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# Following the faith of the father

## Sayyid 'Uthmān's son Yaḥyā on mosque etiquette

E.P. WIERINGA

### ABSTRACT

The *Dalā'il al-nāshid 'an aḥkām al-walā'im fi-l-masājid* (Arguments of the Seeker for Legal Judgements concerning Festive Meals in Mosques) is a short tract, written in 1938 in Malay in Arabic script by Yaḥyā b. 'Uthmān b. 'AbdAllāh, none other than a son of the renowned Batavian *muftī* Sayyid 'Uthmān (1822-1914). Protesting against the (in his view) *bid'a* (unauthorized religious innovation) of organizing festive meals in mosques, he felt it his duty to try to stop his co-religionists from doing wrong. Not being a theologian himself, his pamphlet is basically a tissue of quotations drawn from the prolific work of his well-known father.

### KEYWORDS

Malay lithographed book, mosque, *fatwā*, Sayyid 'Uthmān, Yaḥyā b. 'Uthmān b. 'AbdAllāh, Batavia.

On the website *Islam – World's Greatest Religion*, we read that smelly people should not enter a mosque. The owner of this particular website, who calls himself “King-slave of Allah”, identifying himself as a software and web developer from India, sees it as his task to make it clear to the global community that “Islam is indeed the true religion of Almighty Allah”, disturbed as he is by the large amount of anti-Islamic websites.<sup>1</sup> This IT specialist refers to the authoritative *ḥadīth* collections by Bukhārī and Muslim, in which the Prophet Muḥammad is reported to have said that whoever eats onions or garlic should not come near a mosque, because the angels will be offended.<sup>2</sup> Applying the

<sup>1</sup> [Http://islamgreatreligion.wordpress.com/about-king-slaveofallah/](http://islamgreatreligion.wordpress.com/about-king-slaveofallah/). Accessed on 21-12-2012.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Robson (1963: 148): “Mu'āwiya said on the authority of his father that God's messenger forbade these two plants, namely onions and garlic, and said, 'He who eats them must not come near our mosque'.” He also said, “If you must eat them, suppress their odour by cooking.”

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Prophetic words to modern times, the King-slave of Allah comments:<sup>3</sup>

We might also include here those who come to the mosque straight from work, with unpleasant odours emanating from their armpits and socks. Even worse than these are smokers who have the habit of consuming their hara[a]m cigarettes then coming to the mosque and disturbing the worshippers of Alla[a]h, people and angels alike, with their smell.

This opinion was posted on the worldwide web on June 3, 2009, but, as the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet already indicates, the issue of mosque etiquette is not new, and has been the concern of Muslims everywhere – even in Southeast Asia – as the usual phrase goes in Islamic studies discourse. For example, in a fairly recent Indonesian book on angelology by Rachmat Ramadhana al-Banjari (2007: 238), it is stated, once again on the authority of Prophetic traditions reported by Bukhārī and Muslim, that the angels will stay away from “mouths, bodies, and places which smell unpleasantly or rotten”. Going further back in time, Sayyid ‘Uthmān b. ‘AbdAllāh b. ‘Aqīl b. Yaḥyā al-‘Alawī (1822-1914), the well-known *muftī* of Batavia (present-day Jakarta) and Honorary Adviser to the colonial government for Arabic and Islamic Affairs, warned in his regularly reprinted biography of the Prophet, *al-Zahr al-bāsim* or “The Smiling Flower”, to be read at celebrations of the *Mawlid* (the birthday of Prophet Muhammad) and *Mi‘rāj* (the night journey of Prophet Muhammad to the furthest mosque and then to heaven where he speaks to Allah), against smoking during the recitation, as angels would find tobacco smoke obnoxious (Sayyid ‘Uthmān 1924: 3; compare Pijper 1934: 128):

*Sebagai lagi jangan ada di tempat membaca itu segala bau yang busuk yang dibenci oleh malaikat seperti roko atau cerutu atau dekat seupama kandang binatang. Maka hendaklah ada di tempat itu segala bau-bauan yang harum seperti dupa atau bunga-bunga.*

(Furthermore, in the place where the recitation takes place, there should be no rotten smells, which are hated by the angels such as those from cigarettes or cigars or from the vicinity of an animal cage. In the place [of recitation] there should be fragrant odours such as those from incense or flowers).

