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# TORN BETWEEN MUHAMMADIYAH AND AHMADIYAH IN INDONESIA

## Discussing Erfaan Dahlan's religious affiliation and self-exile

Ahmad Najib Burhani 

### ABSTRACT

The Ahmadiyah in Indonesian Islam has often been seen as a deviant Muslim group, but there was a time when it had a cordial relationship with major Muslim organisations, particularly Muhammadiyah. The Ahmadiyah was once perceived as a highly respected revivalist and modernist Muslim movement, and became a model to be emulated by other Muslims. Erfaan Dahlan is a symbol of the dynamics of this religious relationship in the first half of the 20th century. Motivated by the spirit of Islamic revivalism, he was sent to an Ahmadiyah college in Lahore, British India, during the period of friendly relationship between Muhammadiyah and Ahmadiyah. But when he returned to Indonesia that relationship had deteriorated. As an alumnus of an Ahmadiyah missionary college, on the one hand, and a son of the founder of Muhammadiyah, on the other, he was in the midst of that difficult relationship. His religious identity has been a subject of controversy among competing Muslim communities. The fact that he chose to leave his country to live in Thailand after he completed his study in Lahore further raises curiosity about his religious affiliation. This article, firstly, intends to reveal the dynamics of Muhammadiyah's relationship with Ahmadiyah in the 1920s. Secondly, it will discuss Erfaan Dahlan's religious relation with Muhammadiyah and Ahmadiyah, and particularly, the controversy around the alleged heresy of the Lahori Ahmadiyah and persistent misunderstanding of Erfaan Dahlan's religious affiliation. Finally, the article shows that the case of Erfaan Dahlan reveals the discordancy in a society which categorises its people on the orthodox-heterodox spectrum.

### KEYWORDS

Ahmadiyah; Erfaan Dahlan; heresy; Islamic revivalism; Muhammadiyah; self-exile

If only they weren't here, life would be perfect,  
and society will be harmonious again.  
~ Slavoj Žižek (in Myers 2003: 108) ~

## Introduction

The history of Ahmadiyah in Indonesia is an example of an uneasy relationship between orthodoxy and heterodoxy in a society strongly guided by certain religious doctrines. The Ahmadiyah group has been accused by various Muslim organisations of heresy or infidelity; politically felt as disturbing the dominance of Sunni Islam, and theologically

defaming or insulting the doctrines and teachings of Islam. There are two opposing groups of Ahmadiyah, i.e. Qadiani and Lahori, with different beliefs on the prophethood of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835–1908), the founder of the movement. Since their early formation in Indonesia, they have been widely and indiscriminately considered as deviant groups. In several Muslim countries, if not all of them, the Ahmadis have been excluded from the Muslim community and even discriminated against. However, there was a time when this movement had a cordial relationship with major Muslim organisations in Indonesia, i.e. Muhammadiyah and Sarekat Islam (SI). This affable relationship in the 1920s, had even led to a rumour that the Ahmadiyah and Muhammadiyah were going to merge into one (Beck 2005: 221–222). Furthermore, Muhammadiyah sent its best students, including Erfaan Dahlan (a son of Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of Muhammadiyah), to study in the Ahmadiyah college in Lahore, British India (now Pakistan) in 1924.

This cordial relationship, however, was only short-lived. After receiving information about Ahmadiyah from Haji Rasul, an *‘alim* (scholar of Islam) from Minangkabau, and Abdul ‘Aleem Siddiqi al-Qadiri, a travelling Muslim missionary from British India who came to Yogyakarta in 1927, Muhammadiyah began to be suspicious of Ahmadiyah. It started to disassociate itself from this movement, and finally to sever its relationship with the Ahmadiyah. Not only was Muhammadiyah the first organisation in Indonesia to officially declare the heresy of Ahmadiyah by issuing a fatwa in 1929, it ventured further with a disciplinary decree prohibiting simultaneous affiliation with both groups. This decision triggered expulsions of a number of important figures in Muhammadiyah, including Djojosoegito and Muhammad Husni. The bitter relationship affected Erfaan Dahlan who was studying at an Ahmadiyah college in Lahore when the relationship was warm, but returned to Indonesia in 1930 at a time of hostility between the two organisations. It placed Erfaan Dahlan in a difficult position which made him leave Indonesia for Siam (hereafter, Thailand) and cease his connections with his family in Yogyakarta. He died in Thailand in 1967.

This article, firstly, intends to reveal the history of the arrival and development of Ahmadiyah in Indonesia in the 1920s. Secondly, it will discuss Erfaan Dahlan’s religious relationships with Muhammadiyah and Ahmadiyah. Particularly, it studies the controversy around the alleged heresy of the Lahori Ahmadiyah and persistent misunderstanding of Erfaan Dahlan’s religious affiliation. It argues that the controversy over Erfaan Dahlan’s religious affiliation was mainly influenced by a misunderstanding of most Muslims regarding the Lahori Ahmadiyah, perceiving it as similar to the Qadiani Ahmadiyah. While his departure to Thailand was still associated with the Ahmadiyah, he no longer attaching himself to the movement after he relocated from Pattani to Bangkok. He continued to maintain a good relationship with his Ahmadi friends and teachers, but he abandoned his missionary activity and even his Ahmadiyah affiliation. He avoided giving information about his relationship with this organisation even to his offspring, preferring to teach mainstream Islam, rather than the unique teachings of Ahmadiyah.

Thirdly, Erfaan Dahlan is an example of someone who chose to exile himself from his homeland because of theological differences and uneasiness in being caught between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. As stated by Jeremy Menchik (2016: 67–68), ‘Ahmadiyah, it would seem, marks the boundary of Indonesia’s much-lauded “generally tolerant brand of Islam”. ... The campaign against Ahmadiyah is part of a broader effort by civil

society and the state to constitute the nation through belief in God.’. Guided by a racist fantasy, as summarised by Slavoj Žižek in the epigraph of this article, exclusion and discrimination, including displacing people from their homes and villages, often becomes a ‘norm’ and ‘solution’ in dealing with those perceived as or charged with being heretics. The case of Erfaan Dahlan provides a different way of responding to the orthodox-heterodox controversy. He preferred to leave his homeland and to settle for self-exile in Thailand, and end his ties with his family from 1930. Dahlan’s immediate family was only reunited in 2013, after more than 80 years of separation.

