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Revitalizing Hadhrami Authority: New Networks, Figures and Institutions among *Ḥabā'ib* in Indonesia

Abstract: *This article analyses the rising popularity of young* ḥabā'ib *and their* da'wah *activism in contemporary Indonesia. The popularity of* ḥabā'ib *has also been followed by the proliferation of media and publications promoting both Hadhrami scholars and Hadhramaut. Distinct from scholars who emphasise domestic considerations, this study sees transnational connection as crucial to the facilitation of the* ḥabā'ib's da'wah *activism. The article argues that the reestablishment of ties between Indonesia and Yemen in 1990 in the field of education and preaching* (da'wah) *has facilitated the growing authority of* ḥabā'ib *in Indonesia. These new connections have enabled young Indonesian Muslims to travel to Hadhramaut to study in traditional Islamic seminaries and to build their own* da'wah *networks. By examining these new connections, this article pays particular attention to the charismatic Hadhrami scholar, Habib 'Umar ibn Hafiz, his role and influence, as well as his students' network in contemporary Indonesia.*

Keywords: *Ḥabā'ib*, Traditional Sunni Islam, Hadhramaut, *Da'wah*, Networks.

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Abstrak: *Artikel ini menganalisis meningkatnya popularitas haba'ib muda bersama dengan aktivisme dakwah mereka di Indonesia kontemporer. Populernya haba'ib di masyarakat Muslim Indonesia juga diikuti oleh menjamurnya media dan publikasi yang mempromosikan ulama-ulama di Hadhramaut dan juga pendidikan Islam di sana. Berbeda dari para sarjana yang menekankan faktor domestik, studi ini melihat koneksi transnasional sebagai faktor penting yang memfasilitasi aktivisme dakwah mereka. Studi ini berargumen bahwa hubungan kembali antara Indonesia dan Yaman sejak 1990 dalam bidang pendidikan dan dakwah telah memfasilitasi tumbuhnya otoritas haba'ib di Indonesia. Koneksi baru ini telah mendorong pengiriman santri-santri Indonesia untuk belajar di sekolah-sekolah tradisional di Hadhramaut dan membangun jaringan keagamaan di antara mereka setelah mereka balik. Dalam menganalisis jaringan baru tersebut, artikel ini memberikan perhatian khusus kepada ulama kharismatik dari Hadhramaut, Habib 'Umar ibn Hafiz, peranan dan pengaruhnya serta jaringan muridnya di Indonesia kontemporer.*

Kata kunci: Haba'ib, Islam Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah, Hadhramaut, Dakwah, Jaringan.

ملخص: تقوم هذه المقالة بتحليل ارتفاع الشعبية للحبائب الشباب إلى جانب أنشطتهم الدعوية في إندونيسيا المعاصرة. إن ارتفاع شعبية الحبائب الشباب في المجتمعات الإسلامية الإندونيسية يواكبه انتشار الوسائل والنشرات الإعلامية التي تروج العلماء في حضرموت والتعليم الإسلامي فيها. وتختلف هذه الدراسة عن العلماء الذين يركزون على العوامل المحلية، حيث ترى الشبكات عبر الوطنية باعتبارها عاملا مهما يسهل أنشطتهم الدعوية. تستند هذه الدراسة إلى أن إعادة فتح العلاقات بين إندونيسيا واليمن منذ عام ١٩٩٠ في مجالات التعليم والدعوة قد سهلت نمو سلطة الحبائب في إندونيسيا. وقد دفع هذا الاتصال الجديد إلى إرسال الطلبة الإندونيسيين للدراسة في المدارس التقليدية في حضرموت وبناء شبكة دينية فيما بينهم بعد عودتهم إلى إندونيسيا. وعند تحليل هذه الشبكة الجديدة، يولي هذا المقال اهتماما خاصا بالعالم الحضرمي الكاريزمي؛ الحبيب عمر بن حافظ، ودوره وآثاره وشبكات طلابه في إندونيسيا المعاصرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الحبائب، إسلام أهل السنة والجماعة، حضرموت، الدعوة، الشبكة.

Over the past decade, Indonesia's Muslim population has witnessed the proliferation of Hadhrami-Sayyid preachers. Popularly known as *ḥabā'ib*, these preachers claim to be descendants of the Prophet Muhammad and have their own sermon groups (*majelis taklim*). The *ḥabā'ib* call for the strengthening of traditional Sunni Islam (*ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamā'ah*) and refer to Hadhramaut in Yemen as the centre of Sunni Islam. They have introduced Yemeni Hadhrami ulama (religious scholars) and their religious educational institutions to Indonesian Muslims through their preaching and publications. They also regularly invite and host charismatic Yemeni ulama to deliver sermons at major public events. Some Yemeni ulama, such as Habib 'Umar ibn Hafiz, popularly known as Habib 'Umar, have become popular and their sermons have been followed by thousands. Habib 'Umar's picture is widely sold and hung on the walls in traditionalist Muslims' homes across Indonesia. This phenomenon signals the rising popularity of *ḥabā'ib* in shaping traditional Islam in contemporary Indonesia.

Some scholars have cited domestic factors in order to account for the growing popularity of *ḥabā'ib* in Indonesia. Julia Howell and Arif Zamhari (2012), for example, emphasise the rising trend of urban Sufism, which also includes young *ḥabā'ib* and their sermon groups. Studying two of the largest sermon groups in Jakarta, *Majelis Rasulullah* and *Majelis Nurul Musthofa*, they contend that these movements are new articulations of Sufi piety that use popular mediums and culture to spread their message. In the same vein, Ismail Fajrie Alatas (2009) considered these two *ḥabā'ib* sermon groups as a continuation of the older Hadhrami Sufi path (*ṭarīqah 'Alawīyah*), which have adapted their ways to suit a changing Indonesia and the growing Islamic revival that followed post-Soeharto reform.

While most scholars emphasise domestic factors, in this article I argue that transnational factors also need to be considered in order to comprehensively explain such a phenomenon. This article analyses transnational factors that contribute to the growing influence of *ḥabā'ib* in contemporary Indonesia. It argues that the reconnection between Indonesia and Hadhramaut in the sphere of traditional Islamic education and preaching (*da'wah*) has contributed to the growing authority of *ḥabā'ib* in Indonesia. These networks have enabled Indonesian Muslim youths, either *sayyid* or non-*sayyid*, to attend traditionalist

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Islamic colleges in Hadhramaut and to build *da'wah* networks among themselves. By linking themselves to Yemeni-Hadhrami scholars and their religious seminaries, as well as to sacred places in Hadhramaut, the Indonesian *ḥabā'ib* are enhancing their authority and presenting their version of Sunni Islam as more authentic than other variants of Islam. Examining the forms of this new connection, this article pays particular attention to Habib 'Umar of Hadhramaut, his influence and his educational and *da'wah* networks in contemporary Indonesia. Habib 'Umar is arguably the most important figure among Yemeni *ḥabā'ib*; he has, since the 1990s to the present, played a major role in reconnecting Indonesia and Hadhramaut through education and preaching movements.

The first part of this article discusses the Hadhrami diaspora and the re-establishment of Indonesian-Yemeni ties following Yemen's unification in 1990. The second part analyses new forms of reconnection, especially in the sphere of traditionalist education and *da'wah*. The last part analyses the ways *ḥabā'ib* and returnee graduates promote Hadhramaut as a land of saints and Sunni educational centres in the Middle East. Furthermore, it analyses how they promote rising *sayyid* scholars from Hadhramaut and other parts of the Middle East.

The Hadhrami Diaspora and New Connection

Hadhrami Arabs have a long history of migration to regions throughout the Indian Ocean. The Hadhrami migration began several centuries before the 19th century (Boxberger 2002, 39; Mobini-Kesheh 1999, 17). The wave of migration intensified especially from the 19th to the early 20th century because of increasing political instability in Hadhramaut created by the struggle for power between the Qu'ayti and Kathiri sultanates (Boxberger 2002, 4). The political unrest exacerbated existing hardships in the region already caused by drought and poverty. Increased migration in the 19th century was also supported by advances in transportation and communication. The opening of the Suez Canal and the rapid expansion of steamship travel between Arabia and the Indies facilitated Hadhrami migration to other regions in search of work and trading opportunities (Boxberger 2002, 40; Mobini-Kesheh 1999, 21). According to one report, these developments resulted in 30 per cent of the Hadhrami population in 1930 living outside Hadhramaut (Boxberger 2002, 41).

