

# The Transformation of al-Irshād in the Emerging Nation-State: Indonesian Arabs and Accommodation to the Host Society

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## Introduction

Located at a key juncture of maritime trade, Southeast Asia has accepted various people with foreign origins since ancient times. When we consider the changes and reformations that have occurred in terms of the governing arrangements, the activities of these immigrants and their descendants provide a significant perspective. This article discusses the Arabs living in Indonesia, most of whom were immigrants from Ḥaḍramawt, a region of South Arabia, and their descendants, the so-called Ḥaḍramīs. It focuses on the transformation of one of their organizations, called al-Irshād (spelled Al-Irsyad in present-day Indonesian), that was established early in the twentieth century. Our objective is to analyze how the Arabs accommodated themselves to their host society during the nation-building process.

Relationships between the Arabs and Indonesian society were sometimes contradictory, and especially so during the Dutch colonial period. On the one hand, categorized as “Foreign Orientals” (*vreemde oosterlingen*) along with the Chinese and other Asian minorities, they were separated from the “natives” (*inlanders*), namely, the *pribumis*. On the other hand, they became deeply embedded in the indigenous society through intermarriage and the religion they shared with the majority of the population. The Arabs imposed a strong presence in the field of religion, and especially so during the initial stage of the Islamic reform movement in the early twentieth century, when they initiated notable activities (Noer 1973, 56–69; Steenbrink 1986, 58–62). Al-Irshād is the most prominent organization formed by the Arabs in Indonesia, and it can also be counted as one of the major Islamic organizations formed in early twentieth-century

Indonesia.

Studies of Southeast Asia's early modern history have identified diversity and fluidity as the region's pre-eminent characteristics, and the Arabs have also been credited with a hybrid, not an essentialized, ethnic identity (Feener 2004; Mandal 2011). This situation changed in the modern era, however, when the colonial states began to articulate notions of race, ethnicity, and nation. According to Mobini-Kesheh (1999), the early twentieth century witnessed the *nahḍah Ḥaḍramīya*, that is to say, the awakening of a distinctive Ḥaḍramī identity. During this period, while Indonesian consciousness was forged among the pribumis, the Arabs lost their hybridity, and saw themselves exclusively as Ḥaḍramīs. In her study, Mobini-Kesheh described al-Irshād as a "Ḥaḍramī organization" with a separatist character.

In reality, however, most of the Arabs, including the Irshādīs (members and supporters of al-Irshād), remained in Indonesia even after independence, and they are now generally recognized as Indonesians. Little attention has been given to the Arabs' integration into the host society, except for an organization called Persatoean [Partai] Arab Indonesia (the Indonesian Arab Union [Party]; PAI).<sup>1)</sup> Formed by *peranakan* (local-born) Arabs in 1934, this organization, while supporting the Indonesian nationalist movement, clashed with the Irshādīs and other Arabs who asserted an exclusive Ḥaḍramī/Arab identity. It has been argued that the Arab community's successful integration into Indonesian society was due mainly to their efforts. It is nonetheless problematic to make generalizations about the Arab community's process of integration, because not all of them shared the same ideals as the PAI.

Recent studies have begun to throw new light on other Arab groups. Alatas (2011) examines how the 'Alawīs (or the Bā 'Alawīs), a clan of the descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad, utilized its religious practice to secure its position in Indonesian Muslim society during the post-colonial period. Moreover, Yamaguchi (2016b) has discussed elsewhere that by the end of the Dutch colonial period, al-Irshād had also chosen to become integrated into the host society. That said, how did the Irshādīs respond to and adapt to the host society, while a new nation state was becoming a reality as Dutch rule came to an end? So far, only a few attempts have been made to study the Arab community in Indonesia for the period beginning with the Japanese occupation to the early independence period.<sup>2)</sup>

This article investigates how the activities of al-Irshād changed from the late Dutch colonial period to the 1950s by elucidating how the Arabs

were integrated and what key factors were involved in this process. Compared with other minority groups, such as the Chinese, after independence, the Arabs seem to have been accepted by the host society without major conflict.<sup>3)</sup> Considering the fact that the Arabs share a religion with the majority of the pribumis, this article might also contribute to a further understanding of how Islam served as a social bond in the emerging Indonesian state. Primary sources for this article are periodicals and brochures published in Arabic and Indonesian by both Irshādīs and other Arabs.

## 1. Al-Irshād in the Dutch Colonial Period

To fully understand the transformation of al-Irshād after independence, we will begin by considering its activities in the Dutch colonial period. After looking briefly at the Arab community in general, we will examine how al-Irshād finally chose its orientation toward the host society, and what problems remained to be resolved at that time.

### 1.1. Overview of the Arab Community

The Ḥaḍramīs—who make up the majority of the Arabs in Indonesia—have a long tradition of moving across the Indian Ocean region. It seems that their migrations to maritime Southeast Asia occurred in great waves beginning in the late eighteenth century (Berg 1886, 111). By the early twentieth century, this region had become their main destination, and the flow continued until the outbreak of World War II.<sup>4)</sup> Indonesia, called the Dutch East Indies until 1942, had the largest Arab population in Southeast Asia. Compared with other population groups, however, their number was indeed small, but it increased steadily throughout the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. They were fewer than 30,000 at the turn of the twentieth century, but had increased to 45,000 by 1920, and more than 70,000 by 1930. Most of the Arabs inhabited urban areas, and their largest centers were Batavia (present Jakarta), Surabaya, Pekalongan, Cirebon, Sumenep, Aceh, Palembang, and Pontianak (*Volkstelling 1930* 1935, 48, 307–310).

The Arab immigrants were almost exclusively male, and they married local women. While those born in Arab lands were called *wulāyatī*, *aḡhāh* (the plural form of *quḡh*), or *totok*, those born in Indonesia were called *muwallad*, *Indo-Arab*, or *peranakan*.<sup>5)</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, peranakans constituted most of the Arab community. Moreover,

since the main factor in the increasing population was not an influx of immigrants but a rising birth rate, the proportion of peranakans continued to increase.<sup>6)</sup> Most peranakans used their mothers' language on a daily basis, and few of them could speak Arabic fluently, or at all. Yet, the framework of the Arab community was maintained to a certain degree, primarily because the second or subsequent generations had strong tendencies to look for partners among other peranakans.

The Dutch Indies government treated the Foreign Orientals differently from pribumis with regard to laws and systems.<sup>7)</sup> For example, in the Western-style elementary education offered by the colonial government in the early twentieth century, the Chinese and the Arabs were in principle supposed to enroll in specific "ethnic" schools created for each group (Mobini-Kesheh 1999, chapter 4). Moreover, the colonial government controlled and limited the activities of the Foreign Orientals through the quarter system (*wijkenstelsel*) and the pass system (*passenstelsel*). That is to say, they were required to live in specific settlements allotted to each of the communities in the cities, and if they wanted to leave the area, they had to apply for and get passports. These two systems, which had been applied strictly since the middle of the nineteenth century, were abolished in the 1910s.

Generally speaking, Arabs in Indonesian society could be identified by the following characteristics: first, although not to the same extent as the Chinese, they were economically stronger than pribumis. Most of them conducted various forms of commerce, and handled fabrics, such as *batik* (a painted and patterned cloth) and *sarong* (a garment wrapped around the waist). Like the Chinese, they played the role of middlemen between European retailers and pribumi society. In addition, many of the Arabs practiced usury in their businesses, although it was against the teachings of Islam. They also engaged in the manufacture of batik and *keretek* (a cigarette containing cloves), shipping, real estate businesses, and the press (Berg 1886, 134–158; Ingrams 1939, 166; Mandal 2002, 172–176).

Second, unlike the Chinese, the Arabs had been interwoven into local Muslim society, and could exercise a strong religious influence. In the late nineteenth century, pribumis considered all the Arabs as noblemen, regardless of their actual origins (Berg 1886, 206–230). Moreover, their close relationship with the Middle Eastern regions enabled them to transmit new trends of Islam to the Indonesian archipelago (Bluhm-Warn 1997). In the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, Muslims in

various regions of the world launched reform movements that sought to purify Islam and reconcile it with modern civilization, thereby revitalizing the Muslim world. In Indonesia, the Arabs played a pioneering role in the Islamic reform movement. For example, the Jam‘iyat Khayr (Benevolent Society) established by the Ḥaḍramī Arabs in Batavia around 1901 is considered the oldest modern-style Islamic organization in the country (Saqqāf 1953, 2).

