



## In Search of True Religiousity: The Conversion Experience of Two Jemaat Ahmadiyah

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### **Abstract**

In the Indonesian context, religious conversion is a complex and sensitive phenomenon. It is called complex because it is not only related to the cognitive aspects of the converters but also the emotional side. Meanwhile, it is sensitive because religious conversion certainly has a tremendous impact on the personal life of the doer. This paper focuses on how the conversion process occurs in Ahmadiyah followers in Cirebon West Java Indonesia. The method used is in-depth interviews where each informant is given the widest possible opportunity to explain their conversion process to become followers of Ahmadiyah. This study of religious conversion is interesting to examine considering that studies on religious conversion, especially in the context of minority religious groups, are still rarely carried out in the context of Islamic studies in Indonesia, which is actually plural.

**Keywords:** *Ahmadiyah; Conversion; Religious; Experience*

### **Introduction**

Etymologically, conversion can be defined as the movement of an individual or community from one belief to another with a close bond to carry out everything related to that belief. The word conversion itself comes from the word *conversio* which means repentance, moving, or changing beliefs. Religious conversion is a process of changing beliefs that are contrary to the beliefs that were originally held (Woods, 2012; Zinnbauer & Pargament, 1998).

Referring to the existing studies, religious conversion is often carried out under two conditions, namely voluntary and or forced. Gereon (2019) notes several forms or types of conversion. First, conversion in one of religious sphere to another, such as from Christianity to Islam or vice versa. Second, conversion within the same religious sphere. This second type is often identified with the concept of increasing piety or finding the true truth of the teachings that have been adhered to so far. The concept of “revivalism” which means rebirth is also often associated with this second type of conversion. Another concept that is also in line with the second type of conversion is the concept of “hijrah” which has recently become prevalent in Indonesia.

Apart from the two types of conversion above, there are pragmatic conversion types. This third type of religious conversion is more related to pragmatic interests, such as the interests of improving economic conditions or political interests. Essentially, this does not matter because the choice of religion or belief is part of the personal choice of each individual. Regarding this matter, religious conversion carried out on personal desires is a representation of religious freedom which is part of human rights, regardless of any underlying reasons (Budiawan, 2020).

Looking at the various types of conversions above, it can be stated that the conversion process is very complex which can be different between each individual who does it. Factors of extraordinary experience that were the driving factors for the religious conversion process. This extraordinary experience called a transformative experience (De Cruz, 2018). Regarding this transformative experience, (Paul, 2014) further stated that it is something personal, unique and often difficult to understand rationally, such as whispers or dreams. Human volition in relation to external objects gives rise to religious experience (Widigdo, 2020). Research by Abdullah (2019) shows that dreams are a strong reason for someone to then convert.

Regarding the process of religious conversion, (Darajat, 1996) explained several stages that a person goes through when converting, can be seen in table 1.

Table 1: Process of Religious Conversion

No.	Stage	Process
1	The first quiet period that occurs before conversion	a person is usually overwhelmed by an attitude of indifference to basic issues, including those of religion.
2	The period of restlessness	a person experiences mental turmoil for one thing. At this time, he becomes quick to get offended by something, but at the same time is more easily suggestible.
3	The conversion point period occurs	the soul's uneasiness peaks and finds something that is felt to have saved his soul and is believed to be God's guidance. At this time, all problems seem to disappear and the soul is filled with calm
4	The period of calm and serenity that occurs after conversion	At this time the soul feels calm and at ease because it feels that it has received essential guidance. Relief, detachment from suspicion and anger dominates the soul at this time.
5	The final stage occurs	the person performing the conversion feels comfortable carrying out the newly believed religious ritual. It was during this time that various changeful and solely because of the desire of each conversion to be able to deepen a new belief.

The description of the conversion process above is very interesting to study further, especially in relation to new meanings in individual change which of course have social implications in society. At the stage of its implementation, conversion has an important social meaning to be further examined. In this case, the social meaning contained in the term conversion is a pattern of changes in representation at the social level caused by the shift in belief.