## The arrival of Ahmadiyah in Indonesia

Ahmadiyah is a transnational movement, established by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in British India in 1889. In 1914, this movement split into two camps, i.e. the Qadiani group and the much smaller one, the Lahori, over the contestation on the system of caliphate, the election of a caliph, and the way to propagate Ahmadiyah’s message. The first headquarters of the Qadiani branch was in Qadian, India. After the 1947 partition of India, the office of the caliph moved to Rabwah, Pakistan. Finally, after General Zia-ul-Haq issued Ordinance no. XX in 1984 criminalising the religious beliefs and practices of the Ahmadis, the headquarters and office of the caliph moved to London. The headquarters of the Lahori branch is in Lahore, Pakistan, but some of its activities were managed from the Woking Muslim Mission in England (Burhani 2013). The main theological difference between these two branches of Ahmadiyah is in the way they perceive Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of Ahmadiyah. The Lahori only see him as a reformer (*mujaddid*) of Islam and *muhaddath* (one who receives revelation), whereas the Qadiani believe that Ghulam Ahmad is a prophet, the Messiah, and the Mahdi (Burhani 2013; Friedman 1989, 1998).

As on the Indian subcontinent, there are two similar factions of Ahmadiyah in Indonesia. Formally, the Lahori group calls itself Gerakan Ahmadiyah Indonesia (GAI – Indonesian Ahmadiyah Movement), whereas the Qadiani uses Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia (JAI – Indonesian Ahmadiyah Community) as its official name. Both groups came to Indonesia in the 1920s. Most studies (Beck 2005; Blood 1974; Pijper 1950; Zulkarnain 2005) agree that the first missionaries of the Lahori branch of Ahmadiyah, who formally brought this movement to Java were Mirza Wali Ahmad Baig and Maulana Ahmad. They landed in Yogyakarta in 1924, which has been the homeland of the movement ever since.<sup>1</sup> Before these two missionaries arrived, however, Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, one of the Lahori leaders and one of its most successful missionaries, arrived in Surabaya on 23 October 1920, and he stayed in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) until 1921. He came to Surabaya for medical reasons, as well as to make observations about the city (Zulkarnain 2005: 171). In his preface to the English edition of *The gospel of action*, Muhammad Yakub Khan, however, states that the primary purpose of Kamal-ud-Din’s visit to Surabaya was to study the Muslim situation and the condition of Muslims in Indonesia first-hand (Yakub Khan 1923: 9).

What is unstated in various sources on Kamal-ud-Din’s visit to Indonesia is whether his observation was supposed to be preparations for a mission to Indonesia in later years, or

<sup>1</sup>Von der Mehden (1963: 203) incorrectly mentions that the Lahore branch came to Indonesia in 1925, a year after the Qadiani began its activities in Indonesia.

that it was for something else. Several studies reported that he gave two speeches in Surabaya and Batavia during his stay in the East Indies (Zulkarnain 2005: 171–172). In Surabaya, the Tashwirul Afkar organisation (the embryo of the Nahdlatul Ulama) invited him to give a talk during the celebration of Maulid Nabi (birthday of the Prophet Muhammad) in Masjid Ampel on 28 November 1920, which was attended by around 4,000 people.<sup>2</sup> In Batavia, Kamal-ud-Din gave a religious speech in Gambir Park in 1921. It seems that Kamal-ud-Din finished writing his book, *The secret of existence*, during his stay in the East Indies. This book was translated into Dutch by Soedewo with the title *Het Evangelie van den Daad*.<sup>3</sup> The evidence is a note at the end of the introduction in which Kamal-ud-Din signed and wrote down the date, namely ‘Surabaya (Java), January 28, 1921’.<sup>4</sup> This information provides a strong clue that instead of 1924, as commonly perceived by scholars, Ahmadiyah was Indonesia in 1920. This book was hailed by Sukarno (1964: v. 1, 346), the first president of Indonesia (1945–1966) as a ‘brilliant book, very useful for all Muslims’.

Unlike the Lahori, the Qadiani Ahmadiyah had Indonesian followers prior to sending missionaries to the country. Some students from West Sumatra who studied at the Ahmadiyah school in Qadian, British India, were the first Indonesians to join the Qadiani Ahmadiyah. However, this movement only began to spread throughout Indonesia after its second caliph sent Maulana Rahmat Ali as a *muballigh* (missionary) to Indonesia in 1925 (Zulkarnain 2005). The theological difference between these two branches of Ahmadiyah on the issue of prophethood of Ghulam Ahmad subsequently led to different directions on disseminating their teachings; the Qadiani put more emphasis on inviting people to join a certain distinctive belief of Ahmadiyah, whereas the Lahori tended to promote what was considered, in the first half of the 20th century, the modern and progressive ideas of Ahmadiyah.

With regard to Mirza Wali Ahmad Baig and Maulana Ahmad, it is unclear whether they set out for missionary activities in Java or somewhere else as studies do not agree on this matter. It has been claimed that their initial destination was China, but changed course after receiving information about the progress made by Christian missionaries in Java.<sup>5</sup> Blood (1974) mentions that articles written by Samuel Marinus Zwemer in the *Moslem World* (now the *Muslim World*, founded and edited by Zwemer in 1911) about Christian activities in the Dutch East Indies, indicate that these two Ahmadi missionaries changed their destination to Java. It is very likely that the information regarding this Christian mission in Java became known through the *Moslem World* as the journal published by the Lahori Ahmadiyah, *Islamic Review*, made frequent references, and even had numerous debates with the *Moslem World*.<sup>6</sup> After receiving information about the progress of the Christian mission in Java, Mirza Wali Ahmad Baig and Maulana Ahmad

<sup>2</sup>The Tashwirul Afkar was established and led by KH Abdul Wahab Hasbullah and KH Mas Mansur. Mansur then joined the Muhammadiyah and served as its president from 1937 to 1941 (Aboebakar 1957: 125).

<sup>3</sup>This book has another title: *The gospel of action*. It was originally written in Urdu with two titles: *Raaz-e-hayaat* and *Injil 'amaal*.

<sup>4</sup>In the Urdu edition, this signature appears on page 245 (Kamal-ud-Din 1921). In the English edition, it appears on page 17 (Kamal-ud-Din 1923). In the Indonesian edition, it appears on page xxi (Kamaluddin 1966).

<sup>5</sup>Beck (2005: 220); Blood (1974: 25); Pijper (1950: 251); Soedewo (1937: 93); Zulkarnain (2005: 180–181).

