



Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pemikiran Islam

eISSN: 2809-0322

Vol. 6, No. 3, Mei-Juni 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.69900/ag.v6i3.623>

Genealogy of Thought of Islamic Da'wah Organizations in Indonesia: A Historical Analysis of NU, Muhammadiyah, Persis, and Al-Washliyah

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Abstract

This article examines the genealogy of thought of four major Islamic da'wah institutions in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, Persatuan Islam (Persis), and Al-Jam'iyatul Washliyah (Al-Washliyah). Employing a historical-comparative approach with genealogical analysis inspired by Michel Foucault's framework, this study traces the historical roots, ideological foundations, da'wah character, and intellectual dynamics of each institution within the context of modern Indonesia. Data were gathered through primary and secondary academic literature from leading scholars in the field of Indonesian Islamic history. The findings reveal that although all four institutions emerged from relatively similar socio-historical pressures namely Dutch colonialism and the global wave of Islamic modernism, each developed a distinctive da'wah character. NU embraced a cultural-traditionalist approach rooted in the pesantren tradition and the Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah creed, Muhammadiyah championed dakwah bil-hal (action-based preaching) and social reformism through

modern education and charitable enterprises, Persis emphasized textual-puritan argumentation by rejecting taqlid and bid'ah, while Al-Washliyah integrated da'wah with education within a wasathiyah (moderate) framework. These differing orientations can be traced to divergent intellectual genealogies, Muhammadiyah and Persis absorbed reformist thought from the Middle East (al-Afghani, Abduh, Ridha), while NU and Al-Washliyah remained more deeply rooted in the classical Islamic scholarly tradition of the Malay-Nusantara world. This diversity of orientation represents not a contradiction but rather the intellectual richness of Indonesian Islam, a complementary plurality capable of addressing contemporary challenges including digitalization and religious radicalism.

Keywords: Genealogy of Thought, Islamic Da'wah, NU, Muhammadiyah, Persis, Al-Washliyah, History of Islam in Indonesia

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji genealogi pemikiran empat lembaga dakwah Islam terbesar di Indonesia, yaitu Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, Persatuan Islam (Persis), dan Al-Jam'iyatul Washliyah (Al-Washliyah). Menggunakan pendekatan historis-komparatif dengan analisis genealogi pemikiran yang diinspirasi dari kerangka Michel Foucault, penelitian ini menelusuri akar historis, landasan ideologis, corak dakwah, serta dinamika pemikiran masing-masing lembaga dalam konteks Indonesia modern. Sumber data diperoleh melalui kajian literatur akademik primer dan sekunder dari karya-karya sejarawan terkemuka di bidang Islam Indonesia. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa meskipun keempat lembaga lahir dari tekanan sosio-historis yang relatif sama yakni kolonialisme Belanda dan arus modernisme Islam global, masing-masing mengembangkan karakter dakwah yang distingtif. NU hadir dengan pendekatan kultural-tradisionalis berbasis pesantren dan paham Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah, Muhammadiyah mengusung dakwah bil-hal dan reformisme sosial melalui pendidikan modern serta amal usaha, Persis menonjolkan argumentasi tekstual-puritan dengan menolak taklid dan bid'ah, sementara Al-Washliyah mengintegrasikan dakwah dan pendidikan dalam bingkai wasathiyah. Perbedaan orientasi ini dapat dilacak hingga mata rantai intelektual yang berbeda, Muhammadiyah dan Persis banyak menyerap pemikiran reformis Timur Tengah (al-Afghani, Abduh, Ridha), sedangkan NU dan Al-Washliyah lebih berakar pada tradisi keilmuan Islam Nusantara. Keragaman orientasi ini bukan bentuk pertentangan, melainkan kekayaan intelektual Islam Indonesia yang saling melengkapi dalam menghadapi tantangan kontemporer, termasuk digitalisasi dan radikalisme.

Kata Kunci: Genealogi Pemikiran, Dakwah Islam, NU, Muhammadiyah, Persis, Al-

Washliyah, Sejarah Islam Indonesia

A. Introduction

Islam in Indonesia developed through a long, winding, and dynamic historical process. The presence of Islam in the archipelago is inextricably linked to the intersection of religious teachings with the diverse local socio-cultural realities. Entering the 20th century, Indonesian Muslims faced two major pressures simultaneously: Dutch colonialism, which increasingly gripped every aspect of life, and the tide of modernity, which brought fundamental changes to the perspectives and social order of society. It is within the context of these dual pressures that the emergence of various Islamic organizations in Indonesia must be understood. As documented in various historical studies, Muslims faced numerous challenges both internally and externally within their communities, including external issues stemming from colonialism and Western influence, while internal problems stemmed from the stagnation of thought and the backwardness of the community itself.¹

The Islamic organizations that emerged during this period served more than simply as transmitters of religious teachings. They developed into agents of social change, educational institutions, and cultural forces that shape the face of Indonesian Islam to this day. The four major organizations that are the focus of this study—Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, Persatuan Islam (Persis), and Al-Jam'iyatul Washliyah—each have their own unique history, character, and style of da'wah thought. The differences in approach among these four organizations should be understood not as conflict, but as dynamics that enrich the treasury of Indonesian Islam. Diversity, as one typology of Islam Nusantara, is the fruit of a long struggle between religion and culture, between texts and their complementary contexts.²

A genealogical study of the history and dynamics of these four Islamic missionary institutions is important not only from a historical perspective but also for understanding how Islam developed in Indonesia with its distinctive colors and how each organization made a real contribution to the advancement of the people and the nation. By examining the roots of thought, intellectual influences, and ideological ramifications, we can more fully understand why Indonesian Islam emerged as moderate, inclusive, and adaptive.³

The development of Islam in Indonesia is inseparable from the role of Islamic missionary organizations as agents of education, socialization, and the formation of religious thought. Organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, Persatuan Islam, and Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah emerged within different historical contexts and

¹W. AS. Tridayatna, F. S. Mudafri, and I. S. Khairi, "History and Role of Muhammadiyah in Education," *Proceedings of the International Seminar of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2024), p. 1323.

