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**The Spread of the *Tablighi Jama'at* Across
Western, Central and Eastern Java and
the role of the Indian Muslim Diaspora**

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ABSTRACT

The *Tablighi Jama'at* is perhaps the single biggest Muslim missionary movement in the world today that nonetheless has features unique to itself; such as its aim of primarily converting fellow Muslims to what it feels is the correct mode of Muslim religious life. Since its formation in India during the early stages of the 20th century, the *Tablighi Jama'at* has now developed the most extensive network of mosques, centres and bases for its itinerant members all over the planet, and Southeast Asia is no exception.

This paper focuses on the *Tablighi Jama'at* in Western, Central and Eastern Java (excluding Madura and Bali) and begins with a historical overview of the arrival of the *Tabligh* to Java in the early 1950s. It then looks at the early modes of dissemination and network-building, focusing in particular on the pivotal role played by the Indonesian-Indian-Muslim communities of the major trading cities of Java, and how the *Tabligh* spread across the vast island by working with and through the network of Indian-Muslim merchants who were already rooted there. The paper will trace the spread of the *Tabligh* network as it spread eastwards from its initial landing-point Jakarta, and consider the modalities that were used in its spread and development across the island.

The paper will then address the related questions of how the *Tabligh* managed to root itself into the framework of Javanese society while maintaining its distinctive South Asian character; how the *Tabligh* reconciled itself to the realities of Indonesian politics (first during the 'guided democracy' era of Sukarno and later during the authoritarian decades of Suharto's New Order); how the *Tabligh* accommodated itself with the realities of a repressive militarised state where all modes of organised religion were deemed suspect; how the *Tabligh* subsequently localised itself and took on an more distinctly Indonesian character; and end with the question of how the *Tabligh* may evolve in the future.

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The Spread of the *Tablighi Jama'at* Across Western, Central and Eastern Java and the role of the Indian Muslim Diaspora¹

I. Enter the *Tabligh*: The Initial Arrival of the *Tablighi Jama'at* to Java.

“The coming of the Hindu appears to be very similar to the later arrival of the Muslim from India and the Hadramaut; the *Brahmin* and *Kshatriya* taking the place to be usurped by a *Sayyid* and *Imam*.”²

R. O. Winstedt,
A History of Malaya.

One day in the month of February in the year nineteen-fifty-five, a group of eight men landed at the Kamoyoran International Airport³, Jakarta.

The eight men attracted the attention of the immigration officials and the people at the airport due to their appearance, that was in stark contrast to most of the other passengers at the terminal: All eight of them were from South Asia and they dressed in a manner unlike the other passengers around them. They wore long flowing white shirts that reached down to their knees, under which hung baggy trousers that stopped above their ankles. Their meagre belongings, which also included their books, spare clothes, cooking utensils and provisions, were wrapped up in bundles and sacks as they did not carry suitcases or bags with them. They wore sandals and slippers and had no luxury items on them. On their heads were wound turbans of white cotton and their alien countenances were further amplified and enhanced by beards that were long and thick.

None of the men spoke *Bahasa Indonesia* and only their leader spoke a few words of English. They were – though this was not immediately apparent to the people who looked upon them – of Pathan origin and they had flown to Jakarta all the way from India.

¹ Note: Throughout this paper the term ‘Indian Muslim’ will refer primarily to Muslims of South Asia that includes Muslims of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan nationality only. Conversely, the terms ‘Peranakan Indian’ and ‘Indonesian Indian Muslim’ will refer exclusively to those Muslims of South Asian origin who have become naturalized citizens of Indonesia and who see themselves primarily as Indonesian citizens.

² R. O. Winstedt, *A History of Malaya*, Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, XIII, 1935. (pg. 18.)

³ As this was in 1955, the Sukarno-Hatta airport was not yet built, obviously.

Their knowledge of Jakarta and the rest of Indonesia was scant at best; and all they knew then was that Jakarta was the capital of the Republic of Indonesia that was about to celebrate its first decade of independence. They had flown all the way to Java with no knowledge of the local environs, no knowledge of the local language and customs, no knowledge of the political situation of the country (that was then in the middle of a counter-insurgency war with uprisings in the outer islands) and no local friends or contacts.

As soon as they had cleared immigration and collected their belongings, they walked out of the airport but had no idea where to go next. The leader of the group managed to hail a taxi and soon transport was made available to them. The taxi driver asked them where they wanted to go, and there was some discussion among the group for they had no address to give to the driver. Finally the leader of the group resolved the matter by asking the taxi driver to take them to the house of the first *Indian Muslim* he knew, and off they went.

An hour later the group was deposited in front of a house that stood on Jalan Industri. The house belonged to a certain Haji Zaristan Khan, who was then an Indonesian citizen of Indian origin and who had, in the course of his life, been an agriculturalist, merchant and dairy farmer. Haji Zaristan had been given Indonesian citizenship for his part in the Indonesian nationalist struggle against the Dutch, and like many other Indonesians of Indian origin, now considered himself a fully-fledged Indonesian citizen for whom Indonesia was his country and homeland.

Haji Zaristan appeared out of his house and was confounded by the sight of eight be-turbaned Pathans freshly delivered to his doorstep. As none of them could speak *Bahasa Indonesia*, he conversed with them in Urdu and asked them who they were and why they had come to see him. The leader of the group replied by telling him that they had come all the way from India to spread the teachings of Islam and to preach the ways of the *Tablighi Jama'at*. Not knowing any better, and having no other choice but to offer the

uninvited visitors his own hospitality, Haji Zaristan opened his doors and bade them welcome.

Haji Zaristan was unsure about what to do next, as he had never met with any member the *Tablighi Jama'at* before and was not certain about the intention of his guests. Unable to decide on the best course of action, he then called for a meeting of all the Indian Muslim families of Jakarta at his own house on Jalan Industri.

Two days later a large group of Indian Muslims (all of them Indonesian citizens) had gathered at the home of Haji Zaristan. The leader of the *Tabligh* delegation explained to the elders of the community their intention and what they hoped to achieve during their trip to Jakarta. They asked for the help and advice of the Indian Muslim elders, and after due consultation among themselves Haji Zaristan offered the *Tablighis* the advice of the community: They were to pack up their things and move to the Masjid Bandengan that was located at Kampung Pandan, in Jakarta Utara. There, they were told, they would find a mosque that was relatively empty and where they could stay for free without being a burden or a nuisance to the community.

The *Tablighis* agreed to this proposal and on their third day they moved to the Bandengan mosque of North Jakarta where they began to clear the premises and settle their affairs. This then became the first *Tabligh markaz* (base) in Jakarta and all of Java, and in years to come would be referred to as the *Masjid Pakistan* (Pakistan mosque) of Bandengan. And that is how the *Tablighi Jama'at* made its entry to Java, in 1955.⁴

⁴ Haji Zaristan Khan was himself of Pathan origin and his family had migrated to Indonesia (then the Dutch East Indies) in the 1900s as merchants and agriculturalists from Northern India. Today the family of Haji Zaristan still reside in northern Pakistan. This account of the initial arrival of the *Tabligh Jama'at* was related to us by Ustaz Muhammad Jamil, *Emir* of the *Tabligh* at Masjid Tanjong Anom, Surakarta; Ustaz Attaullah of Surakarta; and the son of Haji Zaristan Khan, Haji Yaakob Khan, who still lives in Jalan Industri, Jakarta. None of them could remember the name of the leader of the first *Tabligh* delegation to Jakarta, though Ustaz Attaullah insisted to us that the leader of the Jakarta delegation of 1955 was *not* Ustaz Haji Miaji Isa, who led the first *Tabligh* delegation from India to Medan, Sumatra, in 1952.

II. The *Tablighi Jama'at* in Java: How a Transnational Pietist movement spread across Southeast Asia through a Diasporic Network.

The account of the arrival of the *Tablighi Jama'at* to Java narrated above gives us some understanding of how the *Tabligh* operates and its modalities of organisation and network-building.

The aim of this paper is to look at the development of the *Tabligh* in one particular part of Indonesia, namely Java; of which relatively little has been written about thus far. We set out to answer some of the questions that have attracted the attention of many scholars to date; among them: 1. How did the *Tablighi Jama'at* come to Indonesia and what were the modalities employed to root the movement across the country; 2. Who were the initial propagators of the *Tabligh* and who were the Indonesians who first converted to the *Tabligh* and helped the movement gain a local footing; 3. How did the *Tabligh* transform itself from being a South Asian-based form of popular Islam to a local stream of Indonesian Islam that operated within the framework of popular vernacular Muslim pietism; 4. How did the *Tabligh* accommodate itself to the realities of power and politics in Indonesia during this period and what was the reaction of the Indonesian state and security apparatus to the *Tabligh* then (in the 1950s-1960s) and in the present?

It is interesting to note that despite the long-enduring presence of the *Tablighi Jama'at* in Indonesia (and its increasingly visible presence in parts of Java such as East Java), relatively little research work has been done on the movement. Our own writings on the *Tabligh* (Noor, 2003, 2007, 2008) has focused on the few known *Tablighi* settlements and centres (*markaz*) in West Java, Patani (Southern Thailand), Kelantan and Trengganu (Northern Malaysia) and has looked at the early spread of the *Tablighi Jama'at* in the Malaysian Peninsula and the conversion narratives that have been employed by the local converts to the movement.⁵ The only recent work on the *Tabligh* of substance has been

⁵ On these subjects, see: Farish A. Noor, *Salafiyya Purists in the land of Shadow Puppets and Hindu Temples: The Tablighi Jama'at in Indonesia*, Paper for the Wissenschaftliche Konferenz zur gegenwartsbezogenen Forchung im Vorderen Orient (DAVO Congress), Hamburg, 20-22 November 2003; *Pathans to the East! The Historical Development of the Tablighi Jama'at movement in Kelantan*,

the doctoral thesis by Yusron Razak (Razak, 2008) whose own study has taken the macro-level approach of analysing the *Tabligh* as a global movement and who has charted its spread world-wide. Though even here it has to be noted that Razak's work has focused more on the theology and doctrines of the *Tabligh*, rather than analysing the spread and development of the *Tabligh* in Indonesia *per se*.⁶

We have dealt with the historical development of the *Tablighi Jama'at* in India elsewhere in our other writings (Noor, 2007, 2008) and so will not dwell at length about the movement's Indian origins and the socio-political context from which it first emerged. Suffice to say that other scholars such as Masud (2000), Medcalf (2002), Sikand (1997, 1998, 2004) et al⁷ have described the *Tablighi Jama'at* as the biggest itinerant transnational Muslim missionary movement in the world today, and have noted how the movement has been shaped by the historically-determined socio-political factors that were salient in the context of Indian politics of the early 20th century.

In brief, it can be noted here that the origins of the *Tablighi Jama'at* go back to the Indian Deobandi movement that was started by Maulana Muhammad Qassim Nanotawi and Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi at the Deoband seminary in 1867.⁸ Like the Deobandis,

Trengganu and Patani and its transnational links with the South Asia and the Global Islamist Revivalist Movement. In the Journal of Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, Vol. 27. No. 1. Duke University Press. 2007; and *The Tablighi Jama'at as a Vehicle for (Re)Discovery: Conversion Narratives and the Appropriation of India in the Southeast Asian Tablighi Jama'at Movement*; in: Michael Feener and Terenjit Sevea eds.), *Islamic Connections: Studies of Muslim South and Southeast Asia*, Institute for Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), National University of Singapore, ISEAS Press, 2008.

⁶ See: Yusron Razak, *Jamaah Tabligh: Ajaran dan Dakwahnya*; Disertasi dalam bidang Ilmu Agama Islam, Sekolah Pascasarjana, Universiti Islam Negeri (UIN) Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, 2008. (To be published)

⁷ See: Muhammad Khalid Masud (ed.), *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Tablighi Jama'at as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal*. Brill, Leiden. 2000; Barbara D. Metcalf, *Traditionalist Islamic Activism: Deoband, Tablighis and Talibs*. ISIM Papers IV, International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM), Leiden, 2002; Yoginder Sikand, *The Origins and Development of the Tablighi Jama'at 1920 – 1990: A Cross Country Comparative Study*, Unpublished Ph.d thesis, Department of History, University of London, 1998; Yoginder Sikand, *The Fitna of Irtidad: Muslim Missionary Responses to the Shuddhi of the Arya Samaj in Early Twentieth Century India*, Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1997, and Yoginder Sikand, *Arya Shuddhi and Muslim Tabligh: Muslim Reactions to Arya Samaj Proselytisation 1923-1930*, 2004.

⁸ The *Dar'ul Ulum Deoband* (sometimes referred to as the Deoband college), was founded in the town of Deoband to the northeast of Delhi. It was formed in the year 1867, one decade after the failed Indian Mutiny of 1857. The two major figures behind the founding of the Deoband college, Maulana Muhammad Qassim Nanotawi and Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, both came from prominent *Ulama* families and both had experienced traditional conservative as well as Sufi-inspired forms of education. They had both

the *Tablighis* were conservative Muslim fundamentalists who were inspired by the reformists of the *Wahhabi* movement from Saudi Arabia. Unlike the Deobandis who were educationists, the *Tablighis* were missionary-activists who sought to transform Muslim society and bring Muslims back to the path of true Islam.

The *Tablighi Jama'at*⁹ movement was formed in the late 1920s by Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Kandhalawi (d. 1944), whose family were closely linked to the Deobandi leadership and its sister school the Mazahiru'l-Ulum in Saharanpur. The movement was formed at a time of intense rivalry and hostility between Muslims and Hindus in India. The *Tablighi Jama'at* was actively working against Hindu revivalist groups like the *Arya Samaj* (est. 1875) as well as Anglican missionary groups from Britain.¹⁰ From the outset the movement sought to purify Indian Islam of Hindu and Christian influence, and it tried to win back Muslims who had been converted by the Hindu revivalist movements in the country.

studied under the Sufi *murshid* Haji Imdadullah and Professor Mamluk Ali of Delhi college and were influenced by the ideas of Islamic revivalists like Shah Wali 'Ullah and Sayyid Ahmad Bareilwi. The two other co-founders of the Deobandi college were Maulana Zulfiqar Ali and Maulana Fazl-ur Rahman. Nanotawi and Gangohi had played a part in the anti-British uprising of 1857, as commanders of Indian forces based at Shamli near Delhi. In 1867 they chose to settle at the town of Doad and they opened a *Madrasah* at the Chattah Masjid. This was the nucleus of the Deobandi School. Both Muhammad Qasim and Rashid Ahmad had new ideas about improving the standards of Islamic education. Their *madrasah* was cut off from the mosque complex itself. The school was finally established in 1879 and it was funded via contributions from the public rather than depending on a *waqf*. The college borrowed techniques and methods of the government colleges, with a rector, principal and salaried teachers. But it also had a *mufti* who supervised the issuing of *fatwas*. The Deobandis accepted Sufism in principle as a legitimate branch of Islam, but rejected many Sufi practices and customs on the grounds that they were contaminated by Hindu and pre-Islamic elements. Thus the Deobandi school became famous for its strict adherence to *Qur'an*, *Hadith* and *Sunnah*, and its zeal to purify Islam of Hindu, Hellenic, Persian and pre-Islamic elements. The students were kept at the *madrasah* and the teaching periods ranged between six to ten years. During this time, the students developed close bonds and ultimately the school produced a network of Deobandi Ulama who shared a similar outlook and approach to Islam. The Deobandi Ulama were known for their uncompromising and confrontational approach towards outsiders. The school issued 269,215 *fatawa* in its first hundred years, and its Ulama engaged in many polemics against Hindus and Christian missionary movements.

⁹ The name of the movement clearly indicates its intention and modalities as well: *Tablighi Jama'at* can be loosely translated as the community or group (*Jama'at*) that goes out to do missionary work (*Tabligh*) in the name of Islam.

¹⁰ See: Yoginder Sikand, *Arya Shuddhi and Muslim Tabligh: Muslim Reactions to Arya Samaj Proselytisation 1923-1930*, 2004; R. K. Ghai, *The Shuddhi Movement in India: A Study of its Socio-Political Dimensions*, Commonwealth Publishers, New Delhi, 1990; J. F. Seunarine, *Reconversion to Hinduism Through Shuddhi*, Christian Literature Society, Madras, 1977.

