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## **Ahmadiyah and Islamic Revivalism in Twentieth-Century Java, Indonesia: A Neglected Contribution**

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A number of scholars, such as Deliar Noer and Abdul Mukti Ali, have argued that the Ahmadiyah in Indonesia have had no significant influence on Islamic revivalism in the early twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> Others, such as Federspiel, perceive that the Ahmadiyah have contributed to the revival of Islam in the country to a degree disproportionate to the group's small size.<sup>2</sup> "[T]he Ahmadiyah groups in Indonesia remained relatively small and isolated throughout the era and probably received more attention from the modernist Muslim organizations than was warranted by their size and influence", states Federspiel.<sup>3</sup> Challenging the above views, Margaret Blood stated, "If Ahmadiyah is discussed simply as one organization among many Islamic based organizations in Indonesia in the early twentieth century we must conclude that its importance within the Muslim community of Indonesia is insignificant.<sup>4</sup> This is most true of the Qadiani branch which is primarily a sectarian organization, and as such, can be best

evaluated in terms of its membership.” However, Blood continues, if one evaluates the Ahmadiyah on the quality of the group’s membership, then the Ahmadiyah, particularly the Lahore branch, “has of course quite a large reverberation for even those Muslims who are reluctant to associate with the sect from Pakistan”.<sup>5</sup> Blood agrees with Justus M. van der Kroef, who believes that the Ahmadiyah have “contributed greatly to a modernistic religious quickening among younger western schooled Indonesians”.<sup>6</sup>

These differing perceptions need to be examined by looking at the history of the arrival of the Ahmadiyah in Indonesia, the circumstances at that time, and how Muslims perceived the group. This article, therefore, intends to study the role of the Ahmadiyah in Islamic revivalism in Indonesia in the first half of the twentieth century by first looking at the circumstances in the country at that time. Second, the article aims to describe the linguistic divide among Indonesian intelligentsia—i.e., between the Arab-educated and the Dutch-educated Muslims—in accessing information and knowledge from foreign countries. Lastly, it will elaborate the appeals of the Ahmadiyah to the Muslim intelligentsia and the role of this movement in Islamic revivalism.

### ***Receptive Attitude to the Ahmadiyah***

Ahmadiyah is a transnational movement, not a home-grown Indonesian movement. The community was established by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in British India in 1889. The group today claims that the movement is currently widespread in more than two hundred countries. There are two Ahmadiyah factions—the Qadiani Ahmadiyah and the Lahore Ahmadiyah. Previously, the former group used the name Ahmadiyah Muslim Jama’at, or Ahmadiyah Muslim Community, while the latter used the name Ahmadiyah Anjuman Isha’at Islam (AII; Ahmadiyah Movement for the Propagation of Islam). In Indonesia, the former uses the official name, Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia (JAI; Indonesian Ahmadiyah Community), while the latter is officially called the Gerakan Ahmadiyah Indonesia (GAI; Indonesian Ahmadiyah Movement). Both groups came to Indonesia in the 1920s.

There were a number of interrelated circumstances in Indonesia when the Ahmadiyah arrived. Progress had been made by Christian

missions in the country, there were perceptions of impurity regarding religious beliefs and practices, there were ongoing troubles under the colonial government, the Islamic system of education was felt to be ineffective, and there was an aversion among the Muslim intelligentsia towards their religion.<sup>7</sup> Of these circumstances, at least two were strongly related to the receptive attitude of Indonesian Muslims to the arrival of Ahmadiyah missionaries (particularly the Lahore branch); namely, the deepening penetration of the Christian missionaries and the loss of confidence—or indifference—of the Muslim intelligentsia to their religion. Instead, the Muslim intelligentsia were more attracted to what was perceived as the modern and Western way of life.<sup>8</sup> Hence, it is necessary to elaborate these two circumstances here.

In 1889 the Dutch government lifted a ban on evangelical activities in regions inhabited by Muslims. The areas that were previously barred to Christian missions for political reasons—to prevent unrest and disturbances—such as Java, were opened and became target areas for them. This policy had a significant effect on the number of religious conversions to Christianity, both from local religions and from Islam.<sup>9</sup> In instances when a number of elite Muslims felt that their religion was being seriously threatened, they believed that the government was not neutral. Indeed, on a number of occasions, the government under L.F. Dingemans (1874–1955), the Resident of Yogyakarta (1924–27), and A.W.F. Idenburg (1861–1935), the Governor-General of the Netherlands Indies (1909–16), favoured Christianity in its policies and even supported Christian missionaries explicitly.<sup>10</sup> Idenburg even declared that the Dutch would not leave the colony before it was “transformed into a Christian nation”.<sup>11</sup> In this situation, Muslim leaders certainly believed that their religion was in danger, and Idenburg’s declaration was perceived as a wakeup call to stop Christian missions.

Another factor that stimulated the receptive attitude towards the Ahmadiyah was the growth of a Western-educated elite. This relates particularly to the introduction of a policy called the Ethical Policy (*Ethische Politiek*) by the Dutch administration in 1901. The policy was recommended by a Dutch socialist, C. Th. Van Deventer, and considered to be a moral responsibility, which he called “Een Ereschuld” (a debt of honour), on the part of the Dutch after having drained tremendous amounts of wealth from the East Indies. In August 1899, for instance, Van Deventer wrote an article in *De Gids* entitled “Een Ereschuld”,

which implied that the welfare of the Dutch was the result of the suffering of people in the East Indies. The Dutch should therefore pay their debt to Indonesians.<sup>12</sup> According to the policy, the welfare of Indonesians must not be completely ignored.<sup>13</sup> Instead, the Dutch should share the wealth received from Indonesia with Indonesians. Included in the implementation of this policy was the introduction of Dutch education to Indonesians, which resulted in the emergence of a new social class of Dutch-educated Indonesian intellectuals. However, as witnessed by Agus Salim, the system of education promoted by the Dutch tended to be secular and materialistic, and it underestimated religion.<sup>14</sup>

