



YOUNG HABAIB: FROM SHOLAWAT ASSEMBLIES, DA'WA AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION IN PONOROGO

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Abstract : This article seeks to explain the rise in popularity of a young habaib among young Muslims in Ponorogo, Habib Naqib bin Abdullah Assegaf, a young habaib with a sholawat Syubanul Shorot assembly that is widely idolised by young Muslims in Ponorogo. This study assumes that the young habaib relies more on entertainment performance than oratorical competence in attracting followers. The results of this study show that (1) Young Habaib have utilised new media and technology through the internet for self-promotion; (2) the promotional power possessed by the shalawat assembly is also supported by young people's congregation as the basis of da'wah and its market share which used to be filled by senior habaib (3) the practice of shalawat carried out by these young Habaib by combining the dimensions of spirituality and musicality so as to attract the attention of millennial youth in urban and rural areas.

Keywords: Yuong Habib, Sholawat Assemblies, Religious Expression

Abstrak: Artikel ini berusaha menjelaskan naiknya popularitas seorang habaib muda di kalangan anak muda Muslim di Ponorogo, Habib Naqib bin Abdullah Assegaf, seorang habaib muda dengan majelis sholawat Syubanul Shorot yang banyak diidolakan oleh anak muda Muslim di Ponorogo. Penelitian ini mengasumsikan bahwa habaib muda lebih mengandalkan pertunjukan hiburan daripada kompetensi oratoris dalam menarik pengikut. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa (1) Habaib muda telah memanfaatkan media baru dan teknologi melalui internet untuk promosi diri; (2) kekuatan promosi yang dimiliki majelis shalawat ini juga didukung oleh jamaah anak muda sebagai basis dakwah dan pangsa pasar yang dulunya diisi oleh para habaib senior; (3) pengamalan shalawat yang dilakukan para habaib muda ini dengan memadukan dimensi spiritualitas dan musikalitas sehingga mampu menarik perhatian kaum muda milenial di perkotaan dan pedesaan.

Kata kunci: Habaib Muda, Majelis Sholawat, Ekspresi Keagamaan



Introduction

One of the interesting religious phenomena in the country is the rise of open-air recitations in big cities. These recitations are organised by young habaib using their own majelis taklim. almost every day there are majelis taklim in Ponorogo. Its various programmes of activities have attracted tens of thousands of worshippers from the enthusiasm of young people in expressing their religion is a sight that almost every day always colours the social flow of society and social media.

The scene above illustrates the participation of young people in traditional recitations led by young habaib. Interestingly, these recitations are synonymous with symbols of material success, consumerism and modernity. Whereas in the past, the majelis taklim were led by senior habaib, now the majelis taklim are led by young habaib, and whereas in the past the congregation was dominated by adults, especially mothers, today the majority of the congregation is dominated by young people.

Habib Naqib bin Assegaf is one of the habaib and majelis taklim that is currently favoured and in demand by young Muslims. The young Habaib who has extraordinary magnetism among young people because of his voice and carrier in leading the sholawat assembly known as Sekar Langit. Almost every day the schedule for the sholawat assembly of Habib Naqib bin Assegaf is always full and the assembly is filled with worshipers. Habib Naqib bin Assegaf's social media is no less magnetic, Naqib bin Assegaf's social media followers have reached no less than two million followers for Tiktok and nearly one million followers on Instagram.

Naqib bin Assegaf's presence gives legitimacy to the youth religion that has grown rapidly with the development of social media. His presence also gradually broke the dominance of senior religious leaders who were increasingly abandoned by worshipers from among young people. It is a unique expression of religiosity amidst the flow of social media and advanced civilisation. To understand this phenomenon, this article asks several questions: Why did this young Habaib become a popular religious leader among young Muslims? What is the attraction of the young Habaib Naqib bin Assegaf and his assembly for young people? and how young people express religious rituals in the midst of modernity.

