

THE *TAJDID* MOVEMENT OF MUHAMMADIYAH IN ACEH Negotiating Identity Between Salafism and Modernism¹

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Abstract

The Muhammadiyah movement aims to stimulate religious life according to Koran and Sunnah. Nevertheless, many Indonesians still believe that Muhammadiyah refuses to recognize local cultural heritage and traditions. This paper discusses two aspects of Muhammadiyah, namely Salafism and modernism, as elements of tajdid (renewal) that encourage modernity in Aceh. The spirit of tajdid in Muhammadiyah's perspective has two meanings: (1) purification in akidah and ibadah (worship) in line with the practices of Prophet Muhammad SAW; and (2) tajdid means dynamizing people's lives with a creative spirit that is suitable to the challenges and demands of modern era.

Keywords: Muhammadiyah, tajdid, Aceh, religious movement.

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Introduction

The tsunami that struck Aceh in late 2004 had important lessons for the Indonesian nation, the people of Aceh, and Acehnese Muslims in particular. For Acehnese Muslims, the tsunami of 26 December remotivated them to return to religious spiritualism substantially, instead of merely formally.³ This was based on the criticism (by some people) who considered that Islam in Aceh, with its Islamic law application, was a mere formality instead of Islam grounded in *rahmatan lil'alam*.⁴

In addition, for the Indonesian nation and the people of Aceh in general, the 2004 tsunami disaster—which caused a great number of deaths—encouraged and accelerated the effort of having a resolution of the long conflict between the government and the Gerakan Aceh Merdeka/GAM (Movement for a Free Aceh). As we know, during the post-independence period, there had been armed movements like DI/TII (*Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia*) throughout the northern Aceh areas. Although it

was claimed that these uprisings had been resolved through mutual dialogue and political compromise, the DI/TII movement had deep ideological roots throughout the society. This was proved by the existence of the bitter political conflict between the government and Gerakan Aceh Merdeka/GAM (Movement for a Free Aceh) during the period from 1976 to 2005.⁵

Furthermore, according to Eka Srimulyani, the DI/TII conflict resulted not only in the birth of GAM as the successor to the conflict with the central government, but also in the origin of the “feud” and the obvious disagreements between modernists and traditionalists. This thesis was based on the fact that there was strong contrast in the political views of the leaders of DI / TII named Abu Daud Beurereuh and Abuya Mudawaly, a famous *dayah* theologian who led *Dayah Darussalam Labuhan Haji* in South Aceh. These two figures became the symbols of modernist and traditionalist groups, respectively, in Aceh. Abu Daud Beurereuh became the head of one of the modernist groups called PUSA (*Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh*), while Abuya Mudawaly represented the traditionalist groups which were united under PERTI (*Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah*). In addressing the DI/TII issue, the PERTI leader Abuya

3. R. Micahel Feener, “Social Engineering Through Shari’a: Islamic Law and State-Directed Da’wa in Contemporary Aceh,” *Indonesia Law Review*, Vol. 3, (Desember 2013), 290.

4. See, for example, Sehat Ihsan Shadiqi, “Islam Dalam Masyarakat Kosmopolit: Relevankah Syariat Islam di Aceh Untuk Masyarakat Modern?” *Kontekstualita*, Vol. 25, No.1 (2010); Danial, “Syari’at Islam dan Pluralitas Sosial (Studi Tentang Minoritas Non-Muslim Dalam Qanun Syari’at Islam di Aceh),” *Analisis*, Vol. XII, No. 1 (Juni 2012), 73-74.

5. Eka Srimulyani, “Islam, Perempuan dan Resolusi Konflik di Aceh (2000-2005)” *Analisis*, Vol. XII, No. 2 (Desember 2012), 270-271.



Mudawaly issued a *fatwa* stating that the DI/TII movement against the legitimate Muslim government was categorized as *bughāt*.⁶ From this feud developed a strong conflict between modernists and traditionalists in Aceh.

Muhammadiyah, which was part of the modernist group and had spread throughout Aceh, was lost in the conflict between modernist and traditionalist groups.⁷ However, there appears to be no evidence showing that Muhammadiyah supported or was involved in the conflict between DI/TII and the central government. It was its modernist spirit which made Muhammadiyah enter the feud between the two groups in Aceh: modernists and traditionalists.