Because those who came through this educational system originated from the traditional elite, those who had never received any Islamic education, "soon they became estranged from Islam. They tended to regard Islam as an anachronism in the modern world and an obstacle to progress."<sup>15</sup> This became a new concern for Muslim leaders, such as those in Muhammadiyah. Some Muslim leaders then tried to show that Islam was compatible with modernity and that Islam does not contradict science. Furthermore, many Muslims of the time saw the Ethical Policy as having a strong connection to the Christian missions. The policy provided more advantages to Christianity because modernity and Western education had often been associated with that religion. In 1901, the Royal Address made at the inauguration of the policy provided strong indication of the link between the policy and the Christian mission. It was stated that, "as a Christian nation the Netherlands have a duty to improve the condition of native Christians in the archipelago, to give Christian missionary activity more aid and to inform the entire administration that the Netherlands have a moral obligation to fulfill as regards the population of those regions".<sup>16</sup>

These two circumstances had a significant influence on the receptive attitude of Indonesian Muslims to Ahmadiyah. As stated by R. Ng. Djojosegito during the 13th Congress of Muhammadiyah in 1924, the Ahmadiyah were not only able to stop the Christian missions in India but were even able to spread Islam to the heart of Christianity in European countries and the United States.<sup>17</sup> A few people in England, for instance, have converted to Islam because of the Ahmadiyah mission to that country. The Ahmadiyah were seen not only as blocking Christian missions in Muslim countries but even as

sending missionaries to the West. This is the point that attracted many Muslims in Indonesia and led them to warmly welcome the sect. The second selling point of Ahmadiyah was its ability to demonstrate that Islam is a rational and modern religion. The modern characteristics of Islam, as demonstrated by the Ahmadis, not only included adopting a Western system of education but also in countering numerous stereotypes about the backwardness of Islam. As shown in its publication, *Islamic Review*, Ahmadiyah discussed topics such as women in Islam, Islam and the sword, tolerance in Islam, peace and love, apostasy in Islam, Islam and progress, and Islam enthroning reason. In line with this modern and rational understanding of Islam, Ahmadiyah had further appeal on account of its efforts to eradicate superstitious practices and traditional admixtures, in a way similar to Muhammadiyah's project to eradicate irrational beliefs, heterodoxy and superstition.

### **Linguistic Divide: Arab-educated vs. Dutch-educated Scholars**

The first quarter of the twentieth century was marked by the revival of Islam, as affirmed by the establishment of numerous Islamic movements, such as Sarekat Islam (SI) in 1905, Muhammadiyah in 1912, al-Irsyad al-Islamiyah in 1914, Persatuan Islam (Persis; Muslim Union) in 1923, Jong Islamieten Bond (JIB; Young Muslim Union) in 1925, and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in 1926. The inspiration for this revivalism came not only from the Middle East—as commonly emphasized by many studies<sup>18</sup>—but also from South Asia.<sup>19</sup> The founders and initiators of these movements were not only Arab-educated Muslims but also Dutch-educated ones. The SI and the JIB, for instance, were dominated by those who had graduated from Dutch schools, whereas organizations like Persis and NU were led mostly by those who had graduated from schools in the Middle East. In fact, these two types of scholars had different views on several matters, such as the issue of the Ahmadiyah.

As mentioned earlier, one of the selling points of Ahmadiyah for Indonesian Muslims was its modern approach to Islam. The Ahmadiyah movement published numerous books that demonstrated the religion's compatibility with modernity. Among the topics dealt with by these publications were issues commonly used by opponents of Islam to

discredit it, such as the issues of women, apostasy and the spreading of Islam by the sword. This can be seen, for instance, in books written by Ahmadi leaders. Muhammad Ali, for instance, wrote on many topics, such as “Divorce in Islam”, “Islam-the religion of humanity”, “Jihad in Islam”, and “Muhammad and Christ”. Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din also wrote on similar topics, such as “Islam and Christianity”, “Islam on slavery”, “Women from Judaism to Islam”, and “Modernism in religion”. The articles that appeared in the Ahmadiyah journal *Islamic Review* also dealt with similar topics. All of these works were intended to counter and correct the distorted and misconceived images of Islam that were prevalent among many in the intelligentsia, particularly in the West.

By the turn of the twentieth century, Indonesia had been marked by a number of attacks on the fundamental beliefs of Indonesian Muslims by Christian missionaries, theosophical movements, and by secularists, atheists and materialists. As stated by Margaret Blood,<sup>20</sup> many young Muslims turned away from religion because these groups accused Islam of being backward and only fit for people living in the Middle Ages. The literature from the Ahmadis, therefore, went to satisfy the hunger from Indonesian Muslims for information that could create confidence in their religion, particularly in the academic or intellectual spheres. Therefore, one could say that the contribution and influence of Ahmadiyah in Indonesia at that time was primarily in disseminating modern thought and reconciling religion and science. Because most Ahmadiyah publications were written in English and Dutch, the readership for these publications was composed mainly of Dutch-educated Muslims (such as those in the SI and the JIB) who already had an attachment to Islam and who wished to study it, but who also had concerns about it and were unable to access similar types of books from the Middle East written in Arabic. As stated by Justus M. van der Kroef, the Dutch translation of Muhammad Ali’s *The Holy Qur’an* “had great influence among those Westernized younger Indonesians who did not know Arabic and yet wished to study the Qur’an”.<sup>21</sup> In short, these publications become the main sources for the Muslim intelligentsia and alternative sources of Islamic revivalism for those who could not understand Arabic.

One person who testified to the modern and rational tendencies of Ahmadiyah books was Sukarno, the first president of Indonesia.

