

## **Spirituality and Local Wisdom: The Case of Ahmadiyya Community in Yogyakarta**

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### **Abstract**

Ahmadiyya community is a minority muslim group in Indonesia often experiencing persecution and violence from radical groups because of their distinctive belief. Ahmadiyya in Indonesia has been in existence since 1924 and spread across the archipelago. Now the community is numbered at around 600,000 people with most Ahmadis living in West Java. Ahmadiyya community in different areas of Indonesia has experienced varied treatments from the local governments. Ahmadis in West Java and Lombok are the most vulnerable and get worse treatment from their local government. However, the Ahmadiyya community in Yogyakarta enjoy their religious freedom, allowing them to conduct their religious activities without any hassles from people and also the government. Moreover, they can participate in many inter-religious dialogues in Yogyakarta. This paper questions why the Ahmadiyya community in Yogyakarta can live in harmony with others and relatively safe while others not. What the factors causing these circumstances? Are there any local wisdom that can be derived from the Ahmadiyya community and Yogyakarta, which significantly influence the respect for religious diversity? This paper examines the Ahmadiyya community in Yogyakarta and its activities in maintaining their faith and also preserving local values of Yogyakarta. Besides active in their own religious community, as part of Yogyakarta, the Ahmadiyya community also partake in wider community activities. In addition, this paper also explores the experience of Ahmadiyya community in Yogyakarta in the context of Yogyakarta as a cultural city. It argues that the Ahmadiyya community in Yogyakarta is safe and treated well because of several factors. First, there is a compatibility between Ahmadiyya values and local wisdom of Yogyakarta. Second, Yogyakarta itself as a

unique province provides freedom and tolerance to any kind of religious and ethnic groups. Third, the role of Sultan in protecting all people regardless their belief, ethnic, religions. And the last one, there is a special character of Ahmadiyya community in Yogyakarta which different from other Ahmadiyya community in other part of Indonesia.

Keywords: Ahmadiyya, spirituality, local wisdom, Yogyakarta, peace, harmony

### **Introduction**

Ahmadiyya first came into Indonesia in 1925 when three young men from West Sumatra came home after their study in Qadian, they were Abubakar Ayyub, Ahmad Nuruddin, and Zaini Dahlan. In August of 1925 they invited an Ahmadiyya muballigh namely Maulana Rahmat Ali HAOT to come for the first time in Tapak Tuan Aceh. Therefore, Ahmadiyya has been existed in Indonesia for more than 90 years. It has been legally registered in the Ministry of Law since 1953, March 13<sup>th</sup> 1953 No. JA 5/23/13 and Tambahan berita Negara RI (Additional State News) no 26, March 1953. And then changed in Berita Negara (State News) No. 3. 1989; and additional State News No. 65 date 15 August 1989. Ahmadiyya's headquarter is in Parung Bogor, West Java. Nowadays, the religious organization has more than 250 branches which spread out across Indonesia with about 600,000 members, with most of the branches in West Java.(Zulkarnain 2005, 290)

Since its establishment in Indonesia, Ahmadiyya has faced some opposition from other Muslim groups because of its distinctive beliefs. However, conflicts and violence towards the Ahmadiyya community have been rising dramatically over the last few years, especially since the downfall of Soeharto's regime in 1998, known as Reformasi era. Those violence and persecution were not only committed by radical groups but also there are some local government which make rules that ban or not allow the activities of Ahmadiyya community in their area.

However, the experience of persecution and violence is not faced by all Ahmadi in Indonesia. In some places, Ahmadi can live in harmony with other muslims and also

got support from local government. Ahmadi in West Java have different experience with Ahmadi in Yogyakarta for example. Looking from the correlation between spirituality and local wisdom, this paper argues that the harmony living of Ahmadi living in Yogyakarta is depend on several factors.

Since the violence conflicts happening top the Ahmadiyya community in Indonesia after Reformasi era, there are many scholars who are interested in doing research on this community. Iskandar Zulkarnain did historical research which involved Ahmadiyya community , both Gerakan Ahmadiyah and Jemaat Ahmadiyah(Zulkarnain 2005). While recently, Burhani did research on the Ahmadiyya community in the context of orthodoxy and heresy and he argues that “the alliance between religious authority and certain state power has often become an underlying factor behind the persecution of ‘heretical’ group (Burhani 2013).

In cultures where religion is woven into the fabric of the society, wisdom and spirituality are interconnected and almost inextricable. Spirituality and wisdom both refer to the exploration of inner states leading to understanding and a sense of meaning (Lindholm, Astin & Astin, 2006).