Research conducted by Stronge et al. (2021) on religion and the development of individual character from before to after conversion deserves to be discussed. This study describes how the conversion process affects changes in a person's character. This research was conducted by taking a sample of conversions in the Christian community in New Zealand. This study found that when a person converts, there is a change in character and behavior in which the individual becomes more humble, honest, and polite in accordance with personality ethics in Christian spiritual values.

From the explanation above, it seems that it can be stated that the process of religious conversion is quite complex and unique because each individual may have different experiences, contexts and

reasons. There are many interesting things to be studied further about this religious conversion. This is where the importance of comprehensive research needs to be done in order to reveal how the process of religious conversion took place and what the factors behind it are.

## **Methods**

The method used is in-depth interviews where each informant is given the widest possible opportunity to explain their conversion process to become followers of Ahmadiyah, Cirebon, West Java, Indonesia. In qualitative research, one of the most common data collection methods is in-depth or unstructured interviews. In-depth interviews are frequently referred to as form conversations (Legard et al., 2003).

This research takes the example of conversions carried out by Ahmadiyah followers where they previously embraced Islam, which in their language is a teaching that has been passed down from generation to generation from their parents. This research becomes even more interesting if you look at the status of the Ahmadiyah group, which is a minority group as well as a group that has received many attacks from Muslim majority groups in Indonesia, even in several other Muslim countries.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Ahmadiyah at a Glance**

Ahmadiyah is a religious movement that was first introduced by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908) in the Qadian area, Punjab, India (Ryad, 2016). Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was a preacher who came from a noble family in the Mughal dynasty. Orthodox Sunni Muslims view Ahmadiyah as a heretical sect because some of its main teachings, such as the concept of Al-Mahdi and Khatamun Nabiyyin, are seen as contrary to the beliefs of the majority of Muslims.

Although from the beginning it experienced various rejections, Ahmadiyya as a religious group has succeeded in expanding its influence. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was the founder and preacher of Ahmadiyah until his death in 1908. Hakim Nuruddin then took over the leadership of the Ahmadiyya Community until 1914. After the death of this second leader, the Ahmadiyya Jama'at experienced an internal crisis which led to the split of this group into two groups. The first group is the Ahmadiyah congregation which is based in its native Qadian and the second is based in Lahore which is now part of Pakistan. This split was motivated by their views on the status and position of the founder of this group, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. The first group believes that he is a Prophet sent by Allah SWT, while the second group refuses to place Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as a prophet, preferring to place him as a reformer or a mujaddid.

In Indonesia, the Ahmadiyya in Lahore is the first group to be introduced. Two preachers, Maulana Ahmad and Wali Ahmad Baiq, arrived in Yogyakarta in 1924 and introduced Ahmadiyah teachings to Muhammadiyah members. Meanwhile, Ahmadiyah Qadian was introduced one year later (1925) by its preacher named Maulana Rahmat Ali. Unlike the first group, which was introduced directly on the island of Java, this second group first stopped in the Tapaktuan area, Sumatra, before spreading further on the island of Java.

It should be noted that in the early days of its existence, the Indonesian people were not very familiar with the differences between these two Ahmadiyah groups. As a result, it is not uncommon to talk about Ahmadiyya at this time not too focused on which groups are developing and rather see Ahmadiyah as a single entity. This is why the earlier discussions of its presence tend to be combined.

Back to the history of the presence of Ahmadiyah in Indonesia. Over time, the Ahmadiyya Jamaat grew and expanded its influence in the Dutch East Indies region (its official name before Indonesia's independence in 1945) and continued until post-independence Indonesia. One of the main figures of Islam in the pre-independence era, Haji Omar Said (HOS) Tjokroaminoto is believed to have been influenced by Ahmadiyah teachings. This can be seen from his monumental work entitled *Islam and Socialism*. Other evidence of this influence can be seen from the efforts of HOS Tjokroaminoto to translate Maulana Muhammad Ali's *Tafsir Book*, the president of Ahmadiyah Lahore, into Malay. As a result, Tjokroaminoto came under attack from Muhammadiyah who thought that the main leader of the Sarekat Islam had moved out of true religious understanding. Not only Muhammadiyah, other Islamic groups also carried out the same attack against Tjokroaminoto. These attacks culminated in the SI Congress in Yogyakarta in 1928. This could also be a factor in the breakup of Sarekat Islam before changing its name to the Indonesian Sarekat Islam Party (PSII). It can be said that since the emergence of Ahmadiyah, it has caused controversy among Muslims.