The rivalry between the two groups, especially between Muhammadiyah and the traditionalist group, apparently continues until today. The dispute is not just about different political views but has spread into the realm of theology. There is an assumption among some communities in Aceh that Muhammadiyah is actually nothing more than a Salafi group which

is the vehicle of Wahabi deployment in Indonesia, including Aceh.⁸ Purification, which is the main feature of the Islamic modernist movement,⁹ has been practised by Muhammadiyah in the forms of eradicating all forms of worship and deeds that fall within categories of *takbayul*, *bid'ah* and *keburafat* (superstition and heresy). Unfortunately, these actions by Muhammadiyah are considered disturbing and threatening the long-lasting status quo in the religious practices among Aceh society. Some people are worried that Muhammadiyah will do the same as the Wahabi group has done to Arabian society.

From this point, then, there is an interesting question to explore, namely, whether Muhammadiyah is the same as

8. Marzuki Muhammad Syatri, an Acehnese student who is taking his master degree in Malaysia, has reported that Muhammadiyah in Aceh has almost always been considered as belonging to Salafi-Wahabi, or at least semi-Wahabi (half-Wahabi). On another occasion, Muftahuddin, another Acehnese student studying in Malaysia said that generally Muhammadiyah tends to be unaccepted by Acehnese people because it is often considered Wahabi. *The author corresponded with Muftahuddin on 27 July 2016, and the interview with Marzuki Muhammad Syatri, took place in early 2016.* To understand the general opinion that Muhammadiyah and Wahabi are the same movement, see Mu'arif, ed., *Muhammadiyah & Wabbabisme: Mengurai Titik Temu dan Titik Seteru* (Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah, 2012).

9. Fazlur Rahman, "Gerakan Pembaharuan Dalam Islam di Tengah Tantangan Dewasa Ini," in Harun Nasution et al., *Perkembangan Modern Dalam Islam* (Jakarta: Yayasan Oboro, 1986), 22.

6. *Ibid.*

7. PUSA which represents the modernist group has some Islamic education institutions known as 'madrasah' which are run under modern education system. In addition, it also gathers modernist scholars in Aceh, including Muhammadiyah scholars particularly those who came earlier to Aceh. From this, it is clear that there is an contiguity between Muhammadiyah and PUSA, which then caused Muhammadiyah to be part of the conflict between the two groups. See *Ibid.*, 271.



the Salafi-Wahabi group—even though Salafi-Wahabi is obviously against modernity while Muhammadiyah is a pioneer of the modernist movement in Indonesia. If they are not the same, how does Muhammadiyah negotiate the competing identities of modernism and tradition among the Acehnese Muslim community? This paper attempts to explore the dynamics of the Muhammadiyah movement as a *Tajdid* movement (reforming/modernist) in Aceh and, in particular, how it negotiates and resolves identity issues among the Acehnese.

Muhammadiyah and Religious Dynamics in Aceh

Muhammadiyah was one of the first Indonesian Islamic organizations, founded on 18 November 1912. It was Ahmad Dahlan, a cleric from the village of Kauman in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, who founded and started this modernist organization. According to the Articles of Association of Muhammadiyah, as quoted by Syamsul Anwar, the organization renamed itself as an “Islamic movement, Da’wah Amar Makruf Nahi Munkar, and Tajdid recognizing Koran and Sunnah as its sources.”¹⁰

Since its establishment, Muhammadiyah has delivered a modernist message as its fundamental

principle. The message was originally delivered by Ahmad Dahlan, who had been heavily influenced by the reforming ideas of the Middle East. Dahlan, who saw directly how the daily religious practice in society had widely deviated from pure Islamic teachings, initiated the steps of renewal from simple things. Deliar Noer has noted that the first step in realizing the idea of reformation was to change the direction of the *Qibla* prayer, which previously was performed facing the west. At the same time, he started organizing his comrades in the Kauman area to do volunteer work in improving the hygienic conditions and to repair and clean the streets and gullies. Though his actions attracted some local opposition, Dahlan considered them to be important in helping change behaviors which were inappropriate to Islam.¹¹

Muhammadiyah was born in a context in which many Muslims were questioning their own social and religious identities. In addition, they also saw fellow Muslims who were deviating from ideal Islam and were possessed by elements of *takbayul*, *bid’ah* and *khurafat* (superstition and heresy). Although Islam had been present in Indonesia many centuries before the rise of modernist movements, it had not penetrated deeply into Indonesian society. Even today, it is apparent

10. Syamsul Anwar, “Fatwā, Purification and Dynamization: A Study of Tarjih in Muhammadiyah,” *Islamic Law and Society*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2005), 29.

