

# The Phenomenon of Polygyny in Contemporary Malaysia: A Case Study of the Darul Arqam Movement

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## ملخص

أحد التجديدات في أحكام الأسرة المسلمة وأحكام الإسلام المعاصر، هي التي خطتها تركيا سنة ١٩١٧، حول محاولة تقييد تعدد الزوجات. وكذلك عدد من الدول حاولت الحد من تعدد الزوجات، بل وأكثر من ذلك توجد بعض الدول التي منعت تعدد الزوجات بصورة مطلقة. ماليزيا أحد الدول التي حددت تعدد الزوجات. كما هو الحال في إندونيسيا، في ماليزيا وضعت بعض الشروط لتعدد الزوجات. وعلى العكس من ذلك نجد بان متبعي حركة دار الأرقم لم يسمحوا بتعدد الزوجات فقط، بل ويجذوه. هذه المقالة هي نتيجة بحث حول وجهة نظر وتطبيق تعدد الزوجات بين مؤيدي حركة دار الأرقم الموجودة في ماليزيا. مصادر هذا البحث هي من البيانات الموجودة، التي كتبت من قبل مؤيدي هذه الحركة أم من بعض البحوث التي كتبت عنهم. وطريقة التحليل المتبعة هي طريقة تحليل الفحوى (analysis content)، من خلال هذا البحث نجد، بان معرفة ما إذا كان الزوج قادر على معاملة الزوجات بالتساوي، فان في نظر متبعي حركة دار الأرقم، يجب أن يمارس تعدد الزوجات. هذا هو سبب لماذا هم يجذبون تعدد الزوجات (منلوب)، وليس السماح به فقط (مباح). في ممارسة تعدد الزوجات، فان هذه الحركة تزرع الصبر على الزوج بين الزوجات، مثل الصبر إلى أن يأتي دورها، الصبر على حالة الزوج. لأنه يوجد من الذي زوجاته تسكن في مناطق مختلفة إن لم تكن بعيدة. والصبر على تقسيم الليالي الغير العادل بين الزوجات المتفاوتات بالسن، لان الرجل

سوف يقضي ليالي أكثر مع الزوجة الأقل سناً. وكذلك أيضاً على الزوجة إطاعة كافة أوامر ورغبات الزوج. في حين لا يجب على الزوج ذلك، ولا داعي لأن يصبر على أي حال. حيث الزوجة التي تصير على زوجها مهما كانت الظروف فإنها ستحصل على ثواب أضعافاً مضاعفة في الآخرة. وكذلك، تعدد الزوجات في نظر متبعي حركة دار الأرقم يمثل مقياس لمعرفة إذا كان الزوج قادر على العدالة بين زوجاته أم لا، في حين بالنسبة للزوجة كمقياس لمعرفة مقدار صبرها. ومن أهداف تعدد الزوجات ما يسمى بـ إدارة الأعمال، حيث من وجهة نظر هذه الحركة، الزوج المتزوج من عدة زوجات قادر على تنظيم الأعمال بصورة مثالية، من خلال تقسيم الأعمال بين الزوجات، مثلاً أحد الزوجات عليها تربية الأولاد، والأخرى عليها أعمال المطبخ والملابس لجميع العائلة، والأخرى تنظم أعمال الزوج ونشطاته. وهدف آخر هو مساعدة الزوج في إنهاء إعماله في منطقة سكن الزوجة. ولهذا السبب، فإن التزوج من أكثر من زوجة والإقامة في محل واحد غايته رفع إمكانية الزوج، في حين أن التزوج من أكثر من زوجة متفرقات بالسكن يسهل إعمال الزوج المتفرقة.

## Abstrak

Satu pembaruan hukum keluarga Muslim dan Islam kontemporer, yang diperkenalkan pertama kali oleh Turki tahun 1917, adalah adanya usaha membatasi praktek poligami. Sejumlah negara berusaha membatasi kemungkinan praktek poligami, bahkan ada negara yang melarang poligami secara mutlak. Malaysia adalah salah satu negara yang membatasi praktek poligami. Sama dengan Indonesia, di Malaysia poligami dapat dilakukan dengan syarat-syarat dan dalam kondisi-kondisi tertentu. Sebaliknya, pengikut gerakan Darul Arqam bukan saja membolehkan praktek poligami, tetapi lebih dari itu gerakan ini menganjurkannya. Tulisan ini adalah hasil penelitian tentang pandangan dan praktek poligami di kalangan (pengikut)

gerakan Darul Arqam yang tinggal dan menetap di Malaysia. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian pustaka yang bersumber pada data pustaka, baik yang ditulis oleh pengikut Darul Arqam maupun hasil penelitian tentang mereka. Adapun metode analisa yang digunakan adalah metode analisa isi (*analysis content*), yakni dengan menganalisis isi tulisan-tulisan yang berbicara tentang gerakan Darul Arqam. Akhirnya penelitian ini menemukan, bahwa untuk mengetahui tentang mampu atau tidaknya seorang suami berlaku adil terhadap isteri-isterinya bagi pengikut Darul Arqam, harus dicoba dengan cara melakukan poligami. Inilah alasan yang dapat ditulis kenapa mereka menganjurkan praktek poligami (*mandûb*), bukan seperti kelompok mayoritas yang hanya membolehkan (*mubâh*). Sementara dalam praktek, gerakan ini menanamkan kepada para isteri yang dipoligami untuk senantiasa sabar dalam mensikapi praktek poligami suami, seperti sabar menunggu giliran, sabar dengan kondisi suami. Sebab ada suami yang isteri-isterinya bertempat tinggal di daerah yang berlainan, bahkan berjauhan. Dalam kasus ini isteri harus sabar menunggu gilirannya. Implikasi lain dari sifat sabar ini adalah, isteri harus sabar kalau suami membagi malam secara tidak adil di antara para isterinya karena faktor usia, dimana malam suami lebih banyak di isteri muda. Demikian juga isteri diwajibkan senantiasa patuh terhadap perintah dan keinginan suami. Sementara suami tidak dianjurkan, bahkan tidak diajarkan untuk bersabar. Adapun isteri yang selalu sabar dengan keadaan suami dalam segala hal akan mendapat ganjaran yang berlipat ganda nanti kelak di hari akhirat. Dengan demikian, poligami bagi gerakan Darul Arqam merupakan ajang untuk mengukur mampu atau tidaknya seorang suami berlaku adil terhadap isteri-isterinya, sementara bagi isteri menjadi ajang melatih kesabaran. Adapun di antara tujuan poligami adalah manajemen kerja, dimana menurut gerakan ini, seorang suami yang berpoligami dapat memaksimalkan perannya, yakni dengan cara mengatur dan membagi tugas-tugas antara para isteri; dimana ada isteri yang khusus mengurus anak, ada yang khusus mengurus dapur dan pakaian seluruh keluarga, ada yang khusus mengurus keperluan suami dan kegiatan-kegiatannya. Tujuan lain adalah membantu tugas suami ketika sang suami bertugas di tempat dimana sang isteri bertempat tinggal. Karena itu, mempunyai isteri lebih dari seorang dan tinggal di satu tempat bertujuan untuk memaksimalkan peran suami, sementara memiliki isteri-isteri yang tinggal di berbagai tempat yang berbeda bertujuan untuk membantu melaksanakan tugas suami.

## A. Introduction

One of the major reforms of Islamic family law in this century, first introduced in 1917 by Turkey,<sup>1</sup> was in the area of polygyny. As a result of this reform, most Muslim countries restricted the practice of polygyny, with some even prohibiting it.<sup>2</sup> Malaysia is one of the countries that tried to limit the possibility of polygyny as the majority of Muslim countries in the world have done. The polygyny in Malaysia is, therefore, only allowed under certain conditions and with some requirements.<sup>3</sup> The Darul Arqam Movement, on the other hand, is a religious movement based in Malaysia encourages the practice of polygyny.<sup>4</sup> According to Arqam, polygyny is not only permitted but indeed is recommended. This paper is an effort to show attitude toward the practice and the possibility of polygyny among the members of Arqam. It will also address the assumption of the majority of people that the practice of polygyny is an uncivilized/uneducated practice.<sup>5</sup> The common belief is that the more that people are educated, the more they will avoid polygyny. This theory will be explored in connection with the phenomenon of polygyny in Arqam, in order to confirm whether this is true in this case.

