

Salafi and the Purification of Religion Movement in Gorontalo

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Abstract. This article is a qualitative research with an ethnographic approach. The purpose of this study is to see and analyze the religious purification movement by the Salafi in Gorontalo. The existence of the Salafi in Gorontalo has existed since 1998, when Gorontalo became the locus of the presence and movement of Salafi thought in the purification of Islamic teachings. This study found that at the beginning of their presence, the Salafi received a reaction of rejection from the Muslim community of Gorontalo, because they were considered a deviant sect. The spirit of returning to the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet as a slogan in the da'wah of the Salafi to make them a source of religion. The Salafi purification movement is a theological critique based on concerns about the purity of Islamic teachings from the influence of Gorontalo local culture.

Keywords: Salafi; purification; religion; culture.

1 Introduction

Gorontalo is an area located at the northern tip of Sulawesi in 2000, separated from North Sulawesi. The separation of Gorontalo gave its own identity as an area where the majority of the populations are Muslim. The diversity of mass organizations is present in the midst of the Muslim community of Gorontalo, such as Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, Al-Khairat, Wahdah Islamiyah and Jama'ah Tabligh. The majority of the Muslim community of Gorontalo believe in Ahlul Sunnah Wal Jama'ah annahdliyah. Religious practices among Muslims are dominated by NU tradition compared to Muhammadiyah. This is influenced by the very traditional pattern of spreading Islam through local cultural channels so that customs are influenced by Islamic values. This can be seen in Gorontalo's philosophy of "adati hula-hula'a to syara'a, syara'a hula-hula'a to Qur'ani" (Adat base on syara', syara' base on Kitabullah).

Currently, the development of Islam in Gorontalo is increasingly dynamic. Gorontalo is open to the inclusion of several Islamic organizations other than NU, Al-Khairat and Muhammadiyah as well as Tarekat groups with various sects. The inclusion of the Salafi as a transnational Islamic network such as Jama'ah Tabligh Wahdah Islamiyah gave a new style in the study of Islamic thought in Gorontalo. Currently, Islam in Gorontalo faces a different situation from the past. There is no longer a royal system built, Islam is no longer institutionalized in a kingdom, religious affairs are no longer regulated by royal authorities.

Times have changed, the local Islamic dynamism of Gorontalo has experienced "repression" and ideological "shock" that came from outside. The war of discourse (contestation) openly between different religious groups is getting stronger. The spectrum of thought from the "New Islam" (Salafi) is considered different from the beliefs and understanding of the Gorontalo people inherited from the ulama at the beginning of the spread and development of Islam.

This research was conducted in Gorontalo in July-December 2021. This study aims to analyze the purification movement of the Salafi in the midst of the fanaticism of the majority of Muslims towards local culture. This research is a qualitative research using ethnographic method. The data were analyzed using inductive analysis to describe analytically the purification movement of the Salafi in Gorontalo.

2 The Presence of Salafi in Gorontalo

The presence of the Salafi in Gorontalo since 1998 with the formation of a mass organization, namely Wahdah Islamiyah, based in Makassar, South Sulawesi. Several names, such as Nurhasan Ngabito, Rustam Faidah and Najamudin Harun, are alumni of the Hubulo Islamic boarding school who are continuing their education at Ma'had Al-Bir, then they were sent to take a cycle (dauroh) at the Makassar Haji hostel. Their participation was the forerunner to the formation of Wahdah Islamiyah in Gorontalo.

In 1998, Nurhasan Ngabito, a student of Ma'had Al-Birr Makassar from Gorontalo, received an order from the central board of Wahdah Islamiyah to carry out a cycle (dauroh) in Gorontalo. The dauroh was held at the Hubulo Islamic Boarding School which was attended by around fifty Hubulo students and also students from STKIP Gorontalo. The cycle (dauroh) was attended by Muhammad Zaitun Rasmin, as the general chairman of the Wahdah Islamiyah Central Executive who was accompanied by two other administrators, namely Saiful Yusuf and Samsuddin Kundru.

The presence of the Salafi at that time received a "rejection" reaction from some Gorontalo Muslim communities. This organization was suspected of being a misleading Islamic organization or a deviant sect. In addition, as a representative of the Wahhabis who have undergone a metamorphosis from an organizational aspect, but ideologically, thoughts and movements are part of a transnational Islamic network, namely Wahhabism.

