7. The Mass Organisation Ijabi

Over the course of time, the number of followers of Shi’ism in Indonesia and the number of Shi’i institutions of da’wa, education and publishing has continued to increase. Up to the end of Suharto’s New Order, the Shi’is in Indonesia were a minority religious group, scattered throughout Indonesia but on the whole confined to urban areas. More importantly, they were not unified under a single socio-religious body. Then efforts emerged to establish a mass national organisation that would bring together all the geographically diverse Shi’i communities. This chapter aims to describe this national Shi’i organisation and reactions to it. We begin with the historical process of the establishment of IJABI Ikatan Jama’ah Ahlul Bait Indonesia (Indonesian Council of Ahli Bait Associations), followed by a section dealing with the ideology of IJABI in order to understand the nature of this organisation. In the third section, we survey its on-going development, in particular during the first period of leadership (2000-2004). Finally, a description of opposition to IJABI and the emergence of a Shi’i ‘non-IJABI’ group is provided.

A. The Foundation of IJABI

After the fall of the New Order in 1998, prominent Shi’i leaders in Indonesia, including Jalaluddin Rakhmat, Husein Shahab, Umar Shahab and Ahmad Baragbah agreed on the importance of establishing a socio-religious organisation that could unite the Shi’i community.1 Serious attempts to set up such a body had begun in earnest in the early 1990s, with senior Shi’i leaders holding a number of meetings, formal and informal, to discuss the urgent need for, and the possibility of, a Shi’i organisation to bring together all the adherents of Shi’ism in Indonesia.

The first organisation to be set up was MAHDI, an abbreviation of Majlis Ahlulbait di Indonesia (Council of the Ahli Bait in Indonesia) founded in Jakarta in the early 1990s. It was headed by Ahmad Baragbah, Head of Pesantren Al-Hadi in Pekalongan, with Furqon Bukhari as the Secretary. In addition to its executive leadership, the organisation had an advisory board (pembina) of 14 members, which included Jalaluddin Rakhmat, Umar Shahab and other prominent Shi’i figures. However, MAHDI did not function well and almost all of its programmes soon failed. The fact that it had no legal status as a socio-religious organisation and was not recognised by the Department of Home Affairs clearly contributed to its problems. It only ever achieved recognition

1 Umar Shahab, interview, (9/1/2003).
as a foundation, *Yayasan MAHDI*. The key figures were Ahmad Baragbah, Zainal Abidin al-Muhdar of the Al-Hakim Foundation in Lampung and Zulfan Lindan, a political activist of the Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle. Eventually, Jalaluddin Rakhmat and his associates withdrew from MAHDI, leaving Ahmad Baragbah and his supporters to continue until the organisation ceased activities.\(^2\) Another factor in MAHDI’s downfall appears to have been the fact that the majority of the Muslim community in Indonesia was simply unaware of its existence. Most significantly however, it failed in its primary aim to unite the followers of Shi’ism in the country and to co-ordinate all the Shi’i foundations under its umbrella.

The failure of this association to operate in Indonesia during the New Order era (1966-1998) can be attributed to two reasons: first, there was no agreement among the various groups or factions within the Shi’i community itself on how the organisation should be run and what its ideology should be. Differences of opinion developed between Jalaluddin Rakhmat and his associates with Ahmad Baragbah and other *ustadhs*, particularly regarding the legal status of MAHDI as a Shi’i organisation. Rakhmat and his supporters believed the procedures for managing and running the organisation should be under the control of the advisory board, while Baragbah’s group was much more focussed on defining MAHDI’s vision and activities, preferring that it become an Islamic foundation rather than an organisation. A second reason for MAHDI’s failure can be found in the socio-political situation in Indonesia during the New Order era, which permitted very little space for minority religious groups to express their identity and religiosity. In this regard, the Shi’i *ustadhs* and intellectuals saw that the organisation and its members would face difficulties and even threats, not only from members of the majority Sunni community but also from the New Order regime itself. For example, any request for MAHDI to be granted legal status as a Shi’i association would almost certainly have been denied by the government, since the state was (and still is) heavily dominated by the ideology of Sunni Islam. In 1997, when asked whether Shi’is in Indonesia would establish a mass organisation, Rakhmat, at the time a declared member of the modernist Sunni organisation Muhammadiyah, responded “Because I do not want to become dependent on anyone, I will not join. But to moderate the atmosphere so as not to lead to continuous misunderstanding, I will state my disagreement if the Shi’is in Indonesia establish a social-religious organisation.”\(^3\) For most of the prominent Shi’i figures, such an application of *taqiyya* is regarded as an essential method for dealing with any socio-political situation not conducive to the existence or development of the minority group. In sum, a series of complex and interrelated factors - internal and external, religious and socio-political

---


led to the failure of Indonesia’s first national Shi’i association. And in fact, over the years, the majority of Shi’is in Indonesia seem to have forgotten the existence of MAHDI and its planned role within their community.

After the fall of the New Order, there arose fresh encouragement for, and even insistence on, the need to have a national organisation to unite the Indonesian followers of Shi’ism. These calls elicited a significant response from prominent Shi’i leaders and in turn gained support from the Islamic Republic of Iran. A series of important meetings took place. Four prominent Shi’i ustadhs and intellectuals, Jalaluddin Rakhmat, Ahmad Baragbah, Zahir Yahya and Umar Shahab, together with a representative from Iran held a meeting to discuss the possibility of founding a Shi’i organisation in Indonesia. The first meeting resulted in an agreement to found a national organisation but initially failed to form a committee to oversee the process. Eventually Jalaluddin Rakhmat and other intellectuals formed the necessary committee to establish the organisation and define its ideological foundation and principles. The committee also agreed on a name, proposed by Rakhmat, for the organisation - IJABI, an abbreviation of Ikatan Jamaah Ahlul Bait Indonesia, or the Indonesian Council of Ahli Bait Associations. Reportedly, Rakhmat originally planned to officially declare the association open at the commemoration of ‘Ashura in 1999 without waiting for agreement from renowned Shi’i ustadhs. However, this would have meant that from the outset IJABI could not claim to represent all Shi’i groups in Indonesia. Rakhmat subsequently agreed to postpone its inauguration. He also agreed to hold meetings with other prominent ustadhs, mainly Qum alumni, in order that IJABI could be recognised by all Shi’i groups. The meetings were instrumental in establishing the concept of a mass organisation to the wider Shi’i community in Indonesia and were intended to recruit Shi’i ustadhs into the process.4

One of the most important meetings, conducted in ICC of Al-Huda in Jakarta, brought together Shi’i figures who had previously clashed during their involvement with MAHDI: Jalaluddin Rakhmat, Zainal Abidin al-Muhdar, Husein Shahab, Umar Shahab and Ahmad Baragbah. This meeting produced a general agreement among all the participants to support Rakhmat’s proposal to found a Shi’i organisation in Indonesia, to be named IJABI.5 However, it was not long before old disputes reared their heads and misunderstandings and disagreements between the ustadhs and intellectuals impacted upon the process of establishment and development of IJABI. Some reports suggest that these disagreements were not just characterised by differences of ideological opinion but also by personal matters and stereotyping of and by certain groups.

---

4 Umar Shahab, interview, (9/1/2003).
The Struggle of the Shi’is in Indonesia

Despite the disagreements Rakhmat, the architect of IJABI decided to go ahead with the organisation’s inauguration on 1 July 2000. He visited Iran to inform Shi’i leaders there of this important strategic plan for the community in Indonesia and to gain the support of the *wali faqih*, Ayatollah ‘Ali Khamene’i. The inauguration of IJABI was followed, the very next day, by its first national congress. This historical double event was reported by more than ten national and local newspapers in Bandung and Jakarta. Figures suggest that approximately 2000 Shi’is, from 20 provinces in Indonesia, as well as from Singapore and Iran participated in IJABI’s opening ceremony, which took place in Gedung Merdeka, Bandung, where the historic 1955 Asia-Africa Conference had also been held. The choice of this location was to symbolise to the public the significance of the new organisation in the social and religious life of Indonesian society.

A number of Muslim scholars – both Sunni and Shi’i - from home and abroad were invited to speak at the seminars following the inauguration. Some of the most high-profile of the Shi’i teachers and scholars were Shaykh Ja’far Hadi from Iran, Ayatollah Ibrahim Kazerooni from London and Muhammad Baqir and Rusli, both from Singapore. The presence of such dignitaries demonstrated the international support for the establishment of IJABI, Iran’s solidarity being the most crucial to its success. However, prominent Indonesian Muslim intellectuals, including Nurcholish Madjid and leaders of Muslim organisations such as Ahmad Syafi’i Ma’arif of Muhammadiyyah and Hasyim Muzadi of NU, who were originally expected to speak at the meeting were notably absent from IJABI’s inauguration. These absences called into question the approval of key elements of the Muslim community of Indonesia, namely the Sunni Muslim intellectuals, modernists and traditionalists alike.

It is widely accepted that IJABI’s inauguration was possible due largely to the democratic atmosphere in Indonesia at that time, fostered by the liberal, moderate President Abdurrahman Wahid. Reporting on the inauguration, the magazine *Gatra* carried the headline “*Mumpung Gus Dur Jadi Presiden*” (“Taking Advantage while Gus Dur is President”). As this suggests, the socio-political situation in Indonesia after the fall of Suharto’s New Order regime gave freedom and opportunity to the adherents of minority religious groups to express their beliefs and religiosity. It is generally acknowledged that Abdurrahman Wahid was a man of openness and pluralism and that his presidency was marked by the emergence of popular social and religious movements. Such movements developed not out of a desire to take part in the development of the Indonesian state and society, but rather to demonstrate their own identity and existence, something which had not been possible during the New Order period. These new-found freedoms of expression occurred in an environment often described as the euphoria of reformation, ‘*Reformasi*’. Rakhmat and his associates capitalised

---

6 *Gatra* (15/7/2000).
on the changed social and political situation under Abdurrahman Wahid’s government. In fact, Rakhmat admitted that the IJABI inauguration and national congress were held in haste, without sufficient preparation, simply because he and his associates wanted to seize the moment, anxious about the possibility of the fall of President Abdurrahman Wahid. There were rumours that the annual meeting of the People’s Consultative Assembly (Majlis Permusyawaratan Rakyat, MPR) scheduled for August 2000 would start impeachment proceedings against Wahid, so Rakhmat was anxious to win official recognition for IJABI while he was still in office.