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<sup>1</sup>Noel Coulson and Doreen Hinchcliffe, "Women and Law Reform in Contemporary Islam", in Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie, *Women in the Muslim World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 49.

<sup>2</sup>See Tahir Mahmood, *Family Law Reform in the Muslim World* (New Delhi: n.p., 1972); Tahir Mahmood, *Personal Law in Islamic Countries*. (New Delhi, Times Press, 1987). Both books show the reform of Islamic Family Law in Muslim Countries. A majority of Muslim countries allow polygyny with the permission of the Islamic Court. Some require the consent of a wife, while other permit polygyny while retaining the right of a wife to be divorced. Al-Bania, Soviet Central Asia, Turkey and Tunisia are Countries writtenly prohibited polygyny. See Tahir Mahmood, *Statutes of Personal Law in Islamic Countries: History, Texts and Analysis*, Revised Edition. (Delhi: ALR, 1995), p. 173-174; Elizabeth H. White, "Legal Reform as an Indicator of Women's Status in Muslim Nations", in Lois Beck and Keddi, *Women and Law Reform*, p. 60.

<sup>3</sup>"Sisters in Islam" is a Muslim women's organization opposed to the practice of polygyny. The main idea of this movement is to propose a modern, cosmopolitan life style by returning back to the original sources (al-Quran and the tradition of the Prophet).

<sup>4</sup>Judith Nagata, "Who Imagines the State? Contested Visions of Nationalism in Malaysia", in, Rodolphe De Koninck, Steve Dery, Bruce Matthews et J. Nagata (eds.), *Identities, Territoire et Environnement en Asie du Sud-Est*. Universite Laval: Dounebts du Gerac, p. 117.

<sup>5</sup>See for example, David G. Maillu, *our kind of polygamy* (Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya Ltd., 1988), p. 1.

Before going further there are two terms should be clarified in order to follow the subject better and easier. First of all, the subject of this paper is polygyny where a husband has more than one wife, whereas the term polygamy applies to a spouse has more than one spouse either wife or a husband. Therefore, the term used in this paper is polygyny instead of polygamy. Another is the term Darul Arqam, which some authors write as Daru al-Arqam or even Dar al-Arqam. In this paper we will use Darul Arqam or even in most places Arqam consistently. The paper is divided into five major sections. The first part consists of the introduction, which is followed by a discussion of the characteristics of polygyny in general in the second part. The third part it will discuss the History of the Darul Arqam, then followed by Arqam practice of polygyny among its members in the next section. Then, it will provide a conclusion in the last part. It is important to note, furthermore, that this study takes a more anthropological and sociological approach than a juristic or constitutional one.

## **B. General Characteristic of Polygyny**

There are a few points which should be taken into account concerning the issue of polygyny. First of all, the practice of polygyny, so far, is unrelated to social structure (matrilineal, patrilineal and parental), nor it restricted to a certain religion, particularly in the case of South East Asia. The fact is that the highest rate of practice of polygyny in Indonesia (13.5%), based on research in 1930, was in Sumba (an area in Lombok), where majority of population is Muslim. This was followed by the people of Flores where the rate was 12% of marriages, but where the majority of the population is Catholic. Minangkabau in West Sumatera, where the social structure is matrilineal, was in fact the third with the rate of practice of polygyny being 9.0%, compared to north Sumatera as number nine with 3.8% of marriages being a polygyny, where the population is patrilineal.<sup>6</sup> The fact is that the matrilineal system in West Sumatera, for example, does not vest power in the hand of wife, it only ensures that descent and property are the privilege of females. As far as marriage matters are concerned, on the other hand, power is

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<sup>6</sup>See for example Gavin W. Jones, *Marriage and Divorce in Islamic South-East Asia* (Oxford, Singapore and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 269-270, and Maillu, *our kind of polygamy*.

in the hands of males.<sup>7</sup>

Outside of South East Asia we should note that, in Africa, where polygyny is common, the majority of the population is Christian.<sup>8</sup> In deed, both Islam and Christianity have groups, which support the practice of polygyny. In the case of Islam, Darul Arqam represents one group favoring the practice of polygyny. In the case of the Christians, Martin Luther originally encouraged the king to take another wife. In 1650, after the Thirty Years War in Germany, the Regional Council of Catholic Franconians, suggested that laymen marry two wives for a period of ten years as a means of rebuilding the population.<sup>9</sup> Another church that practices polygyny is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church).<sup>10</sup> In addition, historical fact shows that the majority of cases of polygyny occur among those who are in power, both economically and politically. This fact is also true of the entire history of South East Asia.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>See Hamka, *Merantau ke Deli* (Djakarta: Penerbit Djayabakti, 1959), p. 54-55, where he shows that the practice of polygyny in Minangkabau society is a common practice. This is supported by religious and traditional beliefs. Women are also accepted to be a co-wife by a man. Another reason for this is their belief that there are more women compared to men. See p. 67. What is implied from the second reason therefore, is that in order for each woman to be a wife, they must practice polygyny. With respect to the power in the hands of the female, according to Adat Minangkabau is in the case of family name, descent and property. The holder of the family according to this tradition is a wife, while a husband is only "sumanda," means a person who comes to the house because of custom (adat). Children belong to the clan of the wife. If they go out, the owner of a wife is not in the hand of husband rather in the hand of mother in law of a husband "mama". Therefore, in case this family falls into a poor family, "mama" has a right to pick a wife up and return her back to the original family. In contrast, if a man of "Minangkabau" marries a woman outside "Minangkabau", a husband has a full power over the family. See Hamka, *Merantau*, p. 28. To the matter of property, such as a house they build is not belong to the family rather belong to a wife. Therefore, the status of a house in the matter of divorce is belong to the wife. Hamka, *Merantau*, p. 65. Therefore, deal with descent, family name and property, in matrilineal social system, the power is in the hand of a wife; Cora vrede-de Stuers, *The Indonesian Woman: Struggle and Achievements* (Netherlands: Monton & Co., Printers, 1960), p. 24-28.

<sup>8</sup>Maillu, *our kind of polygamy*, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup>Jessie L. Embry, *Mormon Polygamous Families* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), pp. 4-5.

<sup>10</sup>Embry, *Mormon Polygamous Families*, p. xiii; Irwin Altman and Joseph Ginat, *Polygamous Families in contemporary society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>11</sup>Yusuf Wibisono, *Monogami atau Poligami: Masalah Sepanjang Masa* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1980). This book shows the historical fact of polygyny in the whole history, even

### C. Ashaari Muhammad and Darul Arqam

The history of the Darul Arqam movement is related to the history of the Sufi order "Tariqah Muhammadiyah", which was founded by Syeikh Muhammad Suhaimi bin Abdullah, who came from Wonosobo, Central Java, Indonesia. When he reached marriageable age,<sup>12</sup> Suhaimi took Nyai Qani'ah bin Abdul Rahim of Kalibeber, Wonosobo, Central Java, Indonesia, as his first wife. Not long after this marriage he left to pursue his studies in an Islamic boarding school (*Pesantren*) in Sulu Tiang, Luwanuh, his wife remained at home. Staying at this school for only in a short time, he then moved to another Islamic boarding school in Termas, Pacitan, East Java. After a few years of his study in this school he returned to Wonosobo, which he then left to continue his studies in Mecca, once again leaving his wife behind. Some of his lecturers in Mecca were Syeikh Ahmad Dahlan, Syed Bakri Shatta, Syeikh Nawawi Banten, Syed Abdullah Zawawi.<sup>13</sup> After living in Mecca for 12 years, he went to stay in Singapura for 40 years. In 1900 Suhaimi moved to Kelang, Selangor where he lived until his death in 1925/21 Rejab 1243,<sup>14</sup> leaving behind 4 wives and 5 children, all of whom were born in Singapura.<sup>15</sup>

Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad,<sup>16</sup> who is called (*bergelar*) *al-Tamimi*,<sup>17</sup> and

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though more deep to Indonesian case, in the Kingdom period and contemporary.