Although he clearly declared that he did not believe in the prophethood of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad—and even did not acknowledge that Ghulam Ahmad was a *mujaddid*, or reformer, of Islam—Sukarno admitted that he had read many books written by Ahmadi scholars and acknowledged that those books had inspired him. One Ahmadiyah book that has brought many benefits to Muslims, according to Sukarno, was *Het Evangelie van den daad* (*The Gospel of Action*). This book, Sukarno said, was “brilliant, useful for all Muslims”. Sukarno further stated that the Ahmadis had contributed some positive values to Indonesia. “In general, they have religious views that I agree [with]: they promote rationalism, they have broadmindedness, they promote modernism, they are very careful in accepting hadith, they prefer to use the Qur’an in the first place, and they have [a] systematic understanding of Islam.”<sup>22</sup> Another witness to the importance of Ahmadiyah books was Oejeng Suwargana, the director of Masa Baru Publishing Co., a prominent publishing house in Bandung, as can be seen from an interview with Justus M. van der Kroef. Suwargana said that Westernized younger Indonesians liked to “buy Ahmadiyah books ... but they do not want to be considered Ahmadis”.<sup>23</sup>

The strongest voices underlining the contribution of Ahmadiyah to Islamic revivalism in Indonesia came from H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto (1882–1934), who was the chairman of Sarekat Islam and a revolutionary leader, and H. Agus Salim (1884–1954), who was a statesman (and also a revolutionary leader). Tjokroaminoto was one of Mirza Wali Baig’s students. His *Tarich agama Islam (riwayat dan pemandangan atas kehidoepan dan perdjalananan nabi Moehammad CLM* (1931), for instance, is based on Ameer Ali’s *The Spirit of Islam*, as well as two Ahmadiyah books: Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din’s *The Ideal Prophet* and Muhammad Ali’s *The Prophet*.<sup>24</sup> He even attempted to translate Maulana Muhammad Ali’s *The Holy Qur’an with English Translation and Commentary* into the Malay language.<sup>25</sup>

Besides the testimonies from the aforementioned scholars and prominent Indonesian figures, the influence of Ahmadiyah on Islamic revivalism can also be seen from its strong impact on the JIB. The members of this organization were Dutch-educated Muslims whose main sources of information about Islam were Dutch and English literature. Although they might have heard many ideas about Islamic reformism from the Middle East (for instance, ideas promoted by

Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida), they could not access any information transmitted in Arabic, such as *Al-Manar*, which for the most part was only available to Arab-educated Muslims. Ahmadiyah literature therefore was of great benefit for the JIB. Even though only a few JIB members joined the Ahmadiyah—like Ahmad Sarida and Soedewo—most of them were interested in Ahmadiyah books.<sup>26</sup> As observed by Jusuf Wibisono, a member of Muhammadiyah and an activist in the JIB, the Lahore Ahmadiyah contributed a number of monumental works. Although he himself did not join the Ahmadiyah, he participated in advertising Ahmadiyah books and encouraged people to read them. The reason for this, he said, was because Ahmadiyah books “were able to satisfy intellectual curiosity”.<sup>27</sup>

In the early decades of the twentieth century, as noted by a number of works, such as those by Kahfi,<sup>28</sup> there was an aversion expressed towards Islam by the intelligentsia (Muslims and non-Muslims alike). Islam was often accused of being an inferior religion that was in contradiction with modernity.<sup>29</sup> To overcome this perception of inferiority, some members of Jong Java led an initiative to offer courses on Islam for Muslim members of the organization. Unfortunately, this initiative was rejected because the majority of the organization’s members wanted to be neutral in regards to religious issues. This rejection prompted them to initiate a new independent organization named the JIB in 1925, whose membership was not limited to Javanese but was also open to people from other areas, as long as they were interested in Islam. They then asked some modernist Muslims, such as Agus Salim, H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto and Ahmad Dahlan, to give lectures on Islam.<sup>30</sup> This aversion expressed towards Islam by some members of the intelligentsia in the early decades of the twentieth century was best reflected in the motto of the JIB; namely, Sura al-Tawba 9.32: “They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah will allow nothing except the perfection of His light, though the disbelievers are averse.”<sup>31</sup> This motto has appeared on the cover of all editions of *Het Licht*, the official publication of the JIB.

The JIB was understandably very receptive towards the Ahmadiis because Ahmadiyah promoted a modern and rational understanding of Islam. This can be seen, for instance, by the fact that Mirza Wali Ahmad Baig was among the teachers in the Malang and Solo branches of the JIB.<sup>32</sup> This appointment indicates that members of the JIB



considered Baig's teachings to be congruent with their intention to create confidence in religion and counter those who attacked Islam. Besides appointing Wali Ahmad Baig as a teacher in the JIB, articles on Ahmadiyah (such as the one written by Soedewo) also appeared frequently in the JIB magazine. In fact, the name of the journal—*Het Licht* (the light)—is the same as the name of the journal published by the headquarters of the Lahore Ahmadiyah, which seems unlikely to simply be a coincidence.

It must be emphasized that the JIB was more closely associated with the Lahore branch of Ahmadiyah, not with the Qadiani branch. The JIB never had any issue towards the former. It did however on many occasions express opposition to Qadiani Ahmadiyah, including in articles published in *Het Licht*. As reported by Husni Dardiri,<sup>33</sup> there were long debates in *Het Licht* about Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. These involved scholars such as Ahmad Sarida, A Kamil, Mirza Wali Ahmad Baig and Djohan Mahmud Tjay. The debates were triggered by an article written by Ahmad Sarida entitled "De Wereldleraar" (the teacher of the world), and they demonstrate how the members of the JIB tended to side with the Lahore Ahmadiyah and mainstream Muslims in their conflict against the Qadiani Ahmadiyah.