Following the example provided by Jam‘iyat Khayr, the Arabs formed many organizations in the early twentieth century, of which al-Irshād was the most prominent, and expanded their activities across the country. Its establishment occurred during a time of internal conflict within the Arab community. In Ḥaḍramawt, ‘Alawīs had traditionally occupied a special position due to their noble origins, and they took the leading role in forming the Jam‘iyat Khayr. In the Arab community in Southeast Asia, however, a group influenced by Islamic reformism in the Middle East began to contest the authority of the ‘Alawīs, advocating the equality of all Muslims. Taking a Sudanese ‘*ulamā*’, Aḥmad Muḥammad Sūrkatī—a former teacher of the Jam‘iyat Khayr’s school—as their leader, in 1914 they formed an organization called Jam‘iyat al-Iṣlāḥ wa-l-Irshād al-‘Arabīya (Arab Association for Reform and Guidance), generally referred to as al-Irshād, in Batavia.<sup>8)</sup>

## 1.2. Dual Character of al-Irshād

As for the activities of al-Irshād during the Dutch colonial period, two aspects have primarily attracted scholarly interest. One is their contribution to the Islamic reform movement, especially in regard to the modernization of Islamic education. In the early twentieth century, there were three types of educational institutions in Indonesia. The first was a traditional Islamic boarding school, generally called a *pesantren*, the second was a Western-style school based on the colonial education system. The third was the *madrasah*, that is to say, a modern-style Islamic school.<sup>9)</sup> In Arabic, the word ‘*madrasah*’ originally means a school and an educational institution. In the Indonesian context, however, it stands for an Islamic school with a modern structure and curriculum that includes non-religious subjects. Al-Irshād was one of the pioneering organizations that dif-fused *madrasah* in Indonesia (Noer 1973, 64–65; Yunus 1979, 307–314; Steenbrink 1986, 61–62).

The other aspect of al-Irshād, which has been especially emphasized

in recent studies, is its Ḥaḍramī/Arab character. Its constitution—published in 1915 and in 1931—stated that “the Arab community” (*al-umma al-‘Arabīya*) and “the Muslim community in general, and the Arab community in particular,” were respectively the focus of its activities (*Qānūn Jam‘iyat al-İşlāḥ wa-l-İrshād al-‘Arabīya: Al-Asāsi wa-l-Dākhilī* 1919, 12–13; Bakrī 1936, 257–258). Its membership was open to all Muslims living in Indonesia, and it also formed branches in cities where no Arabs lived. Its hives of activity, however, were Javanese cities with large Arab populations, such as Batavia (where its headquarters was situated), Surabaya, Cirebon, Pekalongan, and Tegal. Moreover, throughout the Dutch colonial period, only Ḥaḍramīs became members of the association’s central executive. Even its founder and leader, Sūrkatī, did not hold office there (Mobini-Kesheh 1999, 63–68).

The educational activities of al-İrshād also suggest a strong Ḥaḍramī/Arab identity. The Madrasah of al-İrshād (or rather the Arab schools in general) were distinguished by their emphasis on Arabic education. Many native Arabic teachers were recruited from abroad, classes were mostly taught in Arabic, and even outside the classrooms students were prohibited from speaking other languages. This emphasis on Arabic education was closely linked to the view that it was the Arab people’s language. As mentioned above, quite a few peranakan Arabs were not fluent in Arabic. In the early twentieth century, as their Ḥaḍramī/Arab consciousness grew, they felt it necessary to educate their children in their own language (Mobini-Kesheh 1999, 77–78).

Mobini-Kesheh (1999, 71–74) argues that the al-İrshād school system itself played a significant role in forging Ḥaḍramī identity. The colonial education system was thought to have made a decisive contribution to the formation of Indonesian nationhood among pribumis from diverse parts of the Dutch East Indies. According to Mobini-Kesheh, however, the al-İrshād’s educational activities and those of most other Arab organizations were mostly separated from the colonial education system, due to the division of the population. Consequently, they came to see themselves as being different from Indonesians.

Especially in the 1930s, some of the İrshādīs expressed a strong Ḥaḍramī/Arab identity. Among the Ḥaḍramīs in Southeast Asia, the movement to reform their backward homeland, Ḥaḍramawt, became active, beginning in the late 1920s. In the 1930s, some İrshādīs joined this movement, and built modern-style schools in Ḥaḍramawt (Mobini-Kesheh 1999, chap. 6). On the other hand, quite a few peranakan Arabs felt

that they belonged to Indonesian society. This group, led by Abdul Rahman Baswedan, a Surabaya-born Arab, formed the PAI. Members of this group claimed Indonesia as their homeland (*tanah air*), and provoked controversies with the Irshādīs and other Arabs who identified themselves as Ḥaḍramī Arabs until the end of the Dutch colonial period.

It is true that the Ḥaḍramī/Arab identity in al-Irshād served to promote its separatist movement from Indonesian society. It should not be overlooked, however, that al-Irshād had another orientation at the same time that prompted its accommodation to the host society. In this article, we refer to it as a “local-orientation”<sup>10)</sup> that embodied two perspectives. One perspective was that al-Irshād should accept not only Arabs but also pribumi Muslims, and foster cooperation with them; the other was that al-Irshād should adapt its educational activities to keep pace with the progress being made by the host society. It is noteworthy that Sūrkatī, the non-Ḥaḍramī leader of al-Irshād, took the initiative on both points.

From the late 1910s, shortly after the formation of al-Irshād, Sūrkatī began to attempt to adapt the al-Irshād schools to the colonial education system,<sup>11)</sup> ostensibly to meet the needs of the pribumi students. In the early twentieth century, due to the so-called “Ethical Policy” (*Etische Politiek*), Western-style colonial education became more important for achieving upward social mobility in Indonesian society (Shiraishi 1990, 28–30).<sup>12)</sup> However, the association’s central executive did not accept Sūrkatī’s proposal immediately, and it was only in the 1920s that it began to be implemented. Generally speaking, the Arabs were more reluctant than other population groups to send their children to schools offering a colonial education system (Berg 1886, 130; Algadri 1984, 19).

It was in the late 1920s that Sūrkatī clearly defined his local-orientation position.<sup>13)</sup> He advocated the restriction of educational activities to Indonesia, and evinced a negative attitude toward sending students abroad, even to Middle Eastern countries. At this time, he argued that not only pribumi children but also Arab children had to receive a colonial education to catch up with the progress being made by the host society. Sūrkatī also persuaded the Arabs to cooperate more fully with pribumi Muslims, and this was also in keeping with his emphasis on local-orientation. In his view, the threat of secular nationalism would otherwise separate the Arabs from the pribumi Muslims.

It is true that in the 1930s there was increasing momentum among the Irshādīs to reform the situation of Ḥaḍramawt. Even at that time, though, al-Irshād advocated local-orientation, by attempting to adapt its educa-

tional activities to the colonial education system (Yamaguchi 2016b, 457). By the end of the Dutch colonial period, it had opened a Dutch-Arab school in Batavia, and a Dutch-Native school in Tegal. Some of the graduates from these schools proceeded to secondary level schools offering a colonial education, such as the ‘Mulo’ schools (corresponding to junior high schools). In a brochure published in 1938, the al-Irshād’s central executive stated that the al-Irshād schools were not restricted to Arab children, but willingly accepted all Indonesian Muslim children (*Mabādi’ al-Irshād wa-Maqāṣid-hā: Tadhkīr wa-Irshād wa-Naṣā’ih* 1938, 6).<sup>14)</sup> In fact, Indonesian children accounted for 80% of the students in the Dutch-Arab school in Batavia around the same year.<sup>15)</sup> The same brochure proposed a plan to establish a secondary school that accorded with the colonial education system, and proposed a concerted effort with indigenous Islamic associations (*Mabādi’ al-Irshād wa-Maqāṣid-hā: Tadhkīr wa-Irshād wa-Naṣā’ih* 1938, 30).<sup>16)</sup>

By the late 1930s, local-orientation had decisively gained the upper hand in al-Irshād. A jubilee congress held in Surabaya in 1939 to mark the organization’s twenty-fifth anniversary can be considered a crucial turning point (Yamaguchi 2016b, 458–459). During this congress, Sūrkatī persuaded the Irshādīs to reach an agreement to cooperate with members of the PAI, while he opposed the expansion of al-Irshād’s activities to Ḥaḍramawt. That is to say, from the local-orientation standpoint, he rejected al-Irshād’s Ḥaḍramī/Arab character, which indicated a separatist tendency. Sūrkatī’s view apparently gained widespread support from the Irshādīs at that time, and al-Irshād moderated its Ḥaḍramī/Arab identity. The congress decided to incorporate a continuation school (*vervolg-school*)—that used Malay (Indonesian) as the medium of instruction—into the al-Irshād school system, along with an Arabic school and a Dutch-Arab school. Also around the same time, al-Irshād changed its official name to Jam‘iyat al-Iṣlāḥ wa-l-Irshād al-Islāmīya (Islamic Association for Reform and Guidance), replacing the word “Arab” with “Islam.”

