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## Post-Traditionalism in Indonesia: Tracking of Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri's Thought

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### Abstract

*The articulation of Muslims in Indonesia, as well as in other parts of the Islamic world, is a reflection of the dialectic between normative and historical Islamic teachings. In the historicity aspect, the articulation can be influenced by one of them, the dialectic of thought. This study aims to find traces and influences of the thoughts of Muhammad Abdi al-Jabiri, a contemporary Muslim thinker, on the dynamics of Islamic thought in Indonesia in the contemporary era. This study is library research that traces various works of al-Jabiri, which influenced Islamic thought in Indonesia with a hermeneutical approach, especially Gadamer's hermeneutics and Karl Manheim's model of knowing sociology. From the results of tracking and studying these issues, it was found that al-Jabiri's thoughts influenced the younger generation of Muslims affiliated with the Nahdlatul Ulama tradition of thought. Some of the young generations of educated NU have used al-Jabiri's thoughts as a reference in developing the dynamics of thought by calling itself a school of Islamic post-traditionalism.*

### Kata Kunci

*Pemikiran Islam,  
post-tradisionalisme,  
Nahdlatul Ulama*

### Abstrak

*Artikulasi umat Islam di Indonesia, seperti juga yang terjadi di belahan dunia Islam lainnya adalah merupakan cerminan dari dealektika antara ajaran Islam "yang normatif" dan "yang historis". Pada aspek historisitas, artikulasi itu dapat dipengaruhi salah satunya oleh dealektika pemikiran. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan jejak dan pengaruh pemikiran Muhammad Abdi al-Jabiri, seorang pemikir Muslim kontemporer Islam terhadap dinamika pemikiran Islam di Indonesia di era kontemporer. Kajian ini merupakan kajian kepustakaan yang melacak berbagai karya al-*

*Jabiri yang mempengaruhi pemikiran kiislaman di Indonesia dengan pendekatan hermeneutika terutama hermeneutika Gadamer dan sosiologi pengetahuan model Karl Manheim. Dari hasil pelacakan dan telaah atas persoalan tersebut ditemukan bahwa pemikiran al-Jabiri banyak mempengaruhi generasi muda Islam yang berafiliasi pada tradisi pemikiran Nahdlatul Ulama. Generasi muda NU terpelajar sebagian telah menjadikan pemikiran al-Jabiri sebagai salah satu rujukan dalam mengembangkan dinamika pemikiran dengan menyebut dirinya sebagai mazhab "post-tradisionalisme Islam".*

## Introduction

Ahmad Baso argues that post-traditional Islamic thinking, which is closely related to Moroccan-born thinker Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri, may have been introduced in Indonesia by Said Aqil Siradj in 1995. This is based on Said Aqil's criticism of the doctrinal legacy of ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah in the context of Nahdlatul Ulama. (NU).<sup>1</sup> However, Baso admitted that this allegation was not based on official written sources from Said Aqil's work. Instead, his conjecture is based on his collection of al-Jabiri's works, various references to al-Jabiri's works, and various materials from his lectures.<sup>2</sup>

Only after writing this long introduction in the 2000s did Baso mention three articles on al-Jabiri produced by Indonesian writers. However, these writings cannot be categorized as serious works.<sup>3</sup> It was only after entering the

2000s that various writings about al-Jabiri's thoughts in Indonesia began to be discussed more intensively. In the Ruamdi notes,<sup>4</sup> MM Billah's article, "Youth of NU: Results of a Structural Shift within Jama'ah Nahdliyin," published in 2000, has contributed to the development of al-Jabiri's thought, especially in enriching the Post-Traditionalist paradigm. Entering the post-2000s era, writings reviewing al-Jabiri's thoughts appeared more frequently in various scientific journals.

One example is the *Taswir al-Afkar* Journal, 9th edition of 2000 and 10th edition of 2001, published by the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Institute for the Study and Development of Human Resources (Lakpesdam). Both editions seriously review al-Jabiri's thoughts. Furthermore, the *Taswir al-Afkar* Journal published a special issue with the number 10 and cover title, "Islamic Post-Traditionalism: Ideology and Methodology."<sup>5</sup>

Likewise, the *Postrawacana Bulletin*, published in 2001, further emphasized that al-Jabiri's thoughts were increasingly gaining

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<sup>1</sup> Ahmad Baso, "Posmodernisme sebagai Kritik: Kontribusi Metodologis "Kritik Nalar" Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri," in Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri, *Post Tradisionalisme Islam* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2000), ix-x.

