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The Berdiri Mawlid issue among Indonesian muslims in the period from circa 1875 to 1930


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1. Introduction

The end of the 19th century saw a Muslim awakening in the Middle East. This was the result of a combination of both external and internal factors, and in the religious domain became manifest in the Salafiyya reformist movement (see for a good introduction E.I.(2) iv:141-171, esp. 142-156). The most prominent characteristic of this movement was the reaffirmation, in the light of modern requirements, of original Islam as it had been practised by the pious ancestors (al-salaf al-salih). This original Islam was regarded as genuine and suitable for coping with the challenges of modern life. From this basic idea sprang a number of specific new developments, such as the rejection of the so-called taqlid, or servile acceptance of the traditional authorities of the four schools of Law (madhhab) and their canonical interpretations. Instead of this taqlid, the necessity of independent reasoning on the basis of only the Qur’an and Hadith (ijtihad) was affirmed.

Another major characteristic of this reformist movement was the rejection of many later Islamic beliefs and practices which had not been observed by the salaf al-salih and were, therefore, to be eradicated.

Among the numerous scholars who reformulated Islamic doctrine on the basis of these new views were Muhammad ’Abduh (1849-1905) and his pupil Rashid Rida (1865-1935), the latter in his capacity as editor of the famous reformist journal Al-Manar. This journal appeared in Cairo between 1898 and 1940 (E.I.(2) vi:360-361) and was one of the most prominent mouthpieces of the reformist movement throughout the Muslim world, including Indonesia (Schricke 1919-1921:289, 305; Bluhm 1983).

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Of course, Indonesian Muslims also came under the influence of these new modernist ideas, which started to spread into the Indonesian Archipelago from the first decade of the 20th century. Some of the earliest persons responsible for this were: Shaykh Tahir Jalaluddin (1869-1957); Shaykh Muhammad Djamil Djambek (1860-1947); Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah, alias Haji Rasoel (1879-1945); and Haji Abdullah Ahmad (1878-1933) (on these, see Noer 1973:33-39). Shortly after the introduction of the new ideas in Indonesia, two camps formed. The first rejected the modernist ideas and continued to embrace Islam as it had developed in the course of Indonesian history. These traditionalist Muslims came to be known as the Kaum Tua, or ‘Old Generation’. In the second camp were the Muslims who were influenced by these new ideas; they were called the Kaum Muda, or ‘Young Generation’.

Most studies dealing with the modernist movement in Indonesia emphasize its contribution to educational and social change and its importance for the nascent nationalist movement (e.g., [Tawfiq] Abdullah 1971; Noer 1973; Alfian 1989), but tend to pay less attention to the many controversies in the purely religious sphere which resulted from the new reformist ideas.\(^1\) The present article examines one of these controversies, namely the debate about berdiri mawlid, or the issue of whether or not one should ‘stand up’ (Arabic qiyam; Malay berdiri) during the ceremonial reading of a pious biography of the Prophet Muhammad, called mawlid (pl. mawalid), at the point where the passage about his birth is recited.\(^2\) Although this phenomenon has received some scholarly attention before, notably from the Dutch scholars B.J.O. Schrieke (1890-1945) and G.F. Pijper (1893-1988), it has never been the subject of a separate study. A study of the different opinions of the Kaum Muda and the Kaum Tua on berdiri mawlid will provide a clear illustration of the different intellectual orientations of these groups.

2. The principal mawlid texts in Indonesia and their use

It is a widespread devotional practice throughout the Muslim world to recite pious literary works on the life of the Prophet Muhammad. These texts are usually recited in Arabic, even in regions where Arabic is not the native language. The contents of these works have developed far beyond what is known from the oldest biographies of the Prophet, but still include important elements of the biography of Muhammad, for instance the passages about his birth; episodes from his early childhood; his marriage to

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\(^1\) According to Hamka 1958:79-82, there were at least 16 of this kind of controversies.

\(^2\) Other, often magico-ritual, practices in connection with the reciting of mawlid texts are not dealt with in this paper. See for an interesting example of these (the so-called kaboeleu rice) Moestapa 1946:175, 177.
Khadija; the first revelation; his nocturnal journey (miḥrāj); and so on. Because the Prophet's birth (Arabic mawlid) and the events which took place around it play an important part in this kind of writing, such texts are termed mawlid (s., mawlid pl.). The slightly abridged English translation of the Swahili version of al-Barzanjī's mawlid (prose version) in Knappert (1971:48-60) gives a good idea of the contents of a mawlid text.

Mawlid texts are used on various occasions. Restricting ourselves to Indonesia for a few recent examples, the mawlid is recited in the first place at the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (Hamonic 1985:184; Mansurnoor 1990:188). This is not, however, the only occasion on which the mawlid is read. This is also done at, for instance, the commemoration of the Prophet's nocturnal journey (Mansurnoor 1990:188) and the anniversary of a death (Personal observation in Yogyakarta, summer 1990). Examples from earlier periods are again the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (Van Dapperen 1933); the commemoration of the Prophet's nocturnal journey (Pijper 1934:135-136); the recitation at the ceremonial shaving of the first hair of a newborn baby (Snouck Hurgronje 1924:136); the ceremonial gathering at a circumcision ceremony (Snouck Hurgronje 1924:210, 214); and wedding ceremonies (Snouck Hurgronje 1924:233). Apart from these special occasions, mawlid texts are also recited at arbitrarily chosen moments, for example, every Tuesday evening, or whenever one likes to lend a religious character to a certain event. These examples make it clear that we are dealing here with a phenomenon which was, and still is, essential to Indonesian Muslim religious observance.

Collections of these mawlid are very common and can be purchased everywhere. To give an idea of the nature of the most common of these texts in Indonesia, I will describe the contents of a collection of such texts, entitled Majmūʿat al-mawālīd wa-ʿadīya ("Collection of mawlid texts and prayers"), which was printed and published in Bandung. Apart from prayers and other devotional texts, this book contains, firstly, the mawlid text Mawlid sharaf al-dnām, 'The Birth of the Best of Mankind' (= the Prophet Muhammad) (pp. 2-71), which includes the famous song of praise to Muhammad beginning with 'O, Prophet, peace be upon thee (...). The full moon rose over us (ashraqa al-badru ʿalayna) (...)' (pp. 36-39).3 Although this is a very well-known text, its author is unknown. The second mawlid text in this collection is Mawlid al-Barzanjī nahran (= the prose version of al-Barzanjī's mawlid) (pp. 72-109), which, like the third one, Mawlid al-Barzanjī nazman (= the mawlid of al-Barzanjī in verse) (pp. 110-147), was written by the Shafiʿite mufti of Medina, Jaʿfar al-Barzanjī (1101/1690-

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3 This song of praise is also included in recitations of the poetry version of al-Barzanjī's mawlid (Majmūʿat al-mawālīd:119-122). The name of the lines cited is sometimes abbreviated as asrakal, which became a common name for the whole of the mawlid (see, e.g., Snouck Hurgronje 1924:136).
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1177/1764, see al-Muradi 1301/1883:11,9). The fourth mawlid text in the Bandung edition is the Mawlid by al-Dibāʾī (pp. 205-218). Although this text is very common, even outside Indonesia, I have not been able to identify this author.4 The fifth and final mawlid text included in the Bandung edition (pp. 219-227) is that by al-ʿAzb, who lived in Medina at the end of the 19th century (GAL S II:815).

Apart from these famous mawlid texts, less famous ones are also on sale (Van Bruinessen 1990:260). Nowadays there are several translations of mawlid texts in modern Indonesian (Van Bruinessen 1987:48 n.14) and various regional Indonesian languages, such as Javanese (Van Bruinessen 1987:48 n.14) and Buginese (Rampé-rampé). Sometimes the booklets in which they are published only contain these translations, but sometimes they also include the Arabic original, printed either separately or interlinearly with the translation. The availability of a great variety and quantity of these mawlid, besides their intensive use, clearly testifies to their importance in Indonesian Islam.

Finally I would like, in connection with the main subject of this paper—the issue of whether or not to stand up during the ceremonial recitation of mawlid at the point where the birth of the Prophet is mentioned—to point to an interesting detail in a number of mawlid texts. Al-Barzanjī’s prose version, for instance, contains a passage reading:

‘The imams and the transmitters had approved the [practice of] standing up at the mention of his noble birth (al-qiyyām cinda dhikr mawlidihi al-sharīf), and may whosoever pays respect to him—may God bless him and grant him salvation5—be rewarded’ (Majmūʿat al-mawlid:79).

