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Genealogy Thinking and Characteristics of Islamic Theology Abdurrahman Wahid

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Abstract

This study seeks to explore the genealogy of Islamic theological thought and characteristics Abdurrahman Wahid. The author uses a qualitative approach in this study. The research data used were sourced from library data. This study uses a content analysis technique (content analysis), which is a method of data analysis carried out systematically and objectively. The results of this study indicate that the life of Abdurrahman Wahid is so complex and full of intellectual wandering in his life, especially at the young age of the most wrestling in the pesantren world that makes Abdurrahman Wahid born as a figure of Islamic thinkers whose thoughts are recognized in Indonesia, even because of his flexible thinking and friendly. So Abdurrahman Wahid, in the end, is also widely known in the Western world. On the other hand, the Islamic model believed by Abdurrahman Wahid is applied in his daily life by accommodating all the interests of the community without discriminating against his background. Abdurrahman Wahid's thoughts, ranging from the ideas of pluralism, the concept of indigenization to neo-modernist patterns of Islamic thought that value pluralism and freedom of belief, need to be emphasized as one of the theological ideas in Indonesia. Thus, the thought of Abdurrahman Wahid's theology is no longer only at the level of God alone, but how the teachings of God incarnate in religious life for the sake of creating mutual tolerance and peace.

Keywords: *Genealogy, Characteristics of Thought, Islamic Theology*

Introduction

The tendency of growing Islamic thought in Indonesia, with the presence of traditionalism, modernism, and fundamentalism is certainly not signified the cessation of the flow of Islamic thought. As a methodological framework, subsequent methodological updates will always be present, coloring the dynamics of the development of Islamic thought.

The superiority of Islam in Indonesia is its ability to negotiate and compromise with local values. According to Azyumardi Azra, Islam in Indonesia since its arrival and initial

development did not only unite the Indonesian people religiously. However, it also provides a solid basis for religious, social solidarity. (Kamaruzzaman, 2002; 16) Abdurrahman Wahid also stated the same thing. Abdurrahman Wahid considered that Islam should not appear exclusively, but rather had a whole face by not highlighting Islamic symbols. (Zada, 2002; 128)

Abdurrahman Wahid always tried to open the eyes of the heart and mind and provide enlightenment to humanity so that they were not bound by symbols that were indeed useful, but not infrequently caused disasters, shortsightedness, and barriers to religious spirituality. Abdurrahman Wahid reminded that God is a symbol given by each religion, which is then believed by His people. In other words, God is understood not to be a symbol that differs from one religion to another. Still, a universal God free from symbols, God is Perfect, and God is for all religions. (INCREs, 2000; 84)

Islam, in the opinion of Abdurrahman Wahid, is not a frozen doctrine that closes opportunities for interpretation but is an open text that is always ready for any new interpretation related to issues in the dynamics of the times. In that sense, Islam must be judged from its function as a way of life that emphasizes the welfare of society. (Steenbrink, 1997; 190) Abdurrahman Wahid's theological view is based on the consideration that Indonesia is a plural state, so that Islam should prioritize the substance of teachings, such as upholding justice, democracy and developing the character of inclusivism rather than merely an exclusive Islam which only debates the symbols of Islam which actually precisely symbolize Islam far from the substance of the presence of Islam as religion *celestial* in Indonesia. So it is not surprising in Abdurrahman Wahid's religious practice, more focused on human rights, the defense of minorities based on aspects of justice as the teachings of Islam in its concrete form.

Plurality cannot, of course, be understood solely based on the reality of a diverse society and consisting of various ethnic groups and beliefs, or seeing pluralism as a negative good. Still, pluralism must be understood as a valid link of diversity in the bonds of civilization. (Rahman, 2000; 109) Abdurrahman Wahid, as a figure who appreciates community pluralism, encourages awareness to know each other and dialogue to realize *take and give* as an effort to maintain stability and peace in society.