Muslims like to characterize their religion as “easy,” implying that Islam is easy to understand and practice. The objection against smelliness would be a case in point, but what about other rules for proper behaviour in mosques? Obviously, all Muslims would agree that as a general principle in all circumstances a degree of decorum and cleanliness is required, but, as is so often the case, the devil lies in the detail. For example, in his collection of *fatāwā* (singular *fatwā*), first published in 1938, Ahmad Hassan (1887-1958), the *muftī* of the “puritanical” organization Persis (Persatuan Islam or Islamic Association; the acronym means “precise”), ruled that sleeping and eating

<sup>3</sup> [Http://islamgreatreligion.wordpress.com/2009/06/03/coming-to-the-mosque-after-eating-onions-or-garlic-or-anything-that-has-an-offensive-smell/](http://islamgreatreligion.wordpress.com/2009/06/03/coming-to-the-mosque-after-eating-onions-or-garlic-or-anything-that-has-an-offensive-smell/). Accessed on 21-12- 2012.

were permitted in mosques (Hooker 2003: 92). However, no general consensus exists: although in Islamic legal discourse sleeping in mosques is generally considered as a permissible act, some classical scholars have argued instead that it is reprehensible. In actual practice in present-day Indonesia, some mosque managers, unhappy with (male) visitors taking a nap in the prayer house, especially during the Ramadan fatigue, have prohibited this time-honoured custom (Muhajir 2012).

And what about food? What can possibly be wrong with having a festive meal in a mosque? Organized at a joyful event, wouldn't the angels rejoice at such a happy gathering of believers in the house of God? In the same year as the publication of Ahmad Hassan's rulings, this particular issue was taken up in a small lithographed booklet with the pretty straightforward Arabic title of *Dalā'il al-nāshid 'an aḥkām al-walā'im fi-l-masājid*, which translates as "Arguments of the Seeker for Legal Judgements concerning Festive Meals in Mosques". The author refers to festive meals as *jamuan* or *walimah* (see *Dalā'il al-nāshid*, p. 2, line 11; Figure 2). The Malay word *jamuan* is an event at which guests are fed (for example banquet or dinner), whereas the Arabic term *walīma* (plural *walā'im*; "banquet," see Wehr 1980: 1099) is its synonym, although it has gained a more specific connotation in Indonesia, chiefly "marriage feast". According to Pijper (1977: 60), both terms in fact denoted the Indonesian phenomenon of *slametan* (communal religious meals).

The pamphlet delivered arguments against this practice, condemning it as *bid'a*, (an unauthorized religious innovation). Its author was Yaḥyā b. 'Uthmān b. 'AbdAllāh, none other than a son of the famous aforementioned Batavian scholar Sayyid 'Uthmān. This Malay tract of no more than sixteen pages was completed in Batavia on 20 Dhu'l-Qa'dah 1356 (January 22, 1938).<sup>4</sup> The pamphlet was a product of his (late) father's press (see Figure 1 for the title page).

After Sayyid 'Uthmān's death, the continuation of the latter's printing business, which had been quite successful and lucrative, was at stake due to an inheritance row between his sons. Although details about this history are lacking, it appears that not long after their father's demise, several of the sons had set up their own businesses in this field, independently of each other. Nico Kaptein (2010: 219; 222) mentions the names of 'Alwī, Ḥasan, 'AbdAllāh, and Yaḥyā, but as the title page of the 1924 edition of the *al-Zahr al-bāsim* shows, there was still a fifth son active as printer and publisher as this book was "printed by his son Sayyid Ḥamid b. 'Uthmān b. Yaḥyā at the printing office and bookshop al-Ma'mur" (*tercetak oleh anaknya al-Sayyid Ḥamid b. 'Uthmān b. Yaḥyā di kantor cetak dan toko kitab al-Ma'mur*), situated in Keramat 46, Batavia. Of all these sons, according to Nico Kaptein (2010: 222), "it seems that Yaḥyā was the most serious and most successful of all in continuing the business of their renowned father". Rather cautiously, Kaptein (2010: 222) further opines that "[g]iven the fact that Sayyid Yaḥyā continued the work of his father, we may assume that he also sympathized with his ideas and that he belonged to

<sup>4</sup> Information from the colophon on p. 19.

the traditionalist way of thinking which Sayyid ‘Uṭmān had been spreading throughout his life”. The little-known treatise *Dalā’il al-nāshid*, flown from the pen of Yaḥyā himself, confirms that this assumption is correct.<sup>5</sup>

No copies of the tract appear to be extant in the repositories of the former colonial master, namely the well-stocked collections of Leiden University Library and the KITLV (Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, Leiden). It was serendipity that a copy, which once formed part of the personal library of the Dutch Orientalist Guillaume Frédéric Pijper (1893-1988), came into my hands. Pijper (1977: 60) briefly mentions the booklet in his article on mosques in Java, but he calls its author merely a “Batavian Arab,” without referring to Yaḥyā’s impressive family background or even mentioning the important role of Sayyid ‘Uṭmān as a major authority in the *Dalā’il al-nāshid*.

