

# STUDIA ISLAMIKA

INDONESIAN JOURNAL FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES

Volume I, Number 2, 1994



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ISLAM AND PARTY POLITICS IN RURAL JAVA

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GUARDING THE FAITH OF THE *UMMAH*:  
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STUDIA ISLAMIKA (ISSN 0215-0492) is a Journal published quarterly by *Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN, The State Institute for Islamic Studies)* Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, (STI DEPPEN No. 129/SK/DITJEN/PPG/STI/1976) and sponsored by the Department of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. It specializes in Indonesian Islamic studies, and is intended to communicate original researches and current issues on the subject. This journal warmly welcomes contributions from scholars of related disciplines. All articles published do not necessarily represent the views of the journal, or other institutions to which it is affiliated. They are solely the views of the authors.

## Building Inter-Religious Tolerance Among Indonesians

*The relationship between religion and state has influenced all of Indonesian society. Within the Indonesian context, these relationships have undergone several changes and created certain modes from time to time. During the Old Order, pre-1965, religion generally had a strained relationship with the state. The idea of an Islamic state, as proposed by some Muslim politicians was partly responsible for creating such a situation. Muslims were divided into fractions between those supportive to this idea and these who were not. In the mean time, other parties suspected these divided Muslims of having threatened their position as members of this nation. As a result, a traumatic experience was born from the conflict.*

*The New Order government, post-1966, did not want to repeat this miserable political situation. It proposed political and social policies leading to national reconciliation and development. The key concept proposed by the government was inter-religious tolerance.*

*Dr. Tarmizi Taber has been deeply involved in the New Order government. His career started in the Naval forces, to which he drafted himself after finishing at Medical School in Airlangga University, Surabaya. His last position in the Navy was as head of the Center for Spiritual Guidance and Consolling (PUSBINTAL). Before being appointed to his present post, as Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, he was Secretary General of this department.*

**C**ould you describe your views about the religious life of the *ummah* in present day Indonesia?

The outstanding feature of the *ummah's* religious life at the present time is that the roles of Muslim intellectuals and politicians are being properly played. To gain a better understanding about this, we have to compare the religious situation at the time of colonialism and in independent Indonesia. One of the salient features of Dutch colonial politics regarding religion was to distance indigenous intellectuals from their own religion. In so doing, the colonial educational system undertaken run an intensive process of secularization starting with primary schools. Many Muslims graduated from HIS (*Hollandsch Inlandsche School*) and as a consequence, did not understand their religion and were not happy to be considered Muslims. Such a process was systematically planned and intended by the colonial government. The victims were of course the Indonesian Muslim *ummah*.

If we look at the Muslim generation in any country during colonial occupation, their very nature is that, as intellectuals, they do not possess a sense of

pride of being Muslims and even feel inferior that they are seen as Muslims. They are prouder to think and behave in a Western manner. In Indonesia, this politics was further supported by the rule on citizenship levels applied by the Dutch. There was a first, second and third class citizens. The first class citizens were Europeans; the second class were foreign orients, such as Chinese, Arabs, or Japanese; and the third class were the indigenous Indonesian or *inlander* or *bumiputera*. In one way or another, the lowest class, the indigenous people, were striving to reach the high class with all its consequences. Education seemed to provide such a mean of vertical mobilization for them. The politics of religion is therefore combined with the politics of citizenship.

As we have gained independence, religion has been introduced at all levels of education from primary, secondary and high schools, up to tertiary education. In effect, all students and moreover, intellectuals, do not forget their religion. This is clear. The outcome of the education system, which has introduced religion since the start of its teaching, is us ourselves in the present day. There-

fore, the process of change in religious life of today is a historical necessity, in which this republic is struggling to recover the very basic right of its people i.e. the right to adhere to and study religion, of which we were deprived by the Dutch colonial power.

*Among other, what the dominant factor that provided such a change, especially regarding Muslim intellectuals feelings pride of being Muslim?*

The decisive factor in the increase in consciousness among Muslim intellectuals is that whatever role they may hold, religious values are in fact indispensable and provide answers to critical problems.

