

The Voice of the Ulema and Dilemma of the Indonesian Ulema Council's Fatwa among Low Literate Society

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JURNAL TASAWUF DAN PEMIKIRAN ISLAM

Hādī al-'Alawī and the Heterodoxy of Communo-Sufism
Abdul Kadir Riyadi

Sufi Qur'ānic Exegesis and Theomorphic Anthropology
Stephen Cúrto

Dialogue with The Master: Early Shī'a Encounters with Akbarīan Mysticism
Leila Chamankhah

The Voice of the Ulema and Dilemma of the Indonesian Ulema Council's Fatwa among Low Literate Society
Fariz Alnizar, Achmad Munjid

Dialectic and Intersection of Sufism and Kalam in the 1st and 2nd Century of Hijri
Yogi Prana Izza

Power-knowledge Relations of The Elder and The Younger Madurese Muslim Scholars in Propagating Islamism in Madura: A Counter-narrative
Abd A'la, Ahwan Mukarrom

Teosofi Tariqa and Its Principles, Rituals, and Rationality as a Religious Movement

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Abstract

Some Islamic movements in Indonesia make the fatwas issued by the MUI as a reference for their actions. They recently found their momentum after the defence movements called 411 and 212. The proponents of the movements called themselves as Gerakan Nasional Pengawal Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia (GNPF-MUI/The National Movement of Guardian of Fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council). Employing a qualitative approach coupled with historical-causal paradigm this article examines the main question: Do the proponents of these movements substantially understand the fatwas they defend? The results of the research show that the fatwas have a dilemmatic position. On the one hand, there have been movements which insist on making the fatwas as "sacred opinion" that must be protected and guarded. On the other hand, people do not substantially comprehend the fatwas they defend. This problem has been caused, among others, by the cultural basis of the Indonesian society which put more preference on orality than literalism or, explicitly, written tradition.

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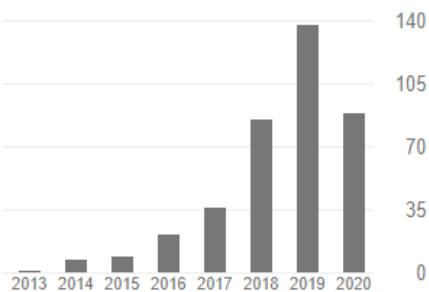
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In July 2005, Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), a semi-official Islamic clerical body of Indonesia, issued a fatwa, or an Islamic legal opinion, against religious pluralism, liberalism, and secularism. The issuance of fatwa garnered substantial controversy and scholarly attention. The fatwa addressed the reformist trend of Islam which had been popular among the broad Indonesian society over the past 25 years. Such trends advocated for a more substantive reading of the Quran and Hadith, instead of Indonesian Ulema Council (Indonesian: Majelis Ulama Indonesia - MUI) is Indonesia's top Muslim clerical body. The council comprises many Indonesian Muslim groups including Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and smaller groups such as, Syarikat Islam, Perti, Al Washliyah, Math'laul Anwar, GUPPI, PTDI, DMI and Al Ittihadiyyah. The Ahlul Bait Indonesia (Shi'ite) and Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia (Ahmadiyah) were not be accepted as members. Under the reign of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, in 2005 Hereunder are some of the quotations we have received from the Bayaans of Moulana Muhammed Saad Saheb which have been proven to have been said by him The Ulema-e-Haq can never be unanimous nor can they

adopt silence over disrespect to the Ambiyaa' (alayhis salaam), deviant ideologies, Tafsir Bir Raay and whimsical explanation of the Ahaadeeth and Aathaar, because, these types of ideologies will later on cause the entire group to deviate from the path of truth as has happened to some Deeni and Islaahi Jamaats.