## CHAPTER SEVEN Moenawar Chalil's Views On Popular Religious Practices

Muslims observe the twelfth day of Rabi' al-Awwal in commemoration of the Prophet's birthday. This commemoration has become the occasion of the festival which is known as Murlid. Likewise, Muslims venerate the tenth day of al-Muharram commonly called [Ashūrā], the last ten days of the month of Ramadan known as Laylat al-qadr, as well as Ramadan itself and the month of Safar. Reformists were generally opposed to the celebration of Mawlid, because they held that the celebration was not sufficiently supported by textual evidence. Moreover, they denounced it on account of the so-called "corrupt" practices surrounding it that were not upheld by the Shuri ah. Similarly, the manner of celebrating venerated days was not acceptable to reformists, because it entailed complex customs that were in direct opposition to their espousal of a simple tradition of veneration. This controversy became the subject of a heated debate between reformists and traditionalists in Indonesia. The reformists advocated a simplification of religious celebrations and rigidly imposed a set of text-based rules for their performance. Moenawar Chalil also spoke out against the traditional manner of celebration and veneration. His views on these controversial issues will be briefly discussed by examining his arguments and juxtaposing them with those of the traditionalists. When necessary, the arguments of the earlier scholars will be used in revealing the historical context of these issues, since this controversy constitutes part of a general trend which has survived to the present. While some early scholars showed a marked indifference to the legitimacy of the traditional trend of celebrations, others seem to have directly or indirectly supported these phenomena.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part presents Chalil's stand on the controversial *Mawlid* celebration, while the second part discusses his attitude towards practices commonly observed on the day of 'Ashūrā'. The third part examines his stand on the issue of *hisāb* and *ru'yah*, along with his assessment of the veneration of *Laylar* 

Although the hisāb-ru'yah debate has no direct connection to the issue of ion discussion of this debate is in fact a necessary prelude to the subject of ath of Ramadān. Chalil's attitude toward the tradition of Rebo wekasan will complete the discussion on the veneration controversy, since the tradition of Rebo wekasan stemmed from a reverence for the month of Safar.

I

The Mawlid al-nabī is a controversial festival with a reputation for heterodoxy. The question of whether the celebration of the Mawlid is allowed or not has arisen from time to time. The fact that al-Suyūṭī was asked for a fatwā on the Mawlid shows that this question was of topical interest as early as in 9th/15th century Cairo and that there were people both in favor of and against its celebration. Even the Fāṭimīds, whose claim to be the descendants of the Prophet had prompted them to initiate the tradition of Mawlid, temporarily suspended its celebration on the account of lack of a legal basis. In modern times, not only did the Wahhābīs try to eliminate the celebration of Mawlid, but other Muslims too, with less puritanical views, attempted to reduce the celebration to a sober level. A number of arguments against the permissibility of the Mawlid were put forward, the chief one of them being the fact that this festival is not mentioned in either the Qur ān or the sunah and was not celebrated by the Prophet or the sulaf

Moenawar Chalil's debates with the traditionalists also revolved around the controversial Mawlid celebration. Indeed, the celebration became a point of disagreement between the reformists and the traditionalists. The Persis: for example, considered the Marklid to be an example of bid'ah (innovation in religious matters) and accused the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>N. J. G. Kaptein, Muhammad's Birthday Festival (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), 68-69.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Ḥasan al-Sandūbī, *Tārīkh al-Iḥtifāl bi-al-Mawlid al-Nabawi* (Cairo, Mathafat al-Istiqāmah, 1948), 64-65.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Annemarie Schimmel, And Muhammud Is His Messenger (Chapel Hill The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 149.

traditionalist 'ulamā' of perpetuating bid'ah by defending its practice. The dispute over the celebration of Mawlid, although much less rigorous in the last three decades, has not entirely lost momentum and the issues of legitimacy and illegitimacy remain moot questions in both modernist and traditionalist circles.

Chalil's investigation to the practice of Markid starts with an examination of its historical background. He begins by claiming to have discovered that the Markid originated from a tradition introduced by Abū Sa'id al-Kokburi, known as al-Malik al-Mu'azzam Muzaffar al-Din, who ascended to power in the city of Irbil, following his appointment by Salāh al-Din al-Ayyūbī in 586 Hijrub. al-Kokburī was noted for his generosity, donating thousands of dinūrs (the name of the gold currency) to the celebration of Markid, which came to enjoy enormous fame and attracted large numbers of people from various places. In describing its festive side, Chalil recounts that more than twenty wooden pavilions were divided into four and five stories. The main pavilion was reserved for al-Kokburī and each of the others for an amīr (prince) or some other persons holding high ranks in the state. In each of the pavilions there was a choir of singers, a band of musicians and a group of story-tellers. The influx of strangers continued without interruption from the month of al-Muḥarram, two months earlier until the celebration itself in the month of Rabī' al-Awwal.6

6 Moenawar Chalil, "Fatwa 'Oelama' Jang Haq Tentang Bid'ah Mauloedan." Pembelu Islum. no. 65. 19-20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>Howard M. Federspiel, *The Persutuan Islam: Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Indonesia* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Modern Indonesia Project, 1970). 57: A Hassan, the chief figure of the *Persis*: enumerated four points by which the *Mawlid* celebration, as practiced by the traditionalists, deserved the classification of *bid'uh*. A. Hassan, "Maulud," *Sual-Djuwab*. no. 4, 6-9; idem, "Perajaan Hari Labir dan Mi'radjnja Nabi s. a. w." *Sual-Djawab*. no. 8, 59-61.

<sup>5</sup> Among the latest pamphlets written on the controversy of Muwlid are Tim P. P. Majlis Tarjih, "Peringatan Maulud Nabi," Suara Muhammadiyah (1-15 July: 1992), 21; Zulfahmi, "Maulid ke- 1466," Suara Muhammadiyah (September; 1993), 28-29; Sahal Mahfudh, "Nabi Sendiri Sudah Mengisaratkan Perlunya Peringatan Maulid," Aulu (October: 1990), 67-68; "Maulid Nabi Alih Semangat Zaman Ini," Aulu (October: 1990), 69; also, see Kaptein, Muhammad's Birthday Festival, 45, footnote no. 1.

Chalil's attribution of the introduction of Mawlid festivities among the Sunnis to Muzaffar al-Din al-Kokburi is supported by data in Ibn Khallikān's Biographical Dictionary. Chalil goes on to describe how the Mawlid has since that time spread throughout the world and is known in every Muslim nation. He admits that even he was once caught up by the enthusiasm of the Mawlid at a time when he was less inclined to find fault with it. 8

The Mawlid was considered by Chalil to be bid'ah dalālah (blameworthy innovation), since it ran counter to dogmatic theory. According to his view, the reverence for the Prophet should be encouraged, but only in so far as it does not exceed the limits prescribed by the Shuri'ah. The fact that the celebration involves the reading of panegyrical texts, in which miraculous characteristics are attributed to the Prophet as the giver of intercession hafā'ah), remission (aunpun) and security (salānnah), clearly violates the basic tenets of the Shuri'ah. These God-like attributes of the Prophet would deny Muhammad's humanity and elevate him to divine stature. As such, the Mawlid which was originally intended as a pious practice became a reprehensible innovation.

The panegyrical texts recited by the traditionalists, namely ul-Barzanji, al-Dibū'i and ul-Burdah, were particularly offensive to Chalil, who called them qusidahs. 10 Indeed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>The description is cited by Chalil from Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary. vol. 2 (trans.) Bn Mac Guckin de Slane (Paris: printed for the Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1842-1871). 539; Muzaffar al-Din al-Kokburi was the brother-in-law of the famed Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi. Under the authority of the latter, he ruled over Irbil, southeast of Mosul in Upper Mesopotamia. G. E. von Grunebaum, Muhammadan Festival's (London: Curzon Press, 1981), 73.

<sup>8</sup> Chalil uses a strong phrase in expressing his rejection of the Muwlid calling for a crusade against its practice by fellow Muslims in his own country (membongkar kelakuna suhubat-suhubat dun orung-orung di negeri penulis sendiri) Chalil, "Fatwa Oelama' Jang Haq Tentang Bid'ah Mauloedan," 20.

9 Ibid. 22.

<sup>10</sup> lbid.; while the first two texts are written in rhymed prose, the third is a poem. See Muhammad Ibn Ahmad 'Āyis al-Malikī, ul-Quwl al-Munjī 'alā Mawlid al-Burzanjī (Cairo: n.p., 1301 H.); 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Dībā'ī, Mawlid al-Dībā'ī (n.p.: n.p.: 1983); Ibrāhim al-Bājūrī, Hāshiyat al-Bājūrī 'alā Muta Qusīdut ul-Burdah (Cairo: Dār Ihyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyah, 1947); for the recital of those three texts in the traditionalist Mawlid. see Van Bruinessen, "Kitab Kuning: Books in Arabic Script in the Pesantren Milieu," Bijdrugea. 146 (1990), 261.

not only did the traditionalists chant these texts in the Mawlid gatherings, but they also incorporated a panegyric, namely Madārij al-Ṣu'ūd ilā Iktisā' al-Burūd, a commentary on al-Burzunjā by Muḥammad Ibn 'Umar al-Bantanī, into the syllabus of their pessatrens. 11 Chalil's objection centered on the concept of shafā'ah and the extravagant exaltation of the Prophet which, in his analysis, went beyond sober eulogy and could easily lead to shirk (polytheism). For him, the idea of shafā'ah was incompatible with the concept of God as an omnipotent lord claiming man's total devotion, because shafā'ah assumes a graver aspect when it shifts man's faith from the Creator to Muḥammad, thus causing him to lapse into polytheism. 12

The Qur in does not present a clear-cut position on the idea of shafi nh. While some passages demonstrate an unfavorable attitude towards it, others do not absolutely exclude it. 13 However, the acceptability of shafi nh is proven by an incident in the lifetime of the Prophet, reported in both fundith safith and qudsi, when he interceded with God on behalf of someone. 14 Aside from this, the Prophet's intercession on the Day of Judgment, which is the type of intercession described in the panegyrical texts, is illustrated

<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Ibn 'Umar al-Nawawi al-Bantani, Madārij al-Su'ūd ilā Iktisā' ul-Burūd (Semarang: Matba'at Tāhā Putra, n.d.).

<sup>12</sup> Chalil, "Fatwa 'Oelama' Jang Haq Tentang Bid'ah Mauloedan," 22.

<sup>13</sup>J. W. Fiegenbaum, "The Ta'ziyah: A Popular Expression of Shi'i Thought," (M. A. thesis McGill University, Montreal, 1965), 123.