<sup>12</sup>None of our sources cited an exact time or an exact age.

<sup>13</sup>Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam & Aurad Muhammadiyah* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Raqib, 1994), p. 49-50.

<sup>14</sup>Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. x, 58. Yet Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah cites his death in 1923, while Amirullah Mohamed cited 1924. See Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah, *Gerakan Islam Tradisional di Malaysia: Sejarah dan Pemikiran Jemaat Tabligh & Darul Arqam* (Kuala Lumpur: Kintan SDN.BHD., 1992), p. 68; Amirullah Mohamed, *Antara Halal dan Haram al-Arqam; Jawapan Kepada Ashaari* (T.tp. RODATRA SDN. BHD., 1994), p. 59. Yet majority of writes put 1925.

<sup>15</sup>Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah, *Gerakan Islam Tradisional*, p. 68.

<sup>16</sup>Ashaari Muhammad has four wives now from five marriages. The first marriage was with ustazah Hasanah, and ended in 1984. His wives now are Tengko Nuriah Abdullah, Ummu Ain, Khadijah Aam, and Walidah. See Mohd. Mohd. Sayuti Omar, *Mujaddid Alam Melayu; Harapan dan Impian Darul Arqam* (Kuala Lumpur: Tinta Merah, 1993), p. 8.

<sup>17</sup>Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. 1-2. The name of *al-Tamimi* based on the Prophet tradition (*hadith*) which states, "in the next time a youth will become *mujaddid/al-mahdi* with some characteristics". Accordingly, Ashaari Muhammad fulfills such characteristics. His title of *Al-Tamimi*, therefore, is not based on descent. Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. 199-206.

since 1993 has gone by another name *Abuya Syeikh Imam*,<sup>18</sup> was born in 1938,<sup>19</sup> in Kampung Pilin, Rembau.<sup>20</sup> His father, Muhammad, was also a member of the Tariqah Aurad Muhammadiyah,<sup>21</sup> while his mother, Maimunah, passed away when he was only 5 years old.<sup>22</sup> Ashaari Muhammad is often said to be of Minangkabau descent.<sup>23</sup>

Wak Ibrahim (Lebai Muhammad)<sup>24</sup>, a loyal student of a "khalifah" of the Sufi Order Tarikat Muhammadiyah, looked after Ashaari Muhammad when he was still a child in Kampung Pilin, Rembau. Later on when he was 16 years old, Ashaari Muhammad received a certificate of membership in the Tariqah Muhammadiyah from Wak Ibrahim.<sup>25</sup>

From Rembau, Ashaari Muhammad went to continue his studies at the Islamic boarding school (*Ma'had*) Hisyamuddin, Kelang, Selangor,<sup>26</sup> under the control of Wak Ibrahim. One of his teachers in Kelang, Selangor, was a grandson of Muhammad Suhaimi, named Muhammad Abdullah bin Muhammad Khairullah, better known as Pak Kiyai, or Pak Mat Kelang, or Pak Mat Kontraktor.<sup>27</sup> Other teachers in this school were Syaikh Muhammad al-Bukhari, who was born in Bukhara, and knew 10.000 *hadiths* in his heart, Haji Abdul Hakim al-Azhari and Ustaz Dhahlan bin Abdul Manaf.<sup>28</sup> Ashaari Muhammad studied in this school until grade seven (*thanawi thalith*).<sup>29</sup> Before coming to Ma'had Hisyamuddin school, Ashaari Muhammad had also

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<sup>18</sup> Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. 59. There is no explanation of this name, yet the leader of a sufi order (*tariqat*) is normally called syeikh. Thus, this name probably comes from this tradition, since Darul Arqam was originally a *sufi* order. Yet it is also important to note that the name of Ashaari developed from time to time. The development of syeikh name is *Ustaz, Mudir, Amir, Syeikh, Imam, Abuya Syeikh, al-Tamimi* and the last *Ayatullah*. Amirullah Mohamed, *Antara Halal*, p. 76, 114.

<sup>19</sup> Another source states he was born in 1937. See for example, Mohd. Sayuti Omar, *Mujaddid Alam Melayu*, p. 2. Yet majority of sources write 1938. It is important to note that Mohd. Sayuti Omar seems to be a writer who has a positive response to Darul Arqam Movement.

<sup>20</sup> Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah, *Gerakan Islam Tradisional di Malaysia*, p. 69-70.

<sup>21</sup> Mohd. Sayuti Omar, *Mujaddid Alam Melayu*, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah, *Gerakan Islam Tradisional di Malaysia*, p. 69-70.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Mohd. Sayuti Omar, *Mujaddid Alam Melayu*, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

received instruction in a Malay school until grade seven.<sup>30</sup>

After graduating from Ma'had Hisyamuddin Ashaari Muhammad took an active part with PAS (PAN Islamic Party) for 10 years (1958-1968).<sup>31</sup> Then Ashaari Muhammad persuaded a small number of his friends to participate in group discussions (*halaqah*), which were at first centered in Lorong Kiri 2, Datuk Keramat, Kuala Lumpur.<sup>32</sup> The purpose of the group discussion was to pursue Islamic Teaching (*fard `ain*).<sup>33</sup> The number of the members of the movement were at first not more than 10, some of them being Zakaria Ansari,<sup>34</sup> Dr. Yaakob, Suhur Hussin, Hambali Latif, Cikgu Abd Rahman Hj. Shamsuddin, and so on.<sup>35</sup> Because the colour of the house where they conducted the *halaqah*, was white, this group was as a consequence called the "white community". After three years the group changed its name from "white community" to Darul Arqam, a name proposed by Ustaz Zakaria Ansari, and accepted by Ashaari Muhammad.<sup>36</sup> Darul Arqam originally referred to the house donated by a sahabat of the Prophet Muhammad as *wakaf* to serve as a centre of Islamic activities.<sup>37</sup>

The last lecture conducted in Lorong Kiri 2 Datuk Keramat was September 3, 1973.<sup>38</sup> Then the center of Darul Arqam was moved to the house of Pak Hussin in Flat Sungai Baru, while regular twice-a-week lectures were

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah, *Gerakan Islam Tradisional di Malaysia*, p. 70-71; Mohd. Sayuti Omar, *Mujaddid Alam Melayu*, p. 29.

<sup>32</sup> Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah, *Gerakan Islam Tradisional di Malaysia*, p. 70-71. Judith Nagata cited the date of found of Darul Arqam that was 1967. Unfortunately she does not put any source. Therefore, I prefer to cite 1968 as the date of found of Darul Arqam as cited by majority of writers. See Judith Nagata, "Who Imagines the State?", p. 117. Muhammad Syukri Salleh, one of important thinkers and writers in Darul Arqam also put 1968 as the date of found Darul Arqam. See Muhammad Syukri Salleh, "Recent Trends in Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia", *Studia Islamica*, vol.6 no. 2, 1999, p. 45.

<sup>33</sup> Amirullah Mohamed, *Antara Halal*, p. 13.

<sup>34</sup> Zakaria Ansari is one of the founders who left Darul Arqam in 1970, then founded another movement was called "Darul Ansar" in Batang, Berjantai, Kuala Selangor. Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah, *Gerakan Islam Tradisional di Malaysia*, p. 76.

<sup>35</sup> Mohd. Sayuti Omar, *Mujaddid Alam Melayu*, p. 77.

<sup>36</sup> Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah, *Gerakan Islam Tradisional di Malaysia*, p. 70-71.

<sup>37</sup> Mohd. Sayuti Omar, *Mujaddid Alam Melayu*, p. 10, 78. Some people who disagree with Darul Arqam Movement called them "ghost in camp" (hantu kom-kom), "error teaching" (ajaran sesat), "new teaching" (ajaran baru), "do pilgrim in Sungai Penchala" (naik haji di Sungani Penchala). Haswan, *Menangani Ancaman Al-Arqam* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit al-Munir, 1993), p. 12.

