Transmission and Preservation of the Manaqib Tradition at Masjid Miftahul Barokah, Cikoang Kaler, Ujungberung, Bandung Regency, 2019–2024

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Abstract

This article reconstructs how the *manaqib* tradition, the communal remembrance (*dhikr*) and veneration of the life and virtues of Shaykh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani, was introduced to and sustained at Masjid Miftahul Barokah in Kampung Cikoang Kaler, Ujungberung, Bandung Regency, between 2019 and 2024. Following the historical method (heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography), it combines oral testimony from five identified informants, a text associated with the Al-Qodiri pesantren of Jember, and the scholarly literature on manaqib in Indonesia. Interpretation draws on Christopher Lloyd's concepts of structural conditioning, human agency, and structural transformation. The article argues that the practice reached the neighbourhood through a personal chain of authorisation (*sanad*, *ijazah*) running from the Al-Qodiri milieu in Jember through K.H. Muhammad Imam Samsul Arifin to a mosque official, Ustadz Mustofa; that the mosque's established role as a venue for communal devotion supplied a ready institutional setting; and that the COVID-19 pandemic acted as a conjuncture that enlarged participation. The mosque sustained the practice not through formal regulation but through a fixed weekly rhythm, routine communication by messaging group, a TikTok livestream, the backing of local leaders, and a persuasive handling of dissent. Falling attendance among working-age congregants and young people is the main constraint. The article offers a documented micro-history of a recently transplanted Sufi devotional practice in a Sundanese peri-urban setting and an account of the mosque as a carrier of tradition rather than only a place of worship.

Keywords: manaqib; Abdul Qadir al-Jilani; mosque; *sanad*; Bandung Regency; local Islamic history

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Introduction

Mosques in the Indonesian archipelago have seldom been confined to the performance of ritual prayer. Historically they have served as places of teaching, preaching, and communal devotion, and in that capacity they have helped carry religious practices across generations and across space.[1] Studies of Islam in the archipelago have long stressed that such carrying is rarely anonymous. Practices travel along personal networks of teachers and students, and they acquire legitimacy from the chains of authorisation (*sanad*, *ijazah*) that link a present practitioner to an acknowledged source.[2] A mosque that receives a new devotional practice through such a chain is therefore a particularly good vantage point from which to observe how tradition is transplanted, accepted, and kept alive.

The practice at issue here is *manaqib*. The word is the plural of *manqabah*, an account of the virtues and exemplary deeds of a revered person; in Indonesian usage *manaqiban* usually denotes the communal recitation of the life of Shaykh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani, the twelfth-century preacher and jurist after whom the Qadiriyya Sufi order is named, together with intercessory prayer (*tawassul*), invocations upon the Prophet (*shalawat*), *dhikr*, and supplication.[3] In many Javanese communities the reading is customarily held on the night of the eleventh of each lunar month, the day associated with the saint's death.[4] Local studies show the practice taking different shapes elsewhere. In Kebumen it is defended by its adherents as a means of preserving ancestral culture, strengthening social bonds, and moral education, while its critics regard the invocation of deceased saints as incompatible with strict monotheism.[5] Among the Banjar of South Kalimantan manaqib texts are treated as sacred reading shaped by the Naqshbandiyya and Sammaniyya orders.[6] In Bengkalis researchers have read the practice for the Islamic educational values it carries, and in Majalengka, West Java, for its role in teaching the moderation associated with Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah and for the pressures that puritan movements and changing lifestyles place on it.[7]

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[1] Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII dan XVIII: Akar Pembaruan Islam Indonesia* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2013).

[2] Azra, *Jaringan Ulama*; Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Pandangan Hidup Kyai dan Visinya Mengenai Masa Depan Indonesia* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2011).

[3] Achmad Asrori al-Ishaqi, *Apakah Manaqib Itu?* (Surabaya: Al-Wava, 2010), 9. Abdul Qadir al-Jilani is traditionally said to have been born in Jilan, south of the Caspian Sea, in 470 or 471 AH (1077–78 CE) and to have died in Baghdad in 561 AH (1166 CE); on the disagreement over the year of birth, see Syekh Muhammad bin Yahya, *Syekh Abdul Qadir Al Jailani: Mahkota Para Auliya* (Jakarta: Prenada, 2005), 6.

[4] Slamet Yahya, "Tradisi Manaqib Syekh Abdul Qodir al-Jailani di Mushalla Raudlatut Thalibin Kembaran Kebumen", *IBDA: Jurnal Kajian Islam dan Budaya* 18, no. 1 (2020): 15–30, https://doi.org/10.24090/ibda.v18i1.3505; Budi Sujati, "Historiografi Manaqib Syekh Abdul Qadir Jailani dan Perkembangannya di Indonesia", *Sinau: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan dan Humaniora* 7, no. 2 (2021): 40–57.

[5] Yahya, "Tradisi Manaqib."