Hadhrami diaspora communities maintained a connection to their homeland (Abushouk and Ibrahim 2009; Freitag and Clarence-Smith 1997; Ho 2006). Material and emotional links were maintained by, among other things, remittances, namely money that migrants send back to their homelands. Wealthy Hadhrami in Singapore during colonial times, for example, sent generous amounts of money for the improvement of caravan routes and the construction of roads in Hadhramaut (Lekon 1997, 274). In 1878, wealthy Hadhrami in Batavia also sent donations to the leading Sufi scholar, Sayyid ʻAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥusayn al-Ḥabshī (1824-1914), to support the founding of a mosque and his traditional learning institution (*rubat*) in Say'un, which served as the center of religious teaching and Sufi activities (Freitag 2003, 280).

Religious education offered another way of maintaining a connection to the homeland. Van den Berg, a Dutch scholar who researched Hadhrami immigrants in the Dutch East Indies from 1884 to 1886, found that it was tradition for Hadhrami migrants to send their children to study their religion and culture in their homeland. They believed that this provided their children, who were isolated from their original language and culture as a result of being born and raised overseas, with a better education (Berg 1989, 141). By living in Hadhramaut, Hadhrami children could learn and speak Arabic without distraction and immerse themselves in the culture of their ancestors. The Hadhrami viewed Hadhramaut as an ideal place for their children since its stark environment and lack of entertainment was conducive to religious learning and pious practices (Berg 1989, 142). Furthermore, the Hadhrami-*sayyid*s saw their homeland as the spiritual land, while Java was the 'damned one' (A. Alatas 2005, 142–58). They wanted to visit Hadhramaut to receive "spiritual benedictions from the scholars who lived and were buried there" (A. Alatas 2005, 151). This tradition, however, was interrupted during the Cold War and the civil war that broke out between the pro-Soviet communist South and anti-communist forces in the North, which made travel and communication between Indonesia and South Yemen difficult. That the Soeharto regime strongly discouraged any interaction with South Yemen also hindered the connection to Hadhramaut (Slama 2005, 80).

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The Rise of *Sayyid*s in Hadhramaut after Yemeni Unification

The unification of North and South Yemen in 1990 and the weakening of socialist control allowed a relaxed atmosphere for religious debate among different Islamic groups in the new state. This new political freedom gave rise to many different religious groups that became actively engaged in public debates. The Salafis and Sufis are two such groups. Since the 1980s, Salafis have expanded to several regions in North Yemen and Hadhramaut became a popular destination for Salafi education in the Middle East. South Yemen, however, is largely populated by peasant farmers who are Sunnis and follow the Shafi'i *madhhab* (school of jurisprudence) (Knysh 2001, 402). In Hadhramaut, *sayyid*s are key leaders and teachers in religious learning and rituals. Prior to unification, the North Yemeni government supported the Salafi movement as "a fifth column to subvert the southern socialist government" (Ho 2006, 316). Under the socialist regime, the *sayyid*s in South Yemen experienced marginalisation, humiliation, and physical persecution from the state apparatus. Moreover, the traditional customs and expressions of devotion to the *sayyid* group were outlawed (Knysh 2001, 408). As a result of unification, *sayyid* groups were once again free to express their religious views and practise their old customs. The major challenge has been coming from the Salafi group that denounces the Sufi group for conducting what they regard as unlawful innovations (*bid'ah*). On occasion, Salafi activists attempted to disrupt traditional rituals and even attacked participants of rituals they deemed *bid'ah*. The tension between the two groups has led to violence and bloodshed (Knysh 2001, 405).

In view of the increasing religious rivalry between Salafis and Sufis, a movement to preserve Hadhrami ancestral tradition and reassert Hadhrami religious identity emerged. The most influential and charismatic *sayyid* figure in this movement was Habib 'Umar. He was born in 1963 into the *sayyid* family of Salim ibn Hafiz. Bin Hafiz is a branch of the family of Shaikh Abu Bakr ibn Salim in Hadhramaut. His father went missing during a period of political turmoil and he is believed to have been killed by the socialist regime's secret police. Habib 'Umar studied under several leading scholars in Hadhramaut and started teaching and conducting *da'wah* from the age of 15. Due to the increasing pressure from the totalitarian regime at that time, Habib 'Umar moved to the city of Bayda', Yemen, where he spent his

time studying and preaching. Habib 'Umar later travelled to Saudi Arabia, where he spent approximately 10 years, receiving his religious education from traditionalist teachers (Alhabib Omar Official Website 2011). After the Yemen unification in 1990, Habib 'Umar returned to Hadhramaut and established a religious college called *Dār al-Muṣṭafá* (the House of the Chosen One) at Tarim. This college has received hundreds of students from various countries, but mainly from Southeast Asia and especially Indonesia.

Habib 'Umar became a leading advocate of Yemeni traditional Islam in Hadhramaut by reviving old religious customs and modifying them to suit modern conditions. These customs include pilgrimage to the shrines of local saints, celebrations of the Prophet's birthday, and collective recitations of Sufi poetry accompanied by music played on traditional musical instruments. In the words of Knysh, "Habib 'Umar and his followers are deliberately reviving sacred geography and pilgrimage calendar of the region, which fell into disuse under the Socialist regime" (Knysh 2001, 408). One important feature of the *sayyids*' religious outlook is their great adoration of the Prophet and His descendants (Knysh 2001, 408). Therefore, the resurgence of these customs has worked to revive the special authority of *sayyids* as religious leaders.

Figure 1. Photo of Habib 'Umar ibn Hafiz
Source: <www.muwasala.org>

The salient feature of Habib 'Umar's religious movement and educational institution lies in his enthusiasm for *da'wah*. According to my informants, when they studied at *Dār al-Muṣṭafá*, they were required

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to spend up to a month in the remote villages and hamlets of Yemen to conduct religious sermons and preach to the local population. While interacting with Habib 'Umar's students in Tarim, Knysh had the impression that the students regard Habib 'Umar's teaching as the 'true' version of Islam; they also considered themselves the disseminators of his beliefs to ignorant Muslims and non-Muslims. In spreading *da'wah*, Habib 'Umar and his group have used proselytisation techniques and multi-media technologies, such as publications, video cassettes and DVDs, and the internet (Knysh 2001, 409, 414).

When Habib 'Umar attended and delivered sermons in Jakarta in 2013, I observed his preaching style and his followers' reverence for him. On stage, he was calm, humble, and wise in appearance and preaching style. He talked systematically and eloquently and often referred to Qur'anic verses and the Prophet's messages. His speaking style was unmodulated and devoid of humour; however, his speech was usually rhetorical, enlivened by colourful words and rhythmically-repeated key sentences that sounded like a poem. He reiterated the peaceful and ethical messages (*akhlāq*) of the Prophet, reminding his audiences to remember God and to resist the material temptations of earthly life. He often stressed the need to attend *majelis* as a way to remember God and comprehend the 'true' teachings of Sunni Islam.

Habib 'Umar's former students from *Dār al-Muṣṭafá*, many of whom have become popular preachers in Indonesia, showed great respect and admiration for him. When speaking about their teacher, they often referred to him as the 'true' Sunni *alim* and praised his perfect character, which follows the Prophet's model. It seems Habib 'Umar's *da'wah*, which centers on the Prophet, has made his followers believe that he is replicating the Prophet's character and way of life. His former students often praise and glorify his ethical virtues and spiritual powers. In the last section of this article, I will discuss his followers' perception and glorification of Indonesian *ḥabā'ib*.

Rebuilding New Connection: Reopening Traditional Seminaries

The unification and restoration of peace in Yemen led some senior *ḥabā'ib* from Indonesia and Saudi Arabia to reconnect with Hadhramaut. Several *ḥabā'ib* told me that the idea to reconnect Hadhramaut and Indonesia came from three senior *ḥabā'ib*: the late Habib 'Abdul Qadir ibn Ahmad Assegaf, the late Habib Muhammad

ibn Abdullah al-Haddar (both originally came from Hadhramaut but lived in Saudi Arabia), and the late Habib Anis ibn Alwi from Solo, Indonesia. According to Abdul Qadir Mauladdawilah and Abdul Qadir Ahmad Mauladdawilah, the idea of reconnection was precipitated by the complaint of Habib Anis to Habib Abdul Qadir regarding the lamentable condition of *sayyids* in Indonesia who had increasingly been uprooted from their traditional culture and religion (Mauladdawilah 2009, 16). In response, Habib Abdul Qadir and Habib Muhammad instructed their student Habib 'Umar to travel to Indonesia in order to revive the link. Habib 'Umar visited leading *ḥabā'ib* in various places in Indonesia in 1993 and selected 30 Indonesian students, mostly *sayyid*s, to study in Hadhramaut, Yemen (I. F. Alatas 2014, 96). The arrival of Indonesian students to Hadhramaut marked the start of Habib 'Umar's new religious school, *Dār al-Muṣṭafá*.