11. Deliar Noer, *Gerakan Modern Islam di Indonesia 1900-1942*, 7th edition (Jakarta: Pustaka LP3ES Indonesia, 1994), 85.



that there are some Islamic habits in Indonesia which come from the influence of non-Islamic traditions. And this has become the target of reformist missionary activity.¹²

Muhammadiyah has developed very fast. Even when Ahmad Dahlan was still alive, it already had branches around Java, and by 1930 it had penetrated into the other major islands of Indonesia such as Sulawesi, Kalimantan and Sumatera.¹³ In Aceh, Muhammadiyah was first introduced in 1923 by Djajasoeakarta. He was a Sundanese and an employee of the Dutch government who was assigned to supervise certain Indonesian areas, including Aceh. He made use of this opportunity to bring the idea of Muhammadiyah to Aceh. Four years later, Muhammadiyah was officially established in Aceh in 1927, 15 years after its birth in Yogyakarta. Acehnese Muhammadiyah was founded in Kutaradja (now Banda Aceh) on Merduati Road (now Jalan KH Ahmad Dahlan No. 7). It started from an Islamic gathering (*pengajian*) and then developed into a school. After that, Muhammadiyah grew inside and outside Banda Aceh at varied rates of development.¹⁴

The variety of Muhammadiyah

development in Aceh is understandable. In my opinion, this is due to several factors, with the first related to geography. Throughout Indonesia, Muhammadiyah tends to develop faster in urban areas and slower in rural areas. And this is true with Aceh as well. This fact is in accordance with what Marzuki stated: that in Aceh, Muhammadiyah has developed faster in urban areas among educated elite groups.¹⁵

The second factor is the dominance of the traditionalist group. Traditionalist groups in Aceh, which are represented by the *Dayah* theologians, hold a very significant influence among the population.¹⁶ A traditionalist group is a group that strongly holds and applies local

15. Interview with Marzuki, took place in early 2016.

16. *The author corresponded with Muftabudin on 27 July 2016.* In another occasion, Fithriady Ilyas, a lecturer of Islamic Studies at UIN ar-Raniry Banda Aceh and a PhD student at university of Malaya, Malaysia, typologically classified Aceh people in viewing Muhammadiyah into two. The first typology is Aceh people who studied in pesantren *dayah* (but not continuing their studies to college) and common people. These people consider Muhammadiyah a Wahabi, due to some facts like there is no qunut recitation during the dawn prayer, no tahlilan, and no kenduri for the dead people. In their point of view, labelling Wahabi to Muhammadiyah is considered more contemptible than *kufur*. This is due to the doctrine given in pesantren *dayah*. The second typology is Aceh people who have got modern pesantren educational experiences and academicians. This group of people see Muhammadiyah more objectively, which is a moderate and rational movement. *The author corresponded with Fithriady Ilyas on 28 July 2016.*

12. Syamsul Anwar, "Fatwā, Purification and Dynamization," 29.

13. Syamsul Anwar, "Fatwā, Purification and Dynamization," 32-33.

14. "Sekilas Sejarah Muhammadiyah Aceh," <http://aceh.muhammadiyah.or.id/content-3-sdet-sejarah.html>, accessed 31-7-2016.



indigenous practices in their religion and law. Interestingly, even though Aceh has a long history in the journey towards the application of Islamic law, technically its practices are still strongly influenced by customary local laws. The influence can be seen from the implementation of law enforcement in the Aceh Darussalam kingdom since the sultanate of Alaudin Riayat Shah Sultan al-Qahhar (1537-1571), in which murder, theft, excessive drinking and adultery were punished with strict sanctions based on *Jinayah Islam* law mixed with local traditional law.¹⁷ In short, it is said that the traditionalists are the group who blend both between Islamic law and traditional local legal practices. Due to this situation, some Islamic practices which contain strong traditional values still exist in Acehnese society. Thus, when Muhammadiyah and its modernist message came to Aceh, traditionalist people were unlikely to accept it easily. We might even say that they considered Muhammadiyah to be their *musob*¹⁸ (enemy).

