

Ahmadiyya Religious Sect in the International World and in Indonesia: The Establishment, Belief, and the Controversy

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ABSTRACT: This essay is a short exposition of the rise of the Ahmadiyya religious sect in the international world, and so some of the settings and consequences of that faith. In particular, the paper is concerned with enlightening for the many societies outside Islam the evolving of the sect as a reaction to Christian missionaries, and to counter the downfall of the religion in India due to British colonialism.

Introduction

Ahmadiyya—a self-defined sect of Islam—has been established in the world for more than a hundred years. Since its establishment in 1899 by Mirza Gulam Ahmad, this sect has been colouring the development of the Islamic discourse. One of its contributions to Islam is its concern to counter the development work of Christian missionaries, either in India (where this sect was found), or in the countries where these missionaries spread their belief, including in Indonesia. Ahmadiyya has also been controversial in Islamic communities around the world especially when dealing with its belief that is contrary to the belief of the Islamic mainstream, i.e. the acknowledgment of its founder, i.e. Gulam Ahmad, as the Messiah, Imam Mahdi, and of the Prophet of Islam after Muhammad.

Ahmadiyya and its Establishment

The establishment of Ahmadiyya in 1889 cannot be separated from the figure of Mirza Gulam Ahmad. Ahmad was born in Qadian, Province of Punjab, India on 18 February 1835, and he died in Lahore on May 26, 1908. The word 'Mirza' in his name is the naming from the royal descent of Mughal Dynasty, an Islamic Empire that has ruled Indian Subcontinent, e.g. India and Pakistan, from 1526–1857.

Gulam Ahmad was known as an intelligent and diligent person. He had spent most of his life in learning about Islam. He had learned the Al-Qur'an enthusiastically and some Persian books from a teacher named Fasl Ahmad. He had also read a number of important Arabic books from

a teacher named Gul Ali Syah. Gulam Ahmad liked staying alone, reading many books about Islam, and he had rarely involved himself in the daily social affairs (Ali, 2010). In 1864-1868, he was a civil servant in British government in Sialkot, India (Fathoni, 2002). For some time, his father had always asked him to administer their land, but he did not like the job.

There were a range of internal and external factors initiating the establishment of Ahmadiyya by Ahmad. The external factor was British imperialism, and the internal one was the deterioration of the position of Muslims in India (Fathoni, 2002; Nadwi, 2005; and Zulkarnain, 2005). From the external one, the arrival of the British in India in the eighteenth century—with their colonialist interest—had much changed the political situation in India, especially when dealing with Islam. Imperialism had attempted long the limiting and destruction of Islamic power as held by the Mughal Dynasty (Zulkarnain, 2005). Since this imperialism period, the condition of Muslims in India had been wretched. Islam was considered as an obstacle to the development of British imperialism, because its people had a spirit of Jihad (holy war), wishing to fight for Islam against non-believers and against any other powers contradicting Islamic understanding. Muslims did not want to co-operate with the British, because the British were considered as non-believers.

Regarding this historical background, Zulkarnain (2005) explains that the British Imperialism became more antipathetic to Islam in India after the Mutiny Rebellion in 1857. The British power maintained that Muslims had provoked this rebellion in order to bring back the glory of Mughal dynasty. The Islamic movement was considered as a danger for the colonialist interest and power in India. This situation had worsened the condition of the Muslims in the country.

From the internal aspect, Muslims at this period had also experienced a deterioration from within. They had no real interest in the development of science and knowledge. They had relied on their belief in mysticism and thus lost the rationalism in Islamic thought. They had also been separated into many sects and groups. These Islamic sects were always involved in conflict, which then brought Islam itself into more sectarian conflict.

According to Fathoni (2002), these internal and external factors had caused Gulam Ahmad to establish Ahmadiyya. The Ahmadiyya sect can be seen as the reaction against the development of Christian missionaries, brought by British, in recruiting new followers in India, and so there arose the worse condition experienced by Muslims in India than in the colonisation period.