## Ahmadiyah Influences in Indonesia

In surveying Islamic revivalist movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Fazlur Rahman<sup>34</sup> classified them into four categories: (1) revivalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, which he calls "pre-modernist revivalism", with Wahhabism as the main example; (2) modernism or "classical modernism"; (3) neo-revivalism or "post-modernist revivalism"; and (4) neo-modernism, which he himself claims to be part of. These four categories of revivalist movements in Islam are interrelated, and "the precise lines of influence among these movements are not always easy to draw".<sup>35</sup>

The main characteristics of these four types of movement are the following. Pre-modernist revivalism is concerned mostly with the degeneration or decline of Muslim society. In order to restore the glory of Islam and to rescue society from degeneration, it calls Muslims to "go back" to the pristine Islam and to eradicate various accretions

and superstitions attached to Islam. Different from the pre-modernist revivalism, the classical modernism promotes *ijtihad* in all spheres of life and argues for the compatibility between Islam and modernity. Proponents of classical modernism appreciate Western ideas and absorb them as inspiration for reforming Muslim society. The neo-revivalism movement is strongly influenced by classical modernism, particularly on some aspects of the modern system such as education and politics, but it also responds to it by trying to identify and distinguish Islam from the West, such as over the issue of bank interest, the status of women, and the veil. What is missing from all three of these movements is a systematic and comprehensive methodology to reform Islam. This becomes the main characteristic of Rahman's neo-modernism.

In some Muslim countries, Rahman says, efforts of the classical modernists to reform Islam have received a negative response, and they have even been regarded as the enemy of Muslim society because they seem to be "sacrificing 'Islam' to the Western social values" or because they look to be "both Westernized and Westernizers",<sup>36</sup> whereas the neo-revivalists have tended to become apologists in defending Islam against the West. Summarizing this, Rahman states, "just as the Classical Modernists had selected such issues as caused them to be accused of simply identifying Islam with Western mores, so now the neo-Revivalists selected certain other issues whereby they claimed to distinguish Islam from the West and set it quite apart from the latter".<sup>37</sup> In Rahman's view, neither the classical modernists nor the neo-revivalists could establish a comprehensive system to reform Islam, despite their claim that Islam is a total way of life. Consequently, the way they have responded to issues has tended to be on an ad hoc or piecemeal approach.

The Ahmadiyah movement may perhaps not be easily classified by a rigid system like Rahman's, since it has a number of characteristics that could be located in three different categories. Analysing the revival characteristic of the Ahmadiyah movement cannot be done in isolation from the socio-religious circumstances that surround it. As elaborated earlier, the Ahmadiis came to Indonesia when Muslim society was suffering from an acute inferiority complex. Several accusations had been levelled against Islam by Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Islam was described as an irrational religion because some of its adherents were practising superstitions. It was accused of being a backward

religion that was incompatible with modernity and only suited to those living in the Middle Ages. Islam was also accused of being an anachronism to science and modern civilization. Many Christians preached that Islam was inferior to Christianity, since the prophet of Islam, Muhammad, is dead whilst the prophet of Christianity is alive in heaven.

In these circumstances, many members of the Muslim intelligentsia with a commitment to Islam sought to find academic information that could be used to refute the accusations and to rescue pride in Muslim society. For those Arab-educated and *pesantren*-educated Muslims, they could find such sources in the works of reformist Muslims from the Arab world, such as Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida. They could also access information from various Arabic publications such as *Al-Manar*. However, for Dutch-educated Muslims lacking literacy in Arabic, their main sources were literature written in Dutch or English. At that time, most of these sources were published by the Ahmadis or were brought by Ahmadi missionaries to Indonesia.

Before Indonesian Independence in 1945, a number of Ahmadiyah books had been translated (from their original English or Urdu) into Dutch, the language of the Indonesian intelligentsia at that time. For instance, in *Di bawah bendera revolusi* (vol. 1, 1964), Sukarno mentions several Ahmadiyah books that he had found very beneficial. Among them were *Het geheim van het bestaan* (a translation of Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din's *Riddle of Life*), *De bronnen van het Christendom* (a translation of Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din's *The Sources of Christianity*), *Het evangelie van den daad* (a translation of Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din's *The Gospel of Action* or *The Secret of Existence*), *Inleiding tot de studie van den heiligen Qur'an* (a translation of Muhammad Ali's *Introduction to the Study of the Holy Quran*), and Muhammad Ali's *Moehammad de profet* (a translation of Muhammad Ali's *Muhammad the Prophet*). Writing on 25 November 1936, Sukarno even stated that *Het evangelie van den daad* was a "brilliant book".<sup>38</sup> In the same article, Sukarno also admitted that the journal, *Islamic Review*, published by the Lahore branch of Ahmadiyah, had many interesting articles.

In addition to the books mentioned by Sukarno, there were many other Ahmadiyah books translated into Dutch and published in Indonesia (then the Netherlands East Indies). Among them were Muhammad Yaqub Khan's *Het nut van God* (the title of the English

version is *Quest after God*),<sup>39</sup> Basharat Ahmad's *De geboorte van Jezus in het licht van den heiligen Qoer-an* (*Birth of Jesus in the Light of the Qur'an*) and Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's *De leerstellingen van den Islam: een oplossing van de vijf fundamenteele religieuze problemen uit Islamietisch oogpunt* (*The Teachings of Islam*).<sup>40</sup> Soedewo P.K. (1906–71)<sup>41</sup> was the translator for most of the Dutch versions of the Ahmadiyah books. The most important Ahmadiyah book was Muhammad Ali's *The Holy Qur'an with English Translation and Commentary*, which was translated by Soedewo into Dutch as *De heilige Qoer-an: vervattende den Arabischen tekst met ophelderende aantekeningen en voorrede van Maulwi Moehammed Ali* and published in 1934. This translation of the Qur'an was received with great enthusiasm by Indonesian Muslim intellectuals at that time, particularly those who graduated from Dutch schools.<sup>42</sup> On many occasions, President Sukarno quoted from this translation in his speeches and writings. And according to a 1974 investigation by *Tempo*, this translation could be found in the homes of most pre-Independence Muslim intellectuals. Besides Indonesia, this translation has also been printed in Suriname and the Netherlands.

