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**“The Resurgence of the Lovers of Ahlul Bait:
The Identity of the Shi’ite Muslims in Modern Indonesia”**

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Abstract

This paper undertakes a discussion of the character and role of Shi’ism in contemporary Indonesia. It shows that, to compare with Shi’ism in the Middle East or Arab countries, the Indonesian Shi’ism seem to be less political. They have been more concerned with the intellectual tradition. This fact has been caused by political situation, majority-minority reason, and intellectual environment. However, after the coming of new generations of Shi’ism in the late 1980s and early 1990s, most of which are the Qum alumni, the tension between Sunnim and Shi’ism happened in several regions, especially when the Shi’ite groups openly show their religious distinctiveness. To analyze the movements and strategies employed by the Shi’ism to be able to struggle in the Sunnism-populated country, the writer uses a majority-minority relation point of view. Moreover, this paper highlights the Sunni responses to the existence of Shi’ism after the Iranian Revolution. The diversity of the Sunni’s reactions has represented the variants of Indonesian Sunni Muslims.

Introduction

The socio-historical course of the movements of Islamic Shi’ism in Indonesia is still the subject of a heated debate among Indonesian Muslims. The overwhelming

mainstream of Muslims in this country, which holds the world's largest Muslim population, is Sunnis who are Shafi'ism-'Ash'arism in their practical-theological stance. There is no precise survey that has been done as for the number of the Shi'ite population in the region. A recent claim mentions that they are nearly 100.000¹ up to 3.000.000.² Yet, along with the spread of Shi'ite literatures and the establishment of Shi'ite organizations in some regions around 1980s and 1990s, the controversy among Indonesian Sunnis pertaining to Shi'ism appeared. Along with the M.U.I. (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*/Indonesian 'Ulama Council), a number of organizations appeal to the government to forbid and prevent the dissemination of Shi'ism. For the meantime, the Indonesian Shi'is are still moving forward, preserving their tradition, and consolidating their movement. This article, therefore, will observe the dynamic of religious and intellectual movements of the Shi'ite groups in contemporary Indonesia. This paper attempts: to elaborate the intellectual transformation of Shi'ism in Indonesia by the 1980-1990 and afterwards; discover the way the Shi'ite communities, as a minority, preserve and disseminate their values and tradition; and highlight the Sunni reactions and their policies towards Shi'ism.

Indonesian Shi'ism after the Iranian Revolution: Intellectual Transformation and Public Recognition

While it had not been easy to identify the devotees of Shi'ism, recently their appearance in the public sphere has been more observable. The number of sympathizers of Shi'ism throughout the country, according to some observers, has increased rapidly as the result of the cultural and political revolution in Iran led by

¹. http://www.usembassyjakarta.org/press_rel/religious_report2003.html. "Indonesia Annual International Religious Freedom Report 2003", released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor.

². <http://www.ijabi.or.id/bspweb/bpikrak1.htm>

Imam Khomeini in 1979. This revolution has had social, religious and political impacts on the Muslim communities who resided in Southeast Asia and the Middle East.³ The Iranian Revolution has become a momentous circumstance that provided a new phase of the development of Islamic-revivalism among Sunnism, in general, and a new consciousness for the sympathizers of Shi'ism, in particular.

In the Indonesian context, we may highlight three phases of the development of Shi'ism after the Iranian Revolution through Berger and Luckmann's "social construction theory." First of all, the phase of "externalization" or "taking in culture" is signified by the process of intellectual transformation of Shi'ite legacy and doctrines in the region. Next to it is the phase of "objectification," which is marked by institutionalization of their ideas individually and communally through subjective and normative activities. Last is the phase of "internalization," which is "a process of socialization" and "producing culture" where the Shi'ism takes a part in the process of the public recognition.

The existence of the Shi'ism in Indonesia before the Iranian Revolution was very "secretive." The sympathizers of Shi'ism did not have enthusiasm for propagating their teachings to others. In order to be able to integrate within the neighborhood, they even kept their beliefs for themselves and the family members only.⁴ However, subsequently, several Muslim students in many universities showed

³. In his observation in several Muslim countries Keddie concludes: "as a gross generalization one may say that the Iranian Revolution was, during its course and for many months after its victory, widely regarded as inspirational in the Muslim world, and more generally in the third world, but that the very positive view of that revolution has declined, except among the Shi'ism of several countries and some radical Islamists, especially students." Nikki R. Keddie, *Iran and the Muslim World: Resistance and Revolution* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 118; see also John L. Esposito, *The Iranian Revolution: Its Global Impact* (Miami: Florida International University, 1990)

⁴. Jalaluddin Rahmat, "Dikotomi Sunni-Syi'ah Tidak Relevan Lagi," in A. Rahman Zainuddin & Hamdan Basyar (ed.), *Syi'ah dan Politik di Indonesia: Sebuah Penelitian* (Bandung: Mizan, 2000), 145; also

their “popular attitudes towards the Revolution.”⁵ They started being interested in acquiring the Iranian intellectual treasures. Along with their admiration of the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt and Neo-Marxian Schools, for example, the Muslim students were familiar with the Shi’ite thinkers and Iranian ideologists. Therefore, as Jalaludin Rahmat has illustrated, along with their discourse of “the Frankfurt School,” the Indonesian Muslim students talk about “the Qum School” for their social critics.⁶ Likewise, numerous names that represent the Shi’i-Iranian intellectuals such as Ali Shari’ati (1933-1977),⁷ Murthada Muthahhari (1920-1979),⁸ and SMH Tabataba’i (1892-1981)⁹ have been well recognized in the region, especially subsequent to the wave of translation of Iranian books, which enriched the Islamic discourse in Indonesia. Despite the fact that numerous books have been translated

Catatan Kang Jalal, Visi Media, Politik dan Pendidikan, edited by Miftah F. Rahmat (Bandung: Remaja Royda Karya, 1998), 433-460. 149.

⁵. Mehden, *Two World of Islam: Interaction between Southeast Asia and the Middle East* (Florida, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993), 72.

⁶. Jalaluddin Rahmat, “Dikotomi Sunni-Syi’ah, 150.

⁷. Ali Shariati was born in 1933 in Mazinan, a suburb of Marshad, Iran, from a religious-progressive nationalist preacher. He obtained his bachelor's degree from the University of Marshad, pursued his graduate studies in philosophy and sociology at the University of Paris, and received Doctorate Degree in 1964. He was well-known as an Iranian ideologist and sociologist. He was murdered on June 19, 1977 in England.

⁸. Ayatullah Murtada Mutahhari, was born 1920 in Fariman, Iran. He was one of the most prolific Iranian writers. He was trained at Marshad and Qum respectively, where he studied Islamic Theology, Philosophy, History and Jurisprudence. He passed away on the 1st of May, 1979. His works have been translated and published in many languages, including Bahasa Indonesia.

