted as emotional

sounding boards, including Alana Campbell, Jeremy Delfin, Jacquelyn Medina, Jason and Jodey Thompson, Jaclyn and Kirby Pederson, Nick and Kristen Mangosing, Joey Gillis, Rex Juacalla, Hillary Foulk, Chris Mancuso, Ruben Mendoza, Kayla Chester, Shane Cavanaugh, and Ross Schneider. Special thanks to my mother, Sue Edmonds, and my father, John Edmonds, who have always driven me to pursue my passions and helped financially support those passions. I want to thank my brother, Ezekiel Edmonds, who helped edit my dissertation and who was always remained a positive force. Finally, I would like to express my deepest appreciation and love to my wife, Katelyn Murphy. She has provided care, support, and love every moment of my voyage through my Ph.D. I cannot wait to continue my life's journey with my unconditionally compassionate, empathetic, and loving partner.

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INTRODUCTION

I mounted my motorbike in Yogyakarta, headed to one Habib Syech bin Adbul Qadir Assegaf's performance of *salawat*- Islamic devotional songs- near Wonogiri in Indonesia. I popped in my headphones to listen to music and use Google maps to help navigate. The transnational group who followed *salawat* performed by Habib Syech had a Facebook page [I think you should bring the facebook name here and then the numbert of followers] with over half a million followers, Syekhermania Pusat. This Facebook page had advertised the event a few days prior, and I wanted to interview some of the merchants who usually began setting up several hours before the performance. The trip would take around three hours, and except the village name, I know nothing about the actual location. I took off on my motorbike, not knowing exactly where I was going, which was usually the case for most people who attended these events. I stopped about halfway through, where I ate some fried rice and snacked on baked goods as a large group of Indonesian schoolteachers sang karaoke at a deafening volume. I texted a member of Habib Syech's sound crew to see if I could get a better idea of the location. He did not answer. I smoked a cigarette with one of the older schoolteachers while explaining to him that I was on my way to see Habib Syech's *salawat*. He asked, "well, would you like to sing one of the songs?" I responded, "no, I have a terrible voice. You will probably ask me to stop." He laughed and replied, "no, of course, not." We finished our cigarettes, and the schoolteachers posed for several pictures. I hopped back on my motorbike and continued driving.

The schoolteachers singing karaoke, who were unaffiliated with Habib Syech's *salawat* performance, asked if I would like to sing "one of the songs." Within Indonesia,

Habib Syech was easily recognizable as a *salawat* performer associated with certain *salawat* litanies. Indeed, in numerous interactions with my interlocutors over eight years of ethnographic research, my interlocutors asserted that Habib Syech was the "leader of *salawat*." However, Habib Syech's *salawat* performances were not composed of devotional songs created by him. Performances of *salawat* have a long history in Indonesia and Muslim communities across the world. *Salawat* has typically been performed in remembrance of Prophet Muhammad's birth (*mawlid*) in localized celebrations and Muslim saint's festivals. For example, Habib Munzir bin Fuad Al-Musawa, who performed *salawat* and *dzikir* across Indonesia until his death in 2013, was known to attract thousands of people. Muhammad Ainun Nadjib, Cak Nun, also pulls large crowds on the island of Java to his *salawat* and sermons. His *salawat* mixes guitars with Javanese gamelan seeking to assert the importance of bringing diverse ethnic and cultural groups together across Java.[1] So, how and for whom is Habib Syech the leader of *salawat*?

Habib Seych's popularity has swollen to include fifteen to twenty events across the islands of Indonesia as well as events in Malaysia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, South Korea, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. His performances often bring crowds of tens of thousands together. Habib Syech started performing *salawat* around 1998. Previously, he used to travel around the island of Java preaching. However, his preaching was not well received. But since 1998, Habib Syech has performed *salawat* more than the Grateful Dead, the Rolling Stones, and many other Western artists across ten countries.

[1] For a discussion of Cak Nun and the Maiyah movement, please see chapter seven of Timothy P Daniels, *Islamic Spectrum in Java* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009).

This dissertation explores the cacophony of histories, technologies, Islamic sensibilities, and material cultures that inform performances of *salawat and renders them popular*. Considering the multitudes of elements at play, my analysis and ethnographic exploration of these performances' popularity reveal shifting forms of Islamic piety that bring Muslims together who have divergent and sometimes conflicting sensibilities. I analyze this shift in Islamic piety in conjunction with profound societal changes in Indonesia and other Muslim majority societies. One of these histories and societal shifts present in the popularity of *salawat* performed by Habib Syech relates to his status as a *sayyid* -a descendant of Prophet Muhamad- and this title's connection with *baraka*, often translated as blessings or charisma. The only English language article on Habib Syech has initially indicated the rise of the importance of *sayyids* in Indonesia that have created new social movements and engagements with Islam has been initially indicated by

Even with the popularity of *salawat* performed by Habib Syech, only one English language article[2] and a handful of Indonesian language articles and books[3] have taken these events directly or indirectly as their object of study. Mark Woodward et al. have approached *salawat* performed by Habib Syech to understand contemporary Hadhrami

[2] Mark Woodward, Inayah Rohmaniyah, Ali Amin, Samsul Ma'arif, Diana Murtaugh Coleman, Muhammad Sani Umar, "Ordering what is right, forbidding what is wrong: Two faces of Hadhrami dakwah in contemporary Indonesia," *RIMA: Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, vol. 46, no 2 (2012): 105-146.

[3] Ahmad Zainal Abidin. *Habib Syech* (Yogyakarta: *Laksana*, 2019). Uwes Fatoni and Eka Octalia Indah Librianti, "Motif Syekhermania Mengakses Video Dakwah Habib Syech bin Abdul Qadir Assegaf," *al-Balagh:Jurnal Dakwa dan Komunikasi,* Vol 3, No 1 (2018): 1-26. Noviera Ira and Dr., Zainul Abas, M.Ag., *Perbandfingan Metode Dakkwa Habaib di Surakarta (Studi Deskriptif Terhadap Pengajian Habib Syech bin Abdul Qadir Assegaf; Habib Noval Bin Muhammad Alaydrus; Habib Alwi Bin Ali Al-Habsyi)* (Surakarta: IAIN Surakarta, 2017). Muhamad Ozon and Kusrini, "Pembuatan Aplikasi Android Tuntunan Qasidah Pilihan Habib Syech bin Abdul Qadir Assegaf," *Jurnal Dasi*. Vol. 13, No. 2 (June 2012): 50-55. Nur Rosyid, "Bershalawat Bersama Habib: Transformasi Baru Relasi Audiens Muslim NU di Indonesia," *Jantra*, Vol. VII, No. 2, (December 2012): 135-144. Moh Saifuddin, *Wujud Dan Strategi Imperatif Dalam Pidato Habib Syech Bin Abdul Qodir Assegaf.* (Surakarta: Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, 2012).

dahwa, the sharing of faith to call others to Islam, in Indonesia. These authors were interested in comparing Habib Syech and Al-Habib Muhammad Rizieq bin Hussein Syihab (Habib Rizieq), the founder of the Islamic Defender's Front, Front Pembela Islam (FPI). Habib Rizieq established stabled FPI as an Islamic political movement in 1998. FPI is known for its 'vice raids' that include closing down small food shops during Ramadan, organizing protests against the government, and inflicting violence on Islamic minorities. The authors argue that both of these figures, Habib Rizieq and Habib Syech, represent new social movements and engagements with Islam that magnify emotions. Habib Syech encourages love and compassion. Habib Rizieq, on the other hand, stirs up fear and hatred.[4] Their analysis indicates the need for further research on the rise of Hadhrami authority in post-Independence Indonesia that pulls from these individuals' "Arab otherness" that provides authenticity to Javanese Islamic civilization.[5] Mark Woodward et al. have also argued that both figures' cultural capital is directly related to their perceived *baraka* that flows from their connection to their positions as Hadhrami *sayyids*. Habib Syech's status as a *sayyid*, the history of Hadhrami teachers in Indonesia, and the perception of Hadhrami *sayyids' baraka* are all part of what drives the popularity of *salawat* performed by Habib Syech in Indonesia and beyond. However, these are only a few of the pieces of the *salawat* puzzle.

Many of the Indonesian language articles and books focus on Habib Syech as their object of study. For example, Ahmad Zainal Abidin's monograph on Habib Syech

[4] Mark Woodward, Inayah Rohmaniyah, Ali Amin, Samsul Ma'arif, Diana Murtaugh Coleman, Muhammad Sani Umar, "Ordering what is right, forbidding what is wrong: Two faces of Hadhrami dakwah in contemporary Indonesia," *RIMA: Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, vol. 46, no 2 (2012):105.
[5] Ibid., 117.

focuses on the biography of Habib Syech, the development of his *dahwa*, and the history of the *salawat* that he performs.[6] Noviera Ira and Zainul Abas compare Habib Syech's dahwa to *Habib Noval* b*in Muhammad Alaydrus and Habib Alwi* b*in Ali Al-Habsyi* in Surakarta.[7] Nur Rosyid focuses on how Habib Syech's *salawat* commodifies the traditions of *salawat* and opens up different relations between the Islamic organizations. Uwes Fatoni and Eka Octalia Indah Librianti reflect on the changing dynamic of *salawat* through technology and modernity.[8] Although many of these works focus on Habib Syech and his *dahwa*, they also reflect on the place of Habib Syech's *salawat* in the history of Indonesian Islam and its relationship to modernity. Each one of these aspects of *salawat*, as performed by Habib Syech, are significant lines of inquiry. However, the popularity of these events extends beyond members of Indonesian Islamic society who are urban, in the case of Woodward, or 'modern' NU, in the case of Rosyid. The immense popularity can furthermore not be singularly reduced to Habib Syech as the performer. As I will demonstrate throughout this dissertation, these events appeal to traditional and modernist-oriented Muslims, and Habib Syech's position as a *sayyid* is only one part of the story.

The appeal of Habib Syech's performances to multiple Islamic sensibilities drove my initial interest. *Baraka* and other conceptual mechanisms did not make themselves known until later in my ethnographic journey. Only in the process of closely attending and observing the complexities of interrelated components did I come to realize the

[6] Ahmad Zainal Abidin. *Habib Syech*. (Yogyakarta: *Laksana*, 2019).
[7] Noviera Ira and Dr., Zainul Abas, M.Ag. *Perbandfingan Metode Dakkwa Habaib di Surakarta (Studi Deskriptif Terhadap Pengajian Habib Syech bin Abdul Qadir Assegaf; Habib Noval Bin Muhammad Alaydrus; Habib Alwi Bin Ali Al-Habsyi) (*Surakarta:IAIN Surakarta, 2017).
[8] Uwes Fatoni and Eka Octalia Indah Librianti, "Motif Syekhermania Mengakses Video Dakwah Habib Syech bin Abdul Qadir Assegaf," *al-Balagh:Jurnal Dakwa dan Komunikasi*. Vol 3, No 1 (2018): 1-26.

intertwinement of multilayered and multiplicity of histories, technologies, Islamic sensibilities, and material cultures that form the popularity of these events and this *majelis*. The term *majelis* in Indonesian means assembly, house, board, body, session, forum, and chamber coupled with the Arabic *majelis,* meaning board, council, and a place of sitting. The term's linguistic background implies both an established board and the gathering at which this board assembles. Habib Syech and other interlocutors' invocation of this term goes beyond annotating an event in which individuals come together. My interlocutors used m*ajelis* to describe the many components that come together in the performances of *salawat,* including the individuals who follow *it,* the extensive online and physical store that sells products associated with his *majelis*, Islamic theology, the history of *majelis* groups for sharing knowledge in Indonesia, national solidarity, and a host of other components. Pulling from the use of this term by my interlocutors to describe the events in the field, I discovered echoes with assemblage theory presented by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. In invoking the term assemblage, here, I intend to use it in conjunction with how Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari initially present the idea, how Manuel De Landa further develops it, and the way *majelis* employs the use of the term to illustrate the popularity of these events.[9]

I follow Deleuze and Guattari in asserting that "an assemblage is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections."[10]Approaching *salawat* as a multiplicity of histories,

[9] Manuel De Landa, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (London: Continuum, 2006).
[10] Guattari Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Athlone, 1988), 8.

technologies, people, materials, sounds, smells, and contexts that changes as it expands in connections allows me to simultaneously indicate the importance of various components and demonstrate how the event actually exists in between and in relation to these components. I am, therefore, interested in determining the durable parts of the assemblage that propel its popularity forward as well as the nature of these events as a new phenomenon in Indonesia with corollaries in other Muslim communities that host them.

I could have written this dissertation as an analysis of Habib Syech and his authority driven by his status as a Hadhrami *sayyid*. However, I find an interesting resonance between my interlocutors' use of the term *majelis* and assemblage theory, in that as in assemblage, the term *majelis* captures the complexity of the phenomenon without reducing it either to its components as sum of its elements or to its elements. *Salawat* has resonances and connections to Islam in the context of Indonesia, its history, politics, and economics. Yet, the popularity of these events cannot be simply explained by relying on any of these elements. Furthermore, in setting my analytics gaze on the "collective assemblage of enunciation, of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies", I reckon not merely the seemingly solid elements that contribute to the *majelis*, but the interplay of other concepts that, while slippery and elusive, are powerful and living participants in propelling the popularity of this phenomena. [11] Although my brief interaction with the schoolteachers which I narrated earlier may seem mundane, it represents the way in which the popularity of Habib

[11] Guattari Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Athlone, 1988), 88.

Syech's performances of *salawat* pervades Indonesian society. I want to return to my journey to *salawat* in Wonogiri, Indonesia, to argue for how approaching the popularity of *salawat* as an assemblage contributes to understanding these events beyond either components or single factor.

Islamic Piety beyond Categorical Binaries

As I got closer to the Wonogiri, I noticed flags indicating an event. Following these flags dogging potholes past rice fields and houses, I eventually reached a parking area where several men stood on the side of the road. They were holding banners and wearing whistles funneling vehicles into the front yard of a local house. I parked my motorbike and greeted the men. A conversation ensued; I chatted with the men about *salawat*, asked them about the local area and each individuals' background. In response to my question as to whether any of them ascribed to any particular Islamic organization, one of the men said: "we are Islam." Another man chuckled and said, "Yes, and that man is a Quranic reciter in the area who could be found most often at NU events." There was laughter. I told them that I wanted to talk to the merchants. Five different packs of cigarettes emerged from different hands as they asked me to stay. I laughed as each of the men had a different brand of cigarettes. It is quite common in Indonesia to see especially men to smoke and share cigarette with others.

According to the WHO, 63% of Indonesian men and 5% of women smoke cigarettes, as of the most recent survey in 2018.[12] Although packs of cigarettes and billboards have graphic pictures of vascular disease and other smoking-related illnesses,

[12]"WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic, 2019: Country profile Indonesia," *World Health Organization*, accessed 14 July 2019, https://www.who.int/tobacco/surveillance/policy/country_profile/idn.pdf

smoking has not significantly decreased in Indonesia. In 2005, Phillip Morris bought Indonesia's third-largest tobacco producer, Hanjaya Mandala Sampoerna.[13] The company has been advertising aggressively in Indonesia. In 2019, Phillip Morris declared 2019 the "Year of Unsmoke" while launching a new cigarette in Indonesia.[14] The rigorous advertising and the long history of tobacco cultivation in Indonesia, beginning in the late 16th century, has embedded smoking in Indonesia's socio-cultural world.[15] Unlike crops such as maze, Tobacco required heavy amounts of labor and manure, and it was sensitive to changes in water levels. However, tobacco cultivation was available to "relatively poor upland farmers" beginning with its introduction.[16] In the mid-seventeenth century, the Javanese began mixing betel nut with tobacco.[17] Between 1900 and 1950, however, Indonesian men began replacing betel nut with cigarettes, mainly due to Dutch colonial policy. The Dutch rejected betel nut spitting as a habit of inferiority, and cigarettes became a symbol of "modernity, cultivation, and education."[18] From the 1950s to the present, many cigarette brands have entered the Indonesian market and are often advertised in relationship to 'modernity, cultivation, and education.'

[13] Timothy Mapes, "Philip Morris Agrees to Buy Sampoerna: U.S. Tobacco Giant to Gain Entry to Indonesian Market In $5.2 Billion Acquisition?," *Wall Street Journal,* 15 March 2005, https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB111078636094478469

[14] "Philip Morris Declares the "Year of Unsmoke," But Launches New Cigarette in Indonesia and Sells Over 700 Billion Cigarettes a Year Worldwide" 18 April 2019 <https://newsroom.heart.org/news/philip-morris-declares-the-year-of-unsmoke-but-launches-new-cigarette-in-indonesia-and-sells-over-700-billion-cigarettes-a-year-worldwide>

[15] Peter Boomgaard, "Maize and Tabaco in Upland Indonesia, 1600-1690" in *Transforming the Indonesian Uplands: Marginality, Power and Production,* ed. Tania Li (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999).

[16] Ibid., 66.

[17] Monika Arnez, "Tobacco and Kretek: Indonesian Drugs in Historical Change," *Aktuelle Südostasienforschung,* 2 (1) 2009: 51.

[18] Ibid., 50.

Thus, as these five men offered five different cigarette brands, my decision about which type of cigarettes I chose to take had a significant implication for it would partially indicate my resonances within Indonesian society. These resonances were revealed to me in the conversation that followed their offer. One of the younger men had LA Lights targeted at adults 19-25; smoking LA lights indicated the person was modern and hip.[19] While no singular delineation on being a modern person, still, the focus here is how these individuals see themselves as a part of the 'modern' world with all of its technological and western views. When I asked which cigarette I should choose, several men indicated that the LA Lights were light and indicated femininity, which is also part of this cigarette brand's advertising.[20] L.A. Lights' advertising is significantly different from that of Gudang Garam International cigarettes, which targets adults at the age range between 36 to 60. This brand is often associated with tradition, loyalty, Indonesian Nationalism, and globalization.[21] [what does this globalization mean here? Not clear.] The LA lights were not kreteks, clove cigarettes. Kreteks are an Indonesian creation from the 1870s mixing tobacco, cloves, and *saus* (sauce) composed of different herbs.[22] Many individuals who identify with Nahdlatul Ulama smoke kreteks of various brands, including Gudang Garam. A running joke overheard from Nahdlatul Ulama members was that a *kyai* (Islamic expert/teacher) is not a *kyai* without kreteks. Another individual offered a menthol cigarette; menthol cigarettes have only recently been introduced to Indonesia. My interlocutors have often joked about menthol cigarettes as cigarettes for men who

[19] Nichter M, Padmawati S, Danardono M, et al., "Reading culture from tobacco advertisements in Indonesia," *Tobacco Control* (18) 2009: 102.
[20] Ibid., 102.
[21] Ibid., 102.
[22] Monika Arnez, "Tobacco and Kretek: Indonesian Drugs in Historical Change," *Aktuelle Südostasienforschung*, 2 (1) 2009: 53.

cannot handle regular cigarettes. Smoking is perceived as tied to masculinity, modernity, nationalism, tradition, education, and identity in different ways by both Indonesians and advertising campaigns.

While these five men may have all been affiliated with NU, this was not immediately clear from this conversation. However, considering how cigarettes are perceived and advertised in Indonesia, these different brands of cigarettes smoked by these men indicated the diverse groups of individuals who participated in these events. This seemingly simple and brief encounter allowed for a far more complex reality of Islam in Indonesia to waft from the ethnographic field, challenging its reductionist portrayals.

Beginning with Clifford Geertz, much of the historical and anthropological literature has defined Islam's development in Indonesia through division into different streams(*aliran*) of Islamic practice and belief.[23] While in chapter one, I will further explicate this *aliranisasi (pillarization)*, here it suffices to note that Western academic perceptions of Indonesian Islamic society have often divided society through these different streams. Indonesian civil Islamic organization, Muhammadiyah, represents those who want to get rid of local practices such as the visiting of the graves and emphasize scripturalist interpretation. In contrast, traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) are those Muslims who see the benefit of continuing local traditions and understandings of Islam, which are neither focused on rationalism nor scripturalist interpretations. Practices such as *salawat* have often exclusively been associated with NU. This distinction does not necessarily operate as a dichotomy, and there are a variety of other

[23] Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976).

Islamic groups that pervade the Indonesian Islamic landscape. These organizations include the rise of more conservative political groups such as FPI (Front Pembela Islam) or the Islamic defenders front known for their moral policing and massive demonstrations. However, the premise that individual affiliation with NU, Muhammadiyah, and other Islamic organizations define Islam's function, practices, and meanings in Indonesia marks the Indonesian Islamic landscape. These Islamic civil organizations, NU and Muhammadiyah, have become the litmus test for moderate, civil Islam.[24] James Hoesterey,[25] James Rush,[26] and David Kloos[27] have begun to indicate the need for different conceptual tools for understandings Indonesian Islamic society. In choosing a particular cigarette offered by the five different men, the need for various conceptual tools was also apparent. Whether implied or advertised, the divergent sensibilities included masculinity, modernity, tradition, femineity, Indonesian nationalism, loyalty, globalization, and Westernization. I do not read the symbolic and structural components that may be a part of this brief interaction as always present to my interlocutors or as definitely a part of their sensibilities. Yet, these divergent sensibilities are a part of the socio-cultural world in which this interaction takes place. The comingling of these various sensibilities represents the need to understand Habib Syech's performances of *salawat* beyond the historical and ethnographic accounts of the division between NU and Muhammadiyah.

[24] Robert Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
[25] James Bourk Hoesterey, *Rebranding Islam: Piety, Prosperity, and a Self-Help Guru* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).
[26] James Rush, *Hamka's Great Story: A Master Writer's Vision of Islam for Modern Indonesia* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016).
[27] David Kloos, *Becoming Better Muslims: Religious Authority and Ethical Improvement in Aceh, Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

The vast diversity of actors who participate in Habib Syech's performance of *salawat* are additionally evident in the variety of religious and political authorities who attended, including heads of state and international figures such as Shaykh Hisham Kabbani, founder of the Naqshbandiyya-Nazimiyya Sufi Order of America. The prime minister of Malaysia, governor of Jakarta, Indonesia, and the mayor of Taichung, Taiwan, have all attended *salawat*. Many Islamic leaders from Indonesian Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Front Pembela Islam (FPI) were also present at many of these events. Self-defined members of the Ahmadiyya and Shia and members from other religions such as Christianity and Hinduism also attended *salawat*. *Salawat* flows between nation-states as well as religious and political affiliation. These gatherings, then, pulled a hugely diverse crowd with members who identify as Muhammadiyah, NU, FPI, Shia, and Ahmadiyya. Members of other religious communities, including Christianity, Hinduism, and indigenous religion across multiple nation-states, also participated in this assemblage. Therefore, I am arguing that these *salawat* performances signify a shift in Islamic piety in Indonesia with reverberations that extend beyond Indonesia.

To understand this transformation, I build on the work of such scholars as such as Saba Mahmoud[28], Charles Hirschkind[29], Amira Mittermaier[30], and Samuli Schielke.[31] Their anthropological study of contemporary Egypt takes place in the aftermath of the

[28] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012).
[29] Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).
[30] Amira Mittermaier, *Dreams that Matter: Egyptian Landscapes of the Imagination* (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011).
[31] Samuli Schielke, *Egypt in the Future Tense: Hope, Frustration, and Ambivalence before and after 2011* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).

Islamic revival, "defined as the unprecedented worldwide engagement with exegetical texts and theological reasoning by Muslims untrained in traditional Islamic institutions."[32] In one way or another the issue of Islamic piety and its various modalities of expressions and sensibilities are central to these studies. These devotional piety expressions are a part of the global Islamic revival responding to demands of the modern world, which creates new opportunities for Islamic authority and practice. Figures such as Schielke have critiqued Mahmood and Hirschkind for their focus on piety. He argues that this results in de-emphasizing the political, cultural, and economic worlds that these revivals emerge within. Schielke also sees this focus on piety as normalizing spiritualists and more conservative interpretations of Islam. According to Schielke, there is a need to refocus on the everyday Muslims whose lives are filled with ambiguity, failure, and inconsistency.[33] I do not, however, see their positions as mutually exclusive and hence rather than reading as rampant with tension, reading their differing focus in conjunction with one another may actually produce more complex and nuanced understanding of Islam in the modern Egyptian society and beyond.

Taking into account both approaches to the everyday and piety in forming the Islamic mode of being that emerges from the ethnographic field, I follow Lara Deeb who considers this phenomenon as bidirectional. Like Deeb, I too am interested in "both the ways the everyday is shaped by religious discipline and normativity and the ways that religious discipline and normativity are themselves produced through and change via

[32] Nadia Fadil and Mayanthi Fernando, "Rediscovering the "everyday" Muslim," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 5 (2), (2015): 60.
[33] Samuli Schielke, *Egypt in the Future Tense: Hope, Frustration, and Ambivalence before and after 2011* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).

everyday social life."[34] In trying to understand the shifts in Islamic piety made manifest in Habib Syech's performances, I am interested in the way in which everyday life engages and redefines Islamic norms. Allowing the multiplicities of sensibilities present and emerging in this exchange of cigarettes contributes to an understanding of the assemblage involved in these events' popularity that signifies a shift in Islamic piety. However, as with the reality of life that is always a process of becoming, my own sense of these realities was constantly trans-formed in the process. I had to become more embedded in the life and rhythm of *salawat* as it possessed rice fields, streets, and stadiums bringing tens of thousands of people from both local and global communities to more thoroughly investigate these shifting forms of Islamic piety.

Recording Ethnographic Struggle

After finishing the cigarette, I began walking to the merchant area outside the large open space that would soon be enveloped by Indonesians watching and participating in *salawat*. One of the men yelled behind my back, "Hey, it's a long walk, and you are fat. Are you sure that you don't want a ride?" We all laughed, and I said, "exercise is needed by me."[35] The sun was setting, and as I walked down the small street leading to the stage, I noticed that at every few feet, a small, burned piece of earth marked the side of the road. It appeared that any trash or loose brush had been collected and burned. Colorful flags flanked both sides of the path to *salawat*. I walked to the long string of merchant stalls selling Syekhermania (Habib Syech's *salawat* fan club) gear, clothing, food, drinks, hermit crabs, toys, and a wide variety of glow sticks. I knew many

[34] Lara Deeb, "Thinking piety and the everyday together A response to Fadil and Fernando," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 5 (2) (2015): 96.
[35] This is a direct translation of my statement in the passive case.

of them from the years that I had spent following Habib Syech and was immediately greeted by a chorus of friendly merchants' voices, "Hello, Mr. Jimi!" As the merchants were still getting settled, I made my way to greet all of the sound crew, musicians, and other members of this event who toured across Indonesia, Asia, and the Middle East. I needed to change into clothes appropriate for the event. Typically, men at *salawat* wore a sarong (tube of fabric worn around the waist), a white button-down shirt, and an Islamic skull cap.

I found a room behind the stage crew that was a part of this *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) where I could change. As I struggled with fastening my sarong, a stranger, who looked to be in his teens, peaked in the window and pulled out his camera phone to document my struggles. I became very embarrassed. This was a new sarong, and it was a little bit smaller than other sarongs that I possessed. I called in one of the sound crew members to help me as the mysterious stranger kept filming. I did not tell him to go away. I just laughed at my struggle. The street vendors who traveled with Habib Syech's *salawat* did not only know my name. Over eight years, I would travel with these events for months at a time. I lived as a member of *salawat*. I exchanged deep personal conversations with these merchants, and any mistakes that I made were often caught on camera by strangers. This is one of the reasons, as anthropologist Tim Ingold suggests, anthropological research may be referred to as practice of education, for the encounters in the field teach the anthropologists as much about themselves, if not more, as about those they have come to "study."[36]

[36] Tim Ingold, *Anthropology and/as Education* (London; New York: Routledge, 2018)

My methodology for understanding these *salawat* performances is rooted in the anthropology of religion. In seeking to decipher the phenomenon of religion as it emerges in the socio-cultural, economic, and political worlds, I bring together methods in both religious studies and anthropology. I have spent over fourteen months following this assemblage across Indonesia, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. I follow Jeanne Favre-Saada in asserting that "one cannot set up a strategy of observation (even a 'participating' one) which keeps the agreed amount of distance that this implies."[37] I have attended over one hundred performances of *salawat* to trace the lines that coalesce to bring these events to life. I traveled with Habib Syech and his entourage in his car. I toured with the musicians on their bus, and I sought out the events on my motorbike. I never knew how or where I was going from one event to the next. I traveled almost every day regularly for more than eight hours by bus, car, motorbike, plane, and train. I frequently slept in a different place every night, often while traveling in different modes of transportation because the rhythm of the events only allowed sleep during the day. I was at the mercy of the movement and rhythm of *salawat.*

During my time in these spaces, I documented my observations, took audio-visual recordings, collected the oral history of Habib Syech and other practitioners, and conducted structured and unstructured interviews. However, this method builds off of living every moment in the flow of this assemblage, moving every night. My fieldnotes were often interrupted by the musicians on the bus. Habib Syech would even throw fruit and other objects from the stage at me as I attempted to take notes during the events. My

[37] Jeanne Favret-Sada, *Deadly Words: Witchcraft in the Bocage*, trans. Catherine Cullen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 21.

fieldnotes were, furthermore, not a private possession. Musicians, the sound crew, Habib Syech, and others were incessantly asking to look at my notes, often taking my notebooks out of my hands. I would try to communicate with my wife or friends back home, but these conversations were usually not private either. If I were in a mode of transportation, musicians frequently asked who I was talking to, what I was saying, and what my friends and family looked like. If I stayed in a home with musicians, sound crew, and other participants, I was not only sharing a bathroom with twenty-five people; I was also never communicating with my family and friends without my interlocutors' inquiries. To enter into the cadence of the event is to intertwine my interlocutors in my life. My life became intertwined with my interlocutors, who knew more about what was going on in my life than my own family because they heard, inquired, and discussed everything I did in public and private spaces. Audio-visual recordings also aided the circulation of my presence at these events.

Photos and videos often circulated without my knowledge until a friend brought them to my attention. One video received over 50,000 views. It became complicated as Habib Syech would pray for my conversion and the conversion of my family to the tens of thousands who gathered to participate in *salawat*. Cameras projected my face onto the screens of the events and, occasionally, national television. Media, especially social media, played a significant part in the life of these events. In addition to this ethnographic analysis on the ground, I therefore, also completed an analysis of Facebook, Twitter, and Indonesian social media to understand *salawat*'s digital presence. In analyzing this large set of data, I indexed my fieldnotes to trace themes that emerged in my observations and conversations.

The constant presence of cameras, smartphone, and television crews at the performances of *salawat* adds another set of histories, technologies, and components contributing to and unraveling the popularity of Habib Syech. Digital and physical recordings of Habib Syech's performances of *salawat* partially fit into the global exchange of Islamic knowledge that has reformulated authority, piety, and ethical sensibilities made possible by social media and digital technologies. Habib Syech's position as a *sayyid* provides him authority when speaking about Islam. At his performances, thousands of recording devices ranging from cell phones to professional audio-visual equipment recorded the events. However, Habib Syech did not often preach during these large *salawat* events. He encouraged participants to stay away from alcohol and drugs. He also invited them to pray(*salat*), fast, and avoid judging others. The recordings of Habib Syech's *salawat* focused on the devotional litanies themselves.

The only exceptions to the focus on recording *salawat* were the events at Habib Syech's building in Solo, Indonesia. Habib Syech held one to four gatherings every month to exchange Islamic knowledge, often called *majelis ta'lim*. During Ramadan, Habib Syech did not perform *salawat* but every night he hosted gatherings that focused on Quranic recitation, sharing stories of the Prophet Muhammad by Habib Syech's family, and analyzing *shari'a* by an Indonesian Islamic scholar. Habib Syech often oversaw the exchange of knowledge and provided context, often mixing stories from his experiences in Indonesia to reflect on Prophet Muhammad and his companions' stories. These Ramadan gatherings and monthly meetings were usually attended by between a few hundred and a thousand participants. However, the recordings that circulate or are kept on individuals' devices are primarily recordings of *salawat.* The knowledge sharing

at Habib Syech's gatherings in his building adds to the rise of digital Islamic authority shared through social media. Some of these recordings are also shared on social media for purposes similar to other social events, which is to display an individual's presence at an event. Still, these recordings also operated differently from the rise of digital Islamic authority and the increased exposure of the events through the sharing on social media.

Circulation is not the only key to the propagation of millions of audio-visual recordings. The millions of *salawat* recordings were not shared with the same velocity through social media or treated in the same way as other types of events. As I will demonstrate in chapter two, my interlocutors asserted that they were trying to 'capture' *baraka*. The advancements of digital technology, such as smartphones, facilitate massive numbers of recordings that were not only driven by a desire to have a presence in the digital world and create a digital community but also to access and share *baraka*. Approaching these events through assemblage theory allows for the incorporation of multiple Indonesian Islamic sensibilities and the impact of technology on the formation of digital communities and Islamic authority. The tread to hold this assemble together, as it was revealed to me through participant observation, was the living modalities of such concepts as *baraka*. By allowing myself to become enmeshed in performances of *salawat,* I was able to recognize a shift in the Islamic sensibilities and forms of piety. It was through my extensive ethnographic exploration which required an openness and attentiveness to the everyday and the discursive that the significance of *baraka* was revealed to me. I return to my path to *salawat* to further unpack how *baraka is* 'captured' in these digital recordings and in the event of *salawat* itself.

Approaching *Baraka*

After I finished changing clothes as the stranger recorded my struggles, I returned to the road lined with different merchants. One of them invited me to sit behind his stall, another one brought coffee and cigarettes. They talked about their lives over the last few years following *salawat* and events by different types of Islamic figures.

Thousands passed by us on the street on the way to the event. We eventually turned to discuss why so many people came to these events. I explained what I had gathered over the last few years, "it seems that many people come for *baraka* (blessings), but they also sometimes talk about *hati tenang* (calm heart) and *syafa'at* (intercession after death)." One of them stopped me and said, "No, Jimi, you have it all wrong. If you receive *baraka*, you will automatically feel *hati tenang* and receive *syafa'at*. You cannot separate these things." With my affirmation of his point, I said ok, our conversation continued. Finally, I thanked him, bought some perfume, and walked down to where the event was heating up.

I had made several different trips to Indonesia prior to this one, had followed *salawat* various times, and had reflected on these terms. But until this moment with the merchants, I had not made a connection between these three concepts. My conversation with this merchant revealed to me the interconnectedness of *hati tenang*, *syafa'at*, and *baraka*. *Baraka* is usually defined as blessings, charisma, or an increase in the good. However, as my interlocutor already revealed, 'if you receive *baraka*, you will automatically feel *hati tenang* and receive *syafa'at*.' *Baraka* cannot be entirely separated from intercession in the afterlife, *syafa'at*; this indicates *baraka*'s connection to both the visible world and the afterlife. However, *baraka* and *syafa'at* are also associated with a feeling of a calm, cool, or peaceful heart (*hati tenang*). As a concept and in its lived

reality, baraka constantly slips between the actual material form and as if ephemeral, not easily demarcated within the conventional boundaries of visible/invisible. However, to better grabble with the amalgam of *baraka*, I must return to my initial narration of the exchange of cigarettes.

The exchange of cigarettes is a gift exchange. A rejection of a cigarette would also be a rejection of the induvial who wanted to ask more questions about America and me as an individual. The choice of Gudang Garam may have indicated my resonances with Indonesian culture and masculinity rooted in Indonesian tradition, or it may have been divorced from any of these meanings. I did not begin fieldwork as a smoker; I resisted smoking during my many trips to Indonesia for several years. However, I started smoking as a social activity with others that often placed me firmly within different types of social exchange. These exchanges, such as the one between the five men, eventually revealed how *barka, hati tenang,* and *syaf'at* are intertwined together in the very nature of these events. Throughout my ethnographic exploration of *salawat*, I came to see how, for my interlocutors, tangible objects such as cigarettes and intangible gifts such as piety were connected to *baraka*. Therefore, I aspire to draw on my ethnographic experiences and analysis of my interlocutors' characterization of these events in their many components as *majelis* deploying assemblage theory in order to reveal the amalgam of *baraka* that lives through and delineates the nature of these events. Through this exploration and analysis, I hope to advance a new understanding of gift exchange informed by the concept and life of *baraka* in its complex and multifarious forms. I define *baraka* as the infinite possible manifestations of gifts, which always return to

God/ineffable, the only source of *baraka*, in both the visible and invisible world that impacts the spiritual, economic, and social lives of people.

Rather than affirming or denying the existence of the ineffable, invisible, or divine, I attend to what emerge in the ethnographic field. Incorporating the "intangible" allows us to see how Muslims in Indonesia create new ways of being/becoming in their engagement with modernity, Islamic discursive tradition, and their constant reshaping and redelineation in the face of the struggles and challenges of the everyday. This definition pulls from Western literature on the gift, Islamic textual analysis, and ethnographic experience. In this register, reality is imagined as constrained by material conditions and extended beyond the visible to incorporate the dead, Prophet Muhammad, and the ineffable. Therefore, this dissertation is not only a story about the changing dynamics of Indonesian piety but the place of *salawat* in it. It is also to illustrate the limits of our theoretical contribution and how much we can learn from my interlocutors' rich understanding of *salawat.* To be open to learn from them will provide and present opportunities for reimagining the study of religion.

Potential Contributions to the Study of Religion

Over the last twenty years, religious studies as a discipline has been wrestling with the ghost of its colonial path indicated in J. Z. Smith's famous statement, "religion is solely the creation of the scholar's study. It is created for the scholar's analytic purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalization. Religion has no existence apart from the academy."[38] It is beyond reproach that the academic study of religion and the

[38] Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), xi.

category of religion emerged from the work of philologists and orientalists such as Max Müller. They were seeking to find the historical basis of religion from a Western Christian perspective. The discipline of religious study emerged from a view of the Other as a primitive version of Western Christianity that would eventually give way to the reign of secularism. Significant ink has been spilled by figures such as Talal Asad,[39] Tomoko Masuzawa,[40] Brent Nongbri,[41] Daniel Dubuisson,[42] and others, about how Western Christian assumptions about religion have become embedded in such concepts as world religions, pluralism, and secularism. However, while the Western essentialized definition of religion is a part of the *salawat* performances, it by no means captures the many complex ways it is lived.

As a demonstration of the way in which the Western definition of religion is always already a part of the *salawat* performances, I want to briefly discuss Indonesia's Pancasila. Indonesia's Pancasila, the Indonesian state's official philosophy, first promulgated in 1945 by Sukarno, begins with the statement "Belief in the One and Only God" (Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa). This definition of religion extends to all of Indonesia's six official religions: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, or Confucianism. The Indonesian State can consult larger religious organizations when determining whether or not to accept minority religious communities

[39] Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion : Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).
[40] Tomoko Masuzawa. *The Invention of World Religions, Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
[41] Brent Nongbri. *Before Religion a History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).
[42] Daniel Dubuisson, *The Western Construction of Religion: Myths, Knowledge, and Ideology* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

to prevent conflict.[43] Indonesians must additionally list their association with one of their religions on official ID cards, KTP. This relatively rigid definition of religion and its relationship with belief are operating within the performances of *selawat* by Habib Syech. But religion in practice is not restricted to the confines of the Indonesian government definition or the Western impositions of the term. This dissertation builds on the productive critique of the category and formation of the discipline of religion and acknowledges the impact of this dissertation that weaves within the story of *salawat.*

Although religion may be the sole creation of the scholars' production, it is also a social reality that is transformed and transforms an individual's everyday experiences. By approaching my ethnographic research through this perspective, a new ontology and way of being Muslim emerge from the amalgam of *baraka*, *syafa'at*, and *hati tenang* that demonstrates a different understanding of being that incorporates the possibility of ineffable, invisible, and the divine into everyday life. Although this may appear at first glance as a theological statement, I am not interested in continuing to sterilize religious studies as a discipline concerned with Marxist leaning approaches to religion as a socio-cultural phenomenon. Instead, I, like my interlocutors, am hunting *baraka* as a part of the nature of this assemblage. The amalgam of *baraka* reveals an alternative understanding of reality, Islam, and the exchange that engages with notions of the secular, modern world the plague the Western category of religion and created new enchantments of the contemporary world.