*But why is the political relationship between Muslims and the government not always smooth? The first years of the New Order, for instance, are often seen as a difficult time for Muslims. The government applied restrictions on the Muslim ummah resulting in the narrowing of opportunities for Muslims to participate in the national political arena.*

That has to be analyzed from the point of views of the establishment of this state. In my

opinion, as our state's fate is democratic, we cannot avoid selecting one of several choices regarding the relationship between the state and religion. The influential choice at that time was a secular state. Almost all modern states established after World War II are secular. This is why many Muslim states or kingdoms finally turned out to be secular. However, as religion had a deep influence on Indonesian culture, our state ideology was neither secular nor religious in terms of theocracy. This is the salient feature of the role of Indonesian intellectuals and religious leaders in the Council for Independence Preparation (BPK).

In the following periods, some parties were not satisfied with the formula. They felt that the state had to be based on Islamic principles, because the majority of the Indonesian population are Muslim. This view resulted in rebellions which only caused Indonesians to be traumatized with Islam. To a large extent, the role and interest of individual leaders are dominant in such rebellions. We can prove that most of the attempts to make Islam the state ideology were driven by individual ambitions. In fact, within the Indonesian context, individual

ambition is not approved of by 'ulamā', intellectuals and people in general.

For that reason, these movements never last long. Connected to this problem, at the beginning of the New Order, after the failure of the communist coup, the government acted with caution. Based on the pendulum theory, the left swing of the pendulum was over, and they did not want to see the pendulum swing to the extreme right. This meant that the government cautiously investigated every possibility that might cause any religious system to become the state ideology. We have already agreed that Indonesia is neither a secular nor a religious state such as Iran and other.

*Was it because of individual ambition that Islamic political parties always failed to gain majority of the vote?*

I have read the biographies of the rebellion leaders. I found that most of these leaders were people who always wanted to be number one in any organization. If they were placed in different positions, they would withdraw themselves from their initial organization. Within the context of the *ummah* union, Muslim conflicts always emerge

in terms of dual rivalry such as NU (*Nahdlatul Ulama*) and Muhammadiyah. The organizations or conflicts are always colored by the inclinations of its leaders.

Nowadays, NU and Muhammadiyah emerge as a process of convergence. This is because of the roles of K.H. Ilyas Ruhiyat, the late K.H. Azhar Basyir, Dr. Anwar Haryono and K.H. Hasan Basri. These people determined the whole condition of the organizations. When people realize that these leaders have harmonious relationship, they will automatically follow them. However, if the successors of these leaders are people with great individual interests, the situation of the *ummah* will definitely change. However, the rest of the *ummah* in Indonesia are still heavily dependent on their leaders.

*What is your opinion if people, especially foreign researchers, are of the opinion that the present Indonesian government is in a "honeymoon" period in its relations with the Muslim community?*

Of course, such an analysis only arises from an assumption that Islam is a threat. It does

not correctly place the historical process of the development of Indonesian Muslim intellectuals and politicians. It views Islam fearfully, due to the fact that at the beginning of independence the Muslim community was left behind but now it holds a front line national position. Therefore, this kind of opinion exists side by side with a monolithic view of Islam: an image that receives wide coverage in Western media. This is an unfortunate view. People have to know about the real situation of Indonesian Muslims, who constitute the largest Muslim population in the world. Islam has never been involved in any kind of violence or holy war since its establishment in this country. Meanwhile, they also have to understand the diversity of Islam: Middle Eastern Islam, Central Asian Islam, Chinese Islam and so forth. No Islamic revenge or anti-Western movement exists in Indonesia.

*However, the fact that the Muslim community has a close relationship with the government may affect the feelings of adherents of other religions.*

Indeed, the Muslim community needs time to prove to other

religion that they will be treated equally. As long as the others maintain decent behavior, the Muslim community will never be aggressive. Conversely, if the others begin to progress their ambitions, such as is often stated: "We want to bring our mission to the whole world", the Muslim community will react aggressively. The important thing, in order to maintain the situation, it is to prevent individual or group aggressiveness from gaining momentum. Indonesian Muslims, who constitute the majority of the population, are the model party. As long as Indonesian Muslims do not exhibit any aggressiveness, other parties will not have any prejudices. Many religious conflicts that occur in Indonesia are ignited by the aggressiveness of missionaries in disseminating their religion. This missionary attitude provokes the fury of the Muslim community. Indonesian Muslims are tolerant, but when they are disturbed, as happened in 1965, they will retaliate vehemently. Nobody ever imagined that in 1965 Indonesian communists, the third biggest communist community in the world, would collapse. Within a short time the communist coup, which was supported by 10

million people, was stranded. This event cannot be separated from the anger of Indonesian Muslim in retaliating against the unbearable political behavior of communist party members. This is the profile of the Indonesian Muslim: tolerant but sensitive.