²Abd. Moqsih, "Interpretation of Islam Nusantara: From the Islamization of Nusantara to the Methodology of Islam Nusantara," *Harmoni: Multicultural & Multireligious Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (2016), p. 21.

³Azyumardi Azra, *Network of Ulama of the Middle East and the Indonesian Archipelago in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Bandung: Mizan, 2004), p. 19.

ideological orientations. Muhammadiyah emphasized Islamic renewal and educational modernization, while Nahdlatul Ulama maintained the tradition of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah, based on Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). Persatuan Islam developed with a reformist approach and a purification of Islamic teachings, while Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah integrated missionary work, education, and the Islamic traditions of the Malay community.

These differing backgrounds shape the diverse paradigms of Islamic da'wah in Indonesia. Therefore, a genealogical approach is crucial to trace the intellectual roots, ideological development, and transformation of the thinking of each organization. This study aims to analyze the genealogy of thought within Islamic da'wah organizations through a historical study of Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, Persatuan Islam, and Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah to understand their contributions to the development of Islamic da'wah and thought in Indonesia.

B. Literature Review

I. Genealogy of Thought as an Analytical Approach

Research into the dynamics of Islamic missionary institutions in Indonesia cannot be adequately understood through a descriptive historical approach that presents a chronology of events alone. Such studies require an approach capable of understanding the relationships between ideas, power, social context, and the transformation of thought that develops within a religious community. Therefore, this research uses a genealogical perspective of thought as the primary theoretical framework in interpreting the development of NU, Muhammadiyah, Persis, and Al-Washliyah.

The concept of genealogy was popularized by Michel Foucault as a method for tracing the origins and development of knowledge or ideas within a particular social context. For Foucault, thought does not emerge in a neutral and linear fashion, but is shaped by power relations, social conditions, and the historical struggles that surround it.⁴ Genealogy does not aim to find a “single truth” of history, but rather to reveal how an idea is formed, undergoes change, and gains legitimacy in society.

In the context of Islamic missionary institutions in Indonesia, a genealogical approach is relevant because each organization emerged from a distinct socio-historical context and has a distinct intellectual chain. Muhammadiyah and Persis, for example, were heavily influenced by Middle Eastern reformism, developed through the thought of Jamaluddin al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rasyid Ridha. Meanwhile, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Al-Washliyah developed through the scholarly tradition of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and a network of Indonesian ulama, who were more accommodating to local culture.⁵

⁴ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 135-140.

⁵ Azyumardi Azra, *Network of Ulama of the Middle East and the Indonesian Archipelago in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Bandung: Mizan, 2004), pp. 1-25.

Through this approach, differences in da'wah orientation between organizations are not understood as mere ideological conflicts, but rather as the result of a long historical construction and intellectual struggle. The genealogy of thought helps explain why NU develops tradition-based cultural da'wah, Muhammadiyah emphasizes social reform and modern education, Persis adopts a textual purification approach, and Al-Washliyah develops a moderate da'wah model based on education and community unity.

The genealogical approach also allows this research to see that religious thought is dynamic, not static. Every organization undergoes transformation in response to changing times, social challenges, and the needs of the Indonesian Muslim community. Thus, the genealogy of thought serves not only as a tool for interpreting the past but also as an instrument for understanding the changing orientation of Islamic preaching in the contemporary era.⁶

2. Theory of Da'wah as a Social Movement

In addition to using a genealogical approach, this research also utilizes the theory of da'wah as a social movement to understand the role of da'wah institutions in Indonesian society. From a modern perspective, da'wah is no longer understood narrowly as the activity of preaching or conveying religious teachings alone, but also as a process of social transformation aimed at fostering societal change toward a better state.⁷

Moh. Ali Aziz explained that da'wah has a very strong social dimension because it is related to the process of changing values, behavior, and the structure of community life.⁸Therefore, Islamic organizations such as NU, Muhammadiyah, Persis, and Al-Washliyah not only carry out religious functions, but also act as agents of social change through education, health services, economic empowerment, and other community activities.

In social movement theory, an organization is born as a response to a crisis situation or social inequality that occurs in society.⁹This is clearly evident in the history of the birth of Islamic organizations in Indonesia in the early 20th century. Dutch colonialism, the educational backwardness of Muslims, and the influx of global modernism were factors that drove the emergence of the modern da'wah movement in Indonesia.

Muhammadiyah, for example, emerged as a reform movement emphasizing modern education and social charity as instruments of da'wah. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) emerged as a socio-religious movement that maintained the traditions of Islamic boarding schools and local culture amidst the current of Islamic purification. Persis

⁶Muhammad Hilmi Bin Ramli, *Genealogy of Islamic Thought: Theory and Application*(Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press, 2021), 14-29.

⁷Samsul Munir Amin, *Da'wah Science*(Jakarta: Amzah, 2013), 56-60.

⁸Moh. Ali Aziz, *Da'wah Science*(Jakarta: Kencana, 2017), 18-25.

⁹ Anthony Giddens, *Sociology*, 7th ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 866-872.

developed as an intellectual movement emphasizing the refinement of faith and textual argumentation, while Al-Washliyah placed education and community unity as the primary foundations of its da'wah movement.

By using the perspective of da'wah as a social movement, this study views da'wah institutions not only as normative religious institutions, but also as social actors that actively shape the identity, culture, and direction of the development of Indonesian Islam.

