CONDEMNING NEW RELIGIOUS STREAMS:
A Problem of Making a Civilised *Umma*
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Abstract
The rising of the religious sects that are claimed as deviated and infidel has been a controversial issue today. This paper reviews the phenomenon, both from the basic of Muslim's faith and from the historical context. Based on these perspectives, this article analyzes the phenomenon of the religious sects vis a vis major groups of Islam. This phenomenon can be categorized into two perspectives; first, the sects which are claimed as deviated can be categorized as madzhab in Islam. Second, those sects can also be indicated as new religion. From the mainstream Muslim group side, the sects was not admiited both as madzhab of Islam and also new religion, because they believe that there is no true religion but Islam. Therefore, all these sects will be refused and should be destroyed. Here, Muslims are not able to make the norms of living together and harmony.
In fact, Islam teaches freedom of speech, thought, and faith. Every one can choose anything without any pressure. To overcome their daily problems, they have to have sense of humanity and non-violence attitudes.

Keywords: deviating, streams in Islam, problems, and civilised society

A. Introduction

A discussion on religious streams or sects in Islam and new religions developing in the Islamic tradition will not touch upon the real problem only by putting it in a very general theme like "deviation and one truth". By contrast, the problem has to be seen from within the history of Islamic societies. If we are talking about Islam as a practised religion, we are in fact talking about

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heterogeneous Islamic streams. Seen from the Islamic history, condemnation and accusation of being unbelievers among fellow Muslims or new religions in Islamic tradition are a recurring phenomenon of what happened in the past.

It is significant therefore to trace the emergence of sects in Islam. In this regard, distinction should be made between streams within Islam and streams as new religions emerging from Islamic tradition. Recurrence of the past in the present time makes it difficult for Muslims to learn from their history.

This article proposes to suggest that mutual exclusive relations of various Islamic streams and recurrence of the past evidence the failure of Muslims to become more civilised and to learn from the past.

B. New Streams: Exclusionary Relation in Islam

The emergence of new groups in Islam throughout history can be categorised into two streams. One is part of Islamic streams, and the other can be considered as a new religion emerging from Islamic tradition. The emergence of new religions in Islamic tradition which still practise certain parts of Islamic teaching but have new prophetic authorities other than Muhammad, even in cases the revelation of new prophets are considered higher than the Quran. New streams within Islam have no new prophetic authority.

The emergence of new streams in Islam has to do with three things: interpretation of religious texts and debates on the use of the sources of authority; problems of political leadership (*imamah*, *khilafat* and power); and crisis of the social role of established Islamic groups in connection with religious relations, power and society.

In the history of Islam, new streams emerged from the political leadership or political power which then influenced their religious interpretation. Examples of this are Khawarij, Shi i and Sunni. Khawarij emerged from dissatisfaction of a group of Muslims with the decision of *taḥkîm* in the Siffin battle between Ali and Mu'awiyah. On the other hand, the Shi'a group supported Ali. Between these two groups was the Sunni group who took a middle position, avoiding the interference with the conflict. The re-emergence or metamorphosis of these groups influenced

the interpretation and production of religious authority, including *hadith* narrations.

This does not necessarily mean that there is no pure interpretation of Islamic sources, especially the Quran and the *hadith*, without any political implication. There still exists pure interpretation. This can be seen, for instance, in this interpretation by the Prophet's companions as follows:

> The Prophet said after the Ahzab battle: don't pray until you reach Bani Quraydah." Some Companions found afternoon prayer while they were on the way (before reaching Bani Qurayda). Some others decided not to pray before reaching Bani Qurayda. And some others performed it while on the way and did not want to leave it. This was told to the Prophet, and the Prophet did not blame any of them.[1]

The wider context of the above *hadith* is clear. The linguistic aspects and the intention of the text become one of the reasons for disagreement and the emergence of diverse Islamic schools of thought. This becomes more conspicuous when there is no any single authority after the death of Muhammad. At the same time, this fact has become more complex since each of ulama has their own social and religious affiliation. Therefore, multi-interpretation is inescapable. Pure interpretation of the Quran or the *hadith* is later used to uphold certain groups who try to dominate Islamic discourses. When a group comes to power, they tend to support the mainstream interpretation.

