CHALLENGING RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY: THE EMERGENCE OF SALAFI USTADHS IN INDONESIA

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A. Introduction

As charismatic leaders, the role of religious leaders (*kyai*, 'ulama, and *muballigh*) in Muslim community is central. Their charisma stems from their deep knowledge of religion and good conduct. Consequently, they are the persons whom the people obey, listen to their advice, and imitate their conduct. Although their expertise is religion, their role in community expands beyond this expertise. People usually come to them for a number of purposes, ranging from family matters to social ones, from business affairs to politics. The government also benefits from them by asking their support for the government's program. Their support takes several forms, such as issuing the fatwa and direct involvement in the program. On the other hand, the *kyais* and 'ulama also benefit from the government. They receive large amount of money from the government to support their activities, such as the development of their *madrasah*s and *pesantren*s.

Since the last decade of the twentieth century, Indonesia has witnessed the emergence of Salafi movement. Supported by the same global movement, this movement has produced Salafi leaders, well-known as *ustāḍ*s. They graduated from the Salafi education institutions in Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Some of them are alumni of the Saudi-sponsored higher education, LIPIA (Institute of Islamic and Arabic Studies) in Jakarta. In addition to their activities in teaching the students in their pesantrens, these *ustād*s actively hold religious teaching in public mosques, offices, or private houses. Their religious gatherings have attracted the following, and thus they become new religious leaders, religious elite, who challenge the existing religious authorities: *kyai*s, 'ulama, and religious leaders of mass organizations. The challenge of this group has been consciously sensed by the leaders of mass Muslim organizations, because of the conversion of some of their activists. Community responses to Salafi movement differ, ranging from verbal to violent action. This article discusses how this new religious elite emerges and challenges the existing religious leaders.

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B. Religious Authority: Kyai, Ulama and ustadz

K*yai, 'ulama* and *ustād* are religious elites who hold religious authority. Religious authority means "the right to impose rules which are deemed to be in consonance with the will of God." In Weberian context, it can be defined as "the right to impose obedience in the name of common values and rules of conduct, share by those who exercise this authority and those who are submitted to it".[50] Muslim community called this group differently. The Sundanese of West Java calls kyai as Ajengan, while the Acehnese calls this scholar as Teungku.[51] They are the specialists in religious sciences, and capable of giving guidance and advice to the people on religious matters and good conducts in line with religious injunctions. The term *kyai* is a title given by community to the scholars of Islam, who usually lead the pesantren.[52]

Slightly different from kyai, *'ulamā* is a title given to scholars of Islam who do not lead pesantren. Literally, the term 'ulama connotes the people with broad knowledge. The knowledge in this regard is universal, covering both secular and religious knowledge. However, this broad sense narrows to limited people, to those who possess good command of Islamic knowledge, particularly *fiqh* (Islamic law) and *hadith*.[53] Thus, the term 'ulama denotes a wider coverage than the term kyai. However, these terms are used interchangeably. These titles, *kyai*, *'ulama*, and *ustad*, are given by the community. They are given after deliberate consideration based not only on deep knowledge, but also on ethics and good conduct.[54]

Scholars hold different opinions concerning the position between kyai and 'ulama; who is superior between the two. Hiroko Horikoshi maintains that kyai is higher than 'ulama. He argues that a kyai is more capable than 'ulama in exercising *ijtihad* (free reasoning), while the 'ulama does not. For him, 'ulama holds *taqlīd* (blind imitation) to the opinions of earlier 'ulama. Kyai is also perceived more charismatic than the 'ulama in the eyes of community. 'Ulama represents himself as a religious official (religious functionaries). 'Ulama holds this function in religious institutions, such as madrasa and pesantren.[55] The different titles of kyai and 'ulama lie in the social status and influence of these two figures in community. On the contrary, van Bruinessen

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[50] Marc Gaborieau, "Redefinition of Religious Authority among South Asian Muslims from 1919 to 1956", in Azyumardi Azra, Kees van Dijk, and Nico J.G. Kaptein, (eds.), *Varieties of Religious Authority*, Singapore and Leiden: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), and International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), 2010, p. 1.

[51] M. Iskandar, et.al., *Peranan Elit Agama pada Masa Revolusi Kemerdekaan Indonesia*, Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2007.

[52] Zamaksyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren*, Jakarta, LP3ES, 1982, p. 55.

[53] Azyumardi Azra, "Biografi Sosial-Intelektual Ulama Perempuan: Pemberdayaan Historiografi", in Jajat Burhanudin, (ed.), *Ulama Perempuan Indonesia*, Jakarta: Gramedia and PPIM UIN Jakarta, 2002, p. xxx.