The intersection between religion, especially Islam and culture in Indonesia, is a problematic feature not to be discussed in the context of Islamic thought. Related to this problem, of course, Abdurrahman Wahid is a category of thinkers in Indonesia who try to answer the question in anticipating the flow of modernization. The most important thing, according to Abdurrahman Wahid, is to fight for Islamic values, not the formalistic universe. Islam is only seen as a source of inspiration-motivation, an ethical-moral foundation, not as a mere social and political symbol. In other words, Islam is not read in terms of its doctrinal verbatim but tries to capture its spirit and spirit. Islam, in its formal legal meaning, cannot be used as an alternative ideology for the *blueprint* of the Indonesian nation-state. Islam is a complementary factor among a broader spectrum of other elements in the life of the nation.

The above discourse is essential to be explored mainly related to the thoughts of Abdurrahman Wahid, as a figure whose ideas influence Indonesian society. For this reason,

so the writer is interested in exploring the genealogy of Abdurrahman Wahid's Islamic theological thought and the characteristics of Abdurrahman Wahid's Islamic thought.

The author uses a qualitative approach in this study. The research data that I use is sourced from library data. The aim is to find out deeply about genealogy and the characteristics of Abdurrahman Wahid's thoughts, especially those who come in contact with Islamic theology. This study uses a content analysis technique (*content analysis*), which is a method of data analysis carried out systematically and objectively. (Krippendorff, 1991; 15). Techniques *Content analysis* includes taxonomic analysis and interpretation. The taxonomic analysis is used to analyze domains to get a comprehensive picture of Abdurrahman Wahid's theological thinking. (Furchan & Maimun, 2005; 64-67). Furthermore, through interpretive methods, the author tries to interpret and analyze in-depth theological thoughts and actions of Abdurrahman Wahid in applying his religious concepts. This interpretive method the authors do within the framework and limits of the objective thinking flow to understand the purpose of Abdurrahman Wahid's ideas, especially his views on theological concepts that are appropriate for the context of Indonesianness.

Overview of Theory

In general, Islamic thought in Indonesia can be categorized into three broad groups, namely, thinking *formalistic*, *substantial*, and *spiritualistic*. typology *Formalistic* refers to groups that emphasize ideologization or politicization that leads to formal religious symbolism. (Zuly Qodir, 2007; 58). Formalism emphasizes that the values implemented by Islam are not implicit enough but must be applied explicitly. That is, the emphasis made on this formalistic typology is formal obedience and religious law, which in social contexts is often manifested in religious symbolization. The thought movement of formalistic thought groups called "hardliners," according to Abdurrahman Wahid, was influenced by transnational Islamic movements from the Middle East, especially those of Wahhabism or Muslim Brotherhood, or a combination of both. (Abdurrahman Wahid, 2009: 20). In Indonesia, groups that are netted in formalistic typology are vigorously fighting for the implementation of Islamic law and systematically crystallized in various political parties or religious movements that carry Islamic law.

Typology is *Substantial* based on the paradigm of religious understanding, which is more concerned with substance or content than specific explicit labels or symbols relating to religion. Thus, this typology emphasizes nature rather than form so that this group considers that Islamization does not need to be formally applied to Islamic law, but most importantly the substance of the teachings contained in Islam, such as the concept of equality, justice, and independence can be realized in Indonesian society. (Shaleh, 2003; 367-368). The last group, namely, *spiritualism*. The Islamic thinker group of *spiritualism* places more emphasis on developing inner attitudes, which to achieve this entails participation in exclusively spiritual-mystical groups, Sufism or *tarekat*, or even through groups that can be called cults. (Nurcholish Madjid, 2000; 115).

On the other hand, the shifting theology that developed in Indonesia cannot be separated from the two main streams of thought that have developed long before, namely

traditionalists and modernist Islam. The empirical facts of socio-political conditions in Indonesia have a substantial share in the dynamics of Islamic theological thinking. The dominant practiced in Indonesia since the early development of Islam is the Asy'ariyah theology, which is the *school of theology mainstream school of theology*, not even in Indonesia Ash'ariyah theology or *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* (Sunni) followed by the majority of Muslims in world. (Azra, 1999; 44).

In its development stage, there is not only one theological school that is embraced in Indonesia, but there is another theological school with differences in the substance of thought and ultimately triggers theological tension and intellectual reactions that further enrich the dynamics of Islam in Indonesia. This was elaborated by Azra into several typologies of theological views. This classification, in reality, does not apply consistently, but there are characters from several topologies that have a relationship. However, this classification is important to be done to look for the substance of thought of each of the theological views that reinforces it, namely modernism, transformative, inclusivism, fundamentalism, and neo-traditionalism. (Azra, 1999; 52-54).