The clear example is the emergence of Murji'ah who demanded to postpone the *takfir* (declaring the others unbelievers) of those involved in the Siffin battle and other groups. Similar cases are with Mu'tazilah, Ash'ariyah, Maghreb group in the Ibn Rushd and Ibn Hazm, and other theologians of Medieval Islam. They made use of two tools: religious interpretation (there is no judge except God, as is the case of Khawarij) and their involvement in power contestations. Religious interpretation was used to support and justify their political involvement and power. The past history of Islam has shown that

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[1] Imam al-Bukhari, *Shaḥîḥ al-Bukhârî*, in kitab "al-Maghâzi", bab "Marjâ'u an-Nabî min al-Aḥzab (Bandung: Syirkah Ma'arif li an-Nasyr wa at-Tauzi', n.d.), III: 34. This *hadith* was narrated by Nafi from Ibnu 'Umar.

religious interpretation and fixation of religious sources were often intermingled with political power and leadership. As a result, it is difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between the fact that religious interpretation is pure religion and that political power is politic.

Both Ash'ariah and Mu'tazilah were affiliated with political power. Ash'ariah reached their heyday during the reign of the Caliphate al-Qadir of the Abbasiyah,[2] and Mu'tazilah during the era of al-Ma'mun. Both Islamic streams had backed up political power such a way that their respective theological views were developed in consonant with their affiliated political interests and were juxtaposed with their claims to the truth of religious interpretation.

What is interesting to note from the emergence of Islamic streams however is the fact that they tended to dominate and even kill each other. Ali oppressed Khawarij. In the modern era, Ibadiyah, the moderate sect of Khawarij, only exists in Oman (little in Zanzibar and Maghreb).[3] Similarly, when Mu'tazilah came to power, they oppressed the Sunni. And the Sunni oppressed Mu'tazilah and Shi'a in the era of the Calipat al-Qadir. In short, these groups negated and felt it necessary to destroy each other.

The Sunni Ash'ari group declared other groups unbelievers. This can be seen in 'Abd al-Qadir al-Baghdadi' statement in his *Al-Farq bayn al-Firaq* as follows:

> "On Ahl al-Ahwa' consisting of al-Jariwidiyah, al-Hishamiah, an-Najjariah, al-Jahmiah, al-Imamiyah, Qadariah, ad-Dirariyah, al-Mushabbihah, and Khawarij, we declared them [unbelievers] as they did to

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[2] In the era of the Caliphate al-Qadir of the Abbasiyah dynasty, the Sunnite group received privileges. The Caliph called Muslims to leave any Islamic schools of thought other than the Asharite, and to condemn them at every religious sermon. This can be read in *al-Bayân al-Qâdirî* written by the Caliph. See the quotation of *al-Bayân al-Qâdirî* in *al-Muntazhâm* of Ibnu al-Jauzi, as quoted by Adam Mitir, *al-Hadharah al-Islâmiyyah fî al-Qarni ar-Râbi' al-Hijri*, trans. Muhammad Abdu al-Hadi Abu Raidah (ttp: Jinnatu at-Ta'lîf wa at-Tarjamah wa an-Nasyr, t.t.). Juga dikutip oleh Muhammed Abed al-Jabiri dalam, *Al-Kasyfu `an Manâhij al-Adillah fî `Aqâid al-Millah* (Lebanon: Markaz Dirâsah al-Wihdah al-Islâmiyyah, 1988).

[3] See John L. Esposito (*ed.*), *Ensiklopedi Dunia Islam Moderen* (Bandung: Mizan, 2001), entries "Ibadiyah" and "Oman".

Ahl al-Sunnah Wa al-Jamaah. They must not pray together with us and we must not pray behind them.[4]

By contrast, Ibn Rushd, representative of the Andalusia tradition, in his *fatwa* declared the Ash'ariyah as unbelievers. He was once asked about the statement saying: someone's faith would never be perfect except by following the Ash'ariyah. He responded:

> Infidelity is but because of believing in what they have (the Ash'ariyah) said. If Muslims do prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage for they know the obscured way, while knowledge of Allah by the method of this madhhab has been held for such a long time or all what they understand is deviated from that belief, they become apostates and forsake from Islam. May Allah save us from the devil Satan …[5]

What was conspicuous are fighting and negating each other. They were preoccupied with and suffered from internal conflicts. This is one of the reasons of Muslims' backwardness and susceptible to others' attack.

C. Religion and New Prophets: Brutal Negation

The reason of the emergence of new groups which can be categorised into new religions is the new prophetic authority other than the prophecy of Muhammad. Debates on new prophets and their religious legitimacy are always undermined by the majority's interpretations claimed to be consensus (*ijma'*) of all Muslims that prophecy has been closed.

Although the vast majority of Muslims believe that Muhammad is the seal of prophets, issues concerning new prophets have emerged within Islamic tradition. This fact has confirmed the existence of new prophets. Below are a number of examples related to the emergence of new religious traditions coming from Islamic tradition.