The tolerant political atmosphere that followed Yemen's unification prompted the reopening and establishment of traditional schools and colleges in an effort to revive *sayyid* tradition associated with Sufism. While educational institutions could be found in Say'un, Hurayda, al-Shihr, al-Mukalla and other places, for Indonesians, Tarim is considered the center of religious education in Hadhramaut. There are three main institutions that have attracted large numbers of international students, especially from Indonesia: *Dār al-Muṣṭafá* and its sister institute for women, *Dār al-Zahrā'*; *Rubat Tarim*; and al-Ahgaff University (Bubalo, Phillips, and Yasmeen 2011, 33). These institutes, which are predominantly led by *ḥabā'ib*, follow Sunnism and the Shafi'i school of Islamic jurisprudence. Their doctrines and references accord with those of traditional *pesantren* in Indonesia. These institutes have become popular among traditionalist *sayyid*s and traditionalist Muslims in Indonesia because of their reputation and the excellence of returning graduates in Islamic knowledge and learning. Some *sayyid*s and their institutes have facilitated preparation courses and the travel of Indonesian students to Hadhramaut.

It is worth mentioning, however, that the links between Indonesia and Yemen have been disrupted again due to the recently renewed Yemeni civil war. The Houthi rebel movement from the north has occupied the Yemeni capital city, Sana'a, which forced the Yemeni government into exile in March 2015. The Saudi-led coalition has intervened by launching air strikes on Houthi military positions in

Sana'a. This unstable situation has led hundreds of Indonesian students to be evacuated back to Indonesia, although some students remained to complete the final year of their study. Besides, they feel that Hadhramaut is safer than Sana'a.

In the following section, I elaborate on the brief history and character of the three main schools attended by Indonesian students.

1. Dār al-Muṣṭafá

The religious school was founded in Tarim in 1993 as the result of Habib 'Umar's visit to Indonesia. Instead of sending Indonesian students to the old schools in Hadhramaut, such as *Rubat Tarim*, Habib 'Umar preferred to run his own school in order to establish himself as a Muslim scholar. At the outset, there was no permanent building for the school. The first cohort of students stayed at the *Rubat al-Muṣṭafá*, located in the city of Shihr, before later moving to the Mosque of Maula Aidid in Tarim. When the new building was completed in 1997, students moved to Hadhramaut (Imron and Hary 2011, 111–12). The school was officially opened on 6 May 1997 (Alhabib Omar Official Website, 2011). With the passage of time, the number of students in *Dār al-Muṣṭafá* increases; the majority of foreign students studying at the school hail from Indonesia. According to a report, the Indonesian students at *Dār al-Muṣṭafá* numbered around 300 to 400 in 2009, and 600 in 2010 (Bubalo, Phillips, and Yasmeen 2011, 34). Indonesian students who study at the school are not only those who come from Hadhrami background, but also non-Hadhrami who graduated from traditional schools (*pesantren*) in Indonesia, especially from Java and Kalimantan.

Three core objectives of *Dār al-Muṣṭafá* define the traditionalist characteristics of the school. Many returnee graduates told me that the school resembles a *pesantren* in Indonesia in which students could study Islamic law and Sufi teachings, which derive from the Shafi'i school and Sunnism. The three objectives include:

1. Learning Islamic law (sharia) and related sciences from those who are authoritative to impart them with connected chains of transmission;
2. Purifying the soul and refining one's character; and
3. Conveying beneficial knowledge and calling to Allah (*da'wah*) [Alhabib Omar Official Website].

The first objective is realised by studying a number of books (*kitāb*) on topics such as Islamic Jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Islamic theology (*'aqīdah*) and Arabic grammar (*naḥw*). Several of these books are familiar to *pesantren* students in Indonesia, such as *Risālah al-jāmi'ah, Safīnat al-Najā', Al-Muqaddimah al-Ḥaḍramīyah, 'Umdat al-sālikīn*, and so forth (Imron and Hary 2011, 115). The second objective indicates that Sufism is part of the core teaching at *Dār al-Muṣṭafá* . The students are required to purge themselves of bad behaviour and follow the Prophet's example in terms of attitude and practices. They are also required to participate regularly in congregational religious chanting (*dhikr* and *wirid*) after prayers. This practice constitutes a part of *ṭarīqah 'Alawīyah* teaching. *ṭarīqah 'Alawīyah* is a Sufi order that belongs to *sayyid*s in Hadhramaut. The *rātib al-ḥaddād* is among the religious litanies of the *ṭarīqah* chanted after each prayer session. Habib 'Umar also instructed his students to read his book entitled *Khulāṣat al-madad al-nabawī* (The Short version of Prophetic Helps), which contains *dhikr* and *wirid*. The last objective points to the school's emphasis on *da'wah* among broader society, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. The school has a schedule for their students to go out to conduct weekly *da'wah*, namely from Thursday to Friday, and yearly *da'wah* that takes 40 days (Imron and Hary 2011, 114). The emphasis on *da'wah* has made the graduates of the school highly competent preachers. In the Indonesian context, the school's graduates have established a number of sermon groups, Islamic media (electronic and print), and *pesantren* as venues for spreading their version of the faith.

2. Rubat Tarim

Rubat Tarim is the oldest educational institute for traditional Islamic studies in Tarim. The institute was established in 1886, a result of reform to the old education system, which took place in various study circles, mosques, and teacher's place (Boxberger 2002, 167). The concern of the institute's founders, who were leading *sayyid*s in Tarim, was to overcome difficulties faced by many students in Tarim to find accommodation (Imron and Hary 2011, 99–100). The *Rubat* was founded with the support of wealthy Hadhrami *sayyid*s in the diaspora and in Hadhramaut. In this institution, students receive instruction in one purpose-built school, which also includes boarding facilities (Boxberger 2002, 167). Students are organised into classes based on

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their ability and the principle of progression and follow a strict four-year curriculum (Freitag 2003, 284). Like *Dār al-Muṣṭafá* , the school adheres to the Shafi'i school of Islamic jurisprudence and maintains Sufi traditions (Bubalo, Phillips, and Yasmeen 2011, 36). The school still adheres to the *ḥalaqah* method, a traditional way of teaching where students sit in a circle on the floor to receive instruction from a teacher (Imron and Hary 2011, 105). Each *ḥalaqah* has a different level of advancement. The study session starts after prayer, either in the morning, noon, afternoon, or at night. Students learn various Islamic studies disciplines, such as *fiqh*, Arabic grammar (*naḥw*), hadith, exegesis (*tafsiīr)*, Islamic monotheism (*tawḥīd*), and so forth. The school became a favourite destination, along with a new *Rubat* in Say'un, for Hadhrami communities in the East Indies (now Indonesia), East Africa, and India (Boxberger 2002, 168). The current director of the *Rubat Tarim* is Habib Salim ibn Abdullah Al-Shatiri, who replaced his brother Habib Hasan ibn Abdullah Al-Shatiri. Under the regime of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen), the school was closed but later re-opened after unification (Bubalo, Phillips, and Yasmeen 2011, 35–36).

Yemen's unification has also revived the practice of sending Indonesian students to *Rubat Tarim*. Students come from several cities in Indonesia, but predominantly from Java and South Kalimantan. There were about 250 to 300 Indonesian students who studied at the *Rubat* in 2010. Some senior *ḥabā'ib* in Indonesia have facilitated the registration, student selection, short training, and travel to *Rubat Tarim*. I met some graduates who have become preachers in Jakarta and South Kalimantan. They told me that they registered through the *Rubat*'s representative in Jakarta and also the former graduate, Habib Abdurrahman ibn Shaykh Alatas. Habib Abdurrahman is a senior *ḥabīb*, the leader (*munsib*) of the Al-Attas clan in Indonesia, and has served as an advisor to the *Rabīṭah 'Alawīyah* (Sayyid Union). He owns a travel and tourism business that sends students and pilgrims to Yemen. He also established the *pesantren Masyhad al-Nur* in Sukabumi, West Java, and claims that it is a branch of the *Rubat Tarim*. Once students have passed the entrance examination, they must attend his *pesantren* for approximately three months in order to acquire basic skills in Arabic and Islamic knowledge before flying to Yemen. Prospective students are also required to pay a fee of around US$5000, which covers their

return airfare, tuition fee, accommodation, and living costs for four years of study.