The Christian missionaries were considered to have launched the apostasy movement to blur for the Muslims their basic principle of Islam

(Nadwi, 2005). The motive behind the establishment of Ahmadiyya is ‘to achieve Islamic reform by providing a new interpretation of Islam in order to find the best solution of the downfall of the religion in India’ (Fathoni, 2002, p. 49).

A Controversy around Its Establishment

There are two main issues regarding the controversy of the establishment of Ahmadiyya. The first issue has been mentioned earlier in that it aims to defend Islam and Muslims from the British imperialist in India (see also Jones, 1986). However, the opposite view has argued, namely that, at that time, Gulam Ahmad and his family were very co-operative to the British Coloniser, and he, as well as, his family were ardent supporters of the British government (Lavan, 1970). Lavan then explains that this support is basically religiously motivated (1970, p. 3). This cooperation got a strong reaction and opposition from the majority of Muslims in India (Fathoni, 2002).

Nadwi (2005) also argues that the British welcomed the coming of Ahmadiyya as a new movement. He explained that, at that time, the British were afraid of a revolutionary Islamic movement or Jihad. The founders of this new movement (Ahmadiyya) had showed their loyalty to the British imperialist, and they made this loyalty the basis of their faith. Nadwi then explained that even Gulam Ahmad himself has told of this loyalty, and his father had been appointed by the British government to be an official in province of Durbar, because of this loyal support (Nadwi, 2005, pp. 7-10). Barahini Ahmadiyya, a first book written by Gulam Ahmad, offers compliments to the British government, and he overtly calls for the support of the British government (Nadwi, 2005, pp. 35-36). Jones (1986, p. 46) also indicates that Ahmadiyya provided support for British Imperial rule, not only in India, but also in other countries, e.g. in Afghanistan.

Regarding this co-operation, according to Zulkarnain (2005), Gulam Ahmad’s family and the British government in India were close friends and they had a strong relationship with each other. The British government had given protection to this family, because the family had provided the British government with full support to implement the colonisation in India.

In the 1857 rebellion initiated by Muslims against the British government, Mirza Gulam Murthada (Mirza Gulam Ahmad’s father) had recruited many people to be members of British army forces under the leadership of General Nicholson. Even Ghulam Qadir, MGA’s older brother, had also joined in the army force to support the colonisation by the British. Another prominent reason is that this co-operation aimed at

maintaining a long-established friendship between Gulam Ahmad's family and the British government (Zulkarnain, 2005, pp. 61-62).

The relationship between Ahmadiyya and the British government has remained a matter of controversy up to the present. Those who support Ahmadiyya argue that Ahmadiyya has an important role to defend Islam in India, especially in the colonisation period. The Ahmadiyya followers around the world, of course, hold this belief. Meanwhile, those who disagree with it argue that the sect is the accomplice of British imperialist and that it has contributed to destroy Islam. Ahmadiyya followers are non-believers, because their belief contradicted the spirit of true Islam and they had then become the supporters of the coloniser.

The Promised Messiah and the Awaited Mahdi

Another controversy of Ahmadiyya is the acknowledgement of its founder as the Messiah, Mahdi, and the prophet of Islam after Muhammad. The Ahmadiyya followers (Ahmadis) believe that Gulam Ahmad is the representation of the Messiah and the Mahdi. The Messiah and Mahdi are two popular figures who can be found in many Islamic literatures. They are the symbols of the revivalism of Islam and they will come at the end of the world to save the human beings. This revivalism will be started after Islam had experienced the worse condition for centuries. In Ahmadiyya's belief, these two figures have come to this world to bring Islamic glory back. The birth of Gulam Ahmad in 1835 signalled the coming of these two figures and, since then, the greater glory of Islam was believed to have started.

The political situation and the deterioration of Islam in India at the time of Gulam Ahmad's life had furthered this belief. The situation of the deterioration of Islam in India under the colonisation of the British Empire is considered similar to the situation of the end of the world as narrated in some Islamic literatures.