Burhanudin Umar and K.H. Muin Mooduto two of the figures from the Nahdlatul Ulama Gorontalo appeared to defend the presence of the da'wah group brought by Nurhasan Ngabito and his friends. The defense was conveyed through in Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) Gorontalo during the morning wisdom event. This defense effort has brought fresh air to the development of the Salafi da'wah in Gorontalo to date. The entry of the Salafi to Gorontalo was based on several reasons.

First, Gorontalo is an area known as the philosophy of "adat based on syara', syara' based on the book of Allah" which is the fundamental reason for the inclusion of this organization. It can be said that the philosophical spirit of the Gorontalo area synergizes with the orientation of the Salafi da'wah, namely the Qur'an as the main reference source for the problems of Muslim life. Second, Gorontalo women use a "beleuto" or face covering similar to a veil or niqab. The beleuto tradition is used as a cultural capital to invite Gorontalo women to cover and protect their genitals from the eyes of men. Third, there has been no ban on Isbal in Gorontalo. In addition to the niqab, the target of the salafi da'wah is the prohibition of men from wearing trousers or robes that can cover the ankles. Fourth, there is no conflict between Muhammadiyah

and Nahdlatul Ulama. Unlike in some other areas, the religious relationship between Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah often experiences horizontal conflicts caused by different views on the issue of *furu'* (a branch of religious teachings) or *khilafiyah* (differences of opinion in determining the legal status of a worship issue). Fifth, *adab* or "*adabu*" is another reason for Wahdah Islamiyah to develop its *da'wah* in Gorontalo. Gorontalo's philosophy of "*adati hula-hula'a to sara'a, sara'a hula-hula'a to Qur'ani*" emphasizes that the life of the people of Gorontalo is very religious with a sense of high social values and uphold religious values, including *adab* itself.

The Salafi *da'wah* movement is very massive and structured. The polite way of preaching outside their group has become its own strength in recruiting members. His *da'wah* is very attractive to the middle class like social workers, state civil apparatus, especially the urban community of the city who come to study at various universities in Gorontalo. This last group became the target of *da'wah*, because it was prepared as a preacher in the future. Not surprisingly, the development of Salafi *da'wah* is very rapid in Gorontalo through a member recruitment system using the SKS (one cadre one) and SKD (one cadre two) pattern.

3 Local culture and the destruction of tawhid

The spirit of applying good habits is part of Nahdlatul Ulama's tolerant attitude towards tradition. For Nahdlatul Ulama, culture is a religious infrastructure, so maintaining traditions and cultural wealth can support religious teachings and spirit. This view is very "Shafi'iyah minded" (Maimun, 2016:104), and it is reinforced by a view of the rules of *fiqh* is "*al-muhafadhotu 'ala qodimis sholih wal akhdzu bil Jadidil Ashlah*," (Maintaining the good old and taking the new one is better). For Nahdliyin residents, local culture is part of customary law or "*al-adatul muhakkamat*".

Abdurrahman Wahid (1989:82) in "*Pribumisasi Islam*," describes local considerations in formulating religious laws, without changing the law itself. It is also not to abandon norms for the sake of culture, but so that these norms accommodate the needs of the culture by taking advantage of the opportunities provided by variations in the understanding of the texts, while still giving a role to the historical formulation of *ushul fiqh* and *fiqh* rules. In this context, NU is identified as a cultural Islamic group. (Arifi, 2018:136).

NU traditions closeness to local culture leaves a counterproductive space for pure Islamic groups who are very anti-traditional. But in the local context, tradition becomes inseparable from religion. As a treasure trove of local traditions, some customs often appear to be productively related to religion. In Gorontalo customs such as *Modutu* (delivering treasure), *Molonthalo* (Thanksgiving after 7 months pregnant), *Molihi Lo Limu* (lime bath), *Beati* (bait a teenage girl). (Mantau, 2016).