First, theology of modernism. The emergence of modern theology was motivated by the motivation to modernize or advance Muslims. In one way or another, whether directly or not, theology of modernism was inspired by a strong context with the modernization program launched by the New Order government. Among the leading protagonists of modernization theology in Indonesia are Harun Nasution and Nurcholis Madjid.

Second. transformation theology. To some extent, transformative theology can be said to be a "part" of modern theology, in the sense that transformative theology wants to realize the transformation of Muslim societies so that they can progress. On the other hand, transformative theology sees that reform must start from the *grassroots level*. The main protagonists of the transformative theology are, to be expected, those who are mainly involved in non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as M. Dawam Rahardjo, Adi Sasono, Hadimulyo, and many other NGO activists.

Third, theology of inclusivism. The theology of inclusivism overlaps in certain aspects with the theology of modernization. The central theme of inclusivism theology is the development of religious understanding and life that is inclusive, tolerant, and respectful of religious pluralism so that adherents of various religious traditions or religions can coexist peacefully (*peaceful co-existence*). Prominent theology figures include Mukti Ali, Nurcholish Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, and Djohan Effendi.

Fourth, theology of fundamentalism. The theology of fundamentalism (contemporary) or neo-fundamentalism to distinguish it from 'classical' fundamentalism like the Wahabi movement in many ways emerged as a reaction to the theology of modernism which was seen as having 'sacrificed' Islam for the sake of modernization which was considered by fundamentalists to be almost identical to westernization. Most supporters of the theology of fundamentalism are students and young people who form exclusive groups (*usrah*) under the leadership of "priests" or "amirs."

Fifth, neo traditionalism theology. The theology of neo traditionalism emerged and developed more or less as a reaction to the theology of modernization which was seen to have driven the "despiritualization" of Islam. One of the main themes of neo traditionalism

theology is a return to the wealth of traditional Islamic spiritual heritage, especially Sufism (and *tarekat*), and sharia. It is different from the theology of fundamentalism which tends to reject the inheritance of Islamic traditions, which are considered to have been mixed with *bid'ah* and *khurafat*.

The characteristics of each typology proposed by Azra have consequences in its application in Indonesia. The many religions and cultural differences shared by plural Indonesian people will have a profound influence on theological concepts.

Findings and Discussion

1. Genealogy of Islamic Theological Thought Abdurrahman Wahid

Abdurrahman Wahid was not only known as a scholar but also a culturalist, writer, intellectual, politician, and humorist, so Abdurrahman Wahid was called a national teacher, pluralist figure, father of democracy, hero of the oppressed, even *wali Allah*. (Moses, 2010; 3). Not surprisingly, to this day, his tomb in the Tebu Ireng Islamic Boarding School complex, Jombang has never been devoid of pilgrims coming from various walks of life. The number of nicknames given by the community makes Abdurrahman Wahid positioned as a text in the life of nationalism in Indonesia. what is done, talked about, and thought about is the subject of public discussion in various circles. (Al-Zastrouw, 1999; 2).

Abdurrahman Wahid's modest personality holds a unique mystery, and his thoughts are not easy to guess. The most important thing to understand Abdurrahman Wahid, as described by Greg Barton, is to always try to find what is implied from what is written. In general, it is not wise to underestimate Abdurrahman Wahid because, in him, there is always something more than what is visible. However, it is also unwise to understand what he is saying too literally. Often, what Abdurrahman Wahid said was not what he knew, but rather what he wanted as something true. (Barton, 2011; 7). Abdurrahman Wahid, at certain times, showed an optimistic and confident attitude in acting, but at certain times Abdurrahman Wahid would look opportunistic and sometimes take confusing political steps. In other words, Abdurrahman Wahid kept many paradoxes in his personal formation. In a successful review by Barton, Abdurrahman Wahid was a figure who was very lightly viewed, but also highly respected, as well as a very popular figure. (Barton, 2011; 19).