Before the Second World War, Pijper had been Assistant Adviser on Native Affairs (1931-1934; 1936-1937) and Adviser on Native Affairs (1937-1942), and in this capacity he had amassed a considerable collection of printed and manuscript works on Islam in Indonesia. When Pijper’s widow passed away, in 2003, a part of it was auctioned in The Hague. I managed to buy some of Pijper’s books, and had the good fortune to find a few rare items which had been overlooked within odd lot batches of books and pamphlets containing booksellers’ dross (see Wieringa 2004: 555-556). A few months later, I discovered that the second-hand bookstore of the chain *De Slegte* in The Hague had also acquired some interesting parts of the Pijper collection at the auction, and I could buy, among others, a copy of Yaḥyā b.‘Uṭmān’s pamphlet.

Writings like this tract belong to the category of theological treatises, which are most strongly committed to traditionalism. In fact, even before turning a single page, Yaḥyā’s plea for the defence of traditional mores is already clearly transmitted through the graphic design of the title page (see Figure 1). The title page is divided into two panels, in which the considerably smaller lower panel is filled with all the relevant textual information about the title of the work, the name of the author, and the publishing house. Conversely, the more spacious upper frame is the real eye-catcher, drawing our attention immediately to an illustration of a traditional Javanese mosque. Its typical shape is commonly known in scholarship as the “Demak type” see Figure 1, featuring multi-tiered roofs but lacking a minaret (Wieringa 2012).

<sup>5</sup> An overview of the publications printed at Yaḥyā’s press is non-existent, but in addition to reissuing his father’s works, he appears to have been active as editor of the periodical *al-Huda* (in Malay with Arabic script), appearing semi-monthly in Batavia sometime in the 1930s (Mobini-Kesheh 1996: 252).