The existence and practice of some of the local treasures above are very open to be opposed by puritanical Salafi Islamic groups, including some religious traditions such as *dikili* (*dhzikr*), *mauludu* (birth of the Prophet), *me'eraji* (*isra' mi'raj*), *aruwa* (soul prayer), *ngadi salawati* (*sholawat*), *tahlili* (*tahlilan*), and *Tawassul* prayer. Thus traditions are understood as a form of deviation from Islamic teachings and contrary to the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. On the other hand, Nahdliyin residents are local cultural tradition practitioners and are often accused of being *Ahlul Bid'ah*. (Pomalingo, 2021:61). This accusation arose because the traditions carried out by the Nahdliyin residents were never exemplified by the Prophet.

According to the Salafi, such practices are part of misguided behavior and undermine monotheism. Islamic teachings must be protected from the influence of local culture and behavior that can damage the *aqidah* of Muslims. Local traditions will only tarnish one's monotheism. So, to maintain the purity of religion, Muslims must be kept away from the influence of local culture. The purification movement is carried out to maintain the purity of Islamic teachings taught by the Prophet Muhammad and Salafush Salih. However, on the other hand, for the Muslims of Gorontalo, the above cultural practices are part of a tradition that needs to be maintained and preserved, because they are believed to be based on Shari'a or do not violate Islamic Shari'a according to the philosophy of the Gorontalo people.

4 The Purification Movement as Theological Critic

The Islamic purification movement is an important phenomenon in the development of Islamic thought and movement. This movement often emerges regularly in situations where there are many differences in morals, understanding, and religious experience. This deviation is seen by the proponents of purification as the decline of Islamic religion and society, and they must cleanse the religion itself of all deviations, anxieties, and stains for the glory of the Muslim community. It must be admitted that the doctrinal framework for perfecting Islam in the face of very complex historical realities and developments. The cycles and sociological crises of Muslims have deviated from the doctrinal framework of Islamic perfection. (Jinan, 2008:58). This process of moving away from the doctrinal and normative ideals of Islam is evident not in ideas and actions that do not follow Islamic principles, but also in adding to certain teachings. This addition is known as *bid'ah* and is considered an illegal part of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

In Gorontalo, the spirit of the purification movement carried out by the Salafi group is a form of theological criticism in order to maintain the purity of Islamic teachings from all forms of local cultural influences such as *shirk*, superstition, *bid'ah* and *churafat*. His *da'wah* is very strict in terms of *aqidah* and *tawhid*. His followers are required not to give space to local culture. The influence of local culture on religion will only obscure ideological orientation. In fact, the tension between theological doctrine and reality and development has existed since the early days of Islamic history. (Azra, 1999:12). As a socio-religious movement that is engaged in *da'wah* and education, the purification of Islamic teachings carried out by the Salafi is different from the current "purification" movement of Muhammadiyah organizations, which emphasizes rationalization by removing old cultural sources to be replaced by a new culture, or replacing old traditions with a new ethos. While The purification movement of the Salafi is the spirit of returning to the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet.

The theology of the Muslims of Gorontalo is considered far from the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. The eradication of TB (*Takhayul*, *Bid'ah* and *Churafat*) is a concrete response of the Salafi to local culture which is considered to deviate from the rules of Islamic *aqidah*. That something mystical must be kept away from the daily attitude of Muslims by changing something that comes from Sufism into morals. The Salafi purification movement is still strengthening and raising awareness of the pattern of life of Muslims. The movement that is no less important is the sharpening of monotheism. Because the formulation of monotheism lies in social reality. Whatever its form, monotheism becomes the central point in the underlying and underlying activities. *Tawhid* must be translated into historical-empirical reality. Religious teachings must be given a new, more contextual and elaborative interpretation in accordance

with the context of space and time. Religious teachings must be given a new interpretation that is more contextual and elaborative in accordance with the context of space and time.

Conclusion

The Salafi group developed by remaining in character as an Islamic movement without form or Islam without politics. The transnational Islamic movement (Salafi) strongly emphasizes the purification of aqidah and monotheism from local cultural influences, in addition to their da'wah efforts as an effort to prosper the mosque, as well as maintain and strengthen faith and righteous deeds. The Salafi purification movement towards Islamic teachings from the influence of local culture is absolute. He will continue to look for formulations from the methodological aspect to keep Islamic teachings sourced from the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet.

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