Organization

[43] Paul Marshall, "The Ambiguities of Religious Freedom in Indonesia," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 2018, 16:1, 85-96.

The first chapter sets the stage for the milieu into which the phenomenon of *salawat* emerges. *Salawat* emerged out of the educational institution of the Islamic boarding school. Like elsewhere in Muslim majority societies, educational institutions in Indonesia have transformed as more people are moving to urban centers leading to new types of Islamic authority and education outside of the traditional educational centers such as the Islamic boarding school. I seek to demonstrate how this milieu simultaneously opens up the possibility of a figure like Habib Syech and how this assemblage cannot be reduced to the transformation of education and Islam's history in Indonesia. As a part of this picture of Islamic education, authority, and history in Indonesia that is transforming and being transformed by people's movement to urban centers, *baraka* makes its first appearance tied to the charisma of teachers, *kyai,* of Islamic boarding schools. *Baraka,* as a concept, has a long-established place in Indonesian Islamic institutions, and in the same way that these institutions are changing, the understandings of *baraka* are changing.

I, like many of my interlocutors, first came to know about *salawat* through digital technologies. The second chapter investigates how these digital and physical recordings of Habib Syech's performances of *salawat* fit into the global exchange of Islamic knowledge that has reformulated authority, piety, and ethical sensibilities. Unlike the mediascapes of Arjun Appadurai or the cassettes of Charles Hirschkind, circulation is not the key to understanding the millions of audio-visual recordings, albeit circulation is a part of the story. In the millions of *salawat* recordings, they are not shared through social media or treated in the same way. These recordings try to 'capture' *baraka* and are exchanged from person to person through private messages. This chapter also introduces

Habib Syech's *Fan club*, Syekhermania, and its digital presence, which, once again, displays both resonances with other types of digital communities and diverges from them. The advancements of digital technology like the smartphone facilitate massive numbers of recordings are not driven only by a desire to share in the digital world and create a digital community but also *baraka*. As in the first chapter, *baraka* appears to indicate a different operation of technology, like education, that opens up various possibilities for understanding Islamic piety's transformation in both education and technology.

In the third chapter, I argue that Islamic affiliation does not define or indicate the type of Islam which Habib Syech embodies and that people come to experience, nor can it be pinned down to one kind of Islamic, political, or other religiopolitical networks. My first contact with those attending Habib Syech challenges the association by individual practitioners and academics of this phenomenon as only a Nahdlatul Ulama style of piety that has no reach beyond traditional streams of NU and Sufi practice and belief. Habib Syech, furthermore, describes his perspective that does not coincide with one particular organization. He sees the variety of flavors of Islam as all viable and necessary components to Islam as the food of life. This chapter also begins to show how, from the first moment of contact, I am caught in and by this assemblage.

I finally arrive at the events of *salawat* in chapter four. This chapter's first goal is to indicate how *baraka* bubbles from the participants, music, feelings, and space, even when I was not necessarily looking for it. *Baraka* spooked the unsuspecting ethnographer. At the same time, *baraka* is consistently disavowed. It is an ontological thing and yet slips between your fingers. I simultaneously indicate the discursive tradition of *baraka* related to the Quran and the ambiguity of the term in everyday life. An in-

between space opens in these events to present *baraka* between the everyday and these celebrations of piety that are embedded in the discursive tradition of Islam and subjected to my participants' ambiguous explanation of *baraka*.

Baraka, as a concept, is my primary object of inquiry in chapter five. I redefine *baraka* in this chapter to take into account the amalgam of *baraka*, *syafa'at*, and *hati tenang* that my interlocutor asserts in the introductory vignette. I define *baraka* as the infinite possible manifestations of gifts, which always return to God, the only source of *baraka*, in both the visible and invisible world that impacts the spiritual, economic, and social lives of people. However, this definition emerges out of the assemblage and reflects a different engagement with modernity and the problems of modernity. It is not that this assemblage is simply a reflection of a new type of Islamic social movement. The problem that this assemblage solves is a living response to the pressures and struggles of living in a world that is the object of the project of modernity. Therefore, my new definition of *baraka* is a new way of being Muslim that simultaneously builds off an ethos of modernity in responding to the political project of modernity through new manifestations of Islamic piety in everyday life.

My analysis of *baraka* emerges in education, technological, and theological institutions revealing how the amalgam of *baraka*, *syafa'at*, and *hati tenang* ripple through these institutions, creating new possibilities for understanding the place of education, technology, and theology in this assemblage of devotional piety. The amalgam of *baraka* only becomes apparent as I am caught in the rhythm of *salawat*. In doing so, *baraka* begins to haunt the ethnographic present as it emanates from my interlocutors' stories, explanations, and affects during and after *salawat*. This, in turn, creates an

opportunity for imagining these events as indicating not only a different form of Islamic piety but of existence that is firmly rooted in an ethos of modernity and enchants the study of religion. *Baraka* enchants my interlocutors' understanding of everyday life. Still, *baraka* also hunts the ethnographer's presence calling for an analysis that pulls from the academic study of religion and centers on the 'imaginative powers of the societies' that I seek to understand who are hunting *baraka* in the performances of *salawat*.

From the Pengajian to the Majelis: Changing Dynamics of Islamic Authority and Learning

The *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school), also called the *pondok, pondok-pesantren, surau,* or *dayah,* is one of the foundational institutions that led to Islam's spread in Indonesia and other Muslim majority societies. In Indonesia, Islam arrived through traders and Sufi teachers in the 15th century. Historians contest the first appearance of these places of learning, as I will demonstrate. Still, the *pesantren* and the *pengajian*, as an extension of the *pesantren,* were powerful educational institutions in Islam's formation in Indonesia. Religious teachers, *kyai*, helped form these institutions for religious education around students (*santri*) interested in studying Islamic texts and theology. *Kyais* or religious teachers versed in the Islamic sciences typically lead *pesantrens* in Indonesia. The *pengajian* refers to the gatherings of people at the *pesantren* or in people's homes for religious instruction. These gatherings were often associated with Sufi orders such as the Naqshbandiyya and Shattariya, but, as we will see, these religious gatherings take on a wide variety of forms in the history of Islam in Indonesia. This form of religious instruction and authority gave way to the recent rise of a new formation of Islamic education and authority, the *majelis ta'lim*, *majelis salawat,* and *majelis dzikir*. All of these gatherings take different forms, as I will discuss further in this chapter. However, these are gatherings of people in homes, mosques, and community centers focused on Islamic learning, *majelis ta'lim*, *salawat, majelis salawat*, and *dzikir*, reciting the ninety-nine names of Allah, *majelis dzikir*.

By tracing the history of Islamic education in Indonesia with particular attention to how it resonates with the contemporary phenomena of the *majelis salawat, majelis*

ta'lim, and *majelis dzikir*, I will demonstrate how these forms of religious gatherings are both a part of the genealogy of education in Indonesia and diverge from this genealogy. *Salawat* has a long history connected to the *pesantren*. *Salawat* was often taught in the *pesantren* and performed in remembrance of Prophet Muhammad's birth (*mawlid*). Even contemporarily, some *pesantrens* have their student(*santri*) perform *salawat* for a month leading up to their national exams. However, *salawat* has also moved out of the Islamic boarding school's physical space to the streets, houses, and other special events, often referred to as *bersalawat, majelis salawat,* and *majelis ta'lim*. The development of *salawat* outside of traditional educational institutions and the formation of more loosely organized gatherings (*majelis ta'lim* and *majelis dzikir*) points to a transformation of religious authority due to urbanization the dispersion of religious authority. It also indicates the milieu into which *salawat* performed by Habib Syech emerges. In this chapter, *baraka* makes its first appearance as a connecter to the *pesantren*, *kyai*, and water. The history of *baraka*, like *salawat*, is connected to educational institutions that are transforming into gatherings called *bersalawat, majelis salawat,* and *majelis ta'lim*. New possibilities for Islamic education and authority emerge, bringing *salawat* outside of traditional educational institutions and opening up different manifestations of Islamic influence.

Bringing Islam to the Malay Archipelago

I climbed onto the back of Muhammad Umam's[1] old motorbike for the hour-long drive outside Salatiga to a small village for a *pengajian*. He manually started the bike as his mom appeared in the doorway of the house, laughing. She said I looked funny in my

[1] All of the names used are synonyms, except Habib Syech.

peci (skullcap) lent to me by her husband, who sat smoking by the side of the house. We departed from the small concrete house, and his motorbike struggled to climb the steep street flanked by houses packed on top of each other. Smoke from the small *krupuk* (deep fried crackers) factory hung in the air. The smell of fish, oil, burning plastic, and motorbike fumes possessed my olfactory perception. We emerged on a somewhat larger street just after 'ishā' (night prayer). As we moved from this small mountain city to other smaller villages in central Java, the air became more refreshing. The only thing punctuating the darkness of the night was an occasional street lamp. We turned onto the road leading to the *pengajian*, weaving around the holes that consumed the road.

The depth of the holes in the road often swallowed an entire tire and threw my body off the seat, forcing me to grab Muhammad tighter, which he found quite entertaining. The road now became mostly mud with two thin strips of concrete, just wide enough for car tires. Muhammad's wheel slipped into the wet mud, and we were suddenly sideways. The back tire was now flat, and we were still a few miles away from the *pengajian*. We pushed the motorbike until we found a small *bengkel* (garage) that could repair the tire. The mechanic melted rubber to fill in the hole in the tire's tube. Thick black smoke filled the air as the smell of burning rubber coagulated in my nose. The mechanic fixed the flat, and we were on our way again. The landscape changed as we entered the small village where we would be attending the *pengajian.* Houses punctuated the thick tropical trees, and I could hear the sound of Syech Abah's voice echoing through the streets. We turned right, and Muhammad parked his bike among the fifty other motorbikes that sat on the side of the road. Syech Abah was the *murshid*, guide or teacher, of the Naqshbandiyya *pengajian* that we were attending. We walked towards

Syech Abah's house, a beacon of light and sound radiating into the thick forest's darkness surrounding the village.

We ascended the blue-tiled steps to the front porch where men sat smoking and drinking tea. Several participants ushered me into a large room containing about twenty-five men. Most of the men were above forty, but there were some college students as well. Syech Abah sat in a chair near the back of the room in the open doorway that separated men and women. More women than men were present, but most were entirely out of view when I was sitting in the room with the other men. A few older women sat within sight, but the rest of the women packed into another room that spilled into the kitchen. A thin green carpet sprawled across the floor, and three low tables formed a partial square around the Syech. These tables were reserved for older initiated members of the Naqshbandiyya *tariqa*. In these events, the night always began with an hour-long sermon often about the "science of the heart: *tasawuf*." The sermons were usually comical and full of examples. In explaining *hidayah*, divine guidance, for instance, Syech Abah related the conversion stories of those working in an oil factory in the Soviet Union, a Christian who heard the *adhan* (call to prayer), and of "mystic" practitioners in Papua to demonstrate how Allah's guidance (*hidayah*) operates in the world. He deduces from these examples that "even those who have nothing and know nothing of Islam receive *hidayah*."

The *hidayah* of the first converts to Islam in the Malay Archipelago came primarily through traders. There is evidence of contact between Arab traders in the ninth century,[2] but it was not until the 13th and 14th centuries that we have proof or whiffs of

[2] Michael Flecker, "A Ninth-century AD Arab or Indian Shipwreck in Indonesia: First Evidence for Direct Trade with China," *World Archaeology* 32, no. 3 (2001): 335-54.

Muslim influence on current day Indonesia.[3] By the early 14th century, the Sumatra-Pasai Sultanate in present-day Aceh was "competing or colluding with those of Bengal for the right to have their names invoked in Friday prayers in Calicut, where Jawis (the term used by Arabic speakers to describe the people of Southeast) often met Indian, Persian and Arab coreligionists."[4] In Java, the first conversions to Islam were those of the major kingdoms on the northern coast, *pasisir*, in the 15th century. Through the conversion of kings, a "mystic synthesis" grew that blended Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic practice and belief, hence creating a distinctly Javanese Islam.[5] The synthesis of Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic practices and beliefs was not a quick process but a gradual mixing of Islam and Hindu-Buddhist practices of the kingdoms. Aside from Java, the Acehnese Islamic kingdoms and those of modern-day Sumatra developed differently than in Java. Due to the trading networks of the 13th century, the straits of Malacca between the eastern coast of modern-day Sumatra and the west coast of Malaysia brought trade as well as religion. M.C. Ricklefs notes that the first evidence of an Islamic kingdom in the Malay Archipelago was the gravestone of Sultan Sulaiman bin Abdullah bin al-Basir at Lemah in modern-day Aceh in 1211.[6] The first gravestone indicating the presence of Muslims on the island of Java appeared one hundred years after the gravestones of Aceh.[7] However, the people that inhabited the western Islands of Indonesia that included modern-day Sumatra and Java were referred to by traders as 'Jawi.' The term Jawi found in, for example, Marco Polo's writings in the 13th century, Ibn Baṭūṭah's travelogues in the 14th

[3] Michael Laffan, *The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and the Narration of a Sufi Past* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011), 4.
[4] Ibid., 27.
[5] M.C. Ricklefs, *Mystic Synthesis: A History of Islamization from the Fourteenth to the early Nineteenth Centuries* (White Plains, N.Y: East Bridge, 2006).
[6] M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia c 1200* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 21.
[7] Ibid., 22.

century, and Tomé Pires writings in the 16th century referred to the land and people of the Malay Archipelago.[8] Like the Malay archipelago's trade networks, the term Jawi expanded with new contacts between traders and the thousands of islands that compose the archipelago.

The Islamization of Java, then, was described as gradual and not through force. Trade, Sufism, and elite conversion characterize the first two hundred years of Islam in Jawa. In the 17th century, Islam moved inward on the Island of Java towards the kingdoms beyond the *pasisir*. The Mataram Sultanate covered much of Central Java previous to the 17th century, and the Sultanate began to blend Islam with Hindu-Buddhist cosmologies creating a stronghold for the mystic synthesis. M.C. Ricklefs argues that this mystic synthesis embodies how Islam became part of the Malay Archipelago and is distinct to the archipelago context. With Sultan Agung's rise in 1613, the Mataram Sultanate's reach extended across Java and Bali. The kingdoms of Java and their mystic synthesis were then embroiled in a long battle with the VOC (Dutch East Indies Company). However, until the early 19th century, the mystic synthesis of the kingdoms of Java as well as Aceh and Banten was an elite affair. The kingdoms of Java, Aceh, and Banten had more interaction with traders and Islam. Many of those not in the higher classes or connected to the kingdoms continued their Hindu-Buddhist practices. Evidence for the first Islamic training that introduced people on both the coasts and inland areas is sparse. As a precursor to the *pesantren*, the first Islamic educational gatherings emerged on the Malay Archipelago coastlines, driven by the traders who converted the rulers of the kingdoms of the Malay Archipelago. These informal gatherings, often led by traders,

[8] Michael Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma Below the Winds* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003): 13-14.

resembled a loose gathering of people who would study the Quran and Islam from traders. These eventually turn into *pondoks* in the 19th century

The Beginnings of Islamic Education in Indonesia

The famous purveyors of Islam, the Wali Songo, may have established *pesantrens* to spread Islam beginning in 1399.[9] There are a few published accounts of the Wali Songo setting up their *pesantrens* in the 15th century,[10] but as Ronald Lukens-Bull notes, the oral histories from contemporary *kyais* "server to establish the contemporary *pesantren* world as inheritors of the Wali Songo."[11] The published sources regarding the development of the *pesantren* across the Indonesian Archipelago indicate that the institutionalization and wide-spread presence of *pesantrens* solidified in the late 19th century. In 1599, both John Davis and Jacob van Neck identified "many schools" in Aceh and Ternate.[12] Nurcholish Madjid, an influential Indonesian Muslim thinker in the 20th century, argued that the *pondok* was, in fact, a continuation of the Hindu-Buddhist institution of "*padepokan*," which was an institution of Hindu-Buddhist learning.[13] He also provides an alternative to the traditional understanding of *santri*, students of the *pondok-pesantren*. Madjid understood the term *santri* as a derivative of either the term *shastri*, referring to the literate seekers of wisdom, or *cantrik*, the interns of *kyai*s,

[9] Ronald Lukens-Bull, *A Peaceful Jihad: Negotiating Identity and Modernity in Muslim Java* (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 48.
[10] IAIN (Institut Agama Islam Negeri) Sunan Ampel Research Team, *Sistem Pendidikan Pesantren Kecil and Pengaruhnya Terhadap Perkembangan Kepribadian Anak* (Educational System of Child Pesantren and the Influence on the Development of the Childrens' Sense of Personhood) (Surabaya: Pusat Penelitian dan Pengabdian Pada Masyarakat, IAIN Sunan, 1992), 22; Mahmud Yunus. *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam in Indonesia* (History of Islamic Education in Indonesia) (Jakarta: Mutiara, 1979), 217.
[11] Ronald Lukens-Bull, *A Peaceful Jihad: Negotiating Identity and Modernity in Muslim Java* (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 48.
[12] Michael Francis Laffan, *The Makings of Indonesian Islam Orientalism and the Narration of a Sufi Past* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011), 27.
[13] Nurcholis Madjid. *Indonesia Kita* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2004), 21.

reaching back to the Hindu-Buddhist past.[14] Ricklefs does not see any evidence for the presence of the *pondok* before 1718.[15] In the 18th century, the *pondok, pesantren,* or a precursor to the *pesantren* did not seem to have a firm grasp on the Malay archipelago. Martin van Bruinessen, furthermore, argues that the *desa perdikan* (tax-free villages associated with religious sites and teachings) may have contained a precursor to the Islamic *pesantren*. However, Bruinessen argues that "out of 211 *perdikan* villages listed in the late 19th-century survey (Anon, 1888), there were only four where (a part of) the revenue was explicitly reserved for the upkeep of the *pesantren*."[16] The pesantren's formal institutionalization in the archipelago does not seem to develop fully until the late 19th century. More *pesantrens* were present in the early 19th century, but they did not become the norm until the late 19th century. In 1831, the Dutch completed a survey of education and found that "in almost all cases Islamic education was simply a matter of elementary instruction in the rote recitation of the *Quran*" and that the *pesantren* was not a common feature of Javanese life.[17]

Madjid proposes that the earliest development of Islam through the earliest traders in the 13th and 14th century is as follows:

> "Those traders, with their cosmopolitan wisdom, also played the role of advising people that needed them; their gilds became a place for seekers of wisdom, and their pondoks became lodges for those coming afar. Gradually, "pondok" served as a place for seeking knowledge and wisdom, similar to the phenomenon that prevailed in various parts of the

[14] Ibid., 21.
[15] M.C. Ricklefs, *Mystic Synthesis: A History of Islamization from the Fourteenth to the early Nineteenth Centuries* (White Plains, N.Y: EastBridge, 2006), 89.
[16] Martin van Bruinessen, "Pesantren and Kitab Kuning: Continuity and Change in a Tradition of religious learning," in *Texts from the Islands: Oral and Written Traditions of Indonesia and the Malay World,* ed. Wolfgang Marschall, Berne: The University of Berne Institute of Ethnology, 1994), 129. Michael Laffan in *The Making of Indonesian Islam* also discusses the *perdikan* as a precursor to the *pesantren.*
[17] M.C. Ricklefs, *Polarizing Javanese Society: Islamic, and Other Visions, C. 1830-1930* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 51.

> Muslim world, with different names such as *zawiyah, ribath, khaniqah,* and *tekke.*"[18]

This elementary instruction in the recitation of the Quran is the precursor to the *pengajian* and *pesantren*. These *pondoks* became places of informal gatherings where seekers studied not just about Islam but also the 'cosmopolitan wisdom' of the traders. It is in the spirit of the *pengajian* that the *pesantren* develops. This brief historical analysis of the precursor to the *pesantren* should not be taken as definitive proof of the late development of Islamic education in Indonesia as an established educational institution. Instead, the informal Islamic study groups and less institutionalized forms of education associated with Islamic learning defined the 13th century through the 1850s.

In the 1850s, an increase of returning hajis grew the number of *putihan* (pious ones), which led to a rise in *pesantrens* formed around studying the *kitab kuning* (yellow scriptures) led by these pious hajis.[19] The *kitab kuning* was a yellow book that refers to a set of Islamic texts used by the *kyai, pesantren* leaders, to teach the Islamic sciences. It was called the yellow book because it was printed on yellow paper. The contents of each *kyai's* yellow book varied. Still, they typically contained scriptures about Islamic jurisprudence, ethics, and mysticism as well as *hadiths*, guides to Quranic recitation, and Quranic interpretation.[20] As Snouck Hurgronje notes of the mid to late-nineteenth century, "there is scarcely any part of the Moslim world where the proportion between the number of the population and the yearly pilgrimages is as favorable to Mekka, as in

[18] Nurcholis Madjid. *Indonesia Kita* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2004), 20
[19] See Martin van Bruinessen, "Pesantren and Kitab Kuning: Continuity and Change in a Tradition of religious learning," in *Texts from the Islands: Oral and Written Traditions of Indonesia and the Malay World*, ed. Wolfgang Marschall, Berne: The University of Berne Institute of Ethnology, 1994).
[20] Ibid., (insert page numbers)

the Malay Archipelago."[21] Some of the members of this enormous influx of pilgrims stay in Mecca studying with a particular ulama. Others perfect their Quranic recitation, and some become a part of a *tariqa* (Sufi order).[22] These pilgrims return to Indonesia and create *pesantrens* and become the head of these Islamic educational institutions, *kyai*. Alternatively, members of the pious *putihan* spread Islamic knowledge by continuing the informal gatherings, *pengajian*. They disseminate their knowledge of Sufism, Quranic recitation, or Islamic sciences through the *pengajians*, often located in personal homes and local mosques. The types of experience captured and brought back to Mecca is a point of debate, but Michael Laffan makes a convincing argument that even in the early nineteenth century, both Sufi and Middle Eastern reform *da'wah* were a part of what was being brought back from Mecca.[23] This is a significant point in the history of Islam in Indonesia because previous framings of Islam in Indonesia were primarily informed by "acceptance of the retrospective framings and validations of seventeenth-century Sufi teachings that emphasized a mystical connection between the Prophet and a learned elite patronizing by regal authorities."[24] Laffan points out that Middle Eastern connections matter in the formation of Indonesian Islamic sensibilities tied to the future rise of nationalism. The mystic synthesis and Islamic reformism coming from Cairo and Mecca are both a part of the formation of Indonesian Islamic identity through the *pesantren* and *pengajian* and later impact the creation of Indonesian understandings of Islam's connection to nationalism in conjunction with the secular nationalism emphasized by

[21] Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka in the Latter Part of the 19th Century: Daily Life, Customs, and Learning of the Moslims of the East-Indian Archipelago*, trans. J. H. Monahan (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007).
[22]Ibid., 254 – 257.
[23] Michael Laffan, *The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and the Narration of a Sufi Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).
[24] Ibid., xiii.

Benedict Anderson.[25] Both Laffan and Anderson's analyses of the rise of Indonesian nationalism are an essential part of the story of *salawat*. The last song typically performed during *salawat* is the national anthem. If *salawat,* performed by Habib Syech, takes place in Indonesian, then the Indonesian national anthem is sung. In Malaysia, the participants sing the Malaysian national anthem. This is somewhat different in Taiwan and Hong Kong, where many of the participants are Indonesian maids and factory workers. So, Habib Syech will often sing the Indonesian national anthem in Taiwan and Hong Kong. Nationalism is another aspect of *salawat* that contributes to making this assemblage and does not explain what is taking place at *salawat*. Participants and Habib Syech talk about coming together as Indonesians and as Muslims. Both secular nationalism and broader connections to Muslims across the world inform how *salawat* is understood by those attending and in forming communities that transgress nation-states.

19th Century Adaptations of Islamic Education

The *pesantren*, *pondok*, *surau*, or *dayah*[26] of late 19th century Indonesia were primarily concerned with dispersing religious knowledge. In the late-19th and early 20th century, riffs appeared separating the pious (*putihan*) from the marginally pious (*abangan*) and the elite who continued the "mystic synthesis" (*priyayi*). Geertz observed this tripartite division of society into different pillars or streams (*aliranisasi*) in the 1950s.[27]

The *abangan*, as defined by Geertz, were those individuals in Javanese society who were the primary participants of the *slametan.* The *slametan* is a communal meal

[25] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, Verso, 1983).
[26] The names of Islamic boarding schools vary depending on location.
[27] Clifford Geertz. *The Religion of Java* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960).

involving rice, incense, Islamic chanting, ancestors, and spirits of various religious backgrounds. The feast ritual is often completed for a "birth, marriage, sorcery, death, house moving, bad dreams, harvest, name-changing, the opening of a factory, illness, the supplication of the village guardian spirit, circumcision, and starting a political meeting."[28] Geertz understood these *slametans* as a quintessential example of syncretism bringing together the Hindu-Buddhist past at the heart of Javanese belief in spirits and their ritual offerings. He, furthermore, saw these rituals directed at ordering social relationships of both the inner (*batin*) and outer (*lair*) person and his/her/their relationship to society and the invisible world of ancestors, spirits, and Allah.[29] The concepts of *batin* and *lair* were, however, more related to the second category of Javanese society, the *priyayi*. With Robert Redfield looming in the background of Geertz's formulation, Geertz sees the village *abangan* as the Little Tradition and the *priyayi* elites as the Great Tradition made powerful by their original ability to trace their lineage back to the pre-colonial Kingdoms of Java.[30] According to Geertz, the beliefs and practices of the *abangan* and *priyayi* are not as significant as the social structure of each. The *priyayi* were those individuals placed in positions of power through affiliation with the Dutch. Higher-level *priyayi* prefer to speak Dutch, although Ricklefs will later flesh out the differentiation between those speaking Dutch and those who want to encourage fluency in Javanese. The importance of societal harmony and hierarchy expressed in the less formal *slametan*s of the *abangan* and the more formal feasts of the *priyayi* is furthermore shown in the Javanese language:

[28] Ibid., 11.
[29] Ibid., 232.
[30] Ibid., 228-229.

> "Like the forms of etiquette more generally, the pattern of linguistic etiquette modulate, regularize, and smooth the process of social interaction into an *alus*, unvarying flow of quiet, emotionally tranquilizing propriety."[31]

Alus here is a type of smoothness, perfection, and attainment of comprehension of the "ultimate structure of existence."[32] The Javanese language has between three and six levels, and each level demands knowledge of one's place with another. Social harmony requires knowledge of one's place in the inner and outer worlds of life. The ultimate experience of this social harmony occurs when the inner and outer parts of the soul are in harmony with the inner and outer aspects of the world. This understanding of the ultimate structure of existence relates to the concept of a calm heart(*hati tenang*) that characterizes the feeling of *baraka*. *Hati tenang*, however, is less structured than the *alus* of 19th and 20th-century Islamic society. *Hati tenang* is a feeling of the ultimate structure of existence that must adjust to the modern world's changing dynamics, as I will further discuss throughout the dissertation. This structure is related to both the relationships between the exterior world, society, ancestors, spirits, and Allah. However, it is not that the individual must know their position in society to feel *hati tenang*. *Hati tenang* is about feeling that one is acting morally and piously with a right relationship to Allah. A sense of the structure of society is not necessary to feel *hati tenang*, unlike *alus*.

Mark Woodward analyzed the Yogyakarta sultanate in the late 20th century to further understand the *priyayi* viewpoint and its relation to the *santri* and other pillars of Javanese society. He argued that the interplay of Hindu-Javanese and Islamic conceptions

[31] Ibid., 255.
[32] Ibid., 232.

of society operate through "hierarchical organization."[33] However, rather than focusing on the Hindu-Buddhist past in formulating the religion of the sultan of Yogyakarta, he sees Javanese Islam as unique "because of the degree to which Sufi concepts of sainthood, mystical path, and the perfection of man are employed in the formulation of an imperial cult."[34] Ricklefs argued that Geertz's division as an observable feature of Indonesian society emerged much later than Geertz would have us believe. Ricklefs claimed that the term *abangan* appeared in the mid-19th century, specifically 1855.[35]

These differentiations between different *alirans*(streams) of Indonesian Islamic society were stratified even further by the Dutch colonial apparatus that created Dutch schools for the *priyayi*'s children. The *priyayi,* in the mid-19th century, operated as middlemen for the Dutch. They collected the 40% land tax imposed by the Dutch through the *cultuurstelsel* (cultivation system). The Javanese population and middle class also grew tremendously during this period contributing to "considerable social dislocation."[36] *Cultuurstelsel* was abandoned in 1860, but many priyayi elite members gained significant wealth, status, and access to education. The Dutch schools taught Dutch, Javanese, and Malay without the Arabic script.[37] This opened up the *priyayi* to European ideas as well as a vision of "a more glorious, more authentically Javanese cultural identity."[38] This vision of Javanese culture, however, was an intellectual/elite vision of what it meant to be

[33] Woodward, Mark, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989), 216.
[34] Ibid., 242.
[35] M.C. Ricklefs, *Polarizing Javanese Society: Islamic and Other Visions c. 1830-1930* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007, 220), 89.
[36] M.C. Ricklefs, *Islamisation and Its Opponents in Java: a Political, Social, Cultural and Religious History, c. 1930 to the Present* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2012), 13.
[37] M.C. Ricklefs, *Polarizing Javanese Society: Islamic and Other Visions c. 1830-1930* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007, 220), 154.
[38] Ibid., 129.

Javanese, in the case of Java. This intellectual vision of Javanese culture created several different responses within the *priayayi*. Many of the *priyayi* continued to practice *slametans* and the mystic synthesis of Java. Other members of the *priyayi* rejected Islam altogether and wanted to return to the Hindu-Buddhist past through 'modern' knowledge. The *priyayi* may not have agreed on whether to reject Islam or not, but they agreed on rejecting the wealthy and Islamically pious *putihan*.

The number of *pesantrens* in Java dramatically increased in the first half of the 20th century.[39] Although many of them continued teaching the mystic synthesis of the Javanese kingdoms, Sumatra, followed by Java, began being influenced by the early 19th century Wahhabi movement in Arabia, calling for a return to Islam in its original form. In the early 20th century, the increase of Javanese and Sundanese traveling on hajj additionally brought back Islamic Modernism, which sought to return directly to the Qur'an and Hadith.[40] The *putihan* became powerful, Islamically oriented members of Indonesian society who presented a challenge to the *priyayi*.

The *priyayi* and *putihan* understood the *abangan* as a lower social class. The *putihan* disagreed with the *abangan*'s lax approach to the five pillars. The *abangan* were generally poorer, rural, and in the debt of *putihan* money lenders of *priyayi* debt collectors.[41] This fragmentation intensifies and becomes politicized leading up to Indonesian independence and institutionalizes these divisions.

[39] .M.C. Ricklefs, *Islamisation and Its Opponents in Java: a Political, Social, Cultural and Religious History, c. 1930 to the Present* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2012), 13.
[40] Ibid., 18.
[41] Ibid., 18.

Institutionalizing Division

During the social unrest preceding Independence, Islam also created additional political vehicles that are still in existence today, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama. Muhammadiyah, founded in 1912, was a modernist movement that appealed to the *putihan* with "roots in both Middle Eastern developments and Indonesian circumstances."[42] The Muhammadiyah sought to purify Islam of local customs such as Sufi practices and focused on building schools, hospitals, and orphanages. It was part of a more significant Salafi reform movement connected to Rashid Rida, Muhammad 'Abduh, and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani from Cairo that sought to return to the unity of the early Islamic community.[43] NU formed in 1926, partially as a response to Muhammadiyah, and expressed the need for continued engagement with local traditions and displays of Islamic piety, such as *ziyara* and *wayang* (shadow puppet theatre). Some *putihan* joined, but NU was mostly composed of the *abangan*. These two do not remain in dialectical tension; there is a broad spectrum in both NU and Muhammadiyah's positions on practice and belief. This separation between NU, Muhammadiyah, and other Indonesian Islamic organizations has deep roots in the history of Islam in Indonesia. By the 1930s, Indonesian society is divided on the proper way to practice Islam and codifies these in the formation of NU and Muhammadiyah, as well as other smaller organizations. These initially political institutions will have a tenuous relationship with Sukarno, eventually becoming civil organizations that do not operate like political parties.

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[42] M.C. Ricklefs, *Polarizing Javanese Society: Islamic and Other Visions c. 1830-1930* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007), 220.

[43] Michael Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma Below the Winds* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003). See also Part I of Mitsuo Nakamura, *The Crescent Arises over the Banyan Tree: A Study of the Muhammadiyah Movement in a Central Javanese Town, c. 1910s-2010*, 2nd ed (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012).

Indonesian Islam is divided and politicized through the process of Independence. However, Islam also solidifies itself as a part of Indonesian nationalism in Muhammadiyah and Nadhlatul Ulama's formation that appeal to the *putihan* and *abangan*, respectively. This further develops in the educational institutions created by Muhammadiyah.

More modernist-oriented *pesantren* are less focused on mysticism and are more interested in "reopening of the gate of *ijtihad* (independent judgment based on the Quran and hadith) and social and political activism instead."[44] A diversity of overlapping approaches, texts, and practices define the *pesantren*. The type of doctrine and ethical sensibilities taught in these schools are on a spectrum- not dialectical opposites. The *madrasa* emerged in the 1920s as a response to the Dutch introduction of general education and modernist movements like Muhammadiyah.[45] The *madrasa* is an Islamic day school that includes general subjects like math and geography, unlike traditional *pesantrens* where students live full-time and only learn the Islamic sciences. Currently, around thirteen percent of Indonesian students enrolled in primary education attend one of the 37,000 *madrasahs*.[46] Within the *pesantren* complex, there may be both a *madrasah* and *pesantren*. The third type of school, the *Sekolah Islam (*Islamic School*),* emerged as

[44] Martin van Bruinessen, "Pesantren and Kitab Kuning: Continuity and Change in a Tradition of religious learning," in *Texts from the Islands: Oral and Written Traditions of Indonesia and the Malay World*, ed. Wolfgang Marschall (Berne: The University of Berne Institute of Ethnology, 1994),123.
[45] Azyumardi Azra, Dina Afrianty, and Robert W. Hefner, "Pesantren and Madrasa: Muslim Schools and National Ideals in Indonesia," in *Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education*, ed. Robert W. Hefner and Muhammad Qasim Zaman (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), 175.
[46] Ibid., 173, and Charlene Tan, "Educative Tradition and Islamic Schools in Indonesia," *Journal of Arabic & Islamic Studies*, Vol. 14, (2014): 50.

early as the late 1960s and became more popular in the 1990s.[47] These Islamic schools were designed for middle to upper-class Muslim families who wanted languages such as English taught and practical Islamic knowledge.[48] The significance of this development to understand the place of the *pengajian* and Islamic education in Indonesia's contemporary climate is that Islamic authority and education became dispersed throughout the *pesantren* and *madrassa* as well as religious instruction at national schools and *Sekolah Islam*.

This *aliranisasi* and understanding of Indonesian Islam based on the divisions between the *putihan, abangan,* and *priyayi* becomes solidified in the politicization of these differences. The power of this history and the conceptual framing for analyzing Islam in Indonesia cannot be understated. Even though Hoesterey argues that "we should pay more attention to religiopolitical networks (*jaringan*) than to a somewhat obsolete notion of 'streams,'"[49] Carool Kersten has recently explained that the "recognition and non-recognition of certain *existing aliran*" are a "fixed feature of political and religious debates in postcolonial Indonesia."[50] Kersten is correct in indicating the place of these *alirans* in the conversations about religion and politics at the level of the Indonesian political apparatus, the Indonesian Ulama Council, *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (MUI), and the heads of Islamic civil organizations. *Aliranisasi* continues to dominate how Indonesian Islamic society is understood, regardless of whether or not it is 'outdated.'

[47] Azyumardi Azra, "Reforms in Islamic Education: A Global Perspective Seen from the Indonesian Case," in *Reforms in Islamic Education: International Perspectives*, ed. Charlene Tan (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 177.
[48] Ibid., 177.
[49] James Bourk Hoesterey, *Rebranding Islam: Piety, Prosperity, and a Self-Help Guru* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 155.
[50] Carool Kersten, *Islam in Indonesia: The Contest for Society, Ideas and Values* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press , 2016), 5.

Although I am willing to concede that in conversations between elites about Islam in Indonesia pull heavily from *alirans* as a "fixed feature" of Indonesian political life, we would do well to reflect upon figures such as Hamka. Hamka, as presented by James Rush, who brings together the politicized *alirans* of NU and Muhammadiyah in his mosque in the 1960s:

> "Hamka's mosque became the informal headquarters for anti-communist politicians, including people from the PSI, Christian party, NU, conservative nationalists, and sympathetic members of the armed forces."[51]

Even as early as the mid-20th century, we see that *aliranisasi* breaks down as a defining feature of Indonesian Muslims' lived realities. These divisions only matter in different moments and contexts. Yet, the space of *salawat* is not a place for divisions or political affiliations. Like Hamka's mosque, *salawat* is a place for a wide diversity of people from Indonesia and beyond.

The History of *Salawat* in Indonesian Islamic Education

The history of *salawat* in Indonesia reaches back to the first contact with Indian and Arab traders from the *pasisir* to the center of Java in the 16th century.[52] *Salawat* has been a part of the Indonesian Islamic landscape since its inception.[53] With the establishment of the New Order in 1966, Rasmussen demonstrates how the patronage of government institutions has bolstered the "prestige of the 'Arab Sound.'"[54] The recitation

[51] James Rush, *Hamka's Great Story: A Master Writer's Vision of Islam for Modern Indonesia* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016), 134.
[52] Anne Rasmussen. *Women, the Recited Quran, and Islamic Music in Indonesia* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2010), 15.
[53] Anne Rasmussen. "The Arab Musical Aesthetic in Indonesian Islam." *The World of Music*, vol. 47, no. 1, (2005): 65–66.
[54] Ibid., 66.

of the Quran is at the heart of developing this "Arab sound" in Indonesia.[55] The musical recitation of the Quran with the interaction of Indian and Arab traders was an oral tradition passed down through Islamic centers, such as the *pesantren*. Yemeni traders, in particular, may have been instrumental in passing on the musical styles of recitation. In the 1990s, Habib Syech's event resembled more structured performances around Quranic recitation. In older videos of his events, Habib Syech is seen reciting the Quran. This assemblage initially appeared to fit into the paradigm of Quranic recitation and the 'Arab sound' supported by government institutions beginning in the 1960s. However, after 2007, these events began developing into the assemblage that now moves with intense velocity across society.