This paper tries to explore the compatibility and connectivity between spirituality of the Jemaat Ahmadiyah Yogyakarta and local wisdom of Yogyakarta from their daily practices. As a qualitative research, data was dig from in-depth interview with participants from Jemaat Ahmadiyah Yogyakarta and also from documents and notes from this community.

This paper consists several parts, introduction which deliver the background of this research literature review and methodology of the research, the second part elaborate the history and the activities done by Ahmadiyya communities in Yogyakarta, the third part discussion on how the compatibility of Ahmadiyya’s spirituality with Yogyakarta local wisdom and factors contributing on that, and the last part is conclusion.

## **Ahmadiyya in Yogyakarta: history and development**

Jemaat Ahmadiyah Yogyakarta which one of the first generation branch in Indonesia was established in 1947 when family of Sayyid Syah Muhammad moved from Kebumen. Sayyid Syah Muhammad was a muballigh of Ahmadiyya who was one of 12 people who accompanied President Soekarno during independence struggle in 1945. On Soekarno's suggestion, he moved from Kebumen to Yogyakarta, and bought a house in Kotabaru in a good price to be a missionary house and build a mosque for their activities. From this place, then Ahmadiyya spread out in Yogyakarta. Now, in Yogyakarta Special District (Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta), there are three branches of JAI, in Kota Baru Yogyakarta, Piyungan Bantul and Rongkop Gunung Kidul.

Yogyakarta Ahmadiyya mosque is located in Kotabaru and it is the place where they do all their activities. In this complex, there are a mosque, a Arif Rahman Hakim library, a missionary house where the muballigh live and a guest house. Based on their data, nowadays the members of Ahmadiyya Yogyakarta is.. they live spreading in Yogyakarta city, Sleman, Bantul and Kulonprogo. Their professions vary from lecturer, civil servant, doctors, entrepreneur and students.

Like other Ahmadi in other place around the world, Ahmadi maximize mosque as their center of activities. Every Jumat all members come to pray Jumat, both male and female, as we know in Ahmadiyya community, female also do Jumat prayer. Every Sunday, Ahmadi usually have some activities in the mosque. Lajnah Imaillah (Ahmadi women) usually have their local committee meeting every first week and muawwanah (member gathering and hearing religious teaching) in the second week. Majelis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya (Ahmadi young men) has their meeting every third week and Majelis Ansharullah (ahmadi men above 40) has their activities every fourth week. They also have special activities for their young kids, athfal and nasirat.

The composition of Yogyakarta members are typically mixed from around Indonesia since Yogyakarta is the city of education so many Ahmadi from other areas studying in Yogyakarta for their undergraduate or graduate education. As there is a rule for Ahmadi who move from their origin and reside for more than one year in other areas, he or she should report her move to the closest branch of Ahmadiyya in that area and she

is registered as member of that branch. Consequently, she must pay chanda and other sacrifice scheme in that branch and involve in religious activities held in that branch. Therefore, the changing of the number of members in Yogyakarta is very dynamic, particularly when the new semester starts. That is why Yogyakarta is called as “a transit” in which many of its members are not originally from Yogyakarta. There are only small number of members who are originally from Yogyakarta. However, this dynamic changing on the composition of their members does not bring any issues in having their routines. Basically, all activities related to the Ahmadiyya organization are done regularly as they schedule.

### **Yogyakarta: a city of tolerance, a city of culture, a place to live**

Talking about Yogyakarta itself, meaning talking its special culture and characteristic. Culturally, Yogyakarta is Javanese culture which no different with other Javanese in central java and East Java. Putro argues that there is identical culture which becoming common knowledge among Yogyakarta people and practices in their daily lives. For example “*urip iki mung mampir ngombe*” (living in the world is only to come by to drink), “*manunggaling kawula gusti*” (unifying between master and servant), “*sangkan paraning dumadi*” (human’s origin and purpose). Those cultural ideas are rooted from Javanese culture.(Putro 2010, 25)

However, the existence of Sultan till now gives a special characteristic in Yogyakarta. The existence of Kraton and Sultan still have a significant influence for Yogyakartaese to do their activities. The concept of *Hamemayu hayuning bawono* (To keep beauty of the world) which was taught by Sultan Hamengkubuwono I is still preserved and practiced by Yogyakarta people, particularly by some Javanese spiritual groups(Putro 2010, 26). As a result, this concept influences the behavioral culture of Yogyakarta people and encourage them to have good relationship with others and more tolerance towards differences. Therefore, there are several organization and NGO which work on building good relationship and tolerance among different religious groups living in Yogyakarta such FPUB, Dian interfidei.

