

SECTARIAN TRANSLATION OF THE QURAN IN INDONESIA

The Case of the Ahmadiyya¹

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Abstract

Ahmadiyya's translations of the Quran have some distinctive characteristics compared to the translations from Sunni Muslims. However, these translations, particularly Soedowo-Dutch translation of Mubammad Ali's The Holy Quran, have been influential in Indonesian Sunni community in the first half of the 20th century. Against the opposition from the Muhammadiyah and the fatwa from Muhammad Rashid Rida of Egypt, which prohibited the use of Ahmadiyya's translation, the Soedowo-Dutch translation was widely used by Dutch-educated intelligentsia as a main source to know about Islam. This article specifically answers the following questions: Why did Ahmadiyya's translations of the Quran have a significant place in Indonesia? What was the appeal of these translations to Indonesian intelligentsia? What is the contribution of these translations to the study of the Quran in this country? This paper argues that the success of Ahmadiyya's translation, particularly the Dutch version, during the revolution era is based on three reasons: language (Dutch is the language of intelligentsia), content (which fit with the need of intelligentsia who seek a harmonious understanding between religie and wetenschap), and form (the only available rendering of the Quran in modern form of publication). In the context of ideology, the reception of Muslim intelligentsia was mainly for their contribution in defending Islam against the

¹ A draft of this article was first presented at the International Conference on Qur'anic Studies, Jakarta, 15-16 February 2014 and workshop on "Qur'anic Studies in Contemporary Indonesia", Jakarta, 2 September 2015. I wish to thank Yusuf Rahman and anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

penetration of Christian mission and the coming of anti-religion ideologies, particularly materialism and atheism, by strongly challenging their doctrines. [Terjemah al-Quran versi Ahmadiyah memiliki beberapa karakteristik yang berbeda jika dibandingkan dengan terjemah versi Islam sunni pada umumnya. Namun demikian, terjemah seperti di atas, khususnya terjemah al-Quran dalam bahasa Belanda --yang dialih-bahasakan dari The Holy Qur'an karya Muhammad Ali oleh Soedowo-- cukup berpengaruh di masyarakat muslim Indonesia pada paruh pertama abad ke-20. Bertentangan dengan fatwa dari Muhammadiyah maupun dari Muhammad Rashid Rida yang melarang penggunaan terjemah versi Ahmadiyah, terjemah Soedowo ini justru menjadi rujukan bagi kalangan terdidik untuk memahami Islam. Tulisan ini secara khusus menjawab pertanyaan: mengapa terjemah al-Quran versi Ahmadiyah ini cukup berpengaruh di Indonesia, apa yang menarik dari terjemah ini bagi mereka, serta apa sumbangan pemikiran terjemah ini pada perkembangan keilmuan al-Quran di negeri ini. Menurut penulis, terjemah versi Ahmadiyah, khususnya yang berbahasa Belanda, mengalami kesuksesan pada masa revolusi dipengaruhi oleh tiga hal: (1) bahasa Belanda yang dipakai adalah bahasa kalangan terdidik, (2) isinya sesuai dengan kebutuhan kalangan terpelajar yang ingin mencari pemahaman yang harmonis antara agama dan ilmu pengetahuan, dan (3) terjemah ini merupakan satu-satunya bentuk publikasi modern dari terjemah al-Quran yang ada pada masa itu. Dalam konteks ideologi, penerimaan kaum intelektual ini terutama terkait dengan upaya perlawanan Islam terhadap tekanan misi Kristen dan masuknya ideologi-ideologi anti agama, khususnya materialisme dan atheisme.]

Keywords: Ahmadiyya, sectarianism, Dutch-educated intelligentsia, wetenschap, rationalism

A. Introduction

The Ahmadiyya has been accused by its opponents of having a different Holy Book from the Holy Book of the rest of Muslims. Ahmadiyya's holy book, in this accusation, is *Tadhkirah*, not the Quran.² However, this accusation has been rejected by the Ahmadis, both

² There are a number of books that try to solidify this accusation, such as: M. Amin Djamaluddin, *Ahmadiyah & Pembajakan Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Lembaga Penelitian & Pengkajian Islam, 2008); and Maman Abdurrahman, *Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Plagiat al-Qur'an: Telaah Komprehensif Plagiasi Mirza Ghulam Ahmad terhadap al-Qur'an* (Bandung: Rahman Press, 2011).

the Qadiani and Lahore faction, for several times.³ Furthermore, this community has also been preoccupied with the project of translating the Quran, not *Tadhkirah*, into numerous languages in different nationalities. Although the project of translating the Quran has been done by many people before the Ahmadiis, the translations from the Ahmadiyya can be seen as a pioneer in the project of translating the Quran by Muslims.⁴ In Indonesia, Ahmadiyya's translation is available in a number of languages, such as Dutch, Malay, Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, and Batakese. These translations had a significant place and widely used by Indonesian Muslims, particularly in the first half of the 20th century and a few decades after Indonesian independence in 1945, as a main source of knowledge of Islam.⁵

There are some differences between Ahmadiyya's translation of the Quran and translations by Sunni Muslims. In translating several verses, Ahmadiyya's translations indicated theological position of this movement from mainstream Sunni Muslims. It is from this fact that Ahmadiyya's translations have often created controversy and opposition from Muslims. In translating verses on miracles, prophethood, and Jesus, for instance, these translations show their distinctiveness from translations done by Sunni and Shi'ite Muslim.

This article, therefore, studies the characteristics of Ahmadiyya's translations and their influences in Indonesian Islam. The questions that will be dealt with in this article are the following: What is the uniqueness of Ahmadiyya's translations of the Quran? Why did Ahmadiyya's translations have a special place in the first half of the 20th century Indonesia? What was the appeal of these translations to Indonesian intelligentsia? What is the contribution of these translations to the study of the Quran in this country?

B. The Translation of the Quran from the Lahore Ahmadiyya

Historically, the idea of translating the Quran from its original

³ Ahmad Sulaeman and Ekky, *Klarifikasi terhadap "Kesesatan Ahmadiyah" dan "Plagiat"* (Bandung: Mubarak Publishing, 2011).

⁴ Translation of the Quran done by non-Muslims, such as George Sale and Alexander Ross, predates the translation by Muslims; Sage Woolworth, "A Bibliography of Koran Texts and Translations", *The Muslim World*, vol. 17, no. 3 (1927), pp. 279-89; Mofakhkhar Hussain Khan, "English Translations of the Holy Qur'an: a Bibliographic Study", *Islamic Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 2 (1986), pp. 82-108.

⁵ Sukarno, *Dibawah Bendera Revolusi*, volume I (Jakarta: Panitia Penerbit Dibawah Bendera Revolusi, 1964).

Arabic language had been a controversy in Muslim world.⁶ Some ulama oppose the idea to translate the Quran with the argument of *i'jāz al-Qur'ān* (the inimitability of the language of the Quran).⁷ Less theological than the idea of *i'jāz al-Qur'ān* is the idea that people could not free themselves from ideological bias. As observed by some scholars, translating the Quran is not merely rendering the Quran from Arabic to other languages, but it is also a means to transmit certain ideology and understanding of the Quran.⁸ It is not surprising, therefore, that an old Italian adage says “the translator is a traitor” (*traduttore traditore*).⁹

The above controversy aside, in Ahmadiyya, translation of the Quran into several languages could be considered the greatest contribution, if may say so, of this movement to Muslim world. The Ahmadiyya, both the Lahore and Qadiani branch, can be considered as initiators in translating the Quran into various languages in the world.¹⁰ For this movement, translating the Quran is one of their ways to implement the doctrine of waging *jihād bi al-qalam* (jihad of the pen) and

⁶ Al-Jīzāwī (*Shaikh al-Azhār*, 1917-1928) said that the translation of the Quran into ‘*ajami*’ was forbidden. Rashīd Ridā reinforced al-Jīzāwī’s opinion by saying that the Quran should not be translated in the Salafist press, including in the publication of *al-Manār* and *Tafsīr al-Manār*. This policy was developed, according to Rashīd Ridā, for the sake of Muslim unity, both religious and political; F.V. Greifenhagen, “Traduttore Traditore: An Analysis of the History of English Translations of the Quran”, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1992), p. 274; Gerard Wiegers, “Language and Identity: Pluralism and the Use of Non-Arabic Languages in the Muslim West”, in *Pluralism and Identity: Studies in Ritual Behaviour*, ed. Jan Platvoet and Karel van der Toorn (Leiden: Brill, 1995), pp. 317, 320; Moch Nur Ichwan, “Negara, Kitab Suci dan Politik: Terjemahan Resmi al-Qur’an di Indonesia”, in *Sadur: Sejarah Terjemahan di Indonesia dan Malaysia* ed. Henri Chambert-Loir (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2009), pp. 417-8.