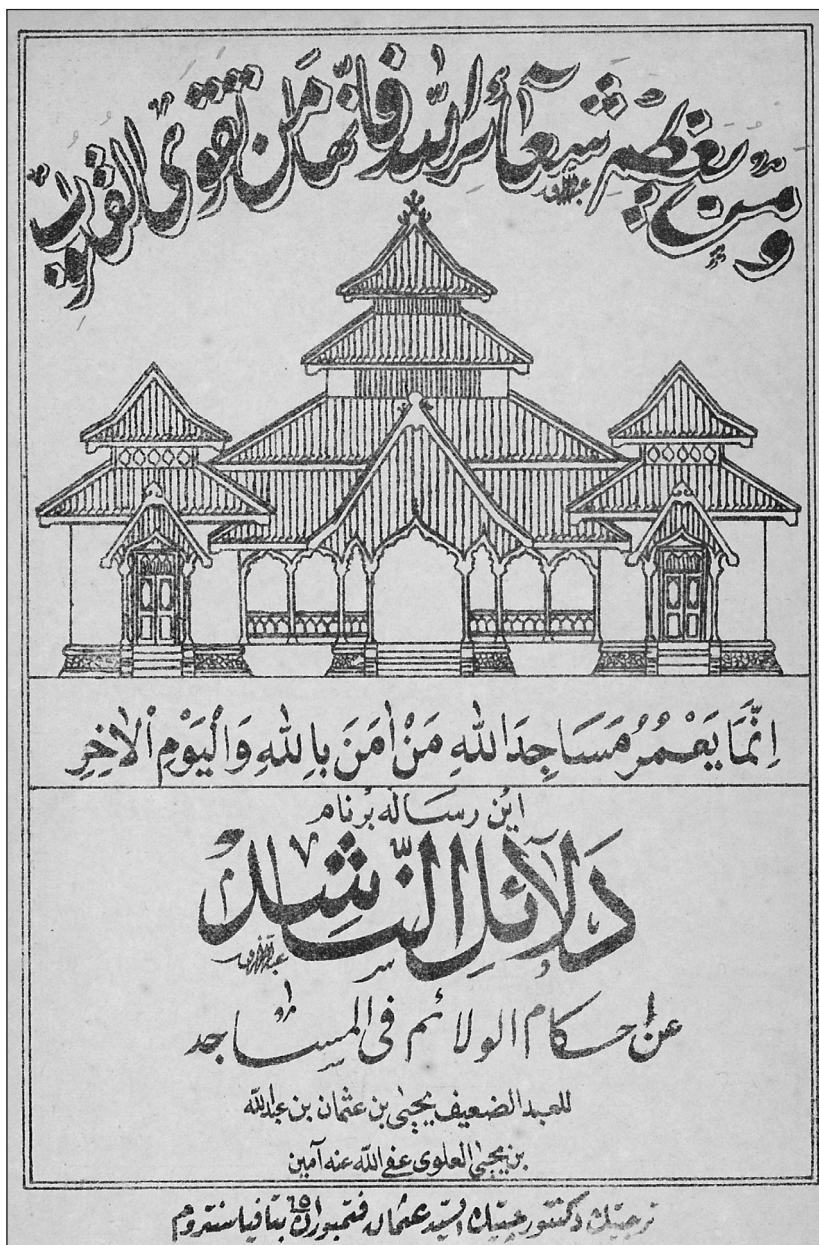


Figure 1. Title page of the *Dalā'il al-nāshid 'an ahkām al-walā'im fi-l-masājid* (Batavia, 1938). Pijper identified the two Qur'ānic references in pencil in the left margin. In the citation at the top he could not resist adding in pencil the vowel signs (compare Wieringa 2004: 560-561 for Pijper's fondness of such linguistic corrections).

The Demak style mosque of the title page betokens the hallowed tradition of Islam in Indonesia, defying modern external innovations, while the two Qur'ānic mottoes also emphasize the continuity of the faith of the fathers through the ages. The first Qur'ānic citation, placed above the illustration of

the mosque, is written in a calligraphic style using the drop shadow effect, which is not uncommon in headings and titles of Javanese twentieth-century books printed in the Arabic script. It is taken from Sūra 22 (The Pilgrimage), verse 32: “[and] those who honour God’s rites show the piety of their hearts” (interpretation Abdel Haleem 2005: 211). The second Qur’ānic citation, below the illustration, is from Sūra 9 (Repentance), verse 18: “The only ones who should tend God’s places of worship are those who believe in God and the Last Day” (interpretation Abdel Haleem 2005: 117).

Directly after the conventional Islamic opening statements in Arabic (*basmala* and *hamdala*), Yaḥyā b. ‘Uthmān does not beat about the bush (p. 2; see Figure 2):

*Ammabakdu maka adalah ini suatu risalah yang amat ringkas di dalam menyatakan wajib menghormati masjid-masjid bait Allah dan haram menjatuhkan segala kehinaan yang merendahkan pada kadarnya yang besar. Masjidlah satu-satunya tempat yang suci di Indonesia ini yang wajib dipertahankan kehormatannya. Oleh karena manakala terhina, terhinalah Muslimin.*

(And furthermore, this is a very short tract on the obligation to show respect for mosques, the houses of God, and on the ban on bringing them into discredit which will lower their great standing. The mosque is the one and only holy place in Indonesia of which the honour must be defended. So, wherever a mosque is denigrated, Muslims are denigrated).

It is noteworthy that Yaḥyā uses the word “Indonesia” here, which at the time of writing was still very much contested. In a 1939 *Nota* of the Dutch government, it was stated that while “in itself there is little objection to the word ‘Indonesian’ [...] the usage of this word remains a means of political agitation [...] and a significance is attached to it which is unacceptable to the Government” (Elsou 2008: 92). In August of the following year, a government policy statement, which was read out in the *Volksraad* (People’s Council, a proto-parliamentary body with limited powers), stipulated that the Dutch government strictly objected to the term “Indonesia” instead of “Nederlandsch-Indië” or Dutch Indies (see Van der Wal 1965: 686). Nevertheless, Yaḥyā uses “Indonesia” twice in the opening page (lines 6 and 9, see Figure 2).

Yaḥyā not only takes issue with festive meals in mosques, as indicated by the book’s title, but also with all kinds of decorations in the mosque during celebrations of the Prophet’s birthday or national holidays. He regards a mosque as the *bait Allah* ‘house of God’, which should solely be a place of worship. Criticizing the *ulama* ‘theologians’ who have hitherto been silent on this, he regards it as his duty to react in writing, because to stay silent would be a sin. As he explains, he is not uttering his own opinion (p. 3):

*Adapun di dalam menerangkan hukum itu tida sekali-kali membawa dari hamba punya bisa sendiri akan tetapi berséndér kepada dalil Qur’an dan ḥadīth dan akwal ulama.*

(In explaining the legal judgements, I will in no way draw on my own abilities, but I will rely upon proofs from the Qur’ān, the ḥadīth and the opinions of theologians).



Figure 2. Opening page of Yahyā's tract, in which he directly states that the mosque is the one and only holy place in Indonesia of which the honour must be defended.