<sup>38</sup> Mohd. Sayuti Omar, *Mujaddid Alam Melayu*, p. 79.

given in the house of Pak Mohd. Salleh Abu Bakar in Simpang Flat, Pekeliling Street.<sup>39</sup> Not long after, the centre moved again to a wood house (*rumah kayu*) in Setapak. Finally, in 1975 Darul Arqam built a permanent centre in Sungai Penchala on a site occupying 4 hectares of land, which was bought by Ashaari Muhammad and his friends in 1971 at the cost \$ 20,000.<sup>40</sup> This lot at that time was still forested.<sup>41</sup>

On January 31, 1975 Darul Arqam sent 12 students to the Foundation (Yayasan) Khairiah in Kupang, Baling, Kedah. This yayasan was chosen not only because of its emphasis on Islamic education (*tarbiyah Islam*), but also because the founder, Ustaz Mohd. Rosdi Yusuf, who had returned from al-Azhar University in 1974, was a supporter and member of Darul Arqam.<sup>42</sup> August 1, 1975 marks the date of founding of Yayasan Pendidikan Darul Arqam, the education department of movement, and the establishment of the movement's first school.<sup>43</sup> The first chairman of this school was Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff,<sup>44</sup> who was helped by the 12 students who had graduated from Khairiah School.<sup>45</sup>

In 1979 Akhbar Anang with six of his friends were suspended by Ashaari Muhammad on the basis that Akhbar Anang had slandered, or even

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80; Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah, *Gerakan Islam Tradisional di Malaysia*, p. 71.

<sup>40</sup> Mohd. Sayuti Omar, *Mujaddid Alam Melayu*, p. 10, 80; Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah, *Gerakan Islam Tradisional di Malaysia*, p. 73.

<sup>41</sup> Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan*, p. viii.

<sup>42</sup> Ashaari and Roshdi Yusoff know each other in 1974, when Ashaari and some of his members often come to Kedah to follow the program of ABIM (Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia/Muslim Youth Movement), when Ashaari was a member, while ustaz Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff was a *mudir* (a director) of Yayasan Khairiah Kupang. At that time Ashaari wanted to send three of Ashaari's son and some of members' son to study in Yayasan Khairiah. From this time their relationship was closer and deeper. Eventually, Yusoff was appointed by Ashaari as a chairman of Darul Arqam School in Sungai Pencala. See Ustaz Mohd. Roshdi yusof, *Bahaya Arqam kepada Ummah dan Negara* (Kelantan: Pustaka Reka, n.d.), p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah, *Gerakan Islam Tradisional di Malaysia*, p. 73.

<sup>44</sup> Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. viii. Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff is a former second important member in Darul Arqam after Ashaari Muhammad. He stayed with Arqam for fourteen (14) years before he left because of his unsatisfaction with Ashaari's teaching in Aurad Muhammadiyah, such as (1) a belief that Suhaimi is still alive, (2) that Katonggo forest (Hutan/Alas Katanggo) is a place where wali-wali live, and area where Suhaimi appointed as al-Mahdi and so on. Even Yusoff stated that there are 40 questions/problems in Darul Arqam. For further information see his book.

<sup>45</sup> Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah, *Gerakan Islam Tradisional di Malaysia*, p. 73.

threatened to seize power from Ashaari Muhammad.<sup>46</sup> According to Anang, however, their expulsion was due to their innovation in using works of Islamic jurisprudence in teaching Darul Arqam members, matters related to economies and other fields. He insisted that he had become a member of Darul Arqam in the hope of developing the Muslim community based on the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet (*sunnah Nabi*).<sup>47</sup>

In 1986 Mukhtar Yaacob,<sup>48</sup> a former important chairman of Darul Arqam,<sup>49</sup> left Darul Arqam. His reason for leaving was due to his disagreement with the teaching of Darul Arqam, which available in Aurad Muhammadiyah.<sup>50</sup> Aurad Muhammadiyah is a set of doctrinal principles underlying the movement. More explanation about it will be given more in another part of the paper. Mukhtar Yaacob was joined by no less than 100 members in leaving Darul Arqam.<sup>51</sup> According to Ustaz Ahmad Shifa Haji Mukhtar, the son of Mukhtar Yaacob, Mukhtar Yaacob tried to apprise Ashaari of the mistakes contained in Aurad Muhammadiyah, but Ashaari refused to listen to Yaacob.<sup>52</sup>

It is important to note, therefore, that, according to one source, the move of the centre (*markaz*) of Darul Arqam from Sungai Pencala, Kuala Lumpur to Kampung Sempadan, Temerloh, Pahang on June 15, 1986, was an effort to

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<sup>46</sup> Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. 182.

<sup>47</sup> Abdul Halim Al-Muhammady (ed.), *Penyelewengan Al-Aqram dari Aqidah dan Sunnah: Mengikuti Perspektif Ahl Al-Sunnah wa Al-Jamaah* (Selangor: Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), 1994), p. 110-111.

<sup>48</sup> In one place his name written Mukhtar Yaacob, in another place Mukhtar Yaacob. For this paper it is written Mukhtar Yaacob.

<sup>49</sup> Mukhtar Ya'cob was a graduated from Al-Azhar University (Master Degree). He stayed with Darul Arqam for eight (8) years. Before joining Arqam Mukhtar Yaacob had a community (*jema'ah*) and was a teacher in the School of Sultan Abu Bakar in Secondary School. He left these all for Arqam. See Abdul Halim Al-Muhammady (ed.), *Penyelewengan Al-Aqram*, p. 118. In Arqam Mukhtar Yaacob was a former (1) Chairman "Mudir" of Yayasan Arqam (Central School of Arqam), (2) Vice Syeikh Arqam, (3) Mudir Pendidikan Arqam Malaysia, (4) a teacher for Fardu 'Ain for the experts of Arqam in Malaysia, (5) a leader of Religious Council (Majlis Ulama [fatwa]) Arqam. Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. 181-184. Mukhtar Ya'cob left Darul Arqam in 1986. Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. 189. See also Haswan, *Menangani Ancaman Al-Aqram*, p. 13.

<sup>50</sup> Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. xi. Mukhtar Yaacob has some reasons of left Darul Arqam: (1) status of Suhaimi as an imam al-Mahdi, (2) Aurad Muhammadiyah, and (3) Silat Sunda. Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. 184.

<sup>51</sup> Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. xi.

<sup>52</sup> Abdul Halim Al-Muhammady, *Penyelewengan Al-Aqram*, p. 119.

avoid defection encouraged by former important members of Darul Arqam, such as Akhbar Anang, and Ustaz Mukhtar Yaacob.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, in the beginning of 1986 Ashaari Muhammad chose to live in Thailand.<sup>54</sup>

Ashaari Muhammad, according to the Aurad Muhammadiyah, is the only person who is able to meet directly with Syeikh Suhaimi, and is automatically the chosen person of the Mahdi. Even the family of Suhaimi is not able to contact Suhaimi directly to the extent that Ashaari does. Ashaari Muhammad has stated that his status as the chosen interlocutor with Suhaimi, was confirmed by Syaikh Mahmud,<sup>55</sup> who had met Suhaimi when he was 6 years old.<sup>56</sup>

Therefore, Aurad Muhammadiyah come in for public question when Akhbar Anang and his friends were suspended in 1979. Akhbar Anang, for instance, accused Ashaari Muhammad of believing that Suhaimi is still alive and will become imam Mahdi.<sup>57</sup> To response to the accusations of Akhbar Anang, Ashaari Muhammad stated that Suhaimi had passed away in 1925 and would not become imam Mahdi.<sup>58</sup> In 1986, when Mukhtar Yaacob left Darul Arqam, on the other hand, Ashaari gave a contradiction answer to the same question. Ashaari stated that Suhaimi is still alive and will become imam Mahdi someday just as Akhbar Anang had earlier claimed.<sup>59</sup>

As stated before, Aurad Muhammadiyah is a set of doctrinal principles of the Darul Arqam movement. Word *aurad* comes originally from *wirid*, a

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<sup>53</sup> Mukhtar Yaacob and Akbar Anang, therefore, considered that there was a wrong teaching in Darul Arqam, especially deal with the belief of Ashaari Muhammad to the status of Syeikh Suhaimi who according to Ashaari, is still alive. Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah, *Gerakan Islam Tradisional di Malaysia*, p. 78. Yet, the members of Darul Arqam stated that the reason why Mukhtar Yaacob left Arqam was due to his not enough patient to the exam in Darul Arqam. Therefore, he was not succeeded as a soldier of imam Mahdi. See Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. 185. As an effect of his leaving, still according to members of Darul Arqam, he got sick and passed away earlier. Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. 190.