[6] Miftahul Jannah, "Manaqib in the Reception of the Banjar Community: Sanctification of Religious Text," *DINIKA: Academic Journal of Islamic Studies* 3, no. 3 (2018).

[7] Supardi Ritonga, Decky Saputra, and Firly Ramadhan, "Islamic Education Values Contained in the Manaqiban Tradition in Wonosari Village, Bengkalis Sub-District," *Kreatifitas: Jurnal Ilmiah*

This article concerns a case of a different kind: a practice that, according to those who live with it, arrived within living memory. In Kampung Cikoang Kaler, in the upland (*atas*) part of the Ujungberung area of Bandung Regency, weekly *manaqib dhikr* has been held at Masjid Miftahul Barokah since 2019. Informants trace its origin to a visit by K.H. Muhammad Imam Samsul Arifin, a teacher linked to the Al-Qodiri pesantren in Jember, East Java, who authorised a local mosque official, Ustadz Mustofa, to practise and spread it.[8] Because the starting point is recent and identifiable, the case allows the historian to ask questions that are difficult to answer for older traditions: who carried the practice, along what route, into what existing religious landscape, and with what institutional support it was kept going.

Previous scholarship offers valuable but differently oriented perspectives. Ajid Thohir has examined the historicity and significance of the manaqib literature on Abdul Qadir al-Jilani within Islamic historiography, and Budi Sujati has surveyed the historiography of manaqib and its development in Indonesia.[9] Other work concerns the Al-Qodiri pesantren itself, its ritual form, and the leadership and preaching strategy of its head, K.H. Achmad Muzakki Syah, and a study of the Aolia community in Gunung Kidul has examined the therapeutic use of "manaqib water."[10] These studies concentrate on the text and its authority, on the pesantren or prayer hall as the site of practice, on the values and healing effects attributed to the ritual, or on the preacher. We have not found a historical study that follows a manaqib practice from the moment of its introduction into a neighbourhood mosque in a Sundanese, peri-urban setting through its first five years, one that treats the mosque itself, rather than the text or the preacher, as the institution that carries the tradition.

This is the gap the article addresses. It pursues two objectives: first, to reconstruct how and through whom the manaqib tradition entered Masjid Miftahul Barokah; and second, to analyse how the mosque, as a religious institution, helped preserve the tradition between 2019 and 2024, and what strengthened or constrained it. Its contribution is threefold. It supplies a documented micro-history of a recently

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Pendidikan Islam 13, no. 1 (2024): 71–91; Ulfa Khusna Lailiyah, Najwa Ajlina Nur Azizah, and Nurul Mubin, "Aktualisasi Nilai-Nilai Aswaja melalui Tradisi Manaqib di Masyarakat Majalengka", *Ikhlas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Islam* 2, no. 3 (2025): 81–90, https://doi.org/10.61132/ikhlas.v2i3.1076.

[8] Informant testimony, including interview with Ustadz Mustofa, official of the mosque's management council (Dewan Kemakmuran Masjid, DKM) and early propagator of manaqib dhikr in Bandung, 8 November 2021, and interview with Junaedi, resident of Cikoang Kaler, April 28, 2025.

[9] Ajid Thohir, *Historisitas dan Signifikansi Kitab Manaqib Syekh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani dalam Historiografi Islam* (Jakarta: Puslitbang Lektur dan Khazanah Keagamaan, Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2011); Sujati, "Historiografi Manaqib."

[10] Erny Sulistya Anggraeny, "Dzikir Manaqib di Pondok Pesantren Al-Qodiri Jember (Studi Orientasi Pengikut Dzikir Manaqib)" (UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2006); M. Walid, "Kepemimpinan KH. Achmad Muzakki Syah, Pengasuh Pondok Pesantren Al-Qodiri Jember", *Fenomena* 6, no. 2 (2007): 301–14, https://doi.org/10.35719/fenomena.v6i2.416; Djuwairiyah and Wisri, "Strategi Dakwah KH. Achmad Muzakki Syah pada Jama'ah Pengajian Dzikir Manakib, *Maddah: Jurnal Komunikasi dan Konseling Islam* 2, no. 2 (2020): 1–11, https://doi.org/10.35316/maddah.v2i2.839; Ida Novianti and Arif Hidayat, "Tasawuf dan Penyembuhan: Studi atas Air Manaqib dan Tradisi Pengobatan Jamaah Aolia, Panggang, Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta", *Ilmu Ushuluddin* 7, no. 2 (2020), https://doi.org/10.15408/iu.v7i2.16146.

transplanted Sufi devotional practice, including a reconstruction of the portion of its *sanad* that can be established. It offers a historical reading of the mosque as an active carrier of tradition. And it shows how a general framework of structure and agency can be applied to a small-scale religious change without losing sight of the persons involved. The novelty lies less in the existence of the practice than in the combination of an identifiable moment of introduction, a traceable line of transmission, and a specific institutional setting, studied together within a single period that includes the COVID-19 pandemic.

