

The Stories of Modern Dervishes in Indonesia

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Tolong

By

Salih Yucel

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	vi
Chapter One.....	1
The Dream of Pasai Ruler Merah Silau and the Civilisation of the Heart	
Chapter Two	22
The Dreams of Modern Dervishes	
Chapter Three	37
The First School	
Chapter Four	54
The Dream is Coming True	
Chapter Five	82
Turks in Semarang	
Chapter Six	111
Yogyakarta: The Centre of Civilisation	
Chapter Seven.....	141
Dream Before the Tsunami	
Chapter Eight.....	171
Unforgettable Stories	
Conclusions	199
References	206

FOREWORD

My interest in doing this research about Hizmet affiliated teachers and institutions began when I attended an international conference titled “The Significance of Education for the Future: The Gülen Model of Education” in October 2010 at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University in Jakarta. Professor M. Amin Abdullah, the Rector of Sunan Kalijaga Islamic State University in Yogyakarta presented his paper on “Fethullah Gülen and character education in Indonesia” comparing Hizmet schools with Pesantrens, the traditional religious schools in Indonesia. After the presentation, an Indonesian academic commented saying that “What you talked about is taught in Pesantrens as well. So, what is the difference?” Professor Abdullah responded. “Yes, you are right, but we talk, they act,” meaning they build student character through an exemplary life of teachers while in Pesantrens it is taught in theory. In many Muslim countries, appearance is prioritised over character whereas the inner dimension, which reflects behaviour of individuals in daily life, is essential from Islamic faith perspective.

If the life of Prophet Muhammed (pbuh), his Companions, and great scholars’ biographies are analysed, the findings will show that they dedicated their whole lives to serving humanity in different ways. After the death of the Prophet, almost ninety per cent of the Companions dispersed to different continents and conveyed the message of Islam mostly through their actions. According to a Chinese chronicle, a Muslim Arab, possibly one of the *Sayyids* ran a town in the west coast of Sumatra Island in 674. After the *Karbala* tragedy, some companions, particularly the *Ahl Bayt*, looked for a safer place to live and practice their religion due to the oppression and tyranny of some Umayyad and Abbasid rulers. So, they migrated to Asia and Africa. Many Muslim and non-Muslim scholars argue that initially most *Ahl Bayt* arrived in the Archipelago (modern day Indonesia) and disseminated the seed of Islam.

Interestingly, the scholars of Makkah and Madinah called them “*Ashab al-Jawiiyin*” the Companions of Java, after the thirteenth century. As it is known, the word “*Ashab*” is particularly used for the Companions of the Prophet in Islamic literature.

Thus, many of the great spiritual leaders, including Wali Sanga or the nine saints in the history of Archipelago were the descendants of the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh). In addition, the disciples of these *Ahl Bayt* also played a crucial role in Islamisation of Archipelago. Snouck Hurgronje (d.1936), Jean Gelman Taylor, and Martin von Bruenessen detail the crucial role of *Ahl Bayt* in their works.

It is generally accepted that mystical experiences and dreams played important roles during the Islamisation of Archipelago. Many of these experiences and dreams were recorded in Malay *Hikayats*.

Even though they do not consider themselves Sufis, Hizmet affiliated teachers and mentors characters resemble Sufi dervishes in the history of Turkish Muslims. Devin Deweese in his book “Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition”, points out Sufi dervishes’ role in Islamisation of Central Asia. I found that stories of the early arrival of Hizmet Movement’s affiliates in the early 90s are similar to these dervishes’ manaqibs (tales or legends). Like dervishes, they came from middle or lower class backgrounds. They left Turkey for their ideals and not because of financial or pleasure purposes. If a scholar analyses their stories with a social science theoretical framework, he/she will conclude that these early arrivals must be crazy adventurous. Four 19 year old young men came to Indonesia in 1993 and knew nothing about the culture or language and with no local helper together with little money which could be enough only for less than a month.

Although it is not the same, there are similarities between the mystical experiences and dreams in the history of Islamisation in Arhipelago and in the immigration of Turkish students and teachers to Indonesia from 1993 and onwards. During my field research in 2018 and 2020 for this project, I recorded over a hundred very interesting mystical experiences and dreams of Turkish teachers, mentors, students, parents and local supporters. These dreams began before arrival of these students to Indonesia.

Hizmet affiliated teachers began to migrate in the early 1990s. David Tittensor called them “Modern day Ibn Battutas”¹ due to their twofold wide dispersal globally and their mutual journeying towards the Divine.

¹ David Tittensor, “Islam’s Modern Day Ibn Battutas: Gülen Teachers Journeying Towards the Divine,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Published online, January, 28, 2015.

United by a common educational purpose, they immigrated to over 170 countries, including Indonesia. While Ibn Battuta (d.1369) travelled to many countries and eventually returned home, these teachers and students mostly did not return to Turkey. They neither belong to a *tariqa* (Sufi Order), as some scholars argue nor are they traditionalists, though they share traits of perhaps both. So, in this research, I would call them “Modern Dervishes” who move by heart. If we have to call them Sufis then, they can be called “the Sufis on their ways.” The findings of this research show that their lifestyles resemble Sufis.

In March 1993, four Hizmet affiliated high school graduates arrived in Jakarta. They had no understanding of Bahasa and had only a limited grasp of English. Later, more students and teachers went to Indonesia. This increase meant that over the course of ten years Hizmet affiliated teachers, with local support, were able to establish schools in Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Semarang, Bogor and Aceh.

I was on sabbatical leave in Indonesia for conducting this research in 2018. I met tens of teachers, parents, students, academics, and businessmen in the above-mentioned cities. I interviewed over one hundred twenty teachers, mentors, parents, local businessmen, and graduates of these educational institutions. The number of people that I met shows the immense growth Hizmet inspired model activities have had in the intervening years and how successful it has been in establishing a wide circle of influence.

The research covers the gamut of human experience including mystical experiences, dreams, altruism, hard work, teamwork, cultural misunderstandings, funny anecdotes, misconceptions, success, failure, happiness and sad stories. During the interviews, some interviewees shed tears when they narrated the altruism of their friends, the sad stories, and the challenges they faced. Sometimes, I could not stop my tears as well. Some teachers and graduates did not feel comfortable including their names and pictures in the publication. To preserve their anonymity, I gave pseudonyms with their consent.

I am an insider. That gave me some advantages to conduct my research in depth. However, it also includes some disadvantages, primarily of which is an awareness that some academics may not find the work particularly critical. Sometimes, in an attempt to mitigate this concern, I attempted to look at it from an outsider’s perspective.