[54] Azyumardi Azra, "Biografi Sosial-Intelektual Ulama Perempuan", p. xxxi.

[55] Horikoshi, *Kyai dan Perubahan Sosial*, Jakarta: Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat (P3M), 1987, pp. 1-3.

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views that the position of 'ulama is higher than that of kyai. This evaluation is based on a kyai's acknowledgment whom he interviewed. Although van Bruinessen regarded him an 'ulama, the kyai felt that he had not reached the level of 'ulama; he was still in the level of kyai.[56]

In practice, the title kyai is also given to the chairperson of mass Muslim organizations, such as the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah. In the NU community, some leading figures such as Muchith Muzadi, are called kyai although they do not head the pesantren. A similar tradition occurs in Muhammadiyah. Since its foundation in 1912, the chairpersons of Muhammadiyah were called kyai. To give example, Abdul Razak Fachruddin (chairman of Muhammadiyah from 1971 to 1985), and his successor, Azhar Basyir (chairman of Muhammadiyah from 1995 to 1998) are called kyai even though they did not lead the pesantren. This title, however, ended with Azhar Basyir. After Basyir, Muhammadiyah was led by Muslim intellectuals: Amien Rais (from 1995 to 1998), Syafi'i Maarif (from 1998 to 2005), and Sirojuddin Syamsuddin (from 2005 to date). Rather than a representation of traditional kyais, these leaders are Muslim scholars who graduated from American universities in social sciences; Rais graduated in political sciences of the University of Chicago, Maarif graduated in history of Political Islam of the University of Chicago, while Syamsudin graduated in political Islam of University of California at Los Angeles.[57] They indeed hold good understanding of religion, because they went to Islamic education institution before their study abroad. Din Syamsuddin, for example, went to famous modern pesantren, Darussalam, Gontor, East Java. Moreover, he graduated in comparative study of religions, at the State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN, now UIN) Jakarta. Thus, since the last decade, Muhammadiyah has been led by Muslim intellectuals, or 'ulama in a broader sense.

Besides kyai and 'ulama, the term *ustād* and *muballigh* are commonplace to call a man of religion. The term *ustād* connotes the teacher of religious knowledge. The teachers of pesantren, regardless their subjects taught, are called ustād by santris and community nearby. In practice, a person who frequently delivers religious lesson in mosques is also called ustād. The community often called this type of religious man as *muballigh* (preacher). In addition to religious lessons taking place in mosques, offices, and houses, ustāds and muballigh often deliver Friday sermons. In many cases, ustāds and muballighs get salaries from this activity, and even some professional ustads and muballighs earn money from this activity. Concerning these titles, it is worth to mention

[56] Martin van Bruinessen, *Rakyat Kecil, Islam dan Politik*, Yogyakarta: Bentang Budaya, 1998, pp. 167-168.

[57] On brief account of these Muhammadiyah leaders, on Amien Rais, see, http://www.muhammadiyah.or.id/id/content-167-det-prof-dr-h-amien-rais.html; on Syafii Maarif, see, http://www.muhammadiyah.or.id/id/content-168-det-prof-dr-ahmad-safii-maarif.html, and on Sirojuddin Syamsuddin, see, http://www.muhammadiyah.or.id/id/content-169-det-prof-dr-h-m-din-syamsuddin.html, accessed on January 2, 2012.

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here that, unlike the heads of traditional pesantren of the NU who are called kyai, leaders of Muhammadiyah pesantren are simply called ustād. The same call is found in another reformist organization, the Persatuan Islam (Persis). The leaders of this puritan group are called ustād, and leaders of Persis' pesantren are simply called ustād.

Kyai's role in community is so central. People come to this group of religious elite for different purposes: asking a religious guidance, and acquiring solution of family problems, economic consultation and even political support. In many occasions, some people consult kyai and ask his advice before commencing their business, and marriage. Geertz mentions the role of kyai in community a cultural broker. He argues that as a person with deep knowledge of religion, kyai is to transform the universal doctrines and values of religion as prescribed in the Qur'an, hadith, and books of the Islamic law in different *maḍhab*s (schools of Islamic law), and adjust them into local practices. In this regard, the kyai interprets the abstract, universal and systematic doctrines of Islam in the context of local beliefs and traditions. It is the kyia, Geertz claims, who determines whether or not local practices are Islamic.[58] Many ordinary Muslims even believe that kyai has supra-natural power that enables him see evil spirits and forecast future fortune. In congruent with animistic belief of the villagers, some kyai acted as *dukun* curing some diseases. Observing this phenomenon, Geertz concludes that "the kijaji [kyai] thus brings together the general moral doctrines of Islam and the specific animistic notions of local tradition, the fragmented, barely conceptualized, practical religion of the ordinary peasant..."[59] A similar assessment is given by Horikoshi. Based on his research on the role of kyai in Garut, West Java, he observes that kyai plays a significant role in preserving the traditional practices, filtering negative values of modernizations, and becoming the agent of change, such as providing the community with educational and economic opportunities.[60] In short, kyai plays as a key agent of change, of modernization, who actively introduces the modern values to the villagers.[61]