<sup>14</sup> ul-Abādich al-Qudsiyah (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1990), 255-272; Muslim, Suhih Muslim, vol. 2 (Beirut: Muassasat 'Izz al-Dīn, 1987), 363; al-Tirmidhi, Sunun al-Tirmidhi, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1983), 258; the expectation of receiving the Prophet's shufā'uh was one of the factors which motivated the composition of works in honor of the Prophet's birthday, al-Bantani, for example, expresses this expectation when commenting on Muwlid al-Shaykh Ahmad Ibn al-Qāsim. Muḥammad Ibn 'Umar al-Nawawi al Bantani, Futh al-Şamad al-'Alim (Surabaya: Shirkat Piramida, n.d.), 1.

in a frequently occurring tradition. 15 In addition, the concept of shatā ah in hadith literature is not confined to Muhammad, but is extended to martyrs and saints as well. 16

Not only did Chalil's opposition to the idea of shall ah prove to be inadequately argued, he also failed to take into account the fact that the extravagant fashion of the texts in praise of Muhammad was characteristic of the literary genre known as al-muda in almabawiyah (Prophetic panegyrics). 17 Typically, al-mada in al-mudawiyah express a lavish exaltation of the birth of the Prophet and praise his life and virtues. This is not entirely unacceptable in Islam, since the Qur an itself mentions Muhammad in praiseworthy terms and God Himself confers blessings upon him. 18 From this perspective, the three aforementioned panegyrical texts could be regarded as sober eulogies, in which love of Muhammad is expressed in tender, colorful and grandiose terms without elevating him to the level of a deity. This sobriety is quite unlike the mystical eulogies which bestow upon the Prophet a position tantamount to that of God. Even the most extravagant of the three, notably Qusidat al-Burdah, takes great pains against any excess of exaltation, al-Būṣiri, the author of the work, declares that no matter how much one wants to express his deep love of the Prophet, one must not indulge in excessive exaltations, as the Christians had done with respect to Jesus. 19

<sup>1.5</sup>A line of poetry in *Qn,sidat al-Burdah* reads: "He [Muḥammad] is the beloved from whom the shafā'uh which will release [his people] from the terrifying anxieties [in the Day of Judgment] is expected. (huwa ul-ḥabīb ul-ladhī turjā shufā'utuh, min kull huwl min ul-nhwāl muqtaḥim). See also al-Bājūri's comment on the relation between shufā'uh and the Day of Judgment in the aforementioned line. al-Bājūri, Hāshiyut ul-Bājūrī 'nlā Muta Qnsīdat al-Burdah, 22-23; Muslim, Suhīh Muslim, vol. 1, 230-232, 233-235, 237-239; Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, Fath ul-Bārī, vol. 13 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 198?), 392-393.

<sup>16</sup> Muhammad's shafa'ah is also recognized by ijma'. A. J. Wensinck, "Shafa'a," The first Encyclopuedia of Islam, vol. 7 (eds.) M. Th. Houtsma et. al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987), 251.

<sup>17</sup>Zaki Mubarak, al-Mada'ih al-Nabawiyah II al-Adab al-'Arabi (Beirut: Dar al-Jil, 1992), 11-12.

<sup>18</sup>The Our La. 33: 43; 33: 56.

<sup>19</sup> See the three lines of the *Qusidat al-Burdah* and the comment provided by Khālid al-Azhari on a *hudīth* which says "Don't attribute praise to me as the Christians have done to Jesus." (lā tutrūni kamā atrut al-Naṣārā 'Isā). al-Bājūrī, Hāshiyat al-Bājūrī 'alā Muta Onsīdat al-Burdah. 26.

Chalil's criticism of the three texts was not confined to an analysis of the extent to which these eulogies contradicted principles, but also extended to the behavior of the participants in the Muwlid celebration. He attacks their loud recitation of the texts, their movement of their heads and their usage of the tambourine. 20 It must be kept in mind that the movement of the head, objected to by Chalil, was not an act commonly seen in the Mawlid celebration, since it was not officially part of the ceremonies. Rather, it sometimes occurred simply as a result of the rhythmical recitation of the texts, which were often loudly performed and accompanied by great excitement. 21 It seems that his criticism of the head movement may have been influenced by his attitude towards the head movement in suff dhikr which was meant as an inducement of the ascetic experience and a sign of closeness with God. 22 This connection may have occurred to Chalil because of the fact that dhikr was an exclusive practice of the traditionalists, particularly those belonging to sufi orders (turionh). Dhikr also became an issue in 'Abduh's argument against the Mawlid celebration. The latter reportedly blamed the 'vlama' for tolerating the celebration of Mawlid under the pretext that it included some positive elements, such as dhike, which 'Abduh considered to be a bid'uh dulālah.<sup>23</sup> Chalil classified the Mawlid celebration as an ibāduh purely on account of the nature of the celebration itself, even though it contained non-religious elements. Given this classification, he would have been justified in condemning the practice altogether, since it had no basis in the Qur'in or sunnah and could therefore be qualified as bid'ut.24

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>Chalil, "Fatwa 'Oelama' Jang Haq Tentang Bid'ah Mauloedan," 22.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Unlike *Onsidat al-Burdah*, neither *ul-Barznaji* nor *ul-Dibā'i* are in verse. Nonetheless, they are written in rhymed prose *(masjū')*, so that the reciter is forced to follow the rhythmical tonation which brings a movement to his body. A comment on the rhyme of *nl-Dibā'i* can be found in Mubārak's analysis of its musical and poetical qualities. Mubārak, *ul-Madā'ih al-Nabuwīyah*, 177.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> In Egypt, for example, the *Muwlid* proper was accompanied by the so-called *dhikr* meetings in which *dhikr* (remembrance of God with certain fixed phrases) was coordinated with bodily movements. von Grunebaum, *Muhummudun Festivals*, 77.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup>Cited in P. Shinar, "Traditional and Reformist Mawlid Celebrations in the Maghrib," in *Studies in Memory of Guston Wiet*, (ed.) Myriam Rosen-Ayalon (Jerusalem: Institute of Asian and African Studies, the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1977), 375, footnote no. 17.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2 4</sup>Chalil, "Fatwa 'Oelama' Jang Haq Tentang Bid'ah Mauloedan," 21.

The association of head movement with suff practices may be better understood, if seen in the light of A. Hassan's attack on the tradition of standing. Unlike moving the head, standing is an integral part of the Muwlid celebration. Hassan said that the traditionalists viewed the act of standing in a suff light. He argued that the traditionalists considered the act a mark of respect towards Muhammad's spirit which was believed to be present at the moment of the procession. 25 Standing has always been a controversial issue in the Mawlid celebration, al-Nawawi, for instance, wrote an essay in its defense, as did Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, who wrote his work to counter the opinion of Ibn al-Hajj, the latter having rejected the act of standing in his Ruf al-Mulum an al-Qa'il bi-Istihsan al-Qiyam min Ahl id-Fad? Among the critics of standing, one may count al-Shibramalsi who argued against it on account of its lack of exemplary precedence from the Prophet.<sup>27</sup> The "standing moment" took place in the latter part of the Muwlid procession, as practiced by the traditionalists, when the reciter of the text read the lines "Sallā Allāh 'alā Muhammad, sallā Allāh 'alayh wa sallam. Marḥaban yā nūr al-'ayn, marḥaban jadd al-Ḥusayn, marḥaban, yā murhaban. "which means "The blessing of God upon Muhammad, blessing upon him and salutation. Welcome light of the eye, welcome grand-sire of Husayn, welcome, oh welcome."28

It was said that standing during the Muwlid celebration was a mere gesture of respect to the Prophet, a gesture that grew out of a tradition where standing was considered to be a demonstration of honor towards people of distinction (ahl al-fadl). In al-Barzanji and Mudārij al-Ṣu'ūd, for example, standing is defined as a mark of respect to the Prophet which was recommended and considered good by the authority of riwāyah and rawīyah<sup>29</sup>

29 al-Bantani, Mudūrij ul-Su'ūd, 14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup>A. Hassan, "Maulud," Sval-Djawab, no. 4, 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup>Muhammad Ibn 'Alawi al-Maliki, Būquh 'Atiruh min Siyngh ul-Muwālid wa ul-Mudā'ih ul-Nubawīyah ul-Kurīmuh (n.p.: n.p.: 1983), 17.

<sup>27</sup> al Bantani, Madārij nl-Su'od. 15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup>For the musical notes of this poetical stanza, see C. Snouck Hurgronje, Mekka in the Lucter Part of the 19th Century (trans.) J. H. Monahan (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1931), 118.

Other evidence could be advanced demonstrating that the practice of standing was a gesture of honor to Muhammad. For example, in a meeting with scholars of his time, Taqy al-Din al-Subki reportedly stood when panegyrical poems were recited in praise of the Prophet. 30 lbn Hajar al-Haytami also describes in one of his fatwās the tradition of standing in the Mawlid current in his day as a gesture of respect to the Prophet. He explains that standing inot bidah since the act was merely a token of respect. 31 Siradjuddin Abbas even claimed that standing was inspired by the practice of the Prophet in ordering his subabab from the Aws clan to give full respect to their chief, namely Sa'd Ibn Mu'ādh, by raising from their seats. 32

As for the playing of the tambourine, Chalil might have confused the Mawlid proper, which was held in celebration of the Prophet's birthday, with the Mawlid or the selawatan, conducted on the occasion of a male child's circumcision or a marriage ceremony. The use of the tambourine is particularly characteristic of this second type of Mawlid and is accompanied by the recital of several lines of poetry taken from Qusidat al-Burdah. The tambourine and poetry signify the extreme joy of the parties concerned and are in no way connected to the celebration of the Prophet's birthday.<sup>33</sup>

Chalil insists that the *Mawlid* should focus on the reading of the Prophet's biography (thrikh) and the recitation of the *Qur'iln* and *hadiths* depicting his struggles for the sake of Islam and his meritorious deeds which set an example for his followers.<sup>34</sup> Partly motivated by a desire to correct the distorted biography of Muhammad narrated in

34Chalil, "Fatwa 'Oelama' Jang Haq Tentang Bid'ah Mauloedan," 22.

<sup>30</sup> Siradjuddin Abbas, 40 Masalah Agama, vol. 2 (Jakarta: Pustaka Tarbiyah, 1992). 179; Abu Bakr Ibn Muhammad Shatā al-Bakrī, I'ānut al-Tālibla. vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1993), 364; al-Bantani, Madārij al-Su'od. 15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3 Î</sup>lbn Hajar al-Haytamî, *Kitāb al-Fatāwā al-Hadīthīyah* (Cairo: Matba'at al-Ma'āhid, 1934), 58.

<sup>32</sup> Abbas, 40 Masalah Agama, vol. 2, 189.; see also al-Maliki's Bāquh 'Atirah. 17.
33 It is said that this Mawlid which is sometimes called selawatan (a Javanese word for salawāt which means praise to the Prophet) is often performed without the accompaniment of the tambourine, which, in fact, does not constitute an integral component of the Mawlid.