The title of the book “The Stories of Modern Dervishes: Tolong” is based on a true story of three orphan students. The Hizmet affiliated school in Aceh organised a picnic at the nearby beach for students and parents a couple of months after the tsunami. Teachers and some parents were having a barbeque. Some students were playing on the beach a bit further from the picnic area. After half an hour, the students at the beach started screaming. Harun, a mentor in the school, ran like crazy toward them. They saw three boys struggling in the big waves of the ocean, all screaming from fear of drowning. Harun dived into the ocean in an attempt to save one of them and managed to catch another in the process. The third boy was screaming, saying “Abi Tolong” meaning “Abi (elder brother in Turkish) I beg you, help.” Another mentor, Huseyin, could not leave him to drown. Although Huseyin was not a professional swimmer, he knew how to swim. Taking off his shirt, Huseyin rushed to the ocean. He was able to get to the third boy but there were strong waves. Huseyin did not know how they could return to the shore, especially since the boy did not know how to swim. The boy was taking *shahadah* and saying “Abi Tolong.” Huseyin and the boy clung to each other as the waves battered them. Huseyin said:

“I felt that it was not possible to survive and both of us were going to die. Both of us were exhausted. I saw that a big wave was coming. I threw the boy in the front of the wave, inspired at that moment. The wave took the boy towards the beach. I tried to swim and the wave took me closer to the beach. I felt that my feet were touching the ground. I could not remember the rest because I fainted. The other staff took me out of the water. When I opened my eyes, I was still thinking about Harun and the other boy instead of thinking of myself. What happened to them? All three boys were orphaned due to the tsunami.”

The first chapter will discuss the arrival of Islam in the Archipelago and then the establishment and revival of the *Dayah* Madrasah educational system. It will end with a brief history of Hizmet schools in Indonesia. The second chapter explores the arrival of Hizmet affiliated students in March 1993 and the challenges they faced during their settlements. The third chapter details how they actualised their mystical dreams and opened the first school. The fourth chapter discusses the success and local recognition of the first school. Chapters Five and Six explore how the educational system expanded as schools in other cities opened. Chapter Seven delves into how another mystical dream came true in Aceh after the tsunami. Chapter Eight explores the stories and challenges of some graduates, teachers and mentors and their activities.

The Hizmet affiliated teachers established ten schools. After a fake and failed military coup², the Turkish government did not extend their passports. Therefore, most of them had to leave Indonesia except those who had married locals or who became Indonesian citizens. Currently, these schools are run mostly by the local Indonesian people, and almost all teachers are local.

For them, seeking and teaching knowledge is more than physical love as classical Muslim scholars experienced. Also, they aimed to achieve perfection in generosity and altruism in their lives. Aaron L. Ghiloni argues that “The greater jihad is an educational process. There is teaching, there is learning, there are no shortcuts.”³ What I found is that these modern dervishes moved by heart.

I would like to thank Professor M. Amin Abdullah, Professor Noorhaidi Hasan, Dr Rofah Mudzakir, Dr Moch Nur Ichwan at State Islamic University in Yogyakarta, where I began this research as a visiting scholar. In addition, I thank the directors and principals of the schools, the local board members, teachers, mentors, graduates and parents for their assistance. Without their support, conducting this research in such depth would be impossible. Finally, I would like to thank my dear friend Dr Abu Bakr Sirajuddin Cook for his feedback and editing.

Salih Yucel
June 2023
Melbourne

² A leading scholar and professor of theology, art history and political history at Georgetown University argues that “the military coup was fake and aimed to attack Hizmet *Movement* in a manner reminiscent of how Hitler targeted the Jews in Germany in 1933-1935.” For details see, Ori Z Soltes, *Between Thought and Action: An Intellectual Biography of Fethullah Gulen*, (New Jersey: Blue Doom, 2022) 269-278. After the failed military coup, which the Turkish Government held Gülen responsible for, over 615,000 people were detained, and about 150,000 were arrested including over 8,000 academics, about 4,000 judges, 167 journalists, about 20,000 women and over 6000 of them with their babies. When this book was written, the regime still continued to arrest people almost seven years after the coup. Over 150,000 people fled or left Turkey due to the oppression and persecution of political Islamists. Gülen strictly denied being behind the failed coup.

³ Aaron J. Ghiloni, *Islam as Education: Pedagogies of Pilgrimage, Prophecy, and Jihad*, (London: Lexington Books, 2019), 90.

CHAPTER ONE

THE DREAM OF PASAI RULER MERAH SILAU AND THE CIVILISATION OF THE HEART

Dreams are glad tidings of prophesy.
—Prophet Muhammed (pbuh)

This chapter first briefly discusses Islam's arrival in Archipelago, modern day Indonesia. Secondly, the role of dreams and mystical experiences will be focused on. Thirdly, the role of Prophet Muhammed's descendants (pbuh) in planting the seeds of Islam will be analysed. Finally, it will discuss the impact of a dream on the initial journey of modern dervishes of the Hizmet Movement.

Dreams and mystical experiences had an important role in the Islamisation of Archipelago. There are many stories about dreams and mystical experiences of the nine saints, their disciples and followers, which have been transmitted orally from generation to generation since the twelfth century.⁴ Some of them are recorded in Malay *Hikayats*. Jean Gelman Taylor mentions some of these stories based on Malay literature, *Hikayats* and chronicles. These *Hikayats* are the major written sources for Islamisation of Archipelago.

It is stated that "Pasai (a kingdom in the north part of Sumatra Island) Ruler Merah Silau had a dream. In his dream, Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) appeared and transmitted the knowledge of Islam to him. When Merah Silau woke up, he found he was circumcised, could recite the credo of faith in Arabic, and read the Koran."⁵ While it is said that he felt that he was a

⁴ For details on the role of dreams of Islamisation, see Azyumardi Azra, *The Transmission of Islamic Reformism to Indonesia: Networks of Middle Eastern and Malay-Indonesian 'Ulama' in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries*, PhD thesis, Colombia University, 1992 and Yusny Saby, *Islam and Social Change: The Role of Ulama in Ache Society*, PhD thesis, Temple University, 1995.

⁵ Taylor, J. Gelman, "Sultan and States: Histories Through Islam." In *Indonesia: Peoples and Histories*, ed. Jean Gelman Taylor, (Yale University Press, 2003), 75. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1nq2mr.10>.