Along with the changes of social and political conditions of post-Independence Indonesia, the mediatory role of kyai shifts from bridging between what is called a "Meccan" universal notions of Islam and "Javanese" beliefs and practices to link between Jakarta and the village. This transformation occurred when the idea of state nation emerged and needed to be communicated and understood by the villagers. As a modern nation needs political engagement of all citizens via, among others, their participation in political parties, many kyais are involved in supporting the traditionalist Islamic party, the Nahdlatul Ulama. Through this party, as the 'owners" of the ummat in

[58] Clifford Geertz, "The Javanese Kijaji: The Changing Role of a Cultural Broker", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (January 1960), p. 236.
[59] Clifford Geertz, "The Javanese Kijaji", pp. 238-239.
[60] Horikoshi, *Kyai dan Perubahan Sosial*, p. 6.
[61] Horikoshi, *Kyai dan Perubahan Sosial*, p. 5.

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the level of grassroots, kyais are active in mobilizing the *umma* via public gatherings. In these occasions, in addition to giving religious guidance, kyais tried to translate modern ideas of development into religious terminologies, and talk to the umma in local languages. Thus, Geertz concludes that as a cultural broker, kyai has shifted from a broker for Islamic civilization to a broker for national government.[62]

Regarding these titles, Salafi teachers are not called kyais, but ustād. The leaders of Salafi pesantrens are simply called ustād or *mudīr al-ma'had* (director of pesantren), to denote the position of the teacher. This title reflects equality among Salafis. It is common to find that *santri*s of Salafi pesantrens talked with the *mudīr* freely without nervousness. During my fieldwork in pesantren Assunnah in Cirebon, for example, I frequently witnessed Thaharah, the then *mudīr*, sitting in mosque's corridor talking with *santri*s. Similarly, this scene occurs in the Salafi religious gatherings: some followers move closer to Salafi teachers after religious gatherings in mosques. They ask the teachers about religious matters which have not been answered during the session. This condition, equality, seems to be attractive of a new adherent or sympathizer of Salafi movement. A managerial staff at the STAI Ali ibn Abi Thalib in Surabaya, East Java, for example, told that one of his interests in joining Salafism is equality showed by Salafi teachers. He compared between kyais of traditional pesantrens of the Nahdlatul Ulama and the *mudīr*s of Salafi pesantrens. While the *santri*s of Salafi pesantren can approach the *mudīr* easily, the santris of the traditional pesantrens respect their kyais excessively, such as kissing hand (*taqbīl*), preparing sandal when the kyai wants to go out from mosque, and massaging the kyai before teaching. In addition to honor, these attitudes aim at acquiring the *berkah* (Ar., *baraka* means God's blessing) from the kyai. The students believe that by respecting and serving the kyai, they will receive God's blessing through the kyai.

The santris' attitudes towards their kyai are rooted in traditional doctrine of the student's behavior towards the teacher, the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Tariq al-Ta'allum* [63]of Burhan al-Islam al-Zarnuji. This work deals with a number of instructions and methods of learning. The work is divided into 13 chapters, including the nature and merit of knowledge, the intention of study, the choice of subject matters of knowledge, teachers, colleague, and permanent association; and respecting the knowledge and those who possesses it. Of most important subject of this work is pupil's attitude towards his teacher. According to the work, a student should respect fully his teacher. A student is not allowed to walk in front the teacher; not to seat on teacher's chair; not to begin talking with the teacher without his permission; not to talk much with the teacher

[62] Clifford Geertz, "The Javanese Kijaji", p. 247.

[63] Imam Burhan al-Islam al-Zarnuji, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim Tariq al-Ta'allum*, Surabaya: Benkul Indah, n.d.. The work has been translated into English by G.E. Von Grunebaum and Theodora M. Abel. See, Az-Zarnuji, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim – Tariq al-Ta'allum, Instruction of the Student: The Method of Leaning*, New York: King's Crown Press, 1947.

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without his consent.[64] In addition, the students have to respect the teacher's relative and colleagues. For example, the students have to stand when a son of teacher comes to show their respect to the teacher.[65] Based on these teachings, students of traditional pesantrens respect fully their teachers. They believe that respecting the kyai and teachers will result in God's blessing.