One key point here is Gulam Ahmad himself who links the characters of the Messiah and the Mahdi. He argues that God (Allah) has pointed to himself as having these characters through a number of divine revelations. Therefore, he felt that he had a moral responsibility to fight for Islam against any powers that might seek to destroy Islam (See Fathoni, 2002, p. 53). He had to work out this holy effort by providing a new interpretation of verses of the Holy Qur'an, in order to overcome social and religious problems faced by Muslims in his life period.

This belief, in the coming of the saviours of Isa and Mahdi through the figure of Gulam Ahmad, was clearly supported by the attitude, behaviour, and psychological condition of the majority of Indian Muslims who had been trapped in esotericism (Nadwi, 2005). A worse condition, where the Muslims have been separated into many sects,

experience frustration, and have no power, have brought them to hopelessness. When India became a British colony, the Muslims were trapped in their traditional and fatalistic life and they were also stuck in a religious fanaticism (Zulkarnain, 2005). The province of Punjab, since that period, has been a central focus of frustration for the Muslims.

Because of this gloom, they had hoped for the coming of a promised saviour (*Dewa Penyelamat yang dijanjikan*) at the end of nineteenth century; he was the Imam Mahdi. These worse conditions were marked by much discouragement, a belief in mysticism, and the declining of the prestige of Islamic clerics,—all of which had opened a path for the emergence of a new teaching brought by Mirza Gulam Ahmad (Nadwi, 2005, pp. 5-7).

The most controversial issue is the acknowledgement of Gulam Ahmad, by some of Ahmadiyya followers, as the prophet of Islam after Muhammad. This is contrary to the Islamic belief held by the majority of Muslims around the world. The Prophet Muhammad is considered as the seal of prophethood; there is no longer a prophet after him. This ‘prophethood’ of Ahmad has led to the separation of its followers into two groups, i.e. the Qadiani and the Lahore Ahmadiyya.

The Qadiani and the Lahore

In the International world, Ahmadiyya is divided into two groups; they are Qadiani Ahmadiyya (Ahmadiyah Qadian) and Lahore Ahmadiyya (Ahmadiyah Lahore). Both of these Ahmadiyya groups have sharp a distinction as regarding their core understanding of Islam, e.g. the concept of prophethood.

The name Qadiani is taken from ‘Qadian’, a district in Punjab, India. According to Ali (2010), the name Qadian was formed from the word ‘Qadi’ or ‘Qadzi’, meaning ‘Judge’. When the King of Mughal Dynasty named ‘Babar’ ruled India, he rewarded them with a fertile land as well as appointed Mirza Hadi Beig, Mirza Gulam Ahmad’s ancestor, to be a Qadi in the area. Qadi or Qadian was then used to name the area. The area of Qadian is inseparable from the history of Gulam Ahmad’s Family.

Meanwhile, the name ‘Lahore Ahmadiyya’ is taken from the place called *Lahore* (in present-day Pakistan), a place where this movement was established in 1914. The founders of this Ahmadiyya movement are two important followers of Mirza Gulam Ahmad, i.e. Maulana Muhammad Ali and Khwaja Kamaluddin. They broke away from the Qadiani Ahmadiyya because of different understandings about Ahmadiyya teaching between them and other other Ahmadiyya followers in Qadiani group.

When Gulam Ahmad was still alive, there was actually one Ahmadiyya, and no Qadiani or Lahore. Its separation emerged when the second Caliph, Mirza Basyiruddin Mahmud, led this religious group. Among the followers at that time, there was an irreconcilable view, which then led them to separate. It was an understanding about the position of Ghulam Ahmad as a reformer or a prophet. The Qadiani acknowledges the prophethood of Ghulam Ahmad after the Prophet Muhammad, whereas Lahore claims that, this founder of Ahmadiyya is just a reformer, and that Muhammad was the seal of the prophethood.

