11 Islam and humanitarian affairs

The middle class and new patterns of social activism

Hilman Latief

Introduction

The major concern of this chapter is to discern the distinct nature of 'Indonesian Islam' by sketching the similarities and differences between Islamic social activism in Indonesia and that in other parts of the Muslim world. In order to do so, we will examine the humanitarian and relief activism organised by Muslim non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which is increasingly characterised as 'social Islam' in the Indonesian nation-state. This new development in the social, economic and political spheres, both regionally and internationally, provides us with an opportunity to look further at the dynamic relationships between faith, the state, the market and civil society, as well as at the widespread engagement of Muslim civil society organisations, at the discursive and practical levels, with humanitarian affairs. We note that the visibility of Islam in the public sphere in post-Suharto Indonesia has gradually become more pervasive, and the growth of Muslim NGOs and social institutions whose work focuses on social welfare, education, economic enterprises, charity activism and humanitarian assistance, with their distinctive religious symbols and values, has also considerably restructured the pattern of Islamic activism.

Faith-based NGOs in Indonesia have publicly attempted to translate religious values as an approach to satisfying public needs. In part, they have revitalised various forms of giving in the Islamic tradition in order to overcome organisational budget constraints, to strengthen institutional capacity and also to expand various types of outreach activities. In particular, Muslim relief NGOs and charitable associations, with their extensive programmes in the health, social and economic sectors, strengthened by professional managers, medical experts, well-trained human resources, solid ideological views and plentiful financial support, have helped to make Islamic social activism in contemporary Indonesia increasingly prevalent and modernised. Their focus is no longer restricted to domestic issues, such as providing medical care or establishing charitable clinics for low-income families in major cities,[1]

but is now also on delivering aid in disaster-affected areas. They can play a considerable role in numerous relief projects in many parts of the world, from Africa to Asia, and from East Asia to the Middle East. In short, Islamic relief agencies have transformed themselves from having a domestic and local character into being a transnational movement. In many cases, Islamic aid associations can even compete with their secular counterparts and government agencies in relieving the victims of natural and man-made disasters (Van Bruinessen 2007; Qureshi 2006).

The relations between faith, socio-economic issues and politics in emergency relief remain an interesting subject for observers. Some have suggested that Islamic humanitarianism embodies the broader discourse and practice of Islamic charities. A number of conferences on 'Islamic charities' held in the Muslim world and in the West have mainly focused on emergency relief. At the same time, humanitarian assistance by Muslim NGOs cannot be detached from the basic notion of benevolent acts according to an Islamic framework.[2] Therefore, Islamic charity practices, both mandatory alms (*zakat*) and voluntary giving (*sadaqa*), are always instrumental in shaping the pattern of humanitarian work. To Muslims, undertaking emergency relief can be part and parcel of their spiritual expression and sense of religious obligation (Krafess 2005), and of their commitment to the unity of the Islamic community (*ummah*) (Shaw-Hamilton 2007). We may also posit that the vividly social activism in Muslim societies is the fruit of the interplay between religiously inspired giving and the deepened Muslim discourse on humanitarianism, as well as the impact of the geo-political landscape in which the intricate relationships, both in the form of cooperation and of competition between 'Islam' and 'the West', have intensified.

In studying Muslim NGOs and social activism in Jordan, Quintant Wictorowicz and Suha Taji Farouki (2004: 686) argue that Islamic social activism or social Islam, which is in some way articulated in 'apolitical activities' ranging from healthcare provision and income-generating projects to education and other kinds of direct aid, can 'become political when they challenge other cultural codes and institutions'. The political nature of Muslim NGOs mainly 'lies at the symbolic and discursive level' instead of direct participation in formal political parties. As entities that hold particular religious values and perhaps political views, Muslim NGOs, as both observers have emphasised, 'serve as institutions for the production, articulation and dissemination of values, connecting the movement to the community of the faithful through daily interactions' (Wictorowicz & Farouki 2004: 686). In Palestine, Muslim voluntary associations that specialise in health provision have emerged as a means of competing with secular NGOs whose financial

sources are mainly foreign funding and Western aid agencies (Challand 2008). By contrast, in Ghana, as studied by Holger Weis (2002: 83), the proliferation of Muslim NGOs 'has been to a large extent a reaction to Christian missionary activities and their capacity to combine religious, educational, health, and social activities'. This implies that the rise of Islamic NGOs undertaking small- and medium-scale humanitarian projects can, in some countries, become a sort of reaction to the flow of foreign funding, as well as a response to the widespread engagement of secular and Christian NGOs with the lavish support of foreign (Western) donors.

It is worth noting that following the Arab Spring uprisings that resulted, in part, in the escalation of violent actions by certain political regimes in the Middle East, numerous Islamic solidarity groups and political factions, such as Hamas in Gaza, Hizbullah in Lebanon and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, have become major players in providing basic goods, such as healthcare and education, and in relieving war victims during the crisis. The proliferation of humanitarian associations and Islamic aid agencies can thus also be seen as a continuum of the broader Islamic solidarity movement. It is within this context that we can examine how Islamic institutions in Indonesia deal with humanitarian affairs, how Islamic aid agencies develop, what sort of *raison d'être* is concealed behind their activities, and who the main actors and supporters of Islamic aid agencies are. In particular, I will address the roles of the Muslim middle class in shaping and reforming social Islam. I certainly believe that class distinction is not always suitable for analysing what is to be called social Islam. But when we come to analyse the actors functioning as the backbone of charitable institutions and aid agencies that specifically work in the fields of humanitarian action and disaster relief, we must not disregard the roles of particular segments of society, which we can label as 'middle groups', whose skills and levels of social, economic and political access vary. And we do acknowledge that humanitarian and relief activities by religious institutions should cope not only with practical matters, such as how to deliver aid to the people in need properly and effectively, but also with the conceptual issues and values to be utilised within those institutions.

Why the urban middle class?

