

# THE BEGINNING OF RENEWAL AND RELIGIOUS REFORM IN INDONESIA: TAWHĪD PURIFICATION

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# **1** THE BEGINNING OF RENEWAL AND RELIGIOUS REFORM IN INDONESIA: *TAWHĪD* PURIFICATION

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## **1** Abstract

This article discusses religious reforms and reforms in Indonesia which are linked to the forerunner to the birth of Muhammadiyah. Using a library survey, this article found that the reform movement in Indonesia began to occur in the early 20th century and could not be separated from the birth of Muhammadiyah. In this context, the renewal of Islam in Indonesia through Muhammadiyah is inseparable from the thoughts of Middle Eastern figures, such as Ibn Taymiyah and Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab, especially in the aspect of creed (*tawhīd*) in the form of purification. This article presents the idea that renewal and reform are a dynamic movement and is still needed in the context of national development as a form of continuity of awareness in modern society.

**Keywords:** renewal, reformation, purification, Muhammadiyah

## AWAL PEMBAHARUAN DAN REFORMASI KEAGAMAAN DI INDONESIA: PEMURNIAN TAUHID

### Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas pembaharuan dan reformasi keagamaan di Indonesia yang dikaitkan dengan cikal bakal kelahiran Muhammadiyah. Dengan menggunakan survey pustaka, artikel ini menemukan bahwa gerakan pembaharuan di Indonesia mulai terjadi pada awal abad ke-20 dan tidak bisa dilepaskan dari kelahiran Muhammadiyah. Dalam konteks ini, pembaharuan Islam di Indonesia melalui Muhammadiyah tidak terlepas dari pemikiran tokoh Timur Tengah, seperti Ibnu Taimiyah dan Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab, terutama pada aspek tauhid dalam bentuk pemurnian atau purifikasi. Artikel ini mengemukakan gagasan bahwa pembaharuan dan reformasi merupakan geraka dinamis dan tetap diperlukan dalam konteks pembangunan bangsa sebagai bentuk kontinuitas kesadaran masyarakat modern.

**Kata-kata Kunci:** pembaharuan, reformasi, pemurnian, Muhammadiyah

### A. INTRODUCTION

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Islamic thought begins and grows from the study of the Qur'an (Mugiyono, 2013) and Hadith (Al-Karasneh & Saleh, 2010). The study is the response of Muslims to the development and demands of the needs they face in everyday life. These developments and demands were initially relatively small but then gradually enlarged. From that condition, the construction of Islamic sciences was formed, both theoretical like theology and philosophy as well as practical ones like *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-fiqh* and sufism (Masyharuddin, 2006). Islamic thought can also be interpreted as Islamic civilization. It is the result of the accumulation of the struggle of adherents of Islam when dealing with the dialectical process. The argumentative occurs

between permanent normative revelation and the historicity of human experience that is always changing according to the needs and dynamics of thought and society (Abdullah, 1995, p. 3). So, the two explanations about Islamic thought provide the same understanding, namely the response or attitude of Muslims to what they face within the limits of the dimensions of space and time, where and when they live.

The responses or attitudes of Muslims show that, in the course of their lives, always popping up on things that they face as a necessity. This fragmentation is captured by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, who, in the end, he founded Muhammadiyah. A decision that was later considered to have reflected who the extraordinary figure was, whose character was recognized by many circles.

The writing of this article does not intend to discuss accurately, the fragmentation captured by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan. This article was written more to reveal, in general, say, the general atmosphere of the two reformist scholars (*'ulamā*), namely Ibn Taymiyyah and Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb which were as the background for the emergence of religious reform and reform in Indonesia, especially in the creed aspect. Its final form, of course, was born in Muhammadiyah, which was trained by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan.

## B. METHOD

This article was written by adapting historical methods. This method is expected to be able to collect and uncover existing historical sources (Buckley & Pérez, 2016). In its compilation, this method was conducted in the form of library or literature research, using reading material as a source or also called library research (Mann, 1998). Historical research is a process that involves gathering and interpreting symptoms, events, or ideas that arose in the past to find useful generalizations (cf., Connaway & Radford, 2016) in an effort to understand historical reality (cf., Ott, 2016, p. 242).