According to Faruqi (1983, 1990), there are at least two basic distinctions between the Qadiani and the Lahore. They are listed as follows:

1. The Founder of Ahmadiyya, Mirza Gulam Ahmad, was a *Mujaddid* (Reformer) as believed by Lahore, or a Prophet as believed by the Qadiyyani; and
2. For Lahore, those who do not believe in Mirza Gulam Ahmad remain Muslims. For Qadiani, such people are considered as *kafirs* (non-believers).

These two distinctive principles—the prophethood of MGA and the labeling other Muslims who do not believe in MGA as *Kafirs* (non-believers)—are claimed as the reasons for establishing the Lahore movement.

Regarding the difference of this basic understanding, Azis (1995) also argues that there are at least four distinctions between the Qadiani and the Lahore. The four distinctions are as follow:

1. the Qadiani belief that no person can be a Muslim without accepting Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as a prophet of God, *versus* the Founder's own belief that everyone who acknowledges the well-known Islamic *Kalima*¹ is a Muslim;
2. the Qadiani's practical treatment of other Muslims as not being fellow-Muslims by refusing to say their funeral prayers, *versus* the Messiah's (Mirza Ghulam Ahmad) teaching of being fraternal with all other Muslims except hostile opponents;

¹ *Kalima* or *Kalima shahada*: *Ash-Hadu an la ilaha ill-Allahu, wa ash-badu anna Muhammad-ar rasul-ullah* is the expression that should be expressed by person to be acknowledged as a Muslim. This expression means 'I testify that there is no God but Allah, and I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah'.

3. the Qadiani belief that no prophet can come after the holy Prophet Muhammad and that the Lahore regarded the holy Prophet Muhammad as the last prophet; and
4. the Qadiani system of rule by an autocratic *Khalifa* (Caliphate) possessing absolute power, *versus* the system set up by the Promised Messiah of the supremacy of the collective decision of the *Anjuman* (the Central Executive Body).

Beside the difference in understanding Islam, the establishment of Lahore Ahmadiyya was also considered to have a political ambition. According to Fathoni (2002), Maulana Muhammad Ali had established the Lahore one because he was disappointed at not to be selected as the second Ahmadiyya caliph. At that time, Mirza Basyiruddin Mahmud, the MGA's first child, was appointed the second caliph. The first caliph was Hakim Nuruddin. However, Fathoni then clarifies that the main reason of the separation was actually due to *Aqidah*; the principle understanding about the prophethood.

Regarding the prophethood of Ahmad, the Qadiani followers believe that in this world, there are two sorts of prophet; they are those who bring *sharia* (Islamic law and teaching) and those who do not. They base their belief upon the concepts of *Khaatamun Nabiyyin* (the last prophet) and *Laa nabiyya ba'di* (i.e. no longer on a prophet who brings a new teaching).

They interpret the two concepts—*khatamun nabiyyin* and *laa nabiyya ba'di*—that a prophet who brings a new teaching will no longer come after Muhammad, but that a prophet who does not bring a new teaching or who continues the teaching of Muhammad, would possibly come. Ghulam Ahmad belongs to this second sort of prophethood. The Qadiani Ahmadis believe that the coming of Ghulam Ahmad as a prophet is to continue the teachings that have been previously brought and disseminated by Muhammad.

This understanding can be seen in an interpretation provided by Al-Hajj Nadzir Ahmad Mbsy in his book *Al-Qaulus Sharih*, which was then approved and published by the followers of Qadiyyani Ahmadiyya in Indonesia.² This understanding can also be confirmed in a statement delivered by Zulkifli Ahmad Pontoh (ZAP), the Spokesman of JAI (Petersen, 2010). When he was asked about 'what is the difference

² See monthly magazine published by the Qadiani Ahmadis in Indonesia (JAI) called 'Nur Islam: *Yubayiddiina wa yaqimusyari'ab*', pp. 38-41, 58, edition VI, June 2003. The translator of this content is Ma'mun Ahmad.

between the Qadiani Ahmadiyya and mainstream Islam here in Indonesia?’ Pontoh argues:

What differs between us and other Muslims is the interpretation of some of the verses of the Holy Koran (Holy Qur’an). So in the Koran, as we understand it, there is the possibility of the coming of a prophet after the holy prophet of Islam (Muhammad).

