

## **SHIAZM IN INDONESIA**

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It is a common belief that the followers of Shia Islam are only to be found in India, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq and Lebanon. But it has been discovered recently that a sizeable number of Shias are to be found in almost every country of the world. Hereunder a translation is reproduced of some parts of 'Al Shiato Fee Indonesia' by Mr. Mohamed Asad Shahab, a popular journalist in Indonesia.

The Shia history in Indonesia begins simultaneously with the advent of Islam and entry of Muslim missionaries into that country. It is thought by some historians that the entry of Islam into Indonesia took place during the early part of the fourth century. There is strong evidence to prove the fact.

The Abbasid era is one of the darkest periods of Islam during which the members of the holy house of the Prophet of Islam and their followers were tortured to the extreme and their survival was made impossible. Consequently in order to save their lives and to be able to live in peace and security, a great number of them were obliged to migrate from their home lands in Iraq to distant lands in the East. Among those who had rescued their lives away from the torture of the Abbasid rule were the sons of Ali Ibne Imam Jafar Sadiq a.s.

Accompanied by their family members and followers, a large number of them had migrated and they were all in all Shias. These people were obliged to do so in order to safeguard their lives and faith. Their leader was Ahmed s/o Issa s/o Mohamed s/o Ali s/o Imam Jaffer Sadiq a.s. Because of his famous migration, he became popularly known as AL MUHAJIR. He was a fully believing and practising Shia Muslim. His migration and settlement in Indonesia is mentioned by an Indonesian historian Al Seyyid Mohamed Ziya Shahab. Seyyid Ahmed s/o Issa Al Muhajir had originally migrated from Baghdad during 313 HIJRA and had settled down in the South of Indonesia. He was, thereafter, followed for several years by a large number of other Shia emigrants from their homelands coming out to settle down in that part of the world.

When Seyyid Ahmed s/o Issa Al Muhajir had settled down in the southern part of Indonesia, that area was dominated by followers of the Abaziyya-Kharijite sect of Islam. At first, he and his followers had to face considerable hardships in the course of propagation of the true Islamic faith, but they were so courageous and determined that they ultimately succeeded in their mission with the help of convincing arguments of the true Islamic knowledge.

The pure Islamic light gradually began to shine over the darkness of ignorance in the area. The zeal for propagation of true Islam of these people did not end there but they sent out groups of missionaries to the nearby and far away regions to spread the gospel of truth. While on the way to India, some had settled down in Malaysia, Philippines and the Solomon Islands in the Pacific. All in all were Shias and descendants of Ali s/o Imam Sadiq a.s. Wherever they had settled down, the people of those places welcomed them

with much respect. These people had also mingled closely with the local inhabitants. Many of them had married the daughters of the rulers and elders of those places to the extent that some of them had enjoyed high posts in their governments. Notwithstanding the high positions attained by them, they did not refrain from their duties towards Islamic propagation. Consequently their efforts resulted in the quick spread and conversion to Islam in great numbers.

From the foregoing, it is evident that the first Muslim settlers in Indonesia were the Shias. This is very true as it is proved from the signs and the plaques on the graves of the early Shia Muslims who had come to Indonesia during the fourth century. Besides several centuries have passed since then, yet the Shia customs and traditions are still to be found in several districts and cities of Indonesia today, despite the fact that the stringent rule for 350 years of the Dutch, the Shias in that country had lost touch with the outside Shias.

The month of Muharram due to the tragic tragedy of Kerbala is of particular significance. In the eyes of Indonesia Muslims, this month is given much importance and respect even today. On the 10th of Muharram in the island of Sumatra, the local Muslims take out a procession and carry out taboots and replicas of Kerbala. But in the island of Java, there are special customs being observed on this day.

In most Muslim houses, two kinds of dishes are cooked, one of white and the other of red colour. These are served to young children who are invited to the ceremony. This creates an atmosphere of deep mourning and the episode of the starving and thirsty children at Kerballa is brought to memory. The meal of red colour denotes the blood of the martyrs of Karbala and the white colour dish denotes their spirit of steadfastness and sacrifice.

To most Muslim Indonesians, the months of Muharram and Safar command special reverence. They do not celebrate any function of joy nor perform any marriage. They firmly believe that marriages performed during those months are doomed to failure and unhappiness. In some places, people name this period as months of Hassan & Husein.