⁹. Allameh Syed Muhammad Husseyn Tabataba’i was born in Tabriz in 1892. Having been trained in his home town for his primary school and the Study of Religion and Arabic, he went to Najaf-e-Ashraf for his higher level of education. He studied Jurisprudence, Mathematics, and Philosophy. After accomplishing the program in his school, he returned to Tabriz in the year 1935. Later on he was teaching in Qum, Iran, until he died in 1981. He published numerous articles and books. One of his magnum opus is *Tafsir al-Mizan* published in 20 volumes.

and published massively,¹⁰ only few works deal straightforwardly with the political and religious ideology of Khomeini, the main figure of Iranian Revolution. As for the lower rate of publications about or written by Khomeini in 1980s, Van Mehden notes that it is probably because of the fear of governmental reprisal and because “Khomeini’s writings and statements have been primarily Iranian in character.”¹¹

Attention should be paid to the way the sympathizers of Shi’ism put forward their identity through discourse. It was the Mizan Press that initiated the publication of the so-called Shi’ism books in the early 1980s. The Arabic book *al-Murajaat* that constitutes a dialogue between A. Syarafuddin Al-Musawi and Asy Syaikh Salim al-Bisyri al-Maliki was selected to be the foremost book published by the Mizan Press in 1983. It has been entitled *Dialog Sunni-Syi’ah* (A Dialogue between a Sunni and a Shi’ism).¹² According to the Director of Mizan Press, Haidar Bagir,¹³ the reason for publishing this book is very simple, but very important, which is “there was no appropriate and adequate discussion of Shi’ism in Indonesia at that time.” Because of this, Haidar was suspected of disseminating Shi’ism doctrines. In the beginning, the books written by Shi’ism scholars were not necessarily reflecting specific Shi’ism

¹⁰. Among the publishers which are supposedly sympathetic or dealing with the Shi’ism thoughts and traditions are: the Mizan Press, the Lentera, the YAPI Press (Jakarta), the YAPI Press (Bangil), the Rosdakarya Press, the Al-Hadi Press, the CV Firdaus Press, the Pustaka Firdaus Press, the Risalah Masa Press, the Qonaah Press, the Bina Tauhid Press, the Mahdi Press, the Al-Kautsar Press, the Al-Baqir Press, the Al-Bayan Press, the As-Sajjad Press, the Basrie Press, the Pintu Ilmu Press, the Al-Muntazhar Press, etc.

¹¹. Mehden, *Two World of Islam*, 73. Later on, the works of and about Khomeini could easily found in the markets.

¹². As-Sayyid Syarafuddin al Musawi, *Dialog Sunnah Syi’ah: Surat menyurat antara asy-Syaikh al-Misyri al-Maliki Rektor al-Azhar di Kairo Mesir dan as-Sayyid Syarafuddin al Musawi al Amili seorang -ulama besar Syi’ah* (Bandung: Mizan, 1983). In order to counter this book, one publisher in 1989 translated and published the work of Mahmud az-Zabi, *Al-Bayyinah, fi ar-Radd ala Abatil al-Muraja’at*. See Mahmud az-Zabi, *Sunni yang Sunni: Tinjauan Dialog Sunni-Syiahnya al-Musawi* translated by Ahmadi Thaha and Ilyas Ismail (Bandung: Pustaka, 1989).

¹³. <http://www.mizan.com/portal/template/BacaBerita/kodenews/591>

teachings, but were concerned with general themes, such as the concept of family in Islam, justice in Islam, women in Islam, moral and ethics in Islam, al-Quran, the History of Muhammad, and the issues concerning the dialogue between Sunnism and Shi'ism. These themes have been more acceptable either by Sunnism or Shi'ism. Towards their publication, they attempt to share the resemblances between themselves and Sunnism. However, other Shi'ite groups presently became more audacious in expressing and propagating their identity. They have offered more specific themes, which are the core of Shi'ite legacy that distinguishes them from Sunnism, such the concept of *imamah*, the superiority of the *ahlul bayt*, Imam al-Mahdi, Mut'ah marriage, etc. Currently, hundreds of Shi'ism books on Islamic Theology, Ethics/Moral, Islamic Jurisprudence, Philosophy, History, Biography, Society, Al-Quran, and Hadith, have already been translated into Indonesian language and published by several publishers.

The intellectual transformation and religious movement among Indonesian Shi'ism, furthermore, cannot be entirely disconnected from the arrival of many Indonesian students who studied and have been studying in Qum (Iran), or the establishment of Shi'ism organizations. The new generation of Qum alumni and Shi'ite organizations then became the important sources that have preserved the spread of the Shi'ite doctrines. If historians mention that the early Shi'ism ideas were probably brought from India some centuries ago by Arab-Persian traders or some Sufi orders, the contemporary phenomena of the "Qum students", starting from 1980s up to now, can be regarded as a new stripe of the straightforward connection between Indonesian Muslims and Iranian/Shi'ism ideas intellectually, religiously and, perhaps, politically. Numerous Indonesian students studied there (Qum) and brought the teachings of Shi'ism to this country. As far as this, most Indonesian students in Qum are coming from the families of the sympathizers of Shi'ism or at

least have a connection with that community. They study *ulum al-Qur'an* (the science of the Quran), *ulum al-hadith* (the science of Islamic tradition), *fiqh* and *ushul al-fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence), *aqidah* (Theology), and *falsafah*, *hikmah* or *'irfan* (Philosophy), either for undergraduate or graduate programs. The *Markaz Jahani Ulume Islami* under the coordination of *Rahbar* (Ayatullah al-Uzma Sayyid Ali Khamanei), has so far been organizing all international students from across the world, including Indonesian students, who are studying religion in Qum.¹⁴

The Qum alumni have illuminated the intellectual and religious discourses of Shi'ism and its sympathizers in Indonesia based on their experience in Iran. In this context, the Iranian connections through the Qum alumni come to be major factors of the growth of the Shi'ite organizations and their educational institutions. According to the observation conducted in 1997, there were about 25 organizations that are concerned with the doctrines of Shi'ism in Jakarta. Ahmad Barakbah, a Qum alumnus, has mentioned that there were no less than 40 Shi'ism organizations that have been established all over the country, the well-known of which are the Mulla Sadra Foundation (Bogor), the *Pesantren* al-Hadi (in Pakalongan), the Al-Jawad Foundation (in Jakarta), the al-Muntazhar Foundation (Jakarta), the Yayasan Pesantren Islam/YAPI (in Bangil), the Muthahhari Foundation (Bandung), the Fatimah Foundation (Jakarta), the Al-Muhibbin Foundation (Probolinggo) and others that can be found in Malang, Yogyakarta, Pontianak, Ujung Pandang, Samarinda, Banjarmasin, etc.¹⁵ The core programs and activities of these organizations are

¹⁴. This is based on my correspondence with the Indonesian Student Association in Qum, Iran on 25 July 2005. For the website of Indonesian students in Qum, see www.islamalternatif.com. The Iranian Government perhaps has a different policy for those who would like study in other academic areas beside religious or Islamic studies.