After independence, Ahmadiyah has experienced ups and downs from the Old Order, the New Order to the Reform Order. The diversity of responses of Muslims and government policies to the existence and position of Ahmadiyah are the main factors in the ebb and flow of the development of the Ahmadiyah congregation in Indonesia. The climax occurred during the Reformation Order when the faucet of openness of expression was widely opened. This era of openness is like a double-edged knife for the existence of the Ahmadiyah congregation. On the one hand, the existence of this group seems to get a breath of fresh air because it is guaranteed by regulations that apply as part of freedom of expression, including in the realm of belief and choice of religion. On the other hand, this era also provided ample space for anti-Ahmadiyah groups to carry out attacks not only at the teaching level, but physically repressive actions against some Ahmadiyah followers. Some of these repressive actions can be noted here, including the Monas tragedy on June 1, 2008, the attack on the Ahmadiyah congregation in Cikeusik, Banten on February 6, 2011 which killed 3 followers and others. In short, the escalation of physical attacks against Ahmadiyah followers actually occurred after the 1998 reformation. However, Ahmadiyah as a religious group still exists in Indonesia with the number of followers that continues to increase both in number and in area coverage.

As one of the most popular as well as controversial religious groups in Indonesia, many studies on Ahmadiyah have been carried out in the form of books, dissertations, research reports and journal articles. (Zulkarnain, 2005) can be said to be the most comprehensive work discussing the history of the Ahmadiyah movement in Indonesia. Apart from its historical aspects, this book discusses the characteristics of Ahmadiyah in Indonesia, the main figures for its spread, the area of distribution and the factors that support and inhibit it. Another work worth mentioning about Ahmadiyah is the writing of (Burhani, 2014) entitled *The Ahmadiyah and The Study of Comparative Religion in Indonesia: Controversies and Influences*. This article, which is one of the titles of a book entitled *Islam and Christian-Muslim relations*, discusses the development of the Ahmadiyah movement compared to other religions in Indonesia.

Another article about Ahmadiyah is Muhammad Asad's work entitled *Ahmadiyah and the Freedom of Religion in Indonesia*. Journal articles discuss religious freedom for the Indonesian Ahmadiyya Jamaat (JAI) and how the majority of Muslims respond to the existence of JAI, especially in the case of attacks on JAI carried out by the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) and the Islamic Research and Study Institute (LPPI) in Bogor, Java. West and MUI's response to this case. In line with Asad's work is Jeremy Menchik's writing entitled *Productive Intolerance: Godly Nationalism in Indonesia*. He traced the historical track record of the pressures that Ahmadiyah has experienced as a minority group from the majority group, both in the context of organization and state life including fatwas from several major Islamic religious organizations such as Persis (Islamic Union), Muhammadiyah, and NU (Nadhlatul. Cleric). Menchik also specifically how the government responds from time to time to the pressure received by the Ahmadiyah group in relation to policies on religious pluralism in the context of a state (As'ad, 2009).

Another article that is in line with the two writings above is Erni Budiwanti's work entitled *Pluralism Collapse: A Study of Jama'ah Ahmadiyah Indonesia (JAI) and Its Persecution*. From the start, the title of this article is provocative in tone. It is not surprising that this article, apart from discussing some of the main teachings of Ahmadiyah, will emphasize the stigma that Ahmadiyah followers accept and face, especially the labeling as deviant and deviating from Islam which is actually issued by the most influential Islamic community institution is the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) through its fatwas. These fatwas are a source of inspiration for conservative Islamic groups to carry out various kinds of persecution against Ahmadiyah and their followers (Budiwanti, 2009).