Sociologically there exists stratification among Salafi ustā□s. Thus, here we can identify some prominent *ustāḍ*s among Salafi groups, whom we can classify them into senior *ustād*s. Within the so-called "Yemeni" Salafis in Indonesia, we can mention Muhammad as-Sewed and Luqman Ba'abduh as senior *ustād*s. The two figures are regarded as their leaders replacing Ja'far Umar Thalib. As-Sewed currently heads two pesantrens, Dhiyā' al-Sunnah in Cirebon, West Java, and al-Anshar in Sleman, Yogyakarta. Meanwhile, Ba'abduh is currently the director of pesantren Salafiya in Jember, East Java. Before directing this pesantren, he studied with shaykh Muqbil al-Wadi'i in his institution, Darul Hadith, Dammaj, Yemen. There are indeed some other Salafi teachers in the second level, such as Afifuddin of Sidayu, Gresik, and Abdul Mu'thi of Yogyakarta. In the other group, the so-called haraki Salafis, more prominent figures are found. Included in these leading ustā□s are Abdul Qadir Jawwas of Bogor, West Java, Abdul Hakim Abdat of Jakarta, Abu Nida of Yogyakarta, Abdurrahman al-Tamimi of Surabaya, and Ahmas Faiz Asifuddin of Solo. Both Jawwas and Abdul Hakim studied Salafism at the Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies (LIPIA), Jakarta, and currently teach at pesantren Minhaj al-Sunnah in Bogor, West Java. Meanwhile, Abu Nida and Asifuddin graduated in Jami'a Imam Muhammad ibn Su'ud, Riyadh. Asifuddin currently heads large Salafi pesantren Imam Bukhari in Solo, while Abu Nida heads the Bin Baz Islamic center in Yogyakarta. In the lower level, some figures emerge, including Abu Qatadah of Tasikmalaya, Abu Haidar of Bandung, Mubarak Bamualim of Surabaya.

C. Salafi *Ustād*s: Challenging Religious Authority

The emergence of Salafi teachers challenges the existing of religious authorities. Salafis challenge both traditional and reformist religious leaders: kyai, ulama and muballighs. The emergence of Salafism has caused opposition from villagers and local religious leaders as well. To show this challenge, in this part I will describe the *mubāḥatha* (discussion, dialog) between Salafis and leaders of Persatuan Islam (Persis). In this dialog forum, each party poses and examines its religious arguments before public.

[64] Az-Zarnuji, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, pp. 16-17.
[65] Az-Zarnuji, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, p. 17.

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The case of *mubāḥatha* shows how Salafis challenging religious authorities of Persatuan Islam (Persis), a purist and reformist organization. The mubā□atha entitled "Mengungkap Gerakan Salafy di Indonesia [Discovering Salafi Movement in Indonesia]" was conducted on 27 March 2007 in Bandung, West Java. The initiative of this dialog emerged from the head of Persis, West Java region. It was attended by prominent figures of Persis, including Siddiq Amien (chairman), Aceng Zakaria (the then head of Pesantren Persis in Garut, West Java), Usman Sholehuddin, head of Dewan Hisbah Persis, and Maman Abdurrahman. In addition to these leading figures of persis, the forum was also attended by delegations of Persis of all districts in West Java. The other party, the Salafis, is represented by Abdul Hakim Abdat (Jakarta) and Abu Qatadah (director of pesantren Ihyaus Sunnah, Tasikmalaya, West Java). Other Salafi figures, such as Tonari (Cirebon), Yunus Anis and Ayip Saefuddin were also present. During the discussion and dialog, Salafis and Persis discussed arguments and examined the *dalīl* of the necessity of following the Salaf manhaj.

The discussion was started by a welcoming speech of committee, and a brief speech of the head of Persis, West Java region. Following these speeches, Siddiq Amien, as a keynote speaker, presented his article on "Fenomena Gerakan Dakwah Salafy di Indonesia dan Menimbang Argumentasi Manhaj al-Salaf al-Saleh sebagai Dasar Ketiga sesudah al-Qur'an dan al-Sunnah" [Phenomenon of Salafi Da'wa Movement in Indonesia and Examination of arguments of Salaf Manhaj as the Third Source after the Qur'an and Sunna]. In his presentation, Amien highlighted some essential aspects Salafi movement in the country. In the first part of his presentation, he discussed the definition of Salafism. On this issue, he elaborated the meaning of "Salaf" and its derivatives. He explained that "Salaf" literally means "the predecessor", and the "Salaf al-Salih" denotes the first three generations of Muslims, consisting of the Companions, the Followers, and the Followers of Followers. Meanwhile, Salafi connotes a person who follows the path of Salaf. In this point, Amien, as a representative of Persis, did not differ from the Salafis in defining Salafism. Amien then complemented his presentation with his observation on the rise of Salafis movements in Indonesia. For him, the Salafi doctrines had inspired some religious movements in the country. The Wahhabi movement inspired the Paderi movement in Minangkabau, West Sumatera, in the 19th century. In the 20th century, Salafi ideas influenced the birth of a number of reformist religious movements: the Jami'at Khayr in 1905 in Jakarta, al-Irsyad in 1913 in Jakarta, Muhammadiyah in 1912 in Yogyakarta, and Persatuan Islam in 1923 in Bandung. With a different emphasis, these organizations call on Muslim for the return the Qur'an and Sunnah; support the jihad and ijtihad; and fighting against *bid'a, khurafat, taqlīd*; through various methods of da'wa, including education, preaching and publications. In Amien's observation, all these organizations are Salafis, because they follow the path of al-Salaf.