In order to deflect criticism from its activities, the *Tablighi Jama'at* rejected the use of violence and opted to remain apolitical. Unlike the Deobandis, the members of the movement avoided direct confrontation with Hindu or Christian groups. Rejecting politics and political activism of any kind, the *Tablighi Jama'at* movement emphasised its peaceful (*sukun*), passive and gradualist approach instead. Members of the movement were expected to take part in communal activities and join in their missionary efforts. They were expected to spend one night a week, one weekend a month, forty days a year and 120 days at least once in their lives with the members of the movement. This was seen as part of their *jihad* (struggle) for the sake of God and their religion.

The movement spread all over the world from Europe to Asia and was held together by its close internal linkages and networks. In time it penetrated into many guilds, business communities and elite networks as well. In most cases, however, its members were ordinary Muslim males from the lower levels of society. The movement has always been able to attract such followers thanks to its emphasis on the egalitarian ethos of Islam. By the end of the 20th century the regular congregation of *Tablighis* in Raiwind, Pakistan and Tungi, Bangladesh, could attract several million followers, making it the second biggest gathering of Muslims after the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.

Like the Deobandis, the *Tablighis* also had an ambiguous relationship with Sufism. They rejected many of the traditional practices and beliefs of the Indian Sufi *tariqas* on the grounds that they were contaminated by alien Hindu practices and ideas, but also sought to use Sufi methods and rituals when it suited them. Metcalf (2002) notes that 'among the *Tablighis* the holiness associated with the Sufi *Pir* was in many ways defused into the charismatic body of the *jama'at* so that the missionary group itself became a channel for divine intervention.'¹¹ Like the Deobandis, the *Tablighi Jama'at* attempted to reproduce the strong *Pir-Murid* bonds in the Sufi *tariqas* within their own organisational structure, making it a very strong and intimately-linked organisational network that would be able to straddle enormous geographical distances. The *Tablighis* also adapted another feature

¹¹ Barbara D. Metcalf, *Traditionalist Islamic Activism: Deoband, Tablighis and Talibs*. ISIM Papers IV, International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM), Leiden, 2002. pg 11.

of the Indian Sufi *tariqas*: the (sometimes extreme) veneration of the Prophet Muhammad and his life history. In *Tablighi Jama'at* circles, *Hadith* and *Seerah* literature concerning the Prophet was and remains of great importance.

In the middle of the 20th century, the founder of the *Tabligh*, Maulana Ilyas, had left the Madrasah Mazahiru'l-Ulum in Saharanpur and transferred his activities to the Basti Nizamuddin in Delhi. Cognisant of the future importance of Delhi, the founder-leader of the *Tabligh* chose Nizamuddin as the new base for the movement's operations and its network of *Tabligh* centres was built from there, while nonetheless maintaining close links to Deoband as well.

By the time that India had gained her independence, the *Tablighi Jama'at* was well and truly rooted in Indian Muslim society; and the partition of India and Pakistan in 1948 did not prevent the *Tabligh* from extending its network of mosques and *madrasahs* to Pakistan either. In 1946 the *Tabligh* sent its first delegations abroad to England and the *Hijaz*, in 1947 to Bengal and Calcutta, and by the early 1950s, the first delegations were sent eastwards to Burma, British Malaya and Indonesia. Razak (2008) notes that the first *Tabligh* delegation to Southeast Asia was sent in 1952, and it was led by Maulana Ustaz Haji Miaji Isa.¹²

Maulana Ustaz Miaji Isa's delegation first headed to Penang (then part of British Malaya and thus still a colonial settlement), before they proceeded further south down the Straits of Melacca and settled at Medan, Eastern Sumatra; and later in Singapore. In Medan the *Tabligh* delegation chose to base themselves at the Al-Hidayah mosque on Jalan Gajah (in 1952); while in Penang (1952) and Singapore (1952) they found support and shelter among the Indian Muslim communities who were already rooted in the Straits Settlements as British colonial subjects and who resided in their respective Indian settlements.¹³

¹² Razak, 2008; pp. 3-5; pg. 9; pg. 11.

¹³ For an account of the early migration and settlement of Indian colonial subjects in British Malaya, see: Farish A. Noor, *The Hindu Rights Action Force (HINDRAF) of Malaysia: Communitarianism Across*

Three years later another *Tabligh* delegation would make its way to Jakarta (1955), Java, and come a-knocking on the door of Haji Zaristan Khan on Jalan Industri. It is important to note that during the early stages of the spread of the *Tabligh* across Southeast Asia, the first delegations that came from India found refuge and support among the members of the Indian diaspora communities of the former British and Dutch colonies. By working and travelling within this diasporic network of Indian migrants, merchants and settlers, the *Tablighi* missionaries were travelling across a familiar cultural-religious space that was little different from the socio-cultural circles they were familiar with back in India; as if they never left, in fact.

III. The Indian Brotherhood network: How the Indian Muslim Diaspora played its Part in the Spread of the *Tabligh Jama'at* across Java 1950s-1980s

Elsewhere we have looked at the role played by the members of the Indian Muslim diaspora community in the spread of the *Tablighi Jama'at* across Northern Malaysia and Southern Thailand.¹⁴ (Noor, 2007) Similar observations can be made about the early spread of the *Tabligh* across Indonesia and Java in particular, and it would therefore be important to begin with an overview of the long historical links and roles played by the Indian Muslims in Indonesia.

The historical connections between the Indian subcontinent and the Indonesian archipelago date well back before the rise of the Gupta dynasty in India and accounts for how and why both Hinduism and Buddhism made their impact on the peoples of the archipelago. Historians including Levi (1938), Sastri (1938), Coedes (1968) have noted

Borders? Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Working papers series no. 163, Nanyang Technical University, Singapore, July 2008.

¹⁴ See: Farish A. Noor, *Pathans to the East! The Historical Development of the Tablighi Jama'at movement in Kelantan, Trengganu and Patani and its transnational links with the South Asia and the Global Islamist Revivalist Movement*. In the Journal of Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, Vol. 27. No. 1. Duke University Press. 2007.

that as far back as the 7th century Hindus and Buddhists from the Indian subcontinent and Sri Lanka have travelled to Sumatra and Java as merchants, priests and scholars and were thus responsible for what has been described by Coedes (1968) as the first wave of ‘Indianisation’ in Southeast Asia. Traces of this early Indian cultural and religious influence are to be found in the temples of Gedung Songo and on the Dieng Plateau (8th cen.) in Central Java, right up to the construction of the Borobudur and Prambanan temple complexes during the period of the Sailendra and Sanjaya dynasties.¹⁵

From the 13th century onwards, Islam’s arrival and consolidation across maritime Southeast Asia was the result of the labours of another generation of Indian teachers, scholars and preachers, who happened to be Muslim by then. In this respect, the coming of Islam to Southeast Asia via India could be said to be the second wave of Indianisation of the archipelago, that added yet another layer of Indianised culture, values and norms on an already cosmopolitan society that was in many respects open to external cultural influences and hybrid in its composition.¹⁶

¹⁵ For more on the early history of Indian-Indonesian relations prior to the coming of Islam and Christianity to Southeast Asia, see: George Coedes, *The Indianised States of Southeast Asia*. (Ed. Walter F. Vella, Translated by Susan Brown Cowing). University of Hawaii press, East-West Centre, Honolulu. 1968; Sylvain Levi, *L’inde Civilisatrice: Aperçu Historique*. Paris, 1938; and *Les Marchands de Mer et leur rôle dans le Bouddhisme Primitif*, in *Bulletin de l’Association Française des Amis de l’Orient*. Paris, October 1929; K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Beginnings of Intercourse Between India and China*, *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Delhi, XIV, 1938; and Wang Gungwu, *The Nanhai Trade: A Study of Early Chinese Trade in Southeast Asia*, *JMBRAS*, XXXI, 2. Kuala Lumpur. 1958.

¹⁶ There already exists a vast body of scholarly material that has looked into the subject of Islam’s arrival to Southeast Asia from the 13th century onwards, and academic consensus rests on the claim that Islam first came to the Malay-Indonesian world via India. For further elucidation and analysis on the topic, one could turn to the following sources: On Islam’s early arrival in the Malay world, see: S. Q. Fatimi, *Islam Comes to Malaysia*. Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, (MSRI), Singapore. 1963; S. Hussein Alatas, *On the Need for a Historical Study of Malaysian Islamisation*. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 4 No. 3. Singapore. March 1963; S. Naguib Al-Attas, ‘Preliminary Statement on a General Theory of the Islamization of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago’, *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*, Kuala Lumpur, 1963 and Russell Jones, *Ten Conversion Myths from Indonesia*, in Nehemia Levtzion (ed.), *Conversion to Islam*, Holmes and Meier, London. 1979. On the topic of contemporary developments in the Malay-Muslim world, see: Chandra Muzaffar, *Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia*. Fajar Bakti Press, Petaling Jaya. 1987; Sharon Siddique, *Conceptualising Contemporary Islam: Religion of Ideology?* In *Readings on Islam and Society in Southeast Asia*, Ahmad Ibrahim, Yasmin Hussain and Sharon Siddique (eds.), Institute for Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), Singapore. 1985; Judith Nagata, *The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver. 1984. For a comparative approach which situates Islamic resurgence in Malaysia within a global context, see: Chandra Muzaffar, *Islamic Resurgence: A Global View*. In *Islam and Society in Southeast Asia*, Taufik Abdullah and Sharon Siddique (eds.), Institute for Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), Singapore. 1986. For an insight into the ideas and philosophy of one of the foremost Islamists and defenders of Islamisation in Malaysia, see: Syed Naquib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), Kuala Lumpur. 1978.

Indians – be they Hindus, Buddhists or Muslims – were therefore not strangers to Southeast Asia and the extent of contact and interaction between the two communities can be gauged by the volume of trade that was conducted across the Indian ocean and the development of a common hybrid culture (evident in the arts and literature) that was shared across the maritime divide. During the Hindu-Buddhist era thousands of Buddhist monks were trained in the Sri Lankan capital of Anuradhapura, housed in monasteries and colleges, before they were sent to Java to preach their creed. Centuries later hundreds and thousands of Muslim scholars and students crossed the Indian ocean to study at the most renowned centres of Muslim learning in Delhi, Lucknow and Deoband in India, as well as Melacca, Patani, Jambi, Aceh, Medan and Demak in Southeast Asia.

The consolidation of Western colonial rule in Asia meant that the cultural continuum that existed between South and Southeast Asia was interrupted by the introduction of modern political boundaries, often arbitrarily decided and imposed. The creation of the colonies of British India, British Burma, British Malaya and the Dutch East Indies introduced new ideas and instruments such as the concept of political citizenship, colonial subjecthood, racialised differences and the colonial census that compartmentalised what was once a more fluid and complex socio-cultural milieu. The treaties that were signed between the Dutch and the British in 1824 and 1871 helped to divide the Indonesian-Malay archipelago further, and made contact and movement across the Indian ocean considerably more difficult for the colonised subjects themselves.

It was during the late colonial era (mid-19th to mid-20th century) that the traffic of peoples across the Indian ocean grew more regimented and policed, guided as it was by the needs of colonial governance and the ideology of racialised colonial-capitalism. In British Malaya the British colonial authorities allowed for the mass migration of Indian labourers who were mostly drawn from the Southern Indian states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu; and most of these indentured labourers were later put to work in the rubber estates and

railway construction sector of the colony.¹⁷ But while Tamil Hindus were primarily brought to the colonies to serve the lower-end of the colonial economy, there were also other Asian migrant communities who came as relatively free agents and who enjoyed considerably more agency and freedom due to their superior economic status: These included Chinese and Indian Muslim merchants who mostly came from South China and Northern India.

The Indian Muslim merchants and traders (who mainly came from places like the Punjab, Bengal and along the eastern coast of India) moved and settled in the same commercial centres that had attracted the earlier generation of Muslim preachers and scholars who had brought Islam to Southeast Asia. Not surprisingly, they were mostly concentrated in the coastal zones of the Southeast Asian colonies, such as Arakan, Tenasserim and the Burmese delta (centred on Rangoon) in British Burma; Penang, Melacca and Singapore in British Malaya and in the coastal entrepôts of Banda Aceh, Medan, Palembang in Sumatra as well as Batavia (Jakarta), Demak, Pekalongan, Cirebon, Indramayu, Semarang and Surabaya in Java in the Dutch East Indies.

The one advantage that the Indian Muslim merchant-migrants had was the fact that they were already Muslims, and this meant that in time they could easily blend into the local Muslim communities of Malaya and the East Indies by marrying Malay, Sumatran and

¹⁷ The studies done by Amarjit Kaur have shown that the arrival of the British railway system was not at all designed or intended to help in the genuine development of the Malayan economy. The simple reason for this was that foremost in the minds of the colonial authorities and business interests was the desire to maximise profit by moving commodities as fast as possible. The trains, coaches and tracks used to transport these goods were themselves imported from Britain, thus saving the need to develop an advanced manufacturing industry in Malaya (Kaur, 1978). Instead, the railway system effectively contributed to the maintenance of Malaya's status as a colonial economy plugged into the Empire's market and dependent upon Britain's manufactured goods. She concludes thus: 'the railroad facilitated the transformation of Malaya into an export-oriented, lopsided economy heavily specialised in tin and rubber' (pg. 124. 1978). The deplorable conditions of the railway construction force itself, made up mostly from migrant Indian coolies was made worse by the negligence of the colonial administrators. The only positive aspect of their working lives was that the railway workers were generally more heterogeneous than the estate workers. There were also a minority of Chinese and Malay labourers amongst them. Consequently they viewed their problems from a more political angle rather than in terms of solely ethnic-based concerns. (Kaur. 1990). [See: Amarjit Kaur, *Railways, Roads and Communication: Their contribution to Asymmetrical Economic development in Malaysia*. Ph.D. Thesis, Columbia University. University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA. 1978 and *Working on the Railway: Indian workers in Malaya, 1880-1957*. In *The Other Side of Malaysian History*, Ed. Peter J. Rimmer, Singapore, 1990]

Javanese women.¹⁸ By the late 19th century, this mixed Malay/Indonesian-Indian community was referring to itself as the '*Jawi Peranakan*', and had blended into mainstream Malay, Sumatran and Javanese society with ease. In the colonial settlements of the North Javanese coast (called the *Pesisir*), Indian-Muslim *Peranakan* communities lived side-by-side with other *Peranakan* communities that were made up of Eurasians and *Peranakans* of Javanese-Chinese and Javanese-Arab stock. The Indian-Muslim *Peranakans* dominated key industries such as the trade in gold, cloth, spices and the production of the *Batik* cloth that Java is famous for, in towns like Batavia, Pekalongan, Cirebon, Semarang, Surabaya and even central Javanese centres of *Batik* production like Surakarta (Solo).

It is interesting to note that even in the context of the colonies, the Indian Muslim migrants reproduced the same social norms, caste distinctions and ethnic loyalties that prevailed in the Indian subcontinent. Hence the vast network of Indian Muslims that settled across Java was in reality a complex array of multiple networks of different and disparate ethnic, linguistic and regional loyalty-structures: The small minority of Tamil Muslims from South India, for instance, were mainly occupied with the money-lending and currency-exchange market; north Indians from Gujerat, Punjab, Bengal and Kashmir were mainly involved in the trade of gold, spices and cloth. Though no systematic survey was ever conducted either during or after Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia, cursory observations that were done during our fieldwork suggested that marriage between these different Indian communities (for example, between a Tamil Muslim and a Pathan) were extremely rare, if not non-existent.

Furthermore it is also important to note that doctrinal and theological differences (such as the divide between Sunnis and Shias, Lahori Ahmadis and Qadiani Ahmadis, etc.) were likewise maintained by the Indian Muslim migrants even in the Dutch East Indies. For this reason in the larger cosmopolitan commercial centres like Surakarta, Surabaya,

¹⁸ This process of inter-racial marriages between Indian Muslims and local Javanese and Sumatran women is often referred to as 'lebur' (to melt), suggesting that unlike the Chinese migrants who came to the East Indies, the Indian Muslims have 'melted' into the larger community of Javanese Muslims and have thus 'gone native' in the process.

