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Sufi Islam and the Nation State

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Sufi Islam and the nation state: Darul Arkam movement in the post Suharto era of Indonesia

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Abstract

Modernity as a global phenomenon has been the most driving matter, said those scholars of modernity, that potentially threat the existent of tradition and religion. Both would vanish once the project of secularism accomplishes. However, since the global modernity, whether represented by secular state, nation state, and democracy, failed to fulfil its promises, tradition and religions in general have reemerged to be likely a new device employed by their adherents to express their grievances and discontents. In such regard, recent Islamic movements promoting the slogan of “back to the authentic Islam” can be a better example to examine the relationship between modernity and religion. Accordingly, the paper, based on my field research, would discuss the role of religion in modern era as represented by Darul Arkam, an Islamic spiritual maternity or *Tarekat (Tharbiqa, Arabic)* in Indonesia after the collapse of Suharto’s military regime in 1998. Originally, the movement of Darul Arkam came into being in Malaysia as a spiritually-social-urban Muslim organization. How did its leaders understand Islam in regard to changing social and political situation and how did they combine economic and religious activities will be the main topics of the paper, together with their views on contemporary issues related to Islam and politics after Soeharto era.

Modernitas sebagai sebuah fenomena global merupakan faktor paling berpengaruh, demikian para teoritis moderisme menyatakan, terhadap keberadaan tradisi dan agama. Kedua unsur ini akan lenyap seiring dengan dengan keberhasilan yang dicapai oleh proyek sekularisme yang berlangsung secara global. Namun demikian, sejak gerakan modernisme, yang diwakili antara lain oleh konsep negara sekuler, negara bangsa, dan demokrasi, dianggap telah gagal memenuhi janji-janjinya, tradisi dan agama secara umum kembali menjadi media untuk mengungkapkan kekecewaan mereka terhadap kegagalan dan akibat-akibat yang ditimbulkan oleh modernism. Pada situasi ketidak puasan ini, gerakan-gerakan Islam dewasa ini yang mempropagandakan gagasan “kembali kepada Islam yang otentik” dapat menjadi sebuah contoh yang tepat untuk menganalisa hubungan kekinian anatara modernitas dan agama. Berdasarkan riset lapangan, tulisan ini akan memaparkan peran kouwintan agama, yang diwakili oleh organisasi Darul Arkam, sebuah perkumpulan yang diikat oleh rasa persaudaran Muslim atau biasa dikenal dengan *tarekat*, di Indonesia paska jatuhnya kekuasaan Presidean Soeharto pada 1998. Darul Arkam sendiri merupakan organisasi komunitas Muslim urban yang muncul pertama kali di Malaysia. Bagaimana pemimpin Darul Arkam memahami ajaran Islam dalam situasi sosial-politik yang tengah berubah di Indonesia dan bagaimana mereka menggabungkan antara aktifitas keagamaan dan ekonomi akan menjadi pembahasan pokok tulisan ini, selain respon mereka terhadap isu-isu yang berkembang di era reformasi.

Keywords: *Islam; Sufism; Shaikh; Politics; Modernity*

Introduction

Religion and politics has been an endless topic among political scientists, particularly after the September 11th 2001 tragedy of the terrorist attack in the US. Indeed, the event has rocked scholars of modernism who convincingly claim the fading of religion as the consequence of the success of secularism project. In fact, however, the world is facing unprecedented apprising of religion in contemporary modern politics. Interestingly, such a revitalization of the role of religion in politics is not a single feature that happens in a certain area, but a global phenomenon.

Theoretically, what occurs with the world of religion in contemporary world can be seen in what has been said by Habermas. Accordingly, religion is not something that will be outgrown as a result of modernization and rationalization. Religion, based in the life-world of its participants, is an important and enduring source of morality. This contribution is particularly important, as religion gives a voice to the marginalized in society, to the 'vulnerable forms of communal life'.¹

The return of Islam politics in Southeast Asia's contemporary dynamic of democratization has assured students of the region to consider this happening as a better example of how Muslims respond to democracy and its subsequent issues related to the rights of civilian within the concept of nation state. Interestingly, amid secularization imposed by nation state's development programs, the religious endurance of Sufis group of Islam to remain exist can be scholarly accounted as a typically expression of enduring source of morality in modern era.

As an Abrahamic religion with its historical journey of no separation between the sacred and the profane world, the encounter of Islam with secular ideas has been endless concern among scholars. Similarly, Southeast Asian Muslims' responds to the idea of democracy will give a new pattern of the reciprocal of Islam and democracy. Though Islam has worldly basic tenets regarding to the concept of the worshiped Lord and the prophet hood, it is not a monolithic religion with a certain leader and place able to command its followers. Islam, therefore, is a religion of plurality, socially, politically, and ritually.

Its diversities can be looked at the different expression of its believers, culturally and politically. Among such differences are also reflected

¹ Jako. S Dryer and Henni J. C. Pietersen, "Religion in the Public Sphere: What can Public Theology Learn from Habermas's Latest Work?", *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, Volume 66, Number 1 (2010).

in Muslims' varied interpretations upon the sacred book of Qur'an and the teaching of the prophet Muhammad (*Hadith*). Varied social and political circumstances faced by Muslims make them to have plural accentuations upon the two sources of Islam. Subsequently, based on such circumstance, Muslims are not a single community, but divers and divided into various groups with their varied religious inclination, tradition and politics.

Sufism (*Tasawwuf* or *Thariqah*, Arabic), an Islamic spiritual brotherhood, is the most evident elements within Muslim society that shows how the learned Muslims articulate their religious authority, responding to unprecedented modern encounters. As the leaders of the orders, may be called as *shaikh*, *murshid*, or *khalifah*, the position of the order cannot be separated from the development of Islamic politics.² Sufi brotherhoods have proved their important position to lead Muslims' resistance against the colonial. For instance, the success of Ahmadiyah Sufi movement in Sudan to lead their followers against France colonialism was noted as the success of Sufi leaders in early modern period of Islam.³ The role of Sufi brotherhood remains continued during the era of nation-state. The Ahmadiyah's political influences became so evident that its disciples were engaging in modern Sudan politics and holding governmental institutions.⁴

²As noted by Knysh, unlike Christian mysticism, which was marginalized by the western enlightenment movement, Islamic thariqah continued to exist, responding to western encounters and contributing to the emergence of diverse Muslim schools in our centuries. In addition to these intellectual contributions, its strong political engagement has been another typical character of the thariqah. See Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History*, Brill: Leiden, Boston, Koln, 2000, 1-4.

³ See Nikki R. Keddie (Ed.). *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions in the Middle East since 1500*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972, 3-4; Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980.

⁴ See John Voll. "Mahdis, Wali, and New Men in the Sudan", in Nikki R. Keddie (Ed.) *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions in the Middle East since 1500*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.