A similar remark is found in the poetry version of al-Barzanjī, which reads:

‘And the scholars, sincere and pious men, were accustomed to rise to their feet (qiyyāman calaʿ al-aqdam), concentrating fully on the personification (tashkhts) of the essence of the “Chosen” (Arabic al-mustafā, i.e., the Prophet Muhammad), who is present in whatever place he is mentioned in, or is even immanent’ (Majmūʿat al-mawlid:123; see also 222 for a similar remark by al-ʿAzb).

From these passages in defence of the practice of standing up it can be gathered that this custom had not always gone uncontested. Although it

4 The spelling of the author’s name is different in different sources. Possibly the correct name is Ibn al-Dayba. This Ibn al-Dayba was born in Zabid (South Arabia) in 866/1461 and died there in 944/1537, cf. E.I.(2), s.v. According to GAL S II:548, no. 8, he was the author of a mawlid text.

5 Arabic salāl Allāh ʿalayhi wa-sallama (in modern Indonesian abbreviated as SAW). This is the usual invocation accompanying references to the Prophet Muhammad.
would be interesting to go into the background and history of the debates on this custom, in the present context we will restrict ourselves to the issue of *qiyām/berdiri* in the Indonesian setting.

3. **Berdiri mawlid** among Indonesian Muslims before the rise of reformism

It is not known when Indonesian *'ulama'* started reflecting on the question of *berdiri mawlid*. However, a number of sources originating from the Jawah colony in Mecca show that Indonesian Muslims were already paying particular attention to this issue and other matters in connection with the *mawlid* recitation before the rise of reformist thinking.

It is well known that Mecca harboured a large Jawah colony, which consisted not only of Javanese, as the name suggests, but also of all other kinds of people from Southeast Asia who had come to the Holy City for devotional purposes or religious study. C. Snouck Hurgronje, who knew Mecca from personal observation and made a description of the Jawah colony there in the latter part of the 19th century which has since become famous, characterized this colony as 'the heart of the religious life of the East-Indian Archipelago' (Snouck Hurgronje 1931:215-292; quotation on p. 291).

One of the most popular teachers among the Jawah students in Mecca was the famous Nawawi Banten, who originally came from West Java. He left Java to settle in Mecca when he was about 15 years old. Although he spent the rest of his life, until his death in 1897, almost entirely in Mecca, he was very influential in Indonesia through his students and his writings (Snouck Hurgronje 1931:268-272, 278; Chaidar 1978:5-9). Among his works are two books in Arabic dealing with the two *mawlid* texts of al-Barzanjī just mentioned – which again underlines the importance of these texts for Indonesian Muslims. The first of these books is entitled *Targhib al-mushhidatin li-baylān manṣūmat Zayn al-‘Abidīn* and comments upon the correct reading, the grammar and the meaning of the poetical version of al-Barzanjī's *mawlid*. This work was first published in Cairo in 1875. It is certain that the book was also known in Indonesia because it can be established that it was circulating in West Java during the 1930s (Van Dapperen 1933:162). When he reaches the passage on *qiyām*, Nawawi explains that this custom was regarded as lawful, basing this thesis on a quotation from the work *Al-durr al-thamin fī mawlid sayyid al-awwalīn wa-l-akhirīn* by a certain al-Samanhūdī (d. 1199/1785, see GAL S II:479), who considered it a good innovation (*bid‘a hasana*) (Nawawi 1292/1875:18-19).  

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*6* I discovered the booklet to be still on sale in Jakarta in November 1992 (Nawawi s.a.).

*7* A *bid‘a* is a religious innovation in the sense that it is something which did not exist in early Islam.
Nawawi's second mawlid book, which was completed in 1293/1875, is entitled Madārij al-su'ūd ilā ikīsā' al-ḥurūd. It was also published in Cairo, in 1296/1878, and is a commentary on the prose version of al-Barzanjī. This work went through at least three reprints (GAL S II:813). It was also in circulation in Indonesia at the beginning of this century (Pijper 1977:95) and is still available on the Indonesian book market today. As might be expected, here, too, Nawawi expresses his approval of the practice of qiyām, which he considers recommendable (mustahabb) as it is mentioned in the poetry of the Iraqi poet Yahyā al-Ṣarṣarī (d. 656/1258, see on him GAL G I:250; S I:443). For the sake of completeness Nawawi also mentions the Egyptian scholar al-Shabramalīsī (997/1589-1087/1677, see on him GAL G II:322; S II:443), who regarded qiyām as an innovation without any legal basis. He further gives a relatively lengthy description of the merits of celebrating the birthday of the Prophet, in which the merits of reciting a mawlid poem are also mentioned (Nawawi 1296/1878:18-19).

Another source which represents the Indonesian views on qiyām on the eve of the arrival of reformism in the Archipelago likewise originated in Mecca, where a lithograph edition of a collection of questions and answers on religious topics (fatwa), entitled Muhimmat al-naṣf’ isšt bayān as’īlat al-ḥadīth, appeared in 1310/1892. It is obvious that the book was meant for the Jawah, because the questions in Arabic are each followed by a Malay translation (in Arabic script). The answers are likewise in Arabic, followed by a Malay translation. Contrary to normal Arabic usage, the script has been fully vocalized, which again indicates that the book was meant for non-Arabs, in this case Jawah. The translator was a certain ĖAbd al-Salam ibn Idris al-Ashlī (= the Acehnese), who completed the translation on 25 Ṣafar 1305 (= 12 November 1887) in the Qushashiyya quarter of Mecca (Muhimmat al-naṣf’ isšt:104). The people who asked for the fatwa in question remain anonymous, whereas the name of the person giving the fatwa, the so-called muftī, is mentioned in all cases. Mostly this is the Shafi’ite muftī Ahmad ibn Zaym Dahlan, who dominated religious life in Mecca from about 1870 until his death in 1886 (Snouck Hurgronje 1923:65-122; 1931:220, 237-238). This collection contains fatwa on all kinds of subjects, for instance inheritance law; marriage law; circumcision; the attitude towards an infidel government; the Friday prayer; the question of whether one may beat a drum to announce the time of the ritual prayer, 'as is the custom among the Jawah people'; and many other things. In short, one can say that this collection gives a good impression of the difficulties in religious
matters encountered by Indonesian Muslims during the last three decades of the 19th century.

The *Muhammad al-nafa'is* contains four *fatwa* relating to the mawlid recitation, and thus gives us an insight into internal Muslim discussions on this topic. The first *fatwa* deals with the question of whether or not it is permitted to beat a tambourine and to smoke a hookah during the mawlid recitation and whether there is a difference between the person reciting and the person listening. The final phrase of this question is very interesting and runs, in translation: ‘Give us the answer, because the Jawah fuqaha‘ strongly disagree about this’. The answer by Ahmad Dahlan is that the use of the tambourine is recommendable (Arabic *mustahabb*; Malay *sunat*), on condition that it is not accompanied by anything which the Law (*shari'a*) forbids. Smoking, however, is disgusting (Arabic and Malay *qablh*), because it is contrary to good manners, both for the person reciting and for the person listening (*Muhammad al-nafa'is*:50-51).

The next *fatwa* concerns the precise moment during the mawlid recitation at which one should rise (Arabic *mahall al-qiyam*; Malay *had qiyam*). Is it when the verses *ashraqa al-badru ‘alayn* (*The full moon rose over us*) up to and including *Rabb fa-rhamna jam‘an* (*O, Lord, have mercy upon all of us*) are recited, or at some other moment? Once again it is noted that there is disagreement about the precise point among the Jawah fuqaha‘. The answer again given by Ahmad Dahlan is that *qiyam* is recommendable at the point where the birth of the Prophet is mentioned. It is sufficient that this is implied in the text recited, even if it is not explicitly indicated (*Muhammad al-nafa'is*:58).

The third *fatwa* concerns the interjections by people attending mawlid recitations, such as ‘O, Muhammad’ and ‘O, my beloved’.