It is not easy to determine which segment of Indonesian society is 'middle class' in general and 'Muslim middle class' in particular. Questions can also be asked regarding what sort of theoretical framework should be utilised to distinguish the middle class from other social

classes. Have the Muslim middle classes held shared identities, and are they always monolithically formed? To what extent have the Muslim middle classes significantly contributed to the formation of social and political behaviour? Observers have used different approaches to define and analyse the formation of the middle class in Indonesian society. Some have focused on the 'mode of consumption', income and lifestyle, while others concentrate on education and 'occupational groups'. This is partly because economic development and political structures seem to have contributed greatly to the formation of societies, with their diverse economic compositions and social stratifications. Social disparity caused by inequality in accessing economic sources in society can be an example of how economic and political culture and structure form social stratification. Access to economic resources, as observers such as Richard Robinson and Howard W. Dick have pointed out, may relate to income level and the mode of consumption (level of consumption, type of consumer goods and manner of consumption). This, in turn, shapes values and identities and also shapes 'lifestyle' patterns, political behaviour and social relations in society (Dick 1990: 64-5).

It appears that social stratification has also shaped the characteristics of the relationships between the state and civil society. Analysing 'occupational groups' among Indonesians and their relations with the state, political scientist Kenneth Young, as summarised by H.W. Dick, comes up with two types of middle class – namely, 'a state-dependent middle class' (civil servants, state entrepreneurs and academics at state universities) and 'an independent middle class' (independent businessmen, professionals and the intelligentsia) (Dick 1990: 66). Many studies have been exhaustively dedicated to the theoretical exploration of the middle class. At the same time, the concept of 'occupational groups' seems to have been used frequently by observers to understand the characteristics of the middle class in Indonesia, despite the fact that this concept needs further elaboration due to the many variants that can still be discovered among the 'middle class', such as upper-middle and lower-middle class as well as 'middle bureaucrats' and 'middle peasants', who live in either urban or rural areas (Young 1990).

In discerning the Muslim middle class in Indonesia, Abdurrahman Wahid attempts to go beyond the notion of the 'entrepreneurial nature' of the middle class and its capacity for 'land control' due to the changing social, economic and political context of the Indonesian nation-state. In recent times, therefore, the Muslim middle class can no longer be exclusively associated with the particular occupational groupings that were very common in the past, such as rich farmers and traders in the rural areas, or manufacturers of batiks, *kretek* cigarettes, leather goods and silver and gold wares in urban areas (Wahid 1990: 22-4).

For example, Wahid sets out two streams of the Muslim middle class in response to colonial rule: the first stream is represented by nationalist leaders and the second stream by nationalist Muslims (including religious scholars or *'ulama*). Prior to Indonesian independence, this Muslim middle class – both nationalists and 'Muslim nationalists' – was committed to supporting independence, but at the same time held different perspectives on maintaining their religious and cultural identities. More importantly, the Muslim middle class, in Wahid's view, includes well-educated people and well-trained-professionals, such as Muslim entrepreneurs, professionals, bureaucrats, civil servants, intellectuals and even military officers.

An interesting observation has also been made by Aswab Mahasin, who has used Clifford Geertz's concepts of *santri* (practising Muslims) and *priyayi* (the Javanese elite) to explain the emergent new Indonesian Muslim middle class. Mahasin points out that there has been a process of '*priyayisasi* of the santri', an embourgeoisement of Muslim generations, partly as a result of rapid economic development and the modernisation of educational institutions in Muslim circles. The Islamic modernist movement has also had a strong influence, which has, to some extent, also changed Muslim attitudes towards modern institutions (Machasin 1990: 140-1; Slamet 1990). Mahasin divides the 'middle groups' of santri-priyayi into three categories: the members of the state bourgeoisie (the upper segment), professionals (the middle segment), and the rest of the urban middle class (the lower segment). In short, the term 'Muslim middle class' can cover wide-ranging groups who are socially, economically and perhaps politically active in creating and reproducing their identities, lifestyles and networks.

While many studies have linked the new Muslim middle class in Indonesia with the popular expression of Islam, including with regard to fashion, music, publications and ritual, I will analyse the endeavours of the Muslim middle class to develop their concept of 'social Islam' in Indonesia's public sphere. Scholars argue that not only do humanitarian assistance and philanthropic activism have much to do with charitable practice, but that they also symbolise 'an upper-class phenomenon' (Adam 2004: 16). A secure position in the economic and political realms has compelled the Muslim middle class to discover new activities through which they can expand their influence and vision,[3] and charitable activism is one of their preferred options.

In Jordan, Egypt, Iran and perhaps in other Muslim countries, middle-class networks are instrumental in transforming economic activism into 'social Islam'. Motivated by various factors, such as challenging undemocratic regimes and state failure to provide adequate welfare for society as well as responding to Western liberal cultural influences and economic policies, the Muslim middle class comes up with notions of

how to reformulate appropriate remedies to effectively heal the rifts in society (see, for example, Clark 2004). Likewise, unprecedented economic development in the Muslim world has created new, prosperous generations on the one hand, and economic inequalities and social disparities in the population as a whole on the other. This situation is exacerbated by economic crises, unjust economic policies and unstable local commodity prices. In turn, this situation results in the birth or revival of 'a giving tradition' and the mobilisation of resources for the public good in many Muslim countries.[4]

The revival of an Islamic giving tradition in the 1990s, which in turn caused the emergence of humanitarian agencies in Indonesia's social, religious and political context, mainly represents an urban, middle-class phenomenon. It signifies the wide-ranging engagement of Muslim workers, some of whom are well- and even highly-paid professionals and government administrators, who hold secure and strategic positions in the private sector and government bureaucracies. This phenomenon is the fruit of the social, economic and political dynamics of the New Order, when economic and political activism among Muslims was not as open as in recent times. In the 1980s, despite the fact that major businesses remained largely in the hands of Chinese entrepreneurs – who in fact had close ties to the regime and corrupt bureaucracy – small- and medium-scale economic enterprises were still run by *pribumi* (indigenous) entrepreneurs. This situation created a heightened level of awareness among local Muslim elites in the bureaucracy, some of whom are university graduates and ex-student activists, wanting to revitalise Indonesia's socio-political economy into an Islamic framework (Lubis 2004).