⁷ In Indonesia, prohibition to translate the Quran into vernacular languages was issued, for instance, by Sayyid Usman of Batavia (Jakarta) during the Dutch colonial time. To support his stance, he published a book entitled *Hukm al-Rahman bi al-Nahy ‘an Tarjamah al-Qur’ān*, 1327/1909; Ichwan, “Negara, Kitab Suci dan Politik”, p. 417.

⁸ Greifenhagen, “Traduttore Traditore”; see also Neal Robinson, “Sectarian and Ideological Bias in Muslim Translations of the Qur’an”, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, vol. 8, no. 3 (1997), pp. 261-78.

⁹ Greifenhagen, “Traduttore Traditore”, p. 274. Some scholars even believe that what people can do is to exegete the passages of the Quran or to find the closest meaning, not translating the Quran.

¹⁰ Woolworth, “A Bibliography of Koran”; Greifenhagen, “Traduttore Traditore”; James Baber, *Translators of the English Qur’an: Historical Patterns of Change from 1649 to 2005*, Master Thesis (Dominguez Hills: California State University, 2008).

they have translated this Holy Book into more than a hundred languages.¹¹ As stated by Muhammad Ali, “The real objective of our movement is the propagation of Islam, and in that work the propagation of the Holy Quran holds the foremost place”.¹²

The main Lahore translation is Muhammad Ali’s *The Holy Qur’an: Containing Arabic text with English Translation and Commentary*. It was published for the first time by The *Islamic Review* Office in Woking, Surrey, London, in 1917. The idea to translate the Quran itself came up in 1907 or a year before Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the Ahmadiyya, passed away. The process of translation started in 1909 and took seven years to finish the work.¹³ After the split of the Ahmadiyya into Lahore and Qadiani branch in 1914, Muhammad Ali was the president of the *Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam* (AAII - Ahmadiyya Association for the Propagation of Islam), known as the Lahore Ahmadiyya, until his death in 1951.

Muhammad Ali’s *The Holy Qur’an* has some distinctive characteristics compared to other translations of the Quran. Among them are the following: First, it tries to show the compatibility between this holy book and modern sciences. Second, it underlines the completeness of the Quran. Third, it opposes the idea of *nāsikh* (abrogate) and *mansūkh* (abrogated) of the verses of the Quran. Fourth, it gives a detailed and lengthy preface.¹⁴ Fifth, it gives a new idea about Jesus and his crucifixion. This article, however, intends to discuss briefly only two of them, namely the first and the fifth.¹⁵

¹¹ R. F. McNeile, “The Koran According to Ahmad”, *The Muslim World*, vol. 6, no. 2 (1916), p. 174; Khan, “English Translations”, p. 89.

¹² Muhammad Ahmad, Mumtaz Ahmad Faruqi, and Zahid Aziz, *A Mighty Striving: the Biography of Maulana Muhammad Ali, Renowned Translator of the Holy Qur’an, Author, Scholar and Missionary of Islam* (Ohio: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam Lahore, 2004), p. 75.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 47. The Qadiani Ahmadiyya claimed that the translation is the property of the Ahmadiyya, not Muhammad Ali. The reason of this claim is because the translation was supervised by the second caliph of the Ahmadiyya, Nuruddin, much of the idea in the translation came from Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, and the project was funded by the Ahmadiyya. Muhammad Ali, however, rejected this claim by stating that it is his intellectual work and most of the fund also came from himself.

¹⁴ This type of translation (with lengthy preface) becomes a model followed by Indonesian official translation of the Quran.

¹⁵ For discussion on other distinctive characteristics of Muhammad Ali’s translation, see A. Bausani, “On some recent translations of the Qur’an”, *Numen*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1957), pp. 75-81; John Warwick Montgomery, “The apologetic approach of *Al-Jāmi’ah*”, Vol. 53, No. 2, 2015 M/1437 H

In his *The Holy Qur'an*, Muhammad Ali tries to show the compatibility between this holy book and modern sciences, that “the Word of God” (revelation) and “the Work of God” (creation) must not contradict each other.¹⁶ One way to do this is by giving allegorical translation whenever the Quran mentions about miracles.¹⁷ Examples for this are the story of Solomon, Moses, and Joseph. Traditionally, Muslim exegetes or translators render the meaning of 27: 16-44 literally, that the prophet Solomon can understand the language of ants. In contrast to this traditional understanding and translation, Ali translates 27: 18 as “Until when they came to the valley of the Naml, a Namlite said: O Naml, enter your houses, (lest) Solomon and his hosts crush you, while they know not.” For Ali, *Naml* is a proper noun and *Namlah* is name of a tribe and that is the reason why he uses capital N. Therefore, this verse does not talk about the ability of Solomon to understand the language of animal. In the story of Sheba, the jinn mentioned in 27: 39 is not understood a magical spirit, but as “one of the Amalekites [a mountain tribe], who were men of large stature”.¹⁸

In a story of Moses (2: 60), Muhammad Ali translates *idrib bi'aṣākāl hajar* as ‘March on the rock with thy staff’, while in other translation, such as Yusuf Ali, that phrase is translated as ‘strike the rock with thy staff’.¹⁹ In the story of Joseph (12:93), it is usually understood that Joseph’s father miraculously recovered from his blindness after Joseph’s cloth was thrown to his face. Muhammad Ali translates this verse differently. He writes: “Take this my shirt and cast it before my father, he will come to know.”

For the discussion on Jesus, Muhammad Ali shows the distinctive perspective of the Ahmadiyya, namely: Jesus did not die on the cross and ascended bodily to heaven after three days in the grave, as commonly believed by Christians. For the Ahmadiyya community, Jesus was also not elevated physically to heaven and stay next to God until today, as commonly believed by Muslims. For them, Jesus was crucified, but he did not die on the cross. He was brought down from the cross and saved

Muhammad Ali and its implications for Christian apologetics”, *The Muslim World*, vol. 51, no. 2 (1961), p. 119; Greifenhagen, “Traduttore Traditore”; and Baber, *Translators of the English Qur'an*.

¹⁶ Montgomery, “The Apologetic Approach”, p. 119.

¹⁷ Robinson, “Sectarian and Ideological Bias”, p. 269.

¹⁸ Muhammad Ali, *The Holy Qur-ān: Containing Arabic Text with English Translation and Commentary* (London: Islamic Review Office, 1917), p. 750.

¹⁹ Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary* (New York: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, 2008).

by his disciples. After his wound was healed with the ointment of Jesus (*marham-i Isa*), he travelled to the east and died a natural death on the age of 120 in Kashmir. In translating 4: 157-159, Muhammad Ali writes:

And for their saying: We have killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the messenger of Allah, and they killed him not, nor did they cause his death on the cross, but he was made to appear to them as such. And certainly those who differ therein are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge about it, but only follow a conjecture, and they killed him not for certain: Nay, Allah exalted him in His presence. And Allah is ever Mighty, Wise. And there is none of the People of the Book but will believe in this before his death; and on the day of Resurrection he will be a witness against them.

C. The Translation of the Quran from the Qadiani Ahmadiyya

There are two famous English translations of the Quran from this movement, namely: Sher Ali's *The Holy Qur'ān: Arabic text and English translation*, published in 1955 and Muhammad Zafrullah Khan's *The Quran: The eternal revelation vouchsafed to Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophet*.²⁰ These English translations have been used as the basis for Ahmadiyya's translation in other languages, including Bahasa Indonesia, Javanese, Batakese, and Balinese. Besides Sher Ali's and Zafrullah Khan's translations, the Qadiani Ahmadiyya also produces five-volume commentary of the Quran entitled *The Holy Qur'ān: Arabic Text with English Translation & Short Commentary*. This commentary was authored by Malik Ghulām Farīd and published under the auspices of Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad.