### 1.3. Maintenance of Arabness

To understand why the Irshādīs finally embraced the local-orientation, we should consider the Arab community’s social situation. Compared with other migrant groups, they had a strong tendency to be permanently domiciled in Indonesia. Added to this, in 1930, about 90% of the Arabs were peranakans, and more than half of the population was



made up of young people under the age of nineteen.<sup>17)</sup> Thus, it was logical that they would establish cooperative relations with the pribumi Muslim society, and adapt their education to the host society's development.

Nevertheless, it should not be overlooked that even Irshādīs with a local-orientation did not want to lose their Arab identity, or be totally assimilated into the host society. The brochure produced in 1938 by al-Irshād's central executive mentioned earlier, while advocating educational activities suitable for Indonesian society, stressed the need to maintain "Arabness" at the same time. It says, "We are a community that has ethnic substance (*kiyān qawmī*) and prominent constituents (*muqawwimāt bāriza*). Communities which want to live in any circumstances cannot ignore them" (*Mabādi' al-Irshād wa-Maqāsid-hā: Tadhkīr wa-Irshād wa-Naṣā'ih* 1938, 29).<sup>18)</sup> Arabic education was seen as the most critical issue for all the Arabs living in Indonesia.

These schools [of al-Irshād] were established in order to revive the Islamic culture in an Islamic land. It goes without saying that the key of this culture is Arabic. Therefore, the merit (*fadl*) and pride (*fakhr*) of al-Irshād was and will be commensurate with the degree to which it serves Arabic and continues to be a fort and citadel for it [Arabic] and Islam. The pride of all Arabs in this country rests on this. If our schools deviated from this course, their activities would come to nothing, and their merit would pass away. (*Mabādi' al-Irshād wa-Maqāsid-hā: Tadhkīr wa-Irshād wa-Naṣā'ih* 1938, 14)<sup>19)</sup>

In essence, this brochure says, "We recognize the need to live up-to-date with the times. In this environment of ours, modern education (*ta'lim 'aṣrī*) is essential to us. It is also essential, however, to reconcile our ethnic interests (*maṣāliḥ qawmīyat-nā*) with the demands of the times (*maṭālib al-zaman*)" (*Mabādi' al-Irshād wa-Maqāsid-hā: Tadhkīr wa-Irshād wa-Naṣā'ih* 1938, 29–30).<sup>20)</sup> That is to say, al-Irshād was trying to balance local-orientation with maintaining Arabness.

Even Sūrkatī acknowledged to some degree the need for Arab children to learn Arabic as their ethnic language. He maintained that the al-Irshād school (probably the Dutch-Arab school in Batavia) was superior to government schools, in that it taught Arabic and religious subjects in addition to the colonial education curriculum, and explained his reasoning as follows:

Even those who failed Dutch in our school will know their ethnic language (*lughat qawm-hu*) and religious subjects, and will grow up in accordance with their ethnic and Islamic culture and education (*al-thaqāfa wa-l-tarbiya al-qawmīya al-Islāmīya*). They could live with their people (*qawm-hu*), without feeling alone or having differences in customs and ethics. On the other hand, Arabs who failed government school examinations would be useless, and especially due to their different education, become burdens to their families, unlike Dutch and Christianized pribumis.<sup>21)</sup>

Apparently the words “ethnic language” and “their people” refer to Arabic and Arabs respectively. This passage makes clear that Sūrkatī never denied the Arab community’s framework completely, and considered Arabic as the core of Arabness.

Based on these views, the Dutch-Arab and the Dutch-Native schools of al-Irshād attempted to juggle colonial education and Arabic education. As a consequence, they attracted not only Arabs but also many pribumi students who were earnest about receiving both modern and Islamic instruction.<sup>22)</sup> Nevertheless, it was not that easy to provide two different streams of education at the same time. The students had to learn Dutch and Arabic simultaneously, and doing so imposed a heavy burden on them (Plas 1931, 181). It usually took students a longer time to graduate than in other schools, and because they were older, or overage, they could be denied the opportunity to take the examinations they had to pass to enter secondary schools offering a colonial education (*Mabādi’ al-Irshād wa-Maqāsid-hā: Tadhkīr wa-Irshād wa-Naṣā’ih* 1938, 30).<sup>23)</sup>

It is obvious from what has been said that during the Dutch colonial period, al-Irshād represented both the separatist Ḥaḍramī/Arab character and the local-orientation. The latter directed al-Irshād to adapt itself to the host society in two respects: it should cooperate with pribumi Muslims, and reflect the host society’s progress in its educational activities. By the late 1930s, local-orientation had gained ascendancy over the Ḥaḍramī/Arab character. Even so, the Irshādīs were left with an identity problem, in that they wanted to maintain their Arabness, and especially their Arabic education. This problem would remain unresolved until the 1950s.

## 2. The Arab Community after the Dutch Colonial Period

In January 1942, the Japanese military launched an invasion of In-

donesia, and after only two months, the Dutch East Indies government surrendered. From then on, the Arab community experienced drastic social changes. The following section describes the Arab situation from the Japanese occupation to the early independence period.

### 2.1. The Japanese Occupation

Though al-Irshād suspended its activities, and closed all its branches and schools with the onset of the Japanese occupation, at the beginning of this period some leading Irshādīs were active in the Madjlis Islam A'laa Indonesia (Supreme Islamic Council of Indonesia; MIAI)—a coalition of Islamic organizations formed in 1937 that was recognized by the Japanese military government. When the MIAI was reorganized in September 1942, Sūrkatī was appointed as one of five indigenous (and Arab) members of the advisory body (Badan Penasehat), the de facto steering committee of the MIAI, and 'Umar Hubayş and 'Umar Nājī were appointed to seats on its executive (Pengoeroes Dewan) (Benda 1958, 116–117; Badjerei 1996, 153).<sup>24</sup>

After the Japanese replaced the MIAI with a new body intended to mobilize Islamic groups—the Madjelis Sjoero Muslimin Indonesia (Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslim; Masjoemi)—in November 1943, the Irshādīs no longer played significant roles. Their leader, Sūrkatī, had passed away in Jakarta in September of that year. Furthermore, at the time Masjoemi was established, the Japanese forbade Islamic organizations—with the exception of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama—to conduct activities (Benda 1958, 151, 262–263). The al-Irshād became inactive, and stayed that way until the end of the 1940s. Some of its members moved to Muhammadiyah, some of its *wakaf* (religious endowment) properties were devolved or transferred to Muhammadiyah, and others were lost (Badjerei 1996, 153).

Since the Japanese military government had prohibited all political activities, the PAI was also forced to cease its operations (Algadri 1984, 170, 173; Jonge 2011, 347), and during this occupation former PAI leaders split into two groups, just as other nationalist groups did. In the beginning, Baswedan kept his distance from the military government, but he later chose to cooperate with it, along with Sukarno and Hatta, in order to achieve early independence. He took positions in Jawa Hokokai (the Java Service Association) and Chuo Sangi-in (the Central Advisory Board) in 1944, and in Badan Penyelidik Oesaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan

Indonesia (the Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence) in 1945 (Algadri 1984, 170; Jonge 2004, 390–391). Hamid Algadri, one of the former leading figures of the PAI, refused to cooperate with the Japanese, and became involved in underground anti-Japanese activities led by Sutan Sjahrir and Amir Sjarifuddin, and Algadri subsequently joined the Partai Sosialis Indonesia (Indonesian Socialist Party) of Sjahrir after independence—which was very unusual for an Arab (Algadri 1984, 170).