Studies on Habaib and Muslim youth in Indonesia have been written with various perspectives. Some authors have analysed young people's participation in Islamic movements and activism and its influence on them.¹

¹See for example Rifki Rosyad, *A Quest for True Islam: A Study of the Islamic Resurgence Movement among the Youth in Bandung, Indonesia* (Canberra: ANU E-Press, 1995); Salman, "The Tarbiyah Movement: Why People Join This Indonesian Contemporary Islamic Movement". *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 13, No. 2, (2006), hlm171-241; Noorhaidi Hasan, *Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militancy, and the Quest for Identity in Post-New Order Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asian Program, 2006); Greg Fealy, "Hizbut Tabrir in Indonesia: Seeking a 'Total' Islamic Identity", dalam S. Akbarzadeh & F. Mansouri. *Islam and Political Violence: Muslim Diaspora and Radicalism in the West* (London: I.B. Tauris, Najib Kailani, "Forum Lingkar Pena and Muslim Youth in Contemporary Indonesia". *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, Vol. 46, No.1, (2012), hlm 33-53; Minako Sakai, "Preaching to Muslim Youth in Indonesia: The 'Dakwah' Activities of Habiburrahman El Shirazy", *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, Vol. 46, No.1, (2012), hlm 9-31.

Most of their attention is on transnational Islamic movements such as Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, the Tarbiyah Movement with its PKS, Jama'ah Tablig, and the Salafi movement. However, there is little written about traditionalist movements, such as the majelis habaib. The works of Arif Zamhari, Julia Day Howell, and Ismail Fajrie Alatas, Syamsul Rijal, Musa Kazim are a few examples. They portray the rise of the sholawat assemblies of the habaib as part of the development of the Sufism movement in the country. The success of these assemblies, according to Zamhari and Howell, cannot be separated from the creativity of their leaders who bring this Sufi movement to the "streets" which are open, so that it can be followed by various groups.²

Meanwhile, Alatas sees the shifting pattern of dhikr assemblies in the capital city as an adaptation effort of the habaib in maintaining the tarekat movement in line with the Islamic revival in post-New Order Indonesia.³

Although the author agrees with these analyses, their studies are more concentrated at the level of the religious elite (habaib), thus not exploring the voices of young people in relation to their participation and contribution to the assemblies. This article seeks to fill this gap by analysing the existence of a young Habaib in Ponorogo, in this case Habib Naqib Assegaf with his Shorot Assembly and the voices of his young followers, as well as their feelings and experiences while being involved in the assembly.

Inspired by Asef Bayat's work on young Muslims in Iran and Egypt,⁴ this article argues that the existence of young Habaib is not only to seek religious knowledge and spirituality, but also because they see the assembly as a place to express 'youthness' in the middle of a big city full of various social and economic problems.

Methods

This study assumes that the young habaib rely more on entertainment performance than oratorical competence in attracting followers. Their appeal lies in their distinctive appearance, which combines symbols of traditionalism, sanctity and Arabness. Young Habaib also appear as traditionalist scholars and Arab-style holy men, with a classical style that makes them look charismatic and authoritative to the audience. This study confirms Hilary Kalmbach's analysis of new religious intellectuals in Egypt that "performance plays a key role in the legitimisation of Islamic authority".⁵ This idea implies that having a traditional education and religious capital (as a young habib) will not be sufficient to gain popularity; a religious person also needs to appear as a traditionalist scholar and a pious person to fulfil his audience's expectations.

Results And Discussion

Rebranding Habaib: From Senior to Junior

²Arif Zamhari dan Julia Day Howell, "Taking Sufism to the Streets: Majelis Zikir and Majelis Shalawat as New Venues for Popular Islamic Piety in Indonesia", Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs, Vol. 46, No. 2, hlm 47-75.

³Ismail Fajrie Alatas, Securing Their Place: The Ba'alawi, Prophetic Piety and Islamic Resurgence. MA Thesis. National University of Singapore, (2008), hlm 96

⁴Asef Bayat, Being Young and Muslim: New Cultural Politics in the Global South and North (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), hlm 8

⁵Hilary Kalmbach, "Blurring Boundaries: Aesthetics, Performance, and the Transformation of Islamic Leadership". Culture and Religion. 16(2), 160-174.

In the last three years, the religious trends of young people have changed. The presence of recitation groups led by habaib, namely Majelis Shorot led by Habib Naqib bin Assegaf and several assemblies led by young habaib, has given a new style. These young habaib present a model and content of khutbah assemblies that attract attention compared to mainstream khutbah assemblies which were initially dominated by senior habaib. Unlike the group of senior habaib assemblies that present studies in the form of tawhid (theology), fiqh (jurisprudence), and tasawwuf (mysticism), the main content of the khutbah group of these young habaib is shalawat. The sermon begins with the reading of the book of Maulid (the story of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad) and shalawat accompanied by hadrah (Arabic acoustic) music, then interspersed with a short lecture and continued again with the reading of shalawat and then closed with prayer. In addition, another unique sight in this recitation is the burning of bukhur (perfume) and fragrant oil during the recitation procession, one of the traditions believed to have originated from the Prophet Muhammad SAW.⁶