Not being a theologian himself, he was necessarily subject to the authority of the learned, and this approach is called *taqlid* or emulation of an expert in matters of Islamic law or dogma (compare Wieringa 2008: 644-645). Yahyā admits that there are scholars who are more knowledgeable about the matter, but as these learned people have remained silent or even allowed the practice, he felt obliged to write this pamphlet (p. 4). He sees his duty firmly rooted



in the Qur'ānic diction of "commanding right and forbidding wrong".<sup>6</sup> The books of his late father Sayyid 'Uthmān were a great help in elucidating the matter (p. 5) and he bases his opinions on rulings of his late father, the "mufti Betawi" (muftī of Batavia) (p. 6). He repeatedly presents citations from these *fatāwā*.

In the first chapter he defends the claim that *haram berjamu-jamu di dalam masjid* (it is forbidden to have festivities in a mosque), because a mosque is a place of worship (p. 5). Basing his opinion on his father's, namely that a mosque should be kept clean, he provides the following argument (p. 6):

*Bahwasanya membersihkan masjid-masjid daripada segala barang kotor-kotor dan yang keji-keji, maka sekalian itu wajib atas tiap-tiap orang Islam. Dan bahwasanya pahala ganjaran atas membersihkan itu amat besar, sehingga orang yang menyapuh sedikit rumput-rumput dari masjid maka menjadi pahalanya itu maskawinnya pada bidadari di dalam syurga.*

(Cleaning mosques of all things that are dirty and despicable is obligatory for every Muslim. And the rewards for cleaning are very great, so that for someone who sweeps up some grasses in a mosque, the reward for him will be the dowry to the nymphs in heaven).

The line of argument pursued here, also with other citations, is that, if cleanliness of the mosque is so highly valued, it should be clear that dirtying a mosque is haram or forbidden.<sup>7</sup> Hence, a mosque should not be dirtied with the remains of meals or coffee (*haram mengotorkan masjid dengan bekas-bekas makanan atau bekas-bekas kopi sekalipun*, p. 7). Yaḥyā invokes his father who had quoted the *ḥadīth* about onions and garlic, adding to this *kucai* (*Allium odorum* 'Chinese chives or leek'), also known as "fragrant garlic" (p. 7):

*Sebagai lagi telah ditegah oleh Rasulullah sallallahu alaihi wasallam akan orang yang makan bawang merah atau bawang putih atau kucai bahwa ia masuk di masjid, karena busuk ba[h]u mulutnya menjadi penggoda atas malaikat dan atas manusia.*

(Furthermore, the Apostle of God, peace be upon him, has prohibited people from eating red onions, garlic, and Chinese chives when they want to enter a mosque, because the rotten smell from their mouth would be a tormentor of the angels and mankind).

On the basis of Qur'ānic citations and *ḥadīths* given in rulings of the "late al-Ḥabīb 'Uthmān" (almarhum al-Ḥabīb 'Uthmān), Yaḥyā states that *mengguna[h]kan masjid bait Allah tempat berkenduri menjamu makan minum haram*, p. 8 (to use a mosque, the house of God, as a place for festive meals, for eating and drinking, is **forbidden**). The last word is written with thick letters (see Figure

<sup>6</sup> On this central moral tenet in Islam, see Cook (2001).

<sup>7</sup> In Yaḥyā's words: *Maka dengan sebagaimana wajib membersihkan masjid-masjid dan bahwa pahala* (p. 7) *membersihkan itu amat besar, maka diketahuilah akan haram mengotorkan masjid dan haram atas orang yang ada najis di badannya atau pakaiannya bahwa ia berdukk di masjid.*

3) and after it he presents anecdotal evidence of contemporaneous dirtying of mosques in Batavia (p. 8), chiefly the mosques of Luar Batang (North Jakarta),<sup>8</sup> Tanah Abang (Central Jakarta), and elsewhere:

*Karena telah terbukti waktu ketika diadakan orang perbuatan yang munkar itu di masjid Luar Batang, Tanah Abang dan lain-lainnya, selebar masjid penuh dengan bekas-bekas makanan nasi, tulang-tulang, tumpahan kuah, kulit buah-buahan, tumpahan air, sehingga penglihatan itu amat menyedihkan dan membangunkan bulu badan. Ditambah lagi dengan teriak-teriaknya orang yang mengatur dan yang ribut merebut makanan sehingga sangat susah orang mencari di dalam masjid satu meter pesegi yang bebas daripada kekotoran itu.*

(This was proven at the time when people went against God's will in the mosques of Luar Batang, Tanah Abang, and elsewhere, when the mosques were full of the remains of rice meals, bones, spilled sauces, fruit skins, and spilled water, so that the sight was very saddening and made one's hair stand on end. What's more, there was shouting of the organizers and of those who noisily competed for food, so that it was very difficult to find one square metre in the mosque, which was free of dirt).