By the time Islam and the New Order regime had established a harmonious relationship, notably in the last years of the Suharto era, the Muslim middle class had consolidated their networks and resources in the economic and political realms. This consolidation partly materialised in the formation of the ICMI (Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim se-Indonesia), the New Order-sponsored Muslim intellectual association. The establishment of the ICMI, which was sponsored by Suharto, who endorsed the instalment of vice-president B.J. Habibie as the ICMI's chairperson, then had wide-ranging consequences for the formation of 'New Order political Islam'. The ICMI to a great extent acted as a think tank of the New Order. Muslim bureaucrats, policymakers, academics and entrepreneurs became acquainted with Islamic affairs, and their intensified interaction and stronger alliances gave rise to a new spiritual and political awareness regarding how to reconcile religious values and socio-economic challenges, and how to synthesise Islam and modernity. In short, Indonesia witnessed 'an Islamic revival on a scale never before seen', within which, as Robert W. Hefner (1998: 233)

stresses, 'many new middle class turned to Islam for ethical inspiration'.[5] The rise of the ICMI has also symbolically signified the formation of a new alliance within the Muslim middle class in contemporary Indonesia (Hefner 1993; Hasbullah 2000).

The roots of Islamic social activism in contemporary Indonesia can also be traced back to the economic and political context of the 1970s and 1980s, when rapid economic development, modernisation and industrialisation enabled the urban middle class to access modern education. According to Asef Bayat (1998: 149), who studied Islamic movements in Iran and Egypt, modern education 'became an important vehicle for social mobility, contributing to the growth of the modern middle class'. Coinciding with the global impact of the Islamic revolutionary movements in Iran and other parts of the Muslim world, higher education institutions in Indonesia also became vibrant centres of the Islamic student movement, and in the last years of the New Order and early stages of the Reformasi era, numerous leading public figures were ex-student activists of the 1970s and 1980s. Endeavours to translate Islamic creeds for a contextually practical and conceptually matching socio-political landscape in Indonesia were also reflected in students' intellectual discourse and political activism. Islamic movements by student activists could be found not only in Islamic universities, but were also even more visible in what can be called secular universities. The University of Indonesia (UI) in Jakarta, Bogor Agricultural Institute (IPB), Gadjah Mada University (UGM) in Yogyakarta, Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), and Airlangga University (UNAIR) in Surabaya, with their campus mosques, were among the major sites in which vibrant Islamic student movements mushroomed, and in turn contributed considerably to the evolution of both 'political Islam' and 'social Islam' in the 1990s and afterwards.

Muslim social activists operating Islamic humanitarian agencies in Indonesia are, for the most part, products of the higher education institutions of the 1970s and 1980s and graduates of Islamic student associations, including the *tarbiyah* movement. Islamic activism has been vividly cultivated in a number of universities in Indonesia mainly since the early 1980s, and the tarbiyah movement is linked to the movement founded by Hassan al-Banna in Egypt. In the 1980s, a period when the New Order regime applied repressive policies, one of the popular activities among student activists was to operate a 'community of learning' (*halqah*) in which intellectual exercise, mental training and Islamic education among students were conducted (Van Bruinessen 2002; Latief 2010a). Hasan al-Banna is the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwan al-Muslimin*), which is now among the world's largest Islamic groups. Underpinned by a widespread network across the Muslim

world, the Muslim Brotherhood could act as both a political movement and social welfare agency at the same time.

Muslim student activists, including those who admired the Muslim Brotherhood's Islamic agenda, spread in both Islamic and notably secular universities. Their educational backgrounds were not restricted to religious studies. Some even had a strong background in the natural sciences, including engineering, agriculture, economics, chemistry and the medical sciences. In the 1990s, these students held secure positions in the government bureaucracy and private companies, while being active in Islamic study groups (*majelis ta'lim*). By discerning this newly Muslim middle class, we can see the link between religion, society, the state and the market in humanitarian projects. We can also see how the middle class, with its horizontal and vertical networks, can play a key role in reframing the Islamic notion of benevolent acts, humanitarianism, the giving tradition, political-economic activism and social work. More importantly, the Muslim middle class is able to materialise Islamic ethical principles in a sophisticated way in order to identify their relevance to current societal needs, as well as 'to maintain their relations with the umma through various other channels: religious institutions and organisations, as well as community development organisations' (Machasin 1990: 142-3). One of the characteristics of the middle class is its ability to transcend boundaries between the elites and the rest of society, to relate the state and society, and to provide a link between economic/business ventures and social enterprises.[6] In the case of humanitarian assistance, the middle class is also capable of linking domestic institutions and international agencies. It can be concluded, therefore, that Islamic humanitarianism found its current significance partly because of the multiplicity of roles played by the urban Muslim middle class.

The current wide-ranging popular majelis ta'lim or *pengajian* by the urban middle class has contributed much to transforming worship and spirituality into socially oriented Islamic activism.[7] I found that a number of philanthropic associations that in subsequent years, most notably in the Reformasi era, became important players in humanitarian work originated from the majelis ta'lim. In this respect, an Islamic gathering has become important social capital, enabling Muslim groups to reformulate and expand their religiously inspired activities by engaging in social work and humanitarian projects. To mention just a few, Rumah Zakat Indonesia (Indonesia Zakat House, RZI) and Dompet Peduli Umat Daarut Tauhid (Daarut Tauhid Charitable Foundation, DPU DT) in Bandung, Yayasan Dana Sosial Al-Falah (Al-Falah Charitable Foundation, YDSF) in Surabaya, and Pos Keadilan Peduli Umat (Justice Command Post for Caring for the Islamic Community, PKPU) in Jakarta are Islamic philanthropic associations emanating

from religious study groups that are organised by and for the urban Muslim middle class. Dompet Dhu'afa, another leading philanthropic association that stems from a leading Islamic newspaper, *Republika*, also originated from an Islamic gathering organised by journalists from this newspaper. The above-listed associations work on social services such as poor relief, free and cheap health provision, the offering of scholarships, skill-development training and disaster relief.