The interesting thing about this assembly is that the congregation is dominated by young people under the age of 30. When viewed from generational theory, these young people belong to Generation Z. Generation Z is a group of people born between 1995 and 2010, meaning that Generation Z ranges from 12 to 27 years old. Santrock states that this age range is early adolescence to early adulthood. Generation Z's life tends to want freedom and often conflicts with religious life.⁷

The rise in popularity of young habaib who lead shalawat assemblies among Muslims has become a new phenomenon in Indonesia in the 5.0 era. While the older generation of habaib preferred to keep a low profile, the new generation is actively promoting themselves. There are several points that set them apart from the previous generation of habaib. Firstly, most of the new preachers are young, ranging from 20 to 30 years old at the start of their da'wah careers. Many of them graduated from Hadhramaut, Yemen, while some others graduated from traditional Islamic schools (pesantren) in Java. Second, new preachers tend to establish their own majelis shalawat, become prominent figures in their organisations, and make use of advertising and the internet to promote their majelis. Newly established assemblies often have a logo or brand, a flag, a head office, an official website, even merchandise. They also have multimedia teams, young staff members and volunteers to help organise their events. Thirdly, many young habaib emphasise their distinctive status by wearing a white turban, a long white dress, and a shawl (mostly green) around their shoulders. Finally, most participants in this type of

⁶Lyn Parker & Pam Nilan, *Adolescents in Contemporary Indonesia* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

⁷Manja Stephan, "Education, Youth, and Islam: The Growing Popularity of Private Religious Lessons in Dushanbe, Tajikistan", *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 29, No. 4, (2010), hlm 475; B. Bradford Brown & Reed W. Larson, "The Kaleidoscope of Adolescence: Experiences of the World's Youth at the Beginning of the 21st Century", dalam B. Bradford Brown, Reed W. Larson, and Saraswathi (Eds.). *The World's Youth: Adolescence in Eight Regions of the Globe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), hlm 9-10.

assembly are young people, both male and female, ranging from 12 to 30 years old and mostly from traditionalist Muslim families.⁸

Participants usually wear the uniform jackets of the assemblies, indicating that the rise of *habaib da'wah* wrapped in *shalawat* assemblies cannot be isolated from the context of competing authority between Muslim groups. In a growing public sphere and an increasingly regulated market, we are witnessing the rapid expansion of various Muslim groups competing for a large following. They actively organise public activities, sell religious products and spread their religious messages through new media. Various interpretations of religious messages, ranging from puritanical to liberal, have been disseminated on print media and the internet. The development of advanced technology and communication and globalisation have enabled the flow of ideas from abroad. Some new Muslim movements with roots in the Middle East have expanded their ideology through *da'wah* and education in Indonesia. Among the new Islamic movements, Salafi groups are prominent in preaching the purification of Islam through preaching, education and new media. They also criticise traditionalist Muslim beliefs and rituals which they regard as innovations that violate Islamic law (*bid'ah*). Traditionalist Muslims, who make up the majority of Muslims in Indonesia, believe that Salafi preaching has become a challenge to their traditions. The community became increasingly concerned when several incidents emerged to threaten their position, such as taking over traditionalist mosques, denouncing unlawful innovations (*bid'ah*) in their religious practices, and Salafi 'penetration' into Muslim organisations.⁹

In a situation where traditionalist Muslims are under the 'threat' of Salafis and other new Muslim groups, there is a growing demand for proselytisation and religious marketing within traditionalist communities. Religious marketing in this sense refers to 'the competition between followers of a particular religious group to gain strong public trust by persuading and convincing them through rhetoric, performance and image'. In this sense, *da'wah* and religious markets are media for preachers and religious groups to attract followers.¹⁰

Increasing competition among congregation members led the *habaib* to creatively design their traditionalist *da'wah* in distinctive fashion in order to fulfil the aspirations of urban Muslim youth. The *habaib* were determined to form a *shalawat* group (*majelis shalawat*) that was completely different from the conventional one. The new *shalawat* groups were organised in such a way as to offer young Muslims a place to express their aspirations through *shalawat* activism and identity expression. *Kiai/gus/habaib* make their *shalawat* assemblies into public performances and entertainments that give followers an active role. As a result, the *majelis* are no longer seen as serious places to

⁸Joseph W. Meri, "Aspects of Baraka (Blessings) and Ritual Devotion Among Medieval Muslims and Jews", *Medieval Encounters*, Vol. 5, No.1, (1999), hlm 46-69.