The songs of *salawat* that radiate from the speakers and voices of the millions that attend these events have primarily been passed down orally. They were passed down orally through the *pesantrens* as well as the Hadhrami education of Habib Syech. Some of the songs, such as *Turi Putrih* and *Padang Bulang* are said to reach back to the time of the bringers of Islam to Java, *Wali Songo*. While songs such as *NKRI Harga Mati*, *Syiir NU* (also known as *Ijo, Ijo*), and *Mahalul Qiyam* have been created and passed down through Nadhlatul Ulama *pesantrens*. Other songs, such as *Ya Hanana* and *Sholatullah*, have roots in both the Indonesian context and Hadhrami education. In many ways, these poems/songs of *salawat* were already a part of the Indonesian Islamic landscape long before Habib Syech. It is not uncommon to hear these songs from other singers spilling

[55] Anne Rasmussen. *Women, the Recited Quran, and Islamic Music in Indonesia*. Berkley: University of California Press, 2010; Anna M. Gade. *Perfection Makes Practice: Learning, Emotion, and the Recited Qur'ān in Indonesia*. Hawaii: University of Hawaii, 2004.

out of car windows, shopping malls, and people's homes. This assemblage pulls from these poems/songs' durability while also not being simply defined by them.

The Emergence of the *Majelis Salawat, Majelis Ta'lim*, and *Majelis Dzikir* in Contemporary Indonesia

Indonesia is experiencing the most considerable urban growth in Asia, and in the next ten years, 68% of the population will live in cities.[56] The *kyai*s or Sufi teachers who were the Islamic authorities of the 19th and 20th century Java and the archipelago no longer have the same power and reach. Indonesian televangelist preachers such as AA Gym have become the new religious authorities speaking to the Indonesian masses.[57] These tele-*dai* (televangelist style Islamic preachers) are partially filling the gap of a rapidly urbanizing Indonesia with the dispersal of religious authority, and I will return to this idea in chapter two. Other developments, such as the mobile mosque and online *pesantren,* have also developed as a result of this. The *pengajian* has become an even more important source of Islamic authority and education as more Indonesians attend public schools. However, a new type of religious gatherings, *majelis dzikir*, *majelis salawat*, and *majelis ta'lim,* are developing separately from the *pengajian*.

The existing literature on these new forms of religious instruction focuses on these events' Sufi heritage, the distinction between urban and rural manifestations, and the rise of Arab authority within the events. Julia Day Howell and Arif Zamhari rightly note that in the last two decades, these gatherings, *majelis dzikir* and *majelis salawat,* have formed partially as a response to "greater social mobility and associational fluidity

[56] "Indonesia's Urban Story: The Role of Cities in Sustainable Economic Development," *World Bank Group*. June 14, 2016.
[57] James Bourk Hoesterey, *Rebranding Islam: Piety, Prosperity, and a Self-Help Guru* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

of modern life."[58] Zamhari, in a separate work, indicates that the rise of *majelis dzikir* groups in East Java is, partially, because these groups resemble Sufi practice but do not require individuals to take an initiation like that of a *tariqa*.[59] The *majelis dzikir* and *majelis salawat* groups described by Zamhari and Howell practice *dzikir* and *salawat,* often led by *habibs* (a teacher of Arab descent) or *kyai*s.[60] The urban *majelis* are usually led by Habibs and tend to place "greater importance of entertainment and religious emotion built on family sentiments."[61] The perception of habibs heightens these family sentiments as representatives and continuations of Prophet Muhammad's family (*sayyid*) and as the first sources of Islam in Java, which I will return to in chapter four. However, I wanted to focus on the exact relationship between Habib Syech, *majelis salawat,* and Sufism.

Some of the first *pengajian*'s and *pesantren*s were run by Sufi Syech's initiated in Mecca.[62] The Wali Songo were said to persuade the kings of Java of Islam's power through mystical feats. As already indicated in Howell and Zamhari's work, formal Sufi orders such as Naqshbandiyya became less popular with the formation of groups such as the *majelis dzikir* partially due to the demands of urbanization. Zamhari and Howell connect the broader development of the *majelis dzikir and salawat* to urban Sufism and the elite's rediscovery of Sufism. The urban elite in the 1950s associated with modernist

[58] Arif Zamhari and Julia Day Howell, "Taking Sufism to the streets: *majelis zikir* and *majelis salawat* as new venues for popular Islamic Piety," *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, vol. 46, no. 2 (2012): 53.
[59] Arif Zamhari, *Rituals of Islamic Spirituality: A Study of Majlis Dhikr Groups in East Java* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2010), 13.
[60] Arif Zamhari and Julia Day Howell, "Taking Sufism to the streets: *majelis zikir* and *majelis salawat* as new venues for popular Islamic Piety," *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, vol. 46, no. 2 (2012): 54.
[61] Ibid., 54.
[62]

organizations like Muhammadiyah rejected Sufi orders.[63] In the late 1930s, figures such as Hamka (Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah) provide "a fresh interpretation of Sufism, or mysticism, nestled within the big idea of modernist Islam."[64] Urban Sufism represents the move by cosmopolitan intellectuals beginning in the 1970s to take "sophisticated Islamic studies, including *tasawwuf,* out of the *pesantren* and universities and into the public arena."[65] The inclusion of *tasawwuf* as mystical Islamic knowledge as the key to happiness, as argued by Hamka, is reflected in Indonesian Islamic sensibilities, such as the phrase I heard on my first trip to Indonesian in 2011, "my work is my *dzikir*." Urban Sufism propelled the philosophy of Sufism, *tasawwuf,* through mass media and televangelist preachers. The *majelis dzikir* and *salawat* take the ritual recitation of *dzikir* and *salawat* as their defining practice and non-elite members of Indonesian society as their primary participants. Both urban Sufism and the *majelis dzikir* and *salawat* are contemporary transformations of Sufi orders, *tariqa*, that do not require initiation and are a response to the pressures of modern life by both elite and non-elite Indonesians. However, my object of study, *salawat* by Habib Syech, does not have the same types of divides or binaries, such as urban/rural, popular/elite, NU/Muhammadiyah. It requires an approach that sees the use of the term *majelis* to indicate both synchronicities with history, Sufism, and Islam in Indonesia and a divergence.

[63] Julia Day Howell, "Modernity and the Borderlands of Islamic Spirituality in Indonesia's New Sufi Networks," *Sufism and the Modern in Islam,* ed. Martin van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell (London: IB Tarus, 2007), 218.
[64] James Rush, *Hamka's Great Story: A Master Writer's Vision of Islam for Modern Indonesia* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016), 23.
[65] Julia Day Howell, "Modernity and the Borderlands of Islamic Spirituality in Indonesia's New Sufi Networks," *Sufism and the Modern in Islam,* ed. Martin van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell (London: IB Tarus, 2007): 237.

‘Alawiyyah Ties to Indonesian Education and the *Majelis Salawat, Majelis Ta’lim*, and *Majelis Dzikir*

Woodward, Rohmaniyah, Amin, Ma’aric, Coleman, and Umar have tried to make sense of Habib Syech’s popularity along with Habib Rizieq, the founder of FPI. They have placed Habib Syech’s reputation within the rise of Hadhrami authority in Indonesia. Woodward, for example, argues that his popularity is based:

> “on what Bourdieu (1991) refers to as the ‘religious capital’ of Hadhrami sayyid to contest dominance in the new, primarily urban, social spaces that have developed in Indonesia since the 1980s. This religious capital is based on the reverence that traditional Indonesian (and other) Muslims have for sayyids, as the embodiment of the *barakah* (blessing) of the Prophet and the Ṭarīqa ‘Alawiyya.”[66]

Woodward et al. are right in indicating that *baraka* seems to be driving these events and that Habib Syech’s position as a Hadharami *sayyid* contributes to the appearance of *baraka*. *Baraka* first emerges here as a feature of Habib Syech’s connection to Prophet Muhammad's lineage and the Sufi Order ‘Alawiyyah.

The establishment of the *tariqa* ‘Alawiyya’s formal practices and institutional development occurs within the history of the Bā ‘Alawī people of the Hadramawt valley in Yemen. The community's formation begins with Aḥmad bin Isā from Basrah’s move from Iraq in the 10th century.[67] It is through Aḥmad bin Isā that members of the Bā ‘Alawī claim descent from Prophet Muhammad. However, the *tariqa* Alawiyya does not form until the thirteenth century with Muhammad b. ‘Ali (d. 1255).[68] The Alawiyya was

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[66] Mark Woodward, Inayah Rohmaniyah, Ali Amin, Samsul Ma'arif, Diana Murtaugh Coleman, Muhammad Sani Umar, “Ordering what is right, forbidding what is wrong: Two faces of Hadhrami dakwah in contemporary Indonesia.” *RIMA: Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, vol. 46, no 2 (2012): 106.
[67] Anne K. Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea Family Networks in East Africa, 1860-1925* (London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 12.
[68] Ismail Fajrie Alatas, "Becoming Indonesians: The Bā 'Alawī in the Interstices of the Nation," *Die Welt Des Islams* 51, no. 1 (2011): 47.

not developed into an "institutional complex of Sufi practices" until the late fourteenth century with Abdal-Raāmán al-Saqqáf (d. 1416).[69] This institutional complex becomes connected to texts, previously pious Bā 'Alawī predecessors, the ritual of "Sallāf Presencing,"[70] and the space of Tarim in the Hadramawt valley.[71] 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Saqqāf created "litanies (*Rātib al-Saqqāf)* which are used at the Saqqāf Presencing and introduced the use of flutes and tambourines to accompany its performance."[72] Musicians play these litanies with lutes and tambourines "'for the facing of God'*(li-wajh Alláh)*."[73]

The Sallāf Presencing was a performance of these litanies intended to face God. This resonates with the *salawat* performed in contemporary Indonesia. Neither Habib Syech nor any of my interlocutors have made mention of Sallāf Presencing. However, the musicians and Habib Syech are not paid. As I will argue in chapter three, many participants and musicians understand the space of *salawat* as a *barzakh* between this world and the next. Many participants feel the presence of God. Therefore, this historical ritual pointed to by Ho is possibly an explanation for how *salawat* and the litanies/poetry of *salawat* are passed down to Habib Syech. He studied with family members from the Hadramawt region in Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Outsiders do not have access to this education as it is by Hadhrami family members for Hadhrami family members. However, Habib Syech's uncle was the first to encourage Habib Syech to perform *salawat* because Habib Syech "had a good voice." It seems reasonable to assume that at some point in

[69] Engseng Ho. *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 43
[70] Ibid., 43.
[71] Ibid., 43-47.
[72] Ibid., 44.
[73] Ibid., 44.

Habib Syech's Hadhrami education, he learned *salawat* or an orally transmitted version of Sallāf Presencing's litanies.

My interlocutors attend *salawat* that pulls from poetry and songs that are said to reach back to the time of the Wali Songo, the time of Prophet Muhammad, and contemporary litanies or *qasida*, poetry, to feel the presence of the Prophet and receive *baraka*, as I will argue throughout the dissertation. The songs of *salawat*, performed by Habib Syech, have links to both the Indonesian past and possible ties to the Hadramawt litanies of *al-Saqqāf.* In addition to this institutional complex which Ensing Ho observes and describes, the character of the 'Alawiyya *tariqa* is exemplified by the imitation of the Prophet Muhammad both internally and externally through the study of the *hadiths* and following the pious Bā 'Alawī predecessors.[74] The Bā 'Alawī descent from Prophet Muhammad connected with the creation and development of the *tariqa* 'Alawiyya focused on the imitation of the Prophet. This connection to the *sayyid* ancestors results, according to Anne K. Bang, in the 'Alawiyya "claim to special *baraka* based on Sharifian descent from the Prophet, an aspect which at times – at least viewed from the outside – seems to overshadow the mystical content."[75] Their claim to Sharifian descent, often generalized as Sayyid descent, indicates their lineage to the Prophet Muhammad. Sharifian descent was initially used to indicate descendence from Hasan ibn Ali, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad. However, *baraka* is tied to the fact that Habib Syech traces his lineage back to the Prophet Muhammad and is recognized as a sayyid, of

[74] Ismail Fajrie Alatas, "Becoming Indonesians: The Bā 'Alawī in the Interstices of the Nation," *Die Welt Des Islams* 51, no. 1 (2011): 47-48.
[75] Anne K. Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea Family Networks in East Africa, 1860-1925* (London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 15.

Sharifian descent. These terms all indicate Habib Syech and ‘Alawiyya’s lineage to the Prophet Muhammad.

The *tariqa* ‘Alawiyya arrived in the Dutch East Indies in the eighteenth century through trading routes between southern Arabia and Southeast Asia.[76] The early twentieth century saw a “hadhrami awakening,” which envisioned the Hadramawt as the homeland and created institutions for consolidating Hadhrami identity around the homeland.[77] Envisioning the Hadramawt as the homeland became problematic as more and more Hadhrami’s intermarried with Indonesians and made the Dutch East Indies their home. In the 1950s, the Hadhramis in general and Bā ‘Alawī became fully integrated into newly independent Indonesia.[78] It was within this environment that Habib Syech was born in 1961. He is one of the sixteen children of Al-Habib Abdul Kadir bin Abdurrahman Assegaf.

Being born into Hadhrami and particularly from an ‘Alawiyya family, which means his Habib Syech’s lineage can be traced back to the Prophet Muhammad, is undoubtedly intertwined with being a part of the *tariqa* ‘Alawiyya. In this sense, untangling the importance of the ‘Alawiyya in formulating his Hadhrami identity and practice would be problematic. Additionally, underestimating the importance of Sufism in the formation of Indonesian Islamic sensibilities would be a mistake. Howell and Zamhari make the case that the emergence of not just Habib Syech’s *majelis salawat*, but

[76] Natalie Mobini-Kesheh, *The Hadhrami Awakening: Community and Identity in the Netherlands East Indies, 1900-1942*. (Ithaca, NY: Sotheast Asia Program Publications, 1999), 21.
[77] See chapter three in Natalie Mobini-Kesheh, *The Hadhrami Awakening: Community and Identity in the Netherlands East Indies, 1900-1942* (Ithaca, NY: Sotheast Asia Program Publications, 1999) and chapter four in Michael Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma Below the Winds* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003)
[78] Ismail Fajrie Alatas, "Becoming Indonesians: The Bā 'Alawī in the Interstices of the Nation," *Die Welt Des Islams* 51, no. 1 (2011): 55.

many other, often smaller, *majelis salawat* and *majelis zikir* groups, "draw on the ritual repertoire of traditional Sufi Islam," while not being confined to many of the traditional components of Sufism, such as initiation.[79] However, in recounting some of his first attempts at preaching around Java, Habib Syech makes a point to indicate how often he was not accepted in Indonesia because of his Arab appearance. He had reminded me, several times, of when he had mosque doors slammed in his face when he was first traveling around Indonesia preaching because "they did not want any Arabs in their mosque."

Habib Syech's Hadhrami heritage and place as a *sayyid* contribute to his popularity. His lineage and ties to an 'Alawiyya family also contribute to Islamic perceptions of his 'cultural capital' and *baraka*. There is undoubtedly more acceptance now than in the past of the authority and place of Hadhrami's in Indonesian society as exemplars of the teachings of Prophet Muhammad. However, many Habibs in Indonesia who preach, teach about the Hadiths, hold government positions, and head Sufi Orders do not have the same fame or pull that Habib Syech does. It was not until Habib Syech started performing *salawat* that he began drawing tens of thousands of listeners. When asked, he, furthermore, separates himself from Sufism. He "knows *salawat*" and thinks different tariqa are different paths, but he does not follow or promote a *tariqa*. Habib Syech has been initiated, through his lineage and education, into the *tariqa* 'Alawiya and *salawat* resonates with Sufi sensibilities. However, this form of Islamic expression extends beyond the spaces in which Sufism has been a significant player. His lineage

[79] Arif Zamhari and Julia Day **Howell,** "Taking Sufism to the streets: majelis zikir and majelis salawat as new venues for popular Islamic piety in Indonesia," *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, vol 46, no 2 (2012): 50.

cannot explain the popularity of Habib Syech, and it is not this *sayyid* identity that singularly allows him to be the emitter of *baraka* at these events. This is the first step in providing an alternative way of understanding the connection between the *majelis ta'lim, dzikir,* and *salawat*

The First Appearance of *Baraka*

On this particular night, following my motorbike ride with Muhammad Umam and the sermon on *hidayah*, Syech Abah decided to explain why my parents could not go to heaven. He took two glasses and filled them both with sweet, black tea. Steam rose from the glasses as he explained, "These glasses are like our hearts, dirty. Sin clouds the water so that you cannot see through it. Jimi, your parents are Christian, yes?" I was surprised as I had never told anyone about my parents or my religion, but they were Christian. So, I responded with, "Yes." He then dumped the tea from one of the glasses. "Jimi, your parents can never cleanse their hearts of sin because they are not on the right path. Their hearts will stay like this glass, cloudy and dirty. However, Muslims can cleanse their hearts like this glass (pointing to the empty glass)." Syech Abah's statement caught me off guard. However, his sermon on *hidayah* indicated that if my parents did convert, then they could cleanse their hearts. According to Syech Abah, this cleansing of the heart was done through *dzikir* and *salat*, but it was also achieved through poetry, *syair*.

The room's atmosphere during the sermon was calm, and men fell in and out of sleep in the back of the room. The beginning of *dzikir*, recitation of the ninety-nine names of God, shifted the atmosphere slightly., the men sleeping in the back briefly lifted their heads and returned to sleep. The *dzikir* lasted for around two hours. Some had books with

Indonesian transliteration of the Arabic recitation, but many simply followed the pace, rhythm, and pronunciation controlled by Syech Abah. My legs went numb as limbs stuck into my back. Muhammad could see that I was uncomfortable, and he began massaging the outside of my right thigh. The room heated up with the sound of *lā ʾilāhaʾill āllāh*. This portion of practice usually builds to a crescendo; if practitioners did not know the Arabic recitations, like me at the time, then they would be handed a little green book with the Indonesian transliteration. The room seemed to erupt with the sound of *lā ʾilāhaʾill āllāh*. Tears fell from the faces of the men around me. Their bodies swelled with emotion, but Syech Abah took control of the recitation and slowed down the rhythm of the *dzikir*. The room was pregnant with emotion. Syech Abah praised God through the microphone as bodies heaved with loud sobs. Waves of "Ya, Allah" swept over the crowd. Unlike the recitation portion of the *dzikir,* Syech Abah did not control the group at the end of the practice. Some practitioners were shaking with uncontrollable emotions, while others were more reserved. The frequency of outbursts of "Allah" slowed as those gathered slowed down. It concluded when Syech Abah said, "Recite *Al-Fatiha* (the first chapter of the Quran)."

Soto, containing mostly broth and rice, and tea were passed around the room. Some people chatted, but most people sat and ate quietly. People then placed water bottles in front of Syech Abah on the low tables surrounding him. Different participants placed bottles of water on a rectangle on the table. Syech Abah stuck the tip of his finger in each bottle three times and recited a verse from the Quran. I leaned over and asked someone what the water was for, and he said, "For health (*kesehatan*)." I stood up with Muhammad, and we joined the line of men who would kiss the hand of the Syech. The

cold, crisp air was refreshing, and Muhammad and I slowly navigated the car-sized potholes once again on our return home.

Charisma and *Baraka*

The only source of *baraka* is Allah. *Baraka* can move through a multiplicity of mediums. As I will indicate in chapter five, the Quran as the word of God, as well as the Prophets and a host of other physical places and objects can act as a medium through which *baraka* travels from the ultimate source, Allah. However, in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, *baraka* is understood, by those in the *pesantren,* as bound up with the charismatic authority and *karama* (divine distinction) of the *kyai*.[80] The above ethnographic vignette is a demonstration of how *baraka* was a part of my ethnographic exploration of Indonesia from the very beginning. This story took place during my first trip to Indonesia in 2011, and it represents how my initial investigation into Indonesia before reaching Habib Syech's performances of *salawat*. When Syech Abah touches the water and recites a few Quranic verses, the Quran (as a medium through which Allah's *baraka* travels) and the *kyai* (who holds *karama* and is, therefore, a worthy medium of *baraka* emanating from Allah through the Quran), moves into the water as an additional medium for *baraka*. The relationship between the *santri* (students) and *kyai* impacts the potential benefits of *baraka*. If the student has been obedient and supportive of the *kyai,* then *baraka* may be present. However, if the student has not been respectful to the teacher, the student could be cursed (*kualaut*), and *baraka* might be present but would not manifest. *Baraka* is short-circuited and not guaranteed to be in the water. In this equation of *baraka*, *baraka* is not guaranteed and indicates just how intangible and slippery it's

[80] Endang Turmudi, *Struggling for the Ummah: Changing Leadership Roles of Kiai in Jompang, East Java* (Canberry: Australian National University E Press, 1996) 74-75.

manifestation in practitioners' lives. Those who attend the *pengajian* of Syech Abah every Thursday continue bringing water to be blessed every Thursday. If the ailment was not cured, then the problem was not that *baraka* is not emanating from Allah, but that it has been short-circuited. Perhaps the *kyai* does not have the proper *karuma*, or *santri* was not in proper relationship to the *kyai* or Allah.

This extends to the kissing of the *kyai*'s hand as well; the proper relationship between the student (*santri*) and teacher (Syech Abah) as well as the *kyai* having *karama* are both preconditions to the possible emergence of *baraka* or *kualaut*. In the case of Habib Syech, his *karama* is initially indicated by his lineage. The relationship between Habib Syech and his 'students,' however, is difficult to determine. There are millions of followers, and very few people have individual relationships with him. However, poetry (*syair*) also emerges as a medium for *baraka* in the events of *salawat*. Syech Abah appears to indicate that *syair* can cleanse the heart, although not the hearts of my Christian parents. It could have only cleansed their hearts if they were willing to be in the right relationship to Allah, conversion, and reciting the *syair* from an Islamic perspective. It is not only dependent on the relationship between *kyai* and *santri* but between Allah and the individual. Having indicated this formulation of *baraka* in the *pesantren* and *pengajian* connected to *syair* and *salawat*, it is always possible that an individual receives *baraka* regardless of their relationship with the *kyai* because *baraka* emanates from its source, Allah, according to its source, Allah. Therefore, even when beginning to grapple with the first appearance of *baraka*, *baraka* cannot be confined to a calculation or equation because its ultimate source is Allah. *Baraka* cannot be captured by rational thought alone because it moves according to Allah.

Syair is a particular type of poetry emerging in the Malay peninsula with the earliest composer being Hamzah Fansuri, who lived "around the second half of the 16th century and the first half of the 17th century."[81] He was one of the first Sufi thinkers and poets of the Malay peninsula.[82] *Syair* was initially composed in Malay with four-line stanzas.[83] The *syair* is related to the Arabic *qasida*, to which I will return in a later chapter. What is significant in this initial gaze at the place of *baraka* in Indonesian Islamic history is that it is initially connected to educational institutions. The *kyai* may be a medium for *baraka*, but it is ultimately Allah who is the holder and transmitter of *baraka*. The *kyai*, *santri*, and water can all become mediums through which *baraka* can be transmitted. *Baraka* can additionally travel through poetry connected to Allah, unrelated to the relationship between the *kyai* and *santri*. *Salawat* is also a form of poetry, not distinctly Malay, performed by Habib Syech and others. The possibility of *salawat*, like *syair*, in the context of the *pengajian*, becoming a medium for *baraka* is not dependent upon the relationship between individuals. *Baraka* cannot be conceived as only reliant on physical proximity and the relationship between holder and receiver.

As Samuli Schilke indicates, "the concept of '*baraka*' allows the inclusion of various practices in one festival."[84] Like Schilke's work on Sufi saint festivals in Egypt, many authors briefly reference *baraka* as blessings actively intertwined with a particular phenomenon. However, analysis of *baraka* in and of itself still lacks as a topic of

[81] Vladimir I. Braginsky, "Towards the Biography of Hamza Fansuri. When Did Hamzah Live? Data from his Poems and Early European Accounts," *Archipel*. No 57, 1999: 136.
[82] Ibid.,136.
[83] Vladimir I. Braginsky, "On the Qasida and Cognate Poetic Forms in the Malay-Indonesian World," in *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, ed. Stefan Sperl and Christopher Shackle (New York: E.J. Brill, 1996), 384.
[84] Samuli Schilke, "Policing Ambiguity: Muslim Saints-Day Festivals and the Moral Geography of Public Space in Egypt," *American Ethnologist* 35, no. 4 (2008): 539-52.

scholarly inquiry.[85] *Baraka*, *salawat*, and Islamic educational institutions have a long history in the formation of Islam in history. Indonesia, Southeast Asia, and Muslim majority communities are rapidly changing due to the movement of bodies to cities that open up the possibility for new Islamic authorities driven by technology. In the next chapter, *baraka* again moves through the Islamic landscape, but the medium, digital technologies, is a unique and developing medium partially responding to the changing dynamics of everyday life. The *kyai* is one of many different Islamic authorities populating the Islamic landscape. Like the transformation of educational institutions and Islamic authorities, mediums, perceptions, and understandings about *baraka* are changing. The rise of new Islamic authorities, urbanism, and digital technologies bring an inclusion of various practices, people, and places together driven by an amalgam of *baraka*.

[85] Edward Westermarck, *The Moorish Conception of Holiness (baraka)* (Helsingfors: Akademiska Bokhandeln, 1916); Prina Werbner and Helene Basu ed. *Embodying charisma: Modernity, Locality, and Performance of Emotion in Sufi Cults* (New York, London: Routledge, 1998); Dietrich von Denffer, "*Baraka* as basic concept of Muslim Popular Belief, *Islamic Studies* 15 (3), 1976: 167-86; Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

CHASING *SALAWAT*'S DIGITAL PRESENCE

Figure 1: Habib Syech checks his phone during a performance of salawat. Personal Photograph

The first whispers of *salawat* performances by Habib Syech I heard were banners for a previous event in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He had been performing *salawat* since 1997 and begun to attract massive crowds. It was in 2012 while I was still studying with Syech Abah in Salatiga as well as traveling around to meet other prominent teachers in Java that I heard murmurs about *salawat* performed by Habib Syech. I occasionally ran into billboards and signs promoting his events, but I knew very little about Habib Syech or *salawat*. My first real introduction to *salawat* by Habib Syech and his musicians, like many Indonesians, was digital. I found a Facebook site dedicated to fans of *salawat* by Habib Syech. Videos of *salawat* circulated through this site and would occasionally appear on social media. DVDs, CDs, and cassettes circulated in stores and pop up stalls in Java, but it was still unclear as to what his *da'wah* (proselytization) was from the

videos. Was Habib Syech just a performer of *salawat*? Was he a tele-*dai* (Islamic televangelist)? The physical recordings and digital recordings of his events were not the sermons of Islamic preachers that have circulated across Muslim-majority societies. Islamic media forms such as the cassette sermon, DVD, and CDs have rapidly circulated the globe, changing how Islamic knowledge and authority forms. Here, I investigate how these digital and physical recordings of *salawat* fit into this global exchange of Islamic knowledge that has reformulated authority, piety, and ethical sensibilities with particular attention to the Indonesian context.[1]

Habib Syech previously produced DVDs and CDs of *salawat* for sale, but he does not currently produce physical CDs or DVDs anymore. He also used to produce studio recordings, but he has stopped making recordings. This does not mean that he will not make videos in the future, but as we will see, the recordings that matter and are readily available to my interlocutors are not cassettes, DVDs, or CDS. Videos and audio recordings of his performance are still for sale at his events, supermarkets, and multimedia stores, but a flash drive or smartphone is more likely the medium by which his sound moves through the Islamic landscape. Habib Syech, additionally, has an individual in Jakarta responsible for managing *salawat* recordings on iTunes and Spotify.

[1] See for example: Lila Abu-Lughoud, *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Nationhood in Egypt* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004, 135-136). Gary R. Bunt, *iMuslim: Rewiring the House of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Ronald Lukens-Bull, *A Peaceful Jihad: Negotiating Identity and Modernity in Muslim Java* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2005); Peter Manuel, *Cassette Culture: Popular Music and Technology in North India* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993); Regula Qureshi, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan*: *Sound, Context, and Meaning in Qawwali* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995); Everett M. Rogers. *Communication Technology* (United Kingdom: Free Press, 1986); Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson, *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2003); Anne Rasmussen. *Women, the Recited Quran, and Islamic Music in Indonesia* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2010).

Habib Syech produces books in Malaysia, but these books are ritual guides rather than explications of Quranic verse or the written word of Habib Syech. The first time I met Habib Syech in person, I asked him to write his phone number down, and he indicated that he did not write. I have seen him take notes, and he is fluent in Arabic, Javanese, and Indonesia. However, his written or spoken thoughts are not what drives social media recordings.

Many of my interlocutors may have owned one CD or one DVD, mainly in remembrance of one specific event that they may have helped sponsor or was in their town. However, I had hundreds of individuals who would open their phone to show me a seemingly infinite list of recordings that they had taken. Although some recordings were shared publicly on YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, many of these recordings were either recorded by the individual or shared between individuals. The recordings of *salawat* that included Habib Syech, musicians, and a whole host of people from multiple vantage points (including drones) seemed infinitely increasing. However, the millions of recordings were not showing up on social media. A search for the events through YouTube turns up only a few recordings in comparison to the number of phones that light up the crowds, recording these assemblages of devotional piety. If the recordings are shared, they are often shared peer-to-peer. For example, I had several pictures and videos taken of me to reach 50,000 people overnight, but I only found out about this because someone sent me a picture that a friend sent them. Photos and videos would appear of me that I had no idea were taken, and they were not often from public postings. The number of recordings of these events is massive, but they are not operating like Charles

Hirschkind's analysis of cassette sermons[2] or the Islamic televangelists of Indonesia.[3] As I will argue at the end of this chapter, the recordings are operating much like the water from Syech Abah's *pengajians*. The point of these recordings is not to share them to prove that one was simply present at *salawat*. These recordings hold the potential of becoming a medium for *baraka*.

The rise of urbanism and the movement of individuals away from traditional Islamic authority, such as the *kyai*, in Indonesia, has provided an opening for new forms of media and new Islamic authorities. For example, Muslim televangelist preacher and popular Islamic figure Kyai Haji Abdullah Gymnastiar, AA Gym, gained enormous popularity in Indonesia between 1990 and 2006, before he took a second wife. He brought together pop-psychology with Islam and created a brand of aspirational piety that appealed to millions. James Bourk Hoesterey, rightly and cleverly, describes him, "as a combination of prosperity gospel televangelist Joel Osteen and TV psychologist Dr. Phil (Einstein 2008), with Oprah Winfrey's power of personal brand (Lofton 2011)."[4] Televangelist, or the "tele-*dai*, (literally one who calls people to faith),"[5] are a significant part of the changing landscape of Islamic authority across the world. However, followers of *salawat*, identify the *dawah* of Habib Syech as *salawat*. Habib Syech often refuses to appear on television. He has turned down large contracts by Indonesian television stations because they wanted to change the time and structure of *salawat*. He occasionally appears on television, and TV stations will stream his events, but they must, like the

[2] Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).
[3] James Bourk Hoesterey, *Rebranding Islam: Piety, Prosperity, and A Self-Help Guru (*Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 11.
[4] Ibid., 11.
[5] Ibid., 9.

practitioners, be present at *salawat*. The time and format of *salawat* do not change according to the demands of media giants. Habib Syech is, furthermore, not the Islamic preacher or tele-*dai*.

CDs, DVDs, cassettes, individual recordings on camera phones, and occasional television appearance are one of the multiplicities that composes this assemblage of devotional piety. It is out of this initial contact with *salawat* that the lasting component of the assemblage enters the frame, *baraka*. This durable or territorialized component of this assemblage of piety, however, should not be understood as a guarantee but rather an aspirational element in these various media forms. Reading, reciting, listening, feeling, and smell are all a part of the way that a practitioner experiences *baraka*. As one of my interlocutors explained, "Yes, when you watch it [*salawat* by Habib Syech] on your cell phone, and you focus on understanding and take it very seriously. You may start to cry. You can feel it [*baraka*]." I set out here, to present how this individuals statements relate to the Indonesian context, and transformation of Islamic digital authority. Additionally, the other ethnographic vignette that I have woven into this chapter is significant as my first attempt to find the events of Habib Syech that was unsuccessful. However, even though I never found the events, *baraka* still managed to assert its presence as I reflect on my experiences at the graves of the nine saints of Java (Wali Songo).

Mediascapes

I am interested in thinking about how the reverberation of Habib Syech's events creates engagement with what has been called a "mediascape" and how that is reconfiguring ethical, political, and aesthetic sensibilities.[6] I am using mediascapes

[6] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 33.

following Arjun Appadurai, who uses the term to refer to both the means of production and dissemination of the media as well as the "images of the world created by these images." [7] It is in both the modes of production and the representational images that these productions indicate the mutually constitutive relationship between media and these events. However, this mediascape is not only, "image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality."[8] Alternatively, I follow Hirschkind in asserting that sight has been privileged over other senses, particularly the auditory. The senses are understood as secondary or tertiary to the narratives of reality provided by images, texts, and that which is easily grasped by "rationality." The olfactory and auditory, in particular, were understood from the perspective of the ideas and concepts that inform the Enlightenment as "an engulfment that threatens the independence and integrity that grounds the masculine spectatorial consciousness."[9] These mediascapes are composed not only of images but also smells, sounds, tastes, and feelings. These mediascapes are one multiplicity connected and instrumental in forming the assemblage of devotional piety that converge in the spaces of Habib Syech's events. I see the senses engaged in feeling *baraka* as building on the concept of mediascapes and providing a different understanding of media that extends past the idea of mediascapes.

One of the defining features of the mediascape is not its "disjuncture" between other scapes informing "global cultural flows;"[10] the mediascape is rhizomatic. It cannot exist outside of the many different scapes that it relates to, and the mediascape is not the

[7] Ibid., 35.
[8] Ibid., 35.
[9] Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 13.
[10] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large : Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 37.

singular mechanism driving the assemblage of devotional piety. It cannot exist as a distinct cultural flow, although it is connected and developed by a particular socio-technical context. Appadurai's formulation of the scapes relies on this distinction between their cultural flows. This, however, does not help us understand the *salawat* of Habib Syech and its extension beyond their manifestation within particular streams.

My understanding of mediascape and its connection to the senses differs from Hirschkind's formulation in two distinct ways. The first is that this "soundscape" cannot be separated, in particular, from the "smellscape" of the events. The richness of sensory materials demands that all of the senses are involved in creating the experience of *baraka*. The second proposition I am making here is that the reconfiguration and reterritorialization of this mediascape is not an exploration of practices that are "counterhistory- counter to the modernist formations of politics and religion and the ideologies that sustain and legitimate them."[11] These practices are fully embedded in "modernist formations" while resulting in a different mechanism that drives this "modernist formation." It is in this mediascape that our initial introduction to the mechanism that drives this modernist assemblage of devotional piety reveals itself, *baraka*. As we will see in the next chapter, *baraka* is inextricably linked to *syafa'at* and *hati tenang*. However, in this chapter, I begin with my first attempt at finding Habib Syech's performances to understand the mediascape and the context out of which it develops.

Finding *Salawat*

[11] Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 3.

I resorted to Facebook to find information on Habib Syech's events because I was not in contact with anyone who seemed to know where he would perform and when. I found a Facebook group called Syekhermania Pusat (Central Syekhermania), and they posted a photo with a banner for an event in Surabaya. I scoured the internet for further information with very little success. People would post photos of banners or event flyers on Facebook, but frequently the dates and locations were sometimes challenging to analyze. Eventually, I saw a photo with a banner for an event in Surabaya that would take place in a few days on "*malam jumat*." "*Malam jumat*" translates literally as Friday night, but in practice, it means Thursday night. At the time, I was not aware of this. I decided that I would attempt to meet him in Surabaya. After several hours of waiting in the hot, stuffy lobby, I was able to meet with a ticket agent and book my ticket. I went to a local internet café and found a hotel in Surabaya in the city center since I did not know precisely where the event would be.

The next day, I rode my motorbike to the train station, boarded the train, and took my seat. About thirty minutes into the ride, the train conductor realized that I had bought a ticket for the wrong day. The conductor explained that I might have to get off the train. I was very frustrated but apologized for making a mistake:

James Edmonds(JE): Maaf Pak, saya tidak lihat tanggal.	I am sorry sir, I did not look at the date
JE: Mohon maaf.	I am very sorry.
Conductor: Wahdo, bisa Bahasa Indonesia?	Wow, you can speak Indonesian?
JE: Iya, tapi masih belajar Pak.	Yes, but I am still studying sir.

Conductor: Ok, sebentar. Saya mungkin punya solusi. Ok, just a moment. I may have a solution.

He left briefly, and when he came back, he decided that I could stay in the dining car for the duration of the trip. I spent the next two hours with the train conductor who took me on a journey through the Javanese meanings of my name and his name. My head was spinning. I was trying to keep up with his blending of Indonesian and Javanese, but I was just worried he would kick me off the train if I did not laugh at his jokes. He related my name to the various landscapes around us in Javanese. He seemed always to come back to fertility, breasts, stamina, and the size of his 'river.' Regardless of the content, Javanese played a significant role in the way in which he understood his place in the Indonesian landscape. I was relieved to arrive in Surabaya. I thanked him again, and he offered to help me get a taxi. I tried to decline graciously, but he followed me as I stepped down from the train.

The heat of Surabaya was stifling. The conductor flagged down a taxi and welcomed me to Surabaya. I climbed into a cab and told the driver the name of the hotel. He immediately began telling me what 'kinds' of people to watch out for in Surabaya. He said that I should watch out for those with dark skin from Madura and that Surabaya had a significant prostitution problem. This seemed like an odd way to open up the conversation, but as we pulled up to the hotel, I realized that I was very close to the red-light district of Surabaya. I had more than one 'pimp' approach me during my stay. In search of Islamic forms of piety, I had certainly seemed to miss the mark. I had also arrived with very little knowledge about where the event would take place.

The person at the front desk inquired as to what I was planning on doing during my stay. I explained that I was going to see Habib Syech. She paused, said hold on a

minute, and left. She came back with one of the security guards (*satpam*) who had attended Habib Syech's event several nights before. I spoke with him about going to see Habib Syech's event, and he explained that Habib Syech had already moved onto another town. I was confused and frustrated, but he suggested that I make a trip to the grave of one of the Nine Saints of Java, the Wali Songo, in the morning, Syech Maulana Malik Ibrahim (d. 1419). I agreed and went back to my room.

The Rise of Mass Media and Digital Connectivity in Indonesia

When I first began searching for information on Habib Syech in 2012, there was not a lot of material, and the content available was spread out between people and different social media sites. Glimpses of the events emerged through photographs or short videos that circulated on Facebook. The lack of centralized information regarding Habib Syech's events in 2012 was not because people were not using the internet to exchange information. The events were averaging around ten thousand people at that point, and many of them were recording videos. People were often aware of the events through posters in the town, word of mouth, or they simply stumbled into the events drawn by the lights that illuminate the sky above. However, the way in which these events developed as a media phenomenon is related to the sociotechnical environment in which they emerge. Previous restrictions of technology under both President Sukarno and President Suharto, as well as community-based and decentralized technological organizations, shape how information is disseminated in Indonesia.

