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Reactions and Attitudes towards the Darul Arqam Movement in Southeast Asia

Abstraksi: *Gerakan Darul Arqam lahir pada tahun 1968 di Kuala Lumpur sebagai kelompok pengajian dan diskusi agama, di bawah pimpinan Ashaari Muhammad. Gerakan tersebut mengembangkan tradisi "Tarekat Muhammadiyah" yang didirikan pada awal abad XX oleh As-Suhaimi, tokoh tasawwuf dari Jawa. Darul Arqam menarik penganut yang semakin banyak jumlahnya dan mendirikan sejumlah perusahaan yang mengesankan. Menurut taksiran tertentu, menjelang pelarangannya di Malaysia, pada Agustus 1994, Darul Arqam memiliki sekitar 10.000 anggota inti dan 100.000 pengikut lainnya di 17 negara, serta aset ekonominya bernilai US$ 115.000.000.*

Artikel ini membahas berbagai reaksi dan sikap terhadap Darul Arqam di Asia Tenggara, terutama pada pertengahan tahun 1994, ketika Darul Arqam menjadi objek perdebatan hangat antara lembaga dan tokoh yang mendukung tindakan keras terhadap Darul Arqam dan yang menolak tindakan itu di seluruh wilayah tersebut. Dalam rangka itu, penulis menganalisis pendirian yang berbeda-beda dari berbagai pemerintah, organisasi keagamaan, lembaga lain dan penduduk secara umum di Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand dan Singapura.

Bahan rujukan yang menjadi dasar analisis dikumpulkan dari artikel-artikel koran, laporan dan dokumen lain dari sejumlah lembaga serta serangkaian wawancara di keempat negeri tersebut. Berbagai kajian terdahulu menyangkut Islam di Asia Tenggara digunakan untuk membangun suatu kerangka analisis umum.

Penulis menjelaskan bahwa perbedaan reaksi terhadap Darul Arqam

antara berbagai negeri di Asia Tenggara sebagian besar diakibatkan perbedaan tradisi keagamaan dan sistem serta keadaan politis. Selain pada perbedaan antara sikap di berbagai negeri, artikel ini menaruh perhatian pada perbedaan sikap antara berbagai kelompok yang mewakili tradisi keagamaan yang berbeda, dan juga antara berbagai daerah di negeri yang sama.

Penulis tidak membatasi diri pada perbedaan sikap, melainkan menganalisis berbagai motif yang melatarbelakangi sikap itu. Ia menunjukkan bahwa motif tersebut kadang-kadang berkaitan dengan kepentingan politis kelompok tertentu, dan, dalam kasus lain lagi, dengan doktrin keagamaan menurut berbagai paham. Di Malaysia, lembaga resmi menampakkan persoalan Darul Arqam sebagai persoalan agama, tetapi, sebenarnya, Darul Arqam menjadi objek penyelidikan dan tindakan intensif ketika mulai terasa sebagai ancaman bagi stabilitas negara serta bagi kedudukan pemerintah dan partai berkuasa. Di Indonesia, Darul Arqam tidak dianggap sebagai ancaman nasional dan itu salah satu sebab mengapa tidak diambil tindakan represif terhadapnya pada tingkat nasional. Di kalangan organisasi keagamaan, tampaklah perbedaan antara gerakan reformis, yang mendukung pelarangan Darul Arqam karena doktrinnya dianggap bertentangan dengan ajaran Islam, dan gerakan "tradisionalis", yang menentang pelarangannya, paling sedikit karena alasan keagamaan. Akhirnya, di Thailand dan Singpura, Darul Arqam tidak menjadi masalah penting dan karena itu perdebatan tentang gerakan tersebut dan tindakan terhadapnya pun terbatas.

Akhirnya, hasil analisis ini tidak terbatas pada persoalan Darul Arqam saja, melainkan menampakkan berbagai ciri umum dari Islam di sejumlah daerah dan negeri di Asia Tenggara.

Kesimpulan utama artikel adalah sebagai berikut. Di Malaysia, kemandirian tiap-tiap negara bagian sangat besar dalam bidang agama, tetapi kemajemukan paham dan tradisi di dalam agama cenderung ditolak. Di Indonesia, bukan hanya kerukunan antara berbagai umat beragama amat diperhatikan, melainkan kemajemukan umat Islam pun diterima sebagai hal yang wajar dan urusannya diputuskan melalui proses musyawarah antara wakil berbagai kelompok. Di Thailand, agama Islam dilindungi dan urusannya tidak dicampuri pemerintah sejauh tidak mengancam stabilitas nasional. Di Singapura, umat Islam merupakan minoritas majemuk yang berusaha ikut serta dalam proses pembangunan dan kemajuan nasional secara bersatu.

مواقف وردود فعل مختلفة فى أنشطة دار الأرقم فى آسيا الجنوبية الشرقية

الخلاصة: إن الحركة المعروفة بـ "دار الأرقم" قد بدأت نشاطها فى شكل مجموعة تدرس وتناقش الأمور الدينية الإسلامية، وذلك فى سنة ١٩٦٨ بكوالا لومبور (Kuala Lumpur). وهذه الحركة التى كان يرؤسها أشعرى محمد (Ashaari Muhammad)، طورت "الطريقة المحمدية" التى قد أنشأها السهيمى (As-Suhaimi)، المتصوف من جزيرة جاوا، فى بداية القرن العشرين. وقد كان الملتحقون بدار الأرقم فى تزايد مستمر كما أنها كونت عددا مذهلا من المؤسسات الاقتصادية. حسب تقييم بعض المصادر، فإن قبل توقف نشاط دار الأرقم من قبل السلطات الماليزية فى شهر أغسطس ١٩٩٤ كان قد وصل عدد أعضائها الأساسيين ١٠٠٠٠ والمتعاطفين لها ١٠٠٠٠٠، وزيادة على ذلك لها مؤسسات اقتصادية بقيمة ١١٥٠٠٠٠٠٠ دولارا أمريكيا تقريبا وذلك فى ١٧ دولة.

تقدم هذه المقالة مواقف وردود أفعال مختلفة عن دار الأرقم فى ماليزيا، وإندونيسيا، وتايلند وسنغافورة، وذلك خاصة بمنتصف سنة ١٩٩٤ حينما أصبحت موضوع النقاش الحاد بين مختلف الحكومات والهيئات والأشخاص،

منهم من كان يؤيد إجراءات شل هذه الحركة ومنهم من كان يرفض اتخـاذ مثـل هذه الإجراءات.

مراجع هذا البحث تتكون من مقالات لعدة جرائد، وتقـارير ووثـائق لبعـض الهيئات وسلسلة من الاستجوابات أجريت فى الـدول المذكـورة. وقـد استفـاد المؤلف من بعض البحوث السابقة المتعلقـة بـالدين الإسلامى فى آسيا الجنوبيـة الشرقية لبناء إطار تحليلى عام.

يوضح المؤلف أن اختلاف ردود الأفعال عن دار الأرقم بين بعض الـدول فى آسيا الجنوبية الشرقية يرجع خاصة إلى تبـاين التقاليد الدينيـة والنظم والأوضـاع السياسية كما يهتم أيضا بتباين المواقف بين مذاهب ومجموعات تمثل تقاليد دينيـة مختلفة وبين مناطق مختلفة فى الدولة نفسها.

والبحـث ليس محـدودا علـى تبـاين المواقف ولكنـه يحلـل كذلك عـددا مـن الأسباب التى يرجع إليها. ويبين أن هذه الأسباب أحيانا تتعلق بالاستقرار الوطنى للدولة المعنية بالأمر وأحيانا بالمصلحة السياسية الخاصة بمجموعـة معينـة وأحيانـا أخرى تتعلق بالعقيدة الدينيـة بحسب مفاهيم مختلفة. أمـا فى ماليزيا فالهيئـات الرسمية تظهر قضية دار الأرقم كقضية دينية، ولكن فى الحقيقـة إن دار الأرقم لم تصبح موضوع التحقيـق والإجراءات المكثفة إلا بعـد أن بـدأت تعتبر تهديـدا لاستقرار الدولة وكذلك لوضع الحكومة والحزب الحاكم. فى إندونيسيا لم تعتبر دار الأرقم تهديدا وطنيا وذلك سبب مـن أسباب عـدم اتخاذ إجراءات زجريـة تجاهها على المستوى الوطنى. أما فى دوائر المنظمـات الدينيـة الإندونيسية فظهـر اختلاف بين الجمعيات الإصلاحية التى أيدت منع دار الأرقم لأن عقيدتهـا تعتبـر مناقضة للعقيدة الإسلامية، والجمعيات "التقليدية" التى عارضت منعها، على كـل حال لأسباب دينية. وأخيرا فى تـايلند وسنغافورة فلم تصبح دار الأرقـم قضية مهمة ولذلك فالمناقشات عنها والإجراءات ضدها محدودة أيضا.

أخيرا فنتيجـة هـذا البحـث ليسـت محـدودة علـى قضيـة دار الأرقـم فحسـب ولكنها تظهر عدة خصائص الإسلام فى بعض المناطق والدول فى آسيا الجنوبيـة الشرقية.

والخلاصة الرئيسية لهذه المقالة هى كالتالى: فى ماليزيا الذاتية فى المجال الدينـى لكل ولاية واصحة جدا ولكن تعددية المفاهيم والتقاليد شئ غير مرغوب فيه. أما فى إندونيسيا بالإضافة إلى الانسجام الكبير بين مختلف الأمم الدينية فتعدد الآراء والمفاهيم داخل الأمة الإسلامية كان مقبولا جدا والقضايا المطروحة يتم حسـمها بمشاورة ممثلى المجموعات الدينية المختلفة. وفى تايلند فالأقلية الصغيرة التـى تديـن بالإسلام بينما الدولة تحمى الأمة الإسلامية ولا تتدخل فى أمورها ما دامت هـذه الأمة لا تهدد الاستقرار الوطنى، وأخيرا ففى سنغافورة إن الأمـة الإسـلامية أقليـة ومتعددة المذاهب والتقاليد ولكنها تحاول المشاركة معا فى عملية التقـدم الوطنـى بصفة متحدة.