Batavia (Jakarta), Cirebon and Pekalongan there existed (and still exists) different mosques for the different Muslim denominations that came from India. In Surabaya, for instance, the Indian-Arab quarter that rests close to the port in the north of the city is home to half a dozen mosques whose congregations are mainly *Peranakan* Indian Muslims, but of different communities of religious thought and praxis. (Sunni, Shia, etc.) In Surabaya alone the mosques in the Indian-Arab quarter that were built in the 19th century were divided along ethnic lines (Sindhis, Punjabis, Gujeratis and Tamils) as well as denominations (Sunnis, Shias, Lahori Ahmadi and Dawoodi Bohras).

The Indian Muslim *Peranakan* community were originally colonial subjects who lived under Dutch colonial law in the East Indies and were thus part of the plural racialised colonial economy that was set up by Holland. Like the other migrant communities who had come to the East Indies, they arrived at the behest of the Dutch colonial government and Dutch commercial enterprises, and were not invited by the Indonesians themselves.

However by the end of the 19th century the Indian Muslim *Peranakan* community was largely allied to the interests of the nascent nationalist movements of Indonesia. Many Indian Muslim merchants lent their support to the first nationalist initiatives that included the first native Indonesian economic co-operative venture, the *Sarekat Islam*¹⁹ movement. Indian Muslim leaders were also prominent in the first wave of Muslim intellectual renewal and political mobilisation, lending their support to the *Kaum Muda* (Younger Generation) intellectuals who were calling for the revival of Islam and the rise of nationalism against the Dutch colonialists as well. During the war of Independence that culminated in Indonesia's unilateral declaration of Independence in 1945, many Indian Muslims took active part as both guerrillas as well as financiers who supported the nationalists. For their part in the nationalist struggle, the Indian Muslims of Indonesia

¹⁹ Khawaja Kamaluddin, the leader of the Lahori Ahmadiya community in Java for instance was one of those Indian Muslim leaders who worked closely with H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto who later founded the *Sarekat Islam*. Many of the Lahori Ahmadi leaders were also closely aligned to the founder-leaders of the *Muhamadiyah* movement and were instrumental in the development of the Muhammadiyah as a modernist Islamist movement whose focus was on the development of modern Islamic education for Javanese Muslim youth.

were rewarded by the new Republican government of Sukarno with Indonesian citizenship, and thus became fully fledged Indonesian citizens by 1945.

It was against this long and impressive historical backdrop of transnational migration across the Indian Ocean that the *Tablighis* first arrived to Java in February 1955.

Long before the first *Tablighi* delegation landed in Jakarta, scores of other itinerant Muslim communities had arrived to Indonesia and settled all over Java themselves: The Lahori Ahmadi community, for instance, had established contact with Indonesian intellectuals in Sumatra and Java from the early 20th century onwards and by the 1920s-30s were actively involved in the intellectual and political life of Java then. It was Khawaja Kamaluddin, a prominent Ahmadi leader among the Lahori Ahmadi community, who was despatched to Java to spread the teachings of the Ahmadiyahs and their modernist approach to Islam. In the decades to come, Lahori Ahmadi leaders like Maulana Ahmad and Mizwa Wali Ahmad Baig would play a crucial role in the development of modernist Muslim thought and political activism in Java (notably in the *Muhamadiyah* movement), influencing both prominent Indonesian nationalist leaders like Sukarno as well as leaders of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). (For a historical overview of the arrival and impact of the Lahori Ahmadi in Java, see appendix A, below).

Another Indian Muslim community of note was the Dawoodi Bohra community, who migrated out of the Indian subcontinent and who have settled in significant numbers in countries like South Africa, Tanzania as well as Indonesia. The Dawoodi Bohras, who have historically been an introverted and mutually self-supporting community, found it easy to settle in Indonesia especially during the period of Dutch colonial rule thanks to the relative freedom of religion they enjoyed under the framework of the East Indies' plural economy. The Bohras settled as merchants in many of the northern coastal port-cities of Java, and the island of Bali remains until today the centre of Indonesia's Bohra community, with their base being the Masjid Fatimi located in Denpasar. Almost all the

Indian Muslim textile shops that were first built along Jalan Sulawesi in Denpasar are likewise dominated by Dawoodi Bohras until today.²⁰

The *Tablighis* who had settled at the Bandengan mosque of North Jakarta in 1955 therefore realised that they had arrived at a country where the socio-political landscape was already a heavily contested one, with many different actors and interests competing for the same space as well as the attention and support of the Javanese Muslim population. The choice of the dilapidated Bandengan mosque was indicative of the extent to which the religio-social landscape of Java was already overcrowded, and the *Tabligh* was not going to find it easy to find new converts and adherents to their cause. In the words of Ustaz H. Attaullah, who would later become one of the most important preachers of the *Tablighi Jama'at* in Central and Eastern Java:

“In those days (the first decade after the arrival of the *Tabligh* in 1955), it was extremely difficult for us to spread our teachings to the Javanese. Tried as we did, we were not permitted to enter into many of the mosques of Java. The mosques of Java were already dominated by the main Islamist groups of Indonesia, and we knew that it was almost impossible to gain a foothold in the mosques that were controlled by the *Nahdatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, Ahmadis, Pancasila* Front and others. So we had to make do with the few mosques that were under nobody’s control, and they were always the smallest, dirtiest and most isolated mosques in the worst (most disreputable) areas.”²¹

This lack of access also accounts for why the *Tablighis* were forced to move again, this time to the Masjid Jami’ Kampung Jeruk in uptown Jakarta in 1957.

Today the Masjid Jami’ Kampung Jeruk is well known as the main *Tablighi* centre in Jakarta. Many non-*Tablighis* we met during our first visit to the mosque in 2003 simply

²⁰ Interview with Imam Tahir Hussein, Head of the Bohra community of Surabaya, 18 September 2008.

²¹ Interview with Ustaz H. Attaullah, Surakarta, 12 September 2008.

referred to it as the ‘Indian mosque’ (*Masjid kaum India*), despite the fact that its congregation is made up almost entirely by local *pribumi* Indonesians themselves.²² Local Jakarta residents claim that the mosque attracts a large number of Indians during Friday *Juma’ah* (*salat Juma’at*) prayers, though on the several occasions when we had the opportunity to take part in these prayers the number of Indians was not that significant, and they were mostly of mixed Indian-Indonesian blood and were long-time residents of Jakarta. The Masjid Jami’ Kampung Jeruk is centrally located, at an intersection that breaks off from the important Jalan Hawam Wuruk, a major motorway that cuts vertically from the old part of Jakarta (*Kota Betawi*) in the north to the newer parts of Jakarta to the south. It stands about two hundred meters away from the National Archives and is on the eastern side of Ciliwung. It also happens to be one of the oldest mosques in Jakarta, though its origin has nothing to do with the Indian Muslim community.

In fact, Masjid Jami’ Kampung Jeruk has a direct connection with the Chinese community of Jakarta, and the *Peranakan* Chinese Muslim community in particular. The fact that it is located at the mouth of the Glodok district – the Chinatown of Jakarta where the race riots and anti-Chinese pogroms of 1998 took place – is not an accident either. This part of Jakarta has historically been the area where Chinese merchants resided, since the time of the foundation of old Jakarta (Batavia, *Betawi*) itself. The *Masjid* was built in 1786, by one of the Chinese Muslim *kapitans* or *komandors* whose name was Tamien Dosol Seeng, otherwise known simply as Pak Tschoa. The *Peranakan kapitans* or *komandors* were basically compradore agents whose task and duty it was to help the Dutch colonial authorities administer the town of Batavia and to maintain order among their respective communities.²³

²² In fact we met only three *Tablighis* of Indian origin when we first visited it in 2003, who happened to be part of a itinerant preaching group that had arrived from Malaysia.

²³ Though exact details of the founding of the Masjid Jami’ Kampung Jeruk are not readily found today, it is safe to assume that the *Kapitan Cina* Pak Tschoa, owing to his prestige and considerable influence among the members of his community, received permission from the Dutch colonial authorities to erect the mosque in the Chinese quarter. The original mosque itself was a relatively grand affair. Heuken (2000) notes that the walls of the mosque were once decorated with Dutch blue and white tiles imported all the way from Delft. (These tiles were destroyed or removed a few decades ago.) The original structure was designed along the lines of the typical Indonesian mosque, with four main pillars and a square structure and a tiered sloping roof on top. Of even greater historical significance is the gravestone (*batu nisan*) that

The area around the Masjid Kampung Jeruk had thus been the first port of call of many other itinerant and migrant communities in the past, and the cosmopolitan character of the area was reflected in the colourful (if not picaresque) residents of the district. Ustaz H. Attaullah described the state of the Masjid Jami' and its environs in 1957 thus:

“In those days (1957) the area around Masjid Kampung Jeruk was a stinking mess. It was the red-light district and all the houses were really brothels so the area had a very bad reputation. The men who went there were mostly poor, seedy characters and you could tell that this was not a place you bring your family to. There was garbage and faeces everywhere, dogs were roaming the streets and at night nobody would go out alone in the alleys because that was the area where the *premans* (gangsters and street thugs) were hanging around. The mosque was filthy and since it was a mainly Chinese area, nobody was ever in the mosque. None of the major Islamist groups wanted it, so we moved in and made it the base of our group then.”²⁴

The arrival of the *Tabligh* at this most unlikely of locations meant that they attracted the attention of the local community and the authorities. Soon after the *Tablighis* had settled

remains in what was once the courtyard (now a walled enclosed enclosure within the main compound) of the mosque. The gravestone points to the direction of Mecca, is made of granite and is decorated with Chinese *nagas* (dragons) and other well known Chinese ornaments. Written clearly (and now further enhanced with a fresh coating of gilt/gold paint) in Chinese characters is the name Ibu Chai, who happened to be the wife of Pak Tschoa, who founded the mosque in 1786. The fact that his wife was buried in the mosque's compound would lend some weight to the claim that Pak Tschoa was a Chinese Muslim *kapitan* of considerable clout and standing then. Facing the mosque is the busy Hawam Wuruk motorway, which is clogged with traffic all day long. It is impossible to escape the commercial life that pulsates in the Glodok district right in front of the mosque: across the street were erected numerous mobile stalls selling food, bags, jewellery as well as pirated VCD/DVD copies of the latest popular films. Today the mosque has been vastly expanded and further renovations are already underway. During our second stay there in 2003 a minaret made of brick and stone was being added, as well as a more modern-looking extension complex that would eventually serve as permanent teaching and living quarters. Today (2008) the renovations and extensions to the mosque complex are complete, though no damage or significant alterations have been made to the original structure of the old mosque itself, as it is now recognised as a listed heritage building. (For more on the history of the Masjid Jami' Kampung Jeruk, see: A. Heuken S. J., *Historical Sites of Jakarta*. Cipta Loka Caraka, Jakarta, 2000. (pp. 161-163.))

²⁴ Interview with Ustaz H. Attaullah, Surakarta, 12 September 2008.

at the Masjid Jami' Kampung Jeruk, the local police were alerted to their presence and they came under constant watch. It was also during this time that investigations were made into the *Tabligh's* origins and their intentions in Indonesia.²⁵ (The *Tabligh's* convoluted relationship with the state security forces of Indonesia is too complex a subject to be dealt with in this paper, and as such will be addressed elsewhere.)

During the first two years after the arrival of the *Tabligh* in 1955, the small delegation tried its best to spread the teachings of the *Tablighi Jama'at* among the small following of Indian Muslims in the North Jakarta district. Cautious forays were made by the members of the delegation or through the local contacts they had established to some of the important cities of Western Java. Between 1955 to 1957, representatives were sent out to Tangerang, Bogor, Cianjur, Cimahi, Bandung, Tasik Malaya and Cirebon²⁶, but met with little success.

The *Tablighis* then were forced to work with and through the network of Indian and Arab *Peranakan* traders and merchants who had settled in Western Java and who were by then already Indonesian citizens who spoke *Bahasa Indonesia*. But despite the warm welcome and hospitality they received from the Indian Muslim community resident in Java, they won few converts to their cause in the first decade after their arrival as many of the Indian Muslims who resided in Java considered themselves fully-fledged Indonesian citizens and were actively involved in local Indonesian politics, with a substantial number of them being members of either the *Nahdatul Ulama* or *Muhamadiyah*.

Furthermore it has to be emphasised again that the network of Indian Muslims in Java was not a singular diasporic network but rather *several* diasporic networks that overlapped. Among these networks were various streams and schools of thought, and not

²⁵ Interview with Ustaz H. Attaullah, Surakarta, 12 September 2008.

²⁶ The towns of Bandung, Tasik Malaya and Cirebon were particularly important to the *Tablighis* due to the fact that all three were known to be important commercial centres with a visible concentration of Indian and Arab *Peranakan* Muslims there. Cirebon in particular was known to all as a major commercial entrepot with a cosmopolitan character to it, that was reflected in its distinctive form of art and culture, notably the *Batik* cloths of Cirebon that display distinctive Indian, Arab and Chinese influence. The Indian Muslim community in Cirebon were known to have played an important role in the import and export of cotton from India and were important players in the Cirebon *batik* industry since the 1920s.

all of these streams of Islamic belief and praxis were open or conducive to the interests of the *Tablighis*. The *Tablighis* could not, for instance, rely on the support of the minority of Shia Muslims of Indian origin. Nor could they expect any support from the Lahori or Qadiani Muslim communities, or the Dawoodi Bohras. As such the pool of support that they could draw from came mainly from the Sunni Indian Muslim community.

The other factor that greatly inhibited the expansion of the *Tabligh* network as it spread from Jakarta was the *foreign-ness* of the movement and how it was perceived as something alien to Indonesian Islam. The first *Tablighis* who came from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh spoke no Javanese or *Bahasa Indonesia* and had no local family links whatsoever. Their mode of dress and daily life-rituals were seen as exotic and unfamiliar to many Indonesians who referred to them summarily as ‘Indian Muslims’ and cast them in the light of a outlandish brand of Islam that was novel and strange. It would take more than a decade before the process of settlement, adaptation and cultural negotiation would yield tangible results; and between 1955 to the late 1970s, most of the *Tablighi* centres in Jakarta and across Western Java were adhoc arrangements where the *Tablighis* would constantly be on the move and forced to settle from one mosque to another. In the city of Bandung, for instance, the *Tablighis* would only secure for themselves a permanent base by the 1980s, after more than three decades of intercession with the local community; and the *Tabligh* was only successful in Bandung after it came under the leadership of a local *Emir*, Ustaz A. Muzzakir, who was himself Javanese by birth.²⁷

Despite the slow rate of progress and the lack of enthusiasm among the Javanese whom they met and tried to convert, the *Tablighis* who were based in Jakarta were luckier further to the east when they sent out feelers to the Indian Muslim communities who resided in Central and Eastern Java. Around August 1955 their tentative probing was

²⁷ Razak (2008) notes that the first delegations to Bandung were sent in the 1950s and 1960s, but with little success. During this period however the *Tabligh* were successful in converting some local Indonesians to their movement and one of them was a certain Ustaz A. Muzzakir, who was himself a retired police officer in the Indonesian Police Force (POLRI). In the 1980s further attempts were made by the *Tabligh* to establish a base in Bandung and this only came about in 1987 after a delegation led by Ustaz Muzzakir arrived for a fifteen day *khuruj* in Bandung, bringing with them other *Tablighis* who had come from Syria, India and Jakarta. The *Tablighis* managed to secure a place for themselves when they took over the Masjid Agung Kotamadya Bandung in the same year (1987). (Razak, 2008, pp. 68-69)

rewarded when he received a positive reply from a certain Kyai Mohammad Tofail, who was then a prominent leader of the Indian and Pakistani Muslim community in Surakarta.