Thereupon Yahyā, still basing himself on rulings of Sayyid 'Uthmān concerning respectful behaviour in the mosque, discusses three transgressions that are "not fitting", which had already been forbidden by the Prophet. Firstly, trade should not be committed in the house of God, and the Prophetic saying is quoted that when one sees someone selling or buying in a mosque, one should say to him: "May God not make your trading profitable."<sup>9</sup> Secondly, if someone cries out in the mosque about something he has lost, the Prophet recommended that one say to him: "God will not restore it to you."<sup>10</sup> Thirdly, according to another *ḥadīth*, reciting poetry and singing in the mosque are forbidden.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The mosque of Luar Batang is still well known today due to the tomb of the eighteenth-century Arab missionary Sayyid al-Aydarūs being located there, which is still a popular place of pilgrimage, see Puspitasari et al. (2012).

<sup>9</sup> This *ḥadīth* is also included in Robson (1963: 148): "Abū Huraira reported God's messenger as saying: When you see anyone buying or selling in a mosque, say, 'May God not make your trading profitable!' The Malay text reads: *Maka apabila ada yang jual-beli di masjid maka sunat dikata padanya: 'Tiadalah diberi untung oleh Allah taala pada penjualmu.'*" (p. 9).

<sup>10</sup> This *ḥadīth* is also included in Robson (1963: 148): "And when you see anyone calling out in it about a stray animal, say, 'May God not restore it to you!' The Malay text reads: *Kedua tiada harus ribut di masjid dengan mencari suatu barang yang hilang itu di masjid. Maka sunat dikata padanya: 'Tiadalah diketemukan oleh Allah taala padamu barang yang hilang itu.'*" (p. 9).

<sup>11</sup> This *ḥadīth* is also included in Robson (1963: 148): "Amr b. Shu'aib on his father's authority reported his grandfather as saying that God's messenger prohibited the recitation of poems in a mosque." The prohibition is not always strictly interpreted. For example, an on-line ruling stipulates that it is permissible to chant Islamic songs in a mosque, provided it does not lead to noise and raised voices [see <http://www.onislam.net/english/ask-the-scholar/arts-and-entertainment/singing-and-music/170468.html?Music=>, accessed on 21-12-2012]. Yahyā (p. 9) is relatively short on this matter: "*Dan apabila ada seorang yang membaca syair nyanyi di masjid maka sunat dikata padanya: 'Disowek-sowek oleh Allah taala akan mulut engkau intaha.'*"