Opinion is divided among scholars as to whether the Japanese military government had any specific policy for Arabs.<sup>25)</sup> In any case, we can safely say that the onset of the Japanese occupation temporarily worsened their situation. The Japanese advocated, at least officially, the building of the New Java (*Djawa Baroe*) by indigenous Indonesians. Thus, at the beginning, they favored pribumis over “foreigners” such as the Chinese, Europeans, and Arabs, who were segregated, suffered some restrictions, forced to pay high fees to register as foreigners, and pay special war taxes depending on the extent of their properties. Moreover, the foreigners were not allowed to move or relocate without obtaining permission, as was the situation for Foreign Orientals during the Dutch colonial period before the 1920s (Arai 2001, 46–47; Jonge 2004, 389).<sup>26)</sup>

As the war situation deteriorated, however, the Japanese gradually eased and abolished the regulations and duties imposed on the Arabs. In December 1943, the Arabs, along with the Chinese, were again allowed to move without special permission. In July 1944, the Japanese announced that the Arabs were considered equal to the pribumis, as long as they did not have foreign citizenships; that is to say, they were exempted from duties and fees associated with registration (Benda 1958, 128, 244; Arai 2001, 49–50; Jonge 2004, 390; id., 2011, 348–349). These measures can be regarded as some of the compromises the Japanese made to secure broad cooperation from the people. They also improved the status of other foreigners, and acceded to the demands of both nationalist and Muslim leaders.<sup>27)</sup>

What has to be noted, regardless of the occupying government’s policies, is that the Japanese occupation had grave consequences for the Arab community. First, the Japanese drastically changed the education system. All private schools, including Arab schools, were forced to close. On April 29, 1942, an official notice was issued allowing private schools to be reopened with special permission, but only schools using Indonesian and regional languages (such as Javanese and Sundanese) as mediums

of instruction were allowed to resume activities. Arab schools were late in obtaining the same permission, and some of the al-Irshād schools resumed activities only in late 1943 (Benda 1958, 243; Badjerei 1996, 154; Arai 2001, 47).

Of greater significance in the long term is that the Japanese destroyed the Dutch colonial education system.<sup>28)</sup> All efforts made by al-Irshād to adapt its educational activities to the host society's development during the Dutch colonial period came to naught. The former education system that had been based on seven-year elementary schools including Dutch-Native schools and Dutch-Arab schools was replaced by an educational system based on six-year schools (*sekolah rakjat*). In those schools, Indonesian and regional languages were used as mediums of instruction, while Dutch language education was wiped out. Although the military government tried to disseminate Japanese, it was impossible to achieve a substantial result in a short period. The occupying government had to depend on Indonesian for administrative matters, the media, and propaganda aimed at winning support for the war. As a result, Indonesian became widespread throughout society, and became ensconced as the national language (Ricklefs 2008, 238).

Another consequence that was crucial for the Arab community was the severance of its relationship with Ḥaḍramawt (Lekon 1997). The large-scale migration of Ḥaḍramīs to maritime Southeast Asia is said to have ended at this point in time, as the outbreak of war hindered traffic in the Indian Ocean. Furthermore, as we shall see later, growing economic nationalism during the early period of independence worsened the situation for immigrants. Even after World War II, the outward flow of migration from Ḥaḍramawt to Indonesia never recovered.<sup>29)</sup> The main destination for Ḥaḍramī migrants changed to Hejaz, Aden, the Gulf countries, and coastal East Africa.

## 2.2. From the Revolutionary Years to the Early Independence Period

On August 17, 1945, two days after Japan surrendered to the Allied Forces, the Republic of Indonesia declared independence. Political parties, such as the Partai Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian National Party; PNI), the Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party; PKI), the Indonesian Socialist Party, and the Masjumi Party, were revived or newly established. Among them, the Masjumi, which was based on the previously mentioned religious organization of the same name, was the

most powerful political group immediately after independence. Since these parties welcomed Arabs, former PAI leaders decided not to revive a party for Arabs (Algadri 1984, 173).

The Dutch, who did not recognize Indonesia's independence, launched an invasion as part of the Allied Forces, intending to recolonize the country. They established puppet states in the areas they controlled, and attempted to divide the Indonesian people. Some minor Arab groups, such as Indo-Arabische Beweging (the Indo-Arab Movement), took the Dutch side (Algadri 1984, 174; Jonge 2011, 351). Nevertheless, a large number of them, including the Irshādīs and former members of the PAI, supported the Republic and joined the struggle for independence. One of the leading al-Irshād figures, 'Umar Hubays, along with Baswedan and Algadri, became members of the Komite Nasional Indonesia Pusat (Central Indonesian National Committee; KNIP), which assumed the role of the parliamentary body of the Republic (Algadri 1984, 173; Mahfudz 1990, 31; Jonge 2004, 391).<sup>30</sup>

Finally, giving in to the pressure exerted by international opposition, the Netherlands recognized the independence of Indonesia. From August 23 to November 2, 1949, a Round Table Conference was held at The Hague, attended by representatives of the Republic of Indonesia on one side and the Netherlands and its puppet states on the other, and sovereignty was transferred from the Netherlands to the Republic of the United States of Indonesia, which was comprised of the Republic and the puppet states. These puppet states were soon merged into the Republic, and on August 15 of the following year, the unitary state was established with the declaration of a provisional constitution.

Although most Arabs supported the Republic's struggle, they were placed in a precarious position both during the Revolution and in the early years of independence. The coequal legal status with pribumis that had finally been granted to them by the Japanese was invalidated. They were classified as a minority group (*golongan kecil*, or *minoritas*), along with the Chinese and the Europeans. These minority groups were treated differently than the pribumis (at that time, they were called *Indonesia-Asli*, meaning "indigenous Indonesian") in two key regards.

The first difference related to the provisions for obtaining Indonesian citizenship. The Citizenship Act of 1946 defined Indonesian citizens (*Warga Negara Indonesia*) as "indigenous people in the territory of the Indonesian state (*orang jang asli dalam daerah Negara Indonesia*)," namely, pribumis first of all. Citizenship could be granted to others—those who

1) had been born in Indonesia, and had been living there for the last five years continuously, as well as 2) were either twenty-one years of age or older, or married, on the condition that they did not refuse citizenship because they were the citizens of another country (Goutama 1975, 133–134). An opinion voiced at the Round Table Conference was that the “active system” of opting for citizenship should be adopted. Under this system, those who belonged to non-pribumi groups would have to make an official declaration that they were refusing another citizenship if they wanted to become Indonesian. Nevertheless, because of minority groups’ opposition, the “passive system”—which allowed minority groups to obtain citizenship automatically unless they refused it within two years—was eventually adopted. It is said that most Arabs chose to obtain Indonesian citizenship (Algadri 1984, 177–178).<sup>31</sup>

The second difference that affected Arabs was the provision that in the future elections to the Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (People’s Representative Council; DPR) seats would be allocated to the minority groups. This provision was decided at the Round Table Conference, and stipulated in the Provisional Constitution of 1950. Accordingly, the Chinese were allotted nine seats, the Europeans six seats, and the Arabs three seats (*Provisional Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia* 1956, 17). The number of seats they were allotted was guaranteed, even if they won fewer than that in the election.

Many Arabs argued against this provision, since they regarded it as a measure intended to separate them from the pribumis. In December 1950, former members of the PAI formed the Badan Konperensi Bangsa Indonesia Turunan Arab (Conference Body of Indonesians of Arab Descent) in Malang, with the intention of having the provision removed from the constitution (Algadri 1984, 177–179). Al-Irshād also attempted to prevent the appointment of representatives of the Arab minority to the DPR, insisting that existing political parties already represented the will of all the social classes and ethnic groups (Badjerei 1996, 168).

It is reasonable to consider the Arabs’ aversion to being treated as a minority group at that time as anteforeignism in Indonesian society. In the early 1950s, official Indonesian economic nationalist policies emerged with the objective of protecting the pribumis, who were considered economically weak. In 1950, the “Sistem Benteng,” which gave privileges to pribumi importers, was introduced, and in 1954, regulations were issued encouraging the transfer of the ownership of rice-mills and harbor facilities to pribumis. After the limited success achieved by these measures, a

campaign known as the “Assaat Movement” was launched in 1956, urging the government to protect pribumis in economic affairs (Suryadinata 1978, 129–134). The main target of this movement were the local Chinese, but the situation was not favorable for the Arabs either. They were also regarded as an economically strong group that exploited pribumis (Jonge 2004, 393), and were attacked by secular nationalist groups such as the PNI and the PKI during the 1955 general election campaign.<sup>32)</sup>

Clearly, these two points had important ramifications for the Arab community from the end of the Dutch colonial period to the early independence period. First, the Dutch colonial education system, which some Arabs had attempted to integrate into their schools, collapsed under the Japanese occupation. When the newly independent nation state began to form its education system, the Arabs had to decide on a new education system for their community. Second, the relationship between the Arab communities and Ḥaḍramawt had been severed, and most Arabs decided to take Indonesian citizenship. Thus, they had no choice but to adapt to their host society, but their status as a minority group left them vulnerable.

### 3. Al-Irshād in the 1950s

In the latter half of 1949, al-Irshād began to resume its activities. At a congress in Jakarta in August, members of the new executive were elected, and some of its schools and branches were re-opened (Badjerei 1996, 157–158). Then, in the 1950s, al-Irshād made decisive changes with two significant moves, and decided on the direction it would take from independence until the present day.