The impact of Ahmadiyah books on the Indonesian public intellectual sphere before Independence can be seen, for instance, from the works of H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto, Agus Salim and Mohammad Natsir. Tjokroaminoto's *Tarich agama Islam*<sup>43</sup> is based on or a reproduction of Muhammad Ali's *Muhammad the Prophet*. Agus Salim's work on *Isra Mi'raj*<sup>44</sup> is also based on Muhammad Ali's *The Holy Qur'an*, specifically his interpretation of verses that deal with *Isra Mi'raj* (the Prophet's spiritual journey on the night of 27 Rejab). Natsir's book on *shalat* (prayers) also refers to Muhammad Ali's books.<sup>45</sup> Soedewo himself, besides translating Ahmadiyah books into Dutch, also wrote a number of books inspired by Ahmadiyah literature, such as *Jesus mati di tiang salib*, *Mi'raj Nabi Muhammad Saw*, *Keesaan Ilahi*, *Islam dan ilmu pengetahuan*, and *Intisari Qur'an suci*.<sup>46</sup>

Ahmadiyah literature deals with two major issues. The first is Islam and its relationship with the modern world. The second is interfaith relations, particularly relations between Islam and Christianity. In dealing with these two issues, Ahmadiyah books employed two different methods. In responding to materialism, the modern world and atheism, they have tended to be "defensive" by emphasizing that Islam is compatible with modernity and modern sciences and

that Islam was even a solution for the world's problems. To the second issue, Ahmadiyah books have tended to go on the "offensive" by attacking the fundamental beliefs of Christianity, such as the Resurrection of Jesus.

In analysing the way Ahmadiyah books deal with the issue of the modern world, I will look here at four books that have had the most significant influence on Indonesia: *The Teachings of Islam* by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (translated into Dutch by Soedewo, with the title *De leerstellingen van den Islam: een oplossing van de vijf fundamentele religieuze problemen uit Islamietisch oogpunt*),<sup>47</sup> *The Religion of Islam* by Muhammad Ali (translated into Dutch by Soedewo, with the title *De religie van den Islām*),<sup>48</sup> Muhammad Ali's *The Holy Qur'an with English Translation and Commentary* (translated into Dutch by Soedewo, with the title *De heilige Qoer-an: vervattende den Arabischen tekst met ophelderende aantekeningen en voorrede van Maulwi Moehammed Ali*),<sup>49</sup> and *The Secret of Existence or The Gospel of Action* by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din (translated into Dutch with the title *Het evangelie van den daad*).<sup>50</sup> *De heilige Qoer-an* was accepted enthusiastically by Indonesian Muslim intellectuals after it was published in 1934. As reported by *Tempo* in 1974,<sup>51</sup> scholars at that time were rushing to order it. It became the most precious property of many scholars, such as Roeslan Abdulgani.<sup>52</sup>

As already mentioned, these books were written at a time that several accusations were being made against Islam by Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Religion in general was being blamed by academics for hindering human progress and for hypnotizing people into non-productive activities. Belief in God was being severely attacked by atheists and materialists.<sup>53</sup> Responding to these circumstances was among the main intentions of Ahmadi writers of the period. They tried to "properly locate" the danger faced by Muslims and to "find the way out" to revive Islam.<sup>54</sup> Islam, according to these books, does not simply teach and hypnotize its followers to isolate themselves in caves and pray the entire day, as it was accused of, but it requires (not merely encourages) its followers to take action. In fact, Kamal-ud-Din titled his book *The Gospel of Action* because he believed that Islam is a religion of action and that it did more than teach its followers to kneel in the mosque.<sup>55</sup> Kamal-ud-Din wanted to use his book to refute those who claimed that Islam only taught Muslims how to "bow and raise their hands" [referring to how Muslims pray] without teaching

them how to accomplish worldly achievements. "Faith and deeds were inseparably bound up in each other, so that the one could not exist without the other ... the secret of life, vitality and prosperity lies in the power of action."<sup>56</sup> Kamal-ud-Din's explanation is similar to that of Ghulam Ahmad's in quoting the following verse: "Give thou good tidings to those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, that for them await gardens underneath which rivers flow" (Q 2.25).

Refuting the accusation that Islam is an anachronism in the modern world and a hindrance to the advancements of science, the books explain the religion's support for invention and science. They also explain how Islam helps open the path for Muslims towards science by eradicating superstition in society. In his own words, Muhammad Ali states that "Islam gave an impetus to learning in a country which had never been a seat of learning and was sunk in the depths of superstition.... it was through Islam that the Renaissance came about in Europe."<sup>57</sup>

To prove that Islam is not a hindrance to modern science, Ahmadiyah books show their strong religious position in combating any elements of Muslim society that contradict reason and their eagerness to adopt Western systems and technologies, such as in education and publishing.<sup>58</sup> In combating elements that contradict reason, Ahmadiyah books tried to eradicate irrational understandings of Islam and attacked superstition in Muslim society. The most important effort by Ahmadiyah followers in eradicating superstition has been by translating the Qur'an into vernacular languages. This has been the main project of this movement wherever they propagate Islam. With this work of translation they have tried to stop the habit in traditional Muslim communities that projected the Qur'an merely as magic or as an amulet. In Kamal-ud-Din's statement, "We have taken good care to wrap them up in fancy coverings and given them a place of honour in our houses, but we seldom open them to find guidance therein. No doubt we do also uncover and open them at times, but only when we want to take an augury. We place it on our heads too, but simply to take an oath thereby."<sup>59</sup> The project to translate the Qur'an into many languages was intended to make Muslims understand their holy book and use it as their main source of guidance. Efforts by the Ahmadiyah to eradicate superstition went to the point that they tried to employ allegorical interpretations for certain verses in the Qur'an that talk about things that appear irrational, such as miracles.<sup>60</sup> In demonstrating an eagerness

for modern development, the Ahmadiyah could be called pioneers in using technology to propagate religion. It published *Religious Review* and *Islamic Review*, among the earliest English journals from the Muslim world. For the Ahmadiyah, publishing was not only a strategy for propagating religion but it was also elevated to a religious duty. It became the implementation of the obligation to conduct peaceful *jihad*.