B. Soelano. Gerebeg di Kesultanan Yogyukarta (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Kanisius, 1993), 42.

vast number of citations from the *Qur inic* verses and *hadith* literature, in which the Prophet is described as a compassionate and enlightened person and his success explained less in terms of divine miracles than as a result of will-power ision and loving kindness. 35 Hence, out of a wish to see Muhammad's biography purged of innovation. Chalil focused instead on commemorating his role as messenger of God who transmitted the *Qur in* to his people and who served as a perfect model for them to emulate. The restriction of *Muwlid* to this simple level is characteristic of the reformist attitude towards celebrating the birth of Muhammad. The *Persis*, for example, went so far as to boycott the tradition of the parade *(puwui)* of school children which was organized as an expression of the joy of the community on the occasion of *Muwlid* and which had nothing to do with the legal aspects of the celebration. 36

Chalil consolidated his stance against the traditional celebration of Muwlid with the opinions of earlier scholars. He cites the opinion of Ibn al-Hājj, who in his book al Mudkhal had vehemently condemned the practice of reading quisiduhs and regarded such an act as forbidden (munkar). Ibn al-Hājj was a strict Mālikīte scholar who criticized numerous practices involved in the contemporary Muwlid celebrations, particularly the participation of women. He expressed a strong objection to the festive aspect of the Mawlid which, according to him, had turned the Mawlid into a place where all manners of unlawful practices (nl-muharumāt) took place. He also denounced the Mawlid customs which were heavily dependent on the use of musical instruments, such as tambourines with jingles (nir musursir), singing, dancing and listening to music. 39

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup>Moenawar Chalil Kelengkupun Turich Nubi Muhummad s. u. w. vol. 1 (Djakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1957).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup>G. F. Pijper, Beberupa Studi Tentang Sejarah Islam di Indonesia, (trans.) Tudjimah and Yessy Augusdin (Jakarta: Penerbit Universitas Indonesia, 1984), 136-137.

<sup>37</sup> Chalil, "Fatwa 'Oelama' Jang Haq Tentang Bid'ah Mauloedan," 20; see also Ibn al-Hajj. nl-Mudkhal. vol. 2 (Cairo: al-Matha'ah al-Misriyah bi-al-Azhar, 1929), 13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup>lbid., 11-12.

<sup>39&</sup>lt;sub>Ibid... 2.</sub>

Another critic of the *Mawlid*, whose opinions are quoted by Chalil, was Ibn Taymiyah who condemned the introduction of festivals, particularly the one celebrated in honor of the Prophet during the first night of the month of Rabi' al-Awwal and the main observance on the night of the Prophet's birthday, allegedly falling on the 12th of the same month. In his quotation, Chalil stresses Ibn Taymiyah's disapproval of the practice of singing which became an integral component of the procession of the *Mawlid*. Ibn Taymiyah further stated, according to Chalil, that such a practice, identified as the *Mawlid's* "rite", undoubtedly belonged to the acts strongly forbidden in Islam. Only a *zindiq* (unbeliever). Ibn Taymiyah further declared, would permit the carrying out of such practices.<sup>40</sup>

Chalil depended on scholars who spoke out against the exaggerated festivities of the Mawlid to support his premise that its celebration by the traditionalists was an evil practice. It should be noted that although Ibn Taymiyah energetically attacked the lighthearted amusements of the Mawlid celebration, he deemed the celebration to be permissible as long as the gatherings sought to express a reverence for the Prophet and good deeds were done in expectation of reward from God. Similarly, even though Ibn al-Hājj castigated the forbidden customs which took place during the Mawlid festivities, he did not totally reject the Mawlid. He praised the expression of gratitude during the ceremony, provided that it did not go to extremes and did not include folkloric elements, such as singing, music and feasting. This was in line with his understanding of the Mawlid as a day of mourning rather than an occasion of feasting. 42

<sup>40</sup>Chalil, "Fatwa 'Oelama' Jang Haq Tentang Bid'ah Mauloedan," 21.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup>Ibn al-Hājj, al-Madkhal, vol. 2, 15; Ibn al-Hājj's al-Madkhal can be characterized as a manual of religiously proper behavior for Muslims. It is rich in its censure and description of the practices performed by Muslims and non-Muslims in their festivals. Muhammad Umar Memon, Iba Taimlya's Scruggle against Popular Religion with an Annotated Translation of His Kitāb lqtidā' al-Ṣirāţ al-Mustaqīm Mukhālafat Asbāb al-Jaḥīm (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), 6.

Chalil also refers to Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī whose perspective differed from that of Ibn al-Hājj and Ibn Taymīyah, in that he tolerated the reading of qusīduhs, considering such an act as a bid'ah husunah (good innovation). This tolerance is in contradiction with Chalil's own view which, as previously discussed, firmly classifies the celebration of Muwlid as a bid'ah dulithah and rejected the recital of qusīduh. Asqalāni's opinion was not uncommon among the Shāfi'ite scholars, who did not reject the traditions involved in the celebration. al-Suyūtī, for example, showed considerable tolerance towards the tradition of Muwlid celebration for which he composed a treatise entitled Husu al Maqsid si 'Amul al-Muwlid, which defended its good innovations. It was also on the basis of the opinions of al-'Asqalānī, al-Suyūtī and al-Haytamī that the traditionalists justified the manner of their Mawlid celebration. This justification was consistent with their approach to legal issues and their reliance on mostly Shāfi'ite authorities, as discussed above in chapter five.

In answer to the question of whether the Mawlid was condemned (mudhmum) or rewarded (yuthāb), the traditionalists referred to al-Suyūtī, who held that in so far as the Mawlid took the form of a public gathering involving the recital of the Qur'ān, reading the Prophet's biography and serving a meal to those attending, the celebration was categorically a bid'ah hasaanh. They also referred to Abū Shāmah who had declared that among the most favorable innovations (wa min ahsani mā ubtudi'a) was the Mawlid celebration, which was marked by the distribution of alms (sadaqāt), the performance of

46 Ibid., 179.

<sup>43</sup> Chalil, "Fatwa 'Oelama' Jang Haq Tentang Bid'ah Mauloedan," 21.

As an example of al-Suyūti's defense of the Muwlid, see his refutation of al Fākihāni al-Maliki's work al-Mawrid st al-Kulām 'ulā 'Amul al-Mawlid, a work which vehemently condemned the tradition of Mawlid celebration and classified it as bid'ah mudhmumah (evil innovation). al-Suyūtī, Husa ul-Maqsid st 'Amul al-Mawlid (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1985), 45-51.

<sup>45</sup> Abbas, 40 Musaluh Agumu, vol. 2, 177-181.

beneficial deeds (ul-ma'rufur) on behalf of the poor and the expression of affection for the Prophet and gratitude to God. 47

Chalil explains that the traditionalists had employed a false *Indith* in their justification of the *Mawlid*. This *Indith* states: "Whoever celebrates my birthday. I will bestow on him a *shafi ah* on the Day of Judgment." This was an obvious fabrication, he further argues, because none of the authoritative collections of *Indith* literature ever reported it. 48 Chalil scrutinizes the reliability of the above-mentioned *Indith* closely, out of dissatisfaction with the extent to which the traditionalists evaluated the *Indith* in general, a fault which he saw as responsible for the introduction of many un-Islamic traditions. 49 Chalil, however, does not mention the source or the names from which this false *Indith* was derived. He only says that one of the readers of the daily *Abadi*, for which he wrote the religious column from 1953-1954 and intermittently from 1955-1960, had brought this *Indith* to his attention. Besides, he himself had often heard mention of this false *Indith* from "enthusiasts" of the *Mawlid* 50

The aforementioned hadith can in fact be found in four different hadith-texts, namely Durrat al-Nāṣiḥin. Waṣiyat al-Muṣṭatā, Uṣfuriyah and Qurrat al-Uyūn, all of which were among the hadith-texts embodied in the curriculum of the pesantren. These texts, which do not provide a classification of the hadith nor an examination of the reliability of its narrators, have a reputation of including false and weak hadiths. This is particularly true of the Waṣiyat al-Muṣṭatā which even goes so far as to leave out the names of transmitters. As such, Waṣiyat al-Muṣṭatā may be regarded as a narration of dialogues between Muḥammad and 'Alī Ibn Abī Tālib on moral, ritual and belief issues. In

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup>Ibid., 180-181.

<sup>48</sup> Moenawar Chalil, "Hadits Mauludan," Abadi (February, 20; 1953).

<sup>49</sup> Moenawar Chalil, "Ratjoen Jang Berbahaja Bagi Oemmat Islam?" Pembelu Islum, no. 56, 25.

<sup>50</sup>Chalil, "Hadits2 Mauludan."

<sup>51</sup> Kitab Palsu Dalam Hadis Kuning," Aulu (February: 1994), 13.

fact, due to its lack of many of the required elements of a *hudith*-text, it could be better classified as a casual record of Muhammad's sayings, irrespective of their authenticity, than as a proper *hudith*-text. 52

that it was but one of several false *(nndith palsu)* reported in those texts. They also unhesitatingly confessed that such fabrication was a grievous sin and strongly condemned by the Prophet. So It would seem, therefore, that this false *(nndith palsu)* was not deliberately employed by the traditionalists as a textual basis for the *(Nnwlid)* celebration, as Chalil had suggested. Rather, they advanced a more subtle argument by referring to the Prophet's practice of fasting on Mondays in honor of his birthday. Sahal Mahfudh, the deputy chair of the Central Consultative Board of the *(Nahdat al-'Ulamā'*) believed that the *(Nawlid)* was a worthy tradition whose establishment could be justified on the basis of the fact that the Prophet himself fasted on Mondays in memory of his birthday. Mahfudh's argument was not novel in the debate over the *(Nawlid)* controversy, since it had been employed by other proponents of the celebration. So Even Ibn al-Hājj, who accepted the *(Nawlid)* with considerable reluctance, resorted to the same *(nadith)* put forth by Mahfudh, declaring that

<sup>52</sup> Although in *Durrat al-Nāṣiḥīa* the last reporter is not mentioned, the first reporter is often mentioned. This does not apply to *Waṣiyat al-Muṣṭufā* where nothing appears except the dialogue between Muḥammad and 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib. 'Uthmān Ibn Ḥasan al-Khawbawī, *Durrat al-Nāṣiḥīa fī al-Wu'z wa al-Irshād* (Semarang: Maktabat Usaha Keluarga, n.d.); see the commentary on *Waṣiyut al-Muṣṭufā* by 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī, al-Miaaḥ al-Saniyah 'alā al-Waṣiyah al-Muṭbūliyah (Indonesia: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyah, n.d.).

<sup>53&</sup>quot;Kitab Palsu Dalam Hadis Kuning," 13; there is a hadith which says: "Whoever intentionally gives the lie to me, he will be permanently placed in hell." This hadith is both subih and mutawatir (a hadith which was reported by a group of people and which was handed down in uninterrupted sequence) and is related in almost all of the hadith texts (fi aghlab dawawia al-hadith). Abu 'Abd Allah Ibn 'Adi, al-Kāmil sī Du'asā' al-Rijāl (Baghdad: Matba'at Salmān al-A'zami, n.d.), 18, sootnote 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup>Sahal Mahfudh, "Nabi Sendiri Mengisaratkan Perlunya Peringatan Maulid." *Aula* (October; 1990), 67.