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The second issued highlighted by Amien is fragmentation of current Salafi movement in Indonesia. Quoting the work of Abu Abdurrahman al-Thalibi, *Dakwah Salafiyah Dakwah Bijak*,[66] Amien explored Salafis' fragmentation into "Yemeni" and "haraki" Salafis. The first faction refers to former Laskar Jihad activists under the leadership of Ja'far Umar Thalib, and the followers of shaykh Muqbil al-Wadi'i of Yemen, and shaykh Rabi ibn Hadi al-Madkhali of Saudi, while the latter is associated with the Ihyā' al-Turāth al-Islāmī and al-Munta□ā al-Islāmī. While the first group of Salafis refutes the haraki method in da'wa, the latter maintains that the haraki method is needed in the application of da'wa in this modern era. Moreover, Amien mentioned individual conflict between Salafis.

The last problem roused by Amien in his speech was the nature of difference between the Salaf, the first three generations of Muslim. Amien agreed with Salafis that, besides the prophet, Muslims must take into account the examples and opinions of the Salaf on religious matters. However, it was the fact that the Salaf differed among them in a number of issues. For example, the difference between Abu Bakr al-Siddiq and 'Umar ibn Khattab on the one hand, and 'Uthman ibn 'Affan on the on the other hand, on the issue of *āḍān* (call for prayer) of the Friday prayer. Following the prophet, the first two caliphs implemented one ā□ān before the prayer, while the third caliph added one more *āḍān*, and thus, there were two *āḍāns* during the reign of 'Uthman. Taking this case as example, Amin questioned "which Salafis Muslim should follow: Abu Bakr and 'Umar, or 'Uthman"? According to Persis, the rationale of 'Uthman was clear; as the Muslim's territory expanded, Muslims became more widespread and, therefore one more *āḍān* was added to signify the coming of prayer time. Thus, following this example, Persis contended that the Salaf exercised a rational thinking. Taking this difference into account, together with the prophet's last speech on the necessity of maintaining the two sources of Islam, the Qur'an and sunna, Amien concluded that Persis discovers no a clear sound argument of the obligation of Muslims to follow the Salaf's *manhaj* (path) as advocated by Salafis.

Following the keynote speech of the chairman of Persis was Salafis' presentation. There were two Salafis presenting their speeches: Abdul Hakim Abdat, and Abu Qatadah. Abdat is a senior Salafi ustād, while Abu Qatadah is a more junior ustād. Both ustāds are of the leading Salafis who frequently visit a number of cities to preach Salafism. Abdat took the first chance. The focus of his presentation was the religious arguments of the obligation of Muslims to follow the Salaf manhaj in their religiosity (thought and conduct). Before discussing this issue, he first took this opportunity to refute analysis and remarks of the previous speaker, Siddiq Amien, dealing with the frictions among Indonesia's Salafi, and the absence of a clear and sound argument of the necessity of imitating the Salaf. On the first issue, Abdat denied

[66] Abu Abdirrahman al-Thalibi, *Dakwah Salafiyah Dakwah Bijak*, Jakarta: Hujjah Press, 2007.

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the frictions among Indonesia's Salafis into Yemeni and Haraki. According to him, this fraction is only an opinion, which is far from the reality. He claimed that Salafis are monolithic and do not recognize the fractions. In this regard, Abdat contended that the analysis must be applied to the *manhaj*, and not to individuals. On the second issue, Abdat maintained that Persis' incapability to find a clear and sound argument of Muslims' obligation to follow the Salafi manhaj does not denote the absence of the argument. This, according to Abdat, might be caused by the fact that Persis has not observed the *dalīl*. Therefore, Abdat took this opportunity to present a number of religious arguments.