<sup>6</sup>Some of the articles in the *Muslim World* that discuss Christian missionaries and Islam in Southeast Asia (particularly the East Indies), before the arrival of Ahmadiyah missionaries in Indonesia in 1924, are Zwemmer (1911) and Mansell (1918). This journal also had a number of articles on Ahmadiyah e.g. Griswold (1912), Walter (1916; 1918), Gardner (1919), Stanton (1925), Bakhsh (1927), and Titus (1941).

decided on Java, with the aim of helping Javanese Muslims halt conversions to Christianity (Kraemer 1937: 52). This intention is stated clearly in the *Annual report for the year 1928–1929* of the Lahori Ahmadiyah: ‘The necessity of it [the Java mission] arose because of the increasing Christianity there ... They are proving a bulwork [sic] against the encroachments of Christianity’ (Jan 1929: 9–11). It is also stated that the Java mission cost the central organisation of Lahori Ahmadiyah a sum of nearly Rs.1,500 per year, with the price of a hardcover book around Rs.2 at that time.<sup>7</sup>

Abdul ‘Alim Siddiq al-Qadiri seems to be more convincing when he stated that Java was the final destination of Mirza Wali Ahmad Baig because the arrival of the Lahori missionaries was in many cases disguised (Beck 2005: 220; Blood 1974: 25; Zulkarnain 2005: 190–191).<sup>8</sup> This is further indicated by an investigation conducted by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din two years before the arrival of official missionaries of the Lahori branch. Kamal-ud-Din began to learn about Indonesia – and possibly the rising tide of the Christian mission in Indonesia – during his visit to Surabaya in 1920 to 1921. He had also paved the path for the next Lahori missionaries, thanks to his friendship with the traditionalist ulama and the leaders of the Muhammadiyah in Surabaya.

The Lahori Ahmadiyah’s arrival in Indonesia was initially welcomed warmly by Indonesian Muslims, particularly by reformist groups such as the Sarekat Islam and the Muhammadiyah. These reformist groups believed that they had found an ally in checking the expansion of Christianity, and disseminating an understanding of Islam that was compatible with modernity. The Muhammadiyah, established in 1912 by Ahmad Dahlan, even provided accommodation in Kauman, in a quarter of Yogyakarta where it was established, for the two Lahore missionaries, Mirza Wali Ahmad Baig and Maulana Ahmad, after their arrival in late March 1924. They stayed in the house of Haji Hilal, a son-in-law of Haji Ahmad Dahlan (the founder of the Muhammadiyah), through his marriage with Djohanah and then, after her death, with her sister Aisjah (Zulkarnain 2005: 181 n. 43).

These two missionaries were invited by the Central Board of the Muhammadiyah to give a lecture at its 13th Mukhtamar (Congress) in Yogyakarta from 28 March to 1 April 1924 (Beck 2005: 225). At that congress, the successes of the Ahmadiyah, particularly in Europe,<sup>9</sup> were highly praised by Djojosegito, the first secretary of the Muhammadiyah. He called the Ahmadiyah, ‘a sister association of the Muhammadiyah’ (Beck 2005: 225). The climax of that cordial relationship was the sending of a number of its best students, including Erfaan Dahlan, the son of its founder, to study at an Ahmadiyah school, the Ishaat Islam College, in Lahore (Zulkarnain 2005: 187). At the subsequent congress, the 14th Mukhtamar of the Muhammadiyah in Yogyakarta on 12–17 March 1925, Mirza Wali Ahmad Baig was again invited and sat close to the leaders of the Muhammadiyah. In his speech, Djojosegito underlined the Ahmadiyah’s contributions in spreading Islam in Europe and their efforts to show the compatibility of Islam with reason (Beck 2005: 228).

<sup>7</sup>Before the arrival of these *muballigh*, as witnessed by Djojosegito, information about Ahmadiyah had been heard in 1921 and 1922 through the *Islamic Review* published in Singapore (Aboebakar 1957: 157).

<sup>8</sup>When Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din came to Surabaya in 1920, he did not discuss the Ahmadiyah. The reports also mention that he was there there for medical not religious reasons.

<sup>9</sup>This is particularly related to the success of Ahmadiyah missionaries in converting prominent figures in England to Islam such as Lord Headley, Sir Archibald Hamilton, and Marmaduke Pickthall.

The Muhammadiyah's leading figures at that time were impressed by the Lahore missionaries and, by sending their best students to Lahore, they were expecting to have good Islamic scholars that could revive Islam in Java.<sup>10</sup> As expressed in the letter sent by Erfaan Dahlan and his friends, it is for the purpose of reviving and rejuvenating Islam that they went to study in India. They wrote:

May we have your attention, please! We (four children) want to inform you that:

Now we can feel that finally we see the path that we have been looking for, i.e. the path that we do believe will be a means to achieve the goals that we have been dreaming for a long time. What goals? You must have been aware that Islam in Java, in the East Indies, and everywhere, is like a garden without gardener. Do not be surprised, it looks messy and certainly not beautiful. It is full of growing and flourishing weeds. We hope, in the future, we can help in weeding out the garden. That is our goal. Therefore, please wish us health. On 13 June 1924 we start travelling to LAHORE on a ship named 'Melchior Treub', learning to be a gardener, fulfilling a religious duty.<sup>11</sup>

### The story and controversy over Erfaan Dahlan (1907–1967)

Erfaan Dahlan was the fifth child of Ahmad Dahlan from his first wife, Walidah. Erfaan was born in 1907 with the childhood name Djoemhan (Djumhan or Jumhan in later revised spellings).<sup>12</sup> His letter from British India in 1924, used the name Djoemhan bin H.A. Dachlan Moehammady. The aforementioned letter was the first from him and his other three friends from Muhammadiyah, after they departed for Lahore on 13 June 1924. They began their study at Isha'at Islamic College, founded and managed by Ahmadiyah Anjuman Isha'ati Islam Lahore (AAIIL) or better known as the Lahori Ahmadiyah.<sup>13</sup> After he returned to Yogyakarta in 1930, he was no longer called by his childhood name, but used his new name, Erfaan Dahlan, which is more Arabic or Islamic.<sup>14</sup> It is likely that the adoption of a new name occurred during his studies in Lahore or at the end of his studies there.

Changing one's name after completing a certain milestone in life is very common in Java, even today. After performing the pilgrimage to Mecca and Madina, Javanese generally take a new more Islamic name or add a new name into their old name. This was the case with the second president of Indonesia, Suharto, when he completed his pilgrimage, and added 'Muhammad' to his name (Hefner 1993: 1). Even the name of Ahmad Dahlan, the father of Erfaan Dahlan, came about after his pilgrimage. Prior to his pilgrimage, he was Muhammad Darwisj (Burhani 2005: 119). This name change practice extends beyond a pilgrimage or education, as it is also common for someone who has completed a long period of meditation or has acquired a new important position, for example, on

<sup>10</sup>Some scholars such as Harry J. Benda (1958: 53), Fred R. von der Mehden (1963: 203), and Martin van Bruinessen (1999: 169) considered that there were three centres of Islamic revivalism and scholarship at the turn of the 20th century: Arabia, Egypt, and India.

<sup>11</sup>This letter was published in *Soewara Moehammadijah* no. 7, year 5/1924, pp. 105–106. I thank Farid Setiawan of Muhammadiyah for providing me with the copy of this magazine, and Saptoni for helping me translate the letter from High Javanese into English.