According to Ahmad Dahlan, the invocation of the Prophet using his name or agnomen (Arabic and Malay *kunya*) is forbidden. Instead, one should address him as ‘O, Messenger’ or ‘O, Prophet’, in view of the Qur’anic verse ‘Make not the calling of the Messenger among you as the calling of one another’ (Sura 24:63). It is interesting to note that the Malay ‘translation’ of the question is longer than the Arabic. The Malay rendering contains the added remark that some of the people present at mawlid recitations stand upright (Malay *berdiri*) from beginning to end, while others remain seated and stand up collectively at a particular moment. Although an answer is sought on this point, the *fatwa* remains silent about it (*Muhammad al-nafa'is*:64).

The final *fatwa* deals with the problem of a number of persons reciting the mawlid using all sorts of vocal tricks to entertain those present. Some

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10 Snouck Hurgronje (1931:168) mentions similar interjections during the recitation of the Qur’an, which he compares to hand-clapping.

11 That is, the Arabic word *Abü* (= father of) or *Umm* (= mother of) followed by the name of the son.
forbid this practice, because it is a form of entertainment (Arabic la\textsuperscript{c}b; Malay wayang-wayang), which is not appropriate to the ‘presence’ of the Prophet (Arabic la yali\textit{q}u bi-hadr\textit{a}thi; the Malay rendering misses the point here, reading: \textit{tiada patut dengan pihak nabi}). A fierce debate had arisen between those for and those against, and the question is which group is right. In the same \textit{fatwa} the question of smoking and chatting during \textit{mawlid} recitations is raised. Again the answer given by Aḥmad Daḥlan is that this style of \textit{mawlid} recitation, which comes close to sheer entertainment, is forbidden. Smoking and chatting, which are in contravention of good manners, should be avoided. Interjections, which tend to disturb people praying or sleeping in the \textit{ribāt} or mosques, are also forbidden. In conclusion he says:

‘It is appropriate that everyone attending a \textit{mawlid} recitation should be humble, in keeping with his – may God bless him and grant him salvation – presence (Arabic and Malay \textit{hadra}) and greatness (Arabic \textit{c\textsuperscript{u}ma}; Malay \textit{kebesaran}). Furthermore, [it is appropriate] that one should reflect on and try to understand what one hears about his character’ (Arabic \textit{akhlāq}; Malay \textit{perangai}).

In addition, the Malay ‘translation’ of this reply concludes with a pious exhortation to both educated and uneducated Muslims (\textit{orang am dan orang khas}) to follow the example of the Prophet (\textit{menyerupai dengan dia}), which in fact is the actual purpose of reciting the \textit{mawlid} (\textit{Muhimmat al-nafā\textsuperscript{is}:16-18}).

Summarizing at this point the views on the \textit{berdiri mawlid} issue current before the arrival of reformist thinking in Indonesian Islam as they emerge from the works of Nawawi Banten and the \textit{Muhimmat al-nafā\textsuperscript{is}}, we may formulate the following conclusions. Although the works of Nawawi Banten contain some reflections on the permissibility of \textit{berdiri}, these are couched in terms wholly within the bounds of traditional Islamic scholarship. From the \textit{Muhimmat al-nafā\textsuperscript{is}} it appears that most problems in connection with the \textit{mawlid} concerned the character of the \textit{mawlid} recitation, which apparently was often too frivolous and profane. For this reason Aḥmad Daḥlan ordered that the \textit{mawlid} be recited in a solemn and devotional atmosphere. The only problem in connection with \textit{berdiri} is the question of when and for how long one should stand up. The permissibility of \textit{berdiri} and the presence of the Prophet, however, are taken for granted. Hence \textit{berdiri mawlid} did not constitute a problem at the end of the 19th century.
Among the numerous topics which this Egyptian reformist journal discussed were many issues relating to Islamic devotional practice. A discussion about the recitation of *mawlid* texts, which occasionally surfaced in the pages of *Al-Manār* from 1899 onwards, is an interesting example. Because this discussion will certainly have influenced Indonesian views on the subject, I will go into it briefly here, giving particular attention to the situation in Southeast Asia.

In *Al-Manār* of 1 Dhū l-Ḥijja 1323 / 26 January 1906 (*Al-Manār* 1906, 8-23:910-911) an inhabitant of Johore, in the south of the Malay Peninsula, reported on an Islamic scholar rejecting the recitation of *al-Dabi* because it contained lies and fabrications (Arabic *khurafāt*). Besides, the ordinary believers (Arabic *al-*ʿawāmm) were told that the 'Chosen' (the Prophet Muhammad) was present in a spiritual form (Arabic *ruḥāniyyat al-mustafāt*), either during the entire recitation or only during the part where those present stood up (Arabic *al-qiyām*). This text was extremely popular, the anonymous writer from Johore continued, and although many *ʿulams* had heard of it, they did not disapprove of it. He asked whether or not this was right.

In reply to this question, *Al-Manār* remarked that this text does contain blatant lies, for example in stating that God first created the Light of Muhammad (Arabic *nūr Muḥammad*), from which the rest of creation emanated. As far as the spiritual presence of the Prophet was concerned, the writer declared people who said that this was so to be liars and impostors. Finally *Al-Manār* asserted that as a Hadith scholar, *al-Dabi* was completely obscure.

This article provoked a furious reaction from Singapore which was published in *Al-Manār* a few months later, on 1 Rabīʿ al-awwal 1324 / 25 April 1906 (*Al-Manār* 9-3:240). It said that some people felt extremely offended and regarded *Al-Manār*'s opinion on the presence of the Prophet during the recitation as conjectural and an insult to God and His Prophet. In its reaction, *Al-Manār* abided by its original opinion, however.

A somewhat belated reaction appeared in *Al-Manār* of 28 Ṣafar 1332 / 26 January 1914 (17-2:111). Here a certain Sayyid ʿAqīl ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAqīl al-Ḥabshi from Palembang asked Rashīd Riḍā whether or not the recitation of *mawlid* texts was a *bidʿa*. As an example of such a *mawlid* he mentioned that by *al-Dībāʾ*, which the dignitaries regarded as the best, because, in contrast to the other *mawlid* texts, the spirit of the Prophet (Arabic *ruḥ al-nabī*) is present during its recitation. As might be expected, Rashīd Riḍā answered that all these stories were *bidʿa* and that they all severely criticize the unorthodox contents of various *mawlid* texts.

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contained many fabricated facts, and consequently strongly discouraged the reading of al-Diba°.

With these publications in Al-Manår we have an example of an early and authoritative reformist opinion on the mawlid recitation. Because similar views must have existed in the Jawah colony in Mecca (Hamka 1958:74; Noer 1973:32), and because Al-Manår most probably was already circulating in Minangkabau in this early period13, these ideas will certainly have influenced the views on berdiri mawlid in this part of the Archipelago.

5. Views on berdiri mawlid in Minangkabau from about 1905 to 1919

At the end of the 19th century, the elementary religious education which children in Minangkabau received from their seventh year onwards in the surau (religious boarding-school in Sumatra) or langgar (small prayer house) included – besides reading the Qur’an, learning how to perform the ritual ablutions and the salat, simple dogmatics, and the like – recitation of the mawlid of al-Barzanjl (Yunus 1983:35, 51). In this context it is interesting to note that Abdul Karim Amrullah, who was to become one of the leading Indonesian reformists, as a child of about 12 was popular with the people of his kampong because he was good at reciting the Qur’an and al-Barzanjt (Hamka 1958:45).

Because elementary education was not subject to the educational reforms which took place at the beginning of the 20th century (Yunus 1983:54), we may say that acquaintance with al-Barzanjt must have been ubiquitous in Minangkabau in the period under discussion. As we have seen above, berdiri mawlid was regarded as a normal custom by Indonesian Muslims until the end of the 19th century. This situation changed at the beginning of the 20th century, when opposition to this arose in Minangkabau for the first time. Abdullah Ahmad, criticizing the practice of berdiri mawlid in a booklet dated 17 Dhí 1-Hijja 1337 / 10 September 1919, remarks that ‘approximately 15 years ago’ Shaykh Abdul Qadir Mandahiling had come to Minangkabau and pointed out that a large number of ‘ulama’ asserted that berdiri mawlid was not a sunn*14, but a bidr.a (Abdullah Ahmad 1919a:49). As his name betrays, this shaykh originated from Mandailing, in South Tapanuli. He had settled in Mecca, where he had studied with Ahmad Dahlan and al-Bakrit (see on the latter Snouck Hurgronje 1931:185, 188-189). In 1915 Shaykh Abdul Qadir Mandahiling was counted among the six most prominent scholars of the Jawah colony in Mecca (Anonymous 1915:539). Although the opinion voiced by Shaykh Abdul Qadir was not in itself unknown, it is striking that

13 Al-Manår 1911, 14-9:669-674, contained a number of questions from the reformer Abdullah Ahmad from Minangkabau.

14 Sunna (used nominally) denotes a good custom sanctioned by tradition. Used adjectivally (Malay sunai), it means ‘recommendable according to the Law’. 
Abdullah Ahmad cited it in the context of his own strong condemnation of *berdiri mawlid*. This suggests that around 1905 Shaykh Abdul Qadir was the first in Indonesia to show opposition to *berdiri mawlid*, which had recently aroused interest in the Middle East and was being discussed in Mecca.