Behind his phenomenal personality in Indonesia, Abdurrahman Wahid is not a spontaneous figure, but his life background is filled with struggle and dynamics, and of course, there are a number of names that affect his personality and thoughtful character.

Abdurrahman Wahid's intellectual development was shaped by classical Islamic education and modern Western education. (Barton, 1999; 325). Culturally, Abdurrahman Wahid crosses three cultural layers. *First*, Abdurrahman Wahid came into contact with the pesantren world culture, which was very hierarchical, closed, and full of ethics that were completely formal; *second*, the open and hard Eastern world; and *third*, liberal, rational and secular Western culture. Everything seems to enter into the person and form a synergy. Almost no one dominantly influenced Abdurrahman Wahid's personality, and each of the intellectual journeys he experienced had a dialogue with him.

In the view of John L. Esposito in Greg Barton, Abdurrahman Wahid's intellectual uniqueness was influenced by *first*, the family factor that always taught me to always think openly and question something intellectually; *secondly*, Abdurrahman Wahid grew up in the world of traditional Indonesian Islamic mysticism, and *third*, Abdurrahman Wahid was influenced by the cultural orientation and modern Indonesian society that led to pluralism and egalitarianism. (Barton, 2011; 135). This is why Abdurrahman Wahid always seems dynamic and difficult to understand. His freedom of thought and the breadth of his thought horizons transcended the boundaries of traditionalism held by his own community. Despite the controversy, all of these activities have been appreciated by many, including those seen from the award *Magsaysay* from the Philippine government for its efforts to develop interfaith relations in Indonesia (1993) and the Islamic Da'wah Award from the Egyptian Government (1991). (Zainal Ali, 2008; 17).

His cultural journey during his lifetime at the traditional Islamic boarding school and his contact with Western culture brought Abdurrahman Wahid's openness to the study of other traditions outside of the mainstream traditions he had adopted from the beginning. This is precisely what, according to Barton in Syafi'i Ma'arif, Abdurrahman Wahid succeeded in bringing his followers, especially in the NU organization, along with its traditionalism insights into modern, liberal and cosmopolitan discourse while maintaining and preserving the classical traditions of Islam, (Barton, 1999; 325). As traditionalists believe that everything that is not clearly prohibited by the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet, this is permitted as long as there is consistency with the principles and values contained in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. (Barton, 2011; 68).

Trace the thought of Abdurrahman Wahid, for example, about the world of *pesantren*. Abdurrahman Wahid considers that the *pesantren* world is at a crossroads due to the flow of modernization and the inadequate accommodation of the demands of the people who are changing rapidly. Based on this, Abdurrahman Wahid reminded to strive to raise the quality progressively that allows Islam to remain acceptable in the midst of society. (Aziz, 1999; 31).

Abdurrahman Wahid's thoughts are clear in his formulation of the concept of *Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah*, which is different from what is generally understood by the public. The Doctrine, *Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah* which is the basic foundation of traditionalist religion and considers it a form of Islam and as a basis for traditionalism defense of modernism. Abdurrahman Wahid views that the doctrine *Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah* is an academic concept that should bring a universal human spirit and is a series of views on various aspects of community life in the form of ideological views and life orientation, as well as being a set of values in people's lives. (Aziz, 1999; 32). This shows the desire of Abdurrahman Wahid to transform religious values in broader life.

The strength of the *pesantren* base that influenced Abdurrahman Wahid's life, although at a young age he had been involved in the Muslim Brotherhood movement at the invitation of his uncle, Aziz Bisri, known as fundamentalist Islam. However, at that time, according to Barton's comment, at that time, Abdurrahman Wahid was getting bored with Islamic titles, which he considered merely a superficial repetition of meaning. At that time, too, he began to reject all expressions of Islam or fundamentalism because he considered this to be contrary to the spirit of the original Islam. His rejection came after he

first tried the fundamentalist ideas when he was in Jombang and then in Cairo and finally determined his position on these ideas. (Aziz, 1999; 58).

Abdurrahman Wahid's complicated history of life and intellectual wanderings throughout his life, especially in his youth, the most struggling in the pesantren world, made Abdurrahman Wahid born as a Muslim thinker whose thoughts were recognized in Indonesia, even because of his flexible and friendly feelings, Abdurrahman Wahid widely known in the Western world.

