

THE EDUCATION OF INDONESIAN SHI‘I LEADERS¹

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Abstract

Amidst the Sunni majority in Indonesia, there exist a small number of Shi‘i adherents that have increased quantitatively and qualitatively since the Iranian revolution of 1978-1979. To see the Shi‘i community as a monolithic entity is misleading. In fact, this community is comprised of several groups that may not be united under a recognised single leader. Leadership in a community results partly from education, although the degree and extent of its influence remain questionable. In this regard, this article aims at analysing the education of Shi‘i leaders in Indonesia. What types of education did they experience? In terms of education backgrounds, Shi‘i leaders may be classified into the ustādhs and intellectuals. The ustādhs are those educated in institutions of Islamic learning and the majority are alumni of hawza ‘ilmiyya (colleges of Islamic learning) in Qum, Iran. Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979, the number of Indonesian students studying in Qum has increased significantly and the hawza ‘ilmiyya of Qum have been very important in producing the Shi‘i ustādhs in Indonesia. On the other hand, the intellectuals are those who have graduated from secular universities but received religious instruction in non-formal education institutions. Although education

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is an important factor contributing to leadership, other factors have to be considered such as scholarship in religious sciences, involvement in da'wa and education activities, leadership experience in education and socio-religious institutions, as the case of Jalaluddin Rakhmat has shown.

Key words: religious education, Shi'i leadership, *ustādh*, intellectual

A. Introduction

For the last twenty-five years, Indonesian Islam has witnessed a growing number of Shi'i adherents scattered throughout the country, despite being a minority Muslim group within the majority Sunni country. The existence of the Shi'i community in Indonesia has enhanced the pluralistic nature of Indonesian religion and society, which is defined by its tolerant attitude and desire to live in harmony. Certain groups, inspired by the reformist ideology of Wahhabism, the Saudi brand of Islam, and supported by Saudi leaders, have promoted a strong anti-Shi'i stance with the goal of stopping the dissemination of Shi'ism in the country. This is in contrast to a number of moderate Muslim intellectuals who have provided room for minority religious group to exist and express their religious beliefs in this pluralistic society.

The Shi'i community itself is not a monolithic entity. With respect to Shi'i leaders in Indonesia, we can classify them into two groups in terms of their education background: the *ustādh* (*ustad*, Indonesian) and the intellectual. In the *pesantren* tradition, the term '*ustādh*' means religious teacher but, in contrast to '*kyai*', '*ustādh*' has also been increasingly associated with '*ulama*', or people of religious learning and prestige or Muslim leaders among certain groups in Indonesia. More specifically, it refers to alumni of *hawza 'ilmiyya* (colleges of Islamic learning) in Qum, Iran. The other type of Shi'i leaders can be called intellectual in the simple meaning of the term, that is, a graduate of 'secular' universities. In the history of Islam in Indonesia, these two types of leaders are clearly distinguished. The first type is '*ulama*' with various popular terms like *kyai* in Central and East Java, *ajengan* in West Java, *tengku* in Aceh, and *tuan guru* in some parts of Sumatera, Kalimantan and Lombok. The second type includes intellectuals who graduated from secular universities. Both groups have been widely discussed, particularly in

regards to attempts to bridge the gap between them. The general difference between the *ustādh* and intellectual in this paper is that the former is considered to have deep religious knowledge without much comprehension of secular science whereas the later is vice versa. But to gain recognition as Shi'i leaders, intellectuals have to expand their religious knowledge. Alternative vehicles for gaining religious knowledge must therefore be considered.

This paper discusses the education of the Indonesian Shi'i *ustādh* and Shi'i intellectual. It is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the education of Shi'i *ustādhs*. In this part, I shall describe the general historical development of how Indonesian students came to pursue their Islamic learning in Qum, the education system of *hawza 'ilmiyya* in Qum, and the further education of Shi'i *ustādhs* after graduating. In the second part, I shall describe the general education of Shi'i intellectuals and the way these intellectuals gain religious knowledge of Shi'ism. In the third part, I shall focus on the education background of Jalaluddin Rakhmat, his career, and other aspects of his leadership in the Shi'i community in Indonesia. This case study will be significant for understanding the complex process of Shi'i leadership in Indonesia.

B. The Education of the Shi'i *Ustādhs*: Development of Indonesian Students in Qum

Within the Shi'i community in Indonesia, the majority of renowned Shi'i *ustādh* are graduates of *hawza 'ilmiyya* in Qum. To name but a few, Umar Shahab and his younger brother Husein Shahab are among the most popular Shi'i figures engaged in education and *da'wa* activities in Jakarta. They are connected with some Shi'i foundations that hold *pengajians* (religious gatherings). Another figure is Abdurrahman Bima, who led Madina Ilmu College for Islamic Studies, a tertiary education institution located in Depok, Southern Jakarta. In Pekalongan, Central Java, Ahmad Baragbah leads a well-known Shi'i pesantren (traditional Islamic educational institution) called Al-Hadi. Some *ustādhs* who graduated from Islamic schools in other Middle Eastern countries, or even intellectuals of secular universities, have also travelled to Qum for short-term training programmes in Islamic knowledge and then made connections with Shi'i teachers and *ulama* in Qum. For example, Hasan

Dalil who finished his undergraduate programme in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, received training in Qum. Even the most renowned Indonesian Shi'i intellectual, Jalaluddin Rakhmat, stayed for a year in Qum, where he attended learning circles and lectures carried out by ayatollahs. This illustrates the importance of Islamic education in Qum for Shi'i adherents in Indonesia.

I do not know when Indonesian students began to pursue their Islamic education in Qum, but some Indonesian students travelled to Qum for Islamic education several years before the outbreak of the Iranian revolution in 1978-1979. There are Hadrami descendants living in different parts of the Indonesian archipelago. In 1974, Ali Ridho Al-Habsyi, son of Muhammad Al-Habsyi and grandson of Habib Ali Kwitang of Jakarta,² pursued studies in Qum. In 1975-1976, six students who graduated from the Pesantren Al-Khairat of Palu, Central Sulawesi, a sister institution of Jami'at Khair of Jakarta and Al-Khairiyah of Surabaya, arrived in Qum. But none of these students became Shi'i *ustādh* in Indonesia. In September 1976, Umar Shahab, a well-known Shi'i *ustādh* today, and Hadrami descendant from Palembang, South Sumatera, travelled to Qum. He said that when he arrived in Qom, there were seven Indonesian students already there.³ In his fieldwork in 1975, Fischer notes students from Indonesia studying in Qum, though, in terms of their number, they were the least among foreign students after Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Lebanon, Tanzania, Turkey, Nigeria, and Kashmir.⁴

This description clearly shows the major role played by Indonesian Arabs in the transmission of Shi'ism into the Indonesian archipelago.

² Habib Ali Al-Habsyi (1870-1968) known as Ali Kwitang was the founder of the famous *Majlis Ta'lim* (meeting place of education and *da'wa*) of Kwitang. He was regarded as *Wali* (friend of God) and his grave has become an important site to visit for people in Jakarta. After its founder died, the *Majlis Ta'lim* was led by his son, Muhammad (1911-1993), who was close to then-President Suharto and an important figure in GOLKAR political circles. Today, it is under the leadership of Muhammad's son Abdurrahman, Ali Ridho's brother. Ali Ridho's sister, Farida Al-Habsyi is a well-known Shi'i figure who runs some Islamic foundations in Jakarta, including Al-Bathul.

³ Interview with Umar Shahab, Jakarta, 9 January 2003.

⁴ Michael m.J. Fischer, *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 78.

We should also bear in mind that Indonesian Arabs have played a major role in the educational, political and religious life in the Indonesian archipelago.⁵ Islamic education of Indonesians in Qum took place because of connections between the *ulama* of these two regions. We were informed that some Indonesian *ulama* had written correspondence with Shi'i *ulama* in Qum. *Ulama* like Sayyid Ahmad Al-Habsyi, the then-leader of Pesantren Al-Riyadh in Palembang, South Sumatera, who was Umar Shahab's teacher, established connections with an Islamic foundation called Muslim Brotherhood in Tehran. Through this foundation, the *ulama* and scholars in Indonesia gained Shi'i Islamic knowledge and information about Islamic education in Qum. Owing to these connections, the first generation of Indonesian students were able to pursue Islamic education in Qum.

Shortly after the Iranian revolution, in September 1979, Husein Shahab, Umar's younger brother, came to Qum seeking Islamic knowledge.⁶ In Qum, Umar Shahab, Husein Shahab, and other Indonesian students were enrolled at Dar al-Tabligh al-Islami, a Shi'i institution that was founded by Ayatollah Muhammad Kazim Shari'atmadari (1904-1987) in 1965. Shari'atmadari was a leading *marāji' al-taqlid* ('sources of emulation') in the Shi'i world, along with Ayatollahs Khu'i and Khomeini in Najaf, Gulpayegani and Mar'ashi-Najafi in Qum, Khonsari in Teheran, and Milani in Mashhad.⁷ While doing his fieldwork in 1975, Fischer noticed mild competition and friendly rivalry among these *marāji' al-taqlid* in setting up schools, hospitals, missionary activities and other activities abroad. Shari'atmadari was known as a moderate clergyman, and through his semi-modern Dār al-Tabligh and other forms of publication, he was the best known to non-Persians.⁸

As an institution of Islamic learning, Dār al-Tabligh was known for its foreign students. It offered a five-year programme with credit system.⁹ The curriculum included traditional religious subjects as well

⁵ Huub de Jong and Nico Kaptein (eds.), *Transcending Borders: Arabs, Politics, Trade and Islam in Southeast Asia*, (Leiden: KITLV, 2002).