Introduction

A round August 1994 the Islamic movement Darul Arqam rather suddenly attracted much attention because it was banned by the Malaysian authorities. Interestingly, this organization was created almost thirty years earlier (in 1968) and the attitude of the Malaysian government towards it had not always been so negative. Some public authorities and religious organizations in Indonesia showed a similar negative reaction to this rather dynamic movement, but such a position was far from unanimous. In Thailand the movement received much less attention, but this country also did not remain unaffected by the wave of discussions about and action against the Darul Arqam, which took on transnational dimensions. In my article I shall try to analyze and explain some of the different attitudes of various public authorities, religious organizations, other associations and the public at large in Southeast Asia towards the Darul Arqam movement.

The article will focus on Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand, these being dealt within successive paragraphs. Some additional comments will be given regarding Singapore, whereas Brunei Darussalam, where the movement was banned relatively early on, has not been covered by the research.

The Darul Arqam originated in 1968 as a religious study and discussion group in Kuala Lumpur. It was created and led by Ashaari Muhammad, who was given the full name of Imam (Haji, Ustaz) Ashaari Muhammad At-Tamimi by his followers, born in 1938 in Kampung Pilin, Rembau, in Negeri Sembilan, one of the present states of Malaysia. At first, it mainly developed among working class inhabitants of rural origin living in the fast growing towns in the southern part of Malaysia. From about the late 1970s onwards, however, the movement increasingly spread among members of the middle and higher strata of Malaysian society, including many students and a number of high officials or members of their families. Ashaari emphasized that Islam concerned the totality of life. He therefore aspired towards the creation of a just Islamic society. In this framework, his movement created dozens of communes all over Malaysia and a great number of economic enterprises, altogether representing an enormous amount of capital.[1] These economic enterprises were among the main factors which attracted the ever-growing numbers of adherents. Among the other characteristics of the Darul Arqam were its stress on a particular identity, considered Islamic, reflected

for example in its production activities of *halâl* food, and its eating and clothing habits, referring to the example of the Prophet Muhammad in a way considered to be exaggerated by many other Muslims.[2] Another striking feature of the movement was its mystical background. It adopted and further developed the Tarikat Muhammadiyah or Muhammadiyah Sufi order established at the beginning of the century by Sheikh Muhammad b. Abdullah As-Suhaimi[3], born in 1839 in Sudagaran, Wonosobo, on the island of Java.[4] Ashaari in particular professed that As-Suhaimi had encountered, not in a dream, but whilst awake, the Prophet Muhammad within the Ka'bah at Mecca and that As-Suhaimi had never died, but was hidden (*"ghâ'ib"*) and would return one day as "al-Imâm al-Mahdî", the guiding leader expected, with some Muslims, at the end of time and more especially, according to Ashaari, from the Eastern part of the Muslim world.[5] More recently Ashaari started to profess that he himself had been granted a similar meeting with the Prophet.[6] In the end, the Darul Arqam was said to have acquired some 10,000 hard-core members[7], about ten times this number for sympathizers[8] and economic assets claimed to be worth 300 million Malaysian ringgit (about US$ 115 million) or more.[9] It was said to cover 17 countries, including Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Brunei Darussalam.[10]

The nature and development of the Darul Arqam lies outside the scope of this article. These matters will only be addressed if necessary to explain certain developments in the attitudes towards the movement. One further clarification has to be made in order to avoid misunderstandings: whereas in Indonesia the movement in question is mainly referred to as "Darul Arqam", in its neighbouring countries it is generally called "al-Arqam".[11]

The article will make clear that differences in the reactions towards the Darul Arqam among the various countries of the region can for a large part be explained by their different religious traditions, and political systems and situations. In addition to the differences between countries, attention will be paid to differences between groups representing various traditions within Islam and even between various regions within the same country.

An interesting aspect of our theme is the motives behind the different attitudes towards the Darul Arqam. The article will show that some motives were related to national stability, others to the political interests of particular groups such as political parties, while in other cases reference was made to Islamic doctrine. Often these mo-

tives cannot be sharply distinguished and the explicit arguments advanced against the Darul Arqam were not necessarily the main reasons for action.

Material for this article was mainly collected from newspaper articles, reports and other documents from a number of organizations and a series of interviews in four countries. In order to construct an analytical framework, use was made of several existing studies relating to Islam in Southeast Asia. Complete references are given in the body of the text, the notes and the annexes.

Malaysia: The Refusal of Pluralism

In Malaysia only about half of the population is Muslim, but Islam plays a prominent role: it has been declared the religion of the Federation[12] and it plays an increasingly important role in the legitimisation mechanism of the government and in party politics. Islam in Malaysia has a particular relation to the Malay ethnic group and the attributes of Malay and Muslim tend to be interchangable.[13]

Each Malaysian state has a large degree of autonomy in religious affairs. Each sultan is the head of the Islamic religion in his state and each state with a hereditary ruler has its own religious council and Islamic court.[14]

The main government institution at the federal level is the Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam (Islamic Affairs Department) of the Prime Minister's Office, popularly known as "Pusat Islam" or "Islamic Centre".[15] The section of this Islamic Affairs Department most specifically involved in the surveillance of al-Arqam —to use the common Malaysian designation— is the Unit Akidah dan Ajaran Sesat (Unit for Faith and Misbelief ["Doctrine Gone Astray"]) of the Pusat Penyelidikan Islam (Islamic Research Centre). The Islamic Affairs Department of the Prime Minister's Office is a government agency which conducts supervision and investigations in the field of Islam and can take decisions relating to the activities of the State or its officials. For example, in 1991 it forbade the involvement of al-Arqam in any state activities.[16]

It does not have the competence, however, to issue any *fatwâ*, e.g. a statement on the soundness of the doctrine of a particular group, nor can it ban any religious movement. This is the competence of the *muftîs* and/or *fatwâ* committees of each separate state, which exercise their functions under the aegis of the Majlis Agama Islam (Islamic Religious Council) of each state. These *fatwâs* gain legal force

after they have been published in the government gazette of the respective state.[17] Both the state *fatwâ* committees and the Islamic religious councils delegate representatives to co-ordinating meetings at the federal level.[18] The National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs reports to the Prime Minister. It may issue *fatwâs* too, which gain official status after being approved by the Council of Rulers and published in His Majesty's Government Gazette. In order to obtain the full force of law, these federal *fatwâs* should, however, subsequently be gazetted in all states.[19]

Other government departments can also play some role in religious life. The Home Office, for example, may ban religious books deemed to be harmful to the public. The al-Arqam case showed that all these different agencies and institutions worked together in a rather smooth way.

One final remark in this short characterization of Muslim institutions in Malaysia: the Islamic councils and *fatwâ* committees at the state level do not represent different Islamic organizations or traditions —such as "modernist" and "traditionalist", Sunnite and Shi'ite— but are composed of a number of *'ulamâ'* and other persons considered to be experts; at the federal level, too, these councils are composed of persons considered to represent each state, not different Muslim groups or traditions. Therefore, within the official Malaysian administration of Islam, diversity, sometimes leading to tensions and division, occurs not between different traditions and organizations, but between the federal and the state level of administration or between various states, each pursuing their own religious policies.[20] An additional reason why diversity from the viewpoint of Islamic legal tradition is limited, is the formal principle laid down in the administration of Islamic law enactment regulations of almost all Malaysian states that *fatwâs* should in principle be issued in conformity with the Shafi'ite *madhhab*.[21]

This institutional peculiarity is the first indication of the fact that in Malaysia, in contrast to Indonesia, plurality is not well received nor recognized in Islam. Our further analysis will yield more evidence of this feature of Islam in the Malaysian political structure.[22]

The explanations above make clear in which circumstances and by which procedures action was finally taken against al-Arqam in Malaysia. Although the movement originated about 1968, government and religious authorities only started to oppose it fiercely from

about 1979. This opposition was apparently stimulated by the criticism of former al-Arqam members regarding certain mystical elements in the doctrine of Ashaari Muhammad. These elements, elaborated in a book entitled *Aurad Muhammadiah* (The Muhammadan *wird*s [supererogatory prayers]), were related in particular to As-Suhaimi and included the belief that As-Suhaimi had never died and would return one day as "*al-Imâm al-Mahdî*". These were declared to be unacceptable deviations from Islamic doctrine even by a number of leading members of al-Arqam itself, such as Akhbar Anang and Khalid Jaafar. The Islamic Affairs Department and the Federal Islamic Council together summoned Ashaari and at their urgency he declared that he renounced these new doctrines. In 1986 a second conflict occurred within al-Arqam. Mokhtar Yaakob, then the second man in the movement, and another prominent member, Roshdi Yusof, left the movement because, they argued, Ashaari still followed the *Aurad Muhammadiah*. Again, this internal conflict was exploited by the public authorities. Ashaari's book *Aurad Muhammadiah Pegangan Darul Arqam* (*Aurad Muhammadiah* guidebook of the Darul Arqam), in which he defended the *Aurad Muhammadiah*, was banned in this same year by the federal *fatwâ* committee and in 1988 by the *fatwâ* committees of all the Malaysian states and the Home Office. From then onwards, Ashaari spent most of his time in Thailand.[23] To date, videotapes with public lectures containing condemnations of Ashaari's doctrine and practices by former leading al-Arqam members are among the preferred weapons of the authorities in their struggle against the movement.[24]

A further step was taken in 1991, when, as mentioned earlier, the Islamic Affairs Department banned al-Arqam from involvement in any government activities, cultural manifestations for example. The climax of the action against al-Arqam was reached in 1994. On 5 August 1994 the National *Fatwâ* Council banned al-Arqam.[25] To achieve legal force, this ban had to be gazetted by the national government and by the administrations of all Malaysian states. The federal text appeared in His Majesty's Government Gazette on 27 August 1994 and the different states all gazetted similar *fatwâ*s from their *fatwâ* committees - these having been issued in June or July - that same month.[26] This means that the process was extremely fast and, in spite of the formal separation of government and religious authorities and the religious autonomy of each state, was apparently well coordinated.[27] The various *fatwâ*s differed only on minor points.[28] Fi-

nally, on the night of 2 to 3 September Ashaari was arrested on Thai territory and delivered to the Malaysian authorities. He was kept in custody under the terms of the Internal Security Act. Some weeks later, according to the Malaysian authorities, he confessed on national television that his whole doctrine had been a deceit, after which he was released from custody and offered restricted liberty. This situation lasts to this day.[29]

It is not the facts themselves, given above in a succinct, chronologically ordered form, which are interesting, but the administrative and political mechanism behind these various measures against al-Arqam, their motives and the changes that occurred in the attitudes of the different Malaysian authorities towards the movement as well as the causes of these changes.