With regard to the five studies above, this study tries to take a position to complement these studies by then providing an overview of how the context of the Jemaat Ahmadiyah is in a more local scope, namely the Jemaat Ahmadiyah in Cirebon area. In addition, this study intends to reveal how the conversion process took place among the Ahmadiyah congregation before they finally embraced Ahmadiyah teachings. This study is based entirely on the experience of two converts as a case study. It seems that this model study has not been carried out much in studies relating to minority groups in Indonesia. Thus, this study is expected to generate other similar studies that revolve around religious conversion, especially those related to minority beliefs in the context of society in Indonesia or in other areas where the issue of religious majority and minority relations is a problem that must be resolved.

### **Ahmadiyah in the Land of the Wali Town: The Dynamics of the Ahmadiyah Congregation in Cirebon**

Today, Cirebon is one of the important centers of the Ahmadiyah movement in Indonesia. One of the most interesting things about Ahmadiyah members living in Cirebon is that almost all, if not all, are diaspora people who come and live in Cirebon. They come from various areas outside Cirebon, including from Tasikmalaya and the Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang and Bekasi (JABODETABEK) areas.

Historically, Ahmadiyah in the Cirebon area initially developed through nomadic Ahmadi traders who came from Manis Lor, a place located in the Kuningan district. In the study of the history of Ahmadiyah in Indonesia, Manis Lor village occupies a special position related to the mass conversion of its citizens under the leadership of Kuwu Bening to become followers of Ahmadiyah in the early 1950s. Seeing that year, Manis Lor can be said to be the earliest region that became part of Ahmadiyah in the ex-residency area of Cirebon and its surroundings. This mass conversion also made Ahmadiyah as the majority religious group in the village where more than 70% of the people are Ahmadiyah followers.

Manis Lor since before independence was known as one of the areas of origin for traders in several major markets in Cirebon, especially Jagasatru Market. Most of them are known as vegetable traders. This cannot be separated from the fact that Kuningan is a source of vegetable agricultural production both in the Kuningan area itself and in other areas around it such as Cirebon, Indramayu and Majalengka. Even though they have been trading in Cirebon for a long time, most, if not entirely, still maintain the nomadic tradition from which they go back and forth to Manis Lor to Cirebon. Very few of them decide to live permanently in Cirebon. This in itself is due to their status as not only traders, but also owners of agricultural land in Manis Lor. Therefore, they still have to monitor the development of their fields so that when they enter the harvest the results are sold to the main markets in the Cirebon area.

The situation changed slightly after the mass conversion to Ahmadiyya mentioned above. The Ahmadiyah preacher named kiyai Basari who comes from Garut and is the first Ahmadiyah missionary in the Cirebon area as well as the main teacher of Kuwu Bening advised the traders from Manis Lor to stay permanently in Cirebon. It seems that apart from economic considerations, the suggestion is aimed at spreading Ahmadiyya influence in the Cirebon area. This means that with their permanent presence, the Ahmadiyah congregation has real followers who live in the city of Cirebon. On the other hand, this activity is carried out to form an initial community which is expected to have a role in establishing a special place of worship for Ahmadiyah followers in Cirebon to carry out various religious rituals as well as the center of the Ahmadiyah movement. This suggestion received a good response when many

Ahmadiyah Manis Lor traders decided to stay permanently in Cirebon. At the very beginning, there were at least 10 families who decided to live in the city of Cirebon. The area in Cirebon that was chosen to be the basis for the Ahmadiyah movement, of course, is not far from the market location, namely the Langensari area.

Over time, the number of Ahmadiyah Manis Lor residents who chose to stay in Cirebon is increasing. This certainly encourages Kiyai Basari to continue to provide direct coaching. To facilitate the growing variety of religious activities, Ahmadiyah members worked together to build an Ahmadi religious activity center in 1952. Ahmadiyah members then took the initiative and worked together to build a simple place of worship that could accommodate the entire Ahmadiyya congregation, which was still very small. Even so, it can be said with certainty that the establishment of this mosque marked the establishment of a branch of the Ahmadiyya board in Cirebon.