Sher Ali's *The Holy Qur'an* was published in 1955, but the specimen of the first part of this translation has appeared in 1915. This translation was done under the auspicious of the second caliph of the Ahmadiyya, Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad. Zafrullah Khan's *the Quran* was originally published in 1971.²¹ The Qadiani translation of the Quran has some similarities with the translation from Muhammad Ali, such as in the context of the death of Jesus. The Qadiani Ahmadiyya even gives more

²⁰ See Sher 'Alī, *The Holy Qur'ān: Arabic Text and English Translation* (Rabwah: the Oriental and Religious Pub. Corp, 1955); Maulawi Sher 'Alī, *The Holy Qur'ān: Arabic Texts and English Translation* (London: Islam International Publications Ltd., 2004).

²¹ Zafrullah Khan has been considered as one of two best followers of the Qadiani Ahmadiyya. He was the first foreign minister of Pakistan and a judge at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague. Another best follower of the Ahmadiyya is Abdus Salam, a Noble-winning Physicist.

emphasis on this issue. In translating 3: 54, for instance, Sher Ali writes: “When Allah said, ‘O Jesus, I will cause thee to die *a natural death* and will exalt thee to Myself” (italics in original, the number of verse in Sher Ali’s translation is 3: 56). In Muhammad Ali’s translation, it is translated as: “When Allah said: O Jesus! I will cause *you* to die and exalt *you* in My presence” (italics in original). In translating Q. 4: 157-159, Zafrullah Khan with his free flowing translation is even bolder than Muhammad Ali in emphasizing the death of Jesus.²² He writes:

And their saying: We did kill the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah; whereas they slew him not, nor did they compass his death on the cross, but he was made to appear to them like one crucified to death; and those who have differed in the matter of his having been taken down alive from the cross are certainly in a state of doubt concerning it, they have no definite knowledge about it, but only follow a conjecture; they certainly did not compass his death in the manner they allege; indeed Allah exalted him to Himself, Allah is Mighty Wise, and there is none among the People of the Book but will continue to believe till his death that Jesus died on the cross, and on the Day of Judgment Jesus will bear witness against them.

One of the obvious differences between these two branches of the Ahmaddiyah is their view on the prophethood of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. The Lahore only recognizes him as a *mujaddid* (reformer), whereas the Qadiani accepts him as a prophet. The translations from Sher Ali, Ghulam Farid, and Zafrullah Khan show this distinctive perspective. In translating Q. 62: 2, for instance, Ghulam Farid gives a footnote mentioning that this verse is a proof of the prophecy of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. He writes, “Thus the Qur’an and the *Hadith* both seem to agree that the present verse refers to the Second Advent of the Holy Prophet in the person of the Promised Messiah [Mirza Ghulam Ahmad]”.²³

In the context of the meaning of *kbātām al-nabiyyīn* (33: 40), the Lahore and Qadiani Ahmadiyya do not have significant differences in their literal translation. Muhammad Ali translates this verse as: “Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Apostle of Allah and the seal of the prophets”. Sher Ali translates this verse as: “Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but *he is* the Messenger of Allah

²² Muhammad Zafrullah Khan, *The Quran: the Eternal Revelation Vouchsafed to Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophet* (London: Curzon Press, 1975).

²³ Malik Ghulam Farid, *The Holy Qur’an: Arabic Text with English Translation & Short Commentary*, vol. 5 (London: Islam International Publications Ltd., 2003), p. 2627.

and the Seal of the prophets.” Sher Ali uses capital S (Seal) and italics “*he is*”, whereas Muhammad Ali uses small s (seal) and no italics. However, if we compare the footnote from Muhammad Ali and Ghulam Farid, it would be found the ideological differences in their translation. Ghulam Farid emphasizes “the continuity of prophethood” after Muhammad and “the advent of Prophets” after Muhammad, whereas Muhammad Ali emphasizes that “prophethood terminated with the Holy Prophet”.²⁴

D. The Ahmadiyya and the Translation of the Quran in Indonesia

The Ahmadiyya’s translation of the Quran was actually not the first available exegetic work on the Quran in Indonesian languages, but it was the first translation of the Quran to be available to Indonesians in the modern era. As investigated by Peter Riddell, the first exegetic work on the entire Quran in Indonesia was ‘Abd al-Ra’uf al-Singkili’s *Tarjuman al-Mustafid* in the 17th century.²⁵ However, in terms of translating the Quran for a wider audience, and not only for pedagogical purposes, the Ahmadiyya’s translation of the Quran was groundbreaking, and had a significant role in the project of “returning back to the Quran” (*al-rujū‘ ilal Qur’ān*) that began in 18th century, in the time of Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab.²⁶ In the following section, this article discusses four cases about Ahmadiyya’s translations of the Quran in Indonesia that have had significant repercussions for discourse on the Quran.

1. Tjokroaminoto’s Malay-Translation

The idea of translating the Quran into the Malay-Indonesian language materialized not long after Mirza Wali Ahmad Baig, the first

²⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 2125-6; Ali, *The Holy Qur-ān*, p. 826.

²⁵ Peter Riddell, “Earliest Quranic Exegetic Activity in the Malay Speaking States”, *Archipel*, vol. 38, no. 1 (1989), pp. 107-24; Peter Riddell, “Controversy in Qur’anic Exegesis and its Relevance to the Malaya-Indonesian World”, in *The Making of an Islamic Political Discourse in Southeast Asia*, ed. by Anthony Reid (Clayton: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies-Monash University, 1993). Other translations of the Quran are *Kitab Kur’an: Tetedakanipun ing Tembang Arab Kajawekaken* (1858) and *Fayḍ al-Rahmān fi Tafsīr al-Qur’ān* (1894). The author for the former is anonymous, while for the latter is Muhammad Shalih bin ‘Umar al-Samarani or Kyai Shaleh Darat; see Ichwan, “Negara, Kitab Suci dan Politik”, p. 417.

²⁶ Fazlur Rahman describes Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s project as “the ‘first throb of life’ in Islam after its rapid decline in the preceding several centuries”. See Fazlur Rahman, “Islam: Challenges and Opportunities”, in *Islam, Past Influence and Present Challenge*, ed. by Alford T. Welch and Pierre Cachia (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979), p. 316.

Lahore Ahmadiyah missionary, came to Indonesia in 1924. With approval from Haji Fachruddin and Mas Mansur of the Muhammadiyah (the largest modernist movement in Indonesia), H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto (1882-1934), the president of the *Sarekat Islam* (SI, Islamic Union), began translating Muhammad Ali's *The Holy Qur'an*²⁷ in 1925.²⁸ As reported by *Tempo*, a Jakarta-based magazine, Tjokroaminoto was once working on this "translation of translation" during his trip to Mecca with Mas Mansur to attend the Islamic World Congress in 1926.²⁹ There was no criticism or opposition to this project until part of it appeared in *Fadjar Asia*, an Islamic periodical, before the Al-Islam Congress, annual meeting of all Indonesian Muslim organizations, in Yogyakarta in 1928.

It was during the Al-Islam Congress of January 26-29, 1928 that this project was bitterly attacked by delegates from the Muhammadiyah.³⁰ The overt reason for this criticism was the allegorical and metaphorical interpretation of the Quran used by Muhammad Ali in his *The Holy Qur'an*. This type of interpretation was considered unacceptable by mainstream ulama.³¹ The attack even took aim at Tjokroaminoto himself, who was accused of being unqualified to translate the Quran. In his defense, Tjokroaminoto stated that his reason for translating Muhammad Ali's *The Holy Qur'an*, instead of other translations of the Quran, was because it was the best translation for the young Muslim intelligentsia who lacked Islamic education, such as those in the *Jong Islamieten Bond* (JIB), an organization of young educated Muslims established in 1925.

²⁷ The first printing of the translation was in 1917.

²⁸ Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia, 1900-1942* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 150-1. Noer's reference is *Fadjar Asia*, 4 February 1928.

²⁹ "Ahmadiyah, Sebuah Titik yang Dilupa", *Tempo*, vol. 29 no. 4 (21 Sep 1974). During the sixth al-Islam Congress in September 1925, Tjokroaminoto and Mas Mansur were elected to represent Muslim people in the East Indies and attend the Islamic World Congress; see Harry J. Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun: Indonesian Islam under the Japanese Occupation, 1942-1945* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve, 1958), pp. 52, 214.