Muslim, he remained unclear of the consequences of this dream and the feelings it evoked. What is Islam? Who is Prophet Muhammed? Why did he come to him in his dream? How is he going to practice Islam? Many other questions were in his mind. On the same day, one of his staff told him that Muslim tradesmen arrived at their shore. Silau thought that this could not be a coincidence. He invited the Muslim tradesmen to his court and learned from them how to pray and practice Islam. He became a close friend of these tradesmen. This is only one of the many stories in the Islamisation of Archipelago.

There are many dreams and mystical experiences in the history of Islam. Caliphs Umar (d.644), Uthman (d.656), and Ali (d.661) saw in their dreams that they would be martyred. The historical books record thousands of dreams and mystical experiences of the Companions of Prophet Muhammed, great scholars, saints and some rulers. It is narrated that Tariq ibn Ziyad saw the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in his dream. In the dream, the Prophet pointed out with his finger to the Iberian Peninsula. Tariq interpreted this as a moral obligation to cross over the strait for the conquest of the peninsula. In another source, "Tariq ibn Ziyad reached the southern shore of Spain and had a dream. He saw the Prophet and the four Caliphs walking on water. They reached him and announced Tariq's expected victory"⁶ The good dreams are part of pious individuals' Islamic spiritual life.

Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) said, "A good dream (that comes true) of a righteous man is one of forty-six parts of prophetism."⁷ In another hadith, he says, "When the time draws near, the dreams of a believer will hardly ever fail to come true, and the most truthful of them in dreams will be the truest in speech among them."⁸ The dream of a Muslim is a portion among the forty-six portions of Prophethood. Dreams are of three types: The righteous dream, which is good news from Allah, dreams in which the Shaitan frightens someone, and dreams about something that has happened to the man himself. The Prophet said, "Therefore, when one of you sees what he dislikes, then he should get up and move on, and not tell any of the

⁶ Leah Kinberg, "Dreams Online Contemporary Appearances of the Prophet in Dreams," In *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies*, ed. Özgen Felek, and Alexander D. Knysh, (New York: State University of New York Press, 2012), 146. ProQuest Ebook Central.

<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/csuaui/detail.action?docID=3407041>.

⁷ Al-Bukhari, n.d. Hadith no: 6983, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Accessed September 24, 2019, <https://sunnah.com/bukhari/91>.

⁸ Ibn Majah, n.d. Hadith no: 3917, *Sunan Ibn Maja*, Accessed September 30, 2019, <https://sunnah.com/ibnmajah/35/25>.

people.” In another hadith, it is narrated that “And I like the fetters in a dream while I dislike the iron collar.” And the interpretation of fetters is being firm in the religion.⁹ Sometimes, the Prophet would ask his companions after *fajr salat* (morning prayer), if anyone had any dreams.

The good dreams and mystical vision of Muslims, particularly *awliya* (Muslim saints), and their followers, are considered as Divine blessings and a source of encouragement. The *awliya* are also seen as figures who often receive certain information through dreams (*kashf*).¹⁰ Great Muslim scholars did not see good dreams as a source of knowledge to act upon but viewed them as good news for spiritual life. Some saints view their dreams as indications for taking some types of actions that do not contradict the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet. Imam al-Ghazali (d.1111), Abdul Qadir Gilani (d.1166), Bahauddin Naqshband (d.1391) and many other great scholars mention how dreams and mystical visions helped them to grow in their spiritual life. They considered dreams to be windows into the hidden mysteries of both this world and the next.¹¹ Some saints travelled or migrated to other cities and countries due to dreams. Saints view good dreams and mystical visions as a comfort during the hardship and tyranny under oppressed rulers.

It is known that due to the oppression of most of the Umayyad rulers and some Abbasside caliphs on *Ahl Bayt*, the *Sayyids* (descendants of the Prophet) dispersed to different continents. They looked for safer places where they could serve humanity and convey the message of Islam freely. As the love from the Muslim community for the Prophet Muhammad extends to his descendants, some Muslim rulers viewed the *Sayyids* with suspicion and concern that their administration would be undermined. Instances of oppression and tyranny often resulted in the immigration (*hijrah*) of the *Ahl Bayt* to different continents, in turn spreading Islam throughout Asia, Africa, and South Asia. As mentioned in the Qur'an "...It may well be that you dislike a thing, but it is good for you, and it may well be that you like a thing, but it is bad for you. God knows, and you do not know" (Qur'an, 2:216). The good that resulted from the oppression on the *Ahl Bayt* is that their immigration spread Islam throughout different

⁹ Tirmidhi, n.d. Sunan at-Tirmidhi, Hadith no:2770, Accessed September 24, 2019. <https://sunnah.com/urn/675740>.

¹⁰ Erni Budiwanti, "The Role of Wali, Ancient Mosques and Sacred Tombs in the Dynamics of Islamisation in Lombok", *Heritage of Nusantara, International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage*, V 3, No 1, (2014):36.

¹¹ Kinberg, 146.

continents. *Hijrah* (immigration) is explicitly seen to have an important role in the lives of almost all prophets, saints, and great scholars. Through *hijrah*, by accepting that they are at the mercy of Allah's choice for them rather than their choice for themselves, they detach themselves from everything other than Allah. Away from the comforts of home, the detachment from the secondary causes is intensified, encouraging the traveller to focus on their connection with the primary cause. While intensified when away, in reality, every individual is a traveller and therefore, in some sense, an immigrant. His or her journey starts in the world of spirits, continues through the stations of their mother's womb, childhood, youth, old age and to the grave, and from there to an entirely new world which is eternal. The spiritual journey is completed with physical ones.

It can be said that immigration is also an indispensable action for revivalism (*tajdid*). It has two stages. In the first stage, a man with a cause develops his character, overflows with belief, inflamed with love, surpassing his self and grows into a passionate slave of truth. In this stage, he struggles against the temptations of his carnal self to build his authentic and spiritual character. It also establishes a strong brotherhood and sisterhood. Khalid Masud argues that *hijrah* established a bond of relationship between Muslims (the Companions of the Prophet), particularly with *Ansar*, the Helpers.¹² *Ansar* shared their wealth and homes with *Muhajirun* who immigrated from Makkah. Almost ninety percent of companions left Makkah and Medina for *hijrah* purposes. Similarly, from the eighth century and onwards, the *awliya* and their disciples also immigrated to the heartland of the Archipelago.

The Civilisation of the Heart

It is suggested that Islam was introduced in the Nusantara Archipelago during the third Caliph Uthman (d.656).¹³ Middle Eastern Muslims, mostly Arabs, arrived in the Archipelago (modern-day Indonesia) in the late 7th century. According to a Chinese source, an Arab Shaikh was running a small town on the west coast of Sumatra in 674.¹⁴ In his book, Pasy Izharul Haqq,

¹² Masud, Muhammed Khalid, "The obligation to migrate: the doctrine of hijrah in Islamic law" In *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination*, ed. Dale F. Eickelman & James Piscatori, (London, Routledge 1990), 33.