President Abdurrahman Wahid had been invited to attend IJABI’s inauguration and to formally open its first national congress; however, he cancelled due to another pressing state duty in Jakarta. Instead, he asked the State Secretary, Djohan Effendy to deputise for him. Effendy did not attend either. In the end, it was the Chief of the Directorate of Social and Political Affairs of West Java, Edy Moelyono, acting on behalf of the Governor of West Java who formally opened and delivered a speech at this historical event. The opening ceremony was marked by all participants standing and chanting a *salawat*, an invocation to the Prophet Muhammad and his Household. While the inauguration went well, inevitably, the absence of Abdurrahman Wahid and other representatives of central government came as a blow to the architects of IJABI and to Jalaluddin Rakhmat in particular. He expressed his disappointment that the president had not sent a representative from Jakarta, which would have sent the clear message that the government supported the organisation. Nevertheless, he went on to tell of the full support offered by President Abdurrahman Wahid to the organisation several days before its declaration, and even long before he became president. Abdurrahman Wahid, claimed Rakhmat, would have mobilised members of the mass organisation NU (of which he had been head) if the Shi’i community had been attacked, or if the Indonesian government had prohibited the Shi’is from practising in the country.

As chief of the steering committee for IJABI’s inauguration, Jalaluddin Rakhmat gave an important speech at the event entitled ‘IJABI: Menyerukan Suara Serak Sejarah’ (IJABI: Calling Out History’s Husky Voice). The speech cited important socio-historical reasons for the establishment of IJABI in the reformation era, a time when the country was entering the new millennium with a strong will to establish an open and democratic Indonesia, free from tyranny and arrogance and allowing its citizens to live according to their beliefs.

---

7 Gatra (15/7/2000).
8 Pikiran Rakyat (2/7/2000), Metro (2/7/2000).
9 Al-Tanwir (16/7/2000).
Reformation has given us the opportunity to express ourselves without fear or any sense of guilt. We all are important parts of this nation and must make valuable contributions to its prosperity. We view Abdurrahman Wahid’s government as the representation of the victory of the Muslim community on the political stage. Long hidden on the historical path was a group of Indonesian Muslims who wanted to demonstrate their religiosity on the basis of a loving devotion to God, His Messenger (Peace be Upon Him) and his Household. In the past, their voices, once in while, were heard from small surau (prayer rooms) in villages when they pronounced a supplication: \textit{li khamsatun utfi biha har al-waba’ al-hatima, al-mustafa wa al-murtada wa ibnahuma wa Fatima} [I have five (persons) with whom I extinguish the ‘heat’ of crushing disease: al-Mustafa (the Prophet), al-Murtada (‘Ali), his two sons (Hasan and Husayn) and Fatima].\footnote{This supplication is pronounced widely among the followers of traditionalist Islam in Java. It is commonly uttered by the congregation in the mosque prior to the performance of the daily obligatory prayers (Machasin, interview, 22/2/2005). On the strength of this practice, the NU leader Abdurrahman Wahid has suggested that NU is culturally Shi’i.} Now, in the era of an ‘ulama’s government, they leap out from that darkened path and try to stand in a well-lit place.\footnote{\textit{Al-Tanwir} (16/7/2000:4).}

Furthermore, Rakhmat’s speech defined the general characteristics of IJABI as a new socio-religious organisation. He emphasised that IJABI’s intention was not to follow Julius Caesar’s victorious statement \textit{Veni, Vidi, Vici}, but rather to sit modestly among existing Muslim organisations and society in Indonesia, while at the same time propagating and implementing the teachings which defend the \textit{mustad’afin} (the oppressed). Rakhmat went on to state that at a time when many Islamic organisations were joining forces with political parties, his community had established a social organisation \textit{without} political affiliations. IJABI was expected to take on the role of assisting people to solve their various difficulties and to face a variety of challenges in order to gain salvation - like the ship of salvation spoken of by the Prophet in the famous Hadith of \textit{Al-Safina}: “the ahl al-bayt are like Noah’s ark; whoever boards the ark will be safe and whoever leaves it will be sunken”. Rakhmat stated that the position of IJABI was becoming the more important when Indonesia faced many economic, social and political crises. He appealed to Muslims in Indonesia to join the ship of IJABI, because IJABI would not be involved in political activities: “This ship is not a political vehicle to achieve important positions in either legislative or executive institutions.”\footnote{\textit{Al-Tanwir} (16/7/2000:4).} The speech was a clear affirmation of the non-political stance of IJABI.

\footnote{\textit{Al-Tanwir} (16/7/2000:4).}
Jalaluddin Rakhmat’s position has been crucial to the development of IJABI. He even describes himself as “a pregnant mother who then gave birth”, saying, “So, I must sacrifice (myself) to be pregnant and now to give birth.” This statement contains two important points concerning his position as a Shi‘i figure. First, it can be interpreted as meaning that before the reformation era Rakhmat concealed the existence of the Shi‘i community in Indonesia. During this time he experienced various difficulties and threats, arising from the fact that the Shi‘is were seen as being synonymous with hardliners, militants or revolutionaries. Secondly, his statement can be understood as a declaration that the existence of Shi‘is and their organisation in the Sunni-dominated country was thanks to Reformasi. However, Dimitri Mahayana, an engineer and lecturer at ITB who headed the organising committee of IJABI’s inauguration, rejects this interpretation. He states that the official declaration of IJABI was not a proclamation of the presence of Shi‘is in Indonesia, but rather it was a proclamation of the spirit of Muslim unity, on the basis of loving devotion to the Qur’an and the *ahl al-bayt* of the Prophet as trustees of the traditions of the Prophet.

During the first national congress, participants discussed and laid down the Statute of IJABI, its rules of organisation, its programmes, as well as electing its chiefs and organisers. The congress elected Jalaluddin Rakhmat Chairman of the Advisory Council and Dimitri Mahayana Chief of the Executive of IJABI. The Advisory Council consisted of 12 members nominated by prominent Shi‘i *ustadhs* and intellectuals from various areas of Indonesia. Notably, some of these members were actually recognised figures of the Sunni community. (The number ‘twelve’ may symbolise the twelve Imams within Twelver *Imamiyya* Shi‘ism.) The Advisory Council members were: Sayyid Segaf al-Jufri, Sayyid Dr. O. Hashem, K.H. Muchtar Adam, K.H. Djamaluddin Asmawi, Sayyid Muhammad Taufiq Yahya, Sayyid Othman Omar Shihab, Lc., Ust. Hasan Rahmat, Sayyid Ir. Haider Baqir, MA, Prof. Dr. Ridwan Suhud, Prof. Dr. Sipon Muladi, Sayyid Drs. Ayik Ali Idrus and Sayyid Ja’far Ali Alqadri.

An examination of the position of these members of the Advisory Council of IJABI, as figures prominent in Indonesian society, helps us to understand the influence of IJABI in this Sunni majority country. It is important to note that seven of the twelve members are Sayyids. These seven Sayyids are influential not only in the Shi‘i community but also in Indonesian society at large. First, Sayyid Segaf al-Jufri is one of the most respected Shi‘i *ustadhs* in Indonesia. He lives in Solo, Central Java and a number of Shi‘is in the area have studied under him. Even Jalaluddin Rakhmat regards al-Jufri as his teacher. Second,
O. Hashem of the al-Saqqaf clan is a Shi’i intellectual and co-founder of YAPI, known for his controversial and polemical works. Third, Muhammad Taufik Yahya, one of the late Husein Al-Habsyi’s sons-in-law, lives in Jakarta and is a Shi’i *ustadh* engaged in the field of *da’wa*. Fourth, Othman Omar Shihab is a famous *ustadh* in Jakarta who often appears on Islamic television programmes, although the majority of Muslims in Indonesia are not aware of his adherence to Shi’ism. Haidar Bagir is a famous intellectual-businessman, who founded and the Mizan Publishing Company, well-known for publishing Shi’i books. The two last names are local leaders: Ayik Ali Idrus is a Muslim scholar in Palembang, South Sumatra, who has held several social positions, including the chairmanship of MUI of Palembang. Idrus is not known among the local Muslim community as a Shi’i. Ja’far Ali Alqadri is a Shi’i leader in Pontianak, West Kalimantan.

The non-Sayyids are also influential Shi’i leaders in various parts of the country. Some are religious teachers at Islamic foundations or *pesantren*, while others are university professors. Muchtar Adam is the head of Babussalam, a *pesantren* located in Bandung. He is also a former member of the National People’s Representative Council (DPR) of the National Mandate Party (PAN) led by Amien Rais, the former chairman of People’s Consultative Assembly (MPR). Adam is engaged in *da’wa* and educational activities in Indonesia. As a Muslim scholar, he has written several books and he is known to have a close relationship with Jalaluddin Rakhmat. Another famous Shi’i teacher in Bandung, also closely related to the chairman of the Advisory Council of IJABI is Hasan Rahmat, who leads a Shi’i *pesantren* in Bandung named *Al-Mukarramah*. Jamaluddin Asmawi is a famous Shi’i figure who has played an important role in the spread of Shi’ism in East Java. He taught Shi’ism at his Islamic foundation in Jember, East Java and is engaged in other *da’wa* activities. He too had a close relationship with Jalaluddin Rakhmat and the late Husein Al-Habsyi of Bangil. Ridwan Suhud is a professor at a university in Bandung and Sipon Muladi is a professor in Samarinda, East Kalimantan. Ridwan Suhud of ITB is known to have converted to Shi’ism long before the victory of the Iranian revolution.\(^{16}\) In sum, all those who became members of IJABI’s Advisory Council are prominent Shi’i *ustadhs* and scholars in Indonesia and respected by adherents of the *madhhab*.