³⁰ Harry J. Benda mentions that the attack came not only from the Muhammadiyah, but also from the Nahdlatul Ulama; "Together they opposed the spread of *Ahmadiyah* teachings, and together they vetoed an Indonesian Koran translation by Tjokroaminoto, based on the English *Ahmadiyah* version"; Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun*, p. 54.

³¹ A number of Quranic verses that had become a subject of debate during the Congress were listed and elaborated by Herman Beck, "The Rupture between the Muhammadiyah and the Ahmadiyah", *Bijdragen Tot De Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, vol. 161, no. 2 (2005), p. 235 n. 46.

He seemed to believe that this translation could be used effectively to help Dutch-educated Muslims regain their confidence in Islam after it had been drained away in their schools, which placed a strong emphasis on rationality. This translation could also be used as an effective weapon for refuting negative accusations against Islam and protecting Western-educated Muslims from the appeals of materialism and Christianity that were evident at that time.³²

One of the staunchest defenders of this “translation of translation” was Agus Salim, Tjokroaminoto’s partner as *dwitunggal* or *duumvirate* in the leadership of the Sarekat Islam. Agus Salim supported Tjokroaminoto’s project and also endorsed his choice to translate Muhammad Ali’s *The Holy Qur’an*. As stated in his introduction to Tjokroaminoto’s translation, Agus Salim praised Muhammad Ali’s *The Holy Qur’an* for its success in reconciling religion and science (*wetenschap*) without necessarily slipping into materialism, rationalism, or mysticism which, he believed, “deviate from monotheistic faith and true Islam. Strictly speaking, it could avoid from the error of Dahriyya, Mu‘tazila, and Batiniyya”.³³ He also stated that Tjokroaminoto’s translation did not contain anything that deviated from an orthodox (mainstream) understanding of Islam. Therefore, it would certainly not misguide people. Salim also mentioned that Muhammad Ali’s translation of the Quran was on a par with Western scholarship from academic and scholarly perspective. With this statement, he implicitly argued that Tjokroaminoto’s translation suited Muslim scholars of his time and that it could confidently be used as a source, with strong academic weight, for refuting any negative accusations, such as the supposed intolerance of Islam, the expansion of Islam using the sword, and the degradation of women.

The controversy over Tjokroaminoto’s translation moved beyond the boundaries of Indonesia and became an international issue. During the heated debate in the Al-Islam Congress in 1928, a delegation from the Muhammadiyah came up with a proposal to arrange a debate between Muhammad Ali of India and Muhammad Rashid Rida of Egypt and ask them to discuss Ali’s translation of the Qur’an,³⁴ although this proposal

³² Margaret Blood, “The Ahmadiyah in Indonesia: Its Early History and Contribution to Islam in the Archipelago” Thesis (Canberra: Australian National University, 1974). The references used by Margaret Blood are *Mailrapport 141X28* and “Salinan dan tafsir Qoeran soetji...” *Fadjar Asia* (4 Feb 1928).

³³ H.M. Bachrun, *Qur’an Suci, Terjemah & Tafsir*, (Jakarta: Darul Kutubul Islamiyah, 2006), p. vii.

³⁴ Blood, *The Ahmadiyah in Indonesia*, p. 43.

was rejected by participants of the Congress because of difficulties to implement the proposal. However, Muhammad Basyuni ‘Imran (1885-1981) of Borneo and a student of Rashid Rida has another idea to deal with this issue. He sent a letter to Rashid Rida requesting his fatwa (*istiftā’*) regarding Tjokroaminoto and Ali’s translation of the Quran. In his reply, Rashid Rida calls his fellow Muslims to avoid using Ahmadiyya’s translation because, for him, it could lead them to astray. In his view, Ali’s translation deviated from the standard interpretation, corrupting and distorting the Quran.³⁵

The opposition of the Muhammadiyah to Tjokroaminoto’s project seems to have two intentions: first, opposing the Sarekat Islam and Tjokroaminoto; and second, as a way to redeem the religious authority of the Muhammadiyah after it had been tainted by their role in welcoming reception of the Ahmadiyya to Indonesia. The Muhammadiyah seemed to regret their previous policy of cooperating with the Ahmadiyya, so they overtly showed their bitter opposition to the Ahmadiyya in order to rehabilitate their tainted reputation.

In reality, the relation between the Muhammadiyah and the SI had started to fray even before the Al-Islam Congress of January 1928. The opposition to Tjokroaminoto’s translation seems to have been a climax of the conflict between these two movements. From the perspective of the Muhammadiyah, Tjokroaminoto was not a good leader and his religious observations could not be taken as a model for Muslims. His trip to Mecca with Mas Mansur revealed his religiosity. During his stay in Mecca to attend the Islamic World Congress and perform the *ḥajj* (pilgrimage), as reported by Muhammadiyah delegation, he easily neglected daily religious rituals. Conversely, it was the Muhammadiyah policy of accepting subsidies from the colonial government that, from the perspective of the SI, led their

³⁵ This call is mentioned in the collection of his fatwas entitles *Fatāwā al-Imām Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā*. The title of the fatwa is *Tarjama Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Hindī li al-Qur’ān*. It is in fatwa number 742, located in volume five of six volumes of the collection of Riḍā’s fatwas. Rida actually confused the Lahore and Qadiani Ahmadiyya, calling Muhammad Ali a member of the Qadiani Ahmadiyya while he was in fact the president of the Lahore Ahmadiyya. See Muhammad Rashid Rida, *Fatāwā al-Imām Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā*, ed. by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Munajjid, and Yūsuf Q. Khūrī (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kitāb al-Jadīd, 2005), pp. 2057-9. For a discussion about Rida’s fatwa on Muhammad Ali’s *The Holy Qur’ān*, see Moch. Nur Ichwan, “Differing Responses to an Ahmadi Translation and Exegesis: The Holy Qur’ān in Egypt and Indonesia” *Archipel*, vol. 62, no. 1, 2001, pp. 143-161. For the fatwa on the status of the Ahmadiyya in Islam, see Ahmad Najib Burhani. “Treating Minorities with Fatwās: A Study of the Ahmadiyya Community in Indonesia”, *Contemporary Islam*, vol. 8, no. 3 (2014), pp. 285-301.

relation with the Muhammadiyah to deteriorate.³⁶ This weakened faith in Tjokroaminoto was further aggravated by the close relations between him and the Ahmadiyya, whereas the Muhammadiyah had started to break their ties with the Ahmadiyyah. It was Abdul 'Ali Siddiq al-Qadiri, an Indian cleric, who, during his tour of Java in October-November 1927, showed the incompatibility of Ahmadiyya beliefs with Islam and led the Muhammadiyah to distance themselves from the Ahmadiyyah movement.³⁷ During the 17th Congress of the Muhammadiyah in Yogyakarta in February 1928, Yunus Anis, the new First Secretary of the Muhammadiyah, after the dismissal of Muhammad Husni stated that the Muhammadiyah's decision to disapprove Tjokroaminoto's translation was based on their assessment that Muhammad Ali's *The Holy Qur'an* deviated from the orthodox teachings of Islam as held by mainstream Sunni Muslims.³⁸

The controversy over Tjokroaminoto's translation of the Quran was then brought to the Congress of the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Indonesian Council of Ulama) in Kediri on September 27-30, 1928.³⁹ The Council finally gave approval to Tjokroaminoto's project of translating Muhammad Ali's *The Holy Qur'an*, with the condition that the project would be done under the supervision of the Council. However, even though the Council of Ulama gave its endorsement to the project, the heated controversy surrounding it perhaps made Tjokroaminoto lose his motivation. By his death in 1934, he had only completed three volumes

³⁶ Noer, *The Modernist Muslim*, p. 237.

³⁷ Iskandar Zulkarnain, *Gerakan Ahmadiyah di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: LKiS Yogyakarta, 2005), p. 190; Beck, "The Rupture between the Muhammadiyah and the Ahmadiyya", p. 236. Hamka mentions that it was his father, Haji Rasul, who unveiled the theological differences between the Ahmadiyya and Sunni Islam; Hamka, *Ayahku: Riwat Hidup Dr. H. Abdul Karim Amrullah dan Perjuangan Kaum Agama di Sumatera* (Jakarta: Umminda, 1982), p. 149.