3. Islamic Modernism and Traditionalism in Indonesia

Another theoretical framework used in this research is the concept of Islamic modernism and traditionalism. This concept is important because the dynamics of Islamic organizational thought in Indonesia are fundamentally influenced by the debate between currents of Islamic renewal and local religious traditions.¹⁰

Islamic modernism developed in response to the decline of Muslims and Western colonial domination. This movement encouraged a rational reinterpretation of Islamic teachings, a rejection of imitation (taqlid), and a return to the Qur'an and Sunnah.¹¹ In the Indonesian context, the idea of modernism has greatly influenced Muhammadiyah and Persis, which emphasize the purification of Islamic teachings, rationality, and reform of the education system.

On the other hand, Islamic traditionalism developed by maintaining the continuity of classical scientific traditions, the authority of schools of thought, and local religious practices that were deemed not to conflict with sharia.¹² NU is the strongest representation of Islamic traditionalism in Indonesia through its cultural and Islamic boarding school approach.

However, the modernist-traditionalist dichotomy cannot be understood in a simple, black-and-white manner. In practice, Islamic organizations in Indonesia have undergone a complex process of adaptation and transformation. Muhammadiyah has not completely abandoned local traditions, while Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has also experienced modernization in education, economics, and the media for Islamic outreach. Therefore, this study views modernism and traditionalism not as mutually exclusive categories, but as a spectrum of ideas that continuously interact in the development of Indonesian Islam.¹³

¹⁰Deliar Noer, *Modern Islamic Movement in Indonesia 1900-1942* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1985), 78-92.

¹¹Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 132-145.

¹²Martin van Bruinessen, *NU: Tradition, Power Relations, Search for New Discourse* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 1994), 14-32.

¹³Azyumardi Azra, *Islam Nusantara: Global and Local Networks* (Jakarta: Prenadamedia Group, 2019), 45-67.

Through this framework, the research attempts to read the dynamics of da'wah thinking in more depth, particularly in understanding how each organization responds to modernity, local culture, and socio-political changes in Indonesia.

C. Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a historical-comparative approach. This approach was chosen because it aims to deeply understand historical processes, thought structures, and ideological dynamics that cannot be measured quantitatively.¹⁴The historical method is applied because the object of study is events and developments that occurred in the past, which require factual reconstruction based on primary and secondary sources.

In particular, this study applies a genealogical analysis of thought (genealogy of ideas) which is inspired by Michel Foucault's research tradition, namely tracing the origins, branches and transformation of an idea in a particular power, social and cultural context.¹⁵This approach allows researchers to not only describe the chronology of history, but also identify causal relationships between the thoughts of figures, the socio-historical context, and the choice of da'wah methodology of each institution.

The selection of sources prioritizes works published by leading academic institutions and has gone through a peer review process, as well as the works of researchers who have a recognized academic track record in the field of Indonesian Islamic history, such as Deliar Noer, Azyumardi Azra, Greg Fealy, Merle Ricklefs, and Karel Steenbrink.¹⁶

D. Result and Discussion

I. The Historical Context of the Emergence of Islamic Propagation Institutions in Indonesia

The emergence of Islamic missionary institutions in Indonesia cannot be separated from the conditions of Muslims during the colonial period, who were under structural and cultural pressure. During Dutch colonial rule, Muslims experienced marginalization in education, economics, and politics, resulting in significant backwardness compared to other groups. Azra explained that colonial policies tended to limit access to modern education for Muslims, resulting in low-

¹⁴ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2014), hlm. 8-12.

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), pp. 135-140; see also Muhammad Hilmi Bin Ramli, *Genealogy of Islamic Thought: Theory and Application* (Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press, 2021), pp. 14-29.

¹⁶ Martin van Bruinessen, *NU: Tradition, Power Relations, Search for New Discourse* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 1994), pp. 14-32.

quality human resources.¹⁷This condition encouraged the emergence of collective awareness among Muslim scholars and intellectuals to carry out reforms through organizational and educational channels as a means of more systematic da'wah.

In addition to internal factors, the emergence of Islamic missionary institutions was also influenced by global currents of thought, particularly Islamic modernism and reformism that developed in the Middle East. The thoughts of figures such as Jamaluddin al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh inspired Islamic reformers in Indonesia to reinterpret Islamic teachings to better suit current developments. Noer emphasized that Islamic modernism in Indonesia was a response to the challenges of colonialism and the stagnation of religious thought.¹⁸This influence is clearly visible in the Muhammadiyah and Persis movements which emphasize the purification of Islamic teachings and rationality in religion.

On the other hand, institutions like Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) emerged in response to these dynamics with a different approach. NU places greater emphasis on preserving Islamic traditions based on local schools of thought and religious practices. Fealy stated that NU emerged as a form of resistance to the purification movement, which was considered too radical in changing traditions.¹⁹This shows that the emergence of da'wah institutions in Indonesia is not homogeneous, but is influenced by differences in approaches to understanding Islamic teachings.

The role of education is a crucial factor in the development of Islamic missionary institutions in Indonesia. Educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), madrasahs, and modern schools are the primary means of disseminating religious thought. Muhammadiyah established modern schools that integrate religious and general knowledge, while Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) maintained the pesantren system as the basis for traditional education. According to Steenbrink, education is a strategic instrument in shaping the identity and direction of the Islamic missionary movement in Indonesia.²⁰

Furthermore, early da'wah was understood not only as a religious activity but also as a social movement aimed at improving social conditions. Da'wah institutions played a role in various fields, such as education, health, and economic

¹⁷Azyumardi Azra, *Islam Nusantara: Global and Local Networks* (Jakarta: Prenadamedia Group, 2019), pp. 45-67.

¹⁸Deliar Noer, *The Modern Islamic Movement in Indonesia 1900-1942* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1985), pp. 78-92.

¹⁹Greg Fealy, *Nahdlatul Ulama and Islamic Politics in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Pustaka LP3ES, 2018), pp. 12-31.