Apparently, the emergence of tensions within al-Arqam itself, especially in 1979 and 1986, was an important factor leading to a harsher attitude by the religious and political authorities. This was partly because a similar development in Ashaari's doctrine or activities —the introduction of the Suhaimi cult within al-Arqam, for example— was declared unacceptable both by people within the movement and outside, including in government circles. A former Malaysian member of al-Arqam explained to me that the deeper reasons for these internal conflicts were not related to Ashaari's mystical doctrine, but rather to differences of opinion concerning the strategy to be followed[30], dissatisfaction with Ashaari's managerial policy[31] or immoderate interest in worldly pleasures[32]. Public authorities, however, were glad to exploit these internal conflicts and the people who, as a result, left al-Arqam and henceforth focussed their criticism on the doctrinal aspects of the movement.

According to its officials, the Islamic Affairs Department has been observing al-Arqam since its creation in 1968.[33] Why then, one has to ask, did the Malaysian government only take a hard stand towards it so much later? Government spokesmen explained that the government reacted to complaints from al-Arqam dissidents to the Islamic Affairs Department. As stated above, these complaints, lodged by Akhbar Anang and others, were related to an unacceptable change in the religious doctrine spread by Ashaari.[34] On other occasions, government officials explained that they had first tried a persuasive approach towards al-Arqam and only later found out that this was ineffective.[35]

Although probably not totally untrue, these explanations are unsatisfactory. An important factor of the change in the government's attitude was that al-Arqam began to be considered a threat to the security of the state. More particularly, it was seen as a menace to the unity of the Muslim community and a source of tension between the different ethnic groups of the multi-racial nation. More vigorous government action against the movement was encouraged by a similar change in attitude in the state of Kelantan, governed by the Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS - All-Malaysian Islamic Party), normally operating as the opponent to Prime Minister Mahathir and his UMNO party.[36] To underpin its argument that al-Arqam had become a security threat, the Malaysian government referred to a photo published in *Tangnam*, a Thai Muslim periodical, allegedly showing an al-Arqam military training camp in Thailand.[37] Several sources deny that the picture really represented a military training camp.[38] However, some people do not exclude the possibility that al-Arqam had set up military forces elsewhere.[39] Apart from the existence or otherwise of al-Arqam military training camps, an important factor why at a later stage al-Arqam came to be considered to be more dangerous to the establishment was a shift of orientation in its recruitment: whereas at first the movement had been concentrated within the lower classes of the rapidly developing urban settlements, from the late 1970s more and more members of the middle and higher layers of society were lured into its fold.[40]

Lastly, several observers are of the opinion that there was yet another reason for this rather sudden, harsh attitude of the Malaysian government, i.e., the particular political interest of Mahathir Muhammad and his UMNO party, trying to strengthen their power in the upcoming elections.[41]

As explained in a newspaper analysis by N.S. Talib, in all its actions the Malaysian government has been careful to promote the opinion that these were not politically motivated, but aimed merely at stopping the spread of deviationist religious teachings. For this reason and in order not to appear anti-Islamic, it instructed the Islamic Affairs Department to explain the —allegedly doctrinal— reasons for the ban to the people.[42] Furthermore, because the al-Arqam "problem" is presented as essentially a religious, doctrinal one, it is logical that decisions by the different *fatwâ* committees are at the core of the legal and administrative mechanisms set up to curb the

development of the movement. However, as soon as some legal basis was provided to intervene against al-Arqam, a whole arsenal of repressive regulations could be applied to enforce the decision.[43]

Let us take a deeper look at the documents disseminated by the Islamic Affairs Department to support the official story. Among them are two successive versions of a brochure *Penyelewengan Aqidah Darul Arqam* (The Darul Arqam Doctrinal Deviation), which gives details on the different official measures taken against al-Arqam.[44] The 1994 edition contains the text of the national *fatwâ* of August 1994, which was followed by more or less identical ones in each state. Firstly this *fatwâ* declares that two books which play a prominent role in the movement, both related in particular to the mystical cult around As-Suhaimi, contain elements which are contrary to Islamic doctrine (*aqîdah*) and law (*syariah*). It then continues with the banning of the al-Arqam movement which uses these books as its points of reference.[45] Thus, doctrinal deviation is presented here as the only reason for the ban. However, the same booklet contains a more detailed exposition of the deviations of al-Arqam. These are divided into three sections: ideas that are contrary to orthodox (*Ahli Sunnah Wal-Jamaah*) doctrine, actions that are contrary to Islamic Law (*Syariah Islam*) and behavior that is contrary to social morals and ethics. Attentive reading shows that the three categories of errors are interrelated and cannot be sharply distinguished. For example, the fact that within the movement Ashaari and his group —al-Arqam itself— are put before one's own family is entered into the category of actions deviating from Islamic law. Yet this is clearly related to al-Arqam's destruction of the institution of the family, mentioned among its deviations from social morals and ethics.[46] On the other hand, a further example of an attitude deemed contrary to good morals, al-Arqam's discrediting of religious scholars (*'ulamâ*) and other learned people, cannot be detached from doctrinal differences.[47]

Therefore, even at the doctrinal and religious levels, the al-Arqam problem is rather complex. However, as explained before, the question has, in fact, other aspects far outside the domain of religion. It is interesting to note that the Malaysian government, especially its Islamic Affairs Department, presents an image on the handling of al-Arqam which contains three highly debatable elements: there are no political motives behind its action; at present the problem is practically settled; and the Malaysian Muslim community unanimously

supported its action.[48] However, from the attitude I met when visiting the Islamic Centre, characterized by reserve and some excess of formalities, I understood that things are not that simple. A subsequent interview with a Malaysian scholar confirmed this impression. He explained to me that at present al-Arqam poses a real problem to the Malaysian authorities. Of more general interest was the information he gave me about the academic discussion on Islam in the country: it is subject to much stricter limits than those in Indonesia; one should be careful not to discuss certain issues or express certain opinions before the wrong forum.[49]

One particular point attracted my attention: the fact that religious pluralism, within the Muslim community, is hardly recognized as a reality or as a subject for discussion. In the first place, this peculiarity of Malaysian Islam is related to the structure of the administration of Islam in Malaysia, which is based, as we saw before, on the consideration of different states, not different traditions or organizations. Secondly, it is related to the close link between Islam and Malay ethnicity and of both with politics in Malaysia. Cultural and ethnical divisions tend to coincide with religious ones in Malaysia and a division within the Muslim community would therefore greatly endanger this community and the social and political stability as a whole.[50] Thirdly, as pointed out by Manning Nash, the search for a national, Malaysian identity is an urgent and unfinished one. Within this search, the reference to Islam plays a fundamental role and within this framework several groups are competing by offering their own version.[51] Elaborating on Nash's argument, I conclude that, for the sake of national stability and its own power, the Malaysian government is driven to strive for a religious monopoly over all other groups offering their own versions of Islam.[52] This aspiration is strengthened by its effort to safeguard its national development policy, which is aimed at suppressing poverty and ethnic tensions, but in the beginning had not taken into consideration future religious developments.[53]

By studying the reactions to the al-Arqam movement, one becomes aware of a peculiar combination of democratic institutions and repression in Malaysia. A comparison with Indonesia, from these points of view, is quite interesting. As for pluralism within the Muslim community, the development of al-Arqam itself shows that the image of uniformity is a false one. Maybe, however, it is correct to state that no other Islamic group supports or supported al-Arqam,

but many individuals do.[54] The ban of the movement aroused protest from several sides, but, according to reports in the press, these were more motivated by a sense of human rights[55] or, partly, by political motives[56] than by religious considerations.

Finally, the existence of regional differences in Malaysian Islam is of some interest, too. Sharifah Zaleha discusses the difference between the northern parts of Malaysia, where networks of Islamic scholars with their various educational and social institutions are better developed compared to the southern regions. In the same framework, she mentions urbanization as an important factor in the development of al-Arqam and similar religious movements.[57] We shall return to these questions while looking at other countries of the region.

Indonesia: Mufakat through Musyawarah

Indonesia, by far the largest country of Southeast Asia, differs from its neighbouring countries on several points. Some 87% of its more than 190 million inhabitants are Muslim. However, Pancasila ("the five pillars"), not Islam, has been made the basis of the state and society, and political movements specifically based on Islam —or on any other particularistic grounds— are not permitted. The country has no department of Islamic affairs, but has a Ministry of Religious Affairs, whose task is to contribute to the development of all religious communities. Naturally, its sections related to the Muslim community are by far the largest. It has offices in each province and within smaller administrative units. As an intermediary between the government and the Muslim community, transmitting and translating aspirations in both directions, a Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI - Indonesian Council of *'ulamâ'* [Islamic religious scholars]) has been created. Councils of *'ulamâ'* exist at the local, provincial and national levels. They all have a *fatwâ* commission or section, which can issue statements of opinion on questions of Islamic law, either at their own initiative or at the request of the government or some other party. They cannot ban any religious organization or publication, but they can propose this to the Prosecutor's Office at the provincial level (*Kejaksaan Tinggi*) or the Attorney-General (*Jaksa Agung*) for the whole of the national territory. In each province the supervision of religious sects is co-ordinated by the Badan Koordinasi Pengawas Aliran Kepercayaan dalam Masyarakat (Bakorpakem - Co-ordinating Agency for the Supervision of Belief Movements within the Society),

led by the Head of the Provincial Prosecutor's Office, in which, among other agencies, the provincial MUI, the office for religious affairs, the office for education and culture and the security services are represented.