<sup>54</sup> Amirullah Mohamed, *Antara Halal dan Haram*, p. 143.

<sup>55</sup> Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. xiii.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>57</sup> Some of his friends are Rasdi Budiman, Muhammad Noor, Haji Akasyah. See Amirullah Mohamed, *Antara Halal dan Haram*, p. 18,

<sup>58</sup> This explanation appeared in al-Akhbar al-Arqam, December 1979/Safar 1401. Amirullah Mohamed, *Antara Halal dan Haram*, p. 55.

<sup>59</sup> Amirullah Mohamed, *Antara Halal dan Haram*, p. 59. This new Aurad Muhammadiyah appeared and went to market on August 30, 1986. See Amirullah Mohamed, *Antara Halal dan Haram*, p. 56.

Malay term for inspirational chanting (*zikr/zikrullah*). Aurad is plural of *wirid*.<sup>60</sup> The major contents of the Aurad Muhammadiyah is a history of the life (*silsilah* and *manaqib*) of Suhaimi. This biography (*silsilah*), included *wirid*, was written in two editions; an original edition and additional edition. The first edition was written by Fadlullah Suhaimi in Javanese, then translated into Malay, while the second was written by Muhammad Taha Suhaimi, the son of Fadlullah Suhaimi. This latter was written in Malay language in both Jawi and Rumi letters.<sup>61</sup>

Muhammad Taha Suhaimi originally recorded *silsilah* of Mohammad Abdullah as-Suhaimi. This record is then put in "Aurad Muhammadiyah Pegangan Darul Arqam" (1986) which is a part of *manaqib* syekh Mohammad as-Suahimi. This book is an additional edition to Taha Suhaimi. Aurad Muhammadiyah was published by Muhammad Abdullah bin Muhammad Khairullah Suhaimi and Muhammad Taha Suhaimi. The whole content of Aurad Muhammadiyah are *tahlil*, *Maulid Barzanji*, *Maulid Daiba'i* and the *Nazam* practice of Syeikh Suhaimi, as written in the biography of Syeikh Suhaimi. *Amalan Pencak Sunda* (*silat ghaib*), which was another practice of the members of Arqam, was another work written by Muhammad Khairullah Suhaimi (the second son of Suhaimi).<sup>62</sup>

In 1988 the Minister of Home Affairs of Malaysian Government banned the publication of Aurad Muhammadiyah,<sup>63</sup> on the following basis: (1) the members of Arqam believed that Suhaimi, as the conduit of Aurad Muhammadiyah, had not passed away and that he would become imam Mahdi someday; (2) they believed that Suhaimi would met the Prophet directly (*yaqazah*) and would receive the Aurad Muhammadiyah from the Prophet; (3) Darul Arqam makes certain additions to the syahadah, including (a) the names of the four companions (*khulafa al-rasyidin*) and (b) mention of the belief that Suhaimi will return as imam Mahdi;<sup>64</sup> (4) Ashaari Muhammad interpreted the Qur'an (4):3, as the basis for his concept of po-

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<sup>60</sup> Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqama*, p. 31.

<sup>61</sup> Amirullah Mohamed, *Antara Halal dan Haram*, p. 56-57.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57, 154..

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>64</sup> The fact is that in the syahadah of Arqam is not mentioned the name of Suhaimi, what was written in their syahadah is *asyhadu anla ilaha illa Allah wa asyhadu anna Muhammadan al-rasul Allah, Abu Bakri al-shiddiqu, umaru al-faruqu, uthman barru al-rahimu, 'aliyu 'adudu al-din, muhammad al-mahdi khulafa'u rasulillahi sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallama*. Haswan, *Menangani Ancaman Al-Arqam*, lamp. V.

lygyny, which differed from the view point of the majority of Muslim scholars ('*ulama'*);<sup>65</sup> (5) Syeikh Arqam Ashaari Muhammad stated that he had met the Prophet, and that the Prophet recognized Arqam as a valid movement; (6) the members of Arqam idolize Syeikh Ashaari as somebody able to give help (*syafa'at*); (7) they believe that Ashaari has been given special powers by God (*kun-fa-yakun*); (8) ) Syeikh Ashaari Muhammad had lied in saying that he was of Tamimi descent; in doing all these (9) the members of Arqam act in defiance of the Syari'ah and Islamic theology. In addition, the members of Arqam try to remain apart from society and the government.<sup>66</sup>

Haswan, another author, reduces these points to some main headings: (1) that Suhaimi is still alive and will be Imam Mahdi someday; (2) that Suhaimi met the Prophet directly (*yāqazah*); (3) that the Arqam doctrine represented an addition to the syahadah and; (4) that Aurad Muhammad was received from the Prophet.<sup>67</sup> In addition, Ashaari's claim to special powers, his interpretation of polygyny and his title of al-Tamimi.

Furthermore, on August 5, 1994 the National Council of Binding Rulings on Religious Matters of Malaysia (*Jawatan-kuasa Fatwa Majlis Kebangsaan*) banned Arqam as well as all its teachings and activities.<sup>68</sup>

Ashaari has never explained how it is that Suhaimi is still alive and will become imam Mahdi. As for the matter of Suhaimi and Ashaari Muhammad's direct dialogue with the Prophet Muhammad in 1991,<sup>69</sup> according to one report, based on direct experience, this dialogue was recorded on a cassette, and a majority of the chairmen of Darul Arqam have a copy of the recording.<sup>70</sup> In trying to explain how this was possible, Ashaari maintained that if a person is already in a special position (*maqam wali*) he will be

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<sup>65</sup> According to Ashaari Muhammad marriage should be started from more than one wife, so that somebody (a husband) is able to consider whether or not he has ability to do just among his wives. In contrast, according to the most Muslim Scholars, the possibility to do polygyny if somebody sure that he has ability to do just among his wives. Therefore, if he is afraid not to do just do not try to marry more than one.

<sup>66</sup> Amirullah Mohamed, *Antara Halal dan Haram*, p. 154, 159, 161-162.

<sup>67</sup> Haswan, *Menangani Ancaman Al-Arqam*, p. 14.

<sup>68</sup> Amirullah Mohamed, *Antara Halal dan Haram*, p. 153, 157.

<sup>69</sup> Abdul Halim Al-Muhammady (ed.), *Penyelewengan Al-Arqam*, p. 102.

<sup>70</sup> Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. xvi, 292. As reported by Ninda (not real name), cited by Yusoff, one of Ashaari's question to the Prophet was "whose name should I put in it if I write a book". Another is "how do I organize umat when I come to power". The reasons for citing these two questions for these two questions only she can exactly remember. Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. 294.

able to communicate with the Prophet.<sup>71</sup>

As for the matter of the additional *syahadah* elements in Aurad Muhammadiyah, Ashaari maintained that what was written in the *syahadah* is not mean an addition, but rather an aid to remember the four *sahabat* and imam Mahdi.<sup>72</sup>

In explaining of the idea that the Aurad Muhammadiyah was received from the Prophet, we need to counter it with Ashaari's statement elsewhere that the *silsilah*, is called "Aurad" rather than "Tariqat", since a *tariqat*'s line goes back to the Prophet, while Aurad Muhammadiyah has no line going back to the prophet. Ashaari has further maintained, is based merely on the practice of Suhaimi, followed by Ashaari Muhammad since 1955 when he was 16 years old.<sup>73</sup> The possibility of reconciling these two statements depends on recognizing that Aurad Muhammadiyah does not come from the prophet but that it was recognized by the Prophet.