<sup>2</sup> Among the books that show Said Siradj's influence on al-Jabiri's thought is, Said Aqil Siradj, *Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah; Sebuah Kritik Historis* (Jakarta: Pustaka Cendikia Muda, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Among the three writings that Baso refers to are: 1) A. Luthfi Assyaukani, "Tipologi dan Wacana Pemikiran Arab Kontemporer", *Paramadina* 1, no. 1 (1998): 58-95; 2) Ahmad Baso, "Problem Islam dan Politik: Perspektif "Kritik Nalar Politik" Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri", *Taswir al-Afkar* 4 (1999): 29-39; and 3) Syafiq Hasyim, "Islam Berangkat dari Nalar Arab: Resensi Buku", *Taswir al-Afkar* 2 (1998): 86-94.

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<sup>4</sup>Rumadi, *Post-Tradisionalisme Islam: Wacana Intelektualisme dalam Komunitas NU* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Departemen Agama RI, 2008), 121.

<sup>5</sup>Among the relevant writings in this issue published in this journal include: Ahmad Baso, "Neo-Modernisme Islam vs Post-Tradisionalisme Islam," *Taswir al-Afkar* 10 (2001); Zuhairi Misrawi, "Dari Tradisionalisme Menuju Post-Tradisionalisme," *Taswir al-Afkar* 10 (2001); Marzuki Wahid, "Post-Tradisionalisme Islam: Gairah Baru Pemikiran Islam Indonesia," *Taswir al-Afkar* 10 (2001).

recognition, especially among the younger generation of Nahdlatul Ulama, which had begun to develop since the 1990s. Apart from publications in various scientific journals, there are also a number of books written about al-Jabiri's thoughts. These books include direct translations of al-Jabiri's works,<sup>6</sup> as well as other literature dealing with al-Jabiri's thought and methodology, which is increasingly being published in Indonesia.<sup>7</sup>

In tracing the tracks of al-Jabiri thought in Indonesia, it appears that the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) community, especially the younger segments, is more prominent and progressive in discussing al-Dzhabiri thinking than other Islamic communities in Indonesia, such as Muhammadiyah. However, some Indonesian thinkers from Muhammadiyah, such as Dawam Raharjo and Amin Abdullah, were the exceptions. Why is the NU community relatively closer and more familiar with al-Jabiri thinking than the Muhammadiyah community?

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<sup>6</sup>Among al-Jabiri's books that have been translated into Indonesian include: *at-Turath wa al-Hadathah/Post Tradisionisme Islam* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2000); *Ishkaliyat al-Fikr al-'Arabi al-Mu'asir/Problematika Pemikiran Arab Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2015); *ad-Dimukrtiyyah wa Huquq al-Insan/Syura:Tradisi Partikularitas-Universalitas* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2003); *Arab-Islamic Philosophy: a Contemporary Critique/Kritik Kontemporer Filsafat Arab-Islam* (Yogyakarta: Islamika, 2003); *Nalar Filsafat dan Teologi Islam*, translated by Aksin Wijaya (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2003); *Problem Peradaban*, translated by Sunarwoto Dema, Mosiri. (Yogyakarta: Belukar, 2004); *Tragedi Intelektual: Perselingkuhan Politik dan Agama*, translated by Zamzan Afandi Abdillah (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Alief, 2003), *Formasi Nalar Arab*, translated by Imam Khoiri. (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2003); *Dialog Timur dan Barat* (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2015)

<sup>7</sup>Among these books are Muhammad Hanif Dhakiri and Zaini Rahman, *Post-Tradisionalisme Islam, Menyingkap Corak Pemikiran dan Gerakan PMII* (Jakarta: Isisindo Mediatama, 2000); Hairus Salim HS dan Muhammad Ridwan (Ed.), *Kultur Hibrida: Anak Muda di Jalur Kultural* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 1999); M. Imdadun Rahmat, *Kritik Nalar Fiqih NU* (Jakarta: PP Lakpesdam NU, 2002); Dawam Raharjo, *Kritik Nalar Islamisme dan Kebangkitan Islam* (Jakarta: Freedom Institute, 2012); M. Amin Abdullah, *Islamic Studies di Perguruan Tinggi* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2006).