IV. Go East, *Tablighi*: The *Tablighi Jama'at* expansion to Central and Eastern Java, 1957-1970s.

As early as August 1955 the members of the first *Tabligh* delegation were already sending out letters and despatches across all of Java, calling upon the help of Indian Muslims who had settled there. One of these despatches were sent to the Central Javanese city of Surakarta, and was received by Kyai Mohammad Tofail, a merchant of note whose family had contributed significantly to the wealth and status of the Indian merchant community of the city. Kyai Mohammad was also doubly respected in his role as publisher of both religious and non-religious books in Solo.²⁸

With the founding of Surakarta as a royal city and home of the *Karaton Surakarta Hadiningrat* in the mid-18th century, the fortunes of Surakarta (Solo) had risen considerably thanks to the influx of migrants from the countryside and the booming *batik* industry. Rice and cotton production, as well as the manufacture and export of *batik*, remain the primary revenue earners for the people of Solo. Among the communities of Solo there are also large communities of migrant settlers from all over Indonesia and beyond. Significantly, Solo is the home of important merchant communities of Arab, Chinese and Indian origin; and Solo's *batik* industry has also benefited from the arrival of these migrant settlers who have helped to boost the industry.

By the 1920s, large numbers of Indians (both Muslims and Hindus) were settling in Sumatra and the north coast of Java to set up trade and open new trading communities. Indian Muslims from the eastern coast and northern provinces of India (then British India) were migrating to Sumatra via Burma and British Malaya and settling in large numbers in the coastal city of Medan. By the 1940s, many of these Indian Muslims were also moving to the other islands and settling in large numbers in Java. With Jakarta as

²⁸ Interview with Emir Ustaz Muhammad Jamil, Tanjung Anom mosque, Surakarta, 15 September 2008.

their primary landing point, these Indian Muslim merchants began to move further inland and Solo was a natural destination for those who were engaged in commercial activities.

The Indian Muslim community in Solo was dominated by Punjabis and Pathans, and were overwhelmingly Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi school. Nonetheless there were no doctrinal clashes between them and the predominantly Shafie Sunni Muslims of Solo, and they were well received. Many of the Indian Muslims chose to reside close to the central market district of Solo, in the vicinity of what is now Pasar Klewer, the biggest *batik* market in all of Indonesia and also the heard of Solo's goldsmith and gold-dealers' community. They enjoyed a near-monopoly over the trade of cotton and spices from India, and were therefore very much depended upon by the local Solonese *Batik* producers who needed to guarantee a steady supply of cloth for their trade. With growing economic clout and presence, the Indian Muslims were able to integrate quickly with relatively little difficulty, owing to the fact that they were Muslims like many of the local Solonese.

Solo's resident Indian Muslim community had grown in numbers and were a powerful and influential economic class unto themselves. They soon developed their own trading guilds, co-operative ventures, schools and mosques for their community. Among the mosques that were built and frequented by the Indian Muslims of Solo was the Masjid An Nimah Tanjung Anom that is located at Jalan Solo Baru, Sarengan, Surakarta, Central Java. The Masjid An Nimah (popularly referred to as Masjid Tanjung Anom) is unique thanks to its place and role in the history of the migrant Indian Muslim community of Surakarta. Built in the year 1946²⁹ the Masjid An Nimah's founder was Ustaz Ismail Khan, who was a merchant of the Khoja community based at Karikal (near Madras), India.

²⁹ During the course of our interview with the residents of the mosque, we were given several other dates as well. One account claimed that the mosque was already in existence as far back as the 1880s, though it was then a local mosque of the Solonese Javanese community. Another account claimed that the mosque had been rebuilt several times but that its foundations were laid in the early 20th century.

Money for the Masjid An Nimah was collected mainly from the Punjabi and Pathan Muslim community members, and the entire mosque was built without any additional financial help from other sources.³⁰ The land titles were acquired from the *Karaton* authorities who were allowed to cede land for the use of religious sites and prayer houses. Additional rent was collected from tenants who lived in the vicinity of the mosque compound as well. Despite the fact that the mosque was built by funds collected from the Indian Muslim community, its style was typically Javanese: The mosque itself was relatively simple with a square, single-levelled floor plan on top of which sat a pyramidal single-tiered roof first made of attap and then replaced with terracotta tiles. The unique feature of the mosque was a brick and mortar minaret, cylindrical in shape and tapering upwards, that stood at the front of the mosque, facing south. The minaret was taller than the roof of the mosque and was a striking feature in Solo then as the traditional laws of the *Karaton* stipulated that no tall structures or buildings could be built anywhere within the parameters of the city; and that no structure could be taller than the tower of the *Karaton* palace itself.

By the mid-1950s, the fortunes of Solo had waxed and waned according to the political upheavals of the country. The Tanjung Anom area slowly declined in prestige, and in time was seen as a 'black-listed' area known for its brothels, drug dens and an underground male and transvestite prostitution racket. The Masjid An Nimah fell into disrepair, though it remained under the care of its founders and caretakers who were mostly from the Indian Muslim community.

It was during this bleak period that the *Tablighi Jama'at* had arrived in Jakarta, and was sending out appeals for help to the Indian Muslims across Java. Kyai Mohammad Tofail replied to this appeal positively, and expressed his interest to learn more about the *Tabligh* and to invite them to Surakarta to preach. It is not known how and when the initial contact between Kyai Mohammad and the *Tablighis* in Jakarta took place, or when

³⁰ Interview with Emir Ustaz Muhammad Jamil, Tanjung Anom mosque, Surakarta, 15 September 2008.

Kyai Mohammad himself had converted to the *Tablighi Jama'at*³¹; but what is certain is that by the end of 1955 the *Tablighis* were already on their way to Surakarta.

By late 1955 the *Tabligh* had sent their first delegation to Solo and gained their first converts there. It was Kyai Mohammad Tofail who became the first *Emir* of the *Tablighi Jama'at* in Surakarta, after which he delegated the same task of propagating the ideas of the *Tabligh* to other members who had just converted to the movement. Later in the same year (1955) the *Tabligh* had despatched delegations to Bangil and Surabaya, and Surakarta (Solo) was the main centre from which the ideas of the *Tabligh* spread across the rest of Central and East Java. The main focus of the Solonese *Tablighis'* attention, however, were the towns and cities of Central Java; and between 1955 to 1959 delegations were sent all across Central Java to places like Jogjakarta, Magelang, Wonogiri, Sragen, Semarang, Kudus, Pekalongan, Purwokerto, Sukaraja, Kebumen and Kendal. In that same year (1955) Kyai Mohammad Tofail declared that the Masjid An Nimah would be the main centre of the *Tabligh* in Solo and for the rest of Central Java as well.³²

While Kyai Mohammad served as the main *Emir* of the *Tabligh* for Central Java, the running of the mosque was left to a committee that decided that the mosque should be run on a rotating leadership basis, with three rotating *Emir* and a consultative (*Shura*)

³¹ During the course of our interviews with Emir Ustaz Muhammad Jamil, Ustaz H. Attaullah and other leaders of the *Tabligh* in Surakarta between 12 to 16 September, none of them could pin-point the exact dates of these events.

³² By 2000 the Masjid An Nimah of Tanjung Anom was the most important centre and transit point for the *Tabligh* network in Central Java, though in terms of its size it has hardly expanded over the years since it was first built. Then in 2005 the Jogjakarta earthquake made its impact across much of Central Java, causing damage to the Masjid Tanjung Anom as well: Its roof was severely damaged and the minaret was cracked down to its foundations and left beyond repair. Once again, the members of the *Tabligh* community sought the help and donation of its members, though by this time (2005) the composition of the *Tabligh* community was no longer confined to the Indian Muslims of Solo. By 2006 a new mosque was built that is in the form of a three-storied building with an open sleeping and praying area on all three levels. Outside the mosque though still within its compound is the grave of the mosque's first founder, Ustaz Ismail Khan. The mosque no longer has a minaret but now has an added compound for a communal kitchen and rooms as well as toilets. Today the mosque is flanked by shops and service centres that cater to the primary needs of the *Tabligh* community: transport and logistics as well as information and education. Along the front façade of the mosque is a travel agency – Wisata Ceria Tours that also runs the Nur Ramadan Haji Plus service – while on its southern flank is a small bookshop – *Khutub Khana 'Nimah* – that sells mainly books related to the teachings and beliefs of the *Tablighi Jama'at*.

committee.³³ Kyai Mohammad Tofail later led many delegations and *tashkil/khuruuj* across Java and the rest of Indonesia, as well as further abroad to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. He died while taking part in the Grand *Ijtima* of the *Tabligh* in Pakistan and was buried in Raiwind where the *Ijtima* was held.

Following the death of Kyai Mohammad Tofail and Ustaz Ismail Khan, the post of *Emir* for the *Tablighi Jama'at* in Solo and Central Java was passed on to the son-in-law of Ustaz Ismail, Ustaz Muhammad Jamil, who was also of Khoja background and whose family roots also go back to Karikal, India. It should thus be noted that almost all of the early converts and founder-leaders of the *Tablighi Jama'at* in Surakarta and Central Java were members of the *Peranakan* Indian Muslim and Arab Muslim communities

The *Tabligh* had found a hospitable environment where it could thrive in earnest when it founded its base in Surakarta. Over the next few decades, the *Tabligh* would continue to expand its network of members and converts in Surakarta and across Central Java with relative ease, despite the political upheavals that were taking place across Indonesia. Surakarta offered a safe haven to the *Tablighis* thanks to its mixed cosmopolitan population and the fact that the city was home to many migrant communities as well as different political groupings. While mainstream Islamist movements like the *Muhamadiyah* and *Nahdatul Ulama* were visibly present in Solo, so was the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and a host of left-leaning secular parties and mass organisations. It was against this complex and confused patchwork of different political and religious orientations that the *Tablighi Jama'at* found a niche for itself.

Surakarta did, however, suffer the consequences of the political turbulence that rocked Indonesia in the mid-1960s. The 1965 failed putsch against the Sukarno government paved the way for the elimination of the Indonesian Communist party (PKI) and led to nation-wide pogroms and harassment of the Indonesian Chinese population, who were summarily denounced as being 'Communists' and agents of China. The Indian Muslims,

³³ Interview with Emir Ustaz Muhammad Jamil, Tanjung Anom mosque, Surakarta, 15 September 2008; and Ustaz H. Attaullah, Surakarta, 12 September 2008.

however, were spared this harassment though the city of Solo – that was then known for its secular leanings and support for the leftist workers movements and the PKI – was to suffer an economic decline over the next decade.

By the 1970s the members of the Solonese *Tabligh* community decided that there was an urgent need to revive the mosque and its activities as the *Tabligh's* influence was being met with competition from other religious leaders and congregations. The Masjid An Nimah was known to be the centre of the *Tablighi Jama'at* in Solo, but other Muslim clerics had begun to come to the mosque to preach their own teachings as well. Between the late 1970s to 1982, among the more famous Muslim imams and scholars who came to the Masjid An Nimah Tanjung Anom were Ustaz Abu Bakar Ba'asyir and Ustaz Abdullah Sungkar, both of whom were regarded as hard-line conservatives affiliated to the remnants of the once active *Darul Islam* movement.³⁴

Due to the growing suspicion of Islamist movements and underground Muslim organisations that was the norm during the time of the New Order government of Suharto (1970-1998), the activities of the *Tablighis* at the Masjid An Nimah were often under scrutiny. Despite these restrictions, Emir Ustaz Muhammad Jamil continued with the plan to expand the *Tabligh's* missionary work in Solo and the rest of Central Java with the help of the second generation of *Tabligh* converts like the actor-turned-*Tabligh* member Ustaz H. Attaullah.

- **Spreading across the centre: How the *Tablighi Jama'at* network expanded across Central Java**

As we have seen above, the first centre of the *Tablighi Jama'at* in Java was located at the capital of Jakarta. Owing to the fact that Jakarta was the capital of Indonesia and naturally the first landing-point for most foreigners who had come from afar to visit the country, the Jakarta *markaz* became the *markaz besar* (Main centre) of all *Tabligh*

³⁴ Interview with Emir Ustaz Muhammad Jamil, Tanjung Anom mosque, Surakarta, 15 September 2008; and Ustaz H. Attaullah, Surakarta, 12 September 2008.

activities across Java, and in the years to come, Indonesia. It was placed at the very top of the *Tabligh's* logistical network as the first entry point, first transit base and first assembly point for all *Tablighis* across all of Indonesia; putting it in the topmost category as the first rung of the *Tabligh's* national network.

Surakarta, on the other hand, was the first city in Central Java to welcome the *Tabligh* and by 1958 was placed in the second rung of the *Tabligh's* national network. Delegations from Jakarta that wished to move on to Central and Eastern Java would have to travel to Surakarta first to rest, regroup and get their marching orders for the next stage of their journey. Thus by the early 1960s, the *Tabligh's* trans-Javanese network was slowly but surely being put into place thanks to the collective effort of the first generation of *Tablighis*, whom we have noted mostly came from *Peranakan* Indian Muslim families.

Having gained a strong foothold in Surakarta, the *Tabligh* began to send our emissaries and delegations to the other Muslim communities across Central Java. Kyai Mohammad Tofail sought the support of other Indian Muslim *Peranakan* families who resided in the other major towns and cities of Central Java, inviting them to Surakarta to meet with the members of the *Tabligh*, while also despatching small delegations to other cities such as Jogjakarta, Semarang, Cilacap, Kebumen, Pekalongan and Purwokerto to see if the *Tabligh* could settle there.

In actual practice, the spread of the *Tabligh* across Central Java was a textbook example of how the *Tabligh* operates elsewhere in Indonesia and the rest of the world. Kyai Mohammad sent many a delegation to all of the major towns and cities on a regular basis, and reports would flow back to the *Tabligh* elders back in Solo recounting the receptivity or hostility of the respective communities there. Kyai Mohammad and the leaders of the *Tabligh* would then allocate more resources (in this case, manpower) to the locations that proved the most hospitable to their advances, and in time would seek a suitable location (a mosque or *pesantren/madrasah*) where they would settle and turn into one of their *markaz*. Having established a foothold in such a location, it would then serve as another

transit point for itinerant *Tablighis* and well as a logistical centre to send out other missionary delegations further afield.³⁵

Naturally the *Tablighis* of Solo were keen to bring their message to the city of Jogjakarta, another royal city of considerable wealth and commercial significance that was also renowned as a centre of batik trade as well as political influence. From the 1940s Jogjakarta (or Jogja) had eclipsed Surakarta thanks to the astute manoeuvrings of the Jogja royal house that supported the nationalist movement's struggle against the Dutch during the Indonesian war of independence. As a result of this tactical move that was well-played, Jogja (unlike Solo) was rewarded with the status of being a *Daerah Istimewa* (Special Province) in its own right, and as such enjoyed far more autonomy than Surakarta did.

Kyai Mohammad sent the first *Tablighi* delegations to Jogjakarta by the late 1950s, but the *Tabligh* were not as successful as they had hoped. One factor that stood in their way was the presence of a number of important mainstream Islamist organisations and movements that already commanded the support and loyalty of thousands of Jojakartans, chief of which was the *Muhamadiyah*. Another factor that initially inhibited the progress of the *Tablighis* in Jogja was the fact that among the Indian Muslim *Peranakan* community there was a small but significant number of Indian Muslims who were of the Lahori Ahmadi community, who had played a vital role in the development of political Islam across all of Java in the 1920s. The *Tablighis* consequently found themselves cast in the role of interlopers who were treading wearily on contested ground. (For a detailed account of the close relationship between the Lahori Ahmadis and the *Muhamadiyah* movement, see appendix A, below.)

Despite their failure to secure a stronger base in Jogjakarta than they had hoped for, the *Tabligh* did not relent in their efforts to spread their network across Central Java. In the years between the 1960s to the 1990s, numerous delegations were sent across Central Java with the hope of securing a stronger foothold in some of the key towns and cities

³⁵ Interview with Emir Ustaz Muhammad Jamil, Tanjung Anom mosque, Surakarta, 14 September 2008; Ustaz Abdul Hadi and Ustaz Abdullah Mubarak, Surakarta, 15 September 2008.

that dotted the major roads and highways that cut across the island. Finally by the 1990s the *Tablighis* were successful in securing a permanent base for themselves in the town of Purwokerto, that lay south of Mount Slamet and was an important transit point on the major East-West artery road that connected Western and Central Java.

