

Appendix C: International Islamic Movements and Their Presence in Indonesia

Ikhwan al-Muslimin was established in 1928 in Ismailiyya, Egypt by Hasan al-Banna, a charismatic figure who later became the first leader of the movement. He was born in Mahmudiyya, a small town in the Nile delta, in 1906 in a strong Muslim middle class family. His father was a sheikh and the Imam of a mosque, who was also a student at the Al-Azhar in the time of Muhammad Abduh, one of the most important figures of Islamic modernist tradition in Egypt. After finishing his study at the local Teacher Training College, Hasan al-Banna continued his study at Dar al-Ulum College in Cairo. In his school days, Banna involved himself in various Islamic associations which emphasised individual religious and moral reform and on commitment to preach Islam to other Muslims by visiting mosques, public entertainment centres, coffee houses and other public gatherings. When he graduated in 1927, he joined the government service and served as a teacher in a Ismailiyya primary school but finally resigned in 1946.

Hasan al-Banna's experience in Cairo greatly influenced his idea to establish the Muslim Brethren (*Ikhwan al-Muslimin*) movement. In Cairo he met Rashid Rida (1865–1935) and his *Salafiyya* (Islamic reform) movement which promoted political and social aspects of Islamic reform, the need for an Islamic State and the introduction of Islamic law. Hasan al-Banna was also attracted by Rida's ideas of total Islamic self-sufficiency and of the danger of Westernisation. At the same time, in Cairo he also saw the presence of British political and cultural domination which threatened traditional Egyptian society and Islam. The Westernisation threat, he believed, came not only from British colonial officials, but also from Westernised Egyptian elites who attempted to replicate Western models of political, social and economic development.

Hasan al-Banna, like Rashid Rida, saw Western secularism and materialism as the major causes of Egypt's political, social and economic problems, and of Muslim impotence and decline. Hasan al-Banna believed that only through return to Islam, following the Qur'an and the example (*sunnah*) of the Prophet, would Muslim all over the world recover from their illness. Different from his modernist predecessors, who were deeply concerned with Western learning, he stressed the perfection and comprehensiveness of Islam and its self-sufficiency. Concerned with these problems, he then formed Islamic discussion groups. Later in 1928, a year after he finished his study at the Dar al-Ulum College he established the movement called *Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, the Muslim Brethren. Hasan al-Banna

who was the “unique embodiment of the Sufi spiritualist, Islamic scholar, activist leader who possessed a rare ability to evoke mass support by translating doctrinal complexities into social action” (Dekmejian 1985:80) made the movement develop rapidly.

There is no clear information about when exactly this Islamic movement came to Indonesia. However, from various books written by many members of *Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, which were later translated into Indonesian, it appears that the ideas of the movement reached Indonesia in the early 1970s. From the translation books which were used by various Islamic youth groups in Indonesia in their early development, it is clear that among other movements, *Ikhwan al-Muslimin* played the most important role. It is also not clear whether this movement has a formal branch in Indonesia or not. However, there are many young Muslim activists who regard themselves as member of *Ikhwan al-Muslimin*. Among Islamic youth activists, it is often called ‘IM’.

Hizb al-Tahrir (Liberation Party) was established in 1953 in Lebanon by Taqiyuddin al-Nabhani, a great thinker, politician and Jerusalem Supreme Judge. The movement spread throughout the Middle East especially in Jordan. The main aim of this movement, as stated in its constitution, was to carry out Islamic life and to re-establish a *Khilafah Islam* (Islamic Caliphate). Ideas of the movement were introduced to Indonesia from 1987, mostly in some large cities of Java, such as Jakarta, Bogor, Bandung, Yogyakarta and Surabaya, and especially on university campuses. Books and papers about this movement had limited circulation among university students.

As admitted by one of its propagandists, *Hizb al-Tahrir* as an exclusive movement does not exist in Indonesia. However, its ideas have been spread systematically through a method of education called *halaqah*, a study group under an *Ulama*. Within the *halaqah*, about 23 reference books are studied, including *Nizham al-Islam* (the Islamic way of life), *al-Nizham al-Iqtisadi fi al-Islam* (the Islamic Economic System), *Al-Shakhsiyat al-Islamiyah* (Islamic Personality), and *Naqd al-Isytiraiyat al-Marksiyah* (Critique of Socialism-Marxism). Like other movements, this one tried to apply Islam to all aspects of daily life. However, practical and symbolic matters, such as ritual practices and moral attitudes towards television, and music, were left up to members themselves.

In Indonesia, as in other countries where this movement developed, the movement spread its ideas secretly. In Iraq, Syria, Lybia, Jordan, Egypt and Tunis many figures of this movement were arrested and killed. For this reason, *Hizb al-Tahrir* became an underground movement. Some of the reference books were even buried by members of the movement for security reasons. Because of the need for secrecy, relations amongst branches of the movement in various countries were very weak. This in turn led to large differences in the *Hizb al-Tahrir* movement from country to country.

Another movement was *Darul Arqam* (Arabic Dar al-Arqam, Arqam territory).¹ Members of this movement can be identified easily by their clothes and features. Male members usually wear a long dark or grey dress, and a turban. They also usually have a thin moustache and a beard. Female members usually wear black clothes which covered all parts of their body, except their eyes. They open their veils (*cadar*), which cover their faces, when they are in a female area or when they are among their *muhrim* (unmarriageable relatives)² Another distinct characteristic of members is their practice of eating together from the same container. In Indonesia, especially in Bandung, this movement has developed and attracted students since early 1990.