<sup>55</sup>al-Maliki, Buquh 'Acienh, 6.

the Prophet had urged his followers to fast on Mondays as a way of honoring his birthday. 56

Chalil's attack on the *Mawlid* targeted in particular the practice of reciting the panegyrical texts. Although the traditionalists were unable to cite any specific textual evidence for this practice, they did consider it to be valid on the basis of the *Mawlid's* overall classification as *bid'ah pasanah* by the Shāfi'īte jurists. Chalil said nothing about the festive side of the *Mawlid*, since the recital of the panegyrical texts was not part of the festivities. Indeed, it was partly against these festivities that scholars expressed their rigorous intolerance towards the *Mawlid*. This intolerance was not only expressed by lbn al-Ḥājj and Ibn Taymīyah, whose opinions Chalil has briefly mentioned, but also by 'Abduh who denounced the festivity and viewed it as an indecent practice. For this reason, 'Abduh perceived the celebration of *Mawlid*, as it was commonly exercised, to be a "bazaar of sins" (sūq al-fusūq). 57

The feasting aspect was not characteristic of the traditionalists' Mawlid, but rather of the Gerebeg Mawlid. The latter, which was observed annually by the Yogyakarta Sultanate, was not unknown to Chalil, since it constituted a "national" feast for the Javanese. It was in the course of the Gerebeg Mawlid that all kinds of "indecent" activities including shadow-plays, games, theater, gambling and lotteries took place. Had Chalil turned his attention to this tradition, he would have condemned it, since it was a "distortion" of the noble meaning of religious celebrations. <sup>58</sup> Indeed, he spoke against the festive

He further states that respect for the Prophet's birthday implies respect for the month of Rabi' al-Awwal. Hence, it is appropriate, he explains, that Muslims should honor the Prophet's birthday by doing things which God had distinguished the outstanding months. Ibn al-Hājj, al-Mudkhal, vol. 2, 3; the hadith which notes the Prophet's Monday fast is reported by Muslim and Ahmad Ibn Hanbal. See Ibn Kathīr, ul-Bidāyuh wu ul-Nihāyuh, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1988), 242; Ibn Rajab, Kitāb Lutā'if ul-Mu'ārif fīmā li-Mawāsim al-'Āmm min al-Wazā'if (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1975), 93.

<sup>57</sup> Muhammad 'Abduh, "al-Ittibā' wa al-Taqlīd," in al-Imām Muhammad 'Abduh. (eds.) Adūnīs and Khālidah Sa'id (Beirut: Dār al-'līm li-al-Malāyīn, 1983), 61.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup>The Gerebeg Mawlid is closely associated with a number of attractions which could be found in the pasar malam (night market). Often, gambling, lottery and their like take place in the pasar malam, although the committee, set up to coordinate the Gerebeg Mawlid, has

aspects of the celebrations of 'Ashura', Laylat al-qadr and Rebo wekusun, which will be briefly presented later. In addition, a very pronounced pre-Islamic syncretism could be found in the procession of the Gerebeg Mawlio. So Chalil's attack on the manner of the Mawlid celebration did not touch upon the central problem of "distortion" which was more evident in the festivities and the syncretism of the Gerebeg than in the mere recital of the quidab, for which legal justification had been provided by its proponents.

H

The veneration of special days and months traditionally generated controversy among Muslims and has led to the creation of two opposing stands. While one opinion venerates the month of Rajab, incorporating within it salāt al-raghā'ib (communal supererogatory prayer) and welcoming the Rajab sacrifices, the other view rejects these practices. Needless to say each opinion claims that it was authorized by the utterances of the Prophet. 60 This dispute is also pertinent to 'Ashūrā' which is celebrated on the tenth day of al-Muḥarram. 'Ashūrā' is the name of a feast regarded by Muslims as commendable and holy on historical grounds. 61 However, a number of hadīths promoting observances, in addition to fasting on the tenth day of al-Muḥarram, were rejected by some scholars. al-Shawkānī, for instance, listed a number of hadīths describing the virtues, qualities and

always declared such games to be illegal. Judaningrat, "Sambutan Ketua," in Risalah Sekuten. 1 (November: 1954), (?).

In the Gerebeg Mawlid, syncretism with pre-Islamic elements is pronounced, as the procession includes the gunungans (food mounds) which are believed to carry blessing for those who receive them and to have as well mystical dimension symbolized in the choice of certain kinds of vegetation, flowers and eggs. In addition, the playing of the gamelan (a set of Javanese musical instruments) and the use of various ceremonial items clearly indicate the pre-Islamic influence in the Gerebeg Mawlid. For further discussion, see Soelarto's Gerebeg di Kesultanan Yogyakarta, 68-84; this is in spite of the fact that the Gerebeg remains an Islamic celebration and indeed the reading of al-Barzanji constitutes the culmination of the celebration. Soedjono Tirtokoesoemo, The Gerebegs in the Sultanuat Jogjakarta, (trans.) F. D. Hansen Raae (n.p.: Nadruk Verboden, n.d.), 16.

<sup>60</sup>M. J. Kister, "Rajab Is the Month of God..." in Studies in Jahiliyya and Early Islam (London: Variorum Reprints, 1980), 193.

<sup>61</sup>A. J. Wensinck, "'Āshūrā'," Encyclopaedia of Islam, vol. 1 (new ed.) (eds.) H. A. R. Gibb et. al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), 705.

merits of the day of 'Ashura' which he considered to be either mawdu' or murfu 62 While Ibn Rajab closely examined hudiths which promoted meritorious practices during 'Ashura', Ibn Taymiyah regarded certain practices observed on this day as incompatible with the Shuri'nh 63

'Ashura' is one of the ceremonial occasions in the Muslim calendar that have acquired a special significance in Javanese culture. List celebration, known as bukuk luwur (the opening of the cover of the grave of Sunan Kudus), for example, is annually conducted in Kudus, central Java, where the Javanese come in throngs from all over the region to keep alive this venerated day. The bukuk luwur procession involves a component of burnkuh (blessing), which is believed to be present in the ceremonial food and in the pieces of the cloth tomb-cover from Sunan Kudus grave. These are distributed at the end of the procession to participants eager to benefit from divine favor. As a religious ceremony, bukuk luwur is also a festive occasion featuring a number of events and attractions during the evening in the pasur mulum (night market). 65

As was the case with his attack-on the celebration of the Mawlid. Chalil's discussion of 'Ashora' did not address the phenomena which developed out of local traditions, such as the observance of buknk luwur. Rather, he attacked a set of practices revered by the traditionalists, whose arguments in their favor can be found in their interpretation of the figh-texts. This discussion of the celebration of 'Ashora', therefore, will also investigate these figh-texts in order to establish the viewpoint and arguments of the traditionalists. Chalil was well aware of the role of the figh-texts in shaping the

<sup>62</sup>al-Shawkāni, al-Fawā'id al-Majmū'ah sī al-Ahādīth al-Mawdū'ah (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabi, 1986), 113-114.

<sup>63</sup>lbn Rajab, Lucă'if al-Ma'ārif sîmā li-Mawāsim ul-'Āmm min ul-Wazā'if, 52-53; Ibn Taymiyah, al-Fucāwā al-Kubcā, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), 295-304.

<sup>64</sup>Koentjaraningrat, Javanese Culture (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1985), 393.

Sunan Kudus is one of the wali sanga (nine sacred apostles) who pioneered in the propagation of Islam on the island of Java. For a short description of the bukak luwur, see Thomas B. Ataladjar, "Menara Kudus," in Ensiklopedi Nasional Indonesia, vol. 9 (Jakarta: Cipta Adi Pusaka, 1990), 210.

traditionalists' way of venerating 'Āshūrā', as demonstrated by his enumeration of ten practices mentioned in one of these texts. 66 Moreover, our discussion of 'Āshūrā' will not be complete without juxtaposing Chalil's opinion with that of the early scholars on this issue.

The fact that the day of 'Āshūrā' belongs to the set of days venerated by the Shurī'uh does not prevent Chalil from subjecting it to scrutiny. In a number of articles, he expresses his belief that the traditionalists had spoiled the excellence of this day by introducing practices which were not prescribed by God, the Prophet or the sulu! Chalil then argues against the customs attached to the day of 'Āshūrā' customs which he considered to be bid'uh dulāluh. He opposes treating 'Āshūrā' as a feast day in which joy is expressed in the form of wasteful parades, parties and public gatherings involving sinful activities. 67 Although he does not reject the holiness of 'Āshūrā', he nevertheless states that its veneration should be in line with a sound hadīth which explains that the Prophet observed the fast of 'Āshūrā' merely out of gratitude to God, who had granted victory to Mūsā and his people over the Fir'awn on that day. Chalil further argues that the Prophet did not introduce the performance of the complex customs, which later prevailed in the community as a result of the spread of weak fundīth traditions in the writings and words of religious scholars. 68

Chalil denounces the claim that whoever performs a voluntary prayer (salāt ul-sunauh) of forty ruku'ahs during 'Āshūrā' between zuhr (noon) and 'aṣr (late after noon-prayer) and recites istightār (a formula of repentance) seventy times upon its completion will be rewarded with paradise. 69 In fact, Chalil deems it sinful to ascribe such

69Chalil, "Bid'ah Pada Asiura."

<sup>66</sup>Moenawar Chalil, "Bid'ah Pada Asjura," Abadi (September, 25; 1953); al-Bakri, l'anne ul-Talibin, vol. 2, 302.

<sup>67</sup> Moenawar Chalil, "Peringatan Asjuraa," Abadi (August, 3; 1954).

Among the *hadīths* that he mentions is one declaring "Today, obligatory fast is not imposed on you and I am fasting today, so he who wishes to observe the fast should do so and he who does not wish to can take food." Ibid.

an innovative prayer to the Prophet. 70 The performance of an 'ibādah mahdah' (pure worship), such as an unprescribed prayer, could never have escaped the criticism of a puritan like Chalil, especially if it was based on a weak hadīth. A similar prayer was discussed by Ibn Taymīyah who held that the Sharī ah condemned the performance of a voluntary prayer that exceeded the ascribed number of raka ahs and in which a particular sūrah (verse) was recited a fixed number of times in veneration of the month of Rajab. 71

Chalil attributes the introduction of this voluntary prayer to the traditionalists, even though it is not mentioned in their figh-texts. Rather, it originates from a hadith discussed in al-Suyūṭī's nl-La illi 'nl-Maṣnū'nh fī nl-Aḥādīth nl-Mawdū'nh. It, therefore, seems that Chalil derived the tradition of this voluntary prayer from al-Suyūṭī's work and then incorporated it into the body of practices associated with the traditionalists' veneration of 'Aṣhūrā'. This may be inferred from the fact that Chalil himself mentions that al-Suyūṭī was among those scholars who rejected the authority of this hadīth. Indeed, al-Suyūṭī conducts in his nl-Lu illi 'nl-Mnṣnū'nh an intense inquiry into the prayers observed in veneration of particular days and months and cautiously examines the hadīths by which the prayers were justified. He does so in order to unravel and expose any defective or inauthentic elements occurring in them. 73 With regards to the voluntary prayer of 'Aṣhūrā' in particular, al-Suyūṭī reveals that the order of such a prayer was based on a hadīth whose reporters were unknown (maihūt).

The common notion that 'Ashurā' is the day on which various miraculous events occurred, such as the creation of Adam, the recovery of Ya'qub's sight, the revelation of the

<sup>70</sup>Ibid

<sup>7 1</sup> Ibn Taymiyah, Mujmu'at Fatuwā Shaykh ul-Islām Tuqy ul-Din Iba Tuymiyah, vol. 2 (Cairo: Matba'at Kurdistān al-Islāmiyah, 1326 H.), 2-3.