In the Twelver Shi'i (*Ithna 'Ashriya*), a new religion raised out of the esoteric school called the Shaykhiyah School whose followers spread in Iran and

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[4] Abu Manshur Abdul Qadir al-Baghdadi, *Al-Farqu bain al-Firâq wa Bayânu Nâhiyah minhum* (Beirût: Dâr al-Al-Âfaq al-Jadîd, 1973), in the twelfth pillar, number 46.

[5] This Ibnu Rushd's *fatwa* is quoted in Mukhtar bin Thahir at-Talili, *Ibnu Rusyd (al-Jidd) wa Kitâbuhu al-Muqaddimât* (Beirût: Dâr al-`Arâbiyyah li al-Kitâb, 1988), pp. 171-172.

Iraq. Sayyid Muhammad Shirazi (known as Bab), the leader of this movement claimed to have the authority of esoteric interpretation of the Qur'an and appealed to improving the obedience to Islam. In 1848, Shirazi declared to be the messiah hidden *imam* and started a new era of religion. The controversy took place when Shirazi's followers declared that Quranic law was renewed and resurgence was coming. He was executed in 1850. When youth movements were oppressed by the majority of the Shi'i, moderate groups emerged: one was the Baha'ullah group under the leadership of Mirza Husain Ali Nuri, and the other was the Azali group under the leadership of Mirza Yahya. Nuri and Yahya were engaged in conflicts which led to the emergence of the Baha'i movement. A conflict between the groups of Abdul Baha' (son of Baha'ullah) and Muhammad Ali occurred as well. The movement still exists up to present and can be regarded as a new religion emerging from Islamic tradition, viz. the Twelver Shi'i.[6]

The same is true of the Shi'a Isma'iliyah. In this group, a phenomenon of a new prophet emerged within a community called Druze. The Isma'ili in the Fatimiyah era believed that the Caliphate Ibn Amr Allah was a messianic saviour. In 1917, al-Hakim claimed to be an incarnation of God. Later on Hamzah Ali az-Zijani, helped by his two disciples, Baha'uddin as-Samuki and Muhamamd ad-Darazi, propagated this new belief throughout the reigned regions of the Fatimiyah dynasty, till to Damascus-Aleppo. The appellation of Druze was taken from this Ad-Darazi, while members of Druze preferred to call themselves *Muwahhidun*.

Ad-Darazi and Hamzah Ali az-Zijani were involved in a conflict concerning who should be the holder of imamate for this group. Ad-Darazi was killed in 1019. Two years after, al-Hakim disappeared mysteriously. His successor, the Caliphate al-Zahir, did not acknowledge his superiority and tried to destroy the Druze group. It was Baha'uddin as-Samuki who spread Druze doctrines. He systematized Druze doctrines into <u>Hikmah asy-Syarîfah</u>, a compilation of religious norms consisting of 116 verses.

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[6] See John L. Esposito (*ed.*), *Ensiklopedi Dunia Islam Moderen …,* entries "Bab" and "Baha'i".

Druze doctrines were different from those of the Muslim majority. No circumcision for boys should be conducted. Polygamy and temporal marriage were forbidden. Martyrdom was not a virtue. Druze had excluded from Islam by declaring that divine revelation sent to al-Hakim was higher than that revealed to Muhammad. Up to present, the Druze still exist under the leadership of the family of Jumblat. The Druzes live in Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Upperland of Golan, Jordan, America, Australia and Africa.[7]

In the Sunni tradition, a new prophet named Mirza Ghulam Ahmad appeared in the subcontinent India. He was the founder of Ahmadiyah. In December 1888, he claimed to have received God'order through inspiration to receive initiation (*baiat*) from his followers.[8]

In 1890, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad declared that Jesus (Isa) died and Mirza was the Messias. Later followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad were divided into two groups: one is those regarding him as a *mujaddid* (reformer), and the other considering him a prophet and after Muhammad there would be other prophets called *buruzi*, prophets without syariat.[9]

To date, Ahmadiyah is the biggest Islamic organisation in the world and its members spread in all parts of the world, especially in Africa. *Al-Fazl* magazine August 2000 reported that since 1993-2000 the total number of Ahmadi had reached 63.214.884 members.[10]

Those prophets always emerged at the time of crisis in certain Muslim societies. Since prophecy is closely related to a claim and divine inspiration, it leaves no room for verification but humble belief. First of all Muhammad declared to be a prophet and to receive God's inspiration as stated in the Quran. Then Arab people followed him. This was also the case of Shirazi (Bab), Baha'ullah, Al-Hakim and Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. The phenomenon of the new religions and new

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[7] On Druze see *Ibid*., entries "Druze", "Lebanon" and "Suriah".