As in other socio-religious organisations, the executive board of IJABI consists of a chairman, general secretary, treasury, and several departments. The leading positions are occupied by Shi’i intellectuals: Dimitri Mahayana became the national chairman and Hadi Suwastio became its general secretary. It is important to point out that three influential figures in key positions of the IJABI leadership structure have close relationships with one another. Both Dimitri Mahayana and

---

Hadi Suwastio studied religion from Jalaluddin Rakhmat while still students at ITB. Both are known as prominent young Muslim intellectuals who have played a role in the development of Shi’ism in the country.

Soon after its declaration, national congress and the inauguration of its leaders and organisers, IJABI requested legal status from the Department of Home Affairs in Jakarta. In early August 2000, a formal letter, supplemented by the organisation’s statute, rules of association, national guidelines for the programmes and leadership structure was signed by Dimitri Mahayana, the Chairman of the Executive Board and Hadi Suwastio, the General Secretary, and brought to Jakarta. In response, the Department of Home Affairs granted IJABI formal legal status as a societal organisation on 11 August 2000. The quick processing of IJABI’s application and the fact that a Shi’i association was legally recognised can be put down to the positive conditions of Reformasi. Legal recognition means that IJABI officially becomes a national Shi’i organisation in Indonesia, an important event within the Islamic history of the country. Such recognition is crucial symbolic capital in the continuing struggle of the Shi’is in Indonesia.

B. The Ideological Foundations of IJABI

The nature of IJABI ideology can be seen from its Statute, which was formulated and ratified at the first national congress on 2 July 2000. The preamble to the Statute clearly states that the establishment of IJABI is based on the principal doctrines of the Shi’i madhhab, even though IJABI itself is declared open to all Muslims, whether Shi’i or Sunni. The Statute goes on to state that devotion to the Prophet’s ahl al-bayt is the axis that unites Muslims, regardless of madhhab.

It is agreed that a loving devotion to God can only be achieved through a loving devotion to his Prophet and in turn, a loving devotion to the Prophet can only be achieved through a loving devotion to his Household.

By using the term ‘ahl al-bayt’ the organisation indicates its Shi’i nature (although devotion to the Prophet’s ahl al-bayt is also recognised in Sunnism). Imam Shafi’i, the founder of the Shafi’i school of jurisprudence followed by the majority of Muslims in Indonesia, once wrote “If the Shi’i loves the Household of the Prophet Muhammad, witness, oh Genies (Jinn) and Mankind, that I am a Shi’i.”

The Statute also states that for centuries Indonesian Muslims have attempted to preserve and develop a loving devotion to the ahl al-bayt and that the establishment of IJABI is an attempt to continue the struggle of previous ‘ulama and Muslim leaders in this respect.

The Statute itself does not provide a definition of *ahl al-bayt*. However, Jalaluddin Rakhmat suggests that the term carries a broad meaning. He interprets the term ‘lovers of the *ahl al-bayt*’ as not only Shi‘is, or those with their own genealogical lines to the Prophet, but all followers of any madhhab in Islam who love his Household. By adopting this very broad definition of *ahl al-bayt*, IJABI intended to attract a larger number of followers; however, the reality is that only Shi‘is join and participate in the association. The reasons for this are examined below.

Despite its policy of openness and inclusivity, IJABI is clearly Shi‘i in nature. This is illustrated in its belief in the five articles of faith (*usul al-din*) as stated in the introduction to its Statute: “the lovers of *ahl al-bayt* in Indonesia are willing to unite and strengthen fronts by establishing a social organisation based on the beliefs in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*), Prophecy (*nubuwwa*), the imamate (*imama*), justice (*’adala*) and the return of servants to their Lord, the Most Merciful and the Beneficent”. Unlike the six pillars of faith of Sunnism, these five are specific to Shi‘ism. Moreover, as Jalaluddin Rakhmat declared on at least one occasion, the lovers of *ahl al-bayt* mean adherents of Shi‘ism. The preamble to the Statute of IJABI cites the famous Hadith of Al-Safina regarding *ahl al-bayt*, namely: “the *ahl al-bayt* is like Noah’s ark (in typhoon and floods). Whoever embarks on the ship is safe; whoever leaves it is swung and flung about.” This is used as the textual proof for the establishment of IJABI, likened to the ship of salvation that protects its members, helping them to gain salvation both in this world and in the hereafter. In addition, there is an explicit expression of the belief in the twelfth Imam - Imam Mahdi - and recognition of his leadership within Shi‘ism. This is followed by a call for his blessing in the establishment and running of the organisation. The Statute also states the position of IJABI as a part of a worldwide movement of Shi‘i organisations. In the last paragraph of its introduction, the Statute says:

“By saying *bi ism Allah majraha wa mursaha* [in the name of Allah, whether we sail or not] and with the emission of enlightening radiation of the stars of the Prophet’s *ahl al-bayt*, we sail the ship of IJABI which will protect all lovers of the *ahl al-bayt* from their enemies, advance their thought spiritually, intellectually and morally and let all believers prosper, physically and spiritually. Finally, we would like to join this ship together with other ships in the whole world under the blessing and leadership of the Lord of the Age, Imam Mahdi, the Awaited, *‘ajjala Allah farajah al-sharif* [May God speed his noble appearance].”

IJABI’s ideology is also reflected in its logo, which is an image of Noah’s ship. IJABI expects the followers of *ahl al-bayt* in Indonesia to embark on this ship:

18 Pikiran Rakhmat (2/7/2000).
“Aboard they will be transported to the eternal realm of Divine love and directed by the infallible Imams”. The ship is also a well-known symbol in Indonesia, an archipelago whose geography stretches along the equator, between Asia and Australia and between the Indian and Pacific oceans. Historically, Indonesians explored the wide oceans in order to sustain life and to learn. The use of the ship logo reflects IJABI’s connection to the nation, something not necessarily evident in other Shi’i organisations.

The IJABI logo depicts twin spread sails, which represent Al-Thaqalayn (the “Two Weighty Matters”), the Qur’an and the purified ahl al-bayt of the Prophet (’itra) as mentioned in the Hadith familiar to the followers of Shi’ism. This Hadith contradicts the one well known among Sunnis, which claims the Qur’an and Sunna of the Prophet as constituting the fundamental Sunni legal sources.²⁰ IJABI believes that all its programmes should be in accordance with the Thaqalayn of the Qur’an and the ahl al-bayt and the missionary goal to propagate Islamic teachings narrated through the ahl al-bayt.

In the logo, a blood-red colour around the ship’s sails represents bravery while a white symbolises the purity, holiness and cleanliness of the innermost essence of human beings. Furthermore, the red used in the outlines and the white space within refer to jamal (beauty) and jalal (strength) among the Attributes of Divinity.

The ship itself is drawn with spiral lines indicating the arms of the ahl al-bayt always ready to convey divine blessing. The logo includes five lines that describe the Ahl al-Kisa (the People of Cloak, the ahl al-bayt) and below these the ship is sailing on nine waves, each representing one of the Imams who lead and guide the whole universe. These 14 waves and lines together refer to the fourteen Infallibles, which include the twelve Imams, the Prophet Muhammad and his daughter Fatima. The text Ikatan Jamaah Ahlulbait Indonesia, the name of the organisation, encircles the ship. The twin spread sails, combined with a circle appearing as a beacon, symbolise the light of the universe. The ship is moving from the East, that is, the sunrise and source of illumination. The ship sails across the ocean, bringing with it the light that rends the veils of darkness in the world of non-existence.²¹

It is important to remember that the term Ahl al-Kisa (People of Cloak) refers to the five addressed in the Qur’anic verse²² known within Shi’ism as the tathir, or ‘purification’ verse. This verse (and the event in which the Prophet gathered his immediate household under his cloak before the people of Medina) supplies the principal designation for the immunity of the ahl al-bayt and is memorised.

²⁰ The complete version of the Hadith can be seen p.85 fn.7.
²¹ http://www.ijabi.or.id/bspweb/maknalogoing.htm.
²² QS (33:33).
by every Shi‘i. It states that God wished to remove all abomination from them. Thus the first meaning of ahl al-bayt within Shi‘ism refers to the five purified people, the Prophet, ‘Ali bin Abi Talib, Fatima, Hasan and Husayn. The second meaning of the term also includes nine Imams who are considered infallible as well.

The Statute of IJABI states that the foundation of this socio-religious organisation is Islam and the loving devotion to the Prophet’s ahl al-bayt (Article 3). Its identity is the Qur’an, the Prophetic Traditions and loving devotion of the purified Household of the Prophet (Article 4). Thereafter, IJABI has five goals:

1. To teach people to live in accordance with the principles of co-existence and the imamate.
2. To introduce and propagate the Islamic teachings narrated through the Prophet’s ahl al-bayt (Peace Be Upon Him).
3. To empower low economic communities and the oppressed, al-mustad’afin.
4. To advance spiritual and intellectual studies.
5. To maintain good relations with all Islamic organisations (article 5).

These goals are to be achieved by undertaking actions as mentioned in Article 6 below:

1. To establish and develop educational (ta‘dib), economic, social and da‘wa institutions.
2. To establish and develop Islamic libraries.
3. To conduct Islamic studies and research.
4. To publish bulletins, books, magazines and newspapers.
5. To establish approaches to other Islamic organisations and to create Islamic brotherhood among fellow Muslim communities.