Ahmad Najib Burhani once answered the same question and concluded that; 1) Differences in the acceptance of al-Jabiri thought between NU and Muhammadiyah were mainly due to differences in religious traditions that developed in both communities. In NU, many traditions are shaped by the Yellow Book, while in Muhammadiyah, the Holy Scriptures are more dominant in shaping their traditions. 2) The study of al-Jabiri has given rise to critical thinking in the NU, especially as they read and understand established doctrines and discourses such as Aswaja and the involvement of the NU in the 1965 events.<sup>8</sup>

From a brief trace of al-Jabiri's thoughts in Indonesia, the thoughts and methods proposed by al-Jabiri have given color to the dynamics of contemporary Islamic thought in Indonesia. Even though the Muhammadiyah community, as stated by Ahmad Najib Burhani, is not as progressive as the NU community—especially the young group who call themselves Post-Traditionalists—the inculcation of al-Jabiri's thoughts, although relatively minimal, has contributed to the journey of the organization's religious thought.

This difference can be understood through the two organizations different historical contexts and long traditions. The strong tradition of the yellow book within the NU structure allows the Post-Traditionalist group, which has strong cultural roots in this organization, to be very receptive to the ideas put forward by al-Jabiri. This is because the concepts introduced by al-Jabiri can be used as an effective critique of the doctrines and traditions that have been established in the institution.

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<sup>8</sup>Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Kitab Kuning dan Kitab Suci: Pengaruh al-Jabiri terhadap Pemikiran Keagamaan di NU dan Muhammadiyah," *Masyarakat Indonesia* 41, no. 1 (2015): 29-42.

Meanwhile, the progressive group within Muhammadiyah felt that they were more able to utilize the ideas put forward by Fazlur Rahman compared to al-Jabiri because the religious tradition in this organization was mostly built on the tradition of the scriptures. Al-Jabiri's epistemological approach was once promoted by Amin Abdullah, who served as Chairman of the Majelis Tarjih and Development of Islamic Thought at Muhammadiyah and was officially used as an approach in tarjih. However, the response from Muhammadiyah members, including intellectuals, was still less lively than that of NU. JIMM activists, who represent progressive thinking within Muhammadiyah, also only quoted al-Jabiri soberly.<sup>9</sup>

Against this background, this research will focus on tracing the relation between trends in contemporary Islamic thought produced by important thinkers such as al-Jabiri and the dynamics of contemporary Islamic thought in Indonesia. This study aims to find and prove the theory of Middle Eastern intellectual networks in the archipelago, as expressed by Azyumardi Azra in his work, "Ulama Network".<sup>10</sup> Azyumardi Azra's findings in the 17th and 18th centuries formed the basis of this study, which expanded its focus to the contemporary era starting in 1967. This study emphasizes al-Jabiri's thought as the center of attention, using hermeneutics to explore it and Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge theory to examine the sociological factors that shape and are influenced by al-Jabiri's thought. This study also examines how al-Jabiri's thoughts interact with contemporary Islamic thought in Indonesia, especially among the younger generation.

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII dan XVIII, Melacak Akar-Akar Pembaruan Islam di Indonesia* (Bandung: Mizan, 1992).

The purpose of this study is to reveal and prove the existence of continuity in Islamic thought from the Middle East to Indonesia, from the classical to the contemporary era. This study seeks to prove the influence and impact of al-Jabiri's thoughts on contemporary Islamic thought in Indonesia, especially among the younger generation affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama.

This study makes a unique contribution by strengthening previous theories showing that the development of Islamic knowledge in Indonesia is inseparable from the developments in Islamic scientific centers, both in the Masyriqi and Maghribi regions. This is shown by contemporary data, especially in the case of the relationship between al-Jabiri, who is a representative of contemporary Islamic thought in the Maghribi region (Morocco), and the younger generation in Indonesia.

### **Islamic Post-traditionalism: Examining the Relationship of Tradition and Modernity**

The thoughts of al-Jabiri and other thinkers from the Middle East have had a significant impact on the development of Islamic thought in Indonesia. This connection is not only contemporary but also has strong roots in the long history of the development of Islam itself. For example, Azyumardi Azra's dissertation notes that the formation of Islamic intellectualism in Indonesia can be traced back to the 17th and 18th centuries.