In different sense, the important position of Sufi groups was also showed by the role of Sufi Ulama at al-Azhar University of Egypt opposing their Muslim rulers. Political disputes between al-Azhar ulama (*shaikh mashayikh al-muruq al-cûfiyyah*) and the *Mamluk* rulers is not quite a distinct pattern of Islam in the region. In eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Egypt was held by political tensions between Sufi groups and Muslim leaders.⁵ For such politico-religious circumstances, contemporary scholars initially conclude that the history of civil society within Muslim society can be referred back to the history of political role of Sufi groups in the past.

The important role of Sufi leaders in the past steamed from their knowledge, charisma, and wealth through which had made them able to control and influence Muslim politics.⁶ Despite of its diversity, each Sufi order and its inner system of hierarchy put the leaders to be very predominant beyond the members of the order. Spiritual hierarchy owned by the leaders is employed whether to collaborate with or oppose against the outside world.

As spiritual organization, Sufi community differentiates from the rest of Muslim groups. In addition to their spiritual disciplines, spiritual obedience of a seeker (*murīd*) towards his or her leader is among that of critical traditions within mystical Islam world. In this case, what a shaikh asks his fellow to do or not will be uncritically followed. In other words, behinds such practice of authority, Sufi tradition can be politically and socially observable.

In a similar vein, Southeast Asian Islam shares the importance of tarekat in the history of Islam in the region. In addition to its critical

⁵ See Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot. "The Ulama of Cairo in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries" in Nikki R. Keddie (Ed.) *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions in the Middle East since 1500*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.

⁶ See Nikki R. Keddie (Ed.). *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis...*, 3-4.

contribution to the spread of Islam in the region, Tarekat masters were noted as political actors within the palace. Although they held religious advisors, those tarekat masters had greater influence upon the power holders through sayikh- student spiritual connection under the umbrella of certain orders. Thus, the orders were not isolated from social and political dynamics. For instances, the participation of Sufi fellows within a few anti-Dutch resurgences in major regions of Indonesia, like what so called as a peasants rebellion in Banten in 1825, the Menteng war in Palembang, and the Amuntai war in South Kalimantan, were not vacuum from tarekat students' involvement.

Subsequently, as such religious movements were considered by the colonial authority as dangerous components within Muslim in the Nederland Indies, solidarity among the fellows of tarekat became leveled. At the same time, a sense of close connection with the heartland of Islam also made the colonial paid much attention towards such circumstances as viable device for the transformation of a globally Pan Islamism circulating ideas of resistance against the infidel colonial. To respond opposition echoed by the tarekat leaders, Dutch government had tried to employ religious figures, mostly among those Arab descents (sayyid). For this regard, as noted by Azyumardi Azra, the appointment of Sayyid Usman as an advisor for the colonial office in Batavia (today Jakarta), was part of the colonial's efforts to suppress tarekat increasing influence among the population. Usman's harsh opinion on allegedly mystical practices conducted by mystical teachers ended with his judgment to them as pseudo teachers (Ind. *guru palsu*) with their illiterate followers.⁷

⁷ Azyumardi Azra, *Islam in the Indonesian World: An Account of Institutional Formation*, Bandung: Mizan Press, 2006.

State-Sufi contestation in Malaysia: the doctrines

Anti-Sufi movement has initially re-emerged in contemporary Southeast Asian Islam (today Malaysia and Indonesia), as will be discussed shortly after. The ban of *tarekat* of Darul Arkam in 1994 by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Muhammad, to some degrees, showed the tensions between Islam and the modern state. In this turn, the rise of Darul Arkam in Malaysian political landscape was no longer a local movement, but it extended farther and triggered solidarity among national leaders of ASEAN members. Mahathir's policy upon Darul Arkam was followed by ASEAN members to take concerns upon its ramification in the region, though they were not in agreement with his policy upon the spread of the movement in their home countries. Indonesia, for example, far from political consideration, the Indonesian council of Ulama (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI) banned the Darul Arkam due to its allegedly heretical teaching.

The 1994 ban of Darul Arkam by Malaysian government was ignited by political discourses sounded by its leader, Ashaari Muhammad. His critical statements to Mahathir's leadership ended with his intention to run in national election for national leader, arguing the need of the country to the implementation of Islamic law (*syari'ah*) instead of the secular one. As the reputation of Ashaari Muhammad prior to the national election increased, Mahathir, using religious arguments given by the state Muslim council (Majelis UGAMA), put the Darul Arkam in his religious consideration as the national leader.

Different from Malaysia, however, the presence of Darul Arkam in Indonesia was more welcomed, though debates on its certain teachings had made Indonesian prominent Muslim thinkers engaged in its development. Darul Arkam's impression to Indonesian president Suharto, however, showed how the movement mingled its religious agendas with the politics as discussed later.

In the history of modern Indonesia, the alliance of Islam and politics can be referred back to close connection between state apparatus and those learned Muslims (Ulama). Politicians or military elites are generally students or friends of Muslim leaders leading Islamic schools (*pesantren* or *pondok*). The friendship between President Suharto and Abah Anom, chairman of *Naqhsabandi* Sufi order in West Java, provides a clear example of this tradition of collaboration between politics and religion of Islam. Nevertheless, the relationship between Sufi masters and the government is not static. As noted by historian Kuntowoyo, the history of Javanese Islam has been marked by religious tensions between particular Sufi teachers and political authorities. The story of the rebellion led by Haji Mutamakkin of Kertasura (central Java) against Patih Danureja in 18th century as narrated in a Javanese chronicle of *Serat Cebolek* draws a story of political tension between Islam and the state in earlier Javanese Islam. Such a religious-political tension ended with a social resistance led by Haji Rifa'i of Kalisasak-Pekalongan (central Java) against the local ruler in 1856.⁸

As the Darul Arkam has been widely known as a traditional Sufi movement for its ritual and teachings, Mahathir's policy upon it seems to be likely a repetition of political tension in the past between Islam and the state in Java. As a Sufi organization, Darul Arkam's mystical tradition can be looked at its spiritual practice of chanting (*zikr*) and of total obedience of the followers towards the grand master of Ashaari Muhammad. In addition to its common characters as a Sufi organization, Darul Arkam has greater concern with its economic programs and its familiarity with modern technology as well. Darul Arkam's independent economic productions, especially its dietary goods, have contributed to its increasing popularity among Malaysian Muslims. Darul Arkam's *halal* products have

⁸ See A.E. Priyono (ed.), *Dr. Kuntowijoyo: Paradigma Islam, Interpretasi untuk Aksi*, Bandung: Penerbit Mizan, 1994, 123-125, 130-131.

been important products needed by modern Malays.⁹ Its economic and modernity has made Darul Arkam a distinct Islamic movement in contemporary Islam. Its economic expansion led Darul Arkam to extend its movement to Indonesia.