Islamic humanitarian agencies in post-New Order Indonesia

An open political environment

As mentioned previously, political change in the New Order era, indicated by the rise of the ICMI, was a crucial development. During this time, the ICMI introduced a new Islamic daily, *Republika,* within which the Islamic philanthropic association, Dompet Dhua'fa (Wallet for the Poor, DD), was created in 1993. The birth of DD was instrumental not only in introducing modern Islamic philanthropic associations, but also in revitalising the tradition of giving among Muslims in Indonesia as a whole. Under keen supervision from *Republika*, Dompet Dhuafa became increasingly popular and gained support among the urban upper-middle classes, ranging from celebrities to Muslim entrepreneurs. Subsequent to the fall of the New Order, the political environment in Indonesia became increasingly open. More formal political parties could participate in general elections and, interestingly, more Islamic associations, whose ideological orientations are varied in character, also came into being.

From a dozen Islamic political parties, one has come to the fore: Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (Prosperous Justice Party, PKS), a tarbiyah-based Islamic political party that has been fully supported by advocates of the tarbiyah movement, including those operating on campuses. The PKS is an Islamic political party *par excellence* with a solid and cohesive membership. It has acted not only as a formal political party, but also as a movement providing wide-ranging social services. The PKS, with its 'social wing', intensified its interaction with political constituents and the public through social enterprises, including emergency relief in disaster-affected areas. It can be argued that typical PKS social activism is a result of the wide-ranging engagement of many Muslim (ex-) student activists who joined this party. The chairperson of the PKS in Bandung explains:

> This party was initiated by campus activists, especially those involved in the tarbiyah movement, and is supported by graduates from higher education institutions in the Middle East, as well as

> young activists who operate Islamic foundations throughout Indonesia. When the PK [*Partai Keadilan*, the former name of PKS] came into being, its activists, who were frequently involved in social welfare activities during the course of their studies in the university, couldn't detach from its roots. PKS activists and sympathisers have held, and at the same time, attempted to revitalise vivid memories of social activism. One may say that social activities carried out by the PKS represent our efforts to gain public support for the elections. While there is nothing wrong with those efforts, one should also understand that our social activities basically symbolise our self-identity as ex-student activists.[8]

In 1999, PKPU was founded by tarbiyah activists. PKPU is a relief agency whose roots and sympathisers cannot be fully detached from the PK. Later on, PKPU became an independent humanitarian agency and started functioning as both a relief agency and zakat collector. It is very common for Islamic charitable associations in Indonesia to have multiple functions (Bamuallim 2006: 168-9). The PKPU, for example, has received recognition from the Ministry of Social Welfare and is regarded as a 'social institution'. At the same time, it is regarded by the Ministry of Religious Affairs as a national zakat collector.[9] PKPU's considerable roles and achievements in social welfare activities led it to be labelled an NGO with Special Consultative Status in the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

The PKPU has three missions: 1) to strengthen relief, rehabilitation and empowerment programmes for self-reliance; 2) to build and develop partnerships with societies, corporations, government and non-profit organisations, both nationally and internationally; and 3) to provide beneficiaries with sufficient information, education and advocacy.[10] The emergence of PKPU since 1999 has signified a new episode in Islamic relief activism in Indonesia, as it is able to accommodate the interests of domestic associations and international agencies, and of private companies and social institutions. In operating its relief projects in disaster-affected spots and densely poor urban areas, PKPU has built partnerships with different parties to undertake charitable work, relief missions and development-oriented programmes.

In order to optimise its function as a relief/humanitarian organisation and zakat agency, two organisational concepts have been developed within PKPU; namely, 'CSR [Corporate Social Responsibility] Management' and 'the Zakat Centre'. The former mainly deals with PKPU's objective of building extensive partnerships with other organisations and notable corporations. Under 'CSR Management', private companies can channel their funds to underpin sustainable develop-

ment programmes through PKPU. The latter, the 'Zakat Centre', was founded to facilitate Muslim benefactors, either individually or collectively, to channel their financial contributions, such as zakat and sadaqa. A number of national corporations have become PKPU's partners, including PT. Pertamina Pusat (a national oil company), PT. Astra Honda Motor (an automotive company), PT. Exelcomindo (telecommunications), Grand Hyatt (the hotel chain) and other corporations in the construction, manufacturing, finance and pharmaceutical industries. A number of international partnerships with foreign NGOs have been established by PKPU, including with IHH (Insani Yardim Vakfi or Insan Hak ve Hurriyetleri), Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) and Helping Hands.

Communal conflicts

A further, momentous stimulus to the proliferation of relief NGOs was provided by the deadly communal and sectarian conflicts that occurred in the late 1990s, especially in the eastern parts of Indonesia such as Ambon in the Moluccas and Poso in Sulawesi. Conflicts between Muslim and Christian communities in the Moluccas and Poso caused thousands of civilian deaths on both sides and stimulated religious associations to send humanitarian teams. Indeed, in response to the deteriorating situation caused by the conflict, a number of Islamic institutions started sending humanitarian teams to help the victims. This was partly because the government, represented by military officers and the police, could not handle the situation effectively. At the same time, the elites and policymakers in Jakarta (the central government) seem to have politicised the situation, rather than arranging adequate peacemaking processes.[11]