2. Characteristics of Islamic thought Abdurrahman Wahid

Islam in addition to being an early religion also became the last religion. By repeating the teachings of all the Prophets, Islam accentuates its universal nature and places itself as the main religion. This confession, which was never proposed by other orthodox beliefs before Islam, distinguishes it from different religions and gives a specific form. There is no other religion that can match Islam as a universal religion. (Abdurrahman Wahid & Hasim Wahid, 1983; 9-20).

Islamic universalism manifests itself in various important manifestations, and the best is in its teachings. The series of instructions covering multiple fields, such as religious law (fiqh), faith (monotheism), ethics (morals, are often narrowed by the community to become mere morality) and attitudes of life display enormous concern for the main elements of humanity (*al-insaniyyah*), such as the principles of equality before the law, protection of citizens from wisdom and abuse, safeguarding weak rights and suffering from lack. (Nurcholis Madjid, 2007; 1).

The development of Islamic thought in Indonesia seems to be less than perfect without involving Islamic ideas offered by Abdurrahman Wahid. Regarding Islam, Abdurrahman Wahid is no longer involved in *discourses* intellectual, when it is no longer able to answer the problems that are being faced by the Indonesian people. As an intellectual *Sunni* tradition in general, Abdurrahman Wahid developed his thoughts through the contextualization paradigm of the treasures of traditional Islamic thought. The inclusive religious model of Abdurrahman Wahid shows excellent concern for solving various kinds of problems that have plagued Indonesia, especially the primary anxiety of Islamic thought, which talks more about substance than the formality of Islamic teachings. (Pahrurroji, 2003; 63).

The emphasis on the meaning of religion for Abdurrahman Wahid cannot be separated from his humanity. To be a good follower of the religion, believing the truth of religion is not enough if it is not accompanied by an appreciation of humanity. Abdurrahman Wahid believes that any religion always puts human values as a prerequisite to building conducive dialogical relations in plurality. According to his belief, as long as religious people believe in the truth of the teachings of their religion and they understand humanity, then all that time everything will proceed without any problems. (Santono, 2004; 102).

Islamic orientation according to Abdurrahman Wahid is the interests of the little people in almost all issues. This can be proven by deeply understanding the position of *maslahah al'ammah* which means general welfare in Islam. Thus, religion must be used as a source of ethics and morality. The humanism offered by Abdurrahman Wahid is part of

human diversity and encourages religious adherents to be humanistic, respect and uphold humanity. "*Wa laqad karramna bani adama*". God alone, according to Abdurrahman Wahid, respects humans.

Abdurrahman Wahid's consistency is fighting for human values contained in Islamic teachings. This can be seen from the recognition of Abdurrahman Wahid himself, who saw Islam as a religion that was undergoing major changes from time to time. Abdurrahman Wahid sees the reality that Islam as a way of life (Sharia) can learn and take from each other from various non-religious ideologies, even the views of other religions. However, the case in Indonesia might be complicated if the debate about Islam is still at the level of black and white debate, right wrong, and so on, which in the end friction of religious patterns often occurs due to coercive definition of Islam between one group and another.

The Islamic experience experienced by Abdurrahman Wahid is different from others. His Understanding is religious-based on intellectual experience from the pesantren, involvement with radical religious movements to Arab nationalism and Arab socialism (*al-isyirakiyyah al-arabiyyah*) in Baghdad. The long intellectual wanderings in Abdurrahman Wahid's intellectual formation process resulted in two big conclusions which became a reference for Abdurrahman Wahid's Islamic understanding, namely that his personal experience would never be felt or experienced by others, while it might be that Abdurrahman Wahid's experience had something in common with others who had his own wandering. . (Abdurrahman Wahid, 2006; 66). Abdurrahman Wahid, for example, is different from Nurcholis Madjid in viewing Islam, Abdurrahman Wahid was born from a traditionalist pesantren, while the patterns and thoughts of Nurcholis Madjid are modern. (Bukhari Umar, 2007; 145). Abdurrahman Wahid's Islam is a unique Islam termed "my Islam".