¹⁵. Dewi Nurjulianti & Arief Subhan, "Lembaga-lembaga Shi'ism di Indonesia," *Ulumul Quran*, No. 4, Vol. VI, 1995, 20-25.

educations, Islamic gatherings, and publications. Among the regular publications in the form of bulletin, magazines and semi-journals issued by the Shi'ism are: *Yaum al-Quds* (Magazine, published by Iranian Embassy); *al-Mawaddah* (by Indonesian Ahl BaitCommunication Forum); *Al-Hikmah* (Muthahari Foundation), *Bulletin Al-Jawad* and *Al-Ghadir* (Al-Jawad Foundation), *Al-Tanwir* (Muthahhari Foundation), and *An-Naba* (Fatimah Foundation).¹⁶

While in the 1980s the teachings of Shi'ism were disseminated because of, perhaps, the political and intellectual euphoria of the Iranian Revolution that, in fact, attracted Indonesian Muslims, especially among the student activists, in the 1990s these sympathizers of Shi'ism were then institutionalized and well-structured in the form of organizations. Indeed, the aim of these organizations is to propagate Shi'ism to Indonesian Muslims. The Al-Jawad Foundation, for instance, openly declares its mission, which is: "to practice the teachings of the *ahlul bayt* in daily life, individually and communally, and to expand and propagate them extensively within society."¹⁷ The same idea is voiced by the Fatimah Foundation (established in 1997). This organization aims "to disseminate the teachings of the *ahlul bayt*," and "to make the *ummah* to be the devotees of Muhammad [PBUH] and the *ahlul bayt*."¹⁸ In short, the intellectual transformation in the form of "the *halaqah*" of Shi'ism in the 1980s has been transformed into a form of institutionalized movements.

A non-confrontational way has been taken by some Shi'ite communities. Jalaluddin Rahmat, the founder of the Muthahhari Foundation, explains that his foundation is not intended to propagate Shi'ism. He believes that it is necessary for

¹⁶. Thohir Abdullah Al-Kaff, "Perkembang Syi'ah di Indonesia," in *Mengapa Kita Menolak Syi'ah: Kumpulan Makalah dan Kesimpulan Seminar Nasional Sehari tentang Shi'ismh* (Jakarta: LPPI, 1998), 67.

¹⁷. See <http://aljawad.tripod.com/aljawad.htm>

¹⁸. See www.yayasanfatimah.org/aboutus.htm

new Muslim generations to reduce the dichotomy between Shi'ism and Sunnism in order to discourage schism that has happened along Islamic history. He uses the "*ukhuwwah* approach" for his strategy.¹⁹ The Muthahhari Foundation, a foundation which is primarily concerned with education has taught its students all main Islamic *madzhabs*, especially the Malikism, Hambalism, Hanafism, Syafi'ism, and Ja'farism. In contrast with other Shi'ite organizations, such as the Al-Jawad Foundation in Bandung, YAPI in Bangil, Pesantren al-Hadi in Pekalongan, and the Fatimah Foundation in Jakarta, the mission of the Muthahhari Foundation has been more moderate in articulating the doctrines of Shi'ism. The Fatimah Foundation, for instance, has taken the opposite way by publishing some articles in response to the Sunni criticism, such as "the Deviations of the Doctrines of *Ahlu Sunnah wa al-Jamaah*," "The Blemished Wahhabism Characteristics," "the Mistakes of Muhammad Companions," etc.²⁰

A number of factors may have generated the institutionalization of these sympathizers of Shi'ism. First of all, the increase of the number of sympathizers of Shi'ism in several regions has demanded more organized activities. In order to preserve the continuity and the spread of their teachings, the interest of this community therefore cannot simply rely on the sporadic groups. They, as a minority, need more social and political recognitions from a wider scope of audiences, especially the outsiders. For the insiders, the institutionalization of the community has given a lot of benefits. It provides a more comprehensive reading facility (library), offers a more intensive and systematic study for new members, and finally

¹⁹. See Dedy Djameluddin Malik dan Idi Subandy Ibrahim, *Zaman Baru Islam Indonesia: Pemikiran dan Aksi Politik Abdurrahman Wahid, M. Amien Rais, Nurcholish Madjid dan Jalaluddin Rakhmat*, (Bandung: Zaman Wacan Mulia, 1998)

²⁰. See <http://www.fatimah.org/indexartikel.htm>

strengthens the cohesion among the sympathizers of Shi'ism. Therefore, through this way, the interest of new sympathizers is not restricted to the intellectual dimension of Shi'ism; but it also deals with the *fiqh*.

Moreover, even though the Sunni-Muslims in the country, as represented by the Indonesian 'Ulama Council have reacted to the spread of Shi'ism by accusing the Shi'ism of deviating from the "true Islam", the New Order regime still gave an opportunity for the non-political religious sectarians to exist, unless such religious groups were gnawing the Pancasila as the basis ideology of the state. A number of Shi'ite groups have been able to run their programs and missions, such as establishing educational institutions. *Pesantren* al-Hadi in Pakalongan, a traditional Islamic institution that has a special concern with Shi'ism, for example, has been running since 1989 and sending a number of its alumni to Qum, Iran.²¹ Along with the YAPI in Bangil, this Pekalongan based-*pesantren* is perhaps the only Islamic educational institution in the country that has adopted the *hawza* system in Qum in its curriculum and religious orientation.²²

The decline of the New Order Regime in the country in 1998 then came to a new spirit for the Shi'ite groups to amalgamate their fragmented sympathizers. The willingness of the sympathizers of Shi'ism to declare their existence openly was also supported by the fact that the President of Indonesia at the time, Abdurrahman Wahid, is well-recognized as an open-minded cleric who is familiar with inclusivism and religious pluralism. As for this situation, Jalaluddin Rahmat points out, "political reform in this country has given a great ability for us to declare our selves, without

²¹. There are about 100-150 students in this *pesantren*. The majority of students are coming from other provinces instead of students from Java Island or neighboring cities.

