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## Reactualization of Intellectualism in Classical Islamic Thought in Indonesia: Comparative Study of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama post Reformation

Reactualización del intelectualismo en el pensamiento islámico clásico en Indonesia. Estudio comparativo de Muhammadiyah y Nahdlatul Ulama después de la reforma

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### RESUMEN:

Los hallazgos de la reactualización del intelectualismo islámico clásico en Indonesia se encuentran en las organizaciones Muhammadiyah y Nahdlatul Ulama, a saber: Primero, el campo de la divinidad, que incluye la discusión de Dios y sus atributos y la relación del universo con Él. Segundo, el campo de la moral (ética), que incluye discusiones sobre los humanos y su comportamiento; relación humana con Dios, relación humana entre sí y relación humana con el universo. Tercero, el campo de la física; incluye una discusión sobre la naturaleza de su crecimiento y desarrollo, y así sucesivamente.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Indonesia, islam clásico, intelectualismo, Muhammadiyah, reactualización..

### ABSTRACT:

The findings of the re-actualization of classical Islamic intellectualism in Indonesia are found in the Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama organizations, namely: First, the field of divinity, which includes discussion of God and His attributes and the relationship of the universe with Him. Second, the field of morals (ethics), which includes discussions about humans and their behavior; human relationship with God, human relationship with each other and human relationship with the universe. Third, the field of physics; includes a discussion about the nature of its growth and development, and so forth.

**KEYWORDS:** Classical islam, Indonesia, intellectualism, Muhammadiyah, reactualization..

### INTRODUCTION

Before accepting the teachings of Islam, the Indonesian already had religion and belief. Indonesian society has had a civilization before the arrival of Islam, a civilization which is a fusion of local civilization and Hindu-Buddhist civilization. Islam plays an important role in social, political, economic and cultural life. That role

can be seen from the influence of Islam in Indonesian society which is very broad. This makes the separation between local culture and Islamic culture difficult. The style of the Islamic community in Indonesia plays an important role in the formation of customs. The acculturation of local culture with Islam is easy to take place and deeply rooted in the Islamic community in Indonesia.

With the plurality of nations in a variety of social, ethnic, racial, and religious traditions, Islamic beliefs are unifying in society. Indonesian Islam consists of two groups, namely traditional and modern.<sup>1</sup> This traditional group is the scholars who are members of the Nahdlatul Ulama, while the modernist group is the scholars who are members of the Muhammadiyah. These two groups represent Muslims throughout Indonesia and both work together in developing the country in realizing a just and prosperous society.

Muhammadiyah with modernity style and Nahdlatul Ulama with traditional style, both of which made quite important contributions in the journey of the Indonesian people, starting from pre-independence, independence, and to filling the independence. The birth of these two organizations is certainly inseparable from the role and influence of the intellectual history that developed by referring it to the history of intellectuals and trying to find back the spread of the work of cultural ideas in the community. Intellectual history also tries to understand the relationship between certain ideas on the one hand and on the other, also non-intellectual factors in general, in the sociology of individuals and society.

Seeing an intellectual figure as a critical group in a society that "pours" his thoughts into the public or his audience, at least, it can be seen that there is a correlation between someone's figure and contribution with the media where intellectual discourse is communicated through language.<sup>2</sup> Human thought is always motivated by history which then mixes between its cultures which is reflected in the form of language. In this discussion, we will see how the birth of two major organizations in Indonesia, namely Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, the mindset developed, the great influences of Classical Islam that developed and grew in it, and the strategic values offered to the Indonesian people.

This research is expected to be useful in increasing the treasury of historical studies and intellectual thought and at the same time contributing to the preservation of scientific traditions in Indonesia. Methodologically this research is a type of qualitative research with library research. The data of this study consisted of primary data in the form of Islamic Intellectual Khazana books, Islamic Intellectual Reform, Contextualization of Islamic Doctrine in History, and Intellectual Traditions of the 18th Century Malay Islamic Scholars. Secondary data is data related to this research problem. Data is comprehensively collected using four kinds of techniques, namely: heuristics, verification, and interpretation, namely analysis (deciphering) and synthesis (unifying) data, and historiography (written in the form).

With this historiography, it will be seen how the influence inherited by Classical Islamic intellectualism that occurred in the two major cities of the Muslims (Makkah and Madinah) or Haramain, until Islam came to Indonesia<sup>3</sup>, in this case reflected in two large organizations namely the Muhammadiyah organization pioneered by Ahmad Dahlan established on 8 Dhuhuljaj or 18 November 1912 and Nahdlatul Ulama was pioneered by Hasyim Asy'ary established on 16 Rajab 1344 or coinciding with 31 January 1926.