The article proceeds as follows. Section 2 sets out the historical method and the source problems it had to confront. Section 3 presents the findings in a thematic-chronological sequence. Section 4 interprets them in light of Lloyd's framework and the existing literature. Section 5 concludes.

Method

The research follows the historical method in its four customary stages: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography.[11]

Heuristics. Evidence was gathered in three categories. The first is oral testimony, produced by interviews with five identified informants, whose details appear in Table 1, and by interviews recorded only by role (the imam who leads the manaqib sessions, mosque officials, and a community figure) in 2024. Field observation of the activities of the mosque, also recorded as 2024, supplements these. The second category is written material: a text on the practice attributed to K.H. Achmad Muzakki Syah, *Sekelumit tentang Amalan Dzikir Manaqib*, associated with the Al-Qodiri pesantren, which carries no publication date and is used here only to situate the Jember milieu and not as evidence of events in Cikoang Kaler.[12] The third is the secondary literature on manaqib, Sufi orders, pesantren, and religious change in Indonesia. Photographic materials were reviewed but are not used as evidence, because they carry no reliable date or provenance bearing on the events studied.

Table 1. Informants identified by name

Informant	Age	Relation to the practice	Date of interview
Ustadz Mustofa	48	Official of the mosque's management council (DKM); recipient of the *ijazah*; early propagator of manaqib *dhikr* in Bandung	November 8, 2021
Junaedi	20	Resident of Cikoang Kaler	April 28, 2025
Didi	59	Resident of Cikoang Kaler	
Itang	55	Resident of Cikoang Kaler	

[11] Louis Gottschalk, *Mengerti Sejarah*, trans. Nugroho Notosusanto (Jakarta: UI Press, 1986); Kuntowijoyo, *Metodologi Sejarah* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 1994).

[12] Achmad Muzakki Syah, *Sekelumit tentang Amalan Dzikir Manaqib* (Jember: Pondok Pesantren Al-Qodiri, n.d.).

Asep	51	Resident of Cikoang Kaler	

Source criticism. External criticism addressed authenticity and provenance. Bibliographic details of the published literature were checked against the publishers' or journals' own records, which corrected several details; where a detail could not be verified, the work is either cited without it or not used. External criticism of the oral material is limited by the state of the records: only two interviews carry an exact date, and the remainder are recorded by year. We therefore cite dates exactly as available and do not reconstruct missing ones.

Internal criticism is more consequential, and it shapes how far the findings can be pressed. Oral testimony is treated as oral historical evidence, that is, as memory produced in the present about the past, and it is read with attention to the informant's position. Ustadz Mustofa is both a principal actor in the story, as the recipient of the *ijazah*, and a source about it, so his account of the origin of the practice is first-hand but interested. Junaedi, aged 20 when interviewed in April 28, 2025, would have been about thirteen in 2019; his account of the early period is therefore more likely to reflect what he later learned than what he witnessed. The interviews are separated from the events by different intervals: about two years in the case of the 2021 interview and about seven in that of 2025. The testimony about the benefits of the practice (calmer congregants, greater patience) consists of self-reports and reports of others' states of mind that could not be independently verified. Informants nevertheless agree closely on the day and time of the weekly session, on the sanad through which the practice came, on the surge of participation during the pandemic, on the tools used to communicate with the congregation, and on the mild nature of the dissent. Such agreement strengthens confidence in these points without making them independent, since the informants belong to one community and may share a narrative.

Two further problems of evidence need to be stated. The first concerns names. The same persons appear under variant spellings (Ustadz Mustofa, Mustafa, or Mustopa; Samsul or Syamsul Arifin; Muzakki or Muzaki Syah), and the figure at the head of the chain is on one occasion called "K.H. Ahmad Mujahid (Syafii)" and on another said to be known also as Muzakki Syah. The published literature identifies K.H. Achmad Muzakki Syah as the leader of the Al-Qodiri pesantren in Jember, and we follow it; we could find no published confirmation of the name "Ahmad Mujahid" and leave that identification unresolved. Written materials gathered during the research also mention other religious figures in connection with the practice (among them a "K.H. Ahmad Marzuki") whom no informant's account of the sanad corroborates; they are set aside. The second problem is chronology. Informants date the introduction to 2019 yet also describe the practice as taking root "during the pandemic." In Indonesia, the pandemic began in March 2020. We therefore treat 2019 as the informants' dating of the *ijazah* and the first sessions, and 2020–2021 as the period of rapid growth, and we note that without documents such as messaging-group records or dated posts the two cannot be reconciled any more precisely.

Scholarly articles were assessed for their relevance and their peer-review status, while hagiographic works on Abdul Qadir al-Jilani were read as expressions of the tradition's self-understanding, not as evidence for the saint's biography.