17. Khamami Zada, "Sentuhan Adat Dalam Pemberlakuan Syariat Islam di Aceh (1514-1903)," *Karsa*, Vol. 20, no. 2 (2012), 198-199

18. *Musob* is a concept in aceh's tradition considering anyone who is outside Islam as an enemy or opponent. This concept is a consequence of Islamic system as a social political system in Aceh Islamic Kingdoms. *Musob* concept was at first addressed to non-Moslems (kafir people) and those who disturbed Aceh people life. However, it developed to be used to address anyone who blocks the implementation of Islamic law in Aceh, including Muslims. See Kamaruzzaman Bustaman Ahmad, "Islam dan

Recently, compared to the situation of a few years ago, the growth of Muhammadiyah among Acehnese religious practices has become more developed. More educational institutions belonging to Muhammadiyah —basic, secondary, and higher education— are now found in the cities of Aceh. In addition, there are some prominent figures of Muhammadiyah who have quite influence in society, especially in religious and social issues.¹⁹ One example is Prof. Al Yasa 'Abu Bakar, a professor and expert on Islamic law at UIN ar-Raniry Banda Aceh. In fact, he was appointed as one of the important figures during the reconciliation process in Sweden between the government and Hasan Tiro, the leader of Gerakan Aceh Merdeka/GAM (Movement for a Free Aceh).²⁰

Salafism and Modernism: A Contradiction?

Salafism and *modernism* are considered to be two terms that are contradictory in their meaning and ideology. In simple terms this assumption can be justified, especially if we look at what they literally mean. However, the question is, is it true that the two can not be reconciled and

Kekerasan: Pengalaman Untuk Aceh (Tinjauan Aspek Sosio-Historis dan Sosio-Antropologis)," *Peuradeun*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (September 2014), 74-75.

19. The author corresponded with Muftahudin on 27 July 2016.

20. Eka Srimulyani, "Islam, Perempuan dan Resolusi Konflik di Aceh", 281.



integrated? To determine the answer, I will first present a discussion of these terms and how they develop in society.

Salafism is derived from the Arabic word *salaf*, which means “first” or “ancient” (*taqaddam wa sabaq*).²¹ The antonym of the word *Salaf* is *khalaf*, whose literal meaning is “later”.²² A search through App *Zekr* informs us that the word *Salaf* in Koran is mentioned in eight verses, where it refers to “the past”.²³ According to Saʿīd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī, the word *Salafī* refers to the three generations since the birth of Islam. This is based on hadist: “The best of generations is my generation (the Prophet), the generation after me (Friends), and after (Successors) (tabiʿin).”²⁴ Today, the terms *Salafism* and *Salafī* have a global usage. As evidence, the *Oxford Dictionary* includes an entry for *Salafī* with the following definition: “a member of a strictly orthodox Sunni Muslim sect advocating a return to the early Islam of the Koran and Sunna”.²⁵

21. Aḥmad bin Fāris bin Zakariyā al-Rāzī, *Muʿjam Maqāyīs al-Lughah* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1979) III: 95.

22. Iffah Muzammil, “Global Salafisme Antara Gerakan dan Kekerasan,” *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Juni 2013), 213.

23. These verses are al-Zukhruf: 56, al-Haqqah: 24, al-Anfal: 38, al-Nisa’: 22, Yunus: 30, al-Baqarah: 275, al-Maidah: 95, dan al-Nisa: 23.

24. Muḥammad Saʿīd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī, *Al-Salafīyah: Maḥalab Zamanīyah Mubārakah Lā Madḡhab Islāmī*, (Damaskus: Dār al-Fikr, 1998), 9.

25. <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/salafi>

According to Muhammad Rofiq, *Salafism* as a doctrine was established by Muslim reformers living in the late 19th and early 20th centuries named Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī (1897), Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1905) and Muḥammad Raṣīd Riḍā (1935). However, some scholars believe that *Salafism* was established much earlier, in Aḥmad bin Hanbal’s textual idea (855) and in the purification movement of Ibnu Taymiyyah (1328) and Ibnu al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (1350). The differences among the variants of *Salafism* are that ‘Abduh’s *Salafism* referred to intellectual responses to European colonialism and the backwardness of the Islamic world in the modern age, while Ibnu Taymiyyah’s *Salafism* was a response to syncretism and the institutional downfall of an Islamic caliphate in the Middle Ages. In addition, Aḥmad bin Hanbal’s *Salafism* was a response to *Kalam Mu’tazilite* rationality in the era of the *Abbasīyah*.²⁶

In current usage, the term *Salafism* is employed with at least two meanings. First, *Salafism* can refer to a movement that brings the spirit back to religious authenticity based on the Koran and the Sunnah. Second, *Salafism* can refer to a movement or group of intolerant, rigid, ultra-conservative, anti-modernity and anti-reform.²⁷ In the contemporary

26. Muhammad Rofiq, “Krisis Otoritas Keagamaan Kontemporer: Literalisme Berjubah Salafī,” *Jurnal Tarjih*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (1434/2013), 101.