Darul Arkam was established in 1968 by a small group of Muslims in the village of Sungai Penchala, a remote neighborhood of Kuala Lumpur. The name Darul Arkam refers to the companions of the Prophet Muhammad, *Arqam bil Abi Al-Arqam*, who supported him in the early period of his teaching in Mecca. The founder of Darul Arkam

Ashaari Muhammad was a politician with the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS). Disappointment with politics led him to build an Islamic community that would combat immorality and cultural decadence in Malaysia by implementing Islamic principles.¹⁰ In 1971, Darul Arkam extended its religious activities. Rather than just being a guide for individual morality, Islam had to implement its teachings in public matters, social issues and the economy. In addition to spiritual teachings and charity, Ashaari began to build a self-sufficient model village for Darul Arkam members in 1973.¹¹

Ashaari insisted that his disciples should believe in the following interlocking components: Islamic community (*Jama'ah Islamiyah*), comprehensive Islam (*syumuly*), and Allah's promise (*jadual Allah*). According to Ashaari, an Islamic community is an assembly of Muslims who truly make Islam the center of their life. A community of Muslims is united by Islamic brotherhood. *Syumuly* means that the Muslim community should

⁹ *Halal* products are goods free from any unlawful components in Islam, such as dietary products containing essence of pork or dog.

¹⁰ See Abdul Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Political Dimension of Religious Conflict Malaysia: State Response to an Islamic Movement", *Indonesia and the Malay World*, Volume 28, Number 80 (2000).

¹¹ See Abdul Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Political Dimension of Religious Conflict...".

be organized on the basis of the oneness of God (*tauhid*), the law of Allah (*syari'ah*), Islamic morality (*akhlak*), the awareness of different opinions among Muslims (*khilafiah*), and they must judge who are the friends and enemies of Muslims.¹² Allah's promise is the fulfillment of the prophecy that in the 15th century of the Islamic calendar, Muslims will reclaim the past glory of Islam.¹³ Drawing on *hadith*, Ashaari teaches that Allah revitalizes Islam every one hundred years by sending a reformer (*mujaddid*). Accordingly, Muslims should expect the fulfillment of Allah's promise.¹⁴ In accordance with this belief, Darul Arkam's struggle to build an Islamic society is dedicated to re-establishing Islamic glory and to fulfilling Allah's promise.

Ashaari's Islamic messianism derives from the concept of the Mahdi (*imam al-Mahdi*), the Messiah, whose appearance will bring justice to the world. The concept of the Mahdi is applied to the founder of *Thariqah Muhammadiyah*,¹⁵ Syeikh Muhammad Assuhaimi, whose death in 1925 was interpreted as his disappearance (*ghaibah*). Syeikh Muhammad Assuhaimi was believed to have physically met (*yakdzah*) the prophet Muhammad. Darul Arkam's ritual practice of *Aurad Muhammadiyah*, the incantation of the names of Allah and Sufi masters including Assuhaimi, is drawn from this belief. In his speech on Darul Arkam's twenty-fifth anniversary in 1993, Ashaari pointed out that according to a saying of the Prophet (*hadith*), before the arrival of Mahdi (the Messiah) Allah will

¹² Ashaari Muhammad, *This is Our Way*, Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Sheikhu Arkam, 1990, 2-16.

¹³ See Abdul Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Political Dimension of Religious Conflict..." 34.

¹⁴ See Abdul Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Inter-Movement Tension Among Resurgent Muslims in Malaysia: Response to the State Clampdown on Darul Arqam in 1994," *Asian Studies Review*, Volume 27, Number 3 (2003), 374.

¹⁵ Sufi order (*tarekat*) Muhammadiyah was founded in Mecca in early twentieth-century by an Indonesian Sufi, Syeikh Muhammad As-Suhaimi, who later came to Singapore and then Malaysia. See Abdul Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Inter-Movement Tension Among Resurgent Muslims in Malaysia..."

send a promised reformer (*Mujaddid*), and he would not be of an Arabian origin, but a Malay. He wishes he himself would be the chosen figure, a precursor of Mahdi.¹⁶

To build an Islamic civilization, Ashaari teaches that Muslims must begin by creating an Islamic economy. The first step, which he calls economic necessity (*fardu kifayah*) requires setting up businesses without economic profit, simply to supply Muslims' basic needs.¹⁷ For example, Rufaqa as *halal* meat business in Europe is non-profitable; it simply supplies ritually pure meat for Muslims. The second step is to establish commercial enterprises for profit and to develop economic independence. The third step is to establish strategic businesses in order to develop the image of Islam as a religion adapted to modernity. This includes modern shopping malls, transportation, communication, and high-tech industries.¹⁸ These economic enterprises should be operated according to the fundamental principles of Islam: perfect belief (*imaan*), love and care (*ukhuhuwah Islamiyah*), harmony and agreement between leaders and members and among leaders, united by Allah's law (*habl min Allah*).¹⁹ In an Islamic civilization, an Islamic economic system would replace capitalism, and Islamic law (*hudud*) would replace secular law.²⁰

¹⁶ Al-Arqam, "25 Years of Darul Arqam: The Struggle of Abuya Sheikh Iman Ashaari Muhammad At-Tamimi," October 1993.

¹⁷ According to Ashaari's student, Risdan Effendi, Ashaari was pained to see Muslims' economic dependence on the infidel (*kafir*) economy, see Meinani, "Ummat Islam Masih Banyak Tergantung Pada Umat Kafir [Muslims still depend too much on Infidel groups]," *Hikmah* 24, 4th Week July, 1994, 5.

¹⁸ Abdurrahman R. Effendi and Gina Puspita, *Membangun Ekonomi Islam Ala Abuya Syekh Imam Ashari Muhammad At-Tamimi*, Jakarta: Giliran Timur, 2004, 42-46 ; Author's interview with Risdan Effendi, 26 July, 2004.

¹⁹ Kamarulnizam Abdullah, *The Politics of Islam in Contemporary Malaysia*, Malaysia: Penerbit University Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2003, 100.

²⁰ See Abdul Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Political Dimension of Religious Conflict..." 34.

In the 1970s, Darul Arkam developed Islamic educational programs as well as a publication program and medical services. According to the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, by 1994, Darul Arkam had set up 417 business enterprises with 22 corporate divisions spread over Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, and Thailand. One enterprise produced *halal* foods for its 10,000 members. It was estimated that total Darul Arkam assets might reach US\$ 116 million. Darul Arkam had also established 257 schools in Malaysia.²¹

Darul Arkam is estimated to have 10,000 to 12,000 followers and about 200,000 sympathizers all over the world.²² Most are educated urban Malaysians who adhere to an Islamic dress code: white or green turbans for men and all-enveloping veil (*pardah*) for women. Darul Arkam members live together and limit social interaction with outsiders. They shun radio and television. However, to spread its teachings and attract new adherents, Darul Arkam utilizes modern technology, such as the Internet, video, and print media. People are accepted as Darul Arkam members once they participate in daily religious activities and devote themselves to preaching Islam as promulgated by Ashaari. Like many Sufi organizations based on family bounds, Darul Arkam's organization is simple: the advisory council (*majlis syuyukh*) is headed by Ashaari himself. He is assisted by two deputies (*amir*), whose duties are handled by Ashaari's sons.²³

Darul Arkam began publishing its *Jawi* (Arabic script) newspaper in 1977. In the 1980s, Ashaari started sending his followers abroad to Pakistan, Jordan, Egypt, and Iran. Around forty members studied in Qum,

²¹ See Jonathan Karp, "Allah' Bounty: Al-Arqaam Sect Draws Strength from Business Empire" *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 1 September 1994, 78.