The hope of having a center of activity that is both representative and modern in fact does not always go hand in hand with an increase in religious activity as originally expected. This cannot be separated from the many residents. The fact that there are still many Ahmadiyah members at the beginning due to one reason or another they often go back and forth at least once a week, Manis Lor-Cirebon or vice versa, causes Ahmadiyah community to become stuck and unable to develop properly. Furthermore, the mosque they built was no longer able to function properly because it was eventually taken over by other Muslim residents who lived in the area. As a result, Ahmadi residents, whose numbers are still very minimal, are forced to hold nomadic religious activity from house to house. This cannot be separated from one of their religious doctrines which is prohibited from congregating with non-Ahmadis. In short, in the first decade of its existence in the Cirebon area, the presence of Ahmadiyah members in the city of wali was not much visible and the number was insignificant.

The situation changed a little when the Ahmadiyah preacher, Kiyai Basari, managed to convince a number of thugs at the Cirebon Central Terminal to pledge allegiance to Ahmadiyah. This unique development actually played a major role in strengthening the Ahmadiyya position as a socio-religious movement that developed in the city of Cirebon at least until the early 1960s. Their support has succeeded in reviving Ahmadiyah religious activities, although they are still nomadic by moving from one house to another.

On the other hand, quantitatively the development of the Ahmadiyya religious movement grew stronger when many Ahmadiyah members from other regions came to Cirebon in the first half of the 1960s. Most of them migrated to Cirebon because of official duties such as becoming prosecutors or others. It could be said that the majority of the newcomers were a more educated group. The increasing number of Ahmadiyah members in the city of Cirebon has revived the spirit to have a more permanent center for the Ahmadiyah movement. After going through several long processes, they finally got a small piece of land. This land was originally a garden before the mosque was gradually built, the construction of which was only completed in 1985. This mosque was named Mubarak. This is the first and only Ahmadiyya Mosque in the city of Cirebon. Since then, various religious activities of Ahmadiyah members in Cirebon have been held in this mosque complex. Currently, the complex functions as the head office of the Cirebon branch of the Ahmadiyah board which includes Indramayu city, Cikbuilder, Ciledug and Cirebon city itself.

The Ahmadiyah religious activities have increased along with the change of leadership from muballigh Basari to muballigh Dudung. Under the new leadership, the program to improve facilities and infrastructure to support the religious activities of the Ahmadiyah congregation in the city of Cirebon continues to be developed, including the construction of special houses for preachers. Dudung himself comes from Manis Lor Kuningan and is one of the alumni from the early generation of the Ahmadiyya Jama'at preacher training held in Bandung. The position of Dudung was then replaced by Muballigh Ceppy, who is still on duty until now.

In contrast to what happened to Ahmadiyah congregations in several other areas, especially Manis Lor, Ciketing Bogor, Madura and even NTB, the Cirebon Ahmadiyah congregation is relatively safe from various pressures from other Islamic groups, although many Muslim groups, especially fundamentalist groups, are aware of the existence of Ahmadiyah congregation and its activity center. Interestingly, the position of the Mubarak Mosque is actually not far from other Muslim mosques, around 200 meters. However, this does not mean that there were no threats that had emerged. In 2005, for example, when there was a conflict between Ahmadiyah and non-Ahmadiyah members in Manis Lor, there was also information about an attack on the Ahmadiyah center in Cirebon. Fortunately, the information was only an issue and the threat never happened.

There are several factors why the religious activity center of the Ahmadiyya Jama'at in Cirebon is relatively safe, among others: First, historical factors. According to Yosep's explanation when the Ahmadiyah congregation started building this activity center, no housing had been built around the location. The condition of the location at that time was only uninhabited grasslands. This made the center of Ahmadiyya activities the earliest building built in the area. This has convinced the surrounding population to consider the existence of the mosque building ahead of their existence. The two residential residents who later stood around the location of the Ahmadiyah activity center did not come from the city of Cirebon, but came from various areas outside Cirebon. Cirebon's status as one of the most important trade contacts on the island of Java encouraged many residents from outside to migrate to Cirebon.

This condition has made Cirebon one of the most important and plural metropolitan cities. So, it is not surprising that the people of Cirebon city are accustomed to a tolerant attitude and accept existing differences, as long as these differences do not disturb them in carrying out their daily activities. This phenomenon is in fact different from the situation in Kuningan, Madura, or Lombok in the West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) region which tends to be homogeneous so that it is prone to persecution and intolerance activities. This then made their attentioneka (settlers around the center of Ahmadiyah religious activities) regarding issues related to religion are not very visible. They put more emphasis on the system of harmony between fellow citizens. These two factors then became some of the main things that eventually made the center of Ahmadiyah religious activities in Cirebon until now safe and tended to be far from intolerant movements carried out by a handful of Muslim communities.