Arif Rahman Hakim Library: our door is always open for everyone

As have been mentioned before that the Ahmadiyya Yogyakarta centered their activities in their mosque in Kotabaru Yogyakarta. In this complex there are a mosque, a mission house and a library. This part elaborate more on the Arif Rahman Hakim Library.

Ahmadiya Yogyakarta has a library which open for public. The collections consist of books about Ahmadiyya teaching and faith and also other religious issues. However, since many people do not know about that not many people come to read or borrow the books available. Only several researchers or colleagues happen to come and enjoy this library. Moreover, when there as an action from several radical Muslims to close down the Ahmadiyya office in Kota Baru in 2010, Ahmadi moved and saved their collections to a safer place and it influenced the activities in the library.

Nowadays, this library also already goes online in [www.arhlibrary.com](http://www.arhlibrary.com) to broaden its coverage and expansion. This library functions as a window or a door for non Ahmadi to see and learn about Ahmadiya. Besides providing books about Ahmadiyya and there are also several quran translation in some languages that has been done by Ahmadiyya community as their program of translating quran into hundred languages.

In this library, visitors can read also information about activities held by the branch in one month and some news about Ahmadiyya around the world that showed in their wall magazine. This library is run by young Ahmadi men and women who are mostly students in some universities in Yogyakarta. Their team usually report activies done by the community both internal activities and external activities such as dialogue, seminar and conference that they attend and join. In addition, people who want to get know more about Ahmadiya can also have discussion with Ahmadi and muballigh who stand by in the library or mission house. Th

Jemaat Ahmadiyah Yogyakarta : Be Yogyakartanese Ahmadi not Ahmadi in Yogyakarta

Ahmadiyya community in Yogyakarta relatively save from any persecution and violence from people and also from local government. These circumstances are influenced by several factors. This part will elaborate more on those underlying factors.

The Ahmadiyya community in Yogyakarta join FPUB Yogyakarta, Forum Persaudaraan Umat Beriman (Interfaith Brotherhood Forum, FPUB) and actively participate in inter religious activities. FPUB is an inter religious organization which was established on 27 February 1997 by several outstanding people from different parties as the way to answer any issues about Indonesia moving from the new Order Era into Reformasi era in which brotherhood values of Indonesian people was in danger. The aims of this FPUB is to develop spirituality values of Indonesia and reach a true brotherhood between people, as said by one of its Founder KH Abdul Muhaimin, the leader of Nurul Ummahat pesantren in Kotagede

In this organization, Ahmadiyya actively participate in all its activities. Indeed, they rarely missed the activities held by this group. Moreover, when this group organizing commemorating the 100 year of Jumenengan sultan HB IX in 2012, the leader of Ahmadiyya Yogyakarta was appointed leader of the organizing committee. They encourage their members to attend any events held by FPUB such as dialogue, exhibition, and social services.

As for contributing in activities held by FPUB, they formed a macapat group consisting several anshor (Ahmadi men above 40 years old). They usually sing songs in Javanese and the songs consisting about Islam and Ahmadiyya teaching. They usually perform in event conducted by FPUB and also in their own internal event.

Other activities done by the Ahmadiyya community in Yogyakarta is social and humanity services. Since Yogyakarta is prone to any natural disaster like Merapi eruption, and earthquake, The Ahmadiyya community always give services to people in need when there is a disaster. For example when there was Merapi eruption in 2006 and 2010, they opened public kitchen and gave food for people in their evacuation. With the help from Humanity First Organization (nonprofit organization belong to the international Ahmadiyya muslim community which concern in giving aid to people in disaster both natural or human made disaster), they give aid and send their members to stand by and give a hand for people who need it.

For Ahmadi, giving social and humanity services to people is their implementation of their slogan “Love for all hatred for none”, a slogan which was

launched by their Khalifah the fourth, Tahir Ahmad. This slogan is really familiar for Ahmadi around the world and all Ahmadi tries hard to implement this slogan in their daily life. It also one important factor which make Ahmadi never reply any violence that happen to them. When they got violence from other communities or mob, they usually will keep silent and do not give any physical reaction. They will only use legal formal way to solve that issue.

Moreover, to support their activities, Ahmadi rely on their own funding. The sacrifice (pengorbanan) scheme inside their organization make them easily get money from their members. Paying chanda and other sacrificing in term of money and energy is the main support for their activities. Talking about fund sacrifice, the Ahmadiyya Community in Yogyakarta, most of its members are relatively wealthy, therefore when they need fund to support their social and humanity activities, members will hand in hand give donation.