The first rumors about the activities of the Darul Arqam —as it is generally known in the country to date— came from the province of West Sumatra. It was probably introduced by Malaysian citizens. On 17 April 1990 the MUI of Bukittinggi issued a *fatwâ* declaring that the teachings of the Darul Arqam were deviating from Islamic doctrine and aroused unrest among the local population, and so it asked the local authorities to ban the movement. Very quickly similar decisions were taken at a higher level. On 17 May the *fatwâ* commission of the provincial MUI issued a similar *fatwâ* and on 6 June the Provincial Prosecutor banned the Darul Arqam and its main guidebook *Aurad Muhammadiah Pegangan Darul Arqam* in West Sumatra, after an investigation by the provincial Bakorpakem. After these relatively early measures, the MUI of West Sumatra repeatedly asked the national MUI to issue a similar *fatwâ*, but in no other province was the Darul Arqam banned before August 1994.[58] In January 1993 the Attorney-General banned *Aurad Muhammadiah Pegangan Darul Arqam* and a later work by Ashaari entitled *Berhati-hati Membuat Tuduhan* (Being Careful in Making Accusations). A protracted discussion went on in the country as to whether or not the Darul Arqam should be banned. Although the *Fatwâ* Commission of the national MUI had, since 1991, declared the Darul Arqam doctrine to be deviant, this decision was never promulgated by the MUI presidency.[59] Finally, on 13 August 1994, the national MUI declared the movement to be deviant and proposed that the Attorney-General should ban it.[60] He did not do so, however, and left the decision to each provincial prosecutor's office.[61] Today, the Darul Arqam has been banned in the majority of the Indonesian provinces.

The attitude of the Indonesian government, represented by the Attorney-General, in spite of demands and suggestions by the MUI and several other organizations and persons, not to issue a national ban of the Darul Arqam, is a suitable starting point for a deeper analysis of the various attitudes which the movement met in this country.

First of all, the Attorney-General specified that each provincial prosecutor's office should take the decision in accordance with the

local conditions.[62] In Indonesia the Darul Arqam was not regarded as a national threat and regional differences were admitted and taken into consideration. Although national unity is continuously emphasized in Indonesian government discourse and policy, in the Darul Arqam case the Indonesian government showed more flexibility and differentiation than that of the federation of Malaysia. In West Sumatra rapid action was undertaken because the organization developed there relatively early and clearly contrasted with the religious understanding of a large majority of the population. In other regions later or no action was undertaken because the development of the Darul Arqam was delayed or limited, its doctrine was felt to be less distant from local traditions, or a combination of both factors.

Next, we are struck by the length and intensity of the debate between organizations and groups with different standpoints. The discussion concerned both the question of whether the Darul Arqam should be banned and the proper reasons for a ban if it were to be issued. In Indonesia we can roughly distinguish three different reasons put forward in support of a ban of the Darul Arqam: because its teachings deviated from the Islamic doctrine; because it damaged the harmonious relations within the Muslim community or between the different religious communities; and because it menaced national stability or the public order. In particular the last two reasons cannot be sharply distinguished, but in the arguments of several organizations the first reason was also often linked to the second or third one. The decisions of the MUI of Bukittinggi and of West Sumatra, for example, are similar. They start by declaring that the teachings of Darul Arqam deviated and led astray (*adalah sesat dan menyesatkan* as formulated in the Bukittinggi *fatwâ*) on points similar to those denounced in Malaysia. Then they added as a second conclusion that these teachings aroused unrest among (*meresahkan, menimbulkan keresahan dalam*) the population. The text of the provincial MUI added that the Darul Arqam tended to exclusivism and fanaticism —in the sense of exaggeration— in its religious practices.[63]

In conformity with their competence, bans by provincial prosecutor's offices, although usually referring to the religiously colored *fatwâs* of the MUIs in their territory, did not normally advance doctrinal motives, but rather arguments related to public order and/or disturbance of the harmonious relations between different elements of the population.[64]

An interesting phenomenon in the Indonesian discussion was the

difference between those religious organizations that desired the banning of the Darul Arqam for reasons of religious doctrine and those that were opposed to a ban, at least for this reason. The first group was represented by the Muhammadiyah, the Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia and the Ikatan Masjid Indonesia, the second by the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), its youth branch Gerakan Pemuda Ansor and the Sunan Ampel Islamic Institute and Laboratory of Surabaya.[65] The first group represents the "reformist" school of Islam. It very much stresses the importance of the Qur'ân and the Prophetical Tradition (*Sunnah*), as laid down in the *Hadîth*, as references and is opposed to any human intercourse with a supernatural world, except for the fundamental attitude of submission to God, without any intermediaries. The second group represents the "traditionalist" style of Islam. Without denying the fundamental value of the Qur'ân and the *Sunnah*, it emphasizes the importance of referring to the rich tradition of Islamic law, cultural life and mysticism. Therefore, it is open to supernatural phenomena such as the extraordinary authority and power of mystical teachers, the strong bonds between leaders and followers within mystical orders and, last but not least, diversity within Islam. It considered the Darul Arqam doctrine to be acceptable within the broad Islamic tradition it refers to. The NU and the Ansor added that, if the government decided to ban the Darul Arqam, it should not do so for doctrinal reasons but for reasons of national security or in order to preserve the harmonious relations between different elements of the population, for example.[66]

A number of Muslim intellectuals also spoke out against a ban of the movement for reasons of human rights[67] or because, in their view, banning was not the way to deal with fellow Muslims who had gone astray.[68] Interesting to note is a reaction of the Minister of Religious Affairs to the claim that to adhere to any belief of one's own choice was a fundamental human right. This, he declared, is the way scholars think; government officials are bureaucrats and think differently. The government considers its responsibility to protect the people from any deviant sects; what matters to the government are the political moves of the Darul Arqam, in Indonesia or in neighbouring countries.[69]

The difference of opinion among Indonesian organizations and individuals still had an impact on the discussion within the national MUI. Firstly, it took a long time before a decision was taken. Secondly, when, on 13 August 1994, this decision was finally taken and

a ban of the Darul Arqam was suggested to the Attorney-General, it did not specify reasons but only declared support of the previous decisions of several provincial MUIs and left it to the Attorney-General to find his own arguments for the ban.[70]

In conclusion, we might say that the attitude of the Indonesian authorities and the Muslim community towards the Darul Arqam differs from the Malaysian attitude.

This difference in attitude is related to the interesting fact that, as stated by Nash, the Indonesian Muslim community is probably more diversified than the Malaysian Muslim community, but far less divided from an administrative point of view.[71] With this statement, Nash basically points out that the diversity of Muslim traditions and schools is greater in Indonesia, but that, as we saw before, the administration of Islam in Malaysia is characterized by the great autonomy of the various states. Furthermore, if there is any co-ordinating effort in Malaysia, this is generally between different states, not between different traditions or organizations. Nash mentions a number of factors why, firstly, pluralism within Islam is stronger in Indonesia than in Malaysia and, secondly, it is better accepted by the Indonesian government than by the Malaysian one. Among them are historical factors. When Islam developed in Southeast Asia, it was confronted by a substratum of previous cultural and religious developments that was much stronger in the present Indonesia than in the present Malaysia. Therefore, Islam developed in a more uniform way in the latter than in the former area.[72] Next, European colonization reinforced this difference because the British rule in Malaya tended to leave all authority for religious affairs with the indigenous heads of the different states, whereas the Dutch intervention in the religious life of their colony went much farther. After both countries achieved independence, the contrast between Malaysia and Indonesia was strengthened once more. When discussing Malaysia, we have noted the central place of Islam in the continuous search for a national identity and unity in Malaysia and, within this framework, the struggle between the ruling authorities and other parties to impose their version of Islam. In New Order (post-1966) Indonesia, these phenomena have lost much of their importance. As pointed out by Nash, in Indonesia the armed forces have played and continue to play a prominent role in the process of national unification. Its authority, gained through its struggle against the colonial army, the abuses of the Old

Order (1945-1966) regime and communism, has no equivalent in the neighbouring country.[73]

Recent studies by Robert W. Hefner add to our understanding of why pluralism has grown within Indonesian Islam and is tolerated, even supported, by the ruling authorities. He explains that after the ideal to create an Islamic state had been abandoned by almost all Indonesian Muslims and Pancasila had been accepted as a the common national ideology, numerous Muslim individuals and organizations, beginning in the 1970s, concentrated their efforts to implement Islamic values on various educational and social activities. These private efforts were supported and complemented by the state. In other words, the strong position of the state has contributed to Islamic pluralism in Indonesia.[74]

This is not to say that harsh action against certain "deviating" religious movements has been totally absent from Indonesia during the last decades. Perhaps, however, the criticism voiced in the last few years against the dominance of the "security approach" in all problems faced by the Indonesian authorities has borne some fruit and has become a complementary factor of their lenient attitude towards the Darul Arqam.[75]

Therefore, whereas, at first glance, Indonesia looks less democratic than Malaysia[76] and most of its other neighbour states, it offers more religious tolerance and dynamism and more open discussions between various religious figures and organizations or scholars than Malaysia. Although religion is a matter of great concern to the authorities and intensively watched over, government policy in this domain is led by a greater cautiousness. Pluralism appears to be generally accepted in Indonesian religious life and this leads to more tolerance, dynamism and resilience than is the case in Malaysia. Maybe the long process of looking for a proper answer to the Darul Arqam question is a typical example of the *mufakat* (agreement) through *musyawarah* (consultation) principle!