¹³ Azra, 1992, 56. Saby, 1995,13-29.

¹⁴ W. P. Groeneveldt, "Notes on the Malay Archipelago and Malacca, Compiled from Chinese Sources", *Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van*

Ishak Al-Sheikh Makarani says that a group of *dawa* workers including about one hundred Arabs from Quraishi tribes arrived at an island in the North of Sumatra in 800.¹⁵ Snouck Hurgronje contests Chinese dating and argues that the 12th century is the earliest possible date for the Islamisation of the Malay world. He states, “Most of the early descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, bearing the title of *Sayyid* or *Sharif*, who completed the preaching of Islam were either as ‘priests’ [sheikhs], ‘priest-princes’ or sultans,”¹⁶ in different Islands¹⁷ in the Archipelago.

Almost all scholars, including Western scholars, agree that *Sayyids* and *Sharif* played very important roles in the Islamisation of Archipelago. The role of *awliya* (saints) are undeniable. Many of these *awliya* are said to be related to a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. For example, Shaikh Jumadil Kubra. This name is a Javanese form of Najmuddin al-Kubra (d.1221). Sunan Gunung Jati is one of the saints who played a very important role in the Islamisation of Java inspired by Najmuddin al-Kubra’s works and Sufi order. ¹⁸Al-Kubra is the founder of the *Kubrawiyya* Sufi *tariqa* (order).¹⁹Kazuhiro Arai states:

Indonesia is a country that contains many descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. Sayyids participate in a wide range of activities and have occupations such as entrepreneurs, politicians, government officials, professionals, artists and academics. ...Ulama of Sayyid descent have opened schools, built mosques, had disciples and conducted da’wa (a call for Islam) in various parts of Southeast Asia. Some of them have come to be recognized as saints (wali) and a yearly visit to their tombs, called a haul, is a popular religious ceremony in the region, especially in Java.

The overwhelming majority of sayyids in Indonesia are descendants of immigrants from the South Arabian region of Ḥaḍramawt (in today’s

Kunsten en Wetenschappen, XXXIX, Den Haag (1880) 14-15 cited in Ismail Hakki Gursoy, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Ansiklopedisi*, (Istanbul:TDV, 1995), C 11 s 194.

¹⁵ Dhuhrri, S, “Dayah Dalam Tiga Fase Perkembangan Menelaal Berbasis Perubahan yang Telah Punah” cited in Dr Zulfikar Ali Bhutto & Zamzami Zauiddin, “Modernisation of Dayah in Aceh”, *The Islamic Quarterly*, V 60, 3 (2016):308.

¹⁶ For details, see Azra, 1992, 16-47.

¹⁷ For details, See Saby, 1995, 13-29.

¹⁸ For details See, Martin van Bruinessen, “Najmuddin al-Kubra, Jumadil Kubra and Jamaluddin al-Akbar Traces of Kubrawiyya Influence” in *Early Indonesian Islam*, Accessed July 13, 2020.

https://brill.com/view/journals/bki/150/2/article-p305_3.xml?language=en.

¹⁹ Taylor, 2003, 78.

Republic of Yemen. In terms of lineage, they are Ḥusaynis (descants of Husain, the grandson of the Prophet).²⁰

Irrespective of the causes of their immigration, wherever these *Sayyids* and *Sharif* travelled, it is observed that Islam spread with them. Their actions and their followers' actions preceded their words. According to historians, most of the prominent spiritual leaders in Southeast Asia were *Sayyids* who played a crucial role in the Islamisation within the region or their traces go back to the Companions of the Prophet. Interestingly, scholars of Mecca and Madinah called them "*Ashab al-Jawiyyin*", the Companions of Java from the 13th century onwards. As it is known, the word "*Ashab*" is particularly used for companions of the Prophet in Islamic literature. Such expression was not used for any other region. In my view, such expression reflects the love and honour of *Sayyids* and *Sharif* among the Meccan and Medinan Scholars.

Sayyids planted the seeds of Islam with esoteric love, watered with their tears of suffering, and nourished themselves with the recitation of the Qur'an, *du'a* and *dhikr*. Their influence affected hearts and minds of masses in many islands. From 16th century and onward, colonial powers saw them as a threat for their national interest. The colonial rulers' oppression, persecution, and tyranny became fertiliser for the growth of these seeds in the Archipelago.

The *Sayyids* were not very interested in grabbing power and ruling over people, preferring to strengthen faith and enlighten the hearts and minds of human beings. "They were followers of Islam by nature, birth, and temperament" as contemporary scholar Said Nursi (d.1960) stated. They migrated to safe places where no ruler of the Middle East could oppress them. Nursi continues,

"With his vision which penetrated the unseen, the Noble Prophet (PBUH) saw that his family would become like a light-giving tree within the world of Islam. The overwhelming majority of those who would perform the duty of guides instructing every level of the World of Islam in human attainment and perfection would emerge from his family. For those who were the source

²⁰ Arai, Kazuhiro. "The sayyids as commodities: the Islamic periodical alKisah and the sayyid community in Indonesia", In *Sayyid and Sharif in the Muslim Societies*, ed. Morimoto Kazuo, Routledge, (London: Routledge, 2012), 247-248.

and guardians of the Prophet's practices and were charged with complying with them in every respect, were his family."²¹

Until the middle of the 12th century, individuals and small groups continued their migration to Southeast Asia. This was mainly for *da'wah* or trade purposes. Due to their good character, they were welcomed by the local community and rulers. Gradually, they became the sultans of people's hearts due to their exemplary lives and helping those who were in need. In addition to that, they were able to show *karamahs* (divine blessings like miracles) in case of need with God's help. There are hundreds of *karamahs* of *awliya* and their students which have been transmitted orally or in Malay *Hikayats* and chronicles.