²⁰Karel A. Steenbrink, *Pesantren, Madrasah, School: Islamic Education in the Modern Era* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2017), pp. 55-70.

empowerment. This demonstrates that da'wah has broad dimensions and is not limited to merely conveying religious teachings. Thus, the emergence of da'wah institutions in Indonesia is the result of a complex interaction between internal and external factors that shaped the dynamics of Islamic thought in Indonesia.²¹

2. History and Thought Pattern of the Dakwah Board

a. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)

1) History and Background of the Establishment of NU

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) was founded on Rajab 16, 1344 H, corresponding to January 31, 1926 CE, in Surabaya, East Java. The organization's birth stemmed from a series of embryonic movements initiated by Islamic boarding school scholars. KH. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah founded a discussion group called Tashwirul Afkar (Revival of Thought) in 1914, which served as a forum for the exchange of ideas among scholars and students. Furthermore, in 1916, Nahdlatul Wathan (Revival of the Homeland) was founded, and in 1918, Nahdlatut Tujjar (Revival of Merchants) was born as an effort to strengthen the people's economy.²²

The immediate trigger for the founding of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) was a response to the global situation, namely when King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud of the Saud Dynasty seized control of Mecca in 1924 and attempted to implement anti-sectarian policies and prohibit pilgrimages to the Prophet's tomb. This policy threatened the Islamic traditions developing within Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in the archipelago. Through the formation of the Hijaz Committee, Islamic boarding school scholars gathered strength to convey their aspirations to the World Islamic Congress in Mecca.²³

Before NU was officially established, Islamic boarding schools had already responded to the national awakening by establishing Nahdlatul Wathan in 1916. With the spirit of fighting for Indonesian independence and upholding the teachings of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah through a flexible cultural approach, NU

²¹Moh. Ali Aziz, "Da'wah as a Social Movement in a Sociological Perspective," *Jurnal Dakwah*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2009), pp. 1-18.

²²Choirul Anam, *Growth and Development of Nahdlatul Ulama* (Surabaya: Duta Aksara Mulia, 2010), pp. 3-15.

²³Deliar Noer, *Op. cit.*, pp. 241-245.

was born as an organization that sought to unite nationalism and Islam.²⁴ A central figure in the founding of NU was KH. Hasyim Asy'ari from Jombang, who later became the first Rais Akbar of NU. Together with KH. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah and KH. Bisri Syansuri, they laid the foundations for what would become the largest Islamic organization in the world.

2) The Ideological Basis and Thought of NU's Da'wah

NU is known for its traditionalist character, based in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). This organization was founded to defend and spread traditionalist understandings, which are still widely held by rural communities and Islamic boarding school circles.²⁵ In sociological typology, NU is often identified as an institution that was born and developed in rural communities, so that its religious thought patterns are also typified as 'traditionalist Islam'.²⁶

NU is founded on the ideology of *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah* (*Aswaja*), an Islamic ideology that follows the footsteps of the Prophet Muhammad SAW and his companions. Theologically, NU adheres to the *Al-Asy'ariyah* and *Al-Maturidiyah* schools of thought. In the field of *fiqh*, NU adheres to one of the four major schools of thought, with the majority of NU scholars following the *Shafi'i* school. Meanwhile, in the field of *Sufism*, NU follows the basic teachings of Imam Abu Qosim Al-Junaidi. KH. Hasyim Asy'ari formulated two important books as the ideological foundation of NU, namely the *Book of Basic Laws* and the *Book of I'tiqad Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah*.²⁷

Nahdlatul Ulama's (NU) missionary philosophy differs significantly from that of other modernist organizations. NU does not view local traditions and cultures as something to be eradicated, as long as they do not conflict with Islamic law. NU's missionary work is carried out through a cultural approach, namely entering and filling the cultural spaces of society with Islamic values. In contemporary developments, NU is known as the proponent of the concept

²⁴Ahmad Faujiyanto, Isjoni, Yuliantoro, and Basri Ibrahim, "The Historical Relationship between the Development of *Nahdlatul Ulama* and the Transmigration Community in Kuantan Singingi Regency (1981-2019)," *Fikri: Journal of Religious, Social and Cultural Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2021), pp. 106-121.

²⁵Amin Farih, "Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and its Contribution in Fighting for Independence and Defending the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia," *Walisongo: Journal of Social and Religious Research*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (2016), pp. 251-284.

²⁶Moch. Nur Ichwan, "Traditionalist and Modernist Islam: A Historical Study of the Typology of Indonesian Islamic Society," UIN Walisongo, 2020, accessed April 29, 2026, <https://s2iat.walisongo.ac.id/index.php/2020/07/31/>.

²⁷Choirul Anam, *Growth and Development of Nahdlatul Ulama* (Surabaya: Bisma Satu Press, 2006), pp. 22-28.

of Islam Nusantara, which promotes moderation, anti-fundamentalism, and respect for local traditions.²⁸ Practices such as haul, tahlilan, and grave pilgrimage are still maintained as part of NU's cultural da'wah identity which is rooted in the lives of the people.