The dispatch of dozens of militia by Laskar Jihad may be seen as an expression of what can be called 'radical Islam'.[12] But it may also indicate a reaction to the government's failure to overcome the riots in Ambon. Through another lens, we may also see that this signifies communal 'solidarity', under which concept Laskar Jihad aimed to 'relieve' the sufferers, their fellow Muslims. In the same way, the deteriorating conflict in Poso upset to the Dewan Dakwah Islamiyyah Indonesia (Islam Propagation Council of Indonesia, DDII), an Islamic missionary association founded by Mohammad Natsir, the former leader of Masyumi. In 1998, DDII launched its humanitarian wing, the Komite Penanggulangan Krisis (Crisis Prevention Committee, KOMPAK) as a reaction to the deadly clashes between Muslims and Christians in Poso. KOMPAK was chaired by Tamsil Limrung, former president of Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (the Indonesian Muslim Student Association,

HMI-MPO),[13] and its aim was to distribute aid, partly from the Middle East, to help conflict victims in Ambon, Poso, West Kalimantan, East Timor and Aceh. KOMPAK's role was not undisputed. Indeed, it was accused of having close ties with – and of supplying weapons to – Muslims in Poso.[14]

It is under these circumstances that the meaning of Islamic humanitarianism is contested. Observers have suggested that in conflict zones, the implementation of humanitarian principles is often constrained by the ideological inclinations of aid agencies, and it is questionable whether they can act neutrally and 'impartially' when providing emergency relief. It is perhaps not easy for paramilitary groups and *da'wa* associations such as Laskar Jihad and KOMPAK to act professionally as humanitarian agencies nor to draw a clear distinction between their religious missionary activities, emergency relief and political struggle.[15] For example, KOMPAK set up a paramilitary wing known as Mujihidin KOMPAK and, as noted by Najib Azca (2011: 36), it 'mobilised Muslims from many groups associated with DDII to join the jihad in Ambon and Poso,' including 'those who affiliated with JI'. A different side of the Islamic humanitarian movement can be seen in the formation of the Medical Emergency Rescue Committee (Mer-C) in 1999 by a group of physicians and medical students. Mer-C is a Muslim humanitarian association that specifically works in conflict zones. Initially, Mer-C emerged in response to the bloody conflicts that spread across the islands of the Moluccas, including Galela, Halmahera and Tual (PIRAC 2002: 180). In practice, its attitude as a humanitarian agency is rather different from Laskar Jihad and KOMPAK's social, religious and political activism.

Keeping in mind the proliferation of Muslim relief agencies, we can assume that a widespread ideological spectrum of Islamic humanitarian agencies appeared in response to the communal conflicts, and that their ideological orientations are as varied as the social and educational backgrounds of their volunteers. Supported by medical volunteers, especially physicians working in either private or government hospitals, Mer-C humanitarian assistance in conflict zones has much to do with medical services, such as the operation of field hospitals and health provision for refugees, while Laskar Jihad and KOMPAK were involved in fighting.

Major natural disasters

When the 2004 earthquake struck the Indian Ocean, causing a devastating tsunami and killing hundreds of thousands of people in the coastal areas of Aceh and Nias, dozens of relief agencies landed in

Aceh. Some national and international NGOs that operated in Aceh at that juncture were faith-based NGOs, including World Vision, Christian Aid, Islamic Aid and Islamic Relief Worldwide. The tsunami disaster in Aceh was among the most tragic of catastrophes in Indonesia acquainting religious institutions in Indonesia with humanitarian affairs. Since then, Islamic relief agencies have spread all over Indonesia and, as one observer has suggested, 'the vast majority of Islamic actors in Aceh following the tsunami were representative of Islam in Indonesia' (Pirac 2002: 180). The catastrophe upset not only to moderate and long-established Islamic organisations such as Muhammadiyah, the Nahdlatul Ulama and Persis (the Islamic Union), but also to newly Islamist groups with their less-well trained volunteers such as Front Pembela Islam (Islamic Defender Front, FPI), Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) and Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI). They carried out emergency relief and delivered modest humanitarian assistance to the tsunami victims. Other philanthropic foundations with a strong background in relief provision such as Dompet Dhuafa, PKPU and Bulan Sabit Merah Indonesia (the Indonesian Red Crescent Society, BSMI) were also present.

The tsunami struck not only the physical environment of the coastal regions in Aceh, it also had a great impact on the minds of Muslim activists. It served as a warning to Islamic associations that they needed to work more seriously and prepare a more sophisticated approach to and comprehensive methods for disaster relief. In short, the disaster that ruined Aceh and Nias encouraged Muslim social activists to make humanitarian affairs a major concern. It is therefore not surprising that, since then, Islamic associations have created more specialised and professional humanitarian units. The experience gained working in the disaster-affected areas in Aceh and Nias proved to be a noteworthy step for the associations mentioned above, providing an impetus for them to move beyond their regular charity activism to relieve the poor in densely populated urban areas. Again, if we look more closely at the Islamic humanitarian actors that operated in Yogyakarta and Central Java in the wake of the 2006 earthquake and other calamities, we discover that, for the most part, they were former Aceh relief volunteers.

In response to the tsunami and other natural disasters, the long-established Muhammadiyah, which in the early twentieth century had operated a humanitarian unit, namely Penolong Kesengsaraan Oemoem (Poor Relief Organisation, PKO), began to consolidate its social vision by introducing a new modern humanitarian division, called MDMC (Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Centre). The MDMC was chaired by Dr. Sudibyo Markus and was under the supervision of the Department of Health and Social Welfare (MKKM) of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah. Muhammadiyah has managed hundreds of

hospitals throughout Indonesia. The MDMC cooperated with Muhammadiyah-Aisyiyah hospitals and higher education institutions, most notably the Faculty of Medical Sciences, the Faculty of Engineering and the Nursing Schools. Therefore, while the MDMC has become a vibrant place for young social activists, it has also received extensive support from medical doctors and nurses working in Muhammadiyah-Aisyiyah hospitals. In order to underpin the MDMC disaster emergency response programmes, some Muhammadiyah-Aisyiyah hospitals also established Disaster Medical Committees (DMC) in order to train and educate medical doctors and nurses in disaster preparedness. Following the 2010 Muhammadiyah Congress in Yogyakarta, the Central Board of Muhammadiyah formalised its humanitarian division and one of its organisational departments, known as the Lembaga Penanggulangan Bencana (Disaster Preparedness Department, LPB).