<sup>12</sup>Some references (Beck 2005: 228) mention that Erfaan Dahlan was born in 1905. However, the information from one of his sons, Winai Dahlan, gave the year of birth as 1907, based on Erfaan Dahlan's passport (interview with Winai Dahlan in Bangkok, Thailand, on 17 October 2018).

<sup>13</sup>*Soewara Moehammadijah*, no. 7, year 5/1924, pp. 105–106.

<sup>14</sup>The use of this new name can be found, for instance, in the report about Erfaan Dahlan in *Pandji Poestaka*, no. 84, Year VIII, 21 October 1930, p. 1340. I would like to thank Dr Suryadi Sunuri of Leiden University for information on this archive.

ascending the throne or being promoted to (military) general. It signifies the beginning of a new life or identifies a certain transformation in life, such as from *abangan* (non-observant Muslim) to *santri* (devout Muslim).

However, according to Rambhai Dharmikarak, the eldest daughter of Erfaan Dahlan, the reason her father changed his name was simply the difficulty teachers and fellow students in British India, encountered in pronouncing Djumhan.<sup>15</sup> This reason may also explain why Erfaan gave his children Arabic and Thai names, the latter being their formal names in Thailand. Rambhai, for instance, has the Arabic name Marifah.<sup>16</sup>

Erfaan Dahlan's study in Lahore was funded by Fonds Dachlan (Dahlan Foundation) where Haji Fachrodin was the president. He went with his three friends from Kweekschool Islam (Moehammadijah) in Yogyakarta. They were Sabitoen bin H. Abdoelwahab, Djoendab bin H. Moechtar, and Ma'soem bin Abdoelhamid. Of these four Muhammadiyah students, according to Winai Dahlan, only his father, Erfaan Dahlan, eventually graduated from the Lahore school. Sabitoen returned to Indonesia in 1927 because of illness. He then became the head of Ahmadiyah in Wonosobo and a member of the central board of the Indonesian Lahori Ahmadiyah (Gerakan Ahmadiyah Indonesia 1979). Djoendab and Ma'soem struggled in their studies and spent less than a year in Lahore. They returned to Java on 10 February 1925 (Beck 2005: 227). Erfaan spent six years in Lahore, successfully completed his studies, and returned to his homeland in 1930.<sup>17</sup> By then the controversy had taken root in Indonesia.

When Erfaan departed for Lahore in 1924, the Muhammadiyah and the Ahmadiyah were like siblings. The Ahmadiyah was often perceived by some members of Muhammadiyah as its older brother because the date of its earlier establishment (1889) preceded the Muhammadiyah (1912). Another reason for considering Ahmadiyah as the senior sibling, as quoted in speeches at Muhammadiyah meetings, is due to the Ahmadiyah's experience in disseminating Islam in foreign countries, particularly Europe and America. It is this 'success' that Muhammadiyah wanted to learn from and emulate (Beck 2005: 225).

In contrast to the time of his departure, by the time he returned from Lahore in 1930, the relationship between Muhammadiyah and Ahmadiyah had deteriorated. Before Erfaan Dahlan's return, during the 18th congress in Solo in 1929, the Muhammadiyah issued a fatwa on Ahmadiyah, entitled 'Hukum orang jang mengimankan pada Nabi sesudah Nabi Muhammad s.a.w.' (the law regarding those who have faith in the existence of a prophet after the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him). It began with quotations from a passage of the Qur'an (al-Ahzāb 33: 40), and two prophetic traditions stating that the Prophet Muhammad was the *khātam al-nabiyyīn* (seal of the prophets), and consequently no prophet came / could come after him. Following these quotations, the fatwa

<sup>15</sup>Interview with Rambhai (Marifah) Dharmikarak at the home of her later father, Erfaan Dahlan, in Bangkok, Thailand, on 19 October 2018.

<sup>16</sup>The names of Erfaan Dahlan's ten children in Thai and Arabic: (1) Mrs Rambhai (Marifah) Dharmikarak (b.1942), (2) Mr Phaiboon (Ismail) Dahlan (b.1946), (3) Mr Phaerat (Sierat) Dahlan (b.1948), (4) Mr Phaesaan (Ahmad) Dahlan (b.1950), (5) Mr Winai (Basir) Dahlan (b.1952), (6) Mrs Amporn (Aminah) Sanafi (b.1953), (7) Mr Anant (Adanan) Dahlan (b.1955), (8) Mr Artorn (Ahsan) Dahlan (b.1957), (9) Mrs Walida (Walidah) Thanakorn (b.1959), and (10) Mr Amnaj (Anwaruddin) Dahlan (b.1962).

<sup>17</sup>Some people, including the children of Erfaan Dahlan in Bangkok, believed that he went directly to Thailand after finishing his study in Lahore. Widyastuti (2014) also mentions that Erfaan did not return to the Dutch East Indies after his study in Lahore. This issue will be discussed later in this article.

declared that those who did not accept this doctrine were *kafir* (unbelievers) (PP Muhammadiyah 1964: 9–10). The fatwa was not explicitly aimed at the Ahmadiyah, but it was obviously issued in response to this movement since it was decreed at the climax of the rupture between these two organisations. It refers to Ahmadiyah's belief in the prophethood of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. Based on this fatwa, Muhammadiyah at that time incorrectly assumed that there is no difference between the Lahori and Qadiani Ahmadiyah.

Muhammadiyah started reviewing its relationship with Ahmadiyah after receiving information about this movement from Haji Rasul, a leading *'alim* and Muhammadiyah activist from West Sumatra and the father of Hamka (Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah), and from Abdul 'Alim Siddiq al-Qadiri. During his visit to Java in 1925, Rasul took the opportunity to meet and debate with Mirza Wali Ahmad Baig. Fachruddin, who was in command of Muhammadiyah (although he was not the chairperson), was present during the debate (Hamka 1982: 148–149). It was here, according to Hamka, that Muhammadiyah became aware of the theological differences between Muhammadiyah and Ahmadiyah.<sup>18</sup> It remains unclear which branch of Ahmadiyah that Haji Rasul indicated to Fachruddin during his visit to Yogyakarta in 1925. The Ahmadiyah that Rasul disputed with in West Sumatra was the Qadiani, whereas the one that he met in Yogyakarta was the Lahori. The second event that changed the Muhammadiyah's view on the Ahmadiyah was the visit of Abdul 'Alim Siddiq al-Qadiri to Yogyakarta around October or November 1927. In that visit, he unveiled the heresy of Ahmadiyah (Beck 2005: 236; Yasir and Yatimin 1989: 33–35; Zulkarnain 2005: 190).<sup>19</sup> Again, it is unclear which Ahmadiyah he was discussing at that time.