27. Iffah Muzammil, “Global Salafisme Antara Gerakan dan Kekerasan,” 213-214.



era, the second meaning usually refers to the Wahabi group founded by Muḥammad bin ‘Abdul Wahhāb in Saudi Arabia.²⁸ Moreover, this version of the term *Salafism* is considered by some as the genealogy of terrorist ideology.²⁹ To differentiate the two meanings of *Salafi*, some scholars call this second version *Salafi-Wahabi*.

If we consider the preferred definition of *Salafi* as the first one, Muhammadiyah and the other modernist movements that have the same spiritual goal (that is, a desire to return to religious authenticity) can be said to be groups of *Salafi*. Consequently, we would not or can not call Muhammadiyah a *Salafi-Wahabi* group.

In contrast to the term *Salafism*, which comes from Arabic, the term *modernism* comes from a Western context. This term is used by Western scholars in the context of religious history.³⁰ Historically, it has been used to

contrast with the term *fundamentalism*.³¹ Yusril Ihza Mahendra states that *modernism* was originally defined as a stream of religion which interpreted the doctrine of Christianity to adapt it to modern developments. Only later was the term *modernism* used by Western Orientalist scholars in the social sciences and humanities to explain similar trends of thought in societies that embraced other religions³²—including Muslim communities.³³

In the discourse of Islamic thought, Islamic modernism or (modernist Islam) interprets Islam using a rational approach in order to adapt it to changes in the modern world.³⁴ Islamic modernists try to harmonize or reconcile religion and modernization in the Islamic world;³⁵ they are what Leslie H. Palmier refers to as a “group that combines religion with Western scientific theories.”³⁶ Fazlur Rahman, as quoted by Chrizin, explains the principles of the modernists in viewing

28. Muhammad Rofiq, “Krisis Otoritas Keagamaan Kontemporer,” 101.

29. Inayah Rohmaniyah dan Mark Woodward, “Wahhabi Perspectives on Pluralism and Gender: A Saudi-Indonesian Contrast,” Research Report, No. 1201 at Center for Strategis Communication, Arizona State University, 3.

30. Yusril Ihza Mahendra, *Modernisme dan Fundamentalisme Dalam Politik Islam* (Jakarta, Paramadina, 1999), h. 5-6; Muhammad chrizin, “Jihad Dalam al-Qur’an Perspektif Modernis dan Fundamental,” *Hermeneia: Jurnal Kajian Islam Interdisipliner*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (January-June 2003), 96;

31. Asep Syamsul M. Romli, *Demonologi Islam: Upaya Barat Membasmi Kekuatan Islam* (Jakarta: Gema Insani Press, 2000), 30.

32. Yusril Ihza Mahendra, *Modernisme dan Fundamentalisme Dalam Politik Islam*, 5-6.

33. Muhammad chrizin, “Jihad Dalam al-Qur’an Perspektif Modernis dan Fundamental,” 96.

34. Yusril Ihza Mahendra, *Modernisme dan Fundamentalisme Dalam Politik Islam*, 12.

35. Muhammad chrizin, “Jihad Dalam al-Qur’an Perspektif Modernis dan Fundamental,” 97.

36. Leslie H. Palmier, “Modern Islam in Indonesia: The Muhammadiyah After Independence,” *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (September 1954), 256.



religious doctrine. Modernist Islam divides religious doctrine into two areas, namely, worship and *muamalah*. All rules in the field of worship are already specified in the *shari'a*. Meanwhile, in the field of *muamalah*, *shari'a* provides general principles and encourages creativity, as without creativity (*ijtihad*) Islam would lose its contemporary relevance. *Muamalah* includes a wide range of systems, methods, or any of the treasures of other civilizations as long as they are beneficial for modern life. The origin of Islamic modernism goes back to the nature of Islamic doctrine as “modern”, because it is open and continues to encourage change in a more progressive direction.³⁷