Unlike *Dār al-Musṭafá*, which concentrates on *da'wah* activities, the *Rubat* places greater emphasis on the mastery of Islamic knowledge through reading and analysing authoritative texts. Students are not encouraged to undertake *da'wah* unless they have read key Islamic studies texts. A graduate from South Kalimantan told me that most of his fellow graduates in this region spread their knowledge by teaching in traditional *pesantren* rather than establishing popular sermon groups like *Dār al-Musṭafá* graduates.

3. Al-Ahgaff University

The third major destination for Indonesian students is Al-Ahgaff University. The university was established in 1995 and is accredited by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Yemen (Ahgaff 2018). The central office, language centre, and main faculties are located at al-Mukalla, a main seaport and the capital city of Hadhramaut. The sharia faculty, however, is located in Tarim, a place regarded as conducive to enhancing the intellectual and spiritual capacity of the students who study Islamic law (Imron and Hary 2011, 116–17). The sharia faculty combines the traditional method with the modern educational system. The traditional method lies in the textual analysis of the classical literature on *uṣūl al-fiqh* (the principles of Islamic law) and the Shafi'i Islamic legal school. According to this method, students have to master the major classical texts in detail under the supervision of senior teachers in Tarim, including those from *Rubat Tarim*. The modern method involves a critical analysis of contemporary literature under the instruction of lecturers who hold master and doctoral degrees. The lecturers, however, usually only summarise the content of books without much detailed discussion. The subjects under study are secondary and complementary resources related to exegesis (*tafsīr*), prophetic tradition (*hadith*), and Islamic economy (Imron and Hary 2011, 118–19). Unlike previous traditional institutes, Al-Aghaff University provides formal degrees for its graduates.

An increasing number of Indonesian students are enrolling at Al-Ahgaff University. According to one Indonesian student, Muhammad Sunni Ismail, special scholarships are available to approximately 100 Indonesian students every year. The scholarship covers tuition fees,

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accommodation near campus, three meals a day, electricity and water. There is a representative of the Al-Ahgaff Foundation in Indonesia who manages the student selection process. If a student passes the selection process, they are required to pay US$2000 for a student visa and five years' fees in advance. Due to the low cost of living and availability of scholarship funding, the number of Indonesian students attending the university has grown. Muhammad estimates that in 2015 there were between 500 and 600 Indonesian students (male and female) studying at the Al-Ahgaff campuses in Tarim and al-Mukalla. Each year, between 120 and 150 new students arrive from Indonesia to study at the university. Although Al-Ahgaff has several faculties, international students from Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, are only allowed to enter the Faculty of Sharia and Islamic Studies (Imron and Hary 2011, 119). Muhammad states that the university has sought to increase the number of scholarships for Indonesians so that they can compete with Saudi Arabia and Iran, which have expanded scholarship programs to promote their respective ideologies (i.e. Salafism and Shi'ism).

The academic atmosphere at the university is more relaxed for students as they have more free time to undertake other activities. Moreover, they are not closely monitored or strictly supervised like those in the other aforementioned institutes. Therefore, Al-Ahgaff students can use their free time to play sport, join student organisations, or attend *ḥalaqah* at *Rubat Tarim* and *Dār al-Muṣṭafá* (Berkuliah 2014). Despite this relaxed atmosphere, Al-Ahgaff University's evaluation and examination system is rigorous. When a student fails to achieve a minimum score in their exams, they will be provided alternative options, including a remedial test and a chance to repeat their studies the following year. If they fail again, the student will be expelled from the university.

Building Local and Global *Da'wah* Network:

Expanding Prophetic Da'wah Style

The educational network of Hadhramis in Tarim is supported by the creation of *da'wah* networks among religious scholars across the world, especially in Southeast Asia. The key actors in creating and expanding this network are the Indonesian Yemeni graduates who have returned to their home countries. Graduates of *Dār al-Muṣṭafá*, Hadhramaut, have actively spread the religious mission of their respected teacher, Habib 'Umar ibn Hafiz. They admit that Habib 'Umar always monitors and

enquires of their progress in *da'wah* when he visits Indonesia. Based on my observations in Indonesia, graduates have established three main *da'wah* sites: sermon groups (*majelis taklim*), traditional *pesantren*, and Islamic media. In terms of Islamic media, this means the publication of books, DVDs, and websites that convey their religious messages. These three forms of media appear to emulate the steps undertaken by Habib 'Umar in Yemen. Habib 'Umar is tireless in spreading *da'wah* by travelling to various places in Yemen. He travels all over the world and visits Indonesia every year. He has also visited Southeast Asia, the United States, Australia, and Europe to deliver his sermons and lectures. Furthermore, he has used visual and audio media, as well as DVDs and the internet to spread his message.

The sermon group *Majelis Rasulullah* (MR) provides a good case study of the influence and direction of Habib 'Umar on his former students in Indonesia. The *Majelis* was established by Habib Munzir ibn Fuad al-Musawa in Jakarta in 1998. Habib 'Umar's greatest influence on Habib Munzir was his *da'wah* activism. It became the main platform for spreading the *sayyid* style of traditional Islam under the banner of devotion to the Prophet. This kind of *da'wah* has been called the Prophetic *da'wah* (*da'wah nabawi*). Two aspects have often been mentioned in Habib Munzir's messages: first, this *da'wah* is a way of continuing the Prophet's mission; second, the *da'wah* emphasises the practice of traditional rituals as a way of loving and pleasing the Prophet. To express his devotion to the Prophet, Habib Munzir often appeared in public dressed in traditional garments believed to be the type of clothing worn by the Prophet; he also employed symbols and messages related to the Prophet in his performances as well as sermons. When Habib Munzir returned to Indonesia in 1998, the first thing he did was *da'wah*, a mission which is emphasised in *Dār al-Muṣṭafá*. He was dressed in a Hadhrami-*sayyid* long robe and turban (*imāmah*) when delivering his sermons. This was in contrast to the appearance of other popular preachers who wore more fashionable Muslim dress in an attempt to accommodate Muslim consumerism. When his congregation grew, he formalised his *da'wah* groups under the name of the *Majelis Rasulullah* (the Assembly of the Prophet). The name, which is linked to the Prophet, was first used by Habib Munzir, before it later became trendy and a commodity of sorts among *ḥabā'ib* religious entrepreneurs.

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The second element, which is borrowed from Habib 'Umar, is the high mobility *da'wah* style and the adept appropriation of new media technology. Unlike sermon groups in Indonesia, which regularly take place in one permanent location or building such as the *Majelis Ta'lim Habib Ali Kwitang* in Jakarta, Habib Munzir frequently moved his sermon venue from one public place to another. This seems to be inspired by the *da'wah* style of his teacher in Hadhramaut, who travelled to many places in his vehicle and gave "fiery public sermons and lecturers at every stop" (Knysh 2001, 406). Habib Munzir brought new innovation in public *da'wah* by creatively casting his sermon group's name as a banner for his religious entrepreneurship. Apart from public preaching, he and his team also produced religious merchandise to promote him and his sermon group. Like Habib 'Umar, he used various media, especially DVDs, streaming videos, websites and social media to spread his message to a wider audience. Through high mobility and the use of new media technology, Habib Munzir quickly became revered as a teacher and preacher, while his sermon group increased in popularity.

The third element that Habib Munzir adopted from Hadhramaut is the popularisation of Hadhrami *sayyid* rituals in Indonesia. As I have noted, after Yemen's unification, Habib 'Umar revived the *sayyid*'s traditional customs, including collective recitations of Sufi poetry, celebration of the Prophet's birthday, and pilgrimages to the shrines of saints and prophetic figures. During class, Habib 'Umar would encourage his pupils to conduct *ziyārah* or visit the graves of saints in Hadhramaut. This ritual has also become a weekly fixture of Habib Munzir's *da'wah* in Indonesia. Habib Munzir and his team mobilised his followers to carry out traditional rituals, such as reciting *dhikr, salawatan* and *mawlid* texts, as well as visiting the sacred graves of *sayyid* saints in Jakarta and elsewhere. The sermon group typically meets at a mosque on Monday nights. It follows the public gathering time of Habib 'Umar's in Hadhramaut. Furthermore, the *mawlid* text read at the gathering is a work of Habib 'Umar entitled *al-Ḍiyā' al-lamī'* (the Shimmering Light). It has become a ritual for the MR to commence proceedings by reading from the *mawlid* text, which takes about an hour. During the public chanting, tambourines are played by the *haḍrah* crew, thereby exciting the audience. In addition, the group also makes a weekly visit to saints' graves. Among the popular graves in

Jakarta are those of al-Habib Ali ibn Abdurrahman al-Habsyi (Habib Ali Kwitang), al-Habib Ahmad ibn Alwi Al-Haddad (Habib Kuncung), al-Habib Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Haddad (Mbah Priok), and al-Habib Husein ibn Abu Bakar Alaydrus (Habib Keramat Luar Batang). Those graves have been popular sites among traditionalist Muslims in Jakarta for many decades. In big cities, such rituals fail to attract young people who aspire to be 'modern'. Habib Munzir, however, popularised this ritual among urban Muslim youths and it has since trended with young people.