These religious arguments occupied the subsequent talk of Abdat. Abdat elaborated arguments of the obligation of Muslims to follow the Salafi *manhaj* from the Qur'an, and hadith. He presented five dalils from the Qur'anic verses: 9:100; 9:119; 12:108; 2:136-137; 1:6. Because of the limit of space, I would like present the first two arguments only: 9:100, and 9:119. The first verse, 9:100, reads as follows:

The vanguard (of Islam)- the first of those who forsook (their homes) and of those who gave them aid, and (also) those who follow them in (all) good deeds,- well-pleased is Allah with them, as are they with Him: for them hath He prepared Gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein for ever: that is the supreme triumph.

As explicitly mentioned in the verse, Abdat argued, the *muhājirūn* (emigrants) and *anṣār* (helpers) were pleased by God. God's please means that God loves their deeds and actions. According to Abdat, the verse implies an order from God for Muslims to follows the companions in order to acquire God's satisfaction. This order emerges in the form of *khabar* (news), not in form of ordinary order.

The second verse, 9:119, reads as follows:

"O, ye who believe! Fear Allah and be with those who are truthful."

According Abdat, the term *al-ṣādiqīn* (truthful) refers to the prophet's companions. Again, according to Abdat, this verse implies an order for Muslims to imitate the companions. In addition to Qur'anic verses, Abdat mentioned a famous hadith telling that best three generations of Muslims: the Companions, the followers and the followers of followers. Relying on these *dalīl*s, Abdat concluded that to follow the Salaf manhaj is obligatory for Muslims.

The second Salafi speaker was Abu Qatadah. Commencing this talk, he acknowledged humbly that he was an activist of Persis; he went to Persis pesantren for seven years before his conversion to Salafism. His talk focused on three issues: the sources of Islamic doctrines, divergent opinions of the companions, and the possibility of being deviant from the truth without following the Salaf manhaj. Concerning the first issue, the speaker, explained that the sources of Islamic doctrines were the Qur'an, hadith, sound *ijmā'* (Consensus), and sound *qiyās* (analogy). On the second issue, the

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speaker acknowledged that the Companions had differed in number of religious issues. Responding to these differences, Abu Qatadah maintained that Muslims can follow one of these opinions, but they are not allowed to add another opinion. On third issue, Abu Qatadah argued that Muslim may fall into a mistake if he or she follows the Qur'an and hadith only. To strengthen his argument, Abu Qatadah recalled the history of Islam, namely the case of assassination 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, the fourth caliph, by Ibn Muljam, an adherent of khawarij. When murdered the caliph, Ibn Muljam read the Qur'anic verse 5:44, which reads: "If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are unbelievers." Referring to this fact, Abu Qatadah posed an essential question: "Look at this case! How did the murder read the Qur'an when he murdered the caliph?" Based on the case, he argued that the Qur'an and hadith alone are insufficient as the sources of Islam. Muslim must follow the Salaf *manhaj* in understanding these sources. He argued that all deviating sects, such as Khawarijite, Mu'tazilate and Shi'ite, complemented their arguments with Qur'anic verses and hadiths, but they interpreted in line with their reason.

The next session was more interesting than the previous one, since it provided discussion, dialog, debate between Salafis and leading figures of Persis. The main question of the participants was about the Salafis' claim that the Salafi *manhaj* was the true one. Maman Abddurahman, one of chairpersons of central of board Persis, posed question about Salafism whether it is a method of thought or a name of group. If it is a method of thought, according to Abdurrahman, many Muslim thinkers, such as Muhammad Abduh, advocated the Salaf method. Concerning this issue, Abdurrahman maintained that a number of Muslim organizations, such as al-Irsyad, Muhammadiyah and Persis have adopted the Salaf method. In his opinion, the core spirit of the Salaf method is the reform movement, including purification of *aqīda* (Islamic faith), purification of *'ibāda* (rituals) and reform of *mu'āmala* (social interactions). Viewed from this perspective, Persis is also Salaf. If Salafism is a way of thought, Abdurrahman continued, why a group of Muslims claims to be the true Salaf. Another delegation from Tasikmalaya, Yuyu Wahyu, raised a quite similar question challenging the validity of Salafis' arguments. In direct manner, he asked: "Who are the Salaf"? Are Muhammad 'Abduh and his disciple, Rashid Rida, Salaf? He challenged the Salafis' arguments of the obligation of following the Salaf manhaj. According to him, the prophet advised Muslims to hold to the two sources only, the Qur'an and hadith. The prophet also believed that Muslims will not deviate from the true Islam when they follow these fundamental sources. In order to understand the two sources, Muslims must learn some methodological approaches, which in turn, will result in a number of laws. However, Wahyu added, Persis examines not only the products (thought and laws), but also the process (methods) and rationale of the products. This is in line with a maxim of Islamic legal theory, "the law depends on the availability of reason" (*al-ḥukm yadūr ma'a al-'illa wujūd wa 'adam*). The third participant, Zae Nandang, asked the speakers about the

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different opinions among the companions. When the companions differed each other on one matter, Nandang asked, whom Muslim must follow.