According to Azra, scholars from the Archipelago, the geographical area covering Indonesia, have been involved in a global network of scholars centered in Mecca and Medina, otherwise known as the Haramain. Prominent scholars such as Nur al-Din al-Raniri (d. 1068 H/1658 AD), Abd al-Rauf al-Sinkili (1024-1105 H/1615-1693 AD), Muhammad Yusuf al-Maqassari (1030-1111 H/ 1629-1699 AD), and Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari (1710-1812 AD) have fought for reform in Islamic thought.

Furthermore, Azra pointed out that these scholars have almost unbroken lineages or isnads

with scholars in the Middle East, especially in Haramain and Cairo. Through this scholarly network, they share and accept new ideas of Islamic thought, moving from mystic-philosophical to neo-Sufism in style. This development proves that the thoughts of al-Jabiri and other thinkers from the Middle East have an important role in shaping and influencing the dynamics of Islamic thought in Indonesia.<sup>11</sup>

In Deliar Noers research, the dynamics of Islamic thought and movement in Indonesia at the beginning of the 20th century can be grouped into two main tendencies. The first is the “traditional movement”, which is represented by organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which was founded in 1926, and the Tarbiyah Islamiyah Association (PERTI), which was founded in 1929. This tendency includes organizations that try to defend Islamic values and traditional practices in Islam.

The second is “modern movements”, which are further divided into two subcategories: social and political. Organizations such as Sarekat Islam (SI), founded in 1911, and Muhammadiyah, founded in 1912, are examples of this movement. They try to respond to the challenges and changes brought about by modernity in different ways, either through social advocacy or political participation.<sup>12</sup> However, the categorization formulated by Deliar Noer tends to be fluid and can change over time. In fact, in some contexts, the typology proposed by Noer is no longer considered relevant, similar to how the “Abangan, Santri, and Priyayi” categories developed by Clifford Geertz (1926-2006) are now less relevant in explaining the dynamics of Islamic society in Indonesia, especially in Java. Although these two typologies provide valuable initial insights, they cannot fully capture the complexities and variations in the development of Islamic thought

and practice in Indonesia.<sup>13</sup>

Although the categories and approaches proposed by Geertz and Deliar Noer may not be completely accurate in understanding Islamic thoughts, movements, and practices in Indonesia, especially in Java, the problem of the relationship between “traditional” and “modern” continues to experience its dynamics. Mark R. Woodward and Greg Barton have carefully researched and analyzed these changes and interactions. Their analysis includes the evolution of Islamic thought and movements, as well as the ongoing interplay between traditionalism and modernism.<sup>14</sup>

The expressions of the two Western researchers illustrate the ongoing relationship between tradition and modernity in Indonesia. Indonesian researcher Mujamil Qomar does not hesitate to say that Indonesian Islam is neo-modernist in terms of the relationship between tradition and modernity. He explained that, at first, Indonesian Islam had a traditional style due to the influence of Ashariyah. Then Indonesian Muslims received modernist views from Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), which flowed to the archipelago; these modernist views were strengthened by Harun Nasution (1919-1998). Both of them conveyed much of Mutazilah’s thoughts which were rational and modernist. In addition, Indonesian Muslims get various experiences of modernization from schools, universities, social relations, and so on. Finally, they began to accept modernization while still holding on to tradition. This attitude is

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<sup>13</sup>For a critique of Geertz’s model of approach, see, Bambang Pranowo, *Memahami Islam Jawa* (Jakarta: Alvabet, 2009), 1-24.

<sup>14</sup>Mark R. Woodward, “Introduction. Talking Across Paradigms: Indonesia, Islam, and Orientalism”, in Mark R. Woodward, *Toward a New Paradigm: Recent Developments in Indonesia Islamic Thought* (Arizona: Arizona State University, 1996), 4; Greg Barton, *Gagasan Islam Liberal di Indonesia: Pemikiran Neo-Modernisme Nurcholish Madjid, Djohan Effendi, Ahmad Wahib, dan Abdurrahman Wahid*, translated by Nanang Tahqiq (Jakarta: Kerjasama Paramadina dengan Pustaka Antara, 1999), 6.

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<sup>11</sup>Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah...*, 294-295.