⁹Sumit K. Mandal, "Popular Sites of Prayer, Transoceanic Migration, and Cultural Diversity: Exploring the Significance of Keramat in Southeast Asia", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 2, (2012), hlm 357.

¹⁰Ismail Fajrie Alatas, *Securing Their Place: The Ba'alawi, Prophetic Piety and Islamic Resurgence*. MA Thesis. National University of Singapore, (2008), hlm 134

perform shalawat, but rather fun places to socialise, chant and sing the praises of the Prophet accompanied by traditional musical performances.

Musikalis spiritualis Sholawat Assemblies

Many young habaib have used new communication technologies as instruments in promoting their majlis and spreading their message to a wider audience. The use of new media, particularly the internet, and advertising was started by the two largest assemblies in Ponorogo, namely Majelis Shorot and Majelis Burdah. Both assemblies started their da'wah expansion in 2010 in Ponorogo. The websites of the assemblies are very important in promoting the habib leader or main speaker and his assemblies. The home page of the Shorot website, for example, shows images of pious-looking habibs in traditionalist costumes, praying or preaching to the congregation. The page provides various options such as the profile of the assembly, the assembly's programme and schedule, documentation of da'wah events, Islamic songs (qasidah) and prayers, social media links, Radio Live, YouTube channel and YouTube live streaming, and so on.¹¹

More recently, in 2023, it also advertised pilgrimage trips to Mecca and Medina under the guidance of Habib Naqib and his brothers under the name Jabal Noor. The options on the website not only provide information about the assemblies and religious messages, but also encourage the audience to get involved and support their da'wah through donations. On the website and social media, habaib sermons are accessible and people can watch live streaming sermons and listen to musical prayers. In addition, they provide an online space for the Muslim audience to follow the ongoing activities of the majelis and take part online by asking questions and making comments related to the majelis programme or theological matters.¹²

The Shorot shalawat assembly led by young habaib Habib Naqib Assegaf emphasises the promotion of ethics and practical Sufi practices rather than black and white legal doctrines. This is quite different from the global Muslim movement, especially Salafis, who emphasise a strict set of Islamic theology and Islamic law in their study groups. Habaib preachers in most events appeal to people to be pious through religious rituals and good deeds and avoid sins. Shorot assemblies provide more ritualised activities than serious study of specific religious texts (kitab). Many informants felt that they found peace and tranquillity when attending the assemblies. In charge of reading the classical kitab texts is Ustadz Laits Atsir reading the book *Safinantunnaja* by Salim Ibn Sumair Al-Hadrami.¹³

A typical part of the Shorot Assembly is the repetition of dhikr (remembrance of Allah) and shalawat (praise of the Prophet) which can constitute up to half of the talk. It is common for members of the congregation to recite the duas with great emotion, and

¹¹Atmodiwirjo, "The Use of Urban Public Places in Jakarta for Adolescents' Hanging Out", *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering*, Vo. 7, No. 2, (2008), hlm. 345.

¹²Ben White, "Generation and Social Change: Indonesian Youth in Comparative Perspective", dalam Kathryn Robonson, *Youth Identities and Social Transformations in Modern Indonesia* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), p. 14

¹³Sheikh Salim bin Sumair was an influential scholar and Sufi in the Islamic world. His teachings and the hustle and bustle of his life had a clear impact on Muslims in every region. Sheikh Salim bin Sumair is believed to have lived for a long period of time and had a great influence during his life.

some of them are moved to tears. During the dhikr, the members of the congregation are usually very solemn, having in their hands an assembly booklet containing a series of genealogies of Prophets or scholars, recitations of dhikr and shalawat to be recited during the talk. Each majelis has produced its own booklet of dhikr with photos and logos of their preachers, kiai, gus or habaib on it.¹⁴

Traditional Arabic music (hadhrah) accompanies the chanting and lectures. Shorot assemblies usually have crew members assigned to chant dhikr, salawat, and maulid texts, and sing Islamic songs. At Majelis Shorot, religious lectures alternate with musical performances so as not to bore the congregation. The crew at the back plays traditional musical instruments, such as tambourines and drums, with some vocalists singing prayers and songs. The musical performances are an important attraction for young participants to the majelis. The Syubanut Shorot leader composed a number of religious songs adapted from popular Indonesian songs. The music has created an extravaganza that stimulates emotions and excites the crowd.¹⁵