## C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Islamic Khilafah in Baghdad was destroyed in 1258 AD. This caused Muslims to experience a long setback in various sectors of life until the end of the 19th century or the beginning of the 20th century. This condition is exacerbated by Western colonialism, which is increasingly widespread in Muslim areas. Nevertheless, there was still a resurgence period in that period, namely the rise of three major Islamic powers, namely the Ottoman dynasty in Turkey (1299-1922), the Safavids in Persia (1501-1736), and the Mughals in India (1526-1857).

However, there is something more dangerous that is experienced by Muslims at that time, namely ignorance in the field of religion, except in a few small groups in individual schools. This long period may be said to be a period of decline of Islamic civilization after about four centuries (650-1258) having a period and golden peak. Especially after the Crusades, the condition of Muslims experienced political weakness, in addition to experiencing a religious crisis. However, it was during this critical period that reformers (mujaddid) were born in several Muslim countries. Among them, Ibn Taimiyah, Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb, Jamaluddin al-Afghani and Muḥammad Abduh (Nashir, 2010).

### 1. Ibn Taymiyah (1263 - 1328)

The full name of this figure is Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm b. 'Abd al-Salām Ibn 'Abdillāh b. Abī al-Qāsim al-Khiḍr Ibn Muḥammad b. al-Khiḍr b. 'Alī b. 'Abdillāh al-Imām al-Ḥabr al-Baḥr al-'Ilm al-Fard Shaykh al-Islām Abū al-'Abbās al-Ḥarrānī al-Hanbalī Nazil Dimasyq (al-Dhahabi, 2013, pp. 53-56). Born in Ḥarrān, a small town in Syria on 1263, after about 150 years of the death of al-Ghazālī (Maududi, 2009, p. 59); and died on 1328 in Damascus. The family name "Ibn Taimiyah" means "Son of Taimiyah" in Arabic. "Taymiyya" is a woman's name. The pupil and main biographer Ibn Taymiyyah Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī, in Hoover (2019) offered two different explanations for the name. One of them is an ancestor who named his daughter

Taymiyya after returning from a trip in the Tayma 'region in northwestern Arabia. The other is that the ancestral mother was a preacher named Taymiyya (Hoover, 2019, p. 15).

Harran is currently in southeast Turkey (Campo, 2009, pp. 339–340), just north of the border with Syria. At the time of Ibn Taymiyah's birth, the city was under the control of the Mamluk Kingdom, but it did not last long (Hoover, 2019, p. 15). In 1269, when Ibn Taymiyyah was six years old, the Mongol invasion forced his family to flee from Harran to Damascus (Ahmed, 1997, p. 20; El-Tobgui, 2019).

After the migration<sup>16</sup> from Harran, Ibn Taymiyya's family settled in the area of the Ḥanbalī community (Antrim, 2015), in Damascus, where Ibn Taymiyya's father was the<sup>4</sup> director of the Sukkariyya madrasa that was in the Ḥanbalī school (Badawi, 2019, p. 112), outside the Old Damascus wall. It was at this school (*madrasah*) that Ibn Taymiyya received education from his father as well as his school director (Leaman, 2015, pp. 229–231), following in the footsteps of his uncle, Fakhr al-Dīn b. Taymiyya (d. 1225), and his paternal grandfather, Majd al-Dīn b. Taymiyya (d. 1255), both of them had<sup>4</sup> distinguished themselves as foremost authorities of the Ḥanbalī madhhab (El-Tobgui, 2019). Although Ibn Taymiyya studied with a large number of scholars (including some women)<sup>5</sup> during his education, his strength and independence of mind were such that none of them his various mentors had sufficient influence on his thinking so that Ibn Taymiyya was considered his student. This is, perhaps, what has caused some researchers to call him neo-Hanbali (Mirza, 2012, p. 11).

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Taymiyya eventually succeeded his father as director of the Sukkariyya madrasa and gave him his first general lesson there at the age of two<sup>2</sup>-y-one (Badawi, 2019, p. 112). One year later, he began teaching the Qur'an commentary (interpretation [*tafsīr*]) at the famous Umayyad Mosque in Damascus and, a decade later, began teaching at the Hanbaliyya school (*madrasah*) in Damascus after the death of one of his teachers there. At around the same time, he was offered the position of prestigious and much-coveted chief justice (*qādī al-quḍāh*), which, however, was rejected (El-Tobgui, 2019).