## DISCUSSION

The state is defined as the highest organization among groups of people who have aspirations to unite, live in one area, and have sovereign government. In the conception of Islam, there is no definite formula (qathi') about the concept of the state. The two sources of Islam are Qur'an and Hadith, both of them do not explicitly define the state model in Islam. Nevertheless, Islam teaches many values and ethics of how the country should be built and raised. It has become part of the rhetoric in Indonesia that Islam is embraced by the majority of Indonesia's population. The rhetoric states that the number of Muslims in Indonesia is 90 percent, even though that number is actually an estimated figure.<sup>4</sup> This number is truly believed to be true, so, when the census shows that the number of Indonesian Muslims is less than 90 percent, various interpretations of the religious life of the Indonesian people occur.

The relationship between religion and state in Indonesia is more based on the principle of dynamic balance, choosing a middle ground between secularism and theocracy.<sup>5</sup> This dynamic equilibrium does not have a separation between religion and state, but each can complement each other with all its roles. Religion still has a critical power towards the state and the state has an obligation to religion. In other words, the pattern of the relationship between religion and the Indonesian state is mutual need or mutualism symbiotic relations.

The commitment to safeguard the agreement of the nation's founders is the future of the Indonesian people which must be maintained within the framework of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). So, relying on this national commitment is irrelevant, even psychic, if found some individuals and groups in Islam who want to carry the idea of a religious state. This is not in line with the principles of diversity and democracy and also betrayed the agreement of the nation's founders. Among the nation's founders were Muslim leaders who were members of two major organizations, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, as a counterweight to the running of this nation.

The context of the next study that can be seen is how the important role of national figures who are members of the two largest organizations in Indonesia will impact the current era. Obviously, the impact that can be seen is how the two thoughts of a large organization develop in society. Classical intellectuals as a starting point for the development of Islam in Indonesia will be clearly actualized both in the Muhammadiyah community and Nahdlatul Ulama organizations, the explanation can be seen as follows:

#### **Reactualization of classical islamic intellectualism in Muhammadiyah organizations**

In the 19th century AD, several important changes began to occur. In Southeast Asia, especially in Indonesia, at the end of the 17th century until the end of the 19th century AD, a process of transmitting Islamic teachings and ideas began to involve intellectual networks. When entering the 19th century the Islamic intellectual tradition in the Malay world experienced a strengthening of thought, especially in works and ideas.

Particularistic culture that developed in the world, especially Indonesia, caused intellectualism becomes an endless agenda. The reason is the thought that is translated in the character of political culture, affects the perception and practice of the mindset state of Indonesian. So far, Indonesian people have been accustomed to live with utopia.<sup>6</sup> That is what causes the country's future to be uncertain. As a result, the people become victims and are always overshadowed by dreams about prosperity which are actually just illusions created by the actors. This is where the need to explore the treasures of classical Islamic intellectuals. In the journey of the Indonesian people since centuries ago, it appears that there is a significant influence between classical Islamic thought with the intellectuals of the archipelago, especially in the Indonesian nation.

In the Islamic scientific tradition, rihlah is not new. After the death of the Prophet Muhammad, the Companions carried out the scientific rihlah to collect and record the hadith left by the Prophet. In subsequent developments the scientific journey not only resulted in a collection of hadiths, but also encouraged the formation of a "network" of friends of the Prophet who were involved in the effort to memorize and record the hadith of the Prophet.<sup>7</sup>

This process of intellectual tradition is inseparable from the process of transmission and diffusion of teachings. The notion of Islam always involves "intellectual networks", both those formed among scholars and as a segment of intellectuals as a whole. The so-called "ulama network" is a complex and extensive intertwined relationship, which exists both between the ulama itself and between the ulama and his students.<sup>8</sup>

The secte in Islamic theology occurs because of differences in views in providing an explanation of God, His oneness, His attributes, and other Islamic Theological issues. Muslims with all diligence understand the Qur'an and the hadith of the Apostles, who are related to the matter, describe and analyze it, and each group of Islamic Theology tries to strengthen their opinion with verses of the Qur'an and hadith. The rationale of thoughts which had been buried by Greek philosophy and other civilizations played an important role in developing Islamic theology. Arabic is used as a tool for understanding the Qur'an, while the hadith as

a source of Islamic theology is an important point for analyzing and providing understanding as a proof of *dalil naqli* and *'aqli*.

The principle of rationalism will provide the main explanation; its application has many different consequences.<sup>9</sup> In general rationalism is a philosophical approach that emphasizes reason (*ratio*) as the main source of knowledge that is free from sensory observation. Adherents of the rationalist principle have the conviction that an argument will be seen as meaningful if an explanation can be verified through a *ratio*. Reality can be known independently of observations, experiences and the use of empirical methods.