Another way of implementing “Love for all hatred for none” is by establishing a medical clinic which gives free medical treatment for people who need it. In Yogyakarta, particularly in Gunung Kidul, in 2013 Ahmadiyya community established a clinic with its doctors and paramedic staff which stand by giving medical services for free for people from Saturday to Thursday. This clinic is fully supported by the Ahmadiyya community international. In giving these medical services they do not bring their religious identity as Ahmadi. They named the clinic without any Ahmadiyya atribut although people know that they are Ahmadi.

Another characteristic which unique in the Ahmadiyya Community Yogyakarta is that their members are spread out, not centralized in one complex like Ahmadiyya community in Manislor Kuningan. This character gives them more chances to be active in their neighborhood through several social activities which involved Yogyakarta people from different groups. Moreover, this spreading out members make the visibility of their identity as ahmadi is not too clear. They mingle with other people and it lessens the chance of conflicts because of theological matter. Indeed, some ahmadis are active in giving Al Qur’an teaching to their neighbors and some majlis Taklim although people already knoe that they are ahmadi.



Moreover, the characteristic of their members which composed from different professions also give advantage for their community existence. Several members have a good position like being lecturers, civil servants and doctors. Having good position in the society and good relationship, those members utilize their personal relationship and profession to support their religious activities by having dialogue and cooperation with other groups. Usually they will start as individual, after having very good close and good relationship then they will go on more deeper cooperation by involving their organization. One example for this praxis is when an Ahmadi woman who is a doctor approach her colleague to have cooperation to hold a seminar attended by women in Yogya from different organizations. She succeeded hold a seminar with good response from the participants and also give good impression about them.

Ahmadi always try to be good citizens wherever they live. This is based on the command from their Khalifah who always remind them to obey the government where they live despite bad treatment from the government. For Ahmadi in Yogyakarta, since the atmosphere of harmony in Yogyakarta make them freer in doing their religious activities because they got protection from the government particularly from Sultan as the governor. When there was a pressure from some radical Muslims to ban the existence of Ahmadiyya in Yogyakarta, Sultan stated that it is not his duty to ban or close down Ahmadiyya as a religious organization but it is on Central government's hand. Moreover, Sultan make sure that he will protect all people living in Yogyakarta regardless their identity as long as they do not break the law.

This unique circumstances in Yogyakarta in which Sultan who accept and protect all people who live in Yogyakarta regardless their ethnic, religion and profession as long as they obey the law. Besides giving safety for the Ahmadiyya community to observe their religious faith, it also give more opportunity for Ahmadi in Yogyakarta to give social and humanity services to people outside their own community. Consequently, there is a mutual relationship between Ahmadiyya community as religious organization with the local government as the state and also people.

Their social and humanity activity can be seen as their way to show their implementation of their slogan "love for all hatred for none", and as their identity as

Yogyakarta, it is “hamemayu hayuning bawono”, meaning their contribution to keep Yogyakarta in peaceful situation by having good relationship with other people from other groups and communities.

Those values between Yogyakarta local wisdom “hamemayu hayuning bawana” is in line with the characteristic of Islam as Rahmatan lil alamin. And for Ahmadiyya community, these wisdom is in accordance with their slogan “Love for all hatred for none”. There is a fit compatibility between Yogyakarta local wisdom and Ahmadiyya spirituality in which it brings harmony between Ahmadi activities as a socio religious organization with other people living in Yogyakarta regardless their different background, ethnicity, religions and belief.

#### Concluding remarks

From discussion about Ahmadiyya community in Yogyakarta, it can be said that there is compatibility between their spirituality as religious organization with Yogyakarta local wisdom. Although there may be different insight on several things, those differences do not bring significant conflict for them because its activities with external groups and communities in Yogyakarta, the Ahmadiyya community does not bring the issue on differences but they prefer prioritizing the similarities with others. Moreover, as people who live in Yogyakarta, Ahmadi respect any cultural things present in Yogyakarta even they grabbed those cultural attribute and adjust them with their religious values. Their choice to modify Javanese culture with their religious teaching, on one hand shows their effort to accommodate local wisdom as Yogyakarta people.

The uniqueness of the Ahmadiyya community in Yogyakarta lay on the spreading out of its members around Yogyakarta with their vary professions and capabilities. This gives them more opportunity to mingle with other people in Yogyakarta and being part as Yogya people with its special culture.

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