<sup>12</sup>Deliar Noer, *Gerakan Modern Islam di Indonesia 1900-1942* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1980), 114.

called Neo-modernism.<sup>15</sup> Neo-Modernism, which its founder, Fazlur Rahman, has positioned as a critical thought and movement against previous thoughts (pre-modernist, classical modernism, and neo-revivalism), has a liberal and critical attitude as well as appreciative towards the legacy of Islamic and Western thought as well. In addition, this group emphasizes the need for systematic and comprehensive *ijtihad*.<sup>16</sup>

By quoting the opinion of Nurcholish Madjid, who predicts that the Neo-modernist group in Indonesia will be the NU community for reasons of its wealth and familiarity with the legacy of the past (turath),<sup>17</sup> Mujamil believes that the *slogan* that the NU community maintains is *al-Muhafazah ala Qadim al-Salih wa al-akhd bi al-Jadid al-Aslah* corresponds to the principles of Neo-Modernism because it combines tradition (*al-Muhafazah ala Qadim al-Salih*) and modernization (*al-akhd bi al-Jadid al-Aslah*).

Linking Neo-modernism with the NU community, as described by Mujamil, seems to have a genealogical problem if Neo-modernism—by following Fazlur Rahman’s historical mapping—is a continuation of pre-revivalism thoughts and movements in the 18th century, classical modernism in the 19th century and 20th, and neo revivalism in the 21st century. While the NU community was not born from the history of thought and movement as mapped by Fazlur Rahman. Thus, it is impossible to say that Neo-Modernism is synonymous with the NU community. One proof of the compatibility between Neo-modernism and the NU community includes an important NU figure, Abdurhamnan Wahid, and Nurcholish Madjid, synonymous with “Liberal

Islam” and Islamic Neo-modernism by Greg Barton. This opinion was later criticized by young NU figure Ahmad Baso who said that Barton failed to look at aspects of the epistemological network and the historicity of Abdurahman Wahid’s thoughts so that he was recklessly classifying him as a Neo-Modernist group.<sup>18</sup>

So, the question becomes, where do the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) community’s thoughts - categorized as “traditional movements” - come from in a genealogical context if they are not related to Neo-Modernism genealogy? To answer this question, Baso tries to make a genealogical comparison between Neo-Modernism and Post-Traditionalism. According to him, the intellectual genealogy of Islamic Post-Traditionalism is rooted in figures who had dialogues with the Western Enlightenment tradition. This includes generations of figures such as Abdullah Ahmed al-Na’im, Nawal Sadawi, Tariq al-Bishri, Abdullah Laroui, and Muhammad Khalafullah, down to generations like Michel Aflaq and ‘Ali Abd ar-Raziq, and finally to Ibn Rushd. While Islamic Neo-Modernism seeks to purify Islam and seek “genuine Islam and is known for its rejection of heresy and its movement to return to the Koran and al-Sunnah, Islamic Post-Traditionalism seeks a new synthesis through its critical dialogue with Islamic traditions, Western traditions, and local culture.”<sup>19</sup>

Comparative analysis between Neo-Modernism and Post-Traditionalism can provide a valuable context on the significance of al-Jabiri thoughts in the history, characteristics, and patterns of Islamic thought in Indonesia. This is especially relevant in the context of the relationship between tradition and modernity within the framework of Islamic thought and movements in Indonesia in the contemporary era. In addition, in an effort

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<sup>15</sup>Mujamil Qomar, *Fajar Baru Islam Indonesia? Kajian Komprehensif atas Arah Sejarah dan Dinamika Intelektual Islam Nusantara* (Bandung: Mizan, 2012), 52-53.

<sup>16</sup>See, Fazlur Rahman, “Islam: Challenges and Opportunities,” in Alford T. Welch dan P. Cachia (eds.), *Islam Past Influence and Present Challenge* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 1979), 315-327.

<sup>17</sup>Nurcholish Madjid, “*NU dan Perkembangan Pemikiran Islam di Indonesia*,” *Aula* 9 (1994): 68.