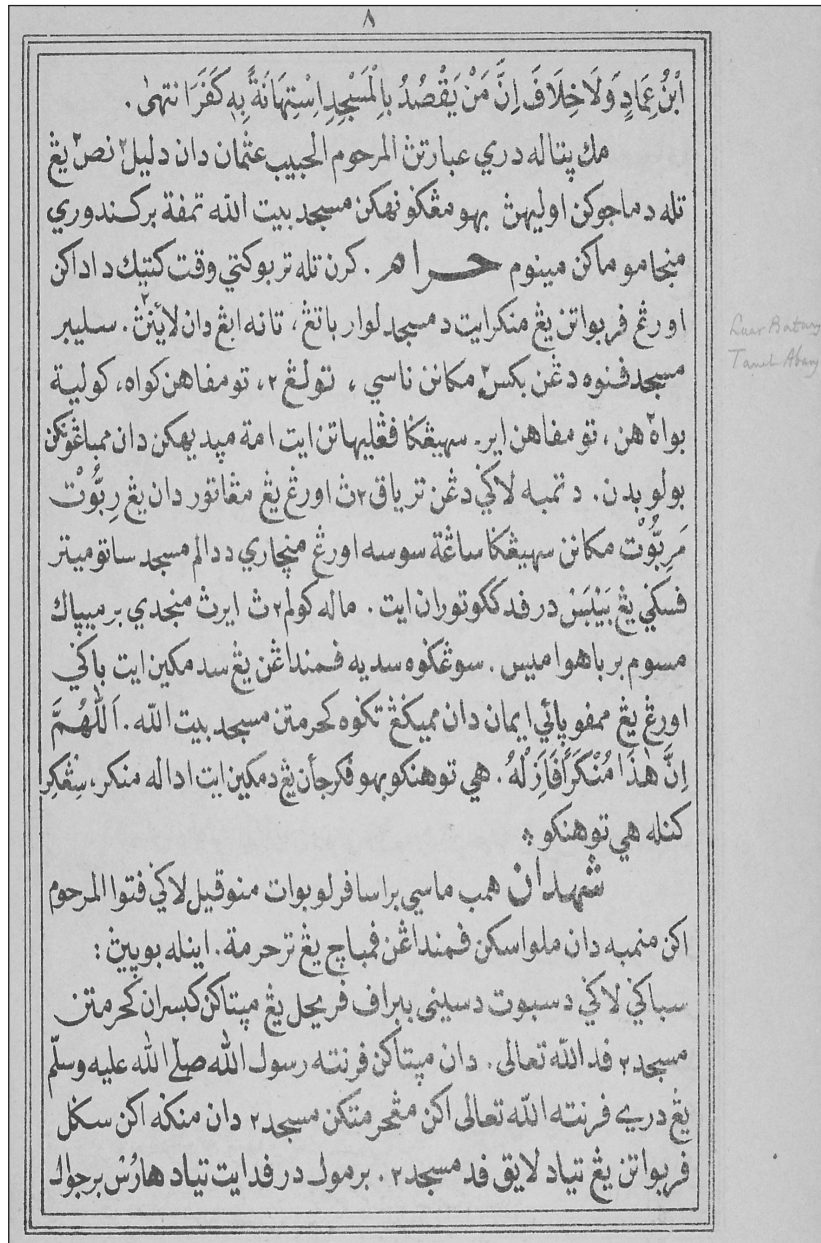


Figure 3. The word *haram* (forbidden) is written with thick letters (*Dalā'il al-nāshid*, p. 8, line 4). Pijper noted in pencil in the right margin the place names of “Luar Batang” and “Tanah Abang”.

Yaḥyā addresses “my honourable brethren” to take notice of these three “condemnations”, which were already forbidden in the era of the Prophet, chiefly “shouting”, trading, and searching lost things in the mosque. He argues that having festive meals in a mosque is *bid'a*, because it was unknown in the time of the Prophet, and by way of *qiyās* (analogical deduction) he concludes

that the Prophet certainly would have forbidden it, just as in the case of the three aforementioned offenses against the dignity of a mosque.

Theologians from Al-Azhar University (*al-Azhar al-Sharif* or the noble Azhar), too, have ruled that eating and drinking in the mosque is forbidden. The latter word, *haram*, is again written with thick bold letters (p. 11). The reasons for this are summarized as follows:

1. Bringing down the dignity of a mosque ;
2. Dirtying a mosque with the remains of food and drink and all kinds of fruit skins;
3. Noisy sounds of people fighting [over food] and excited crying to each other;
4. Entry of small children, who have not yet reached the age of discretion, taking part in the festive meals in the mosque;
5. A place of worshipping God is made into a place that serves food and drink like a restaurant.

The fourteenth-century Maliki jurist and theologian Abū ‘AbdAllāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Abdarī (better known as Ibn al-Hājj, 1334) is also invoked as an authority and he ruled that it was forbidden to eat in mosques, especially onions, garlic, and *kucai*, to which Yaḥyā adds the footnote such as *nasi kebuli* and other dishes.<sup>12</sup>

To clarify the matter even further for the “honourable reader”, Yaḥyā quotes again from the work of his father, from the latter’s *Jam’ al-fawāid* (published in 1310/1892), in which it was stipulated that in the rare event of there being eating and drinking in the mosque, it was incumbent that the mosque should not be dirtied and its visitors not be troubled.<sup>13</sup> This implied, as Yaḥyā commented, that it was impossible to receive thousands of people in the mosque with food and still meet both requirements about not littering and not being a nuisance to others (p. 11).

Yaḥyā argued that what was forbidden in one case *mutatis mutandis* also applied to similar cases (p. 13):

*Seupama haram membaca Qur’an karena ada di dalam kakus, haram makan minum di masjid karena mengotorkan masjid, bikin berisik di masjid kemasukan anak-anak di masjid, sebagai juga haram perempuan yang lagi datang kotor masuk ke masjid karena khawatir mengotorkannya.*

(If, for example, it is forbidden to recite the Qur’ān while being on the toilet, it is also forbidden to eat and drink in a mosque because this makes the mosque dirty; making noise in a mosque because of children entering is in the same way

<sup>12</sup> The dictionary of Stevens and Schmidgall-Tellings (2004: 460) explains *nasi kebuli* as “rice cooked with meat or fish, oil or butter, a sweetener, etcetera and colored by turmeric.”

<sup>13</sup> The Malay text reads (p. 12): *Sebagai lagi harus makan minum di dalam masjid syaratnya pula jika tida mengotorkan masjid dan tida menjadi penggodas atas yang ada di masjid. Adapun jikalau ada yang demikian itu maka haram adanya intaha.*

forbidden as it is for women who happen to be menstruating to enter a mosque for fear of making it dirty).