The first and second goals indicate the Shi‘i character of IJABI. The first goal is to establish a community of adherents to Shi‘ism in Indonesia and IJABI wants to unite them under the umbrella of its organisation. This corresponds to the function of IJABI as a mass organisation to assemble the community of ahl al-bayt in Indonesia (Article 9). Related to this is the necessity of the community not only to believe in imamate but also to practice all the teachings of Islam, particularly those of the Imams. This goal indicates the internal orientation of IJABI’s mission, in so far as it focuses first and foremost on the development and progress of its members and of all Shi‘is in Indonesia. The second goal is external, implying that the true teachings of Shi‘ism have not yet spread or
been understood among the majority of Indonesian Muslims. It is the duty of IJABI to introduce them to these ideas and to teach them about Shi’ism. Both these goals can be categorised as the religious dimension of IJABI.

The third goal reflects the social character of the organisation, which is to support the oppressed. This is one of the most important aspects of Shi’ism and one frequently emphasised in Shi’i writings. The need to side with those less fortunate perhaps originates from the experiences of the Shi’is themselves as a minority religious group. In the context of Sunni-Shi’i relations, the Shi’is have generally been the oppressed party. For these reasons, IJABI aims to undertake programmes designed to raise up the poor and the oppressed.

The fourth goal of IJABI demonstrates the intellectual and scientific character of the organisation. IJABI states its interest and involvement in studies and research in scientific fields and believes that this will advance spiritual development. IJABI’s belief in a unified system of both intellectual and spiritual dimensions is a further reflection of its Shi’i nature.

Just as the first four goals correspond to the first four actions of Article 6, the fifth goal correlates to the fifth action. Regarding this last goal, as a new Muslim organisation, IJABI attempts to forge good relations, not only with existing Muslim associations in Indonesia, such as NU, Muhammadiyah and Persis, but also with other international Muslim - both Sunni and Shi’i - organisations as well as non-Muslim associations. As a recognised socio-religious association, IJABI takes its duty seriously to participate in the development of Indonesian society as a whole.

According to its Statute, IJABI is independent and non-sectarian (Article 7). It is not affiliated to any political party or to the state. Jalaluddin Rakhmat has said that IJABI is not a means for anyone to gain an executive or legislative position. This is affirmed by the fact that those who are active in a political party cannot also join the executive committee. Its non-sectarian character means that followers of any madhhab may join IJABI, provided they are adult Muslims and willing to obey the Statutes of the organisation (Article 11). Article 11 is formulated specifically for the purpose of attracting large numbers of members to the organisation. Recognising the need for a broad membership, Rakhmat tried to deny the specific Shi’i nature of IJABI:

IJABI is not a social organisation that provides an umbrella for Shi’i adherents alone, but it is a social organisation open to all madhhab and Muslim groups in Indonesia. Within IJABI at the present time, there are indeed many people coming from a variety of madhhab and groups. They are united in order to love God, His messenger and his ahl al-bayt.23

---

23 Pikiran Rakyat (2/7/2000).
IJABI has formulated its own vision: “to present an intellectual movement which enlightens Islamic thought and to empower the oppressed (mustad’afin)” and its mission is “to assemble all lovers of the ahl al-bayt, from any madhhab.” Dimitri Mahayana, the first Chairman of IJABI’s Executive Council elaborated on the various kinds of oppression, including socio-economic oppression and oppression against self-expression. He reiterated that socio-economic oppression is the result of global capitalism and the subsequent gap between North and South - the developed and the developing countries - which in turn has led to a new form of imperialism. Oppression in the field of religious expression is the consequence of a lack of tolerance and mutual respect. Similarly, Jalaluddin Rakhmat has emphasised that IJABI is an umbrella organisation for a community which has been marginalised throughout history, pointing out that IJABI does not represent any political elite, but takes the side of the common man and the oppressed. The statements by Mahayana and Rakhmat underscore IJABI’s goal to empower those sections of society which have been neglected by many other groups and organisations in the country.

IJABI expects to play a role in the realisation of a just and civilised civil society, masyarakat madani (Article 10) and for establishing a just Muslim community in Indonesia as a whole. Dimitri Mahayana also outlined two arenas of empowerment for IJABI’s membership: the material and the intellectual. Material empowerment means generating a variety of business and economic opportunities. Thus, IJABI attempts to establish business networks which tie in with existing international Muslim business networks and through which the organisation can improve the economic conditions of its members and of the Muslim community in Indonesia in general. With regard to intellectual empowerment, Mahayana suggests that real empowerment comes from the spiritual depth of human beings, both individually and socially. IJABI hopes to undertake activities that will set in motion a transformation process to produce dynamic thought and a world-view based on the principle of tawhid (the Oneness of God) and the ideal of Divine love applied in daily life.

This leads us to another important aspect of the ideology of IJABI, the paradigm of love. Dimitri Mahayana points to an historical example of this ‘love paradigm’, as practiced by Imam ‘Ali bin Abi Talib, the first Imam, who is said to have frequently bathed with the lepers living in surrounding suburban areas of Medina. Leaders of IJABI regard this ‘love paradigm’ as a unique feature of their new organisation. Many works by Jalaluddin Rakhmat, for example,

---

24 http://www.ijabi.or.id/deforganisasi.htm.
25 Pikiran Rakyat (10/7/2000).
26 Pikiran Rakyat (2/7/2000).
27 Pikiran Rakyat (10/7/2000).
28 Pikiran Rakyat (10/7/2000).
promote the importance of love in social and religious life. He once stated that the Madhhab Alawi (the madhhab of ‘Ali, or Shi’ism) is the madhhab of love, as it is represented in the life story of ‘Ali bin Abi Talib.\textsuperscript{29}

We have now established that IJABI was founded on the principal doctrines of Shi’ism. The next step is to scrutinise its organisational principles, and in particular the structure of its leadership. In this respect, IJABI resembles NU, the largest traditionalist Muslim organisation in Indonesia. Its national leadership consists of a Religious Advisory Council, Dewan Syuro and an Executive Council, Tanfidziah. This structure was chosen in order to confer status on the ‘ulama, although they do not hold the highest authority. IJABI’s Religious Advisory Council is a collective consultative leadership and is positioned at the top of the organisation. The Executive Council is responsible for the implementation of all decisions by the organisation’s congress. As is stated in the Statutes, Article 14, each section of the leadership is headed by a general chairman, ra’is ‘am. The highest authority in IJABI is not in the hands of the Religious Advisory Council, instead it is held by a congress, muktamar - either national or extraordinary - at the national level and by regional or district conferences, musyawarah at the regional or district levels (Article 12). The Rules of Organisation state that “congress holds the highest authority” (Article 10.2). From this we are to deduce that the authority structure of IJABI is based on the democratic principle that anyone can participate in making organisational decisions through either a congress or a conference.

At the apex of the organisation, the Religious Advisory Council advises and supervises the Executive Council regarding the implementation of all congress decisions. It has no authority over that of the Executive Council. Any final report of the Executive Council regarding the implementation of congress decisions is evaluated by the next session of congress, not by the Religious Advisory Council. The relationship between the Religious Advisory Council and the Executive Council is purely consultative. However, it should be noted that the Rules of Organisation (Article 20.3) state that the members of the Religious Advisory Council consist of ‘ulama, ustads and intellectuals who “understand the Islamic and the modern sciences, understand the Indonesian social and political context, guard their own self-esteem, do not follow their passions and attempt to safeguard Islamic teachings.” These qualifications reflect the high status of the Religious Advisory Council within the organisation.

IJABI’s decision to make congress, not the Religious Advisory Council the highest authority is similar to situations in other social and religious organisations in Indonesia. IJABI does not imitate the Shi’i leadership model of wilayat al-faqih, which gives the highest authority to the ‘ulama’. Consequently, the majority of

\textsuperscript{29} Rakhmat (1999:294-295).
Qum alumni *ustadhs* view IJABI as an organisation that does not rightly reflect the leadership principles of Shi‘ism and this is a reason for their rejection of IJABI. For the leaders of IJABI, the rule is simply a manifestation of democratic organisation, honouring the participation of its members.

### C. The Development of IJABI

Although it is too early to evaluate the development of this new socio-religious organisation, let alone predict its future, it is relevant to describe its early growth and the implementation of its programmes. The public attendance at IJABI’s inauguration and first national congress in Bandung in July 2000 illustrates the enthusiasm among Indonesian Shi‘is for its coming into being. According to media reports, the number of participants reached more than 2,000, with people coming from 20 provinces throughout Indonesia. At the time of the inauguration Jalaluddin Rakhmat claimed that IJABI had about three million followers from a variety of backgrounds, including one ex-dissident Muslim group (which he called a ‘traditionalist element’), Muslim intellectuals and even poor people, the *mustadh‘afin*. According to Rakhmat’s analysis, the majority of the ‘traditionalist element’ hailed from Makassar, South Sulawesi and West Java. He said that the social basis of IJABI was comparable to that of the Darul Islam separatist movement most active in those areas. It is certainly true that some members of IJABI are ex-members of the now banned Darul Islam (DI/NII). The second group of participants, the intellectuals are the university students and campus groups who were introduced to the religious and intellectual discourses developed by IJABI leaders. The third element, the poor, generally come from West Java and who, in accordance with Shi‘i ideology, have been raised up and educated by the same figures who founded or joined IJABI.\(^\text{30}\) However, just as with other socio-religious organisations such as NU and Muhammadiyah which also claim millions of followers, these figures cannot be proved. In fact, IJABI meetings and gatherings of late seem to have attracted fewer participants than were at the first national congress.