²² See Kamarulnizam Abdullah, *The Politics of Islam in Contemporary Malaysia...*, 100.

²³ See Kamarulnizam Abdullah, *The Politics of Islam in Contemporary Malaysia...*, 100.

Iran.²⁴ By 1990, Ashaari's Islamic writings and his recorded public lectures and books were numerous, and he began to speak more openly about the hidden goal of Darul Arkam. Ashaari argued that Muslim states would unite in a struggle against the West, and Islamic concepts of society, politics, economics, education, etc. would be realized. The small community (*thaiifah*) of Darul Arkam would expand and become the foundation upon which to build an Islamic State (*Daulah Islamiah*) in Malaysia. In 1992 he stated that the era of the glory of Islam had emerged in Southeast Asia. Islam would spread from Malaysia to Hurasan, and finally to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, where the expected Messiah (*Imam al-Mahdi*) would appear.²⁵ His belief in the coming Islamic messiah led Ashaari to provoke Muslims all over the world to reject every non-Islamic system. He urged Malaysian Muslims to oppose the secular Malaysian state.

As the number of Darul Arkam followers increased and Ashaari's reputation rapidly grew, he began to express his political views, criticizing the Malaysian government's policy. At first the Malaysian government responded to Darul Arkam in a very careful manner because there was no legal reason to ban it. However, once Ashaari publicly expressed his opposition to Mahathir's policies, the government started to worry. Rather than banning Darul Arkam for political reasons, Mahathir made Darul Arkam's religious rituals the issue. Supported by a ruling of the Malaysian Muslim Scholars Council/MMU (*Majelis Ugama*) that Ashaari's teaching, particularly his concept of the Messiah, was heresy (*bid'ah*). Mahathir banned Darul Arkam in 1994. MMU also objected to Darul Arkam's

²⁴ S. Jayasankaran, "New Convictions: Islamic Group Run into Government Opposition", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 July 1996, 21.

²⁵ See Abdul Fauzi Abdul Hamid "Political Dimension of Religious Conflict,,", 34; Noorhaidi Hasan, "In Search of Identity: The Contemporary Islamic Communities in Southeast Asia", *Studia Islamika*, Volume 7, Number 3 (2000), 80; Abdul Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Inter-Movement Tension Among Resurgent Muslims in Malaysia,,", 370-374.

ritual practice of *aurad Muhammadiyah*. According to MMU, these ideas and practices contradict the Islamic teaching (*syari'ah Islamiyah*) of the tradition of the family of the Prophet and Islamic community (*Ahl Sunnah wal Jamaah*).²⁶ When he banned Darul Arkam and jailed Ashaari in 1994, Mahathir also accused Darul Arkam of practicing female slavery because of its polygamous practices.²⁷ In order to maintain political solidarity with Malaysia, Southeast Asian governments under the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) also banned Darul Arkam.²⁸

Darul Arkam in Indonesia

Facing opposition from Malaysian government, the DA movement crossed its movement to Indonesia in 1990s. After the MUI issued its religious policy (fatwa) on the threat of DA to Indonesia's religious harmony, DA's followers were no longer showing their activities in the public spaces. However, once religious and political resurgences hit Indonesia in the following of the fall of Suharto's New Order in 1998, DA movement re-appeared in its different way and name.

Instead of Darul Arkam, its Indonesian leaders considered Rufaqa as the revitalized name for their organization. Remained practicing Sufi tradition of *Tarekat*, Rufaqa's fellows tried to revitalize DA's teaching in a modern sense of making its community familiar with science and modern technology. Like its predecessor, Rufaqa has branches in major cities of Indonesia: Jakarta, Medan, Pekanbaru, Riau, Palembang, Batam,

²⁶ According to the Malaysian Ministry of Islamic Affair (Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam), Ashaari Muhammad's claims are heresy because the Quranic verse (Q:16) states that every human being will die and the hadith that says people who are to meet the Prophet physically are those who lived with him. Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam Jabatan Perdana Menteri, *Penyelewengan Arqam dari Ajaran Islam*, Kuala Lumpur: Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam Jabatan Perdana Menteri, 1994.

²⁷ Abdul Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Inter-Movement Tension Among Resurgent Muslims in Malaysia...", 21.

²⁸ *Jakarta Post*, "ASEAN to Restrict Al-Arqam", 5 August 1994, 1.

Surabaya, Bandung, and Semarang.²⁹ Also, Rufaqa'a emphasizes economic activities combined with Islamic proselytizing (*Dakwah*). It has established around 500 companies all over the world. In Indonesia, its businesses turn over around Rp. 500 million a day.³⁰ Its international business may be found in Germany, France, UK, the USA, Uzbekistan, China, Japan, Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the UEA, Australia, and all Southeast Asian countries.³¹

Apart from its trans-national economic networks, Rufaqa'a remains underpinning with the practice of traditional Islam with its messianic notion inherited by its predecessor of Darul Arkam. Its mystical character can be scrutinized through Rufaqa'a's messianic notion of such a charismatic leadership as embedded in Darul Arkam's Mahdi movement with its fundamentalist slogan of "return to the root of Islam" or "pristine Islam". In regard to Rufaqa'a's mixed traditions of messianic and economic-modern activities, therefore, to consider Rufaqa'a as a merely traditional movement seems unsuitable.

For this regard, what has been classified by Dekmejian (1984) on Islamic revivalist movements seems less viable to define the Rufaqa'a of Indonesia in a such single word. Accordingly, as activists of Islamic resurgences or Islamic revivalisms may identify their movements in the following characters of Islamic renaissance (*ba'ath al-Islam*), Islamic awakening (*sahwah al-Islamiyah*), religious revival (*ihya al-Din*), and Islamic fundamentalism (*usuliyyah al-Islamiyah*), Dekmejian's last point seems appropriate to categorize the Rufaqa'a's mission. As its goals is keen to develop three

²⁹ Sigit Rahardjo and Marga Raharja, "Jalan Bisnis Menuju Surga: Gurita Bisnis Rufaqa'a International Indonesia," *Kontan*, 8, no. 46, 23 August 2004, 5.

³⁰ Sigit Rahardjo and Marga Raharja, "Jalan Bisnis Menuju Surga: Gurita Bisnis Rufaqa'a International Indonesia," *Kontan*, 8, no. 46 (23 August 2004), 5.