³⁸ Beck, "The Rupture between the Muhammadiyah and the Ahmadiyya", pp. 235-6.

³⁹ This institution was established in 1927. During the SI Congress in January 1928, this institution was approved by the members of the SI as the council of ulama for the Indonesian Muslim community in general, although in reality it was only a department within the SI. The committee of this council consisted of K.H.M. Anwaruddin (Rembang), K.H.M. Abdullah Siradj (Yogyakarta), Haji Abdul Halim (Majalengka). According to Tjokroaminoto, it had around 150 members. See Noer, *The Modernist Muslim*, p. 150.

Ahmad Najib Burhani
of *The Holy Qur'an*.⁴⁰

2. Soedewo's Dutch-Translation

As opposed to Tjokroaminoto's Malay translation of Muhammad Ali's *The Holy Qur'an*, which received bitter and devastating opposition from Indonesian Muslims (particularly those in the Muhammadiyah and the Nahdlatul Ulama, NU), Soedewo's translation into Dutch was a great success.⁴¹ The 4000 copies of the first printing in 1934 were warmly welcomed by the Indonesian Muslim intelligentsia.⁴² Although this translation also received sharp criticism, this could not stop it from being published.⁴³ Soedewo's translation has even been reprinted several times in Indonesia and in Dutch-speaking countries such as South Africa, Suriname, and the Netherlands.

According to a journalistic investigation conducted by *Tempo*, this translation could be found in every Muslim intelligentsia household of the late colonial era.⁴⁴ This is also the translation of the Quran that

⁴⁰ Hadji 'Oemar Sa'id Tjokroaminoto (trans.), *Qoer'an Soetji, Disertai Salinan dan Keterangannja dalam Bahasa Melajoe*, (Weltevreden, 1928). This information is based on G.F. Pijper's "De Ahmadiyah in Indonesia" in Philippus Samuel van Ronkel, *Bingkeisan Budi: een Bundel Opstellen aan Dr. Philippus Samuel van Ronkel door Vrienden en Leerlingen Aangeboden op z'n Tachtigste Verjaardag 1 Augustus 1950* (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff's Uitgeversmaatschappij N.V., 1950), p. 252. Based on an investigation by *Tempo*, this translation is available in a museum in Jakarta. However, the name of the museum is not indicated in the report; *Tempo*, "Jiplak-menjiplak' Tafsir Qur'an" *Tempo*, vol. 45, no. 3, 12 January 1974.

⁴¹ The title of this translation is *De heilige Qoer-an: Vervattende den Arabischen Tekst met Ophelderende Aanteekeningen en Voorrede van Maulvi Moehammed Ali* (Batavia: Hoofdcomite Qoer-ānfonds, 1934). There were two translations of the Quran in Malay that appeared almost simultaneously, namely: Ahmad Hassan's *Al-Furqan: Tafsir Quraan*, which appeared for the first time in 1928 and Mahmud Yunus's *Tarjamah Al Quran Al Karim*, which appeared for the first time in 1935; Peter Riddell, "Menerjemahkan al-Qur'an ke Dalam Bahasa-bahasa di Indonesia", in *Sadur*, p. 403.

⁴² Soedewo, *Asas-asas dan Pekerdjaan Gerakan Ahmadiyah Indonesia (Centrum Lahore)*, trans. by Sastrawiria (Soekaboemi: Gerakan Ahmadiyah Indonesia (Centrum Lahore), 1937), p. 87; GAI (Gerakan Ahmadiyah Lahore Indonesia), *Anggaran Dasar (Qanun Asasi)*, (Yogyakarta: Gerakan Ahmadiyah Lahore Indonesia, n.d.), pp. 109-10.

⁴³ *Adil*, a magazine published by the Muhammadiyah, in its edition number. 135, 8 February 1934, for instance, gives the following statement: "The Dutch translation of the Qur'an simply make people go astray, making our descendants fall into *jahannam* (hell); poisonous exegesis for Muslims"; see S. Ali Yasir and Yatimin, *100 Tahun Ahmadiyah: 60 Tahun Gerakan Ahmadiyah Lahore Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Pedoman Besar GAI, Bagian Tabligh dan Tarbiyah, 1989), p. 37; GAI, *Anggaran Dasar (Qanun Asasi)*, p. 109.

⁴⁴ "Ahmadiyah, Sebuah Titik yang Dilupa".

was frequently quoted by Sukarno, the first president of Indonesia, in a number of his religious speeches and writings.⁴⁵ To illustrate the value of this translation for his life, Roeslan Abdulgani, a leader of the Indonesian national revolution and a key minister during the Sukarno era (1945-1965), stated that the two most significant books in his life were *De vrijmaking der menschheid* by Hendrik Willem Van Loon⁴⁶ and *De heilige Qoer-an* by Muhammad Ali of Lahore. “When he was arrested by the Dutch, Roeslan let all his property confiscated with a condition that he could keep those two books with him”.⁴⁷

There were at least three reasons why Soedewo’s translation was so popular and received with such interest. First, in terms of the medium of communication, this translation used Dutch, the language of educated elites in Indonesia at that time. As described by Karel Steenbrink, the membership of the *Jong Islamieten Bond* (JIB), “mostly consisted of children from the elite, who visited schools, where the language of instruction was Dutch. Their language of communication often was also Dutch. Their knowledge of Arabic was usually zero and even their knowledge of Malay and Javanese often very poor”.⁴⁸ National leaders at that time, such as Sukarno and H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto, did not have strong religious family backgrounds and did not go to *pesantren* (religious school). Therefore, although there were already exegetic works available in Arabic, such as *Tafsir al-Manar* and other modern works from Egypt, the language barrier made these works inaccessible to them.

Second, in terms of content, *De heilige Qoer-an* offered a new understanding of Islam which was appropriate for the needs of the Indonesian Muslim intelligentsia at that time --namely, the compatibility of *religie en wetenschap* (religion and science). With the onslaught of atheism, materialism, and Christianity, these members of the Muslim intelligentsia needed an authoritative source to show the superiority of Islam over other religions and its compatibility with science. *De heilige*

⁴⁵ Sukarno, *Kalan Akan Mentjari Tuhan, Batjalab al-Qur’an* (Djakarta: Departemen Agama, 1963); Soekarno, *Alqur’an Membentuk Manusia Baru* (Djakarta: Departemen Agama, 1964); Sukarno, *Dibawah Bendera Revolusi*.

⁴⁶ See Hendrik Willem van Loon, *De Vrijmaking der Denschheid: Geschiedenis van’s Menschen Strijd om het Recht van Vrijheid van Gedachte* (Amsterdam: Scheltens & Giltay, 1930).

⁴⁷ Roeslan Abdulgani, “Cak Roes, dari ‘kaptan’ langsung...”, *Tempo* (27 Dec 1975), <http://majalah.tempointeraktif.com/id/arsip/1975/12/27/TK/mbm.19751227.TK68399.id.html>, accessed 14 October 2011.

⁴⁸ Karel A. Steenbrink, “The Study of Comparative Religion by Indonesian Muslims: A Survey”, *Numen*, vol.37, no. 2 (1990), p. 146.

Qoer-an effectively satisfied this type of need.⁴⁹ With his way of translating and presenting the Quran, Muhammad Ali refuted Western criticisms, such as the accusation that Islam was intolerant towards non-Muslims and degraded women. To make the Quran compatible with modern science, Muhammad Ali even downplayed or reinterpreted miracles and supra-rational matters (which can easily be found in the Quran) so that they would be comprehensible with human reason. From the perspective of traditional ulama such as Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi of India and the Muhammadiyah ulama, this type of translation was a deviation from orthodox Islam, which was why they rejected it.⁵⁰ It is against traditional beliefs of Muslims that oppose allegorical interpretation of the Quran. However, for the Muslim intelligentsia at that time, these features were advantages of this translation and made them more likely to buy *De heilige Qoer-an*.

Third, it was the first available translation of the Quran in market and accessible in terms of language. There were a number of exegetic works in Indonesia before *De heilige Qoer-an*, but they are in Arabic or using Arabic script which was not the language used by those intelligentsia.