Habib 'Umar has served as spiritual father and consultant to the MR. He is popularly called 'noble teacher' (*guru mulia*) by Habib Munzir and his followers, an indication of their great reverence for him. Some staff told me that Habib 'Umar has played a great role in directing the development of the sermon group since its establishment. In dealing with serious problems and operations, Habib Munzir always consulted with Habib 'Umar. When faced with challenges from various directions, he asked for advice and support from his teacher. The close relationship of Habib 'Umar to the sermon group has been demonstrated by his regular presence in the MR public gathering in which he performs as a key speaker. Based on my observations, Habib Umar frequently comes to Indonesia to attend the *haul* (yearly commemoration) for his charismatic grandfather, Shaykh Abu Bakar ibn Salim, who is regarded as a great *ulama* and revered saint in Hadhramaut. The Majelis plays an important role in supporting the operation of the *haul.* The *haul* regularly takes place in Cidodol, South Jakarta and attracts a large number of participants. At the *haul*, Habib 'Umar gives a sermon and recites prayers. After spending time with the MR, Habib 'Umar usually goes to visit his former students' institutions, such as Yayasan Al-Fachriyyah of Habib Jindan ibn Novel ibn Jindan in Tangerang, and several *ulama* in Jakarta, before moving on to Java or other parts of Indonesia.

Habib 'Umar's influence on the *Majelis* was also noticeable after the death of Habib Munzir in 2013. *Majelis* leaders gathered to discuss the most suitable successor to Habib Munzir, but any nomination would have to be approved by Habib 'Umar, who came to Jakarta at the end of 2013. The result was the restructuring of the *Majelis*, which had previously had a single leader. With the approval of Habib 'Umar, the *Majelis* leaders decided to divide the leadership between the *majelis*

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syura (advisory board) and *pengurus harian* (the executive board). The *majelis syura* comprises several senior *ḥabā'ib* who give advice and make decisions on religious matters, while the executive board carries out the *Majelis*' programs and organises the religious gatherings. In 2015, *majelis syura* member who was also the elder brother of Habib Munzir, Habib Nabiel ibn Fuad Al-Musawa, told me that the supreme leadership of MR is the *majelis syura*; they have the authority to appoint preachers, develop the MR foundation, and monitor the executive board. After his death, Habib Munzir was succeeded by a series of *Dār al-Muṣṭafá* graduates, none of whom were his relatives. The first chairman of the MR executive board was Habib Ahmad ibn Novel (2014–2015). Since 2015, the executive board has been divided in two: a teachers' division (*dewan guru*) and an executive division (*dewan pengurus*). The current chairman of the former is Habib Muhammad Bagir ibn Yahya, while the chairman of the latter is Habib Ja'far ibn Muhammad Bagir Al-Attas. According to Habib Nabiel, this restructuring was made because there is no one who could replace the charismatic Habib Munzir. Besides, the changing leadership is aimed at empowering *Dār al-Muṣṭafá* alumni figures (*penokohan*). In reality, decisions made by *majelis syura* must be approved by Habib 'Umar.

Building Ulama Network of Southeast Asia

Starting from Indonesia, Habib 'Umar has moved to build a Sunni network among traditionalist ulama in Southeast Asia. In 2007, he established an *ulama* network called the *Majlis al-Muwāṣalah bayn 'Ulamā' al-Muslimīn* (A Communication Forum for Muslim Scholars), the objective of which was "to contribute to creating and developing Godly scholars (*ulama Rabbani*) within Muslim societies" (Majelis Al-Muwasholah 2015). The *Muwāṣalah* website states that the reason for establishing the forum is the worsening condition that besets Muslim societies in the form of moral decline, internal conflict and increasing crime rates. They believe that in dealing with such a situation, Muslim scholars (*ulama*) have a responsibility to provide guidance and shepherd the *ummah* to the corridor of God's true path. One way to realise this, according to the *Muwāṣalah*, is to push for unity, consolidation, and mutual support among the *ulama* across regions (Majelis Al-Muwasholah 2015). The forum has conducted several meetings and training sessions (*dawrah*) for teachers and

ulama in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. The participants invited are mostly local popular preachers and teachers of Islamic studies (*ustādh*) who have a traditionalist orientation. The program is not only undertaken at the national level, but also in the provinces such as West Nusa Tenggara, South Kalimantan, and East Java. The forum invites a number of local traditionalists *ulama* to a meeting (*multaqā' ulama*) and encourages unity and communication among them. On particular occasions, several *sayyid* scholars of Hadhramaut, such as Habib Salim ibn Abdullah al-Shatiri, were invited to deliver a religious lecture or sermon to the *ulama* audiences. Several branches of the *Muwāṣalah* have been established in several provinces in which most of the local coordinators are *sayyid* figures.

In expanding the organisation and realising its programs, *Muwāṣalah* is independent and relies only on its members and sympathisers. In many activities, I saw *Rabīṭah 'Alawīyah* as the only formal organisation that actively supported the *Muwāṣalah* programs. Based on my observation of their publications and national news, *Muwāṣalah* has not engaged with formal Islamic organisations, such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). This might be because they see NU leaders' views as not being in line with their Sunni version. According to Habib Nabiel Al-Musawa, the reason is that some NU leaders have been influenced by Shi'ism and Islamic liberalism. According to *Muwāṣalah*, Shi'ism and Islamic liberalism are deviant and Sunni Muslims must acknowledge that. Some *Muwāṣalah* members, especially those from East Java, have criticised NU's general chairman, Said Aqil Siradj, for his liberal thought and his support for Muslim minorities, including the Shi'a. With regard to *Muwāṣalah*'s relations with government, there are indications that *Muwāṣalah* has begun to approach local authorities seeking their support. During the *ulama* meetings for the regions of Bali and West and Nusa Tenggara, which were held in Mataram in 2014, the governor of West Nusa Tenggara delivered an opening speech, which expressed his support for the program (Muslimedia News 2014).

The meetings and training programs of the *Muwāṣalah* aim to strengthen traditional Sunnism by empowering traditionalist preachers and teachers. The issues raised deal with consolidating traditionalist local *ulama* and organising training sessions (*dawrah*) regularly. The venues are usually traditionalist bases, such as *pesantren*, *ḥabā'ib*'s *majelis*, or rented buildings. In South Kalimantan, for instance, the

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Muwāṣalah organised a meeting in 2014 for *ulama* at *Pesantren al-Falah Banjar Baru*. It was reported that there were about 100 *ulama* from various places in South Kalimantan who participated in the program (Majelis Al-Muwasholah 2015). At this forum, Habib Muhammad ibn Agil Assegaf was elected as the coordinator of *Muwāṣalah* for the region. A number of reports on the website indicate that most of the *Muwāṣalah* coordinators for several provinces come from *ḥabā'ib.* The domination of *ḥabā'ib* in the communication forums implies that *ḥabā'ib* have created platforms and networks that allow them to expand their influence and religious standing among traditionalist Muslim societies.

In expanding the global ulama network, Habib 'Umar has been received help from existing local networks created by his students, especially in Southeast Asia. In Indonesia, the graduates of Hadhramaut have been active in building communication among their peers. For instance, they created a communication forum for the graduates of *Dār al-Muṣṭafá called al-Wafā' bi 'Ahdillāh* (Realising the Promise of God). It has branches in several provinces where the graduates are based. In East Java, the head of the local communication forum since 2011 has been the young popular preacher in Malang, Habib Jamal ibn Thoha Ba'agil. He estimated there to be around 200 alumni in 2013 in East Java, most of whom have established *pesantren*s and sermon groups. The alumni regularly meet once every three months in order to discuss the development of their outreach and share information and solutions in dealing with problems in the societies. The alumni networks have hosted activities for Habib 'Umar and other prominent *ḥabā'ib* from the Middle East.