*You may agree with the prediction that Islamic resurgence will take place in Southeast Asia and in particular Indonesia. What is the rationale behind this opinion?*

This prediction rest on the assumption of historical continuity. We are the biggest Muslim community in the world. We do not have any kind of unrest against adherent of other religions. While anti-Western feelings/attitudes are spread throughout Muslim countries, the Indonesian reaction is not so extreme. We, Indonesian Muslims, do not view secularization only in a negative light. The process of secularization, which is the very nature of modernization has, however, a positive side especially in connection with the development of science. Secularization enables us to think and investigate the conditions of our life as deeply as possible. Therefore, in my

opinion, Islamic resurgence in Indonesia is a historical necessity if Indonesian Muslim organizations are to focus their attention on the development of the quality of the *ummah*.

There are two qualities possessed by all Indonesian Muslims: economy and education. The Muslim community should revitalize the spirit exemplified by the Prophet, the Saints and Indonesian Muslims leaders of the past, who paid special attention to the importance of economic prosperity among the Muslim community. They have a great role in establishing a strong and prosperous Muslim community. Mean-while, the role of Islamic education in developing the Indonesian people was also crucial. It has always had to respond to the real demands of Indonesian society. People not only need to enrol in a school but they also need a good education. Therefore, Muslim organizations have to be able to act as agents of development and, at the same time, as pioneers of modernization. They have to provide for the demands of their members in this rapidly changing world. Indonesia has a good history of producing prominent intellectuals, such as Soedjatmoko and Habibie. But



what we need now is to create many more Soedjatmokos and many more Habibies.

*How about Indonesian Muslim intellectuals specializing in religious knowledge?*

In the Malay world, Shaykh Nawawî al Bantani, Akhmad Khatîb, or Hamka are prominent enough. Unfortunately, Hamka wrote his books in Indonesian so international audiences do not know of his works. From my point of view, Muslim intellectuals from a younger generation process brighter insight. What they need is a medium to communicate their thoughts. For that reason, the Department of Religious Affairs has been providing facilities to support this demand. We decide upon Arabic and English as compulsory subjects in our educational system. English is the international language of the world's societies, while Arabic is the international language for Muslim communities. By mastering these languages we hope that our Indonesian intellectuals will be able to communicate their thought worldwide, now and in the future.

*The model of Islamic movement in Indonesia has under-*

*gone several changes. The general tendency of Islamic movement during the Old Order was take political form. Meanwhile, Islamic political movements have been almost absent in the New Order period. In this period, movements are more cultural.*

Investigating the nature of past Islamic movements, we will find that all of them were political. Such a tendency has to be placed in the context of the era, in which the energy of the nation was concentrated upon the building of a national identity. During the Old Order, people were eager to expel all elements of colonialism and were struggling to gain a national identity. However, during the New Order, partly because of the historical trauma, Indonesian Muslims prefer to establish a movement that has the least potential for conflict, i.e. a cultural movement. This latter tendency has to be seen as a strategy, the so-called indirect strategy.

*Is this strategy, adopted voluntarily by Muslim organizations or, as many Indonesianists believe, is it merely a civil effect of the Government's harsh attitude toward Islam?*

If we closely investigate the current situation, we will find that development has been the focus of all societies in the world. Within the development era, the most apparent elements are education, economy, health, housing and all elements that lead directly to the fulfillment of basic needs. This is a fact of development.

Another factor is that Muslim political parties have been abandoned since the beginning of the New Order. The activists and members of these parties have in turn, had to choose some form of participation. On the basis of certain trauma, i.e. the failure of political movements, as well as the calculation of recent demands, they prefer to participate in a more culturally oriented movement. This process is, therefore, a historical necessity and is adopted voluntarily.