Before Indonesia's independence from the Dutch, Indonesia's first vice president and revolutionary against colonialism, Muhammad Hatta, introduced, "cooperates operated not just as pragmatic systems of production but as technologies of social

justice," that would exist outside of Dutch rule.[12] Hatta envisioned the Indonesian future as progressing with individual communities creating a technological and economic future run by multiple individuals. The homes, schools, hospitals, and the technological activities would not be created by a Dutch, but in building these communities outside of the colonial power centers like Batavia, there could be an independent Indonesia. This independent Indonesia was not driven by a military battle. He saw an independent Indonesia building from the strength of the Indonesian people who could become economically independent from the Dutch. Every community would be responsible for building their infrastructure through a collective engagement by all those in the community to use the resources available. It was a bottom-up vision for Indonesian democracy that attempted to break the cycle of exploitation. He was quickly put in prison for his anti-colonial sentiment in 1934.[13] This anti-colonial, grassroots vision of Indonesia is a powerful mechanism in the development of the mediascapes of Indonesia as they flow with the development of the technoscapes such as the internet, which becomes the medium through which multiple media forms emerge.

Between the 1930s and Indonesian Independence in 1945, Indonesia was in political, social, and religious upheaval. The Japanese occupation between 1942 and 1945 adds another layer of complexity. The Japanese partially understood the power that the *kyai*'s had in their communities across Indonesia. So, the Japanese began "political indoctrination courses for *kyais* in Jakarta."[14] The number of *kyais* who went to these

[12] Suzanne Moon, "Building from the Outside In: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and Civil Society in New Order Indonesia," in *Dreamscapes of Modernity: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and the Fabrication of Power*, ed. Sheila Jasanoff and Sang-Hyun Kim (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 179.
[13] Ibid., 177.
[14] M.C. Ricklefs, *Islamisation and Its Opponents in Java : A Political, Social, Cultural and Religious History, C. 1930 to Present* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2012) 63.

courses was small in relation to the actual number of *kyais*, but this added a political component to religious authorities who typically stayed out of politics. Ricklefs argues that *kyais* now had to play a very delicate game because, "the more obviously they entered the world of politics, the more ordinary they seemed."[15] *Pesantrens*, however, were often economic, educational, and Islamic centers of their community. So, it was not so much if they entered politics, but rather, how "obvious" their engagement with politics was related to their prowess as an "other-worldly" individual. Hiding political participation was more difficult for those who were a part of the Japanese's other efforts at politicizing Islamic factions across the archipelago to govern: Masyumi. Masyumi (Majlis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia, Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims), which would become a highly influential Islamic political party in Indonesia after independence and the largest Islamic party in the world.[16] Masyumi, as it existed under the Japanese, sought to bring Modernists from Muhammadiyah together with traditionalists from Nahdlatul Ulama.

The politicization of religious leaders and organizations under Japanese occupation, coupled with Hatta's sociotechnical vision for the future of Indonesia, forms the discursive environment from which the mediascape develops. However, Sukarno had a different vision of Indonesian economic and community development. Sukarno worked to build industrial complexes run by elite members of society. Hatta retired from the vice presidency in 1956 as a critique of Sukarno's "politicization of cooperatives," among

[15] Ibid, 65.
[16] Remy Madinier, *The Masyumi Party between Democracy and Integralism*, trans. Jeremy Desmond (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2015).

other things.[17] Hatta's analysis of Sukarno's 'Guided Democracy' as authoritarianism in democratic clothing landed Hatta in prison. Suharto's New Order worked to further consolidate economic and political power by consolidating military power over political life, reorganizing institutions to control these organizations at the furthest level possible, and justified authoritarian rule.[18] From independence in 1945 until the fall of Suharto in 1998, Hatta's ideas of economic cooperates at the base of society dramatically impacted the landscape under which Onno Purbo emerges, "the father of the Indonesian internet."[19]

For members of the general public, authoritarianism that sought to control every aspect of economic and political life enforced by the military became the standard power relationship under which Indonesians had to operate. Suharto's launching of the Palapas satellite in 1976 that sought to unify Indonesia by shaping and controlling the Indonesian consciousness indicated this attempt at control.[20] Bottom-up enterprises that were not endorsed by the New Order had little chance of success, and yet, Purbo began building the foundations for Indonesia's internet through,"'guerilla' (*gerilya*) tactics in their 'struggle' (*perjuangan*) to bring a 'free net' to Indonesia."[21] The formation of the internet was very much a part of the tactical struggle against the strategic power of the New Order. The formation of the internet in Indonesia was significantly different from how,

[17] Suzanne Moon, "Building from the Outside In: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and Civil Society in New Order Indonesia," in *Dreamscapes of Modernity: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and the Fabrication of Power*, ed. Sheila Jasanoff and Sang-Hyun Kim (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 181.
[18] Edward Aspinall, *Opposing Suharto: Compromise, Resistance, and Regime Change in Indonesia*. (Stanford.: Stanford University Press, 2005), 22-23.
[19] Joshua Barker, "Guerilla Engineers: The Internet and the Politics of Freedom in Indonesia," in *Dreamscapes of Modernity: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and the Fabrication of Power*, ed. Sheila Jasanoff and Sang-Hyun Kim (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 200.
[20] Joshua Barker, "Engineers and Political Dreams: Indonesia in the Satellite Age," *Current Anthropology* 46, no. 5 (December 2005): 708.
[21] Ibid., 200.

for example, the internet developed in the United States, as an extension of the state.[22] Even today, the fact that only one cell phone provider requires its users to bind their SIM card to identify information, such as the KTP, is an indication of the understanding that drives the tactics of the Indonesian internet. It is in the vein of struggle and freedom that the internet as a component of the technological landscape developed in Indonesia.

Purbo began developing the first interconnected computer network in the 1990s between the Institute of Technology in Bandung and other campuses.[23] Although Suharto introduced his Palapas satellite in 1976, the internet as the free net was under constant negotiation at the Institute of Technology in Bandung.[24] The development of the activist internet run by those subverting power became even more significant as Purbo wanted to create a wired infrastructure that was independently controlled; in 2007, he writes, "money, technology and government help are not the keys. The dedication of many Indonesian volunteers to community education processes is the most important factor in developing this infrastructure."[25] Rather than laying cables through the Bandung campus and Indonesia as a whole, he saw wireless internet as the future of community-based infrastructure. The internet was to become a place in which authoritarian regimes attempt to consolidate power as well as a position of community-based, bottom-up tactics for improving Indonesia. For Onno, the internet was a "self-organized public," that, "should provide participants with a form of sociality that is characterized by a set of shared

[22] Byung-Keun Kim, *Internationalizing the Internet : The Co-evolution of Influence and Technology*. (Cheltenham, UK ; Northampton, MA: E. Elgar, 2005).
[23] Joshua Barker, "Guerilla Engineers: The Internet and the Politics of Freedom in Indonesia," *Dreamscapes of Modernity: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and the Fabrication of Power*, ed. Sheila Jasanoff and Sang-Hyun Kim (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 200.
[24] Ibid., 205.
[25] Onno Purbo., "Getting Connected." *Inside Indonesia*. July 29, 2007. Accessed February 8, 2009. https://www.insideindonesia.org/getting-connected

technical practices, heightened reciprocity, less hierarchy, more speed, greater immediacy, and greater intimacy."[26] It is this form of sociality based on greater intimacy, speed, and less hierarchy that reflects the use of technology, such as smartphones, and the digital landscape into which contemporary *salawat* performed by Habib Syech develops.

Part of the reason for the lack of information on the location and time of *salawat* was a lack of consolidation of "power." One person or organization did not control the circulation of information, and Habib Syech chooses not to intervene in the mediascape unless it is to indicate his lack of participation in politics. I see his disavowal of politics as a tactic to avoid the pitfalls of Indonesian Islamic history in which Masyumi, NU, and Muhammadiyah become wrapped up in the happenings of violence, governance, and secular life. The disavowal of politics as a feature of *salawat* becomes even more salient when reflecting on the impacts of the internet and digital connectivity on Islamic authority and vice versa.

The Tele-*dai* and Digital Islamic Authority

I was watching the news in Yogyakarta because of the riots in Jakarta following the second election of Jokowi. The government requested all social media platforms to either slow down or completely stop communication due to the riots in Jakarta. I was not able to reach my family unless I went to a hotel that was using a VPN for their entire network. Rumors floated around that the reason behind this was intelligence from the United States, and Europe indicated that terrorist organizations were sending in money to pay for rioters. It is not uncommon for people to pay rioters. As an American, I was

[26] Joshua Barker, "Guerilla Engineers: The Internet and the Politics of Freedom in Indonesia," *Dreamscapes of Modernity: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and the Fabrication of Power*, ed. Sheila Jasanoff and Sang-Hyun Kim (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 214.

scared. However, my Indonesian friends were unbothered. One even laughed at me as I told him I was nervous, "we lived under Suharto's restriction of technology. We are just used to this, and I try different SIM cards and coffee shops." The interaction between authoritarianism and tactics to subvert them are still very alive in Indonesia. However, the global flows of technologies like television, radio, smartphones, and the internet have dramatically changed the dynamics of Islamic authority, authenticity, and the, "self-conscious Islamic identity and practices (prayer, religious lessons, meetings, and anti-Christian rhetoric) and paraphernalia (clothing, mosques, books, and cassettes) that enact, embody, and inculcate it."[27] I am arguing here that this contemporary self-conscious Islamic identity that builds during the 1960s and 70s in the Middle East emerges in Indonesia much later. The 2016 and 2017 protests that brought millions of people to Jakarta to call for the then governor's, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok), arrest for his blasphemy against Islam brought this self-consciously Islamic identity to the national and international stage. The last ten years of Indonesian Islamic life has seen an enormous shift in the way in which Islam is understood and practiced.

In 1960 and 1970s Egypt, the cassettes that circulated in Egypt were crucial in building an Islamic ethical sensibility that, "both attune the heart to God's word and incline the body toward moral conduct."[28] Attuning the heart was impacted not only by the content but by the delivery of the sermons. This attunement and transformation of

[27] Lila Abu-Lughoud, *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Nationhood in Egypt* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 135-136.
[28] Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 9.

Islamic sensibilities were directed towards death as "the fundamental condition of human life."[29] The heart's attunement to death, however, was not a desire for death:

> One of the primary tasks of *khutaba'* is to afford listeners such a taste of death, to portray death in its manifold dimensions and ramifications with a vividness and moral depth so as to root it in their sensory experience, to constitute it as a habit of thought, heart, and body. The tasting of death through continual acts of remembrance enables an ethical orientation in this world, a moral-emotional bearing proper to pious human action.[30]

These sermons, *khutaba'*, were not intended to frighten people into pious action. Instead, the sermons were rooted in an understanding of life that was intimately connected with death. An awareness of the reality of death directed worldly activity. This awareness leads to pious action, but the transformation of Islamic ethical sensibilities was not merely a "rational" transformation, but a different physical and sensory attunement that created a different understanding, a counter-history, that challenges a western, modernist reading of contemporary life. This radical transformation of ethical sensibilities at the heart of the cassette sermons circulating in Egypt does not take place in Indonesia in the same way.

The cassette sermons of Egypt and the Quranic recitation of Indonesia both engage in, "a distinctive and energetic expression of a transnational phenomenon of 'Islamic awakening.'[31] They both, furthermore, act as techniques that impact the embodiment of piety, but these cassettes did not change Indonesia in the same way that the sermons of Hirschkind's listeners were. Quranic reciters and teachers were, "brought from Egypt and Indonesia to perform and to conduct classes."[32] Although they performed

[29] Ibid., 175.
[30] Ibid., 176.
[31] Anna M. Gade, *Perfection Makes Practice: Learning, Emotion, and the Recited Quran in Indonesia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 1.
[32] Ibid., 189.

and conducted classes, it was the cassettes of the reciters who played in Indonesia, such as ʻAbd al-Bāsiṭ ʻAbd al- Samad, that impacted, "long-term proclivities to emulate those very performances."[33] The cassettes and the performances were less concerned with producing an emotional state in the listener, and more oriented towards creating orthopraxical styles of recitation and expectations.[34] These cassettes were furthermore not readily available even in 1990s Indonesia. Indonesian reciters would have to get them from individuals going on Hajj. The cassettes of Quranic recitations impacted the style of Quranic recitation, which became an even more important part of Islamic education and practice in the 1990s. Affect impacted the method of recitation that created more engagement with the Quran and Islamic practice:

> In Qur'ānic Indonesia, affect took the form of attention to the recited Qur'ān within the project of its preservation in memory; this extended to emotional strategies of managing that very ability socially in order to remain a memorizer. Sentiment conveyed both by the "learning curriculum" and the "teaching curriculum" of Arabic reading manipulated feeling to encode specific emotions into the activity of vocalizing the Quran by way of apprehending the sound and shape of its language."[35]

Affect was a tool used by individual reciters and the educational environment to memorize the Quran. This affect was not a redirection of Islamic sensibilities towards death. It reconstituted Muslim sensibilities towards recitation that led to further engagement in both individual and societal engagement with Quranic recitation that led to more practice of recitation and pious action associated with correct recitation. Cassettes in Indonesia helped create affective, emotional strategies of recitation that assisted in memorization and perfecting the sound and shape of Quranic recitation. 1990s

[33] Ibid., 188.
[34] Ibid., 188.
[35] Ibid., 58.

Indonesia also sees the emergence of *tele-dai*, AA Gym, whose branding of Islamic self-help, Manajemen Qolbu (Heart Management), appeals to a newly-mobile Middle-Class in creating a model for the "good Muslim citizen."[36]

The power of AA Gym's brand of Islamic piety that brings Islamic meaning and legitimacy to global pop-psychology cannot be understated. His network of influence, "relies on his public image as a pious, successful, devoted, and dreamy man who can restrain negative emotion but also share his soft and romantic side."[37] His concerted effort to create a personal brand, Manajemen Qolbu, that relied on his appearance as a pious man and loving husband, supported his public image. He was able to become an influential public figure capable of "shaming the state" into acting ethically. His brand and public persona crumbled when he took a second wife. He branded himself as one capable of managing his desires, informing the model of an Islamic family. It was partially his public engagement with politics, and his attempt to create a brand that relied on his appearance as a loving, devoted husband that led to his downfall. However, he is an indication of the changing engagement by Indonesian Muslims, particularly the middle class, with modernity.

Hoesterey argues that AA Gym is a figure on the "cutting-edge, cutting-edge sort of supermodernity."[38] I would argue that perhaps this is not a supermodernity but that modernity as an ethos is always interested in the 'cutting-edge.' However, the significance of the emergence of figures like AA Gym in the Indonesian Islamic landscape is that, in the search for piety that relates to the global increase in self-

[36] James Bourk Hoesterey, *Rebranding Islam: Piety, Prosperity, and a Self-Help Guru* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 23.
[37] Ibid., 36.
[38] Ibid., 12.

consciously Islamic identity and the growth in Quranic recitation, new configurations and engagements with modernity as an ethos become tangled with the complicated relationship between technology and Islamic authority, as well as the history of authoritarianism and political Islam. It is in these conditions which *salawat* and the communities that form around *salawat* of Habib Syech develop.

Syekhermania and Digital Community

Figure 2: Screenshot from the homepage of the Syekermania Pusat Facebook group.[39]

The Syekhermania Pusat's (Central Syekermania) Facebook site was my first introduction to Habib Syech, and it now has over 600,000 followers. As we will see, Habib Syech, along with his fan club(Syekhermania), has attempted to stay out of politics and lack a consolidated digital identity. Habib Syech is not interested in building a brand for himself, becoming a tele-*dai*, or controlling digital emergences of his performances.

[39] "Syekhermania Pusat," *Facebook*, https://www.facebook.com/SYEKHERMANIA.PUSAT/

In the 'About' section, the group describes itself in a tone that indicates excitement and reads like someone speaking through a megaphone to hype up a large crowd:

> "'Syekhermania' is the vessel for the Community of Lovers and Practitioners of '*Salawat* of Prophet Muhammad SAW' who are full of sincerity in praying because of the encouragement from 'The *Salawat* Motivator' Habib Syekh bin Abdul Qadir Assegaf as the Caregiver of the Majeli s Ta'lim and *Salawat* of 'AHBAABUL MUSTHOFA' from Solo in Central Java. He always galvanizes young souls who are lulled by the glittering of life in the world to remember *salawat* for the Prophet Muhammad. Through the method of da'wah 'Habib Syech *salawat*' also on the basis of 'Community' which he always emphasizes, invites, and guides us to."[40]

The original website announcing the events of Habib Syech and Ahbaabul Musthofa was presented as the creation of a blog by "the initiator" titled Ahbaabul Musthofa. Around the same time, another blog, "Central Ahbaabul Musthofa,' arose.[41] It is unclear when precisely the sites were first created. Habib Syech began performing in 1997, and by 2009, most of the focus was on the Facebook site, Syekhermania Pusat. The name changed from Ahbaabul Musthofa to Syekhermania because there were so many new groups popping up with the name "Ahbaabul Musthofa." Local manifestations of individual communities following the group were creating their sites, and for the initiator and others, this created the perception that there was competition.

After 2009, 'lovers of Habib Syech' were consolidated into the group Syechermania. Habib Syech has an Indonesian textile factory that makes jackets, flags, and other Syekhermania gear. He also makes other clothes such as sarongs and the white

[40] "About," *Syekhermania Pusat*. https://www.facebook.com/pg/SYEKHERMANIA.PUSAT/about/?ref=page_internal

[41] Although many people know who this individual is, he prefers to not be identified, and he is referred to as 'the initiator' by other interlocutors. He has had to delete any personal Facebook site because of the influx of friend requests and messages. He, furthermore, indicates that he does not want to take the attention away from himself.

shirts characteristic of the *santri* (Islamic boarding school attendee). Recently, he made a deal with the water brand Clavio for the creation of Syekher Water. Although the water is not officially presented as containing *baraka*, Instagram posts, perception of Syekhermania members, and informal conversation with sellers indicate that the water potentially contains *baraka*. Shyeker Water is an example of both the commercialization of *salawat* and the new kinds of mediums through which participants perceive *baraka* to move. In the first appearance of *baraka*, the *kyai* touches the water that is brought to him, thereby opening up the potential of *baraka*. Water is still the medium through which *baraka* moves, and it is also commercialized. This water is distributed by members of Syekhermania, rather than through traditional forms of commercial exchange. Motorbikes, vans, and trucks owned by members of Syekhermania transport the water from Solo to other parts of Indonesia. Stores dedicated to selling the water have also arisen.

This community of Habib Syech lovers creates complex systems of economic and spiritual exchange across Indonesia, but also to other countries. Syekhermania Taiwan and Malaysia have their own official Facebook page. The Burmese man who attended Habib Syech's events also bought large amounts of merchandise to take back to Burma. There is no particular ritual or rite that makes someone a part of Syekhermania besides perhaps listening to and participating in the performances by Habib Syech. Purchasing and wearing merchandise is a way to display allegiance. However, as compared to initiation into a Sufi order or participating in a self-help seminar led by the Islamic elite, the group is open to anyone. Many members of Syekhermania have furthermore never been to an event. They simply follow the events of Habib Syech

through YouTube and Facebook. Before turning to how these individuals who do not attend *salawat* identify as members of the Syekhermania community, I want to turn to how Habib Syech indicates his distrust of all media, including Facebook. The reason for not trusting traditional networks of economic and commercial exchange is similar to the reason why Habib Syech has continually turned down huge contracts to appear regularly on television, radio, and make endorsements of specific political candidates.

Information on the location and schedule of the events has changed slightly in the last five years with the increase of Syechermania sites on Facebook and with the creation of the website, Syechermania.or.id, that posts Habib Syech's schedule. Before 2014, the monthly schedule, which is now released somewhere between the end of the previous month and the tenth of the month in which the events will take place, was not regularly published. After 2014, the official website of Syekhermania began to post monthly schedules sporadically, but it was not until the last few years that social media sites posted these schedules regularly. The information provided in these schedules is additionally unclear. The format in the below example is replicated in the typical schedule announcement. Typically, the day of the week is on the left, followed by the date and time. The only other information given is a city. It is highly unusual for a specific address to be announced. The exception to this rule is the Wednesday night *Majelis Ta'lim* at Habib Syech's building in the Pasar Kliwon area of Surakarta.

JADWAL SYEKHERMANIA FEBRUARI 2017 M.

MAJLIS SALAWAT "AHBAABUL MUSTHOFA".

BERSAMA: AL-HABIB SYEKH ASSEGAF (SOLO).

•Kamis | 02 Februari 2017 | 19.30 WIB.

“MADURA JATIM BERSALAWAT”

•Jum’at | 03 Februari 2017 | 19.30 WIB.

“SIDOARJO JATIM BERSALAWAT”

•Ahad Pagi | 05 Februari 2017 M.

“SRAGEN JATENG BERSALAWAT”

•Senin | 06 Februari 2017 | 19.30 WIB.

“METESEH SEMARANG BERSALAWAT”

•Rabu | 08 Februari 2017 | 19.30 WIB.

“RUTINAN AHBAABUL MUSTHOFA PUSAT”

DI GEDUNG “BUSTANUL ‘ASYIQIN” SOLO.

•Kamis | 09 Februari 2017 | 19.30 WIB.

“UNY YOGYAKARTA BERSALAWAT”

•Sabtu | 11 Februari 2017 | 19.30 WIB.

“KRAPYAK YOGYAKARTA BERSALAWAT”

•Senin | 13 Februari 2017 | 19.30 WIB.

“PURBALINGGA JATENG BERSALAWAT”

•Selasa | 14 Februari 2017 | 19.30 WIB.

“PURWOKERTO JATENG BERSALAWAT”

•Rabu | 15 Februari 2017 | 19.30 WIB.

“RUTINAN AHBAABUL MUSTHOFA PUSAT”

DI GEDUNG “BUSTANUL ‘ASYIQIN” SOLO.

•Kamis | 16 Februari 2017 | 19.30 WIB.

“SAMBOJA KALTIM BERSALAWAT”

•Senin | 20 Februari 2017 | 19.30 WIB.

"SUKOHARJO JATENG BERSALAWAT"

•Selasa | 21 Februari 2017 | 19.30 WIB.

"YOGYAKARTA BERSALAWAT"

•Rabu | 22 Februari 2017 | 19.30 WIB.

"RUTINAN AHBAABUL MUSTHOFA PUSAT"

DI GEDUNG "BUSTANUL 'ASYIQIN" SOLO.

•Jumat – Selasa | 24 – 28 Februari 2017 M.

"TAIWAN BERSALAWAT"[42]

This schedule, which is typical of Habib Syech's travels, includes sixteen events across the island of Java and Madura in Indonesia as well as two events in Taiwan. This also precludes the events which are not announced and open to the public. Habib Syech often has several private events with family members or benefactors each month. Even the most prominent musicians in the U.S. do not perform at this rate. He has been performing alongside his *majelis* since 1997; he is just beginning his 22nd year of performing. He averages about 15 performances a month, bringing the total number of events to around 3,960.

The use of social media as a platform for dispersing information is intended to solidify Habib Syech's control over the crowd of people who identify as members of Syekhermania. This is demonstrated by Habib Syech's statement at one of the events:

> "Do not trust what you see on the media. Do not believe what you see on Facebook. I do not have Facebook. I do not have a Twitter. I have an Instagram to share the activities of my events. However, I do not communicate on Instagram. There are many who claim to be me on

[42] "Jadwal Habib Syech update Bulan February," *Syekhermania*, Accessed February 10, 2017 http://syekhermania.or.id/jadwal-habib-syekh-update-bulan-februari-2017/

> Instagram, but they pretend to be me to use my name to sell things. There are many Islamic preachers on television, but do not believe them because they are only selling Islam."

Habib Syech and other members of Syekhermania have a deep distrust of technology and social media. Habib Syech frequently publicly performs his disavowal of technology while simultaneously encouraging people to use the lights on their cellphones to sway back and forth to his music. He posts on Instagram, but this is primarily to "share the activities of his events," while others are using it to sell Islam. The one-time Habib Syech has used his Instagram to post a direct message that took place very recently about the upcoming election. In September of 2018, videos surfaced comparing the interaction between Habib Syech and Jokowi as well as a separate interaction between Habib Syech and Jokowi's challenger, Prabowo Subianto.

The first video shows Habib Syech embracing Jokowi in Habib Syech's building in Solo, Indonesia. The second video shows an awkward interaction between Habib Syech and who?. Habib Syech sits at a round table with others preparing for events, and Prabowo suddenly appears immediately extending his arms for a hug. He wraps his arms around the shoulders of Habib Syech as Habib Syech ducks his head and says, "Please sit, sit." Prabowo doubles down on the hug and tries to reach even further around Habib Syech. This elicits laughter from Habib Syech, who leans further away from the embrace and urges him to sit. These two instances are then taken as an indication of his choice for president. Habib Syech releases a statement on Instagram. He writes:

> "I am not an ulama. I am nobody. I only want to urge society to love the Prophet through *salawat*. I will surely perform *salawat* whenever and wherever, whoever wants to come, *Ahlan wa sahlan, silahkan*. I do not know political affairs. All citizens of the nation are free to determine their political choices, including choosing a president. However, after there is already someone chosen, that means God's decision must be respected by

> everyone. As citizens of the nation, which are good, all of us must support and direct that which is true because the president will work for what is important for us as a nation."[43]

This Instagram post is the only post that Habib Syech has ever made on his one form of social media that has any written statement. His statement, "I do not know political affairs," is a common sentiment that he shares in public and private while sitting next to local and national government figures. He may not take a stance on politics, but he is an active participant in encouraging political engagement by his followers.

In addition to both the Facebook page, Syekhermania, Habib Syech's Instagram, and the creation of various branded materials, such as water and Syekhermania jackets, many of the participants also wear a particular scent of perfume, agarwood. They also wear white shirts and white skull caps, *pecis*. One of Habib Syech's assistants makes fried tofu during every Ramadan with a secret blend of spices that assistants hand out to the thousands that attend his events during Ramadan at his building in Solo. The aromas, tastes, and clothing all contribute to this mediascape surrounding and forming the assemblages of devotional piety that circulate across Southeast Asia. However, this mediascape is doing something differently than the previously discussed Quranic recitation, cassette recordings, tele-*dai*'s, or the emergence of digital Islamic authority. I want to now turn to my interlocutor who asserted that the digital recordings of *salawat* allow him to experience *baraka*.

Technological *Baraka*

I sat on a busy corner in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, with two shop owners as three young children played next to a busy street corner. It was dusk, and the street was alive

[43] Syaikhassegaf," *Instagram*, September 14, 2018. Accessed October 1, 2019. <https://www.instagram.com/syaikhassegaf/?hl=en>

with the lights and the insistent sound of car and motorbike horns. As we sat on the tile floor, we talked about their lives and my experience in Indonesia. I asked if they had ever heard of *salawat*. They laughed and said, "Well, of course." I then asked if they had ever heard of Habib Syech bin Abdul Qadir Assegaf, and they again said, "Yes, of course; he is the leader of *salawat*." However, they had never been to any of his events that typically bring between 20 to 70,000 people together. It was not unusual to find someone who knew of Habib Syech only through his presence in social media. Habib Syech's presence in social media increases rapidly as thousands of new pictures and videos are uploaded every day. In some ways, this mimics what would be expected from a famous musician. However, the conversation then moved to *baraka*.

I said, "Many people say they go to these events for *baraka*, what do you think of that?"

One of the shop owners energetically motioned to his phone and said, "Yes, when you watch it [Habib Syech's performance] on your cell phone, and you focus on understanding and take it very seriously. You may start to cry. You can feel it." He motioned as if tears were running down his cheeks to his feet. I asked, "You feel what?" He responded, "*Baraka*." This shop owner was not the only one to indicate that in watching a recorded version of one of Habib Syech's events, one could feel *baraka*. Experiencing *baraka* does not require the participant to be physically present at the event; it extends through the videos and photos posted on social media platforms. Smartphones and social media are new mediums for experiencing *baraka* that slips into everyday life in a way that it previously did not.

The transference of *baraka* has typically required touch or presence at the place through which it moves. For example, Habib Syech tells the story of the prophet Muhammad going to the house of a low-income family. There was only one portion of food, such as rice for fourteen people. However, after Prophet Muhammad, as a medium for *baraka*, touched the rice with his hand, there was not only enough food for everyone, but there was excess food. Bottles of water are, additionally, regularly brought to religious figures like Habib Syech to bless by reciting Quranic verses and blowing or touching the water. *Baraka* here creates excess, increases the usefulness, and transforms the material. Those seeking *baraka* would have to travel to the religious figures *pesantren* or wait to get close to the figure. Physical presence was required. However, recordings make the potential experience of *baraka* accessible with the push of the play button on YouTube.

Baraka is unhinged from the present moment and resonates beyond the events through smartphones. The smartphone transforms into a medium for experiencing blessings, an increase in usefulness, or the spiritual power emitted from Allah said to be present at these events. This unexplainable feeling of *baraka* can manifest at any moment. Technology is speeding up the process of exchange and allowing the shopkeepers to experience *baraka* in-between fixing shoes.

Visiting the Graves

After being accosted by a man asking if I wanted to "cari cewek" (look for girls) during breakfast, I set off to Syech Ibrahim's grave. Buses, cars, and people dressed in white filled the streets around Ibrahim's grave. As I approached, several Indonesian men greeted me with a big smile and a firm handshake. He gave me *peci* (Islamic skullcap) to

wear, and I was escorted to the front, next to Ibrahim's grave, where his wife, Sayyidah Siti Fatimah, and his son, Syekh Maulana Maghfur, lay next to him. As I sat unsure of what to do, a symphony of voices filled the air with *dzikir* (recitation of the ninety-nine names of God). Different groups of people were reciting different *dzikir* that layered upon one another, creating a single sound with many inflections. A rhythmic and steady, "Lā ḥawla wa-lā quwwata ʾillā bi-llāh," blended with those ecstatically expressed, "la illaha in Allah." The sound punctuated by a loud, "Allah hu," while others sat still and silent. In these different expressions of dzikir, different *tarekat* (Sufi orders), or roads to God, make themselves known from the more ecstatic to the soberer. Dried white and yellow flowers lay on the graves of Syech Ibrahim, his wife, and son. These white flowers float between the memories of the dead and the lives of the living as a reminder of what questions will be asked in the afterlife. These flowers reverberate with the sound of one of the song's Habib Syech sings which is said to be made by the Wali Songo, Turi Putih (White Flowers) -Javanese

Turi Putih, Turi Putih	White Flowers, White Flowers
Di tandur, di tandur ning kebon agung	to be planted, to be planted in the big garden (graveyard)
Ana cleret tiba nyemplung,	There is a swift, gliding wind that plunges
mbok iro kembange apa	What is this flower (asking an angel)
Sholatullah Salamullah Ala Toha Rasulillah,	Salat to Allah and Salam to the Messenger of God
Sholatullah Salamullah Ala Yasin Habibillah X2	Salat Allah and salam to the beloved

	of God
Wetan kali, kulon kali	West of the river, East of the river
Tengah-tengah tanduran pari	In between is a rice field
Saiki ngaji sesok yo ngaji,	Today study the Quran, tomorrow study the Quran
ayo manut poro kiyai	Come on, join with the Kyai
Ayo golek sangune mati	Come on, look for supplies for the afterlife
Sholatullah Salamullah Ala Toha Rasulillah,	Salat to Allah and Salam to the Messenger of God
Sholatullah Salamullah Ala Yasin Habibillah X2	Salat Allah and salam to the beloved of God
Tandurane tanduran kembang,	The fields are full of flowers
kembang kenongo ning njero guo.	The flowers (used for graves) are inside the cave
Tumpakane kereto jawa	The vehicle is the Javanese train
rudo papat rupo menungsa.	The wheels are four humans[44]

These white flowers are not just a symbol of funerals and graveyards; they also resemble the moment in which the angel of death (Malak-ul Mawt) descends to ask the individual who died, "What have you done." The response is, "Salat" (prayer) and remembering Prophet Muhammad. The representation of the angel descending is the swift wind that makes the white flowers stir from their tree in the graveyard. It begins as

[44] I want to thank Pak Wanto for his assistance in making sense of this *syair*.

if someone has died and is confused, asking what these flowers that descend are. We then move to the rice field where the song encourages people to study to Quran for the supplies in the afterlife. In the final verse, the individual is recounting as if they are in a coffin(cave) being carried by a Javanese train with four heads. The metaphor here is the carrying of the casket wrapped in flowers (*kembang kenongo*) by four men on their shoulders. Their heads look like wheels (the Javanese train) as they carry this deceased person to the grave. After visitors to the grave throw flowers on top of the grave and the last person leaves, the angel comes to investigate this person's deeds in life. However, there is confusion here by the individual who has died as to what exactly happened. The individual is describing the Javanese train, and the flowers are inside the cave. This cave refers simultaneously to the individual's coffin while also indicating they are somehow outside of the cave. They are not trapped in the cave, but the flowers are inside this cave held up by four men. This scene in-between the rivers in the rice fields should not be understood as a distant vision. Many of the events of *salawat* take place on-top of rice fields, and white as well as other flowers placed on-top off Javanese graves each year appear at the events. Large baskets of the flowers are strewn across the crowd at the end of the events; white, and often purple, flowers are tossed over those present not only representing or reminding participants of the moments in which they will enter the "cave," but it is in this moment participants feel the presence of Prophet Muhammad.

My visit to the grave of Syech Ibrahim's, along with the very popular *syair*, *Turi Putih*, begins to hint at the *barzakh* that opens up as a space between the living and the dead at the performances of *salawat*. However, this *barzakh* is not only indicated in the physical space of *salawat* and the graveyards of figures, such as Syech Ibrahim. Social

media and the recordings of *salawat* exist as a *barzakh* between the events and everyday life. The use and experience of social media are built on the Indonesian mediascape and present a different, and even counter-intuitive, use of social media. The recordings of *salawat* can be shared between people, but they become, much like the water from Syech Abah, potential mediums for dispersing *baraka*.

Approaching the use and development of technology used by members of Syeckermania and those who want to, "feel *baraka*," through the recordings not as a recapitulation of Islamic mediascapes, allows for the emergence of a different digital milieu to manifest that is not 'cutting edge,' but reflects the centrality of *baraka* in the spread and attempted capture of these videos. These individuals' attempts at capturing digital *baraka* connect to *salawat,* and the figure of Habib Syech as the leader of *salawat.* The rise of digital technology is, furthermore, connected to changing forms of Islamic education and authority, as demonstrated in chapter one. However, my interlocutors continually assert that the *dahwa* of Habib Syech is his *salawat.* In the next chapter, I turn to my first interaction with Habib Syech to indicate how he positions himself in-between Islamic sensibilities, and how even at my first interaction with participants, the institutional divisions between Islamic affiliation, NU and Muhammadiyah, break apart.

ENTERING THE MAJELIS

In 2015, I returned to Salatiga with my friend Muhamad to meet with Syech Abah, but he had had a stroke. We discussed the proper way to breathe while doing *dzikir*, but it was challenging to communicate with him. He also seemed exhausted and angry that I had not been back to see him the previous year. I apologized, and he, then, brought up Habib Syech in the context of discussing the heads of different *tariqa* in Indonesia.

Syech Abah: "You know, Habib Syech was here only a few days ago. He had a lot of people come to his event, a lot of people."

James Edmonds(JE): "I have already tried to meet with him, and I was unsuccessful. He is difficult to meet with."

Syech Abah: "He is having an event (halal bi halal) in Solo at his building."

JE: "Oh, interesting. Where is that?"

Syech Abah: "It is at his building, Gedung Bustanul Asyiqiin in Solo."

JE: "Ok, could you please help me spell that?"

Syech Abah: "Yes, A-s-y-i-q-i-i-n"

JE: "Ok, I will try to meet him."

I sat with Syech Abah for a while, sipping tea and catching up, but I felt that I was not going to be able to continue researching at this site. Syech Abah seemed to be directing me towards a different path. I began searching Facebook for more information. This was the second time that I was attempting to find *salawat* performed by Habib Syech through social media. I was unsure of what to expect, and I was not sure if I wanted to meet with him. He was very popular, and I had the opportunity to speak with other ethnographers

who had previously attended his events. Habib Syech was not all that interesting to many of them because he appeared to be simply a performer. Habib Syech did not often give sermons, and he did not appear to be an Islamic authority. As one article in the *Jakarta Post* indicated in response to my article,[1] "First, what most Indonesians practice through *salawat*, especially when led from a stage with a big sound system and thousands of participants, is the tradition of celebrating Mawlid." Muhammad As'ad, in this brief article, indicates that Habib Syech is simply a phenomenon of popular culture and is not responsible for much other than popularizing Mawlid(the birth of Prophet Muhammad).

Other anthropologists have asserted to me that Habib Syech is simply a new form of leisure. The assertions of these anthropologists and the appearance of anthropologists and musicologists continue throughout the project. My initial hesitation and continued struggle throughout the work was also propelled by those who indicated that nothing new was happening at *salawat*. Habib Syech was simply a performer who brought people together. He was simply a representation of Nahdlatul Ulama(NU) piety. He had nothing to add to our understanding of Islam because his theology indicated by his sermons was simple. Over the hundreds of events that I have attended, most of his speeches revolved around telling those present not to drink alcohol, not to have sex before marriage, and be good Muslims by praying five times a day. My relationship with Habib Syech developed differently from many of the scholars who have attempted to study the phenomenon of Habib Syech. This assemblage resonates with Islam as a historical reality, as defined by Shahab Ahmed.

[1] Muhammad Asad, "The performances that help curb extremism," *The Jakarta Post*. 30 November 2017. < https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2017/11/30/the-performances-that-help-curb-extremism.html>

I want to continue looking at the changing ethical sensibility that is forming in the assemblage of devotional piety through my first interaction with followers of *salawat* by Habib Syech. Habib is simultaneously a necessary part of this assemblage of devotional piety, and his presence and prominence do not define the nature or direction of this assemblage. It is, furthermore, more complicated than simply being identified as a celebration of Mawlid, NU Piety, or Islamic performance. I will indicate who Habib Syech is for followers of *salawat* and how he attempts to embody multiple tastes, flavors, *alirans* of Islam. His tasty position for many from *Syekhermania* and others who come to his performances of *salawat* demonstrate the historical reality of Islam, as indicated by Shahab Ahmed. Habib Syech demonstrates how "coherent contradiction" is at the center of understanding Islam as it is practiced and understood by his followers. It is Habib Syech's ability to inhabit in the space of "coherent contradiction"[2] that allows him to appeal to such a wide variety of Islamic sensibilities in forming a new Islamic sensibility based on "*explorative authority-the authority to explore*"[3] that coincides with how Shahab Ahmed has defined Islam.