It is therefore obvious that *Salafism* and *modernism* are actually two opposing schools of thought—especially if we acknowledge the historical root of fundamentalism as a reaction to modernism. Scholars define fundamentalism as a stream that clings to the “fundamentals” of a certain religion by interpreting religious scriptures in a rigid and literal way.³⁸ Among the main trends of Islamic fundamentalism are strict religious practices, commitment to abide by the text as it is, commitment to maintain Islamic countries, and the need to implement *shari'a* as practiced

in the era of the Prophet Muhammad in Medina. All of these are similar, not to say identical, to the characteristics of *Salafi* groups, and particularly the term *Salafi* in the second definition as previously explained: that is, *Salafism* referring to a movement or group of intolerance, rigidity, ultra-conservatism, anti-modernity and anti-reform. If historically fundamentalism refers to a reaction to modernism, then *Salafism* is also a response to Western progress toward change and modernity. Thus, it is clear that there is a gap between modernism and *Salafism* which makes them contradictory.

Muhammadiyah's Tajdid Spirit: Negotiating Identity Between *Salafism* and *Modernism*

Even though it would seem difficult to reconcile and integrate *Salafism* and *modernism*, Muhammadiyah has attempted efforts to reconcile these two principles. According to Muhammadiyah (and apparently other modernist movements), there should be a strict field of work done by each of these two. Muhammadiyah believes that there are three fields that should be made clear in Islam: faith, *ibadah* (worship), and *muamalah*.

As a movement and an organization in existence for more than a century, Muhammadiyah has constructed a *manhaj* model (methodology) to direct and control its journey in facing the changing world on one side and in constantly upholding

37. Muhammad chrizin, “Jihad Dalam al-Qur'an Perspektif Modernis dan Fundamentalisme,” 97.

38. For instance see Yusril Ihza Mahendra, *Modernisme dan Fundamentalisme Dalam Politik Islam*, 12.



fundamental religious values on the other. In other words, Muhammadiyah strives to align the values of religion with modernity in order to remain relevant in the contemporary world. To realize these goals, Muhammadiyah founded Majelis Tarjih (the Tarjih Board) to formulate and achieve its religious activities and strategies.³⁹ It is therefore Majelis Tarjih becomes the representation of Muhammadiyah in the religion field.

Majelis Tarjih formulates the purpose and actions of Muhammadiyah, particularly in the field of religion to anticipate religious issues and problems. The formulation is commonly called *Manhaj Tarjih*, it provides not only a methodology but also some fundamental values to help understand religion. A discussion of the methodology is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, we focus on the fundamental values and spirit of *Manhaj Tarjih*. By so doing, we will see what efforts Muhammadiyah has made in reconciling and aligning Salafist and modernist principles.

There are four spirits that are grounded in *Manhaj Tarjih*:

- 1) **Tolerance:** Decisions made by Majelis Tarjih are not necessarily the most correct or absolutely right. Muhammadiyah never claims to have the only truth.
- 2) **Openness:** Any decision made by the Majelis Tarjih can be criticized

to improve it. If stronger and more convincing arguments are found, Majelis Tarjih will not be reluctant to discuss them and make necessary revisions.

- 3) **Unaffiliated school of thought:** Muhammadiyah is not affiliated with any specific schools of thought. The *ijtihad* is based on Koran, Sunnah and the existing *ijtihad* methods. Muhammadiyah never completely negates the opinions of *fukaha*. Instead, their opinions are taken into consideration during the making of rules and norms which are in line with the contemporary contexts in which people live.
- 4) **Tajdid:** In Muhammadiyah, this has two meanings: (1) In the field of faith and worship, *tajdid* refers to purification in terms of returning the faith and *ibadah* (worship) to their purist form, which is the *Sunnah*, and (2) In the field of worldly *mualamah*, *tajdid* means dinamizing people's lives with creativity in accordance with the demands of the times.⁴⁰

These four spirits embodied in *Manhaj Tarjih* completely represent the Muhamadiyah movement in the religious field. The two meanings of *tajdid* can be interpreted as a way for Muhammadiyah to reconcile and integrate the principles of *Salafism* and

39. Syamsul Anwar, "Fatwā, Purification and Dynamization," 34.

40. Syamsul Anwar, "Manhaj Tarjih," 5-8, the paper presented at event Rapat Kerja Tingkat Pusat Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, 19-21 Rabiul Akhir/January 29-31, 2016.



modernism. The keywords of *tajdid* are “purification” and “dynamization”. Purification in worship and creed (the first meaning of *tajdid*) is in harmony with the spirit of *Salafism* that encourages people to go back to Koran and Sunnah (*ar-ruju’ ila al-Quran wa as-Sunnah*).