*It seems that the closer relationship between the government and the Muslim ummah gained momentum from the formation of the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI) in 1990. This organization unites Muslims from various backgrounds on the one hand, and technocrats and other government officials on*

*the other hand. It means that the old political trauma has been overcome. How could such an event taken place within such a short time?*

It was high time to accept that Indonesian Islam is not a threat after all. The role of Muslim intellectuals in developing the economy, education and the quality of the *ummah* has convinced the government that they can work hand-in-hand with them. B.J. Habibie, the leader of ICMI, has proved himself as a flexible technocrat, who is able to mediate between and facilitate almost all interests. His personality is far from frightening or extremist.

Islamic resurgence in Indonesia is not to be suspected, since Indonesian Muslims themselves have firmly accepted *Pancasila* as the state ideology and as the sole basis for political as well as social organizations. Meanwhile, Indonesian Muslims will never consider whether *Pancasila* is final or a springboard for another's destination, since *Pancasila* is able to facilitate their demands. They will never be afraid that *Pancasila* puts their religion to one side. Three and half years ago, we ratified Bill No. 8, 1985. We also already have a code on education and

also on religious jurisprudence. All of these codes conform with the values and spirit of Islam.

*However, many people, especially the adherents of other religions, are apprehensive about the ratification of the Bill on religious jurisprudence seeing it as reviving the Jakarta Charter, which would mean an institutionalization of Muslim law (shari'ah).*

This suspicion arises before they know the exact contents of the Bill. Actually, we had already discussed the Bill before the 1987 general election but this discussion was then suspended until the election was over. In 1988, we took the discussion to the level of the Indonesian Legislative Assembly (DPR). The Bill was discussed openly and all mass media were freely investigating the possibilities of the ratification of the Bill. Indeed, many people were afraid of reviving the Jakarta Charter. They also felt that the ratification of the Bill would mean an institutionalization of Muslim law. They said that it would contradict the very principle of the State of not basing its ideology on any particular religion. Having been ratified, however, such suspicion shown not be legitimate.

The important thing was that the Bill was accepted openly and democratically.

*About ICMI. Recent mass media reports focus on ICMI's character as a national organization. They say that the label of Islam is a return to primordialism. ICMI is portrayed as though it does not possess a national outlook.*

In my opinion, the elements of nationalism and Islam have fused together in the minds of Indonesian Muslims. In this way George McTurnan Kahin in his *Nationalism and Revolution*, called Indonesian state ideology the best exposition, synthesizing the element of village democracy, Western democracy and Islamic democracy. Thus this nation state has encompassed these three elements of democracy. At the same time, our national perspective reflects our religious perspective and vice versa. Therefore, I am not of the opinion that the resurgence of Islamic organizations will lead to the revival of primordialism.

Both religion and ethnicity form the condition of nationality. These elements cannot be placed face to face with nationalism, because they are parts of

the characteristics of nationality itself. Our origin is in our ethnicity and we have normative standards from our religion. However, they cannot be regarded as a hindrance to our national life. Take an example. During the colonial time, it was almost impossible to marry someone with a different ethnic origin. Ethnicity was a big problem ever in the relationships between Indonesians themselves. Conversely, now people can freely marry someone with different origins, even foreigners. This situation is also reflected in religious life. All Indonesians have their own religion and adhere to the values and norms taught by them. Even so, religion cannot be considered to contradict nationality, because religious values provide the guidance for national life. Even if we scrutinize the development program, all values attached to it are and should be guided by religious values.

*In the investigation of Indonesian politics, many Indonesianists employ a dualistic model: Islam and non-Islam, civil and military, or state and society. This model is also reflected in the view of the position of the ICMI. People often juxtapose*

*this organization with the armed forces (ABRI). Moreover, ICMI is also regarded as representative of civil forces.*

If we return to the political situation before 1965, the usual model employed was a triangle of forces: Islam, the armed forces and communism. Within its development, Islam and the armed forces made an alliance to face the aggressive communist party. They succeeded in countering the attempted coup by the communists. In the following period, the remaining forces were Islam and the armed forces. Therefore, at the beginning of the New Order, the armed forces had to pay special attention to Islamic forces. This policy was partly applied because of the traumatic events of the past. Having undergone several changes in the following period, Islam has proved itself to not be a threat to the other party. However, the armed forces feel that it is imperative to be cautious of all possibilities. They have therefore, to firmly check the ideas behind the establishment of any nationwide organizations such as ICMI. Also ICMI is led by a super-technocrat, B.J. Habibie, who has enormous power. Realizing that this organization

is intended to improve the quality of the *ummah*, the armed forces have become supportive. This dynamic should be seen in terms of check and balance, the characteristic of political dialectics.