### **First Conversion Experience**

His full name is Singgih Prasetyo or known internally in Ahmadiyah as Mr. Singgih. He was born on November 9, 1959 in Yogyakarta, one of the centers of the Islamic kingdom in the pre-Dutch colonial era as well as inland Javanese culture or Kejawen, a model of local religious expression typical of the interior of the central part of Java. It is not surprising that Singgihpun in his early days was more introduced to the values and traditions of Kejawen in his large family environment.

Singgih is an activist for the student movement on his campus. He has been active in the Islamic Student Association (HMI) and Indonesian Islamic Students (PII), two young wings of the Islamic reformist Islamic movement in Indonesia. But he was also active in the Indonesian National Marhaenism Movement (GMNI), the main wing of the youth of the secular nationalism group. This fact is really interesting considering the youth organizations above represent conflicting ideologies, especially HMI versus GMNI. Singgih said that his activity was part of self-discovery. It is as he states, "*I entered HMI, entered GMNI, went to PII, but all of them I did not get what I was looking for, in the pure sense of studying Islam for the spiritual only. In some of these places, I found that these associations had both a national and a political tone, so they could not satisfy my heart*".

However, as stated above, Singgih through his various activities did not get satisfactory results for him. The search for "truth" led him to get to know Ahmadiyah. Singgih attended religious studies at the mosque which was not far from where he lived. At the first he did not realize that the recitation he was

attending was the Ahmadiyah group. This is inseparable from the background of his religious knowledge, which is characterized by Islam that is typical of Kejawen.

Over time, especially since starting lectures at the Faculty of Law, Gadjah Mada University (UGM), young Singgih started listening to Ahmadiyah and began asking questions about Ahmadiyah. He also tried to discuss with several colleagues and colleagues among the recitation participants who had embodied themselves to embrace Ahmadiyah.

Through these discussions, Singgih began to gradually understand the main teachings of Ahmadiyah. These intensive religious discussions finally succeeded in convincing him that Ahmadiyah was in accordance with the concept he had been looking for. Singgih saw Ahmadiyah as a belief that focuses on worship and perfecting the worship of its followers. This aspect of religious appreciation is an attraction for Singgih to study Ahmadiyah in more depth. It is as he himself said that:

*"There must be a purity of the soul, this is something that is rare in any Islamic community, telling its members to purify the soul, I even get things like that in Buddhism, Hinduism, some belief streams, this is really something of an explanation. Ahmadiyya, which is complete, that is complete, so the purity of the soul is very basic, so there is no strings attached ... "*

It seems that Singgih's background as a follower of Kejawen Islam emphasizes a feeling of being a reference in seeing Ahmadiyah teachings that he gets from religious recitation and discussions. In his narrative, he explained that he was deeply influenced by the concept of Kejawen instilled by his grandfather who was an elementary school teacher during the Dutch era. He and his mother were always instilled in the values of honesty, courage, and purity of soul. On this basis, Singgih saw the similarity of values between what his grandfather taught him and the principles and teachings of Ahmadiyah. In fact, he considered Ahmadiyah teachings to be more complete than those of his grandfather. That is what solidified him to declare allegiance during his studies at UGM.

However, the bai'at procession was not the end of Singgih Muda's search for the true truth that he had been looking for. To convince himself that Ahmadiyah is true, he conducted question and answer activities about religion in several churches in Yogyakarta. He did this activity after the procession of making himself a new Ahmadi follower. The theme of the discussion focuses more on the concept of divinity and belief. His choice to discuss in church cannot be separated from his status as alumni Christian School, SMA BOPKRI Yogyakarta. At the first he had more discussions with young church activists. However, since Singgih is known to have pledged allegiance to Ahmadiyah, he is mostly seen by priests or pastors. These religious discussions have further strengthened his belief in Ahmadiyah, which in his speech stated, "If in the past I was still convinced, but now I am sure that I approach Ainul Yaqin".