[8] See Iskandar Zulkarnaen, *Gerakan Ahmadiyah di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2005), p. 63.

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] See, *Surat Edaran Khusus Jamaah Ahmadiyah Indonesia,* No. 33, 2000.

prophets is similar to that of new sects in Islam. All tend to be the object of negation by opponents.

D. Religious Condemnation Phenomenon: a Historical Recurrence

Current condemnations of the new religious sects are a historical recurrence. Let us start our discussion with the Hizbu Tahrir (henceforth: HT) by discussing the HT's struggling method as formulated in the book *Manhaj H̲izbu Tah̲rîr fî Taghyîr*. The book was translated into Indonesian as *Strategi Dakwah Hizbu Tahrir* and had confidentially been circulated for decades.[11] In this book was stated three phases of its struggle. First is the phase of training and regeneration (*marh̲alah at-tatsqîf*). In this phase, attempts are made to cultivate the HT's thought and method into its caders' mind. The second phase is the interaction with Muslim community (*marh̲alah tafa'ul ma'a al-ummah*). This is intended to motivate the *ummah* to take part in observing the obligation of Islamic promulgation. The third is the taking over of the power (*marh̲alah istilâm al-hukm*) to implement Islam comprehensively and to promulgate Islamic messages over the world.

The basic principle of the HT's struggle is that all Muslim contries are included in *Dar al-Kufr* (abode of unbelievers), regardless of their Muslim settlers. To them, *Dar al-Islam* is a place in which Islamic law systems are implemented in all aspects of life, including government, and its saveguard is in the hands of Muslims, regardless of the fact that non-Muslims exist there. *Dar al-Kufr* on the other hand is a place in which infidels' law systems and the safeguard are not in the hands of Muslims. Therefore, HT holds the view that whoever believes in democracy, does not implement Islamic law, and separates religion from state, lives in an infidel state and supports infidel system.

Similar to HT are the Salafi groups. A Salafi teacher (*ustadh*), Ruwaifi' b. Sulayman, said that HT has gone stray and misled. For him, HT is equal to Khawarij and neo-Mu'tazilah. A Salafi group even condemned their fellow Salafi

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[11] See, Hizbu Tahrir, *Manhaj H̲izbu Tah̲rîr fî Taghyîr*, translated into *Strategi Dakwah Hizbu Tahrir*, (n.p.: Hizbu Tahrir, n.d.).

such as Jamaah Tabligh. This Jamaah was founded by a Sufi from the Jishtiyyah Order Maulana Muhammad Ilyas bin Muhammad Isma'il al-Hanafi ad-Diyubandi al-Jisyti al-Kandahlawi al-Dihlawi. This order is attached to the Maturidiyah in theology and the Hanafi in Islamic law. It is considered to have practised bad innovation, heresy and *khurafat*.[12] Fauzan al-Anshari, former chief of the Information Department of MMI (Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia), quoting Ibn Taymiya, said that this Salafi is the people of bid'a, *dhalal* and breaking the *umma* unity. Fauzan said:

> "It is more surprising that they consider a secular state as an Islamic state which should be obeyed by Muslims. Those who understand *tauhid* (Islamic doctrine) will certainly laugh at seeing their stupidity for considering the government of Syirian Nushairiyyah, for instance, as an Islamic government which should be obeyed, and they condemned Syirian Mujahidin who waged a holy war (*ijtihad*) on the Nushairiyyah government. Whereas all who understand *tauhid* (Islamic theology) would understand that ulama have agreed that Nushairiyyah is an infidel sect. Of course, other jokes on this matter cannot be separated from the principles of secularism held by the *syuyukh* (masters) of this Salafi".[13]

FUUI (Forum Ulama Umat Indonesia) issued a death *fatwa* to Ulil Abshar Abdalla for his article published in a national daily.[14] Another death *fatwa* also was issued by FUUI to a number of students at IAIN Bandung. FUUI organised TIAS (Tim Investigasi Aliran Sesat), a special team for the investigation of "deviant sects" (aliran-aliran sesat). All this conveys that FUUI claimed to be the most pious, most close to God, and most Islamic.

Sufi orders had often become target of condemnation. As an example, Hamka, the author of *Tafsir al-Azhar* and leader of the MUI (Majelis Ulama Indonesia) once said: "it is better that those caliphs of *suluk* (murshid of Sufi

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[12] Ruwaifi bin Sulaiman, "Membongkar Kedok Jamaah Tabligh" dalam http://www.asysyariah.com/print.php?id_online=153, dimuat Kamis, 03 Agustus 2006 ; and "Kelompok Hizbut Tahrir dan Khilafah, Sorotan Ilmiah Tentang Selubung Sesat Suatu Gerakan", in http://www.asysyariah.com/print.php?id_online=287, accessed 04 September 2006.