²². Dewi Nurjulianti & Arief Subhan, "Lembaga-lembaga Shi'ismh di Indonesia," 24; Tatik S. Hafidz "Dari Qum, ke Bangil dan Pekalongan," *Tiras*, No 3/Thn II/15 February 1996.

fear or feeling guilty.” In the long run, the *Ikatan Jamaah Ahlul bayt Indonesia/IJABI* (Association of Indonesian *Ahlul bayt* Society) was established on 1 July 2000, in Bandung-West Java, and publicly declared in their first national congress on 4 July 2000.²³ About two thousand people from twenty provinces attended this congress.²⁴ Pertaining to the identity of this organization, the IJABI, in the Introduction (*Muqaddimah*) of its Guiding Principles (*Anggaran Dasar*), asserts:

“For centuries, Indonesian Muslims have preserved their love for the *ahlul bayt*. In order to continue the struggle of the previous *ulamas*, the lovers of the *ahlul bayt* in Indonesia intend to unify and strengthen ranks (communities) by establishing social organization based on the *tauhid* (unity of God), *nubuwwah* (prophethood), *imamah* (leadership), justice, and the return of the servants to God, the *Rahman* (the most compassionate) and the *Rahim* (the most merciful)...By taking the blessing of the prophet’s (Muhammad) sayings: “The *ahlul bayt* is like Noah’s ark (during the flood and typhoon). Those who travel and join with this ark would be safe; otherwise, they would be sunk and thrown.” We have established the Ikatan Jamaah Ahlul Bait Indonesia (IJABI) as the ark of our safety...By saying *bismillahi majreha wa mursaha*, and being accompanied by the light of *ahlul bayt ‘Alaihi Salam*, we launch the ark of IJABI that would protect all the lovers of the *ahlul bayt* from their enemies, would develop their thinking spiritually, intellectually and

²³. “Kang Jalal: Tujuan IJABI, bedayakan yang lemah,” *Pikiran Rakyat*, 2 July 2000.

²⁴. “Ijabi Dideklarasikan di Bandung,” *Kompas*, 4 July 2000.

morally, as well as would offer prosperity for all Muslims extrinsically and intrinsically..."²⁵

This congress is a momentous event for the Indonesian Shi'ism to be recognized extensively by society. This becomes even the medium for them to be able to integrate or assimilate with the Sunni Muslim fellows, as a majority, by sharing and voicing the resemblance towards them without reducing their identity as Shi'ism. Jalaluddin Rahmat, for example, the chairman and one of the initiators of this association, frequently emphasizes that the IJABI is an open socio-religious organization whose membership is not restricted to Shi'ism. "We would like to open a wide definition of the lovers of the *ahlul bayt*," Jalal adds. In a wide definition, therefore, the IJABI will cover all the divisions of Shi'ism that exist in Indonesia, and welcome those (among Sunnism) who know, feel sympathy and, more importantly, love the *ahlul bayt* and their descendants.²⁶ Even so, later on the IJABI could not represent all Indonesian Shi'ism since each Shi'ite group, in fact, has different religious orientations.

Being recognized by society is an essential step in seeking cultural, social and legal legitimations. In the process of internalization, according Berger and Luckmann,²⁷ legitimacy is an important phase, especially where the established organizations belonging to the minority, in this case Shi'ism, need social and religious justifications. Nevertheless, this community has still faced religious, cultural and even political boundaries to be justified by Sunnism due to the

²⁵. See http://www.ijabi.or.id/bspweb/Pembukaan_AD.htm

²⁶. "Mumpung Gus Dur Jadi President," *Gatra*, 15 July 2000; see also <http://www.ijabi.or.id/bspweb/bgatra.htm>.

²⁷. See Peter L Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Book Edition, 1967), 92-116.

Indonesian Sunnis are diverse in their religious orientation (from radical to moderate in action), and the government's strict awareness to the underground Islamic political movements.

The Variants of Indonesian Shi'ism

The majority of Indonesian Shi'ism is the Ithna 'Ash'ariyah. The appearance of this group in the public sphere is more often than the two others. Therefore, since the two main groups, the Zaidiyyah and Isma'iliyyah, are hard to be found in the region, they will not be discussed further in this paper. Moreover, as a community that has a long historical record of sectarianism, the definition of Shi'ite communities has been very loose and has generated a dispute among the observers and Shi'is themselves. Graham E. Fuller and Rend Rahim Francke present various definitions in their observation of Shi'ite communities in several Sunnism-populated countries. For most Shi'ism, "the definition of Shi'ism is compound of religious, cultural, historical, and social attributes, and it is ultimately a definition determined by individual."²⁸ Some perhaps give emphasis to the religious component, while others may put emphasis on cultural and social components. In a more strict definition, Shi'ism is "a religious faith and a way of life based on that faith."²⁹ According to this view, therefore, Shi'ism as an identity is "inseparable from adherence to religious faith, and it is the active practice of Shi'ism that expresses identity."³⁰ If we take such a definition into account, we may observe how the Indonesian Shi'ism expresses their identity through the so-called "active practice" that separates them from the Sunni faith.

²⁸. Graham E. Fuller and Rend Rahim Francke, *The Arab Shi'ism: The Forgotten Muslims* (Hampshire and London: Macmillan Press, 1999), 17.

²⁹. Ibid.

³⁰. Ibid.

If it is true that the Iranian Revolution had attracted Sunni Muslims' attention across the world, the further questions are: in what sense the Indonesian Muslims (students and activists) have been interested in that occasion, and in what sense the books that are written by Shi'ite intellectuals have influenced the religiosity of Sunni Muslim youths? When the Iranian Revolution occurred in 1979, Imam Khomeini declared that this is the successful "Islamic Revolution" in Iran. Therefore, it is not surprising that this event was a magnet for Muslims around the world. In the case of Indonesia, many Muslim intellectuals had been attracted by either this event or the Iranian ideology. However, it does not necessarily make them Shi'ism. Even if they become the sympathizers of Shi'ism, we still can raise another question; have they been only interested in the theological doctrines of Shi'ism, or in both socio-political movement and religious practices?

The sympathizers of Shi'ism themselves have faced difficulties to define their specific identity in Indonesia since their theological, ideological, and practical tendencies are not shaped in a single stance.³¹ Some of the sympathizers are concerned with the intellectual and socio-political dimension of Shi'ism, while others are concerned with its theological doctrines. There are also those who deal with philosophy, theology and religious practices. Thus, the variants of Indonesian Shi'ism are actually coherent with the problem of definition that has been pointed out beforehand by Fuller and Francke. In this regard, there are some factors that have possibly formed why some of the Shi'ite sympathizers have dealt merely with intellectual outlook of Shi'ism, instead of religious practices and theology:³² First,

³¹. Jalaluddin Rahmat, "Dikotomi Sunni-Syi'ah", in Zainuddin, *Syi'ah dan Politik*, 148.