Probably his meeting with Shaykh Abdul Qadir around 1905, and perhaps also the publication of the various *fatwa* in *Al-Manar* just mentioned, induced Abdullah Ahmad to ask for an opinion on *berdiri mawlid* from the Minangkabau scholar Shaykh Tahir Jalaluddin (1869-1957), who was living in Singapore, where in collaboration with some other people he published the first reformist journal in Southeast Asia. This journal, *Al-Imam*, in outward appearance resembled the Egyptian *Al-Manâr*, and was published in Malay in Jawi script. It appeared from 1906 till 1908 (Roff 1967:56-67).

In the issue of *Al-Imam* which appeared on 17 November 1906, both the question asked by Haji Abdullah Ahmad, 'the agent (wakil) of *Al-Imam* in Padang Panjang', as he was called, and the reply by *Al-Imam* were published. The answer to Haji Abdullah Ahmad’s question as to whether or not the Law demanded *berdiri mawlid* was that there were no authentic traditions {hadith yang sahih} to justify this custom. *Berdiri mawlid* was not practised in early Islam, but was only instituted later by some rulers from Persia (raja-raja Ajam), and thereafter taken over by later 'ulama'. In fact, the Prophet himself had forbidden the idea of standing up for him, as is clear from two of his sayings, which are then quoted in Arabic and followed by a translation. They run: 'It is not permitted to stand up for me, but only for God – He is most high', and 'Do not stand up like the Persians (Arabic al-a`jam) to show respect (Arabic yu`azzimu; Malay membesarkan) for each other' (*Al-Imam* 1906, I-5:150).

This *fatwa* represents the first reformist position on *berdiri mawlid* in Southeast Asia, and sets the tone for the subsequent debate on the subject. In this text the reformist way of thinking is clearly manifest, only the Hadith being regarded as a valid justification for any practice, and thus also that of *berdiri mawlid*. It furthermore shows that only customs sanctioned by early Islam are considered acceptable, while later additions are rejected.

The next important phase in the debate on *berdiri mawlid* was a public discussion (rapat) between Kaum Muda and Kaum Tua followers in Padang Panjang in 1325 (= 1907). This meeting was most probably organized by Haji Abdullah Ahmad, consequent upon the *fatwa* in *Al-Imam*. From the little that is known about this meeting it can be inferred that the opponents of *berdiri mawlid*, the reformist-oriented Muslims (or *malim-malim baru*), defended their position by quoting the Prophetic tradition 'Do not stand up for me', which, as we have just seen, also figured in the *fatwa* in *Al-Imam* (Chatib Ali 1337/1919a:xi).

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15 I would like to thank Dr. Liaw Yock Fang, from the National University of Singapore, for sending me a photocopy of this *fatwa*. 
The first text in which berdiri mawlid is discussed in more depth is entitled Irshäd al-çawêmna pada menyatakan mawlid al-nabi callbacks al-salam, ‘The proper guide for ordinary believers explaining the mawlid of the Prophet – peace be upon him’. This text is a lengthy Malay poem, written in Arabic script, by the famous reformer Abdul Karim Amrullah, who completed it on 8 Dhû l-Hijja 1327 (= 21 December 1909) (Abdul Karim 1914:20). It deals with the correct way of performing the recitation of the mawlid, and in this connection fulminates against all kinds of practices which are in contradiction with what is ‘proper behaviour (adab) vis-à-vis the Prophet’, for instance the use of tambourines (rebana) (p. 3) and the protracted recitations which prevent people from performing the salat at the right time (p. 6).

In this text, Abdul Karim Amrullah also discusses the practice of berdiri mawlid at the point where the Prophet is welcomed in the course of the recitation of the Sharaf al-anâm and al-Barzanji (pp. 9-11). He says that according to some, this standing up is a good innovation (bidšt a hasana), which can be classified as a good custom (sunat) honouring the Prophet, as it is performed in imitation of the famous Shafi’ite scholar al-Subkl (d. 756/1355, see on him GAL G II:87-88; S II:102-104; al-Subkl 1964-1976:X, 208). But according to Abdul Karim Amrullah this argument is very weak. Others justify the standing up by stating that the Prophet always enters a gathering where the mawlid is being recited, so that one has to stand up to honour him. According to Abdul Karim Amrullah, however, any person who claims this presence of the Prophet is ignorant; he is a fasiq and not an callbacks aadil, as there is no evidence for this (Abdul Karim 1914:11).16 The famous Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytaml (909/1504 - 974/1567, see on him E.I. (2) iii:778-779), in his Fatâwâ hadîthiyya, also denounced the ‘ulama’ for allowing ordinary people (orang awam) to believe that this practice was sunna. It is not so, according to Abdul Karim Amrullah, because God has not commanded it. It should moreover be regarded as a forbidden innovation (bidšt a tertegah), as there is no proof (dalil) that it is a sunna.

The practical implication of these reformist-inspired views on berdiri mawlid was, of course, that Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah no longer stood up during the recitation of the mawlid. Nonetheless, he did not go as far as Al-Mandr, which, as we have seen, totally abandoned the mawlid. In the biography of Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah (entitled ‘My Father’) by his son, the famous author Hamka, the author mentions that his father continued to recite al-Barzanji (Hamka 1958:70).

Besides Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah, another early reformer, Djamil Djambek, engaged in a crusade against the overly profane character of the gatherings at which the mawlid was recited. To rectify the situation, Djamil

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16 Fâsiq and callbacks aadil are both legal terms. An callbacks aadil is someone with a good reputation from the religious point of view, who is therefore able to act as witness; a fasiq is the opposite. See Juynboll 1930:318.
إيقاف اليد

فيما استدع من امر القياس
تأليف
الفاصل . العالم الباحث
توان شيخ عبدالكرير يغ دكتر دين
حاج رسول بن المرحوم الشيخ محمد عمر الله
توانكو كسامى منكابو
نفع الله بعلوه
امين
( الطبعة الأولى )
دقيق قد فرجتاك سنيل فيبر
دروكر كرامي العمير
فاغ

Cover Abdul Karim Amrullah 1331/1913
(Leiden Univeristy Library 892 E92)
Djambek started teaching a number of boys the correct way of reciting al-Barzanji and the Sharaf al-Andam. These boys, in their turn, passed this knowledge on in the kampong. As a result, mawlid recitations began to assume a more solemn character (Van Ronkel 1916:19).

While the arguments about berdiri mawlid remained rather rudimentary in Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah's Irshad al-Cawimm because of the lapidary style of this text, this scholar elaborated them in a later publication. This he did for the following reasons.

In the reformist journal Al-Munir, published by Haji Abdullah Ahmad in Padang from 1911-1916 (Noer 1973:39-40), an article had appeared on 15 Shawwal 1331 (= 17 September 1913) which stated that 'standing up during the recitation of the passage about the birth of the Prophet - may God bless him and grant him salvation - is a bid'a which should not be observed' (Abdul Karim 1331/1913:1). This article provoked a strong reaction from a reader, who sent a letter in favour of berdiri mawlid to Al-Munir. This letter represents, in fact, the first serious attempt by traditionalist circles to challenge the modernist view on this practice. The letter was answered by Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah on behalf of the editorial board of Al-Munir. Because this reply was rather long, it was decided to publish it as a separate brochure (satu risala yang sendiri). Entitled, in Arabic rhymed prose, Iqaz al-niyam fi ma bu'da min amr al-qiyam ('The awakening of the sleeping; dealing with the matter of standing up, which has been innovated'), the brochure was written in Malay in Arabic script and was printed in Padang. The title-page mentions that the actual writing was completed in Padang Paanjang on 18 Dhu l-Hijja 1331 (= 19 October 1913). This brochure certainly is the most interesting and the most complete document in the debate on berdiri mawlid, and will therefore be discussed at length here.