This is not to deny, of course, the influence of some more mundane motives within the Indonesian government policy towards the Darul Arqam. By leaving the decision to lower level authorities, the Indonesian government managed to avoid a painful decision on an extremely sensitive political problem.[77] Another factor which made the Indonesian government hesitate to take a harsh stand towards the Darul Arqam was its desire to show that it did not slavishly imitate the steps of its neighbouring country.[78] Finally, there is the claim

of a former Malaysian member of al-Arqam that the particularly good relations between the Darul Arqam and President Soeharto also played a role in the Indonesian attitude to this movement. This claim, however, seems rather controversial.[79]

Thailand: Indifference to a Marginal Problem

In Thailand Muslims form only a small minority, consisting of various groups with rather different origins and traditions. Best known are the Malay Muslims of Southern Thailand, where they constitute the majority. However, Thai Islam is not limited to this community.[80] Although successive Thai governments have followed a policy, sometimes merciless, of cultural assimilationism, the Thai state guarantees freedom in religion.[81] Therefore, the authorities will never ban a religious movement for doctrinal reasons, but only if it constitutes a threat to national stability or security. Moreover, because Muslims form a small minority, not much attention is paid to them in government policy or public discussions, unless, again, national stability is at stake, as happened on several occasions with Muslim separatist groups in the South. At present, however, this separatism seems to have been almost wiped out.[82]

Most relations between the government and the Muslim community pass through the Central Committee for Islamic Affairs of Thailand, presided over by the *Chularâtchamontri* or State Adviser on Islamic Affairs. The Central Committee works in close co-operation with the Department of Religious Affairs, which falls under the joint jurisdiction of the Home Office and the Ministry of Education. Below the Central Committee, each province with a sufficiently large Muslim population has its Provincial Committee for Islamic Affairs. Among the main tasks of these central and provincial committees is the administration of all registered mosques.[83] If in 1988 Omar Farouk wrote that the authority of the *Chularâtchamontri* was not accepted by all Muslims in the country, since then his authority has declined even more, especially after his agency became involved in some questionable lucrative activities.[84] Regarding the development of al-Arqam, the *Chularâtchamontri* has not taken any initiative or particular attitude.[85]

After 1986, facing difficulties with the Malaysian authorities, Ashaari settled in Thailand.[86] Al-Arqam started to recruit adherents in the South. It approached the Muslim population through its reli-

gious leaders, but had little success. Then it moved to other regions, where it attracted a few more adherents, especially in Phuket and Chiang Mai. On the whole, however, its adherents have always remained limited.[87] In the end the Thai government began to observe its development out of fear of division of the Thai people. In particular when rumors spread about al-Arqam setting up military training camps in Thailand, various Thai authorities started to discuss the movement.[88] Things stopped there, however, because al-Arqam was banned in Malaysia and this made its organization almost disappear in Thailand, too.[89]

Two aspects of the development of al-Arqam in Thailand are worth further discussion: regional differences and the attitude of the Thai authorities.

As in Indonesia, in Thailand not all regions reacted to al-Arqam in the same way. In the South the movement mostly met with indifference; in some other places it had a little more success. Different reasons are given for this contrast. The continuing influence of the authority of the old religious establishment, the *tuan guru* with their *pondok*, in the South is mentioned as a factor by several sources. Similarly strong religious leadership does not exist in the rest of the country.[90] This religious establishment is not open to anything new in the field of religion. Because of their influence, the strategy of al-Arqam of approaching the population in the South through these leading figures was basically appropriate. Its failure to attract the religious leadership, however, practically meant failure to attract anybody. Another reason mentioned to explain why al-Arqam had little success in the South, is the more solid religious knowledge its inhabitants possess. This argument was advanced by a person from the South, however, and was relativised by interlocutors in Bangkok.[91] Maybe a conservative attitude to new developments in religion, caused partly by the strength of the old religious leadership, is represented by some people as a deeper knowledge of the true religion. A former al-Arqam member presented a still different point of view: he explained that Ashaari considered it more important to develop his movement in regions which lacked local religious leadership than in the south of the country.[92] Other factors mentioned why al-Arqam was less successful in the South were the strong influence of Wahabism, the weakness of mystical traditions in this region and the fact that Islam is under much closer surveillance in the South with its tradition of au-

tonomy movements.[93]

The attitude of the Thai authorities towards al-Arqam was characterized by indifference. In some regions al-Arqam developed good relations with the local authorities and in the beginning the Thai government may have considered the presence of Ashaari and his followers as a positive fact, counterbalancing the presence of Thai separatists in Malaysia.[94] As explained above, when negative reports began to spread about the movement, the Thai authorities started to pay a little more attention to it. In the end these authorities became sensitive to increasing Malaysian pressure to stop the activities of Ashaari and associates in the country. As a result, Ashaari had to leave Thailand and ended up in Malaysian custody.[95] High Thai authorities, among whom the Chief of Police played a prominent role, acquiesced on Ashaari's departure from their country within the framework of the "good relationship" between Thailand and Malaysia.

Thailand and Malaysia have been co-operating in security matters for several decades. In 1956 these countries established the General Border Committee to discuss security problems around their common border in annual meetings between ministers and high officials from both parties. The main points of discussion were the Communist Party of Malaya, which found refuge in Southern Thailand, and the Malay Muslim autonomy fighters from Southern Thailand, who received some support on the other side of the border. In 1965 both countries signed an agreement authorizing their security forces to pursue communist "terrorists" across the border of the other country and in 1977 a further agreement was signed relating to common military operations. In 1967 co-operation was established on a higher and enlarged level by the creation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This organization was set up as a framework for co-operation to guarantee the stability of its member countries, without interference in each other's internal affairs. Malaysia and Thailand have both been members of the ASEAN from the beginning. The threat of communism was one of the main matters of concern for the associated nations and, within the framework of the then dominant "domino theory", the Malaysian government considered Thailand to be the main bastion against the expansion of communism. Therefore, although on several occasions both parties have accused each other of not loyally implementing their co-operation agreements, the general tendency of both governments has been to

help each other in maintaining national stability and security and to withhold from interference in each other's domestic problems. The Malaysian government, for example, has refused, or at least limited, its support of the autonomy movement among Malay Muslims in Southern Thailand.[96] More recently, co-operation within the framework of the Indonesian-Malaysian-Thai Growth Triangle development project has become a further factor in the development of good relations between the Thai and the Malaysian authorities.[97]

After Ashaari's deportation to Malaysia, several Thai organizations and personalities launched protests. These protests, which were motivated more by a sense of human rights than by religious arguments, did not last longer than a few weeks, however.[98]

Although al-Arqam has never become a large movement in Thailand, nor a very important subject of discussion, it has left a positive impression with many Muslim intellectuals from Bangkok. All Thai persons interviewed in the Thai capital spoke in positive terms about the organization. They referred in particular to its economic activities and its aspiration to give a real form to Islam. They just regretted its conservatism or exaggeration in social life and clothing habits, for example, and certain unacceptable elements of its doctrine.[99]

Singapore: Unity in Pluralism

The Muslim community of Singapore comprises about 450,000 people, i.e., about 15% of the total population of about 3,000,000. The Acting Minister for Community Development and Senior Minister of State for Home Affairs has, as one of his tasks, to act as "Minister in Charge of Muslim Affairs". In this last role, he has three administrative agencies at his disposal: the *Sharī'ah* Court, the Registry of Muslim Marriages and the Majelis Ugama Islam Singapura (MUIS —Islamic Centre of Singapore). The last mentioned agency is a statutory body with a large degree of autonomy. It is headed by the MUIS Council, nominated for three years by the President of Singapore and composed of representatives of all the Muslim groups in the country.[100] The Singapore constitution guarantees freedom of religion and therefore Singapore authorities cannot ban certain religious groups. The MUIS is competent in the field of Islam. Therefore, it can declare a group which states itself to be Islamic as deviating and ban it, for this reason, from running its activities within the mosques. It cannot ban books, but may suggest that the Ministry of Information and the Arts should do so. The main task of the MUIS, however, is

to issue *fatwâ*s - the Mufti of Singapore, heading the *Fatwâ* Committee of the MUIS, is one of its officers - and offer advice to the Muslim community. The main responsibilities of the MUIS towards the State are to preserve harmonious relations —within the family as well as the Muslim community— and the stability of the state, as far as the Muslim community is concerned.[101]

Since its inauguration in 1968, the MUIS has played an increasingly prominent role in the social development of the Singapore Muslim community. It has acquired this importance most of all through its activities in the field of the collection and spending of *zakâh*, its handling of the *hajj* for all Singapore Muslims and the construction of large mosques in the new housing estates built within the framework of the Housing and Development Board program. The movement of large parts of the Muslim community into these new urban districts is one of the most conspicuous aspects of the ongoing process of its social and economic progress and integration into "mainstream" Singapore.[102]

For historical and geographical reasons, Singapore keeps in close contact with Malaysia, and religious developments in the latter country often have an effect on the former.[103]

In 1993 the MUIS issued its first *fatwâ* condemning al-Arqam. This measure was taken after it had received complaints from the public about rifts occurring within families where some members had adhered to al-Arqam. These rifts occurred because al-Arqam separates itself from other Muslims in its ritual practices. Before issuing the *fatwâ*, the MUIS conducted a study of al-Arqam. For this reason, it invited two Malaysian specialists to its office. The *fatwâ* declared that al-Arqam might lead to errors and division within the Muslim community and advised the Muslim population not to adhere to it. After Ashaari's arrest in Malaysia, the *fatwâ* was reissued with further details. In conformity with its competence, the MUIS banned al-Arqam from mosques and Muslim schools, and asked the Ministry of Information and the Arts to ban *Aurad Muhammadiah Pegangan Al-Arqam*. Today, only a few adherents remain in the country.[104]

From this short survey of the attitude of the Singapore authorities towards al-Arqam, we can make the following comments. Firstly, social reasons, relating to the unity of the family and the Muslim community, appear to be dominant among the motives of the action

against al-Arqam. In fact, the unity of the family is considered extremely important by both the Singapore authorities at large and the MUIS.[105] This principle, for its part, is related to the stability of society and the state.