Another distinction is that the Qadiani adopts the caliphate (*khilafah*) system. Its leader is called khalifah (Caliph). The system refers to Islamic rule, which has been implemented ever since the death of Prophet Muhammad by some four Islamic caliphs: Abu Bakar, Utsman, Umar, and Ali. The successors of Gulam Ahmad also called themselves as caliphs. The Qadiani has both an international caliphate and a national leadership in many countries (where its national leader is called *amir*), these including in Indonesia. This caliphate system can be confirmed in some Qadiani literatures. Its current international leader is the fifth caliph named Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad.³

However, the Lahore Ahmadiyya does not adopt this caliphate system. The Lahore Ahmadis establishes a Central Executive Body that they call *Anjuman*. This executive body has also an organisational structure. However, there is no international connection that links Lahore Ahmadis organisationally from different countries. The Lahore (group) does not concern itself with an organisational movement but it is more of a cultural movement. The Lahore Ahmadis emphasises its effort in a movement of thought, and it does not involve in a political alike-movement that tries to establish Islamic rule or government.

Besides these differences, the Qadiani and Lahore have actually a similar understanding on some issues. They rely upon a belief that Mirza Gulam Ahmad is the Promised Messiah as well as the awaited Mahdi. Lahore Ahmadiyya prominent figure in Indonesia, Nanang RI Iskandar, acknowledges this belief by saying that Gulam Ahmad has appointed himself as the Messiah and Mahdi. Gulam Ahmad believed that by representing these two figures, he had a responsibility to re-establish the Islamic struggle to free human being from evil influence of *Satan* (evil) (Iskandar, 2005, 2009). Another Lahore Ahmadiyya figure in Indonesia, Susmoyo Djoyosugito, states that he believes that MGA is a *mujaddid* (reformer) from the nineteenth century, the Messiah and Mahdi (Djoyosugito, 1984).

Similar to the condition of Ahmadiyya in the international world, the Ahmadiyya community in Indonesia is also divided into two groups. The

³ See <http://warta-ahmadiyah.org/muslim-televison-ahmadiyya-menyampaikan-pesan-khusus-pada-dunia-arab>.

Qadiani establishes *Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia* (the JAI), while the Lahore creates Gerakan Ahmadiyya Indonesia (the GAI). The following section provides information about the history of these two Ahmadiyya groups in Indonesia.

Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia

Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia (the JAI) has officially existed in Indonesia since the 1920s. The teaching and belief of JAI was firstly brought and introduced in Indonesia on 2 October 1925 by Rahmat Ali (a Qadiani follower) in Tapaktuan, Aceh (Burhani, 2013). Rahmat Ali was an alumnus of the University of Punjab. He was the first missionary of Qadiani Ahmadiyya who was sent to *Hindia Belanda* (nowadays Indonesia) and, firstly, he arrived in Sumatera Island (in Tapaktuan). He was invited by three students from *Minangkabau* (South Sumatera) who had studied in Lahore, British India (Harsono, 2010). The students were Abubakar Ayyub, Ahmad Nuruddin, and Zaini Dahlan.

Ali was directly sent to Sumatera Island to proselytise Qadiani Ahmadiyya's belief and teaching, to recruit new members, and to establish new branches in some parts of Indonesian territory. After arriving in Tapaktuan, he then travelled to Padang. In 1926, the JAI was officially established as an organisation in Padang. At that time, Sumatera was under the official administration of Governor General Andries Cornelis Dirk de Graeff (1926-1931) (Harsono, 2010).