³¹ Khudori et. al., "Mimpi Bandar dari Sentul," *Gatra*, 29 Mai 2004, 24 - 33 ; Author's interview with Risdam Effendi, chairman of Rufaqa'a International Indonesia, 26 July 2004.

fundamentals of Islamic faith: Islamic community (ummah) under legitimate Islamic authority (*al-Shaariyyah al-hukm*) and a renewal of the faith (*tajdid*), to some extents, the Rufaqa may be considered as an Islamic fundamental movement so far.³² However, if we try to examine Deikmejian's in valuing Rufaqa as a fundamentalist movement, we may fail to see it in a more comprehensive picture. Since its mystical tradition has been combined with global connections, modern and futuristic vision of the ummah, the notion of the new religious movement (NRM) seems to be working to define the movement of contemporary Rufaqa in Indonesia.³³

Before discussing further Rufaqa's movement in Indonesia, I will flash back to its predecessor Darul Arkam that brought to Indonesia by Ashaari's disciple, Amal Arifin. Arifin involvement with Darul Arkam began when he was a student in the Agriculture Department at La Trobe University in Australia in the mid-1980s. As in Australia, Darul Arkam attracted a lot of Indonesian university students studying abroad, particularly those majoring at sciences disciplines. Among those responsible for the development of Darul Arkam in Southeast Asia were Abdurrahman Risdam Effendi and his wife, Gina Puspita. Both graduated from one of Indonesia's reputable campuses, namely Bandung Institute of Technology (Institut Teknologi Bandung, ITB). They joined Darul Arkam when they lived in France as students in the aeronautic department at Ecole. The couples were among those having close connection with Ashaari Muhammad, the grand master of Darul Arkam of Malaysia. Under his spiritual direction Risdam and Gina started to lead Darul Arkam in Indonesia.

³² See R. Hrair Dekmejian, *Islamic Revolution: Fundamentalism in Arab World*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1985, 4.

³³ See John Obert Voll, "Contemporary Sufism and Current Social Theory" in Martin van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell (Eds.), *Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam*, New York: Martinus Press, 2007; Susanne Hoeber Rudolph. "Introduction: Religion, State, and Transnational Civil Society" in Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori (Eds.), *Transnational Religion & Fading States*, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997.

In Indonesia Darul Arkam adopted an emirate system created as by Ashaari, which reflects mystical tradition in Islam and its caliphate system. Through this system, the organization is divided into regional and national units led by an emir. Indonesian Darul Arkam was divided into six territories so far, three in Java (Negarai Jawa I, II, and III) and three in Sumatra (Negeri Sumatera I, II, and III).³⁴ Like in Sufi tradition (*tarekat*), all emirs were directly appointed by Darul Arkam's top leader, Ashaari Muhammad.³⁵

The center of Darul Arkam was a neighborhood region near the University of Indonesia (UI) in Depok at the edge of Jakarta. Around this secular campus Darul Arkam activists, mostly students of the natural sciences, started to engage in various economic activities. Among its economic site was the café of *Sayyidatina Siti Khadijah*, the wife of Prophet Muhammad. The café housed a beauty salon, bookstore, computer center and so forth. In addition, Darul Arkam also had a factory that produced *halal* sauce and a shop providing cassettes of Islamic songs (*nasyid*).³⁶

Unlike the Malaysian Darul Arkam, Darul Arkam activists in Indonesia did not extend their religious and economic activities into political actions criticizing Indonesian government's policy. In contrast to his opposition to Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad, Ashaari Muhammad praised President Suharto and considered as a Muslim leader. When President Suharto supported the establishment of the Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals Association in 1990, Ashaari said that President Suharto was fulfilling the plan of Allah.³⁷ Ashaari's view on President

³⁴ Salam Sriwijaya, "Al-Arqaam dalam Tata Kehidupan Yang Tertib", *Sriwijaya Post*, 6 August 1994, 4.

³⁵ Kamarulnizam Abdullah, *The Politics of Islam in Contemporary Malaysia...*, 100.

³⁶ Irwan Andri Atmanto and Lukman Hakim Arifin, "Setelah Abuya Memilih Tobat," *Gatra* 6 December 2003, 94-98.

³⁷ Asoib At-Tamimi, 1993, *Presiden Soeharto Ikut Jadwal Allah*, Asoib: International Limited, 1993.

Suharto was followed by his Indonesian disciples by frequent visits to Suharto's ministers.

Although the government did not show formal disagreement with the presence of Darul Arkam in Indonesia, few Muslims groups supported by the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) felt inconvenience with the DA's certain Islamic views, particularly its mystical view of Ashaari's direct allegiance with the prophet. As this point hit controversies among Muslim organizations, the MUI considered DA was about to threaten Indonesian religious harmony within Muslims. Finally, the MUI requested the government to ban the DA in the country.

Similar with Malaysia, In the early 1990s criticisms towards Darul Arkam first came up in Aceh, north Sumatra, as the early 1990s, followed by Padang of West Sumatra. In 1992 the Provincial Indonesian Muslim Religious Council in Aceh issued an Act (*fatwa*) banning Darul Arkam in the whole province. Two years after Malaysia banned Darul Arkam, objections upon Darul Arkam appeared in Padang in 1994.³⁸ Its distinct religious appearances, indeed, led the Minister of Religious Affairs of Indonesia, Tarmizi Taher, to value Darul Arkam's religious practices as contradicted and violated Padang tradition. Taher's impression on Darul Arkam was based on its practice of marriage. As reported by the *Independen*, Taher's statement was provoked by the case of a woman married a Darul Arkam activist without permission from her family.³⁹ Finally, the provincial Council of MUI in Padang requested MUI in Jakarta to ask the government to ban Darul Arkam.⁴⁰

³⁸ See Noorhaidi Hasan, "In Search of Identity,,", 80

³⁹ "Pak Menteri Tersinggung, Dituduhlah Arqam Sesat", *Independen*, 10 September 1994, 15.

⁴⁰ According to Prof. A. Hasymi, Darul Arkam's teachings are deviant from the true foundation of Islam (*aqidah*). Therefore, Darul Arkam was banned in Aceh. See A Hasjmy, "Ajaran Darul Arqam Sesat!" *Hikmah* 24, 4th Week July 1994, 6.

The *fatwa* banning Darul Arkam in Indonesia was issued by the MUI in Jakarta on the grounds that Ashaari's claim that his master, Syeikh Muhammad Assuhaimi, had physically met the Prophet Muhammad in the holy *Kaaba*. In addition to his mystical point, the MUI was also very critical towards DA members' practice of the *aurad muhammadiyah* ritual and other unorthodox teachings such as requiring women to cover their whole bodies, demanding head-gear for men, and teaching religious exclusivity. According to MUI, these religious practices were considered as heretic and might potentially threat religious harmony among the Ummah. Furthermore, the MUI launched its *fatwa* by suggesting that Darul Arkam's religious exclusivity could threaten religious harmony in the country.⁴¹ Like in Malaysia, considering MUI's *fatwa*, the government then formally bans Darul Arkam in Indonesia.⁴²

On the other hand, following the government ban of Darul Arkam, disputes were going on among Muslim organizations and Muslim thinkers as well. According to the traditionalist Islamic organization Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), to include the name of a Sufi master in ritual chanting is very common in Sufi tradition. This practice is understood as making a spiritual connection to Sufi masters (*tawassul as-Shaalih*). The chairman of NU, Abdurrachman Wachid said that Darul Akam's ritual is no different from that of NU's mystical tradition.⁴³ In contrast, the modernist Islamic organization Muhammadiyah showed its objection to Darul Arkam on the grounds that Darul Arkam's ritual practices were part of that of heretical practices in Islam. For this notion, Amin Rais, the chairman of Muhammadiyah supported the government's ban of Darul Arkam in

⁴¹ See Majelis Ulama Indonesia, "Darul Arqam" in *Himpunan Fatwa MUI Sejak 1975*, Penerbit Erlangga, 2011, 54-55.