#### 3.1. Approach to Masjumi

One of al-Irshād’s significant decisions during the 1950s related to its approach to the Islamic party, Masjumi. It was not the first time al-Irshād had joined a coalition of Islamic groups in Indonesia. Prior to its participation in the MIAI, from 1922 to 1933 it had participated in a series of meetings of the *Congres Al-Islam Hindia* (The Indies Al-Islam Congresses), which were a first attempt to unite Islamic groups in Indonesia.<sup>33)</sup> The important point to note here is that al-Irshād, which had essentially been a social organization, only now established a formal relationship with a political party.



The relationship with Masjumi began almost immediately after al-Irshād resumed its activities. Mohammad Natsir, a leading Masjumi figure, attended the above-mentioned al-Irshād congress in Jakarta in August 1949.<sup>34)</sup> Around September 1951, al-Irshād sent a petition to Masjumi headquarters, requesting that it be given the status of a special member (*anggota istimewa*).<sup>35)</sup> Unlike other members, who were individual Muslims, special membership was given to Islamic organizations. On December 10, al-Irshād was recognized as a special member, with the assent of the other special members.<sup>36)</sup> Other Islamic organizations, such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, also acquired special Masjumi membership. Nahdlatul Ulama, however, dissatisfied with the position of the traditionalists in the party, split from it in April 1952, and established its own political party (Boland 1982, 45–47).<sup>37)</sup>

While al-Irshād continued to have discretion over social and educational affairs (*soal2 sosial, perguruan dan lain2*), as a special member of Masjumi it came under the Masjumi's influence with regard to political affairs (*soal2 politik*). The party's newspaper, *Berita Masjumi*, reported that Masjumi became the *imam* (leader) of al-Irshād as the sole Indonesian Islamic party (*satu2nja partai politik Islam Indonesia*).<sup>38)</sup> Right after that, at the congress of al-Irshād held in Surakarta in December, Natsir was inducted as the general counsel (*penasehat umum*) of the headquarters of al-Irshād (Badjerei 1996, 162).

It is important to note that al-Irshād attempted to conceal its Ḥaḍramī/Arab character while it was consolidating its relationship with Masjumi. For example, at the above-mentioned congress in Surakarta in 1951, the al-Irshād bylaws were revised, and its purposes restated as follows.<sup>39)</sup>

- a. to execute the doctrine, instruction, and laws of Islamic religion (*ajaran, perintah dan hukum2 agama Islam*), as correctly as possible, as they are decreed in the book of Allah, and as exemplified by the conduct of His apostle.
- b. to encourage life and living according to Islam in the broadest sense.
- c. To cooperate with other groups and organizations in matters which are of common significance, and which are not in conflict with the instructions and laws of Islam, nor the laws of the state authorities.

As mentioned before, the previous bylaws had stated “the Arab commu-

nity” and “the Islamic community in general, and the Arab community in particular,” as the intended focus of its activities. The new bylaws, however, did not use the word “Arab.”

It was not only al-Irshād that sought cooperation with the Masjumi. Masjumi in turn attempted to win al-Irshād’s support during the general election in 1955. On September 25, immediately prior to the election for the DPR, an event commemorating the sixteenth anniversary of Pemuda Al-Irsjad (Youth Wing of al-Irshād) was held in Jakarta.<sup>40)</sup> This event was described publicly as “only an anniversary of Pemuda Al-Irsjad, and not associated with a campaign for the general election, as some of the guests are thinking.”<sup>41)</sup> However, Herbert Feith, who was staying in Indonesia to observe the general election, stated that “[t]hroughout the period, and particularly in 1954 and 1955, virtually every public event was an occasion for election campaigning” (Feith 1962, 353). Judging from the fact that along with Natsir, another leading Masjumi figure, Mohammad Roem, also attended the event, it does not seem reasonable to suppose that the event had nothing to do with the election.<sup>42)</sup>

At the outset of the event, Hussein Badjerei, the manager of the Jakarta branch of Pemuda Al-Irsjad, gave an opening address.<sup>43)</sup> The point Badjerei emphasized was that Pemuda Al-Irsjad was not an organization only for Arabs, but for all Muslims in Indonesia. According to him, while it was true that Pemuda Al-Irsjad had many “Indonesian youth of Arab origin (*pemuda2 Indonesia keturunan Arab*),” its members also included not a few “indigenous Indonesian youth (*pemuda Indonesia Asli*).” He pointed out that the problem of how the organization was perceived “seems to be a minor problem, yet we consider it necessary to continue paying attention to it.”<sup>44)</sup>

On the other hand, at the end of the event, Natsir gave a speech in which he stated that “the balances (*neratja*) of Pemuda Al-Irsjad are inclining to the positive side.” In his view, both negative and positive outcomes had been achieved by Pemuda Al-Irsjad. The negative outcome was “to ensure that the youth do not get washed away by a current, that is to say, to confine [them] within the organization.” The positive outcome, on the other hand, was “to face the youth’s social problems (*persoalan masyarakat kepada pemuda*),” in other words, “a moral crisis” (*krisis moril*).

Although it was a rather ambiguous expression, the first part of the statement means that Pemuda Al-Irsjad had not pledged its support for Masjumi, because Natsir mentioned that “it [Pemuda Al-Irsjad] has not issued any statement.” It is obvious that Pemuda Al-Irsjad was not fully

satisfied with the mutual cooperation between Masjumi and al-Irshād.<sup>45)</sup> As for the latter part of the statement, considering the political scene at that time, it must refer to the crisis Islam faced in secular political groups, such as the PNI and the PKI. While the secular parties opposed making Indonesia a state based on Islam, Islamic leaders such as Natsir advocated that Islam did not conflict with the *Pancasila* (the “five principles,” the official philosophy of independent Indonesia) (Boland, 1982, 47–48; Feener 2007, 88–91). To sum up, Natsir sought the support of the members of Pemuda Al-Irshad for the Islamic group, and especially Masjumi, in the general election.

It must be noted that Masjumi assumed a favorable attitude toward al-Irshād and also toward Arabs in general. A pro-Masjumi journal, *Hikmah*, published several articles that called for resolution of the minorities’ predicament, and especially that of the Arabs.<sup>46)</sup> Furthermore, in March 1955, Masjumi presided over the special conference in Surakarta to discuss the Arab minority’s problem.<sup>47)</sup> During the conference, Hamka, a well-known writer and journalist from West Sumatra and one of the leading figures in Masjumi, delivered a lecture.<sup>48)</sup>

Hamka argued that whether in the Middle East or Southeast Asia, Islam essentially had not recognized concepts such as native (*aseli*), non-native (*bukan aseli*), or minority (*minoriteit*). In the past, Muslims knew only Islamness (*keislaman*) as their nationality (*kebangsaan*). Then, he continued,

wherever a Muslim resides, that is the place where he serves God and he does good deeds in the land where he is living. Even though he is not a descendant of natives of the country (*keturunan jang aseli dari negeri itu*) that does not allow him to do nothing nor not to feel responsible.<sup>49)</sup>

Based on this view, Hamka commented on the Arab contribution to Indonesia, especially in the fields of literature and other arts. He expressed great appreciation for the deeds of historical figures such as Hamzah Fansuri, Abdullah Abdul Kadir (Munshi Abdullah), and Raden Saleh.<sup>50)</sup> Then, mentioning names such as Hubays, Baswedan, and younger writers and artists, he stated that true Indonesian children of Arab descent (*anak2 bangsa Indonesia sedjati keturunan Arab*) would hold an important place again, as before.

We notice two points of argument in this speech. The first is a stress on the significance of Islam beyond nationalities, and the second is the

thought that Arabs were an integral component of Indonesian culture. Masjumi was attempting to establish Islam as an ideology in the new nation state, and to promote Islamization of the society. It is presumed that this policy encouraged the leaders of Masjumi to accept the Arabs not just as coreligionists, but also as essential to an Indonesian society based on Islam.

In the elections to the DPR, the PNI (22%), Masjumi (21%), Nahdlatul Ulama (18%), and the PKI (16%) emerged as the four main parties, with Masjumi narrowly edged into second place by the PNI. Furthermore, Islamic leaders were disappointed by the fact that the all the Islamic parties together could not win 50% of the vote (Feith 1962, 434; Boland 1982, 52–54). Nevertheless, because the Arab candidates of several parties won more than the three seats that were to be allotted to them, the issue was settled practically (Algadri 1984, 179). Among the Irshādīs, ‘Umar Hubayş was elected to the Constituent Assembly in 1956 as a Masjumi candidate, and later also became a member of the DPR (Mahfudz 1990, 31; Badjerei 1996, 169).