The recruitment of members of the JAI was significantly successful when Ali moved to *Batavia* (nowadays Jakarta), the capital city of *Hindia Belanda*, in 1931. In that year, the teaching of Qadiani Ahmadiyya was rapidly developed in Jakarta and Bogor. In these two cities, the organisation of JAI was established officially. From these two cities, the understanding of Qadiani Ahmadiyya then developed in many cities on Java Island, such as in Tangerang, Cianjur, Sukabumi, Bandung, Garut, Tasikmalaya, Ciamis, and Karawang.

The JAI had obtained its status as legal entity/ corporation (*Badan Hukum*) through the decision letter of the Minister for Justice [*Kementerian Kehakiman*]. No. JA 5 / 23 / 13 on 13 March 1953. In another legal acknowledgement, JAI has been recognised as 'a social organisation through a letter from the Directorate for Political Relations No. 75/DI/VI/2003' (Colbran, 2010, p. 687). The court of central Jakarta, through its letter number 0628 /KET / 1978, then reinforced this legal acknowledgement on 19 June 1978. According to Harsono (2010), under the administration of five Indonesian presidents, i.e. Soekarno, Soeharto, Habibie, Abdurrahman Wahid, and Megawati, there had never been a prohibition or restriction nationally against *Jemaat Ahmadiyya*. In 2000,

President Wahid, at that time welcomed the 4th caliph of Qadiani Ahmadiyya, Mirza Tahir Ahmad, to Jakarta.

In regard to the belief about the prophethood of Gulam Ahmad, the JAI members have the same belief as with other Qadiani Ahmadiyya members around the world. They also believe that the founder of Ahmadiyya is the Promised Messiah as well as the Imam Mahdi. Regarding the figure of the founder of Ahmadiyya, Suryawan (2010, p. 3) argues as follows:

‘It is slightly different from the mainstream Islam, e.g. NU, the JAI Ahmadis believe that Prophet Isa had passed away and will not come to this world anymore. Prophet Isa (the son of Maryam), whose coming is indicated in Al-Qur’an and *Hadith*, has been arriving in this world through the figure of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.’

Due to its belief, especially the prophethood of Gulam Ahmad, the JAI followers have been the target of violence especially in Indonesian reformation era (1998 to the present). During this era, there are at least two legal proclamations issued by Indonesian state official institutions, i.e. the joint ministerial decree and the religious decrees (*fatwa*, in 1980 and in 2005). Violent acts have also been done frequently, their purpose to attack the followers of JAI in certain places in Indonesia. On 6 February 2011, the violent attack perpetrated by a group of 1.500 radical Muslims had killed three Ahmadis and severely injured five more (Mietzner, 2012). This is also reported by Indonesian national newspapers, such as *Kompas* (‘Komnas Temukan’, 2011).

Due to the differences of the JAI and the GAI, the following section provides the history of the GAI in Indonesia, starting from the arrival of this movement before the independence of Indonesia to the present time.

Gerakan Ahmadiyah Indonesia

The Indonesian Ahmadiyya Movement (*Gerakan Ahmadiyah Indonesia*/ the GAI) has been actually present in Indonesia since the movement era in the pre-independence of this country (Burhani, 2014). According to Burhani (2014), the GAI has contributed to the history of modern Indonesia; at very least, this movement became the ‘safeguard’ of the Islamic (*keislaman*) of some movement figures at that time, e.g. Ruslan Abdul Ghani, Cokroaminoto, Soekarno, and Haji Agus Salim. In addition, the GAI has also contributed to the Islamic literature, particularly in the literature concerning the issue of Christianity missionaries in Indonesia (Burhani, 2013).

The GAI was established officially in Yogyakarta on 10 December 1928. I use term ‘officially’ here because understanding of the Lahore

Ahmadiyya had actually been introduced to Java Island, especially in Yogyakarta, in 1924 (Yasir and Yatimin, 1989). A decision to establish this Ahmadiyya organisation aimed at propagating the thought or understanding of Lahore Ahmadiyya as a new form of Islamic movement.