The first section, entitled 'A protest against Al-Munir from a reader in Danau Bayur' (on the eastern shore of Lake Maninjau), contains the text of the original letter sent to Al-Munir. The writer of this letter begins by stating that berdiri mawlid is normal practice throughout the Muslim world, including Mecca and Medina. The practice is approved by the c‘ulama of Mecca, who have a lot of evidence (dalil) in support of it. Eight such pieces of evidence are cited, so that everyone may decide for themselves who is right, the c‘ulama of Mecca or the c‘ulama of Al-Munir. The letter ends by stressing that there has not been any protest against the practice of berdiri in Mecca and Medina over the past decades and challenging Al-Munir to refute the evidence cited (pp. 1-4).

In his reaction, Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah begins by explaining his methodological principles in a general section (pp. 4-8). He points out first

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17 Although this issue of Al-Munir was not available to me, I consulted a quotation from it in Abdul Karim 1331/1913:7 (berdiri ketika sampai bacaan kepada nabi (sm) diperankan ini bid’ a yang tidak sepatusnya diperbuat).
of all that he will determine whether the practice is in agreement with the four sources of the Law, namely the Qur'an, the Hadith, *ijma* (consensus among the *ulama*), and *qiyas* (reasoning by analogy). To justify his method, Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah adduces the Qur'anic verse saying 'If you have a dispute on any matter, refer it to God and the Messenger' (Sura 4:59), as well as a Prophetic tradition to the same effect, thus underlining the significance of the Qur'an and the exemplary life of the Prophet Muhammad as laid down in the Hadith. He furthermore points out that the words of the *ulama* should not be accepted unconditionally, but only if they are based on strong arguments. After all, Ibn Hajar has said that, if in doubt, one should select that which accords with clear testimony. He himself is not impressed by the fact that al-Šarṣart, al-Subkt and al-Barzanj̣ approved of *berdiri*, for, as Ali has said, 'Do not heed who has said it, but what he has said'. The eight arguments advanced in the letter do nothing to undermine the view expressed in the Al-Manir article, namely that the practice of *berdiri* should not be observed, as they do not prove that the performance of *berdiri* is obligatory (*wajib*), or even recommended (*sunat*), going by the principles just explained or by the statements of Muslim scholars. Following this introduction, Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah repeats all the arguments in favour of *berdiri mawlid* one after another, simultaneously refuting them.

(i) The first argument was provided by the quotation from the prose version of al-Barzanj̣ which has been given in translation above, stating that the *imams* and the transmitters had approved the practice of standing up (see section 2 above). According to the critic this had been with the aim of glorifying (*membesarkan*) the Prophet. This argument for is refuted by Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah by stating that, while it is not known for certain that the Prophet himself performed it, the quotation from al-Barzanj̣ does not prove the obligatory character of the practice of *berdiri*. In view of the Prophetic tradition that 'Whosoever performs anything which does not contribute to our cause will be rejected', *berdiri* is not acceptable (pp. 8-9).

(ii) The second argument was also provided by a quotation from an old Arabic text, namely the above-mentioned verse by the Iraqi poet Yahya al-Šarṣart, in which he says that certain persons rose at the mention of the Prophet's birth (see section 3 above). Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah asserts that this second argument cannot be adduced as proof that *berdiri* is recommendable (*sunat*), as al-Šarṣart speaks of 'standing up in rows', which differs from the current *berdiri* practice. One should therefore choose to remain seated, in view of the following fiqh principle: 'If there is any doubt about whether something is a *bid'a* or is a *sunna*, refrain from doing it'.

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18 It is important to note here that Haji Abdul Karim’s interpretation of *ijma* is rather different from that of his traditionalist contemporaries: he recognizes this legal principle only insofar as it is based on the Qur’an and the Hadith (Schrieke 1919-1921:303-304).
Moreover, there is another *fiqh* principle, from Ibn Humam (d. 861/1457, on him see *E.J.* (2) iii:164), applicable in this case, namely the principle that ‘If there is any doubt about whether something is obligatory or recommendable, do that which is the better’. Hence, since it cannot be established that *berdiri* is, in fact, obligatory, it is better to remain seated (pp. 9-11).

(iii) The third argument was that this same line of poetry from al-Šaršart led the famous Muslim scholar Taqi al-Din al-Subki (see same section above), as well as the *qaďis* and *‘ulama’* who were in his company, to stand up. Al-Munir, although recognizing al-Subki as a great mujtahid (a person who makes use of *ijtihad*, independent reasoning, without blindly following older authorities), counters this with the observation that this is in itself insufficient proof for the correctness of his behaviour in this matter (pp. 11-12).

(iv) The fourth argument was that the Prophet’s Companions (*sahabat-sahabai*) rose when the Qur’anic verse ‘The commandment of God has come’ (Sura 16:1) was revealed to him. Reasoning by analogy (*qiyas*), one should accordingly also rise on hearing about the birth of the Prophet. In refutation of this argument, Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah remarks that the Prophet and his Companions had started up (*melumpat*) in fear when Sura 16 verse 1 was sent down, because they thought the Day of Judgement had come. Since this is a completely different action from *berdiri mawlid*, which is done with the aim of showing respect, *qiyas* cannot be applied here (pp. 12-15).

(v) In the fifth place, the anonymous defender of *berdiri* argued that the practice of standing up just by itself is fitting (*harus*), but with the added intention (*niyya*) to glorify the Prophet becomes *sunna*, for which as a result one will be rewarded. Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah refutes this by saying that, as one of the practices which have been added to the custom of *berdiri mawlid*, this is irrelevant, since, as has already been demonstrated, this custom itself is forbidden (pp. 15-18).

(vi) The sixth argument was that, if one stands up when a scholar comes in, one should certainly do so when the Messenger of God enters. This argument is refuted by stating that it presupposes that the Prophet actually enters the room where a *mawlid* is being recited. This is a big lie (*bohong yang besar*), however, and is impossible when seen in the light of reason (*aqil*), as the Prophet did not have an immaterial body (*bertubuh halus*) but a material body (*bertubuh kasar*), like all men. Besides, it is impossible for the Prophet to be present in various places where *mawlid* texts are being recited at one and the same time. Finally, the claim that the spirit (*ruh*) of the Prophet enters the room where the gathering takes place cannot be upheld, as there is no evidence for this in the Qur’an and the authentic Hadith works (pp. 18-21).

In an interlude (pp. 21-30), Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah then addresses himself to those readers who are completely ignorant of the problem under discussion. The gist of this is that the Prophet himself did not want people
to stand up out of respect for him, as is apparent, for instance, from his saying 'Do not stand up for me, but for God'.

(vii) Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah then continues by addressing himself to the seventh argument advanced by the letter writer, namely a quotation from the tradition in which the Prophet said ‘Stand up for your leader’ (Arabic qamūs li-sayyidikum) at the moment when Sa'ād ibn Ma'ādh entered, followed by the remark that, if the Prophet gave orders for this at the entrance of one of his Companions, how much more valid it is for the Prophet himself, as the leader (panghulu) of all prophets. Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah replies to this that the command to stand up, which is in fact contained in the tradition quoted, does not refer to the performance of this act for the Prophet, but for somebody else. For this reason, qiyyās cannot be applied in this case. Moreover, the interpretations of the Hadith in question vary. According to some ʿulamaʾ, the order to rise for Sa'ād testifies that it is sunna to stand up for a person of higher rank to show respect for him. The correct interpretation, however, given by Ibn al-Ḥājj (d. 737/1336, see on him E.I.(2) iii:779-780), is that the Prophet only ordered those present to stand up for Sa'ād in order to help him dismount from his riding-donkey and prevent him from falling because he was ill. This order thus was not given with the aim of paying respect to Sa'ād. Furthermore, the claim that the Prophet enters a room at the moment of the mention of his birth is a lie (dusta) (pp. 30-35).