This movement was established in Malaysia in 1972 by Muhammad Suhaimi. Suhaimi was born in Wonosobo, Central Java in 1295 Hijri (1917). According to members of Arqam, Suhaimi was the 33rd descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. In Singapore and Malaysia Suhaimi created controversy, when he taught a *wirid* (recitation), called *Awrad Muhammadiyah*. According to his followers, this *wirid* was directly given by the Prophet inside the Ka'bah in Mecca. The *wirid* consists of reciting 50 times the *istighfar* (*astagfirullah*, I ask God's forgiveness), reciting the *al-Ikhlâs* chapter of the Qur'an, and reciting 50 times the *Shalawat Nabi* (invocation of the Prophet). This *Awrad Muhammadiyah*, which is believed to diverge from true Islamic teachings, became one of the reasons that Darul Arqam was banned in Indonesia in 1994. Already, in 1990, the West Sumatran MUI (Assembly of Indonesian Ulama) had banned this movement for the same reason. Darul Arqam was also banned in Malaysia in 1994 because of its ultimate aim to apply the Prophet's preaching strategy, i.e. to create an Islamic village that would develop into a wider region and finally into an Islamic state. Malaysian government accused the Darul Arqam of preparing arm forces, which threatened national security (Panji Masyarakat 21:7:1994).³

¹ Arqam was the name of one of the Prophet's companions. In the early period of Islam, his house became a secret centre for the spreading of Islam; a meeting place of the Prophet and His followers, and a place to educate new converts.

² In Arabic *mahram* means 'forbidden'. In Islamic law, it is the degree of consanguinity between a man and woman that renders marriage impossible but gives them the right of association.

³ On 20 October 1994, Ashari Muhammad, ex-leader of the Darul Arqam which has been banned since 5 August 1994, admitted in front of Malaysian *ulama* and *mufti* (official expounder of Islamic law) that the Darul Arqam teachings, especially *Awrad Muhammadiyah*, were wrong and conflicted with Islamic teachings. He also admitted that he made stories about his meeting with the Prophet in order to assure his followers. Furthermore, he promised to correct and reeducate his followers who had been lost. In this meeting Ashaari Muhammad, who always wore a long dark cloth and turban, wore a white Malay cloth and a white cap (*peci*) without turban. Likewise, his wife, who usually wore a black veil that covered her face, wore the usual veil that only covers hair, neck and shoulder (Panji Masyarakat 1:11:1994). His confession raised then question whether he honestly and consciously admitted his wrong doing or did so merely because he was forced to do so to save himself, his followers and his movement from the government restrictions. How he could easily and suddenly change his mind after 26 years was difficult to understand. Would he be able to change his followers' beliefs and practices?.

Jama'ah Tabligh is another Islamic movement that has attracted many young people, most of them students. Like Darul Arqam, female followers usually wear dark clothes which cover all parts of their body. Male members usually have a moustache and beard. Their practice of eating from the same container using their hands and sitting on the floor are similar to the habit of Darul Arqam members. The differences is that they wear special Indian-style clothes, and they always use a *siwak* (tooth brush made of speical wood). They claim that all of these habits identified them as the *sunnah* (tradition) of the Prophet.

This movement was established in India in 1930 by Syaikh Malik Maulana Muhammad Ilyas (1887–1948). According to its members, the emergence of this movement was inspired by the fact that the Muslim mentality had degenerated, and that mosques were empty. There was no other solution except to resume the teachings of the Prophet. One of its main activities is called *khuruj* (to go out), which means to go out to do *dakwah* (preaching). Members usually walk from house to house, from mosque to mosque, and this is not limited by country boundaries. Senior members of the movement usually visit various neighbouring countries.⁴ During *khuruj*, members usually stay at the mosques they are targeting. According to this movement, *khuruj* activity can be done for about three days a week, a month in a year, or at least 40 days in a whole lifetime.

Their *khuruj* activities usually start with visiting Muslim families and inviting them to come the mosque to pray. One member of the *khuruj* group, which usually consisted of less then ten persons, gives a *bayan* (speech) after prayer. The speeches, according to the constitution of the movement, would deal with politics or *khilafiyah* (differences in the Muslim community in matters of doctrinal importance); would not ask for charity or talk about others' mistakes; and would not humiliate the government, other groups or particular individuals. The movement's slogan, according to a member of *Jama'ah Tabligh*, was “if there is something wrong correct it immediately, and do not engage in polemic” (Tempo 3:4:1993).

From these Islamic groups emerges an important issue. Although they have similar ideological views and orientation ie. to solve problems faced by the Muslim *ummat*, they differently identify what these problems are. These differences have resulted in offering different solutions and emphasising different aspects. This is especially the case among those Islamic groups which come from overseas, such as the Middle East and India, since they originally emerged in different countries with different causes, different historical backgrounds and different cultural settings. These imported Islamic groups although they do not

⁴ One of my students, at the IAIN, told me that he had visited Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia, although he had been a member for only two years.

neglect local Indonesian situations, are concerned with international Islamic issues.