In the early independence period, when minority groups including the Arabs found themselves in a precarious position in Indonesian society, al-Irshād attempted to establish cooperative relations with an Islamic party, namely Masjumi. For its part, Masjumi accepted the Arabs, and when it clashed with secular nationalist groups over the ideology of the independent nation state, it regarded them as a part of Indonesian society based on Islam. While al-Irshād succeeded in securing its position as an Indonesian Islamic organization, it concealed its Ḥaḍramī/Arab character.

### 3.2. Determination of Educational Activities

During the 1950s, al-Irshād made another significant change, by deciding what educational activities would be offered. While only a small number of people could receive a public education during the Dutch colonial period, the Indonesian government sought to effect nationwide implementation of compulsory education based on Indonesian as the language of instruction. Al-Irshād had to take steps in the 1950s as the government moved toward full implementation of its educational policies.

The Indonesian national education system had been marked by the dualism it had inherited from the Dutch colonial period, though it abolished the division on ethnic lines (Noer 1983, chapter 3; Jabali and Jam-

hari 2002, 91 fn 2). Two types of formal education were offered. The first was a general education taught at a school called a *sekolah*. Originating from the colonial education system, the general education was organized by the administration of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The other was a religious education, which was placed under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Their schools were called Madrasah, which evolved from schools of the same name diffused through the Islamic reform movement. Apart from these schools, there were Islamic boarding school, called pesantrens. They had no particular curriculum or system, and were placed under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.<sup>51)</sup>

Al-Irshād decided on its new educational activities at the congress held in Surabaya in November 1954.<sup>52)</sup> Accordingly, it had four kinds of schools: kindergarten (*rawḍat al-aṭfāl/taman kanak2*), elementary (*madrassa ibtidā'īya/sekolah rakjat*), secondary (*madrassa i'dādiya, madrasa thānawīya/sekolah menengah*), and a teacher training college (*kulliyat mu'allimīn/perguruan tinggi*).<sup>53)</sup> What is important is that the language of instruction in all schools was stipulated as being Indonesian, except for the training college. Furthermore, although the decision did not state clearly, these schools were presumably part of the general education stream. As for Arabic and religious subjects, it was decided that they would be taught as “extra subjects” (*'ulūm idāfiya*).<sup>54)</sup>

Nevertheless, not all Irshādīs accepted the decision that placed less importance on Arabic education. At the congress of Pemuda Al-Irshād in November of that year, a plan to establish three types of continuation schools (*sekolah landjutan pertama*) was proposed. The first type was one that specialized in Arabic and religious subjects, the second was one that taught mainly Arabic and religious subjects with additional general subjects, and the third type taught mainly general subjects with additional Arabic and religious subjects.<sup>55)</sup> These schools would be open to students who had completed a primary education. It is obvious that the proposal was intended to balance Arabic education with national education, and in 1956 a debate emerged in Irshādī's periodical, *al-Murshid*, about the decision regarding educational activities.

ʿUmar Nājī, a leading figure of al-Irshād, contributed an article that supported the Congress's decision.<sup>56)</sup> He had been prominently involved in the organization's educational activities since the Dutch colonial period (Nājī n.d., 120, 126). Using the metaphor of a “camel” (*jamal*) and “caravan of knowledge” (*qāfilat al-'ilm*), he argued in that article that the Arab community should not be left behind in the progress being made

by the host society. In his opinion, it had been impossible for al-Irshād to adequately conduct educational activities without state assistance. Thus, during the Dutch colonial period, it had attempted to fasten its camel to “the Dutch caravan of knowledge” (*qāfilat al-‘ilm al-Hūlandiya*). Now that “the Indonesian language has taken the place of the Dutch language in the new era,” al-Irshād had to fasten its camel to the new caravan of knowledge. He explained that “this time we must not miss the caravan as we did before. Because of this, we decided that our schools will follow the curriculum of the indigenous government (*minhāj al-ḥukūma al-waṭaniya*), while changing the extra subjects into Arabic and religion.” Nājī also advocated that the al-Irshād schools should adopt the general education system, presumably because at that time the Indonesian government attached much importance to general education, while religious education had not developed sufficiently.<sup>57)</sup>

On the other hand, some Irshādīs disagreed with the decision of the Congress. One of them was ‘Umar Bin Ṭālib, a teacher in an East Javanese city, Malang. He argued against the opinion to make the al-Irshād schools accord with the general education system, and ardently advocated that al-Irshād had to continue using Arabic as the language of instruction in order to fulfill its mission (*risāla*).<sup>58)</sup> Disagreeing with Nājī, in Bin Ṭālib’s view, the Arab community could afford to establish not only elementary schools, but also higher educational institutions. Even if the al-Irshād schools followed the Indonesian government’s curriculum, he continued, the language of instruction had to be Arabic, not Indonesian.

Another opinion proposed balancing adaptation with the development of the host society while maintaining Arabness by utilizing the relationship with the Arab Middle East. An anonymous article in *al-Murshid* mentioned a plan to establish an educational institution (*ma‘had*) that had received the support of the Islamic Congress (al-Mu’tamar al-Islāmī) of Egypt.<sup>59)</sup> This institution would teach classes in Arabic and follow the curriculum of the Indonesian national education system. The Islamic Congress was established by the Egyptian government in November 1954, with one of its purposes being to address the wellbeing of Muslims, by promoting education for example, as part of a policy for foreign Muslim countries. According to the plan, this institution would include an elementary school (*madrasa ibtidā’iya*), a secondary school (*madrasa i’dābiya*, *madrasa thānawīya*), and a boarding house, and its graduates would be able to take university entrance examinations in either Indonesia or Egypt. It is obvious that this plan was proposed because al-Irshād had a close rela-

tionship with Egypt at that time. This is evident from the fact that in July 1956, when an Egyptian cultural mission visited Indonesia, a reception was held at the al-Irshād school in Surabaya.<sup>60)</sup>

Although, as far as we can confirm, such an institution was not realized with the support of the Islamic Congress, al-Irshād sought an association with Azhar in Cairo. An al-Irshād brochure presumably published in the early 1960s stated that the Ministry of Education of the United Arab Republic recognized al-Irshād school's diploma as being equivalent to the Azhar's (*shahādat al-Azhar al-thānawīya*) secondary school diploma (*Hādihā Bayān li-l-Nās* n.d., 14).<sup>61)</sup> Nevertheless, the attempt to form an association with Azhar was not successful, and later al-Irshād developed a relationship with Saudi Arabia rather than Egypt (Bubalo and Fealy 2005, 59).

In the end, by the 1960s, al-Irshād's educational activities had come to focus on general education. According to an al-Irshād brochure published in the mid-1960s, the types of al-Irshād schools at that time were kindergarten (*taman kanak-kanak*), elementary (*sekolah dasar*), junior high (*sekolah menengah pertama*), vocational girls' schools (*sekolah kependaian putri*), senior high schools for economics (*sekolah menengah ekonomi atas*), religious teachers' training centers (*pendidikan guru agama*), senior high schools (*sekolah menengah atas*), teacher training colleges (*kullijatul Muallimin*), universities (*universitas*), and an Arabic language academy (*akademi Bahasa Arab*) (Elansari 1964, 68–71). Among these schools, only the religious teachers' training centers belonged to the religious education stream, and the others, except for the teachers' training colleges, were part of the general education system.<sup>62)</sup>

In the 1950s, arguments regarding Irshādīs' educational activities—some of them as seen in the Dutch colonial period—insisted that their organizations had to continue emphasizing Arabic education to maintain Arabness. In the end, however, al-Irshād abandoned that view, deciding to focus its educational activities on general education. This decision was based on the belief that the Arabs had to catch up with the progress being made by the host society.

### 3.3. Al-Irshād in the Present Day

Today, al-Irshād continues to be active in social activities, mainly education.<sup>63)</sup> In appearance, it retains some degree of its Ḥaḍramī/Arab character. Its strongholds are Javanese cities with a supposedly large Arab presence, such as Jakarta, Surabaya, and Pekalongan.<sup>64)</sup> Moreover, Arab

Indonesians dominate the organization's key posts (*Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyyah: Profil Organisasi* n.d.). It is noteworthy, however, that the transformation that occurred through the two moves made in the 1950s are evident to the present day.