<sup>72</sup>Chalil, "Bid'ah Pada Asjura,"; idem, "Peringatan Asjuraa."

<sup>73</sup>See part of "Kitāb al-Ṣalāb" (chapter on prayer) in al-Suyūţī, al-La'āli' al-Muṣṇū'ab fī al-Aḥādīch al-Mawdū'ab, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifab, n.d.), 48-63.

Old Testament to Müsa, the anchoring of Nüh's ark and others are dismissed by Chalil. 75 As mentioned elsewhere, Chalil was fascinated by the power of reason and employed it in rejecting senseless statements and legendary traits attributed to the Qur'an. He was particularly suspicious of the primitive aspects of those stories that exalted the peculiarities of the day of 'Ashura'. This is despite the fact that these same stories, which are reported in a hadith narrating the miracles of the early Prophets, are one of the sources for the 'Ashora' fast which Chalil strongly believed in. 76

Chalil made it a practice to reject hadiths that were in contradiction with reason. Thus, illogical hudiths like the one discussed above were met with a high degree of disapproval. Although al-Suyuti ascribes the account of the above hadith on the miracles of the prophets to Abu Hurayrah and considers its reporters trustworthy (rijuluh thiquit). he nevertheless expresses his suspicion that its much (content) was a mere fabrication of later scholars. 77 A full citation of the fuelth as narrated by al-Suyuti can be found in one of the traditionalists' figh-text, namely the l'anat al-Talibin by al-Bakri, who, unlike al-Suyūți, does not investigate the reliability of its isnad or the authenticity of its muon al-Bakri simply accepts the legends as historical facts in order to establish the holiness of Ashuni 78

Chalil lists other practices absorbed into the tradition of 'Ashūrā' which he considers to be grave diversions from the pure teachings of the Prophet. He shows an uncompromising position even against the minor tradition of iktihal or celular (coloring one's eyelids with kohl). In fact, he declares, associating the practice of iktihal with a healing power capable of guarding or curing the eyes from diseases owing to the sanctity of Ashura' was a ridiculous belief. He further argues that iktipal originated from a false

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup>Moenawar Chalil. "Menjingkap Tabir Kepalsuan Dari Hadits2 Mengenai Kekeramatan dan Kesaktian Hari Asjura" Abadi (July 15; 1960).

<sup>76</sup>al-Suyuti, al-La'āli' al-Masau'ah sī al-Ahādīth al-Mawdu'ah, vol. 2, 109-110.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup>Ibid., 110.

<sup>78</sup>al-Bakri, I'aauh, vol. 2, 302.

tradition ascribed to Muhammad. 79 Although iktihāl was mentioned in the traditionalists' figh-texts, there is no common traditionalist position on its practice. While some display a favorable attitude towards it, others entirely exclude it. Several lines of anzm (poetry) are quoted in Bughyut al-Musarshidin encouraging people to practice iktihāl along with other commendable acts during 'Ashura': 80 The Bughyuh, however, is the only traditionalist figh-text which unequivocally favors the practice of iktihāl. This indicates that its practice was debatable even among the traditionalists, since Bughyuh is a collection of fatwās (legal opinions) intended to settle matters disputed in Muslim religious life. 81

Tinut al-Talibin also raises the issue of iktibil by examining the validity of the textual evidence behind this tradition. Nonetheless, unlike the Bughyah, the I and rejects the practice of iktibil in as much as it is based on a hadich that, for various reasons, had been largely rejected by scholars, such as al-Hākim, who considered it to be munkar (rejected), and Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalāni, who deemed it to be manyou' (false). Some Hanasite jurists even saw in iktibil a humiliating metaphor, symbolizing the manner by which Yazid and Ibn Ziyād rubbed their eyes with Huṣayn's blood. 82

It must be borne in mind that the tradition of *iktipil* is not restricted to the day of 'Ashuri'. since it is a recommendable exercise for those who fast, particularly during the month of Ramadan. al-Shafi'i endorses the practice of *iktipil* on the basis of the Prophetic tradition stating that: "Smear [your eyes] with antimony sprinkled [with perfume], since it

80. Abd al-Rahman Ba 'Alawi, Bughyat al-Mustarshidin (Semarang: Maktabat wa Matba'at Usaha Keluarga, n.d.), 114.

<sup>79</sup>Chalil, "Bid'ah Pada Asjura."

<sup>81</sup> Bughyah is an abridgment of a large collection of fatwas which were issued by five fugaha (jurists), namely 'Abd Allah Ba Faqih, 'Abd Allah Ibn 'Umar Ibn Yahya, 'Alawi Ibn Saqqaf, Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr al-Yamani and Muhammad Ibn Sulayman al-Madani. Ibid., 2.

<sup>82</sup>al-Bakri, l'anne al-Talibin, vol. 2, 301; the relation between iktihal and the death of Husayn is also mentioned in Isma'il Ibn Muhammad al-Jazāhī's Kushf al-Khafā' wa Muzil al-Ilbās min al-Aþādīch 'ammā Ishtubucu min Alsinut al-Nās, vol. 2 (Aleppo: Maktabat al-Turāth al-Islāmī, n.d.), 325.

can increase the vision and make the eyelids grow."83 'Alī al-Qārī confirms the acceptability of *iktiḥīl* by saying that its practice is good as long as it is intended as following the *sunaub* of the Prophet and not as expressing joy or grief, as was the case with the Khawārij and the Rāfiḍah. 84

Another practice which Chalil considers textually groundless and devoid of religious principles is the tradition of *ightisil* (bathing), by which immunity from diseases was thought to be secured. Like the tradition of *ightisil*. Chalil condemns *ightisil*, because it is not backed up with conclusive textual evidence and because of its reliance on a non-scientific explanation. His stand against the belief in non-scientific explanations paralleled his rejection of the so-called *nl-pibb nl-nabawi* which promoted health care, medication and healing formulas based on Muhammad's personal experience and observation. Even if the *indiths* on *iknipil* and *ightisil* were proven to be sound. Chalil would still question their scientific value. In contrast to its rejection of *iknipil*, the *l'innib* justifies the practice of *ightisil* and considers it a virtue esteemed by the *Shari'ub*. Nonetheless, in justifying the practice the *l'innib* does not rely on *inaith*, but on poems which enumerate a set of commendable acts, including that of *ightisil*, to mark the momentous tenth of al-Muharram. 86

The *hudith* upholding the practices of *iktihāl* and *ightisāl* was rejected by scholars for sundry reasons. While al-Ḥākim, who traced the *hadīth* back to Ibn 'Abbās, classified it as *marīv'*, Ibn Rajab disqualified it as *mawdū*, al-Ḥākim also called into question one of the transmitters of the *hadīth's isnāo*.<sup>87</sup> Ibn Najjār narrated the *hudīth* in

<sup>83</sup>al-Munāwi said that the Shāfi'ites agreed in recommending iktihāl as it promoted the physical well-being of its practitioners. Ali Ibn Ahmad al-'Azīzī, al-Sirāj al-Munīr: Sharh al-Jāmi' ul-Ṣaghīr, vol. 1 (Miṣr: al-Maṭba'ah al-Khayrīyah, 1304 H.), 268; al-Shāfi'i, ul-Umm. vol. 7 (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣrīyah li-al-Kitāb, 1987), 133.

<sup>84</sup>Mulla 'Alī al-Qārī, ul-Asrār al-Marfo'ah fī ul-Akhbār ul-Mawdo'uh (Beirut: Dār al-Amānah, 1971), 475.

<sup>85</sup>Chalil, "Bid'ah Pada Asjura."

<sup>86</sup> al-Bakri, *l'anne al-Talibin*, vol. 2, 302.

<sup>87</sup>al-Suyūți, ul-Lu'āli' ul-Mașno'uh sī ul-Ahādīch ul-Muwdo'uh, vol. 2, 111.

question on the authority of Abū Hurayrah but doubted its isnād on account of one of its reporters, namely Ismā'īl Ibn Mu'ammar Ibn Qays, whom he considered unreliable. 88 Ibn Taymīyah, who does not chose to rank this hudīth, offered an overall view saying that the traditions commonly observed during 'Āshūrā', such as those of ikrihāl and ightisāl, were bid'nh munkurah, having been ordered neither by the Prophet nor by the al-Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn (the four orthodox Caliphs) nor even by the a immut al-Muslimīn (the leaders of Muslims). He further argues that the hadīths which report those practices were introduced by the muta hkhkhirūn (later scholars) whose opinions on their authenticity are not to be trusted. 89

Chalil's disagreement with 'Ashura' related practices went beyond those originating from a belief in the merit of voluntary prayer, the miracles of the early Prophets and the healing powers of iktihal and ightisal. He took a firm stand against the special status of other practices performed during 'Ashura', even if they served a devotional purpose, such as almsgiving (sudaquh), compassionate visits to the sick and added support to relatives (kelapungan kepada segenap kelvarganya). Chalil argues that the employment of the hadich to legitimate these so-called devotional acts was defective, since one of its narrators, Habib Ibn Habib al-Marwazi, was declared a liar by al-Dhahabi, al-'Asqalānī and al-Suyūṭī. He further states that the pursuit of a religious cause would nullify the act, regardless of its merit, unless the act could be justified on the basis of an authentic argument. 90

He was supported in this by early scholars who were critical of the *hadith* in question. Ibn Rajab, for example, cites the opinions of three *hadith* scholars, each of whom concluded that the *hadith* was either *marfu'* or that its *isnād* was *majhūl* (unknown) or

<sup>88</sup>al-Shawkānī, al-Fawā'id al-Majmū'ab sī al-Aḥādīth al-Mawdū'ab. 114; Ibn Rajab. Laṣā'if al-Ma'ārif, 52.

<sup>89</sup> ibn Taymiyah, al-Facāwā al-Kubcā, 301-302.

<sup>90</sup> Moenawar Chalil, "Menjingkap Tabir Kepalsuan."

ghayr malifux (unprotected), 91 whereas Ibn al-Jawzi and Ibn Taymīyah discovered it to be false. 92 According to Ibn Taymīyah, sectarian antagonism was involved in the introduction of devotional practices into the observance of the day of 'Ashūrū'. He holds that the hadīth which encouraged people to give added support to their family, for example, was created by heretics (nhl nl-bid'ah) whose hatred towards 'Alī and his followers had led them to counter the Rāfidah by creating a false hadīth. He further states that the rivalry between the heretics and the Rāfidah was an antagonism between two evils, since each of them had fabricated a hadīth to establish a tradition not prescribed by the Prophet. 93

The *hadith* in support of devotional acts in 'Ashura' was not entirely rejected by scholars. Unlike the *hudith* on *ikithal* and *ightisal*, there were scholars who categorized it as authoritative. Abu al-Fadl Ibn Nāṣir in particular argued that this *hudith* had been passed down from Abu Hurayrah in a number of ways (*turuq*), some of which were sound, al-Suyuti was also convinced that the *hudith* in question was unequivocally sound (thābit suhit). The l'anth quotes the hudith on devotional purposes with no reference to the controversy over its authenticity. Seven if it was considered a weak hudith, it did not lose its value for guidance, since it dealt exclusively with virtuous practices (fudā'il al-a'māl). This artitude was consistent with the traditionalist principle which held that a weak hudith could be used to support virtuous acts. 96

The same principle was maintained by most of the Shāfi'īte scholars who, according to al-Nawawi, were in consensus on the permissibility of the use of a weak

<sup>9 1</sup> Ibn Rajab, Luca'if al-Ma'arif, 52.