³². Of the Shi'ism practices which are performed and organized by the Shi'ism organizations as the way they preserve Shi'ism traditions are prayers (*thaharah*, *salat*, routine recitation of *Du'a Kumayl*, *Tawassul*, *Faraj*, etc.), religious events (i.e. the commemoration of religious festivals: the born of Muhammad, Fatimah b. Muhammad, 'Ali b. 'Ali Thalib, Hasan b. 'Ali, Husein b 'Ali, etc.) and other

they may have not been interested in the *fiqh*, but their attentions may have focused more on political or philosophical ideas. Second, they may have been faced with strict cultural and political obstacles in their religious and social environments. Third, they may have achieved Shi'ite teachings simply from their readings, not from an intensive gathering with Indonesian Shi'ite scholars. In another case, my informant (female, 42), a sympathizer of Shi'ism regularly recites *Kumail* and the prayer belonging to Zainal 'Abidin. However, she is trying to avoid the "exaggerated devotion" of the saints.³³

What is more, the Qum alumni again have given a significant contribution in shaping the variety of religious tendencies among Indonesian Shi'ism. They have fulfilled the need of those who are inclined to have *fiqh*-oriented instead of intellectualism. Whereas the first generation of Qum alumni remains intellectual in nature, the second generation is more *fiqh* in character. The former is more inclusive and open-minded, while the later is in some way more exclusive in attitudes. According to Jalaluddin Rahmat, since the *fiqh*-oriented of Shi'ism coagulates within Indonesian Shi'ism, the system of *marja'iyah* or *marja' at-taqlid* ("sources of imitation") comes instantaneously into existence.³⁴ There are some prominent Iraqi and Iranian Shi'ism *ulamas* whom Indonesian Shi'ism refer to, such as Ayyatullah Al-Uzhma Sayyid Ali Huseini Sistani (Najaf, Iraq), Ayyatullah Al-Uzhma Al-Imam Ruhullah Al-Musawi Al-Khomeini (Iran), Ayyatullah Al-Uzhma Sayyid Ali Huseini Khemenei (Iran), Ayyatullah Al-Uzhma Syekh Muhammad Taqi Bahjat Fumani

rituals. As for the theology, it is primarily concerned with *imamah* and the need of *ummah* of the *ma'sum imam*.

³³. For the prayer of Zayn al-Abidin, see *The Psalm of Islam (Al-Shahifat al-Sajjadiya)*, translated with introduction and annotation by William Chitick (Oxford, New York, etc.: The Muhammadi Trust of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 1988).

³⁴. Ibid.

(Qum, Iran), Ayyatullah Al-Uzhma Syeikh Lutfullah Shafi Gulpaegani (Qum, Iran), and Ayyatullah Al-Uzhma Syeikh Muhammad Fahdl Lankarani (Qum, Iran). My interview with one Shi'ite devotee (a male, 38 years old) ³⁵ reveals that the Qum alumni have a strong determination in shaping the characteristic and religious outlooks of the new sympathizers of Shi'ism through their intensive and regular religious gatherings. Therefore, most of the *maraji'* of the Indonesian Shi'ism are Iranian *Ulamas*. Accordingly, nearly all the teachers in the Shi'ite organizations are Qum alumni, and they are able to share deeply the Ja'farite *fiqh* in addition to the philosophy and Shi'ite theological doctrines.

Aside from the intellectual transformation and institutionalization of Shi'ism, the political inclination of Indonesian Shi'ism is not too lucid. When the history of Shi'ite community has long been known to have a high political tendency, why the Shi'ism communities in Indonesia are less political is an essential matter. Martin Van Bruinessen, in relation to this case, mentions that the political sense of Shi'ism has been changed by their intellectual sense. The Shi'ism movement in Indonesia, Bruinessen emphasizes, "is no longer considered revolutionary sectarian movement; rather it becomes introversionist."³⁶ Since the Shi'ism community in Southeast Asia is a minority, as Fred R. von der Mehden has pointed out, there is "no natural base for Iranian influence as exists in parts of the Middle East."³⁷ One of the sympathizers

³⁵. Interview, July 28 2005.

³⁶. Martin van Bruinessen, "Gerakan Sempalan di Kalangan Umat Islam Indonesia: Latar Belakang Sosial Budaya" ("Sectarian Movements in Indonesian Islam: Social and Cultural background"), *'Ulumul Qur'an*, Vol III no 1(1992), 16-27.

³⁷. Even so, it does not mean there was no political tendency among them. There were a few actions that could be regarded as a direct political impact of the Iranian Revolution either among Sunnis or Shi'is. For example, in 1986 the Soeharto regime persecuted those who got involved in Malang bombings. They, through an organization called "The Indonesian Islamic Revolution Board," attempted to bring down the regime by seeking political support from Iran and Libya. In another case,

says that politics or “Shi’ite politics” is a topic that is rarely discussed in his community for the duration of his participation for years in the *halaqah* and religious gatherings organized by the Shi’ite communities. There are probably two reasons that make them do so: first, up to now the position of Shi’ism remains marginal. In the context of nation-state, they are numerical and functional minorities. Second, they perhaps realized that there are numerous Sunni groups that may get bothered by such a discourse. Therefore, the Shi’ite groups have still been waiting for the “right time” to be involved openly in the political discourse. The declaration of the IJABI as I have mentioned previously is a good example of how the Shi’ite groups are still reluctant to be openly involved in taking politics into their discourse and movements.

Juan Cole in his study of the Shi’ite minorities asserts: “Among the key struggles of the Twelver Shi’ism communities in the twentieth century was the problem of coming to terms with being minorities in a nation state.”³⁸ He then presents two categories of Shi’ite minorities, which are numerical minorities (i.e. Shi’ite communities in Iran Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan), and functional minorities (i.e. Bahrain, Iraq and Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan). Albeit he does not embrace Indonesia into his discussion, we may insert

the pattern of Iran as an “Islamic State” has been idealized by a certain Sunni Muslim who sought the implementation of Islamic state in the country. See Fred R. von der Mehden, *Two World of Islam*, 73. It was Irfan Suryahadi who was sentenced to thirteen years in the prison after accused of being subversive by the regime. He was the editor of magazine *Risalah*, and published an article entitled “Wejangan Ayatullah Khomeini” (The Advices of Ayatullah Khomeini). It is reported that Suryahadi had frequently contacted the Iranian Embassy in Jakarta. Ibid.; see also Amnesty International, “The imprisonment of Irfan Suryahadi,” in Indonesian Report, Human Right Supplements no. 18 October 1986, 5-9; ICG Asia Briefing, TK August 2002, “Al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia: The Case of the Ngruki Network” in Indonesia, <http://www.indonesia-house.org/archive/BaliAriefB.pdf>; Currently, Irfan Suryahadi Awwas is the executive chairman of the Majlis Mujahidin Indonesia, an organization that strongly encourages the establishment of Islamic state in Indonesia.