The Ahmadi's contribution to checking Christian missionary activity was not primarily in the form of challenging the missionaries in their efforts to convert people but rather by producing books that attacked Christianity and defended Islamic beliefs. They also challenged Christian missionaries to public debates. One such engagement took place in Wonosobo in 1932 between Muhammad Sabitun and van Dijk, a Christian missionary from a Protestant Church, *Gereja Aku Iki Pepadanging Jagad*.<sup>61</sup> It was largely through books however that Ahmadi efforts to slow the Christian mission bore the greatest fruit. Their approach became a model for the DDII (Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia, or Indonesian Islamic Propagation Council), Muhammadiyah, the YAPI (Yayasan Pesantren Islam, or Islamic Boarding School Foundation) and other missionaries in Indonesia.<sup>62</sup> They also became a model for the study of comparative religion in Indonesia, and their writings became sources for Indonesian Muslims interested in conducting comparative studies on Christianity. Although contemporary comparative studies do not consider these books as contributing to the development of religious studies, they did create confidence among Muslims towards their religion.

The number of books produced by Ahmadis on this issue is significant. It became one of the major genres of literature issued by the Ahmadiyah. Almost all Ahmadi scholars have made an intellectual contribution to this issue by writing a book. Three books published in Indonesia before independence had a significant influence on Indonesian Muslims: Muhammad Ali's *The Holy Qur'an*, Basharat Ahmad's *Birth of Jesus in the Light of the Qur'an* (translated into Dutch by Soedewo with the title *De geboorte van Jesus in het licht van den heiligen Qoer-an*), and Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din's *The Sources of Christianity* (translated into Dutch by Soedewo with the title *De bronnen van het Christendom*).<sup>63</sup> These books all deal with certain fundamental doctrines of Christianity. Two of them are about the death of Jesus and his prophesized Second Coming before the End of Days.

## Conclusion

Using Fazlur Rahman's categorization of Islamic revivalism, the Ahmadiyah could be included in the category of modernist movements for their strong support for modernity and rationality. It was the Ahmadi's modernist stance that appealed to Indonesian modernist movements such as Muhammadiyah. This movement even tended to be excessive in its modernist stance to the point that its leaders did not accept the literal meaning of the verses of the Qur'an that spoke about miracles. Instead of believing in miracles, they emphasized their metaphorical meanings.

Ahmadiyah's concern for irrational beliefs and superstition was an extension of the group's modernist stance.<sup>64</sup> This is certainly different from the pre-modernist revivalism that was concerned about purifying religion from accretions and external elements. Although they shared the same understanding that superstitions, Sufism and irrational beliefs were the main reasons for the Muslim community being trapped in a declining condition and being left behind by other communities, their efforts to eradicate superstitions were mainly motivated by their modernist stance, and only secondarily motivated by a puritan spirit.

However, only the Lahore Ahmadiyah could be classified as a modernist movement. Whilst the Qadiani Ahmadiyah were also employing modernist approaches to understanding religion, such as a way to interpret the Qur'an, they adopted certain beliefs and practices that contradicted the modern spirit, such as a belief in messianism and a reliance on "dreams" in human affairs.<sup>65</sup> Dreaming for the Qadiani is a method of communication between the divine and worldly realities.

From a contemporary perspective, the way modernist movements like the Ahmadiyah approach religion can be considered to be apologetic. They try to defend Islam by claiming that Islam is the most rational and modern religion, that the Qur'an contains everything needed by human beings, that any new scientific innovation has already been mentioned in the Qur'an, which was revealed 1400 years ago. The way they approach religion could also be included in the exclusive perspective. However, from the perspective of Indonesian Muslims in the early decades of the twentieth century, this approach was perhaps



what they needed. Under the attack of modern materialism, atheism and Christian missionaries, they needed some form of academic device to defend Islam and to refute the various accusations.

The apologetic and polemical nature of Ahmadiyah literature meant it was filled with just such responses. And this is why Ahmadiyah (and Ahmadiyah books) attracted the Indonesian Muslim intelligentsia, who felt responsible for defending their religion, especially those who graduated from Dutch schools and those more familiar with Dutch and English literature than with the Arabic. From their education, they saw how modern and secular paradigms treated Islam, and how Christian missionaries attacked their religion. The only scholarly sources to hand they could use with a degree of credibility to defend Islam were Ahmadiyah books. Mirza Mubarak Ahmad rightly claims, "It is very true that prior to the establishment of our missions in Indonesia, literature in the Indonesian languages did not exist which could present Islam in a manner capable of meeting modern needs."<sup>66</sup> It is from this point, we can say, that the Ahmadis from the Indian subcontinent could be perceived as a source of Islamic revivalism in Indonesia in the early twentieth century, competing with that originating from the Middle East.

## Notes

1. Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia, 1900–1942* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 151n207; Abdul Mukti Ali, "The Muhammadijah Movement: A Bibliographic Introduction" (MA thesis, McGill University, 1959), p. 72.
2. Howard M. Federspiel, *Islam and Ideology in the Emerging Indonesian State: The Persatuan Islam (Persis), 1923–1957* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), p. 63.
3. Federspiel, *Islam and Ideology*, p. 63. Wilfred Cantwell Smith has drawn quite similar conclusions about the Ahmadiyah in India. He says, "The most important fact about the Ahmadiyah Movement in Indian Islam is that the Ahmadiyah Movement (though important in itself) is not important in Indian Islam". See Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Modern Islām in India: A Social Analysis* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1969), p. 367.
4. Margaret Blood, "The Ahmadiyah in Indonesia: Its Early History and Contribution to Islam in the Archipelago" (Honours sub-thesis, Australian National University, 1974), pp. 64–65.