The Executive Council of IJABI has tried to implement both long-term and short-term programmes, as outlined in the National Guidelines for Programmes (2000-2004). Both programmes have internal and external elements. The IJABI executive structure comprises six departments, each with its own programme, namely: organisation, empowerment of the Muslim community, intellectual development and *da‘wa*, education, media and information technology and international relations. As a new organisation, IJABI appears to give priority to raising the profile of the organisation throughout the country by establishing

\(^{30}\) *Tekad* (10-11/7/2000).
more and more branches, including regional/provincial leadership councils (Dewan Pimpinan Wilayah, DPW), district leadership councils (Dewan Pimpinan Daerah, DPD) and sub-district leadership councils (Dewan Pimpinan Cabang, DPC). Some months after its foundation, the national Executive Council initiated various programmes, while Shi‘i leaders in several provinces began organise regional conferences. Often these regional conferences were combined with a seminar to which the Chairman of the Religious Advisory Council, Jalaluddin Rakhmat, was invited, along with other Shi‘i intellectuals and local Muslim intellectuals and leaders. The regional branch of South Sumatra, for instance, was officially inaugurated on 17 September 2000 and held a conference on the same day. The guests included Jalaluddin Rakhmat, Sri Adyanti Rachmadi and Muslim intellectuals from the capital city of Palembang - Prof. Jalaluddin, the then Rector of IAIN Raden Fatah and Mal An Abdullah, the General Chairman of the provincial branch of NU – who were asked to speak on “Inter-religious Tolerance.” Such activities show the early growth of IJABI as a vigorous.

By February 2004, IJABI had 14 provincial, 48 district and 25 sub-district branches. The regional or provincial branches include South Sumatra, West Java, South Sulawesi, JABODEBEK (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Bekasi), Yogyakarta, Lampung, North Sumatra, Central Java, East Java, West Nusa Tenggara, Bangka Belitung and Central Sulawesi. Additionally, there are so-called ‘regional coordinators’ for provinces where a regional branch of IJABI has yet to be established, including Aceh, Riau, Bengkulu, Banten, West Kalimantan, East Kalimantan, Bali and East Nusa Tenggara. IJABI has also established autonomous institutions such as the Ikatan Pelajar Ahlul Bait Indonesia (Association of Indonesian Ahl al-Bayt Students), Badan Advokasi dan Pengembangan Hukum dan Hak Azazi Manusia (Board for Advocacy and the Development of Law and Human Rights) and Fatimiyyah (the Ahl al-Bayt Women’s League). IJABI has also established a branch in Qum, Iran. Some regional or district branches have already embarked upon their programmes, while others - possibly most others - have not yet been active in implementing programmes for the development of Shi‘ism in their areas.

The departments of the national Executive Council of IJABI have drawn up a number of long-term programmes (although these have been less successful than the short-term programmes) including the establishment of provincial and district branches, as outlined in the guidelines. It appears that IJABI relies heavily on the Division of Imdad Mustad’afin at the Muthahhari Foundation, to execute its programmes of relief to the poor in the Muslim community. This division has considerable experience in assistance to poor children and orphans; for example, on 2 July 2000 it carried out a mass circumcision programme on

31 Al-Tanwir (17/9/2000).
32 This is different from the popular acronym JABOTABEK (Jakarta, Bogor, Tangerang and Bekasi).
the occasion of the celebration of the Prophet’s birthday and the inauguration of IJABI. Several other regular programmes of this division involve the participation of students from the Muthahhari Senior High School. Such close co-operation between the two institutions is explained by the fact that the head of the division of Imdad Mustad’afin, Sayyid Abu Ali Al-Aydrus is also the head of the Division of the Oppressed within IJABI’s Department of Empowerment of the Muslim Community. This joint programme has been relatively successful.

IJABI’s Department of the Empowerment of the Muslim Community has also organised a business training programme aimed at providing participants with ‘financial intelligence’, so that they might go on to create business opportunities for their own personal and organisational benefit. This programme was carried out in co-operation with the McDonald’s Company in Indonesia, owned by Bambang Rachmadi, and attracted many participants from a number of regional and district branches of IJABI.

Another relatively active department is that of intellectual development and da’wa. This department is responsible for celebrating the holy days of the Shi’i tradition such as the Prophet’s birthday, the Imams’ and Sayyida Fatima’s birthday, ‘Ashura, and Arba’in. Additionally, the department has organised training in fields such as philosophy, Islamic law, akhlaq (character and morality) and Sufism. Discussions and seminars, national and local, on various topics have been held. Like the Empowerment of the Muslim Community programme, these activities are usually carried out in co-operation with the Muthahhari Foundation and sometimes with the Sehati or Tazkiya Sejati Foundations, headed by Sri Adyanti Rachmadi, wife of the aforementioned Bambang Rachmadi. Furthermore, IJABI has already sent several students to pursue their education in Iran and this annual programme is expected to run well. IJABI is also looking into the possibility of sending students to other countries such as England, America, Australia and Syria.

One of the most important da’wa activities conducted by IJABI is a muballigh course known as the Pengkaderan Muballigh (Preacher Cadre Training). This is important not only for Shi’i da’wa (as described in Chapter Four) but also for the consolidation of IJABI members and leaders throughout the country. The training is aimed at providing the cadres of IJABI with the capability to defend the madhhab of the ahl al-bayt, to enlighten the Muslim umma and to defend Islam in the context of global political developments. It deals not only with topics of Shi’ism and da’wa technique but also addresses a number of problems confronting the members. The participants are expected to be able make a defense against ideas that are contrary to the Statutes and principles of IJABI.

---

33 Al-Tanwir (2/7/2000).
The early development of IJABI has, without question, depended on its central figures, Jalaluddin Rakhmat, Dimitri Mahayana, and Hadi Suwastio and other related institutions, especially the Muthahhari Foundation and Tazkiya Sejati. Support from rich patrons such as Sri Adyanti Sudharmono has also contributed significantly to its early growth. However, in April 2003, a breakdown in relations between Rakhmat and Sri Adyanti and her brother, Tantyo Sudharmono resulted in internal dissension within IJABI. Following this upset, Rakhmat resigned from his position as the director of the Tazkiya Sejati Foundation, which he had occupied since 1997. Tantyo Sudharmono was removed from his position as the chairman of the JABODEBEK branch of IJABI, to be replaced by Budiono.34 This recent and dramatic episode has clearly affected the later development of IJABI.

The exact reasons behind the discord remain unclear. Jalaluddin Rakhmat and his IJABI associates hint at slanderous remarks towards him during his time at Tazkya Sejati. This resulted in him issuing a circular containing statements cursing his opponents. The circular was sent out to all of the provincial and district branches of IJABI and was received with both positive and negative reactions from IJABI members and members of the Shi‘i community at large. Later, Rakhmat justified his cursing through his own publications, *Al-Tanwir*35 and *Bahtera*.36 In an article entitled ‘The Command for Cursing in the Qur’an and Sunna’ he states “There are some ignorant people among the followers of ahl al-bayt who do not bother to curse those who should be cursed.” He goes on to cite verses of the Qur’an and sayings of the Prophet and the Imams which permit the cursing of sinful people, including slanderers. Rakhmat was trying to make use of the point that no religious textual or rational proofs reject the permissibility of cursing.

Dissention has also occurred in local branches of IJABI, including South Sumatra, Central Java and Yogyakarta. Internal conflicts in Palembang, South Sumatra, for instance, contributed to the withdrawal of renowned Shi‘i figures such as Jailani and his wife Mariatul Fadilah from IJABI and as a result, IJABI programmes in the area have not run smoothly. The former chairman of the Central Java branch of IJABI was dismissed from his position because of his involvement in the *Yaum al-Quds* demonstration in 2003. This is an annual demonstration, held on the Friday of the first week of Ramadan, prescribed by Ayatollah Khomeini. Shi‘i ustadhs in Indonesia organised this event to demonstrate their adherence and loyalty to the leader of the Iranian revolution. Given that IJABI promotes itself as a non-political organisation, it forbids its members to be involved in any

34 Budiono is a Shi‘i figure in Jakarta. Besides leading Shi‘i foundations, in 1998 he founded a nasyid group called K’PAS (*Kelompok Pencinta Aktif Shalawat*, the Active Lover Group of Singing Invocations) which has been invited to perform at numerous religious events in Jakarta and West Java.


36 *Bahtera* (October 2003:66-71).
political activities which may threaten its legal status. Consequently, a number of IJABI’s executive members who were active in political parties have resigned. This has further reduced the social base of the organisation.

In response to internal discord, IJABI tried harder to strengthen its position. It drew up a list of ten undesirable attributes of non-IJABI behaviour: racism, intolerance, tarekatism (following certain Sufi orders and confessing to high spiritual achievement through them), mahdism (confessing a capability to communicate with the Imam Mahdi), promotion of a state based on Islamic shari’a (such as the Darul Islam/NII movement mentioned above), salafism (Wahhabism), fiqh-orientation, politics, utilising IJABI for personal gain, and disloyalty. Each of these ten negative attributes was believed to have been present among members of IJABI, threatening its existence and unity and decreasing the efficiency of its programmes. In formulating this list, IJABI hoped its members would dissociate themselves from these ten attributes, rendering IJABI an ideal social-religious organisation.

The problems outlined above resulted in a decrease in both the membership and leadership of IJABI. Its second national congress, held in Jakarta on 27-29 February 2004 was marked by a lack of support by prominent Shi‘i figures and Iranian personalities in Indonesia. There was no representative from Iran or ICC of Al-Huda, for example. Other dignitaries who had attended the inauguration and first national congress were mainly absent. Nonetheless, hundreds of participants did attend the seminar, which followed the congress on the topic “Building a Paradigm of Ethics in the Life of Society and the Nation” in which Nurcholish Madjid, Jalaluddin Rakhmat and Juanda from the Indonesian Navy were speakers. Representatives of provincial and district branches of IJABI from throughout the country attended. Although they acknowledged the problems and weaknesses of IJABI’s leaders, the participants of the congress unanimously accepted reports presented by Rakhmat as Chairman of the Religious Advisory Council and Dimitri Mahayana as Chairman of the Executive Council. They also agreed to re-appoint Rakhmat to his position in the Religious Council and to elect Furqon Bukhari as the new Chairman and Khalid al-Walid as the new Secretary-General of the Executive Council.