First, al-Irshād officially rejects the notion that it has a Ḥaḍramī/Arab identity, and instead asserts that it is an Indonesian Islamic organization. Its official website provides the following information:

Al-Irsyad is a national Islamic organization (*organisasi Islam nasional*). As written in its bylaws, a condition of its membership is “those who have citizenship of the Republic of Indonesia, profess Islam, and have reached adulthood.” **Thus, it is not true to consider that Al-Irsyad is an organization of people of Arab descent (*organisasi warga keturunan Arab*).** (Bold characters in the original)<sup>65</sup>

It is reasonable to suppose that this declaration reflects the fact that even now many people consider al-Irshād an Arab organization. Nevertheless, al-Irshād is attempting to dispel this image. Moreover, its activities are limited to Indonesia, and its relationship with Ḥaḍramawt has been completely extinguished.<sup>66</sup>

Second, al-Irshād placed a priority on general education rather than on religious education (see Table).<sup>67</sup> Although at junior and senior secondary levels there are quite a number of religious education schools, with regard to primary education, general elementary schools (*sekolah dasar*) outnumber Islamic elementary schools (*madrasah ibtidaiyah*). As a matter of course, all of these schools use Indonesian, not Arabic, as the language of instruction.

As Arabic education received less emphasis, the *raison d'être* of al-

<i>Level of school</i>	<i>General education</i>	<i>Religious education</i>
Kindergarten	33	–
Elementary	22	10
Junior secondary	14	10
Senior secondary	7	6
Others	1	1

**Table: Schools of al-Irshād (2011)**

Sources: The list in the head office of al-Irshād (accessed May 2011)  
Islamic Kindertartens (*raudatul atfal*) are not included.



Irshād came into question, as had been feared in the Dutch colonial period. Beginning in the 1980s, feeling a sense of danger with regard to young generations that had lost their Arabic language skills, some Irshādīs began to express their dissatisfaction about the educational activities being provided to their children. They established pesantrens to revive Arabic and religious education, and claimed that al-Irshād should return to its original objective (Hasan 2006, 73–77). After the 1980s, al-Irshād established about seven pesantrens.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, in the mid-1990s, the discontent with the educational activities finally split the al-Irshād into two camps (Slama 2014).

This seems to indicate that a shift toward religious education occurred as part of al-Irshād's educational activities. We should not overlook the fact, however, that an increasing number of pesantrens is a phenomenon seen not only in al-Irshād or the Arab community, but also more generally in Indonesia (Azra, Afrianty, and Hefner 2007, 178). Therefore, it seems reasonable to consider al-Irshād's revival of Arabic and religious education as having developed within the framework of Indonesian society's progress.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the most important thing to note is that beginning in the Dutch colonial period, al-Irshād fostered the local-orientation that prompted its accommodation to the host society. In this context, al-Irshād attempted to establish schools that accorded with the colonial education system, in order to keep pace with the host society's progress. It emphasized cooperation with pribumi Muslims, and did not restrict its activities to the Arabs. Though the notion of local-orientation had become dominant among the Irshādīs by the end of the Dutch colonial period, the problem of identity was left behind, because the Irshādīs wanted to maintain Arabness, and they considered its essence was Arabic education.

It was in the 1950s, immediately after independence, that al-Irshād was decisively transformed. At that time, although most Arabs chose to become Indonesian, they were placed in an unstable position as a minority group. When a new national education system was introduced, they also had to decide which educational activities would be offered to their community. Under these conditions, al-Irshād made two significant moves in the 1950s. The first was to approach the Islamic party, *Masjumi*. By building cooperative relations with this party, al-Irshād secured

its position in Indonesian Muslim society, while it concealed its Ḥaḍramī/Arab identity. Its second move was the decision to focus its educational activities on general education. Its schools began to use Indonesian as the language of instruction, and thereby ended their previous emphasis on Arabic education.

We can argue that these two actions are based on the same viewpoint that characterized the local-orientation notion during the Dutch colonial period. That is to say, al-Irshād continued adapting its educational activities to the development occurring in the host society, opened its schools to pribumi Muslims, and established cooperative relations with them. Judging from al-Irshād in the present day, these two moves in the 1950s determined the direction al-Irshād would take after independence. Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that al-Irshād's process of integration, which began during the Dutch colonial period, had been completed by the 1950s.

In closing, we should note that al-Irshād's local-orientation was grounded in the fact that Arabs share their religion with the majority of the pribumis. This means that the Arabs did not consider themselves exclusively Ḥaḍramīs, rather that they maintained their hybrid identity even in the twentieth century. When the minority groups faced difficulties in the early independence period, the Arabs found their place with comparative ease, by choosing to emphasize their identity as Muslims. Thus, it follows that Islam contributed to their social integration, beyond the division of the population that occurred in the colonial period, as the Indonesian nation state emerged. Yet this paper limits the discussion to one of the Arab groups, the Irshādīs. Thus, it requires careful comparison with other groups to consider the process of the integration of the Arab community as a whole in the host society.

### Notes

- 1) As for the PAI, see Haikal (1986, chapter 5), Mobini-Kesheh (1999, chapter 7), and Jonge (2004, 2009, 2011).
- 2) Arai (2001) generally discusses the Arabs during the Japanese Occupation, and Jonge (2004, 2011) focuses on the activities of ex-PAI members.
- 3) For a discussion of the relationship Chinese immigrants had with Indonesian society in the twentieth century, see Suryadinata (1978).
- 4) Ulrike Freitag makes the following estimates of the populations of Ḥaḍramī communities in the 1930s: 75,926 in Southeast Asia, more than 2,000 in India, 12,717 in Saudi Arabia, and some hundreds to thousands in other regions (Freitag 2003, 52).

- 5) Characteristics of the *peranakan* Arabs are discussed in Berg (1886, chapter 8).
- 6) The number of Arab immigrants that immigrated annually from 1900 to 1930 is listed in *Volkstelling 1930* (1935, 49). The Arab population increased by 43,936, while newcomers accounted for only 15, 207 of these.
- 7) For an overview of the Dutch colonial government's policy for Arabs, see Mandal (1994, chapter 3), and Jonge (1997, 94–111).
- 8) For *Sūrkatī* and the formation of al-Irshād, see Mobini-Kesheh (1999, chap. 3) and Yamaguchi (2016b).
- 9) Some studies mention another type of modern-style Islamic school called *sekolah Islam*. See Azra, Afrianty, and Hefner (2007, 177). As they explain, however, it is difficult to distinguish *madrrasah* from *sekolah Islam*.
- 10) In the Dutch colonial period, Irshādīs in general did not define a clear position on the idea of Indonesia and Indonesian nationalism. Thus, we use a somewhat ambiguous word, “local-orientation,” rather than Indonesian-orientation.
- 11) For details of *Sūrkatī*'s attempt, see Yamaguchi (2016b, 446–449).
- 12) “The Ethical Policy” was a kind of enlightened policy adopted by the Dutch East Indies Government in the early twentieth century. The expansion of public education was one of the main pillars of this policy (Ricklefs 2008, 183–193). For a concise explanation of colonial education, see Wal (1961).
- 13) For more detailed discussions of his local-orientation, see Yamaguchi (2016b, 452–456).
- 14) This brochure has sections in both Arabic and Malay. The page mentioned here is from the Malay part.
- 15) *Handelingen van den Volksraad*, July 25, 1938, 414.
- 16) The page mentioned here is from the Arabic text.
- 17) See *Volkstelling 1930* (1935, 94, 160) and the introduction of *Algemeen Verslag van het Onderwijs in Nederlandsch-Indië*, part 2, published in the 1930s.
- 18) This page is in Arabic.
- 19) This page is in Arabic.
- 20) This page is in Arabic.
- 21) “*Bayān li-Man Yufid-hum al-Bayān*,” *al-Murshid* 14 (November 1938): 15.
- 22) *Handelingen van den Volksraad*, July 25, 1938, 414.
- 23) This page is in Arabic.
- 24) For the reorganized leadership of MIAI, see “Rapat M.I.A.I.: Beberapa Poetoesan,” *Asia Raja* 175 (November 16, 1942): 2. Other Arabs in the leadership of the MIAI were as follows: ‘Alī al-Ḥabshī, a famous ‘*ulamā*’ of Jakarta, was a member of its advisory body, see Alatas (2011, 54–60). Baswedan and Hosin Alatas (both from the PAI), and Jahja bin Oesman bin Jahja (the son of a famous ‘Alawī ‘*ulamā*’), were members of its executive.
- 25) Benda (1958, 126–128) argues that the Japanese military government took a hostile view of the Arabs because it was apprehensive regarding their pan-Islamic influence. Jonge (2011, 347–350) agrees with Benda, adding that the Japanese were also irritated by the Arabs’ dubious business practices. Kroef (1953, 322–323), on the contrary, —probably considering only the latter part of the Japanese occupation—states that the Arabs were treated

better than other foreigners. According to Arai (2001, 51–52), it is hard to find evidence that the Japanese associated the Arabs with pan-Islamism, or that they had a special policy for them. He concludes that the Arabs were treated just as other foreigners were.