Another institute that has helped to expand Habib 'Umar's influence across the world is the Tabah Foundation in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which was founded by his former student, Habib Ali al-Jufri, in 2005. It is a non-profit organisation that "offers suggestions and recommendations to opinion makers in order that they assume a wise approach that is beneficial to society. It also sets up practical projects that serve the exalted values of Islam and brings out its splendours as a civilization" (Tabah Foundation n.d.). Habib 'Umar is positioned in an advisory board along with other five Muslim scholars in the foundation. Habib Ali al-Jufri also serves as the deputy director at *Dār al-Muṣṭafá*. Due to this relationship, the Tabah Foundation has helped Habib

'Umar's religious academy *Dār al-Muṣṭafá* to improve the standard of its administrative organisation and increase services provided for students. The foundation also has facilitated the travel of Habib 'Umar to give lectures and sermons in Islamic institutions and universities in Africa and Europe (Moustafa 2014). These venues, therefore, have helped to increase the profile and influence of Habib 'Umar in different parts of the world.

Promoting Hadhramautism for Authority

Promoting Hadhramaut as the Centre of 'Truly' Sunni Scholarship

Indonesian graduates from Hadhramaut have helped to promote Yemeni traditional education in Indonesian societies. Most of the graduates of *Rubat Tarim* and *Dār al-Muṣṭafá* maintain a strong connection and line of communication with their teacher after they return to Indonesia. Many have established traditional education institutions and sermon groups or joined existing ones. I met several popular preachers in Java who founded a traditional model of *pesantren*, which adopts the teaching methods and subjects from Hadhramaut. New generations of students are also encouraged to continue their studies in Hadhramaut. As these graduates maintain such a strong bond with their teacher, especially Habib 'Umar, they conduct selection tests and travel to Hadhramaut. It is different from Al-Ahgaff University, which has a representative office in Indonesia that manages student selection and offers scholarships every year. Habib Jamal, a graduate of *Dār al-Muṣṭafá*, is a case in point. Upon returning to Malang, he established a small *pesantren* called *Anwar Tawfiq* (the Lights of Prosperity) with the financial support of a local donor. He states that the school's establishment was approved by his teacher in Yemen. He also admits that he borrowed *Dār al-Muṣṭafá* 's model, especially in developing his students' Arabic language skills and their ability to read classical religious books (*kitab kuning*). Some of his students have graduated and continue their studies at *Dār al-Muṣṭafá*, Hadhramaut.

Besides the work of graduates, several publishing houses and magazines owned by *ḥabā'ib* also play a significant role in promoting education in Hadhramaut. There are several reasons for promoting schools in Hadhramaut. First, Hadhramaut, especially Tarim, has been regarded as the eminent centre of traditional Sunnism and the Shafi'i *madhab* in the Middle East. Several Indonesian graduates expressed a

preference for Hadhramaut over Mecca and Medina because the latter two have been infused with Wahhabi teachings. The exception is the *Rubat* of Sayyid Muhammad Alwi al-Maliki (1944-2004), an informal institute in Mecca that bases its philosophy on traditional Sunni tenets. For the Indonesian graduates and the *sayyid* media, the Sunni tradition in Hadhramaut has long been maintained and practised by the *sayyid* communities. Several *sayyid* publications point out that the majority of Muslims in Hadhramaut follow Sunnism and the Shafi'i *madhhab* (Baharun 2013, 69–70; Mauladdawilah and Mauladdawilah 2012, 98). They argue that the spread of Shafi'i jurisprudence in the region was due to their ancestor Ahmad ibn Isa, who moved from Basra, Iraq, to Hadhramaut. He was considered to have played an important role in propagating the Sunni theology among the Hadhrami population, which was at that time dominated by Shi'i Zaydīyah and 'Ibādīyah (Baharun 2013, 69–70). They therefore feel at home in Hadhramaut, as it has much in common with Indonesia in terms of theology, *madhab*, and tradition. In fact, they argue that the similarities in theology and *madhhab* came about because of the roles of Hadhrami *sayyid*s, who disseminated Islam in Indonesia many centuries ago (Mauladdawilah and Mauladdawilah 2012, 101).

Secondly, *ḥabā'ib* promote Hadhramaut as a spiritual centre. During their studies in Hadhramaut, the students not only learned Islamic law and Islamic monotheism (*tawḥīd*), but also Sufism through literature and religious practice. These subjects are not offered in Saudi universities where puritan Salafi ideology predominates. Moreover, students learn Sufi practices that follow the teaching of *Ṭarīqah 'Alawīyah*, such as reciting *Ratīb al-Ḥaddād* after obligatory prayers, visiting the graves of holy saints, obtaining blessings (*tabarruk*), and maintaining ethical behaviour (*adab*) in everyday life. A graduate of *Rubat Tarim*, Muhiddin explained:

> The place of my study (Tarim) is traditional and it has a rich heritage. The Hadhrami community really maintains the tradition (*adat*) inherited from their ancestors. So, this is a genuine teaching of the Prophet. They have adopted both Islamic knowledge (*ilmu*) and practice (*amal*) in their lives. In terms of knowledge, it might be the same as what students learn in Saudi, Egypt and Indonesia, yet in terms of blessing you will find more in Hadhramaut. Their ethics (*adab*) and behaviour (*akhlak*) are amazing. They really respect their teachers and their ancestors. Several study spaces contain blessings as many people have studied in such places before. When you study at such spaces, you will feel peaceful (*adem*).

The spiritual attraction of Hadhramaut has been associated with the high number of graves of Muslim saints, especially *sayyid*s, and sacred places. Besides the grave of the pre-Islamic Prophet Hud, there are three cemeteries that have become pilgrimage destinations (*ziyārah*): Zanbal, Furaith, and Akdar (Mauladdawilah and Mauladdawilah 2012, 130). Zanbal is the most popular as it is the site of the graves of the Companions of the Prophet, the spiritual father of *sayyids* in Hadhramaut, al-Imam al-Faqih al-Muqaddam, and thousands of Muslim saints and great *ulama* (Mauladdawilah and Mauladdawilah 2012, 132). Furthermore, there are a number of old mosques believed to have the power to bestow blessings since famous Muslim saints and scholars from previous generations have studied and prayed in such places.

Lastly, *ḥabā'ib* promote Tarim as a healthy environment for learning and practising Islamic piety. The *sayyid* publications state that the population of Tarim is generally pious and committed to the values of Islam. They "put forward their ethical behaviour, live with ascetic ways, ignore earthly pleasures, and avoid popularity" (Mauladdawilah and Mauladdawilah 2012, 122). A graduate from *Rubat Tarim* recalled how he felt at peace when studying there and how he believed that the environment allowed him to focus on religious learning and to rid himself of material concerns. This pious environment, according to *sayyid* publications, was due to the prayer of the Companion of the Prophet, Abu Bakr, after gaining the support of Tarim's population for his leadership. He prayed for three things for Tarim: the prosperity of the city, the abundance of water and blessings, and the presence of pious people in Tarim (Mauladdawilah and Mauladdawilah 2012, 116). This, for some Indonesian *ḥabā'ib*, theologically explains the birth of numerous scholars and saints in Tarim for many generations

Promoting *Ḥabā'ib* as the International Authoritative Ulama

The Venues of Promotion

The return of Hadhramaut-educated graduates to Indonesia has helped to promote the rise of *ḥabā'ib* from Yemen. The intense communication between graduates and their teachers has allowed the former to invite the latter to give sermons or lectures in Indonesia. Through such programs they have introduced their charismatic teachers to Indonesian audiences. Habib 'Umar is the most popular; he

is frequently invited as a keynote speaker at the big *mawlid's* festivities in Jakarta and for other activities organised by his former students and *ulama* networks. Other popular *ḥabā'ib* from overseas who have been invited include Habib Ali al-Jufri of Abu Dhabi, Habib Salim ibn Abdullah Al-Shatiri of Tarim, and Habib Zain ibn Sumayt of Medina.

The print and electronic media play a significant role in promoting the *ḥabā'ib* from the Middle East. Publications on the *ḥabā'ib* are not only promoted by graduates of Hadhramaut, but also by Indonesian *sayyid*s and traditionalist Muslims who are interested in popularising their thoughts or monetising their works. These publications are sold in certain Islamic bookstores and by small vendors, rather than in mainstream bookstores such as Gramedia, due to their reluctance to fulfil those retailers' requirements. Among the *ḥabā'ib* in the Middle East, the works of Habib 'Umar and Sayyid Muhammad Alwi seem to get more attention from several publishers because of their popularity. Most publications are works written in Arabic and translated into Indonesian. The works of Habib 'Umar mostly contain religious advice on purifying the soul, Islamic ethics (*akhlāq*), and Islamic moderation (*wasaṭīyah*). The translated works of Sayyid Muhammad Alwi, on the other hand, deal with doctrinal justifications for defending the traditionalist practices, such as *mawlid* (celebrating the Prophet's birthday), *tawaṣṣul* (intercession), *tabarruk* (seeking blessing), and *ziyārah* (visiting the sains' graves).