Yogyakarta is known as the centre of Muhammadiyah, one of the largest Islamic organisations in Indonesia. Based on this geographical location, there was a (close) relationship between Lahore Ahmadiyya and Muhammadiyah during the period of 1924 to 1928. Even the founders of the GAI were the former members of Muhammadiyah.

In 1924, several months after the death of Ahmad Dahlan (the founder of Muhammadiyah), two Lahore Ahmadiyya figures arrived in Yogyakarta. They were Maulana Ahmad and Mirza Wali Ahmad Baig. Actually, they had planned to go to China to spread Lahore Ahmadiyya thought. However, when they had arrived in Singapore, they got information that the spread of Christianity in Java Island was largely successful. Therefore, they changed their planning and decided not to go to China, but to Java. The central board of Muhammadiyah, at that time, 'welcomed their arrival in Yogyakarta enthusiastically' (Yasir and Yatimin, 1989, p. 31).

At the beginning, the relationship between Lahore Ahmadiyya and Muhammadiyah was very close. Maulana Ahmad and Mirza Wali Ahmad Baig were free to introduce their understanding to Muhammadiyah followers. Some Muhammadiyah members even learned new Islamic views from these two figures. However, this situation then caused the emergence of dispute and hatred against Baig and Maulana Ahmad. The dispute and hatred then culminated in 1927 when Abdul Alim Assidiqi from India arrived in Java Island and Yogyakarta to propagate anti-ahmadiyya movement.

After its establishment in 1928, the members of GAI moved to some parts of Java Island, such as Purwokerto, Purbalingga, Malang, Bandung, Sukabumi, and Madiun in 1929. While working on their new profession in those districts, they also disseminated their Islamic understanding and established new GAI branches in the new places.

The GAI has been continually promoting the Islamic understanding of Lahore Ahmadiyya in Indonesia. In the Indonesian context, this belief is not adopted by Islamic mainstream in Indonesia. The GAI relies for its belief on the Islamic understanding brought by Mirza Gulam Ahmad. This can be found in many books written by some prominent figures of GAI such as S. Ali Yasir, Susmoyo Djoyosugito, Nanang RI Iskandar, and Mulyono.

GAI followers and all Lahore Ahmadiyya followers around the world believe that Gulam Ahmad was an Islamic reformer in nineteenth

century, the one who represents the figures of the promised Messiah as well as the awaited Mahdi (Djoyosugito, 1984; Iskandar, 2005; Mulyono, 2003; Yasir, 2012). They believe that the coming of Gulam Ahmad (the founder of Ahmadiyya) and his Ahmadiyya movement will bring the revivalism of Islam.

The membership of GAI is recruited on a voluntary principle (*prinsip sukarela*). In 1930, the GAI had been recognised as a corporation (*Badan Hukum / Rechtspersoon*) by the Indonesian Government No IX (Extra Bijvoegsel Jav. Courant 22 April 1930 No. 32), and it was been registered in the Ministry of Religious Affairs in 1963 No. 18 / II. The first chairman of GAI is H. dr. Susmoyo Djoyosugito (Yasir and Yatimin, 1989). Based on *Anggaran Dasar dan Anggaran Rumah Tangga*⁴ (a constitution), this organisation is based on the principle of *Pancasila*. The acceptance of *Pancasila* as the basic principle of GAI has been decided since 1947 in a congress (*Muktamar*) conducted in Purwokerto (Ali, 2013).

Beside this belief, the GAI also proposes a movement to develop Islam as a peaceful religion through *Jihad*. For GAI members, *Jihad* is not understood as holy war by using weapons or swords to kill those who are considered to be the non-believers or the enemy of Islam. However, it should be implemented through peaceful ways, or by the so-called *Jihad by the pen* (e.g. writing and publishing books).

According to Yasir (1982, 2006), *Jihad* is not similar to war. On the contrary, it is a serious attempt to struggle against lust (*hawa nafsu*), Satan (*setan/ syaitan*), and all enemies who use violence to destroy the religious truth of Islam. This concept is actually contradicted by other understandings of *Jihad* of some Islamic groups that consider it as a holy war to maintain Islam, e.g. by suicide bombing.