Interpretation. The facts established were interpreted with the help of Christopher Lloyd's structurist account of social history, which distinguishes three moments: social structure as a conditioning framework within which people act; human agency, the capacity of actors to use, bend, or reshape that framework; and structural transformation, in which the interaction of existing structure, agency, and historical events produces a new structure.[13] Edward Shils's observation that traditions persist only so long as identifiable agents keep and adapt them supplements this framework when the discussion turns to preservation.[14]

Historiography. The findings are arranged thematically within a broadly chronological order and are placed in dialogue with the literature cited above. Informants and interview dates are identified exactly as the records give them. Where the surviving record does not attribute a statement to a named informant, it is cited as "informant testimony" with the year of the interview if known.

Results

The setting and the religious landscape before 2019

Masjid Miftahul Barokah stands in Kampung Cikoang Kaler, a neighbourhood in the upland part of the Ujungberung area. According to informants, the mosque's religious programme before 2019 consisted mainly of *Yasinan* (communal recitation of Surah Yasin), a study session held on the eve of Friday (*pengajian malam Jumat*), and a study group for women; one account adds *tahlilan*. These activities belong to the repertoire of communal devotion often associated with traditional, pesantren-oriented Islam in Java, and they had long been part of local life. It was in this setting, with a mosque already accustomed to hosting collective devotion, that the manaqib practice arrived.

The introduction of manaqib dhikr, 2019

The informants' accounts converge on the following sequence. In 2019, K.H. Muhammad Imam Samsul Arifin visited Cikoang Kaler and gave the *ijazah* of manaqib dhikr to Ustadz Mustofa, then serving on the management council of the mosque.[15] The informants describe this variously as an *ijazah*, a "diploma," a "certificate," or the "giving" of the dhikr; we read these as the same act, namely the authorisation of a recipient to practise the dhikr and to lead others in it. From this authorisation the mosque began to hold the practice routinely. The imam who leads the sessions reported that he too had received his *ijazah* directly from K.H. Imam

[13] Christopher Lloyd, *Explanation in Social History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).
[14] Edward Shils, *Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).
[15] Interview with Junaedi, April 28, 2025;

Samsul Arifin, which suggests that the authorisation extended to more than one person at the mosque.[16]

Informants situate K.H. Imam Samsul Arifin in the lineage of the Al-Qodiri pesantren in Jember. They describe him as a student and successor in the chain of K.H. Achmad Muzakki Syah, who leads that institution and is known for his dhikr gatherings.[17] The published literature supports the Jember end of this chain as a matter of institutional fact. Al-Qodiri was reported to have grown from nine students in 1976 to about four thousand in 2006; it is led by Muzakki Syah, who conducts a weekly dhikr in honour of Abdul Qadir al-Jilani on Thursday nights at the pesantren, drawing large crowds, and whose preaching has been studied as a form of therapeutic *dakwah* that also drew accusations from critics.[18] None of the sources consulted documents the stages of the chain between Muzakki Syah and K.H. Imam Samsul Arifin, nor the upstream links from Muzakki Syah back to the saint. Figure 1 therefore shows only the portion of the sanad that the evidence can support.

Al-Qodiri milieu, Jember (K.H. Achmad Muzakki Syah) → K.H. Muhammad Imam Samsul Arifin → Ustadz Mustofa and the manaqib imam, Masjid Miftahul Barokah → the congregation of Cikoang Kaler

Figure 1. The portion of the sanad that can be established from informants' accounts. Links before Muzakki Syah and between him and K.H. Imam Samsul Arifin are undocumented in the sources consulted. Source: interviews; Walid (2007).

According to Junaedi, the spread of the practice relied on persuasion: religious leaders introduced it without compulsion, and residents remained free to respond as they wished.[19] This detail matters for what follows, because it shows how the practice was presented to a community in which not everyone would welcome it.

The form of the weekly session

From the outset the practice took the form of a weekly gathering on Monday evenings after the Isha prayer. Informants give the starting time as between 8 and 9 p.m. and the ending time as around 11 p.m.[20] The content is described as the recitation of *shalawat*, *dhikr*, *tawassul*, supplications, and *wirid*, led by an imam who holds an *ijazah* and assisted by congregants with defined roles in the recitation; the congregational Isha prayer precedes it.[21] The records mention a manaqib book among the materials but do not identify it, so we cannot say which text is read.

[16] Interview with the manaqib imam, Masjid Miftahul Barokah, 2024.

[17] Interview with Junaedi, April 28, 2025.

[18] Walid, "Kepemimpinan KH. Achmad Muzakki Syah"; "Kiai Muzakki, Sosok Kiai yang Istiqamah," NU Online, accessed April 30, 2025, https://nu.or.id/daerah/kiai-muzakki-sosok-kiai-yang-istiqamah-cLLH0; Djuwairiyah and Wisri, "Strategi Dakwah."

[19] Interview with Junaedi, April 28, 2025.

[20] Interview with the manaqib imam, 2024; interview with Ustadz Mustofa, 8 November 2021. One passage in the records writes the day as *malam Senin*, which in the Islamic reckoning of the day would be Sunday evening; the other statements, and the imam's account, say Monday evening, which is followed here.

[21] Interview with the manaqib imam, 2024; interview with Ustadz Mustofa, 8 November 2021.