⁶ Interview with Husein Shahab, Jakarta, 2 April 2004.

⁷ Fischer, *Iran*, p. 88.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

as secular sciences including psychology, philosophy, sociology, mathematics, and English. The language of instruction was Arabic. While Dar al-Tabligh was strongly entrenched in the traditional *hawza* system, its education system was modern.¹⁰ Additionally, Dar al-Tabligh carried out a number of Islamic missionary programmes such as training for preachers, correspondence courses on Islam, and publishing Islamic books and journals. The school published four journals in Persian, *Maktab-i Islam* (School of Islam), *Payam-i Shadi* (Glad Tidings), and *Nasl-i Naw* (New Generation), and one in Arabic, *al-Hadi* (the Guide). The circulation of these journals was extensive with *Maktab-i Islam* printing 60,000 copies and *al-Hadi* serving as a link to Muslims and Islamic institutions in other countries.¹¹

In Qum, the first group of Indonesian students followed a modern system of education even though they could attend classes or lectures provided through the traditional *hawza* system. This lasted until 1981, when Dar al-Tabligh was dissolved due to conflict between Grand Ayatollah Shari'atmadari and Khomeini over the doctrinal concept of *wilāyat al-faqih* ('mandate of the jurist') and the participation of *ulama* in the government. On April 1982, Shari'atmadari was formally demoted from the rank of *marja' al-taqīd*.¹²

With the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979, there arose new developments in the education of Indonesian students in Qum and the system of education they followed there. Intense discussions between the newly founded Islamic government of Iran and Indonesian Shi'i *ulama* was a result of efforts from both sides. The victory of the ayatollahs over the secular regime in Iran led some Indonesian intellectuals and *ulama* to seek out connections and study the ideological basis of the Iranian revolution, namely Shi'ism. This was met with a corresponding effort from Iranian leaders and *ulama* attempting to disseminate Shi'ism to Indonesia and attract Indonesian students to study Islamic knowledge in Iran. These efforts, on the part of Iranian leaders, were considered to be an 'export of revolution'. In

¹⁰ Interview with Umar Shahab, Jakarta, 9 January 2003.

¹¹ Fischer, *Iran*, p. 84.

¹² Mojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 296.

1982, the Iranian government sent Ayatollah Ibrahim Amini, Ayatollah Masduqi, and Hujjat al-Islam Mahmudi as representatives to Indonesia. Among the activities of these officials was their visit to YAPI (*Yayasan Pesantren Islam*, the Foundation of Islamic Education) of Bangil, East Java, where they met with its leader Ustadz Husein Al-Habsyi. At the time, Husein Al-Habsyi (1921-1994) was one of the most prominent Shi'i *ulama* in Indonesia, playing a major role in the development of Islamic *da'wa* and education in the country. The result of this meeting was that *hawza 'ilmiyya* in Qum agreed to accept ten Indonesian students and the selection was under Husein Al-Habsyi's authority.

Partly because of this connection between Husein Al-Habsyi and Iran, many students pursuing their religious education in Qum were graduates of Husein Al-Habsyi's YAPI. But Husein Al-Habsyi gave an opportunity to students from other schools. Of the ten students in the above-mentioned agreement, six were alumni of YAPI while four were from other institutions. The six students included Ibrahim Al-Habsyi and Muhsin Labieb (Husein Al-Habsyi's son and step son respectively), Rusdi Al-Aydrus, Muhammad Baragbah, Idrus Al-Jufri, and Umar Hadud Al-Attas. The four students from outside YAPI were Ahmad Baragbah, Hasan Abu Ammar, Muhammad Mauladawilah, and Musam.¹³ Most of them have since become important Shi'i figures in Indonesia.

After the dissolution of Dar al-Tabligh, Madrasa Hujjatiyya began a programme for foreign students and the ten Indonesian students who had just arrived in Qum in 1982, entered the Madrasa Hujjatiyya. Husein Shahab who had studied for two years at the Dar al-Tabligh also transferred to this *madrasa*. This *madrasa* was founded in 1946 by Ayatollah Muhammad Hujjat Kuhkamari, a student of 'Abd al-Karim Ha'iri, the reformer of *hawza 'ilmiyya* in Qum. Unlike Dar al-Tabligh, Madrasa Hujjatiyya followed the traditional system of education generally used in the *hawza 'ilmiyya* in the Shi'i world.

Every year, Indonesian students arrived in Qum for study. The majority of them were YAPI graduates and/or recommended by Husein

¹³ Syamsuri Ali, "Alumni Hawzah Ilmiah Qum: Pewacanaan Intelektualitas dan Relasi Sosialnya dalam transmisi Syiah di Indonesia", PhD Thesis draft prepared for Promotion in the Graduate Program at UIN Jakarta, pp. 185-6.

Al-Habsyi. Between 1985 and 1989, students recommended by him included Musyayya Ba'abud, Zahir Yahya, Miqdad, Fathoni Hadi, Muhammad Amin Sufyan, Abdurrahman Bima, Husein Alkaff, Herman Al-Munthahhar, Muhammad Al-Jufri, and Abdul Aziz Al-Hinduan. Today, most of these people are recognised as important Shi'i *ustādhbs* in Indonesia. Graduates from Islamic schools like the Muthahhari Foundation of Bandung in West Java and Al-Hadi of Pekalongan in Central Java also began to pursue their education in Qum. In terms of the selection process, until his death in 1994, Husein Al-Habsyi was the most important confidant of Iranian leaders and 'ulama' with respect to the development of Shi'i education and *da'wa* in Indonesia. Later, recommendations from other Shi'i intellectuals such as Jalaluddin Rakhmat and Haidar Bagir were recognised in Iran. By 1990, fifty Indonesian students had studied in Qum.¹⁴ This illustrates the growing interest Indonesian students had in pursuing education in Qum. Nearly all Indonesian students were enrolled at the Madrasa Hujjatiyya. At this *madrasa*, the Indonesian students were registered at the *muqaddamat* (preliminary) level. They were assigned their primary courses, but free to pursue their own interests by attending other lectures and circles in Qum.

The number of Indonesian students pursuing their learning in Qum has increased significantly. In 2000, the number of Qum graduates in Indonesia was more than a hundred. In 2001, fifty Indonesian students were selected to continue their studies in Qum.¹⁵ In 2003, seventy Indonesian students were selected and the next year saw that number rise to ninety. These successful applicants were classified in terms of financial support, with some receiving full scholarship while others received only monthly stipends when they arrived in Qum. This significantly increased number of students is due in part to the efforts of the International Center for Islamic Studies (*Markaze Jabani-e Ulume Islami*), or ICIS, which has given greater attention to the recruitment of international students for studies in Qum. In the last few years, ICIS has sent commissions to Indonesia to conduct tests at the Islamic Cultural

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 203-4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 201-4.

Center of Jakarta and other Shi'i institutions in the country. ICIS aims to coordinate education programmes for foreign students, distribute students to *madrāsas*, and respond to their needs within the *hawza 'ilmiyya* of Qum, with the goal of disseminating Islamic knowledge and teachings at the international level. Since 1994, this centre has been part of the office of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, headed by Ayatollah 'Ali Khamene'i, who appoints its director.¹⁶ Through this centre, a growing number of Indonesian students have been recruited to study in Qum.

Since 1992, changes have taken place. While most Indonesian students were registered at the Madrasa Hujjatiyya, a few pursued their learning at other *madrāsas*, like Madrasa Mu'miniyya. These students included Salman Darudin and Hasyim Adnan¹⁷ who were enrolled at the Madrasa Mu'miniyya. This *madrasa* was founded in 1701, during the reign of Sultan Husayn, and does not follow the curriculum of *hawza*. It has created its own system and curriculum with its own learning materials rather than using generally recognised textbooks. The Madrasa Mu'miniyya also differed from the Hujjatiyya in that the former prohibited its students from attending religious lectures and study circles in the traditional system.¹⁸ In addition to the Madrasa Mu'miniyya, other Indonesian students attended Madrasa Imam Khomeini, which was established in 1996 to be the educational centre for international students. This *madrasa*, which was established after the death of the Iranian revolution leader, runs a modern system of education, in terms of programmes and curriculum, even though the traditional character of the *hawza* system is also present. It organises both undergraduate and graduate programmes in various fields of specialisation within the religious sciences.¹⁹ This new development was in response to the demands of international students and to carry out the dissemination of Islamic knowledge in the framework of Islamic *da'wa*.

¹⁶ For brief account of ICIS, see: <http://www.qomicis.com/english/about/history.asp>.