Secondly, the MUIS stresses its role as a source of advice to the Muslim community.

Thirdly, the MUIS represents all groups within the Muslim community, similar to the situation in Indonesia and contrary to that in Malaysia. All were involved in the discussions and supported the results. As a small minority, in the process of catching up with the "mainstream" in Singapore, the Muslim community is forced to stay united in its pluralism.[106]

Conclusion

This article was not aimed primarily at analyzing the Darul Arqam movement, but at developing a better understanding of the differences and similarities of various Southeast Asian countries in the field of Islam. Firstly, comparisons have been made related to the quantitative position of the Muslim community within the total population of each country and the official position of Islam within the state. Next, the institutional systems, government policies, and styles of religious life of the countries have been explained and compared. Apart from differences between countries, differences between regions and between various Islamic traditions within the same country have also been brought to light. It has been shown that these were more distinct or better acknowledged in some countries than in others. There is no need to repeat the details of these findings in this conclusion.

As for the relations between the various countries in the field of Islam, these have existed since the very beginning of the development of this religion in the region. Today, these relations may well be in the process of intensification. At the government level they have been institutionalized since 1989 in the MABIMS, i.e. the [meetings of] Menteri-Menteri Agama Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia dan Singapura (Ministers of Religious Affairs of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore), also attended by observers from Thailand and the Philippines.[107]

To close this article, it is interesting to develop this question of official contacts between the governments of the region in connection with the Darul Arqam. Several newspapers speculated on the

Fifth MABIMS meeting held on the island of Langkawi, Malaysia, in early August 1994. A number of people assumed that the Malaysian government would exploit this occasion to put pressure on its neighbouring countries to support and follow its Darul Arqam policy.[108] According to two Thai observers at the meeting whom I interviewed, however, the meeting was instead used to exchange information rather than to decide on any common policy against the Darul Arqam.[109] Also, outside the framework of the MABIMS or its preparatory senior officials meeting, information was exchanged between the different governments and religious organizations from different countries. However, most involved parties insisted on their independence in handling the Darul Arqam question.[110]

The co-operation in religious affairs between various governments of the region often becomes part of policies of a larger order, also covering the domain of security, among other questions. A point in case is the Thai-Malaysian convention on security in the border region, mentioned above as a possible factor in the Malaysian influence on Thai policy against Ashaari and his movement. A similar case is the Malaysian decision to adopt a less favorable attitude towards members of the Acehnese autonomy movement who seek refuge to this country, which might be linked to a similar attitude from the Indonesian authorities towards Malaysian al-Arqam members. Rumors are circulated about an agreement to this effect between both countries, but it seems impossible to obtain details. Explicitly stated as one of the objectives of the MABIMS meetings, however, is the prevention of religious developments from being overheated and infiltrated by hardliner groups coming either from inside or outside the Southeast Asian region.[111]

Finally, we have noted the Indonesian-Malaysian-Thai Growth Triangle project, focussing on economic development, as another example of broader co-operation which influenced the policy of the governments concerned towards the Darul Arqam.

At a lower level, in order to support their standpoint on the Darul Arqam, Malaysian religious authorities provided information to institutions and organizations in the neighbouring countries. We have seen that the Singapore MUIS invited two Malaysian experts. As for the Indonesian authorities, one of the documents they referred to in order to form an opinion on the Darul Arqam was Hashim A. Ghani's *Aurad Muhammadiah Menyeleweng*, published in Kuala Pilah, Malaysia.[112] Furthermore, it is interesting to note that an Indonesian

Nahdlatul Ulama delegation once paid a visit to the Malaysian Islamic Affairs Department. However, the two parties could not agree on the correct attitude towards the Darul Arqam. In particular, they could not agree on the proper term to categorize the Darul Arqam, *sesat* (deviating) or not.[113]

These contacts, once again, show that the Muslim communities of Southeast Asia face similar problems and maintain close relations, but are not identical and would not wish to be so.

List of Abbreviations (titles of periodicals cited)
BP : *Bangkok Post* (daily, Bangkok)
HT : *Harian Terbit* (daily, Jakarta)
JP : *Jakarta Post* (daily, Jakarta)
KO : *Kompas* (daily, Jakarta)
MD: *Media Dakwah* (monthly, Jakarta)
PE : *Pelita* (daily, Jakarta)
RE : *Republika* (daily, Jakarta)
SP : *Sunday Post* (Sunday edition *Bangkok Post*)

List of Interviews
(place and date of interview in brackets)
1. Saifullah S.A., Lecturer, Institut Agama Islam Negeri Imam Bonjol, Padang, Indonesia (Padang, 12-06-1995)
2. Moestamir Makmoer, Secretary-General Majelis Ulama Indonesia West Sumatra, Padang, Indonesia (Padang, 12-06-1995)
3. Mohd. Murat Md. Aris, Public Relations Officer, and Md. Yusuf B.H. Zuhri, Director of Religious Education, Majelis Ugama Islam Singapore (Singapore, 19-06-1995)
4. Officials (wishing to remain anonymous) of the Unit Akidah dan Ajaran Sesat, Pusat Penyelidikan Islam, Bahagian Hal Ehwal Agama Islam, Jabatan Perdana Menteri, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur, 20-06-1995)
5. Sharifah Zaleha binte Syed Hassan, Lecturer, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia (Bangi, 20-06-1995)
6. Ismail Ali, Director of the College of Islamic Studies, Prince of Songhla University, Pattani, Thailand (Pattani, 22-06-1995)
7. Abdulwahab Abdulwahab, President of the Islamic Comittee of Pattani Province and Senator of Thailand, Thailand (Pattani, 22-06-1995)
8. Imtiyaz Yusuf, Lecturer, Center for Human Resources Development, Faculty of Graduate Studies, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand (23-06-1995 - 25-06-1995)
9. Jaran Maluleem, Lecturer, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand and Editor of the Thai Muslim periodical *Tangnam* (Bangkok, 23-06-1995)
10. Kasem Adchasai, Managing Editor, Thai daily *Krungthep Turakij*, Bangkok, Thailand (Bangkok, 24-06-1995)
11. Arong Suthasasna, Professor, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand (Bangkok, 25-06-1995)
12. Former al-Arqam member, Malaysia (mid-1995) (further details omitted to protect source)

Endnotes

*   This article is an improved version of a paper presented at the first EUROSEAS
    Conference, Leiden, 29 June - 1 July 1995. I would like to express my grateful-
    ness to Darul Aqsha, Jakarta, and Imtiyaz Yusuf, Bangkok, who provided me
    with newspaper clippings; Imtiyaz Yusuf also was of great help in arranging
    interviews in Bangkok.

1. See for example Sharifah Zaleha binte Syed Hassan, *The Revival of Islam in Post-
   Independence Malaysia: A Case Study of the Al Arqam Movement*, presented as a
   paper to the same EUROSEAS conference, pp. 5 ff.

2. *Cf.* Chandra Muzaffar, *Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia* (Selangor: Fajar Bakti, 1987),
   pp. 45 f.; Asep Zaenal Ausop, *Dar al-Arqam. Ajaran dan Gerakannya* [Dar al-
   Arqam. Its Doctrine and Movement], unpublished paper, seminar History of
   Islam in Southeast Asia, postgraduate programme, IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah,
   Jakarta, pp. 7 f.

3. Also spelt As Suhaimi, Suhaimi, as-Suhaemi and Suhaemi.

4. On As-Suhaimi see "As Suhaimi, sang Imam Mahdi?", MD, Sept. 1994, p. 48 f.
   (for explanation of the abbreviations of periodical titles see the annex at the end
   of the article).

5. This part of the Darul Arqam doctrine is presented in detail in Muhammad
   Ashaari, *Aurad Muhammadiah Pegangan Darul Arqam* (Kuala Lumpur:
   Penerangan Al Arqam, 1986).

6. See for example the excerpt in MD, Sept. 1994 of the "dialogue of Ashaari with
   the Prophet" as reported by Ashaari to the Majelis Syuyukh Al-Arqam in Thai-
   land at the end of 1993 and published by the Malaysian Islamic Affairs Depart-
   ment, and also *Utusan Malaysia*, 06-08-1994.

7. Sharifah Zaleha, *op. cit.*, p. 7. Mawardi Noor, a Muslim preacher from Jakarta,
   quoted a much lower figure for its adherents in Malaysia: only about 3,000 (PE,
   29-07-1994).

8. JP, 19-07-1994; article by N.S. Talib in SP, 06-11-1994. These numbers are diffi-
   cult to verify; some give much higher, others lower estimates.

9. Compare the article by M.G.G. Pillai in BP, 03-08-1994 and N.S. Talib in SP, 06-
   11-1994.

10. For a complete list of these countries see JP, 19-07-1994. All numbers and amounts
    given should be considered with care because the different estimates have be-
    come a part of the conflict surrounding the Darul Arqam.

11. One of the reasons why this shorter name is often preferred in these countries, is
    to avoid confusion with another "Darul Arqam" organization which is active in
    Singapore in the field of *da'wah* among non-Muslims and has nothing to do with
    the movement studied in this article (distinction stressed in an interview with
    Mohd. Murat Md. Aris and Md. Yusuf B.H. Zuhri, Singapore, 19-06-1995 [For
    details of all persons interviewed see the List of Interviews at the end of this
    article]). Other variants of the name are Al Arqam and, still shorter, Arqam,
    whereas the longer name "Jemaah Darul Arqam" is also used. The name "Darul
    Arqam" [*Dâr al-Arqam*, i.e. House of al-Arqam] refers to the house of a certain
    al-Arqam in Mecca, which served as the main meeting place of the Muslim com-
    munity at an early stage in its development.

12. Fred R. von der Mehden, "Malaysia. Islam and Multiethnic Polities", in John L.
    Esposito (ed.), *Islam in Asia. Religion, Politics, and Society* (New York/Oxford:
    Oxford University Press), 1987, p. 187; Hussin Mutalib, *Islam and Ethnicity in
    Malay Politics* (Singapore etc.: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 1.