(viii) The final argument of the anonymous letter writer was that, just as it is a sunna to celebrate the birthday of the Prophet by acquainting oneself with his life story, glorifying him and honouring him, so berdiri, being intended to glorify and honour the Prophet, is also a sunna. Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah replies that in this argument once again qiyyās is wrongly applied. The celebration of the Prophet’s mawlid (birthday) is justified by all kinds of Prophetic traditions¹⁹, while this is not the case with berdiri. Moreover, it is open to question whether berdiri should be classified as a form of worship (ibadat) in the category of physical goals (Arabic al-maqāṣid al-badaniyya). According to the theory of Islamic Law, this type of ibadat may only be observed if it is supported by an authoritative text (nas). Such a text has never yet been produced by the supporters of berdiri (pp. 35-43).

In the conclusion (khatimat) of his brochure, Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah discusses Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī’s fatwa on berdiri during the recitation of mawlid stories from his Al-fatwa al-hadithiyya (Ibn Ḥajar 1329/1911: 59). After quoting the relevant Arabic passage and its Malay translation, he points out that Ibn Ḥajar states here that many people stand up when the passage concerning the birth of the Prophet in a mawlid poem

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¹⁹ Here the entire complex of the ʿAshūrā’ tradition is also referred to (Abdul Karim 1331/1913:37). For this justification of the celebration of the Prophet’s mawlid see Kaptein 1993:63-64, 87.
is recited. Although this is a bid'a which is not compulsory, people persist in doing so to honour the Prophet. Ordinary people (Arabic al-cawâm; Malay orang yang belum tahu) are excused for doing this, but religious specialists (Arabic and Malay al-khâwâsî) are not. Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah thereat states that ordinary people who are informed in this matter should not blindly submit (bertaqlid buta) to the legal opinions and copy the behaviour of people who are wrong, even if they are famous teachers (like Ibn Hâjâr). ‘Only the Prophets are endowed with infallibility’ (Arabic inna laysat al-ismâ illâ li-l-anbiyâ). The fact that many people observe the custom of berdiri is not yet proof of its religious correctness (pp. 43-53).

The significance of this tract lies, of course, in Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah’s methodological approach to the problem. As has become clear, he makes independent use of the primary sources of the Law (ijtihâd) and does not blindly follow the scholars of the past (taqlîd). Concerning this last point it should be noted that he even went so far as to challenge the opinion of Ibn Hâjâr al-Haytamî. As in traditionalist Indonesian Islam the authority of this famous Shafi‘î scholar was uncontested (Snouck Hurgronje 1924:285-303), this must have really shocked his opponents. All in all, Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah’s iqâd al-niyâm can best be characterized as an ‘exercise in ijtihâd’.

Although the Kaum Tua scholars will certainly have discussed this brochure, the first example of a reaction from traditionalist circles of which I am aware dates from 1916. This Kitâb târkhîb al-nas ila rahmat Allah, completed on Monday, 2 Ramadân, 1334 (= 3 July 1916) (Bayang 1334/1916:143-144), and written by the Kaum Tua scholar Muhammad Dalîl, alias Shaykh Bayang, ventures the opinion that there is no harm in berdiri mawlid. On the contrary, because it is done out of respect for the Prophet, it is good (baik). Although the practice was not observed by the Prophet himself, nor by his Companions (sahabatnya), it has been ordered by God’s word, namely ‘God orders justice and the performance of good deeds (Arabic al-îhsân)’ (Sura 16:90), and by the Prophetic tradition that ‘If anyone establishes a good custom (sunna hasana), let it be established’ (Bayang 1334/1916:58-59). The argument thus is a pun on the word ‘good’ (Malay baik, Arabic ihsân).

From this period onwards, we find hardly any traces of the debate about berdiri mawlid, although we might have expected this controversy to have grown intenser as a result of the general increase in tension between the Kaum Tua and the Kaum Muda. One rare example is a brief article in the Kaum Tua-oriented Padang newspaper Oetoesan Melajoe of 8 May 1917, which reports that the ‘malim baroe’ had refused to perform the so-called usalli (the uttering aloud of the niyya (intention) preceding the salât), and had also rejected berdiri mawlid (Anonymous 1917a; 1917b).

The next reference I have come across is in a report of a public debate between Chatib Ali and Shaykh Djambek at a meeting of the Raad Agama of Matur on 2 March 1919. Here Chatib Ali had argued in defence of the
مقدمه

فندعلوان نتوئلین رانه مفرکنکین حکم میباچ

اصلي دان برديري مولد
توكاراغ اوله:
حمیعبدالله احمد

کتیبه رانية

منجادي سباکی نبرک
دری نهچین جوم مورد

تنبیه

فمبری تهوان: بارغ سباک يغ میلی فندعلوان این
نسلیای مندندت هلبی سانی درکو نتوئلین رانه ترسبی.

ترجمه ند فرهیتناکن "دفوهلذه" فادغ
1919.
view that *berdiri mawlid* was a *sunna*, since ordinary people (*orang awam*) had been given dispensation for its performance by Ibn Hajar al-Haytami’s statement, and because all Shafiite *ulama* performed it. Shaykh Djambek, on the other hand, regarded *berdiri mawlid* as a *bid'a*, as there was no legal basis (*asl*) or evidence (*dalil*) for it. Because the controversy could not be solved, the chairman of the Raad Agama, Haji Abdul Hamid, brought it to the attention of Dr. Hazeu, the head of the Bureau for Native Affairs (Anonymous 1919). The case will certainly have led to an increase in Dutch attention for the Kaum Muda – Kaum Tua controversy as a whole, and may account for the Dutch involvement in the Padang debate of 15 July 1919.

6. The Padang debate (15 July 1919) and its aftermath

The climax in the controversy about *berdiri mawlid* occurred at a public meeting (*rapal*) in Padang on the night of 15 July 1919. According to B.J.O. Schrieke, who reported on this meeting, it took place under ‘impartial chairmanship’ (Schrieke 1919-1921:315). On closer examination, however, it appears that the impartial chairman was Dr. Schrieke himself, who at the time was an employee of the Bureau for Native Affairs (Van Blankenstein 1950:144). From the preface to the minutes of the meeting, published by Haji Abdullah Ahmad on 10 September 1919, it appears that, at a preparatory meeting on 8 July, strict formal rules for the proceedings at the meeting had been laid down by mutual agreement between the two parties. For example, the role of the chairman had been precisely defined, and the subjects for discussion fixed (and restricted to two at Schrieke’s suggestion). It had furthermore been decided that no interruptions, except by the chairman, were to be allowed, that minutes would be drawn up after the debate, and so on (Abdullah Ahmad 1919a:11-13).

The two subjects discussed at the meeting were, firstly, the question of *usalli*, that is, whether or not the *niyya* (intention) preceding the *salat* should be uttered aloud, and secondly, that of *berdiri mawlid*. The Kaum Muda faction was headed by Haji Abdullah Ahmad, while the Kaum Tua group was represented by Shaykh Chatib Ali. The meeting was attended by *ulama* of both persuasions. Among the participants who are mentioned by name there were a few interesting figures, for example, on the Kaum Tua side, Haji Moehammad Noer Bajoer Danau20, who acted as secretary, and on the Kaum Muda side, Shaykh Djamil Djambek.21 Apart from the *ulama*, a number of colonial civil servants (e.g., the Resident of West Sumatra, 20 Possibly this was the anonymous writer of the letter in reaction to the view expressed on *berdiri mawlid* in *Al-Munir* which had prompted Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah to write his *Iqd al-niyām*, see section 5 above.

21 The newspaper *Tjaja Sumatra*, in its report on the debate of 28 July 1919 (in *IPO* 1919, 32:2), mentioned that Haji Rasoel (= Abdul Karim Amrullah) was also present. His name does not appear in Abdullah Ahmad 1919b, however.
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J.D.L. Le Fèbvre, indigenous civil servants, and journalists (for instance, from the newspaper Oetoesan Melajoe), and about a thousand (sic) interested auditors attended this meeting (Abdullah Ahmad 1919b:1).

The first subject to be discussed was the question of usalli. The Kaum Tua speaker declared this to be a sunna, while the representative of the Kaum Muda refuted this (Abdullah Ahmad 1919b:2-12).