After these visits, the Muhammadiyah began its hostility towards the Ahmadiyah. The first decision made by the Muhammadiyah after this rupture was to issue a *maklumat* (proclamation or announcement) on 5 July 1928 (No. 294) stating, among other things, that Ahmadiyah teachings and beliefs were prohibited from being taught in Muhammadiyah circles (Yasir and Yatimin 1989: 35). As a corollary to this announcement, the Muhammadiyah began dislodging Ahmadiyah elements from the Muhammadiyah movement, disciplining a number of its members who had sympathies or close relations with Mirza Wali Ahmad Baig. They had to choose to either withdraw from the Muhammadiyah or leave the Ahmadiyah. Muhammad Husni, the general secretary of Muhammadiyah, and Djojosoegito, at that time the chairman of the Purwokerto branch of Muhammadiyah, preferred to be loyal to Ahmadiyah. For making this difficult choice, they were subsequently expelled from the Muhammadiyah organisation (Yasir and Yatimin 1989: 35).

Erfaan Dahlan returned to Yogyakarta when the rupture between Muhammadiyah and Ahmadiyah was still reverberating amongst members of both organisations. Being an alumnus of an Ahmadiyah college and a son of the founder of Muhammadiyah, the young Erfaan Dahlan was predictably torn between these two organisations. In the

<sup>18</sup>Herman Beck challenges Hamka's view that his father was the catalyst of the rupture between Muhammadiyah and Ahmadiyah. He shows that after the meeting between Haji Rasul and Mirza Wali Baig: (1) sympathetic articles on Ahmadiyah were still found in the *Almanak Moehammadijah* of 1926–1927; (2) the publishing house Taman Pustaka Muhammadiyah, still published Ahmadiyah books; and (3) these two organisations still cooperated in opposing Christian missionaries (Beck 2005: 231).

<sup>19</sup>Abdul 'Alim Siddiq al-Qadiri was a travelling missionary. He was born on 3 April 1892 (15 Ramadhan 1310) in Meerut, India. He came to Southeast Asia and then lived in Singapore for several years from 1930. He died on 22 August 1954 in Madina, Saudi Arabia. This information comes from an inscription in Abdul 'Alim Siddiq al-Qadiri mosque in 90 Lorong K, Telok Kurau Road, Singapore.

Ahmadiyah news, it was reported that Erfaan was staying in Yogyakarta for six months. Besides visiting his family, during this short return, he also participated in the GAI congress in Purwokerto on 25–26 June 1930.<sup>20</sup> According to a report by Blumberger (1931), Erfaan delivered a speech during the congress with a ‘*propagandistische strekking*’ (propagandistic tenor) that Islam was currently in a bad situation, and its Islamic spirit had disappeared from the Muslim community. ‘Ahmadiyah wants to change this. Christianity fears Ahmadiyah,’ he said (Blumberger 1931: 101–105, 348–350). More than giving that speech, Erfaan was even included in list of Ahmadiyah chairpersons in Purwokerto.

Erfaan’s family in Bangkok do not have any information about his association with the Lahori Ahmadiyah. Rambhai Darmikarak or Maarifah, said that her father never told his children anything related to Ahmadiyah and, therefore, she has no idea about Erfaan’s affiliation with this movement.<sup>21</sup> She even believed that Erfaan did not return to Yogyakarta after completing his study in Lahore. She reported (seemingly mistakenly) that he went directly to Pattani in Thailand, to work with an Indian physician, Dr A.W. Khan. Another offspring, Winai Dahlan, explained that his father Erfaan did not return to Yogyakarta because of the conflict between Muhammadiyah and Ahmadiyah. On learning about the Muhammadiyah’s opposition to the Ahmadiyah in his homeland, Erfaan decided against returning to Yogyakarta.

One can imagine that 80 years ago with distorted and exaggerated information from homeland to young man of 20 year-olds like Erfaan [sic], how much he felt worried and scared. His decision was to not go back home to Kauman since his name was used by Ahmadiyah in Yogyakarta as a member of Ahmadiyah movement founder.<sup>22</sup>

Rambhai and Winai believe that Erfaan only returned to Indonesia once after his move to Thailand. Namely, in 1965, when he represented the children of Ahmad Dahlan to receive an award as a national hero which came with a house given by the Indonesian government.<sup>23</sup>

However, it seems difficult to have a clear picture of the conflict at that time and to feel the heat of the rupture without being present in Yogyakarta. Currently there is no evidence that Erfaan received detailed information about the rupture while he studied in Lahore. Therefore, it seems more plausible that he did not go directly to Thailand, but first returned to Yogyakarta for a while (perhaps for six months) before deciding to leave as he was caught in the conflict between the Muhammadiyah and the Ahmadiyah.

Winai Dahlan, the fifth offspring of Erfaan, asserts strongly that his father was not an Ahmadi and did not convey Ahmadiyah teachings to his children during his lifetime. His response below was in English:

Studying in Madrasah of Ahmadiyah does not mean that he sold out his soul to be Ahmadi. He just did his responsibility to finish his education, never let other people down. Therefore, nothing in KH A Dahlan’s family in Thailand links with Ahmadiyah, but so proud of KH A Dahlan as founder of Muhammadiyah.<sup>24</sup>

(Pers. comm. 19 August 2013)

<sup>20</sup>Erfan Ahmad Dahlan (1905–<1967>), <<http://ahmadiyah.org/irfan-dahlan/>>

<sup>21</sup>Interview with Rambhai Darmikarak at her home in Bangkok, Thailand, on 19 October 2018.

<sup>22</sup>Pers. comm. Winai Dahlan to author, 19 August 2013.

<sup>23</sup>The Indonesian government awarded Ahmad Dahlan the status of *Pahlawan Nasional* (National Hero) following Presidential Decree No. 657 on 27 December 1961. On the question of *pahlawan nasional* awards, see Fogg (2019).

<sup>24</sup>Interview with Winai Dahlan at the Halal Science Center, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand, 17 October 2018 when he reasserted that his father was not an Ahmadi.

The conviction of Erfaan's family that he was not an Ahmadiyah missionary and did not teach or preach its doctrine seems to be supported by evidence in Thailand. Muslims account for only about 5% in Thailand and are mostly concentrated in the four southern-most provinces of Pattani, Narathiwat, Yala and Satun. The number of Muslims in Bangkok is very small, let alone the number of Ahmadis. Even the Qadiani Ahmadiyah that has been very active in disseminating its teachings has only about 30 members in Bangkok. According to Ung Kurnia, president and missionary in charge of the Qadiani Ahmadiyah in Thailand, this movement has 2,000 members in the country, and most are immigrants from the Indian subcontinent. Native Thais comprise only 10% of total members or about 200 people, and there are only three Ahmadis from Indonesia.<sup>25</sup> The membership of the Lahori Ahmadiyah in several countries is generally much lower than that of the Qadiani Ahmadiyah. In Indonesia, for instance, the Lahori only comprise about one or two percent of the total Ahmadis, as they have been stalled or stopped in their growth. It is possible that there is no Lahori Ahmadi in Thailand, and those who previously had any association with this movement just merged with other Muslims, abandoning their affiliation with the Ahmadiyah completely.