With respect to the belief that Ashaari Muhammad had a special power, it is important to note that according to an experienced source, Ustaz Khalid Jaafar, who was very close to the *syekh*, Ashaari Muhammad indeed had black magic (*sihir*) and supernatural (*sakti*) powers.<sup>74</sup> It can be proven and has been experienced, maintains the same source, that in Aurad Muhammadiyah practice a person can fly on a white horse (*hantu*) wherever he wants to.<sup>75</sup>

We will address to the polygyny issue in greater detail in the next section, but suffice it to say that according to a former important chairman of Arqam, Ustaz Khalid Jaafar, it is true that by virtue of a certain *wirid* in Aurad Muhammadiyah, a member will gain an extra sexual power. This power is found within an evil spirit (*jin nafsu*). Therefore, he adds, it should not come as a surprise if a member of Arqam has 10 wives.<sup>76</sup>

The Darul Arqam Movement has a number of departments (Biro/Syu'bah), which organize all the activities of the movement. Yet it is signifi-

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<sup>71</sup> Amirullah Mohamed, *Antara Halal dan Haram*, p. 50.

<sup>72</sup> Haswan, *Menangani Ancaman*, p. 16.

<sup>73</sup> Amirullah Mohamed, *Antara Halal dan Haram*, p. 57.

<sup>74</sup> It is experience of Khalid Jaafar. Abdul Halim Al-Muhammady, *Penyelewengan Al-Arqam*, p. 104,108. It is also reported that some people know the name of Ashaari as a person who has a special power to fly, powerful, invisible and such. See. . Abdul Halim Al-Muhammady (ed.), *Penyelewengan Al-Arqam*, p. 119.

<sup>75</sup> Abdul Halim Al-Muhammady, *Penyelewengan Al-Arqam*, p. 105 dst.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

cant to note that none of these departments date from the founding the movement, but have been developed over time. In addition, Akbar Anang is credited as an important former member who developed the economic and financial resources of Darul Arqam, and was the first publisher of the al-Arqam newspaper.<sup>77</sup> He was a chairman who sponsored the sale of manufactured products from Darul Arqam directly to the user.<sup>78</sup> Akhbar Anang became so influential in developing Darul Arqam, especially in economic, financial and publishing concerns, that he began to be suspected by Ashaari as somebody who trying to monopolize the group's economic activities.<sup>79</sup> In addition, the development of the economic activities of Darul Arqam only started in the 1980s. It was before this period; in around the 1970s, that Ashaari Muhammad came to Indonesia, especially Surabaya and Jakarta to visit and to conduct comparative study. One place he concentrated on in his visit was Jakarta, where there was a special Muslim Community, called the *Islam Jamaah*. The members of this community were former film stars like Benyamin, Ida Royani, Christine Hakim and others. The funds of this community were derived from their own economic and agricultural activities.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, it is possible that Ashaari may have learnt from this comparative study how to make a community fund by itself.

The first department of the Darul Arqam to be founded was Department of Education (*Syu'bah Tarbiyah wal-Ta'lim*), which organizes educational activities in general, while the Centre of Training (*Pusat Latihan Perguruan al-Arqam*) is a foundation which organizes the Islamic Education only.<sup>81</sup> The second department to be set up was the Department of Benefit or finance (*Syu'bah Ijtima'iyah or Kebajikan*), which was concerned with the matters of marriage, birth, family, orphans, widows, common people and such.<sup>82</sup> This department was founded in May 1977 and was centred in Gombak, and was chaired for the first time by Akhbar Anang,<sup>83</sup> The third department established is the Department of Manufacturing (*Syu'bah al-Tijarah wal-Sina'ah*),

<sup>77</sup> Some of their magazines are Amal and al-nasihah.

<sup>78</sup> Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. ix.

<sup>79</sup> Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. x.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>81</sup> Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah, *Gerakan Islam Tradisional di Malaysia*, p. 84.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74-75. Akhbar Anang was a former chairman of Darul Arqam who was suspension by Ashaari Muhammad from Darul Arqam in 1979. See Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. 182.

which organizes the matters of economy and income. The fourth department is Agriculture Department (*Syu'bah al-Zira'ah*), which deals with matters of an agricultural nature, such as (1) planting rice, vegetables, fruits, and (2) animal husbandry, such as raising fish, chickens, lambs, cows and so on.<sup>84</sup> The fifth was the Department of Information (*Syu'bah I'lan*), which organizes the distribution of information within newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and so on. In July 1, 1977 it was given an official name namely Akhbar al-Arqam. Later on it was further developed and became a publishing company.<sup>85</sup> The sixth department was Department of Health (*Syu'bah Perubatan/Klinik*), which was concerned with matters of health, not only for the members of Darul Arqam, but also for others. This department was based in Minang, Bombak, Batu Cares.<sup>86</sup> Founded in June 18, 1978, it was first chaired by Nordin Ahmad.<sup>87</sup> The Finance Department (*Syu'bah Mal/Biro Keuangan dan Perbendaharaan*), was another important department in Darul Arqam, which organizes and distributes the entire income of the community and the movement itself.<sup>88</sup> The last department to be founded in Darul Arqam is the Department of Mission (*Shu'bah Da'wah*), which also contains a small branch devoted to Foreign Affairs (*Syu'bah Luar Negeri*). This department organizes the movement' missionary work both in Malaysia and abroad.<sup>89</sup>

Besides all these departments Arqam has another unit, known as the Women Unit (*Unit Muslimat*), which organizes all sorts of activities for women.<sup>90</sup>

With respect to its income, Arqam has a number of sources: (a) a small amount (5 – 10 %) comes from the salaries of its members; (b) income from the manufacturing of their own production, such as the sale of soap, oil and so on; (c) income from their own mini supermarket.<sup>91</sup> Arqam also has a consortium, called the Al-Arqam Group Companies (AGC), which operates in 16 countries.<sup>92</sup> Those who do not work outside Arqam usually work for Arqam.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah, *Gerakan Islam Tradisional di Malaysia*, p. 91.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90-91.

<sup>92</sup> Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. 67.

<sup>93</sup> Ustaz Mohd. Roshdi Yusof, *Bahaya Arqam*, p. 6.

Women also have their own company, "Solehah Enterprise", organized and run by women, which operates in many areas of trade, such as fruit, tailoring (20 tailors), bread factories (15 units), flower shops (5 units), packing (10 units), and hair salon (2 units). Around 50% of the female portion of Arqam work in this company.<sup>94</sup>

Besides these main sources of income, Arqam always motivates its members to donate their property as *wakaf*. To stress the importance of donations, it is stated, even, that the only way to prove one's obedience to Arqam, is by donating property.<sup>95</sup> In some cases, according to one source, a donation of property is just another way for Arqam to keep somebody within Arqam.<sup>96</sup>

As far as the hierarchy of organization is concerned, Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad is the leader of Darul Arqam (*Syeikh al-Arqam*), who is assisted by a number of officials, such as the Vice Chairman (*Naib Syeikh al-Arqam*). The chairman also has a number of "Muda'id". In addition to these chairmen, there are a number of departments, called "Syu'bah", each chaired by a "mudir". A number of "Musa'ids" help a *mudir*. In every branch there are a number of "Perkampungan" (a location where a number of members of Arqam live) of Darul Arqam, that each of which is chaired by a *Mudir*. Each "Perkampungan" has as many departments as the central administration.<sup>97</sup>

## D. Practice of Polygyny

### 1. Requirements and Purposes of Polygyny

Before discussing the requirements of polygyny it is important to make it clear who a man should consider into polygyny. According to the practice of Darul Arqam, there are two principle ways in which polygyny may be proposed to a couple. The first is for either the husband or the wife to suggest this arrangement. While it may seem strange for a wife to make such a proposal. The Darul Arqam insists that the best present a wife can make to her husband is her permission to him to take another wife.<sup>98</sup> In fact, if she make this special present to her husband, it is believed that she will get a

<sup>94</sup> Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. 69.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 295.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 286. This case happened to Ninda's husband.

<sup>97</sup> Abdul Rahman Haji Abdullah, *Gerakan Islam Tradisional di Malaysia*, p. 100-101.