Book publishers and magazines that promote *ḥabā'ib* profiles and writings have grown in number. Most of these publishers are based in East and Central Java. The *Pustaka Basma* in Malang, East Java, promotes local *ḥabā'ib*, as well as *ḥabā'ib* from the Middle East. Previously, it was called *Karisma*, when it was established in 2008. The publishing house was founded by Habib Abdul Qadir ibn Umar Mauladdawilah and his colleagues who had a concern for traditionalist *da'wah*. Since his days as a student in the *Pesantren Darut Tauhid*, Malang, Habib Abdul Qadir has collected *ḥabā'ib* photos and hagiographies (*manāqib*), and recorded *ḥabā'ib* sermons. This hobby eventually led him to write a best-selling book entitled *17 Haba'ib Berpengaruh di Indonesia* (17 Influential Ḥabā'ib in Indonesia) (AlKisah 2015). Habib Abdul Qadir and his colleague, Ernaz Siswanto, told me that the idea of founding a publishing company came to him when he was attending sermon groups in Malang with

his friends. They saw that the Islamic bookstores in Malang were full of Wahhabi books. As an attempt to counter the Wahhabi, they began publishing stories and bibliographies of Muslim scholars and saints in acknowledgment that such books can inspire people to emulate the saints and have a successful life. They said that most of their consumers are traditionalist Muslims who buy their books from vendors located near sermon group venues. Several books, such as *17 Influential Ḥabā'ib in Indonesia*, have been popular among sermon groups congregants. *Pustaka Basma* has sold over 30,000 copies of the book not only in Indonesia, but also in Malaysia and Singapore. Despite the book's continued publication, Habib Abdul Qadir admits that his publisher lacks professionalism and has limited funds.

Like book publishers, the number of Islamic magazines that promote *ḥabā'ib* continues to grow. The most notable magazine of its kind is *alKisah*, based in Jakarta. According to Kazuhiro Arai, the magazine has an important role in introducing *ḥabā'ib* and their activities to a broader Indonesian audience (Arai 2012, 247). *AlKisah* was first published in July 2003 and has been led by Harun Musawa, a *sayyid* businessman and former *Tempo* magazine editor, and his family. Later, together with his wife, Nuniek, he started his own publishing business by publishing magazines for adolescents, such as *Aneka Yes!* The distinctive element of *alKisah* is that it is dedicated to *ḥabā'ib*. *Ḥabā'ib's* images adorn the cover page and the articles inside contain religious messages, stories and reports on past and present religious figures. The magazine used to publish pictures of celebrity Muslim figures on the cover page but has since replaced these with pictures of *ḥabā'ib*. According to the deputy editor-in-chief, Ali Yahya, this change was not planned, but was rather a result of positive responses from readers who wanted them to keep publishing pictures of *ḥabā'ib* on their covers. In other words, images of the *ḥabā'ib* have a market value for the magazine. Not only does the magazine promote the newly emerging *ḥabā'ib* preachers in Indonesia, it also helps to introduce the *sayyid* scholars from the Middle East to the Indonesian public. Several editions have raised the profiles and religious messages of Sunni *ḥabā'ib* from the Middle East, most notably Yemen, such as Habib 'Umar ibn Hafiz, Habib Abdullah ibn Salim Al-Shatiri, and Habib Ali al-Jufri. It also often reports the activities of Habib 'Umar when he comes to Indonesia on his annual visit. The magazine even

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devotes a whole section called *madrasah Hadhramaut* (Islamic school of Hadhramaut) to topical religious advice from the deputy head of *Dār al-Muṣṭafá*, Habib Ali al-Jufri.

Promoting Ḥabā'ib as the Guardians of Sunni Islam

Various media of Indonesian *sayyid*s, either print or electronic, have promoted *ḥabā'ib* from the Middle East as the guardians of 'true' Islam. Two *ḥabā'ib* who feature predominantly in Indonesian publications are Habib 'Umar ibn Hafiz and the late Sayyid Muhammad Alwi al-Maliki. They are described as the authoritative Sunni *ulama* from the Middle East who seek to spread the 'true' path of Islam through education and *da'wah*. The 'true' Islam in their view is traditional Sunnism formulated by *salafuna al-ṣāliḥīn* (the pious predecessors). This version of Islam follows the authentic path of the Prophet, His family (*ahl al-bayt*), and His companions (Mauladdawilah 2009, vii).

Habib 'Umar and Sayyid Muhammad Alwi are special for *sayyid* communities and traditionalist Muslims in Indonesia for several reasons. First, both are the descendants of the Prophet. Habib 'Umar's genealogy is through the line of the Prophet's grandson, Husayn, while Sayyid Muhammad's is through the line of another of the Prophet's grandsons, Hasan. Second, they are considered to have mastered various disciplines of Islamic knowledge with genealogical chain and legitimacy to the Prophet (*sanad*). This sort of traditional knowledge certification has been in decline after the modernisation of Islamic schools. While such practices are seldom found in formal education, such as Islamic senior high schools and universities, several informal learning centres, such as *ḥalaqah* and *rubat* in the Middle East, especially Hadhramaut, and *pesantren* in Southeast Asia, still maintain them. The more *ijāzah* (certification through oral and written form) from authoritative scholars a student obtains, the more respect he gains from his followers. It is therefore understandable to see a list of teachers or Muslim scholars displayed on a *habib*'s profile, either in his book or on his website. Thirdly, they share a similar concern, namely to maintain and protect Sunni Islam through education, written works, and *da'wah*. Sayyid Muhammad Alwi was a productive scholar whose works in various disciplines have been translated into Indonesian. He wrote books that defended Sunni orthodox beliefs and rituals, which are criticised as *bid'ah* (unlawful innovation) by Salafi scholars. The most cited work is

Mafāhim yajibu an tuṣaḥḥaḥ (The Views That Have to be Corrected). The book provides doctrinal arguments in defending traditionalist rituals such as *mawlid*, *ziyārah*, *tawaṣṣul* and *tabarruk*. With regard to intercession, for instance, Alwi refuted those who judge such practice as a part of polytheism (*mushrik*). He argues that intercession is justified by religious texts and precedents from past believers. He stresses that intercessors only serve as mediators in order to get quick access to God's help. To support his argument, he refers to a number of Qur'anic verses and Hadith, the opinions of several *ulama*, as well as to the intercession practice of the Prophet, to indicate that intercession is allowed in Islam (Al-Hasani and al-Maliki 2011, 85–90). I observed that many *ḥabā'ib* and *kiai*s in Indonesia often refer to his work or his doctrinal justification, either in preaching and publications.

Promoting Sayyid Scholars as the Prophetic Exemplars

With regard to Habib 'Umar, the Indonesian *ḥabā'ib* and traditionalists promote him as a rising star who manifests the 'perfect' character of the Prophet. Several informants told me that Habib 'Umar has 'precisely' emulated the character of the Prophet, as well as following His ways in religious practice (*'ibādah*) and human interaction (*mu'āmalah*). Former students who have interacted with Habib 'Umar have, for years, used a hagiographical style in describing his life, his character, and his dedication in realising his religious mission. Habib Munzir, for instance, praised the personality of his teacher, Habib 'Umar, in a sermon:

He is a man who has achieved a level of '*ḥāfiẓ*', i.e. one who has memorised 100,000 hadith with its chain (*sanad*) and its content (*matn*). He also has the title of *al-musnid*, meaning one who has received thousands of hadith, which links him with other transmitters to the Prophet. During my four years of study with him (at *Dār al-Muṣṭafá*) I have not seen a greater person who resembles the Prophet than what I found in him. What I read from hadith on the description of the Prophet (such as the way he sits, walks, sleeps, and talks) is all found in Habib 'Umar ibn Hafiz.