The *Tablighi Jama'at* had been sending delegations to Purwokerto in the Western half of Central Java since the late 1960s, but with little success. Most of the delegations were forced to vacate the mosques and *madrasahs* they stayed in by local residents who were already affiliated to local Islamist movements and political parties, and almost all of the local mosques were already dominated by local mainstream Islamist groups. It was only at the mosque of Makam Banjar Mulya that the *Tablighis* could reside with relative ease, and it was only in 1995 that the *Tabligh* managed to gain a foothold in the mosque that was originally built by Soni Harsono, who was then Minister of Agriculture.³⁶

Owing to its relative isolation in the interior of Central Java, there were fewer Muslims of Indian or Arab *Peranakan* origin there compared to cities like Surakarta, Jakarta or Cirebon. The first group of *Tablighis* who successfully managed to gain control of the Masjid Makam Banjar Mulya was made up of itinerant religious students who were studying in Jogjakarta and who had become members of the *Tabligh* themselves.³⁷ Among them were students like Agus Salim, Abdul Aziz, Husna and Budi who were all of Javanese descent and who were consequently more successful in adapting themselves to the local environment and were easily accepted by the locals of Purwokerto.³⁸

Soon after taking over the *Masjid Makam Banjar Mulya*, the first group of *Tablighis* established a modest *pesantren* that was named *Pesantren Ubay ibn Ka'ab*.³⁹ Both the mosque and the *pesantren* were subsequently amalgamated to serve as the first *markaz* of the *Tabligh* in Purwokerto. *Tabligh* members we spoke to insisted that the *markaz* and *pesantren* were built entirely by the *Tablighis* themselves with no support or funding

³⁶ Interview with Imam Muhammad Khurdri and Ustaz Haji Hendra, Purwokerto, 30 August 2008.

³⁷ They were members of the *Tabligh* community based at the Masjid Jami' al-Ittihad in Jogjakarta.

³⁸ Interview with Imam Ustaz Haji Hendra, Purwokerto, 31 August 2008.

³⁹ The *Pesantren Ubay Ibn Ka'ab* is still running, and is located at Jalan Pahlawan Gang 6, RT 02, RW 04, Kelurahan Tanjung, Pecamatan Purwokerto.

from the local political parties or other Islamist groups. Due to the cold response they received during the initial period between the 1970s to the late 1990s from local mainstream Islamist movements, the *Tablighis* in Purwokerto have been reluctant to engage with local Islamist groups and have adopted a largely isolationist stance vis parties and movements like the PKS, *Muhamadiyah* and NU.

The *Tabligh's* use of the *pesantren* as both a *markaz* as well as a centre for conversion and education of students and new members is not a unique phenomenon considering the educational activities it undertakes elsewhere across Java, from the *markaz* in Jakarta to the Masjid Tanjung Anom in Surakarta, and of course its main base and most important educational facility at Temboro, Magetan. As with the case of many other *Tablighi* schools, the *Tabligh* focuses primarily on the members of society who are the most marginalised and disenfranchised, and of the 150-200 students who make up the yearly intake of the *pesantren* more than half of them are either orphans or those who come from poor families. The practice of giving priority to orphaned children and children from poor families is not exceptional to the *Tabligh* either, and we have noted elsewhere (Noor, 2007) that similar proclivities are found in other Islamist groups and institutions such as the conservative Ngruki *madrasah* network run by more political scholar-activists like Abu Bakar Ba'asyir and Abdullah Sungkar.⁴⁰

Like the other *Tabligh*-run *madrasahs* and *pesantrens*, the teaching curriculum at the *Pesantren Ubay Ibn Ka'ab* is decidedly *Tablighi*-oriented and features texts that are the standard reading material of the *Tablighi Jama'at* worldwide such as the *Fadail al-A'mal* of Maulana Zakaria, the *Muntakhab al-Ahadith* of Maulana Yusuf and Maulana Sa'ad and the *Riyadus-Salihin* of Yahya Syaraf an-Nawawi.⁴¹

The apolitical worldview of the *Tabligh* is once again reflected in the daily life rituals and learning process of the Purwokerto *markaz*, where there is no access to newspapers, TV

⁴⁰ For a more detailed look at the workings of the Ngruki *madrasah* network, see: Farish A. Noor, *Ngruki Revisited: Modernity and Its Discontents at the Pondok Pesantren al-Mukmin of Ngruki, Surakarta*, Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Working papers series no. 139, Nanyang Technical University, Singapore, October 2007.

⁴¹ Interview with Imam Muhammad Khurdri and Ustaz Haji Hendra, Purwokerto, 30 August 2008.

or radio and all discussion of politics is strictly forbidden. Our respondents informed us that the Purwokerto *markaz* was non-political and would not participate in the local politics of the community. Attempts by some *Tablighis* to raise political concerns in the *markaz* were met with disapproval, and would not be sanctioned by the leadership of the *markaz*.⁴²

Today the pesantren and *markaz* are run jointly by Imam Muhammad Khudri and Ustaz Haji Hendra, both of whom are long-time veterans who have been with the *Tabligh* since the 1970s and who have made several trips abroad to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Korea and Japan. The Purwokerto *markaz* is also important in the overall logistical and communications structure of the *Tabligh* network in Central Java as it is place in the third rung of the communications and command chain of *markazs* across Java: *Tabligh* delegations who wish to travel to other parts of Western Central Java are first directed to travel from Jakarta to Surakarta, after which they are despatched to Purwokerto. It is from Purwokerto that these delegations are then subsequently divided and then parcelled out as smaller groups to carry on their *dakwah* work in the smaller districts and regions such as Ciamis (in West Java), Slawi, Banyumas, Cilacap, Banjarnegara and Purbalingga.⁴³

The Purwokerto *markaz* is placed in the third rank of the trans-Java and trans-Indonesian *Tablighi Jama'at* network system and is as such a vital transit point for members of the *Tabligh* in the Western half of Central Java. As noted earlier, it is at Purwokerto that visiting delegations of *Tablighis* from abroad and other parts of Indonesia are broken up and parcelled out into smaller delegations who will then visit other smaller provinces, districts and sub-districts across Central Java like Banyumas, Banjarnegara and Purbalingga. Some are also sent westwards to Western Javanese provinces and districts

⁴² This public disavowal of politics is all the more striking in the case of the Purwokerto *markaz* for it was known that one of the leaders of the *markaz*, Ustaz Haji Hendra, was himself a former member and activist for the Islamist party *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS), a new Islamist party that was only formally established during the final year of Suharto in 1998. Ustaz Hendra had appealed for permission to use the *markaz* to gather support for the PKS in Purwokerto, but this appeal was formally and immediately rejected by the *Emirs* of Surakarta and Jakarta. (Interview with Imam Ustaz Haji Hendra, Purwokerto, 31 August 2008.)

⁴³ Interview with Imam Muhammad Khudri and Ustaz Haji Hendra, Purwokerto, 30 August 2008.

like Ciamis. Purwokerto's role as meeting point is equally important for it is here that small delegations and individuals from the smaller Central Javanese sub-districts meet before they are then assembled into larger delegations that are then despatched at regular intervals to the main centre of the *Tabligh* in Central Java at Surakarta, and then sent on to Jakarta before they are sent on their missionary tours across Indonesia or even abroad to places like the Indian subcontinent, the Arab countries, North Africa and even Europe.

Thus it can be seen that this three-tiered network has developed to become an efficient mechanism for the mobilisation and movement of the *Tablighis* all across Java, Indonesia and overseas; making it one of the most expansive and integrated logistical networks of itinerant Indonesian Muslims in the country today. During the course of our fieldwork we observed the workings of this network at all levels and concluded that the *Tabligh* has now developed one of the most well-organised and integrated mobilisation and logistical networks in Java, that rivals that of the other mainstream Islamist movements and political parties.⁴⁴

By the 1990s, the *Tablighi Jama'at* had thus consolidated their presence across much of Western and Central Java. The major cities of Jakarta, Surakarta and Jogjakarta had been accounted for, and already a three-tiered network system had been set up across half of Java, linking the main *Tabligh* centre of Jakarta to second-rung transit stations like Surakarta that were in turn connected to a third tier of local bases in smaller towns like

⁴⁴ Having visited and stayed at all the major *Tabligh* centres in Java, we observed the movement of thousands of *Tablighis* across the island throughout the two months of field research: During the stay at the *Markaz Besar* at Masjid Kampung Jeruk in Jakarta, for instance, we observed the arrival and dispersal of dozens of delegations that had returned from other parts of Indonesia and abroad as they were preparing to take to the road again and return to their respective villages and hometowns for the celebration of *Eid'ul Fitri*. During our stay there, a total of twenty four delegations were sent home on the first day and twenty more were sent on the second. These were members of the *Tabligh* who had come from Western, Central and Eastern Java and who were then packed into smaller groups that were despatched home by bus and train. During our stay at the *Markaz* of Masjid Tanjung Anom in Surakarta we encountered a delegation that had come from Egypt, made up of twelve Arabs of different nationalities who had first landed in Jakarta and who were then despatched to Solo in the company of local minders. The Egyptian delegation was *en route* to Jogjakarta, after which they would be sent to Temboro and then all the way to Surabaya. At the same *Markaz* in Solo another delegation of forty members were being readied for their trip to India. They were first to be sent to Jakarta, where they would stay at the *Markaz Besar* of Masjid Kampung Jeruk while their Indian tourist visas were processed. Then they would first fly to Dhaka, Bangladesh by Bhima Airlines (which we were informed offered cheaper tickets), and then from Dhaka make their way to New Delhi where they would stay at the Basti Nizamuddin before going on a forty-day tour of Northern India.

Purwokerto. East Java, however, remained a relatively under-cultivated region for the *Tabligh* as it was not able to find itself a major centre and base for its activities. This did not daunt the *Tablighis* though, who were determined to spread their network to East Java in their bid to bring the entire island into their expansive network of *markazes* and *pesantrons*.

V. Go Further East, *Tabligh*: The *Tablighi Jama'at*'s Expansion to Eastern Java, 1990 to the Present.

As we have seen earlier, the *Tablighi Jama'at* was already consolidated in Central Java by the 1960s and had been sending out delegations to East Java since then. Most of these delegations, however, met with little success due to strong active resistance from the members of the NU who did not welcome them in what they perceived to be their home ground. By the late 1960s, several dozen *Tabligh* delegations had been despatched to Magetan, Madiun, Jombang, Ponorogo, Worokerto, Malang and Surabaya. None of them managed to gain a permanent foothold in any of these towns and cities.⁴⁵

The reception that the *Tabligh* was given was even hostile at times, leading to incidents where the members of the movement found themselves on the wrong side of the law: In 1990 the *Tabligh* sent a delegation to East Java from their base at Masjid An Nimah Tanjung Anom. This delegation was led by the father of Ustaz H. Attaullah, Ustaz Muhammad Ramzan.⁴⁶ The delegation was a small one made up of eight *Tablighis* from India and Pakistan, and was led by Ustaz Muhammad Ramzan himself who was the only Indonesian citizen among them. In East Java the group met with stiff resistance from the local branches of the NU, who did not allow them to use their mosques for their preaching or allowed them to spend the night there.⁴⁷ Nonetheless they managed to travel

⁴⁵ Interview with Emir Ustaz Muhammad Jamil, Tanjung Anom mosque, Surakarta, 15 September 2008; and Ustaz H. Attaullah, Surakarta, 12 September 2008.

⁴⁶ Interview Ustaz H. Attaullah, Surakarta, 12 September 2008.

⁴⁷ In the words of Ustaz Attaullah: "In many of the East Javanese mosques, we (the *Tabligh*) were not given a warm welcome at all. When my father's delegation tried to sleep in the mosques, they were chased out. If they tried to cook, the locals would also cook and take up their space. If they tried to sleep, the locals would

to Magetan and then Madiun, and from there travelled all the way to Surabaya and finally ended up in Kudus.

In Kudus however the *Tablighi* delegation was arrested by local police and were sent to Jakarta on the grounds that their activities were deemed suspect. Ustaz Muhammad Ramzan was allowed to go free when he showed the police officers his Indonesian identity papers and his badge of merit for being a veteran of the Indonesian war of Independence. The rest of the delegation were, however, detained at the Cangkerang deportation centre near Jakarta, awaiting deportation to their respective home countries. Ustaz Muhammad Ramzan notified his fellow *Tablighis* in Solo as well as the main *Tablighi markaz* in Kebun Jeruk Jakarta, and attempts were made by them to have the Indian and Pakistani *Tablighis* released: only to be informed later that the Indian and Pakistani *Tablighis* preferred to be left in the quarantine centre in Cangkerang so that they could carry out their *dakwah* work among the detainees there.⁴⁸

One of the factors that may have inhibited the activities of the *Tabligh* in East Java in the 1960s was the fact that the region remained among the most traditionalist in Java, with a strong sense of Javanese identity that was rooted in the popular Javanese belief and value system (known as *Kejawen*). Our interviewees noted that it was more difficult for the first *Tabligh* delegations to succeed further east as there were fewer settlements where they could find a visible *Peranakan* Indian Muslim presence, save for the cosmopolitan port-city of Surabaya.

Faced with this less than warm welcome, the *Tabligh* was forced to address a local factor that had hitherto not presented itself as a problem: ethnicity and ethnic differences. As we

stay in the mosque and talk all night long to keep them awake. They really made us feel unwelcomed, and treated us very badly then.” Interview Ustaz H. Attaullah, Surakarta, 12 September 2008.

⁴⁸ Ustaz Attaullah recounted this episode thus: “When we sent out members to the police station to get our brothers out of the detention centre, the police were bemused themselves. They said to us ‘your friends don’t want to leave the detention centre because their visas are about to expire anyway in two weeks, and they would rather remain in the detention centre to do their *dakwah* work among the prisoners.’ This made us realise how committed our brothers from India and Pakistan were, and instead of feeling sorry for them, we were even more proud of their faith and commitment.” Interview Ustaz H. Attaullah, Surakarta, 12 September 2008.

have seen above, during the initial stages of the *Tabligh's* arrival in Java it had managed to root itself successfully and rapidly by working through the Indian diaspora network. The *Tabligh* found that it could quickly and easily find its own niche among the members of the *Peranakan* Indian Muslim community that had settled in the ports and commercial cities of the northern Javanese *Pesisir* coast, and even in inland commercial centres like Surakarta where the Indian Muslims were prominent members of the local business community.

But East Java retained a stronger Javanese character and the East Javanese were less inclined to accept the *Tablighi* delegations when they were led by Indian Muslims, even if they were *Peranakan* Indians who were themselves Indonesian citizens. Furthermore East Java's reputation as the bastion of the *Nahdatul Ulama* meant that the region was a heavily contested territory where the NU was not about to give up cherished ground even to local Islamist competitors like the *Muhamadiyah*. Undeterred by these local factors, the *Tabligh* pursued its plans for expansion without respite. By the 1960s tentative probing efforts were made by several delegations that were sent to Surabaya from the *Tabligh markaz* in Surakarta.

The port-city of Surabaya ranks as one of the most important cities of Java and is the fourth largest city in all of Indonesia. Historically it boasts of its reputation as a centre of nationalism and it was in Surabaya that the war against the Dutch was fought in earnest. Historically Surabaya also ranks highly as one of the most cosmopolitan centres of Java where large numbers of Indians, Arabs and Chinese merchants had settled, giving the city a uniquely commercial and cosmopolitan feel to it. The Indian and Arab Muslim merchant community was traditionally settled in the *Qubah* district (otherwise known as *Kampung Arab*) in the northern quarter of the city, close to the Masjid Sunan Ampel that houses the grave (*makam*) of Sunan Ampel, one of the nine saints of Java who was credited with bringing Islam to the island. The Masjid Sunan Ampel also happens to be a major pilgrimage site for hundreds of thousands of devoted followers of the *Nahdatul Ulama*, who regard it as one of the most sacred places of Java.

Naturally the *Tabligh* felt that Surabaya would be the city where they would be most welcomed and where they should establish their base for all their activities in East Java. What they had not accounted for, however, was the fact that the *Peranakan* Indian and Arab community there was already deeply rooted in local Indonesian politics and the extent to which the *Peranakan* Indian Muslim community was divided along cleavages of ethnic and religious-doctrinal differences.