3) Dynamics of NU Thought and Contribution

Throughout its history, NU has demonstrated significant intellectual dynamism. During the colonial era, NU played a role in the resistance against colonialists, including issuing the Jihad Resolution in October 1945, which called for compulsory war to defend independence. During the New Order era, NU experienced strong political pressure but managed to survive by returning to the 1926 Khittah at the 1984 Congress, which affirmed NU as a socio-religious, not a political, organization. In the field of education, NU established thousands of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and madrasas (Islamic schools) throughout Indonesia.

b. Muhammadiyah

1) History and Background of the Establishment of Muhammadiyah

Muhammadiyah is the largest modernist Islamic organization in Indonesia, founded by KH. Ahmad Dahlan on 8 Dzulhijjah 1330 H, corresponding to November 18, 1912 AD, in Kauman Village, Yogyakarta. Ahmad Dahlan was the son of an imam and preacher at the Kauman Grand Mosque. His love of knowledge led Ahmad Dahlan to perform the Hajj pilgrimage at the age of 15 and to live in Mecca for five years, where he came into contact with Islamic reformist thought.²⁹

Ahmad Dahlan's reformist ideas matured after his second return from Mecca in 1903. He was influenced by the thoughts of Islamic reformers such as Ibn Taymiyyah, Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rasyid Ridha. He also studied with prominent Indonesian scholars living in Mecca, including Sheikh Ahmad Khatib from Minangkabau and Kiai Nawawi from Banten. The founding of Muhammadiyah was preceded by the opening of the Muhammadiyah School in 1911, where Ahmad Dahlan combined religious education with general knowledge.

²⁸Zainul Milal Bizawie, *Laskar Ulama-Santri & Jihad Resolution: The Vanguard in Upholding Indonesia 1945-1949* (Tangerang: Pustaka Compass, 2014), pp. 88-102.

²⁹Musthafa Kamal Pasha and Ahmad Adaby Darban, *Muhammadiyah as an Islamic Movement* (Yogyakarta: LPPI UMY, 2002), pp. 11-23.

Muhammadiyah's legal entity was then recognized by the Dutch East Indies government on August 22, 1914.³⁰

2) The Ideological Basis and Thought of Muhammadiyah's Da'wah

Muhammadiyah upholds three pillars of religious ideology: da'wah, tajdid (renewal), and Progressive Islam, which embraces wasathiyah (moderate) perspectives. The Muhammadiyah Constitution, based on the results of the 45th Congress in 2005, states that Muhammadiyah is an Islamic da'wah movement organization, amar makruf nahi munkar (promotion), and tajdid (renewal). It adheres to Islamic faith and is based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah.³¹

One of Ahmad Dahlan's most influential concepts is the 'Theology of Al-Ma'un', which arose from his habit of teaching Surah Al-Ma'un to his students and then instructing them to practice it. For Muhammadiyah, da'wah is not just about lectures and religious studies, but must be realized in real social actions that touch the lives of the community: helping the poor, establishing clinics, orphanages, and community services. This spirit led to the birth of the General Relief Movement (PKO) as Muhammadiyah's first social enterprise. Another important step in reform was the pioneering of the Aisyiyah women's movement in 1917, in which Ahmad Dahlan encouraged Muslim women to be active in society and help spread Islamic teachings.

3) Dynamics of Muhammadiyah's Thoughts and Contributions

Muhammadiyah has experienced significant intellectual dynamics throughout its history. In terms of its relationship with the state, Muhammadiyah played a crucial role in the national movement, participated in the formulation of the state's foundations, and was active in various national forums.³² During the New Order era, Muhammadiyah faced pressure with the change of Islamic principles to Pancasila principles in 1985, which was then returned at the 2000 Congress. To date, Muhammadiyah has built thousands of schools, dozens of universities, hundreds of hospitals and clinics, as well as various charitable efforts throughout Indonesia.

³⁰Desvian Bandarsyah, "The Dynamics of Tajdid in Muhammadiyah Da'wah," *HISTORIA: Journal of the History Education Study Program*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2016), pp. 67-74.

³¹Fuad Hamzah et al., "The History of Muhammadiyah," *Journal of Indonesian History*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2023), pp. 27-32.

³²Benny Afriandi, S. K. Elhusein, Ahmad Lahmi, Desi Asmaret, and Dahlan, "Muhammadiyah and the Movement for Change: A Review of Social, Islamic, and Reformed Aspects," *Indonesian Research Journal on Education*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2024), pp. 267-276.

c. Islamic Union (PERSIS)

1) History and Background of the Establishment of PERSIS

The Islamic Association (PERSIS) was founded on September 12, 1923, in Bandung, West Java. The organization emerged from a study group initiated by two merchants from Palembang: Kiai Haji Muhammad Zamzam, an alumnus of Dar al-'Ulum Mecca, and Haji Muhammad Yunus, a trader fluent in Arabic and active in Islamic discussions. At the suggestion of Sheikh Ahmad Soorkati, the study group evolved into a formal organization called 'Persatoean Islam Bandoeng,' with KH. Muhammad Zamzam as its first chairman.³³ The name 'Islamic Association' was chosen with the intention of directing the spirit of *ijtihad* and *jihad* to achieve unity of Islamic thought, unity of Islamic feelings, unity of Islamic voices, and unity of Islamic efforts, a philosophy based on Q.S. Ali Imran verse 103.³⁴

The founders of PERSIS were greatly influenced by the thoughts of Islamic reformers such as Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim, Muhammad Abduh, Muhammad Abdul Wahhab, As-Syaukani, and Rashid Ridha. In the early days, PERSIS was a study club that seriously studied the book *Bidayah al-Mujtahid* and the reformist thoughts of the *al-Manar* magazine published by Muhammad Rashid Ridha in Egypt.³⁵ A new chapter for PERSIS began when Ahmad Hassan (A. Hassan) joined the PERSIS discussion group in 1924. Born in Singapore on December 31, 1887, A. Hassan was a master of various Islamic religious and general sciences and was fluent in Arabic, English, Malay, and Tamil. A. Hassan's presence gave PERSIS a real shape and personality. Over time, A. Hassan emerged as the most influential intellectual figure who shaped PERSIS's distinctive character as a critical and argumentative reformist organization.³⁶

2) The Ideological Basis and Thought of PERSIS Da'wah

PERSIS upholds a strong spirit of returning to the Quran and Hadith, and purifying faith and worship from all forms of superstition, superstition, and innovation. Unlike Muhammadiyah, which employs a charitable approach, PERSIS emphasizes a critical intellectual tradition and argumentative preaching.