Intellectual is the main source of knowledge, and science is basically a deductive system that can be understood rationally and not directly related to sensory knowledge. Truth is not tested through sensory verification procedures, but with criteria such as logical consistency. Classical Islamic theology groups, especially *Mu'tazilah*, focus their attention on broadcasting Islam through philosophical dialogue and refute the reasons of people who are hostile to Islam through logical argumentation.<sup>10</sup> The Islamic group will not be able to face its opponents, if they do not know the opinions of their opponents. Finally, the Islamic region became an arena for debating various opinions. This affects each party, including using rational arguments to explain and defend their opinions. Some Muslims learn the methods of Greek philosophy to be used in explaining and defending the teachings of Islam, among which are the *mu'tazilah* group.<sup>11</sup>

*Mu'tazilah* is a group that builds their understanding based on reason analysis. In interpreting religion, they interpret it according to logic.<sup>12</sup> *Mu'tazilah* is philosophical secte in the Islamic world of the 8th and 9th centuries. It called *mu'tazilah* or *I'tazala*, which means they are those who separate themselves from *Jamhur 'alim Ulama*, who are considered to have distorted Islamic teachings. This secte teaches five principles (*al-usul al khamsah*) to save Islam from destruction.<sup>13</sup> This secte was pioneered by *Wasil bin Ata* (700-749 AD) using the philosophy of Aristotle, wearing Arabic clothes and colored *'itiqad Islam*. Among the main problems which are the focus of *Mu'tazilah* is the discussion of human action. Are humans free to do their actions or just carry out God's will (forced)?

*Mu'tazilah* holds that God has given freedom to humans in determining their wills and deeds, because God is not absolute in His will, and God has an obligation to be just, obliged to keep promises and obliged to give good fortune. In relation to human actions, God's absolute will is limited because that freedom has been given to humans in determining their will.

The primacy of the *ratio* proposition among the four types of theorem is that the proposition of the *ratio* leads to knowledge of the existence of God based on speculative argumentation. *Qadi* reasoned that the body is mortal impermanent, therefore there must be other immortal substances which are the designers and creators of mortal beings. The reasoning process from the creation of a mortal body to the logical consequence that there must be an eternal creator that is present in most of the explanations.

Intellectuals of Indonesian Muslims increasingly pay attention to issues that are suitable for Islam in the development of the country, and Islamic values can be combined with rationalism. The issue of routine in theology and Islamic law (*fiqh*) is still debated, but it is not the main intellectual concern. Even more important for them is the theology of development, the term created by *Nurcholis Madjid* is "Movement for the renewal of Islamic Thought".<sup>14</sup>

Indonesian Muslims, who are members of *Muhammadiyah* and other modernist organizations, put their teaching of apology. Previous modernists emphasized rationality in an effort to eliminate traditional religious practices, and asserted that Islam does not merely permit, but requires modernity. Modernity is emphasized in terms of technology and science. Because modernism previously combined technological and scientific rationality with Islamic scripturalism, the issue of religion was excluded from the working area of rationality. This means that the modernist concept of Islamic society is limited to the literal understanding of the social teachings of the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith*.

The most important contribution of Hidayat Nata Atmaja for the development of Indonesian Islamic discourse is his attempt to separate modernism from scripturalism. Nurcholis Madjid provides a more realistic assessment of how Muslims should approach modernity.<sup>15</sup> According to Nurcholis Madjid, Indonesian Muslims are again experiencing slowness in the thought and development of Islamic education. He explained that the need for renewal of thought was more urgent than the need to maintain the intellectual agreement of the people. In his speech he described modernist organizations such as Muhammadiyah already rigid, perhaps unable to grasp the dynamic and progressive spirit of the idea of improvement itself.<sup>16</sup> He appealed to end the debate between secte and move on to fight for a method of reasoning.

In this critical situation, the presence of the Mu'tazilah kalam becomes significant in Indonesian discourse.

Harun Nasution turned to the Mu'tazilah kalam, because it allowed the use of reason in religious matters. Among Islamic theology in Indonesia, what distinguishes Mu'tazilah from other Islamic schools is the virtue of speculative reasoning (vows).<sup>17</sup> For Mu'tazilah speculative reasoning is very important to know God and understand his justice, and then obey Him. Regardless of the way the Mu'tazilah theologians understand the results of their reflection and speculative reasoning whose position under the Qur'an is the proof. This approach, namely: First, speculative reasoning is an attempt made by the Mu'tazilah theologian to understand the problem of religion. In other words, speculative reasoning is the antithesis of the role of the dogma of the scriptures, which became the Sunni establishment. Second, however, because humans are not absolute creatures, everything they produce is conditional. Third, because of this, human truth is relative (zanny) and temporal. This uncertainty is an essential quality of all human intellectual activity, including speculative reasoning.