The complex character of the *Peranakan* Indian and Arab communities of Surabaya is reflected in the number of mosques and *madrassahs* that exist in the *Kampung Arab* area: When the *Tabligh* sent its first delegations to Surabaya they discovered that the *Peranakan* Muslims were divided along sectarian ethnic and religious lines and that each community had its own religious and community centre. The Indian Sunni Muslims were mostly from Gujerat and had settled in the city as traders who dominated the textile trade as well as the trade in gold and silver. They were settled in the Chinese and Indian area around Jalan Panggung and their mosque was the Masjid Serang.⁴⁹ (So called because many of these *Peranakan* Indians had originally moved from Banten in West Java, where they were settled in an area called Saerang, which in turn lent the mosque its name.) Today the Masjid Serang is dominated by *Peranakan* Arabs who are likewise Sunni, of the Shafie school of thought. Apart from the Gujerati Muslims there were also a considerable number of *Peranakan* Muslims who came from Sindh and a smaller number of *Peranakans* of Tamil origin, the latter of which were equally divided between Hindus and Muslims.

The *Tablighis* also did not account for the fact that there was a large and visible representation of Shia Muslims in Surabaya, most of whom were also *Peranakan* Indian Muslims who came from Northern India originally. The Shia Muslim community had its own mosque, which was the Masjid al-Fatimi.⁵⁰ Needless to say, the *Tablighis* were not at all welcomed at the Fatimi mosque and made no attempts to seek new converts among the Shias.

⁴⁹ The Masjid Serang is located at Jalan Panggung (Theatre Street) in downtown Surabaya which covers the intersection between the Indian and Chinese quarters.

⁵⁰ The Shia-dominated Masjid al-Fatimi is located at no. 16 Jalan Kalimasmadya, Surabaya.

Apart from the Surabaya Shia community, there were also the *Ahmadis* who were settled close to the *Kampung Arab* area but who also had their own mosque that was called the Masjid an-Nur.⁵¹ As was the case of the *Ahmadis* of Jogjakarta, the *Ahmadis* of Surabaya had played a visible part in the nationalist struggle and had established themselves as important figures in the local politics of Surabaya. Like the Shias, they too rejected the overtures of the *Tablighis* and did not offer their mosque to the newcomers.

And to complicate things further, Surabaya was also one of the centres for the minority Bohra community that had settled mainly on the island of Bali to the east of Java.⁵² Its leader, Taher Hussein⁵³, described the situation that faced the *Tabligh* in the 1970s thus:

“When they (the *Tabligh*) first came here, they had no place to go to. Every mosque was taken and even when they tried to sleep in the main mosque of the city they were asked to leave by the authorities. You see, Surabaya has always been a centre for us (*Peranakan* Indian Muslims) but we have been living here for more than a hundred years; so its not that easy to just walk in and make yourself at home. We (the Bohras) had our

⁵¹ The Ahmadi-controlled Masjid an-Nur is located at Jalan Kawatan in the Bubutan district of Surabaya.

⁵² The small Bohra community of Indonesia is concentrated mostly on the island of Bali, in the city of Denpasar. Almost all of them are of Gujerati origin and have become naturalized citizens of Indonesia since 1945. Today they are mainly engaged in the business of cloth and jewellery and are to be found along Jalan Sulawesi in Denpasar. They also have their own mosque in Denpasar that is the Masjid Fatimi on Jalan Kartini, the Imam of which is Imam Haji Abbas. The leader of the Bohra community in Indonesia is Ustaz Hattim Ali who also comes from a family of Gujerati merchants who have settled in Indonesia for more than a century. (Interview with Taher Hussein, Surabaya, 21 September 2008.)

⁵³ Taher Hussein is the leader of the Bohra community in Surabaya and was born in Indonesia in 1951, in the city of Surabaya itself. His father, Hussein Abdul Ali Khambati, was of Gujerati origin and had migrated to Indonesia in the 1930s. Prior to that he had worked as a *Chakiwalla* (flour-miller) in the Geylang district in Singapore up to 1933. Having settled in Surabaya by 1939, Hussein Khambati started his family after marrying his wife Zaitun who was sent to him by his family from India. They had four sons: Taher Abdul Ali Hussein, Muhammad Abdul Ali Hussein, Siraj Abdul Ali Hussein and Noman Abdul Ali Hussein; whom the father sent to live and work in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. Taher Hussein remained in Surabaya and became a Muslim student activist with the *Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam* (HMI) in the 1970s. His father's company imported Qurans as well as Hindi films from India, while also working in the textile trade. Taher studied law and eventually became a lawyer who has represented the Bohra community several times. (Interview with Taher Hussein, Toko Saleh Bhai, Surabaya, 21 September 2008.)

own mosque, the Sunnis had their mosques, the Shias had their mosques. But all the places were taken up, so where could the *Tablighis* go?”⁵⁴

Faced with the same question the *Tablighis* were forced to hop from one mosque to another in search of refuge. As it became clear that none of the *Peranakan* Indian or Arab-controlled mosques would open their doors to the *Tablighi Jama'at*, they were forced to set up temporary bases in the smaller mosques that were found in the residential neighbourhoods of the big city.⁵⁵ Adapting to the realities on the ground the *Tabligh* also altered its tactics and began to send delegations that were led by local *pribumi* Indonesians to Surabaya instead, hoping that this would make it easier for them to gain a foothold in the city.

Success finally came in the year 1984 when a delegation was sent to Surabaya that was led by Ustaz Haji Muhammad Amin Sayid, who was from Sulawesi and of Bugis ethnic background. This small delegation of five members toured the mosques of the residential areas and finally managed to gain the consent of the residents of the Pekan Barat district, who allowed them to settle (albeit temporarily) at the Masjid Nur Hidayat on Jalan Ikan Gurame 4/5 in Pekan Barat. Though the mosque itself was little more than a linked house that was located in the middle of a lower middle-class residential area, it did at least offer the *Tabligh* a semi-permanent base for their activities. In 1985 the Masjid Nur Hidayat on Jalan Ikan Gurame 4/5 was declared as the *markaz* of the *Tabligh* in Surabaya and Ustaz Haji Muhammad was made the first *Emir* of the *Tabligh* for Surabaya. All delegations to East Java were henceforth despatched to the *markaz* that served as the transit point for other delegations en route to Madura and further east, right up to Bali.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Interview with Taher Hussein, Toko Saleh Bhai, Surabaya, 21 September 2008.

⁵⁵ In the words of Ustaz Abdul Wahad, current Emir of the *Tabligh* in Surabaya: “At that time we were floating around like anchovies (*ikan bilis*), and the locals really didn’t like us at all! Wherever we went we were told to leave within a couple of days. They really hounded us out of their neighbourhoods because they thought we were strange. Especially when they saw our Indian brothers from abroad, who couldn’t speak Javanese or *Bahasa Indonesia*, they thought we were criminals on the run!” (Interview with the *Emir* of the *Tablighi Jama'at* of Surabaya, Ustaz Abdul Wahab at the Masjid Nur Hidayat, Pekan Barat, Surabaya, 22-23 September 2008.)

⁵⁶ Interview with the *Emir* of the *Tablighi Jama'at* of Surabaya, Ustaz Abdul Wahab and second *Emir* Ustaz Abdul Rahman at the Masjid Nur Hidayat, Pekan Barat, Surabaya, 22-23 September 2008.

While the *markaz* at the Masjid Nur Hidayat is officially the main centre for *Tabligh* activities for all of East Java, in its form and appearance it compares poorly to the other centres in Jakarta and Surakarta: The mosque has been expanded by breaking down the walls of two residential homes and is still too small to house a major gathering of the *Tablighs* at any given time. Furthermore the earlier delegations at the *markaz* numbered more than a dozen, but have now expanded to the hundreds. At its peak the mosque can take in as many as seven hundred *Tablighis*, though these large gatherings are often regarded with some degree of suspicion by the locals who remain clueless about what takes place in the mosque. In the words of the current *Emir* Ustaz Abdul Wahab, who is of Madurese origin:

“That has been our fate here in Surabaya. God has favoured us by giving us this mosque, but we know that they (the locals and the authorities) can kick us out anytime. That is the irony: Surabaya was one of our first bases in East Java, but it is the slowest to develop!”⁵⁷

Cognisant of the need for a better base for their religious and educational activities, and sensitive to the fact that the *Tabligh* had to adjust to local ethnic sensibilities so as to localise themselves better, the *Tablighi Jama'at* sought to find themselves a bigger centre in East Java where they could carry out their activities with little interruption. They got their big break in 1984, in the same year that they succeeded in gaining their foothold in Surabaya, when they managed to win the support of the local community in the village of Temboro near the town of Magetan that straddles the border between Central and Eastern Java.

Magetan had always been one of the transit points along the route taken by the *Tablighi* delegations as they moved from Surakarta into East Java. It lies along the Surakarta-Madiun-Surabaya main road and as such was well served by public transport. Magetan was also the home of a very small number of *Peranakan* Indian Muslims who had settled

⁵⁷ Interview with the *Emir* of the *Tablighi Jama'at* of Surabaya, Ustaz Abdul Wahab at the Masjid Nur Hidayat, Pekan Barat, Surabaya, 22 September 2008.

there before Indonesian independence.⁵⁸ But located as it was deep in the East Javanese countryside, the tone and tenor of Javanese Islam in Magetan and its environs remained deeply rooted in Javanese culture, language and customs; and the *Tablighis* (who were often led and represented by *Peranakan* Indian Muslims) were often seen as strange outsiders and interlopers.⁵⁹ In the words of Ustaz A. Fazaldin⁶⁰ of Magetan:

“Even in the 1950s there were not so many of us (*Peranakan* Indian Muslims) here in East Java, except for Surabaya where there were plenty of Arabs and Indians. Here in Magetan there were less than twenty families and most of us were traders who came from Punjab or Northern Pakistan (Pathan). By then many of the families had moved out to bigger cities where it was easier to do business, and the few who remained were all married to local girls and so we lost our identity: we ‘melted’ (*lebur*) among the Javanese and by the time of my children’s generation we had mixed families or had adopted Javanese children like I did. So when the *Tabligh* came to us in the 1970s and 1980s, they could not find any Indian

⁵⁸ There has never been an Indian mosque in Magetan and the *Peranakan* Indian Muslims of Magetan have never really stood out as a community apart from the locals. The same observation can be made of the other *Peranakan* communities in smaller towns like Kartosono, despite the fact that many of the *Peranakan* Indian Muslims were evidently successful in their commercial activities: Haji Ishak Khan of Kartosono, for instance, was the richest merchant in the town and had entirely dominated the local textile business of Kartosono since the 1940s.

⁵⁹ Interview with Ustaz A. Fazaldin, Toko Murah Baru, Magetan, 17 September 2008.

⁶⁰ Ustaz A. Fazaldin was among the first members of the *Tablighi Jama’at* in the small commercial town of Magetan. Of Pathan origin, he was born in 1949 in Indonesia but his family hailed from Rawalpindi (Pakistan). The other half of his family still lives in Pakistan though there has been very little contact between him and them over the past four decades. His father, Fizuridin Khan, migrated to Indonesia in 1945 and first landed in Sulawesi, before settling in Java by the mid-1940s, and ended up in the trade of cloth and jewellery in Magetan. During the time of his father’s arrival in Magetan there were around twenty South Asian families that had settled there, but their numbers dwindled to around ten families who remained until today. Ustaz Fazaldin was born as an Indonesian and as such recognised himself as an Indonesian citizen; he had never travelled to Pakistan or India until he formally became a member of the *Tabligh* in the 1980s. In 1984 he took part in a three-day *Tablighi* tour that was led by Ustaz Abu Zar who had come from Thailand, and ended up at the *Tablighi Markaz* in Temboro where he met with Ustaz Abdul Rahim, the elder brother of Ustaz Muhammad Jamil, the *Emir* of the *Tabligh* in Surakarta. Born with a limp in his left leg, Ustaz Fazaldin informed us that he believed that through his pious works with the *Tabligh* he “would be cured of the limp in heaven” by God. (Interview with Ustaz A. Fazaldin, Toko Murah Baru, Magetan, 17 September 2008.)

Muslim contacts like they did in Jakarta or Surakarta. Here, we were all Javanese and had become natives.”⁶¹

A stone’s throw away from Magetan is the little village of Temboro, a small agricultural hamlet where the local economy is focused primarily on farming (rice and sugar cane) with a largely agrarian rural community. It was at Temboro that an important *pesantren* had been set up by a local religious scholar with the support of the *Nahdatul Ulama*: The Pondok Pesantren al-Fatah⁶² was set up in 1958 by Kyai Mahmud Siddique, son of the famous Javanese scholar Kyai Ahmad Siddique. Originally a *pesantren* with a strong leaning towards the Sufi teachings of the *Naqshabandiyya* and *Qadariyya Tareqats*⁶³, the *pesantren* had attracted a strong following thanks to the reputation of both Kyai Ahmad Siddique and Kyai Mahmud (who was an alumni of the Tebuyuron *pesantren*).⁶⁴

Naturally the *Tabligh* had paid many a visit to the Pesantren al-Fatah as they made their trips towards Surabaya and the other towns and cities of East Java. In 1984 a delegation was sent specifically to the *pesantren* that was led by Ustaz Prof. Abdusobur Khan who had come all the way from Pakistan and who had been despatched to Surakarta from Jakarta: His mission, if it can be called that, was to try and win over the support of Kyai Uzairon, the son of Kyai Mahmud Siddique who was then the head of the *pesantren* at Temboro. Kyai Uzairon had studied in Mecca and then Cairo, but had no previous contact with the *Tablighis* and knew little of their history and intentions then. In the course of their meeting together, Ustaz Abdusobur managed to win the heart of Kyai Uzairon who subsequently converted to the *Tablighi Jama’at* and became one of them.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Interview with Ustaz A. Fazaldin, Toko Murah Baru, Magetan, 17 September 2008.

⁶² The Pondok Pesantren al-Fatah is located at Kabupaten Karas, Temboro, Magetan.

⁶³ It was not surprising that the Pesantren al Fatah was inclined towards the study of Sufism and Islamic mysticism as the NU-supported educational institutions in East Java were historically close to many of the Sufi *tareqats* that were active in the region. Furthermore the NU’s strong adherence to traditional forms of popular folk piety and the Javanese tradition of *Kejawen* also meant that many of its own practices shared formal and ritual similarities with the rites and rituals of the Sufi *tareqats*, including the veneration of saints that has always been a regular feature of NU ceremonies. (Interview with Muhammad Nur Ichwan, Sunan Kalijaga Islamic University, Jogjakarta, 30 August 2008.)

⁶⁴ Interview with Ustaz Tantowi Jauhari, Secondary Emir at the Pesantren and Markaz al-Fatah, Temboro, 19-20 September 2008.

⁶⁵ Ustaz Tantowi described the character of Ustaz Abdusobur thus: “He was a big man with a prominent head and you could see that he was a great professor. But Kyai Uzairon was most impressed by his

Shortly after his conversion in 1984 Kyai Uzairon was made the *Emir* of the *Tabligh*-controlled Pesantren al-Fatah, becoming one of the first Javanese *Emirs* of the *Tabligh* in East Java. Between 1984 to 1989 Kyai Uzairon and his father Kyai Mahmud made several trips to Basti Nizamuddin in New Delhi where they met with other *Tablighi* leaders and members, and plans were made to send *Tablighi* delegations from Temboro to South Asia. Between 1989 to 1993 several batches of *santris* (students) from the Pesantren al-Fatah were sent to study at *Tablighi madrasahs* in India (in Delhi and Lucknow) as well as Pakistan (in Karachi and Lahore). Now there are more than one hundred of these students who make up the Temboro alumni of students who have studied at *Tablighi*-run madrasahs in India and Pakistan, and many of them have returned to Temboro to teach there.