³³Yusron Wahyu Asmin and Ahmad Muchtar, *Persatuan Islam: Pembaharuan Islam Indonesia Abad 20*, trans. by Howard M. Federspiel (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1996), pp. 34-56.

³⁴Ustadz Hadi, "The Thoughts of the Islamic Unity Hadith (PERSIS)," *PAPPASANG: Journal of the Study of the Qur'an, Hadith and Islamic Thought*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2023), pp. 232-261.

³⁵Siti Halimah Mar'ah, Nurul Zakiyah Husna, and Fatimah T. Dzulfa, "History and Development of PERSIS," *Journal of Educational Science and Local Wisdom*, Vol. 4, No. 6 (2024), pp. 993-1008.

³⁶Syafiq A. Mughni, "Hassan's Position in Islamic Reform in Indonesia," *The Journal of History and Civilization*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2017), pp. 1-18.

A. Hassan, nicknamed the "Lion of the Podium," is known as a polemicist and debater skilled at debunking the arguments of those with differing views.³⁷

PERSIS was not politically oriented, but rather focused on Islamic education and da'wah. As a vehicle for disseminating ideas, PERSIS actively published various magazines and pamphlets, including *Pembela Islam* (1929–1935), *Al-Fatwa* (1933–1935), *Soal Jawaban* (1931–1940), *Al-Lisan* (1935–1942), *At-Taqwa* (1937–1941), and *Al-Hikam* (1939).³⁸ PERSIS is known for its reformist, textual, and critical approach to traditions deemed to lack a strong foundation in the Qur'an and Sunnah. A. Hassan's most important intellectual contribution was the writing of *Tafsir Al-Furqan*, which was the first step in the history of translating the Qur'an into Indonesian between 1920 and 1950.

3) Dynamics of PERSIS Thought and Contribution

The dynamics of PERSIS's thinking experienced internal tension between the group that wanted PERSIS to enter the realm of practical politics (spearheaded by KH. Isa Anshari) and the group that wanted PERSIS to remain focused on da'wah and education (spearheaded by KH. E. Abdurrahman). In the end, KH. E. Abdurrahman was elected as general chairman and PERSIS returned to its original mission as a da'wah and education organization. The best PERSIS cadres who later became national figures include Mohammad Natsir (former Prime Minister of the Republic of Indonesia), Mohammad Isa Anshary, and E. Abdurrahman. PERSIS received legal recognition in 1939 and continues to grow to this day.

d. Al-Washliyah

1) History and Background of the Establishment of Al-Washliyah

Al-Jam'iyatul Washliyah (Al-Washliyah) was born on November 30, 1930, corresponding to Rajab 9, 1349 H, in Medan, North Sumatra. This organization was the fruit of the internal dynamics of Muslims in East Sumatra in the early 20th century, particularly the tension between the Older (traditionalist) from Mandailing and the Younger (modernist) who spread from Minangkabau to East Sumatra.³⁹

³⁷Syafiq A. Mughni, *Hassan Bandung: Radical Islamic Thinker, Edition II* (Surabaya: PT. Bina Ilmu, 1994), pp. 67-88.

³⁸Eliwatis, Iswantir, Ridha Maimori, and Sri Herawati, "The Role of Persatuan Islam (Persis) in the Development of Islamic Education in Indonesia," *Tazkiya: Journal of Islamic Education*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (2022), pp. 41-53.

³⁹Irwan Batubara, *Dynamics of the Al-Washliyah Movement from Era to Era* (Medan: Perdana Publishing, 2015), pp. 19-37.

The immediate background to the founding of Al-Washliyah was the religious debate that developed in the Maktab al-Islamiyah Tapanuli (MIT) environment, Medan.⁴⁰ Since 1928, the MIT Debating Club has been actively discussing various religious issues that have become a source of conflict between the Old and the Young.⁴¹ The main figures involved in the founding of Al-Washliyah include H. Ismail Banda (the first chairman), H. Abdurrahman Syihab, H. Muhammad Arsyad Thalib Lubis, H. Yusuf Ahmad Lubis, and H. Adnan Nur Lubis. Al-Washliyah received strong support from Sheikh Hasan Maksu (Mufti of the Deli Sultanate).

The name 'Al-Washliyah' was given by Sheikh Muhammad Yunus, meaning 'the one who connects' or 'the one who strengthens ties of kinship.' This name reflects the organization's fundamental vision: to build a bridge connecting humanity with Allah SWT and with each other, in a spirit of brotherhood and unity.⁴² One of the factors that led to the formation of Al-Washliyah was the Dutch colonial political conditions, which deliberately fostered differences and conflict among Muslims through the policy of divide and rule. Muslim scholars and figures felt compelled to form a unifying body that could bridge the various divided groups.⁴³

2) The Ideological Basis and Thought of Al-Washliyah's Da'wah

Al-Washliyah adheres to the moderate Islamic school (wasathiyah) of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah, which follows the Shafi'i school of thought, in line with the Islamic tradition developed among Malay-Indonesian scholars. Al-Washliyah's missionary thinking centers on five main charitable deeds: education, preaching, enjoining good and forbidding evil, orphanages, and economic empowerment of the community.⁴⁴

Al-Washliyah's da'wah approach places a strong emphasis on the continuity (washilah) between da'wah and education. Al-Washliyah was the first in North Sumatra to implement a modern, classical educational model, demonstrating a

⁴⁰Muhammad Tanjung, *Maktab Islamiyah Tapanuli 1918-1942: Tracing the History of Islamic Education in the Early 20th Century in Medan* (Medan: IAIN Press, 2012), pp. 102-118.