During his departure to Thailand, as reported by the *Pandji Poestaka* magazine, Erfaan Dahlan was described as someone who was dispatched there, as an Ahmadi missionary. It stated:

Mr Erfaan A. Dahlan Goes to Siam. Someone from Poerwokerto reported: On 15 October, Mr Erfaan A. Dahlan, [a son] of the founder of Moehamadijah Indonesia, started his journey from Djokja to Siam. On 18 October, he departed from Tanjung Priok [now in Jakarta]. The purpose of his journey to Siam is to disseminate Islam and for international brotherhood there. He is a Muslim missionary of the Lahore Ahmadiyah movement. He is the first native Indonesian to be dispatched to disseminate Islam in a foreign country. He graduated from Ishaat Islamic College Lahore, one of the Ahmadiyah schools there. At that school, he learned theology (Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism) and became well versed in English, Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Sanskrit. Mr Erfaan has been 6 months in the East Indies to visit his relatives.<sup>26</sup>

The above report on his arrival in Thailand also describes Erfaan Dahlan as an Ahmadiyah missionary. He arrived in the southern province of Pattani in 1930 and, according to Winai Dahlan and Rambhai Darmikarak, met with his friend from British India, Dr A.W. Khan who was working as a physician. Just like Erfaan, the Ahmadiyah affiliation of Khan is also contested by Khan's family. Based on information from Khan's children, Winai Dahlan and Rambhai Darmikarak assured the author that Khan was not an Ahmadi.<sup>27</sup> In his explanation about the relationship between Erfaan Dahlan and Dr Khan, Winai Dahlan states:

He came to Pattani, Thailand, during 1930 to spend his life [work] as assistant [to] Dr Khan, a Pakistani doctor who had dedicated his life by working there. I met several sons of Dr Khan who insisted that their father was not Ahmadiyah but [that] one time by chance [he] had visited Lahore [to attend] a meeting. He met Erfaan who urged [him to] accept working as [his] assistant in Thailand. Erfaan had worked with Dr Khan for a year before wandering

<sup>25</sup>Interview with Ung Kurnia and Prasit Jumma Khan Rakpraphapan, local missionary of Ahmadiyah, in Royal Rattanakosin Hotel, Bangkok and in Ahmadiyah Mission House in Pathumthani province, Thailand, 16 October 2018.

<sup>26</sup>*Pandji Poestaka*, no. 84, Year VIII, 21 October 1930, p. 1340. I thank Dr Suryadi Sunuri of Leiden University for providing me with this archive as well as Saptoni for helping to translate the letter from High Javanese into English.

<sup>27</sup>The status of Dr Khan as physician is also stated by Winai Dahlan in his correspondence with the author on 19 August 2013.

northwards to Nakhon Srithammarat and finally to Bangkok. He probably met my mother, a daughter of Masjid Java's Imam, during his 25 year-old of age [sic]. Impressed [with] Erfaan's character and humble manner, Imam finally granted his youngest daughter, Yaharah, to my father. When they married, my mother was 16, a decade younger than her husband. My mother always joke[d] about [the] poverty of Erfaan, by saying he had only 2 sarongs when they married, possibly in the year of 1934.

(Pers. comm. 19 August 2013)

However, a report of the Lahori Ahmadiyah states:

Dr. A.W. Khan, a very sincere and quiet worker for the propagation of Islam, established an Islamic Mission at Pattani (South Siam) in memory of his revered father about five years ago. He was striving hard to expand the work when he came in touch with our Society and from that time he has been trying to fulfil his dream of the propagation of Islam among the Siamese. He attended our anniversary along with his wife in 1930, but before he left Siam, he had obtained from our Society the services of Mr. Erfan Dahlan, a young Javanese and a student of our Ishaat Islam College. Mr. Erfan Dahlan joined Pattani Mission in October 1930. A little later he was sent to Bangkok, the capital of Siam, to learn the Siamese language where he was cordially received by Maulana A. Karim Masoodie, Imam of the Royal Mosque, who is helping him in every way. They are now both carrying on the Islamic propaganda in Siam.

(AAIIL 1932: 18)

It would appear from the Ahmadiyah report that initially Erfaan Dahlan was to be a missionary of the Lahori Ahmadiyah in Siam. This is further supported by his design of the *Correspondentieblad* masthead, a Lahori Ahmadiyah magazine in Java in Dutch (Figure 1). Its editorial note of May 1931 page 12, gave the following information:

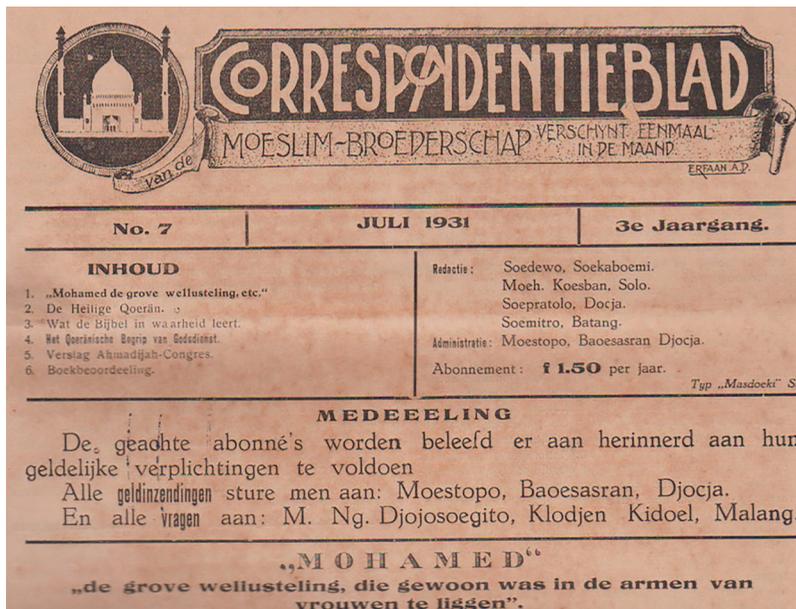


Figure 1. Masthead of *Correspondentieblad* with Erfaan Dahlan's name at the bottom right. Courtesy of Asghar Ali of GAI Yogyakarta.