I do not think ICMI is a powerful force, while the armed forces are powerful force. The ICMI's function is instead as a moral and intellectual force. The armed forces will participate in the election of president and vice president, while the ICMI will not. This is because the armed forces has representatives in the parliament, while the ICMI does not. As long as Islamic organizations do not act off the track, they will not face problems from the armed forces. The presence of ICMI as the uniting body of Indonesian Muslims will in fact help the development of the nation as a whole. Indonesian Muslims constitute the majority of the population and it is appropriate to give them facilities. Should we fail to accommodate the Muslim *ummah*, the political situation of our country would be like that of Pakistan.

*If so, what is the role of the armed forces in the future, especially in connection with the*

*democratization process, human rights and openness, which have been taking place for quite some time?*

In Indonesia, the armed forces have never attempted a coup. This is diametrically different to African states and even different to the tendencies of the armed forces in our neighboring countries. Since its establishment, the armed forces have been united with the civilians. Therefore, in relation to the democratization process, their role is located in the Indonesian Legislative Assembly. They will use their force in other contexts and I think their role will depend very much on the situation. When the situation is stable, their role will reduce. Meanwhile, they will increase if it is necessary for the armed forces to stabilize the situation.

*Now we focus on the Department of Religious Affairs. What is the central policy to be elaborated concerning the development of religious life?*

I put the position of religion in a global context, in which religion has the potential for conflict. For this reason, the relationship between religious adherents becomes the crucial

aspect of religious life. Recently, I was invited by STT (the Protestant Theological School) to a discussion of the cooperation of religious adherents in the eradication of poverty. In my opinion, such a program cannot be applied on the basis of religion, such that Muslim leaders only think of their Muslim fellows. Real cooperation will only be manifested if all religious leaders, be they Muslim, Christian, Hindu, or Buddhist, work hand-in-hand to eradicate poverty from the whole nation. We find that the majority of poor people in the West of Indonesia are Muslims, while in the East they are Christians. Regardless of their religion, they are poor. Thus, it is the responsibility of all religious leaders to free them from poverty.

According to Paul Tillich, religion is a matter of involvement. Indonesian Muslims feel involved in the fate of other Muslims in different regions. So too the adherents of other religions feel involved with their fellow religious followers. Therefore, the relationship between religious adherents is important for a nation as large as Indonesian. The primary aspect to be developed regarding this relationship is how to

maintain a harmonious relationship among the Muslim *ummah*. As long as the majority of the population, i.e. Muslims, show their internal harmony, other religious followers will join them. The government treats all Muslim organizations equally. This policy aims at avoiding past experiences, when not all Muslim organizations held the same position before the government. In spite of that, treating them equally will reduce the suspicion or hatred that could occur between these organizations. The harmonious situation of the *ummah* will provide the necessary conditions in order to attain further goals.

The Department of Religious Affairs main concern at this time is the provision of religious education to all students. The significance of religious knowledge for the students of public schools, whose graduates have a strong influence on the life of the nation, is to implant religious values, so that in the future they do not become "monsters" of the nation but rather decent leaders of the nation. Meanwhile, the Department is also concerned with educating students from Islamic schools in other subjects, so that in the future they can bal-

ance the knowledge of public school graduates. Each party can complement the other. This policy is an effort toward the integration of knowledge within intellectual circles.

*In fact, the Department of Religious Affairs administers educational institutions from madrasah (Islamic primary schools) to IAIN (State Institute for Islamic Studies). What is your ideal expectation for these institutions?*

In the next twenty-five years, people will concentrate on the establishment of centers of excellence. This will be the fundamental characteristics of the 21st century. Unexceptionally, IAINs should also become centers of excellence for Islamic studies. However, we have to be realistic: are there enough resources available? Because of our limited resources, especially in the finance budget, we cannot develop all 14 IAINs in Indonesia to become center of excellence of all religious knowledge. As an alternative, each IAIN can develop to become centers of certain branches of religious knowledge. The IAIN in Jakarta, for instance, is to develop its capacity in Islamic philosophy, while the one in

Yogyakarta concentrates on Islamic law, and so forth. I assume that in the future IAIN graduates will have a broader knowledge.