<sup>92</sup> al-Shawkani, ul-Fuwā'id ul-Majano'ab sī ul-Abādīch ul-Muwdo'nb, 115-116.

<sup>93</sup> lbn Taymiyah, ul-Fucuwā al-Kubrā, vol. 2, 302.

<sup>9 4</sup>al-Shawkuni, al-Fuwuid al-Majano'ah ff al-Ahūdith al-Muwdo'ah, 115-116; al-Jazāhi, Kashf al-Khafā' wa Muzil al-Ilbās, vol. 2, 392.

<sup>95</sup> al-Bakri, *l'anth*, vol. 2, 302.

For the connection between the reverence of 'Ashura' and fuda'il ul-u'mal, see in ibid., 203; for an opinion that fuda'il al-u'mal means recommended practices (ibaduc-ibuduc sunnat) to which the practices on the day of 'Ashura' could be connected and which were condemned by the reformists, see A. Hassan, "Memakai Hadits Dla'if," Sval-Djawab, no. 3, 20-21.

hadith for the inducement of such practices. 97 Siradjuddin Abbas also notes that while the Shafi'ite madhhab allowed the use of a weak hadith for the execution of fada'il al-a'māl, the Hanasite employed it to accommodate legal provisions. 98 The acceptance of a weak hadith in such circumstances was disallowed by the reformists, who argued that these latter also fall within the criteria of religious devotions which must, therefore, rest on a sound textual basis. Hence, the use of a weak hadith to justify such practices could not be sustained in light of the reformist principles to which Chalil strongly adhered 99

Chalil himself observed 'Ashūrā' by simply fasting on the tenth day of the month, as an authentic hadīth prescribed. 100 There is no dispute over the solid textual basis of the fast of 'Ashūrā'. In fact, scholars even considered it an obligatory fast before it was abrogated by the requirements of the Ramadān fast. 101 They championed the obligatory nature of the fast of 'Ashūrā' on the basis of statements (kulām) by Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal and Abū Bakr al-Athram. 102 In addition, a certain hadīth even contained an order to pay zakāt during 'Ashūrā' an order made before the verse on the obligatory zakāt al-fitr was revealed. 103

<sup>97</sup>al-Nawawi, Mata al-Arba'ia al-Nawawiyah si al-Ahādith al-Şahihah al-Nabawiyah (Algiers: al-Madrasah al-'Aliyah li-al-Dirāsāt al-'Arabiyah, 1950), 8.

<sup>98</sup> Abbas, 40 Musuluh Aguma, vol. 3, 183.

Moenawar Chalil, "Ratjoen Jang Berbahaja Bagi Oemmat Islam?" 21; see also Hassan's rejection of the use of a *hadith da'if* (weak *hadith*) to justify virtuous deeds. Hassan, "Memakai Hadits Dla'if," 20-21.

<sup>100</sup>Chalil, "Bid'ah Pada Asjura."

<sup>101</sup>There is a false *badith* on the fast of 'Ashura' related by an authority of Habib Ibn Habib which emphasizes the blessing attached to it and which declares its reward to be equal to sixty years of worship. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, al-Manar al-Munif st al-Suhih wa al-Du'if (Aleppo: Maktabat al-Mathu at al-Islāmiyah, 1970), 47.

<sup>102</sup> Ibn Rajab, Lută'if ul-Ma'ārif, 47; al-Nawawi, ul-Majmo' Sharh ul-Muhadhdhab, vol. 6 (Damascus: Idārat al-Tibā'ah al-Munūriyah, n.d.), 383; unlike the other recommended fasts, the fast of 'Āshūrā' can be observed by a woman, even if she does not ask her husband's consent. This indicates the high status of the fast of 'Āshūrā' which is to be contested only by the recommended fast of 'Arafah for which a husband's consent is equally not required. Ibn Hajar al-Haytami, al-Minhāj al-Qawim (Semarang: Maktabat Usaha Keluarga, n.d.), 127; for instances in which husband's consent is required for a woman who wants to fast, see Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Din al-Albāni, Silsilat al-Ahādīth ul-Suḥīhah wa Shay' min Fiqhihā wa Fawā'idihā, vol. 1 (n.p.: al-Maktab al-Islāmi, 1985). 679-670.

<sup>103</sup> Majd al-Dīn al-Mubārak Ibn al-Athīr, Jāmi' al-Uṣūl sī Ahādīth al-Rasūl, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1983), 311.

be seen in the fact that he was not in favor of fasting on the ninth day of al-Muharram, known as Tasv'v'. This fast was also mentioned by some scholars as part of a series of fasting days during al-Muharram, which included the eleventh day of the month as well. Both function and fight literature report that the Prophet planned a fast on the ninth of al-Muharram to distinguish the Muslim fast of 'Ashvira' from that of the Jews, but his death put an end to the plan. Despite his failure to realize this goal, the concept of Tasv'v' had a strong appeal and the fast was faithfully observed by Muslims. Ochalil's rejection of the fast of Tasv'v' followed from his puritanical belief that only those rituals based on the Prophet's actual deeds should be performed, because only in such cases is there a reliable guide to the manner of their execution. In fact, the fast of Tasv'v' remained a subject of controversy, as scholars disagreed on the events that had led to the issuance of that order (subab al-wurūd).

From the point of view of a puritan like Chalil, the excessive practices of 'Ashura' were antithetical to the authentic teachings of the Prophet, since an examination of the hadith from which the complex customs of 'Ashura' had descended clearly proved its unreliability. No wonder, therefore, that he opposed all these practices, accepting only the fast of the tenth of al-Muharram which had conclusively been performed by the Prophet. Chalil was not merely concerned with denouncing those practices, but was also concerned

<sup>104</sup>Chalil, "Bid'ah Pada Asjura."

<sup>105</sup>lbn al-Athir, Jāmi' al-Uşul fi Ahādith al-Rasul, vol. 2, 311.; Zakariyā al-Anṣāri, Fath al-Wahhāb bi-Sharh Manhaj al-Tullāb, vol. 1 (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.), 124; al-Nawawi, al-Majmū' Sharh al-Muhadhdhab, vol. 6, 383; some scholars recommended fasting during the first ten days of al-Muharram. See Majd al-Din Abī al-Barakāt, al-Muharram fī al-Figh 'alā Madhhab al-Imām Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Arabi, n.d.), 231.

<sup>106</sup> Muslim, Subih Muslim, vol. 2, 498-499; the Prophet reportedly said: "Distinguish yourselves from the Jews by fasting the ninth and the eleventh of al-Muharram," Ibn Rajab, Lattif al-Mu'arif. 49; for the opinion which associated the Jewish 'Ashurt' with that of the Muslims, see S. D. Goitein, Studies in Islamic History and Institutions (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), 95-97.

<sup>107</sup>For the controversy, see the three arguments put forth by Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī in his Kirāb al-Ḥadā'iq fī 'llm al-Ḥadāth wa al-Zuhdīyāt, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, n.d.), 204.

with providing a textual basis for their illegitimacy. His objection to the traditionalists' veneration of 'Ashūrā' partly revolved around his presumption of their use of weak hadīths. Hence, the reasons for the divergent opinions concerning its veneration lie mostly on the different perceptions concerning the acceptability of weak hadīths. Chalil certainly rejected the use of weak hadīths, thus conforming to the puritan principle which provided no room for the use of weak hadīths even in support of the so called-fadā il ul-a'mūl.

## III

Another controversy pertinent to the veneration of particular months involved the debate over the method used to determine the first day of Ramadān and Shawwāl. While the reformists utilized the science of astronomy ('ilm al-falak'), by which hisāb (calendrical computation) was conducted to calculate the appearance of the new moon (hilāl), the traditionalists depended on ru'yah (sighting the new moon with the naked eyes) to detect the new moon. The debate over hisāb and ru'yah has not shown any sign of abating and still heats up every year when the months of Sha'bān and Ramadān are drawing to a close. 108 In an attempt to reach a unified solution, the Department of Religious Affairs created a Board of Hisāb and Ru'yah (Badan Hisab dan Rukyar) in 1972. It was felt that without such an initiative a schism would emerge within the Muslim community. 109 Indeed, this controversy prevails the Muslim community as a whole, despite the fact that

109A. Mukti Ali, "Sambutan Menteri Agama," in Luporun Musyuwarah Nasional Hisab dan Rukyat Direktorat Jendral Bimbingun Musyarakat Islam, 9 s/d 11 Muret. 1977. (Jakarta: Direktorat Pembinaan Badan Peradilan Agama Departemen Agama, 1977), 3 4.

<sup>108</sup> The recurrence of this controversy is reflected in various articles recently published in the traditionalist and reformist media. Muhammad Kurdi, "Hisab Hilal Suatu Kemajuan atau Kemunduran dalam Penetapan Awal Bulan," Suaru Muhammadiyah (January 16-31; 1993), 26-27; Basit Wasid, "Rukyat Dengan Alat Canggih," Suara Muhammadiyah (November 1-15; 1993), 56-57; "Jawaban Ahli Rukyat atas Ahli Hisab," Aula (April-May; 1992), 30-39; "Mengintip Hilal Bukan Melihat Purnama," Aula (April-May; 1992), 16-23; Aziz Masyhuri, "Rukyah Hilal Bukan Khilafiyah," Aula (April-May; 1992), 23-30; A. Salam Nawawi, "Problema Hisab dan Prediksi Rukyat," Aula (February; 1991), 51-57; "Penetapan Awal Ramadhan dari Tahun ke Tahun," Aula (February; 1994), 67-70; "Satu Tahun Beridul Fitri Dua Kali," Aula (April-May; 1992), 11-16; "Idul Fitri Beda Lagi Beda Lagi," Aula (May; 1994), 29-33.

attempts have been made to reconcile the two approaches of hisab and ru'yuh 110 Needless to say, before the emergence of the reformist movement in Indonesia, ru yuh constituted the only method exercised by the Muslims. 111

The hisāb-rv'yab controversy prompted Chalil to speak on behalf of the reformists. 112 He describes that the observance of the Ramadan fast should begin when the new moon was sighted, since the verse declares: "So whosoever of you see the moon (wa man shahida minkum al-shahr) he shall fast therein". This is confirmed in a hadith which states: "Do not fast till you see (taraw) the new moon and do not break fast till you see (nurw) it, but if the weather is cloudy calculate about it." He explains that the word shuhida and ra'ā (the infinitive form of tarnw) indicate a visual, intellectual and scientific meaning as pertaining to the act of sighting. He also illustrates that this inexact indication of the words shuhida and ra it was designed to accommodate the intellectual means of society. Hence, the Sharinh, according to him, instructs that the commencement of the Ramadan fast should begin with the sighting of the moon using the naked eyes (ru'yah) for those who have no scientific means to do otherwise and expects those who are able to do so to utilize calendrical computation (hisab) for the purpose. 113

Chalil argues that the Prophet practiced ru yah due to illiteracy and the scarcity of astronomical knowledge in his time. If the science of astronomy had been advanced enough, the Prophet would have determined the commencement of the Ramadan fast

113 Moenawar Chalil, Nilai dan Hikmah Puasa (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1982), 65-66.

<sup>110</sup> Several international conferences have been held in an attempt to reach a compromise solution according to which the beginning of the Ramadan fast would be determined by using an approach embracing both hisāb and ru'yah. See Abdul Hamid b. Mohd. Tahir. Permasalahan dulam Penentuan Awal Puasa dan Hari Raya (Johor: Unit Penerbitan Akademik Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 1991), 1, 10.