13. On Islam and ethnicity in Malay politics, see Mutalib, *op. cit.*
14. *Op. cit.*, p. 1. Malacca and Penang also have Islamic religious councils (majlis agama Islam), although they have no sultan. The federal king (yang dipertuan agung) is the head of the Islamic religion in these two states (Othman bin Haji Ishak, *Fatwa dalam Perundangan Islam [Fatwâs* in Islamic Legislation] (Kuala Lumpur: Fajar Bakti, 1981), pp. 34 ff.). Most states have their own committee of [Islamic] religious law or *"fatwâ* committees" (jawatankuasa undang-undang agama; Johore has none) and *muftî (op. cit.*, pp. 27 ff.).
15. Strictly speaking the "Pusat Islam" is the complex of buildings where the Islamic Affairs Department, and a number of other public administrations relating to the Islamic religion, are housed.
16. See details below.
17. See note 14 and Othman, *op. cit.*, pp. 27 ff. for more details.
18. The Majlis Fatwa Kebangsaan (National *Fatwâ* Council) and the Majlis Kebangsaan bagi Hal Ehwal Agama Islam (National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs), formerly the Jabatan Agama Islam Wilayah Persekutuan (Islamic Religious Department of the Federal Territory), respectively.
19. *Cf.* Othman, *op. cit.*, pp. 172 f.; Hussin Mutalib, Islam in Malaysia. *From Revivalism to Islamic State* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1993), p. 36; and the procedure of the issuing of *fatwâs* against al-Arqam as reported below.
20. On conflicts in Islamic regulation and policy between various states or between the Federation and the states, see Othman, *op. cit.*, pp. 173 ff.; von der Mehden, *op. cit.*, pp. 186 ff.
21. Othman, *op. cit.*, pp. 29 ff., who mentions the state of Perlis as an exception (*op. cit.*, p. 45).
22. Apart from the references already mentioned, details on Muslim institutions in Malaysia were obtained from the Unit Akidah dan Ajaran Sesat, Pusat Penyelidikan Islam, Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam, Kuala Lumpur, interview 20-06-1995.
23. The Islamic Affairs Department depicts this decision as Ashaari's flight; in doing so he declined invitations for new discussions with the Federal Agency for the Islamic Religion and the Islamic Affairs Department (Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam, Jabatan Perdana Menteri, *Penyelewengan Arqam dari Ajaran Islam* [Arqam's Deviation from Islamic Teaching] (Kuala Lumpur, 1994), p. 3). However, people close to Ashaari state that he left Malaysia in the interests of the whole Muslim community of this country, i.e., in order to diminish the tension that had developed among its members (interview with a former al-Arqam member from Malaysia, mid-1995).
24. At his visit to the Pusat Islam (Islamic Affairs Department) on 20-06-1995, the author of this article was shown videotapes of lectures by Khalid Jaafar and Roshdi Yusof, among others, denouncing al-Arqam. For their lectures, the former members are offered high fees by the Islamic Affairs Department (interview with a former Malaysian member of al-Arqam - not one of those who later became involved in this anti-al-Arqam propaganda).
25. RE, 03-09-1994.
26. Except for Pahang, which followed on 22 September. For details see Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam, *Penyelewengan Arqam dari Ajaran Islam*, last annex. For the proclamation at the national level, see SP, 11-09-1994.
27. Such smooth co-ordination in religious policy was not always the case, as pointed out by Othman and von der Mehden (see note 20 for exact references).

28. Interview with the Unit Akidah dan Ajaran Sesat. The chronology of the different actions against al-Arqam is found in Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam, *op. cit.* and an earlier version of this brochure, published by the same institution, entitled *Penyelewengan Aqidah Darul Arqam* [The Darul Arqam Doctrinal Deviation] (Kuala Lumpur, 1993).

29. On this televised "confession", see BP, 21, 22-10-1994. As well as some of his adherents, some other groups and individuals doubted this alleged confession (such as the Malay human rights organization Suaram, see BP, 22-10-1994; *cf.* SP, 18-09-1994 on distrust of earlier police declarations of Ashaari's confession). One source even stated that his actual words did not really contain a confession but rather continuously avoided the questions of his interlocutors (interview with Sharifah Zaleha binte Syed Hassan, Bangi, 20-06-1995).

30. This was the case of Akhbar Anang, a radical person of secular education, who wanted to realize an Islamic society by violent means, opposing the more peaceful strategy of Ashaari, a person of religious education and strongly influenced by Sufism. In the end, Akhbar Anang was expelled from al-Arqam by Ashaari (interview with a former Malaysian member of al-Arqam).

31. This was the case of Khalid Jaafar, who, after having filled a high position within the al-Arqam organization, could not accept being assigned a lower position by Ashaari, in conformity with his training policy which aimed at the education of humility. Khalid Jaafar then left al-Arqam. Several years later Mochtar Yaakob left the movement after people facing similar deceptions had vested their hopes for promotion in him (same interview).

32. The last problem was the case of Roshdi Yusof, who left al-Arqam after being criticized for his unbounded interest in money and women (same interview). Therefore, the claim that the conflicts within al-Arqam were struggles for power, as expressed by Sharifah Zaleha, *op. cit.*, p. 9 is not easy to accept.

33. Interview with the Unit Akidah dan Ajaran Sesat.

34. Same source.

35. On this last explanation, see the article by N.S. Talib in SP, 06-11-1994.

36. *Op. cit.* This article mentions the economic success of al-Arqam as the reason why the Kelantan government intervened against it.

37. Published in Thai, also known by the Arabic title *al-Hidayah* or the English *Islamic Guidance Post*. This incrimination was made on 8 September 1994 and used as a direct justification for the first raid on an al-Arqam community on the following day (BP, 10-09-1994).

38. Among them the Inspector-General of the Malaysian Police (article by Talib in SP, 06-11-1994, cited above), the editor of *Tangnam* (Jaran Maluleem, interview, Bangkok, 23-06-1995) and other people interviewed in Thailand (Ismail Ali, Pattani, 22-06-1995; Abdulwahab Abdulwahab, Pattani, 22-06-1995; Arong Suthasasna, Bangkok, 25-06-1995).

39. Opinion of Arong Suthasasna, interview cited.

40. As mentioned by Sharifah Zaleha, *op. cit.*, p. 7, among others.

41. *Cf.* JP, 27-08-1994; article by M.G.G. Pillai in BP, 17-08-1994; interview, Malaysia, 20-06-1995, with a person (whom I shall not identify) who claims that Mahathir has always survived on crises.

42. Cited Article by N.S. Talib in SP, 6-11-1994.

43. Such as the Internal Security Act, under which Ashaari and a group of close followers were detained in early September 1994 and which allows indefinite detention without trial (see BP, 10-09-1994, 24-09-1994); the Secret Societies Act,

drawn up in the 1950s to combat communism (BP, 08-08-1994). In September 1994 many more al-Arqam members were arrested and later released on bail on charges ranging from violating marriage rules to distributing outlawed literature; members who refused to quit the banned organization were also threatened with imprisonment for up to three months and six strokes of the cane under Malaysian "Islamic laws" ... (BP, 24-09-1994).

44. The second version has a slightly different title with almost the same sense: *Penyelewengan Arqam dari Ajaran Islam* [Arqam's Deviation from Islamic Teaching]; see note 23 and 28 for bibliographical details.

45. *Penyelewengan Arqam*, annex.

46. *Op. cit.*, pp. 12, 16.

47. *Op. cit.*, p. 13.

48. These elements were stressed, for example, by the officials of the Islamic Affairs Department, Unit Akidah dan Ajaran Sesat, whom I interviewed on 20-06-1995.

49. Interview, Malaysia, 20-06-1995 (significantly, the people interviewed in Malaysia asked me not to report their names, at least in relation to certain details).

50. As pointed out by Nash, Manning, in "Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia and Indonesia", in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds), *Fundamentalism Observed* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1991) [The Fundamentalism Project. Vol. 1], p. 724.

51. *Op. cit.*, pp. 699, 726 f.; *cf.* M. Din Syamsuddin, "Islamic Political Thought and Cultural Revival in Modern Indonesia", *Studia Islamika*, 2 (4) (Oct.-Dec. 1995), p. 55.

52. By developing Nash's argument in this way, we may partly meet Saiful Muzani's objection to Nash's analysis that it does not explain why the Malaysian government took an oppressive stand towards al-Arqam (*cf.* Saiful Muzani, "Identitas Negara-Bangsa dan Kebangkitan Islam. Perbandingan Malaysia dan Indonesia" [Identity of the Nation-State and Islamic Revival. A Comparison of Malaysia and Indonesia] [review article on Nash, *op. cit.*], *Studia Islamika*, 1 (2) (July-Sept. 1994), p. 182).

53. *Cf. op. cit.*, pp. 700 f.

54. As reported in BP, 03-08-1994.

55. Such as Suaram (SP, 08-08-1994).

56. Such as one of the opposition parties, the Partai Aksi Demokratik, which declared that use of the Internal Security Act against Ashaari violated human rights (KO, 04-09-1994).

57. Sharifah Zaleha, *op. cit.*, pp. 2 ff.

58. However, in some provinces the MUI issued a fatwâ against the movement, e.g. in North Sumatra in 1991 (RE, 22-08-1994).

59. *Cf.* KO, 10-08-1994.

60. The data mentioned in this paragraph are based on an interview with Moestamir Makmoer, Secretary-General of the MUI of West Sumatra, Padang, 12-06-1995; copies of the decisions mentioned which he provided to me; and several newspapers.

61. *Cf.* JP, 26-08-1994; BP, 26-08-1994, 08-10-1994.