*As the largest Muslim community in the world, Indonesian Muslims are expected to contribute certain roles to the international Muslim communities. Therefore, what kinds of roles should Indonesian Muslims have and should be applied now and in the future?*

Such an expectation has to be thoroughly investigated. First of all, Indonesia has played a significant role in the arena of international politics by being the leader of the Non-Aligned Countries. The fact that Indonesia was elected to lead this international organization has, at the very least, given a sense of dignity to the whole Muslim community in the world. Secondly, we have proved to the world societies that the minorities in Indonesia are well-treated, without any kind of discrimination. Therefore, we do not have any serious problems in our international relationships, even though we have differences in cultural or political orientations. Thirdly, the large number of Indonesian

Muslims offers a potential market. If this potential is properly implemented, we can assume that economic development will find its momentum, which in turn will also improve the quality of human resources, intellectual activities and cultural development.

On the basis of this hypothesis, Indonesian Muslims will be able to make a greater contribution in the future. It is true that our marginal or peripheral position in the Muslim world map makes it difficult for us to influence the Muslim societies residing in the center of Islam. However, by being peripheral, Indonesian Muslims will not face any tension in undertaking some changes and reinterpretation of Islamic doctrines. Unlike Muslims in the central axis of Islamic tradition, Indonesian Muslims can easily renew or reform their religion. In certain Muslim communities, people are highly sensitive about religious renewal or different interpretations. In Indonesia, we do not have Salman Rushdi or Taslima Nasreen affairs.

*In the Middle East and in other Muslim countries, the tendency towards the emergence of a radical Islam is very strong. Why does such a tendency not appear in Indonesia?*

This relates to the history of Islam in Indonesia. Since its beginning the process of Islamization has taken the form of gradual transformation. This process has never involved any violence or spilling of blood.

*However, many people regard Indonesian Islam as a domesticated Islam.*

Yes, but never think that the smile of Indonesians is an expression of weakness; it is rather an indication of patience. If they feel disturbed, they will react at all costs. The Saudi Arabian Minister of *Hajj* used to comment that Indonesian pilgrims are among the most decent pilgrims in the world, yet, because of their sensitivity we cannot neglect them.

His comment indicates that Indonesian Muslims are on the one hand sensitive, but on the other hand tolerant. People who do not understand the characteristic of Indonesians will simply regard them as weak. This is a serious misunderstanding. We may recall the behavior of Indonesian Muslims in 1965, when the communist party underestimated them. As they had been so patient and yet the communists still humiliated them, the Mus-



lms then retaliated against the communist's heavy-handedness. Within a short time, the communist party and all its members were assaulted. No one ever imagined that the Indonesian Communist Party would collapse in such a short time. It was the third largest communist party in the world.

*You just commented on pilgrimage. As the data indicates, the number of Indonesian pilgrims is continuously rising. Are there any special reasons behind this development?*

Indonesian pilgrims in the last few years have become the largest number of pilgrims. This year, more than 175,000 Indonesian Muslims joined the pilgrimage. During the Development Cabinet V, the number increased 10 per cent each year, and now, in 1994, this figure has increased to about 30 per cent. There are at least two reasons for the increase in the number of Indonesian pilgrims. Firstly, religious consciousness among the *ummah* is increasing as religious dissemination has been conducted using effective methods. Religious dissemination is not only conducted through traditional means, that of direct preaching in the mosque and other institutions,

but also through the utilization of electronic and printed media, such as television and newspapers. The second factor is economic development. Based on the available data, the majority of Indonesian pilgrims have backgrounds as farmers, civil servants and members of armed forces. These three categories generally represent the whole population of Indonesia. In economic terms therefore, the increasing number of *hajj* also indicates the rising economic capability of Indonesian citizens. Such an assumption is based on the fact that the fare for the pilgrimage is not cheap and only certain people can afford it.

*Do these pilgrims have particular roles in society after returning to their homeland?*

Yes. The obvious effect is for the pilgrims themselves. Having returned from Mecca, they will be titled with *hajj*. Such a title is not without responsibility. The pilgrims has always to remember to behave in a proper manner and moreover, they also have to deepen their religious understanding. Pilgrimage itself is a unique experience. People gathered together for a special occasion, in which they are treated as the guests of Allah.