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<sup>18</sup>See, Ahmad Baso, *NU Studies: Pergolakan Pemikiran antara Fundamentalisme Islam dan Fundamentalisme Neoliberal* (Jakarta: Erlangga, 2006), 159-182.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 166.

to map contemporary Islamic thoughts and movements in Indonesia—as is also the case in other regions of the Islamic world—it is important to consider other variations, such as the Neo-Traditionalism paradigm, which is closely related to the figure and thoughts of Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Although the terms Neo-Traditionalism and Post-Traditionalism are rooted in the word “traditional”, they differ in the epistemological and ideological aspects they develop. In fact, Neo-Modernism, Post-Traditionalism, and Neo-Traditionalism emerged from the same background—a response to challenges coming from the Modern West and the reality of the decline of civilization in the Islamic world. However, the analysis and strategies they offer and develop have different methods. For example, Neo-Traditionalism argues that in order to rise from a state of decline, the Islamic world must return to the core of Islamic tradition as a spiritual reality amidst the chaos and unrest that has occurred in the modern world. What is meant by core Islamic tradition here is *tasawuf/tarekat*.<sup>20</sup>

Examining contemporary Islamic thought and movement in response to issues of tradition and modernity from a paradigmatic perspective shows the relevance of the methodology proposed by al-Jabiri—Arabic Criticism—to the problems faced by the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) community in understanding the Aswaja doctrine. This provides a context for the maintenance of the longstanding concept of Aswaja. Therefore, the discussion of al-Jabiri’s thought, especially in terms of his epistemology, is important from both a theoretical and speculative point of view—this aspect is reflected in his works *Bunyah al-‘Aql al-‘Arabi*<sup>21</sup>

and *Takwin al-‘Aql al-‘Arabi*<sup>22</sup>—and from a practical-political perspective as described in his works *Naqd al-‘Aql al-Siyasi*’ and *Naqd al-‘Aql al-Akhlaqi*. This discussion is a methodological necessity for the development of Islamic thought in Indonesia in general and particularly for the development of Islamic thought within the NU community, especially in parsing issues related to the Aswaja doctrine.

### **Critique of al-Jabiri’s model of Reason in NU’s Aswaja Doctrine**

Al-Jabiri’s “Arab Reason Criticism” project, which contains two content: epistemological reasoning criticism and practical reasoning criticism, has relevance to the tradition of ahl al-sunnah wa al-Jama’ah (Aswaja) of the NU community in Indonesia. The Aswaja concept formulated by NU scholars has been accepted without question for a long time. This is and is a logical result of the understanding of madhhabiyah traditionalism which has been the role model of NU scholars so far. It was Said Aqil Siradj who first expressed a critical voice towards the concept of Aswaja, which has been accepted as a religious paradigm that includes the doctrines of *aqidah*, *fiqh*, and *tasawuf*.<sup>23</sup>

Said Aqil Siradj’s criticism of the Aswaja concept is summarized by Djohan Effendi as follows: 1). The Aswaja formulation is considered too simple, practical, and conducive. The concept of Aswaja should not be old-fashioned, strict, exclusive, elitist, and maintain the status quo, 2). Aswaja is not a madhhab but a method (*manhaj*) of thinking that underlies several thoughts and schools of thought, and 3). Aswaja does not have a clear concept of *Imamat*, namely political leadership

<sup>20</sup>Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1987), 15.

<sup>21</sup>Muhammad Abed Al-Jabiri, *Bunyah al-‘Aql al-‘Arabi* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Tsaqafi al-Arabi, 1991).

<sup>22</sup>Muhammad Abed Al-Jabiri, *Takwin al-‘Aql al-‘Arabi* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Tsaqafi al-Arabi, 1991).

<sup>23</sup>Djohan Effendi, *Pembaruan Tanpa Membongkar Tradisi: Wacana Keagamaan di Kalangan Generasi Muda NU Masa Kepemimpinan Gusdur* (Jakarta: Kompas, 2010), 263-264.

in the sense of head of state, and tends to be pragmatic by emphasizing more reality than substance.<sup>24</sup>

Said Aqiel Siradj offers the following formula for the definition of Aswaja: “Manhaj al-Fikr ad-Dini as-Shamil ‘ala Shu’uni al-Hayat wa Muqtadyatiha al-Qa’im ‘ala principle at-Tawassut” which means a method of religious thinking that covers all aspects of life and is based on the principles of moderation, balance, and tolerance. This critique is historical and consistent with al-Jabiri’s “Criticism of Arab Reason” in its methodology.