### Announcement

With the release of this issue, our magazine has a masthead. We express our gratitude to our brother ERFAN DACHLAN, a Muslim missionary of the Lahore Ahmadiyah in Siam (Patani) for the very aesthetic drawing he designed.

Red. and Adm.

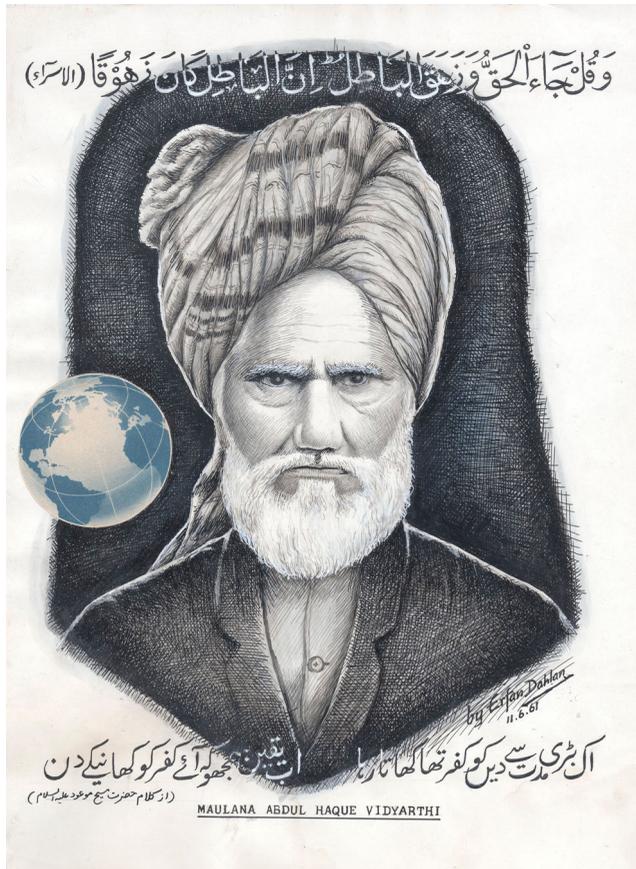
However, after living in Thailand for a few years, it seems he preferred to be a missionary of Islam in general, rather than specifically for the Lahore Ahmadiyah. After working with Dr Khan for about a year, Erfaan left Pattani and moved northwards to Bangkok. The reason for his move, according to Rambhai and Winai Dahlan, was not because he was assigned by Dr Khan to work in Bangkok, but that he was trying to seek 'his own life after learning that there is [a] Javanese community in Bangkok'.<sup>28</sup> His abandonment of the Ahmadiyah mission can be seen from the information that his activities during his lifetime in Bangkok were not limited to preaching activities. Unlike other Ahmadiyah missionaries who received financial support from the organisation, Erfaan had to find his own living to support his family. As narrated by his children, Rambhai and Winai, Erfaan worked at several institutions and commercial companies which included the German embassy in Thailand, the export-import company Yip In Tsoi & Co., and the Pakistani embassy in Thailand. He was still working at the Pakistani embassy when he passed away on 8 May 1967.

The abandonment of his Ahmadiyah affiliation can be further confirmed by visiting his house and the Muslim community nearby. When the author visited Erfaan's house, currently the home of his eldest daughter, there was no clue of his affiliation with Ahmadiyah. The Muslim community close by and around the Jawa Mosque in Bangkok, some 10 metres from his house, practise traditionalist Islam, similar to the Nahdlatul Ulama in Indonesia. Delivery of Friday sermons is identical to the one in Javanese villages, with the preacher holding a wooden staff or stick. This community also holds *slametan* and celebrate *Maulid Nabi*. The Jawa Mosque, which Erfaan and his family were continuously involved in and helped maintain, has a *bedug* (a mosque drum), which was, in the old days, used to call believers to prayer.

Although Erfaan Dahlan relinquished his Ahmadiyah belief after arriving in Bangkok, getting married, and having children, he still maintained a good relationship with his Ahmadi friends and teachers in Indonesia and British India (Pakistan). He did not become a missionary or teach his children about the Ahmadiyah. Erfaan Dahlan, for instance, drew a portrait of his teacher in Lahore, Maulana Abdul Haque Vidyarthi, wearing clothing similar to that commonly used by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (Figure 2). Beneath the portrait, there is a poem from Ghulam Ahmad in Urdu. The translation of the poem dedicated to Abdul Haque states: 'For so long had unbelief been devouring the faith [of Islam], rest assured now that the days are here for devouring unbelief.'<sup>29</sup> At the bottom right of the portrait, as with other images, Erfaan Dahlan included his signature and the date,

<sup>28</sup>Interview with Winai Dahlan at the Halal Science Center, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand, 17 October 2018.

<sup>29</sup><<http://www.abdulhaq.info/photos/sketch.htm>> The website is that of Dr Zahid Aziz, a grandson of Vidyarthi. The content of this website has been reproduced on Indonesian Lahori Ahmadiyah website.



**Figure 2.** Portrait of Maulana Abdul Haque Vidyarthi who was Erfaan Dahlan's teacher in Lahore. Erfaan's signature appears on the bottom right. Courtesy of Dr Zahid Aziz (grandson of Maulana Abdul Haque Vidyarthi)<sup>31</sup>

11 June 1961.<sup>30</sup> The portrait and poem would be indications that Erfaan had not completely severed links with the Ahmadiyah.

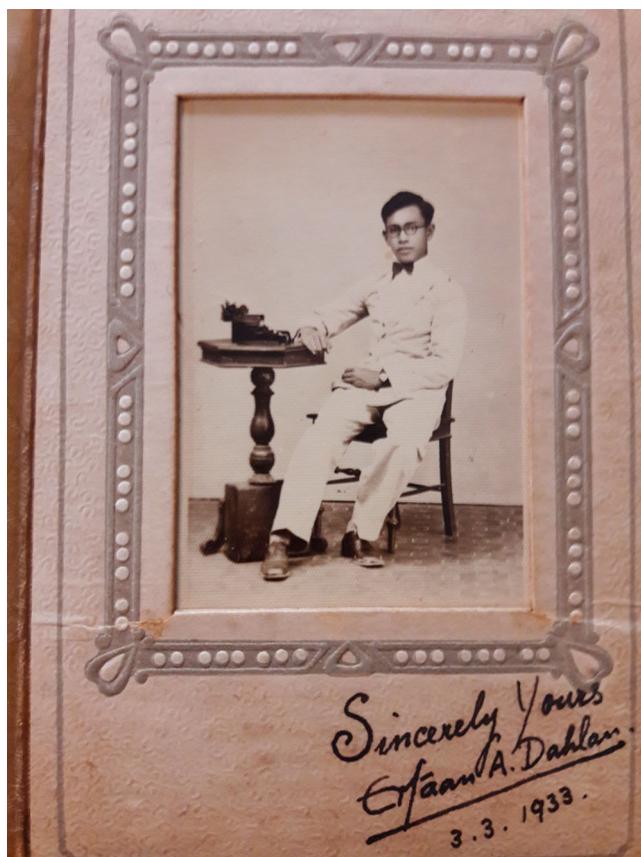
According to Erfaan Dahlan's daughter, Rambhai Dharmikarak, her father had a very beautiful hand for calligraphy and drawing, and almost always added his signature and a date. In his own portrait shown to me by Rambhai, dated 3 March 1933, Erfaan also included his signature and the date in his elegant handwriting (Figure 3), similar to that on the Vidyarthi portrait and the *Correspondentieblad* masthead.