Informants state that the manner of conducting the session has undergone no significant change since it was first introduced.[22]

The emphasis the informants place on *dhikr*, *tawassul*, and supplication, rather than on a long reading of the saint's biography, resembles the way the ritual at the Al-Qodiri pesantren has been described, with its opening *qasidah* of *istighatsah*, prayers for deceased parents, repentance, invocations upon the Prophet, supplication, and a motivating sermon from the pesantren's leaders.[23] This is a resemblance, not proof of a procedural copy, since the Cikoang Kaler sources do not describe the sequence in detail.

Pandemic and growth, 2020–2021

All informants who addressed the matter connect the early flourishing of the practice with the COVID-19 pandemic. In their account, residents spent more time at home during the restrictions, felt anxious, and sought inner calm; the *dhikr* offered it, and attendance rose markedly during the first period of the practice.[24] Young people attended in significant numbers. One informant recalled, in words translated here from the Indonesian: "There used to be many young people, especially during the pandemic, but now there are fewer because they work and have their own activities."[25] The mosque thus gained, in this period, a larger and more varied congregation than the earlier study groups had drawn, including worshippers from different age groups.

Reception and dissent

Informants report that the practice was by and large well received, mainly because of the calm that congregants said it gave them. They also report that some residents questioned its basis, observing that it was not practised in the time of the Prophet.[26] The mosque's leaders and the congregation responded by explaining that the activity consisted of *dhikr*, *shalawat*, prayer, and good works aimed at drawing closer to God, and by preserving cordial relations with those who disagreed. According to the informants, the disagreement did not escalate into serious conflict. This pattern is familiar from elsewhere: the Kebumen study records the same two kinds of response, and the Majalengka study identifies puritan critique as a challenge to the tradition.[27]

Local leaders supported the practice from the start. An informant recalled that the head of the neighbourhood association (*Rukun Warga*, RW), among other community leaders, was enthusiastic about taking part in the early period.[28]

[22] Informant testimony, 2021 and 2024.
[23] Anggraeny, "Dzikir Manaqib di Pondok Pesantren Al-Qodiri Jember."
[24] Interview with Ustadz Mustofa, 8 November 2021; interview with Junaedi, April 28, 2025.
[25] Informant testimony, 2024.
[26] Interview with Ustadz Mustofa, 8 November 2021; informant testimony, 2024.
[27] Yahya, "Tradisi Manaqib"; Lailiyah, Azizah, and Mubin, "Aktualisasi Nilai-Nilai Aswaja."
[28] Informant testimony, 2024; interview with Junaedi, April 28, 2025.

How the mosque kept the practice going, 2019–2024

The informants describe several practical measures by which the mosque and its leaders kept the weekly session going between 2019 and 2024.

A fixed rhythm. The most consistent element in the testimony is regularity. The session has been held every week at the same time since 2019 and, according to the informants, continued through 2024.[29]

Routine communication. The mosque officials remind congregants by announcement after congregational prayers and, more systematically, in a WhatsApp group. An informant described these efforts in the words, translated here, "we always announce in the manaqib group, the WhatsApp group, that there will be a manaqib dhikr today."[30]

Livestreaming. The sessions are broadcast live on TikTok so that congregants who have moved away or work far from Cikoang Kaler can still take part. As the informant put it, translated here, "we also broadcast live on TikTok because some congregants have moved house or moved to distant workplaces and can take part through the livestream."[31]

Maintenance of the sanad. The mosque's leaders present the practice as authorised through a recognisable chain. The imam explained that the foundation of the practice at the mosque is the *ijazah* from K.H. Imam Samsul Arifin, who is linked to Muzakki Syah of Al-Qodiri. That the practice came with a recognisable chain is likely to have lent it credibility among residents, although no informant put it in exactly these terms.[32]

Involving the young. Mosque officials sought to involve young people in the activity. The informants acknowledge, however, that the pandemic-era cohort of young participants has since thinned out as many have taken up jobs and moved elsewhere.[33]

Persuasive handling of difference. As noted above, the mosque's leaders treated questioning of the practice with explanation and courtesy and did not make attendance a test of loyalty.

These measures should be set beside what the evidence does not show. The records contain no evidence that the mosque introduced written regulations or constitutional provisions on the manaqib, a training programme for young reciters, a curriculum on manaqib in the mosque's educational programmes, or formal cooperation with regional organisations or pesantren for large joint gatherings. Such measures are sometimes recommended for the preservation of religious tradition, but no informant described them, and they are not treated here as findings.

[29] Interview with the manaqib imam, 2024; interview with Ustadz Mustofa, 8 November 2021; field observation, Masjid Miftahul Barokah, 2024.

[30] Interview with Ustadz Mustofa, 8 November 2021; informant testimony, 2024.

[31] Informant testimony, 2024.

[32] Interview with the manaqib imam, 2024; interview with Junaedi, April 28, 2025.

[33] Informant testimony, 2024.