Today the *Pesantren* and *Markaz* of al-Fatah in Temboro is the biggest *Tablighi Jama'at* educational centre in all of Java. Covering an area almost four kilometres square, it is a vast complex made up of the original Pesantren al-Fatah as well as four mosques and a large *Tabligh* congregation centre that houses offices, dormitories, kitchens and supply stores for the *Tabligh*. It is at Temboro that the major *Ijtimas* of the *Tabligh* are regularly held, for the complex is large enough to accommodate a huge congregation of several thousand *Tablighis*. On a regular day the *pesantren* alone can accommodate around six hundred teachers and more than seven thousand students; many of whom come from Indonesia but also neighbouring countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Thailand and beyond.⁶⁶ It can therefore be rightfully described as the *Tablighi Jama'at's* most important gain in all of Java over the past two decades.

manners because the Professor was so gentle and kind, he was the nicest man you ever could meet. He spoke from the heart, and his piety was clear for all to see. Speaking as he did, we knew that this man had come to bring good news and to speak the truth. Kyai Uzairon was also an educated man who had studied in Mecca; and this meeting between the two was a meeting of two hearts. So it was blessed and that is why it was so easy for Kyai Uzairon to be won over by Ustaz Abdusubor." (Interview with Ustaz Tantowi Jauhari, Secondary Emir at the Pesantren and Markaz al-Fatah, Temboro, 19-20 September 2008.)

⁶⁶ During our stay there we shared our accommodation with a group of twelve Malaysian *Tablighis* who had just arrived ahead of the Eid holidays. They were all students in their late teens and early twenties and had come from different states of the Malaysian Peninsula.

None of this would have been possible without the missionary work of Ustaz Abdusubor who had made the trip to Temboro in 1984, which is why the conversion of Kyai Uzairon by the Ustaz was perhaps one of the most important achievements of the *Tablighi Jama'at* in East Java: After decades of tentative probing they had finally secured for themselves an established educational institution of note that was led by a Javanese scholar who enjoyed the loyalty and support of thousands of East Javanese. It also meant that henceforth the *Tabligh* would be able to transfer many of its educational activities to the *pesantren*, that was already considerably large by the 1980s and which has expanded considerably ever since. Most important of all, this transfer of power and authority meant that in East Java the *Tabligh* was slowly but surely developing a distinctively local Javanese appearance, and had gained a Javanese look to it. After labouring for so long under the label of an 'Indian form' of Islam that carried some degree of stigma to it, the *Tablighi Jama'at* had finally come home and had gone local.

VI. Faith and Brotherhood, Trials and Tribulations: The role of the Indian Muslim diaspora and the cultural bonds that helped to develop the *Tablighi Jama'at* network in Java.

As was mentioned at the outset of this paper, the story of the arrival and spread of the *Tablighi Jama'at* across Southeast Asia has been one of the untold stories of Islam in Southeast Asia in the 20th century. Seen in the broader macro context, the *Tabligh's* spread across the region reads as a textbook example of modern globalisation at work, save that this is a mode of globalisation that has essentially been faith-driven rather than capital-driven; though of course the political-economic dimension of this network is considerable and cannot be underestimated.

The question however, remains: How and why was the *Tabligh* so successful in spreading its network across Java from the 1950s to the present, when so many other Islamist movements and parties had met stiffer resistance? What were the factors that accounted

for its success and the relative ease with which it embedded itself into Javanese society? These are some of the questions we will try to address while concluding this paper.

Much of the earlier research on the *Tablighi Jama'at* in Malaysia and Indonesia tended to emphasise its urban presence and the role that the movement has played in the revival of normative Islam in both countries. Although in terms of its outlook and approach to Islam the *Tablighi Jama'at* movement was widely regarded as being conservative and fundamentalist, it attracted relatively little attention from the Malaysian and Indonesian authorities because it was viewed as being apolitical and harmless.

Arguably the most important feature of the *Tabligh* movement is its apparently apolitical outlook and character. In both Malaysia and Indonesia, the movement was seen as quietist and passive in nature, and was conspicuously absent from the political scene. This in part explains the appeal of the *Tablighi Jama'at* for urban Muslims in countries like Indonesia and Malaysia, and accounts for the relative indifference of the governments of the countries concerned towards the group. In the case of Indonesia, we have shown elsewhere (Noor, 2003) the *Tabligh* movement was tolerated by the Suharto regime for the simple reason that it was seen as apolitical and non-violent. The movement's claim that it could control and discipline its members was likewise seen as attractive by the Suharto government and its military backers, coming as it did when the Indonesian government was actively seeking ways and means to blunt the thrust of the Islamist opposition in the country.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ The arrival of the *Tablighi Jama'at* in Indonesia coincided with the ascendancy of the Suharto regime that was then backed up by the Indonesian armed forces (ABRI, later TNI) and a number of Western-educated technocrats like B. J. Habibie as well as charismatic local elites like Sultan Hamengku Bowono of the court of Jogjakarta. From 1966 to 1998 President Suharto presided over the reconstruction of Indonesian society and its economy in the wake of the turbulent Sukarno era and the bloody anti-communist purges of 1965. Under Soeharto the Indonesian army was given the responsibility to maintain law and order and ensure the territorial integrity of the state. Led by men like Gen. Benny Moerdani, Gen. Ali Murtopo, Gen. A. M. Hendropriyono and others the Indonesian military elite sought to control and eventually eliminate what they regarded as an increasingly dangerous security threat to the country: the rise of political Islam. The Suharto era witnessed the rise of authoritarian politics in Indonesia, which was accompanied by the de-politicisation of Indonesian society. The Islamist parties of Indonesia were forced to merge together into one loosely-assembled bloc, known as the *Parti Persatuan Pembangunan* (Development and Unity Party, PPP) and were no longer allowed to use ostensibly 'Islamic' symbols and slogans in their political activities. It was during this time that Indonesian Islamist intellectuals and activists began to call for a non-political approach to Islamisation in Indonesia and the inculcation of Islamic *values*

The aim of this paper has been to trace the early arrival, spread and consolidation of the *Tablighi Jama'at* across Java from the early 1950s to the present. By concluding we would like to reiterate the following observations about the *Tabligh's* activities in Java during this period and highlight the salient points about its transmission and modalities of reproduction:

- It is clear that the *Tablighi Jama'at's* arrival and spread across Java was facilitated by the Indonesian Indian-Muslim *Peranakan* community who were instrumental in its early success. The *Tabligh* presented itself as an Indian Muslim movement and found support and succour among the *Peranakan* Indian Muslims of Indonesia who were by then Indonesian citizens and active members of their community. Nonetheless, the *Tabligh* were able to tap into the primordial ethnic and cultural attachments of many of these *Peranakan* Indian Muslims who still maintained linguistic and cultural bonds to South Asia, and who were comfortable with dealing with the *Tablighis* who were not seen as being entirely alien to them.
- The cultivation of their cultural and linguistic bonds by the *Tabligh* in turn allowed it and its members to quickly enter into the already established economic, commercial, political and educational networks that were created by the Indian Muslim

(as opposed to Islamic *politics*) in Indonesian public life. These new Islamist movements and intellectuals were predominantly concerned about the question of Islamic normative culture and cultural politics, and in many cases their own critiques against the Suharto regime was couched in terms of a culturalist (as opposed to economic-structuralist) discourse that posited the view that the ills of Indonesian society could be remedied if Islamic values and norms were further inculcated into Indonesian public space and political life. It was during this period that the *Tablighi Jama'at* began to make its presence felt in the urban space of Indonesia, which at the time was already a heavy contested arena with numerous actors and agents competing for their share of public attention and support. During the 1970s the *Tablighi Jama'at* began to engage with the members of Indonesia's urban under-classes, hoping to win the support and membership of the urban poor. Its primary constituency, as was the case in Malaysia, was the urban poor and under-represented. Its members were mostly young Indonesian boys aged in their teens to their late twenties. The fact that all of its members were males probably made the movement seem more attractive to the ruling elite, who were understandably worried about the growing number of unemployed and frustrated young men in the urban centres. (See: Farish A. Noor, *Salafiyya Purists in the land of Shadow Puppets and Hindu Temples: The Tablighi Jama'at in Indonesia*, Paper for the Wissenschaftliche Konferenz zur gegenwartsbezogenen Forchung im Vorderen Orient (DAVO Congress), Hamburg, 20-22 November 2003, pp. 8-12).

Peranakans who had settled in Java since the mid-19th century; and by doing so the *Tabligh* found that they were able to transfer their ideas to the Indonesian context with relative ease and considerable speed. Here was a case of a newly-arrived transnational social movement piggy-backing on to an already established diaspora network system and utilising that system for its own ends.

- By working within this established diasporic network that stretched across Java and beyond, the first generation of *Tablighi* missionaries of the 1950s and 1960s were merely replicating the earlier modes of conversion and transfer of ideas that had been pioneered by successive generations of Indian Muslim merchants, preachers and scholars who had travelled to Java since the 15th century and who had brought both Islam and commerce to the island. In this respect the *Tabligh's* arrival was not an occasion of disruptive social dislocation or trauma, and this may also account for why the resistance to the *Tabligh* at first was somewhat low-key: The *Tablighis* were not seen as a 'threat' to the prevailing social order of Javanese Muslims (though they were seen at times as competitors by other local Islamist groups) and were soon incorporated as just another stream of popular Islam in an already overcrowded social topography where a host of Muslim actors and agents were at work.
- However working within this Indian Muslim diaspora network did also present its own set of disadvantages and obstacles: Firstly, the *Tablighi Jama'at's* contact with Muslims was limited to Indian Muslims who were Sunni and of the Hanafi and Shafie schools of legal thought, and were consequently unable to carry out any significant conversion of Ahmadis, Ismailis, Bohras, etc. This, as we have seen above in the account of the *Tabligh's* arrival in places like Jogjakarta and Surabaya, was one of the reasons that it could not spread so easily in some localities despite the presence of a significant Peranakan Indian Muslim community. Secondly the predominantly Indian Muslim character of the first generation of missionaries meant that the *Tablighis* were stuck with the label of 'Indian Muslims' who preached a form of 'Indianised' Islam that was seen as different from that of the normative religiosity practiced by the predominantly *pribumi* Javanese population of Java.

- It was only by the late 1980s and 1990s that the *Tabligh* would slowly shed this image of being an ‘Indian variant’ of Islam as it slowly enlarged the local Javanese component of its membership base, after converting more and more Javanese Muslims to its cause. As we have seen above in the case of the *Tabligh*’s arrival at Purwokerto, Surabaya and Temboro, it was only by the late 1980s and 1990s that the *Tabligh* managed to gain a visible presence in the less cosmopolitan smaller cities of Java, and a significant presence in East Java, when its membership profile slowly changed with the conversion of more *pribumi* Javanese to the *Tablighi Jama’at*.
- The transformation of the *Tablighi Jama’at* from a predominantly Indian Muslim minority fringe movement to a more visibly mainstream Javanese one has taken a period of half a century, but in the long run will probably secure the success of the *Tabligh* as a legitimate and mainstream Islamist current in Java and the rest of Indonesia. What is important to note however is that this transformation may also entail the loss of the *Tabligh*’s initial specificity and uniqueness as a South Asian form of normative Islam as it adapts itself to the realities of Javanese religious and political life, and slowly becomes a Southeast Asian form of normative Islam instead.

By concluding, it should be added that as a transnational movement for faith renewal (to borrow Masud’s description of the *Tabligh*), the *Tablighi Jama’at* is a *modern* movement in the sense that it accepts the reality of modern-day politics as a given: It is and remains a transnational movement simply because it accepts that it has to transcend national boundaries and is forced to live with the reality of the modern nation-state. Political frontiers, differences of citizenship and class, and a host of other modern modes of distinction and differentiation have been incorporated into the internal workings of the *Tabligh* and are reflected in its own (modern) mode of compartmentalising its world into regions, districts, departments that are internally organised and differentiated according to a hierarchy of power and responsibility. The success of the *Tabligh* partly depends on its ability to mirror the workings of the modern state (in this case, Indonesia) and to reflect

the internal differences of Indonesian society (its class distinctions, ethnic and regional loyalties, etc.) into its own operational structure and mode of reproduction.

What began as a South Asian movement with a distinctive South Asian flavour and feel to it has now transformed itself into a localised mode of normative religiosity that finds adherence and support from the local population of Java. As globalisation techniques and strategies go, the *Tabligh's* mode of globalisation and dispersal has proven to be a fairly successful one. Unencumbered by ethnic and cultural attachments or the need to retain its South Asian identity, the *Tabligh* has managed to spread itself from India to Europe, Africa, the Arab world and Asia while localising itself in each new context it finds itself in. In the Indonesian case however the *Tabligh's* initial success was guaranteed by the most unlikely of allies: the network of Indian Muslim merchants and traders who had settled in the country as Indonesian citizens and whose calling to Islam was occasioned by a knock on the door by a fellow traveller who brought with him memories of India and the promise of a life of piety.

End.

Appendix A:

The Role and Influence of the Lahori Ahmadi in Java from the 1920s.

The *Ahmadi* (*Ahmadiyya*) community has been an influential and well-connected constituency in Indonesia since the 1920s and has played a key role in the development of political Islam in the country. Though relatively small in number, the Ahmadi community has managed to establish long-standing and important relationships with key Indonesian Islamist leaders and politicians, including Haji Oesman Said Tjokroaminoto (1882-1935), Sukarno, Muhammad Hatta and Muhammad Natsir.

Ahmadi members have played a leading role in the modernisation movement, the anti-colonial struggle, the process of nation-building and national politics in the country. They occupied key positions in the major political parties of Indonesia, including the Indonesian Communist party (PKI).

The dominant stream of Ahmadis in Indonesia come from the Lahori branch that traces its lineage to the founder of the Ahmadi movement, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908). In 1905 Mirza Ghulam Ahmad formed the *Shadr Anjuman Ahmadiyya* which came under the leadership of his appointed successor, Maulvi Haqim Nuruddin. Following the death of Haqim Nuruddin in 1914, the *Shadr Anjuman Ahmadiyya* came under the leadership of Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad. It was during this time that the Ahmadiyya community faced its first internal rift, when Mirza Bashiruddin's claim that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad had the status of a Prophet effectively split the movement in two. Maulana Muhammad Ali formed another *Shadr Anjuman Ahmadiyya* based in Lahore, and since then the two groups have been known as the '*Qadiani Ahmadis*' and '*Lahori Ahmadis*' respectively. Keen to demonstrate their modernist outlook and credentials, the Lahori Ahmadis refer to their leader as the *President* of the movement (unlike the Qadianis who referred to their leader as the *Khalifah al-Masih*). The Indonesian Ahmadis trace their lineage to the Lahori group and reiterated the Lahoris' claim that the Qadianis are heretics and beyond the pale of Islam. The Indonesian Lahori Ahmadis in turn insist that they belong within the fold of orthodox Islam, and have gone to great lengths to defend and prove the legitimacy of their belief and faith practices.

The first contact between the Lahori Ahmadis and Indonesia took place in 1920-21 when the Lahori Ahmadi preacher Khawaja Kamaluddin was sent to the country (then under Dutch colonial rule) as its first emissary. Khawaja Kamaluddin was of the most prominent Lahori Ahmadi scholars then: along with Muhammad Ali he was the co-editor of the influential *Review of Religions* (pub. 1902-1914). Although he stayed in Indonesia for only a few weeks, Khawaja Kamaluddin managed to make contact with Haji Oesman Said Tjokroaminoto, founder of the *Sarekat Islam Indonesia* and one of the most popular and influential Islamist activists and thinkers in the country then. (The *Sarekat Islam* was

then the umbrella organisation for a number of Islamist movements and claimed that it had 400,000 members and could mobilise millions.) H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto would later become a prominent figure in the anti-colonial movement, as well as the father-in-law and spiritual guide to the country's foremost nationalist leader and first President Sukarno.

Khawaja Kamaluddin and H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto developed a close working relationship and correspondence, and the latter was very much impressed and influenced by the modernist ideas and reformist agenda of the Ahmadis. Tjokroaminoto adopted the ideas of the Ahmadis and through his own writings the ideas of the Ahmadis were shared with other progressive Muslim thinkers and leaders (though Tjokroaminoto never became a member of the Ahmadis himself). Upon his return to Lahore, Khawaja Kamaluddin reported that the Ahmadis would be able to work easily in Indonesia with the help of Indonesian Muslims. In Indonesia, as was the case in British India, the Ahmadis were coming under control and surveillance due to their reputation for being anti-colonial Muslims. This made them unpopular with the British in India and the Dutch in Indonesia, but also boosted their appeal in the eyes of the Indonesian nationalists.