In addition to the strong foundation in fiqh, Ibn Taymiyya is also studied or gained knowledge from other fiqh experts (Al-Matroudi, 2006, p. 16). But, this has led to strong friction with the groups who support power and who, from the beginning, did not agree with the Hanbali School, which is why Ibn Taymiyah was jailed several times. Ibn Taymiyyah also had<sup>2</sup> a great deal of authority in the hadith, interpretation, philosophy, and theology. So that, he showed an almost astonishing familiarity with all main schools of thought, as well as certain writings, from most philosophers<sup>16</sup> and theologians who lived before. He was known as "the most important falāsifah reader after Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in the Sunni world." (El-Tobgui, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> In 1299, Ibn Taymiyya wrote one of his most famous creed opinions, *al-Fatwā al-Ḥamawīyyat al-Kubrā*, which was hostile to Ash'arī's theology and to an<sup>16</sup> other common Islamic theology (Hoover, 2020). Opponents of Ibn Taymiyya from the Islamic theolog accused him of anthropomorphism because of this<sup>4</sup> creed. Because of the creed, Ibn Taymiyyah was called to be "tried" at the house of al-Qazwīnī (d. 1338). But he was acquitted of all charges and allowed to continue his teaching and writing, after successfully explaining his beliefs (El-Tobgui, 2019).

Ibn Taymiyya also strongly opposed philosophical sufism, especially those who brought understanding *wiḥdat al-wujūd* or phanteism (Akasoy, 2012; El-Tobgui, 2019; Fancy, 2013, pp. 49–50) of Ibn 'Arabī, but received practical sufism. He is believed to be strong as a follower of *al-Qādiriyyah* (Berkey & Berkey, 2003, p. 236; Homerin, 1985). He also opened the gates of the *ijtihād*, which was tightly closed at the time (Hallaq, 1984; Rafiabadi, 2003, p. 71; Rafik, 2019, p. 212). This is where<sup>5</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah became the figure of a great scholar and thinker who stood out in promoting the movement "Return to the Qur'an and Sunnah" (*al-rujū' ilā al-Qur'ān wa al-Sunnah*), (Esposito, 2010<sup>5</sup>: x; Khan, 2009, p. 103; Pavlin, 2013) also known as the Islamic purification movement. It causes the situation of the lives of Muslims at that time was indeed in a condition full of crisis. He was in the middle of an era when authentic Islam was tainted with a variety of

deviations. So that, the movement "Return to the Qur'an and Sunnah" which was echoed was indeed very contextual with the critical times at that time (Nashir, 2010).

This movement then inspired the next round of Islamic reform movements. It is indeed attributed to the teachings of the pious predecessors (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*). The Islamic teachings that were practiced and embraced in the time of the Prophet (*'ahd al-nabī*), Companions (*'ahd al-ṣaḥābah*), Successors (*'ahd al-tābi'īn*), and Successors of the Successors (*'ahd tābi' al-tābi'īn*) until the 3rd century, also known as the original Islamic movement (Nashir, 2010).

Original or pure Islam has not been tainted by the practices of deviations of *shirk* (polytheism) in which Muhammadiyah environment known as TBC (*Takhayyul* [Superstition], *Bid'ah* [Heresy], and *Ç[K]hurāfāt* [Old Wives Tales]) (Mohamad, 2015; Nashir, 2010). Muhammadiyah also adapted, if not said to adopt, sufism from Ibn Taymiyyah plus from his student Ibn al-Qayyim (d.). Interestingly, it turns out that Ibn Taymiyyah's neo-Sufism is in the form of salaf-based Orthodoxy-Sufism or sunni-Sufism. Thus, the movement "Return to the Qur'an and Sunnah" applies to all aspects of Islam; the creed, worship, *muāmalah* and morality (Bachtiar, 2015).