His status as an Ahmadiyah follower led Singgih to find his soul mate with fellow Ahmadiyah followers. He married the daughter of an IAIN Sunan Kalijaga lecturer who is also an Ahmadiyah follower. This marriage brought him deeper to know the main teachings of Ahmadiyah. Together with his in-laws, he read the main references about the teachings echoed by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. It can be said that his father-in-law is his main mentor on Ahmadiyah teachings and at the same time delivered him to fully serve to develop Ahmadiyah in Indonesia, including having to migrate to Cirebon where he currently lives.

## **Second Conversion Experience**

The second figure is the former chairman of the branch of the Ahmadiyah Congregation of Cirebon city. His full name is Yosep Yudaswara or known as Pak Yosep. He was born and grew up in the Karawang area. His parents actually came from Garut, but later migrated to Karawang to build a better life. It is not stated exactly when his parents' family migrated from Garut to Karawang. Seeing its origin,

it has the same line of origins as Kyai Basari, who was the muballigh pioneer of the Ahmadiyah movement in the city of Cirebon and its surroundings. Even so, Yosep stated that there was no genealogical connection between him and the Basari cleric. He also emphasized that although he knows that Garut is one of the main bases of Ahmadiyah in West Java, he has no connection with the Ahmadiyah group in Garut.

Returning to his family origins, Yosep did not explain in more detail how and who his parents were. However, looking at the conversion process that occurred during adolescence, it can be said that their parents and extended family are not members of the Ahmadiyya Jama'at. If you look at the time of his conversion in 1983 where he was registered as a senior high school student (SLTA), we can be sure that he was born in the 1960s. Likewise, there is no further information about the level of education he took other than the Secondary Technical School (STM) when he started on a religious journey.

Yosep's conversion process to Ahmadiyah took place in 1983. While pursuing secondary education (STM), Yosep experienced what is known as "spiritual turmoil". As a young man who was looking for great values, he was active as a mosque teenager, where he often toured mosques and attended various recitations held by preachers in the Karawang area. This spiritual experience culminates in a dream of meeting a charismatic figure who he does not know who that figure is. Armed with curiosity about the figure who appeared in his dream, he tried to find it in consultation with several religious figures. Until then he found the answer that the figure in his dream was in fact the main character of Ahmadiyah, a Khalifah. On that basis, he was advised by the Ahmadiyya preacher to declare bai'at and enter Ahmadiyah, and then explore the Ahmadi teachings of the preacher who often invited him to participate in conducting religious broadcasts outside the city.

Yosep's migration process to Cirebon took place in 1995. This was entirely due to job demands. Previously he worked at the Kujang Fertilizer Factory in the Karawang area. In 1995, he tried to apply for a job at Pertamina. But he failed. Finally, he was accepted at the Politama plastic ore factory, a subsidiary of Pertamina in Balongan Indramayu. Until now, he still works at the same place.

Yosep is one of the main figures in the board of Ahmadiyah Cirebon. He was the chairman of the Ahmadiyya regional committee in Cirebon city from 2016-2019. His position as the new chairman was replaced by Agus, an employee of the Cirebon City Government. Yosep's current position is as amir of region 9 which includes several areas around Cirebon 3 which include Indramayu, Cirebon, Kuningan and Majalengka.

Indeed, at the beginning of its development, the Ahmadiyah city of Cirebon was made the center of the Ahmadiyah organization for the entire former Cirebon residency which includes Cirebon cities and districts, Indramayu, Majalengka and Kuningan. In line with the rapid development of Ahmadiyah members in this area, the head of the Ahmadiyah center in 2017 decided to split the Ahmadiyya Cirebon management into two. First, the area which includes Kuningan dan Majalengka became the 13th branch and was led by a separate management where Mustofa was appointed as its first chairman. Meanwhile, Yosep Yudaswara continued his leadership in the other region (14th branch) which currently only includes Cirebon and Indramayu. This separation has implications for the position of muballigh, a kind of minister of religious affairs, for each region.