Leaders of majelis shalawat have become superstars for young Muslims due to the effects of media, advertising and their own performance. Self-promotion through websites, books, billboards and merchandise has helped raise the profile of habaib among their audiences and the general public who access such media. Participants, who engage with habaib and are in awe of their performance, religious message and pleasant personalities, help spread their image to the wider community. Some participants related their experiences to friends and family on social media, and this helped spread the habaib's fame. Many assembly members described their kiai/gus/habib as holy (wali), humble, pious, but also cool. 'Cool' in this sense means that the habaib, although wearing traditional robes, understand youth slang and fancy styles of speech and robes. Habib Naqib Assegaf and his brothers in the neighbourhood of Majelis Syubbanul Shorot, for example, often fascinate young worshipers by using the local Probolinggo dialect and slang and wearing sunglasses.¹⁶ The status of sayyid, kiai, gus, self-promotion and stylish performance have turned the young preacher, Habib Naqib, into a new idol for young Muslims, especially in Ponorogo.

Gen Z, Piety and Religious Expression in Ponorogo

The young habaib in Ponorogo try to attract worshipers by using various creative strategies. The most important strategy is using billboards, banners, posters and social media. Some worshippers are attracted to the majelis after seeing information about the recitation on roadside banners and announcement posters on social media. The majelis' social media and community pages on social media, especially Facebook, usually announce and disseminate the schedule of activities for the following four weeks. The use of the internet, especially social media, for da'wah purposes is very strategic in Indonesia. According to data from the Ministry of Communication and Information,

¹⁴Ahmad Fadhli, Ulama Betawi (Studi tentang Jaringan Ulama Betawi dan Kontribusinya terhadap Perkembangan Islam Abad ke-19 dan 20) (Jakarta: Manhalun Nasyi-in Press. 2011), hlm 59.

¹⁵ Lyn Parker & Pam Nilan, *Adolescents in Contemporary Indonesia* (New York: Routledge, 2013)

¹⁶Wawancara, Tajib, 29 Juli 2024.

internet users in Indonesia have reached 63 million in 2013. Of this number, 95 per cent use the internet to access social media. In terms of Facebook usage, for example, Indonesia is in the fourth position in the world after America, Brazil, and India. Isparmo Seo also reported that most Facebook users are young people between the ages of 18-34. With the popularity of smartphones today, young people often use their free time to communicate through online services such as Tiktok, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Line, as well as posting status and commenting on their friends' status on Social media.¹⁷

In addition to accessing the majelis' social media, the young congregants also use majelis accessories, particularly the jackets of Majelis Shorot, Sheikh Mania and Zahir Mania, as symbols of piety and group identity. These young people are proud to wear the jackets of Majelis Shorot, Sheikh Mania and Zahir Mania which show their affiliation to the habib's assembly. The jackets also symbolise that they are pious Muslims affiliated to traditional Islam, or what is popularly called aswaja Islam. The use of assembly symbols like this reinforces what Durkheim termed the 'social representation' of religion.¹⁸ Habib Nadif took the initiative to use majelis jackets and other merchandise as a means to spread religion among young people. Habib Naqib's success then inspired a number of habibs to use the same method. According to Mara Einstein, someone who consumes certain religious products means that he defines his personal identity as a consumer. He continued, 'it is the seller (marketer) who gives meaning to the product, and it is this meaning that is consumed by the buyer'.¹⁹

Majelis Shorot habib Naqib in Ponorogo provides a platform for young people to express their 'youthfulness'. The concept of youthfulness here means not only the stage of age, but also the momentum and variety of activities to express identity and enjoy the fun that young people usually live. In the past, majelis taklim were generally attended by older and middle-aged people. It was more popular, in particular, among urban housewives. Recitations are usually held regularly and are held in mosques, the homes of the congregation, or in a permanent room owned by the speaker.

This is very different from the recent model of young habaib-style recitation where the congregation is dominated by young people.²⁰ It is also different from the global Islamic movements that are eagerly targeting young people in schools and campuses. While these movements have recruitment and regeneration programmes for new members, the majelis habaib are more open to the public and do not require formal membership. However, habaib and their staff usually ask the congregation to commit to their assemblies in order to learn more about the teachings of Islam and contribute to the

¹⁷Kominfo, "Pengguna Internet di Indonesia 63 Juta Orang", (2013), diakses pada tgl 5 Januari 2015, dari http://kominfo.go.id/index.php/content/detail/3415/Kominfo+%3A+Pengguna+Internet+di+Indonesia+63+Juta+-+Orang/0/berita_satker

¹⁸ Emile Durkheim, "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life", dalam Michael Lambek (Ed.). *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, (London: Blackwell, 2002), hlm 34-47

¹⁹ Parker & Nilan, *Adolescents in Contemporary Indonesia*, hlm.166.