⁴¹Chalijah Hasanuddin, *Al-Jam'iyatul Washliyah 1930-1942: Fire in the Chaff in East Sumatra* (Bandung: Pustaka, 1988), pp. 22-45.

⁴²Muhammad Rozali, *Tradition of the Scholars of Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah North Sumatra* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2018), pp. 88-99.

⁴³Nur Hasanah Awaliyah, "Social Religious Organizations and Islamic Education: A Case Study of Al-Jam'iyatul Washliyah," *Jurnal Moderasi*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2023), pp. 55-67.

⁴⁴Dja'far Siddik and Rosnita, "Al-Washliyah Education Movement in North Sumatra," *Ulumuna: Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (2014), pp. 93-120.

strong spirit of renewal, even within a traditional framework.⁴⁵ Al-Washliyah's commitment to education is evident in its extraordinary development: from 16 educational institutions when it was first established in East Sumatra, it has now grown to around 700 educational institutions throughout Indonesia.⁴⁶ One of Al-Washliyah's most impressive da'wah achievements was the success of the da'wah mission to Porsea, Tapanuli in 1933, where the Al-Washliyah delegation succeeded in converting many residents of the region to Islam.

3) Dynamics of Thought and Contribution of Al-Washliyah

Al-Washliyah declares itself non-political and unaffiliated with any political forces. This principle has been consistently upheld at every Al-Washliyah Congress. However, during the struggle for independence, Al-Washliyah was actively involved in countering Dutch colonialism.⁴⁷ Al-Washliyah joined the Supreme Islamic Council of Indonesia (MIAI) on August 5, 1941, demonstrating its involvement in the national movement for Muslim unity. Al-Washliyah has now expanded to 35 provinces across Indonesia.

3. Comparison of the Dynamics of Islamic Thought in the Four Institutions

Although these four Islamic missionary organizations emerged in nearly the same historical context, there are significant differences in orientation and approach between them, which can be analyzed from several dimensions. From a theological-faith perspective, NU and Al-Washliyah both adhere to the Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah school of thought, following a school of thought in fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), while Muhammadiyah and PERSIS emphasize ijtihad directly from the Qur'an and Sunnah. Of the two, PERSIS takes the firmest stance in rejecting the imitation of schools of thought and is the most active in criticizing practices deemed heretical.

In terms of da'wah methods, Muhammadiyah is known for its da'wah bil-hal (da'wah through concrete actions) approach, manifested in the establishment of schools, hospitals, and social institutions. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) employs a cultural approach that recognizes and incorporates local traditions. PERSIS

⁴⁵Sefri Tanjung Sumantri, Novita Deliana, and Yanfi Utami Afif, "Islamic Education, Modernization, and Colonization: The Transformation of the Jam'iyatul Washliyah Educational Institution 1930-1942," *TADRIS: Journal of Islamic Education*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (2021), pp. 157-174.

⁴⁶Khoirun Nisa, Muhammad Arif Ansori, Anis Ayu Andari, Muhammad Kholil, and Sudarningsih, "Al-Jam'iyatul Al-Washliyah Educational Institutions (1930-2000): Existence, Typology of Education, and Its Issues," *Yupa: Historical Studies Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2024), pp. 124-139.

⁴⁷Ahmad Saragih, "The Contribution of Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah to Indonesian Independence (1930-1950)," *MIQOT: Journal of Islamic Sciences*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (2016), pp. 1-22.

prioritizes argumentative and polemical da'wah through debate and publications. Al-Washliyah combines da'wah with education as two mutually reinforcing blades.

In terms of attitudes toward local traditions, NU and Al-Washliyah tend to be accommodating to local traditions and cultures that do not conflict with sharia. Muhammadiyah is more selective and encourages purification without being overly confrontational. PERSIS takes the firmest stance in rejecting traditions deemed heretical and prioritizes textual arguments.

Geographically and socially, Muhammadiyah emerged in Central Java, with deep roots among merchants and urban communities. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) emerged in East Java, with strong roots in rural Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). PERSIS emerged in West Java, with a strong urban intellectual base. Al-Washliyah emerged in North Sumatra, with deep roots in traditional Malay-Muslim communities.

Despite their differences, these four Islamic missionary organizations share a fundamental similarity: the belief that Islam is a comprehensive religion encompassing all aspects of life, and a commitment to improving the quality of life for the community through education, Islamic outreach, and social work. This diversity of Islamic outreach orientations is precisely the richness of Indonesian Islam, enabling it to reach various levels of society with the most appropriate approach.⁴⁸

4. Genealogical Analysis of Thought

The dynamics of thought within Indonesian Islamic missionary institutions demonstrate a diversity inextricably linked to the underlying social context. The differences between Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, Persis, and Al-Washliyah are not a contradiction, but rather a reflection of differing responses to the social conditions they face. Ricklefs explains that the development of Islam in Indonesia is heavily influenced by the local context, resulting in variations in religious practice and thought.⁴⁹ This shows that differences are not a weakness, but rather a wealth in Indonesian Islamic tradition.

The educational background of the founding fathers is also a crucial factor in shaping the dynamics of thought. Muhammadiyah figures like Ahmad Dahlan were heavily influenced by modern education and reformist thought, while NU figures like Hasyim Asy'ari had a strong Islamic boarding school background. This

⁴⁸Bahtiar Effendy, *Islam and the State: The Transformation of Islamic Political Ideas and Practices in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1998), pp. 67-85.