As indicated in the previous chapter, Habib Syech avoids many of the common traits of the tele-*dai* or new Islamic authority who exerts their prescriptive authority through various media sources. His digital presence is disjointed and in the hands of his followers. The information involving Habib Syech was easier to find in 2015, but what I found indicated that Habib Syech had an open house for three days, following the

[2] Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam?: The Importance of being Islamic* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016), 405.
[3] Ibid., 282.

conclusion of Ramadan. There were no posted times, and because I had dragged my feet for several days, the events were going to begin on the day that I found the post.

I hopped in a taxi from Salatiga to Solo in hopes of finding these events at his building. After a very long two-hour car ride in which our average speed was around ten miles an hour, I arrived in Solo. I checked into a hotel and searched for Gedung Bustanul Asyiqiin on Google Maps. I could not find the building on Google Maps, but I knew the general area of the building. I asked a taxi driver to take me to the area and help me find the building. We took off from the hotel. I had never been to Solo, Indonesia. So, I had no idea if we were going in the right direction or not. The taxi driver pulled over and asked someone where the building was. The stranger directed us down a very narrow street, and eventually, the taxi driver announced that we had arrived. I was pretty sure that we had not arrived, but I thought I would have better luck asking people who lived in the area. I exited the taxi and asked the driver if I could have his number as I had no way of returning to the hotel. He gave me his number, and I exited the car. I then began asking random people on the street and in their front yards about Habib Syech's building. Some people seemed confused, but one family pointed me in a direction. I walked somewhat aimlessly around the street in the direction that the family indicated. I was on the road just big enough for one car, and I came to an intersection. I saw to my left that there was a large building, but I was not sure if it was a mosque, house, or something else. I walked over and started talking to a man selling chicken noodles, *mie ayam*. I asked him where Habib Syech's building was. He laughed and pointed behind him. I was relieved to find the building, but the man informed me that Habib Syech was not scheduled to appear

until five in the afternoon. It was one in the afternoon; so, I sat down, ate some noodles, and drank several glasses of exceptionally sweet tea.

I chatted some with the owner of the food stall, but I mostly sat in the sun, sweating and waiting. Buses, cars, and motorbikes began showing up around three, and I was quickly an object of interest. A local kid arrived by bicycle. He asked if I was from Saudi Arabia in Arabic. I responded no in Arabic. He then said that he was from Saudi Arabia and that many people from the area were Arab. I said that I was there to see Habib Syech. He laughed, grabbed his food, and left. I would later learn that everything that I was saying to people was being reported back to Habib Syech.

A few men in their early twenties showed up wearing Syekhermania t-shirts and sat next to me at the food stall. We made small talk, and I then asked them about their shirts. One man responded, "we are lovers of Habib Syech and *salawat*. We go to Habib Syech because it makes us feel peaceful and calm (*hati tenang*)." Another man told me that going to see and participate in Habib Syech's events made him feel "cooler" (*dingin*). This man identified as Muhammadiyah. The fact that the first two people whom I spoke with at this event were from the two largest Islamic organizations in the world is significant because these two organizations, NU and Muhammadiyah, often represent two ways of practicing and engaging with Islam.

Further Parsing Indonesia's Islamic Organizations[4]

As I indicated in chapter one, James Hoesterey has pushed back on envision Indonesia as defined by streams and introduced the need for understanding religion

[4] This section, "Indonesia's Islamic Organizations," has been adapted and expanded upon from my publication, James M Edmonds. "Smelling *Baraka*: Everyday Islam and Islamic Normativity" in "(Mis)Representations of Islam: Politics, Community, and Advocacy," ed. Timothy P. Daniels and Meryem F. Zaman, special issue. *American Journal of Islamic Social Science* 36, no. 3 (Summer 2019).

according to"religio-political networks (*jaringan*)."[5] James Rush has also indicated the need for an understanding of the formation of Indonesian Islam and democracy in the 20th century as not plagued by *aliranisasi*. Even as Hoesterey, Rush, and forthcoming scholarship from Verena Meyer argue for a vision of Indonesian Islam that goes beyond *aliranisasi*, Carool Kersten still relies and defines Indonesian Islam through polarization and 'pillarization' relying on *aliranisasi* as a founding component of Indonesian Islamic sensibilities. [6] Although he directs his argument at trying to understand the place of 'progressives' and 'liberal' Muslims in Indonesia, the backbone of his work still relies very heavily on the assumption that Indonesian Islam should be understood as polarized into different streams. [25] Robert Hefner previously argued that the formation of these organizations and their development through the twenty-first century was crucial to creating a democratic Indonesia and "civic habits" of "tolerance, autonomy, and skepticism towards the all pretending state."[7] However, even with different understandings of Indonesian Islam put forward by Hoesterey, Rush, and Meyer, the book that an Indonesian colleague thrust into my hands at an Islamic university was Kersten's work. However, Habib Syech's performances bring people of varying backgrounds who identify with NU, Muhammadiyah, and practitioners who are a part of the 'conservative turn' in Indonesia.

Although the call for sharia as a foundational component of Indonesia is not new, the rise of groups such as FPI (*Front Pembela Islam*) and the introduction of laws

[5] James Bourke Hoesterey, *Rebranding Islam: Piety, Prosperity, and a Self-help Guru* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 155.
[6] Carool Kersten, *Islam in Indonesia: The Contest for Society, Ideas and Values* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, January 2016).
[7] Robert Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 217.

outlawing LGBTQ activity and dating activity, in general, are perhaps indicators of the "conservative turn" in Indonesia following *Reformasi* (1998).[8] Whether or not this "conservative turn" in Indonesian Islamic society is abrupt is up for debate. Hefner has argued for attention to the multiple "sharia imaginaries" that inform contemporary Indonesian debates and sensibilities around sharia.[9] The distinctly Indonesian understanding of Islamic law identifies "sharia and the divine good with modern social and educational improvements," rather than strict rules that seek to eliminate ambiguity.[10] The existence of an understanding of sharia justified by *maṣlaḥa* or 'public interest' arising from Muhammadiyah's leadership in the twentieth century is an essential component to understanding the multiple possible interpretations and understandings of sharia in Indonesia.[11] However, the showings in 2016 of FPI against the then-governor of Jakarta, Ahok, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, for blasphemy against Islam are a powerful example of the success of Salafi interpretations of Sharia, based on strict and prescriptive rules.[12]

Habib Muhammad Rizieq bin Hussein Syihab (Habib Rizieq) formed FPI in 1998. Unlike Muhammadiyah and NU, FPI is an overtly political organization that wants "the establishment of an Islamic Party under FPI control whose main program is the

[8] Martin van Bruinessen, ed., *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the "Conservative Turn,"* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013).
[9] Robert Hefner, "Sharia Law and Muslim Ethical Imaginaries in Modern Indonesia," in *Sharia Dynamics: Islamic Law and Sociopolitical Processes*, ed. Timothy P. Daniels (Switzerland: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2017), 94.
[10] Ibid., 94.
[11] Ibid., 100.
[12] For an overview of these events, see Greg Fealy, "Bigger than Ahok: Explaining the 2 December Mass Rally," *Indonesia at Melbourne*, December 7, 2016, http://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/bigger-than-ahok-explaining-jakartas-2-december-mass-rally/.

Application of Islamic Sharia in Kaffah in the frame of the Republic of Indonesia."[13] Feener traces the use of "Kaffah" in public discourse and political regulation to Aceh in 2000 and the Salmaan Mosque during the New Order (1966-1998).[14] "*Islam yang kaffah*" (comprehensive Islam) originates, according to Michael Feener, in the new models of Islamic education, namely the "*tarbiya* movement built upon foundations developed in the Middle East by the Muslim Brotherhood."[15] This movement stresses the application of Sharia in its totality to "transform individuals to better prepare their souls for success in both this world and the next."[16]

The "kaffah" movement in contemporary Indonesia has become a significant force in Indonesian society as seen in the 2019 election where both the current president, Joko Widodo, and his challenger, Prabowo Subianto Djojohadikusumo, are trying to appear as friends of the *Islam yang kaffah* by appearing with figures such as Habib Rizieq, the founder of FPI.[17] However, Fealy and White have argued that FPI's Salafism is "largely symbolic" because of their lack of strict codes.[37] Their Salafism "manifests not in everyday practice but in the Islamic identity it presents to the public through its vigilant actions and public demonstrations."[18] Although Greg and Fealy are indicating what

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[13]"Pernyataan Pers Mengenai MUNAS II FPI," *FPI.com*, December 11, 2008. Accessed August 12, 2018. < https://web.archive.org/web/20090418053353/ http://fpi.or.id:80/ringkasan.asp?jenis=pernyataan>

[14] R. Michael Feener*, Shari'a and Social Engineering: The Implementation of Islamic Law in Contemporary Aceh, Indonesia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[15] Ibid., 207. For further discussion of the *tarbiya* movement in Indonesia, see Nurhayati Djamas, "Gerakan Kaum Muda Islam Mesjid Salman," *Gerakan Islam Kontemporer di Indonesia*, ed. Imam Tholkhah Abdul Aziz and S. Soetarman (Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 1989).

[16] R. Michael Feener*, Shari'a and Social Engineering: The Implementation of Islamic Law in Contemporary Aceh, Indonesia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 212

[17] Andri Saubani, "Islam Kafah ala Jokowi," *Republik*, May 11, 2019, https://nasional.republika.co.id/berita/nasional/news-analysis/po6zt9409/islam-kafah-emala-emjokowi; Danu Damarjati, "Yusril Ungkap Transkrip Lengkap 'Habib Rizieq Ragukan Keislaman Prabowo," *Detik News*, April 3, 2019, https://news.detik.com/berita/d-4495625/yusril-ungkap-transkrip-lengkap-habib-rizieq-ragukan-keislaman-prabowo.

[18] Greg Fealy and Sally White, *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008), 200.

seems to be the most public and impactful presentations by FPI, this is not to say that Salafism has not entered everyday life for many individuals associated with FPI or self-identified as Salafi. The Ramadan raids led by members of FPI and the many gatherings held by FPI against religious pluralism, Ahok, the Ahmadiyya, and Shi'is are all ways in which they express their attempts at the implementation of Salafism.[19] The place of FPI within the events that are a part of the assemblage surrounding Habib Syech's performances are additionally intriguing considering the presence of Shi'i Muslims at the events.

Habib Syech has claimed that he has seen Shi'i Muslims beating their chests (*laṭam*) at his events and that he has no problem with this, so long as they do not cause any trouble. This "ritualized striking of one's body in grief" is an inextricable expression of Shi'i piety often performed during the remembrance of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein at Karbala.[20] Beating the chest with the hands and arms without shedding blood is a recent (late twentieth century) transformation.[21] However, the presence of Shi'i forms of Islam—or, more aptly termed, "alid piety"—in Indonesia reach back to the fourteenth century.[22] The distinction between Shi'i sectarianism and "alid piety" is significant in understanding how reverence for the Prophet's family (*ahl al-bayt*) is embedded not just in Shi'i sensibilities in Indonesia but in broader trends in Indonesian

[19]For an overview of these various actions by FPI, see Raja Eben Lumbanrau, "Jejak FPI dan Status 'Napi' Rizieq Shihab," *CNN Indonesia*, January 17, 2017, https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20170117092140-20-186830/jejak-fpi-dan-status-napi-rizieq-shihab?.
[20] Lara Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 131.
[21] Ibid., 135.
[22] Chiara Formichi and R. Michael Feener, eds., *Shiism in Southeast Asia: 'Alid Piety and Sectarian Constructions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 6.

Islam.[23] Before the mid-twentieth century, forms of Shi'i institutionalism were few and far between, but in the 1970s Shi'i organizations under the label *madhhab ahl albayt* (the *madhhab* of the Prophet's family) became a part of the Indonesian Islamic landscape.[24] The *madhhab ahl al-bayt* became active on university campuses and in *pesantrens* across Indonesia. However, the current place of the Shi'a in Indonesia is tenuous at best.[25] For example, the anti-Shi'a National Alliance (*Aliansi Nasional Anti Syiah Indonesia*) was established on April 20, 2014, to build "unity and brotherhood in the face of Shia heresy in Indonesia."[26] The formation of this organization as well as the multiple incidents of violence against the Shi'a in the last ten years, including the burning, beating, and killing of Shi'i Muslims, indicate the unstable place of the Shi'a in contemporary Indonesia.[27] It is therefore surprising that Habib Syech would claim to see Shi'is performing *laṭam* during *salawat* and that he has no problem with this.

Members of NU, Muhammadiyah, FPI, and the Shi'a are all potentially present in the crowds that amass around these events of devotional piety. There is a wide range of ages and socioeconomic statuses at the events. This first interaction with individuals coming to Habib Syech is striking because it quickly begins to challenge long-held assumptions about Indonesian Islam from a variety of disciplines that define and study

[23] Ibid., 3.
[24]Umar Faruk Assegaf, "Aspects of Shi'ism in Contemporary Indonesia: A Quest for Social Recognition in the Post-Suharto Era (1998-2008)," in *Shiism in Southeast Asia: 'Alid Piety and Sectarian Constructions*, ed. Chiara Formichi and R. Michael Feener. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, 250.
[25] For a comprehensive history of the Shi'a in Indonesia, especially following 1979, see Zulkiffi, *The Struggle of the Shi'is in Indonesia* (Australia: ANU E Press, 2013).
[26]"Visi dan Misi," *Annas Indonesia*, accessed August 15, 2018, http://www.annasindonesia.com/profil/visi-dan-misi-aliansi-nasional-anti-syiah.
[27]See, for example, Khairil Azhar, "Arson of Shiite 'pesantren', Illiteracy and Local Leaders," *The Jakarta Post*, December 31, 2011, accessed July 8, 2018 , http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/12/31/arson-shiite-pesantren-ill iteracy-and-local-leaders.html and Chiara Formichi. "Violence, Sectarianism, and the Politics of Religion: Articulations of Anti-Shi'a Discourses in Indonesia," *Indonesia* 98 (2014): 1-27.

Islam in Indonesia by looking at how Indonesian Islamic society is made meaningful by its connection to streams of discourse, orthodoxy, and practice. These streams, however, converge to form an ocean. This ocean is representative of the rhizomatic assemblages that bring contradictory Islamic sensibilities together in forming something that is not only a definitive example of Islam but reveals one of the mechanisms that drives the feeling of unity in diversity at the heart of Shahab Ahmed's definition of Islam.

Halal bi Halal

After a while, the doors to Habib Syech's building opened. I was not initially sure how to make sense of the building. The building has an exterior courtyard with bathrooms on either side. A rooster in a green cage sat within a few feet of a massive generator, about the size of a sedan. A small case that holds merchandise for sale sat outside of a large building painted in white and blue, mimicking the style of architecture found in the Great Mosque of Mecca. It stood two stories tall and was shaped like a "U." Although the entirety of the space was covered, the middle section of the U was open and covered by a roof, around forty feet above the area. A fountain sits in the middle. The exterior of the U has two floors that are also open. Ornate lights hang from the ceiling and illuminate the white walls and tiled floors. The front of the building on the bottom floor houses a private bedroom and bathroom, which Habib Syech uses to escape the crowds and meet with distinguished guests. I have never been in this room. However, in 2019, a friend of mine who works in the building snuck a picture of inside the room. On one of the walls is a small poster that I gifted to Habib Syech, promoting the talk that I gave at *Universitas Gajah Mada*. Below is the photo that he sent me:

Figure 3: Photograph shared by a member of Habib Syech's inner circle that shows a poster for James Edmonds' presentation at the Gadjah Mada University.

My friend drew the red line and circle. Nothing else adorns the wall.

Outside of this room is an ample enclosed space where Habib Syech usually receives visitors. There is a prayer niche in the center of the room with ornate calligraphy along the walls. On the opposite side of this large open room is the sound booth. Habib Syech's sound crew and assistants usually pack this room. Equipment for live streaming the events on YouTube and Facebook have progressively updated through the years. Boxes containing snacks such as dates fill in the gaps between bodies that often reside there. The second story also resembles a U, but the front of the U contains three bedrooms and a bathroom. Habib Syech's assistants, who take care of the building, live there. Guests sometimes stay in the building as well. I often stayed there when returning from an event. If it was after two a.m., then I would usually sleep in the building. Habib Syech did not like me riding my motorbike back to my apartment late at night, and I

would have to check in with him once I arrived if I did so. I was known to drive through the island of Java at all hours of the night, but I was also known to get lost.

The building was now filling with people. I meandered around, feeling out of place. Approximately two thousand people filled the streets and building in preparation for the arrival of Habib Syech. I sat down in the open space in the middle with the growing masses, and it was not long before Habib Syech appeared. The thousands gathered suddenly stood up and moved towards him. He tried to walk through the crowd, but people stopped him. I stood on the outside, watching the masses fluctuate around him. He smiled and laughed. He handed out 2,000 rupiahs (about fourteen cents) to the children, and he occasionally stopped and to take a selfie with someone. He did not seem phased by the growing number of people reaching to shake his hand, take a picture, or be acknowledged by him. He stopped and looked at me. The crowd parted, and he motioned for me to get closer to him.

JE: Hello, how are you?

Habib Syech (HS): Haha, I am fine. How are you? Where are you from?

JE: I am good. I am from America. My name is James.

HS: Why are you here?

JE: Well, Syech Abah said that I should meet you; so, I am here observing your event.

HS: Ok, please come, sit up front with me.

The crowd closed the path as soon as it had opened up. Habib Syech looked me in the eyes and motioned towards the front of his building. I was shocked and somewhat unnerved. The aides of the building also caught wind of the interaction, and one of them approached me to tell me where to sit. I sat down on the right of where he would be

seated. He would sit on several rugs flanked by eight, blue pillows. Cold water and an incense burner awaited him. The incense burner billowed clouds of agarwood smoke into the air. He sat down as more and more people pressed forward into the building. My body was squeezed into a small space right beside him. People sat down, almost on top of each other. He picked up the microphone and began addressing me, but it was difficult to hear him over the crowds.

HS: An American has come here.

JE: Sorry, what?

HS: Have you already been to Indonesia?

JE: What?

JE: Are you married?

J: Not yet, but I would very much like to be.

HS: Everyone should marry. It is halal. Did everyone wudu? James, is your mother well? Are you well? Did you already wudu?

JE: Yes.

HB: Drink water James (he takes a bottle of water and opens it for me to drink). Every day during *leberan*(Eid al-Fitr), it is like this James. It is not because I am a good person. They, they are good. They came from far away and arrived here.

[Call to Prayer]

All the people come to pray. They come during Ramadan to pray with Allah. Can you speak Javanese James?

JE: No, sorry.

HS: My mother speaks Bahasa Indonesia. My grandfather speaks Bahasa Jawa. Bahasa Jawa is beautiful. Bahasa Jawa is far from Arabic, but they share words.

HS: Do you have a question, James? Do you know about oil from Texas and Willie Nelson?

[2nd Call to prayer]

Everyone prays with Habib Syech as the imam. There is nowhere for me to go. There are thousands of people pushing forward to get a space close to Habib Syech. Women are moved behind the men. I end up in the prayer line. After the prayer, Habib Syech makes sure to grab my attention, even as I try to slip into the crowd.

HS: Here, James. Here sit. Talking to the crowd, is everyone healthy? Is there a question?

Someone from the Crowd (C): If you are fasting during Ramadan, when should we start and end fasting?

HS: It is up to you and the relationships that you have. If you want to begin on the eighteenth or seventeenth, it is up to you.

The debates around when to begin fasting are always somewhat contentious. These debates revolve around organizational affiliation. For example, Muhammadiyah claims to rely on science to determine when to start Ramadan. In other words, they do not need to physically see the moon to determine if it is a New Moon. They use a scientific calculation to determine when the new moon will take place and, therefore, the start of Ramadan. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), on the other hand, starts Ramadan according to when the New Moon can physically be seen. The Ministry of Religion will often make an official pronouncement, but this does not change the fact that Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiya may not always begin Ramadan on the same day. This question seems

deceivingly innocuous, but here the individual asking the question is asking Habib Syech to take a side. In asking this question, he is asking if Habib Syech aligns himself with NU or Muhammadiyah. Habib Syech tosses the question aside as unimportant. This first interaction with Habib Syech indicates how he will engage with many individuals and organizations who attempt to place him in a particular box.

Fasting (*sawm*) during Ramadan that we often teach in an introduction to Islam classes as a defining characteristic of Islam does not begin on the same date for different individuals and groups of Muslims in Indonesia. Indonesians, furthermore, have different understandings of fasting. There is *puasa bicara, puasa geni, puasa ngebleng*, and *puasa mutih* in addition to fasting from food and water.[28] *Puasa bicara* is fasting from speaking. *Puasa geni* is eating only raw foods, including uncooked rice.[29] *Puasa nglebleng* is fasting for forty days and only consuming one cup of water per day.[30] *Puasa mutih* involves only eating plain rice and drinking water or eating only unseasoned food.[31] The seemingly accepted truism that Muslims simply fast from sun-up to sun-down from food and water ignores the long-standing tradition in certain Javanese Islamic traditions that adds that you should not drink anything but water or eat anything with spices during the fasting period. These different types of fasting are not a significantly common practice in Indonesia, but in many of the villages that Habib Syech's events visit, there are still men and women who ascribe to these types of fasting. These traditions of fasting have deep roots in the Hindu-Buddhist past. The point here is to simply indicate that it is not *sawm*

[28] Timothy P Daniels, *Islamic Spectrum in Java* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), 58-69.
[29] Ibid; 69.
[30] Ibid., 58.
[31] Ibid., 61.

itself that defines Ramadan and Islamic experience, but rather, the debates, contentions, and disjuncture around fasting that form the boundary of Islam in Indonesia that is continually being remade by Muslims. Habib Syech is not interested in taking sides in this case, and this is a tactic that Habib Syech regularly uses. He does not make pronouncements that indicate the importance of aligning himself with a particular Islamic organization, political party, or type of Islamic authority. Instead, he asserts that he must be "like a smell."[32]

Following the crowds' first question, Habib Syech turns to me:

HS: James, do you have a question?

JE: Why does everyone come here?

HS: Ask them. Why do you come? Because of *silaturahmi* (maintaining ties between people). They come here because I go to their homes/places. If I did not go to the villages, they would not come. If I do not know them, then maybe they will not come here. (He turns to the crowd) Why do you come here?

Crowd response: We like praying with the group.

HB: The *majelis* is the same. Every Thursday, we have a *Majelis Ta'lim*. A group of Muslims gathering to make sure a concept is understood. Every Thursday, we have one. We study Islam. I am not a teacher. They are my teacher. Now look, here are the police from Jogja. Why does he come here, because I already came to meet him? Islam is one person and another becoming family. One by one, we are family. There are different ethnicities: Sumba, Java. However, there is only one Islam.

[32] Please see James M Edmonds. "Smelling *Baraka*: Everyday Islam and Islamic Normativity" in "(Mis)Representations of Islam: Politics, Community, and Advocacy," ed. Timothy P. Daniels and Meryem F. Zaman, special issue. *American Journal of Islamic Social Science* 36, no. 3 (Summer 2019).

My initial question seems to throw him off, but he does attempt to answer it. *Silahturahmi* can take both noun and verbal forms. It is the meeting between friends and fellow Muslims often in people's homes. This *silahturahmi* is concerned with maintaining relationships. During Leberan(Idul Fitri), Jakarta is a ghost town because everyone has returned to their village to see their family and friends. Significantly, Habib Syech understands his events as moments in which he is visiting with the tens of thousands who attend. The relationship between Habib Syech and attendees is not a performer and observer relationship. He sees it as relational, even if he may not be able to greet everyone who comes physically. He sees it as his responsibility to care for those who come to his building. He often provides food and water for those who come to his building. During Ramadan, every person who attends his *Majelis Ta'lim* receives a meal for beginning the fast.

The crowd responds that they like praying with "the group." However, they could simply attend Friday mosque, a *pengajian*, or other Islamic figures event to pray with the group. What exactly is it about this group for this respondent that is different or significant? Habib Syech immediately responds that this *majelis* is the same. This is distinct from his second statement: "Every Thursday we have a *Majelis Ta'lim*." The *majelis* refers to something much broader and more amorphous as opposed to the *majelis ta'lim*, which represents a particular event. Habib Syech also indicates that he is not a teacher of the *majelis*. He is not necessarily the leader, teacher, ulama, or performer at the heart of the *majelis*. This massive, undefined *majelis* is one "thing" that is based on relationships between people becoming family under the banner of Islam. It is within this concept of *majelis* that Islam is being made and negotiated by Muslims. However, the

operation of this *majelis* that defines this phenomenon in the world from the perspective of Habib Syech is much more expansive as compared to Islam as defined by Indonesian Islamic affiliation. This broad understanding of *majelis* is an indication of how the *majelis* may operate similarly to what the west has deemed the assemblage.

At this point, there were a few different questions from the crowd involving fasting, selling manure, *zakat*, and a wide variety of topics. I felt pressed to ask as many questions as I could. I was not sure if I would ever be this close to Habib Syech again.

JE: In Indonesia, there is NU and Muhammadiyah, and they are different. Why are they different? Is one better than the other?

HB: Islam is not different. NU is Islam, Muhammadiyah is Islam. All are Islam. They are not different. There is only one God. The difference is this: James, me, and someone else like different types of food. The name of these different types of food is food. The name of this food is Islam. There is tempeh, tofu, and sate [often chicken or goat roasted over charcoal and covered in a peanut sauce]. There are many varieties. James does not like sate.

JE: No, I like sate.

[Crowd Laughs]

HB: No, no, you can't for this example. James does not like sate. James likes tempeh. I like sate. Someone else likes tofu. However, all of the food is Islam. I cannot tell James he must like sate; you cannot say, "If you do not like sate, then you are not a part of Islam." You cannot say this. All of this food is Islam. There are some who eat sate, some who eat tempeh, and some who eat tofu. There is not a problem with different foods. They all fill your stomach.

JE: But I think sate is better than your tempeh. So, ya, all of the food is Islam, but there are some who do not like sate.

HS: Why does he not like sate, because he is sick. Because he is sick, he eats sate and becomes sick with emotions. This person who is sick with emotions is absolutely not pious. Even if you eat sate or different things, everyone eats rice, which is Islam. There is only one Islam. The meaning is this: if James likes this and other people like other things, this is no problem. You are not required to like sate. Salat is required, and that is what is important. Performing wudu is required. Doing what is required is what gets you into heaven. People who say, "Why you do like this, why you do like this"(in English), you cannot do this. "Islam is family" (English). They will not go to heaven. When you go to prayer in Mecca, there are some who (using motions changes the way his hands set. He puts his hands on his stomach, puts his arms straight up in the air, and then straight down. He places his hands on his chest.) They are all ok. Prayer is the same. Allah is the same. Family is the same. "This is all the same, no different" (in English). If you want to eat tempeh or sate, that's fine, but you cannot tell other people that they have to eat sate. We like sate. We like tempeh. You cannot say to me that you cannot eat sate because it is not good for your body, no. If you like eating sate, eat sate. If you like eating tempeh, eat tempeh. Good people only have to worry about themselves, not others. Rules are not different. There are no separate rules for Arabs. The rules are the same. The Quran already said, inside Islam, not in context, that compulsory prayer is the same as we have here. There are Saudi Arabian people who do not wear sarongs; here, we wear sarongs. This is different; some people wear pants, others sarongs. This is no problem. It is not important what you wear. If there is a difference or you are wearing leaves because there

are no clothes, this is no problem. What matters is Allah. Islam does not tell you what to wear. If you want to wear a sarong, you can, or if you want to wear other things, then you can. The things Arab's wear are not the clothes of Islam. Are there more questions?

Defining Islam

Habib Syech's comments here resonate with Shahab Ahmed's argument in *What is Islam*?: *The Importance of Being Islamic*. Islam in this exchange between myself, Habib Syech, and the crowd is not merely a concept or object of inquiry, Islam is "*a real historical phenomenon*."[33] I follow Ahmed in asserting that this historical phenomenon called Islam that is always already being made and remade by Muslims can only be identified by how "*it is made meaningful in terms of hermeneutical engagement with Revelation to Muḥammad as one or more of Pre-Text, Text, and Con-Text.*"[34] Ahmed's work diverges from Asad's discursive tradition in taking agency out of the hands of those interested in making proscriptions about Islam.

> When the thrust of authority towards orthodoxy is posited as the definitive processual dynamic of the discursive tradition/Islam, then when we/Muslims "begin, as Muslims do" to conceptualize Islam/Islamic, we/Muslims(are obliged)to begin to think of prescriptive authority; and our/Muslim thinking of Islam in terms of prescriptive authority leads to our/Muslim thinking of Islam as orthodoxy—as the regulation or requirement of correct practices and the condemnation or exclusion of incorrect ones.[35]

I am not arguing that Muslims do not make claims about the regulation and requirements of correct practice. However, returning to fasting, even if I was to accept that fasting during Ramadan is a definitive pillar of Islam, this does not actually indicate how or even

[33] Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam: The Importance of being Islamic* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016), 6.
[34] Ibid., 405.
[35] Ibid., 274.

when Muslims fast. Furthermore, it does not show what takes place in communities made meaningful for Muslims around the world. For example, Samuli Schielke makes the argument that "soccer is seen as a form of sociality (*lamma*) and amusement (*tasliya*) that characterize Ramadan in Egypt as much as fasting and prayer."[36] Ramadan in Egypt is made meaningfully Islamic not only by the fasting but by how Muslims spend their leisure time. The prescriptive authority that forms the basis to orthodoxy and orthopraxy in the discursive tradition ignores the complex, contradictory, ambiguous, and ambivalent way in which Muslims make Islam in their communities while always having an awareness of the singularity of Islam.

Something is "*Islamic to the extent that it is made meaningful in terms of hermeneutical engagement with Revelation to Muḥammad as one or more of Pre-Text, Text, and Con-Text*."[37] As others have noted, this definition can become so expansive that it is difficult to conceptualize.[38] If the pre-text of revelation is conceived as a "limitless Reality whose meanings are susceptible to and available for exploration, and not merely as the limited and limiting reality of prescription," then Revelation becomes limitless.[39] Ahmed is, however, proving a means for escaping the prescriptive authority of Talal Asad's discursive tradition, and he is trying to force the academic out of his/her zeitgeist. To understand Islam, for Ahmed, not as a feature of the western concept of religion that hangs heavy with Christian concepts is to understand Islam on its terms.

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[36] Samuli Schielke, *Egypt in the Future Tense: Hope, Frustration, and Ambivalence Before and After* 2011 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2015), 50.
[37] Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam?: The Importance of being Islamic* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016), 405.
[38] See for example, Aaron W. Hughes, review of *What is Islam?: The Importance of being Islamic*, by Shahab Ahmed, *Reading Religion*, September 8, 2017 http://readingreligion.org/books/what-islam
[39] Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam?: The Importance of being Islamic* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016), 406.

The quest for this limitless revelation defines Islamic society that seeks Truth through metaphor: "metaphorical truth of this world is conceived as the bridge to the Real-Truth: a bridge on which one is forever crossing back and forth in the act of meaning-making."[40] These metaphors, coherent contradiction, and meaning-making are, furthermore, not defined by prescriptive authority. They are explained by '*explorative authority-the authority to explore.*' Habib Syech uses food as a metaphor for differing understandings, practices, and lived realities of Islam. If one wants to eat sate, this is not a problem. The problem only becomes when someone tells another that they must eat/interpret food/Islam in a particular way. Habib Syech additionally dodges the question of prescribing a specific time for fasting. He is not interested in being prescriptive, but rather, embodies explorative authority. Everyone can eat whatever food they like; the only problem becomes when someone is sick with emotions.

Habib Syech's metaphorical truth is also essential in understanding the statements made by the two participants whom I met waiting outside of Gedung Bustanul Asyiqiin. They indicated that they came because it made their heart calm and cool. When discussing emotion, someone can make a situation hot(*panas*) when they are sick with emotions. Attending Habib Syech's events makes individuals calm, peaceful, and 'cool.' This cooling off of the emotions is partially connected to Habib Syech's message of multiplicity. This, however, gets more complicated when Habib Syech begins to make prescriptive statements.

Prescriptive Authority

[40] Ibid., 406.

The following day, I arrived at Habib Syech's building. Thousands had again come, and Habib Syech was already taking questions. I tried to slip in unnoticed, but some of the assistants recognized me and pulled me to the front. The following conversation between members of the crowd and Habib Syech was taking place:

C: What *tarekat* should we follow?

HS: There are many different *tariqa*. I am not a part of a *tariqa*. *Tariqa* is a road for getting to Allah within a school led by a murshid, a teacher for becoming good. It is one road to becoming good. (James, sit down) The best *dzikir* is slow, la illah ila Allah. There are different forms of *dzikir*. Some say Allah, Allah. Others say, Allah Hu, Allah Hu. All are remembering Allah, and they are different roads to becoming good.

C: Where does someone go if they die?

HS: Are they Muslims? Have they taken the *shahada*? If he is not a Muslim…James come here.

HS: What are you writing down, James?

JE: Words I do not know.

HS: Why are you making a recording on your handphone?

JE: For me, for my research.

HS: There can be a benefit to this. Maybe you will write a book?

JE: Haha, yes. Where is everyone from today?

HS: There are some from Dieng, Jogja, Pati, and she works in Hong Kong, but she is from Semarang. (Pointing to a woman in a niqab) Even aneh2 (really weird) is here.

C: Can a woman lead the call to prayer?

HS: No, she cannot. If it is already prayer time, and there is not a man, then she can.

Crowd: What about for a *pengajian*?

HS: The *pengajian* and masjid are the same. It has to be a man. It cannot be a woman. This is a common question. I often have events with women. Women can do the call to prayer if there is an event for women, and there is not a man, then you can. The law says you cannot.

Crowd/same lady: Yes, but if there is an event for women, and there is a man?

HB: If there is an event just for women, then that's fine. If a woman is by herself, it is no problem.

The questions died down, and the next round of people who wanted to see Habib Syech were ushered towards the front. I tried to get up to allow others to sit down.

HS: James, sit down. Do you have any questions?

JE: Well, are you a Syech?

HS: I am not a syech. My name is syech. My father was Syech Abdul Qadir Assegaf. His name was syech because he was a syech. He was from Mecca. (Directing his speech to the crowd) Please move so others can come in.

Habib Syech does not see himself in these assemblages as a Syech, ulama, guru, teacher, or religious authority, and yet, he is willing to take a stand on the best type of *dzikir* and who should make the call to prayer. In the same few hours that Habib Syech has made a case for there being multiple flavors of Islam, he has also made proclamations about the right way to practice. The key here is not to read these as definitive statements but rather preferences. He is quick to indicate what is right for him while indicating that others should do what they want. He, furthermore, may contradict himself about matters, such as gender norms in Islam. For example, in 2015, Habib Syech pointed out a woman

wearing a niqab. She stood out amongst the other women who were wearing hijabs. However, in 2017, Habib Syech's wife wore a niqab and did not accompany him to his events. Habib Syech's wife explained that she went to a mosque in Jakarta, where all of the women were wearing niqabs. She felt very embarrassed and asked Habib Syech if she could wear the niqab. He said that it was up to her, but she did not have to wear the niqab. Religion and norms are constantly contextual and embedded in people's everyday lives.

Handing me the Microphone

Following these first interactions, I now had Habib Syech's contact information, and I knew there was an upcoming event not far from Solo. I convinced my friend's brother to drive me from Salatiga to the event several hours away. Habib Syech sent me information for when the event would begin and a general area for where the event would take place. I naively arrived when the event flyer said it would start, 5:30 p.m. When I arrived, the stage crew was sill constructing the field, and an empty field lay in front of the stage. I was nervous that perhaps the event had been canceled, or maybe my information was wrong. I walked around and tried to make small talk with people sitting in food stalls near the field. I asked if anyone knew about the event and when it would begin. The resounding answer by several members was that it would begin "later." I was frustrated and a bit confused; so, I walked towards the stage. A metal fence surrounded the stage. This fence extended in a square creating a thirty foot square around the main stage and a lower stage for musicians. The same metal fence extended in a line directly from the fenced-off area directly in front of the stage. I later learned that this fence was

intended to separate men from women. However, this separation was rarely able to be enforced. Men and women would intermingle in the crowds.

Inside the fenced-off area in front of the stage was another, much lower stage. This lower level stage had at least fifteen microphones and had a green felt carpet laying overtop the stage. I looked around, feeling a bit confused. Stage lights were hung, illuminating the field with blues, greens, and oranges. Someone walked up to me and said: “Jimi, come with me.” I had seen this man before, but I was not sure who he was. He was wearing a white shirt, sarong, and badge of some sort. He escorted my friend and me into the inner gated area. He gave us something to drink and eat then told us where to sit. We now sat on bamboo mats right in front of the stage. There were small groups of people beginning to arrive and take their place in the field. Cameras were set up on stage, in front of the stage, and on the small stage in the inner gated area. The cameras looked like something in a newsroom, and the young men operating them all had shirts with “crew” written on them. After about an hour of waiting, the space inside the gate was filling up, and I could not see where the crowd ended in the field. The speakers that I spotted in the streets outside of the field now made more sense. The area was the size of two football fields and full, the roads beyond the field were bursting with people.

As I sat with my friend, someone stuck a camera in my face, and I looked up to see my friend smirking while projecting my face on the multiple screens that flanked the stage. I said no, no, thank you, but the cameraman just smiled and filmed me. My friend laughed at me as I became more uncomfortable by the second. The musicians now arrived. They took their place on the low stage and began playing. The sky lit up with the stage lights, and three spotlights danced in the sky above. I heard cheers as police lights

added to the light show taking place in the field. Following the police car was a series of black vans, which made their way around the exterior of the crowd as members of Banser (NU Islamic militia) cleared a path. The car arrived on the side of the stage, and Banser, along with police officers, formed a human wall on either side of the front passenger door. The door slowly opened, and that section of the crowd became dense with bodies. Banser and the police were leaning back into the crowd to clear a path. Habib Syech made his way slowly through the crowd and began ascending the stage. Someone took his sandals as he reached the top of the stage. There were already twenty or thirty men on stage who stood to greet him.

Habib Syech made his way to the front of the stage, waved, and smiled at the crowd. People stood up and cried, "*Allah hu Akbar*." Habib Syech sat down, signaling stage members to follow. He seemed to spot me immediately. He caught my eye, pointed, and patted the space directly next to him on stage. I shook my head. He motioned with his hands and laughed as I tried to stay put. Several men came over, helped me up, and pushed me up the stairs. I had worn tennis shoes, which slowed down the process. As I reached the top of the stage, people on stage looked just as surprised as I was that I was now on stage. Habib Syech turned around and motioned for me to get closer. I did, but I did not join him at the front of the stage. I sat one row behind him. Habib Syech launched into *salawat*. The musicians, sound crew, participants, and the earth now coalesced in the space of *salawat*. I watched as the massive crowd threw glow sticks and waved their arms in the air. As Habib Syech sang, he looked back at me and chuckled at my look of shock. He motioned forward with his arm as if to say, "Look."

Habib Syech threw fruit from the stage as well as water. As the crowd warmed up, Habib Syech encouraged them to sing louder. He wiped the sweat from his face, took a sip of Yakult, and belted out the lyrics from deep in his belly. The cameras projected images of the crowd, musicians, and Habib Syech, but the cameras were not connected to any type of live stream. The cameras were there to display what was happening on stage to the masses primarily. In the middle of the performance, Habib Syech took a break. The sponsor of the event, a local politician, told jokes and talked about society coming together. Following the rather lengthy speech, Habib Syech took the microphone back and began singing again. Towards the end of *salawat*, Habib Syech stopped singing, turned around, looked at me, and pretended to toss me the mic. Many people on stage laughed at this as his musicians carried the song. Habib Syech continued trying to convince me to take the microphone. This is not the last time I would be asked to take the microphone in front of tens of thousands of people.