¹⁷ Salman Darudin works as a staff member of the Islamic Cultural Center in Jakarta; Hasyim Adnan works as a religious teacher at YAPI in Bangil.

¹⁸ Syamsuri Ali, "Alumni Hawzah Ilmiah", pp. 192-4.

¹⁹ *Syiar*, Muharram 1425, p. 31.

A change can also be seen in the level of education of the Indonesian students arriving in Qum. The first students had only completed their secondary education, but more recently, several graduates of tertiary education have pursued further education there. Among these are alumni of Madina Ilmu College for Islamic Studies in Depok. Graduates of ‘secular’ universities have also travelled to Qum for religious education, with an example being Mujtahid Hashem, a graduate of the technical faculty at the University of Indonesia (UI). Instead of expanding his knowledge in technology, Mujtahid Hashem came to Qum in 2001 to engage in the study of religious knowledge, motivated by his admiration for such Shi‘i figures as Khomeini and Mutahhari, who had graduated from traditional institutions of learning. While in Qum, he was selected the general secretary of the Association of Indonesian Students (HPI) in Iran.²⁰ These changes have contributed to the diversity of Qum alumni in Indonesia.

Thus, the number of Indonesian students studying in Qum grew significantly over the years. The above historical description illustrates some of the differences in the institutions attended and education systems followed. Differences can also be found in individual interests in certain subjects or fields of Islamic knowledge that developed in the course of study. This may contribute to differences among the Qum alumni in Indonesian in skills and specialisations, besides styles, connections, and networks.

C. The Educational System of *Hawza ‘Ilmiyya*

There are two types of education systems at the *hawza ‘ilmiyya* in Qum. The first is the traditional system, which is the most famous and influential in the *hawza ‘ilmiyya*, and the other is the modern schooling system. In the traditional system, the curriculum structure includes both transmitted and intellectual religious sciences: *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *uṣūl al-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence), *‘ulūm al-Qur’ān* (Qur’anic sciences), *‘ulūm al-ḥadīth* (sciences of Tradition), *nahw* (Arabic syntax), *ṣarf* (Arabic morphology), *balāgha* (rhetoric), *manṭiq* (logic), *ḥikma* (philosophy), *kalām* (theology), *tasawwuf* and *‘irfān* (Sufism and gnosis). Each subject has its

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-2.

own standard books.²¹ The books are studied in the form of *halaqat* (study circles) which are under the supervision of an ayatollah. In this traditional system, namely the system of *mujtabid* education, the education programme is composed of three levels: *muqaddamat* (the preliminary level), *sutub* (the external), and *dars al-kbarij* (graduation class) or *babth al-kbarij* (graduation research). To study at the upper levels, students are required to complete the lower level. On average, the first two levels require a minimum of ten years and most students are in their mid-twenties when commencing the *dars al-kbarij*. The three levels have to be completed to become a *mujtabid*, that is, a religious scholar who has achieved the level of competence necessary to make religious decision based on reason from the principal sources of Islam. The position of this traditional system of education is extremely important in the social system of Shi'i community at large because of the necessary existence of living *marja' al-taqlid* throughout history.

At the preliminary stage, which lasts from three to five years, the emphasis is on providing students with various skills in Arabic. The main subjects taught at the preliminary level include *nahw* (Arabic syntax), *sarf* (Arabic morphology), *balagha* (Rhetoric), and *mantiq* (Logic). In addition, there are some optional subjects including literature, Mathematics, Astronomy, and introductory *fiqh* (jurisprudence) taken from one of the *Risalah Amaliyya* (Tracts on Practice) of a contemporary *marja' al-taqlid*. The learning process at this level is that of groups of students gathering around a teacher who will go through the texts with them. Students are free to choose the teacher, though usually, teachers at this level are senior students or assistants of *maraji' al-taqlid*.²²

At the *sutub* level, which usually lasts from three to six years, students are introduced to the substance of deductive *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and *usul al-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence) on which their progress to the next and ultimate level depends. The optional subjects provided at this level are *tafsir* (Qur'an exegesis), *hadith* (Tradition), *kalām* (theology),

²¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*, (London: Kegan Paul International, 1987), pp. 165-182.

²² Momen, *An Introduction*, pp. 200-1; see also Chibli Mallat, *The Renewal of Islamic Law: Muhammad Baqer as-Sadr, Najaf and the Shi'i International*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 39-40.

philosophy, *'irfān* (Gnosis, Sufism), history, and ethics. Generally, courses are organised around lectures based on the main texts of the two main subjects and students are free to select which lectures they will attend. The students may also attend lectures in the optional subjects. Usually, teachers at this level are *mujtabids* who have just achieved the authority of *ijtibād* and are establishing their reputations.²³

Although the subjects at the ultimate level, *dars al-kbarij*, are *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the method of learning is different from that of the other two levels. The teaching is done by the prominent *mujtabids* who deliver lectures for certain periods of time. Usually, they form the schedule and choose the place for their class. Students are free to choose whose class they will attend. Usually, several hundred participants, including other *mujtabids*, may attend lectures delivered by the most prominent *mujtabids*. The dialectical method is generally used in the class, with students encouraged to discuss and argue points with the teacher. At this stage, most students are accomplished in the skill of abstract discursive argumentation and trained to be confident. The culmination of the student's efforts is the acceptance of an *ijāza* (certification) from a recognised *mujtabid*. Usually, the student at this level writes a treatise on *fiqh* or *uṣūl al-fiqh* and presents it to the *mujtabid* who will consider the student and the work. Based on the 'evaluation' of the student and his work, the *mujtabid* will issue the *ijāza*, which authorises the student to exercise *ijtibād*.²⁴ Thus, students built up their careers based on their relations with certain *mujtabid*-teachers.

When a person receives the *ijāza* to exercise *ijtibād*, namely *mujtabid*, the honorific title *ayatollah* (*ayāt Allāh*, 'signs of God') is usually bestowed upon him. An *ayatollah* who is recognised as a *marja' al-taqlid*, that is the source of emulation for Shi'is in matters of Islamic law, usually receives the title *ayatollah al-'uzmā* (the grand *ayatollah*). As to an aspiring *mujtabid*, the common title given to him is *hujjat al-Islām* (proof of Islam). The structure of Shi'i *ulama* is like a pyramid. The highest level but the smallest in quantity is the grand *ayatollah*. Below this is *ayatollah*. There are a number of *ayatollahs* in Iran. The lowest in the structure and the largest

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 202; Mallat, *The Renewal*, pp. 41-2.

in quantity is *hujjat al-Islām*. Thus, the structure of Shi'i *ulama* is strongly entrenched in the traditional system of education at the *hawza 'ilmiyya*.

The modern *madrassa* system is a transformation of the classical system, adopting the modern system of education in terms of grades, curriculum, learning in the classroom, rules and others. The non-traditional *madrassas* "are set up to serve needs not supplied by the traditional system".²⁵ Usually, each *madrassa* has its complex in which all educational facilities are located. In it, hostels are provided for its students in order for them to live and study together with certain rules outlined by the *madrassa*. The curriculum structure consists of religious sciences in the slightly simplified version of traditional study courses and secular sciences. It is clear that, unlike the traditional system, this modern *madrassa* system is not intended to train students to become *mujtabids*. This innovative type of education has provided an alternative for students who, for certain reasons, cannot follow the traditional system in the *hawza 'ilmiyya*.

The *hawza 'ilmiyya* tends to provide international students, like Indonesians, with a separate education programme. In this regard, the modern *madrassa* system is the most common alternative for them. As mentioned above, the Islamic Republic of Iran, through the ICIS, has organised innovative programmes on the basis of the modern *madrassa* system of education for international students. In the Madrasa Imam Khomeini, education programmes are organised based on grade systems that include undergraduate and graduate levels equivalent to the tertiary education in the modern education system. This innovation is a step towards establishing the *hawza 'ilmiyya* of Qum as a leading international centre of Islamic learning, which can attract many students from various parts of the world. It is not intended to produce *mujtabids* but to train students to become Islamic scholars and missionaries.

D. Further Education of Indonesian Shi'i Ustādhs

By and large, Indonesian Shi'i *ustādhs* may be classified into two groups: those who concluded their education in Qum and those who pursued education after studying in Qum. Most current Shi'i *ustādhs* in

²⁵ Fischer, *Iran*, p. 81.

Indonesia belong in the first category. Most Indonesian students finish the *muqaddamat* while only a few could finish certain texts of the *sutuh* level. The prominent Shi'i *ustādhs* in Indonesia today are generally those who arrived in Qum before 1990. Most of these studied at and finished their learning from the Madrasa Hujjatiyya, except Umar Shahab who completed his learning at Dar al-Tabligh and his brother Husein who studied at the Dar al-Taligh and then at the Madrasa Hujjatiyya.

Most returned to their home country and have engaged themselves in *da'wa*, education and cultural activities. Some founded Shi'i institutions of *da'wa* and education or became heads of existing institutions. Being among those who completed their studies in Qum, the prestigious centre of learning in the Shi'i world, they gained recognition from the Shi'i adherents in Indonesia as Shi'i figures who have thorough knowledge of Shi'ism, notwithstanding the fact that their accomplishments only equal the preliminary level. This is particularly true until 1990, when the number of Qum alumni in Indonesia was still very small so that graduation from Qum still had great cultural capital. With the cultural capital they gained and the Shi'i institutions they lead, some figures have become famous Shi'i *ustādhs* in Indonesia.