⁴² *Forum Keadilan*, "Di Balik Larangan Politik Al-Arkam", 1 September, 1994, No.10, III, 94-95

⁴³ *Independen* 10 September 1994, 15.

Indonesia.⁴⁴ Unlike Rais, two Muslim intellectuals, Nurcholish Madjid and Emha Ainun Nadjib disagreed with the ban on Darul Arkam. Madjid said that Islam teaches there is no compulsion in the matter of belief. “Prohibiting a particular belief is a form of compulsion.” Avoiding religious arguments, Nadjib said that what the government should do is make Darul Arkam’s followers inclusive citizens instead of banning the organization.⁴⁵ As opinions travelled among Muslims on the Darul Arkam, the government of Suharto banned it. Its followers, however, remained continuing its ritual and economic activities up to the fall of President Suharto in 1998. The reform era (Era Reformasi) has opened wider opportunity for DA’s fellows to re-emerge with a new strategy of Dakwah carried by its substituted organization, Rufaqaq, which was founded a year before the turn down of Suharto era.

Rufaqaq: the metamorphosed Darul Arkam

Preceding Rufaqaq, in 1996 Darul Arkam activists founded *Hawariyun* as a new organization to continue the mission of the banned Darul Arkam. The foundation of *Hawariyun* was symbolically considered as the implementation of the notion of *hijrah* (the prophet migration from Mecca to Medina). Initially, the period of Mecca was the time of building the Islamic community, while the Medina period was the expansion of Islam. *Hawariyun* in such a sense was the symbol of the expansion of Darul Arkam with its new mission.⁴⁶

In 1997, a year before the fall of President Suharto, *Hawariyun* members established Rufaqaq (Arabic: “close friends”). The name of Rufaqaq

⁴⁴ Rais said that he already read Darul Arkam’s English books. According to him these books judge others as wrong, and themselves as right. “Darul Arqam “Yang Terlarang”” *Hikmah*, 4th week, July 1994, 4.

⁴⁵ “ Darul Arqam Masih Akan Dievaluasi” *Sriwijaya Post*, 24 July 1994, 11.

⁴⁶ Author interviews with Risdam Effendi.

itself was dedicated to those Ashaari's loyalists who accompanied him during his hardest days of interrogation held by Mahathir government.⁴⁷ MUI's fatwa on Darul Arkam seems has made Ashaari's Indonesian fellows of Rufaqa change their strategy of Dakwah. Different from Darul Arkam in Malaysia, Rufaqa members are no longer wearing Arabic dress with their beards as practiced by Ashaari Muhammad and his followers in Malaysia. Now like most Indonesian Muslims, Rufaqa members dress up *baju koko* (a loose, long sleeved shirt) and *kopiah* (headwear of Indonesian Muslims). Different from the previous tears of Dakwah, now they promote moderate Islamic teachings along with modern Islamic economic activities. For example, Rufaqa opened *Qotrunnada* Café in Semanggi Street business center in Jakarta. More than providing halal food and beverage, *Qotrunnada* Café also serves Islamic teaching on every Saturday morning. Not only did wealthy educated people come to listen to its teaching programs, but also ordinary people.⁴⁸ There is a "Morning Motivation" program for professional community, in addition to its Islamic teaching and free business consultation. Also, for entertainment market demand, Rufaqa, through its choir of *Qatrunnada*, produces popular Islamic songs.

On the other hand, apart from its seemingly inclusive and modern activities, Rufaqa remains consistent with Darul Arkam's religious exclusiveness of living in a separate location. For this notion, Rufaqa leaders designated Sentul, a luxurious exclusive residential location near to Jakarta, as their communal residence. There are schools for their younger and economic sites such as studio, publishing, bookstore, shops, and so on.

Regionally, Rufaqa's members live in smaller groups (*bandar*) with their local coordinators responsible for each members or branch. Every

⁴⁷ *Gatra*, 29 May 2004.

⁴⁸ *Gatra*, 6 December 2003.

bandar may join with other bandar both in religious activities or businesses. All bandar leaders are appointed by Ashaari Muhammad through his representative (amir) in Indonesia. Selecting Sentul as their residence is not without reasons and intervention of the grand master of Darul Arkam in Malaysia. According to Rufaqa's chairman, Risdam Effendi, "Abuya [Arabic, father, a title used to refer to Ashaari Muhammad] instructed us to move to Sentul due to its strategic consideration for our Dakwah. Since there is a big Christian school and a church, our mission is to call people to Islam".⁴⁹

In addition to such missionary mission of making non-Muslims converted to Islam, Rufaqa is also very keen with making Muslims more Islamized in their daily matters. Effendi says, "According to Abuya, most Muslims are more interested in discussing Islam than in implementing it. Thus, our honored Abuya has been trying to wake his colleagues up to struggle for Islam as a way of life. For this mission, Abuya, Effendi says, encourages people to know, to love, and to be afraid of Allah. Accordingly, the glory of Islam cannot be reached by weapons, but by developing Islamic models for the family, economics, technology, civilization, and education."⁵⁰

Therefore, Effendi explains, Rufaqa is very concerned with the promotion of Islamic life style like wearing Islamic dress for its women members. Such exclusiveness is also evident in its education programs for their children. Therefore, instead of sending their children to general schools or Islamic ones (Ar. *madrasah*), Rufaqa followers in Sentul teach their younger in their schools teaching their own curriculum. Like those Malaysian Darul Arkam, Rufaqa members are familiar with modern technology like as computers and other electronic devices. In education subject, not only does teach Islamic teaching, but also secular knowledge like

⁴⁹ Author's interview, 26 July, 2004.

⁵⁰ Author's interview, 26 July, 2004.

math, physics, biology etc. In this sense, education, Effendi says, should be dedicated to develop Islamic character of the students as a way to create good Muslims with religious and secular knowledge.⁵¹

In addition to education programs for the younger, Rufaqa'a members have a weekly religious program on every Thursday night, by which Ashari's teaching (*minda*) is delivered by a Bandar's leader or the national chairman.⁵² Together with teaching the *minda*, they also remain reciting Darul Arkam daily chanting of *Aurad Muhammadiyah*, which was widely criticized by the Ulama before it considered as one of Darul Arkam's heresies. For this point, according to Rowaha, Effendi's assistant in Sentul, "Rufaqa'a's leaders do not insist members practice *aurad Muhammadiyah* as taught by Ashaari Muhammad, but most core members continue to practice it along with the rest of *aurad* of other Sufi orders (*Tarekat*), such as *Nasqabandiyah*, *Satariyah*, *Ahmadiyah* and *Sazdiliyah*."⁵³

Slightly different from Rowaha who tries to include Rufaqa'a's mystical ritual into the major orders in Islam above, Haef Saefuddin said, "Abuya told us that if *aurad Muhammadiyah* is a problem for Rufaqa'a's relationship with other communities, we should not practice it. Islamic *dakwah* is more important than *aurad*."⁵⁴ Changing religious consideration related to the controversial *aurad Muhammadiyah* has apparently showed that Rufaqa'a's activists are fully aware of the negative impact of Darul Arkam's earlier controversial practices of the *aurad* to its organization.