## 2. Muhammad bin Abd al-Wahhab

Among the renewal movements born in the second phase (in the early 1740s), was the Wahhabi movement. Muslim religious scholars in Mecca took note of a new doctrine coming out of Central Arabia. The author of that doctrine, Muhammad bin Abd al-Wahhāb, declared that Muslims had reverted to idolatry (Commins, 2006, p. 1). His full name is Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb b. Sulaymān b. 'Alī b. Aḥmad b. Rāshid b. Yazīd Ibn Muhammad b. Yazīd b. Muḥṣin (al-Qannūjī, 1978, p. 194). He was born in the 'Uyaynah region of the Nejd region in 1703 and died in 1792 in the same city. He was the son of a well-known judge and scholar in the city of Uyaynah, and at an early age had memorized the Qur'an and learned religion from his father. After studying religious knowledge in depth, Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb made Ibn Taimiyah as a reference for his thoughts, especially in the field of monotheism, as well as resting his fiqh on Imam Ibn Hanbal. He tried hard to revive the teachings of Salaf al-Salih, especially to purify Islamic creed (Haddad, 2015, p. 339).

Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb's reform movement was a link with the previous reforms pioneered by Ibn Taimiyah (Hasan, 2017). He emphasized the refinement of Islamic teachings in referring to the original sources of the Qur'an and Sunnah, in the form of traces of the Salaf al-Salih (Al-Atawneh, 2010, p. 56) which was echoed by Ibn Taimiyah (Bowering, 2015, p. 16; Nawab & Osman, 2014). He may be said to be a continuation of Ibn Taimiyah's renewal with an emphasis on purification that is more practical or even harsh. That is, the movement to return the people to pure Islamic teachings is not merely returning to the two sources of teachings, namely the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (Leo, 2017, pp. 48–49), as well as a movement to eradicate the practices of *shirk* (polytheism) and heresy which expanded at that time directly and loudly, like the destruction of sacred grave buildings (Isakhan & Zarandona, 2018).

Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb was also concerned about the imitation of the Muslims at that time, and reiterated the opening of the door of *ijtihād*, although for this movement it was not as prominent as Ibn Taimiyah and the reformers afterward, because Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb pressure seemed to be far more the movement back to the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet which is purifying. (Saeed, 2016). The development of Sufism is seen as polluting the purity of monotheism and weakening the vitality of the lives of Muslims (Rustom, 2018). It is in this connection that the purifying style of reform becomes the main focus (Wiktorowicz, 2005).

A fairly strict purification pattern revolves around the following: (1) All that is allowed and must be worshiped is God, and those who worship God other than Allah have become polytheists and may be killed; (2) Most Muslims are no longer adherents of pure monotheism because they ask for help no longer from God, but from the sheiks or guardians and supernatural powers, such people have also become polytheists;



(3) To mention the name of the Prophet, sheik or angel as an intermediary in prayer is also a *shirk*; (4) Asking for intercession other than to God is also *shirk*; (5) Vow apart from God is also *shirk*; (6) Acquiring knowledge other than the Qur'an, Hadith and *qiyās* (analogy) is *kufr*; (7) Not believing in God's *qaḍā* and *qadar* is also *kufr*; (8) Likewise interpreting the Qur'an with *ta'wīl* is *kufr* (Nashir, 2010).

With the character and orientation of the purification movement that is hard and simple, and after working together with the Su'ud dynasty, *Wahhābiyah* developed into a flow of the Islamic movement that spread to various parts of the Islamic world, especially through the procession of the pilgrimage where all Muslims came to two holy cities (Mecca and Medina) where *Wahhābiyah* was born and grew up. In Indonesia the term Wahhabi is even attached to that strict style of Islam, especially through the Paderi movement in West Sumatra.

In the early 19th century scholars from the Minangkabau studied and developed the Wahhabism they had learned in the holy land. After returning from the Holy Land, the scholars brought the idea of renewal to West Sumatra, a movement that wanted Islam to be carried out purely in accordance with al-Qur'an and Sunnah (Dobbin, 1974), and invited Muslim societies to clean religious life from the influence of a local culture that is considered to violate the teachings of the Sunni version of Wahhabi Islam (Kartodirdjo, 1988, p. 377; Nashir, 2008). From this reference, the direct influence of the Wahhabi movement to Indonesia (more precisely to West Sumatra) occurred through the Minangkabau Ulama, not through K.H. Ahmad Dahlan and Muhammadiyah. However, Muhammadiyah with the movement to eradicate TBC (*Takhayyul* [Superstition], *Bid'ah* [Heresy], and *C[Kh]urāfāt* [Old Wives Tales]) in the past is also often identified with the Wahhabi movement. The content and open movements and thoughts of K. H. Ahmad Dahlan himself, personally, are not the same as Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb who is hard and simple. The movements and thoughts of K. H. Ahmad Dahlan and more closely associated with Muhammad Abduh, a reformer from Egypt (Nashir, 2010).