5. Blood, "The Ahmadiyah", pp. 63–64. This statement resembles one by Mirza Mubarak Ahmad, the head of Ahmadiyah's Foreign Mission, who declared that "the literature of the Ahmadiyah movement has played a most remarkable role in creating confidence among Muslims in regard to the ascendancy of Islam". See Mirza Mubarak Ahmad, *Ahmadiyah in the Far East, Rabwah* (West Pakistan: Ahmadiyya Muslim Foreign Missions, 1964), p. 35.
6. Justus M. van Der Kroef, "Recent Trends in Indonesian Islam", *Muslim World* 52, no. 1 (1962): 57.
7. A number of studies have tried to classify the problems faced by Indonesian Muslims in the early twentieth century. Among them are Abdul Mukti Ali, "The Muhammadiyah Movement: A Bibliographic Introduction" (MA thesis, McGill University, 1959); Alwi Shihab, "The Muhammadiyah Movement and Its Controversy with Christian Mission in Indonesia" (PhD thesis, Temple University, 1995); Fred R. Von der Mehden, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia: Burma, Indonesia, the Philippines* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1963).
8. There was actually one other factor; namely, the impurity and superstition in Indonesian religious beliefs and practices that made Islam seem to be a backward religion. However, the role of the Ahmadiyah with respect to this issue is ambiguous because the movement (particularly the Qadiani branch) adhered to strong elements of messianism and mysticism. The opposition to superstitions was more intended to clear the ground for making the claim that Ahmadiyah was the true Islam. One circumstance did not fit with the coming of the Ahmadi; namely, nationalist efforts to free Indonesia from the colonial government. Ahmadiyah teaches loyalty to any government, including a colonial one, as long as it guarantee religious freedom. This is among the reasons the Ahmadi later split from Sarekat Islam, which preferred a non-cooperation policy towards the Dutch administration. This last point, along with the excessive veneration of Ghulam Ahmad, were among the Ahmadiyah teachings that were strongly criticized by Sukarno. Soekarno, "Tidak pertjaja bahwa Mirza Gulam Ahmad adalah nabi", in *Dibawah bendera revolusi*, vol. 1 (Djakarta: Panitia Penerbit Dibawah Bender Revolusi, 1964), p. 346.
9. H. Kraemer, "A Survey of the Netherlands Indies", *Muslim World* 27, no. 1 (1937): 44–55.
10. H.B. Mansell, "Concerning Moslems in Malaya", *Muslim World* 8, no. 2 (1918): 213–16; Herman L. Beck, "The Rupture between the Muhammadiyah and the Ahmadiyah", *Bijdragen Tot De Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde* 161, no. 2 (2005): 210.

11. Beck, "The Rupture", p. 223; Alwi Shihab, "The Muhammadiyah Movement", p. 260.
12. Noer, *The Modernist Muslim*, p. 163; Erni Haryanti Kahfi, "Haji Agus Salim: His Role in Nationalist Movements in Indonesia during the Early Twentieth Century" (MA thesis, McGill University, 1996), p. 33.
13. Noer, *The Modernist Muslim*, pp. 162–3.
14. Kahfi, "Haji Agus Salim", p. 42.
15. Blood, "The Ahmadiyah", pp. 5–6.
16. Noer, *The Modernist Muslim*, p. 165.
17. Beck, "The Rupture", p. 226.
18. Michael Francis Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma below the Winds* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003); Jajat Burhanuddin, "Islamic Knowledge, Authority and Political Power: The 'Ulama in Colonial Indonesia'" (PhD thesis, Universiteit Leiden, 2007); William R. Roff, *Studies on Islam and Society in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009).
19. Blood, "The Ahmadiyah"; Michael R. Feener, "Cross-Cultural Contexts of Modern Muslim Intellectualism", *Die Welt Des Islam* 47, nos. 3–4 (2007): 264–82.
20. Blood, "The Ahmadiyah", pp. 5–6.
21. Kroef, "Recent Trends", p. 58.
22. Soekarno, "Tidak pertjaja bahwa Mirza Gulam Ahmad", p. 346.
23. Kroef, "Recent Trends", p. 58; Hasnul Arifin Melayu, "Islam and Politics in the Thought of Tjokroaminoto (1882–1934)" (MA thesis, McGill University, 2000), pp. 17–18.
24. Kevin W. Fogg, "Indonesian Islamic Socialism and its South Asian Roots", *Modern Asian Studies* (2 July 2019): 1–126, doi:10.1017/S0026749X17000646.
25. Moch Nur Ichwan, "Differing Responses to an Ahmadi Translation and Exegesis: The Holy Qur'ân in Egypt and Indonesia", *Archipel* 62 (2001): 143–61.
26. Kroef, "Recent Trends", p. 58.
27. "Ahmadiyah, sebuah titik yang dilupa", *Tempo*, 21 September 1974.
28. Kahfi, "Haji Agus Salim", p. 118.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 115; Yudi Latif, *Indonesian Muslim: Intelligentsia and Power* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008).
31. This translation follows Maulana Muhammad Ali, *English Translation of the Holy Quran with Explanatory Notes* (Wembley: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore Publications, UK, 2010).