Walis and their students in Archipelago did not have a state which could support them, no libraries like *Bayt al-Hikmah* in Bagdad, Damascus, Cordoba, or Istanbul to use as a source. They did not have well known Jurists, *mufasssirs* and theologians who existed in the Middle East, Central Asia, and Spain at that time. However, they have had "roamers" whose actions preceded their knowledge. They did not have much knowledge, but heart centred aims. Of these figures, Taylor writes:

Roamers were holy men, Java's variant on a key figure of Islamic history. They chose Java's forest streams and mountaintops as places to meditate; they abstained from food, sleep, and sex to gain supernatural powers and the ability to perform acts of magic. Then they passed through Java collecting followers, who comprised a tightly knit band of initiates into their secret knowledge and a much larger crowd of hangers-on. The followers lived outside the norms and demands of the establishment of kings and kings' religious appointees. They shunned palaces and mosques. Mobile holy men had the gift of prophecy. They were no friends to monarchs.²²

And:

A common character in Islamic conversion stories from around the archipelago is the stranger or missionary from overseas. The stranger often arrives on a ship laden with cargo; he is always a man; he has superior powers which he demonstrates by such acts of magic as flying, moving mountains, and unexplainable cures for illness. The stranger is not an ascetic.²³

²¹ Said Nursi, *Flashes*, Translated by Sukran Vahide, (Istanbul: Sozler Ofset, 1999), 38.

²² Taylor, 2003, 112.

²³ Taylor, 2003, 78.

Walis played a very important role in the Islamisation of Archipelago through *karamahs*. It is narrated that Sunan Kalijaga emerged from trance were able to speak Arabic and fly through the air.²⁴ Erni Budiwanti gives details of *Walis'* role in Islamisation through *karamas* in Lombok. He argues that in a post trading era, *Wali* became a central figure in transferring Islamic knowledge to the interior island, especially in remote hinterland areas.²⁵ Budiwanti continues: “*Wali* is popularly described as knowledgeable, charismatic, honourable, respectable, and is thus venerated by the locals. He maintains a gentle attitude and very persuasive in conveying his message. He was also very tolerant to the local cultural practices.”²⁶ Taylor and many other Western scholars make a grave mistake by calling *karama* (divine blessings) of these saints as magic. Their approach is more materialistic rather than spiritual. Nursi argues that “they apply their materialist opinions in matters of spirituality. It is true that those who search for every truth in corporeality have their intellects in their corporeal senses when corporeal senses are blind to spiritual things.”²⁷ Magic is unlawful in Islam. How could saints practice magic which is *haram* (unlawful) in the name of Islam or spread Islam? The secret knowledge which they tried to gain was *marifa* (knowing God deeply). Aspects of *marifa* include knowing the wisdom of creations, events and the purpose behind it.

Taylor continues,

“Indonesia’s Islamic past is a heritage of stories, legends, and traditions of miracles [it should be *karama* or divine blessing] explaining how kings converted, of Muslim holy men whose feats of magic eclipsed the powers of Hindu and Buddhist priests, of heroes of Islamic literature and also of local heroes who embarked on journeys across Indonesian oceans and through Indonesian forests in the quest of self-knowledge and a kingdom they would rule as sultan and caliph.”²⁸

Wherever these Islamic pioneers went in the first five centuries of Islam, they became like a light-emitting tree on different continents, including Asia and in particular Southeast Asia, that supported Islam branching out across

²⁴ Taylor, 2003, 77.

²⁵ Budiwanti, “The Role of Wali, Ancient Mosques and Sacred Tombs in the Dynamics of Islamisation,” 39.

²⁶ Budiwanti, “The Role of Wali, Ancient Mosques and Sacred Tombs in the Dynamics of Islamisation,” 40.

²⁷ Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Reasoning: A Key to Understanding the Qur’an’s Eloquence*, Translated by Huseyin Akarsu, (New Jersey: Tughras Book, 2008), xi.

²⁸ Taylor, 2003, 75.

the globe. There are many examples where these Islamic pioneers were warmly welcomed by locals and, over time, they influenced masses, becoming sultans of people's hearts. They led hundreds of thousands of diverse people towards Islam in the regions, including China. Historically, the oppression and tyranny of Muslim rulers led to immigration which eventually assisted the spread of Islam.

Historian al-Mas'udi (d. 956) mentions that after the Chinese ruler Ti-Tsung took office in 878-879, over 120,000 Muslims were massacred in Khanfu in the region of Canton due to the rebellion of a village. Those running from carnage settled in Kalah or Kadah in Malaya and later became an engine for inviting people peacefully to Islam in Southeast Asia.²⁹

Most of these leading *da'wah* workers were *Sayyids* or their followers and conveyed the religion of Islam through sincere actions by shedding tears for humanity and islamised most of the Southeast Asian region. They established a civilisation which I would call "The Civilisation of the Heart".³⁰

The migration to different islands of modern day Indonesia by the *Sayyids* and other individuals continued until the 17th century. Those who immigrated to these Islands did not bring many books with them nor treasures. They were not well known among the *hadith*, *fiqh*, *tafsir* or kalam scholars. They were very far from the Islamic civilisations in the Middle East, Spain and Central Asia. Almost no connection or support from Muslim kings, amirs or scholars. Islam in Indonesia was one of the remotest areas from the centres of Islam. It can be said that the motivation behind *hijrah* of *Ahl Bayt* and their followers was not worldly but spiritual. They were moved by their hearts. Yet, this does not suggest that they did not have sufficient knowledge of Islam to successfully transport its teaching and practice.

The arrival of the Portuguese and Dutch in Archipelago for colonisation purposes had a great impact militarily, economically, socially and spiritually. On one hand, colonial powers benefited from the economic resources of the region, on the other hand, they tried to convert people to Christianity by showing off their strong military presence, equating the practice of Christianity with the exercise of power.

²⁹ Groeneveldt, 1880, 14-15 cited in "Gursoy, 1995, 194.

³⁰ Yucel, Salih, The making of the 'Civilisation of the Heart' in South East Asia, Australasian Muslim Times, June 26.2018. <http://www.amust.com.au/2018/06/the-making-of-the-civilisation-of-the-heart-in-south-east-asia/>.

During colonisation, Christianity, the religion of the master, was promoted, and Islam, the religion of the colonised, was controlled.³¹ Such conditions motivated Muslims, particularly the *Sayyid* led scholars, to strive harder for Islamisation of Archipelago. The colonial power was not happy with this and they began to use military power against them. However, as Islam was motivated by moral action and practised by example, colonial powers were unable to stop the spread of Islam because it was rooted in the hearts of people and not merely practised as an expression of power.

While the ‘divide and rule policy’ was strongly applied by colonial powers in Indonesia, most of the *ulama* aimed to Islamise and unite the whole region with respect, love, and moral action.³² Many “isms” in the region, such as communism and nationalism, were injected by the colonial powers in an attempt to divide people and create different ideologies as alternatives to Islam. For this as Laffan argues the Dutch used indigenous aristocracies and informants extensively,³³ particularly Priyayi network was employed for achieving their goals. In return, those who were in the Priyayi network would benefit from colonial power financially and the benevolence of the Dutch government.