In Muhammadiyah, purification means examining worship guidance from the Sunnah in order to find the most appropriate form of worship—or at least the closest to the Sunnah. This does not mean that Muhammadiyah rules out the presence of diversity (*tanawwu’*) in the *kaifat* (ways) of worship. In seeking the most appropriate way or form of worship with the Prophet’s Sunnah, Muhammadiyah maintains the *tanawwu’* principle, which means as long as it has got its bases on the Sunnah. One of the best examples of this is the variation in reciting the *iftitah* prayer, which indicates that the Prophet himself varied its application. Conversely, the Majelis Tarjih strongly states that any variant of worship that is not supported by Sunnah cannot be considered a religious practice and can not be put into practice. Therefore, in the field of worship, purification means conducting relevant studies to free faith (*aqidah*) from any elements of superstition (*takbayul*).⁴¹

Interestingly, even though both Muhammadiyah and Salafism encourage a return to only the Koran and Sunnah for guidance on worship and faith, there

is a very fundamental difference between them. The difference lies in the way the Muhammadiyah movement looks at the worldly *muamalah* (*muamalah dunyah*). In the field of *muamalah*, Muhammadiyah believes that *tajdid* no longer means only purification. Instead, Muhammadiyah switches to the second meaning, which encourages dynamization. *Tajdid* in *muamalah* thus means dynamizing the life of societies so that it is line with the spirit of the Koran and Sunnah. As a result, some existing norms and practices in the past can be changed if they no longer support the demand and dynamic for change.⁴² This fact becomes the differentiator between Muhammadiyah and Salafi (especially the Salafi-Wahhabi). In Salafi, on the other hand, *muamalah*-related activities and ideas should follow what the Prophet did in his time. For example, in the field of politics, Salafist can not accept the concept of democracy because it is a product of modernity, and it did not exist during the time of the Prophet.⁴³

The Muhammadiyah spirit to do dynamization can be said to be — within certain limits — similar to the aim of modernism, which is always trying to make adjustments to modern developments. In the view of Greg Barton, the word *modern* can also be

42. *Ibid*.

43. Another indication showing Muhammadiyah is different from Wahabi, see Amin Abdullah, “Sinergisitas Puritanisme dengan Keilmuan Kontemporer,” in Mu’arif, ed., *Muhammadiyah & Wabbabisme*, 132-133.

41. Syamsul Anwar, “Manhaj Tarjih,” 7.



interpreted as “dynamic”, which can mean the ability to adapt and respond creatively to a difficult environment, besides totality and energetic. According to him, dynamics includes two processes: promoting existing positive life values while replacing old values with new and perfected ones. The process of value changing is what he calls “modernization”.⁴⁴ In other words, it can be said that the dynamic is the motor of modernism. Promoting existing positive values and at the same time replacing old values with new and perfected ones is in line with the following principle of Islamic thought that addresses worldly *muamalah* matters: “*al-muhafazhatu ala al-qadim al-salih wa al-akhdzu bi al-jadid al-aslah*” (“keep the relevant old traditions while also taking more relevant new ones”).

Muhammadiyah as a *Tajdid* Movement in Aceh

Being based on the spirit of *tajdid*, Muhammadiyah does its *da'wah* among Acehnese Muslims who still hold quite a strong belief in tradition. In doing so, Muhammadiyah in Aceh has made some adjustment with the cultural side of society, which is, of course, different from the culture of Yogyakarta, the original site of Muhammadiyah. This fact was explained in the opening speech of Prof. Al Yasa 'Abu Bakr — a prominent Muhammadiyah figure

in Aceh — during an *iftitah* sermon at the annual regional meeting of Muhammadiyah and the 38th Aisyiyah Conference in Banda Aceh. In his speech he stated:

Muhammadiyah is present and plays an active role in communities throughout Aceh because it has been supported by favorable circumstances, namely, help from the communities and protection from the government. Muhammadiyah is a tolerant organization which aims to educate people about diversity in worship and in accepting guidance in interpreting Al-Quran and Hadith. Muhammadiyah encourages people to plan various activities and businesses as an attempt to build a future-oriented society, instead of a past-oriented one. Muhammadiyah supports Qanun Aceh, which already stated that the only faith allowed to develop in Aceh is *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah*. Muhammadiyah accepts it without objection because we truly understand what it means and what true meanings it has. *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah* is a creed which is based on the Koran and Sunnah, referring to the understanding of the *Sababa radiyallahu `anhum* and resting on the six pillars of faith. In recent times this understanding has been systematized in such a way using certain methods such as *Murji'ah*, *Salafiah*, *Asy'ariah* and *Maturidiah*. At the present time, scholars have been trying to develop and rearrange them systematically using new ways, so that they are easily understood by today's society whose logical

44. Greg Fealy dan Greg Barton, *Tradisionalisme Radikal: Persinggungan Nahdatul Ulama-Negara* (Yogyakarta: LkiS, 1997), 176.



thinking is strongly influenced by the progress of science and technology. In addition, Muhammadiyah does not mind the *Qanun* stating that the implementation of acts of worship in Aceh will give priority to the *Syafi'iah* school of thought, as in the same chapter of the *Qanun* there is a provision that clearly states that any other deeds of worship, as long as they are sponsored by official and legal religious organizations, are allowed to be practiced and facilitated and protected by the Government of Aceh. On the other hand, Muhammadiyah objects to and will not accept the existing provisions of the *Qanun* that are narrowly conceived, and are interpreted in a limited manner based on the understanding or desire of certain political groups. Muhammadiyah hopes that the provisions of *Qanun* are always interpreted openly and as they are, so that the spirit of tolerance and openness in them is not lost because of the desire and restrictions of certain groups.”⁴⁵

From this statement of Al Yasa, we can identify two important points. First, as with Muhammadiyah in other areas, Muhammadiyah in Aceh

45. See more at Al Yasa' Abu Bakar, “Khutbah Iftitah Ketua Pimpinan Wilayah Muhammadiyah Aceh Dalam Acara Pembukaan Musyawarah Wilayah Muhammadiyah Dan ‘Aisyiah Ke-38’”, <http://alyasaa-bubakar.com/2015/12/khutbah-iftitah-ketua-pimpinan-wilayah-muhammadiyah-aceh-dalam-acara-pembukaan-musyawarah-wilayah-muhammadiyah-dan-aisyiah-ke-38-di-banda-aceh/>, accessed 31-7-2016.

advocates “Islam yang berkemajuan” — a term used by the founder of Muhammadiyah long before use of the terms modernist Islam or progressive Islam⁴⁶ — on the basis of *tajdid* spirit, tolerance, openness, and non-affiliation with any particular schools of thought. Second, there is an acculturation between the Muhammadiyah guided spirits and Acehnese social principles in implementing the *Qanun* in Aceh, which is one of *Qanun* contents is based on *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah* and Shaffi based in its worship practice.

These two important points can apparently (but not comprehensively) explain how Muhammadiyah has become a *tajdid* movement in Aceh. It has accomplished this due to a careful negotiation between the principles to be restrained and the culture to be accommodated, as long as they are in accordance with the spirit of the Koran and Sunnah.

Closing Remarks

First, although Muhammadiyah reflects the spirit of Salafi in terms of advocating a return to purity based on the Koran and Sunnah, Muhammadiyah still accommodates the spirit in progress, tolerance, openness

46. Amin Abdullah, “Reaktualisasi Islam yang ‘Berkemajuan’: Agenda Strategis Muhammadiyah di Tengah Gerakan Keagamaan Kontemporer,” the paper presented at Ramadhan Religious Meeting that by the central board of Muhammadiyah, Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta, 7 Ramadhan 1432/Agustus 2011.



to modernity, and acceptance of change according to science. And this is what distinguishes Muhammadiyah and the Salafi (the Salafi-Wahabi in particular). Thus, the only similarity between Muhammadiyah and the Salafi is that both have the goal of returning to Qur'an and Sunnah.

Second, Muhammadiyah's openness to modernity on one hand, and its strong belief in returning to only the Qur'an and Sunnah on the other, is a type of fusion that enables Muhammadiyah to reconcile and bridge the principles of Salafism and modernism. And it is in line with the meaning of *tajdid*, which is the spirit of Muhammadiyah.

Third, Muhammadiyah has implemented *tajdid* in Aceh in order to build a progressive Acehnese Muslim society that is progressive in development but nevertheless respects the principles of Acehnese traditional society in implementing the *Qanun*.

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