Indonesia with a growing institution and Muhammadiyah as an organization that fills independence gives a very extraordinary contribution especially in the field of education that is rational (harmony between ratios and revelations), modern educational facilities, development of health institutions, institutions of higher education modern and harmonious between religious science and modern science. The rational mindset is clearly seen in intellectualism, which synergizes in Islamic modernity.

The contemporary Indonesian thinkers above, contrary to Mu'tazilah, they are happy to rely solely on the scriptures as a basis for knowing God. But they still use the virtues of reason as a tool for Islamic solutions to social problems in the world. This is a major concern for developing practical theology that can provide an interpretation of Islam for social and political realities, thus distinguishing the classical rationalists, namely Mu'tazilah, from modernist theologians in Indonesia. In this way it seems that the difference between the Mu'tazilah theologian and the modernist is more on the aspect of religious esoteric experience. The struggle for modernity in the Islamic world gave birth to efforts to renew the existing tradition, although the Islamic reformist movement cannot be called Islamic modernism because of their difference. The reformist movement carried out in Indonesia which refers to modernism, to realize the Islamic world civilization in Indonesia in responding to global challenges.

#### **Reactualization of classical Islamic intellectualism in Nahdlatul Ulama organization**

Intellectual tradition generally refers to the process of Islamic transmission, the formation of intellectual discourse, which in the next process becomes a tradition that is developed and maintained continuously. The intellectual tradition manifested in the emergence of Islamic works. Islamic scientific contacts between the Indonesian region and the scientific center in Haramain were intensified in turn, when some of the ulemas returned to their homeland, they became the main locomotive in the dissemination and transmission of religious thought to the Nusantara Muslim community.<sup>18</sup>

From this arises a big problem that causes the divisions of Muslims, which are related to the perpetrators of major sins, whereas they initially have faith, then continue to the problem of believers who commit minor sins continuously. Furthermore, it continues on the issue of the status of al-Qur'an whether the hadith or qadim, and enters the understanding of the meaning of the mutasyabihat verses, to the substance, nature and affinity of Allah.

Broadly speaking, Muslim thought can be divided into four groups, namely: First, the field of divinity, which includes discussion of God and His attributes and the relationship of the universe with Him. Second, the field of morals (ethics), which includes discussions about humans and their behavior; human relationship with God, human relationship with each other and human relationship with the universe. Third, the field of physics; includes a discussion of the nature of its growth and development. Fourth, the exact sciences, includes discussions on science such as; mathematics, geometry, astronomy and so on.<sup>19</sup>

The results of the thoughts of Muslims about these four things pretty much brought developments to science and human civilization. This thought has an important value in human life. Associated with the problem of God, many concepts of thought have emerged. This is because divinity is fundamental in Islamic teachings; the problem is very complex and unique.

God is supernatural, due to the supernatural of God, various kinds of rational thinking concepts emerge. Theology is associated with these problems, which discusses rationally in Islamic theology such as the Mu'tazilah, As'ariyah, Maturidiyah and others, while in philosophy it includes the study of metaphysics.

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is one of the largest Islamic organizations with the most members in Indonesia, and is a mass-based organization under the leadership of the ulema. A deep belief in the sharing of thoughts, ideas, concepts in all things, and the methods carried by NU are believed to be the main key for NU to exist and continue to survive to this day.<sup>20</sup>

To understand NU as jam'iyah diniyah (religious organization) appropriately, it is not enough to look at it from a formal angle since it was born. Because long before NU was born in the form of jam'iyah (organization), it first existed and took the form of a jama'ah (community) which was strongly bound by religious social activities that had its own characteristics.

The birth of the NU jam'iyah is no different from accommodating an existing item. In other words, the manifestation of NU as a religious organization is merely a formal affirmation of the informal mechanism from the ulama with the same understanding, a staunch holder of one of the four mazhab: Shafi'i, Maliki, Hanafi, and Hambali which had already run and existed long before the NU jam'iyah was born.