Later, the issue of berdiri mawlid was debated. Haji Abdullah Ahmad, representing the Kaum Muda, stated that he did not recognize this custom as being a sunna, as there were no legal grounds (ast) nor any absolute proof (dalil) for this. Next, he pointed to some traditions which illustrate that the Prophet did not want his Companions to stand up when he came in. According to Haji Abdullah Ahmad, this was the more applicable to berdiri mawlid, as Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī considered this itself to be a ‘bidʿa which should not be performed’. This kind of bidʿa is a bidʿa sharʿiyya, which is always wrong. In conclusion he remarked that berdiri mawlid thus was not a sunna, but a wrong bidʿa, and therefore was either forbidden (haram) or objectionable (makruh).

The next speaker was Chatib Ali, who started by explaining that berdiri mawlid was not practised at the time of the Prophet, nor in that of the generation after him, but only arose in the third century. For this reason, the custom is indeed a bidʿa. According to respected and famous scholars who base themselves on absolute proof (dalil), on traditions, on qiyyās, and on ijmaʿ, it is nonetheless a ‘good innovation’ (bidʿa ḥasanah). The majority of these scholars, moreover, do not regard it as a wrong bidʿa. Ibn Ḥajar al-Ḥaytamī says that berdiri mawlid is a bidʿa for religious specialists (orang Ichawas) and that ordinary people are excused for observing it. As there are no longer any religious specialists nowadays, obviously Ibn Ḥajar recommends the performance of berdiri mawlid (Abdullah 1919b:15-16).

In the subsequent discussion, Haji Abdullah Ahmad asked for proof. This was finally produced by Hasan Basri, who had been asked by Chatib Ali to act as spokesman for the Kaum Tua during the remainder of the debate. In support of his view, Hasan Basri quoted a tradition according to which a Companion of the Prophet, named Hasan, once stood up to honour the Prophet when the latter entered. Haji Abdullah Ahmad did not accept this as proof, however, because the actual arrival (kedatangan) of the Prophet in the tradition is something different from the recitation of a passage about his birth in a mawlid. Hence in this case qiyyās was not applicable. The remainder of the debate then revolved around the question of whether or not qiyyās could be applied here. Hasan Basri expressed the opinion that it could, and that berdiri mawlid was therefore a sunna, while Haji Abdullah maintained the exact opposite (Abdullah 1919b:16-20). As might be expected, once again both parties held to their original positions. We may conclude that the debate did nothing to bring a reconciliation between the two parties closer, therefore.

An interesting point about this debate is the involvement in it of the
Bureau for Native Affairs. The undoubted aim of this was to moderate the conflict and thus diminish any instability there may have been in West Sumatra.

The significance of the Padang debate lies in the fact that it brought the Kaum Tua – Kaum Muda controversy into the public arena once and for all, so that it stopped being a matter of purely scholarly interest. Browsing through the newspapers from the period, we see that the ideas of the reformist-oriented Muslims were regularly discussed after the debate, in particular by Datoek Soetan Maharadja, the editor of Oetoesan Melajoe. The latter attacked the ‘Wahhabis’, as the modernist Muslims were disparagingly referred to, repeatedly (IPO 1919, 32, 33, 34, 37, 43, 44, 45, 49; 1920, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 17, 19).

Not long after the Padang debate, on 24 July, Chatib Ali invited a reaction to it from Shaykh Banten, of Batavia. Shaykh Banten’s response, dated 17 Dhū l-Qa‘da 1337 / 22 August 1919, was published by Chatib Ali in the form of a brochure. It reflected the opinion of thirteen well-known ‘ulama’ from Java (see for their names Chatib Ali 1919b:11), and completely supported Chatib Ali’s views: usalli was regarded as either recommendable or compulsory (wajib), while berdiri mawlid was unanimously declared compulsory (Chatib Ali 1919b:4-5). According to Schrieke (1919-1921:317 note 2), some of the thirteen Javanese ‘ulama’ had no knowledge of this document at all.

Chatib Ali reissued this brochure some time later, probably in October, adding among other things a letter on the subject, which he attributed to Schrieke, saying that it contained the reaction to the question of berdiri mawlid as referred to the Bureau for Native Affairs by the chairman of the Raad Agama in Matur. The letter, signed by Schrieke, mentions berdiri mawlid as being a sunna (Chatib Ali 1919c:28-31). This same letter was reproduced in the article ‘Poetoesan dalam hal berdiri maulid’, published in the newspaper Oetoesan Melajoe of 23 October 1919 (Anonymous 1919). The source of this article undoubtedly was the above-mentioned brochure, which must therefore have appeared not long before the article.

In his comments on both these brochures, Schrieke, concealing the fact that he was personally involved, observes that the reissue of the brochure testified to an even greater degree of insolence and falsehood than its original edition (Schrieke 1919-1921:317). Although we can be certain, therefore, that this brochure and its reprint were forgeries, they still played a role in the public debate in Minangkabau.

In response to the information spread by Chatib Ali and to the criticism in the newspapers, Haji Abdullah Ahmad on 10 September 1919 published a booklet which he entitled Al-Muqaddima, ‘The Preface’ (i.e., to the minutes of the meeting at which the debate had been held). In this he set out to correct the misrepresentations of the 15 July meeting which the Kaum Tua had circulated (Abdullah 1919a). To this booklet he added the official minutes of this meeting as an appendix. These minutes had been signed by
الخاتمة

كتبه في أواخره وبا اجواء إنسانية
دائم، فكانا ملطفاً إحسانًا
دمكيس ديربردي مولد نسي
فإن محمد كاتبان تجاوب مستمث
عند توجه قواناً مطالعه
دبوقية تيهاني نفعة كديامية
مستمثد مبشر داسين
شبح عهد حري يهم مخبرين
دان، مندا لك ان مرغ ماني
مستمثد كوكو السفري نبي
اميل يتحف نواع يرغ بطل
جاهز نفردا يليهم نفاذ
كما يغ حق اكن حادي بكلا
سابق رحة كفن رسالة
عندائده فاسخ دشن جاهز
حديث دان دليل اجاه لاقكة
كتاب يلغ ملالا ادا دسيرة

الخاتمة

ترجمت دمكيس ديربردي فادغ ندا بولس افريد قهين
1920

Cover Chatib Ali 1920
(Leiden University Library 800 C102)
the most prominent persons present, such as Schrieke, Moehammad Ali Abdul Moetallib (= Chatib Ali), and Haji Abdullah Ahmad (Abdullah 1919b:22). Schrieke also believed these minutes to be genuine and correct (Schrieke 1919-1921:317). In this Muqaddima, Haji Abdullah Ahmad again deals with the questions of usalli and berdiri mawlid, but in a more elaborate way than he had been able to do at the meeting itself (Abdullah 1919a:31-60).

Another outcome of the Padang debate was that Shaykh Chatib Ali wrote to Mecca for support for his views. This gave rise to an interesting document, entitled Al-khâtima al-bahiya, ‘The beautiful conclusion’ (i.e., of the debate), which appeared in Padang in April 1920. It contains five fatwa in Arabic from Muhammad Mukhtar. This scholar originally came from Indonesia, but was teaching in Mecca, where he was counted among the most competent of the Jawah scholars. From the Holy City he intervened in Islamic issues in Indonesia from time to time. Thus in 1913 he wrote an Arabic treatise in support of Sarekat Islam (Juynboll 1914:157-159; Anonymous 1915:539). He issued the five fatwa at the request of Chatib Ali and his associates on 29 Dhū l-Qa‘da 1337 (= 26 August 1919). One of these fatwa deals with berdiri mawlid.22 On this subject Muhammad Mukhtar takes the usual traditionalist position, referring to the usual traditionalist authorities on the point and pronouncing the custom recommendable (mustahabb) (Chatib Ali 1920:2).

The original Arabic text of these fatwa is followed by a Malay rendering (in Arabic script) by Chatib Ali, who states that his purpose in translating it was that all people might be able to see the error of Haji Abdullah Ahmad’s ways. Chatib Ali also adds his own views on the five subjects dealt with by Muhammad Muchtar, as well as on a number of other topics. His translation of the fatwa on berdiri mawlid is followed by a few quotations from the work Jawāhir al-bihār in support of the view that the Prophet’s spirit is really present at the point where his entry into the world is mentioned (Chatib Ali 1920:10).23

At the end of Al-khâtima al-bahiya, Chatib Ali again discusses berdiri mawlid, expatiating on Ibn Hajar al-Haytamī’s statement that the practice is a bid‘a for religious specialists (khawas). In his opinion Ibn Hajar did not mean a legal innovation (bid‘a shar‘iyya), which by its very nature is always forbidden, but a recommended innovation (bid‘a sunna) in this case, as the basis (‘illâ) for this bid‘a is a sunna (Chatib Ali 1920:23).