Responding to these questions, Abdat, the first Salafi speaker, replied that what he delivered was the Salafi manhaj as a method of thought and a way of religious life, and not the matters of *fiqh* in which the Salaf had differed in a number of issues. Abdat contended that the Salaf had agreed on essential teachings of Islam. They believed in the God's punishment in the graves after the death, in the God's pre-destination, in God's occupation on His Chair (*'Arsh*), in God's Face and Hand, which are different from those of human, and in eternality (*qadīm)* of the Qur'an. Abdat argued that the Salaf did not differ on these matters. On the need of following the Salafi manhaj, Abdat argued that the Qur'an and hadith are true (*ḥaq*). However, he continued, not all the people arguing with the Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions are true. Again, he mentioned a number of Muslim groups, such as the Mu'tazilite, who reject some hadiths because they perceived that these hadiths contradict the Qur'an. According to Abdat, the Mu'tazila and the Muslim philosophers referred to the Qur'an and hadith to support their thought, but they interpreted them in line with their ratio, and as a result, they deviated from the true Islam. In order to avoid the same mistake, Abdat argued, following the Salaf manhaj is necessary in understanding the Qur'an and hadith. Thus, in the Salafi slogan the phrase "the return to the Qur'an and hadith" as advocated by a number of reformist Muslim organizations must be accomplished by "with understanding of the Salaf". Meanwhile, Abu Qatadah, in his reply, highlighted the characteristics of the Salaf. Referring to Yahya Abd al-Mu'in, he mentioned a number of beliefs of *ahl al-sunna*. These include the belief in the pre-destination; giving precedence to Abu Bakr and 'Umar ibn Khattab in faith and caliphate; the belief in the punishment in the grave; and the belief in the Day of Resurrection. Moreover, he mentioned a number of Salafi methods in concluding the laws (*istidlāl*). First, the return to the Qur'an and hadith; second, understanding the Qur'an and hadith in line with the Salaf manhaj; third, preferring the texts (*naṣṣ*) than ratio (*'aql*); fourth, returning the *mutashābih* texts (allegoric texts that have more than one and uncertain meanings) to the *muḥkam* texts (texts that have accurate and precise meanings); and the last, reconciling the arguments when the *dalil*s differ. Based on this ground, Abu Qatadah contended that each individual, group or organization must measure itself whether or not he is Salafi.

The discussion continued to the second term of question and answer session. There were four participants raising questions in this term. Almost all of them asked the validity of Salafi's arguments of the necessity of following the Salaf manhaj. They also questioned the speakers whom they must follow when the Salaf differ in a number of issues. Uus, for example, severely criticized Salafis for their insistence in following the Salaf manhaj. He argued with a widely accepted hadith telling a dialog between the

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prophet and Mu'a□ ibn Jabal before the prophet sent him to Yemen. The prophet was reported to have asked his messenger on the sources of religious matters. Ibn Jabal replied that he would rely on the Book of God and the Sunna. If he could not find in these two fundamental sources, he would exercise *ijtihad* with his ratio (*ajtahid bi ra'yī*), and the prophet agreed. Relying on this story, Uus continued that the hadith does not tell us to follow the opinions of the companions.

Encountering these questions, the Salafis remained in their position. Abdat, for example, repeatedly maintained that the dialog should be focused on the Salaf manhaj as a method of thought and conduct in religious matters. For him, the different opinions between the Salaf is not an issue, since they appeared in the particularity and disputed matters (*juz'iyyāt* and *khilāfiyāt*), and not in the essential doctrines of Islam, the *aqīda*.

It appeared that during the mubā□atha, Salafis and Persis disputed on several aspects. On the one hand, since the beginning Persis raised the questions of the differences among the companions of the prophet on a number of issues. Through these differences, Persis contended that Muslims should grasp the spirit and the *elan* vital of the difference, and not the texts, in order to cope with modern demands. On the other hand, Salafis tried to avoid discussing the differences between the Salaf, but sought similarities among them. Even though they differ in many issue, Salafis argued, they agree in essential doctrines.