³⁸. Juan Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi’ism Islam* (New York & London: I.B. Tauris Publisher, 2002), 173.

Indonesian Shi'ism into the first category. In respect to Indonesian religious environment, we may find, with a more specific attention, some resemblances between Indonesian Shi'ism and Saudi Arabia or Pakistan, one of which is that the Shi'ite minorities live in a Sunni-dominated country. While Saudi Arabia and Pakistan are formally applying the concept of Islamic State on their constitutions, Indonesia, with a very large Muslim population, is a nation where Islamic law is not the basis of civil law.³⁹ Therefore, the Shi'is do not face any significant political barrier from the government; instead they have been faced with the Sunni theological outlooks. However, unlike Shi'ism in the Middle Eastern countries that has a long historical tension with the Sunnism politically and religiously, Indonesian Shi'ism for the most part are the recent converts especially after the Iranian Revolution.

There are some policies issued by minority groups in facing the majorities. A sociologist and political scientist Terence E. Cook contrasts three main different policies and strategies that can be used by a minority group, which are separation, assimilation, or accommodation.⁴⁰ His study concerning ethnic and religious minorities in several regions reveals that the "stronger minorities," including religious communities, typically use "separation as segregation," "assimilation as controls," and "accommodation as minimal." In contrast, the "weaker minorities" employ "separation as separatism," "assimilation as integration," and "accommodation as maximal." If we take such a formulation into account, I would

³⁹. When Indonesia began to be governed under the regulation of the New Order, Muslim scholars embarked on "partial realization of Islamic law" as their new strategy instead of debating Islam as the basis of state or Islamic Law in general. As a result, the Family Law (UU No. 1/1974) and Religious Court (UU No. 7/1989 Waqaf/pious foundation (UU No. 7/1989) were finally adopted and legislated by the government. Following the decline of the New Order, even some policies in regard to 'partial Islamic law' such as the Guideline of the Zakat/alms (UU No. 38/1999) and the Management of Hajj (No. 38/1999) as well as *shari'ah* Banking were approved under certain official regulations.

⁴⁰. Terrence A. Cook, *Separation, Assimilation, or Accommodation: Contrasting Ethnic Minority Policies* (London: Westport, Connecticut, 2003).

say at this point that Indonesian Shi'ism is not strong enough in its numbers. Therefore, "assimilation as integration" and "accommodation as maximal" are two strategies that have been used by Shi'ite communities in order to preserve their ongoing missions and existing institutions.

In a wider context, up to now, the "accommodation as maximal" strategy has been employed by most of the Shi'ite groups. As the "weaker minorities," being recognized socially and religiously by the Sunni Muslims and the government in the region where they are able to practice their beliefs, commemorate *Asyura* ritual,⁴¹ memorialize the *haul* of Imam Khomeini,⁴² establish their organizations, and publish their books is a good result of their accommodation strategy. By taking this strategy, therefore, the Indonesian Shi'ism leave their political tendencies far behind, at least for a while. This circumstance is actually different from certain Sunni Muslim groups, such as the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (M.M.I.)⁴³ and Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (H.T.I.)⁴⁴ that openly campaign for an Islamic state and the concept of *khilafah* in order to replace the ongoing democratic system. In my consideration, the silence of Shi'ism in regards to their political inclination in the era of reformation in the country where religious communities have opportunities to communicate their interest freely is not caused by their fear of the government; instead they are anxious of their Sunni fellows, especially the puritan and radical ones.

A Sunnism Response to Shi'ism: Religious, Social and Political Rivalries

⁴¹. See <http://www.liputan6.com/fullnews/96016.html>

⁴². See http://www.tempointeraktif.com/hg/nasional/2005/06/04/brk_20050604-62053.id.html

⁴³. See Irfan Suryahadi Awwas, *Risalah Kongress Mujahidin I dan Penegakkan Syari'ah Islam* (Yogyakarta; Wihdah Press, 2001)

⁴⁴. Muhammad Ismail Yusanto, "The Demand for *Shari'ah* as positive law in Indonesia," *Reference Paper toward presentation on Panel 4: Islam in Positive Law and the Indonesian Legal System, Conference on "Islamic Law in Modern Indonesia"*, Legal Islamic Studies Program, Harvard Law School, April 17-18 2004.

The relationship between Sunnism and Shi'ism in Indonesia is determined by several factors. Since the religious outlooks and political tendencies of Sunni Muslims vary, their reactions to the existence of Shi'ism are not shaped in a single form. Some of them accuse Shi'ism of deviating from Islam and condemn them as apostates, while others see them as Muslim communities whose religious viewpoints and attitudes are different in some way from Sunnism. Nonetheless, we have to note that, in the Indonesian case, a serious discourse issued by Sunni Muslims over Shi'ism emerged along with the growth of sympathizers of Shi'ism in the country and the dissemination of Shi'ite doctrines following the Iranian Revolution.

It was the M.U.I. (the Indonesian Ulama Council) that issued the edicts (*fatwas*) concerning Shi'ite doctrines five years after the Iranian Revolution. The condemnation of the M.U.I. has been based upon some arguments. To begin with, the M.U.I. has seen that the Shi'ism has fragmented the *hadith* transmission by rejecting the non-Shi'ite transmitters, while Sunnism, as the M.U.I. has claimed, has not fragmented the narrator and transmitters of *hadith* based on their status either as the *ahlul bayt* or not. Second, Shi'ism believes that an *imam* (leader) is *ma'sum* ("free from making any mistake"). This outlook is considered misleading by the M.U.I. since the Sunnis consider *imam* an ordinary human being that is be able to make any mistake. Third, regardless of *ijma'* (an agreement among *'ulama* or *fuqaha* concerning a certain religious matter), Shi'ism believes that an *ijma'* needs the approval of the *imam's*. For Sunnism, an *ijma'* does not need such an approval. Fourth, Islamic leadership for Shi'ism is obligatory and a part of principles of Islam, while according to some Sunnis, Islam has not determine religiously a certain form of the concept of Islamic state or political leadership. The important thing for the Sunnis is how to serve and protect society appropriately, not the form of leadership itself. Fifth, Shi'ism for the most part disapprove of the leadership of Abu Bakar, Umar b

Khattab, and Uthman b. 'Affan as *al-khulafa al-rashidun* since they believe that it must be Ali b. Abi Talib who rightly succeeded the prophet Muhammad. Finally, according to the M.U.I.'s *fatwas*, the differences between the Sunnism and Shi'ism are very fundamental, and the *fatwas* lay emphasis on protecting Sunni Muslims from the influence of the Shi'ite doctrines.⁴⁵