The most prominent Shi'i *ustādhs* pursued their learning at other tertiary institutions. Because their education in Qum only reached the *muqaddamat* level, few renowned Shi'i *ustādhs* are satisfied with this. They pursued their learning in the field of Islamic studies at Islamic universities in Indonesia or in other countries. Before going to Qum, Umar Shahab completed his secondary education at Pesantren Ar-Riyadh in Palembang. After five years study at Dar al-Tabligh, Umar Shahab took a *doctorandus* programme at the State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) in Palembang and completed it in 1984. He was selected as a lecturer at the institution. In 1989, he then pursued his Masters and, in 1991, a Doctoral programme, both at what is now known as the State Islamic University in Jakarta.²⁶ He has not yet finished the doctoral programme. During his long periods of study in Jakarta, Umar Shahab has been active in the field of education and *da'wa*, besides working as a local staff person at the Iranian Embassy in Jakarta.

²⁶ Interview with Umar Shahab, Jakarta, 9 January 2003.

With regard to his younger brother, Husein Shahab, further study was also undertaken. Husein Shahab, who completed his study in Qum in 1986, returned to Palembang and then went to Malaysia for work. Then, from 1991 to 1994, he became an important *ustādh* at the Muthahhari Foundation, headed by Jalaluddin Rakhmat. It was Husein Shahab who took over some of the duties of Jalaluddin Rakhmat as the head of the institution when the latter stayed for a year in Qum. Since then, Husein Shahab has been popular among the Shi'īs in Indonesia. In 1994 he continued his education in the Masters programme in the field of Islamic thought at the International Institute for Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) in Kuala Lumpur, a tertiary educational institution founded and led by Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas.²⁷ The programme was not completed, however. Since 1996, he has been active in *da'wa* and education activities in Jakarta.

An exceptional case is the education of Abdurrahman Al-'Aydrus known as Abdurrahman Bima since he comes from Bima, Lombok. He spent nine years studying in Qum. After graduating from YAPI of Bangil, with the recommendation of Husein Al-Habsyi, Abdurrahman went to Qum in 1987 and entered the Madrasa Hujjatiyya. After accomplishing his *muqaddamat* at the *madrasa* in 1990, Abdurrahman pursued the *sutuh* level. Then, he completed the study of *uṣūl al-fiqh* at the *dars al-kharij* level. With this high accomplishment, Abdurrahman was selected to pursue his studies at Imam Sadiq Institute, founded and headed by Ayatollah Ja'far Subhani. At the institute, Abdurrahman took Islamic theology as his major in the graduate programme under the supervision of the prominent theologian Ayatollah Ja'far Subhani, with whom he has maintained a good relationship. From 1991 till 1995, he studied and completed the standard books in this particular field. He is required to write a PhD thesis for the institute.²⁸ In 1996, Abdurrahman returned to Indonesia where he has been engaged in the field of *da'wa* and education. Among his activities is his directorship of Madina Ilmu College for Islamic Studies in Depok, Southern Jakarta. Later, in 2000, Abdurrahman enrolled in the PhD programme at State Islamic University in Jakarta.

²⁷ Interview with Husein Shahab, Jakarta, 2 April 2004.

²⁸ Syamsuri Ali, "Alumni Hawzah Ilmiah", pp. 246-9.

From the education of these three prominent figures, it is likely that studying at the graduate level is required to become a prominent Shi'i leader in Indonesia. This shows that the education of Shi'i leadership in Indonesia by and large relies on both traditional and modern systems of education. In the Indonesian context, having a doctoral degree is a very prestigious achievement. Their education in Qum that only reached the preliminary level could not fulfil the growing demands of Indonesian society. It is not surprising that, for practical reasons, as mentioned above, the ICIS has organised a modern system of education for foreign students.

We should note as well that usually the field of specialisation taken by the Shi'i *ustādhbs* is Islamic studies in the classical meaning of the term. This is understandable because generally they are engaged in the field of Islamic *da'wa* and education which requires a broad understanding of Islam in order to gain or maintain the recognition of their prestigious position in the community. In a nutshell, further education in the field of religious knowledge contributes to making the Shi'i *ustādhbs*, who graduated from the *hawza 'ilmiyya* of Qum, prominent Shi'i leaders in Indonesia. The field of specialisation chosen by this group is different from that taken by the Shi'i intellectual in Indonesia.

1. The Education of Shi'i Intellectuals

As mentioned before, intellectuals in this paper are graduates of 'secular' universities who were trained in the secular sciences. Generally, they have not received religious education or studied Shi'ism at formal Islamic institutions of learning in Indonesia or abroad. Usually, they learn Shi'i Islam and convert to the Shi'a when they are students at, or after they graduated from, university. Most Shi'i intellectuals in Indonesia earn a living in fields independent of the Shi'i community; they work at universities and educational institutions or are engaged in business and political activities. In everyday life, this group is sometimes called *ustādhb*. The most prominent of them is Jalaluddin Rakhmat, a professor of Communications at the Padjadjaran University and head of the Muthahhari Foundation. Other well-known intellectuals include Haidar Bagir, the founder and director of Mizan Publishing House, Dimitri Mahayana, a lecturer at Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), and

Hadi Swastio, a lecturer at the College of Telecommunication Science. All these institutions are located in Bandung, West Java.

Unlike the education of Shi'ī *ustādhbs*, all of these Shi'ī intellectuals graduated from universities in Indonesia or in the West. Jalaluddin Rakhmat completed his tertiary education in communication at the Padjadjaran University and got his Masters of Science in the same field at Iowa State University in the US. He then enrolled at the Australian National University, Australia, in the field of political science, but has not yet finished. Haidar Bagir completed his industrial technology degree at Bandung Institute of Technology and his Masters in philosophy at Harvard University in the US. He is at present writing his Ph.D. thesis in philosophy at UI. Hadi Swastio completed his Ph.D. from a university in the UK. Dimitri completed his engineer at ITB, masters at Waseda University in Japan, and Ph.D. at ITB in electrical engineering. It is clear that, in general, these intellectuals do not enter formal Islamic educational institutions.

We should bear in mind, however, that along with the New Order government's de-politicisation of Islam, Indonesia has, since the early 1980s, experienced a rapid growth of 'Islamic revival' on university campuses. The most well-known is the 'Salman movement', a puritan movement that teaches the totality of the Islamic worldview encompassing all aspects of human life, as developed by Imaduddin Abdurrahim, who in turn was heavily influenced by the Islamic ideas of Hasan al-Banna and Mawdudi, prominent leaders of *Ikhwan al-Muslimin* (Muslim Brothers). "In Java, Salman-inspired religious activities had become a conspicuous feature of campus life at virtually every major university by the early 1980s."²⁹ Besides the Salman Mosque in Bandung, other important centres of the movement have been the Arif Rahman Hakim Mosque of University of Indonesia (UI) in Jakarta, the Salahuddin Mosque of Gadjah Mada University (UGM) in Yogyakarta, and Al-Ghifari Mosque of Bogor Agricultural Institute (IPB) in Bogor. The movement, which is frequently known as *usra* ('family'), carried out

²⁹ R. W. Hefner, "Islam, State, and Civil Society: ICMI and the Struggle for the Indonesian Middle Class," A Working Paper, (Massachusetts: Boston University, 1993), p. 13.

discussion, training, and publication to spread its Islamic ideology.

On Indonesian university campuses, there also arose Shi'i groups after the victory of the Iranian revolution in 1978-1979. As we know, a number of Muslim intellectuals in Indonesia were amazed at Shi'i revolutionary ideologies and later converted into Shi'is. We also find the same was true among university students. Today some of these students have become influential Shi'i intellectuals in Indonesia. During the 1980s and 1990s, Shi'i groups were found among students at famous universities scattered across the country. Three major centres that deserve attention are Jakarta, Bandung in West Java, and Makassar in South Sulawesi.

At University of Indonesia (UI), Jakarta, Agus Abubakar Aarsal Al-Habsyi was a student in the physics department in 1979. He converted into Shi'ism after the Iranian revolution, although he acknowledged there were some Shi'is in his village in South Sulawesi.³⁰ Born in Makassar, South Sulawesi, on 1960, into a Hadrami migrant family, Agus Abubakar was active in religious lectures and study circles at the Arif Rahman Hakim Mosque of UI and in the university student organisation. The story is told that he once had a debate on Shi'ism with Prof. Rasjidi, imam of the mosque at that time, who was known for his anti-Shi'i stance. He also fiercely criticised Rasjidi's anti-Shi'i views through mass media.³¹ As a consequence, Agus Abubakar was banned from leading religious gatherings at the mosque and from leadership of student organisations. But Agus Abubakar was becoming more well-known as a Shi'i adherent and, in varied ways, he attempted to spread Shi'i teachings, particularly its intellectual aspects, to students.³² Agus Abubakar is widely known to have been a religious teacher who played a role in the spread of Shi'ism in Jakarta. At present, he is a member of the National Leadership Council (DPP) of Democratic Party that was co-founded by Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the current Indonesian president.