The purpose of the establishment of NU is to preserve, develop and practice the Islamic teachings of Ahlusunnah wal jamaah who adhere to one of the four mahzab of thought, unite the steps of the ulemas and their followers and carry out activities aimed at creating community benefit, the progress of the nation and the elevation of dignity and human dignity.<sup>21</sup>

For this reason, the presence of NU has an important role for Indonesia, including making changes in the attitudes and world views of many Muslims, especially in adapting to the challenges of modernization. This role is sometimes misunderstood by observers. They see NU as a link between the modern state and traditional society. Clifford Geertz, for example, placed NU kiai as "cultural brokers". But the use of this term, also with an understanding of the process by which "cultural brokers" select which cultures are acceptable and which should be rejected, imply that "cultural brokers" themselves do not have original views and approaches.

This view of the role of the pesantren kiai, which was noted as one of the most important elements in NU's leadership, has been refuted by Hiroko Horikoshi's research. The results of his study of the social functions of the kiai in West Java show that the driving force for change comes from the core of religious thought, which accompanies a long interaction with modernization itself.

As an illustration of the role played by NU in relation to social change, it can be seen in the decision to organize through RMI (Rabithah Ma'ahid Islamiyah), a series of forums that discuss the relationships between established Islamic teachings and diverse aspects of modern life. Such as science and technology, legal reform, the role of parliaments and local lawmakers, transplants of human organs, and the functioning of modern economic institutions such as insurance companies and stock exchanges.

The problem of the unity and integrity of the Indonesian people is actually a problem that is quite complex, and concerns the interests of the community as individuals, certain family members, members of certain groups, members of the local community, and members of the Indonesian nation. There are several

points that need to be considered with regard to the problem of integration, for example if you want to try to strengthen the unity and integrity of the nation, because what is done very much depends on how to describe the problem at hand, how to have statements that are heeded or not heeded. Therefore, the picture that is used as the basis for thinking, determining attitudes and acting is very dependent on the frame of mind used and the information that is owned.

### **The strategic value of Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah intellectualism in building the Indonesian Nation**

Indonesian values and rules should be used as a guide. Indonesian should be used as the language of unity in its true meaning. Meanwhile, among the groups themselves, if regional languages, regional cultures, certain religions, etc. are maintained, as long as they do not interfere with the unity and integrity of the Indonesian people. The group concerned must be justified in obtaining favors from the cultural or religious distinctiveness of the group. Indonesian national is formed from humans who come from various groups, ethnicity, race, and religion, even with diverse cultural backgrounds and directions.

The success of the integration of Islamic and Indonesian values in pluralism, better known as the expression of national unity,<sup>22</sup> is not only determined by the government or certain groups, but is determined by all elements of society. When all are aware of their respective duties as Indonesians with regard to the demand to unite different groups in Indonesian society, national unity can be better and more sustainable until the end of time.

Religion has a very important position and role in the life of the Indonesian people. Recognition of the important position and role of religion is reflected in the establishment of the principle of the Almighty God as the first principle of the philosophy of the state of Pancasila, which is also understood as the principle that animates other Pancasila principles. Therefore, religious development is not only an integral part of national development, but also a part that should underlie and inspire the overall direction and objectives of national development.

Besides having a very important position, religion also holds a unique position in the life of the nation and state. This is reflected in a well-known formulation of relations between religions and states in Indonesia that "Indonesia is not a theocratic state, but not a secular state"<sup>23</sup>. This formula means that the national and state life arrangements are not based on one particular religious understanding or belief, but the values of nobleness, virtue, and goodness contained in religions are recognized as spiritual, moral and ethical sources and foundation for the life of the nation and state.

The development of religious life in Indonesia aims to ensure that religious life is always headed in a positive direction and avoid or reduce the negative excesses that will arise and damage the unity and peace of society. Government policy in the development of religious life especially focused on broadcasting religion and relations between religious communities, because it was alleged that religious broadcasting often triggers tension between religious relations. Referring to Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, there are several philosophical foundations for the development of religious fields, namely religion as a source of spiritual, moral, and ethical values for religious and state life, respect and protection of religious rights and freedoms as part of citizens' human rights the state, religious harmony and the management of religious life, and the development of the character of national identity.<sup>24</sup>

### **CONCLUSION**

Reactualization of classical Islamic intellectualism in Indonesia found in the Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama organizations, namely: First, the field of divinity, which includes discussion of God and His attributes and the relationship of the universe with Him. Second, the field of morals (ethics), which includes discussions about humans and their behavior; human relationship with God, human relationship with each other and human relationship with the universe. Third, the field of physics; includes a discussion about the nature of its growth and development. Fourth, the exact sciences, includes discussions on science such as; mathematics, geometry, astronomy and so on.

The results of the thoughts of Muslims about these four points pretty much brought developments to science and human civilization. This thought has an important value in human life. Associated with the problem of God, many concepts of thought have emerged. This is because divinity is fundamental in Islamic teachings; the problem is very complex and unique.

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