It is interesting to note that the contents of Al-khâtima al-bahiya were

22 The other subjects treated of are that of usalli, the use of the Malay language in the Friday sermon, the Naqshbandiyya brotherhood, and the depiction of living creatures.
23 The work cited here deals with the virtues of the Prophet. It was written by Yûsuf al-Nubhānī (1849-1932) (GAL S II:764), who, with Ahmad Dahlan, was regarded by Hamka as one of the champions of traditionalist Islam (Hamka 1958:76-78).
discussed at a meeting in Ulakan prior to its publication, on 17 Rabi\textsuperscript{c} al-
awwal 1338 / 11 December 1919. This meeting was attended by many
Kaum Tua scholars, who are mentioned by name (e.g., Shaykh Muhammad
Dalil Bayang), as well as hundreds of other people. The wish to have the
text printed to prove the falsehood of Haji Abdullah Ahmad and his
sympathizers in the matters of berdiri mawlid and usalli was put forward
during this meeting (Chatib Ali 1920:24).

After the publication of Al-khadima al-bahija, the debate on berdiri
mawlid seems to have died down in the course of 1920. This appears to be
confirmed by the absence of reports on the controversy in the press surveys
compiled by the Bureau for Popular Literature (Bureau voor de Volks-
lectuur).

7. Debates on berdiri mawlid outside Minangkabau

The berdiri mawlid issue was not only discussed in Minangkabau, but was
also a subject for debate among the Arabs in Java. After the arrival of
Ahmad al-Surkati, a Sudanese by birth, in Batavia from Mecca in 1912 to
teach Arabic, there was an argument about the privileged position of the
sayyid (the religious nobility among the Arabs) in which he became
involved. As a result, al-Surkati broke away from the Arab establishment
and in 1913 founded the reform movement known as Al-Irshad (Schrieke
1921:189-240; Pijper 1977:109-120). Both al-Surkati and Al-Irshad became
the subject of severe criticism. This grew worse in 1919, when some Irshad
members refused to stand up during a mawlid recitation in Batavia (Schrieke
1921:206-207; see also al-\textsuperscript{c}Attas 1979:741). As in West Sumatra, this
gave rise to a number of articles and brochures for and against berdiri
mawlid.

Although this controversy is not as well documented as that in
Minangkabau, it is obvious that it lasted until at least 1340 (= 1921), when
a certain Muhammad ibn Hadün al-\textsuperscript{c}Attas published an Arabic tract in
defence of berdiri mawlid (al-\textsuperscript{c}Attas 1340/1921). The matter seems to have
ended when Irshad members decided to no longer attend traditional mawlid
recitations (Pijper 1934:152). The controversy among the Arabs in Java
seems to have been settled at the end of 1921, for an article in the periodical
Boro Boedoer of 26 October thanked Dr. Schrieke for his role in this (IPO
1921, 43:217).

In countries other than Indonesia, too, the question of whether or not to
stand up during mawlid recitation was of particular interest in the same
period. For instance, from 1918 onward this question constituted a major

\textsuperscript{24} An isolated instance of a revival was reported at the beginning of May 1922,
when a ‘Wahhabite agitator’ in Padang refused to stand up during the recitation
of the relevant mawlid passages (see IPO 1922, 19:227).
issue in Morocco for a number of years, which likewise provoked a large number of publications for and against (Kaptein forthcoming). Thus the debate about berdiri mawlid was in no way restricted to Indonesia, but was of a more general character in Islam.

8. Some later views on berdiri mawlid

Although the debate in Indonesia abated after the meeting in Padang of 1919, it is worth mentioning two later opinions on the subject here. The first one was voiced by Ahmad Hassan, the leader of the reformist organization Persatuan Islam (Persis), which was founded in Bandung in 1923. Although the number of its followers has never been large, the influence of Persis should not be underestimated. This was mainly the result of the writings of Ahmad Hassan (Pijper 1977:120-126).

In 1930 a certain M. Asrani, from Teloek Betoeng Alabio, Amoentai (South Kalimantan), raised the question of mawlid recitation in the section devoted to religious questions (Soeal Djawab) of the Persis journal Pembela Islam. In the reply this recitation is criticized on three points. Firstly, people’s lack of understanding of the Arabic language used for the recitation of the Prophet’s life story is condemned as being irrational. In the second place, the belief that one will be rewarded for reciting mawlid is rejected as a (forbidden) bid’ā. In the third place, the practice of standing up in order to show respect for the Prophet is also condemned as a bid’ā, as it is not clear that the spirit of the Prophet is actually present. Even if this spirit were present, then still one should not stand up, because the Prophet forbade people to rise to their feet out of respect for him (Anonymous 1930:50-53; for a Dutch translation see Pijper 1977:126-129). It is interesting to note that immediately after this, attention is drawn to an advertisement in the journal Noeroel-jaqien (Fort van der Capellen) recommending a booklet on this subject by ‘Dr. H. Amroellah, of Padang Pandjang’ (Anonymous 1930:53). Undoubtedly Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah’s brochure Iqâz al-anîyâm is meant here. Had this work perhaps been reprinted?

Finally, the matter was discussed by the Nahdatul Ulama, the largest organization of traditionalist Muslims in Indonesia, at its 5th Congress, held in Pekalongan on 7 September 1930. It decided with reference to a number of traditional authorities, like Ibn Ḥajar al-Ḥaytamī, that berdiri mawlid was a legally accepted custom which was recommended (Arabic c’urf sharî’î mustahabb) (Pengurus besar Nahdatul Ulama 1960:165-66).

Although it would be possible to elaborate on the later views on berdiri mawlid, this is not necessary in the present context. The two stances just mentioned suffice to illustrate the later positions in the debate: reformist-orientated Muslims rejected berdiri mawlid, while traditionalist Muslims approved it or even recommended it.
9. Concluding remarks

At the end of the 19th century, the ceremonial practice of ‘standing up’ at the point where the passage concerning the birth of the Prophet Muhammad was recited during recitations of mawlid texts was a generally accepted custom in Indonesian Islam. With the advent of reformist ideas from the Middle East and their concomitant anti-ritualistic impulses, however, this custom became a subject of debate between reformist and traditionalist Muslims. From about the beginning of the 20th century onward, the rejection of berdiri mawlid could be seen as one of the major characteristics of the Kaum Muda. This remained so until at least 1920, when the debate on the subject was at its height.

Although the issue of berdiri mawlid in itself was only a minor one, it was one of the principal subjects in connection with which the opposition between Kaum Tua and Kaum Muda crystallized. The debate on this topic gave Kaum Muda scholars an opportunity of realizing a number of typically reformist ideas. They rejected berdiri mawlid because, in their view, no textual proofs were provided by the Qur’an and the Hadith for the existence of this custom in early Islam. Furthermore, they refused to accept the opinions of later authorities who had approved of berdiri mawlid. The Kaum Tua Muslims, on the other hand, continued performing berdiri mawlid because this formed part of their religious practice and had been sanctioned by a number of later authorities.

The Kaum Muda scholars thus adopted a different methodological approach towards berdiri mawlid from the Kaum Tua, and it is this difference which explains why this issue received so much attention. That the Kaum Muda scholars had adopted a new way of thinking and had started dealing with Islam in an independent and open-minded fashion is clear from the example of the berdiri mawlid issue studied in this paper.

ABBREVIATIONS

BKI = Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde
E.I.(2) = The Encyclopaedia of Islam
GAL G = C. Brockelmann 1943-1947, 2 original Volumes
GAL S = C. Brockelmann 1943-1947, 3 supplementary Volumes
IPO = Bureau voor de Volkslectuur, Overzicht van de Inlandsche en Maleisch-Chineesche Pers
KITLV = Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde.
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The Berdiri Mawlid Issue Among Indonesian Muslims


Rampé-rampé malebbikna nabitta Muhammak s.a.w., Karangenna Japparek; napabbasa Ugie Abedulkaring Ali, tau pole ri kampung Barasanji, s.a. [ca. 1985], s.1.