Besides students of UI, one also finds a number of self-converted Shi'is among students at Institute of Teacher Training and Education (IKIP), which then became State University of Jakarta (UNJ), National

³⁰ *Panji Masyarakat*, (513, 1986), p. 20.

³¹ *Tempo* (26 May 1984), p. 7.

³² *Syi'ar* (Muharram 1425), p. 35.

University (UNAS), Christian University of Indonesia (UKI), and Jayabaya University. One of these Shi'i students was Mulhandy Ibn Haj of Jayabaya University, who admitted to converting to Shi'ism in 1983. His conversion began with his great interest in understanding how Khomeini could overthrow the powerful Shah of Iran.³³ Another student was Zulvan Lindan, of National University, who became a well-known Shi'i figure in Jakarta. He was a former member of the Council of People's Representatives from Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle (*PDI Perjuangan*) led by the former Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri. These Shi'i students conducted religious circles and discussions in which the Iranian revolutionary ideologies and Shi'i doctrines were discussed.

For many years, Shi'ism has attracted university students in Jakarta. The Shi'i students of UI, in 1989, founded a study group named Abu Dzar, coordinated by Haryanto of the Faculty of Mathematics and Science and Yussa Agustian of the Faculty of Technology. One of their guides was Agus Abubakar. This study group was founded with the purpose of reawakening thought and introducing Shi'i ideas to students. To achieve these goals, the group carried out discussion, training, and other religious and intellectual activities.³⁴

A later development of the Shi'i students at UI was marked by an attempt to make HMI (*Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam*, Muslim Student Association) a means through which Shi'i thoughts were spread. Rudy Suharto of the Faculty of Mathematics and Science, the present editor-in chief of *Syi'ar*, a magazine of the Islamic Cultural Center in Jakarta, together with other student activists guided by their seniors, Furqon Bukhori and Zulvan Lindan, succeeded in establishing a HMI branch in Depok. By means of this branch of HMI, Shi'i students at UI attempted to carry out various intellectual and religious activities. But this took place until 1995, when HMI divided into pro-Shi'i and anti-Shi'i groups, the latter being recognized by the national leadership of HMI. As a forum for alumni of UI, there exists FAHMI (*Forum Alumni HMI*) founded in 1997 by Shi'i activists, such as Rudy Suharto.³⁵

³³ *Panji Masyarakat* (513, 1986), p. 19.

³⁴ *Syi'ar* (Muharram 1425), p. 35.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

In Bandung, we find Shi'is among students at Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), Padjadjaran University (UNPAD), and Institute for Education and Teacher Training (IKIP), currently Indonesian Education University (UPI). Some of these Shi'i students were campus mosque activists who organised and attended study circles and religious lectures held in campus mosques, particularly the Salman Mosque of ITB. In fact, most of the current Shi'i intellectuals who graduated from Bandung's universities were Salman mosque activists. The most famous is Haidar Bagir. Born in Solo, 20 February 1957, into a Sayyid family of Hadrami migrants, Haidar Bagir finished his primary and secondary education at the Diponegoro Islamic school of Surakarta that was co-founded by his father, Muhammad al-Baqir Al-Habsyi. Then, in 1975, Haidar entered the Department of Industrial Technology at ITB and completed his studies in 1982. He was also on the editorial board of an Islamic student journal, *Pustaka*, which was established by Amar Haryono, an ITB librarian.³⁶ We should note that during Haidar's study at ITB, Khomeini succeeded in overthrowing the powerful Shah of Iran. The victory of the Iranian revolution created a wave of popularity for Khomeini as its leader and Shi'ism as its ideology, leading Haidar and other students to study Shi'ism and then convert to the *madhhab*. In 1983, Haidar Bagir founded Mizan, one of the largest Islamic Publishing Houses in Indonesia and publisher of a number of Shi'i books in the vernacular, and was its director until recently. Its first publication was a controversial book and bestseller entitled *Dialog Sunnah Syi'ab* (Shi'i Sunni Dialogue), a translation of Saraf al-Din al-Musawi's *al-Muraja'at* ('Consultations'). Historically, Haidar Bagir played a major role in the spread and development of Shi'ism in the country.

Additionally, later groups of university students in Bandung learned Shi'ism and were converted into Shi'ism. Most of them were active in religious circles and lectures conducted at campus mosques and Islamic institutions in the city. A number of them have become recognized as Shi'i intellectuals and activists in Indonesia such as Dimitri

³⁶ Jeroen Peeters, "Islamic Books Publishers in Indonesia: A Social Network Analysis", in Paul van der Velde and Alex McKay (eds.), *New Developments in Asian Studies: An Introduction*, (Leiden and Amsterdam: Kegan Paul International in association with IAS, 1998), p. 217.

Mahayana (the former chairman of IJABI, Indonesian Association of Ahl al-Bayt Congregation), Hadi Swastio (the former general secretary of IJABI), and Yusuf Bakhtiar (a former deputy chief of Muthahhari Senior High School and presently political activist of National Message Party founded by Amien Rais). It is important to notice that these figures actively attended religious lectures and circles held by Jalaluddin Rakhmat at mosques in the city and at his own institution, Yayasan Mutahhari (Muthahhari Foundation). They therefore have a close relationship with this most famous Shi'i intellectual in Indonesia. It is important to recognize the important role these figures have played, and continue to play, in the spread and development of Shi'ism, not only in Bandung, but throughout Indonesia. It is not without reason that Bandung has been considered an important centre for the spread of Shi'ism in Indonesia.

A relatively large number of Shi'i students can be found in Makassar, South Sulawesi. In 2004, I was informed the majority of Shi'is in the city were university students. The growing number of Shi'i adherents began in early 1990, when a few Shi'i activists in Makassar intensified the propagation of Shi'ism at university campuses. The rapid growth of Shi'ism in Makassar can be seen in several interrelated points according to Shi'i activists.³⁷ First, there have been continuous and intensive systematic studies on Shi'i thought by guest Shi'i religious teachers or intellectuals from Jakarta and Bandung. Jalaluddin Rakhmat, in his capacity as the most prominent Shi'i intellectual in Indonesia, has very frequently been invited to deliver religious lectures concerning Shi'i Islam, particularly the aspect of thought, philosophy and Sufism. In addition, the *ustādhs* of Qum alumni and others were invited to teach matters pertaining to Shi'i jurisprudence as needed by the Shi'is in this region. Second, several foundations have been established with the purpose of instructing and disseminating Shi'i teaching and thought. Third, the pioneering propagandists of Shi'ism in Makassar were campus activists who participated in studies and discussions on Islam as well as training in university mosques so that Shi'i teachings and thoughts were easily spread by means of existing networks. Fourth, the propagation

³⁷ See: <http://rausyanfikir.tripod.com/divmks.htm>.

of Shi'ism in Makassar, to a certain extent, gained sympathy from other students associations, particularly HMI. Many members and leaders of HMI are Shi'is. Thus, it is evident that Shi'ism spread through almost all university campuses in Makassar. Some of these converts have become important Shi'i figures in the region and in Jakarta.

This description has illustrated that the above-mentioned intellectuals gained knowledge of Shi'ism, not through formal education, but through non-formal education and training. Religious circles and lectures at the campus mosques or in other places provided them with religious knowledge that they may not have received through formal education programmes. For instance, current Shi'i intellectuals and activists in Bandung attended religious circles and lectures conducted by Jalaluddin Rakhmat. With regard to the education of Indonesian Shi'i intellectuals, this type of non-formal education and training has been extremely important. Another considerable impact of the study circles at campus mosques can be found in the case of *Lembaga Dakwah Kampus* (Campus Da'wa Institute), which transformed into an influential political party in Indonesia, *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (Prosperity and Justice Party).