Constraints, 2019–2024

Informants identify four constraints. The first is the working lives of congregants. Irregular working hours and the demands of earning a living meant that some congregants could not attend every week although they wished to.[34] The second is the decline in the participation of young people after the pandemic. The third is the fluctuation of attendance more generally: the congregation was largest in the pandemic period and smaller afterwards, though those who remained attended steadily.[35] The fourth is the difference of opinion on the practice's religious basis, which has been handled without open conflict.

Effects reported by the congregation

Informants report that regular attendance has brought several results. They describe worshippers who have become calmer and more patient, who control their anger better, and who are more regular in other religious activities such as congregational prayer, study sessions, and the commemoration of Islamic holidays.[36] They also describe mutual help among regular attendees: visits to the sick, and support, in labour, money, or moral encouragement, for those in difficulty.[37] These are testimonies about the congregation by members of the congregation. They show what participants say the practice means to them; they do not measure change in behaviour, and attendance records that could test them were not available. Table 2 summarises the chronology on the evidence as it stands.

Table 2. Chronology of the manaqib practice at Masjid Miftahul Barokah as established by the evidence

Period	Development	Principal evidence
Before 2019	Mosque activities centre on *Yasinan*, Friday-night study, and a women's study group	Interviews
2019	*Ijazah* of manaqib *dhikr* given to Ustadz Mustofa by K.H. Muhammad Imam Samsul Arifin; weekly Monday-evening sessions begin	Interviews (Mustofa, Junaedi, manaqib imam)
2020–2021	COVID-19 pandemic; attendance rises, including among young people (dating of growth is our inference from informants' linkage to the pandemic)	Interviews
November 8, 2021	Interview with Ustadz Mustofa	Interview record
2024	Weekly sessions continue; announcements by WhatsApp; TikTok livestream; attendance below the pandemic peak	Interviews and observation recorded for 2024

[34] Informant testimony, 2024.
[35] Interview with the manaqib imam, 2024; interview with Junaedi, April 28, 2025.
[36] Informant testimony, 2024; interview with Ustadz Mustofa, 8 November 2021.
[37] Informant testimony, 2024.

April 28, 2025	Interview with Junaedi (retrospective on the early period)	Interview record

Discussion

Sanad as structure and as a resource for agency

Lloyd's first moment, structure as conditioning, helps explain why the practice could take root at this mosque. Two structural conditions were already in place in 2019. The first was institutional: a mosque whose programme consisted of collective devotions and study sessions, and whose congregation was accustomed to meeting for them. The second was a conception of religious authority in which a devotional practice of this kind is not simply picked up from a book but received from a person who is himself authorised. Scholars of the archipelago's ulama networks have long identified this logic as central to the way teaching and practice travel.[38] Under such a conception, a mosque official who wished to lead manaqib *dhikr* with legitimacy needed an *ijazah*, and an *ijazah* could be had only by gaining the attention of someone within the network.

Within these constraints, individual agency is visible at three points. The first is K.H. Muhammad Imam Samsul Arifin, who came to Cikoang Kaler and extended the authorisation; the record does not show who initiated the contact, whether through an invitation or an itinerant visit, and we do not speculate. The second is Ustadz Mustofa and the manaqib imam, who accepted it and turned it into a weekly routine instead of a single act of reception. The third is the choice, reported by informants, to spread the practice by persuasion and to receive dissent with explanation rather than confrontation. This choice was not dictated by structure. In other settings, questioning of the Prophetic basis of manaqib is recorded as a continuing source of disagreement, and the Kebumen and Majalengka studies treat it as a real challenge to the practice.[39] That Cikoang Kaler apparently avoided serious conflict says something about how the actors used their margin of manoeuvre, although we have no testimony from those who objected, and our evidence for the absence of conflict comes from participants.

The sanad that can be reconstructed is short. It reaches back only as far as the Al-Qodiri milieu in Jember, and the sources do not document the links between Muzakki Syah and K.H. Imam Samsul Arifin. The Jember pesantren is, in the published literature, a major centre of manaqib dhikr, one that has been studied for its leadership, its ritual, and its preaching.[40] What our case adds is the movement of that practice a considerable distance, from East Java to a Sundanese neighbourhood, by way of a person-to-person link and without the creation of a branch institution.

[38] Azra, *Jaringan Ulama*; Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren*; Martin van Bruinessen, "Studies of Sufism and the Sufi Orders in Indonesia," *Die Welt des Islams* 38, no. 2 (1998): 192–219.

[39] Yahya, "Tradisi Manaqib"; Lailiyah, Azizah, and Mubin, "Aktualisasi Nilai-Nilai Aswaja."

[40] Walid, "Kepemimpinan KH. Achmad Muzakki Syah"; Anggraeny, "Dzikir Manaqib"; Djuwairiyah and Wisri, "Strategi Dakwah."