Since 1940s, GAI has established a school in Yogyakarta called *Perguruan Islam Republik Indonesia* (the Islamic School of the Republic of Indonesia) abbreviated as PIRI. PIRI was precisely established on 1 September 1947, and it then became an independent education foundation on 3 February 1959 (Ali, 2013). This educational foundation is used as a medium to spread and maintain Islamic teaching of GAI through educational efforts. Although this educational foundation had no longer been administered under the organisational control of GAI and had become independent since 1959, it has remained an integral part of GAI movement.

Nowadays, PIRI still survives and the school has been developing its classes from early childhood to university level. Besides having been

⁴ *Anggaran Dasar dan Anggaran Rumah Tangga* is a constitution which is based on mutual agreement of the members of an organisation. This constitution was published by Pedoman Besar Gerakan Ahmadiyya Indonesia (PB GAI) in 1995.

established in some places in Yogyakarta, the foundation has also some branches in Purwokerto and on Sumatera Island, e.g. in Lampung and south Sumatera. All students, not only from Yogyakarta, have been accepted to study in this school. This educational foundation has obviously brought the GAI into an inclusive movement and to be an integral part of Yogyakarta people. The GAI has been widely accepted by Muslim communities in that province.

In an interview in Yogyakarta in 2013, Mulyono—the secretary of GAI—said that another inclusive effort created by the GAI is by inviting preachers from other Islamic organisations to give Friday sermons or other religious speeches in GAI's mosque. This invitation is an important one to learn other Islamic views from others. Further, the members of GAI are also invited by other Islamic groups to give the sermons and speeches. Besides their coming from Islamic circles, GAI also invites religious leaders from other religions and beliefs. This activity is always carried out to share religious thought and knowledge and so to build a close relationship with people from different religions and beliefs.

In the interview (2013), Mulyono states convincingly that :

We do not want to force other people to have a similar belief with us because this belief should be based on comprehension and volunteerism. We never think and do not want to think to accuse other Muslims who have different understanding of Islam as the non-believers. We develop this belief based on understanding that Islam is a peaceful religion.

Up to the present, GAI still exists in Indonesia and its head office is in Yogyakarta. The precise number of its followers is not well recorded. Mulyono argues that the GAI does not concern on recruiting members, but it focuses on disseminating or propagating its Islamic teaching as a cultural movement.

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Conclusion

This article has provided a brief narrative about Ahmadiyya from the historical perspective. During this time, the establishment of Ahmadiyya has raised a controversy, at least in two issues, i.e. the establishment of this religious sect and the acknowledgement of its founder—Gulam Ahmad—as the promised Messiah, the Mahdi, and the prophet of Islam after Muhammad. Regarding the first issue, Ahmadiyya is regarded as the defender of Islam (as believed by its founder and followers) on the one hand, but, on the other hand, Ahmadiyya is also considered as the accomplice of British Imperialist, out to destroy the Islamic faith of Muslims. Pertaining to the second issue, the recognition of Gulam Ahmad as a prophet has created discriminatory practices and physical

attacks against the Ahmadiyya followers in some countries, e.g. in Pakistan and in Indonesia.

With the establishment of the JAI and GAI in Indonesia, the Ahmadiyya belief of Islam can be seen as a thought or understanding of Islam, which can be accepted by some groups of people. These two Ahmadiyya groups had been established in Indonesia before the independence of the country. Although its followers (especially those from the JAI) have been the target of violent acts, they can still exist in Indonesia.

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In *Australian Folklore* Number 28 (2013), Andi Muhammad Irawan had sought to explain the tragedy of the First Bali Bombing in 2002, an event causing the deaths of nearly 90 Australians. It was a consequence of the bombers' training and with the notion of Muslims' 'religious obligations'. This, unlike military activities elsewhere, was a much mistaken religious activity / interpretation of the Prophet Muhammad, and one which necessitated the death penalty.

JSR