All of a sudden, Habib Syech's son stood up, grabbed me, and told me to go down the stairs. I fumbled around with my shoes and descended the stairs. At the bottom of the stairs were swarms of people. The gate had not kept the crowds from pushing forward. I was not sure where to go or how to get through. Banser suddenly pushed a pathway for Habib Syech's son, and I got forced into the crowd. I struggled to return to my friend. I found him and squeezed in next to him. The crowd now stood. Habib Syech led the Indonesian national anthem, the last song of most performances. After the event, Habib Syech encouraged people to protect their phones and bags from being stolen. He then began his descent from the stage. All of the men on the stage stood up and moved

towards him. Habib Syech shook some hands and slowly made his way to the stairs where someone slipped his sandals on.

Police officers and Banser again formed a line to hold back the crowds. People tried to jump over, go under, and run through the path of the police and Banser. The police and Banser linked arms and made lines to form a walkway that was two people deep on either side. Habib Syech made it to his car, but people began slapping the van. The police and Banser formed a path for the van and slowly navigated it through the field of people. I watched as people chased after the car and left a field full of trash. I was not sure where to go, as there were so many people. So, I sat down with my friend and waited. After fifteen minutes, the crowd had died down, but I was now the center of attention. Different people walked up and wanted to take my picture. One of the men with badges saw what was going on and asked my friend to help get me to a car. I walked rather quickly as my friends helped push through people trying to stop me. Someone grabbed my shoulder, and I had to stop. My friend encouraged me forward, and the man with a badge said that we should go to eat dinner with Habib Syech. I asked where, and he told me to just get in the car.

After getting into the car, the man directed my friend's brother. The house was not more than a five-minute drive. Someone opened a large metal gate, and we drove in. There were still several hundred people, but the gates somewhat contained the exterior chaos. A different man with a badge saw me and immediately grabbed me to go inside of the house. Habib Syech shouted across the room, "James, come here and sit!" He was sitting with a few people, and I sat down. Someone brought me food and water. Habib Syech introduced me to the man who owned the house. Habib Syech asked what I

thought of the event. I was not sure what to say. I did not have any concept for making sense of what had just happened. So, I responded, “It was excellent!” Habib Syech was very dissatisfied with my answer and continued, “Yes, what else.” I said, “Well, I am not sure I understand what is happening.” Habib Syech, laughed and patted me on the shoulder and said, “*Wong desa* (village person) iya?” Everyone sitting close to the circle laughed.

Many times throughout fieldwork, Habib Syech would refer to me as *wong desa* for not understanding how to eat certain fruits, for losing my sandals, and for wearing the “wrong” clothes. It was now around midnight, and I was exhausted. Habib Syech ate rather quickly and was planning on returning to Solo, Indonesia. He asked if I had a ride back to Salatiga, and I said, “Yes.” As he stood up to leave, I quickly went outside to allow the family more time with Habib Syech. A man ran up to me outside and asked: “What is my name?” I was surprised and said, “I am sorry what?” He responded, “You should know me. Do you remember me?” I replied, “No, I am really sorry. I have forgotten your name.” He said, “I am Syech Abah’s son. He told you to come here. You should not forget my father and me.” I apologized, and my friend, sensing that I was uncomfortable, encouraged me to get in the car.

In beginning to enter into the *majelis*, as an assemblage of figures such as Habib Syech, musicians, participants, food, fields, lights, and the sounds of *salawat*, it is clear from the first interactions that I cannot remain as a participant-observer from the crowds. My body and life were projected onto screens, even as I tried to dodge the cameras in my face. During my first interactions, I was the center of attention. In beginning to conceive of the space of *salawat* and the *majelis ta’lim*, my presuppositions about Islam in

Indonesia defined by Islamic affiliation did not work. My first conversation mimics hundreds of discussions with individuals throughout my work. Some participants indicated their association with NU, Muhammadiyah, or FPI, and many simply said they were Islam. If this is only leisurely Islam of the NU variety, then these initial interactions do not fit. To understand this moving assemblage of *salawat* and the ethical sensibilities that it entailed, I could not merely listen, document, and observe.

I would have to become a part of this complex assemblage that races across the world. My first experiences were overwhelming, and, at times, I felt panic as crowds smashed me into any space available at the *majelis ta'lim* and *salawat*. Whether I was interested in keeping an ethnographic distance from my interlocutors was metaphorically broken when Habib Syech attempted to hand me the microphone. Pictures and videos of me circulated through WhatsApp, and my friend requests on Facebook exploded to the extent that it was uncontrollable. This was the first *salawat* event I attended, and I attended over one hundred of these events. My position in this moving assemblage became more complicated every time I showed up. The nature of the movement also required me to rely on musicians, participants, and Habib Syech to reach many of these events that had no exact location. Even when I traveled by myself to the events, participants and Habib Syech saw this as an act of piety. Even as I continued to assert that I was doing research, I was physically dragged to the front of the stage if anyone from Syekhermania saw me. *Baraka* was hunting me through the multiple mediums and forms that it takes. However, *baraka* is never stable. As the man, whose name I forgot, asserted, "You should know me. Do you remember me?" My connection to Indonesian and the Islamic community was through Syech Abah's gatherings, and his son was not

happy that I had seemed to have forgotten about this. My access to this community and the potential of *baraka* related to the *kyai*, Syech Abah, was now short-circuited. I was not in the right relationship to Syech Abah, his family, and his community.

EMBRACED BY THE PROPHET: *SYAFA'AT, BARAKA*, AND *HATI TENANG*

After my initial interaction with Habib Syech, as indicated in the previous chapter, I began following him to his performances of *salawat*. Finding out the exact address of these events proved to be challenging. The Syekhermania Facebook, again, only provided a city and time, often only a few days in advance of an event. So, I would text Habib Syech to find information. Information from Habib Syech, Facebook, and other people that I met was often sparse and required me to enter into this moving assemblage that manifested in the events. I began traveling full time with this assemblage. I built relationships with the musicians, vendors, sound crew, and other members. When I first began attending the events, I was dazzled at the sheer mass of people that seemed to flow into various locations. I started thinking about how the presence of significant religious and political figures may have contributed to the popularity of these events. I thought that perhaps Habib Syech's charisma and voice brought the crowds. However, in the same way, that Islamic affiliation or digital presence contribute to this assemblage but do not explain it, the influx of political and religious authorities, as well as the charisma and persona of Habib Syech, cannot fully explain the velocity of this assemblage across Indonesia, Asia, and the Middle East. All of these factors contribute to building this assemblage, but they still rely on a view from the glass towers of a city. In the words of Michel de Certeau:

> "To be lifted to the summit of the World Trade Center is to be lifted out of the city's grasp. One's body is no longer clasped by the streets that turn and return it according to an anonymous law; nor is it possessed, whether as player or played, by the rumble of so many differences and by the nervousness of New York traffic. When one goes up there, he leaves

> behind the mass that carries off and mixes up in itself any identity of authors or spectators."[1]

Building of this analogy, to be lifted on the drone that floats over *salawat,* is to be removed from *salawat's* grasp. The rhythm, aroma, or feeling of the rice fields, stadiums, and roads no longer clasp the participant-observer. Looking from the drone that floats over *salawat* removes the rumble of differences and by the unsettled nature of the assemblage, elements, and other bodies. When one goes up there, he/she/they leave behind the mass that carries off and mixes up in itself any identity of authors or spectators. You cannot hunt *baraka* from drones or towers. You can only see the institutions, strategic powers, and paths that seem to consume and constrain these assemblages. This does not illuminate the tactics of everyday life in which people make their lives meaningful.

I follow de Certeau in asserting that to understand *salawat,* I have to be aware of both the strategies (the power structures of Islamic history, Indonesian politics, and power) and tactics (the actions of the everyday Muslims who subverts, disassembles, and innovates). I have provided a drone-based view of *salawat* and its relation to Islamic educational institutions, the rise of different types of Islamic authorities, and the ethnographer. However, I am interested in how the members of these assemblages engage with the strategies of the Indonesian and Islamic landscape while also subverting them and demanding that *baraka*, and its relation to *syafa'at* (intercession in the afterlife) and *hati tenang* (calm heart), is the raison d'être of *salawat*'s assemblage subverting,

[1]Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkley: University of California Press, 1984), 92

disassembling, and creating innovations in understandings of Islam, Indonesia, and the place of the ethnographer

Baraka, Baraka, Baraka

After an event in Semarang Indonesia, the *bupati* (regency head) sponsored a dinner for VIP guests. The field and stage still swirled with thousands of people. I was ushered along with Habib Syech and others. I often tried to dodge formal events such as this to talk to participants, but I was also often physically "encouraged" to move in specific ways. A human chain formed at the bottom of the stairs that descended from the stage. A group of Banser members grabbed me from my seat and pushed me into the space between the two human chains leading from the stage to an area for dinner. I slowly made my way as thousands of people pushed on the human chains. Hands, elbows, heads, and feet all stuck through the human chain. Screams of men and women filled the void left by the cessation of *salawat*. I reached the clearing that I realized was more of an open pavilion with a roof and tile floors. The tables were set with a formal white cloth. A human barricade surrounding this area kept people from pushing forwards. The smell of fresh rice, sate, and fried tofu made me hungry. I sat and quickly ate something. I was planning on riding back with Habib Syech. He did not typically spend much time eating dinner after the events; he preferred to eat before the events. He grabbed a little food and called me over to meet the *bupati*. I greeted them and explained who I was. I gulped my food and sipped water as the two chatted. The visit was not very long. Habib Syech stood up to leave, and I stood up to get out of the way of the ten other VIPs who wanted a photo. Suddenly two veiled women broke through the human barrier and were running towards Habib Syech. I was in their way. I shouted in surprise as their

bodies covered in multicolored cloth ran into me. As they passed through me, I could hear one of them say *baraka*, *baraka*, *baraka* from deep in their chest. They quickly reached Habib Syech and began slapping him. He protected his head as these women tried to beat *baraka* out of him. Several members of Banser stepped in to stop the beating and escort the women away.

This experience created a different line of inquiry. Habib Syech was not singing or on stage. The women ignored all of the other political and religious figures present. They were not, for example, interested in pictures of the governor or the other Islamic authorities present. They were hunting *baraka*, and they were trying to extract it from the body of Habib Syech. The echoes of *baraka* from these women create an opportunity to investigate *baraka* as a discursive tradition located in the everyday lives of Muslims that radiate from these assemblages propelling their popularity and revealing a different kind of ontology at the heart of this contemporary assemblage.

There is a tension here between those hunting and the mediums that they hunt. The only source of *baraka* is Allah.[2] However, the Quran indicates several mediums through which *baraka* moves. The Quran itself is understood as a medium of *baraka*.[3] Israel, Egypt,[4] present-day Syria,[5] Palestine,[6] and the "earth" are all blessed by God.[7] The Kabah and the *al-Masjid al Aqsa* in Jerusalem are also blessed.[8] An olive tree is also blessed.[9] A "blessed night"[10] could refer to the "Night of Power" or a more general night

[2] Quran 25:1, 25:10, 25: 61.
[3] See Quran 6:92, 6:155, 38:29, 40:64, 43:85, 55:78, 67:1
[4] See Quran 7:137
[5] See Quran 21:71, 34:18
[6] See Quran 21: 81
[7] See Quran 41:10
[8] See Quran 17:1
[9] See Quran 24:35
[10] See Quran 44:3

in which one receives revelation.[11] The prophets such as Moses,[12] Isaac, and Abraham[13] are also blessed. Places, time, people, and physical objects can be mediums of *baraka*, which begins and ends with Allah. The olive tree of Al-Nur (The Light) warrants additional pause. In the following *ayat*, of surah 24, an olive tree is presented as blessed.

> Allah is the Light(2996) of the heavens and the earth. (2997) The Parable of His Light is as if there were a Niche and within it, a Lamp: the Lamp enclosed in Glass:(2998) the glass as it were a brilliant star:(2999) Lit from a blessed Tree,(3000) an Olive, neither of the East nor of the West,(3001) whose oil is well-nigh luminous, though fire scarce touched it:(3002) Light upon Light! Allah doth guide whom He will to His Light:(3003) Allah doth set forth Parables for men: and Allah doth know all things.[14]

Allah is the Light that illuminates all of creation, like a star. The fuel for this light from the lamp that illuminates all creation is lit from this blessed Olive Tree. However, Ali notes a catch in this vision of equating physical light with Allah:

> The physical light is but a reflection of the true Light in the world of Reality, and that true Light is Allah. We can only think of Allah in terms of our phenomenal experience, and in the phenomenal world, light is the purest thing we know, but physical light has drawbacks incidental to its physical nature: e.g., (1) it is dependent on some source external to itself: (2) it is a passing phenomenon: if we take it to be a form of motion or energy it is unstable, like all physical phenomena; (3) it is dependent on space and time; its speed is 186,000 miles per second, and there are stars whose light takes thousands (or millions or billions) of years before it reaches the earth. The perfect Light of Allah is free from any such defects.[15]

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[11] *The Quran: The Meaning of the Glorious Quran Text, Translation & Commentary*, trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali (San Francisco, CA: The Islamic Bulletin, 2013). In note 4690 of Abdullah Yusuf Ali's interpretation of the Quran, he indicates "Usually taken to be a night in the month of Ramadan, say the 23rd, 25th, or 27th night of that month. It is referred to as the Night of Power in 97:1-2. See also 2:185. But perhaps we need not fix it literally by the calendar. The night that a Message descends from Allah is indeed a blessed night like a day of rain for a parched land.

[12] See Quran 27:7-8

[13] See Quran 37:109-113

[14] Quran 24:35

[15] *The Quran: The Meaning of the Glorious Quran Text, Translation & Commentary* , trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali (San Francisco, CA: The Islamic Bulletin, 2013), Note 2997.

The fuel that feeds this perfect Light of Allah is not contained by the physical nature of light. Its fuel, therefore, is and is not olive oil. Olive oil is a source from which the Light burns. However, the source oil, from which this fuel is created, is "neither from the east or west" and "well-nigh luminous." It is both representative of the olive oil existing in the world and a perfectly created oil that creates luminous light like that of a fire. The source of this olive oil is the tree. This tree, however, is interpreted by al-Ghazzali in the following way:

> Its peculiarity is to begin from one proposition, then to branch out into two, which two become four and so on until by this process of logical division they become very numerous. It leads, finally, to conclusions which in their turn become germs producing like conclusions, these latter being also susceptible of continuation, each with each. The symbol which our world yields for this is a Tree. And when further we consider that the fruit of the discursive reason is material for this multiplying, establishing, and fixing of all knowledge, it will naturally not be typified by trees like quince, apple, pomegranate, nor, in brief, by any other tree whatever, except the Olive.[16]

Trees like the "multiplying, establishing, and fixing of all knowledge" continually create new growth(branches and leaves). These leaves and branches also produce "germs" or pollen that spreads, creating the possibility of other trees and conclusions. There is a logical division here, but this Tree is also Blessed. It is also a medium of *baraka*, which originates in Allah. Therefore, this olive tree is not just any olive tree. The perfect olive tree represents all knowledge, even as it continues expanding, creating the perfective oil that "increases radiance" beyond the physical constraints of light, building Light upon Light.[17] *Baraka*, then, is a closed system in which the source of the light begins from a tree blessed by God representing all knowledge that then produces

[16] Al-Ghazzali, *Mishkât Al-Anwar*, trans. William Henry Temple Gairdnner (London: Royal Asiastic Society, 1924), 152
[17] Ibid., 153.

pure/perfect olive oil that, in turn, lights the illuminating flame (Allah) in the niche which does not exist outside of Allah.

The mediums of *baraka* are as numerous as the branches of an olive tree that encapsulate all that can be known from inside and outside of time. These mediums/branches do not merely contain *baraka* as something that can be captured. These branches/*baraka* contain *baraka* and become the fuel that illuminates the Truth/Light of Allah in the world. This is a closed system in which He who blesses the tree creates the oil that creates the manifestation of illuminate Light/Truth/Allah, which can be replicated from the multiple branches of the tree that create multiple olives. The Prophets, land/space, time, and the physical world can all be mediums for in the emanation of Light that illuminates all of creation.

This textual analysis of the mediums and source of *baraka* in the Quran is an essential building block to understanding the discursive tradition of *baraka* that appears at the heart of this assemblage. [18] However, I also have an affinity with the recent turn in Islamic studies by figures such as Samuli Schielke and other scholars who want to focus on the everyday Muslims,[19] the rough ground of the everyday,[20] ordinary ethics,[21] and *Islam mondain*[22] to capture the conflict, ambiguity, and friction of Muslims in everyday

[18] Talal Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," *Qui Parle*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Spring/Summer 2009): 20.
[19] Samuli Schielke, "Being Good in Ramadan: Ambivalence, Fragmentation, and the Moral Self in the Lives of Young Egyptians," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15, S1 (2009): 24–40; Samuli Schielke and Liza Debevec, eds., *Ordinary Lives and Grand Schemes: An Anthropology of Everyday Religion* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012).
[20] Hayder Al-Mohammad and Daniela Peluso, "Ethics and the 'Rough Ground" of the Everyday: The Overlappings of Life in Postinvasion Iraq," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 42-58.
[21] Michael Lambek, *Ordinary Ethics: Anthropology, Language, and Action* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010).
[22] Filippo Osella and Benjamin Soares, *Islam, Politics, Anthropology* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 12.

contexts. This stream of scholarship is self-consciously pushing back on Saba Mahmood, Charles Hirshkind, and others who focus on piety movements as a feature of the Islamic revival. At the center of this concept of piety emerging out of the Islamic revival is governance and normativity. For example, Schielke critiques Mahmood for "assuming that Muslims just want to be good Muslims and thus focusing on how they in practice try to negotiate situations in which the pressures of a secular state make it difficult to live out a committed Muslim life."[23] For Schielke, the issue is thinking that all Muslims want to be good Muslims and that this "particular ideal of personhood" builds individual subjectivities with specific ethical commitments. These individual subjectivities that focus on being good Muslims, however, does not allow for the "ambivalence, contradictions, and experiences of failure" that lie at the heart of forming subjectivities for Schielke.

However, any attempt to indicate that the human condition and Islam are defined by ambiguity undoes ambiguity. Being normative about ambiguity falls into the same trap of making conceptual absolutes. It, furthermore, does not allow for the possibility of Salafi's or others interested in forming normative subjectivities.[24] Someone can at, different times, make and use dominant, institutional norms in one moment, and the next moment, contradict themselves. However, the scholars analyze Muslim subjectivities from either the side of piety or ambiguity, the epistemological biases of the ethnographer become apparent. Normativity in the space of the everyday is a strategic power that operates just as much as the tactics of everyday life. They are not opposites but form the

[23] Samuli Schielke, *Egypt in the Future Tense: Hope, Frustration, and Ambivalence before and after 2012* (Bloomington : Indiana University Press 2015), 18.
[24] See Nadia Fadil and Mayanthi Fernando, "Rediscovering the "everyday" Muslim Notes on an anthropological divide," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*. 5, no 2 (2015): 59–88.

multiple possibilities that inform human action. Neither side can is absolute. I do not see these two conceptual tools for understanding Islam and as necessarily in tension. I approach *salawat* from both the drone and the on-the-ground perspective.

My approach pulls from Asad's discursive tradition in trying to determine how my interlocutors connect the assemblage of *salawat* to "conceptions of the Islamic past and future" in the present. This assemblage produces a series of intertwined concepts (*baraka*, *syafa'at*, and *hati tenang*) that both indicate the ambiguous, ineffable, and precarity of everyday life and create new normative ethical subjectivities.

Disavowing *Baraka*

In trying to understand the discursive tradition that emerges out of *salawat*, I began focusing on Habib Syech. I imagined that he was the medium for *baraka*. However, analyzing the appearance of *baraka, syafa'at*, and *hati tenang* as a feature of Habib Syech goes against my initial textual analysis of *baraka* as well as how it appears in the events. The Prophets and other members of the 'righteous' can receive and become mediums for *baraka*. However, Habib Syech is but one branch of the olive tree. The olive tree of the Quran is, furthermore, a perfect Olive tree that guarantees the perfect olive fruit that can then become the fuel for divine Light. However, Habib Syech is not equivalent to God and, therefore, his branch of the olive tree is just as constrained by the sun, which shines on it, like other branches. Habib Syech's branch, furthermore, has the potential of creating unripe or less than perfect fruit. *Baraka* may move through this branch, but it may not. Multiple branches come together to make the olive tree/assemblage in which *baraka* can and does manifest for people. In rooting this discursive tradition to the every day, Habib Syech has similar ideas about his subjectivity.

Habib Syech has never said that he "has" *baraka*. I once asked him why people say that he had *baraka.* He quickly became angry and told me that I did not understand Indonesian well enough. I knew that he might not like this question, but I wanted to push him on *baraka*. I was offended and hurt because I did understand what he was saying, and I was trying to understand further how he understood *baraka*. This was not the first or last time that Habib Syech would privately and publicly critique my Indonesian, Arabic, or Javanese. He, then, turned the question back on me: "Ok, Jimi, what have you learned from others about *baraka*?" I repeated the adage that I always met when I asked others about it, "Well, *baraka* cannot be captured/rationally understood. It can only be felt." He said, "Yes, and so have you felt it?" I stumbled around, trying to figure out the answer to the question. I had indeed thought about this, but Habib Syech wanted a definitive answer. Habib Syech often turned questions on me and brought them to bear on my experience. If I wanted to ask a difficult question or ask him to talk about a difficult subject, I had to answer the same questions about myself.

Following this interaction, Habib Syech said that I needed to accompany him to Malaysia in a few days so that someone who spoke English could explain *baraka* to me. So while I spoke with Habib Syech, I bought a ticket to Malaysia that coincided with the flight of the musicians and Habib Syech. We would be in Malaysia for less than 24 hours. I was not sure what the event was in Malaysia. The musicians also knew very little about the event as they did both big and small events in Malaysia. Everyone was along for the ride. When we arrived, several large vans awaited us. I climbed in, and we were quickly off. I asked where we were going, and one of the musicians told me to take a nap because I was grumpy. So, I took a nap. I felt the vans slow down and looked up to see the vans

pulling into a gated area. Beautifully manicured trees flanked the roads, and a golf course was on the left side. We went through the gates, and as we wound up this road, bright white mansions with Mercedes Benzes and BMWs in the driveways appeared. I was disoriented and looked at the overpowering architecture of these three-story mansions that overlooked Kuala Lumpur. We pulled up to a huge house that overlooked the golf course and city.

I filed in with the group of musicians who seemed to be feeling just as uncomfortable as I was. We walked into the backyard, and a small stage had been constructed. A large black couch was at the center of a low stage. This setup was very different from every other event I have been to over the past five years. Habib Syech and others always sat on the ground of the stage. This private event was for the owner of the house and his guests. The area in front of the stage, which extended most of the backyard, was covered with rugs. Fans were positioned all over the backyard to cool everyone off. The guests and musicians did not mingle. I spoke to a few Malaysians present at the event who were not very interested in talking to me. The women wore bright clothing with gold jewelry. The men paired business slacks with white shirts common to the typical *salawat* event. The musicians told me that it was time to pray. I often spent a lot of time with the musicians and other actors navigating the question, "Jimi, are you joining us?" There were many times where the fourth attempt by the musicians or other interlocutors at four in the morning resulted in me begrudgingly joining everyone for prayer. This was also complicated by the fact that the places that I would stay with the musicians had enough room for everyone to sleep or pray. Both activities could not be

accomplished at the same time. In this case, I felt out of place and joined the musicians in preparing for prayer.

The guests completed ablutions inside the home. The homeowner instructed the musicians to use the spigot at the edge of the backyard. The musicians then pushed me to the faucet to begin ablutions. I began, and several musicians tried to instruct me as to the proper way to do ablutions. Someone else said that I was doing it right, and a debate ensued about the appropriate way to do ablutions. I laughed and continued as they discussed how much water was necessary for cleaning my feet. I joined the musicians as guests began their prayers in different spots around the backyard. Following prayer, the musicians began to get set up. I sat with them, and I was going to be allowed to play with the musicians. I had no training, but this did not seem to be a problem. I would play the small *rebana* drum, which did not hold the rhythm of the music. It was more of a punctuating sound above the other tambourines and drums. Habib Syech appeared, and the hundred or so guests swarmed around him. He smiled and took pictures with the guests. He stepped onto the low stage and sat on the black couch. The guests sat in front of the stage, and Habib Syech quickly began singing. He looked at me and laughed as I struggled to learn the rhythms of each song. Although Habib Syech and the musicians had a similar effect to other events, the crowd did not. Habib Syech encouraged the group to sing louder, but many of them sat in silence with their heads bowed. Habib Syech playfully threw fruit to the crowd, but they did not receive it in the same way.

There was a seriousness to the event that was unfamiliar. Habib Syech did not give a long speech, but at the end of forty-five minutes of performing, he began praying for the crowd. The emotion changed. I could hear soft pronouncements of "Ya Allah," as

many in the crowd wept uncontrollably. Habib Syech prayed for intercession in the afterlife (*syafaat di akhirat*), he prayed for the host and his guests that they would receive *baraka*. Some of the crowd sat softly weeping while others wept with their whole body. This crowd did not resemble the masses that flocked to the events in Indonesia. The mood was more serious and somber.

This scene reminded me of what I had seen during my first trip to visit Syech Abah. *Salawat* in Malaysia also seemed to resonate with what has been called "new urban Sufi networks" by Julia Day Howell.[25] These middle to upper-class individuals reflect a new engagement, particularly by Modernists like the Muhammadiyah, with *tasawwuf* in educational courses and works such as *Tasauf Modern* by Hamka. This event was a reminder that these assemblages tap into the "larger network of social resources being created to meet the new demand from cosmopolitan Muslims for ways to learn about and use Islamic devotional and mystical practices to cultivate a richer inner life, what we might call 'depth spirituality.'"[26] Many of these cosmopolitan seekers turn to educational courses like that of AA Gym and his Heart Management.[27] Habib Syech slips into this network of educational courses, televangelists, and Islamic self-help while not being confined by its boundaries. This assemblage, furthermore, appeals to not only those socio-economically disadvantaged populations who have affinities for *salawat* and more traditionalist leanings. The growing upper and middle class who are cosmopolitan modernists also seek *salawat*.

[25]Julia Day Howell, "Modernity and Islamic Spirituality in Indonesia's New Sufi Networks," in *Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam*, ed. Martin van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell (London ; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007).
[26] Ibid., 232.
[27] James Hoesterey. *Rebranding Islam: Piety, Prosperity, and A Self-Help Guru* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

Hunting *Baraka*

On one of my long stretches traveling with the musicians who accompany Habib Syech, I sat next to one of the musicians, Henry. He was poking fun at me for being tired. There were three groups of musicians who typically accompanied Habib Syech, a group from Yogyakarta, Solo, and Kudus. Habib Syech traveled with one of the groups of musicians, depending on where the event would take place. Often the musicians from Solo would travel internationally with Habib Syech, but Habib Syech would also request individual members to accompany him to certain events. On this particular trip with the musicians, we were on performance number three. The first performance was in Central Java. The second was in Malaysia, and the third was in Jakarta. I, along with the musicians, slept on the planes, buses, and cars in-between performances. Henry's incessant poking fun at me for overeating, snoring, and sleeping too much, in general, were getting on my nerves. However, there were twenty-five musicians who lived every moment together for weeks at a time with me in tote. I finally dared to say, "Henry, everyone keeps telling me that many of the musicians were '*anak jalan*" (street children) before becoming a part of Habib Syech's musicians. Did you used to live on the streets?"

Henry: "Well, Jimi, not all of us are from the streets, but yes, I was living on the streets and getting into bad things."

Me: "Well, what sorts of bad things?"

Henry: "Well, look at my tattoo."

As he lifted his shirt to show me the tattoo, several other musicians showed their tattoos as well. I showed mine, as well.

Henry: "Ya, Jimi, I was into drinking."

Me: “Oh, so how did you get involved with *salawat*.”

Henry: “Someone invited me to play and gave me a place to live while I learned how to play *salawat*.”

This was not an unusual story. As another individual recounted[28] to me,

> “I used to be a thug. I was the enforcer for my community. If someone had a problem, they would call me, and I would go and collect the money that was owed or deal with the issue. I would not leave until my knife tasted blood. However, alhamdulillah, I started going to *salawat*, and I was able to get out of the gang. I do not do any of that anymore.”

Salawat for many men, both old and young, helped them get out of the streets or gangs. Many of those men who identified *salawat* as helping them to “be better Muslims” also began businesses. Several of the musicians would spend their time outside of the events, when they were not eating or sleeping, shopping for fish, fabrics, and other material goods. They would bring them back to their communities to sell. Some have even started YouTube channels that resemble a travel channel with *salawat* sprinkled in-between. Piety and business are deeply intertwined in the *salawat*. As Hammodi’s interlocutor asserts in Mecca, “Everyone knows there’s nothing wrong with combining trade and worship for *baraka*.”[29]

As the bus continued, it became apparent that the driver and the musicians were unsure of where to go. We were lost, driving around roads just big enough for the bus. Several musicians now sat at the front of the bus debating the right route to take, as well as texting and calling organizers of the event. After about half an hour of U-turns and false starts, we finally found a man that one of the musicians called who could direct us

[28] Due to the nature of this story, I am not revealing who he is or what his place is in this assemblage.
[29] Abdellah Hammoudi, *A Season in Mecca: Narrative of Pilgrimage* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2006), 84.

to the event. Neither the musicians nor the driver seemed upset. There was a sense of urgency, but it was not unusual to be lost.

On a separate occasion, I took my motorbike with the same information that was available to other people who wanted to go to the event. I knew that it would take me around three hours by motorbike to get to Semarang, but I was not sure where the event was in reference to downtown. So, I allowed four hours to reach the event. I set out on my motorbike, not knowing where I was going. At that point, GPS was still not very helpful in navigating through the roads of Java. So, I used signs, and I occasionally stopped to ask people if I was going in the right direction. I had booked a hotel in Semarang in case I was not able to find the moving assemblage. After about three and a half hours, I arrived at the hotel. I changed clothes and set off to try and find the event. I checked social media and saw that the event was not actually in Semarang. The flyer that was posted on Syekhermania's Facebook page did not give an exact location, but it did provide the name of a town. I started in that direction. After thirty minutes, I ran into a group of individuals wearing Syekhermania Jackets. They were stopped on the side of the road. I pulled over and asked if they knew where the event was. They laughed and said that they did not but that they were trying to find it. I asked if I could tag along, and they said yes. After fifteen minutes or so of following the group, we stopped again to ask someone directions. I found a man fixing a flat tire at the Indomaret, similar to a Circle K, and asked if he knew where this event was. He said yes, and then provided the name of the location, but I had no idea where that field was. I apologized and asked if he could tell me which way to turn. The next five minutes were full of lots of directions, and I only memorized the first three turns. I thanked him and saw a large truck that would typically

be used to move rice and other goods around packed full of young Indonesians waving flags and banners. I quickly jumped on my motorbike and followed the truck encouraging the other Syekhermania fans to follow. After a few minutes, traffic was at a standstill. The young Indonesians in the back of the truck were not phased as they sang and shouted with excitement. The road was now full of Indonesians wearing Syekhermania gear and the white shirts characteristic of all those attending the events. I maneuvered around the huge eighteen-wheeler style trucks, cars, and motorbikes full of people on their way to the event. I entered the motorbike stream that flowed like a river around traffic and found parking.

These assemblages are not easy to find, and yet they come together in a different place every night. Returning to the bus that is now on the right path to *salawat*, we eventually found the field for *salawat.* People quickly surrounded the bus. The bus driver had to push very slowly through the crowd with the help of the Indonesian Islamic militia, Banser. The power required for these assemblages was enormous. Temporary power lines crossed above the path of the bus. The bus then got stuck because one of the power lines was not tall enough. A latter then appeared out of the crowd. The individual with the ladder used it to raise the power line so that the bus could pass through. On either side of the bus were merchants selling a wide variety of merchandise. Some sold food like fried tofu, while others sold Syekhermania gear, perfume, prayer mats, glow sticks, hermit crabs, prayer beads, paintings of Habib Syech, and a host of other materials.

Habib Syech produces some of the Syekhermania gear, but many other individuals make gear as well. Habib Syech also makes a wide range of clothing, both

related to the fan club as well as garments in general. Often the vendors will either buy directly from Habib Syech or make their version. This is not a problem for Habib Syech as he often recounts how many people make money off of the events. He, for example, used to make recordings of the events but stopped because others were making them for sale at the events and DVD stores across Indonesia. He does still receive revenue from songs purchased on Apple Music and Spotify, but if someone else wants to make Syekhermania gear or other things to sell, "This is no problem," in Habib Syech's words. There is, furthermore, no official or trademarked gear. Capitalist notions of ownership do not drive the economy built around these events, and yet, there is constant innovation in the production of products. Habib Syech's creation of Syekher Water, mentioned in chapter two, is an excellent example of this.

As the bus slowed to a complete stop, Banser surrounded the bus and provided an exit for the musicians and the anthropologist in tote. As we descended into the crowd, hands crabbed at our bags, and different musicians stopped for photographs. Some of the younger musicians who were unmarried seemed to be taking a lot of selfies with the young Indonesian women who stopped them. Wrappers and other trash mixed with mud already covered the ground. We eventually reached the gate that surrounded the stages. At every event, a four-foot-tall metal gate surrounded the main stage or stages. Someone had to open the gate for us to enter. There were already thousands waiting in the field in front of the main stage.

The main stage is typically five feet or more off the ground. The size of the stage, as well as the height of the stage, is dependent upon the location. Trees, power lines, the physical space, and a host of other determining factors determine the setup of *salawat*. In

this case, the stage was large enough to hold one hundred people or so. The back of the stage was typically composed of a large screen. A banner or a projection screen that extended the width and height of the stage typically composed the backdrop of the stage. Most stages had trusses that extended above the stage between ten and twenty feet. Stage lights with multiple patterns and colors were attached to the trusses as well as a tarp to help keep out the rain. If there was available space, two other stages were constructed outside of the metal gate on either side of the main stage. Special guests, including political and religious officials, often sat on these lower stages. The stages were sometimes divided between men and women, but this was not always the case. The main stage was usually composed of mostly men, but women regularly appeared on the stage. That metal gate that extended out into the crowd intended to separate men and women was also often ignored or overlooked. Habib Syech has critiqued the use of these events for young men and women to go on dates, and yet, these events are certainly places in which young men and women can intermingle in ways that they cannot in the mosque, the *pengajian,* or other spaces designed for Islamic learning and exchange. However, many of these events take place in more rural areas. These spaces are similar to the café's of Beirut that Deeb and Harb argue are "often described as *shar'i* ("religiously legitimate"), *muhafiz* ("conservative"), or simply *munasib* ("appropriate") by both their clientele and owners."[30] The assemblages that revolve around *salawat* open up as spaces of Islamic leisure that are perceived as acceptable, and yet, these assemblages are not places of leisure, nor are they made sense of by Indonesians as spaces of entertainment that are *shar'i*, *muhafiz,* or *munasib*. Some of the defining features of spaces considered

[30] Lara Deeb and Mona Harb, *Leisurely Islam: Negotiating Geography and Morality in Shi'ite South Beirut* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2014).

appropriate in Beirut are the lack of nonhalal meat, alcohol, and dancing. The defining features of the assemblage of *salawat* are less stable, and they are not understood or made meaningful as spaces of leisure, even if many young couples use them as such. These are events for listening to and participating in *salawat*. Vendors do not sell nonhalal meat or alcohol at these events. However, the governance of these events is less codified.

The size of the events, as well as the ephemerality of the moving parts, make any attempt to govern emotion, leisure, actions, and understandings of participants challenging at best. I remember walking upon a man and women who were sitting on one of the waterproof mats that were typically sold at the events; these mats usually resembled a thick piece of foil. The couple snuggled close together, and there were other couples and families nearby. These unmarried couples were not interested in communicating with me, tucked away at the back of a field. I tried to ask them about their lives and where they were from, but they did not seem to want to talk. When I asked if they were married, the question was met with giggles and a shy, no. I had broken the veil of secrecy. In this way, Habib Syech or any other group, organization, or politician has very little control over the use of these spaces. At an event in Kalimantan sponsored by the police in remembrance of the police's birthdate, there were metal detectors and vast swaths of police and anti-terrorist units, and yet, the crowd was just as unruly.

The musicians' stage is typically a foot or two off of the ground. Three lines of microphones are poised to receive the musicians. At this event, I sat with the musicians, although I have spent time at these events on stage, in the crowd, and in the space that surrounds the events full of temporary shops selling merchandise. We sat down, and the musicians adjusted their microphones. Someone tapped me on the shoulder, and

Someone tapped my back and handed me three cartons of cigarettes. I tried to tell the man that I did not smoke, but he thrust it into my hands. I held the 600 cigarettes and looked up at the musicians. They were Djarum chocolate, and apparently, Djarum had helped sponsor the event. Several of the musicians laughed at me. I was not quite sure what to do. I tried to pass the cigarettes to the musicians who playfully denied them as if I was going to suddenly chain smoke 600 cigarettes. They said, "No, no Jimi. Those are for you." I finally just set them on top of one of the musician's drums.

The Sounds of *Salawat*

Habib Syech picked up the microphone and released the sound of *salawat*:

Yā rabbi ṣalli ʻalā Muḥammad

Yā rabbi ṣalli ʻalayhi wasallim

Yā rabbi ṣalli ʻalā Muḥammad

Yā rabbi ṣalli ʻalayhi wasallim

Yā rabbi ballighu al-waṣīla

Yā rabbi khuṣṣahu bi-l-faḍīla

Yā rabbi waraḍa ʻanni al-ṣaḥāba

Yā rabbi waraḍa ʻani al-sulāla

Yā rabbi ṣalli ʻalā Muḥammad

Yā rabbi ṣalli ʻalayhi wasallim

Yā rabbi ṣalli ʻalā Muḥammad

Yā rabbi ṣalli ʻalayhi wasallim

[O God, pray for Muhammad O God, peace be upon him

O God, pray for Muhammad O God, peace be upon him

O God, give him the path to Allah

O God, peculiar to his moral excellence

O God, be pleased with his companions

O God, be pleased with his descendants

O God, pray for Muhammad

O God, peace be upon him

O God, pray for Muhammad

O God, peace be upon him.][31]

Flags began waving as the stage lights started jumping from the stage to the masses that coagulated in the field into a nodule of moving flesh, flags, aromas, and sensations. Some members of the crowds sat silent while others jumped up, screaming along at the top of their lungs. The earth rumbled beneath the sound of *salawat*. I sat with the musicians taking notes and watching everything unfold. I spotted the usual array of materials on the front of the main stage. In the center, just in front of Habib Syech, sat a pillow upon which he set his microphone. Next to the pillow was a container full of ice. The pillow, ice container, and drinking cup for tea traveled everywhere Habib Syech performed. In front of the pillow were tissues used to wipe the sweat off of his face and his hands. A large basket full of fruit, including rambutan, snake fruit, longan, and apples, was flanked by bottles of water and Yakult. Flower arrangements hung across the stage. At different points during the performance, Habib Syech would launch fruit, water, flowers, and Yakult into the crowd. He would also pull out anywhere between fifty and two hundred

[31] James M Edmonds. "Smelling *Baraka*: Everyday Islam and Islamic Normativity" in "(Mis)Representations of Islam: Politics, Community, and Advocacy," ed. Timothy P. Daniels and Meryem F. Zaman, special issue. *American Journal of Islamic Social Science* 36, no. 3 (Summer 2019), 33-34.