The inclusive attitude shown by Abdurrahman Wahid does not see "my Islam" as limiting "your Islam", ie Islam, that is different from what he understands. "Your Islam," according to Abdurrahman Wahid, is more an appreciation and reflection of someone against traditionalism or religious rituals that live in society. According to Abdurrahman Wahid, traditionalism that lives in society must be valued as "truth" born of faith. For example, manifestations of Islamic traditions in several regions in Java. The practices of *tahlilan*, *talqin*, *tarekat*, *tawasul* and the like are generally carried out by traditional Muslim groups community Perdusunan in Java that is not influenced very strongly Wahhabism movement adopt local customs, and according to their beliefs do not clash with Islamic teachings. (Ismail, 1999; 71).

Also as described by Abdurrahman Wahid in the tradition of haul / commemoration of the death of Sunan Bonang in Tuban every year. Without being announced, people came flocking to the Tuban square, bringing their own mats / newspapers and drinks, just to listen to the lecturers' description of Sunan Bonang. Not important, has Sunan Bonang ever lived? What is in the mind of visitors is like that. "Truth" obtained like this according to Abdurrahman Wahid is something that is based on faith, not from experience. (Barton, 2011; 68).

As for "Our Islam" is more a derivation of one's concern for the future of Islam which is based on the common interests of the Muslims. The vision of "Our Islam" carries

an integrative concept which includes "my Islam" and "your Islam" and concerns the whole Muslim community. The difficulty of formulating "Our Islam", because the experience that shapes "My Islam" is often different from the beliefs that shape "Your Islam". But according to Abdurrahman Wahid, the most underlying problem in the formation of "Our Islam" is the temporary tendency of groups of people to impose the concept of "Our Islam" according to their own interpretations. In other words, they want to impose the truth of Islam according to their own interpretations. According to Abdurrahman Wahid, the monopoly on interpreting the truth like this is contrary to the spirit of democracy. (Barton, 2011; 34).

The clarity in the view of Islam, according to Abdurrahman Wahid, is that Islam is a belief that spreads love that is fundamentally tolerant and respects differences. Islamic beliefs are egalitarian beliefs, beliefs that fundamentally do not support unfair treatment for reasons of class, ethnicity, race, gender, or other groupings in society. Islam in Abdurrahman Wahid's view is Islam, which recognizes that in God's view, all humans are equal, even Muslim and non-Muslim status is the same. Abdurrahman Wahid, 2010; xxxi).

Conclusions

Abdurrahman Wahid, known as a controversial figure in Indonesia so far, has become a text so that all people have the same right in giving his interpretation of Abdurrahman Wahid based on his theological framework. Including researchers themselves who consider Abdurrahman Wahid as a devout Muslim who can integrate traditional Islamic thought by not forgetting various kinds of changes that occur in Indonesia, both related to religion, especially the phenomena of nationality and statehood. Likewise, many consider Abdurrahman Wahid to be a traditionalist Muslim, possible because, in some religious expressions, they tend to use phrases based on variants of Indonesian locality or indigenous culture. This is clearly seen in terms of genealogy and the characteristics of Abdurrahman Wahid's theological thought.

Abdurrahman Wahid is not a thinker without criticism. The author himself considers that Abdurrahman Wahid, at times, sometimes goes too fast regardless of whether the people who follow behind him are ready with their thoughts. Of course, with the socio-cultural conditions of Indonesian people who are left far behind from other societies, such as Western societies who have already been familiar with the technology. In fact, at the level of community thought, not all were able to keep up with Abdurrahman Wahid's rhythm of thought.

Namun, hal yang ditegaskan dalam penelitian ini adalah kategorisasi pemikiran Abdurrahman Wahid dalam kajian pemikiran Islam. Sebagaimana yang dijelaskan oleh Greg Barton, bahwa Abdurrahman Wahid masuk dalam kategori neo-modernisme di Indonesia. Namun, penulis kiranya penting untuk menegaskan temuan penelitian ini dan lebih cenderung memasukkan Abdurrahman Wahid dalam kategori pemikir neo-modernis, tetapi dialog kritis antara Abdurrahman Wahid dengan tradisi di Indonesia menjadi embrio lahirnya Post-Tradisionalisme di Indonesia yang diwarisi dan diteruskan oleh kalangan muda Nahdlatul Ulama.

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