In 1924 the *Lahori Anjuman* sent two emissaries to China, Maulana Ahmad and Mirza Wali Ahmad Baig. The two emissaries were supposed to travel to China by sea in order to ascertain the state of Muslims in China and make their report as soon as they returned. But while in transit in Singapore they received news from Indonesian Islamist contacts that the Dutch had stepped up their conversion campaign in Java and that in Jogjakarta Christian missionaries were claiming that they had successfully converted thousands of Muslims. Worried about the development in Indonesia, Maulana Ahmad and Mirza Wali Ahmad Baig sent a telegram to Lahore to ask permission to make a detour to Java to investigate. Permission was granted and they made their way to Jogjakarta, Central Java.

Upon their arrival in Jogjakarta, the Ahmadi emissaries were given a warm welcome by the leaders and members of the modernist-reformist *Muhamadiyah* movement that had been formed by Kyai Ahmad Dahlan. At the Muhammadiyah conference of 1924, both of

them were invited to speak, and Maulana Ahmad spoke in Arabic while Mirza Wali Ahmad spoke in English. The Muhamadiyah members were particularly impressed by Mirza Wali Ahmad because he could speak and write in English, something that the Indonesian modernists admired then. News of their arrival was spread across the country courtesy of the Muhamadiyah press, and the leaders of the Muhamadiyah expressed their interest to work with the Lahori Ahmadis and learn from them. Soon after, Kyai Ahmad Dahlan sent his son, Jumhan, who was already a rising leader of the Muhamadiyah, along with six other young Muhamadiyah members to Lahore to study at the *Lahori Anjuman*.

Due to reasons of ill health, Maulana Ahmad returned to Lahore soon after but Mirza Wali Ahmad was invited by the leaders of the Muhamadiyah to stay. Because he could not speak Indonesian (then) and only English, Mirza Wali Ahmad attracted a following among the educated intellectuals of the Muhamadiyah. He soon developed a reputation as a teacher who used modern methods of instruction, including less conventional modes of preaching such as music. (Mirza Wali Ahmad was a keen musician who could play the guitar and even began to include Indian music lessons in his classes, something that added to his allure and charisma.) This proved to be a problem from the beginning, for the more traditional *ulama* of Java did not take too well to Mirza Wali Ahmad and his ideas, and many suspected him of being too radical and westernised.

Despite these difficulties, the influence of Mirza Wali Ahmad grew rapidly. Most of his followers were leaders of Muhamadiyah like Raden Ngabei Minhadjurrahman Djoyosugito and Muhammad Husni, and young members of the Muhamadiyah who had graduated from the *Muhamadiyah Kweekschool* like Muhammad Irsyad and Mufti Sharif. Many of the members of the newly-established Jong Islamieten Bond (JIB, Young Muslim League) and Studenten Islam Studieclub (SIS) were also attracted to Mirza Wali Ahmad's ideas about social reform and the revitalisation of Islamic thought and practice. In time, under the guidance and direction of Mirza Wali Ahmad, they began to translate Dutch books into the Indonesian language, to help further the cause of local education in the country and to expose young Muslims to the latest currents of Western thought and

sciences. Mirza Wali Ahmad's ideas and advice were constantly featured in their magazines and journals, such as *Het Licht*, the journal of the JIB.

In 1925 another landmark development was Tjokroaminoto's decision to translate Muhammad Ali's English translation of the *Qur'an* entitled *The Holy Qur'an: Containing the Arabic Text with English Translation and Commentary* into Indonesian. Tjokroaminoto sought the advice of the leaders of the Muhammadiyah and *Sarekat Islam*, and permission was granted for him to proceed – albeit under supervision of the movements' *ulama*.

Moved by Mirza Wali Ahmad's appeals for Muslim unity and development, Muhammadiyah members formed the *Muslim Broederschap* movement in Jogjakarta (in 1926) in order to mobilise the younger Islamist intellectuals and activists in the region. The Muslim Broederschap was led by Djoyosugito and Muhammad Husni, who were deeply influenced by the reformist ideas of Ghulam Mirza Ahmad that they had learned from Mirza Wali Ahmad. The movement had its own journal called *Correspondentie Blad*, which contained ideas that were taken almost entirely from the corpus of Ghulam Mirza Ahmad's work.

By then the reputation of the Lahori Ahmadis had spread across Java and beyond, and this was largely due to the missionary efforts of Mirza Wali Ahmad Baig. But Mirza Wali Ahmad had also angered many of the traditional *ulama* who rejected the modernist ideas of the Ahmadis, and this led to the first confrontation with the Ahmadis. In 1927 the Indian *salafi ulama* Maulana Abdul Alim as-Sadiqi arrived in Java and immediately began attacking Mirza Wali Ahmad and the Ahmadis in general, accusing them of heresy and being Westernised in their outlook and values. Though this crisis was contained, it set a precedent for the attacks on the Indonesian Lahori Ahmadis that were to follow.

Following the personal attacks on Mirza Wali Ahmad Baig, the more conservative and pro-Arab *ulama* began to attack Tjokroaminoto for his project to translate Muhammad Ali's English translation and exegesis of the *Qur'an* into Indonesian. Tjorkoaminoto

defended his project on the grounds that the Muhamadiyah and *Sarekat Islam* had agreed to it earlier, and permission was granted by Kyai Mas Masyur and Haji Fakhruddin in 1925. In response the prominent *alim* and *Maharaja Imam* of Sambas (Kalimantan) Shaykh Muhammad Basyumi Imran wrote to his former teacher Rachid Rida in Egypt, and asked for a *fatwa* that would declare the Indonesian translation of Muhammad Ali's exegesis *haram*. Rashid Rida issued his *fatwa* on 17 July 1928, though it failed to stop the publication of the Indonesian edition of Muhammad Ali's exegesis. Though Tjokroaminoto received the support of others like Haji Agus Salim and the younger activists of the Studenten Islam Studieclub and Jong Islamieten Bond, the scandal that was caused by the *fatwa* led to the Muhamadiyah distancing itself from the Ahmadis and rejecting the Indonesian translation of Muhammad Ali's work.

Due to the controversy that had been generated by the attacks on Mirza Wali Ahmad and his followers they were soon ostracised and alienated from the mainstream. In 1928, under pressure from the more conservative elements of the movement, the leaders of the Muhamadiyah were forced to issue an ultimatum to the followers of Mirza Wali Ahmad: they had to choose between remaining members of Muhamadiyah or joining the Lahori Ahmadis. Muhammad Husni was threatened with dismissal by the Muhamadiyah leadership and Djoyosugito was removed from his post within the movement. Others who were forced to leave the Muhamadiyah included Muhammad Kusban, Sutantyo, Supratolo and others.

Forced to leave their movement, Muhammad Husni, Raden Ngabei Djoyosugito, Muhammad Irsyad, Muhammad Sabit, R. Soedewo Kertoadinegoro, Idris Latjuba, Hardjosubroto, K.H. Sya'rani, K. H. Abdurrahman, Muhammad Kusban, Sutantyo, R. Supratolo and the rest decided to form their own movement, the *Gerakan Ahmadiyah Indonesia-Centrum Lahore* (GAI) on 10 December 1928. The movement was official registered and recognised the following year, on 28 September 1929. Its first leader was Raden Ngabei Minhadjurrahman Djoyosugito.

By then the Ahmadis had aroused the suspicion of the Dutch colonial authorities who regarded them as a subversive anti-colonial movement that might later prove to be a threat to colonial rule. Despite coming under the surveillance of the Dutch secret police, the GAI managed to open branches within the first year of its foundation: In Purwokerto under Kyai Ma'aruf, Purbalingga under K.H. Sya'rani, Pliken under K.H. Abdurrahman, Jogjakarta under R. Supratolo, and Surakarta under Muhammad Kusban. In 1930 more branches were created in Malang under Raden Ngabei Djoyosugito, Sukabumi under Soedewo, Madiun under Pak Utsman and Bandung under Muhammad Husni. Mirza Wali Ahmad Baig moved to Purwokerto and this then became the headquarters of Lahori Ahmadi activities in Java. Within the next few years the Lahori Ahmadis extended their influence by opening even more branches in Jakarta (Batavia), Cirebon, Wonosobo and Megelang.

Even then the Lahori Ahmadis were few in number, compared to other groups like the *Nahdatul Ulama*, *Muhamadiyah*, *Sarekat Islam* and JIB. But they enjoyed the enormous advantage of having a number of prominent intellectuals who could write and translate well, and it was through their publications that they managed to spread their ideas across the country. At the 1933 GAI Congress they decided to form their own printing house, the *Qur'an-Fonds* that was under the direction of Abdul Rajab, Muhammad Husni, Pringgono, Ahmad Wongsosewoyo, Bintoro, Suroto, R.A. Wiranatakusumah and others. It was decided then to form a sub-committee of the *Qur'an-Fonds* at every town and district branch, and that they would continue to publish reports, newsletters and journals that would propagate the ideas of Ghulam Mirza Ahmad, Mirza Wali Ahmad and the Lahori Ahmadi school of thought. The *Qur'an-Fonds* also embarked on many translation programs, including a translation of the *Qur'an* into the Indonesian language. The traditional *ulama* in turn responded by claiming that the Ahmadi translation of the *Qur'an* was *haram* to read and that their ideas were heretical and dangerous for Muslims.

By then (1935) Mirza Wali Ahmad Baig had spent more than a decade in Indonesia as the foremost emissary and spokesman for the *Lahori Anjuman*. During his extended sojourn he never married and dedicated all of his time to the work of the GAI. Four months after

the publication of the GAI's Indonesian translation of Muhammad Ali's translation of *Qur'an* (that was done by R. Soedewo), Mirza Wali Ahmad announced his decision to return to India at the GAI Congress in Surakarta. Due to his outstanding work-related obligations, his journey back to India was delayed and only undertaken in November 1937. He had spent a total of thirteen years in Indonesia by then. (1924-1937).

In 1939 the GAI Congress voted to set up a fund to send their members to Europe for further studies, but this was cut short by the advent of the Second World War. During the war the GAI officially refused to co-operate with the Japanese and maintained their nationalist stance. However a number of Ahmadi leaders like H. M. Bachrun and Muhammad Irsyad joined the Japanese-sponsored *Pembela Tanah Air* (PETA) militia. H. M. Bachrun started with the rank of captain but eventually rose to the level of Lieutenant Colonel and was put in charge of PETA's 15th Regiment. In the meantime the Ahmadi prepared their members for the anti-colonial struggle that was to follow the defeat of the Japanese and the return of the Dutch to Indonesia after the war. During the Indonesian War of Independence Ahmadi leaders like H. M. Bachrun took an active part in the guerrilla war against the Dutch. (H. M. Bachrun eventually rose to become the personal adjutant and Secretary for Military Affairs of President Sukarno.)

When Indonesia declared its independence on 17 August 1945, GAI supported it completely. At its first post-war Congress in 1947, the GAI leadership expressed their support for Sukarno's *Pancasila* (five principles) ideology of state. GAI distanced itself from the other Islamist movements that called for the introduction of Islamic law and the creation of an Islamic state in Indonesia. GAI insisted that it was a non-partisan, non-political movement, though it allowed its members to join political parties on an individual basis. By then GAI members were themselves involved in the post-colonial struggle to build the Indonesian Republic, and many GAI leaders and members joined the mainstream political parties in the country including the PNI, NU, Masjumi, PSII. GAI however rejected Communism and the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party). When one of its leaders – Muhammad Sabitun – joined the PKI, he was ordered to leave the communist party or lose his membership to the GAI. (Sabitun claimed that he had joined

the PKI in order to convert its members to the Lahori Ahmadi cause from within. Following Sabitun's refusal to leave the PKI he was expelled from the GAI on 17 October 1957.)

At the GAI Congress of 1947 the members of GAI voted to create the *Perguruan Islam Republik Indonesia* (PIRI – Islamic Teachers Association of the Republic of Indonesia) as an outfit that would train future cadres of GAI. Through PIRI, GAI managed to recruit new members, train their cadres as well as develop the teaching staff for their expanding network of schools. In 1958 PIRI was given autonomous status and allowed to run its own activities. The first leader of the now-autonomous PIRI post-1958 was Ibu Djoyosugito, one of the prominent women members of the Indonesian Lahori Ahmadi community.

Also in 1958 at the GAI Congress the members of the movement voted to create the Darul Kutubil Islamiyah (DKI), which was GAI's first fully-owned and controlled publishing house under the direction of H. M. Bachrun. DKI published the first Ahmadi *Qur'an* in Javanese, as well as other texts such as *Rahasia Hidup* (a collection of the essays of Khawaja Kamaluddin, the Lahori Ahmadis' first emissary to Indonesia), *Fathi Islam*, *Ekonomi Islam*, *Islam dan Ilmu Pengetahuan*, *Islam dan Socialisme*, *Islam is Modern*, *Islam the Religion of Humanity* and *Women in Islam*. By then GAI, through its DKI press, was known in Indonesia as one of the leading voices of modernist Islam and the main proponent of Islamic modernisation, reform and development.

GAI struggled to maintain its autonomy and non-partisan status following the collapse of Sukarno's regime in 1965 and the rise of the New Order (*Orde Baru*) that was led by President Suharto and backed up by the Indonesian army. In 1966 its leader Raden Ngabei Minhadjurrahman Djoyosugito passed away after leading the movement since 1929 and the leadership of the movement was passed to H.M. Bachrun who had been put in charge of the DKI earlier. During this turbulent period H. M. Bachrun ensured that GAI would keep a safe distance from Indonesian politics. For the next few years GAI

concentrated mainly on missionary and publication work, while introducing the latest ideas from abroad via their printing press and publications.

In 1979 H. M. Bachrun passed away and the leadership of GAI was passed to Prof. Ahmad Muhammad Djoyosugito. The other prominent leaders of the time were Dr. Susmoyo Djoyosugito and S. Ali Nasir. During this time the Indonesian Lahori Ahmadis attempted to expand and intensify their contacts with Ahmadis abroad. In 1972 the first batch of Malaysian Ahmadis (7 in all) arrived to begin their studies at the Lahori Ahmadi schools in Java. Later during 1978-1980 GAI sent two emissaries to study in Lahore: Muhammad Iskandar and Sardiman Tarsudi. Then in 1980-1984 two other Indonesian Lahori Ahmadis were sent: Suyut Ahmad Surayudo and Yatimin. By then however, GAI's international contacts were getting weaker and less frequent. In Pakistan the Ahmadis had been declared heretics and non-Muslims during the time of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Later in the mid-1980s the Malaysian government also declared the Malaysian Ahmadis to be non-Muslims. As a result the Lahori Ahmadis of Indonesia were left on their own and the movement assumed an even more local character.

By the 1990s the Indonesian Lahori Ahmadis had managed to weather the storms of the New Order era. Due to their low profile and small number, they were never regarded as a political or security threat by the Soeharto regime or the state security forces. During the 1970s-80s when Soeharto sought to depoliticise Islam in the country the Indonesian Lahori Ahmadis (like other marginal groups such as the *Tablighi Jama'at*) managed to insulate and protect themselves. By foregrounding their pioneering work on reformist-modernist Islam, GAI endeared itself to the technocrats of the Suharto regime and their ideas were allowed to circulate across Indonesian society. Unlike the case of other Muslim countries, they were never directly threatened with excommunication from the Muslim community. GAI leaders and members in turn maintained their status in society by playing an active part in university and intellectual life, and they were seen as the defenders of pluralist, liberal and democratic Islam in the country. GAI has also maintained its missionary outlook and many of its outreach programmes: In the wake of the first Gulf War of 1990-91, GAI sent more than two tons of books – mostly

translations of the *Qur'an* – to the United States and Western Europe, in order to counter negative perceptions of Islam and Muslims. Because they were never seen as supporters of the Suharto regime either, they survived the political crisis that brought down the Suharto government in 1998. Today they remain a well-established force in Central Java, with a strong presence in academic institutions such as Gajah Mada university, Jogjakarta.

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