Religious education and training has been provided through Shi'i foundations that were established in cities and towns. Since the late 1980s, there have been numerous Shi'i foundations established throughout the country, with some becoming big institutions while others remain small or even disappear. Several of the foundations, such as the Muthahhari Foundation and YAPI of Bangil, have also organised formal education. The Muthahhari Foundation, founded in 1988 by Jalaluddin Rakhmat, Haidar Bagir, and other intellectuals, is the biggest Shi'i institution in Bandung, providing religious education and training for students in the city. As mentioned in its goals, the institution was established to bridge the gap between *ulama* and intellectuals with regard to knowledge.³⁸

The significant role of non-formal religious education can be seen in the case of Dimitri Mahayana. During the periods of his study at the

³⁸ Yayasan Muthahhari, *Yayasan Muthahhari untuk Pencerahan Pemikiran*, (Bandung: Yayasan Muthahhari, 1993).

electrical engineering department of ITB and afterwards, Dimitri was very active in attending various religious circles in the city, such as the *usra* movement, Sufism, and Shi'ism. But he was so strongly influenced by lectures and study circles conducted by Jalaluddin Rakhmat that he was almost never absent from them. Later, Dimitri was active in Rakhmat's foundation and his involvement in the foundation identifies him as a Muthahhari activist. This case clearly illustrates that Indonesian Shi'i figures or Islamic leaders in general may be produced from the combination of education in 'secular' universities and non-formal religious institutions. In other words, the education of Indonesian Shi'i leaders, especially intellectuals, should be seen from social, educational, and religious aspects. The portrait of Jalaluddin Rakhmat below, will show how an intellectual, university graduate has become the most prominent Shi'i leader in Indonesia

2. Jalaluddin Rakhmat's Education and Leadership

The above description indicates the close connection of Shi'i groups with Jalaluddin Rakhmat (known as Kang Jalal) and therefore this relationship deserves special attention. Among his followers, he is known as K.H. Jalaluddin Rakhmat. This indicates a recognition of Rakhmat's religious knowledge and leadership. In Indonesia, *Kyai* is the prestigious title given to a man of religious learning who has legitimate authority in the field of religion. Born in Bojongsalam, Rancaekek, the district of Bandung in West Java, on 29 August 1949, Jalaluddin Rakhmat came from a religious family. His father was said to be a man of religious learning, a village chief, as well as a Masjumi activist who joined the Darul Islam, forcing him to move to Sumatera for several years. In his village, he attended public school as well as learning religious knowledge from a traditionalist religious teacher named Ajengan Shidik. His religious education was primarily in the field of *nahw* (Arabic syntax) and *sarf* (Arabic morphology), known within the *pesantren* tradition as *ilmu alat* ('instrumental knowledge'). Rakhmat admitted that this knowledge of Arabic was instrumental in accessing the vast Arabic literature required in the formation of his religious thought. Rakhmat's thorough knowledge of Shi'ism was generally gained through the reading of Arabic books. This made Rakhmat's position distinctive compared

with other Indonesian Muslim intellectuals who graduated from secular universities. Thus, this type of cultural capital contributed to the recognition of his present position as a renowned Shif'i leader.

Rakhmat received his formal education at the secondary and tertiary levels in 'secular' schools and universities. After completing his Junior High School (SMP Muslimin III) and Senior High School (SMA II) in Bandung, Rakhmat enrolled in the Faculty of Communications Science at Padjadjaran University. In addition, he entered Teacher Training for Junior High School (PGSLP) in the English department and with this diploma he then taught at several Senior High Schools in the city to support his life and study expenses. His academic career in the field of Communications began when he was selected to become a lecturer at his alma mater. The development of his career continued in 1980, when he received a Fulbright scholarship for further study in the same field at Iowa State University in the US. He finished his Masters programme in 1982 writing a thesis entitled *A Model for the Study of Mass Media Effects on Political Leaders*. Later, he enrolled in a Ph.D. programme at Padjadjaran University. Finally, in 1994, Rakhmat took Political Science as his Ph.D. major at the Australian National University but has not yet completed the degree.

Communications is Rakhmat's specialisation on which he has lectured since the beginning of his academic career. By and large, lectures delivered by Rakhmat have attracted great attention from students. His students state that they eagerly looked forward to Rakhmat's lectures because of his good rhetoric and expertise in the field.³⁹ But in 1992, he was dismissed from Padjadjaran University due to tension between Rakhmat and, what he called, the 'campus bureaucrat' of Padjadjaran University.⁴⁰ In the course of his academic career, he has written a number of textbooks on his technical specialisation. The books are considered to have become important references for students in the field. They include *Retorika Modern* (Modern Rhetoric, 1982), *Metode Penelitian Komunikasi* (Methods of Communications Research, 1985), and *Psikologi*

³⁹ Dedy Djamiluddin Malik and Idi Subandi Ibrahim, *Zaman Baru Islam Indonesia: Pemikiran dan Aksi Politik Abdurrahman Wabid, M. Amin Rais, Nurchblosib Madjid, Jalaluddin Rakhmat*, (Bandung: Zaman Wacana Baru, 1998), pp. 143-4.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

Komunikasi (Psychology of Communications, 1985). With his popular lectures and textbooks circulating among the students and scholars in the field of communications, Rakhmat was widely recognised as an expert that is rarely found in Indonesia. It is not surprising therefore that in 2001, even though he was absent from Padjadjaran University for almost ten years, Rakhmat was called to return to the university as a lecturer and then inaugurated as professor of Communications at the university.⁴¹ In becoming a professor, Rakhmat achieved the highest position in his academic career even though he faced big obstacles.

Rakhmat's expertise in Communications is frequently considered to have contributed to his considerable success in the field of Islamic *da'wa*. Indeed, Rakhmat is a very popular preacher. His religious lectures are very popular. When Rakhmat was active in giving religious lectures at the Salman Mosque, a large number of participants attended. On one occasion, Imaduddin Abdurrahim was informed that the influence of Rakhmat on Salman activists was so great that they were divided into the followers of Rakhmat and the followers of Nurcholish Madjid.⁴² In short, his expertise is not only in the field of Communications science but also in the practice of the science in the field of Islamic *da'wa*.

Rakhmat's life history is strongly embedded in the field of *da'wa*. Long before his conversion to Shi'ism, Rakhmat was affiliated with the reformist Persatuan Islam (PERSIS) and Muhammadiyah. These two Muslim groups are known to strongly oppose Islamic beliefs and practices held by traditionalist Muslims in the country. During the period of his study at secondary school, Rakhmat joined the youth section of PERSIS in Bandung. Later on, he joined the Muhammadiyah training centre called Darul Arqam, conducted for the purpose of establishing Muhammadiyah preacher cadres. The outcome was that, as he himself admitted, Rakhmat became a fanatical cadre of Muhammadiyah, actively carrying out *da'wa* activities in different areas of West Java. In his *da'wa* activities, Rakhmat strongly promoted the reformist ideology of Muhammadiyah that inevitably received strong negative reactions from proponents of the

⁴¹ Rasyidi, *Dakwah Sufistik Kang Jalal: Menenteramkan Jiwa, Mencerabkan Pikiran*, (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2004), pp. 29-32.

⁴² M. Imaduddin Abdurrahim, "Kata Pengantar", in Jalaluddin Rakhmat, *Islam Alternatif*, (Bandung: Mizan, 1986), p. 15.

traditionalist Muslim groups in the region. But Rakhmat always believed that he succeeded in carrying out his duties as a Muhammadiyah preacher. Due to his achievement in this reformist organisation, Rakhmat was appointed an executive member of the council of education, instruction, and culture at the Bandung branch of Muhammadiyah and of the council of preaching at the West Java provincial branch of Muhammadiyah.⁴³ We should note here that, after becoming a Shi'i, Rakhmat in his *da'wa* activities promoted religious teachings and practices such as the importance of *ziyāra* (visitation of graves), *tawassul* (uttering certain names of Muslim saints or Imams in supplications), and the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, all of which are strongly incompatible with the reformist stance.

Rakhmat's devotion to *da'wa* activities is also shown by the fact that he still carried out the activity during his time in America. Together with Imaduddin Abdurrahim and others, Rakhmat established *pengajian* circles at the Dar al-Arqam Mosque in Ames, Iowa. One of his missionary activities was to deliver religious sermons at Friday Prayers, which were then compiled and published as a book entitled *Khutbah-khutbah di Amerika* (Sermons in America, 1988). His close relationship with the afore-mentioned Imaduddin Abdurrahim, co-founder of the Salman Mosque of ITB, led him into becoming an active religious lecturer at the mosque upon his return from America. His fame as a popular Muslim preacher and intellectual soon spread widely, not only in Bandung, but throughout the country.

With his educational background in Communications and experience as a preacher, Rakhmat's approach in *da'wa* is an attempt to implement certain concepts from the field of science in combination with traditional patterns of Islamic preaching including Sufi methods. He not only implemented the approach but also formulated his ideas in the field of communication and Islamic *da'wa*, two closely interrelated fields, in some essays included in two of his books, *Islam Alternatif* (Alternative Islam, 1986) and *Catatan Kang Jalal* (Kang Jalal's Notes, 1997). Aspects of Rakhmat's ideas on communication and *da'wa* in the books also reveal his own practice in *da'wa* activities.

⁴³ Malik and Ibrahim, *Zaman Baru Islam*, p. 143; Rasyidi, *Dakwah Sufistik*, p. 43.