The critical epistemology found in his first two works, *Bunyah al-‘Aql al-‘Arabi’* and *Takwin al-‘Aql al-‘Arabi’*, adopts an archaeological approach that examines the ways and mechanisms of knowledge reproduction that exist in Muslim society today. When associated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), especially in terms of its way of thinking—as noted by Baso—there is a critical spirit that underlies the concept of Aswaja, which has been positioned as correct and legitimate, and seen as an artifact that should be shown to visitors. Museum. An example is the narrowing and limiting traditional truth to only the Aswaja models of ash-Shafi’i, al-Ghazali, Junaid al-Bghdadi, and al-Ash’ari. Anything beyond that is considered *ghair mu’tabarah* (heterodox, not recognized).<sup>25</sup>

The adherence to the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Aswaja concept by the Nahdiyyin community without any criticism—in Said Aqiel Siradj’s opinion—is not in line with the historical spirit of the formation of Aswaja itself. Siradj gave an example that the emergence of al-Ash’ari, when viewed from a historical perspective, was an attempt to find a middle way between the extreme scripturalism of ahl Hadith and the rationalism of Mutazilah. Kalam al-Ash’ari

is not free from flaws, then corrected by Ibn Taimiyyah. Moreover, Muhammad Abduh made the same correction to Ibn Taimiyyah in the future.

For historical reasons like that, Said Aqil Siradj examined turath, in this case, the concept of Aswaja NU which was first conveyed by Kiai Hashim Ashari in his opening speech at the 1947 NU Congress critically, just as was done by Ibn Taimiyyah and Muhammad Abduh against al-Ash’ari. This critical spirit is also at the core of al-Jabiri’s methodology. Therefore, what is more, important to emphasize in this context is the relevance of the methodology of Contemporary Arab Islamic intellectuals, in this case, the thought of al-Jabiri, concerning the NU tradition as a whole.

Another criticism put forward by Said Aqil Siradj is his refusal to make Aswaja a madhhab. He suggested that Aswaja be used as a method of thinking that underlies several thoughts and schools of thought. In response to his reading of the historical turath, Siradj questions the concept of the four madhhabs, particularly the addition of Imam Ibn Hanbal. He said Ibn Hanbal was not a fiqh expert but more a hadith expert. For this reason, he suggested that NU remove him from the list of the four Aswaja madhhab fiqh imams.

All of Said Aqil Siradj’s criticisms—in his position as an individual—against Aswaja NU and also—much more importantly—Abdurrahman Wahid’s (Gusdur) whole indigenization of Islam ideas, directly or indirectly, influenced the younger generation of NU who called themselves madhhab Post-Traditionalist. This phenomenon can be considered a phenomenon of Islamic renewal among young NU.<sup>26</sup> The renewal of Islamic thought carried out by the young generation

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 266-267.

<sup>25</sup>Ahmad Baso, *NU Studies...*, 168.

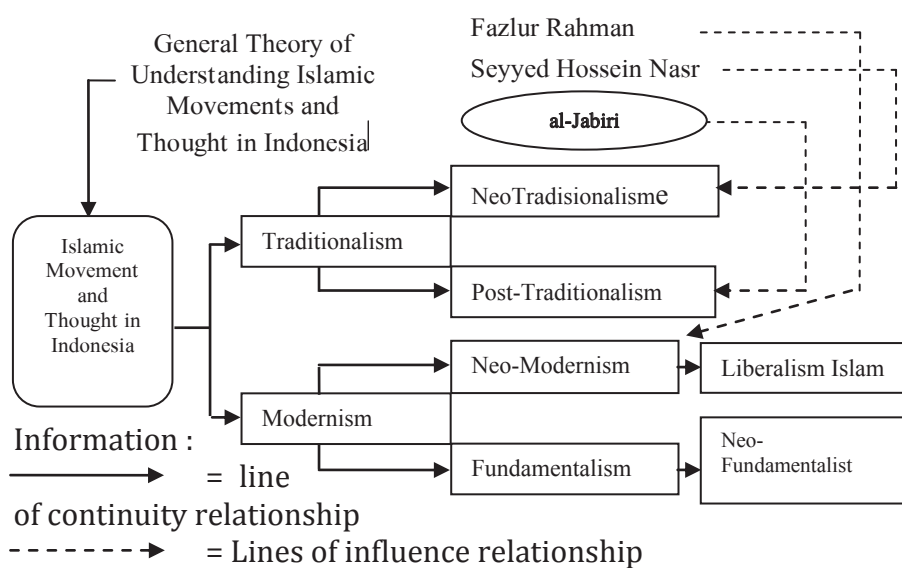
<sup>26</sup>See, Dissertation written by Ahmad Ali Riyadi on the topic, *Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Youth Islamic Renewal Movement in Indonesia 1990-2005, 2006.*