⁵¹ Author's interview, 26 July, 2004.

⁵² When the author visited Rufaqa'a's Friday Night meeting in a luxurious home on Jalan Sriwijaya, South Jakarta, August 20, 2004, there were about thirty members sitting around Effendi listening to his speech (*taklim*). Women sat in the back of men. Effendi delivered Abuya's teaching (*Minda*) of Islamic Mahdiism. He reminded his audience to follow Ashaari's way, as the member of the group of the truth (*Jama'ah Kebenaran*) under Abuya's leadership and explained the danger of Western thought. This meeting was closed by singing Ashaari's spiritual poems.

⁵³ Author's interview with Rowaha, March 2004.

⁵⁴ Author's interview, 26 July 2004.

As traditional Islam, Rifaqaa has conservative stand on the role of women in the world of politics. Effendi says Islam does not strict women to become a leader, yet limited in certain affairs such as domestic professions other than political leadership. For instance, he says, Rifaqaa has divisions handled by the women, such as education, health, and businesses, without any male intervention. However, in the case of national leadership, Effendi emphasizes; women are not allowed by Islam, due to their “physical weakness” and “emotional instability”. For this reason, Effendi says, “the Koran men are created to become leaders, not women”.⁵⁵

To examine their leadership, Effendi adds, a man of Rifaqaa may be tested by practicing polygamy. For Rifaqaa the polygamy is a form of leadership training for men as the educators and fair leaders for their wives and children, while to be patient in dealing with familiar problems and jealousy among their wives.”⁵⁶

In similar vein, according to Effendi’s wife, Gina Puspita, the polygamy may give benefits to women. Examplifying herself, Puspita points out, that because his husband married with more than her, she is able to participate in seminars without any fear of leaving their children with her co-wife.⁵⁷ Emphasizing on the positive impact of polygamy, Effendi says, “All my children have care and love from their different mothers.”⁵⁸ “If we believe in God, “ he argues” we should not afraid of not being able to feed our children because each child has his fortune. Allah ever protects

⁵⁵ According to the Koran (S. IV: 34) “Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because God has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means... “, see A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur’an: Text, Translation and Commentary*, Brentwood, Maryland, USA: Amana Corp, 1983, 190.

⁵⁶ Effendi has four wives. Two of them live in one house while the third lives in Batam and the fourth in Malaysia. Dr. Gina Puspita, Effendi’s first wife, leads Rifaqaa’s women division. She is more active in Rifaqaa than other’s wives.

⁵⁷ Author’s interview with Gina Puspita, 26 July 2004.

⁵⁸ Rifaqaa has a polygamy division, which recommends when a member is allowed or asked to have more than one wife.

their future as long as we work hard to obtain his blessing. To have many children may strengthen the follower of the prophet (*ummah*).”⁵⁹

In addition, to strengthen the ummah economy may have been among those priorities to be carried out. For this notion, Rifaqaa is very keen with economic projects. However, rather than accumulating capital, Rifaqaa’s business are dedicated to support Islamic proselytizing (*dakwah*). Apologetically, all economic activities within the organization are devoted to obtaining Allah’s blessing and forgiveness. Therefore, rather than seeking personal material benefits, Rifaqaa’s businesses are oriented toward developing its members’ responsibilities for others as a form of religious worship.⁶⁰ Rifaqaa’s business divisions consist of finance and trading, education, human development, tourism, civilization, health, publishing etc.

Through different forms of regular businesses, Rifaqaa provides the salary for its employees not based on his or her position in a company, but in accordance with their daily needs (*ma’asy*). For example, a regular employee with two wives will receive more money than a single employee, even though his position is higher. Effendi says, “Rifaqaa covers all employees’ basic needs.”⁶¹ Rifaqaa also produces goods to sell to non-members and participates in trade exhibitions held by the government.

Apart from its social and economic activities, the position of Ashaari Muhammad of Darul Arkam is very central among Rifaqaa’s members. They believe that Abuya guides their life. Effendi says, “Abuya is our leader and guide when Rifaqaa’s members face any challenge or obstacles.” Effendi accepts Ashaari Muhammad as the true reformer (*mujaddid*). “Since *Abuya* was arrested we continue our struggle and wait for the prom-

⁵⁹ Author’s interview, 26 July, 2004.

⁶⁰ Author’s interview, 26 July, 2004.

⁶¹ Author’s interview, 26 July 2004; See *Gatra*, 29 May 29 2004.

ise of Allah to be fulfilled so that Islam will reemerge after being tested and He (Allah) will send His defender,” Effendi says. Effendi says that the major problem faced by Muslims is a dissension among them. Effendi does not agree with Muslims who claim that this dissension should be viewed as a good creative dynamic within the Muslim community. He thinks it is due to the lack of a charismatic leader capable of resolving disputes (*khilafiah*) among Muslims. According to Effendi, Muslims today no longer have Islamic brotherhood or Islamic solidarity as practiced in the time of the Prophet Muhammad.

Fragmented Islamic politics and Islamic universal brotherhood are also Rufaqa’s concerns. To resolve internal disputes and moral decadences, Muslims must practice religious teachings consistently. Therefore, politics should be understood in a wider context to mean all effort to develop socially, economically, and culturally. According to Effendi, politics (*siyasah*) in Islamic terms should be aimed at reaching Islamic goals through calling people to love Allah and bringing people to embrace Islam. “If our economy and technology are weak, we cannot persuade people to love Allah,” says Effendi. Therefore, Rufaqa’s concern is not how to gain political power, but how to build and strengthen Muslims economically, technologically, and educationally, as an effort to create an Islamic civilization.⁶²

Since Islam appeared as a comprehensive guideline for human beings, according to Effendi, Rufaqa does not accept democracy, because it is not an Islamic system. The failure of Islamic parties in countries like Turkey, Algeria, Egypt and so on, is due to following an un-Islamic system as if Allah does not have a proper system of rule that is suitable for Mus-

⁶² In a special report on Darul Arkam in 1994, *Hikmah* weekly reports that Risdam Effendi said that Darul Arkam does not engage in politics because the term politics is not Islamic, but Greek. In contrast, Islamic politics (*siyash*: Arabic) means how to make Islam accepted by all people. See *Hikmah* 24, 4th Week of July 1994.

lims. Effendi points out that democracy may not bring good people to be leaders. "If fifty gangsters give their votes to a gangster to be president, then good people with forty nine votes will be ruled by a gangster. As long as Islamic leaders (*ulama*) and intellectuals are still a minority within Muslim countries, democracy will not bring political benefits for Muslims. It is a political system imposed by Western countries, especially the US, on Muslim countries, in order to prevent Muslims from coming to power through the process of elections. Like human rights, democracy is being used by Western governments, especially the US, to damage Islam everywhere."