One may wonder how Rakhmat, who was a lecturer and reformist preacher, converted to Shi'i Islam. We should remember that he was among the Muslim intellectuals who were fascinated by the victory of the Iranian revolution and its ideology. Rakhmat and other intellectuals, such as Amien Rais and Dawam Rahardjo, were attracted by the works of revolutionary ideologies, like that of Ali Shari'ari, which they considered as alternative ideological worldviews. But Rakhmat admitted that he began to engage in an intensive self-study of Shi'i Islam beginning in 1984, the year that seems to be a turning point for Rakhmat's religious, intellectual, and spiritual quest. Even though we cannot ascertain the time of his conversion to Shi'ism, this would probably be after his intensive study of Shi'i literature and reflection. A very short account of Rakhmat's interest in Shi'ism goes like this. In 1984, Rakhmat, together with Haidar Bagir and Endang Saefuddin Anshary, attended an Islamic conference in Colombo, at which he and others became acquainted with Shi'i *ulama*. Rakhmat himself admitted that the intellectual and religious appearance of the Shi'i *ulama* at the conference impressed him very much. What impressed him more was that the Shi'i *ulama* gave him a number of Shi'i books. The late Mohammad Natsir, then DDII chairman, who devoted himself to *da'wa* activities in the country, on an occasion before they left for Colombo, had in fact warned them against accepting Shi'i books given by the Shi'i *ulama*. Before this event, Rakhmat had not been willing to learn Shi'ism although he had often seen Shi'i books. Upon his return, he enthusiastically read the Shi'i books. Rakhmat admitted that a Shi'i book that really challenged his Sunni belief was one that strongly criticised the validity and reliability of Abu Huraira as a transmitter of the Prophetic Traditions. In fact, a large number of *hadiths* he upheld for his belief and practice are narrated through Abu Huraira. After this, he continued studying the teachings of Shi'ism, particularly through Arabic books, and found the religious truth in this branch of Islam.⁴⁴ But before the above-mentioned year, Rakhmat must have read the works of Shari'ati and al-Musawi's *Dialog Sunnah Syi'ah* (Shi'i-Sunni Dialogue) which had been available in Indonesian since 1983. Haidar Bagir is even of the opinion that Rakhmat began to study Shi'i

⁴⁴ Interview with Jalaluddin Rakhmat, Bandung, 1 January 2003.

works when he was in America.⁴⁵ Whatever the exact time, Rakhmat admitted that after 1984, many people wanting to become Shi'is established connections with him, a factor that created his fame as a Shi'i figure in Indonesia.

Besides his intensive self-study of Shi'i works, Rakhmat was involved in discussion with Shi'i *ulama* like Husein Al-Habsyi of Bangil. Rakhmat also established connections with Shi'i *ulama* in Iran and in other parts of the world. To gain thorough knowledge of Shi'ism, Rakhmat went to Qum and lived there for about one year in 1992-1993. Rakhmat's intention was also to pursue a Ph.D. in theology at Teheran University but the process was so complex that he changed his mind.⁴⁶ In this city, Rakhmat established connections with ayatollahs and attended religious lectures and study circles held in the *hawza 'ilmiyya*. This also provided his children an opportunity to receive education and religious experience in the shrine city of Qum. Some of them were enrolled at *madradas* in Qum. His first son, Miftah Fauzi Rakhmat, is currently an important Shi'i *ustādh* at the Muttahhari Foundation and in Bandung, after studying in Qum, Melbourne (Australia), Berlin (Germany), and Damascus (Syria). Even though Rakhmat is not considered a Qum alumnus, his connections with Qum ayatollahs and the Islamic knowledge he gained through attending lectures and study circles enhanced his religious authority and leadership among the Shi'is in Indonesia.

An important aspect of religious authority and leadership is scholarship in religious sciences. In this regard, Rakhmat provided his followers with numerous works in the form of books, essays, translations, or introductory notes to other people's works on various aspects of Islamic scholarship. Collections of his general essays on religious issues are published in his two famous books, the afore-mentioned *Islam Alternatif* (Alternative Islam, 1986) and *Islam Aktual* (Actual Islam, 1991). As its sub-title shows, the former consists of essays presented in seminars and lectures at university campuses. The topics of the essays include Islam as a mercy for all creatures, Islam and liberation of *mustad'afin* (the

⁴⁵ Haidar Bagir, *20 Tahun "Mazhab" Mizan: Menjelajah Semesta Hikmah*, (Bandung: Mizan, 2003), p. 72.

⁴⁶ Jalaluddin Rakhmat, *Catatan Kang Jalal: Visi Media, Politik, dan Pendidikan*, (Bandung: Rosda, 1997), p. 457.

Oppressed), Islam and the establishment of society, Islam and science, and ends with Shi'i Islam, implicitly indicating the book's call for readers to follow this particular *madhbab*. The other book contains shorter essays that were originally published in national mass media such as *Tempo*, *Panji Masyarakat*, *Kompas*, *Pikiran Rakyat* and *Java Pos*. Notwithstanding its promising sub-title 'Reflection of a Muslim intellectual', Rakhmat himself admitted that, in accord with the character of mass media, generally the essays are neither profound nor thorough. This acknowledgement, however, does not lessen the significance of the book.

Rakhmat also wrote books on more specialised disciplines of Islamic knowledge. In the field of *tafsir* (Qur'anic exegesis), he has produced two books: *Tafsir Bil Ma'tsur* (Qur'anic Commentary by Narrated Sources, 1994) and *Tafsir Sufi Al-Fatihah* (Mystical Commentary of the First Chapter of the Qur'an, 1999). "In this area", writes Feener, "Rakhmat adopts the method of interpreting verses primarily in terms of other related ones from the Qur'an itself with material from the Sunnah used as a further means of clarification."⁴⁷ This is usually called *tafsir bi al-ma'thūr*, the title of Rakhmat's first book, or the *tafsir al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an*, which literally means interpreting certain Qur'anic verses with other Qur'anic verses, a method associated with the renowned Shi'i scholar Allamah Husayn Tabataba'i (1903-1981). In his second Qur'anic commentary, Rakhmat claims: "For the first time in Indonesian, I will include many *hadīths* from the Prophet's *abl al-bayt* (upon whom be peace)."⁴⁸

Many of his books are about Sufism. Besides the above-mentioned Sufi *tafsir* book, others include *Membuka Tirai Kegaiban: Renungan-renungan Sufistik* ('Revealing Mystical Veil: Sufi Reflections', 1994), *Reformasi Sufistik* (Sufi Reform, 1998), and *Meraih Cinta Ilahi: Pencerahan Sufistik* ('Achieving Divine Love: Sufi Enlightenment', 1999). All these books are derived from collections of his preaching on various occasions, particularly the Sunday religious gathering at the Munawwarah Mosque, and essays published in the mass media. Commenting on Rakhmat's *Membuka Tirai*

⁴⁷ R. Michael Feener, *Developments in Muslim Jurisprudence in Twentieth Century Indonesia*, (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1999), pp. 183-4.

⁴⁸ Jalaluddin Rakhmat, *Tafsir Sufi Al-Fatihah: Mukdimah*, (Bandung: Rosda, 1999), pp. xvi-xvii.

Kegaiban, Rosyidi points out that its readers will not receive deep explanations like those found in the books of Suhrawardi and al-Ghazali, even though its title seems promising.⁴⁹ But Rakhmat has realised shortcomings found in his works, as he writes in all introductions to their publication, more often than not, providing excuses. The publication of these Sufi works is in accord with the implementation of a Sufi approach in the *da'wa* activity carried by the Shi'is in the country. In a nutshell, Rakhmat's works on Sufism illustrate his great contribution not only to the enrichment of aspects of Sufi tradition but also to the recognition of Shi'i teachings and tradition among Indonesian Muslims at large.

In the field of Islamic history, Rakhmat wrote *Al-Mustafa: Pengantar Studi Kritis Tarikh Nabi SAW* (The Chosen: An Introductory Critical Study of History of the Prophet, 2002). As the sub-title suggests, the book, which is comprised of his lectures at the Muthahhari Foundation, contains an introduction to the critical study of the history of the Prophet Muhammad. This study is a criticism of Sunni sources, particularly *hadith* collections narrating occasions or stories that the Shi'is, including Rakhmat, believe to be contrary to the noble character of the Prophet Muhammad, and should be conducted because he is the most perfect man and the best example for mankind. This book is a call to reconstruct a proper history in accord with this principle. Since it is only an introduction, the book does not deal with the historical description of the life of the Prophet Muhammad, except for some examples that should be criticised.

Rakhmat's call for devotion to the Prophet Muhammad, the best of God's creatures and guide to achieve God, is clearly expressed in his work, *Rindu Rasul: Meraib Cinta Ilahi Melalui Syafa'at Nabi SAW* ('Longing for the Messenger: Achieving Divine Love through Shafa'a of the Prophet', 2001). In it Rakhmat provides us with convincing arguments for varied forms of loving devotion to the Prophet as vehicles to achieve God. One expression of love to the Prophet is called *tabarruk*, which literally means 'taking blessing', because all related to the Prophet contain blessings.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Rasyidi, *Dakwah Sufistik*, p. 38.

⁵⁰ Jalaluddin Rakhmat, *Rindu Rasul: Meraib Cinta Ilahi Melalui Syafa'at Nabi SAW*, (Bandung: Rosda, 2001), p. 224.

“The blessing of the Prophet (upon him be peace) guides us to gain prosperity in the world and in the hereafter. It can cure physical and psychical illnesses and save us in the hereafter.”⁵¹ In short, this book is intended to present the Prophet Muhammad for every day life of Muslims. In the context of Indonesian Islam at large, through this book, Rakhmat has greatly contributed to maintaining Islamic practices upheld by the traditionalist Muslim groups in Indonesia.