### 3. *Tawhīd* Purification and TBC (*Takhayyul* [Superstition], *Bid'ah* [Heresy], and *C[Kh]urāfāt* [Old Wives Tales])

Despite living in different times, Ibn Taymiyyah and Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb was seen as facing the same situation and conditions of society (Kurniawan et al., 2019). At that time, Muslims seemed to no more prolonged hold to the pure teachings of Islam as taught by the Prophet Muhammad, especially in the aspect of monotheism, the belief of the Islamic ummah has been assumed to no longer be based on the Qur'an and Sunnah.

The consequences of the impurity of the teaching are also reflected in the practice of *bid'ah* (heresy) and *khurāfāt* (old wives tales) in everyday lives. Many Muslims came to the tombs of saints or sheiks to ask for *shafā'ah* (help) and blessings. In praying, they use the names of prophets, '*ulamā'*, or angels as *wasīlah* or intermediaries. Muslims are portrayed as believing in supernatural forces outside of God's power that can bring benefits and harm to humans (Baidhaway, 2010).

The supernatural power comes from the spirits of their ancestors who dwell in many trees, mountains, seas, caves, etc. that are considered sacred (Golan, 2003). They always worship in these places to honor and also ask for help from spirits in overcoming everyday difficulties. They believe that luck will come from God, and also believe in a fate that comes from certain things that are considered sacred. They used these objects, and they took them away intending to avoid evil and misery. The socio-religious conditions of the Islamic community in the world in general and Arabic, in particular, caused Ibn Taymiyyah and Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb to carry out this purification movement and appear to be a continuous movement. However, there are differences in the style of movement between the two (Fouad, 2020).

From several sources it is mentioned that the Ibn Taymiyyah movement was more individual (Hoover, 2007, p. 50); did not get government support at the time. This is because the government adheres to schools that are different from those adhered to by Ibn Taymiyyah (Al-Matroudi, 2006, p. 13). While Muhammad

b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb, after expressing his personal opinion, was supported by the government (Su'ud Dynasty) (Bosworth, 2014, p. 57; Hitti, 1970, p. 741). So that the influence of the movement reportedly occurred massively, spreading to various corners of the region where the Muslims are.

Situations and conditions faced by Ibn Taymiyyah and Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb, believed to have greatly influenced K.H. Ahmad Dahlan when performing the Hajj and settled to study Islam in Mecca for thirteen years (1890-1903) (Mulkhan, 2010, p. 70).

Through the reading sources he obtained, K.H. Ahmad Dahlan seemed to feel called to carry out the mission of Islamic renewal, which began with purification of monotheism first. K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's soul calling to carry out the mission was due to the similarity of the community he faced in Indonesia (Java, at the time) (Ch, 2010, p. 37; Priatna & Hakim, 2013, p. 80; Sholikhin, 2010, p. 430), with the community faced by Ibn Taymiyyah and Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab.

#### D. CONCLUSION

The mission and reform movement carried out by Ibn Taymiyyah and Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb has colored the history of the journey of Islamic thought which, of course, begins with the movement "Return to the Qur'an and Sunnah", followed by eradicating TBC (*Takhayyul* [Superstition], *Bid'ah* [Heresy], and *Ḥikmah* [Old Wives Tales]). Without the missions and movements of these two figures, it may be that the Islamic Ummah will be far lost in deviations that, perhaps, they are unaware of. The mission and movement also reached and were captured and then continued by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan as the forerunner to the birth of Muhammadiyah. What distinguishes between K.H. Ahmad Dahlan with two predecessors are the dimensions of time and place. In the narration of Ibn Taymiyyah and Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb has not yet seen a narrative that touches on the side of modernity. Meanwhile, because of the dimensions of time and place, the narrative put forth by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan clearly shows the importance of the modernity side.

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