⁴⁹Merle C. Ricklefs, *Modern Indonesian History 1200-2008* (Jakarta: Serambi Ilmu Semesta, 2019), pp. 215-230.

difference resulted in differing orientations to da'wah (Islamic preaching), with Muhammadiyah tending to be rational and modernist, while NU is more traditional and contextual. Burhanuddin stated that educational background significantly influences how a person understands and interprets religious teachings.⁵⁰

Furthermore, the orientation of da'wah (preaching) is also a distinguishing factor in the dynamics of thought. Muhammadiyah and Persis place greater emphasis on the purification of Islamic teachings, while NU and Al-Washliyah emphasize accommodation to local culture. According to Zada, these differences in orientation result from differing interpretations of the sources of Islamic teachings.⁵¹ From the perspective of the genealogy of thought, this difference can be traced back to different intellectual chains: the founders of PERSIS and Muhammadiyah directly absorbed the reformist thought of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, while the founders of NU and Al-Washliyah were more influenced by the Islamic scholarly tradition of the Nusantara which had already undergone a process of acculturation.

This dynamic also demonstrates that the thinking within Islamic missionary institutions is dynamic and continues to evolve with the changing times. Islamic missionary institutions are not static, but continually adapt to changing social conditions. Thus, differences in thought within Islamic missionary institutions can be understood as the result of the interaction between social context, educational background, and Islamic missionary orientation—a difference that should not be viewed as conflict, but as a form of intellectual dynamics that enriches the Islamic heritage in Indonesia.⁵²

5. Implications for Islamic Propagation Institutions

The differences in the dynamics of thought within Islamic missionary institutions have significant implications for their role and function in society. Islamic missionary institutions function not only as religious institutions but also as ideological institutions that shape society's perspectives on religion and social life. Azra stated that religious institutions play a crucial role in shaping the collective identity of Muslims in Indonesia.

Besides being ideological institutions, Islamic missionary institutions also serve as agents of social change. Through various programs and activities, Islamic

⁵⁰Jajat Burhanuddin, *History of Islamic Civilization in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2020), pp. 188-205.

⁵¹Khamami Zada, *Radical and Moderate Islam in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2021), pp. 77-91.

⁵²Syamsul Arifin, "Dynamics of Islamic Thought and Da'wah in the Context of Modernity," *Journal of Da'wah Science*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (2014), pp. 201-220.

missionary institutions contribute to improving the quality of life of the community, including in education, economics, and health. Muhammadiyah is known for its network of schools and hospitals, while Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is active in community empowerment programs based on Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). In the field of education, Islamic missionary institutions have a significant influence in shaping a generation of knowledgeable and moral Muslims. Steenbrink emphasized that education is the primary tool for transmitting values and ideology within Islamic missionary institutions.

In the cultural sphere, Islamic missionary institutions play a role in preserving and developing Islamic traditions appropriate to the local context. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), for example, is known for its cultural approach, which accommodates local traditions in religious practices. Thus, Islamic missionary institutions have a multidimensional role, encompassing various aspects of community life.⁵³

6. Contemporary Relevance

In the contemporary context, da'wah institutions face increasingly complex challenges, particularly with the advent of the digital era. Digitalization has transformed the way da'wah is conducted, from a face-to-face approach to a digital media-based approach. Campbell stated that digital religion has created a new space for more open and interactive religious practices.⁵⁴ This requires Islamic preaching institutions to adapt to technological developments.

Furthermore, another challenge faced is the rise of radicalism that utilizes digital media as a means of spreading ideology. This requires Islamic missionary institutions to be more active in disseminating narratives of Islamic moderation. Azra emphasized the importance of a moderate approach in maintaining social and religious stability in Indonesia. Furthermore, social media and digital platforms can be used as a means to convey religious messages to a wider audience. Wahyudi demonstrated that digital Islamic missionary activities have great potential to increase the effectiveness of religious communication.⁵⁵

However, the use of technology in preaching also requires a wise approach to avoid compromising the quality of the message. Preaching institutions need to ensure that the content they deliver maintains depth and accuracy. Therefore, the

⁵³Nur Syam, *Coastal Islam* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2005), pp. 15-28.

⁵⁴Heidi A. Campbell, *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (New York: Routledge, 2020), hlm. 12-30.

⁵⁵Rohmat Wahyudi, "Digitalization of Da'wah and Changes in Religious Communication Patterns," *Journal of Da'wah Science*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2023), pp. 67-82.

relevance of preaching institutions in the contemporary era is largely determined by their ability to integrate traditional and modern approaches.⁵⁶

⁵⁶Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Pluralism, Liberalism, and Islamism: Religious Outlook of the Muhammadiyah," *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (2018), pp. 433–470.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the genealogy of thought of Islamic da'wah institutions in Indonesia was born from diverse historical and social contexts, influenced by colonial conditions, global thought currents, and the internal dynamics of the Muslim community. The emergence of NU, Muhammadiyah, Persis, and Al-Washliyah was a response to the needs of the community in facing the challenges of the times, both in religious and social aspects. The differences in thought that emerged among these institutions are not a form of conflict, but rather an intellectual dynamic that reflects the richness of Islamic tradition in Indonesia. Analysis of the genealogy of thought shows that these differences are influenced by different intellectual chains: from the reformist Middle Eastern scholarly tradition absorbed by Muhammadiyah and PERSIS, to the Nusantara Islamic scholarly tradition maintained by NU and Al-Washliyah.

Furthermore, Islamic propagation institutions play a crucial role as ideological institutions and agents of social change. Their contributions extend beyond religious boundaries to education, politics, and culture. This demonstrates the broad and strategic dimensions of Islamic propagation in society. In the contemporary context, Islamic propagation institutions face various challenges, such as digitalization and radicalism. However, these challenges also provide opportunities for Islamic propagation institutions to innovate and expand their reach. Therefore, an integrative approach is needed to manage Islamic propagation in the modern era, while remaining grounded in the genealogical roots of thought that have shaped the character of each institution. Thus, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, Persis, and Al-Washliyah have made significant contributions to the development of Islam in Indonesia. Their diversity of thought is a strength in building an Islam that is moderate, inclusive, and adaptive to changing times.

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