This is consistent with the view of Sufi orders in Indonesia as networks of teacher–pupil affiliation.[41]

The pandemic as a conjuncture, and the problem of chronology

For Lloyd, structural change results when existing structure and agency meet a historical event. In this case the event that informants single out is the COVID-19 pandemic. Their consistent testimony is that confinement at home and the anxiety of the period increased the demand for devotional activity that offered calm, and that attendance, especially of the young, surged accordingly. The practice, in other words, found its first large congregation under conditions that were exceptional. On this reading the structure that emerged after 2019 differs from the one that preceded it: a weekly, authorised, and publicly visible devotion in the mosque, drawing a wider congregation than the study groups had done, and later extended by messaging group and livestream.

The reading has to be qualified by the problem of chronology identified in Section 2. If the *ijazah* was given in 2019 and the pandemic reached Indonesia in March 2020, the practice either began at the end of 2019 and grew in 2020, or informants have compressed the sequence in memory, so that the pandemic years, in which participation was most striking, have coloured their dating of the beginning. The two possibilities carry different implications. In the first, the pandemic enlarged a congregation that already existed; in the second, the practice may have started under pandemic conditions and been shaped by them from the outset. The evidence available does not discriminate between them. The central argument, that authorisation through a sanad preceded the growth of the congregation and that the pandemic amplified it, does not depend on the answer, but the precise causal weight of the pandemic does. Dated records of the first sessions, such as the creation of the messaging group or the first livestream, would settle the matter, and their absence is a limitation of the present evidence.

The mosque as carrier of tradition

Shils argued that a tradition survives only if there are agents who keep it and adapt it to changing conditions.[42] The testimony allows us to say what the mosque, as an institution, contributed to this work. It supplied a place and a time: the same venue, the same weekly slot, the Isha prayer as a gathering point. It supplied personnel, in the persons of the *ijazah* holders and the officials who handled the logistics. It supplied a channel of communication, first announcements after prayers and then a WhatsApp group. And it supplied social legitimacy, through the support of local leaders, including at the outset the head of the neighbourhood association.

Two features of this pattern deserve comment. The first is the weekly rhythm. In many Javanese communities manaqib is held on the eleventh night of the lunar month, as in the Kebumen case.[43] The Cikoang Kaler sessions follow another

[41] Bruinessen, "Studies of Sufism."
[42] Shils, *Tradition*.
[43] Yahya, "Tradisi Manaqib."

calendar. The weekly dhikr reported for the Al-Qodiri pesantren, held on Thursday nights, suggests one possible source of the weekly rhythm, but the day differs and the Cikoang Kaler sources do not describe the origin of the schedule, so the parallel is suggestive rather than demonstrated.[44] The second is the manner of preservation. The evidence shows continuity achieved by habit, communication, and personal sponsorship, and shows no formal regulation, training programme, or institutional alliance. This should not be read as a deficiency. Preserved in this way, the practice is flexible and light on resources. But it also means that continuity rests on a small number of people. The *ijazah* is personal, and the leadership of the sessions is bound to the persons who hold it. Whether the practice would survive a change in these individuals is a question the sources, which end in 2024, cannot answer; it follows, though, from the personal character of the sanad itself.

Digital media and the widening of the congregation

The use of WhatsApp for reminders and of TikTok for livestreaming appears in the testimony as practical solutions to a specific problem: congregants who had moved away or whose work took them elsewhere. The livestream allowed them to remain part of the congregation. In this way the mosque extended its congregation beyond the neighbourhood while keeping the physical session as its centre. Julia Howell has described the appeal of Sufi practice among urban Indonesians, and Lailiyah and colleagues recommend digital platforms as a means of revitalising manaqib among changing generations.[45] The Cikoang Kaler case suggests that such adaptation can occur at a very small scale and from within the congregation's own needs, without being part of a strategy of mission. We lack data on the size of the online audience or on whether it consists of former residents, as the informants suggest, or of others, and we therefore do not claim that the livestream has widened the congregation beyond the former residents whom informants describe.

Contestation and constraint

The constraints that informants identify are mundane. Working hours, the departure of young people into employment, and the fluctuation of attendance after the pandemic's peak did not threaten the existence of the weekly session in the period covered, but they did shape its size. Taken together, they suggest that the tradition's main challenge in this setting is less ideological opposition than competition for time. The principled objection, that manaqib has no precedent in the time of the Prophet, was noted by informants and handled with explanation and tact. The Majalengka study identifies puritan movements and changing lifestyles as the main challenges to manaqib in West Java, and the Cikoang Kaler testimony appears to place the weight on lifestyle, though our evidence on those who objected is indirect.[46] The pandemic cohort of young participants is the clearest example of how a conjuncture can enlarge a tradition and how its passing can shrink it again.

[44] Walid, "Kepemimpinan KH. Achmad Muzakki Syah"; "Kiai Muzakki," NU Online.

[45] Julia Day Howell, "Sufism and the Indonesian Islamic Revival," *Journal of Asian Studies* 60, no. 3 (2001): 701–29; Lailiyah, Azizah, and Mubin, "Aktualisasi Nilai-Nilai Aswaja."