Colonial education institutions were another tool through which attempts of division were sown. The colonial power’s educational institutions had two primary aims. The first aim was to educate an elite class which could help them to run the country according to their national interest, again equating colonial education with power. The second aim was to resurrect the pre-Islamic culture, ideology, and religion in the region as an alternative to Islam. Whoever did not serve for this purpose was considered an enemy by the Dutch even if they were peaceful Sufis. The Indies journalist C. Busken Huët write in 1883. “Whoever in the archipelago is not for us is against us. And whoever is against us we shall bring under our control.”³⁴

The educated elite did not have strong roots in the community, even though they received very strong financial, political, and educational support. As Laffan argues “They had clearly the dual life.”³⁵ On one hand, they showed

³¹ Saby, 1995, 45.

³² For details, see Michael Francis Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The umma below the winds*, (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 77-101.

³³ Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia*, 78.

³⁴ Veer, Peter van Der, *Imperial encounters; Religion and modernity in India and Britain*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). 85, Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia*, 39.

³⁵ Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia*, 84.

themselves as representative of Muslim people, on the other hand, many of them were working like informants for or collaborators with the colonial power. The educated elite served as agents of colonial power among the populace. The colonial educational institutions' system contradicted the peoples' beliefs and culture. The graduates of these institutions were applauded and supported by the colonial powers while also being mainly disliked and rejected by the majority of people. There were some exceptions, as some of the educated elite returned to their roots or at least showed that they were part of the community. The Indonesian *ulama* and ordinary Muslims believed that the educated elite were colonised mentally as well. According to an academic who wants to be anonymous, the majority of Indonesians perceived this elite group as being "Duchtoxicated." Saby views them as those who "Exploiting the national resources of the country and serving the colonial power's interest more than the people's interests."³⁶ On the contrary, some argue that this educated elite introduced modernity to Indonesians and became an engine in the development of the country.

Divisions such as these caused harm to all areas of the society. The disconnect between the colonial powers and the general populace meant that there was no connection between the head and the body. There was a big gap in trust between ordinary Muslims and most of the educated elite. This led to many social, political, spiritual, and economic illnesses. It was like an ague which paralyses the body. Any individual or group who tried to overcome such illness was brutally crushed.

Muslims in Archipelago had no structured military, no sophisticated weapons, no rulers who could develop a strategy against the "Divide and Rule" policy. However, they had something stronger than what colonial powers exercised as Professor Yusny Saby, the former Vice chancellor of Syiah Kuala University mentioned during the interview.³⁷ The Muslim populace had the Qur'an, their source of motivation, spirituality, and patience against dirty political games. It was the source of the life which colonial power did not have. In an attempt to create division amongst the Muslim populace, the colonial powers pushed for the classification of Muslim groups, such as modernist, traditional and socialist.

The majority of Indonesians were neither modernists nor fundamentalists, as many argue. They were ordinary Muslims who struggled for their needs of daily life. However, such ideological division can be observed among

³⁶ See, Saby, 1995, 45-48.

³⁷ Yusny Saby, Personal Communication, 18 March 2018.

some of the educated and elites. On the other hand, *Sayyids* had the goal of reaching the hearts and minds of people. Oppression by the Dutch, Japanese, and British became fertiliser for growing the tree of Islam after the 17th century, as the oppression of Amawids on *Ahl Bayt* led to immigration and later Islamisation of South Asia and Asia.

The country was colonised and the people had no freedom and lived in poverty. However, their minds remained free and not “colonitoxicated” as an intellectual argued who wanted to be anonymous. The ongoing exercise of colonial power meant most of the graduates of colonial educational institutions had more freedom and economic prosperity than the people. They were seen by the general populace of Muslims as colonitoxicated, meaning they were not intellectually free, with relatively minor exceptions, as detailed by Saby and other scholars.

Muslims in Indonesia were not allowed to open schools until the beginning of 20th century. As a result, they transformed their houses to Qur’anic schools. This is a tradition that continues to this day in many houses in Indonesia. The whole family gathered to read the Qur’an between *maghrib* and *isha* prayer to strengthen their faith and grow spiritually.

The world can learn from the people of Indonesia who developed social and spiritual perseverance skills against colonisation, oppression and tyranny without compromising their faith for almost four centuries.³⁸ The Dayahs, the traditional madrasah played a crucial role in Islamisation and struggling against colonial powers. It is necessary to shed light about the history of Dayahs.

The First Dayah or Zawiya

The Dayah is the first traditional Islamic boarding school in Aceh. Since the time of the sultanate of Aceh, “Dayah as educational institution has contributed in educating generations of the nation before the public education institutions were established in our homeland so that educational institutions of Dayah is called the oldest educational institution in Aceh and in Indonesia.”³⁹ Dayah educational system was based on five principles that is, sincerity, simplicity, self-sufficient, ukhwah Islamiyah (Islamic brotherhood)

³⁸ Saby, 1995, 45-48.

³⁹ Nasir Usman, Murniati AR, Marzuki, “The influence of leadership in improving personnel performance at traditional Islamic boarding school (dayah),” *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (2016):205-215.

and freedom.⁴⁰ The Dayah has built a culture of work that does not expect a salary.⁴¹

In 2018, during my visit to Aceh, I interviewed Yunsy Saby, the former Vice Chancellor of Syiah Kuala University. We spoke about the history of *Dayahs* in Aceh. Then discussion continued about the curriculum of *Dayahs*. In recounting the history and methods of the *Dayahs*, Saby began counting Arabic verbs as taught in the Ottoman *madrasahs*. This was a big surprise for me because I learned classical Arabic in the same way. When I asked where he learned this format of Arabic verbs, he said in a *Dayah*, a classical *madrasa* in Aceh. He was an expert on *Dayahs*' history. During the conversation with Professor Saby, I realised that *Dayahs* curriculum and education philosophy was very similar to Sufi *Zawiyahs* in Ottoman Empire. Then the question arises, "Who established the *Dayah* and inspired *Dayah*'s curriculum?"

Although the earliest date of arrival of Ottoman citizens to Aceh is not known, the grave Ottoman Scholar H. Achmad Qastury (1316-1389) shows that it was after the mid-14th century (see fig. 1.1) After arrival of Ottoman Soldiers in 1567, some of them stayed in Aceh with the permission of Ottoman Sultan.

⁴⁰Usman and Marzuki, "The influence of leadership in improving personnel performance at traditional Islamic boarding school (dayah)" 205-215.

⁴¹ Usman and Marzuki, "The influence of leadership in improving personnel performance at traditional Islamic boarding school (dayah)"205-215.