Yaḥyā calls upon the government officials in charge of the *bupati-bupati* (regencies), the *ulama-ulama*, the chief administrators of mosques, and mosque managers to take heed of the duty of commanding right and forbidding wrong, explicitly drawing attention to the example of the “late al-Habib ‘Uthmān” who had intensively carried out this Qur’ānic exhortation, with about one hundred works in print.

Yaḥyā does not go into the close ties his father had with the colonial government, but in a rather remarkable twist, he closes the first paragraph with a loyalist declaration (pp. 13-14):

*Pihak pemerintah lebih suka orang yang memegang teguh agama dan setia pada (p. 14) Tuhannya yang tida bermuka-muka. Karena ambilannya jika orang yang curang pada Tuhannya atau pada hukum Allah niscaya di mana dapat kesempatan tiada enggan mereka akan curang juga pada pemerintah dengan melanggar wetnya<sup>14</sup> sebagaimana telah banyak terbukti orang yang diadungkan tiba-tiba berbuat yang khianat dan kecewa.*

(The government prefers people who firmly hold on to their religion and are faithful to their God without hypocrisy. It assumes that if people are dishonest towards their God or against God’s law, they will certainly, whenever given the chance, also be dishonest towards the government, breaking its laws, as this has already been proven by many people who had been glorified but then suddenly did treacherous and disappointing things).

Unfortunately for us, Yaḥyā does not name names, but apparently his use of the term “Indonesia” in the text’s introduction did not necessarily turn him into an anti-colonial nationalist.

The second paragraph, which is only very short (pp. 14-15), is on the religious innovation of decorating a mosque with flowers, flags, papers, paint in all sorts of colours, and stained-glass windows, which are referred to as *khalas in lut* (from Dutch *glas-in-lood*), explained as ‘multi-coloured glass’ (p. 14). The decoration of mosques is declared to be *makrūh* (in law permitted yet reprehensible, but in practice questionable), invoking the authority of Imam Nawawi (al-Nawawī, one of the foremost scholars of the Shāfi’ī law school, died 676/1277) and Imam Rafi’i (the Shāfi’ī jurist Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Rāfi’ī, died 580/1184). A ruling by Shaykh ‘Alī Maḥfūz al-Azharī (a contemporaneous theologian from Azhar University, 1361/1942) from his book *al-Ibdā’ (fī maḍārr al-ibtidā’)* is cited to the effect that carved works in a mosque are a religious innovation that is *makrūh*. Furthermore, ‘Umar is said to have said that the mosque gives people shelter from the rain, and should not be painted red or yellow, but this saying is not further elucidated.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Spelt *w-y-t-ny*, based on the Dutch word *wet* (law).

<sup>15</sup> The Malay text reads: *Dan memerintah Sayyidina ‘Umar atas mendirikan masjid dan berkata ia kepada tukang membuatnya lindungilah olehmu akan manusia daripada hujan dan hati-hati daripada mengecat dengan [p. 15] warna merah atau kuning, intaha.*

However, Yaḥyā cites three extracts from the works of his father, who on several occasions had condemned the decoration of mosques, such as the use of coloured paint, floral carvings, and also pictures as these things divert the heart of the believer from God. They are *haram*, even if the pictures (of animals or people) are adorned with Qur'ānic calligraphy. Finally, the Prophet is cited as having said that after his death, his followers would ornament the mosques as the Jews and Christians do, and theologically this *ḥadīth*, of course, touches upon the heart of the matter.<sup>16</sup> In fact, in the same year as Yaḥyā's booklet, Ahmad Hassan, commonly described as a "reformist" or "modernist," also found that (an excessive) decoration is forbidden "especially as it is reminiscent of Christian and Jewish practice" (Hooker 2003: 92).

After briefly summarizing the tenet of his short treatise, reiterating once more the already oft-repeated message that having festive meals and using decoration in mosques is forbidden, Yaḥyā expressed the hope to bring out a more extended second edition in the near future, adding several important matters pertaining to the mosque. It is unknown whether this was ever realized, but such is the state of the history of the book in Indonesia, which is still largely uncharted.

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<sup>16</sup> Compare Robson (1963: 145). The Malay text reads (p. 16): *Bersabda Rasulullah sallallahu alaihi wassalam: "Aku berpendapatan nanti kamu merias-riaskan masjid-masjid kamu sesudahnya matiku sebagai bangsa Yahudi dan Nasrani meriaskan gereja-gerejanya mereka itu."*

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