62. JP, 26-08-1994.

63. The texts of both documents, as specified above.

64. See e.g. JP, 27-08-1994; SP, 28-08-1994.

65. See RE, 12-08-1994, 22-08-1994; KO, 13-08-1994; PE, 13-08-1994, 18-08-1994; BP, 26-08-1994; SP, 28-08-1994; article by Lukman Harun in PE, 10-08-1994; article

by Azyumardi Azra in JP, 31-08-1994; several articles in MD, Sept. 1994.
66. KO, 13-08-1994; PE, 18-08-1994.
67. Such as Nurcholish Madjid, Dawam Rahardjo and Dahlan Ranuwihardjo (JP, 15-08-1994; MD, Sept. 1994).
68. Interview with Saifullah S.A., Padang, 12-06-1995.
69. JP, *loc. cit.*
70. Text of the decision; KO, 14-08-1994; PE, HT, 15-08-1994; article by Nashir Maqsudi in MD, Sept. 1994. The President of the national MUI, Hasan Basri, after this long awaited decision, even declared that the matter was no longer in the hands of the ulama and that the MUI would not be disappointed if in the end the government did not ban the Darul Arqam (JP, 15-08-1994).
71. Nash, *op. cit.*, p. 717.
72. *O. c.*, pp. 715 ff. In general, we can follow Nash's argument. However, those parts of his argument which lean heavily on the controversial theories of Clifford Geertz should be greeted with caution (*cf.* Muzani, op. cit., pp. 183 f.; Robert W. Hefner, "Modernity and the Challenge of Pluralism: Some Indonesian Lessons", *Studia Islamika*, 2 (4) (Oct.-Dec. 1995), p. 41).
73. Nash, *op. cit.*, p. 724.
74. Hefner, *op. cit.*, pp. 37, 41; Robert W. Hefner, "Islam, State, and Civil Society: ICMI and the Struggle for the Indonesian Middle Class", Indonesia, 56 (October 1993), pp. 6 f. Similarly; Mitsuo Nakamura, *The Emergence of Islamizing Middle Class and the Dialectics of Political Islam in the New Order of Indonesia: Prelude to Formation of the ICMI*, unpublished paper presented at the Conference on Islam and the Social Construction of Identities: Comparative Perspectives on Southeast Asian Muslims, University of Hawaii, 4-6 August 1993, especially pp. 8 f., 22 f., 26 ff. *Cf.* R. William Liddle, *Islam and Politics in Late New Order Indonesia*, unpublished paper presented at the Conference on Religion and Society in the Modern World: Islam in Southeast Asia, Jakarta, 29-31 May 1995, organized by the Indonesian Institute of Science (LIPI), American-Indonesian Exchange Foundation (AMINEF) and IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Conference on Religion and Society in the Modern World, Jakarta, 1995, p. 4.
75. See for example, the discussion on the police raid of the Haur Koneng Sect in Majalengka, West Java, 28 July 1993, as reported in *INIS Newsletter* (Jakarta/Leiden), 10 (1993), pp. 88 ff.
76. The absence of a free multi-party system and a free press, the prominent role of the Armed Forces in various sectors of life and the huge power of the President negatively affect the image of Indonesia from the viewpoint of democracy.
77. My attention was attracted to this point by Lizzy van Leeuwen during discussion of the original version of this text at the 1995 EUROSEAS conference.
78. Article by Azyumardi Azra in JP, 31-08-1994. See for example a declaration of the Indonesian Minister of Religious Affairs, reported in JP, 27-07-1994 and the Indonesian Attorney-General, referring to the Indonesian Co-ordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs, reported in JP and RE, 09-08-1994.
79. Claim voiced by the former Malaysian member of al-Arqam whom I interviewed. The Indonesian government declared that the Darul Arqam abused a meeting it once had with President Soeharto by publishing photos of this encounter, said to depict their cordial relationship (abuse denounced by the Indonesian Minister of Religious Affairs on 26 July 1994, among other occasions, as reported in JP, 27-07-1994). The former al-Arqam member interviewed claimed that this "official" standpoint did not represent the "real" attitude of the Indonesian govern-

ment.

80. For a general survey of the Muslims in Thailand, their number, their composition and their principal institutions, see Farouk, Omar, "The Muslims of Thailand - A Survey", in Andrew D.W. Forbes (ed.), *The Muslims of Thailand* (Gaya (Bihar, India): Centre for South East Asian Studies, 1988), Vol. 1, pp. 1-30.

81. *Op. cit.*, p. 26.

82. Interview with Ismail Ali, Pattani, 21-06-1995.

83. Farouk, *op. cit.*, pp. 20 ff.

84. Such as the rapid conversion to Islam of Thai Buddhist candidates for work in Saudi Arabia when the offer of Muslim labor was insufficient to satisfy the demand (interview with Kasem Adchasai, Bangkok, 24-06-1994).

85. Same interview.

86. In the beginning, however, he still made frequent visits to Malaysia (interview with a former Malaysian member of al-Arqam).

87. BP, 11-08-1994; SP, 23-10-1994; various interviews.

88. Interview with Abdulwahab Abdulwahab, who, in his role as senator, discussed the question with the Commander-in-Chief of the Thai Armed Forces, also a senator; BP, 13-08-1994.

89. A small community remains in Phuket (same interview).

90. Interview with Ismail Ali; interview with Jaran Maluleem; *cf.* W.K. Che Man, Muslim Separatism. *The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand* (Singapore etc.: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 136 f.

91. Opinion of Ismail Ali (interview), relativised in particular by Imtiyaz Yusuf (interview, Bangkok, 23-06-1995 till 25-06-1995).

92. Interview with a former Malaysian member of al-Arqam.

93. Interview with Jaran Maluleem (on Wahabism); interview with Kasem Adchasai (on the absence of a strong mystical tradition); interview with a former Malaysian member of al-Arqam (on the closer surveillance).

94. According to Arong Suthasasna, interview.

95. Several stories have been circulated about what happened in the end with Ashaari as a result of this Malaysian pressure. The correct version seems to be as follows. Thai security officials advised him to leave for a third country. In accordance with this advice, Ashaari left for Jordan. Shortly afterwards, however, he decided to go back to Malaysia via Thailand in order to directly face the authorities in his home country. However, he was prevented from realizing this plan because he was arrested while still on Thai territory by Thai police, in co-operation with Malaysian security forces. By this action, these latter forces wanted to avoid Ashaari would landing at a Malaysian airport and being welcomed by a large mass of supporters (interview with a former Malaysian member of al-Arqam). Stories also differ concerning the involvement of the Thai Home Minister, Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, and his deputy, Den Tohmina, in this or their knowledge of the Thai police plan to act against Ashaari. They are generally believed to have adopted a favorable attitude towards Ashaari and his movement.

96. Mohd. Zamberi A. Malek, *Umat Islam Patani. Sejarah dan Politik* [The Muslim Community of Pattani. History and Politics] (Shah Alam: Hizbi, 1993), pp. 365 ff.; 380 ff. This tradition of co-operation of both countries in security matters was mentioned as a factor in their co-operation against the al-Arqam in the interviews with Jaran Maluleem and Kasem Adchasai.

97. Interviews with Jaran Maluleem and Kasem Adchasai.

98. BP, 10-09-1994 (on protests by the Muslim Lawyers Club), 06-10-1994 (on a panel discussion); interviews with Kasem Adchasai and Arong Suthasasna. *Cf.* note 95 on possible differences of attitude among Thai authorities.

99. Interviews with Jaran Maluleem, Kasem Adchasai, Arong Suthasasna. The last mentioned person declared that if it detaches itself somewhat from its teaching on the *Mahdî*, al-Arqam has a bright future and will develop great power.

100. Interview with Mohd. Murat Md. Aris and Md. Yusuf B.H. Zuhri, Singapore, 19-06-1995. On the administration of Islam in Singapore and its historical background, see also Sharon Siddique, "The Administration of Islam in Singapore", in Taufik Abdullah and Sharon Siddique (eds), *Islam and Society in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), pp. 315-331. The administration of Islam is based on the Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA, 1966). Siddique (*op. cit.*, p. 326) mentions that the proposals of some members of the Select Committee preparing the AMLA to establish a still more direct influence of Muslim organizations on the appointment of the MUIS members were rejected.

101. Interview with Mohd. Murat Md. Aris and Md. Yusuf B.H. Zuhri; Siddique, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

102. Siddique, *op. cit.*, pp. 326 ff; Sharon Siddique, Being Muslim in Singapore: Change, Community and Consciousness, unpublished paper presented at the Conference on Religion and Society in the Modern World, Jakarta, 1995; interview with Mohd. Murat Md. Aris and Md. Yusuf B.H. Zuhri.

103. Interview with Mohd. Murat Md. Aris and Md. Yusuf B.H. Zuhri.

104. Same interview; text *fatwâ* 27 July 1994.

105. Same interview.

106. Same interview.

107. See for example PE, 05-07-1994; RE, 05-07-1994, 07-07-1994.

108. For example SP, 31-07-1994; PE, RE, 04-08-1994; BP, 11-08-1994.

109. Interviews with Ismail Ali and Abdulwahab Abdulwahab.

110. For example the Indonesian authorities mentioned in note 78.

111. As stated by the Indonesian Minister of Religious Affairs: Tarmizi Taher, "Changing the Image of Islam and the Muslim World (Indonesian Experience)", public lecture presented at Harvard University, Boston, 8 Nov. 1995, p. 14.

112. Hashim A. Ghani, *Aurad Muhammadiah Menyeleweng* [The *Aurad Muhammadiah* are deviating] (Kuala Pilah (Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia), s.a. [1988]) (republished later under the title *Kesesatan Darul Arqam* [The Deviation of Darul Arqam]). At least, I found that this book was used by the MUI of West Sumatera and was also circulated in Jakarta.

113. The main problem was that the NU delegation feared that this term would place the Darul Arqam outside the Islamic community, whereas their Malaysian interlocutors emphasized that this was not what they intended to do (interview with the Unit Akidah dan Ajaran Sesat [sic!]). The MUIS of Singapore also avoided the term *sesat* and preferred *menyeleweng* (interview with Mohd. Murat Md. Aris and Md. Yusuf B.H. Zuhri). In fact, as is apparent from its publications, the Malaysian Islamic Affairs Department uses both terms.

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