3. *The Official Indonesian Translation and Plagiarism*

The differences and oppositions between the Lahore and Qadiani Ahmadiyya were not limited to theological issues, but also to the ways in which they propagated their beliefs and translated the Quran. In the context of translating the Quran, the two branches competed with one another to render it into as many foreign languages as possible. Accordingly, the two branches had their own translations of the Quran in Indonesia. The Qadiani translation of the Quran in Bahasa Indonesia appeared for the first time in 1953⁵¹, whereas the Lahore translation

⁴⁹ Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, for instance, states in his introduction to the Qurat that, “no other revealed Book proves their validity on grounds of logic and reason, while the Qur-an frankly appeals to our reason before it asks us to accept them”; see Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, “The Holy Qur-an and its Commentary: Introduction”, *Islamic Review*, vol. XX, no. 5 (1932), p. 166.

⁵⁰ Abdulhasan ‘Ali Nadwi, *Qadianism: A Critical Study* (Lucknow: Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, 1965). Among the verses of the Quran that became the subject of debate are 2:60; 2:72-73; 3:49; 27:16-18; 34:14; 27:30; and 72:1.

⁵¹ Shaikh Khurshid Ahmad, “A Brief History of Ahmadiyya Muslim Community”, <http://www.alislam.org/library/history/ahmadiyya/56.html>, accessed 14 October 2011. My reference is Lembaga Penjelenggara Penterjemah Kitab Sutji al Qurān and Jajasan Penjelenggara Penterjemah/Pentafsir al Qurān, *Al Qurān dan Terjemahnja = al-Qur’ān al-Karīm*, 3 vol. (Djakarta: Lembaga Penjelenggara Penterjemah 266

of the Quran into Bahasa Indonesia appeared in 1979 (but its Dutch and Javanese translations had already appeared in 1934 and 1958, respectively).⁵²

What is interesting in the context of Ahmadiyya's translations is that even though many people opposed them and regard them of deviating from the accepted standard translation of the Quran, the official Indonesian translation of the Quran followed the model of Ahmadiyya's translations.⁵³ The official Indonesian translation of the Quran only appeared for the first time in 1965 and was published by the Ministry of Religion.⁵⁴ The introduction of the first edition of this translation was accused of committing plagiarism from the work of Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad (the second caliph of the Qadiani Ahmadiyya movement) which was entitled *Introduction to the Study of the Qur'an*.⁵⁵ This work had been attached as an introduction to the Qadiani

Kitab Sutji al Qurān, 1965).

⁵² The Indonesian translation of the Quran from the Lahore Ahmadiyya, translated from Muhammad Ali's *The Holy Qur'an* by H.M. Bachrun, was approved and certified by the Ministry of Religion on 2 July 1971 (No. Sd/Lega/II-d/82/71).

⁵³ For the view that Ahmadiyya's translations have deviated from the standard translation in Sunni Islam, see M. Quraish Shihab, "Menyikapi Perbedaan dengan Cara Beradab" in Muchlis M. Hanafi, *Menggugat Ahmadiyah: Mengungkap Ayat-ayat Kontroversial dalam Tafsir Ahmadiyah* (Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2011). For the discussion on the background, history, and some "mistakes" of the Indonesian translation from the Qadiani Ahmadiyya, see Muchlis M. Hanafi, *Menggugat Ahmadiyah*. Hanafi's book was responded by R.H. Munirul Islam Yusuf and Ekky O. Sabandi, *Ahmadiyah Menggugat! Menjawab Tulisan: "Menggugat Ahmadiyah"* (Bandung: Mubarak Publishing, 2011).

⁵⁴ The first printing of this translation used Bahasa Indonesia in old orthography, i.e. *al Qurān dan Terdjemahnja = al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*. This edition consists of three volumes, published separately in 1965, 1967, and 1969. This first edition was printed at a printing house called Yayasan Mu'awanah Nahdlatul Ulama (Yamunu). Accordingly, this edition was often called the "Yamunu Edition". The second edition was published in 1974 when Abdul Mukti Ali was the Minister of Religion. This second edition was named the "Mukti Ali Edition". The third edition was published by Mujamma' Khadim al-Haramayn al-Sharifayn al-Malik Fahd li al-Taba'at al-Mushaf al-Sharif in 1990. This edition has been distributed freely for Indonesian pilgrims as a gift from the King of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, this edition has been called the "Saudi Edition". See Ichwan "Negara, Kitab Suci dan Politik", p. 420; Budi Setiono, "Jejak Tafsir Kaum Ahmadi", *Majalah Historia* (26 August 2011), <http://www.majalah-historia.com/berita-489-jejak-tafsir-kaum-ahmadi.html>, accessed 13 October 2011.

⁵⁵ The official Indonesian translation of the Quran was published by Mujamma' Khadim al-Haramain al-Syarifain (n.d.) and rectified by Lajnah Pentashih al-Qur'an, the Minister of Religion, on 28 February 1990. It still contains Mahmud Ahmad's work, but this work is not mentioned in the bibliography. See Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, *Al-Jāmi'ah*, Vol. 53, No. 2, 2015 M/1437 H

translation of the Quran (which was written by Maulawi Sher Ali), but was published separately as a book, appearing for the first time in 1949.⁵⁶ *Indonesia Raya*, a Jakarta-based daily newspaper (now defunct), first brought this issue to public attention in its edition on 19 December 1973. *Tempo* made a further investigation and found that 12 out of 125 pages from the introduction of the official Indonesian translation were copied and pasted from Mahmud Ahmad's work.⁵⁷ The copied sections of Mahmud Ahmad mainly discussed religions before Islam and their holy Books, Islam's place among other religions, and humans' need for the revelation of the Quran, while arguing that religion was not a product of human imagination.

The project of producing an "official" Indonesian translation of the Quran was conducted by two teams: one in Jakarta and one in Yogyakarta.⁵⁸ The introduction was written by the Jakarta team, which consisted of religious experts such as Mukti Ali, Bustami Abdulgani, Toha Jahja Omar, and Asrul Sani. The Yogyakarta team, which consisted of experts such as Hasbi Ash-Shiddique, Mochtar Jahja, Ali Maksum, had the responsibility of translating the Quran.⁵⁹ Bahrum Rangkuti, the General Secretary of the Ministry of Religion during the time that the project was conducted, was also allegedly involved, which probably made the work of Mahmud Ahmad was included verbatim in the official translation.⁶⁰ Bahrum Rangkuti was an alumnus of Jami'a al-Mubasherin, Rabwah, Pakistan, a school for the Qadiani Ahmadiyya missionaries.⁶¹

Introduction to the Study of the Holy Quran (London: The London Mosque, 1949).

⁵⁶ My reference is the 1996 edition.

⁵⁷ "Jiplak-menjiplak' Tafsir Qur'an". Besides the content, the official translation also allegedly follows the design and *khat* (type of script) of the Qadiani translation, see R. Ahmad Anwar, *Di Mana Letak Kesesatan dan Bahaya Ahmadiyah?* (Bandung: Yayasan al-Abror, 2002), pp. 9-11.

⁵⁸ "Official" means the translation produced and distributed officially by Indonesian government.

⁵⁹ "Jiplak-menjiplak' Tafsir Qur'an".

⁶⁰ According to a source from the Ahmadiyya, the relation between Mukti Ali and the Ahmadiyya began when he was studying in Pakistan. During his study there, he stayed in the house of Yahya Pontoh, a prominent figure in the Ahmadiyya. See Zaenal Abidin E. P., *Syarif Ahmad Saitama Lubis: Dari Ahmadiyah untuk Bangsa* (Yogyakarta: Logung Pustaka, 2007), p. 180.