D. Responses to IJABI

During the process of establishing IJABI there had been consensus among followers of Shi‘ism in Indonesia and the intellectuals, scholars and ustadhs as its leaders about the importance of a national organisation and the approval of its name. This consensus was demonstrated at meetings held in the Al-Huda Islamic Centre in Jakarta. Clearly, at this point in time, Indonesia’s Shi‘is were
united by a common purpose. However, as we saw above, this unity was short-lived and tainted by disputes and misunderstandings among the proponents of IJABI – on the one side Jalaluddin Rakhmat and his associates and on the other, the Shi’i .Castusdhis, who were mainly Qum alumni. This is why the majority of ustadhs and scholars had been absent from IJABI’s inauguration and its first national congress in Bandung.

Disputes and misunderstandings between the two groups continue to this day. Such discord at the elite level has become widespread among members of the Shi’i community. Public criticism of opponents and the use of da’wa activities to defend certain points of view have become commonplace. It is not unusual, for example, for leaders to criticise opponents during pengajian, or religious discussions in the hope of gaining support. In short, there is a split in the Shi’i community in Indonesia between the supporters of IJABI and their opponents; between ‘IJABIs’ and ‘non-IJABIs’.

However, it would be an oversight to neglect a third category, the Shi’is who refuse to join either of these camps. Members of this ‘neutral’ group are clearly troubled by the fact that the establishment of IJABI, instead of promoting unity within the Shi’i community in Indonesia, has exaggerated existing fractures. This group includes a number of well-known Shi’i figures who have tried to bridge the divide. For example, Sayyid Seggaf al-Jufri has made efforts to organise Islamic rituals and commemorations that bring together the IJABI and non-IJABI groups in Solo, Central Java. Another prominent Shi’i intellectual, known for his harmonious relationship with all Shi’i groups, is Haidar Bagir, head of the Mizan Publishing Company. Despite the fact that he was once listed on IJABI’s Religious Advisory Council, Bagir has never participated in any IJABI activities. He refuses to take sides with either of the opposing groups, preferring to offer his moral and material support to all Shi’i activities.

And Haidar Bagir is not alone. In fact, the majority of Shi’i scholars who are officially listed as members of IJABI’s Religious Advisory Council do not publicly show support for IJABI, nor for its programmes. Some even go so far as to reject the organisation outright. This extraordinary situation is exacerbated by the fact that a number of people listed as members of IJABI’s central board or of its regional or district branches rarely participate in IJABI programmes, let alone lead or organise any activity. Furthermore, a number have even acted to destabilise the organisation and its influence. Inevitably, this serious lack of support has led to IJABI’s programmes being severely compromised and more often than not unable to achieve their desired results.

As previously mentioned, the proponents of IJABI include ex-dissident elements of the Darul Islam movement and grassroots members who had relations with IJABI’s leaders long before the organisation was established. They are brought
together through *da’wa* and educational activities held at Shi’i foundations located in various regions. Such activities usually involve eminent Shi’i intellectuals being invited to deliver religious lectures. The supporters of IJABI also maintain their ties through the publication of books and periodicals, in which prominent intellectuals write about Shi’i teachings and ideology. On the whole, the leading figures among IJABI supporters are intellectuals who have considerable influence over the other elements of this group. The majority have graduated from secular universities and have later committed themselves to the Shi’i *madhhab*. Only a small number have graduated from the *hawza ‘ilmiyya* in Qum.

In terms of religious thought, it is widely known that IJABI places more emphasis on the importance of *akhlaq*, or personal morality and Sufism than on formal jurisprudence. Moreover, IJABI leaders are openly critical of those who uphold what they call the ‘*fiqh paradigm*’ - a controversial term coined by Jalaluddin Rakhmat - in their religious life and *da’wa* activities. In his Sunday gatherings, Rakhmat continues to present Islamic teachings derived from the Sufi tradition and the traditions of the Imams. These beliefs are also reflected in his numerous written works. For Rakhmat and his associates, Sufism and Shi’ism are inseparable and integral teachings of Islam. As we saw in Chapter Two, he even recommends ignoring some aspects of jurisprudence for the sake of Islamic fraternity and in accordance with the teaching of *taqiyya*.

In contrast, the opponents of IJABI are mainly the learned Shi’i *ustadhs*. Most graduated from the *hawza ‘ilmiyya* of Qum, and a few from other Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia or abroad. The majority are Sayyids. They have a significant number of followers who support their institutions and activities. Before the establishment of IJABI, a number of leading figures in this group had headed the *Yayasan Mahdi* that had been set up as a mass Shi’i organisation (refer to the first section above). Like the IJABI group, they have also established Shi’i foundations and *pesantren* which claim to follow the *hawza ‘ilmiyya* system of Islamic education in Qum. As we saw in the previous chapter, a few of the Shi’i *ustadhs* have written Islamic books published by Shi’i publishers. Some of their foundations also produce Islamic periodicals. Like the IJABI group, the opponents of IJABI use these activities to maintain their contacts and their relationships.

Unlike the proponents of IJABI, however, the *ustadhs* pay great attention to the entire teachings of Shi’ism, including Ja‘fari jurisprudence. It is for this reason that IJABI supporters view them as ‘*fiqh*-oriented’. For this group, being Shi’i means leaving behind all the non-Shi’i elements of Islam, and instead upholding all the teachings and traditions of Shi’ism, commonly called *tashayyu’*. (which
literally means ‘Shi’ism’). This is necessary, they believe, in order for Shi’is to become true believers and so that the Shi’i community in Indonesia does not become isolated from other Shi’i communities worldwide.\(^{37}\)

The divide between the two groups in terms of social and educational background and religious orientation leads to intricate conflict and competition with regard to the accumulation of social, cultural and economic capital. The explanation below illustrates the complex factors at play. Competition and conflict originate in the differences in social background among the Shi’i community of Indonesia: those of Arab descent versus the campus group, as well as ustadhs versus intellectuals. These divisions are sustained by interrelated personal, religious, political and economic factors. Each group has its own identity which they tend to preserve and strengthen. Each group propagates its own religious ideology, trying to attract as many followers as possible, as well as trying to exert influence among the wider Shi’i population. Whenever possible, these groups attempt to set up an organisation, providing a place for their followers to gather, with a view to becoming the dominant force within the community. This act of establishing a socio-religious organisation can be seen as a political one, even though the organisation itself may be apolitical. Political interests are also evident in the strategies used by members of these groups to gain positions within the new organisation and even influence the formulation of its statutes and rules. The valuable social capital thus obtained can in turn be converted into economic capital, as a statement made by Bahruddin Fanani, speaking for all Shi’is who choose not to join either of the competing groups, affirms. Fanani points out that the main sources of conflict between IJABIs and non-IJABIs are social position and economic resources.\(^{38}\) In the context of accumulating capital the different groups compete, rather than co-operate, with one another.

There are further issues, some major, some minor and some related to the above-mentioned differences, giving the ustadhs cause to reject IJABI. Ahmad Baragbah suggests three reasons for the rejection. The first concerns the name of the organisation. Now, the name of an organisation reflects its identity. The ustadhs had originally proposed that the appropriate name for a Shi’i organisation was Ahlulbait (ahl al-bayt). Not only was it succinct and easy to remember, but the term is very important to and is frequently used by the Shi’i community. Some may view this as a minor problem. The second, perhaps more important matter concerns the position of wilayat al-faqih in relation to the organisation. This is a political concept, implemented in the Islamic Republic of Iran and gives the faqih, or learned man of religion the highest authority over other sections of society. The faqih is designated as a leader of the Shi’i community, not just in Iran but worldwide, and the Shi’is in Indonesia are expected to recognise his

---

\(^{37}\) Al-Kaff (2001:2).

\(^{38}\) Bahruddin Fanani, interview, (16/10/2002).
political-religious leadership. Indonesia’s Shi’i *ustadhs* believe that the concept *wilayat al-faqih* should be mentioned explicitly in IJABI’s Statute, demonstrating the Shi’i nature of the organisation and its deference to the leadership of *wali faqih* in the Shi’i world. In fact, the term is absent from the Statutes of IJABI. This, then, is the main reason for the *ustadhs* to reject and even to oppose IJABI’s existence: the *ustadh* group regards IJABI as an opponent of *wilayat al-faqih*. A third factor, also related to the Statute and Rules of Organisation, concerns internal authority. The IJABI Statute and Rules of Organisation state that the highest authority is the national congress. The *ustadhs* argue that this power, like the appointment of the chairman of the Executive Council, should be in the hands of the Religious Advisory Council (*Dewan Syuro*) and not be based on a ballot in the national congress. In support of this argument, they point to experiences at the first national congress, which they believe was not well prepared, something even the organiser, Jalaluddin Rakhmat, also admits.

The *ustadh* group considers IJABI, by not supporting *wilayat al-faqih*, to be *raushan fikr* (‘reformed’ intellectuals). In Iran these *raushan fikr* have a different political orientation from that of the ‘*ulama* who have led the country since the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Indonesia’s *ustadhs* believe IJABI supporters resemble the *raushan fikr* in Iran in the fact that they emphasise the importance of the intellectuals, rather than the ‘*ulama* in social and political fields and various other aspects of Muslim life. The attitude of the Shi’i *ustadhs* is supported by a statement by Khomeini: “Islam will not be protected by the *raushan fikr*. It is the *raushanfikr* who dupe the clear verses of the Qur’an.”