Fig 1-1. The sign on grave stone of well known five scholars including H. Achmad Qastury in the vicinity of Syiah Kuala University in Aceh (Courtesy: The Author)

These soldiers married Acehnese women and were honoured by people. Their descendants still exist in Aceh or other part of Indonesia. One of these historical figures was commonly known “Baba Dawud.” Despite the obscurity surrounding his origin, Dawud al-Jawi al-Fansfiri b. Isma'il b. Agha Mustafa b. Agha 'Ali al-Rumi, the most favoured student of Abd al-Rauf ibn Ali al-Fansuri al-Sinkili (d.1693), established *Dayah* in Aceh together with his Master.⁴² “Rumi” is a title historically used for the Turks from Anatolia. The best known example is the 13th century Sufi master Mawlana Jalal Din Rumi. Another point of interest in Dawud’s genealogy is the mention of two Aghas. “Agha” is another title, given to honourable people or elite amongst the Ottomans. Both titles indicate that Dawud al-Jawi had Turkish roots. Some argue that *Dayah* was established centuries before Dawud al-Rumi. It can be noted that he reformed the *Dayah*

⁴² Azra, 1992, 415.

infostructure and curriculum by injecting Ottoman Zawiya's educational system and spirituality.⁴³



Fig. 1-2. Dawud al- Rumi's grave in Aceh (Courtesy: The Author)

⁴³ See Dr Zulfikar Ali Bhutto & Zamzami Zanuiddin, "Modernisation of Dayah in Aceh," *The Islamic Quarterly*, v. 60, 3 (2016):305-319.

With his master, Dawud al-Jawi established *Dayah*⁴⁴ and developed a *Dayah* curriculum. This new structure had a dormitory, kitchen, playing area, classrooms, and gardens, acting as the first traditional Acehnese Islamic educational institution in Aceh. So, *Dayah* became a boarding educational institution in the late 17th century. The word of *Dayah* resembles *zawiyah* in Ottoman Turkish. In Acehnese language, *Dayah* means a religious boarding school, like *pesantren* in Java and *pondok* in Malaysia. Core physical elements of a *Dayah* include students and teachers living together in one compound, boarding facilities, and a big prayer hall, ensuring that the daily physical needs are met. Core educational elements include specific classical religious books as the core curriculum, emphasizing the teaching of classical *fiqh*, *tafsir*, and hadith. Moral comportment (*adab*)⁴⁵ is another common aspect of *Dayah* education, displayed through the exemplary life of their teachers. The educational system in *Dayah* was neither one of the types of Sufism nor traditional like in the Middle East. The Sufi flavour that appealed to Indonesians allowing Islam to flourish across the country, became an implicit aspect of their Islamic practice, which carried across to all aspects of their spiritual development. The *Dayah* system looks similar to Sufis *zawiya* system during the Ottoman Empire. The physical structures are also similar to *zawiya*: classrooms, boarding rooms, a big garden, a master's office and prayer facilities. The curriculum includes all Islamic sciences such as Arabic, Quran memorisation and exegesis, theology, Sirah and akhlaq (ethics). Akhlaq was learned both in theory and practice. The Arabic curriculum is similar to that used in the Ottoman madrasa system. The *istighna* (indebtedness) principle was taught and applied. The spiritual jihad of Sufism was also seen in the *Dayah* system.

What did the graduates do after their graduation? This is crucial since there is no specific practical professional training for the *Dayahs'* students. When asked, they always respond that the study in the *Dayah* is for the sake of God. No "worldly" expectation is ever formulated or discussed. Aiming to make a living due to studying in the *Dayah* would reduce the student's sincerity and devalue the study itself. In the understanding of the *Dayah* community, "Knowledge belongs to God," and to seek knowledge is to follow the path of God. If a person aimed to get worldly benefits from study, he would achieve "unblessed" knowledge. Yunsy Saby has documented *Dayah* graduates' ethics in his Doctoral thesis.⁴⁶ According to Saby, such

⁴⁴ Azra, 1992, 415.

⁴⁵ See Bhutto and Zanuiddin, "Modernisation of Dayah in Aceh," 305-319.

⁴⁶ Saby, 1992, 48.

indebtedness of graduates and moral values were strictly applied until the late 60s, after which point there is a stronger Saudi influence in the form of Salafism. Such moral principles gave an opportunity to *Dayah* graduates for conquering hearts and minds of people, getting their support to strive and fight against colonial powers.

In contrast to the moral and spiritual educational system of the *Dayah*, the Dutch brought modern secular education to Indonesia. In turn, the birth of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama's educational institutions came to create an alternative to the Dutch secular educational system. However, despite many strengths, the Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama's educational institutions were unable to compete with the Dutch educational institutions across a range of fields, particularly science. With the waning of the dominance of the *Dayah* educational system, combined with limitations of alternatives to strictly secular education, a large gap in the moral development of young Indonesians emerged, a gap asking to be filled.

Hizmet Schools

Although Turkey was not colonised officially, educationally, intellectually and socially it had been westernised more than many colonised countries. Religious education was banned, and the government closed almost all religious institutions from 1924 to 1950. The Jacobin secular government wholly controlled mosques. As Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama established educational institutions as an alternative to colonial institutions in Indonesia, Hizmet Movement's educational institutions became an alternative to missionary schools and secular state educational institutions in Turkey. Said Nursi theorised about an educational philosophy that combined heart and mind or modernity and religion. The Hizmet Movement, under Fethullah Gülen's⁴⁷ spiritual leadership, successfully put this theory

⁴⁷ Fethullah Gülen is considered one of the world's most influential, albeit controversial, spiritual leaders. He has been seen as a threat to different degrees by almost all governments of Turkey since 1972. Throughout his life, he dealt with discrimination, numerous false slanders, persecution, and insults and faced oppression since 1960. He escaped from death at the last minute from during the 1960 military coup led by secularists. During the 1972 military muhtira (semi-military coup) he was imprisoned for about six months and in the 1980 coup, was placed on the wanted list, alongside communist terrorists who were responsible for mass murders, for allegedly wanting to bring shariah law to Turkey. For that reason, he remained underground, hidden from the public eye for six years while he was

into practice. After being firmly established within Turkey, this educational methodology spread out over the globe, finding home in over 170 countries, including Indonesia, in the last 25 years. They saw love of knowledge as part of the religion as Ibn al-Qayyim states “Love of knowledge leads one to learn, teach and follow it—indeed this is the religion.”⁴⁸ Gülen’s followers were “confronted with modernity without abandoning the faith.”⁴⁹ However, they also injected Islamic spirituality into the dry body of secular educational activities. They healed what secularism harmed. David Tittensor calls them “Modern ibn Battutas”⁵⁰ but Ibn Battuta (d.1369) travelled and returned to his land. Hizmet affiliated teachers did not return and lived there. Unlike the Tabligh Jamaat, in which men must go on khuruj (a trip to teach Muslims with weak practice) three days a month and forty days a year (and women somewhat less),⁵¹ those who have a role within the Hizmet Movement commit to hijrah for the rest of their lives.⁵²

searched for as a terrorist. In 1986, the courts removed him from the wanted list and granted a pardon.