32. Dardiri Husni, "Jong Islamieten Bond: A Study of a Muslim Youth Movement in Indonesia during the Dutch Colonial Era, 1924–1942" (MA thesis, McGill University, 1998), p. 86.
33. Ibid.
34. Fazlur Rahman, "Islam: Challenges and Opportunities", in *Islam: Past Influence and Present Challenge*, edited by Alford T. Welch and Pierre Cachia, pp. 315–30 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979).
35. Ibid., p. 316
36. Ibid., pp. 321, 324.
37. Ibid., p. 324.
38. Soekarno, "Tidak pertjaja bahwa Mirza Gulam Ahmad", pp. 345–47.
39. Muhammad Yaqub Khan, *Het nut van God*, translated by Soedewo (Djokjakarta: Indonesische Ahmadiyah Beweging, 1970).
40. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, *De leerstellingen van den Islam: een oplossing van de vijf fundamenteele religieuze problemen uit Islamietisch oogpunt*, translated by Soedewo (Ahmadiyah Beweging Indonesie, 1931).
41. His full name is Soedewo P.K. (Parto Kertodinegoro). He was born in Jember and became an active member of the JIB. See "The Late Raden Soedewo Parto Kertodinegoro: Translator into Dutch of Maulana Muhammad Ali's First Edition of the English Translation of the Holy Quran", <http://www.muslim.org/activities/indonesia/soedewo.htm> (accessed 20 August 2011); Soedewo, *Asas-asas dan pekerdjaan Gerakan Ahmadiyah Indonesia (Centrum Lahore)*, translated into Malay by Sastrawiria (Soekaboemi: Gerakan Ahmadiyah Indonesia [Centrum Lahore], 1937).
42. Moch Nur Ichwan, "Differing Responses", pp. 143–61.
43. Umar Said Tjokroaminoto, *Tarich agama Islam (riwayat dan pemandangan atas kehidoepan dan perdjalanen nabi Moehammad CLM)* (Soerabaja, Abdul-Rehman Habib Patel, 1931).
44. Agus Salim, *Nabi Muhammad s.a.w.: tjeritera Isra' dan Mi'radj* (Djakarta, Tintamas, 1962).
45. Mohammad Natsir, *Marilah salat* (Djakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1960). See Zulkarnain, Iskandar, *Gerakan Ahmadiyah di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: LKiS Yogyakarta, 2005), p. 280.
46. Zulkarnain, *Gerakan Ahmadiyah di Indonesia*, pp. 22, 233, 277.
47. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, *De leerstellingen van den Islam*.
48. Muhammad Ali, *De religie van den Islām* (Batavia: Ahmadiyah Beweging Indonesia, 1938).
49. Moehammad Ali, *De heilige Qoer-an: vervattende den Arabischen tekst met ophelderende aantekeningen en voorrede van Maulwi Moehammed Ali*, translated by Soedewo (Batavia: Hoofdcomité Qoer-ânfonds, 1934).
50. The Dutch translation is not available to the present author.

51. "Ahmadiyah, sebuah titik yang dilupa", *Tempo*, 21 September 1974.
52. "Cak Roes, dari 'kaptan' langsung...", *Tempo*, 27 December 1975.
53. Kamal-ud-Din, Khwaja, *The Sources of Christianity* (Columbus, OH: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam [Lahore] USA, 1997), p. 11; Muhammad Ali, 'Preface', in *The Teachings of Islam: A Solution of Five Fundamental Religious Problems from the Muslim Point of View*, by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (London: Luzac & Co, 1910), p. viii; Maulana Muhammad Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Arabic Text with English Translation and Commentary* (Columbus, OH: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha`at Islam Lahore Inc. USA, 2002), pp. 1-14.
54. Kamal-ud-Din, Khwaja, *The Secret of Existence or The Gospel of Action*, translated by Muhammad Yakub Khan (Woking: The Basheer Muslim Library, the Islamic Review Office, 1923), p. 11.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
57. Muhammad Ali, *The Religion of Islam: A Comprehensive Discussion of the Sources, Principles and Practices of Islam* (Columbus, OH: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam Lahore, 1995), p. 12.
58. Quotations of Ahmadiyah claims that Islam is compatible with modernity and reason can be found in James Thayer Addison, "The Ahmadiya Movement and Its Western Propaganda", *Harvard Theological Review* 22, no. 1 (1929): 26.
59. Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, *The Secret of Existence*, pp. 12-13.
60. This is particularly true for the Lahore branch. For the Qadiani Ahmadiyah, this position is quite contradictory to its messianic belief and its reliance on dreams. With these kinds of beliefs it is actually difficult to categorize Qadiani Ahmadiyah as a modernist movement or as a pre-modernist revivalism movement. But if the examination on the position on messianism is directed to the Lahore Ahmadiyah, then it can be stated that Ahmadiyah is part of a modernist or revivalist movement. According to the Lahore Ahmadiyah, the messianic claim of Ghulam Ahmad was used to stop the hope and reliance of Muslims on the coming of the messiah, and to demonstrate that Jesus is not a superhuman who will descend to earth before the End of Days. As a human being, Jesus had died, and what would descend from heaven would not be Jesus in a physical sense, but rather it is meant to be understood in a metaphorical sense.
61. Zulkarnain, *Gerakan Ahmadiyah di Indonesia*, p. 245.
62. Ahmad Najib Burhani, "The Ahmadiyya and the Study of Comparative Religion in Indonesia: Controversies and Influences", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25, no. 2 (2014): 141-58; Zulkarnain, *Gerakan Ahmadiyah di Indonesia*, pp. 278-80; "Ahmadiyah, sebuah titik yang dilupa", *Tempo*, 21 September 1974.

63. Chwadja-Kamal-Oed-Din, *De bronnen van het Christendom*, translated by Soedewo. (Djokjakarta: Ahmadiyah Beweging Indonesië, 1930).
64. The Qadiani's concern with superstitious practice is mostly related to its efforts to clear the ground for their beliefs; namely, they want to restore the true and authentic teachings of Islam that were corrupted by Muslims since the beginning of Islam until the time of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. Among the teachings corrupted by Muslims is the prophecy of the coming of Ghulam Ahmad as the Messiah.
65. They also show reverence to the grave of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.
66. Mirza Mubarak Ahmad, *Ahmadiyyat in the Far East* (Rabwah, West Pakistan: Ahmadiyya Muslim Foreign Missions, 1964), p. 34.