<sup>111</sup>C. Snouck Hurgronje, Kumpulan Karangan Snouck Hurgronje, vol. 8 (Jakarta: INIS, 1993), 95-97.

<sup>112</sup>For the reformist support of bisab, see "Puasa dengan Hisab," Sval-Djawab, no. 7, 56-58; this is not to say that the reformists totally rejected the method of ru'yah, when the findings of hisab proved to be void due to the appearance of the moon and its detection by naked eye. Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, Himpunan Pucusan Mujlis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (Yogyakarta: P. P. Muhammadiyah, 1967), 291-292.

according to histo. This was so, Chalil explains, because the Prophet himself had admitted that illiteracy and the absence of the skill of histo among his people constituted an obstacle in their exercise of histo. Chalil quotes the following hadith to justify his premise: "We are unlettered people who can neither write nor count. The month is thus and thus, folding his thumb when he said it the third time." 114 Nowadays, Chalil argues, the practice of ruynh should be replaced due to Muslim expertise in astronomy and on account of the histo's high level of accuracy in fixing the beginning of Ramadān and Shawwāl. 115 Chalil then points the inconsistency of the proponents of ruynh, who persistently reject the use of histo for the calculation of the first day of Ramadān and Shawwāl, but unconditionally resort to it for the calculation of the obligatory prayer times. 116

Chalil agrees with the traditionalists on the fact that hish had never been put into practice during the era of the Prophet, but disagrees with them on its adoption by the subhibah and the tabi'un. Citing Ibn Taymiyah's opinion, Aziz Masyhuri, the deputy chair of the Consultative Board of the Nuhcht al-'Ulamā' of east Java, notes that hish as a practice began only after the third century of Hijrah. Prior to that, ru'yah had continually served as the sole method from the time of the Prophet, the sabhibah and the tabi'un. Moreover, all four of the great madhinb founders had reached an agreement on the absolute observance of ru'yah. 117 The traditionalists also demonstrated that the proponents of hish had developed different approaches, which in due course resulted in the formation of three categories of hish. These categorical divisions, with their divergent levels of mathematical accuracy, had brought about varying deductions, the consequence of which

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., 68.

<sup>115&</sup>lt;sub>Ibid., 69.</sub>

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., 69-70.

<sup>117</sup> Masyhuri, "Rukyah Hilal Bukan Khilafiyah," 24.

<sup>118</sup> Nawawi, "Problema Hisab dan Prediksi Rukyat," 50-51.

was that different dates were sometimes assigned to the first day of Ramadan and Shawwal. 119

Masyhuri argued that the exercise of  $r\dot{v}'ynh$  was in perfect conformity with religious doctrine and that its replacement by  $\dot{p}is\bar{n}b$  would oppose the Shari'nh, which provided conclusive evidence for the unconditional acceptance of rv'ynh. According to his view,  $\dot{p}is\bar{n}b$  can only act as a supplement to rv'ynh, because  $\dot{p}is\bar{n}b$ , which generates its formulas from logical norms, cannot function as a legal basis for a religious act. Hisāb should be simply taken as a guide in calculating the night when the rv'ynh is to be conducted, while the final determination has to be based on the authority of rv'ynh alone. Masyhuri further argued that the word  $\dot{r}urnw$ , as mentioned in the  $\dot{p}udith$  quoted by Chalil, cannot be interpreted as the act of sighting in either an intellectual or a scientific sense, as Chalil had maintained. Rather, it should be understood to mean visual sighting alone, because the phrase which follows fn'inghumma (if it is cloudy) particularizes its meaning, notably the sighting of the new moon with the naked eye. 120

According to the traditionalists, Chalil's translation of the *Qur inic* verse also presented some problems. They rejected his interpretation of the verse wa man shahida minkum al-shahr as meaning "So whosoever of you see the moon", because such an interpretation ignores the context in which the verse stands. All the classical exegetes

<sup>119</sup> The central board of the Muhummadiyah abrogated the establishment of the first day of Shawwill as Sunday, March 17th 1991, which had been the data announced earlier, and moved it to the following day, Monday, March 18th 1991. The central board of the Muhammadiyah did this once again in 1992, when the first day of Shawwill was revised from Saturday to Sunday. The one day lapse in the first day of Shawwill reoccurred in 1994, although this time the change was not proposed by Muhammadiyah circles. The revision was a reflection of an inaccuracy which befell the hisib system. "Satu Tahun Beridul Fitri Dua Kali," 14; Nawawi, "Problema Hisab dan Prediksi Rukyat," 51-52; see also Abbas. 40 Masalah Agama, vol. 1, 233.

<sup>120</sup> Masyhuri, "Rukyah Hilal Bukan Khilafiyah," 24; it is worth mentioning that the word ru'yah in the hadith is always followed by the phrases fa'in ghumma, fa'in halat dunahu ghayabah, an yaghumma, fa'in ghubbiya or fa'in ughmiya, all of which have the general sense of "if it is cloudy". See Muslim, Şahih Muslim, vol. 2, 458-459; Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, Futh ul-Būri, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), 119; al-Zurqāni, Sharh ul-Zurqāni 'alū al-Muwatta', vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1980), 152-155.

translated *shuhida* as "staying home", in the sense of not going on a journey, and not as seeing the moon. Thus, the sense of the verse should be: "So whoever of you is present [staying home] in the month, he shall fast therein." This translation was derived from its assumed contrast with the following verse which declares: "But if anyone is sick or on a journey, then a number of other days." Siradjuddin Abbas, therefore, felt that the verse has nothing to do with the issue of searching for the first and the last day of Ramadān. Rather, it presents the subject of fasting in general, since the question of the commencement and the end of Ramadān fast was exclusively ordained by the *hadīch*. 122

Chalil does not refer to the opinion of any of the early scholars in the course of his discussion of the hisāb-ru'yuh controversy. Scholars, such as Ibn Taymīyah and al-Shawkānī, whose opinions often served as his point of reference, seem to have favored ru'yuh. al-Shawkānī held that ru'yuh was the only viable basis for determining the commencement of the Ramadān fast as none of the hudīth traditions commanded otherwise. Ibn Rushd, whose Bidāyut al-Mujtahid was widely accepted by the reformists, found in ru'yuh an authoritative way of defining the beginning of Ramadān. The traditionalists, on the other hand, were able to claim the support of the early scholars. Thus, besides legitimizing their view with the opinions of non-Shafi'ite scholars, such as Ibn Taymīyah, al-Shawkānī and Ibn Rushd, the traditionalists also solicited support from the opinions of the authoritative Shāfi'īte scholars, such as al-Nawawī, al-'Asqalānī and al-Ramlī. 125

<sup>121</sup>For the verification, see Ibn Kathīr, Tufsīr ul-Qur'ān al-'Azīm, vol. 1 (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Istiqāmah, 1956), 216; al-Zamakhshari, al-Kushshāf, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 199?), 114; al-Rāzi, al-Tafsīr al-Kubīr, vol. 5 (Miṣr: al-Maṭba'ah al-Bahīyah al-Miṣrīyah, 1935-38), 96; al-Baydāwī, Anwār ul-Tunzīl wu Asrār ul-Ta'wīl, vol. 1 (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag: 1968), 101.

<sup>122</sup> Abbas, 40 Masulah Aguma, vol. 1, 248-249.

<sup>123</sup>al-Shawkānī, Nayl al-Awtār min Ahādīth Sayyid al-Akhyār: Sharh Muntaqā al-Akhbār, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1992), 188-191.

<sup>124</sup>Ibn Rushd, Bidāyat al-Mujtahid, vol. 1 (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 1986), 284.

<sup>125</sup> Abbas, 40 Musulah Agama, vol. 1, 254-255.

The traditionalists further challenged the notion advanced by Chalil that hisāb did not exist in the Prophet's time. Masyhuri notes that historical evidence indicates the practice of hisāb in pre-Islamic Arabia as proven by the archeological discovery of places where hisāb was "taught." 126 He shows that Ibn 'Abbās was among those who had expertise in the art of hisāb, whereby he calculated the number of twenty manzilahs (phases) through which the moon consistently rotated in a year. 127 Thus, the hadāth speaking of illiteracy and lack of astronomical skill should not be interpreted as an absolute negation of the arts of writing and astronomy among the Arabs and, as such, should not be used to justify the concept of hisāb. 128

Another controversy which attracted Chalil's attention with regards to the veneration of Ramadān was the way Laylar al-qudr (the night of power) was supposed to be observed. Laylaral-qudr is the night during Ramadān which is proclaimed in the Qur in as excelling any other night. It is the night when "the angels and the Spirit descend therein, by permission of their Lord, with every decree." 129 It was when the month of Ramadān became the month of the obligatory fast that Laylar al-qudr apparently assumed its lofty stature. Since then it has become one of the most venerated nights in the Muslim calendar. 130 The legitimation of Laylar al-qudr was linked with the elaboration of the idea of its virtues and merits. In comparing Laylaral-bara ah (the night of innocence) to Laylar al-qudr, scholars note that the former had a fixed date, while the latter did not. In addition, the former was the night of judgment and decree, while the latter was the night of mercy.

<sup>126</sup> Masyhuri mentioned Farld Wajdi's opinion that scholars had discovered archeological evidence in the form of stones, which indicated *hisāb*- related activity. Masyhuri, "Jawaban Ahli Rukyat atas Ahli Hisab," 32; see also Muḥammad Farld Wajdi, *Dā'irat ul-Ma'ārif al-Qara ul-'Ishrīn*, vol. 6 (Cairo: Maṭba'at Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Qarn al-'Ishrīn, 1915-1919).

<sup>127</sup> Masyhuri refers to al-Suyūţī who mentions that Ibn 'Abbās even had identified the names for each of those manzilahs. Masyhuri, "Jawaban Ahli Rukyat atas Ahli Hisab," 32; see also al-Suyūṭī, al-Durr al-Manthūr fī al-Tafsīr ul-Ma'thūr, vol. 5 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), 264.

<sup>128</sup> Machfudz Anwar, "Ilmu Falak," Aula (April; 1995), 77.

<sup>129</sup> The Qur'sa, 97: 4.

<sup>130</sup> For the opinions which signified the importance of Laylut al-qudr and traced its historical reason, see K. Wagtendonk, Fasting in the Korun (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), 45.