After the military toppled the Necmettin Erbakan government in 1997, he went to the US for medical attention. Under the control of the staunchly secular military, the courts decreed that Gülen was conspiring to gain control of the state and intending to bring a Saudi style shariah law to Turkey, thereby causing chaos and division in the nation. These charges were dismissed in 2002 and discerned by the Supreme Court of Appeals of Turkey in 2005. (see, Salih Yucel, *Gülen as a spiritual leader in a global Islamic context*, *Journal of Religion and Society*, v.12, (2010):1-19.

In 2016 there was another failed military coup, which the Turkish Government held Gülen responsible for. Over 615,000 people were detained, and about 150,000 were arrested including over 8,000 academics, about 4,000 judges, 167 journalists, about 20,000 women and over 6000 of them with their babies. When this book was written, the regime still continued to arrest people almost seven years after the coup. Over 150,000 people fled or left Turkey due to the oppression and persecution of political Islamists. Gülen strictly denied being behind the failed coup. However, this issue is out of the scope of this research.

⁴⁸ Ghiloni, *Islam as Education: Pedagogies of Pilgrimage, Prophecy, and Jihad*, 34.

⁴⁹ Oliver Leaman, *Islam in the Philosophy of Education*, an Encyclopedia, ed. J.J. Chambliss (New York: 1996), 315. In Aaron Gholani *Islam as Education: Pedagogies of Pilgrimage, Prophecy, and Jihad*, (New York: Lexington Books, 2019), 37.

⁵⁰ Tittensor, “Islam’s Modern Day Ibn Battutas: Gülen Teachers Journeying Towards the Divine” 166.

⁵¹ Barbara Metcalf, “Islam and Women, the case of the tablighi jama’at”, *SEHR*, Vol. 5, Issue 1: Contested Politics, 1996, Accessed October 7, 2015, web.stanford.edu/group/SHR/5-1/text/metcalf.html.

⁵² Salih Yucel, *A Life in Tears*, (New Jersey, Tughras Books, 2017), 119.

The success of Hizmet schools is underpinned by several important principles. Firstly, the schools are based on teamwork, similar to other non-Muslim faith-based movements, such as the Jesuits. Secondly, the focus on and development of altruism and sincerity amongst staff have led these educational institutions to receive great financial support from the business community, particularly the middle class. Thirdly, the simplicity and exemplary lifestyle of Fethullah Gülen and leaders of the Movement have built trust and sustainability. Fourthly, these educational institutions are running according to the *waqf* (endowment) system with a business mentality. However, like the persecution of the *Sayyids* and *Sharif*, becoming successful and influential in society caused jealousy. Similarly, Hizmet Movement's affiliates were treated by some political powers as a threat to their regimes.

The opening of these schools in Indonesia began in 1995 with four high school graduates who did not know Bahasa and had very limited English. Their stories resemble the first dervishes who went to central Asia. All four have different characteristics but established solid teamwork. They planted the seeds as one of them took orders from the Prophet in his dream. The original four began with educating a few students in their humble rented house. Gradually the numbers grew. By 1995 the first Hizmet school opened in Indonesia, followed soon after by many others. In the current educational milieu, Hizmet schools are competing with hundred year old missionary and Chinese schools in the country. During the interviews, some school principals and teachers indicated how these schools with such education systems had become a model for faith-based groups such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama educational institutions.

As M. Amin Abdullah, the former Vice Chancellor of State Islamic University said, "It is too early for Hizmet Schools to be a model for the educational system as *Dayahs* did in the history or Dutch schools in modern times."⁵³ Most of the interviewees indicated that these schools are promising to be a model at least for the faith-based movements.

The story of Hizmet Schools begins with four high school graduates arriving in Indonesia in March 1993. How were these four unskilled high school graduates able to establish a school in two years after their arrival? In the following chapters, the reader will find the degree of motivation, teamwork, sincerity, hard work, and cultural clashes involved in establishing the first Hizmet school in Indonesia through their stories gleaned from numerous

⁵³ Personal communication, March 19, 2018.

interviews. The results of this study show that dreams also played an important role.

During my interviews, I documented over a hundred dreams and how they became a source of motivation. Gottfried Hagen argues,

“The modern historian might call motivation by dreams a psychological explanation. There are two fundamental forms of conveying meaning through dreams. In a number of instances, the message is conveyed explicitly by an authoritative person, who appears in the dream to address the dreamer. This may be a former sultan or a sheikh, but most frequently, it is the Prophet Muhammed who communicates with the dreamer.”⁵⁴

Some of the dreams I documented will be mentioned in this book but some will not. Some of them are personal and those who saw dreams did not feel comfortable for them to be published. Their dreams related to religious, spiritual and social life. There are similar dreams in the lives of four Turkish high school graduates who wanted to go overseas for seeking and teaching knowledge purposes. All have unique stories.

Hakim graduated from high school in 1992. Some of his friends migrated to a different part of the world to seek knowledge and teach via the Hizmet Movement, which is a faith-based movement that will be discussed in later chapters. He was quite keen to go as well. His family was middle class and financially were not able to send him to a developed country. However, Hakim was very passionate about serving humanity and aimed to go to any country. Despite his young age, he would tend to all religious obligations. In addition, he would perform *tahajjud* (night vigil) and, from time to time, shed tears over other people's suffering. He sought to dedicate himself to the education of humanity. However, how could this be achieved? One of his mentors helped and connected him to the Hizmet Movement, which opened schools in Turkey and commenced opening schools overseas in the early 90s. When Hakim heard the legendary stories of those who immigrated to different Central Asian countries for learning and teaching, he felt much more enthusiastic. His friends considered him as a very spiritual person.

In the midst of the winter of 1993 in Istanbul, the night was bitterly cold. Hakim supplicated as he usually did before bed to wake up for *tahajjud* prayer. Putting his head on the pillow, his passion to travel overseas filled

⁵⁴Gottfried Hagen, *Dreaming ‘Osmans’ Of History and Meaning*, In “Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies” 108.