Muhammad Atho Mudzhar in his study of the *fatwas* of the M.U.I. assumes that the *fatwas* issued by the M.U.I. in 8 March 1984 regarding the Muslim minorities, especially the Shi'ism, was generated by and had a connection with the interest of government that apprehensive about the political impacts of the Iranian Revolution to Indonesia as the world's largest Muslim population. Atho' Mudzar moderately notes:

"We know that 1979 was the year of Iranian Revolution, which toppled the secular government of the Shah and replaced it with an Islamic one. Apparently the echo of that resounded beyond Iranian territories and reached Indonesia. It was rumored that some Muslim youths were to be the target for the exportation of the ideas of the Iranian Islamic revolution. It was in this context that the government saw it necessary to take precautionary steps to prevent such Islamic revolutionary ideas from developing in the country, and it was also in this context the M.U.I. made its contribution to the efforts to preserve the establishment by issuing the *fatwa*. Thus, while the arguments of *fatwas* were classical and theological in nature, the goals were contemporary and political. It is too obvious to

⁴⁵. Muhammad Atho Mudzar, *Fatwas of the Council of Indonesian Ulama: A Study of Islamic Legal Thought in Indonesia 1975-1988*, bilingual edition (Jakarta: INIS, 1993), 114-115.

ignore the fact that the actual concern of the *fatwa* was with the doctrine of the *imama* and nothing else.⁴⁶

Following the M.U.I.'s *fatwas*, a National Seminar was conducted in the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta in 21 September 1997. This seminar was cosponsored by the L.P.P.I. (Institute of research and Islamic Studies). It was addressed specifically to condemn the Shi'ite doctrines and their existence in the country. The speakers joining this seminar were the key persons of some Sunni organizations, such as K. H. Mohammad Dawam Anwar (Katib Syuriah, Nahdlatul 'Ulama), K.H. Irfan Zidny (Lajnah Falakiyyah Syuriah of Nahdlatul 'Ulama), K.H. Thohir Al-Kaff (Al-Bayyinat Foundation), Nabhan Hussein (Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia), K.H. A. Latif Mukhtar (Persatuan Islam), Hidayat Nurwahid (Al-Haramain Foundation), and Syu'bah Asa (Editor of *Panji Masyarakat* Magazine).

In addition to the arguments that were issued by the M.U.I. in its National Meetings in 1984 as their disagreement to Shi'ism, this seminar issued some more points: 1) Shi'ism believes that the Quran is imperfect since the complete version of it will be brought by the *Imam al-Muntazhar* (the waited Imam); 2) they believe in the *taqiyyah*; 3) the Jum'at Prayer is not obligatory without the present of their *imam*; 4) Shi'ism has changed the sentences of adhan (call to prayer in Islam) by adding the word "*wa ashhadu anna 'Aliyyan waliyullah*" (We testify that 'Ali is a God's Guardian); 5) they implement Mut'ah marriage; and 6) along Islamic history, the Shi'is had been the betrayers, agents of crime and terrorists. Moreover, on behalf of the political and social stabilities in the region, the committee members of this seminar, which were K.H. Djamaluddin, K.H. Mustafa 'Ali Ya'qub, K.H. Ahmad Khalil Ridwan, Abdul Qadir Al-Attas, and Ahmad Zain Al-Kaff, issued some recommendations by insisting

⁴⁶. Muhammad Atho Mudzar, *Fatwas of the Council of Indonesian Ulama*, 115.

the government: 1) prohibit the spread of Shi'ite doctrines in Indonesia for the reason that the Shi'ism will not be loyal to the Indonesian government since they believe in the authority of their *imam*; 2) ban the dissemination of their books; 3) invalidate the licenses of their organizations or educational institutions; 4) obligate the publishers to report all their publications to the M.U.I. for further investigation; 5) forbid the Iranian Embassy from disseminating the doctrines of Shi'ism.⁴⁷ With the purpose of supporting their claims, the committee members of this seminar also quoted some sayings and opinions of the Sunni scholars' and their refutation of Shi'ism, such as Imam Malik, Imam Ahmad, Ibn Qutaibah, Ibn Hazm, Al-Qadhi 'Iyadh, al-Sam'ani, and Ibn Taimiyah.

Despite the fact that some of the speakers in the seminar above are the main figures in their own organization, their participation in it was as individuals. As a matter of fact, the Nahdlatul 'Ulama, the largest Muslim Sunni organization in Indonesia of which K.H. Irfan Zidny and K. H. Mohammad Dawam Anwar were leading members, does not issue any official opinion on this subject. On the other hand, other main figures of this organization, such as K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid and K.H. Said Agil Siradj, seem to take the opposite way. They see Shi'ism simply as another Islamic school of thought that endeavors to propagate Muhammad's teachings. "In principle, the Shi'is uphold the tradition (*sunnah*) and justice (*'adalah*) whatever the risk," explains Sirajd, "while the Sunni paid attention to the tradition (*sunnah*) and the unity of the community (*jama'ah*). Therefore, Sirajd adds, "the Shi'is are *ahlu Sunnah wa al-'adalah*, while the Sunnis are *ahlu Sunnah wa al-jama'ah*. Both defend and propagate the teachings of Muhammad."⁴⁸ A similar opinion has been

⁴⁷. See Umar Abduh and Abu Huzaiifah (ed.) *Mengapa Kita Menolak Syi'ah: Kumpulan Makalah dan Kesimpulan Seminar Nasional Sehari tentang Syi'ah* (Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Kautsar, 1988), 158-162.

⁴⁸. *Tiras*, No. 3/THN II/15 February 1996.

voiced by Abdurrahman Wahid. He figures out that there are some similarities between the traditions practiced by the members of the Nahdhatul 'Ulama and by the Shi'ism, such as *ziyarah* (make a devotional visit to a sacred place), *taqiid* in the *fiqh*, and honoring the *ahlul bayt*. "Honestly, the members of the Nahdlatul Ulama themselves are practicing some of the Shi'ite traditions. It can obviously be seen in its *tarekat* and Sufism tradition."⁴⁹

While the Indonesian Shi'ism has an Iranian connection in their religious traditions, the Indonesian Sunnism has a Middle Eastern connection, especially with the countries where the ideology of Wahhabism overwhelmingly exists such as Saudi Arabia. As to his Muslim fellows who condemn the Shi'ism tradition, Abdurrahman Wahid points out that this happens because the Sunnis anxious that the Shi'is would disturb the established Sunni tradition in the country, and the Sunni Muslims have been influenced by Saudi thoughts. "I think this (the negative response of the Indonesian Sunnis) is only their anxiety. Their thoughts have been greatly influenced by Saudi Arabia," Abdurrahman Wahid elucidates. "In fact," he adds, "there is no serious problem in Egypt (regarding the Shi'ism). The Shi'ism tradition in Egypt has even been considered the fifth School in Islam."⁵⁰ Moreover, we have to mention clearly in this case that what Abdurrahman Wahid means in his statement above is simply in terms of a religious point of view of the Sunnis, not in terms of social and political points of view. As I have explained previously, since the Indonesia is not an Islamic State, the government does not interfere further regarding the existence of the Shi'ism. This circumstance is different from the policies of Saudi Arabia, as an Islam-based society. Fuller and Francke have presented that there are some cases that can be categorized as religious, cultural, legal, and economic discriminations towards

⁴⁹. *Editor* No. 2/THN III/16 September 1989; also *Tiras*, No. 3/THN II/15 February 1996, 19.