There is a further issue which is a source of conflict between the IJABI and non-IJABI groups, and that is Jalaluddin Rakhmat’s attitude towards the Arab Sayyids. Some Sayyids recognise Rakhmat as anti-Sayyid, although he himself rejects the accusation. They point to statements made by him in an interview on national television which, they say, indicate this prejudice. (Some respondents in my interviews offered a recording of Rakhmat’s programme and quoted reports by witnesses to the same effect.) Consequently, many Sayyids are extremely annoyed with him. This is evident in a discussion of M. Hasyim Assegaf’s (M. Hashem’s) book, *Derita Putri-Putri Nabi: Studi Historis Kafa’ah Syarifah* (the Anguish of the Daughters of the Prophet: A Historical Study of the Kafa’a Sharifa). The book was published by Rosda in Bandung on the occasion of the celebration of Fatima’s birthday held by IJABI, in cooperation with Rosda and the Sehati Foundation, in Jakarta in September 2000. One of the main themes of the book is that *kafa’a*, or the principle of equality of birth in marriage partners is the product of Arab culture, is legitimised by the Sunni schools of jurisprudence, and by Shafi’i in particular. *Kafa’a* in marriage is not

---

39 Ahmad Baragbah, interview, (21/10/2002).
recognised in Ja‘fari jurisprudence. This book was perceived to be a criticism of the widely held view among the Arab community in Indonesia that a Sharifa - the title given to female descendants of the Prophet - may only marry a Sayyid. (This is the principle of kafa’a sharifa). Assegaf makes the point that the Imams strongly reject such discrimination. In Shi’ism, ancestry is not permitted to be the basis for the legality of marriage. Even Imam Khomeini’s daughter married a non-Sayyid man. Assegaf goes on to state that the obligation of Sharifas to marry only Sayyids is also contrary to the principles of human rights. Assegaf - himself a Sayyid - and Jalaluddin Rakhmat and Maria Ulfa Anshar were speakers at the same event in Jakarta. In the audience were many Sayyids and Sharifas. During the discussions, a number of criticisms and impolite statements were addressed solely to Jalaluddin Rakhmat, rather than to Assegaf or Anshar. In her anger, one Sharifa shouted out that “even dogs look for good partner.”

It is important to point out that the question of Sayyid descent is a classical and sensitive matter which, in the early 20th century, divided the Arab community in the Dutch East Indies into pro- and anti-Sayyid factions. The conflict between these groups even attracted the attention of the colonial government, which made attempts to solve the problem. The mere fact that IJABI would organise a discussion of this topic could be seen as provocative. Before the event, Zein Al-Hadi, a Shi‘i teacher in Jakarta sent Rakhmat a letter, warning him that such an activity would be very unpopular. Rakhmat ignored this advice, considering it to be an important intellectual activity and an opportunity to implement one of IJABI’s programmes. It is clear that the central problem was not the content of M. Hashem’s book per se, but rather the deliberate raising of the sensitive issue of the social status of Sayyid versus non-Sayyid.

The Sayyid-non-Sayyid divide is generally recognised within the Shi‘i community in Indonesia. Some Shi‘i leaders suggest that it corresponds to the divide between non-IJABI and IJABI; others disagree. However, it is a fact that both Sayyids and non-Sayyids have used their organisations and religious gatherings as vehicles to defend and strengthen their own positions, while at the same time attacking the weaknesses of their opponents.

Some Sayyids have tried to understand Jalaluddin Rakhmat’s negative attitude towards them. Some suggest that it is a result of a bad experience in his personal

41 Sayyid Usman, for instance, strongly rejected marriages between a Sharifa and a non-Sayyid man - either Arab or non-Arab – even if her wali, or legal guardian agreed to it. Sayyid Usman maintained that if a marriage of this kind occurs, it should be nullified, and if necessary by force (Azra 1995:12).
relations with Sayyids in the past. One Sayyid informant suggested that Rakhmat had failed in an attempt to marry his son off to a Sharifa in Lampung because the girl's father had opposed the union.\footnote{Ahmad Muhajir al-Muhdar, interview, (29/8/2002).}

Whether this anecdote is true or not, there is no question that a number of Sayyids have a disharmonious relationship with Jalaluddin Rakhmat and so reject the existence of IJABI as a national Shi’i organisation in Indonesia, refusing to participate in its activities. One well-known Sayyid leader, Zainal Abidin al-Muhdar actually became embroiled in a public spat with Rakhmat. The two squabbled about the Sayyid issue at the Iranian embassy in Jakarta and again at the ICC of Al-Huda in Jakarta. Even though they were seen to apologise publicly to each other at ICC of Al-Huda, their disharmonious relations continue to this day.\footnote{Ahmad Muhajir al-Muhdar, interview, (29/8/2002).}

Jalaluddin Rakhmat and other IJABI leaders strenuously deny that they harbour any prejudice against the Sayyids. They may well have a point: seven out of twelve members of the IJABI Religious Advisory Council are Sayyids and other Sayyids occupy positions on its Executive Board, including Rakhmat’s confidant, Sayyid Abu Ali Al-Idrus. (Abu Ali has headed the division of *Imdad Mustad’afin* at the Muthahhari Foundation and the division of *Mustad’afin* at IJABI). Rakhmat himself insists that he is not at all anti-Sayyid, even though he is reported to have expressed some ethnic stereotypes\footnote{Shepard 1981:216.} when referring to Arabs in Indonesia. For example, he quoted a professor of anthropology, Michael Gilsenan, who in a meeting with Rakhmat referred to the uniqueness of the Arabs in Indonesia, saying that they have a racist attitude against the native population, despite being a small minority in the country.\footnote{Jalaluddin Rakhmat, interview, (2/1/2003).}

In their own defense, Jalaluddin Rakhmat and his supporters insist that the \textit{ustadhs} had actually agreed to the establishment of IJABI, but that during the process - before the inauguration and national congress - the \textit{ustadhs}, the Arabs and the Qum alumni in particular decided that they should become the dominant leaders of the organisation.\footnote{Gatra (6/12/2003:62).} Rakhmat stuck to his belief that every decision has to be decided through congress.\footnote{Jalaluddin Rakhmat, interview, (2/1/2003).} He once claimed that he was forced to fight against the Arabs for the sake of democracy.\footnote{Gatra (6/12/2003:62).} As explained above, the \textit{ustadhs} implacably disagreed with congress as the highest authority in the organisation.
In addition to the issues mentioned above, the rejection of IJABI can also be attributed to misunderstandings which occurred during the series of meetings in the process of its establishment. The disharmony reached its peak following a statement by Jalaluddin Rakhmat and Dimitri Mahayana suggesting that a number of the ustads who were striving to become leaders of the Shi‘i community in Indonesia, including IJABI, were incapable of such a role. In response, the ustads demanded a written apology from Rakhmat. He did write a letter of apology, but his opponents saw its contents as cynical. When he was asked to come to the last meeting to explain himself, three days before the IJABI inauguration, Rakhmat did not attend. As a result, most of the ustads took the decision not only to boycott IJABI’s inauguration and national congress but also to reject IJABI outright as an organisation.

Among the non-IJABI group, Jalaluddin Rakhmat’s personality is frequently cited as a source of tension. For example, after the spat and subsequent apologies between Rakhmat and Zainal Abidin al-Muhdar at the ICC of Al-Huda, Rakhmat is reported to have told the evening religious gathering at Tazkiya Sejati that he had been attacked by overwhelming numbers of Sayyids. At other times he is said to have humiliated a number of Shi‘i ustads, and in particular those without a university education. He never invites them to deliver religious lectures at the Tazkiya Sejati Foundation or to attend the religious gatherings held by Sri Adyanti Sudharmono. It is widely acknowledged that teaching at religious gatherings such as those at Paramadina and Tazkiya Sejati, which attract a mainly middle class audience, brings significant remuneration. In addition, Rakhmat’s statements in religious gatherings and to the national media discrediting the ustads are a significant source of disharmony between IJABI and non-IJABI supporters.

Among the initial reactions to the establishment of IJABI, one came from a meeting of a number of Qum alumni ustads at the Al-Jawad Foundation on 18 June 2000, before IJABI’s inauguration. The ustads at this meeting included Ahmad Baragbah, Zahir Yahya, Muhsin Labib, Husein Al-Kaff, Abdullah Husein al-Aydrus and Muhammad Sueb. The meeting produced two conclusions, which were signed and sent to Jalaluddin Rakhmat: first, a recommendation to cancel the inauguration ceremony and put the establishment of IJABI on hold because it was ill-prepared; second, a rejection of the ideological foundations of IJABI, including its refusal to accept the principle of wilayat al-faqih within the structure of the organisation.

---

Other subsequent attempts have been made to reject the existence and development of IJABI. One of them included a letter stating their rejection of the organisation, signed by 36 prominent Shi’i *ustadhs* and intellectuals and sent to the international Shi’i leader, the *wali faqih* in Iran, Ayatollah ‘Ali Khamene’i. This was one of the most important anti-IJABI strategies employed, because from a religious perspective the Shi’i community in Indonesia is an integral part of the Shi’i world under the headship of the *wali faqih*. There have, however, been a number of proponents of IJABI who studied in Iran who have come out in defence of the organisation. Khalid Al-Walid, the then chairman of the Iranian branch of IJABI and current secretary-general of IJABI visited the Rahbar’s office to make a number of clarifications regarding the disputes between the proponents and the opponents of IJABI.\(^5^9\) Despite recurring efforts by IJABI’s enemies to convince the centre of Shi’i leadership that the organisation should be rejected, it is clear that IJABI, as a national Shi’i organisation in Sunni-dominated Indonesia and as a part of the worldwide group of Shi’i organisations, still has the formal recognition by the office of the international Shi’i leader in Iran.

A group of Indonesian students in Qum, affiliated to the Association of Indonesian Students (*Himpunan Pelajar Indonesia*, HPI) also publicly rejected the existence of IJABI in a letter dated 22 March 2001 and signed by its presidium, Ibrahim Al-Habsyi (Husein Al-Habsyi’s son), Abdullah Beik and Muchtar Luthfi, all of whom have close connections to prominent Qum alumni *ustadhs* in Indonesia. Their rejection was based on the ideological foundations of IJABI and its refusal to accept the principle of *wilayat al-faqih*. The letter emphasised that an organisation designed to bring together all Shi’is in Indonesia must obey the leadership of *wali faqih* absolutely during the occultation of Imam Mahdi, because the *wali faqih* is the representative of the Imam.\(^6^0\) The letter states

In the view of HPI, ‘to hold *wilaya*’ [spiritual investiture] cannot be just jargon. There are several derivations from the principles that are required by the organisation. Therefore, the principles must be implemented in a systematic, not technical, matter.