2,000-rupiah bills from his pocket and instruct someone to hand them out. There were also times when people would hand Habib Syech a stack of 2,000- or 5,000-rupiah bills. He would take the bills and place them in his pocket. After the bills were in his pocket for a moment, he would hand them to someone to be distributed. The bills were always crisp.

I sat taking notes. I was wearing Habib Syech's old shirt and a sarong given to me by his son. I was wearing a white *peci*, skull cap, that was given to me by the musician's bus driver. As I traveled with this assemblage, I was often told to wear different things. Habib Syech and a wide variety of other participants criticized my jeans and collared shirts to the point that Habib Syech gave me his shirt. His son also gave me a brand-new sarong. As I sat taking field notes amid this assemblage, I was suddenly hit in the face by a snake fruit. I looked up, startled, and Habib Syech was trying to hide his laughter beneath his closed fist. The musicians were also laughing. This became a common occurrence. When I was looking down at my notebook or taking pictures with my camera, it was not uncommon for Habib Syech to hit me or my camera multiple times during the events. I always asked him why he did this, and his response was always just laughter. During one such occasion, I decided I was tired of getting hit. So, I began throwing the fruit behind me into the crowd. I thought that this would be the end of it. However, he just kept throwing more fruit. It was not until I stopped looking at my notebook and camera that I stopped getting fruit thrown at me.

There is no set song list. There were certain songs such as *Ya Hanana* that would never begin the events. However, of the hundred or so events that I attended, I never heard the same songs in the same order. The last two songs were typically *Mahalul Qiyam* and the Indonesian national anthem. The Indonesian national anthem was not

always sung, but *Mahalul Qiyam* was almost always the last or second to last song of the event. About in the middle of the event, there was also one particular song that always excited the crowd (*Yā Ḥanāna*).

Before the beginning of *Yā Ḥanāna*(O Our Bliss), there is usually a period of *dzikir*. The intensity builds as the crowd rhythmically recites, *lā ʾilāha ʾillā llāh, lā ʾilāha ʾillā llāh, lā ʾilāha ʾillā llāh, lā ʾilāha ʾillā llāh* until Habib Syech begins *Yā Ḥanāna*:

Ẓahara al-dīnu al-muwayyad

Bi-ẓuhūri nabī Aḥmad Ẓahara al-dīnu al-muwayyad

Bi-ẓuhūri nabī Aḥmad

Yā ḥanāna bi Muḥammad Dhālika faḍlu min Allāh (Allāh)

Yā ḥanāna, Yā ḥanāna, Yā ḥanāna, Yā ḥanāna, Yā ḥanāna,

Yā ḥanāna, Yā ḥanāna, Yā ḥanāna

[The religion's advocate manifested

With the appearance of the prophet Ahmad

The religion's advocate manifested

With the appearance of the prophet Ahmad

O our bliss because of Muhammad

That is the bounty from God

(Allah!) O our bliss, O our bliss, O our bliss, O our bliss, O our bliss, O our bliss, O our bliss, O our bliss][32]

The climax of the chorus is always a resounding *Allāh* with ripped up paper thrown in the air. The space above the masses of people resembled multicolored snow. With the

[32] Ibid., 34.

conclusion of *Yā Ḥanāna*, Habib Syech took a break, as he usually did in the middle of performing. He was not known to give long speeches during that period; indeed he often says very little during the performances. He allows VIP guests to give speeches or sermons. At the events, his comments were usually restricted to things like discouraging drug and alcohol use, judging other people, and *main-main* (playing around sexually). He, instead, encouraged participants to pray for people to be good. That is, his appeal is not due to his sermons or theological positions. During this specific event, a local cleric gave a passionate sermon; even though I was very close to the stage, the noise of the crowd made it difficult to make out distinct words as he shouted into the microphone that was too close to his mouth. He began:

Preacher: Tonight Habib Syech invites us to say salam to Allah and prophet Muhammad. Say assalamualaikum a few times to Nabi Muhammad, and he will respond salama to you, you will not hear the response of Nabi Muhammad because we have a lot of sin. Right?

Crowd: Right!

Preacher: However, don't give up. Our *salawat* and salam, of course, is received by Allah. Amin, Ya raba allamin. Ya, rabaaa.

Crowd: allamin.

Preacher: If we speak of the struggle of Muhammad, we come together now thousands of humans. In the past, It was not like this. Prophet Muhammad went "door to door." From house to house. The prophet invited people one by one. The prophet did not know to lie. Do you like lying or not?

Crowd: Never.

Preacher: Do you lie or not?

Crowd: Never.

Preacher: Prophet Muhammad never lied, but we humans lie, right?

Crowd: True.

Preacher: They came together because of Muhammad. I will tell you to believe in Muhammad because he did not know a lie even once. I say tonight, believe in Muhammad because he did not know a lie even once!

The preacher continued in the same vein encouraging people to believe in Muhammad.

He then turned to *salawat*:

"People who *bersalawat*[33], I am sorry, the only creature that does not know *salawat* to Prophet Muhammad, its name is Satan. Many people who do not like *salawat*, they use Habib Syech as an example of something haram(forbidden). However, it is only Satan who does not know *salawat*. Put your hands up for Prophet Muhammad. Don't put your hands up for kyais, habibs, or the ulama. put your hands in the air for Nabi Muhammad."

The entire crowd stuck their hands in the air and swayed as the musicians began beating their instruments. As the crowd continued to sing and sway, the man shouted, these are the hands that will enter heaven. At this moment, he was indicating that a veil had been lifted, and these bodies were simultaneously located in the earth while also extending their arms into the afterlife. These participants seemed to be inhabiting the *barzakh* at this moment.

When he finished, Habib Syech picked up the microphone and began *salawat* once more. The crowd again erupted into singing, swaying, crying, screaming, and filling this space. As the event moved towards the last two songs, *Mahalul Qiyam* and the Indonesian national anthem, Habib Syech stopped to talk about Valentine's Day.

Habib Syech:

Valentine's day is not Our day. There is no Valentine's Day in Islam. Later, maybe I see men and women in SMA giving red flowers and saying happy Valentines. This cannot be. Women, if there is a man that offers flowers to you on valentine's day, give it back because he is not a good person. Men if there is a woman who offers a flower to you and says, "Happy Valentine's Day." She is not a good person. If there is another person who wants to follow valentine's day, that is their business. It is not our business. We do not need to follow. Whoever follows Valentine's Day. I see in social media that there are people from Subang, Cirebon, Indramayu, Magelanka, Bandung, using social media

[33] *Bersalawat* is the verbal form of *salawat.*

styles that say: “Happy Valentine’s my darling” (In English). Islam, at every moment, is a day of love. In Islam, every time is the time of love. You don’t have to wait until the 14the of February. You don’t have to wait for Mother’s Day. Every day is Mother’s Day…I have one of my siblings, Mr. James, from America, there (pointing). He is doing research on *salawat*. He has already come to Subang how many times? He will not say happy valentines[34]. He is from America. He is already bored with Valentine’s Day, why are Indonesian people excited about it. I am sorry, but what has happened in our society, there are things that are not normal. I again ask all of my congregation (Jemaah) do not follow things that are not good. I hope for our safety. Ayo, Islam is peaceful. Islam is affectionate. Islam is love. Islam is more beneficial, like this night, amazing. The song we sang, Ahmad ya Habib, is enjoyed, The hands that were raised are the hands that will enter heaven. My order is not to follow Valentine's Day. Mothers and fathers, if you have a child who wants to participate in Valentine’s Day, lock them down. Lock their foot to things in the home so they can’t go out. If there is a person who does not perform *salat*, and he follows valentines, do not judge or hit. Islam is not a religion that likes hitting. Islam is a religion that always prays for others to be better compared to that which is. I hope Indonesia will become a model for other nations.

Following this speech, Habib Syech began *Mahalul Qiyam*. At the moment in which everyone stood up, I was reminded of something a college-age female told me outside of one of the events. She told me that at this moment, “I feel that Prophet Muhammad arrives at *salawat* when we stand. If I have a burden at that time when I am at *salawat,* I feel like the Prophet Muhammad hugs me, and I am released from this burden.” As I will develop in the last chapter, this is a further indication of the opening up of the *barzakh*, the realm of in-between. During *salawat,* the ethnographer, participants, and a plethora of elements all may respond to feelings of *baraka*.

In the hunt for trying to understand this assemblage, their rhythm, pace, and velocity required me to become a part of this moving *majelis*. These assemblages have roots in the history of Islamic education in Indonesian and are partially a response to the demands of modernity, which force people to seek jobs in cities and away from traditional Islamic institutions such as the *pengajian*. This assemblage is not the only

[34] I have never before or after had a conversation about Valentine’s Day with Habib Syech nor do I have much of an opinion of Valentine’s day.

response to the changing dynamics of education and Islam in Indonesian and Muslim majority societies. TV, radio, and social media have become full of tele-*dai* and Muslim celebrities proposing various types of Islam. However, this assemblages' representation in the technological world through Syekhemania, followers of the assemblages, and Habib Syech does not merely indicate new engagements with technology. The hints and whiffs of information, videos, and pictures that participate in this transnational assemblage become mediums for *baraka*. Information, unification, and digital identity are not at the heart of the use of technology for the participants of *salawat.* The lack of differentiation and boundary maintenance between different types of Islamic organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah are also a part of *salawat. Salawat* is not a modern manifestation of *aliranisasi* and Islamic organizational affiliation. These organizations matter in particular ways and at particular moments. They do not define *salawat*. Habib Syech, in the previous chapter, provided a tasty epistemology that seems to present this assemblage as a manifestation of Islam with a wide variety of flavors at its core. This food also appears to nourish those who do not identify as Muslim, such as Christians and Hindus, at the events.

At the heart of this analysis of *salawat* is not only a desire to understand how Islam is made meaningful by Muslims in the contemporary world. It is also driven by a desire to understand what emerges out of this assemblage, which has historical and contextual roots in Indonesia and Islam that provides a different understanding of reality that does not hang on Western notions of a disenchanted reality driven by the beat of progress. The intertwined concepts of *baraka*, *syafa'at*, and *hati tenang* that emerge from the ethnographic field indicate of a way of being religious that navigates modernity as an

ethos through Islam as a source and basin for life. A calm heart, *hati tenang*, is embedded in the stresses and rigors of modernity connected to the intercession in the afterlife, *syafa'at*, and *baraka*. How these stories become intertwined in the Western stories of modernity creates a different view of reality driven by this amalgam, as I will further develop in the next chapter.

In the next chapter, I will turn to how *baraka*, *syafa'at*, and *hati tenang* allow for a different definition of *baraka* that extends beyond these events of *salawat* Lighting up another form of life that blends/challenges/and reinforces boundaries between the enchanted and material as well as the secular and material. This breakdown extends far beyond the confines of Indonesia and Asia. Contemporary life is full of ambiguity, coherent contradiction, and the ineffable even as Western narratives of modernity attempt to categorize, differentiate, and disavow the enchanted. *Salawat,* as an assemblage, reflects characteristics of the contemporary world that remind us that life overflows the boundaries of the stories that we often tell ourselves about the world as a materially confined totality.

REIMAGINING *BARAKA* AS GIFT

During Ramadan in 2016, I went to Habib Syech's building almost every night from around ten p.m. until 3:30 a.m. The night would begin with reciting the Quran, followed by different members of Habib Syech's family, giving a wide variety of sermons. Many of them were related to stories about Prophet Muhammad. Habib Syech would also relate these stories to the proper way of acting. Here is an example of a type of brief sermon Habib Syech would give during Ramadan:

> "On the road, there were students of an ulama close to here, and a group of drunk people was walking down that street. Students of the kyai and ulama asked them to pray for the destruction of the drunk people. The kyai smiled. The ulama smiled and said, 'Yes, I will pray for them.' You see, the ulama's prayer here was, "Ya Allah, eliminate whatever drove these people drunk and make them happy." This prayer is great. The students prayed for their destruction. However, when these same drunk people came to hear the ulama's prayers and dahwa, they kissed his hand. This is *baraka* from the prayer of the ulama we mentioned. What is my point? Rather than praying for destruction or for what is not good, it is better to pray that people like that become good people. This is a person who is terrific. A person who is good always wants whoever is in front of him to be a good person. If there is a person who prays for the destruction of others, this is not the words of a good person. Pray for whoever. Feel obedience. I want this for anyone that follows my *majelis*, never pray for evil or destruction of people. Pray for good. Pray for goodness for others so that when they are good, you will be happy. If we pray for good, your life will be full of joy. If you pray for bad things to happen, life will become difficult. Pray that they will be changed.
>
> Invite them to *salawat* if there is a person that is not good. If they like dangdut, this is no problem. Invite them and, God willing, they will enjoy *salat*. Our prayer is that everyone will receive goodness. Someone that helps and prayers for others to be good, of course, is a good person. A person who always wants other people to be good will get goodness from God and Prophet Muhammad.

Habib Syech repeats this message, or similar messages encouraging people to pray for the goodness of others, often. If he gives a brief sermon at one of the *salawat* events, this is often his message. Pray for goodness and when that goodness comes back,

understand this as *baraka* stemming from your prayer. However, one of the evenings towards the end of Ramadan sticks out.

At around three in the morning, following multiple speeches from Habib Syech and others, packets of food would be distributed. I did not typically eat the food because it was often difficult for me to eat chilies with rice and some meat or tempeh/tofu at that hour. However, when I tried to decline the food, this was taken as an offense. So, I would take the food every night and bring it to a man who seemed to be living on the side of the road in his *becak* (pedicab). Every night on my way home, I would stop and give the food to this man. I never knew his name, and he was surprised every time that I brought him food. One night around three a.m., one of the individuals who worked at the mosque pulled me aside. We sat down with a few other people in a circle. People were resting and relaxing as the food was passed out. He said, "Jimi, I saw you giving the food to the man on the side of the road." I got defensive and apologized, "I am very sorry. It is just hard for me to eat that food so early in the morning." Several people laughed. He continued, "No, Jimi, this is not a problem, but you know this is *baraka*." I responded by saying, "No, no. I am just giving this man food that I do not want to eat. This is not *baraka*." He laughed and said, "Jimi, no. This is how *baraka* works."

I returned home and wrestled with my interlocutors' statement. I could not understand how to make sense of this. At this point in my fieldwork, I was still trying to understand Habib Syech and the popularity of these events by looking at the political and social structures that made it possible. However, *baraka* was now perceived to be operating in my own life, even as I attempted to remain the neutral ethnographer. *Baraka* was no longer a theological concept that I could keep at an arm's length. It became a

central line of inquiry into *salawat* as not only a phenomenon with resonances in Indonesian and Islamic history and practice. I began to understand *salawat* as a site of a breakdown in which a multiplicity of resonances converged in the streets, fields, and stadiums across Indonesia, Asia, and the Middle East, creating new forms of Islamic practice. These forms of Islamic piety, furthermore, reveal through *baraka* an engagement with modernity that is both deeply embedded in an ethos of modernity while imagining beyond it. Taking *baraka* seriously as a concept arising out of the assemblage of *salawat* produces an image of reality that reinvigorates the present with the ineffable, magical, and sacred.

Modernity's Disenchantment

I follow Michel Foucault, building on Baudelaire, who understands modernity as an ethos rather than an epoch. Modernity cannot be constrained to a period, such as the Enlightenment, but instead defines "a way of thinking and feeling; a way, too, of acting and behaving that at the same time marks a relation of belonging and presents itself as a task."[1] The way of thinking, acting, feeling, and behaving is less about, for example, a break from tradition and more about a relationship to the present as the defining moment of reality. This philosophical attitude towards the present, however, grapples with the reality of the present and seeks to "imagine it otherwise as it is."[2] An ethos of modernity is also a relationship that one has with oneself that "compels him to face the task of producing himself."[3] This production of the self in the present moment is not a discovery of the self. It is an invention of the self.

[1] Michael Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 37.
[2] Ibid., 39.
[3] Ibid., 39.

Envisioning modernity as an ethos does not create the false dichotomy that one must, therefore, either be for or against this ethos. This ethos is not a new theory or concept creating a stable concept of modernity, rather, it "has to be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them."[4] The approach that Foucault then argues for is a crito-historical inquiry into the "practices envisaged simultaneously as a technological type of rationality and as strategic games of liberties."[5] This 'technological type of rationality' is embedded in institutions, societies, and ideas that attempt to discipline and order the present to produce certain types of sensibilities. However, an inquiry into these technological types of rationality is coupled with imagining beyond the present or 'strategic games of liberties.' Taking a crito-historical approach to practices in the world such as *salawat* allows for simultaneously indicating the types of technological types of rationality that are embedded in this assemblage while also looking at the way this assemblage imagines itself beyond the constraints of multiple disciplinary and ordering apparatuses.

This ethos is not stable and does not produce the same types of institutions or orderings in different places. Different historical, socio-cultural, geographical, and other features create various institutions and manifestations of this ethos, and yet, *modernity as a political project* seeks this technological type of rationality as a 'hegemonic political goal.'[6] This political project stemming from this ethos rooted in the Enlightenment "aims

[4] Ibid., 46.
[5] Ibid., 47.
[6]Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular : Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 13.

at institutionalizing several (sometimes conflicting, often evolving) principles: constitutionalism, moral autonomy, democracy, human rights, civil equality, industry, consumerism, freedom of the market- and secularism."[7] These principles, in turn, created experiences of the world by reorganizing time, space, knowledge, and the senses. These experiences are understood to be experiences of modernity that are necessarily disenchanted, "implying a direct access to reality, a stripping away of myth, magic, and the sacred."[8] The political project of modernity is interested in disenchanting the world of myth, magic, and the sacred to institute its values devoid of 'religion.' This disenchantment, however, is a feature of the political project of modernity, and not definitive of Foucault's understanding of modernity as an ethos. Therefore, I would argue that an ethos of modernity is as central to the problem as it is to a solution. An ethos of modernity is also capable of allowing imagination beyond the world as organized by principles like secularism to imagine the reality of the present beyond the present that is not necessarily disenchanted. When trying to unravel the relationship between disenchantment as a sensibility embedded in the ordering institutions/ideas of the project of modernity, secularism remains one of the perceived prime movers of the project of modernity.

Secular, Secularization, and Secularism

Unraveling secularism and its connection to the project of modernity and modernity as an ethos is further complicated by the related concepts of the secular, secularization, and the secularization theorem. José Casanova articulately indicates three

[7] Ibid., 13.
[8] Ibid., 13.

different ‘semantic moments’ in which the secular and secularization arise in history.[9] This first moment is encapsulated in the term *siglo* which has three different translations in the Spanish to English dictionary: ‘“century; age; world.”’[10] However, the ‘century’ becomes the primary meaning preserved in ordinary language when referring to the secular. Casanova argues that this is because “the differentiation of time and space into two different realities, a sacred one and a profane one, became truly meaningless long ago, even in Catholic Spain.”[11] In this first example, the secular century rather than the secular age or world indicates the lack of separation between secular time, ‘age,’ and space, ‘world.’ The secular encompasses time and space in the secular age. The second semantic moment is when the religious becomes an option as opposed to the secular.

The second moment in which secularization appears is in Canon Law. Secularization referred to the process in which a member of the Catholic, religious community left to return to the ‘secular’ world. Those members of the clergy who were engaged outside of the monastery or cloister were ‘secular priests. ’ The religious priests were those completely separate from the outside world. The secular and religious, in this sense, become distinctly different realms. In Canon Law, the secular is the world beyond the monastery. This secular world is, furthermore, not devoid of individuals such as a parish, ‘secular,’ priests, but the secular becomes a distinct reality outside of the ‘religious space’ inhabited by religious clergy. This second use of the secular and secularization is related to Max Weber’s concept of secularization “whereby the concept of "calling" moves or is relocated from the religious to the secular sphere to signify, now

[9] José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 13
[10] Ibid., 13
[11] Ibid., 14.

for the first time, the exercise of secular activities in the world." Weber's use of secularization and Casanova's relation to Weber's secularization is a crucial moment in which individuals began to have the secular as an option aside from the religious. Now, as Charles Taylor indicates, this builds upon the reality that "archaic societies" were not predicated on "the whole set of distinctions we make between the religious, political, economic, social, etc., aspects of our society."[12] Furthermore, for Taylor, the question of secularization is dependent upon belief and unbelief as distinct ways of engaging in the world.

The 'believer' in Taylor's formation "requires reference to God, that is, to something beyond human life and/or nature" for a fullness of human potential.[13] The unbeliever, on the other hand, understands "the power to reach fullness" as "within."[14] This power to reach 'fullness' resonates with Foucault's ethos, in which the induvial must produce themselves. However, this ethos of modernity is not a simple differentiation between believers and unbelievers. Although Taylor acknowledges the Christian bias inherent in this formulation, his conception of secularism is also predicated on a division between the believer and unbeliever. This separation assumes that they are not both caught in an ethos of modernity that manifests in the secular age. The unbeliever, for Taylor, is capable of fullness through the "power of reason."[15] Reason and a glorification of the present pervade Taylor's analysis of modernity and secularism, and yet, Foucault opens up the possibility of imagining past the 'heroic present.' Both the unbeliever and

[12] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 2.
[13] Ibid., 8.
[14] Ibid., 8.
[15] Ibid., 9.

believer are caught in an ethos of modernity in which secularity and secularization are connected to the political project of modernity. Therefore, in trying to grapple with the rough ground of Muslim life, divisions between the believer and unbeliever are not helpful. The question for my interlocutors' participation in *salawat* is not whether or not to believe. As Casanova reminds us, the secularization theory was unsuccessful.

Casanova's third semantic moment relates to the Protestant Reformation in which the state or other secular institutions took land and wealth from ecclesiastical institutions and placed them in the secular realm. This not only indicated the division between the religious and secular realm but also led to the secularization thesis or the theory of secularization. This theory held that not only did the secular become differentiated from the religious, but that religion would, therefore, decline (possibly to extinction) and move to the private sphere.[16] I do agree that the process of secularization as a differentiation between the secular and the religious, as well as an attempt at placing religion in the private sphere, was quintessential to an ethos of modernity interested in technological styles of rationality. However, Casanova's work helps reflect on how religious traditions, which the secularization theory assumed were declining and increasingly being privatized, were, in fact, "refusing to accept the marginal and privatized role which theories of modernity as well as theories of secularization had reserved for them."[17] I argue then that the 'believer' and 'unbeliever' are both caught in the ethos of modernity that accepts secularization as a differentiation between the religious and the secular.

Secularism, then, is not a necessary component of modernity. Secularism is a disciplinary apparatus used by the project of modernity to institute the differentiation

[16] Ibid., 19-20.
[17] Ibid., 5.

between the religious and the secular as well as the attempt to privatize and marginalize religion in the public sphere(secularization). Both the secular and secularization are prior to secularism and help explain some of the basic tenets of secularism. Secularism, however, like an ethos of modernity, does not stand as a theory. Secularism is a certain relationship between the religious and secular made manifest by institutions like the state that is often driven by the project of modernity. However, I am not only interested in how perceptions and lived realities of secularism and the project of modernity play out in the assemblages of *salawat*. I am interested in how theses assemblages indicate a different milieu in which an ethos of modernity interacts with Islam as a discursive tradition and the lives of individual Muslims to provide an alternative concept for imagining the contemporary place of religion in the world.

Baraka, as a gift, brings together technological types of rationality together with the ineffable, ambiguous, and sacred to produce a perspective of the present. This perspective of the present is fully engaged with an ethos of modernity and imagines beyond the present. This imagining, however, does not merely structure and (re)structure the present into institutions that produce certain dualistic feelings between the religious and secular. The present is (re)enchanted to reflect a reality that is not caught in the games of differentiation.

Opening up the *Barzakh*

Following an event in West Java, I was traveling back home with the musicians. It was around two in the morning, and we were going to Kudus. We had a long way to go back to Kudus in Central Java, the home base of this group of musicians. We were pulling into a restaurant that was open twenty-four hours a day. The musicians were still

wide awake. The restaurant was empty, but the staff seemed ready for us. I was not hungry, but the musicians said, “Jimi, you need to eat now because we will not stop for a long time.” I begrudgingly took some rice, vegetables, and cold fried chicken. I ate what I could and chatted with the bus driver. He was not eating very much because it “would make him sleepy.” However, his trusty plastic bottle full of coffee was close at hand. He said this was his fuel for driving through the night. The coffee was thick with Javanese sugar and coffee grounds. It looked similar to tar. Once we finished eating, the bus driver and many of the musicians started smoking cigarettes and drinking their tea. One of the musicians walked by my table and said, “Eat, sleep, *salawat*. Ya, Jimi?” This was a common joke. While traveling with the musicians, this did seem to capture the flow of life. Sleeping and eating could happen at any time during the day/night between performing *salawat*. The musicians were, furthermore, at the mercy of whomever was sponsoring the events for lodging. While traveling with the musicians, I never knew where I would sleep from day-to-day, and the sleeping arraignments could change very rapidly. After one performance, we might have to travel from one location to the next arriving at two, three, or four in the morning. If it was a hotel, I might get some time to sleep, but if it were a house, many of the musicians would stay up until dawn prayer (*fajr*). I was then able to sleep between the five daily prayers as the musicians would often not tolerate me sleeping during *salat*.

The bus driver asked if I would come to his house for a few days between events. He lived in Salatiga, and he promised to take me back to Solo, which was about an hour and a half away from Salatiga, depending on traffic. I was not sure how long I would be at his house, but I agreed. I was the only person going back to Solo, and I did not want to

ask him to drive to Solo after his long drive from West Java to Kudus and Salatiga in Central Java. I fell asleep to the rhythm of the bus driver weaving in and out of traffic. He used every inch of space available on the road. I was often jostled awake by the bus driver hitting the breaks or swerving with gusto. At around six in the morning, one of the musicians tapped me and said, “Jimi, it’s morning. Time to get up.” I looked at him with squinty eyes and disdain for the sun that was beating in my face. The musician laughed at me. Most of the musicians were awake, and we were traveling through a village that had recently been flooded. The muddy water lapped at steps of the bus as we attempted to navigate the wholly flooded road. After making it through the waters, we drove a few more hours and dropped off the musicians in Kudus. The bus was now mostly empty except for me, the bus driver, and the bus driver’s assistant who helped him navigate. We stopped around ten in the morning to eat some breakfast and then continued to the bus driver's home.

The bus pulled up to a large wooden structure. In front of the large wooden structure was rice laid out to dry. The farmers swept a path to allow the bus could park on the side of the wooden building underneath an awning. The bus driver’s wife met us on her motorbike to take the bus driver to the house so that he could come and get me. I grabbed my bag and waited for a few minutes. The bus driver came back, and I hopped on the back of his motorbike. We went further into the village until the road became just large enough for one motorbike. Thick trees and undergrowth flanked the road. We arrived at his house. There was a somewhat clear area in front of his house, and a new house was being built just down the path from his house. His new concrete house stood mostly alone. Chickens ran around in the yard, and cats laid on the front porch. I entered

the house, and I greeted his wife. The previous year, I had also stayed with the bus driver for one night. However, the year before, his house was made from wood. The bus driver said that he needed to clean the bus and get it ready. He returned to the bus.

I laid down in his living room on the floor. I was exhausted from the rhythm of the musicians' life. The bus driver never seemed to stop working to clean the bus and take care of the mechanical problems that seemed to pop up continually. The bus driver's wife turned on the new flat-screen TV. They had not only recently gotten a flat-screen TV, but I could also watch HBO. I quickly fell asleep to the comforting sound of Arnold Schwarzenegger in one of the Terminator movies punctuated by rooster calls. I slept for four hours curled up on the floor until I was awoken to the bus driver trying to drive a cat out of the house.

In the evening, I ate dinner with the bus driver, his wife, and his mother and went to bed early. The next day, I ran errands with the bus driver, fed the chickens, and wandered around the village with some local kids. That evening, I sat down with the bus driver. We had both recovered from the recent time on the road. Smoke from his cigarette billowed upwards and floated in the air. We snacked on delicious Javanese snacks that his wife made fresh every day to sell in the market. He said, "Jimi, did you know that Habib Syech had an event in this village." I responded, "No, I did not know that." He then pulled out a DVD. "I have a DVD of the event. Would you like to watch it?" I said, "sure!" He popped in the DVD, and we watched it on his new flat-screen TV. The DVD documented the event from people setting up the stage and sound system to the conclusion of Habib Syech's performance. The stage was set up in the forest in front of his house. No cars or trucks could make it down the narrow road; so, everything had to be

carried or strapped to a motorbike to the open area in the jungle. I watched as the bus driver explained all of the people who donated their money, time, and services to make the event happen.

The sound crew brought all of their equipment to the event for a very reduced rate. Habib Syech does not charge any fee to perform. He usually asks the people who invite him to pay for his lodging and transportation costs. In this case, there was no lodging cost because Habib Syech was close to home. So, the price was only gas and, usually, a small fee for the driver. However, the amount of money Habib Syech's driver received was often kept under wraps. People always gave money in envelopes, and when I asked Habib Syech's driver how much he received, he always said, enough. Food and water were also donated or partially purchased through donations. I watched as the film recounted the arrival of local people, the musicians, Habib Syech, and members of Syekhermania.

The bus driver and his wife sang along with the DVD when the performance began. The bus driver's excitement was palpable. I could see how much joy it seemed to bring him. I then noticed in the video that someone had a shirt that read "Hunting *syafa'at*." I asked the bus driver, "I have seen a few shirts with the word *syafa'at* on it. What does *syafa'at* mean?"

He was hesitant to respond. He said, "There are ulama and kyai who can answer the question much better," but I replied, "I want to know your opinion on the subject. I do not need an 'official' interpretation." He agreed and said emphatically:

> "We must appreciate Allah's creation. Those who are present at *salawat* know that to be present at *salawat* includes asking for a *syafa'at* through Muhammad from Allah. *Roh*(spirit/soul) gets together in the afterlife in the same place. Have you dreamt of someone who had already died? This

> is when your *roh* meets others in the place of *roh*. I anticipate heaven and hell. Hell is like jail. Heaven is like laughing and happy. An example of heaven is going to the events of Habib Syech, where you feel happy and peaceful."

The bus driver uses the word *hadir* meaning "be present" or "attend" in the second sentence indicating that those who are "present" at *salawat* know that to be "present" includes asking for *syafa'at*. However, he is not suggesting that those who are present pray for *syafa'at* at the events, although there are some who do. He is implying that by be being present at *salawat,* people know their presence is also understood as them beseeching Prophet Muhammad to intercede on their behalf in the place of the (*roh*) when they die. What precisely the bus driver means here by the place of *roh* is unclear. It seems as if he is equating the place of *roh* to the afterlife, but not necessarily heaven or hell. Here, he is referring to the Quranic term *rūḥ,* which is connected to *nafs*. Both are used in the Quran and have been developed by thinkers such as Ibn Ḳayyim al-Djawziyya, al-Ghazālī, Ibn al-ʿArabī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and many others. According to E.E. Calverley and I.R. Newtton, the most dominant position built from Ibn Ḳayyim al-Djawziyya is the following:

> The *rūḥ* is identified with the *nafs*, and is itself a body, different in quiddity (*al-māhiyya*) from this sensible body, of the nature of light, high, light in weight, living, moving, interpenetrating the bodily members as water in the rose. It is created, but everlasting; it departs temporarily from the body in sleep; when the body dies it departs for the first judgment, returns to the body for the questioning of Munkar and Nakīr [*q.v.*], and, except in the cases of prophets and martyrs, remains in the grave foretasting bliss or punishment until the Resurrection.[18]

The *rūḥ* here is embedded in the physical body and extends as an everlasting body beyond death. During sleep, as indicated by the bus driver, the *rūḥ* can depart while

[18] Calverley, E.E., and I.R. Netton. 'Nafs'. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition. Ed. P. Bearman et al. Brill Reference Online. Web. 21 Jan. 2020.

sleeping. The place of *rūḥ* could then be the place in which *rūḥ* are foretasting bliss(heaven) or punishment(*rūḥ)* before the final Resurrection. The place of *rūḥ* then is the place in which an individual's *rūḥ* anticipates heaven or hell. This place of anticipation, in the bus driver's statement, seems to connect to both the place of *rūḥ* and the events of Habib Syech themselves. I understand, therefore, the bus driver to be asserting that *salawat* is a moment in the present in which a space of in-between opens up. *Salawat* becomes a time and space in which divisions between the living and dead, as well as heaven and earth, disappear. I understand the space and time of *salawat* as a moment in which the *barzakh* becomes manifest.

The *barzakh* is the space in which the *rūḥ* dwell until Judgement day.[19] Amira Mittermaier has built off of the work of Stephania Pandolfo and Vincent Carpanzano to develop a "*barzakhian* perceptive" that "ruptures binary outlooks and invites us to think beyond the present and visible."[20] The *barzakhian* perceptive is not only a disposition by the ethnographer to their material that 'ruptures binary outlooks.' This perceptive is also an acknowledgment that there are specific spaces, experiences, and moments that demand, beseech, and call the ethnographer beyond the present and visible that cannot be explained by binary approaches to reality. Mittermaier's *barzakhian* perceptive is developed through and is demanded by the Egyptian dream worlds.

Salawat, like the dreams of Mittermaier's interlocutors, requires a *barzakhian* perceptive that ruptures binaries. These perceived binaries include the division between Islamic organizations like NU and Muhammadiyah, as well as the division between

[19] Amira Mittermaier, *Dreams that Matter*: *Egyptian Landscapes of Imagination* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2011), 4.
[20] Ibid., 4.

Muslims and other religious practitioners who attend the events. *Salawat* does not, furthermore, stand on the division between the religious and political. *Salawat* ruptures these binaries and invites an analysis that forces me to reflect beyond the visible and present. The bus driver here is connecting *syafa'at* in the afterlife to the *barzakh*, the place of *rūḥ*, to the events of Habib Syech in which a moment of heaven can be experienced. These assemblages do not exist in the present and visible sphere of life. They also are a temporary experience of the *barzakh* in which participants' presence at the events is an indication of their request for *syafa'at*; the participants understand both the visible and invisible as present. I understand *salawat* as on the cusp of the visible/present and the invisible/eternal for many of my interlocutors. As a group of college-aged women recounts to me,

Woman 1: "When I do *salawat*, Allah brings peace in hearts, and if we think about our prophet, we will miss him even though we have never met him."

Woman 2: "I feel that Prophet Muhammad arrives at *salawat* when we stand. If I have a burden at that time when I am at *salawat*, I feel like the Prophet Muhammad hugs me, and I am released from this burden."

Salawat is an in-between space in which Prophet Muhammad descends and creates peace and releases burdens. The visible and invisible manifest in the present of *salawat* bridging the living and the dead as well as the human and Divine. This is different from a concert or event only intended to reproduce songs or feel collective effervescence. This is, furthermore, connected to another common term that I often saw on social media and in the crowds at the events, *hadirmania*. The bus driver's first response to my question, then, helps reveal the need for a *barzakhian* perceptive that 'ruptures binaries' and invites me to imagine beyond the present and visible thereby not only being true to the

phenomena but also engaging with an ethos of modernity that imagines itself beyond the present.

Hadirmania is the passion participants have for being present or attending the events. *Hadirmania* encapsulates the drive individuals have to travel over long distances to follow the events. Some of the participants will follow *salawat* from town to town, traveling for ten or twelve hours by motorbike, train, car, or bicycle to reach the new location. This drive to be present is also reflected in the use of recording devices. As I indicated in the second chapter, the way individuals use videos, photos, and sound is different from the way concerts, sermons, and videos are shared on social media. The thousands of videos that participants record every night are not shared on social media in the same way. Some are shared, but many are kept for personal use. If the videos are shared, participants share them between friends. They are not only trying to capture the event to show that they were present.

I would argue that my interlocutors are trying to capture the moment in which the *barzakh* appears and the potential of receiving *baraka*, *syafa'at*, and *hati tenang* opens. The drive to capture more and more videos of *salawat* is a reflection of the ephemerality of this moment made manifest by this assemblage. *Hadirmania* connects to an ethos of modernity in which an individual must make themselves in the present. One cannot make oneself as an integral part of this moving assemblage without being present. Participants are inventing themselves as a part of this assemblage, which is required to lift the veil between this world and the next. The *barzakh* that becomes manifest during *salawat* also opens up the ability for the reception of *baraka*, *syafa'at*, and *hati tenang*.

The Order of *Baraka*

I continued my conversation with the bus driver as he lit another cigarette. I asked, “Ok, but people come for *baraka* as well, right?”

Bus driver: “Yes, for example, logically you buy a shirt with money, but really you pray, and someone may bring you a shirt. The shirt is given by Allah.”

James Edmonds(JE): “What, then, is the difference between *rizqi* and *baraka*?”

Bus driver: “*Rizqi* and *baraka* both come from Allah. *Rizqi* already came from God. *Baraka* comes from Allah through an intermediary. An example is Jimi follows Habib Syech. There Jimi will be honored by many people, that honor enters the category of *baraka* through Habib Syech from Allah.”

The main difference here between *rizqi* and *baraka* in this example is that *baraka* moves through an intermediary. *Rizqi* has already come from God because, as one of my interlocutors recounted, “every person and animal gets *rizqi*. The house gecko(*cicak*) is patient, and mosquitos fly all around in the air. However, the lizard is able to get the mosquito. That is *rizqi*.” The shirt in the example above could potentially enter either the category of *rizqi* or *baraka*. However, the shirt is in the category of *baraka* because the individual prayed for the shirt and the shirt came through an intermediary. *Rizqi* is the ‘provisions’ or ‘wealth’ that every human and animal receives from God. *Baraka*, broadly speaking, comes from God through an intermediary and is not just the general provisions necessary for everyday life. However, *rizqi* can enter the category of *baraka*.

One of my interlocutors asserted that “*Rizqi* is the food you get, once you say *bismillah,* the food can become *baraka*. You have to do something for it to become *baraka*.” Here, even the provisions that a person receives can potentially become mediums for *baraka*. The prayer of the person who needs a shirt or begins eating enters

the category of *baraka* once the individual "does something." The intermediary in the example of the food is the food itself. Doing something, however, does not necessarily need to be in the category of prayer or reduced to the realm of rational thought. By being present, *hadir*, at *salawat*, an individual could be asking for *syafa'at* that is also connected to *baraka* and *hati tenang*. This action, however, does not demand or guarantee *syafa'at*, *baraka*, or *hati tenang*. It is not a cause and effect relationship. This is a relationship in which the potential for *baraka* increases as an individual does an action, but *baraka*'s ultimate source is God. So, *baraka* can move through an intermediary to an individual even if that individual has not done an action that they knowingly or unknowingly did for the amalgam of *baraka*, *syafa'at*, and *hati tenang*. No action or nonaction guarantees *baraka*, and action can have an impact on whether or not food or a shirt enter the category of *baraka*. This is a demonstration of the technological type of rationality that seeks to express concepts such as *rizqi* and *baraka* in the present. However, *baraka* is never guaranteed. In 2019, I learned that the bus driver no longer works for Habib Syech, and the bus is broken beyond repair. Even as techno-rationalist perceptions of reality attempt to codify concepts such as *riziqi* and *baraka*, these concepts produce experiences of reality that cannot as easily be explained.