Scholars reason that had the date of Laylar al-quadr been precisely determined, people strom every exection on that day only and would have relied upon the

As with his attack on the celebration of venerated days, Chalil rejects the practices largely associated with Laylat al-qadr and insists that its celebration be purged of all accretions incompatible with his viewpoint. He criticizes many of the customs as unacceptable, such as the belief that Laylar always takes place on one of the oddnumbered days between the 20th and the 30th of Rama $\phi \bar{a}n$ . He also finds unacceptable the decoration of houses with lights and the assembly of people in the alua-alua (the public park located in front of the residence of the regent of a district) in anticipation of the arrival of Laylar al-qudr. Moreover, he criticizes the increasing tendency to use Laylar al-qudr as an occasion for feasting, in which a large sum of money is spent on food, drink and processions (nrnk-nrnkan). 132 Worse still was the fact, Chalil confirms, that in the celebration of Laylar al-qudr emphasis is placed on the reading of false reports regarding the merit of reciting particular surnhs (chapters) or Aynhs (verses) of the Qur'an, while reports on the Qur In as a guide for human life are discarded. 133 Chalil wanted Laylar alquadr to assume a reformist character and prescribed the abandonment of old forms of feasting and their replacement by socially-oriented activities, such as feeding the poor and setting aside part of one's wealth for the construction of schools, orphanages and other charitable institutions, 134

Chalil devoted particular attention to the issue of the fixed date of Laylar al-qudr and whether it falls during the last ten days or on one of the odd-numbered days of the last

<sup>131</sup>M. J. Kister, "Sha'bān Is My Month," in Society and Religion from Jāhiliyya to Islam (Hampshire: Variorum Gower Publishing Group, 1990), 28.

<sup>132</sup> Moenawar Chalil, "Memperingati Peristiwa Nuzul Al-Qur'an dan Lailatul Qadar," Abudi (May 22; 1953).

<sup>133</sup>Chalil. Nilai dan Hikmah Puasa, 81.

<sup>134</sup> Chalil, "Memperingati Peristiwa Nuzul Al-Qur'an dan Lailatul Qadar."

ten days or on the seventeenth day of the month. 135 He specifically attacks the belief in the occurrence of Layland on the odd days, because people generally went out of their way to observe it on those days. Restricting its observance to a particular day is not justified, he affirms, since each of the three proposed days has a sound hadith to support it. 136 Moreover, even though the three possibilities are supported by hadiths. none of them can be made absolute since the Qur an itself does not give a precise date for Laylat alandr. 137 Accepting the odd days over the other possible days would inject polemics into an atmosphere of harmony and would divert attention away from the main aim and spirit of such a holy night. For Chalil, the debate over fixing the date of Luylat al-quadr did not carry any real significance, since the merit of Laylat al-qudr does not lie in the date of its occurrence, but in the degree of devotion that Muslims show during the month of Ramadan as a whole. Citing 'Abduh's opinion he affirms that the hudith which gave different dates for Laylut al-quadr simply meant to incite Muslims to be more actively devoted on those days. Veneration of Laylut al-gudr should not be confused with the debate over the question of its exact date, since its occurrence on a fixed day or during the whole of Ramadan would only have significance if proven by the intensity of devotional exercises 138

Chalil was of the view that the time at which devotional exercises take place is of much less importance than the sense of religious piety brought to these occasions by the person performing them. There was no day or month which was in itself bad or good. What makes a day better or worse, according to Chalil, is the value which is invested in it

<sup>135</sup> Moenawar Chalil, "Lailatul Qadar: Ibadat dan Amal Shalih Selama 10 Malam Jang Terachir," Abadi (March; 18; 1960).

<sup>136</sup> Not less than six *hudith* are quoted by Chalil to justify the validity of the three different days of *Luylut ul-qudt*. Ibid. 137 Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.; see also Muhammad 'Abduh's Tufsir al-Qur'in al-'Azim: Juz' 'Amma (Cairo: al-Matba'ah al-Amīrīyah, 1322), 129.

by a person. This alone determines the quality of a time period and not vice versu. 139 Convinced of the unimportance of time, he rejects the Prophetic traditions which describe God having created certain beings on particular days due to the merit of those particular moments, despite the fact that those *hadiths* are narrated in the *Musnad* of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal and the *Sahih* of Muslim. 140 This general belief in the neutrality of time underlies Chalil's refutation of practices motivated by a belief in the danger or the merit of a particular day or month.

Chalil's brief discussion of the *Rebo wekasan* will shed more light on this aspect of his thought. He rejects the traditional ceremony held to ward off bad omens, a ceremony which by tradition occurs on the last Wednesday of the month of Safar and which is known as *Rebo wekasan* (a Javanese phrase meaning the last Wednesday). He explains that on that day people suspend all daily activities to observe special prayers, hoping for safety and for protection from misfortunes and calamities, which they believe might haunt them on that particular day of the month. <sup>141</sup> The tradition of *Rebo wekasan* is said to be an idiosyncratic part of the calendar of ceremonies celebrated by Javanese Muslims. <sup>142</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that no trace of the celebration can be found in the classical function of fight literature.

The tradition had a religious connection when it was associated with the kiyais who, according to Chalil, were the providers of the jimat (charm) and the tangkal (amulet), which brought forth magical powers securing the safety of people on this unlucky

<sup>139</sup> Moenawar Chalil, "Tachajul Dlm Bulan Shafar Jang Harus Dibongkar," Abadi (November 6: 1953).

He justifies his argument by revealing the weakness of the *isnud* (chain of narrators) because of its inclusion of al-Hajjāj Ibn Jurayj, whom he considers to be a person with a psychiatric problem (akulnya tiduk beres). Moenawar Chalil, "Betulkah Kedjadian Alam Semesta Dalam Waktu Lima Hari," Abadi (June, 5; 1960).

<sup>141</sup> Chalil, "Tachajul Dim Bulan Shafar Jang Harus Dibongkar." For a detailed account of the tradition on Rebo Wekusua, see Pijper. Bebernpa Studi Teatung Sejarah Islum di Indonesia. 153-165.

<sup>142</sup>Koentjaraningrat, Javanese Culture, 393-394.

day. 143 The use of the term "kiynis" in Chalil's statement denotes the traditionalist religious scholars and implies that they approved of such a tradition. Nonetheless, if they were indeed involved, their involvement did not stem from the nurturing source of the Shāfi'ite figh-texts, as none of them mention anything about the month of Safar, let alone the specific tradition of Rebo wekusun. This was in contrast to the other venerated months which receive a full explanation in these texts of their virtues, merits and qualities. 144

The tradition of *Rebo Weknsan* was likely local in origin but imbued with a religious flavor, since veneration of particular months is not peculiar to Islam after all. In numerous utterances attributed to the Prophet, he is said to have recommended fasting to venerate the months of al-Muharram, Rajab and Sha'bān. The Prophet said, for example, that "Sha'bān is my month," and "The superiority of Sha'bān over other months is like my superiority over other prophets." These utterances are widely circulated and are usually coupled with his statement about the status of Rajab and Ramadān. Agjab is also a month of devotional practices and of fasting. According to some traditions, swearing against wrong-doers in this month is especially effective. In another broad statement, the Prophet declared that "Rajab is the month of God, Sha'bān is my month, Ramadān is the month of my people." 147

These months thus enjoyed a special merit and anyone who undertook devotional exercises during then, such as prayers, vigils and supplication, would see their rewards multiplied. Another *hadīth* also mentions that the pious observances of the present are of

<sup>143</sup> Chalil, "Tachajul Dim Bulan Shafar jang Harus Dibongkar."

With regards to the months venerated by the Shuri'nh and during which the fast is recommended, the Shāfi'lte fight texts mention the months of Ramadān, Dhū al-Qa'dah, Dhū al-Hijjah, al-Muḥarram, Rajab and Sha'bān, but not the month of Şafar. See, for example, al-Haytamī, al-Minhāj al-Quwīm, 126; Zakarīyā al-Anṣārī, Tuhfat al-Tullāb bi-Sharh Taḥrir al-Lubāb (Indonesia: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīyah, n.d.), 50; al-Bakrī, I'ānat al-Tālbīa, vol. 2, 307.

<sup>145</sup> Kister, "Sha'ban Is My Month," 15.

<sup>146</sup>Kister, "Rajab Is the Month of God...", 191-192.

<sup>147&</sup>lt;sub>Ibid., 203.</sub>

less merit than those of the past, as the Prophet had reportedly said that "Indeed, our present year is less worthy (urkhas thumana) than the last year was." <sup>148</sup> Apart from these hadiths, a number of traditions also recommend fasting on white and black days (al-ayyūm ul-bīd wa ul-sūd), which might be interpreted as symbols of good and evil which the fasting either honors or atones for, as the case may be. <sup>149</sup> Thus, Chalil's inclination to deemphasize the eminence and merit of particular moments of time was not really in keeping with the Prophet's own statements.

Chalil was following puritanical principles when he rejected elements of the celebration of the Mawlid and the veneration of 'Ashura'. Laylat al-qudr and Rebo wekasan. He based his refutation on the fact that no sound hadith ever suggested the celebration of the Mawlid, let alone the excessive exaltation of the Prophet as outlined in the panegyrical works. Chalil's puritanical zeal was directed at a number of practices performed in veneration of 'Ashura' which he identified as innovations that no reliable traditions had ever suggested. He also spoke against the practices of Laylat al-qudr and Rebo wekasan and tried to purge these celebrations of all accretions that were incompatible with his puritanical outlook.

Chalil's rejection of belief in the merit or the demerit of a particular time, as manifested in his attack on the debate over the fixed date of Laylat al-qadr and his condemnation of the superstition associating bad omens with the Rebo wekasan, followed from his belief that exalting particular days or months violates the unity of God by making certain times independent of Him. Chalil's observation focused on the incompatibility of such a belief with the concept of pure monotheism (tawhid) which is based on the absolute dependence on God. The Prophet had declared, Chalil argues, that "foretelling misfortune is

<sup>148</sup> The padich was related to the authority of 'Abd Allah Ibn Mas'ud. See Ibn al-Hajj, al-Madkhal, vol. 1, 300.

The order of the fast on the white and black days was reported in Sugar al-Nasa'l, one of the six canonical collections of padith. al-Anşāri, Tupfar al-Tullāb. 50.

the act of shirk. "150 In addition, Chalil held that it was one's own deeds that would bring bliss or calamity and not the merit and the felicity of a given time. By saying so, he "rationalized" the concept of the veneration of particular days. This was not only reflected in his views on Laylat al-quadr and Rebo wekasan, but also in his advocacy of hisāb over ru'yub and his rejection of irrational practices during 'Ashūrā'

It should be pointed out, however, that Chalil's rejection of the traditional manner of veneration was a denial of practices which naturally emerged to satisfy the religious emotion and which cannot be fully judged by a rigid interpretation of the texts. Religion should also be conceived as a means of expressing a variety of emotions, such as hope for protection (shaffinh), fear of calamity (Rebo weknsan), belief in the multiplication of rewards (voluntary prayer), contemplation of fairy tales (belief in the miraculous stories of the early Prophets) and expression of joy (festivity). No religion can live in the hearts of its adherents without the expression of such emotions. Any attempt to eradicate them would consequently reduce the emotional dimension of one's religious experience.

<sup>150</sup> Chalil, "Djangan Pertjaja Kepada Tachajul Dan Churasat," Abadi (October 30: 1954)