<sup>98</sup> Nur S. Biedyn Beseri, *Kahwin Cara Arqam* (Selangor: Trans Media Publikashions, (1992), p. 70-72.

special present in the hereafter.<sup>99</sup>

Another is for the organization itself to propose polygyny, which is originally and officially proposed by the Department of Benefit (*Su'bah Ijtim'iyah*). The reason for such a proposal is usually that some missions (*dakwah*) needs to undertaken by a husband. There are three main reasons for this in turn. First of all, a husband has many different responsibilities in the organization. Therefore, the function of a co-wife is to help him to accomplish these tasks. Secondly, in the course of his work a husband often has to move from one place to another. The function of a co-wife in this circumstance is to accompany him to all these different places and assist him in general serve. The third and related reason is that a co-wife can relieve then the first wife of the burden of travel so that she can organize everything at home, including looking after children, cleaning house, and so on.<sup>100</sup> These three reasons are all designed to help a husband pursue his *dakwah* responsibility more effectively.

In order to engage in polygyny there are a number of requirements that have to be fulfilled. First of all, there is the agreement of a committee (*shura*) within the Darul Arqam organization that has to be secured. The members of this committee consist of all chairmen of departments (*ketua jabatan-jabatan*) of the movement.<sup>101</sup> Even though a formal agreement has to be reached, if in fact the *Shu'bah Ijtima'iyah* is behind the suggestion in the first place, then the *shura* almost inevitable approves the request.

A second requirement is a husband is able to do justice among his wives,<sup>102</sup> which includes justice of maintenance and sexual right. The meaning of justice in maintenance is that a husband should have the ability to fulfill the needs of his wives in accordance with their expectation.<sup>103</sup> This so because a wife who originally comes from rich family does not have the same need as a wife who originally comes from a poor family. For example, if a wife who originally comes from a rich family, is used to eating fish and meat, whereas a wife who originally comes from a poor family, is used to eating vegetables only, consequently, a husband has to provide fish and meat for the former but not for the latter.

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<sup>99</sup>The special present will get in here after, for example is a gold umbrella.

<sup>100</sup>Nur S. Biedyn Beseri, *Kahwin Cara Arqam*, p. 65-66.

<sup>101</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 91.

The meaning of sexual justice, on the other hand, is that all wives have in principle the same rights and are entitled to spend equal length of time with the husband, without any distinction being made between younger and the older wives. Nevertheless, even though a husband is officially forbidden to stay longer in the company a certain wife, in practice the wives usually accept this matter.<sup>104</sup>

Interestingly, and this is extremely different from the view of the majority of scholars, Arqam believed that in order for somebody to understand how to do justice among wives in polygyny, he must first have more than one wife.<sup>105</sup> To put it in a different way, a husband has to have more than one wife in order for him to understand whether or not as a husband has the ability to do justice among his wives.

In addition to these major requirements, there are a few secondary requirements in order for a family to achieve the goals of marriage and polygyny. Some of these have to be fulfilled by a husband, others by the wives. The first requirement is that a husband, must love his first wife (the older one) more than the others, the second more than the third, and so on accordingly. Secondly, a husband has to help his older wife more than he did before he married the other wives. Thirdly, a husband must not refer to his first wife as first wife, but rather make no distinction between them in term of name.<sup>106</sup> The main goal of these requirements, therefore, is to keep in love to all one's wives regardless of beauty, age and such.

The first requirement of the wives is for a younger wife to always give more a chance to the older wife to be with their husband. Second, the younger wife must not hope to receive better treatment than the other wives. In addition, a younger wife always has to maintain a good relation with the older wives.<sup>107</sup> Put differently, to be a good team, all wives should work together without much expectation from the others.

The practical polygyny has institutional purpose, within Darul Arqam as well, which may be enumerated as being at least six in all. The first purpose is enlargement of the membership of the Darul Arqam Movement (mis-

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<sup>104</sup> Nur S. Biedyn Beseri, *Kahwin Cara Arqam*, p. 93. Or probably it is more reasonable to say Wives force to accept the condition by the Arqam teaching.

<sup>105</sup> See Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. 227; Abdul Halim Al-Muhammady, *Penyelewengan Al-Arqam*, p. 134.

<sup>106</sup> Nur S. Biedyn Beseri, *Kahwin Cara Arqam*, p. 102-103.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103-105.

sionary work internal to Darul Arqam). It has been stated by a few former members of Arqam, that Arqam uses polygyny to persuade people, particularly, the rich and those in high positions, to become members of Arqam.<sup>108</sup> Second of its purpose is to enlarge the number of the followers of Prophet Muhammad (mission to the *ummah* in general).<sup>109</sup> Thirdly, polygyny is a solution to a situation where there are more women in society compared to men. By polygyny, thus, a woman makes a sacrifice for the benefit of her species. To prove the necessity of making sacrifice for the benefit of women species in particular, Khadijah Amm<sup>110</sup> cited the saying, "the best among you is the one who benefits the other" (*khaira al-nas man yanfa'u al-nas*).<sup>111</sup> The fourth purpose seems to follow from the third purpose, i.e., to give an opportunity to other women to have a husband. Another purpose is to make up for the inability of one wife to serve her husband because of a disability of some sort, such as in fulfilling his sexual needs, whether in time of sickness or menstruation.<sup>112</sup> The last purpose is to prove one's love for a husband, by making him a present of one's agreement to polygyny.<sup>113</sup> How important the last purpose is Ashaari has emphasized in several places and at different time.

In order to achieve the first two purposes, Arqam regard the age of 25 years as the best time for woman to marry, because this age is also the best time for women to have as many babies as possible. While for those who are already 40 years old it is very hard to have baby.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>108</sup>This report based on an experience of Ninda (not real name) who was involved in Arqam for 7 years. When she first became a member, chairman asked her and some of her friends (ten of them) to persuade rich and good position Muslim to be a member of Arqam. She refused to do so with a certain reason, but the rest of her friends did. Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. 281; Amirullah Mohamed, *Antara Halal dan Haram*, p. 115

<sup>109</sup>Nur S. Biedyn Beseri, *Kahwin Cara Arqam*, p. 25; Ustaz Yusuf Din, *Politik Dakwah* (Kuala Lumpur: ASOIB, 1992), in which Ashaari explains the way of doing mission (dakwah).

<sup>110</sup>Khadijah Amm is one of Ashaari's wives.

<sup>111</sup>Ustazah Khadijah Amm, *Manisnya Madu*. Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Syeikhul Arqam, 1990, p. 34, 51.

<sup>112</sup>Nur S. Biedyn Beseri, *Kahwin Cara Arqam*, p. 158; Khadijah Amm, *Manisnya Madu*, p. 12.

<sup>113</sup>Nur S. Biedyn Beseri, *Kahwin Cara Arqam*, p. 140.

<sup>114</sup>Nur S. Biedyn Beseri, *Kahwin Cara Arqam*, p. 21.

## 2. Polygamy in Practice

In dealing with the practice of polygyny among the followers of Darul Arqam, there are two important points to discuss. First of all, how a polygynous family actually functions, and the second, the reason can the followers of Darul Arqam.

As for how polygyny family works within Darul Arqam, this involves basically three arrangements, or combination of these three. The first is that all wives live together in one house.<sup>115</sup> The second is that some wives live at home while one of them goes with the husband on his mission work (*dakwah*). The last way is for all the wives to live in separate places in accordance with the husband's responsibilities.

For wives who live together in the same house, they usually organize and divide the duties in accordance with their number, their education and their abilities. If a husband, for example has four wives, and one of them is a professional, then she goes out to a job to earn money. Another wife who is probably more comfortable with taking care of the kitchen and house, will do so. Another who enjoys looking after their children, will be assigned this task, while the last wife take care of the needs of the husband, such as cleaning and ironing his clothes, providing food and so on. It is also possible that one of them will involve herself in missionary work. While the husband concentrate on his job, whether full-time mission work or partly remunerative work and partly *dakwah* activity. Thus, each wife works according to her skill, position and need in the family, and they all, therefore, work together as a group to fulfill the needs of the whole of family and enlarge the mission of the organization at the same time.

Polygyny is made possible in Darul Arqam, first of all, through support of distribution of the wealth of the organization. All the money raised from the salaries of members and the proceed from sales of their products, are collected by a committee, who then redistributes them to the whole community of Darul Arqam. The amount of money distributed to each family is based on the needs of each family not upon the salary accepted nor the position of the husband in the organization either. By this practice therefore, there is no reason for any family to be without any money to survive.