JE: "Why does it go through Habib Syech?"

Bus Driver: "Habib Syech has blood which has already stuck or adhered to Jimi. Another example of *baraka*, Jimi, follows the events for three days. If Jimi does not want to follow Habib Syech, of course, he will get rid of lots of money. However, because he follows Habib Syech, he becomes a minimalist. The money that he would have spent

enters the category of *baraka*. I hope for *baraka* from God through Habib Syech. Because I work for him, I hope to get *baraka*."

JE: "What do you think about people who say *salawat* is made by NU?"

Bus driver: "This event is not made by NU. Many do not like *salawat*, many who enter the category of Wahhabi. There are many in solo. NU has the Quran, hadith, and ulama. Other groups just have the Quran. There are some who just have the Quran and Hadiths."

JE: "So there are those who do not like *salawat*, but they are mostly Wahhabi?"

Bus driver: "Yes."

JE: "Oh, ok, do you have any examples of *baraka* from your own life?"

Bus driver: "Before 2012, I was not close to *salawat* (he began driving in 2007). Then my life could be said to be unstable. After I was close to *salawat*, beginning in 2012, I felt my life was more stable. That is *baraka* from *salawat*. Here is an example of *baraka* from others. If I am in my home, I smoke traditional tobacco that I roll, but if I follow the events of Habib Syech, then I smoke cigarettes made in the industry. The cigarettes were given through the events. I was able to smoke better cigarettes."

He continued, "If I go out for an event other than *salawat*, my wife is suspicious. However, if I leave for three days without coming home for *salawat*, she is not suspicious. Time, food, water, life can all enter the category of *baraka*. If I use a lamp every day for *ibadah* (worship) and it costs 1,000,000 rupiahs, I easily get the money to buy the electric for the lamp because I use it for *ibadah*. However, it is difficult to buy 1,000,000 for a lamp not used for *ibadah*. That is *baraka*."

In this conversation with the bus driver, he provides rapid-fire examples of *baraka* that connects to *syafa'at* and more stability. Electricity, cigarettes, money, trust

from his wife, water, and 'life' can all enter the category of *baraka*. The bus driver was able to build a new house out of concrete, and he was able to buy a new television. The *baraka* that he experienced at the events provided him with material benefits as well as stability. This feeling of stability, however, is not just tied to material conditions. This feeling of stability also comes with the feeling of a calm heart, *hati tenang*. The feeling associated with *baraka* and *syafa'at* is a calm or cool heart. This calm heart has continually come up even in the very first interaction with the NU and Muhammadiyah practitioners outside Habib Syech's building. In this example, the bus driver again asserts that NU does not make *salawat*, and the only group which is against *salawat* enters the category of Wahhabi. However, the things that make the heart hot or unstable further illustrate how *baraka* and *salawat* are tied to my interlocutors' understandings of 'modern life.'

Modernity's Instability

In the boarding house that I lived in Solo, I made several friends whom I would occasionally eat dinner with and go on afternoon trips to local tourism spots. On this particular afternoon, I was meeting with four of my friends to plan a trip to a lake. The five of us sat on the ground, snacking on peanuts and tea. They asked me about my research on Habib Syech, and I said that everything was going well, but I wanted to ask mas Dhika about a recent statement that he had made about modern Islam.

I asked, "You said that you followed modern Islam. Do you feel that you follow this *aliran* (a stream of Islamic thought)?"

Mbak Ana interjected and said the following:

"No, it is not an *aliran*. Modern is like a mindset of Muslims. Like I know what the Islamic law says about halal and haram. We know the way of Islam, but in our life, we

adjust it to the situation of the recent era, today's era. We do not live in the era of Prophet Muhammad anymore. Here in modern life, we interact with people. People all around the world. Even local people have different mindsets and different backgrounds, and so we must be flexible. We complete the obligations of Islam, like pray five times and fast. I fast on Mondays and Thursdays. I try to do it regularly. I do not do it if I am sick or ill or not feeling comfortable. We also follow fasting during Ramadan. We do not cheat people. We do what Islam obligates us to do, but we also interact with others. In the era of Muhammad, they fought with non-Muslims because non-Muslims disagree with Islam, and they wanted to kill us. So, we fight back. However, basically, Islam teaches us to be peaceful and to live together with non-Muslims. That is the real lesson of Islam. So, we should live peacefully with others, hand in hand. We can cooperate with non-Muslims in trade and business, but we have our own beliefs. You do whatever you believe, and we do whatever we believe, but in business, ok, we cooperate. So we don't interfere in others' privacy, especially in belief. Like you are a non-Muslim, but I respect you because you are good to us, and we are peaceful. We do not want to fight with others because we need you, and you need to interact with us when you are here. Even when you are far away, we must keep connected. We must keep communication, but not every day because this is modern life. We must interact with others. We need each other. So, we need each other, actually, James. So we cannot be strict.

I continued my conversation with Mbak Ana: "How do ideas such as modern Islam fit with someone like Habib Syech?"

Mbak Ana: "In my opinion, tolerance. Habib Syech is NU, like us. That is aliran. NU fits with this aliran. You know, in philosophy, we understand tolerance, but Habib Syech also teaches us to be tolerant. You know in Islam, *taqwa* (piety). In Islam, the level of *taqwa* of a Muslim cannot be judged by others because it's the authority of Allah. So, for example, if I say you are *kafir* that you are not good in Islam. We cannot do that. That is the authority of Allah. The tolerance is that we can cooperate with non-Muslims. We communicate, and we cooperate, and we don't fight. It is part of tolerance. We let Christian people pray in the church, and this is also part of tolerance. Like me, I go with all of you to tourist sites, and we are not married, but in my mind, he is my brother; he is my close friend.

We don't do anything harmful. We don't touch each other. We just want to have fun and admire the creation of Allah. The mountain is the creation of Allah. The air, the fog, we see in nature is the creation of Allah. So, we come here to view it. When we respond, Ya Allah, this is very good; it is because we are admitting the creation of Allah. We are grateful for everything Allah creates, and I go with you because it is my tolerance. I need you, and he needs you as a friend, not to use you. Friends, brothers. You are my brother now. They are your brothers too. She is your sister. We don't have any adverse interest in our hearts. Has Habib Syech already talked about Islam with James?"

Jamie: "Oh yes, lots, but I asked the question because it is sometimes difficult for me to talk to women at the events, and you are a woman who identifies with modern Islam. So I want to know how Habib Syech appeals to you."

Mbak Ana: “Because as modern people, a woman who lives in the modern era, I must interact with others and communicate with others, and I am learning English. English is a part of my life. I have been studying English since junior high school. I always got As. My friends and my teachers also told me that we live in the modern era, if you want to be strict, then go live in the forest. You need a motorbike, who made the motorcycle? You need shoes, who made the shoes and who designed the shoes? And my bicycle, who made the bicycle? We are allowed to do this, and Prophet Muhammad gave us this example. He made trade negotiations with non-Muslims, as long as they did not fight or kill Muslims. However, if they make honor killing, they will fight back. So in understanding religion, we cannot see just theory, we must adjust it with practice, with daily life. Habib Syech fits us because he is a religious figure, and he is the grand grand grand grandson of prophet Muhammad, directly. I need guidance, I need a figure who tells me what to do, but I adjust it with my daily life.”

In this first part of this exchange, mbak Ana articulates modern Islam as Islam that stays true to Islamic law and obligations such as *salat* and fasting as well as to the ‘real lesson of Islam: ‘to be peaceful and to live together with non-Muslims.’ The marker of Islam modern for mbak Ana is tolerance. Tolerance of other religions and other people that leads to cooperation between Muslims and non-Muslims. She also articulates how gender plays out in modern Islam. She sees traveling with myself and her other male friends as permissible because we do not touch each other or do anything inappropriate. We are ‘admiring Allah’s creation’ when going to tourist sites, which is an allowable interaction. She even goes so far as to argue that these interactions between Muslims and on-Muslims are necessary to modern life. The individual interested in being strict in interpretation concerning relationships between people should “go live in the forest.” Other individuals who attend the events also resonate with her characterizations of modern Islam. These characterizations coincide with Islamic Modernism through figures such as Ahmad Dahlan and Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani as well as Muhammadiyah. However, the project of modernity is also fully embedded in this conversation about Islamic engagement with the modern world. Values such as tolerance and different interpretations of gender norms are

a part of the project of modernity, which seeks to institutionalize moral autonomy, human rights, and civil equality through the discourse of tolerance. Mbak Ana, like many other Muslims, is caught in the hegemonic political project of modernity, but *salawat* offers an alternative solution to the project of modernity by imagining the present differently.

I continued my conversation with mbak Ana: "There are other people who have *pengajians* though, no?

Mbak Ana: "I listen to others too. I take what is best for me. I take the knowledge from *pengajian*."

Jamie: "Is there a difference between Habib Syech and other people?"

Mbak Nina: "Ya, maybe because his *dahwa* is especially *salawat*

Me: "His *dahwa* is *salawat*?"

Mbak Nina: "Ya, he is more received because his basics are in *salawat*."

Mbak Ana: "*Salawat* is a part of Islam, now what is interesting is that in Indonesia, there is already *salawat*. Do you know the word *baraka*?"

Jamie: "I do not."

Mbak Ana: "*Baraka* is useful for us. We have a small amount, but we feel that it is enough. For example, if I only have 10,000 rupiahs, I will feel like it is enough. I spend it positively. Positive way, not for like getting drunk. It is not *bakara* if I use it to get drunk. If it comes from corruption, it is not *baraka*. If I use it to buy alcohol, it is not *baraka*. If I use it to go to the club, it is not *baraka*. Because it's not the way Allah guides us. It is just wasteful. If I have 10,000, and I can give it to others. It is *baraka*."

Jamie: "What about in the thought of modern people?"

Mbak Ana: "My plan is to find a better job and a good husband. *Baraka* makes my heart peaceful. But I am stressed now because I just broke up. I still love him, James. But I will find a new, better man."

Jamie: "In your life, what makes you very stressed?"

Mbak Ana: “Right now, my problem is my ex-boyfriend. My problem is that I cannot forget him. That is why I pray to God for a solution. The solution can be a new man or that my boyfriend comes back.”

Jamie: “Mas Marvin, you are very stressed about what?”

Marvin: “I am very stressed about getting my salary.”

Jamie: “What makes your heart not peaceful?”

Mbak Ana: “What makes our heart not peaceful is the word. Like, we need more money. Like, I just lost my boyfriend. Actually, if we believe in God, we know that God will guide us. That is why when I pray, I always pray that God gives me the solution. I often dream of him. I still think of him. I ask for a solution. I ask for forgiveness. Maybe I did something wrong in my life that I did not realize. So I ask for forgiveness first, and I ask for a solution.”

I knew the term *baraka*, but in this situation, I wanted to see how my interlocutors engaged with *baraka*. Mbak Nina proposes that Habib Syech’s *dahwa* is what makes him ‘more received.’ Mbak Ana then indicates, as I have, that *salat* was already a part of Indonesia, and that is why it is interesting that Habib Syech has such a large following. She then switches almost immediately to *baraka*. *Baraka* is a feeling of something being enough even if, for example, the person only has 10000 rupiahs, around one dollar. This money, however, cannot be gained from corruption or used for buying alcohol, going to the club, or other improper ways. When I ask how this then connects to modern Islam, she responds that it makes her heart calm. *Baraka* makes her heart calm, and the world makes her heart uncalm. Mbak Ana and Marvin indicate that dating, employment, and money all make their hearts feel uncalm. It is the modern world and the stress of relationships that make the heart uncalm.

Sacrifice, Gift, and the Impossible

Marcel Mauss’ theory of the gift remains a robust foundation for the study of societies through their total system of giving, exchange, and reciprocation. Mauss’s

"*systems of total exchange*" was an attempt to analyze how the economic, legal, and religious systems of 'archaic societies' operated based on collective giving, receiving, and reciprocation.[21] This system was not, however, only built on his ethnographic analysis of the American northwest potlatch and the Melanesian system of exchange. Mauss's presentation of the system of total exchange coincides with his analysis of the social function of sacrifice. I am not attempting to present *baraka* as a theory that explains a *total system of exchange*. I seek to show how *baraka* is predicated on different premises that create a different concept of the gift that reinserts the ineffable and enchanted into an understanding of reality.

Mauss and W.D. Halls argue that William Robert Smith's work building off of figures such as E.B. Tylor on sacrifice failed to sufficiently analyze sacrifice in 'primitive' religion because Smith did not interpret "the original complexity" of the "Semitic ritual systems."[22] He proposes to look at sacrifice through the original complexity of Vedic and Biblical texts to create a unified system of sacrifice. In his system, the sacrificer is "the subject to whom the benefits of sacrifice then accrues, or who undergoes its effects."[23] The "*objects of sacrifice*" are "those kinds of things for whose sake the sacrifice takes place."[24] These objects of sacrifice could be either directly or indirectly involved in the act of sacrifice. The *act of sacrifice* furthermore impacts the *sacrificer*. The sacrifice impacts the object and *sacrificer*. The *object of sacrifice* is not necessarily the thing being sacrificed. This object acts as "an intermediary between the

[21] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (London: Cohen & West LTD, 1966), 1
[22]Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function,* trans. W.D. Halls (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1898), 7
[23] Ibid., 10.
[24] Ibid., 10.

sacrifier, or the object which is to receive the practical benefits of the sacrifice, and the divinity to whom the sacrifice is usually addressed." The "*victim*" is the sacrificed object.[25] The *victim* in this formulation must also be consecrated, that is, to "made to pass into the religious realm."[26] For example, a *sacrifice,* who will receive the benefits of the sacrifice, consecrates a flower "in service to the god" to impact the weather. The weather is the *object of sacrifice,* while not forgetting that the *sacrificer* will also be affected by this sacrifice. The flower then becomes the *victim* of the sacrifice when it is destroyed, burned, or cut. Mauss and Hall's full definition of sacrifice, then, requires the following:

> "Sacrifice is a religious act which, through the consecration of a victim, modifies the condition of the moral person who accomplishes it or that of certain objects with which he is concerned."[27]

They categorize two different types of sacrifices according to who/what is impacted. *Personal Sacrifice* impacts the *sacrificer*; the *object of the sacrifice* is then the "personality" of the sacrificer.[28] *Objective sacrifice* impacts objects; objects become the *object of the sacrifice*.

The *sacrificer*, *objects of the sacrifice*, and *victims* in this scheme are all in the 'profane' world. Before the sacrifice can take place, all of these members of the sacrifice must be consecrated, thereby entering into the realm of the sacred. Sacrifice is seen to be a quintessentially a religious act done in a "religious frame of mind."[29] The *sacrifice* and other participants of the sacrifice must additionally exit the sacrifice back into the profane world. Variation in the scheme of sacrifice is due to the general functions of the sacrifice.

[25] Ibid., 12.
[26] Ibid., 11.
[27] Ibid., 13.
[28] Ibid., 13.
[29] Ibid., 28.

However, Mauss and Hall see the variation in the scheme based on different arraignments and proportions.[30] If the ritual functions differently, it is not because sacrifice is fundamentally different. The ritual functions differently through different arraignments and the unequal development of different elements. For example, an initiation right may have a more extended introductory period in which the *sacrificer* must prepare and enter into a consecrated state. However, Mauss and Hall use the example of the *nazir*, understood as an "absolutely pure being," does not need a longer period of introduction because they are already in a pure state. The *nazir* then offers a ram, sheep, and lamb to be "freed from consecration."[31] The function of this sacrifice is desacralization. Therefore, the exit is more developed than the introduction. Both the initiation and *nazir* impact the 'condition of the moral person,' thereby fitting into their definition of sacrifice. However, the function is different, revealing how multiplicities of meanings and intended outcomes fit into the scheme of sacrifice. The "special functions" of the sacrifice further impact the scheme of the sacrifice and explain difference and complexity.

Mauss and Hall are functionalists in the history of the study of religion. Functionalists such as Mauss, Durkheim, Malinowski, and Marx were all interested in how religion functions as a feature of society. However, Mauss as, well as many of these other functionalists, were evolutionists building off of Darwin's theory of evolution. Religion, then, not only had varied functions but developed into other current religious institutions that would eventually disappear as a result of natural selection, and later, secularism. Mauss's reflection, then, on the special functions of sacrifice is also an

[30] Ibid., 50.
[31] Ibid., 56.

attempt to understand how sacrifice, as it is presented in the Biblical and Vedic texts, changes into current representations of religion. For example, Mauss and Hall understand beliefs about rebirth to come from personal sacrifices in which the *sacrificer* "has improved his lot, either because he has eradicated the evil to which he was prey, or because he has regained a state of grace, or because he has acquired a divine power."[32] These personal sacrifices lead to the development of beliefs about rebirth. The agrarian sacrifice intended to impact the earth, on the other hand, creates a wide variety of other types of sacrifices and consequences. Mauss and Hall argue that the sacrifice of the god develops from agrarian sacrifice in which "the sacrifice attains its highest expression."[33]

Mauss and Hall's interests in the evolution of religion are again apparent in their assertion that agrarian sacrifices create the god, who will then be sacrificed. The god emerges out of the sacrifice in which the victim is born again. In this sacrifice, the victim "is invested with the highest degree of sanctity-a sanctity organized and personified in the sacrifice."[34] Here, the *object of the sacrifice* is the victim, and the intended outcome is the highest degree of sanctity 'organized and personified in the sacrifice.' This sacrifice of the god develops into Christianity in which "the figure of the Pascal Lamb, the customary victim of an agrarian or pastoral sacrifice, has persisted and still serves even today to designate Christ, that is to say, God."[35] This sacrifice is the 'highest expression' of sacrifice because it is dependent upon other types of personal, agrarian, and object sacrifices that create the possibility of sacrificing the god. They also are the 'highest

[32] Ibid., 62.
[33] Ibid., 77.
[34] Ibid., 80.
[35] Ibid., 81.

expression' because they lead, in an evolutionary sense, to the Catholic mass and Hindu sacrifices.

Even with this variation between the general and specific functions of sacrifice, their unity comes from "*establishing a means of communication between the sacred and the profane worlds through the mediation of a victim, that is, of a thing that in the course of the ceremony is destroyed*."[36] Sacrifice, then, is not merely one ritual among many, but forms the foundation for Christianity and Hinduism, as Mauss and Hall's understand these religions. Sacrifice creates communication between the sacred and profane that then leads to its highest expression, which is still seen in Christianity. The intended and unintended creations that follow this sacrifice lead to a wide variety of religious beliefs. However, beyond the creation of religious sensibilities in the 'archaic' societies, sacrifice is also a "social function because sacrifice is concerned with social matters."[37] Sacrifice, for Mauss and Hall, must be reoriented into the society. The *victims, objects of the sacrifice*, and *sacrificers* do not have any imagined place outside of the social world. Sacrifice exists in society because it nourishes social relations and maintains a social norm. Sacrifice redistributes wealth, "redeems" individuals who have committed a societal offense, and appoints wealth of the society to individuals.[38] Sacrifice, in Mauss and Hall's rendition, is one of the first acts that lead to the creation of religion, including Christianity. Sacrifice, however, is not a *total system of exchange* in society. Sacrifice is one way in which society develops to maintain collective cohesion.

[36] Ibid., 97.
[37] Ibid., 102.
[38] Ibid., 102-103.

I understand this theory of sacrifice as a precursor to Mauss's understanding of gift as the fundamental building block for society's *total system of exchanges*. Religion in this system, then, evolves from sacrifice and ultimately creates social cohesion. I understand Mauss' later work on the gift to be an additional development of his desire to understand the total system of society, of which religion is a part.

Mauss's analysis of the gift wrestles with understanding "*total* social phenomenon" that form the foundation of "religious, legal, moral, and economic" institutions. [39] He uses the phenomenon of the gift as an entryway into understanding the basis of 'archaic societies.' His aim, however, is twofold. In indicating the exchanges at the center of archaic societies and their moral and economic features, he also wants to indicate how these experiences of gifts are then embedded in current society. In building the gift as a total phenomenon of social exchange, Mauss builds on a series of other concepts. The first is the "system of *total prestations*." This system of total exchange is a system in which collectives through a 'chief' or local head exchange courtesies, entertainments, ritual, military assistance, women, children, dances, and feasts; and fairs in which the market is but one element and the circulation of wealth but one part of a wide and enduring contract."[40] If circulation becomes the major problem for modern markets, then the central problem or underlying morality of these archaic societies is *total prestation*, for Mauss, a wide and enduring contact. The chief gives on behalf of the whole society. The gift and its various forms in different societies are ultimately invested in ensuring social contact both within and outside of the tribe/community. Mauss and

[39] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (London: Cohen & West LTD, 1966), 2.
[40] Ibid., 2.

Hall previously presented sacrifice as filling a similar function within the society: social cohesion. However, sacrifice is not the foundation for the enduring contact between tribes/communities, according to Mauss. Here, Mauss is trying to find the very basis of past societies. Sacrifice is not sufficient in creating a *total prestation* but does create many of the religious sensibilities of past and current religions. Therefore, sacrifice and gifts are related both in Mauss's method and interconnected in Mauss's quest to understand the previous forms of society. They are parallel in that Mauss's approach to both sacrifice and exchange begins with an evolutionary mindset seeking to understand previous forms of sacrifice and exchange that then develop into 'modern-day' religion and markets, respectively. Sacrifice is not separate from this total system of exchange, but, as we will see, it is a step in the evolution of the gift.

The first prestation that Mauss addresses to understand the gift is in the *potlatch* of the Tlingit and Haida people. This prestation is of an "agonistic type," which reveals how the potlatch, and in turn, the total prestation operates by including the whole tribe in exchanges between chiefs and nobles. Mauss then turns to Polynesia to understand the "spiritual mechanisms" of the exchange that "obliges us to make a return gift for a gift received."[41] When Mauss initially looked at Samoa, he did not see the potlatch because rivalry and destruction between communities were absent, but he did observe the "absolute obligation to make return gifts under the penalty of losing the *mana*, authority and wealth."[42] Mauss presents this *mana* as the "magical, religious, and spiritual power" in everything that can be considered property.[43] However, in the process of exchange,

[41] Ibid., 5.
[42] Ibid., 6.
[43] Ibid., 8.

mana, or the magical, spiritual power of the thing exchanged, is connected to the *hau* of the gift. In gift exchange, the *hau* of the gift is that spiritual power which demands further giving. Mauss uses the following example to demonstrate the *hau* of the gift:

> "You give me *taonga*; I give it to another, the latter gives me *taonga* back since he is forced to do so by the *hau* of my gift, and I am obliged to give this one to you since I must return to you what is, in fact, the product of the *hau* of your *taonga*."[44]

The *hau* is that spiritual power that obliges the giver to give and the receiver to give connected to the "*hau* of its forest, its soil, its homeland, and the *hau* pursues him who holds it."[45] The *hau* is not just connected to the act of giving but is connected to the very soil, forest, and space that it originated demanding to be returned from whence it came. To give then is not an exchange of wealth distinct from the individual or collectivities in the exchange. The *hau* exchanged in giving is a part of the individual or collective that gives. The obligation to receive and give, then, is demanded by the *hau* that is connected to the individual or collective giver and the forest, soil, and homeland. The *hau* is at the center of the potlatch and the *system of total exchange*.

Sacrifice, once again, enters the frame to indicate how gifts operate between humans and their gods. Sacrifice is the first step in a "natural evolution" from the interaction between "the first groups of beings with whom men must have made contracts."[46] Sacrificial destruction then establishes the first relationships between men, the dead, spirits, and god. As Mauss and Hall indicate, the highest expression of this is sacrificing the god, which develops from agricultural sacrifice and turns into a wide variety of beliefs and rituals in religion. However, sacrifice is also one of the first

[44] Ibid., 9.
[45] Ibid., 9.
[46] Ibid., 13.

moments of exchange in which the *hau*, potlatch, and *system of total exchange* develop. This is an essential piece of Mauss's thought because it forms the building blocks of his understanding of society, but it also diverges from my knowledge of *baraka* as a gift that does not begin with sacrifice. *Baraka* does not originate nor circulate according to sacrifice. *Baraka* as the *hau,* which impacts the spiritual and material dimensions of an individual and society, is not confined to the contractual sacrifice of the gods that forms a 'natural evolution' of the gift from archaic societies' first contacts. *Baraka* is not a reorganizing of the scheme of sacrifice or gift to reveal different outcomes. A different premise lies at the basis of *baraka* as a gift. However, before turning to *baraka* and the premises that form the basis of this system of exchange, I want to turn to the scheme or distribution of the system.

This system of total prestation indicated in gift exchange must have an impetus behind it. Mauss identifies the obligation to give with the chief. Giving is required of the chief to "keep his authority in his tribe, village, family, and maintain his position with the chiefs inside and outside his nation."[47] If the chief fails to give, he loses his rank in the tribe. However, in giving, the chief also initiates the system of gift exchange that obliges others to receive. If one refuses to receive, the individual or collective not only indicates a fear of repayment but loses honor and the religious/spiritual power inherent in the giving, *hau*. One can refuse the gift as an "assertion of victory," which coincides with the nature of the total prestation as agonistic.[48] However, "in principle…gifts are always accepted and praised."[49] The obligation to repay is also a part of the gift system. The *hau*

[47] Ibid., 37.
[48] Ibid., 53.
[49] Ibid., 54.

of the gift not only imparts power on the giver and transfers a part of the individual giver to the receiver. It also obliges return to the original giver, with interest. However, in the gift-giving exchange, time becomes a prominent figure.

After the receiver receives the gift, there must be time between repayment. Repayment, furthermore, depends on time. It is the aspect of time that Jacques Derrida argues "appear[s] as that which undoes this distinction between taking and giving, therefore also between receiving and giving, perhaps between receptivity and activity, or even between the being-affected and the affecting of any affection."[50] The gift must be related to the economy in Derrida's analysis, and the relation between the gift and the economy when taking time into account is "*the* impossible."[51] In Derrida's presentation of the gift, the gift disrupts the economy. If the gift is possible, then the gift must be given and must not circulate; it "must not come back to the giver."[52] The gift must have a relation to the circulation of exchange, and yet, it must be foreign to the circle. If this is the case, then the gift cannot be within time, it must be an "instant when the *paradoxical* instant…tears time apart."[53] The gift, for Derrida, is predicated on a thinking subject or collective who first, intends to give. The conditions for a gift to take place, then, seem to indicate the impossibility of the gift. For a gift to exist, there cannot be any immediate or long term reciprocation as this annuls the gift.[54] Therefore, if the gift becomes recognized as a gift at the instance in which the giver intends to give the gift, or the receiver identifies it as a gift and thereby indicates a need to reciprocate, then the gift is no longer

[50] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time. I, Counterfeit Money* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 3.
[51] Ibid., 7.
[52] Ibid., 7.
[53] Ibid., 9.
[54] Ibid., 10-11.

a ‘true’ gift. For a gift to exist, it is predicated on the donee, not giving back. For a gift to exist, both the donor and donee must not identify it as a gift because identifying it as a gift annuls the possibility of a gift that is not subject to the circular exchange of an economy. If the gift presents itself as a gift, then “it no longer presents itself.”[55] A condition of the gift then is absolute forgetting:

> For there to be gift event (we say event and not act), something must come about or happen, in an instant, in an instant that no doubt does not belong to the economy of time, in a time without time, in such a way that the forgetting forgets, that it forgets itself, but also in such a way that this forgetting, without being something present, presentable, determinable, sensible or meaningful, is not nothing.[56]

For the impossible gift, the gift must not only exist outside of the circle of time, but it must be forgotten and then forgotten that it was forgotten. Yet, in the moment of forgetting that which is forgotten, the gift must still be ‘not nothing.’ In Mauss’s understanding of the gift, the driving force behind the gift is the *hau* that obliges one to give, receive, and reciprocate. However, this assumes that indigenous peoples do not “sometimes behave like sociologists.”[57] This implies that ‘archaic’ people are not aware of the gift as a process of giving, receiving, and reciprocation. If the ‘archaic’ people are, in fact, aware of the sociology of the gift, then this annuls the gift, according to Derrida’s reasoning. However, *baraka* presents a different premise for gift exchange.

Defining *Baraka*

In chapter four, *baraka*, as a concept in the Quran, reveals that the only source of *baraka* is Allah. In the metaphor of the olive tree, a closed system emerges in which an olive dressed ‘blessed’ (given *baraka*) creates the olive oil that then illuminates

[55] Ibid., 15.
[56] Ibid., 17.
[57] Ibid., 75.

Light/Truth/Allah. The *baraka* that Allah gives and grows through the branches of all knowledge then reciprocates back to Allah. The basis of *baraka* is not sacrifice, and unlike the gift in Mauss and Derrida's conception cannot be poisonous. *Baraka* is fundamentally connected to Allah, and all that is good. The original giver, Allah, guarantees reciprocation. The premise of *baraka*, then, is that Allah gives and is the only giver which both manifests this gift through the many branches of knowledge and receives the oil/blessings that this gift provides. Therefore, in this scheme of the gift, the giver and final receiver of the gift is Allah.

I want to turn now to the mediums and objects of *baraka*. Many of my interlocutors indicate how *baraka* acts in their lives, providing a calm heart, intercession in the afterlife, cigarettes, a new home, material wealth, and a feeling that even a little is enough. In the process of recognizing *baraka*, the gift has already passed through the receiver who, in that exact moment of receiving *baraka*, may not know it as such. *Baraka*, at once, exists as a social fact and is the forgotten impossible gift in the moment of exchange between the individual and Allah.

It is a social fact in that it is a part of a discursive tradition that individuals assert impacts their material, economic, and spiritual lives. The effect of *baraka* through various mediums can take a plethora of forms. The intermediaries represent the branches of the tree that are blessed by Allah. Water appears as the first intermediary of *baraka* in chapter one. Phones and recordings emerge as the new intermediary for *baraka* in chapter two. The music, events, Habib Syech, the ethnographer, the Prophets, places, time, physical objects, piety, trade, and a different life path all emerge as manifestations of *baraka* in chapter four. *Syafa'at* and *hati tenang* appear as feelings and expressions of

baraka. Cigarettes, economic security, and trust appear as *baraka* in this chapter, and they can disappear as fast as they arise.

Baraka, as a gift, can appear in all of the branches of possible knowledge, indicating an infinite possible manifestation of gifts. These gifts, furthermore, can impact the material, economic, and spiritual lives of those who receive *baraka*. Yet, Habib Syech is careful to disavow *baraka* as something that an individual or material necessarily contains. As my interlocutors attempt to explain *baraka* as that ineffable thing that operates and cannot be captured through thinking, *baraka* still extends past these explanations of its impacts. I now want to adjust my previous definition to include these reflections on the premise and life of *baraka*.

I have previously defined *baraka* as, "the infinite possible manifestation of gifts, not dependent on reciprocation, from God, the only source of *baraka*, in both the visible and invisible world impacting the spiritual, economic, and social lives of people." However, reciprocation is, in fact, part of this system, but the obligation to reciprocate is not on the receiver. The giver, Allah, guarantees it. *Baraka* then is the infinite possible manifestations of gifts, which always return to God, the only source of *baraka*, in both the visible and invisible, *barzakh*, world that impacts the spiritual, economic, and social lives of people.

CONCLUSION

The remaining question, then, is why so much ink has been spilled in this dissertation grabbling with the ineffable? I return to de Castro in trying to pull from 'the imaginative powers of the societies-or, better, the peoples and collectives-that they propose to explain.' I could have written an exposition of these events focusing on Habib Syech and the religious and political resonances that are always already a part of this assemblage. However, my interlocutors time and time again asserted that they attended the events for *baraka*. They were hunting *baraka*. In bringing my interlocutors' stories, the textual discursive tradition of *baraka,* and the concept of gift together to imagine a definition of *baraka,* I do not imagine a total system of exchange. I am not trying to create a new theology or theory that explains this assemblage as a feature of modern life. I have sought to show how *baraka* presents an alternative concept to understanding exchange that does not begin with sacrifice or as a feature of indigenous/archaic society. My definition emerges out of my experiences with this moving assemblage and seeks to present a new concept of gift that allows Muslims across nation-states to grapple with modernity as a project and create something beyond it. *Baraka* presents 'reality' not as a disenchanted space of calculated exchange. *Baraka* breaks out of Derrida's critique of the gift and presents an alternative to the assumptions of a disenchanted reality marked by secularism, progress, and materialist's conceptions of reality. *Baraka* opens up the possibility of a world in which the invisible and ineffable act to produce effects on the material, spiritual, and economical. This does not require an individual to be for or against God; instead, it inserts ambiguity and the ineffable into the exchange that does not proceed as an easily rationalized object of inquiry.

As indicated in chapter one, *baraka* has a long history connected to *kyai*s, their charisma, and the *pesantren* style of Islamic education. The concept is not new or, as indicated in chapter four, unconnected to the textual tradition of the Quran. Chapter two reflects on my first meeting with Habib Syech through social media and his *Fan club* while revealing that recordings are used much differently from the assumed role of recordings in social media. Individuals were seeking *baraka* from these recordings rather than sharing them to indicate their presence at the events. I descend into the events of Habib Syech to show the multiple 'flavors' of Islamic life that converge in Habib Syech's events and reveal the need to understand *salawat* beyond Islamic affiliation and beyond Habib Syech. In the previous chapter, I used de Certeau's metaphor of the city to reflect upon how the discursive tradition of *baraka* connects to the Quran as well as how people engage with *baraka* in their everyday lives. I indicated both the view from the drone overhead of the events in which the discursive tradition of *baraka* appears as well as the street level in which individuals engage with this discursive tradition and create new understandings of *baraka*. In this chapter, I want to grapple with *baraka* and the interrelated concepts of *syafa'at* (intercession) and *hati tenang* (calm heart) to develop *baraka* as a concept that brings both the discursive tradition together with the hundreds of examples of *baraka*.

In trying to capture or define what exactly *baraka* entails, I envision it as I have done elsewhere as, "the infinite possible manifestation of gifts, not dependent on reciprocation, from God, the only source of *baraka*, in both the visible and invisible world impacting the spiritual, economic, and social lives of people."[1] However, in the

[1] Edmonds, James M. "Smelling *Baraka*: Everyday Islam and Islamic Normativity." in "(Mis)Representations of Islam: Politics, Community, and Advocacy" Edited by Timothy P. Daniels and

introduction, a merchant reminds me that *syafa'at*, *baraka*, and *hati tenang* are all connected. He asserts, 'if you receive *baraka*, you will automatically feel *hati tenang* and receive *syafa'at*. You cannot separate these things.' If your heart is calm, this is a sign that you may have received *baraka* and *syafa'at*. This does not mean that the hundreds of interlocutors who I interviewed always tied these things together. However, this amalgam of lived concepts propels this assemblage towards further popularity. Individuals might attend *salawat* because "their friends are going," prominent religious and political figures are present, or they identify this event as align with their particular form of Islamic practice. All of these may be reasons that people attend the events. Yet, the amalgam of *baraka*, *syafa'at*, and *hati tenang* keeps people coming back to the events.

Developing this concept that has emerged from the ethnographic field, however, is not only crucial in understanding this particular phenomenon in Indonesia, Asia, and other Muslim majority societies. *Baraka* presents an alternative understanding of the contemporary world that is not necessarily 'disenchanted,' devoid of magic, and the ineffable. *Baraka* is both embedded in an ethos of modernity that orders existence through technological understandings of rationality devoid of magic and (re)enchants that order of existence. *Baraka* brings both the rationality of modernity together with the possibility of extending beyond that rationality to allow the ineffable and spiritual to bear on existence.

I am not proposing a new theology or reinvigorating Eliadian visions of the sacred. I am pulling from figures such as Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, who have wrestled with getting beyond the confines of anthropology and academia as a discursive field

confined by disciplinary structures and formations. I am responding to this proposition from him:

> "Couldn't one shift to a perspective showing that the source of the most interesting concepts, problems, entities, and agents introduced into thought by anthropological theory is in the imaginative powers of the societies-or, better, the peoples and collectives-that they propose to explain?"[2]

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Favret Saada, and Eduardo Kohn have created works that attempt to grapple with this same question. The discipline of religious studies, like anthropology, has been grappling with its object of inquiry. Jonathan Z. Smith's assertion that religion is "solely the creation of the scholar's study" has reverberated across the field for the last thirty years.[3] This critique of the study of religion is an indication of the crisis which continues to run rampant: what is religious studies' object of study? If there is no *sui generis* object called religion, how then do we study something scholars have created, namely religion. Jonathan Z. Smith, Talal Asad, Daniel Dubuisson, Brent Ngonbri, Tomoko Masuzawah, Russel McCutcheon, Aaron Hughes and many articles in the *Method and Theory in the study of Religion* lament the creation of religion as a Western, Christian object imposed on the world's cultures through imperialism, globalization, and secularism. The answers to the question of how we proceed include abandoning the term altogether,[4] focusing on the embeddedness of religion in social and

[2] Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics: For a Post-Structural Anthropology*, ed. And trans. Peter Skafish (Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing. 2014), 40.
[3] Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1982), xi.
[4] Daniel Dubuisson, *The Western Construction of Religion: Myths, Knowledge, and Ideology* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins UP, 2003); A. Taves, E. Asprem, and E Ihm, "Psychology, meaning making, and the study of worldviews: Beyond religion and non-religion," *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, *10*(3): 207–217. Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion* (Yale University Press, 2013).

material systems,[5] and focusing on the practices of everyday people.[6] However, the scholar is no longer the sole author, distributor, or user of the term religion. Religion is a living phenomenon that my interlocutors engage with, reinterpret, and navigate. Tossing aside religion as a colonial invention risks recolonizing communities that were previously forced to participate in this thing called religion. I see the path forward in the same vein that anthropologists, like de Castro, who seek to decolonize thought through the people who are continually creating new engagements with religion and other related concepts such as belief. Conceiving of *baraka* through the discursive tradition of Islam and its relation to the everyday engagements of Indonesian Muslims with *baraka* is an attempt to use my interlocutors' stories, concepts, lives to challenge western thought that has relied on disenchanted rationalities that preclude enchantment, ambiguity, and ineffability from their object of study. This is additionally not an attempt to bring phenomenology back to the center of religious studies. I develop the concept of *baraka* as it emerges and connects to the Islamic tradition and western understandings of religion to present an alternative to the increasingly segregated and disenchanted field of religious studies.

[5] Talal Asad, "The Ideas of an Anthropology of Islam," *Qui Parle* 17.2, 2009. Thomas Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006). Manuel A Vásquez, *More than Belief : A Materialist Theory of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
[6]Robert A Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). David D Hall ed., *Lived Religion in America : Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1997).

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