⁶¹ Ismatu Ropi, "Islamism, Government Regulation and the Ahmadiyah Controversy in Indonesia", *Al-Jami'ah*, vol. 48, no. 2, 2010, pp. 295-6; M. Dawam Rahardjo, "Gerakan Ahmadiyah dalam Krisis", in M.A. Suryawan, *Bukan Sekedar Hitam Putih: Kontroversi Pemahaman Ahmadiyah* (Tangerang: Azahra Publishing, 2005), p. xi; Bahrum Rangkuti also translated Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad's *The Economic*

Mahmud Ahmad's work was inserted into the 1990 edition, but his name was omitted from the bibliography, perhaps to avoid criticism from mainstream Muslims. However, this would be considered a crime from an academic perspective. Furthermore, not only were the title and author of the quoted work omitted from the bibliography of the official translation, but the sheer number of pages taken from Mahmud Ahmad's work also creates serious concerns for those with academic sensibilities. The Ministry of Religion's answer, through Bahrum Rangkuti, seemed only to address the theological question while neglecting the academic one. He said, as quoted by *Tempo*, "The content [of the part of the translation] which was taken [from Mahmud Ahmad's book] does not harm Islamic faith because it is only talking about historical issues."⁶²

4. *The Translation of the Quran into Local Languages*

Besides Malay, Dutch, and Bahasa Indonesia translations, the Lahore and Qadiani Ahmadiyya also translated the Quran into ethnic Indonesian languages; the Lahore translated the Quran into Javanese, whereas the Qadiani translated the Quran into Sundanese (Western Java), Balinese (Bali Island), and Batakese (the language of the Batak ethnicity on Sumatra Island). The Javanese translation was done by R. Ng. H. Minhadjurrahman Djajasugita and M. Mufti Sharif and was published for the first time in 1958 under the name *Quran sutji djarwa Djawi dalah tafsiripun*.⁶³ The Sundanese, Balinese, and Batakese translations were conducted by the Qadiani Ahmadiyya only for selected verses, not the entirety of the Quran. The translation of the Quran into Sundanese was entitled *Ayat-ayat pinilih tina Alquran* and was performed by Djajadi, J.D. Narasoma, Anwari, and Ahmad Anwar. It was published in 1988, as were the Balinese and Batakese versions, which were entitled *Kutipan-kutipan*

Structure of Islamic Society (Qadian: Nazim Book Depot Tahrik-i-Jadid, 1946) into Bahasa Indonesia and entitled it *Bentok Dasar Ekonomi Doenia: Pembinaan Masjarakat Doenia, Filsafat Ekonomi, Hakikat Pertempoeran Politik. Dewasa ini, Dilibat dari Segi Islam, Kapitalisme dan Komoenisme*, trans. by Bahroem Rangkoeti (Jakarta: Neratja Trading Co., 1948).

⁶² "Jiplak-menjiplak' Tafsir Qur'an".

⁶³ See Muhammad Ali, *Quran Sutji Djarwa Djawi dalah Tafsiripun*, trans. by Minhadjurrahman Djajasugita and M. Mufti Sharif (Jogjakarta: Gerakan Ahmadijah Indonesia, 1958). This translation was approved by the Minister of Religion on October 3, 1958 (No. D. 26/Q.I) and certified by the Lajnah Pentashih Mushaf al-Qur'an (Committee for the Rectification of the Texts of the Qur'an) of this Ministry on March 13, 1959 (No. A/O/IV/3602). The Indonesian government does not issue the official translation of the Quran in languages other than Bahasa Indonesia.

saking al-Qur'an sui ring Bahasa Bali and *Ayat ayat na tarpillit sian al Quran tu bata Batak*, respectively.⁶⁴

The influence of translating the Quran into local or ethnic languages is perhaps not as significant at the present day as it was in previous decades because the domination of Bahasa Indonesia has almost made the ethnic languages of Indonesia extinct, particularly in writing. In the early decades of Indonesian Independence, however, these languages were more important than Bahasa Indonesia for disseminating ideas, particularly among Javanese and Sundanese aristocracies and commoners. The story of the conversion of hundreds of people in Kediri, East Java could be used as an example of the importance of local languages in disseminating certain religious beliefs and appealing to people to join the Ahmadiyya.⁶⁵ The branch of the Lahore Ahmadiyya in Kediri was established in 1963 and led by S.W. Burhanul Arifin. The establishment of this branch, according to a report from the movement, was spurred by the Javanese translation of the Quran. This branch immediately won a large following in comparison to the other branches of the Lahore Ahmadiyya in Indonesia: 193 members and 800 prospective members.⁶⁶

There was a particular appeal to using local words and phrases when translating selected verses of the Quran into Sundanese, Balinese, and Batakese in order to reflect distinctive local beliefs. In the Balinese edition, for instance, the God of Islam was also called *Ida Sang Hyang Widi Wasa*, the prophets were called *awatara* (avatars), and the *nubunwat* (message of the prophet) was named *wangsit*. The use of these terminologies was very useful for disseminating Ahmadiyya beliefs because they provide justifications for the claim that Ghulam Ahmad was a prophet. The use of local terminology also provided a good foundation for teaching the Ahmadiyyah concept of continuous revelation from God, which was very similar to the Balinese belief that *wangsit* could be received by people in

⁶⁴ Djajadi, et. al., *Ayat-ayat Pinilih tina Alquran* (Jakarta: Islam International Publications Ltd. 1988); Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, *Kutipan-kutipan saking al-Qur'an sui ring Bahasa Bali* (London: Islam International Publications Ltd., 1988); *Ayat ayat na tarpillit sian al Quran tu bata Batak* (London: Islam International Publications Ltd., 1988). The translators of the Balinese and Batakese editions are not indicated in the book.

⁶⁵ On whether the Ahmadiyya's translation has an impact on the conversion of people to this religious group, see Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Conversion to the Ahmadiyya in Indonesia: Winning Hearts through Ethical and Spiritual Appeals", *Sojourn*, vol. 29, no. 3 (2014), pp. 657-690.

⁶⁶ Yasir and Yatimin, *100 Tabun Ahmadiyah*, p. 44; GAI, *Anggaran Dasar (Qanun Asasi)*, pp. 120-1.

the present day.⁶⁷

E. Distinctiveness of Ahmadiyya's translation and Its Influences

For the Ahmadiyya, the idea of translating the Quran into numerous languages, including Bahasa Indonesia, was not so much different from the idea of translating the Gospels and the Bible into several native languages, namely, as a medium for proselytizing religion. When Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din left India as a missionary to London in 1913, he said, "I am going to conquer Europe by means of this [Quran]".⁶⁸ In missionary activities, the Holy Book was often used as a weapon to convince people about the truth or the falsity of certain religions.⁶⁹ In Islam, for instance, the Quran was used to show the superiority of Islam over other religions and the deviation of Christianity from its original teachings; the Christian mission used the Gospel in a similar manner. The project of translating the Quran certainly had multiple purposes in addition to missionary work. For fellow believers, for instance, translation was intended to show the beauty of Islam and its compatibility with modern science, to give a comprehensible guidance for religious life, and to clear the ground for Ahmadiyya beliefs and teachings.

In terms of the content, it seems useful to see it in the context of Islamic revivalism. In his article entitled "Islam: Challenges and opportunities", Fazlur Rahman classifies Islamic revivalist movements of the 19th and 20th centuries into four categories: pre-modernist revivalism, modernism, neo-revivalism, and neo-modernism.⁷⁰ Pre-modernist revivalism was epitomized by Wahhabism with its project to "go back" to the pristine Islam in the seventh century. One of the ways to do that was by eradicating various accretions and superstitions attached to Islam. Only by this way, in the belief of pre-modernist revivalists, Islam could regain its supremacy and glory. In contrast to pre-modernist revivalism, modernist Muslims assumed that Muslims could only regain its past supremacy and glory by absorbing totally Western technology, sciences,

⁶⁷ About *nubuwwah*, see Marilyn Robinson Waldman, "Nubuwwah", in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. by Mircea Eliade and Charles J. Adams, vol. 11 (New York: Macmillan, 1987), p. : 1-7.

⁶⁸ GAI, *Anggaran Dasar (Qanun Asasi)*, p. 83.

⁶⁹ By showing that the Quran is a collection of revelations received by the Prophet Muhammad during his lifetime, it proves that this religion is a revealed religion, not a creation of human beings. As stated by Muhammad Ali, the Quran is the most important miracle in Islam.

⁷⁰ Rahman, "Islam: Challenges and Opportunities".

and ideas. They believe that Islam or the Quran is perfectly compatible with modern sciences and no single verse in the Quran that goes against reason.

Inheriting the paradigms of pre-modernist revivalism and modernism, neo-revivalist movement believes that Islam or the Quran is far superior to Western ideas and modern innovations. New findings and science innovations have been pre-told in the Quran and Islam has offered a better system of education, system of banking, and a better role of women compared to the West. It is a response to such kind of revivalism Fazlur Rahman promoted his idea of neo-modernism. For Rahman, all three mentioned revivalist movements could not establish a comprehensive system in reforming Islam, despite their claim that Islam is a total way of life. The way they respond issues tend to be *ad hoc*, apologetic, incline to use piecemeal approach, and lack of systematic and comprehensive methodology.