- 26) The foreigners were classified as either “Europeans” or “other foreigners,” and the Arabs were categorized as the latter. Since Europeans, probably with the exception of the Germans and Italians, were regarded as hostile people, they were charged higher registration fees and regulated more strictly.
- 27) Japanese policy on Islam and demands from the Muslim leaders, especially *kyais* (local traditional Islamic scholars), are discussed in Kobayashi (1997).
- 28) As for education during the Japanese occupation, see Toda (1971, 72–92).
- 29) It is highly likely, however, that the immigrant flow from Ḥaḍramawt to Indonesia after the Japanese occupation recovered temporarily, with 491 Arabs moving into Indonesia in 1950. This is comparable with numbers in the early twentieth century. The number of Arab immigrants, however, had decreased drastically by the middle of the 1950s (*Volkstelling 1930* 1935, 49; Schaap 1957, 170).
- 30) The KNIP consisted of outstanding Indonesian nationalists and the most important leaders of the chief ethnic, religious, social, and economic groups in Indonesia. Initially, it fulfilled only advisory functions, but was later given legislative power (Kahin 1969, 140).
- 31) For details of citizenship decided at the Round Table Conference, see Goutama, (1975, 85–89). Unlike the Arabs, about 390,000 Chinese, from a population of about 1,500,000 Chinese born in Indonesia, refused Indonesian citizenship (Suryadinata 1978, 115).
- 32) No title, *Gema Pemuda Al-Irsjad* 2/7 (October 1955): 5.
- 33) For the Arabs’ participation in the Congres Al-Islam Hindia, and especially Irshādīs’ participation, see Yamaguchi (2016a).
- 34) It was said that Natsir had become acquainted with Sūrkatī in the prewar period, and had been influenced by him on Islamic reformist thought (Rosidi 1990, 167). For a detailed description of the career and thoughts of Natsir, see Feener (2007, 83–106).
- 35) “Al-Irsjad Mendjadi Anggota Istimewa Masjumi,” *Berita Masjumi* 2/99 (September 28, 1951): 3.
- 36) “Al-Irsjad Disahkan sebagai Anggota Istimewa Masjumi,” *Berita Masjumi* 2/116 (December 14, 1951): 1.
- 37) A number of members of the former Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia left it and revived their own party in 1947.
- 38) “Sambutan Al-Irsjad terhadap Pengakuan MASJUMI,” *Berita Masjumi* 2/123 (January 24, 1952): 1. At that time, the Masjumi was not the sole Islamic party in Indonesia. In addition to Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia, another political party, named Perti, was established in the middle Sumatra in 1946.
- 39) “Anggaran Dasar dari Perhimpunan Al-Irsjad,” *Gema Pemuda Al-Irsjad* 1/6 (October 1954): 9–15.
- 40) Pemuda al-Irsjad was renamed in 1939, changing from Waḥdat al-Mutakharrijī al-Irshād (Union of al-Irshād Graduates), which was established in 1930

- (Mobini-Kesheh 1999, 70).
- 41) “Peringatan Ulang Tahun Pemuda Al-Irshad,” *Gema Pemuda Al-Irshad* 2/7 (October 1955): 11.
  - 42) Although they were absent, two other figures from Masjumi, Kasman Singodimedjo and Anwar Harjono, were among those planning to attend the event. However, in addition to the Masjumi leaders, Anwar Tjokroaminoto, a leader of the Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia, also attended the event.
  - 43) “Peringatan Ulang Tahun Pemuda Al-Irshad,” *Gema Pemuda Al-Irshad* 2/7 (October 1955): 11.
  - 44) *Ibid.*, 13–14.
  - 45) Pemuda Al-Irshad had joined Gerakan Pemuda Islam Indonesia, which was established in 1945. Nevertheless, after al-Irshād became a special member of Masjumi, much of its money was applied to Masjumi’s activities. This seemingly caused dissatisfaction in Pemuda Al-Irshad. Badjerei (1996, 160) said that the relationship with Masjumi “hindered the efforts and process of rehabilitation within al-Irshād.”
  - 46) For example, see the following articles: “Majoriteit dan Minoriteit,” *Hikmah* 4/13 (December 22, 1951): 6–7; “Golongan Tionghoa dan Masyarakat Islam,” *Hikmah* 7/5 (January 30, 1954): 5–6.
  - 47) “Hubungan Kewarganegaraan dengan Kebudayaan,” *Hikmah* 8/20–21 (August 14, 1955): 15.
  - 48) “Warga Negara Indonesia Turunan Arab: ‘Asli tadak Asli’ dan Perkembangan Seni Indonesia,” *Hikmah* 8/17 (April 23, 1955): 6–7, 22.
  - 49) *Ibid.*, 6.
  - 50) Among these figures, Hamzah Fansuri, a Sufi poet, is usually not considered an Arab descendant. Moreover, Munshi Abdullah was a writer active in Malaya. It is, though, entirely fair to say that both of them contributed to the development of the Malay language (Indonesian).
  - 51) Though other religions were recognized, the religious education was designed basically for Muslims. Today, the differences between the general education and the religious education have been minimized (Azra, Afrianty, and Hefner 2007, 176–177).
  - 52) “Keputusan2 Mu’amar Al-Irshad ke 28 & Peringatan 40 Tahun,” *Gema Pemuda Al-Irshad* 1/8 (December 1954): 12; “Naşīb al-Madāris al-Islāmīya,” *al-Murshid* 3/2 (June 15, 1956): 5.
  - 53) Formal religious education had a religious teachers’ training facility named *Pendidikan Guru Agama*. Al-Irshād’s training college was a different one.
  - 54) “Madāris al-Irshād Māḍī-hā wa-Ḥādir-hā,” *al-Murshid* 3/2 (June 15, 1956): 7.
  - 55) “Panitia ad hoc Konggres Pemuda Al-Irshad II,” *Gema Pemuda Al-Irshad* 1/8 (December 1954): 9.
  - 56) “Madāris al-Irshād Māḍī-hā wa-Ḥādir-hā,” 6–7.
  - 57) “Kayfa Yajibu An Tu’addiya al-Irshād Risālat-hā,” *al-Murshid* 3/5 (September 15, 1956): 16–17. Religious education began to be improved only from the 1960s to the 1970s (Jabali and Jamhari 2002: 120–122; Azra, Afrianty, and Hefner 2007, 186).
  - 58) “Kayfa Yajibu An Tu’addiya al-Irshād Risālat-hā,” 16–17. Probably this

- ‘Umar Bin Ṭālib is the father of Ja‘far Umar Thalib, the founder of the Laskar Jihad, an Islamic paramilitary group. ‘Umar was born in Madura Island in 1919, the son of an immigrant from Ḥaḍramawt, and studied at the al-Irshād school of Surabaya. After independence, he was active in Muhammadiyah, and became the Maṣjumi leader in Malang (Hasan 2006, 65–67).
- 59) “Naṣīb al-Madāris al-Islāmiya,” 5. As for the Islamic Congress, see Vatikiotis (1961, 51, 191–193). Where the institution would be established was not mentioned.
- 60) “Menjambut Missi Kebudayaan Mesir,” *Gema Pemuda Al-Irsjad* 3/6 (September 1956): 11–12. According to this article, the Egyptian cultural mission had also visited the Surakarta branch of al-Irshād.
- 61) The United Arab Republic denoted a political union formed by Egypt and Syria in 1958. Although it was dismantled in 1961, with the secession of Syria, Egypt continued to use the name of the United Arab Republic until 1971.
- 62) Both the vocational girls’ school and the senior high school for economics were vocational schools (Tilaar 1995, 207–210).
- 63) The present day al-Irshād is divided into two groups, Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah and Perhimpunan Al-Irsyad. The following description is based on data from Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyyah, which we can consider as the mainstream faction.
- 64) Personal interview with Zeyd Amar, on October 18, 2010, in Jakarta.
- 65) “Tentang Al-Irsyad,” in <http://alirsyad.org> (accessed August 7, 2017).
- 66) Personal interview with Geys Amar on September 2, 2008, in Jakarta.
- 67) This table does not include schools for non-formal education, such as *taman pendidikan al-Qur’an* and *taman kanak al-Quran*, Qur’anic schools for children.
- 68) Personal interview with Zeyd Amar, on October 18, 2010, in Jakarta.

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*Interviews*

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Zeyd Amar, a former chief secretary of al-Irshād, on October 18, 2010, in Jakarta.