Likewise, Dompet Dhuafa, as an Islamic philanthropy organisation, took the initiative of setting up a permanent humanitarian division whose duties include disaster relief. Aksi Cepat Tanggap (Quick Response Unit, ACT) represents DD's humanitarian agency and, in practice, cooperates with DD's Charitable Health Clinics (Layanan Kesehatan Cuma-Cuma, LKC). In order to improve its organisational capacity in humanitarian affairs, Dompet Dhuafa recently launched a Disaster Humanitarian Centre (DMC-DD) based in Jakarta. DMC-DD handles three main projects: disaster preparedness, emergency response and rehabilitation and reconstruction. In 2011, DMC-DD had 850 volunteers throughout Indonesia.[16]

The deep involvement of private companies and international aid agencies in emergency relief over the years in Indonesia has also been influential in strengthening domestic Islamic humanitarian agencies in terms of financial matters and practical skills. Aside from providing financial support to domestic NGOs, including faith-based NGOs, private companies have become a long-term partner of Islamic NGOs in conducting charitable works and relief missions. This is an indication of the progress and increasing ability of Muslims NGOs to engage in humanitarian activities. Furthermore, I would suggest that Muslim middle-class employees working in private companies have played a considerable role in linking private sector organisations to Islamic voluntary sector associations. During the reconstruction stage following the 2004 tsunami, for example, the construction of temporary shelters and semi-permanent dwellings and the operation of health centres for disaster victims was made possible by financial support from private companies.

PKPU and DMC-DD are among the many Islamic humanitarian associations that have gained strong support not only from the public, but also from national and international corporations. The widespread

engagement of private sector organisations in humanitarian affairs is in line with the state regulations on corporations in Indonesia, such as the Ordinance on Corporations (*UU Perseroan Terbatas*) No. 40, 2007 and the Ordinance on Capital Investment (*UU Penanaman Modal*) No. 25, 2007, according to which corporations should be involved in sustainable development projects as a part of their social responsibility. Interestingly, a number of private companies in Indonesia and abroad have engaged Islamic voluntary sector organisations as local partners. Various welfare-oriented projects represent the fruit of the cooperation between non-religiously affiliated companies and Muslim aid associations in Indonesia. For example, in response to the tsunami, the earthquakes and deluges that struck some regions in Aceh, Padang and Papua between 2004-2010, Dompet Dhuafa has worked with ExxonMobil to renovate schools and to provide training for those affected by these calamities. Another collaborative effort between these two organisations took place in the form of food and medical supplies, refugee shelters and other in-kind aid. In the same way, PKPU worked with PT Freeport, RZI with PT Telkom, and BSMI with PT Indosat to provide healthcare, community development, poor relief and emergency responses.

Emergency relief: self-identity and resisting 'the Other'

It is generally acknowledged that social activism in Muslim societies represents the Muslim view of Islam as a set of revelation-based ethical principles to create the common good (*al-maslaha al-'amma*) in the worldly life, and that it also reflects Muslims' attitudes towards their environment. Although Islamic charities have a long history and can be traced back to the Ottoman Empire, when relief organisations were founded, Muslim engagement in professional emergency relief is still considered a new phenomenon, one that started in the 1970s. As previously mentioned, Islamic associations entered the field of humanitarian affairs in Indonesia in the late 1990s.

The growth in Islamic relief NGOs in many countries in part reflects the process of reformulating humanitarian principles from an Islamic point of view – that is, whether Muslim NGOs oppose the Western 'secular' concept of humanitarianism or reconcile Islamic views and international humanitarian law. Philosophical foundations for humanitarian action can be derived from diverse sources, such as religiously inspired values or philosophical reflection. But for many decades, international communities have referred to the humanitarian principles and law contained within, among other international agreements, the Geneva Convention of 1949. The ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) and the IFRC (International Federation of Red Cross

and Red Crescent Societies) have actively coordinated with international humanitarian groups to campaign for humanitarian principles, including in the Muslim world.

Nevertheless, the ambiguous relations between the Muslim world and the West seem to have stimulated Muslim societies to cautiously examine international humanitarian law and human rights at a symbolic and discursive level. In Muslim societies, *shari'a* is imperative to the formulation of Islamic humanitarian principles. Conceptually and practically, Islamic voluntary organisations attempt to provide aid to those in need 'in a manner Islamists deem consistent with Islamic values and practices' (Wictorowicz & Farouki 2000: 686). Despite the fact that Islamic NGOs and 'secular' humanitarian agencies may share common interests during the course of emergency relief, the intricacies of the religious, social and political contexts where humanitarian associations operate may trigger Muslim NGOs to develop new perspectives and paradigms in relief and humanitarian activities, especially in conflict zones. This 'new' perspective may or may not violate the principles of humanitarian action, as enshrined in international humanitarian law, such as the concepts of 'neutrality' and 'impartiality'. Inspired by various factors, Muslim humanitarian NGOs, and perhaps other faith-based NGOs, do not necessarily take international humanitarian principles into consideration in the course of relief action. This is partly because humanitarian principles should also be adapted to societal needs. For example, one might put heavy emphasis on 'impartiality' or 'neutrality' in the course of emergency relief so that people or victims, regardless of their social, ethical, religious and political backgrounds, can benefit from the aid offered by humanitarian agencies. Yet, in precarious situations, when two or more groups clash, humanitarian NGOs are often faced with difficult situations.