As they return to their homeland, they possess a new religious spirit. Their role among other Muslims is significant. These pilgrims will be the model of religious devotion; other people will also receive the unique spiritual enlightenment experienced during the pilgrimage. Above all, the pilgrims share a broader perspectives on the condition of their fellow Muslims as a result of the Arafah forum, in which they meet fellow Muslims from all over the world.

*Almost one year ago, Samuel Huntington made a new prediction on the fate of future international relationship. In his article "Clash of Civilization?" Huntington noted that in the future Islam will clash with the West. How far can his thesis be affirmed?*

I investigated his books some years ago. In comparison with other works written before "Clash of Civilization?", this time Huntington appears to be more speculative. The writing of this article seems to motivated by the desire to predict future conditions. He finds that ideological and economic conflict have ended. Driven by his conviction regarding the

eternal existence of conflict, he looks at the possible form of conflict in the future, "what kind of conflict will there be in the future?". He then finds that civilization is the most likely force to motivate such a conflict. This is only a possibility and is indeed speculative. Unfortunately, he does not try to investigate other possibilities. As a matter of fact, Islam does not have the potential to drive conflict. The basic intention of Islam itself is to provide values and teaching which lead and guide people towards harmonious and peaceful relationships. Even though America is the only super-power left in the world, this does not mean that all other nations are unhappy with its position. Indonesians, for instance, never view Americans as their enemy.

*Do you mean that the conflict between Islam and the West basically does not exist?*

What we call the West or Islam is represented in the form of norms and values. For example, the West is manifested in terms of a secularization process or technological discovery. Islam itself is also manifested in its long history in terms of culture or civilization. Should the two

meet together, there will not be a conflict but rather a competition. In reality, a clash of civilization does not exist. More than 70 percent of the literature which we, Indonesian Muslims, have, come from the West. This does not necessarily mean that we are Westernized or are we in conflict with the West.

If we investigate historical events, we find that one civilization never clashes with the other. The process of civilizational meetings never end in conflict, but rather result in a process of aculturation or competition. When Hulagu Khan and his army came to Baghdad, he defeated the Muslim army and destroyed the city of Baghdad. The Muslim army was totally defeated and could not resist the power of the Mongolian army. However, in the end Hulagu Khan converted himself and his army to become Muslims. This means that although he was able to destroy the power of Muslims, he was also defeated by Muslim culture. Events ran the same way with Genghis Khan. Although this warrior occupied Chinese land for a long time and he himself was Mongolian, he would have been happy if people had regarded him as Chinese. This was because Chinese culture

was higher than Mongolian. He defeated Chinese people but he was defeated by the culture of the people who had been defeated. Therefore, cultures or civilizations compete with each other.

*If Western civilization is not a threat to Islam and so Islam is not a threat to the West, do you see any kinds of ideology or sets of values that may become a threat to the Muslim community, especially Indonesian Muslims?*

The thing that has to receive special attention in the religious life of the *ummah* is the dissemination of certain teachings, which deviate from the common understanding of the *ummah* themselves. Recently, certain splinter branches of Islam have disseminated in some areas of Indonesia. Partly because of our slow surveillance, they eventually create a situation of unrest in these areas. Such branches always make strong claims that their teachings represent the only original and true Islam. These claims directly humiliate the conviction of the majority and, in retaliation, the majority will judge them according to their own means. Therefore, the government has to be cautious with all new

teachings entering the Indonesian community. Almost all kinds of deviated teachings arise from outside Indonesia and are steered by individual leaders who have strong personal interests.

*Will they be influential, Darul Arqam (Dâr al Arqâm) for instance?*

No. It influences people temporarily. Such an organization heavily depends on its leader. Darul Arqam (*Dâr al Arqâm*) can be taken as an example. The leader of this organization is Azhari Muhammad. He was a politician of PAS (the Malaysian Islamic Party) who failed to

become a member of parliament. He tried to be elected several times but he still failed to gain sufficient votes. Having failed in the political arena, he then went to Singapore to meet the Suhaemi family. Because of his talent in communicating his ideas, he was able to attract followers. One of his outstanding strategies is to attract the educated Muslim community so his organization grows rapidly. As a result, Darul Arqam (*Dâr al Arqâm*) has been spreading worldwide. However, this model of religious understanding will only last for a short time.

**Hendro Prasetyo**