The stories on his affable personality have often been retold and spread by his students and later included in books, magazines, or posted on their website and social media. The stories include his 'extraordinary' treatment of his students in Hadhramaut when facing hardship. A story

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documented in a book and spread in the blogs and social media, for instance, recounts:

> Once upon a time, Habib Munzir and his friends stayed in the *rubat* of *Dār al-Musṭafá* in a time of hardship due to the civil war in Yemen. Food stock had decreased as its delivery had been blocked by invaders. The food was only enough for Habib 'Umar's family. However, Habib Munzir and his friends could have a meal. One day, after having a meal, he saw Habib 'Umar's child collecting the rest of their food. When asked what she was doing, she said, "I am collecting the rest of the food for my father who has not eaten." That is the amazing moral (*akhlāq*) of al-Habib 'Umar ibn Hafiz. He and his family did not eat provided that his students were not hungry. Is there one of us who could follow his morality and altruism even in a difficult situation? (Biografi Ulama dan Ḥabā'ib, 2012).

His efforts at *da'wah* are another element in promoting his Prophetic quality. He has been described as a zealous preacher who has spread the religion of God in many places with patience, sincerity, and persistence (Mauladdawilah 2009, 9). Habib 'Umar is seen as a great orator and communicator who could attract his audience and move them to tears with his sermons. Some former students have called him a "lion of the stage" (*singa podium*) in their book illustrating his excellent skills in public communication (Mauladdawilah 2009). His *da'wah* travel has expanded not only into the Middle East, but also to countries in Southeast Asia, South Asia, Africa, America, and Europe. *Da'wah* in Islam has two dimensions. The first involves a call or persuasion to non-Muslims to convert to Islam, while the second means to call or remind Muslims to follow and practise the teaching of Islam. There are some accounts from Indonesian *muḥibbīn* (followers of *ḥabā'ib*) about the success of Habib 'Umar in converting non-Muslims in the West as a result of his soul-touch approach. However, the works and sermons of Habib 'Umar largely target Muslims, urging them to go back to the true path of Islam as exemplified by pious predecessors who manifested the authentic teachings of the Prophet. This call is not different from that of the Salafi group, which asks Muslims to return to the authentic teachings. From Habib 'Umar's perspective, however, authentic Islam means the revival of Islamic tradition, rather than the purification of Islam. Indeed, many of his students believe that the Salafi and other groups have strayed from Islam and are therefore 'deviant'.

The glorification of Habib 'Umar and other Hadhrami *ulama* enhances the authority of Indonesia's new preachers. Several preachers,

especially *Dār al-Muṣṭafá* graduates, have expressed their admiration and affinity for Habib ʻUmar, either through stories or pictures. Some young preachers have displayed the images of Habib ʻUmar and other Yemeni *sayyid* scholars in their official websites and social media page as a way of basking in their reflected glory. By connecting themselves to Habib ʻUmar, the preachers may convey three messages to their audiences: first, they are students of Habib ʻUmar and have studied with him in Hadhramaut; second, while they are not direct students of Habib ʻUmar in Hadhramaut, they have received certificates for teaching a subject or practising a particular litany; third, they follow the Sunni religious orientation and *daʻwah* path of Habib ʻUmar. By displaying these connections, preachers have sought to bolster their profile and attract more participants to their sermon groups.

Closing Remarks

I have demonstrated how transnational factors have contributed to the rising influence of the *ḥabāʾib* in Indonesia. I have also described how the political and social change in Yemen that led to the unification of South and North Yemen in 1990 has paved the way for the reconnection between Indonesia and Hadhramaut, especially in the sphere of education and *daʻwah*, which some scholars have identified as a new form of Hadhrami connection (Heiss and Slama 2010; Ho 2006; Slama 2005). There is indeed an increasing aspiration among Hadhrami-*sayyid* communities to send their children to their ancestral land or to visit the saints' graves as a way of reconnecting with their homeland. What this article shows, however, is that *ḥabāʾib* have framed and promoted this new link as facilitating a traditional Sunni revival, rather than an exclusive Hadhrami revival. In fact, the re-establishment of ties has created a new form of transnational Sunni network between Yemen and Indonesia, as well as other countries. Through these networks, the major aspiration among *ḥabāʾib* is the expansion and the strengthening of traditionalist Sunni Islam (*ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamāʻah*) across the world.

Despite the common platform of strengthening Sunni Islam within these networks, the quest to revive the position of the *ḥabāʾib* as authoritative scholars defending 'true Islam' is apparent. The networks have been revitalised by 'charismatic' *ḥabāʾib* in the Middle East, especially Hadhramaut in Yemen, to promote their religious authority

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in Indonesia. Returning graduate networks and the newly established *ulama* communication forums, as well as print publications and online media, have also facilitated this development. Certain forms of media have promoted *ḥabā'ib* in Hadhramaut (and other parts in the Middle East) as the inheritors of the Prophet's teachings and morality, and as the authoritative guards of Sunni Islam in the Muslim world. Furthermore, they also promote Hadhramaut as the 'sacred' land, the centre of Sunni education, and a model of piety.

The transnational connection in education and *da'wah* has provided *ḥabā'ib* and traditionalist Muslims in Indonesia with cultural capital. Indonesian *ḥabā'ib* have used their status and their connection to Hadhramaut as a way of enhancing their religious authority, and hence gained popularity and financial rewards. This does not, however, only apply to the *ḥabā'ib*. Indeed, there has been an increasing trend among traditionalist Muslims, especially *pesantren* graduates, to continue their studies in Hadhramaut. In fact, the number of Indonesian non-*sayyid* students wishing to study in Hadhramaut is greater than that of *sayyid*. Hadhramaut is their preferred destination to learn 'true' Sunni Islam and experience piety in 'the land of a thousand saints'. Concurrently, they aspire to attain the reputation of a Hadhramaut graduate, which should provide them with greater religious standing in a range of Muslim societies. When they become preachers or Muslim scholars, their connection to Hadhramaut, in the form of stories, pilgrimage, and affiliation with particular charismatic scholars, will also strengthen their authority among their followers in Indonesia.

Endnotes

- This article was a part of my Ph.D thesis submitted to the Australian National University in 2016.

1. Hadhrami Arabs comprise *sayyid* and non-*sayyid* groups. *Sayyid* refers to those who have genealogical links to the Prophet Muhammad through His grandson, Husayn. *Ḥabīb* (or *ḥabā'ib* for plural) is another call for the *sayyid*s. In Indonesian usage, however, *ḥabā'ib* refers to *sayyid* ulama or preachers who are erudite in Islamic teaching. Therefore, in this article, I use *sayyid* as a group status and *ḥabīb* as a religious authority.
2. For further discussion of Salafism in Yemen, see Laurent Bonnefoy (2011).
3. Personal communication with Fahmi, April 5, 2015.
4. Interview with Syarif, Solo, March 3, 2013.
5. Interview with Jindan ibn Novel, Jakarta, April 8, 2013.
6. Interview with Syarif, Solo, March 3, 2013.
7. Interview with Syarif, Solo, March 3, 2013.
8. Interview with Muhiddin, Jakarta, October 20, 2013.
9. Interview with Syarif, Solo, March 3, 2013.
10. Personal communication with Muhammad Sunni Ismail, March 4, 2015.
11. Personal communication with Muhammad Sunni Ismail, March 4, 2015.
12. Personal communication with Muhammad Sunni Ismail, March 4, 2015.
13. Personal communication with Nabiel Al-Musawa, September 17, 2015.
14. Personal communication with Nabiel Al-Musawa, September 17, 2015.
15. Personal communication with Nabiel Al-Musawa, September 17, 2015.
16. Personal communication with Alwi Al-Kaff, March 12, 2015.
17. Interview with Jamal ibn Thoha Ba'agil, Malang, March 25, 2013.
18. Interview with Jamal ibn Thoha Ba'agil, Malang, March 25, 2013.
19. Baharun notes that Ahmad ibn Isa al-Muhajir was from Kufa, but authoritative work on the topic states that he is from Basra, Iraq. Earlier sources did not clearly state that he was a Sunni from the beginning. Some scholars believed he was originally Shi'i before converting to Sunni Islam in order to adapt to Hadhrami Muslim society. See, for instance, R.B. Serjeant (1975).
20. Interview with Muhiddin, Jakarta, October 20, 2013.
21. Interview with Syarif, Solo, March 3, 2013.
22. Interview with Abdul Qadir Mauladdawilah, Malang, March 22, 2013.
23. Personal communication with Ernaz Siswanto, March 23, 2015.
24. Interview with Abdul Qadir Mauladdawilah, Malang, March 22, 2013.
25. Interview with Ali Yahya, Jakarta, January 2, 2013.
26. See the introduction of the video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-bLW18tzyw (accessed on 26 March 2015).

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