For certain Islamic aid agencies, humanitarian affairs in a conflict zone relate not only to the way in which aid can be delivered to the victims effectively, but also to how to help and advocate for the major victims in that conflict. When communal conflict erupted in Ambon and Poso, a number of Muslim associations played a considerable role in the relief effort. In Java and other parts of Indonesia, Muslim communities and Christian groups actively raised funds and drew attention to the conflict as a means of encouraging the public to show their solidarity and to donate. Both Muslims and Christian communities believed that the vast majority of victims were from their own sides. Muslims were sure that in the Ambon conflict, a Muslim minority population had become the target of Christian violence. By contrast, Christians blamed the government for not doing enough to protect their co-religionists, including from attacks by Muslims who had come to the region to join the fighting.[17] It is not surprising that it is not

easy for humanitarian agencies to avoid such a political framework, and that they have to show their rigorous political stance in the course of delivering emergency relief. In 1999, some Islamic humanitarian agencies formed Aliansi Lembaga Swadaya Umat untuk Masalah Kemanusiaan (Muslim NGOs Alliance for Humanitarian Issues, ALARM)[18] to put forward the Muslim perspective on the conflict and injustice in Ambon. ALARM also requested the government to investigate the tragedy in Tobelo and other parts of the Moluccas, where thousands of people were slaughtered. To sum up, humanitarian activism can be an expression of communal solidarity, and thus faith-based NGOs, to some extent, are characterised by 'communitarian humanitarianism'.

Contestation among faith-based NGOs frequently takes place in the field, especially between those with different ideological and religious backgrounds. In fact, the wide spectrum of Islam in Indonesia affects the types of humanitarian agencies. For some Islamist groups, participating in emergency relief can mean engagement in reducing the impact of secular and some kinds of non-Islamic influence in disaster-affected areas. Following the tsunami in Aceh, for example, Islamist groups such as FPI, MMI and Hizbut Tahrir provided humanitarian assistance during the emergency stage. Along with volunteers from other humanitarian associations, Islamists actively retrieved dead bodies, cleaned infrastructure and reconstructed buildings of worship. These volunteers arrived in Aceh with the idea that they would rescue the victims, the Acehnese, not only physically, but also sociologically and spiritually. The widespread engagement of foreign agencies, from both secular and Christian associations, apparently motivated Islamists to consolidate and actively engage. The Islamists also showed strong resistance towards evangelical Christians and Westerners, who were regarded as, at least potentially, having violated Islamic law implemented in the Province of Nanggro Aceh Darussalam. Therefore, apart from being humanitarian activists, Islamists acted as the guardians of public morals and Islamic institutions. For example, Hilmi Bakar al-Maskati, a coordinator of FPI in Aceh Relief, warned against the involvement of foreign agencies in Aceh: 'We saw the American soldiers helping the Acehnese, and that is a good thing [...] They come here to help us and we welcome them. However, if they interfere with our tradition, or civilisation, or law, that would become a problem'.[19]

This suspicion among faith-based NGOs, notably Muslim and Christian, was strengthened by the presence of American evangelicals in Aceh who publicly announced aggressive Christian missionary activities. They would take the children of Aceh to the United States and Christianise them.[20] This certainly provoked Islamists to respond in various ways. The moderates, such as Muhammadiyah and the Nahdla-

tul Ulama, along with Christian leaders in Jakarta, attempted to clarify the situation by releasing an 'Interfaith Press Statement Concerning Humanitarian Work in Aceh'[21] against religious proselytising in humanitarian efforts. *Badan Rekonstruksi dan Rehabilitasi* (BRR NAD-Nias), a government-sponsored Agency for the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Aceh and Nias, also responded to this interfaith issue. In 2006, BRR sponsored a special 'Islamist watchdog' team, namely Tim Pembinaan dan Pengawasan Pendangkalan Aqidah (P3A), whose main duties are to protect Muslim communities from any kind of illegal religious proselytising by other institutions.[22]

It should also be noted that relationships between Muslims and 'the Other' are not always characterised by suspicion. Strategic cooperation between Muslims, Christians and the

> secular in humanitarian affairs can be materialised in certain degrees. When religious proselytizing turned out to be a very sensitive issue in post-tsunami Aceh, the Muhammadiyah established partnership with an American-based Christian humanitarian NGO, the World Vision Indonesia (WVI), and an Australian Roman Catholic one, the Youth Off The Street (YOTS).[23]

YOTS was founded in Australia by Father Chris Riley, an Australian Roman Catholic priest, in 1991. Its main objective is to provide assistance to disadvantaged youth. YOTS has grown to become 'a community organisation working for young people who are chronically homeless, drug dependent and recovering from abuse'. Apart from working in Australia, YOTS also operates overseas, notably in post-disaster areas, in post-conflict Timor Leste (formerly East Timor) and post-tsunami Aceh. It addressed issues related to the well-being of disadvantaged youth and vulnerable children. A collaborative effort between Muhammadiyah and YOTS took place in 2005, and one of the fruits of this cooperation was the operation of a Children's Centre to provide resources and direct care for children.

The close relationship between the Australian government (embassy) and Muhammadiyah was apparently a dominant factor in forging the partnership between Muhammadiyah and YOTS. In 2006, the Australian government, represented by AUSAID, also engaged Muhammadiyah to operate emergency, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities in Yogyakarta in response to the 2006 earthquake through a project labelled the PKO (People Kampong Organised). More than simply a relief operation, the PKO is a development-oriented project focusing on the health, education and school management sectors. Similarly, various relief and development projects, including livelihood and income-generating projects, were run in disaster-affected spots, such as Banda

Aceh (tsunami), Padang-Pariaman in West Sumatra (earthquake), and Yogyakarta (Merapi eruption) by the MDMC in cooperation with World Vision Indonesia (WVI) and World Vision Singapore (WVS). This also goes to suggest that in Muslim societies, humanitarian affairs have become a 'new' field of Muslim social enterprise. At the same time, humanitarianism has stimulated the Muslim middle class, with its extensive horizontal and vertical networks, both nationally and internationally, as well as with its ability to mobilise resources (funds, benefactors and volunteers), to produce and reproduce new patterns of Islamic social activism in Indonesia.