Another reason for the possibility of polygyny is a belief among fe-

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

male members of Arqam, who are educated to believe that polygyny is (1) a form of struggle (jihad) that has to be faced by women, (2) a test of a true follower of Muhammad (*mu'minah*), (3) a chance to have a special reward in the hereafter. A woman who is faced with the prospect of her husband taking a co-wife is not always happy with the situation. If she accepts it is only due to the fact that she was taught to believe that a good believer (*mu'minah*) is one who is patient in the face of a test, which a co-wife most definitely is. This may be seen from the conversation between a second wife and the first wife whose husband wanted to marry a third wife: the second wife said, "I want to make a sacrifice as you did". Another example: "our owner is God, as is also abang Ahmad (their husband). God has already made a decision that abang Ahmad should marry another woman. Therefore we just be patient and thank God".<sup>116</sup> Therefore, they agreed to be co-wives out of a belief that they had to comply.

Such beliefs among female Arqam member regarding polygyny is a fruit of the teaching of the Syeikh of Darul Arqam, Ashaari Muhammad, who established a number of principles on marriage and polygyny. As a result, it is not surprising that a female of Arqam should prefer to choose a husband 42 years old with two wives with five children rather than a single man 26 years old to be a husband.<sup>117</sup>

In addition, the teaching of the Syeikh is absolute and unquestionable. At least in the eyes of the members of Arqam. Consequently, whatever Ashaari says is always accepted as a belief has to be followed, one of which is the teaching on polygyny.<sup>118</sup>

The first principle of polygyny set down by Ashaari Muhammad is that the happiness of a family in marriage depends on a wife's being ready to obey her husband, and her husband's being able to educate his wife/wives to always obey God.<sup>119</sup> Therefore, whatever they do is principally to obey God. By so doing they believe they will get a special reward in the hereafter.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116-117.

<sup>118</sup> Mohd. Roshdi Yusoff, *40 Persoalan Arqam*, p. xviii, 280. The Syeikh doctrine/lectures people to be always obey him, otherwise somebody will be in danger. Therefore, this is one reason why some members of Arqam do not leave Arqam even though they actually want to. Interestingly, in some cases it happened that those who leave Arqam fall in sick, as in the case of Khalid Jaafar. *Penyelewangan*, 102.

<sup>119</sup> Nur S. Biedyn Beseri, *Kahwin Cara Arqam*, p. 33

Secondly, polygyny is a tradition observed by righteous men (orang-orang shaleh).<sup>120</sup> To prove this view, Ashaari Muhammad stated that the prophet, the sahabat, the sufi-sufi, and teachers, and others all practice polygyny.<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, according to Ashaari Muhammad, the Prophet Muhammad had more than eleven wives, as it is widely believed. According to Ashaari Muhammad, the Prophet Muhammad has thirty-six or thirty-seven wives, yet they were not all with the Prophet at the same time, since the prophet divorced them one by one for different reasons. Among the sahabat Ashaari Muhammad cites Hassan ibn 'Ali, who according to him, had two hundred wives. From sufi Ashaari also noted the case of Syaikh Abdul Kadir Jailani who had four wives.<sup>122</sup>

Thirdly, polygyny is a test for women allowing them achieve to the highest and the greatest position (*ganjaran paling besar*) in the hereafter.<sup>123</sup> Ashaari Muhammad insists that a wife who is able to obey her husband and accept another wife in the household will have a special present in the hereafter, that is, a gold umbrella. Therefore, even though a co-wife is a trial for a wife she will be able to endure it because of hope for that special present.<sup>124</sup> Therefore, the women of Arqam always insists on how important it is always obey one's husband, or even to be a servant to one's husband.<sup>125</sup>

The reason why a wife has to be tested through polygyny, according to Ashaari Muhammad, is that a husband too is tested by many different situations, such as work outside of home, as a leader in society, as a leader in certain organizations and so on, while a wife only stays at home. Therefore, a wife has to be tested through polygyny in order to see whether a wife is patient enough to face such a challenge. In other words, polygyny is a test to see if a wife is patient enough to obey God.<sup>126</sup> By co-wife is the same as who

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64. In addition, Kasimin cites two groups of earlier practice of polygyny in Malaysia were (1) traders from India, Gujarat, Persi and Middle East for mission, and (2). Qur'anic teachers and Boarding Schools who are respected normally due to their knowledge in religion, particularly in Kelantan, Terengganu dan Kedah. See Amran Kasimin, *Konflik Poligami di Malaysia* (Petaling Jaya: Karya Publishing House, 1978), p. 78-80

<sup>122</sup> Nur S. Biedyn Beseri, *Kahwin Cara Arqam*, p. 139; Amirullah Mohamed, *Antara Halal dan Haram*, p. 103.

<sup>123</sup> Nur S. Biedyn Beseri, *Kahwin Cara Arqam*, p. 69.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>125</sup> See in Amal and al-Nasihah, in rubric Rahasia Suami-Isteri.

<sup>126</sup> Nur S. Biedyn Beseri, *Kahwin Cara Arqam*, p. 140-141.

succeeded in controlling a passions, and to succeed in controlling one's passions is the biggest struggle in Islam.<sup>127</sup> Even Ashaari Muhammad claims that it is not fair if a wife does not permit her husband to practice polygyny, since a husband has already fulfilled her needs.<sup>128</sup> This last principle is in contrast to Ashaari's explanation elsewhere, that some wives should work to make money. They do not stay at home. Some even fulfill the needs of family, while the husband only undertaken mission work.

In addition, the failure of polygyny practically, according to Arqam, is not due to the concept itself as stated in the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet, but it is rather due to people who practice it without understanding the concept properly. Therefore, polygyny, according to Arqam, is more of a problem-solver than a problem-creator. Consequently, the government should not prohibit polygyny, cited Khadijah.<sup>129</sup>

The way to teach women to be always obey the teaching of Arqam within syeikh and chairmen of Arqam is by "brain wash".<sup>130</sup>

## E. Conclusion

To conclude, the ideas of Ashaari Muhammad developed over time, until he had acquired a formidable reputation in his movement as the source of absolute truth. Only a few have doubted his teaching, and these have for the most part left Arqam, although some remain in it for economic and security reason. These latter have become economically dependent on organization after leaving jobs, or donating property to Arqam on joining. Many also believe that if they leave the movement they will fall sick, and there are cases of this happening. Therefore, they are afraid to take a chance.

What people see of Arqam from outside may be different from what happening inside. The fact is that what we know is based on the experience of those who have left Arqam.

As for polygyny, in Arqam woman always accept whatever mistakes

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<sup>127</sup>Khadijah cited a few verses of al-Qur'an to show the necessity of controlling a passions. She cited for example al-Taubah (9):38-39. Khadijah Amm, *Manisnya Madu*, p. 40-41.

<sup>128</sup>Nur S. Biedyn Beseri, *Kahwin Cara Arqam*, p. 156.

<sup>129</sup>Khadijah Amm, *Manisnya Madu*, p. 132-133.

<sup>130</sup>Amirullah Mohamed, *Antara Halal dan Haram*, p. 76, 115. Interestingly enough, the questions in this ceremony are not really related to Islamic teaching, such as asked to woman if she get if she does intercourse.

are made by a husband, and try to put things right. A relationship between a wife and a husband in family is considered always to be for benefit of a husband. A wife is always asked to be patient in whatever circumstances and to await the reward of God in the hereafter. By contrast, a husband is never asked to be patient as to make a sacrifice for the same reason. Interestingly, or perhaps ironically, the women always accept this teaching. The acceptance of the theory of Arqam on polygyny is probably due to the failure of other Islamic movements available to provide an example of practical Muslim life. Arqam has come to fulfill this role.

In addition, even though some Arqam women are graduates from university, very rarely do they look at Arqam's theory on polygyny analytically and critically as Ninda did. One reason for this situation is probably due to their lack of understanding of Islamic teachings. They know a great deal in their own field but not much about Islam. As a result, they simply accept the absolute teachings of Ashaari without knowing enough to compare to the other sources.

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