Surprisingly enough, rather than supporting Muslim figures running for the presidency (Amin Rais, Hamzah Haz, Yusuf Kalla, and Hasyim Muzadi), politically Rufaqa supported a military candidate, General Wiranto. In the first direct election of a president in 2004, Rufaqa gave their votes to General Wiranto, who is known as a Suharto loyalist and is accused of violating human rights in Timor Leste. In this case, Effendi argued that Wiranto, like former President Suharto, is a better Muslim than Muslim political leaders because he regularly performs midnight prayers (*tahajjud*) and recommended fasting (*sunnat*). When Wiranto failed to move to the second round of the election, Effendi said that Wiranto will become president through Allah's way, not by the Western way of democratic election.⁶³ Hence, Ashaari's teaching of millennialism obviously influences Rufaqa's leader.

The members

Rufaqa recruits new members from the middle class –university students, businessmen, and professionals. They primarily live in big cities. Rufaqa's strategy of *dakwah* is that social change starts from the top

⁶³ Author's interview, 26 July 2004.

(middle class) and flows down to the lower classes. For Rufaqa, quantity is not its priority, but quality. Rufaqa members are divided into two groups: permanent and non-permanent members.⁶⁴ The first are individuals who have been working with Rufaqa for a long time and have pledged to become Abuya's followers and observe the strict disciplines of Rufaqa. "If they do not pray *tahajjud* they are not allowed to work," Effendi says.⁶⁵ The second are people who work in Rufaqa's companies and are paid professionally.

Rufaqa members are not very articulate or reflective about what attracted them to join the movement. For example, before he became a member, Haef Saefuddin (35) was an activist of radical Muslim youth organizations in his own city, Garut, West Java. However, he says that he failed to understand Islam properly. Once he met Effendi and learned about Abuya and his Islamic teachings, Haef became a member of Rufaqa. Now Haef lives in Sentul with his wife and their two children. Haef has been appointed by Effendi to handle Rufaqa's business in Sentul. "What I do is to spread love and brotherhood among people," he explains.

Rizal (30), a graduate of Bandung Technology Institute, met Abuya before he decided to join Rufaqa. He says that Abuya is a wise leader. For example, Abuya welcomes his guests without regard for their social position. According to Rizal, Abuya is generous. He will pick you up and accompany you when you visit his house, then he will provide you with food and eat with you. "For Abuya, all human beings are equal, and we have to treat them fairly," Rizal says. "Abuya is able to discuss everything, science, economy, politics, and so on, although he never studied those fields." Although he works in a state company, Rizal says, he is ready to

⁶⁴ According to Effendi Rufaqa has 250 permanent members or employees and 250 non-permanent members, see *Kontan* 8, no. 46, 23 August 2004, 5.

⁶⁵ Author's interview, August 2004.

go anywhere, even to foreign countries, whenever Abuya asks him to develop Rufaqa.

Ahmad Ali (28), a graduate from the education faculty of Surabaya, East Java, said that his motivation to join Rufaqa was to become a good Muslim. In Rufaqa, he says, rather than just a ritual, Islamic daily prayer (*sholat*) is a deeply meaningful spiritual communication between God and human beings.

Mardiyah (35), a graduate of Padang University, was drawn to Rufaqa because of Ashaari Muhammad's teaching of love among his followers. She became interested in Darul Arkam when she was a student. She met *Abuya* Ashaari when he delivered a speech in Padang in the 1980s. "*Abuya's* teaching of fulfilling Islam in a comprehensive way led me to join Darul Arkam." Mardiyah has responsibility for managing one of Rufaqa's restaurants in Bogor, West Java.

Susi Kurnaesih (27), a graduate of the Indonesian Open University and a member of the Justice and Prosperity Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera) says that she participated in a Rufaqa seminar in 2001. The seminar's theme "Save the Nation by Praying" impressed her, and she wanted to know more about the movement. She became a member after she learned that Islamic struggle (*jihad*) should start from individuals and then extend to family, society, and the nation.

Conclusion

What we can learn from the emergence of Darul Arkam can be viewed as a reaction of a religious community to social problems caused by the failure of secular regimes, which established in newly independent nations after World War II to bring prosperity and equality for their citizens.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993; Dale F. Eickelman, "Trans-state Islam

This phenomenon contradicts the prediction of social scientists following Max Weber that religion would fade out in the modern world. In fact, in the last forty years, religion has emerged as an important factor in politics. Indeed, as pointed out by Eickelman that Islam has become a powerful tool to express national grievances against the West that were formerly associated with the Pan-Arab movement of the late nineteenth century.⁶⁷

In other words, social changes brought by modernity have threatened the existence of traditional communities, which resulted in social and economic gaps between traditional and modern societies. In this sense, religious movements have emerged to fill the gap.⁶⁸ The emergence of the religious association of Darul Arkam can be seen as a religious response to fears of losing cultural identity in a global order.⁶⁹ Through engagement in the Darul Arkam organization, Muslims may create a new communal identity.

Apart from these characteristics, Darul Arkam also represents a new form of transnational, virtual community. Like *Nasqabandiyah* order which has spread from Pakistan to the United Kingdom,⁷⁰ Darul Arkam,

and Security” in Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori (eds.) *Transnational Religion & Fading States*, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997; John L. Esposito, *Islam and Politics*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1984.

⁶⁷ Eickelman, “*Trans-state Islam and Security*”.

⁶⁸ Rudolph mentions Sufi orders, Catholic missionaries and Buddhist monks in this community based religious orientation. See Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, “Introduction: Religion, State, and Transnational Civil Society” in Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori (eds.), *Transnational Religion & Fading States*; Steve Bruce, “Cathedral to Cults: the Evolving form of the Religious Life” in Paul Heelas (ed.) *Religion, Modernity and Post Modernity*, UK: Blackwell Publisher, 1998.

⁶⁹ R. Hrair Dekmejian, *Islamic Revolution: Fundamentalism in Arab World*.

⁷⁰ For further comparative studies on Sufi movements see John Obert Voll, 1994, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World* (2nd Edition), New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994; Pnina Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love: The Anthropology of a Global Sufi Cult*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003; and A. Nizar Hamzeh and R. Hrair Dekmejian, 1996, “A Sufi Response to Political Islamism: Al-Habaash of Lebanon” *International Middle East Studies*, 28, May 1996, 217-229.

to some degree, can be also noted as a new transnational religious movement in modern Southeast Asia. However, to simplistically view Darul Arkam as a fundamentalist movement is to misunderstand the ways in which it provides a solution to modern problems and a vision of a better future.

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