Conclusion

It has been argued that 'the social and especially the political relationships between the urban middle class and the informal working class in the social sphere [...] are actually very significant in the definition of the "middle class" and a critical dimension of the reproduction of class relationships' (Harriss 2006: 8). This chapter has addressed the multiple roles played by the Muslim middle class in shaping 'social Islam' in the socially and politically changing landscape of the Indonesian nation-state. The Islamisation of the urban middle class has resulted in an unprecedented level of social activism within Muslim communities in Indonesia. While worship remains an important activity for the urban middle class, as evidenced by the proliferation of religious gathering groups and spiritual training centres in many urban areas, endeavours to transform individual piety into socially grounded activities are also pervasive. Many major religious gathering groups, for instance, have spawned humanitarian agencies as a form of religiously inspired social expression. This development coincides with the rapid expansion of political activism in the post-New Order era. Controlled keenly by members of the middle class, a wide range of Islamic humanitarian agencies are meeting public needs in contemporary Indonesia, especially in the wake of natural disasters and communal conflicts. In short, the Muslim middle class is active in reinforcing the bridge between religious worship and social activism, between economic projects and social enterprises, and between political concerns and humanitarian activism.

Islamic humanitarian agencies have also been modernised and augmented by the prevalence of social capital and economic resources controlled by the Muslim middle class. With a variety of modern educational backgrounds and the opportunity to fill various strategic positions in the government bureaucracy or in corporations, the Muslim middle class can make creative attempts to reformulate its social Islam,

to redefine the characteristics of benefactors and types of beneficiaries, to reshape organisational patterns and to redefine the scope of their socio-political networks. The operation of well-organised and professional Islamic humanitarian agencies in Indonesia is mounting evidence of the middle-class contribution to social Islam in contemporary Indonesia. Of course, modern Islamic humanitarian agencies are also constrained by certain factors. While they cannot be completely detached from the influence of state policies and the market, Muslim middle-class political frameworks are also ideologically fragmented. This is partly because, as a social entity, the middle class is also generally engaged in a struggle for power and identity, and middle-class identity is defined not only by occupational status and social stratification, but also by religious, political and cultural proximities. Therefore, the shared interests of the middle class, represented by its social welfare associations, in helping the needy in densely populated urban areas and poor rural areas, in assisting sufferers in disaster-affected regions, or even in framing their discourse in response to the communal conflicts in Indonesia and abroad, do not easily lead middle-class Islamic social activism in the direction of greater unity.

Notes

1 For the proliferation of medical help in the form of charitable clinics in urban areas, see Latief (2010) and Sciortino et al. (2010).
2 See, for example, Alterman and Von Hippel (2007) and Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan (2003).
3 The Indonesian sociologist Ariel Heryanto (2011: 62) has noted: 'among these privileged segments of the Muslim community there should be both a greater need and a greater liability to explore new activities in the cultural and aesthetic as well as legal and intellectual realms to justify and celebrate their newly acquired privileges, express their identities and aspirations, and/or expand and further consolidate their politico-economic position'.
4 For the proliferation of philanthropic associations in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, see Ibrahim and Sherif (2008), Mitsuo et al. (2001), and Josie M.F. and Ibrahim (2002).
5 See also Nyman (2006: 93-8).
6 For further comparison, see Harris (2006: 447) and Dick (1985).
7 For further discussion, see also Muzakki (2007).
8 Interview with Haru Suhandaru, chairperson of PKS of Bandung, 10 October 2010. He was just elected as chairperson of Municipal Parliament of Bandung (DPRD Kotamadya Bandung).
9 See SK Mensos RI No. 08/HUK/2010 (on social organisation); SK Meneg RI No. 441/2001 (on National Zakat Collector).
10 www.pkpu.or.id/about/visi-dan-misi (Accessed 15 August 2011).
11 For further reading, see Van Klinken (2007), especially chapters 5 and 6.
12 For a more comprehensive discussion of the role of militias in Ambon, see Hasan (2007).

13 In 2002, Tamsil Limrung and Agus Dwikarna, head of KOMPAK of the Celebes Region, were arrested at Manila international airport. They were accused of having supported terrorist action in conflict areas and other regions of Indonesia. Tamsil Limrung was released after officials from the Philippines found him innocent of terrorist crimes. Agus Dwikarna was sent to prison for 17 years after he was found to be in possession of illegal explosives.
14 http://ddii.acehprov.go.id/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19&Itemid=29 (accessed 31 August 2010).
15 See also Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan (2003: 70) and Burr and Collins (2006: 1-3).
16 http://dmc.dompetdhuafa.org/ (accessed 15 August 2011).
17 For further reading, see Mulyadi (2003) and Hasan (2002).
18 ALARM is made up of: 1) Pusat Penanggulangan Krisis dan Bantuan Umat (PPK-BU) MUI; 2) the Medical Emergency Rescue Committee (Mer-C); 3) Komite Penanggulangan Krisis (KOMPAK) DDII; 4) Pos Keadilan Peduli Umat (PKPU); 5) Jaringan Media Profetik (JMP); 6) Pusat Advokasi Hukum dan Hak Asasi Manusia (Paham) Indonesia; 7) Komite Solidaritas Umat Islam (KSUI); and 8) Keluarga Besar Korban Tanjung Priok.
19 'Militants Jump into Aceh Aid Effort', *Los Angeles Times,* 10 January 2005. http://articles.latimes.com/2005/jan/10/world/fg-militants10 (accessed 21 Feb 2011).
20 www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A7535-2005Jan13.html (accessed 31 August 2010).
21 http://islamlib.com/en/article/interfaith-statement-concerning-humanitarian-work-in-aceh/ (accessed 31 August 2010).
22 See Tim Pembinaan dan Pengawasan Pendangkalan Aqidah (P3A) BRR NAD-Nias, Laporan Hasil Investigasi Pendangkalan Aqidah (Nangro Aceh Darussalam: BRR, 2006).
23 See Report, Youth of the Street: Outcomes and Achievements Report (2005).