²⁰Mara Einstein, *Brands of Faith: Marketing Religion in Commercial Age* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), hlm. 71-72.



'da'wah of the Prophet'. From the author's interactions with the students and congregation of Majelis Shorot, it seems that the programmes of the assembly become a vehicle for them to, what Bayat calls, 'claim and reclaim their youthfulness'.²¹ Bayat defines 'youthfulness' as 'a habitus and cognitive and behavioural dispositions associated with being young, the social location between childhood and adulthood, where they experience relative autonomy, not dependent on adults, but not independent, and they are free from responsibility'.²²

Activism, mobility, and fun are some of the elements of youth expression. At majelis, young people can meet their peers and together channelled their aspirations and exchanged experiences. Their commitment to the struggle makes them active and mobile as the assemblies are held in various places. They actively build communication networks with fellow followers and staff of Majelis Shorot. In this case, many followers, both crew and ordinary congregants, create online groups through mobile phones, such as on Instagram, Tiktok and WhatsApp (WA). During the research, the author joined these online groups and was able to follow and monitor the informal conversations and discussions that developed among the followers of Majelis Shorot. In the WhatsApp group, for example, members actively coordinate and share information on various issues related to the assembly. Some of the information and conversations are serious, but they are more often joking and sharing stories and funny meme images to entertain each other. The atmosphere in these online groups is relaxed and members can be funny and tease each other to familiarise themselves with other members.

The social interaction of the congregation with other congregants is another feature of youth expression. The regular programmes of the assemblies become a means for sociability and social expression. Many followers of the assembly interact online without ever meeting each other. To strengthen relationships and commitment among the congregation, especially the online congregation, the staff of Majelis Shorot also organises informal gatherings termed 'Kopi Darat', shortened to Kopdar. This term follows the trend of young people following up virtual friendships into the real world. Kopdar activities are usually held at the home of one of the interested Jemaah. Activities include opening remarks from the host and staff of Majelis Shorot, recitation of maulid texts accompanied by hadhrah music, a short lecture, prayers, and concluding with a shared lunch. The pre-event session and lunch seemed to be a vehicle for the participants to get to know each other and share their life experiences as congregants of MAJELIS SHOROT. Participation in majelis taklim does not mean that young people reject romantic relationships and leisure time fun. Unlike other da'wah groups that strictly limit the interaction of men and women, the interaction between the followers of the habaib majelis that I observed was fluid, even though some of the congregants were women. Indeed, during the recitation there was a dividing line separating male and

²¹ Wawancara, Aditya Pangestu, 27 Juli 2024

²² Asef Bayat, *Being Young and Muslim: New Cultural Politics in the Global South and North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), hlm 8

female congregants, but some did not care and took up positions sitting next to their partners (husbands/wives or boyfriends) during the recitation. Before and after the assembly, some of the young congregants (mostly teenagers) were seen riding with their partners who were also active in the assembly.

Conclusion

This article has analysed the author's views and experiences observing the existence of Habib Naqib Assegaf and his followers in Majelis Shorot in Ponorogo. This is an attempt to understand the rising influence and popularity of young habaib among young people in Ponorogo, which is a santri city with the hegemony and authority of older kiai and older habaib. The author has shown that young people's participation in majelis taklim is not just a fascination with Sufism or spiritual revivalism, as some researchers have suggested. The author argues that young Muslims see Majelis Shorot not only as a platform to express piety, but also to express their 'youthfulness'. Majelis Shorot's appeal to young people cannot be separated from the habib's strategy of creatively modifying his da'wah through various mediums that suit the needs and aspirations of young people in Ponorogo. These mediums include the use of new media (internet and social media), logos, symbols, merchandising, stage performances, and the establishment of communities of followers. Followers not only participate to learn religion, but also enjoy the 'fun' of social interaction with their peers in the majelis. Therefore, this study reinforces the role of new media and popular culture as a means to attract young people to religion. At this point, traditional Islam, which is usually associated with rural domains, can appear modern and stylish, thus appealing to young people in Ponorogo.

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