### Solving the puzzle and concluding remarks

Compared to the Qadiani Ahmadiyah, a distinguishing missionary aspect of the Lahori Ahmadiyah is that it does not require its missionaries to emphasise its uniqueness to potential converts. If the best tactic is seemingly abandoning or concealing Ahmadiyah identity to disseminate Islam, it would be one they would practise. If their activities in

<sup>30</sup><<http://ahmadiyah.org/irfan-dahlan/>>

<sup>31</sup><<http://www.abdulhaq.info/photos/sketch.htm>>



**Figure 3.** Erfaan Dahlan in 1933. Courtesy of Rambhai Dharmikarak.

disseminating Ahmadiyah doctrine only created controversy and opposition, the Ahmadiyah missionaries would keep Ahmadiyah teachings hidden or even leave this organisation and join the Sunni Muslim community. The unaggressive approach in converting people to the Ahmadiyah and not flaunting the Ahmadiyah identity were underlined by Sutjipto, the secretary of the central leadership of the GAI. He said, 'We are Muslims ... We have no problem at all to abandon organisational identity and only identify ourselves as Muslims. Whether the GAI exists or not is not quite important for us. We are okay without the GAI' (*Tempo* 1974).

The Qadiani Ahmadiyah, however, requires its missionaries ensure that they show its distinctiveness and the identity of Ahmadiyah. Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, the Khalifatul Masih II, emphasised that Ahmadiyah missionaries must use the unique features of the movement, as the most important element of their propagation to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. For him, the existence of the Ahmadiyah as a distinct community has to be maintained by adhering to this difference from the outset when a missionary meets new people; otherwise, the existence of the movement would be threatened (Mahmud Ahmad 2007a: 277–290; 2007b: 9–32).

Mahmud Ahmad's emphasis on the distinctive features of the Ahmadiyah was originally a response to Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, who avoided any reference to the Ahmadiyah

and Ghulam Ahmad when he propagated Islam, particularly to non-Muslims. In opposing Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din's methods, Mahmud Ahmad asserted that 'if members of the Jama'at had followed such a course, they would have come after a time to assume the same character as Khwaja Sahib and would ultimately have gone astray from the aims of the Ahmadiyya Movement' (Mahmud Ahmad 2007a: 280). This difference in propagating Islam finally became one of the points that distinguished the Qadiani from Lahori Ahmadiyah. Erfaan Dahlan seems to have once been a missionary of the Lahori Ahmadiyah, but then he stopped propagating the Ahmadiyah doctrine, or just kept it to himself.

The other point of the controversy that needs clarification is the widespread misunderstanding about the Lahori Ahmadiyah, amongst the laity and religious leaders, who conflate both Ahmadiyah groups and oppose them indiscriminately. The fatwa of the Council of Indonesian Ulama (MUI) on Ahmadiyah in 1980 only addressed the Qadiani Ahmadiyah, but the 2005 fatwa was directed at the Ahmadiyah in general without considering their differences (Burhani 2014a).<sup>32</sup>

As with MUI's misunderstanding of the Lahori Ahmadiyah, the Muhammadiyah in 1929 made a similar mistake. Although the Lahori Ahmadiyah does not believe in the prophethood of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, it was erroneously the main target of Muhammadiyah's fatwa in 1929. The falling-out and conflict between the Muhammadiyah and the Ahmadiyah in that year possibly led to Erfaan Dahlan's self-exile in Thailand. Since moving to Thailand, he only returned to Indonesia once. After decades of separation, the families of Ahmad Dahlan in Thailand and Indonesia were finally reunited in 2013 (Zulkifli 2013). However, the family reunion still left the ambiguity of Erfaan's religious affiliation.

This article, therefore, clarifies this issue by arguing that, firstly, Erfaan Dahlan's move to Thailand was mainly motivated by being caught in the conflict between the Muhammadiyah and the Ahmadiyah. Secondly, although he was associated with the Lahori Ahmadiyah foreign mission during his first year in Thailand, he seems to have suspended relations with the Ahmadiyah mission when he moved from Pattani to Bangkok a year later. Thirdly, Erfaan Dahlan maintained good relations with his teachers from Ahmadiyah, such as Maulana Abdul Haque Vidyarthi, and also continued communicating with his friends from the Indonesian Lahori Ahmadiyah or the GAI, but he no longer acted as an Ahmadiyah missionary in Thailand or conveyed Ahmadiyah teachings to his children and the Muslim community in Bangkok.

The case of Erfaan Dahlan is part of a broader impact of the conflict between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, particularly the charge of heresy or infidelity towards a group accused of embracing deviant religious teachings. Such an accusation not only labels the targeted individual or group as *kafir* (unbelievers), but ostracises the person or group in the Muslim community, and so alienates them from social interaction. *Kafir* is thus, a religious category with social implications. As with the case of Ahmadiyah in Transito (Burhani 2014b), the charge of heresy against the Ahmadiyah community has influenced mainstream Muslims in West Nusa Tenggara to displace the Ahmadis several times from their respective home and town. Since 2006, they have had to live together in Transito, a crowded shelter house in Mataram, the capital of West Nusa Tenggara. Similarly,

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<sup>32</sup>The position of the Lahori Ahmadiyah on MUI's fatwa in 2005 and its difference from the Qadiani Ahmadiyah is discussed by Ali Yasir (2005).

mainstream Muslims in Madura, East Java, displaced the Shi'ite community from Sampang after the East Java branch of MUI declared the group as heretics (Afdillah 2016). Exclusivism, as stated by Zizek in the epigraph of this article, has become a norm in certain sectors of society. Some people assume that perfectness of life and harmonious society can only be created by rejecting diversity and strengthening homogeneity.

Unlike the fate of the Ahmadiyah in Transito and the Shi'ite community in Sampang, Erfaan Dahlan chose self-exile. This move to avoid embroilment in the conflict between the Muhammadiyah and the Ahmadiyah, included severing ties with his family in Yogyakarta.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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