[46] Lailiyah, Azizah, and Mubin, "Aktualisasi Nilai-Nilai Aswaja."

Whether those young people will return, or whether a new cohort will take their place, cannot be determined from the testimony.

What participants say the practice does

The congregation's reports of calm, patience, and mutual help are consistent with the educational and social values that studies in Bengkalis and Majalengka attribute to manaqib.[47] For the historian, however, they have a different status. They are evidence of how participants understand the practice and of the meanings that sustain their participation. They are not evidence of behavioural change, and they cannot be generalised to the neighbourhood as a whole. We therefore treat them as part of the explanation of why attendance persisted, and not as findings about the effects of manaqib on the community.

Positioning within the historiography

The findings can be set against four strands of the literature reviewed in Section 1. Studies centred on the text, such as Thohir's, ask what the manaqib literature is and how far it can be trusted as history. The Cikoang Kaler evidence does not bear on that question, and the records do not even identify which text is read; what they show is that, in this setting, the weight of the session falls on *dhikr*, *tawassul*, and supplication led by an authorised person, with the text in a subordinate place. Studies centred on the pesantren, such as those of Al-Qodiri, describe a practice at its source. Our case shows the same practice at the other end of a line of transmission, in a mosque with no boarding school and no formal tie to the institution that is its source, which is a different kind of historical object. Studies of values, from Bengkalis and Majalengka, tend to describe what the practice teaches; the present study adds a chronology, an identifiable route of arrival, and an account of the institutional means by which a weekly session is kept going. Finally, the study of manaqib water in Gunung Kidul shows how, in another community, the practice has taken on a therapeutic form.[48] The records from Cikoang Kaler contain no mention of manaqib water or healing, although informants do speak of calm and consolation. This may reflect a real difference between the communities or only the questions that were asked, and the point illustrates how much local variation in the practice remains to be documented.

Taken together, these comparisons support a modest historiographical claim. Manaqib in Indonesia is not a single tradition transmitted unchanged from a common source. It is a family of practices that are re-embedded each time they are received, adopting the rhythm, setting, and emphasis that the receiving community and its leaders give them. The value of local, dated case studies is that they let that re-embedding be observed rather than assumed.

[47] Ritonga, Saputra, and Ramadhan, "Islamic Education Values"; Lailiyah, Azizah, and Mubin, "Aktualisasi Nilai-Nilai Aswaja."

[48] Novianti and Hidayat, "Tasawuf dan Penyembuhan."

Limitations and directions

The study rests on a small number of informants, all participants or sympathisers; on interviews of which only two are exactly dated; and on the absence of documentary corroboration. Statements about 2024 rest on interviews and observation recorded only by year. No one who objected to the practice was interviewed, no attendance records or messaging-group archives were available, and K.H. Imam Samsul Arifin and the Jember end of the chain were not interviewed. Future research could address each of these points: by interviewing the figures at the head of the chain, by obtaining dated digital records of the first sessions and of attendance, and by interviewing residents who did not take part.

Conclusion

This article set out to reconstruct how the manaqib tradition entered Masjid Miftahul Barokah and how the mosque helped to preserve it between 2019 and 2024. On the first question, the evidence indicates that the practice came in 2019 through a personal chain of authorisation: K.H. Muhammad Imam Samsul Arifin, who informants place within the lineage of K.H. Achmad Muzakki Syah of the Al-Qodiri pesantren in Jember, gave the *ijazah* of manaqib *dhikr* to Ustadz Mustofa, an official of the mosque's management council, and the imam who leads the sessions also holds an *ijazah* from him. The practice was introduced by persuasion into a mosque that already hosted communal devotions, and its early growth coincided, in informants' accounts, with the COVID-19 pandemic. The portion of the sanad that can be documented reaches only to the Jember milieu.

On the second question, the mosque preserved the practice through a fixed weekly session on Monday evenings, through routine communication by announcement and a WhatsApp group, through a TikTok livestream that kept absent congregants connected, through the support of local leaders, and through a conciliatory handling of dissent. The principal constraints were the working lives of congregants and the decline of youth participation after the pandemic. Informants regard the practice as a source of calm, patience, and mutual help, but these testimonies describe the meaning of the practice for participants and do not measure its effects.

The contribution of the article is a documented micro-history of a recently transplanted Sufi devotional practice in a Sundanese peri-urban setting, one that traces the line of transmission as far as the evidence allows, identifies the institutional means of continuity, and treats the mosque as an agent of tradition and not only a place of worship. Its novelty lies in the combination of an identifiable moment of introduction, a traceable though partial sanad, and a specific institutional setting, examined within a single period that includes the pandemic. Applied through Lloyd's framework, the findings show an existing structure of communal devotion and personal authorisation, human agency exercised by identifiable persons, and a historical event that together produced a new weekly institution. The study's limits, set out above, are those of a small body of mainly participant testimony; they point to the dated records and independent voices that further research should seek.

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