Systematically, the establishment of an organisation may not use the principle of ‘absolute democracy’ (where the highest authority is determined totally on the basis of the quantity of votes) because the Western version of absolute democracy in the view of the *wilayat al-faqih* system is ‘rubbish’ and has already a long time ago been thrown

\(^{59}\) Khalid Al-Walid, interview, (3/7/2002).

out by this pure system. From this perspective, HPI cannot accept a Shi‘i organisation that claims ‘to hold wilaya’ in the system of establishing leadership, using ways contrary to the principles of wilaya.

Technically, the procedure of the organisation may not be contrary to clear and agreed shari‘a laws and there is no contextual reason to renounce them (with a reason of taqiyya, for instance). HPI cannot accept an organisation acting on behalf of Shi‘i community but which in fact neglects matters that become precisely the symbol and identity of the Shi‘i madhhab.\textsuperscript{61}

Another important strategic attempt to repudiate IJABI came from a cooperative of leaders of other Shi‘i foundations in Indonesia. Following a series of meetings, they agreed to reject IJABI and all of its programmes. One of these meetings was called a ‘workshop of the Ahl al-Bayt Foundations of all Indonesia’ and was held in Jakarta, 7-8 June 2001. It was organised by ICC of Al-Huda to mark the celebration of Mawlid, the Birth of the Prophet. It was attended by a number of guests from Iran, including Ayatollah Shaykh Akhtari. This is a clear indication of the lack of support for IJABI from ICC of Al-Huda. Just before the workshop was to take place, IJABI issued a circular, signed by Dimitri Mahayana, the chairman of Executive Board and Hadi Suwastio, the general secretary, on 31 May 2001. The circular listed a number of reasons for declaring the workshop invalid: first, IJABI remains the umbrella organisation for all Shi‘i foundations and congregations in Indonesia and so no other organisation is required; second, the establishment of another organisation, if this was the aim of the workshop, would threaten the success of any programmes run by IJABI and the new organisation both; third, the workshop was designed to create disunity within the Islamic community and lead to confusion among the followers of Shi‘ism. The opponents of IJABI refuted the IJABI circular by issuing a ‘Declaration of the Attitude of Indonesian Ahl al-Bayt Foundations to IJABI’ on 8 June 2001 in Jakarta. This declaration rejects the position of IJABI as the umbrella organisation for Shi‘i foundations in Indonesia. The main part of the declaration says:

\begin{quote}
Considering and seeing several points below:
\begin{itemize}
  \item The claim that IJABI is an umbrella organisation for Indonesian all ahl al-bayt foundations and congregations is not true
  \item As a fait accompli among the Indonesian ahl al-bayt community, the existence of IJABI has resulted in various continuing disputes, dissensions and controversies
\end{itemize}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{61} Ali (2002:418).
The Struggle of the Shi‘is in Indonesia

• The demeanour of some IJABI personnel, both at the centre and in the branches, has made them slanderers who endanger the existence of a number of foundations as well as individuals related to them
• The unclear IJABI vision and mission has resulted in the separation of IJABI from other Indonesian ahl al-bayt foundations

Herewith, we, on behalf of the undersigned foundations state the following. We

1. Take no responsibility for any IJABI activities or any related foundations or individuals
2. Reject to being under the organisational umbrella of IJABI
3. Call for the unity of all foundations and communities of the lovers of the ahl al-bayt in Indonesia under the shade of the Master of Affair of Muslims, the Grand Ayatollah Sayyid ‘Ali Khamene‘i.

Twenty-seven Shi‘i foundations and one local association from all over Indonesia signed the declaration, including such major institutions as Fatimah and Madinatul Ilmi of Jakarta, IPABI of Bogor, Al-Jawad of Bandung and Al-Hadi of Pekalongan. The majority of the signatories were the chiefs of the foundations, while others were staff members, including the staff of ICC of Al-Huda of Jakarta, an Iran-sponsored foundation in Indonesia. This represents a significant rejection of IJABI by the country’s Shi‘i foundations.

Another significant development by opponents of IJABI was the setting up of three local Shi‘i associations in Java: KIBLAT (Komunitas Ahlul Bait Jawa Barat, West Java Ahl al-Bayt Community), WASIAT in Central Java and FAJAR (Forum Jamaah Ahlul Bait Jawa Timur, Forum of East Java Ahl al-Bayt Congregations) in East Java. In contrast to IJABI, these three organisations only function to coordinate the existing Shi‘i foundations within their own areas. Proponents of these organisations accuse IJABI’s provincial and district branches of usurping the position and function of Shi‘i foundations in the regions. They say this has led not only to opposition from the leaders of the Shi‘i foundations but also to inactivity at the branches of IJABI, who are failing to implement their own programmes. They believe that both the existing Shi‘i foundations and the regional and district branches of IJABI are likely to have the similar programmes, leading to a duplication of efforts.

62 Other foundations include AMALI (Medan), Al-Baqir (Bangil), Al-Hujjah (Jember), Al-Kazim (Cirebon), Al-Mujtaba (Purwakarta), CIS (Jakarta), Darul Taqrib (Depara), Al-Batul (Jakarta), FAHMI (Depok), ICC of Al-Huda (Jakarta), Pelita Hidayah (Malang), Al-Kautsar (Malang), Al-Hakim (Lampung), Safinatun Najah (Wonosobo), Al-Muhibbin (Probolinggo), Al-Aqilah (Tangerang), Al-Wahdah (Solo), Al-Mawaddah (Kendal), Al-Muntazar (Samarinda), Al-Huda (Sumenep), Miftahul Huda (Tangerang), and As-Sajjad (Jakarta). The local organisation was FAJAR (Forum Jamaah Ahlul Bait Jawa Timur).
The leaders of these coordinating organisations are prominent Shi'i teachers who are also Qum alumni. Husein Al-Kaff and Abdullah Assegaf became the founders and leaders of KIBLAT, while Ahmad Baragbah and Miqdad are the founders and leaders of WASIAT. The influential leaders of FAJAR are Zahir Yahya and Muhsin Labib. All of these men graduated from Qum and have become prominent Shi'i teachers and leaders in Indonesia. They have close connections with one another based on their shared ideology and their common aim to propagate Shi'ism in Indonesia.

KIBLAT is an assembly of six Shi'i foundations located in several cities and towns in West Java, including Al-Jawad of Bandung, As-Syifa of Garut, Al-Kazhim of Cirebon, Al-Kautsar of Bandung, Al-Mujtaba of Purwakarta and IPABI of Bogor. KIBLAT’s first congress was held in August 2001. WASIAT in Central Java was officially declared at the end of 2002 and has yet to make significant progress. FAJAR, centred in Malang in East Java (home to a large Shi'i community) was officially inaugurated on 21 April 2000, although it had been initiated in 1998. FAJAR used to have significant influence on the Shi’i community in East Java; however, this has since decreased, partly due to its leaders, Zahir Yahya and Muhsin Labib moving to Australia and Jakarta respectively for study. Of the three associations, KIBLAT has been, and continues to be, active in its role as coordinator of the six Shi’i foundations, as well as organising training and education programmes and the celebration of Shi’i holy days. Its activity may be seen as an attempt to compete with IJABI, partly because of its geographical location, close to the national centre of IJABI in Bandung. As for the development of the local associations, WASIAT does not run particularly well. Moreover, these three local coordinating associations are not recognised nationally or legally by the Indonesian government.

A marked difference between these local associations and IJABI can be seen in their incorporation of the concept of wilayat al-faqih in their statutes and organisations. Their goal is to establish a community based on the principle of wilaya, so that the Shi’i community in Indonesia completely accepts and lives under the umbrella of wilayat al-faqih. As an imitation of wilayat al-faqih, the structure of these local associations places the so-called mustashar, or adviser, a position occupied by prominent local ustadhs and Qum alumni, as the highest authority in such crucial matters as formulating ideological, conceptual and strategic policies of the association, and even giving it the power to dissolve the association. As the position of mustashar is connected to the wali faqih, it is considered to have legitimacy in the shari’a.63 Thus, unlike IJABI, these local associations implement a top-down leadership, giving authority to local ustadhs rather than making decisions through a congress.

There is a desire among proponents of these local Shi’i organisations to found another national Shi’i organisation, different from IJABI in terms of religious and organisational principles and using their local Shi’i associations as its model. This was seen in 2003 when an ustadh group in Jakarta established Forum Al-Husainy, which aims to assemble and unite nearly all renowned ustadhs and activists in the capital city of Indonesia. With the involvement of key figures such as Husein Shahab and Hasan Daliel Al-Aydrus, this forum did succeed in its aims. It attempted to organise various da’wa activities using, what they call spiritual, intellectual and social approaches. The spiritual approach, for example, includes holding a monthly dhikr congregation in the Al-Bina Mosque in Jakarta. In terms of the intellectual approach, several series of da’wa training courses have been organised. In addition, da’wa activities have been undertaken using a social approach. This forum, however, differs from the three local institutions, not least because of its emphasis on da’wa programmes rather than on the formulation of statutes or other organisational apparatuses. While IJABI is only supported by a small number of Shi’is in Indonesia, the majority of the country’s ustadhs and activists agree on the necessity of having a single national organisation that is recognised by all groups within the community. Husein Shahab makes the point that that there is always an aspiration among Shi’i leaders to have a single umbrella organisation to ensure programmes of da’wa, education and culture achieve maximum results.

To sum up, it is IJABI which has achieved legal recognition from the government, resulting in the accumulation of symbolic capital, and it exercises power in terms of its existence and activities. IJABI is based on the principal doctrines of Shi’ism; however, it operates in accordance with the principles of democracy, placing the highest authority in the hands of a national congress. Despite its legal status, IJABI lacks support from the internal Shi’i community, and the ustadhs in particular, who actively reject its nationally recognised position by employing a variety of strategies. Consequently opponents have established local associations that may ultimately manifest themselves within another national Shi’i organisation.

64 Suara Umma (1/1/2004:55-57).