[13] Fauzan al-Anshari, "Salafi dalam Sorotan: Benarkah Gerakan Salafi Paling Ahlussunnah?" dalam www.majelis.mujahidin.or.id, published on Thursday, 12 May 2005.

[14] Criticism of the deat *fatwa* by FUUI can be found in Nur Khalik Ridwan, "Mati bagi yang Berbeda: Menakar Fatwa Hukuman Mati Islam Radikal", in *Renai* journal, Edisi Summer-Fall, July-October 2002, pp. 161-178.

orders) be hung on palm tree."[15] In November 2007 the Naqshabandiyyah order was condemned by a group of people as "deviant". Hundreds of people of Tana Beru, Bontobahari subdistrict, attacked the *dhikr* (remembrance of God) place of the Naqshabandis at Sapolohe village. As a result, their permanent places were destroyed for being stoned. In this incident, Some 60 followers, of the Sufi order of neighbouring sub-districts, who were performing *dhikr* should be evacuated to headquarter of Polsek (Sectoral Police) Bontobahari. The leader of the Naqshabandi order got injured in his eyes.[16]

The above examples show that a historical recurrence in Islamic history: negation and extinction of the other groups by fellow Muslims. Dominant Muslim majority oppressed the minority. Those Islamic groups seem to dream of the past. They try to negate and extinct all interpretations which are different from theirs. From those examples we can see that Muslims seem not to learn from the past: what was wrong with their interaction with their fellow Muslims?

E. Failure to Establish Civilised Principles

The failure of Muslims (especially ulama) to formulate common principles of a civilised community such as self-reliance, prosperity, tolerance, and peace, is the most conspicuous evidence. It is almost impossible that these principles are agreed by Muslims from different groups. Impossible also is that Muslim societies have only one *madhhab* (stream or school of thought). Currently Islam is divided not only into 72 groups but hundreds or even thousands. Abd al-Qahir al-Baghdadi in his *alf-Farq bayna al-Firaq* mentions that what is called Shi'i or Sunni is divided into diverse categories.[17]

The failure of Muslim societies to formulate civilised life, according to me, is because of the failure to set up minimum criteria of who can be called a

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[15] Quoted by Burhanuddin Daya, *Gerakan Pembaharuan Islam,* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 1995), p. 198.

[16] Information from Subair, an activist at LAPAR Makassar. LAPAR is an NGO which refuted the condemnation of Naqsyabandiyah on November 2007 and called NU members of the region to follow them.

[17] See Abu Manshur Abdul Qadir al-Baghdadi, *al-Farqu bain al-Firâq* … in the discussion of the unsaved groups.

Muslim.[18] The maximum criteria tend to exclude the diversity of Muslim societies and to be the reason for accusing fellow Muslim of being infidel. By minimum criteria, Muslims cannot be marginalised and condemned. So, who is Muslim? What criteria could be made to determine one's belief? Is belief in God enough to judge him a Muslim? Or is it the observance of five prayers? Is it Belief in Muhammad as the last prophet or in the Quran as the created or not created Word of God? Or is it belief in Islamic *khilafat*? And so forth. If Muslims fail to set minimum criteria, they will accuse each other of being infidels. Even one who performs five prayers a day will easily be blamed if he/she follows democratic principles or does not support Islamic *khilafat* as the HT believe.

F. Conclusion

To conclude this discussion, I would like to draw some points. The first thing I want to highlight is related to the accusation of fellow Muslims of being "deviated or not deviated". This accusation is in contradiction to the diversity and plurality of Muslim societies. Violence will cause other violence. As can be seen above, extinction of fellow Muslims is a recurring fact in Islamic history.

Secondly, Muslims' power in the mid of geo-politic and economic competition is not determined by the vast number of people who were already condemned or forced to go back to the "true" Islam. By contrast, violence, killing, and extinction by fellow Muslims are the proof of Muslim weakness. Muslims become busied with internal conflicts.

The third point concerns the claim of certain Muslim groups to the truth and saviour. There is no a valid criteria to consider if one can be called being deviated or infidels. Only God has heaven and hell. No one can claim to have them. Apart from that, death is the only way to prove that he/she is truly saved and true in the eyes of God.

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[18] Myriad *hadith* narrate diverse things: one tells that Islam is composed of five things; a Muslim is one who saves the others from his wrong deed, etc.

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