Both parties agreed that the Salafi manhaj is a method of thought in concluding Islamic law. Both agreed that the Salaf were the best generations of Muslim community, since they are considered as the people who understand the religion best after the prophet. However, Salafis and Persis disputed in the obligation of Muslim to follow the Salaf manhaj. As evident in the Salafis' arguments, this obligation is inferred and indirectly ordered by the Qur'anic verses and hadith. The God's satisfaction with the Salaf, for example, is understood and interpreted by Salafis as an order for Muslim to follow the Salaf. Similarly, the widely hadith on the best three generations of Muslim community is considered as an instruction of the prophet to follow the Salaf manhaj. This rationale is rejected by Persis. According to Persis, there is no a clear and sound religious argument from the Qur'an and hadith that obligates Muslims to follow the Salaf manhaj. Two famous hadiths are cited in this matter. First is the hadith telling the last advise of prophet for Muslims to hold the Book of God and Sunna; and the second is the hadith of Mu'ā□ ibn Jabal. These hadiths do not request Muslims to follow the Salaf manhaj.

In this dialog, we can see how Salafis and Persis examine their religious arguments, challenging each other, and contesting their religious authority. The effort to establish their religious authority was not only seen Salafis' religious arguments, but also in their way of delivering argument. During the dialog, Abu Qatadah always read Arabic texts and then translating it into Bahasa Indonesia. Although his translation was

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exactly the same as the Arabic text, he needed to expose his argument first in Arabic, and then followed by its translation. This method, he wanted to show that his Arabic is excellent and he was authoritative in religious affairs. In addition, during the dialog he also wore *turban*. For many people, turban symbolizes piety and certain degree of religious knowledge. Through this dialog, each party, especially Salafis, maintained their religious authority before their adherents.

It is interesting to observe the shift of religious authority in Indonesia. Traditional religious authorities (kyai and 'ulama) have been recently challenged by the newly emerging and popular *muballigh*s (preacher), and *da'i* (preacher), such as Arifin Ilham and Abdullah Gymnastyar (well-known as 'Aa Gym). Supported by electronic media, particularly the national television channel, such as TV One, Metro TV, Surya Citra Television (SCTV), these young figures have attracted Muslims. This phenomenon can be observed from the participants attending the religious lessons delivered by these figures. The "Majelis Zikir" of Arifin Ilham, for example, was attended by hundreds of Muslims. The participants, mostly women, wear the white long dresses and chanted *zikr* (special formula to remember God). What is interesting of the Majelis Zikir is that many participants cry during the *pengajian*. In addition to the *zikr*, the content of the lesson delivered by Ilham is daily duties of Islam, such as prayers.[67] Another beloved preacher by women was Abdullah Gymnastyar from Bandung, West Java. He manages religious programs adopting the name of Managemen Qalbu (Heart Management). Like Arifin, Gymnastyar's sermons were attended by thousands of Muslims, mostly women. His fame significantly deteriorated after he took a second wife. This deterioration, according Hoesterey, due to the fact that Gymnastyar's authority does not stem from his deep knowledge of Islam, but from his image of an ideal husband. Before his fans, Aa Gym is represented as a good husband for his wife, and a good father for his children. Thus, when Aa Gym took the second wife, he broke his image.[68]

In addition to these individual and independent preachers, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama also have faced the challenges from mass organizations, namely Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) and Justice Prosperity Party (PKS). As a party of da'wa, PKS, which attracts many fresh graduates of the Middle Eastern universities, often produces its religious "fatwa". In 2005, for example, PKS declared publicly that the

[67] Andree Feillard, "From Handling Water in a Glass to Coping with Ocean: Shift in Religious Authority in Indonesi", in Azyumardi Azra, Kees van Dijk, and Nico J.G. Kaptein, (eds.), *Varieties of Religious Authority*, p.168.

[68] James B. Hoesterey, "Marketing Morality: The Rise, Fall and Rebranding of Aa Gym," in Greg Fealy and Sally White, *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, Singapore: ISEAS, 2008, pp. 95-112.

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celebration of 'Īd al-Adha one day earlier than the official day made by the government.[69]

D. Concluding Remarks

The emergence of Salafi movement raises different responses from Muslim community. The responses vary from verbal, physical gestures, intellectual to violence. The case of Mubahatsah above is a good example of intellectual response of Persatuan Islam. Persatuan Islam, together with Muhammadiyah, faces a serious challenge from Salafis. In cities, Salafism has attracted some activists of Muhammadiyah and Persis, and converted them to Salafi. The fascination could be caused by the fact that Salafism and reformist organizations share a similar slogan of purification of Islamic doctrines, "the return to the Qur'an and hadith". Having this similarity, Salafi ustadhs successfully convince young activists of Muhammadiyah and Persis. Thus, the mubahatha case can be viewed as an effort of leading figure of Persis to limit the influence of Salafism to the adherent and sympathizers of Persis. Through dialog, Persis tries to show the weakness of Salafism. On the other hand, the Salafis have opportunity to examine their arguments. Thus, the dialog shows the contest of religious authority between the two parties.

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[69] Andree Feillard, "From Handling Water" p.168.

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