In terms of quantity, the development of the number of Ahmadiyya in Cirebon city continues to increase from year to year. One of the factors is the increasing number of Ahmadiyah members who come and stay in Cirebon. The reasons for their attendance are generally the same, namely because of the demands of work and / or joining other working family members. Currently, there are 250 Ahmadiyah members in the city of Cirebon from around 60 families. That number is about ¼ of the total Ahmadiyah members under the Cirebon branch of Ahmadiyah, which reaches approximately 1000 people spread across several areas, especially Cirebon city, Ciledug, Cikbuilder and Indramayu city.

## **Bai`at as The Way of Living**

In the context of the two interviewees (Mr. Singgih and Mr. Yosep) who committed bai`at to become Ahmadiyah followers, it appears that they have different backgrounds and reasons. However, both of them have some similarities, especially in terms of the processes that are carried out by both of them. This is in line with the conversion stages put forward by Darajat, Z (1996). The two people experienced relatively the same experience in the initial calm phase where both of them were still indifferent to religious issues. Singgih, for example, spent more time studying with discipline like his idol, namely his own grandfather who taught discipline in gaining knowledge. Meanwhile, Yosep spent more of his time on routine youth activities.

The situation changed with the increasing age and experience and associations that both Singgih and Yosep had. This is in Darajat, Z (1996) term as the stage of restlessness. Singgih, for example, stated that he began to look for the true meaning of Islam by having religious discussions with his friends and participating in various kinds of religious recitation in mosques in the neighborhood where he lived. Through this process, he finally became acquainted with Ahmadiyah teachings, which he thought were in accordance with the views he had been looking for. The same thing happened to Joseph, where he experienced extraordinary events in the form of dreams. His curiosity about the meaning of his dream of being visited by a caliph had led him to an inner turmoil and at the same time encouraged him to start paying attention to religious issues intensively. This is what led Yosep to perform bai`at when he felt that the figure of the caliph was the caliph of Ahmadiyah. This conversion stage is the culmination of a process of restlessness that a converter has experienced for some time.

The discovery as well as the answer to religious questions at this stage of uncertainty encourages a convert to further deepen the teachings of the religion he has just adopted. This can be seen in the case of the two sources of this study. Singgih was increasingly involved in studies conducted by the Ahmadiyah group in Yogyakarta, especially when he later married the daughter of an Ahmadiyah figure in the area who was also listed as a lecturer at IAIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. With this status, Singgih even began to play an important role in the structure of the Ahmadiyah organization in his hometown. More than that, his activeness in Ahmadiyah's management has led him to Cirebon, where he is one of the central figures of Cirebon Ahmadiyah. A similar experience was experienced by Yosep, who was increasingly studying Ahmadiyah teachings. In fact, thanks to his intelligence and sincerity, Yosep was appointed as an assistant to the Ahmadiyah preacher who always accompanies the preacher to travel around various cities outside the Karawang area. Referring to the concept of the Zakiyah Darajat stages, the stages experienced by Singgih and Yosep were the calm and serene stages.

Furthermore, if seen from the actions of the two sources above, this feeling of calm and serenity encourages them not only to implement this new belief in their daily lives, but to encourage them to be more active in the Ahmadiyah movement and activities. They are willing to make sacrifices for the sake of spreading their new faith to others. In short, Ahmadiyah is not only a new identity for both of them, but also becomes the main orientation of their life.

## **Conclusion**

As a dynamic in the process of one's religiosity, religious conversion is unique, dynamic and complex. In this study, two converts are unique because of each has its own reasons. Both also have to go through an extraordinary process, even if we refer to the conversion stages of Darajat, Z (1996) through relatively the same stages. There are several factors behind the conversion carried out by the two converts mentioned above. First, the dynamic factors and internal commitment concerned play a vital role in directing the action. Second, family and environmental factors also play an important role in "facilitating" this conversion process. In the second case this conversion plays a role in the progress of the conversion process without causing the negative impact that often occurs in other conversion processes. On the other

hand, this study also found that the converts carried out the conversion process voluntarily. There was no coercion from other parties. This emphasizes that the existing conversion process is peaceful and solely because of the desire of each conversion to be able to deepen a new belief.

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