⁵⁰. *Tiras*, No. 3/THN II/15 February 1996.

Shi'ism in Saudi Arabia.⁵¹ In addition to this, the arguments that have been made by Indonesian Sunni are different from the Saudi Wahhabi. The Indonesian Sunnism, as represented by the M.U.I.'s *fatwas* and the recommendations of the seminar, do not accuse Shi'ism of being non-believers (*kuffar*), even if there are some problematic matters within Shi'ite doctrines which are not acceptable for them. While for the Wahhabi, the veneration of *imam* can be considered *shirk*, Jacob Goldberg in his study describes, "the Wahhabi view of the Shi'is is a logical development of the cornerstone of Wahhabi ideology: the doctrine of *tauhid* (the unity of God). Abhorrence of such Shi'ite practices as saint worship, shrine and grave cults, and veneration of *imams* become the central tenet of Wahhabism."⁵²

The Sunni response towards Shi'ism can be mapped out, not only in the level of the elite *'ulamas* through their *fatwas*, but also in the level of action among ordinary societies in some regions where the Shi'is directly interact with the Sunnis. Ahmad Barakbah, the principal of the Pesantren Al-Hadi, explains that when he established his *pesantren* in Pekalongan, the responses from the public and local government were unenthusiastic. He was even often interrogated by police officers to explain the purpose of his *pesantren*.⁵³ Meanwhile, a similar circumstance was faced by the Pesantren YAPI, a *pesantren* that was established by Husein al-Habshy,⁵⁴ a famous

⁵¹. For further discussion see Graham E. Fuller and Rend Rahim Francke, *The Arab Shi'ism*, 183-186.

⁵². Jagob Goldberg, "The Shi'i Minority in Saudi Arabia," in Juan R.I. Cole and Nikki R. Keddie, *Shi'ism and Social Protest* (New Haven and London: Yale University, 1986), 231-232.

⁵³. *Tiras*, No. 3/THN II/15 Ferbruary 1996.

⁵⁴. Husein al-Habsy was born in Surabaya on 21 April 1921 and educated in the Pesantren "al-Khairiyah" in East Java and in Malaysia. He is also the author of *Benarkah Nabi Bermuka Masam* (Jakarta: Al-Kautsar, 1992). This book comprises his explanation and interpretation of the Surah 'Abasa where it is mentioned that the Prophet Muhammad frowned and turned his face away from the blind man called Ibnu Ummi Maktum. According to al-Habsy, the prophet Muhammad did not frown and turn his face away from Ibn Ummi Maktum because the prophet was free from doing such a wrong

Shi'ism cleric in Indonesia. In the 1980s, this *pesantren* made some educational projects by collaborating with some other *pesantrens* in East Java. By the time the other *pesantrens* recognized that his *pesantren* had a Shi'ite tendency, they (the Sunnis) suspended their partnership.⁵⁵

From the Indonesian Sunni Muslim perspective, as reflected in the M.U.I.'s *fatwas*, the recommendation of the seminar conducted by L.P.P.I., and the attitudes performed by people in some regions, the Shi'ism doctrines have been considered unsuitable with the Indonesian religious environment. More importantly, those claims and opinions of the Sunni represent political and sociological rivalries. In fact, one issue which has often been blown up is that the emergence of Shi'ism will bother the social and perhaps political stability of the country. In a religious point of view, it was the *fiqh* orientation that had been demonstratively performed by some of the sympathizers of Shi'ism, such as *Mut'ah* marriage and their devotion to the *imam* or Iranian *imam*, generated a high resistance from the Sunni Muslims given that marriage and leadership are parts of the social construction of a society. This assumption is supported by the fact that in a recent National Congress conducted in July 2005, the M.U.I. issued 11 *fatwas*, one of which emphasizes that the Ahmadiyah, without mentioning Shi'ism, has deviated from Islam and therefore is not a part of Islam, while in 1984, the Ahmadiyah and Shi'ism were classified together. Moreover, the impact of the *fatwas* concerning Shi'ism was not observable. There was no official action from the government to ban the existence of Shi'ism and their institutions, although there was pressure on the Ahmadiyah. The Shi'ite

deed. Accordingly, *'abasa watawalla, an jaahu al-a'ma* means "(One of the Ummayyad elites) frowned and turned way because there came to him the blind man (interrupting)." Most of the Sunni Muslims interpret that it was the prophet who frowned and turned his face away from the blind man.

⁵⁵. *Tiras*, No. 3/THN II/15 February 1996.

communities still can run their activities, publish their books, and perform their rituals without restraint.

Concluding Remarks

Like the Sunni Muslims, the religious, intellectual and political orientations of the Indonesian Shi'ism are very diverse. It seems that there is no agreement among them how to contextualize Shi'ite doctrines, such as *Imamah* and the concept of *velayatul faqih*, in the Indonesian religious and cultural atmospheres. Thus, the Shi'ite communities still face cultural, sociological, and political boundaries in articulating their political tendencies in the Indonesian context. As a consequence of the differences in defining how to be a Shi'i in Indonesia among the Shi'ite communities themselves, the appearance of some factions among them is finally unavoidable.

Moreover, the attempts to preserve their religious and social identities, to strengthen intellectual tradition through publishing Shi'ite books, and to make intensive connections with Iran are among the strategies and policies they have taken. Therefore, it is not surprising if Shi'ism get support mainly from the university students who are able to access such publications and have a strong curiosity. To reduce the resistance from Sunnism, especially when the wave of conservatism-puritan ideology strongly influenced the Sunni Muslims, the Shi'is attempt not to be too demonstrative in expressing their belief, especially that which will bother the socio-religious and political configuration of the Sunni.

Despite the fact that officially Indonesia is not an Islamic state, the pressure of the majority of Muslims who are Sunni in nature towards the minority is in some way able to influence the government to take action. Therefore, a big challenge for Shi'ite communities in the current situation is how they create a discourse that will effectively diminish the passion of the elite Sunnism in eliminating Shi'ism. The

survival of Shi'ism in Indonesia, in sum, will be determined by the social and religious attitudes of Shi'ite communities themselves, as well as by the wave of the ideology of Puritanism-Wahhabism among the Sunni communities.