of NU, as written in Ahmad Ali Riyadi's dissertation, is methodologically oriented towards the trend of contemporary Arab thought, especially al-Jabiri's thought. So that the model of contemporary reading of turath as offered by al-Jabiri is functionally useful for the young generation of NU in developing

their thoughts in their environment where issues of tradition (at-turath) and modernity (al-Hadathah). All traces, relevance, dynamics, and influence of al-Jabiri's thoughts on the development of Islamic movements and thought in Indonesia can be described in the following chart:

Figure 1. Chart of The effect of al-Jabiri 's thinking on Islamic Movement and Thought in Indonesia<sup>27</sup>



Based on the diagrams presented, it can be seen that the influence of al-Jabiri thinking in Indonesia appears to be real through intellectual activity driven by the young generation of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), who identify themselves as Post-Traditionalist Islam. The activity became an integral part of the discourse of the renewal of Islamic thought among the young generation of NU, as described in the dissertation of Ahmad Ali Riyad.<sup>28</sup> However, there are differences in the thought movements initiated by other communities

in Indonesia, such as the progressive young generation of Muhammadiyah who joined the Young Muhammadiyah Intellectual Network. (JIMM). This community is still consistently in the theme of "return to the Qur'an", as reflected in the Mukhtar theme of this group in 2003, namely "Tadarus Islamic Thought: Back to The Holy Qur'an, Interpretation of the Meaning of the Times."<sup>29</sup> This indicates that young Muhammadiyah tends to be more interested in discussing Fazlur Rahman's thinking as a Neo-Modernist than al-Jabiri. This phenomenon can be interpreted as conformity between the intellectual tradition of Muhammad, who inherited the

<sup>27</sup>This chart is partially adapted from, Rumadi, *Post-Tradisionalisme Islam ...*, 149.

<sup>28</sup>Ahmad Ali Riyadi, *Gerakan Pembaharuan Islam Kaum Muda Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) di Indonesia 1990-2005*, 2006.

<sup>29</sup>Ahmad Najib Burhani, *"Kitab Kuning dan Kitab Suci..."*, 29-42

idea of renewal to return to the Qur'an, and the Sunnah, with the main idea of Fazlur Rahman, who emphasized the interpretation of the Quran rather than the tradition. Surely, the Qur'an is more important than the Quran.

## Conclusion

The model of critical reading of tradition introduced by Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri through his project of thought in Naqd al-Aql al-Arabi has become a trend of contemporary thought in Islam. In turn, that thought influenced the discourse of Islamic thought in Indonesia. The young community of NU is familiar with the yellow book tradition, where the heritage of scholarly thought is seeded from time to time, genealogically, parallel to the spirit offered by al-Jabiri. Critical thinking about the past, including the heritage of thought, and orientation to the future (modernity), is a need to be avoided both by the contemporary Arab world as it is the locus of al-Jabiri's thought and that is an Islamic challenge in Indonesia where the youth community is growing and developing.

The trace and contribution of al-Jabiri's thought in the development of Islamic thought in Indonesia can thus be said to have triggered the young generation of Islam, especially young Islamic groups, in formulating the relationship between tradition and modernity and formulating Islam's rise, especially in Indonesia by considering the richness of tradition and how to read and behave critically. By making *aswaja as manhaj* (not *mazhab*) as the traditional view, the dynamics of thinking are relatively more lively. Thus, from the aspect of thought, Islam Indonesia has been colored by the contemporary approach, which produces a new way of viewing, especially in looking at tradition and modernity with the name post-traditionalism.

This study also reinforces the view that the development of Islamic thought, from the

classical era to the contemporary, cannot be freed historically-genealogically from thought with its entire pattern with the center of the science of Islam in the Middle East and other parts of the Islamic world including the Maghrib region (Tunisia, al-Jazair, Maroko).

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