Rakhmat also wrote a book on ethics with a provocative imperative title, *Dahulukan Akhlak di atas Fikih* (Prioritise Ethics over Jurisprudence, 2002). The book is intended to solve the long-lasting problem of Muslim *umma*, specifically factions that emerged since the death of the Prophet Muhammad, by implementing the universal divine message of the Prophet on the necessity of noble ethics, namely in his saying: “Indeed, I was designated to perfect noble ethics”. Rakhmat presents differences of legal opinion among schools of Islamic law over the course of history as well as factions and fanatical attitudes of followers of schools that have created religious conflicts within the *umma*. Therefore, Rakhmat suggests that one should renounce his or her own adherence to a particular school of law in favour of establishing Islamic fraternity. This scholarly work contain Rakhmat’s genuine ideas that have received credit as well as criticisms from both Sunnis and Shi’is in Indonesia.

Notwithstanding Rakhmat’s call to abandon school of law for the sake of Islamic fraternity, he wrote several essays on *fiqh* (jurisprudence). Based on the essays, Feener included Rakhmat as one of the new Muslim intellectuals who has contributed to developments of Muslim jurisprudence in twentieth century Indonesia. Like Munawir Sazali and Nurcholish Madjid, Rakhmat maintains the necessity for continuous exercise of *ijtihad* in order that Muslims can adapt themselves to social and cultural changes. But Rakhmat hastens to remark that not everyone is authorized for such a difficult task because of certain requirements necessary to undertake it.⁵² As a Shi’i adherent, Rakhmat upholds the view that, in terms of jurisprudence, Muslims are classified into *mujtahid* and *muqallid* (“follower”). In Shi’i Islam, the laity should follow a certain

⁵¹ Rakhmat, *Rindu Rasul*, pp. 225-6.

⁵² Feener, *Developments*.

mujtabid that is known as *marja' al-taqīd*. Since Rakhmat is not a *mujtabid*, his response to issues of Islamic law is likely to provide alternative views while emphasising one's personal choice and the importance of Islamic fraternity. This can be found in his book, *Jalaluddin Rakhmat Menjawab Soal-soal Islam Kontemporer* (Jalaluddin Rakhmat Answers Contemporary Islamic Problems, 1998), which is derived from his spontaneous responses to questions posed by his audience at religious lectures held at the Salman and Al-Munawwarah Mosques from the 1980s to 1998. In this way, Rakhmat strictly positions himself as a *muqallid* in the field of Islamic law. Nonetheless, this does not reduce Rakhmat's scholarship, which is an important determinant of Islamic leadership in the Shi'i community in Indonesia.

With regard to his leadership, Rakhmat established the Muthahhari Foundation Bandung in 1988 and since then has headed it. Other co-founders include Haidar Bagir, Ahmad Tafsir, Agus Effendi, and Ahmad Muhajir. The foundation, which promotes the slogan of 'enlightenment of Islamic thought', is engaged in the field of *da'wa*, education, and publication. Since 1992, it has organised SMU Plus (Senior High School with attribute Plus), one of the most popular schools in Indonesia, attracting students from various parts of the country. Rakhmat himself regularly gives religious lectures at Sunday's *pengajian* held at Al-Munawwarah Mosque, besides other kinds of religious circles. As mentioned above, a number of students who then become Shi'i intellectuals studied religious knowledge at these religious lectures and circles. The recorded preaching materials of this *pengajian* are processed to become the content of a missionary periodical called *Al-Tanwir*, published by the *da'wa* division of the Muthahhari Foundation. The foundation has provided a publishing section that produced a number of books including the works of Rakhmat and of students of SMU Plus. All these various activities have made the institution and its leader famous throughout the entire country.

In 1997, Rakhmat with the financial support from Soedharmono, ex-vice-president of Indonesia during the New Order era, and his family founded Tazkiya Sejati, a centre of Sufi studies and training, in Jakarta. Rakhmat was its director until he left the institution in 2003 due to conflict between him and Yanti Soedharmono and Tanty Soedharmono.

From 1997 to 2003, Tazkiya Sejati organised more than twenty courses of Sufism that attracted participants from the upper middle class in Jakarta, including businessmen, executives, and retired functionaries. Conducted over the weekend, the courses allowed people to participate without leaving their work. Unlike courses on Sufism organised by Nurcholish Madjid's Paramadina, the programme at Tazkiya Sejati provided its participants not only with theoretical aspects of Sufism but also with rituals taught in Sufism like *dhikr* (remembrance of God) and prayers in which the participants receive guidance from teachers in order to perform them correctly. In this regard, Sila considers Tazkiya Sejati to be the most significant institution of Sufism for the executive finds many participants at Tazkiya Sejati who used to attend courses on Sufism at other institutions like Paramadina. Instead of getting nothing except discussion, they moved to Tazkiya Sejati where, "besides receiving contemporary topics of Sufism from Islamic scholars through discussion and seminar, they were taught ways of practising certain *wirid* and worship."⁵³ Research by Zubaidah, as cited by Rosyidi,⁵⁴ shows that most *jama'ah* responded positively to the course on Sufism held at Tazkiya Sejati and they believed that the course had transformed them positively in terms of knowledge and religiosity.

Rakhmat's leadership is also seen in his pioneering the establishment of the national Shi'i organisation in Indonesia called IJABI (*Ikatan Jamaah Ahlul Bait Indonesia*, Indonesian Association of Ahl al-Bayt Congregation) in 2000. Since then, Rakhmat has become the chairman of the advisory council and the most influential figure in the development of the organisation. In the beginning, Rakhmat and other Shi'i intellectuals worked with Shi'i *ustādhbs* in founding this Shi'i organisation but in the process of its establishment, the groups split. While Shi'i intellectuals under the leadership of Rakhmat are generally associated with IJABI, which claims to be the umbrella organisation for all Shi'is in Indonesia, the Shi'i *ustādhbs* have rejected it. As a social and

⁵³ M. Adlin Sila, "Model Tasawuf Masyarakat Perkotaan: Kasus Pusat Kajian Tasawuf (PKT) Tazkiyah Sejati", paper presented in a seminar held in the Office of Research and Developments, Development of Religious Affairs, 3 November 2000, p. 7.

⁵⁴ Rasyidi, *Dakwah Sufistik*, pp. 122-3.

religious organisation, IJABI has enjoyed a strong position because it is legally recognised by the Indonesian government through the Ministry of Home Affairs. Suffice it to say that with the establishment of IJABI, Rakhmat has occupied the national leadership of the Shi'ī community notwithstanding the fact that the Shi'ī *ustādhbs* reject the organisation.

Thus, Rakhmat's education, expertise in Communications, engagement in the field of *da'wa*, experience in the *hawza 'ilmiyya* in Qum, connections with Shi'ī *ulama* in Iran and other places, Islamic scholarship, and leadership experience in Islamic institution are determinants that have established his leadership in the Shi'ī community in Indonesia. In the case of Rakhmat's leadership, his education alone does not have a direct effect on it but it is to be considered along with other factors. In a nutshell, education is a very important factor in affecting Shi'ī leadership, but it depends on other mentioned determinants.

E. Concluding Remarks

In terms of education background, the Shi'ī *ustādhbs* are distinguished from Shi'ī intellectuals. By and large, the Shi'ī *ustādhbs* were educated in the *hawza 'ilmiyya* of Qum, a prominent centre of Shi'ī learning. The tendency to study at this centre of religious learning started in the 1970s but grew dramatically after the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979. The number of Indonesian students studying in Qum has increased significantly along with changes in the process of student selection and the institutions attended by the students. Most Shi'ī *ustādhbs* in Indonesia graduated from the Madrasa Hujjatiyya. The *hawza 'ilmiyya* of Qum provided two different systems of education: the traditional system and the modern *madrasa* system. By and large, the Indonesian students followed the *madrasa* system of education but they were free to attend religious lectures and study circles held in the traditional system. They returned to their country and engaged themselves in the field of *da'wa*, education, and culture. Few Shi'ī *ustādhbs*, the most prominent in present Indonesia, pursued their Islamic education at post-graduate programs in Indonesia or abroad.

Unlike the Shi'ī *ustādhbs*, Shi'ī intellectuals graduated from 'secular' universities in Indonesia or abroad. But with the Islamic revivalism at university campuses since the late 1970s, students who became

intellectuals were active in attending religious lectures and study circles at campus mosques or Islamic institutions in order to gain religious knowledge. This non-formal education became a very important vehicle, facilitating the strong desire of students to learn religious sciences so that they can grow to be renowned Shi'i figures in their community.

Even though Jalaluddin Rakhmat, the most prominent Shi'i leader in present Indonesia, is a Shi'i intellectual in terms of formal education, his educational background is extremely complex. Rakhmat studied religious knowledge in non-formal institutions from an early age. This was followed by his self-study of Islamic texts and being engaged in social and religious organisations. His education and religious experience were fulfilled by residing in the shrine city of Qum where he attended religious lectures and study circles. In addition to his achievement in education, Rakhmat's leadership is influenced by such factors as his long-lasting engagement in *da'wa* activities, his good connections with Shi'i *ulama*, his remarkable accomplishments in Islamic scholarship, and his establishment of and leadership in Islamic institutions and organisations. All these contribute to establishing Rakhmat's leadership in the Shi'i community in Indonesia. In other words, education is very influential in the Shi'i leadership in Indonesia, but it depends on these determinant aspects. This illustrates the complex process of Shi'i leadership within the Shi'i community Indonesia.

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