Using Rahman's categorization of revivalist movements, Ahmadiyya's religious position, as reflected in its translation of the Quran, cannot be put strictly in one of those four categories. As stated by Rahman himself, these four categories of revivalist movements in Islam are interrelated and "the precise lines of influence among these movements are not always easy to draw".⁷¹ However, Ahmadiyya's perspective of the modern sciences and ideas can be seen as a mixture between modernist and neo-revivalist movements. Sometimes, the translator emphasized that the Quran is perfect harmony with modern sciences. As stated by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, a close friend of Muhammad Ali and a leader of the Lahore Ahmadiyya, no single verses in the Quran that contradicts sciences, "No other revealed Book proves their validity on grounds of logic and reason, while the Qur-an frankly appeals to our reason before it asks us to accept them".⁷² In other places, however, the translator also tries to show that the Quran is more advanced than modern sciences and implicitly pre-tell modern innovations or achievements of modern sciences. In short, as stated by Ali in his preface to the translation:

In the Holy Quran are found guiding rules for the ordinary man of the world as well as for the philosopher, and for communities in the lowest grade of civilization as well as for the highly civilized nations of the world. Practicability is the keynote of its precepts, and thus the same universality which marks its principles of faith is to be met with in its

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

⁷² Kamal-ud-Din, "The Holy Qur-an and its Commentary", p. 166.

practical ordinances, suiting as they do the requirements of all ages and nations.⁷³

It is the position of the Ahmadiyya toward sciences and miracles that make some critics accuse them as apologetics Muslims. In his translation, Muhammad Ali makes every effort to show that the Quran conforms to modern mind, for instance, by removing any notion of miracle or giving allegorical interpretation. The only miracle in the Quran is the Quran itself; its completeness and no discrepancy in its content. In sum, the purpose of Ahmadiyya's translation of the Quran is to show that this holy book is eternally true, including its prophecies, and it conforms to modern sciences.

This type of translation, i.e. by making the Quran compatible with sciences, was able to hide the feeling of defeat felt by some Muslims in front of the advancement of Western technology and science. It could please, appease, and convince them that Islam is more advanced than the West and every technological and scientific innovation has been predicted or pre-told in the Quran. However, in the long run, this kind of feeling is actually deceiving. Technology and science continue to progress, and even with tremendous speed in recent years, while the translation of the Quran by the Ahmadiyya stay in the same place, with only small changes. This makes several translations related sciences that then look compatible with sciences are now look outdated or awkward. This is the reason why some people oppose the idea to make scientific verses of the Quran compatible with sciences. This is perhaps also the reason why the translation of Ahmadiyah is now lost its position as an important translation of the Quran in Muslim world. Of course besides heretical accusation to the theological beliefs of the Ahmadiyya, it is also the fact that the translation was written in the frame of sciences of the early and middle of twentieth century that makes contemporary people no longer refer to it as before.

The stance of the Ahmadiyya to modern sciences is in contrast to its stance toward Christianity. In the context of modern sciences, the Ahmadiyya used "defensive" approach, whereas in regard to Christianity, they employ "offensive" approach. The way the Ahmadiyya discusses about Jesus, for instance, tend to debunk the common belief in Christianity. This is perhaps done on purpose, because the Ahmadiyya has strong intention to attack the very core of Christianity or to break the cross. In illustrating the offensive approach of the Ahmadiyya to

⁷³ Ali, *The holy Qur-ān*, p. xiii.

Christianity, Kenneth Cragg states, “There is a depressing crudeness or superficiality about the discussion of those items of Christianity which call for treatment in the Introduction”.⁷⁴ Similar conclusion was stated by Samuel M. Zwemer. He says, “The old Islam honoured Jesus Christ as a great prophet, and although it denied his deity and atoning death it always acknowledged his sinlessness and virgin birth. The New Islam denies the sinlessness of Jesus, mocks at the virgin birth, and offers proof from the writings of infidels and from modern destructive criticism that the Bible is a tissue of fables and myths. It is painful to read the articles written on these subjects by men who in some cases are graduates of Christian colleges”.⁷⁵

This kind of thinking, i.e. the apologetic approach of the Ahmadiyya, was exactly the one that attracted Muslim intelligentsia in Indonesia in the beginning of the 20th century to join the Ahmadiyya or to learn about Islam from Ahmadiyya books or missionaries. It created the feeling of superiority and confidence among Muslims before Christians and followers of other religions. In the face of aggressive Christian mission to Indonesia and serious attack from materialism, the apologetic approach of the Ahmadiyya became a weapon for Muslim intelligentsia to defend their faith. They do not have any other weapon to face Christian mission and the attack of materialism except the apologetic approach of the Ahmadiyya. And it is true that Christian mission was in the mind of Muhammad Ali when he did the project of translating the Quran during the time of the acceleration of Christian mission in British India in the first half of the twentieth century. When he talks about no discrepancy or about consistency in the Quran, he thinks in comparison with what is commonly said about the Bible.

F. Concluding Remarks

The Quran used by the Ahmadiyya is the same Quran as the one used and read by other Muslims. The meaning of “sectarian” in the

⁷⁴ Kenneth Cragg, “[Review of] *The Holy Qur’an, Arabic Text and Translation*”, *The Muslim World*, vol. 47, no. 4 (1957), p. 342.

⁷⁵ Samuel Marinus Zwemer, *Across the World of Islam: Studies in Aspects of the Mohammedan Faith and in the Present Awakening of the Moslem Multitudes* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1929), p. 28. For the use of Ahmadiyya literature in the study of comparative religion, see Ahmad Najib Burhani, “The Ahmadiyya and the Study of Comparative Religion in Indonesia: Controversies and Influences”, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, vol. 25, no. 2 (2014), pp. 141-158.

context of Ahmadiyya's translation of the Quran refers mostly to the unique or distinctive translation towards certain verses in the Quran. This kind of translation is not solely done by the Ahmadiyya, but also by other groups or sects in Islam. In the context of the Ahmadiyya, they translate certain verses in accordance with theological beliefs of this group, particularly, on the second coming of the Messiah, the prophethood, and verses on miracles.

There are some characteristics of Ahmadiyya's translations, but two most important of them are, first, their offensive position on the verses of Jesus and Christianity and, second, their defensive stance on verses related to sciences. The response of Indonesian Sunni Muslims to Ahmadiyya's translations had been ambiguous. In contrast to the reception for the Ahmadiyya as a foreign movement, where most of Indonesian Muslims tended to oppose it, Ahmadiyya's translation of the Quran was warmly received by some Muslim Intelligentsia in the early 20th century, such as Sukarno, Tjokroaminoto, Agus Salim, and Roeslan Abdulgani. They even perceived them as the best book that they ever read and the best property that they ever have.

The reason why Indonesian Muslim intelligentsia eagerly accepted Ahmadiyya's translation, particularly Soedewo's Dutch-translation, lies in its unique characteristics. It tries to show that Islam conforms modern sciences, it gives allegorical interpretation for the verses on miracle that make it acceptable for rationalists, and it rejects abrogation of any verses in the Quran. It is these characteristics, as admitted by some intelligentsia, which were capable of rescuing them from losing their faith because of the attractive appeals from materialism, atheism, and Christianity. The Muhammadiyah and the NU, however, harshly opposed Ahmadiyya's translations for their deviation from standard translation in Sunni Islam. For the Lahore, the deviation can be found in their use of allegorical and metaphorical translation for the verses on miracles, while for the Qadiani lies in their interpretation of the meaning of *kbātam al-nabiyyīn*.

Nowadays, however, the Ahmadiyya's translation is not as popular as before. Not many people turn to the Ahmadiyya for scientific translation of the Quran or for the issue of Christianity. Besides the availability of many references, the translation from the Lahore Ahmadiyya was influenced by scientific findings and discourse of the early and middle of the twentieth century. Some of them are even surpassed by new theories and scientific findings. While in the context of Christianity, now the interfaith relations in academia moved to cooperation rather than

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rivalry which is different from the situation during the colonial time or after the Independence of Indonesia.

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