

SYAFI'I MA'ARIF'S THOUGHT ON ISLAMIC RENEWAL IN THE CONTEXT OF THE HISTORY AND TRADITION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC SCHOLARSHIP IN INDONESIA

PEMIKIRAN SYAFI'I MA'ARIF TENTANG PEMBARUAN ISLAM DALAM KONTEKS SEJARAH DAN TRADISI PERKEMBANGAN ILMU ISLAM DI INDONESIA

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Abstract

As a modernist, Syafi'i Ma'arif's intellectual contributions are particularly notable in the fields of religious and political thought, as well as education. The process of renewing Islamic thought by Syafi'i Ma'arif has developed dynamically and has also influenced the emergence of Islamic modernists in recent times, who seek to encourage Muslims to interpret Islam as rationally as possible in various aspects of life, particularly in theology, philosophy, and Sufism. Syafi'i Ma'arif is a modernist figure with a highly rational mode of thought who has successfully developed various concepts relevant to the modernization of Islam in the realms of education, politics, and socio-culture. These concepts have had a significant influence among the public particularly among intellectuals and the educated and have the potential to bring about change and renewal in Indonesia.

Keywords: Syafi'i Ma'arif, Islamic modernist, political thought, religious thought

Abstrak

Sebagai seorang modernis, kontribusi intelektual Syafi'i Ma'arif sangat menonjol di bidang pemikiran keagamaan dan politik, serta pendidikan. Proses pembaruan pemikiran Islam yang dilakukan oleh Syafi'i Ma'arif telah berkembang secara dinamis dan juga memengaruhi munculnya para modernis Islam di masa kini, yang berupaya mendorong umat Islam untuk menafsirkan Islam secara rasional dalam berbagai aspek kehidupan, terutama dalam teologi, filsafat, dan tasawuf. Syafi'i Ma'arif adalah tokoh modernis dengan cara berpikir yang sangat rasional yang telah berhasil mengembangkan berbagai konsep yang relevan dengan modernisasi Islam di bidang pendidikan, politik, dan sosio-budaya. Konsep-konsep ini telah memberikan pengaruh yang signifikan di kalangan masyarakat, terutama di kalangan intelektual dan kaum terpelajar, serta memiliki potensi untuk membawa perubahan dan pembaruan di Indonesia.

Kata kunci: Syafi'i Ma'arif, modernis Islam, pemikiran politik, pemikiran keagamaan

INTRODUCTION

The beginning of a movement to modernize Islamic thought in Indonesia was a continuation of Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahab's "purification movement" (revivalism), which was adapted to the Indonesian context by Sheikh Muhammad Djamil Djambek (1860-1947), Abdul Karim Amrullah (1879-1945), and Haji Abdullah Ahmad in West Sumatra.¹ Further developments can be seen in the reform

¹Azyumardi Azra, "The Transmission of Islamic Reformism to Indonesia: Networks of Middle Eastern and Malay-Indonesian Ulama," *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1995, 79-80.

movement launched by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan (1868–1923) on November 12, 1912, At that time, he founded Muhammadiyah as the precursor to educational reform in Indonesia, primarily influenced by the ideas of Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905) regarding the necessity of reforming or modernizing the Islamic education system.²

Regarding the emergence of the Muhammadiyah organization as a movement for the renewal of Indonesian Islam, there are three internal factors underlying the spirit of modernization of Islamic thought within that organization. First, the reality of the backwardness and low level of education among Indonesian Muslims in all aspects of life. Second, the severe poverty of Indonesian society, despite the fact that Indonesia is a country with abundant natural resources. Third, the Islamic education system was outdated, as reflected in the educational systems of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*).³

Observing the development of the movement to modernize Islamic thought led by these modernists, since 1967, young people within the Islamic movement have been actively discussing the necessity of modernization. Evidence of this can be found in articles published in student newspapers, such as *Mahasiswa Indonesia*, *Mimbar Demokrasi*, *Gema Mahasiswa* (published by the UGM Student Council), *Harian KAMI*, and *Harian Masa Kini*.⁴ Within the Islamic Students Association (Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam, HMI), the issue of modernization was a central topic of discussion at cadre training sessions and even at branch conferences in various cities with universities. In the same year, a number of staunch advocates of modernization also emerged in Yogyakarta and Central Java, such as Ahmad Wahib, Djohan Efendi, Mansyur Hamid, and Dawam Rahardjo. Among the figures who supported and invigorated the discourse on modernization in Indonesia, Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif is the central focus of this paper.⁵

Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif is a leading figure of Islamic neo-modernism in Indonesia, whose religious reform movements deserve the attention of all Muslims.⁶ The movement to modernize Islamic thought in Indonesia led by Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif is a movement aimed at understanding Islamic issues rationally and comprehensively, as well as understanding and not pitting Islam against new developments brought about by advances in modern science and technology. Institutionally, Syafi'i Ma'arif's movement for the renewal of Islamic thought is primarily channeled through the Muhammadiyah organization, with the most influential component being the educational institutions under the umbrella of Muhammadiyah Universities throughout Indonesia. Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, who earned his doctorate in Chicago, is passionate about continuing the work of Fazlur Rahman, the Indian-Pakistani thinker (an Islamic neo-modernist). As a modernist, Syafi'i Ma'arif, much like Nurcholis Madjid, was active in the renowned Islamic study forum "Paramadina"; this forum, according to Martin van Bruinessen, is the most liberal forum in Jakarta.

² Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Muhammadiyah dan Modernisasi Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia," *Jurnal Ma'arif*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2014, 15–17.

³ Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, *Islam dan Masalah Negara: Studi tentang Percaturan dan Konstituante* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1987), 66.

⁴ Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Kemodernan dan Keindonesiaan* (Bandung: Mizan, 1992), 17.

⁵ M. Syafi'i Anwar, "Neo-Modernism and Islamic Thought in Indonesia," *Jurnal Ulumul Qur'an*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 1994, 30–32.

⁶ Bahtiar Effendy, "Islam and the State in Indonesia: The Role of Neo-Modernist Thought," *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1996, 95–98.

The Paramadina Foundation serves as a new platform for Islamic studies among the middle and upper classes; moreover, from another perspective, Paramadina functions as an open forum for religious figures and thinkers from various academic disciplines. This can be seen in the recent developments in the understanding of Islam among Indonesian intellectuals, which tend to be inclusive, as their studies are pluralistic and tolerant. This is evident in the emergence of thinkers such as Franz Magis Suseno, Victor Tanja, and other Islamic thinkers like Komaruddin Hidayat, Azyumardi Azra, Bachtiar Efendi, Kuntowijoyo, and Syafi'i Ma'arif.⁷ Therefore, to comprehensively understand Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif's contributions to the modernization of Islam in Indonesia, the author will address several core issues within the scope of this paper.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

This thesis employs a historical approach. This qualitative approach focuses the research on a comparative analysis of the movement for the modernization of Islamic thought, as proposed by Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, through a historical review of the discourse and movements associated with it.

Research Design

Based on its subject matter, this study is clearly a library research project with a descriptive-analytical design, employing a qualitative approach. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on conceptual analysis, specifically examining the core ideas and how those ideas are disseminated. Syafi'i Ma'arif's core ideas are presented as objectively as possible, in accordance with the dynamics of those ideas amidst the intellectual struggles of Indonesian society.

The next step involves collecting data from books, magazines, and scholarly articles written by Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, as well as other research findings related to the theme of this study (the modernization of Islamic thought). Given the abundance of writings by this figure, the author has been selective in choosing which of his works to include, or has cited only those aspects relevant to this theme.

Using the text analysis method, the researcher studied the main ideas of Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif. The researcher then analyzed the relevance between one idea and another. Thus, the discourse on the modernization of Islamic thought by Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif in Indonesia can be formulated.

Critical Analysis Method

After data collection, analysis was conducted using both deductive and inductive data processing methods. The data analysis process involves processing the text according to predefined rules and procedures in a systematic manner. The process of analyzing the text must contribute to the theory; the analysis is based on the manifested descriptions. In this regard, the author will analyze texts written in the form of books or scholarly articles, which are the products of the discourse and movement of the modernization of Islamic thought led by Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif.

Then, a philosophical analysis is conducted by examining all forms of the movement's outcomes with careful consideration of wisdom, to arrive at objective

⁷ Martin van Bruenessen, *Indonesia's Ulama and Politics: Caught between Legitimizing the Status Quo and Searching alternatives*, dalam *Prisma*, No. 49 (Juni), 1990, 62.

conclusions. This philosophical analysis employs a critical method—that is, critiquing through the analysis of opinions explaining Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif's movement. It also employs a rationalization method regarding the reality of the discourse and movements of these two figures in a qualitative manner.

Interpretive Method

Textual interpretation involves using historical records of modernism as a data source. Contextual interpretation, on the other hand, involves interpreting the ideas and outcomes of the reform movement initiated by Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, as manifested in books, statements, research findings, and responses from other thinkers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Biography

Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif is one of Muhammadiyah's finest sons, born in a village named Sumpurkudus, in the regency of West Sumatra. He was born on May 31, 1935. Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif was born to a devoutly religious couple: his mother, Fathiyah, and his father, a religious scholar named Ma'rifah.⁸

Education: Elementary School, Muhammadiyah Ibtidaiyah Madrasah, Sumpurkudus (1947), Muhammadiyah Muallimin Madrasah in Lintau (1950), and Yogyakarta (1956); Cokrominoto University, Surakarta (1964); IKIP Yogyakarta; (1968), Ohio University, and the University of Chicago (1982).⁹

Permanent position: lecturer at IKIP Yogyakarta. In 1986, he served as a visiting professor at the University of Iowa; from 1990 to 1992, he was a contract lecturer at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia; and from 1993 to 1994, he served as a visiting associate professor at the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Montreal, Canada.

Since the 1990 Muhammadiyah Congress, he has been a member of Muhammadiyah (1955–present), a member of HMI (1957–1968), a member of the HMI Surakarta Executive Board from 1963 to 1964, Acting Chairman of the Central Executive Board of Muhammadiyah, and Chairman of the Central Executive Board of Muhammadiyah from 1999 to 2004. In professional organizations, he served as a member of the Executive Board of the Indonesian Historical Society (MSI) in the Yogyakarta chapter.

He has written several books published by LP3ES (Islam and State Issues: A Study of the Political Arena and the Constituent Assembly. Jakarta: LP3ES, 1987.), Islam and State Issues: A Study of the Political Arena and the Constituent Assembly (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1987), Grounding Islam. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1995. The Map of Islamic Intellectualism in Indonesia, Bandung: Mizan, 1993.

His works have been published by Pustaka Salman, Shalahuddin Press, IAIN Sunan Kalijaga Press, Mizan, and he has authored numerous articles. His wife's name is Nurkhalifah, and his son is Mohammad Hafiz. On January 4, 1997, he was inaugurated as a Full Professor at IKIP Karangmalang in Yogyakarta.

⁸ Syafi'i Ma'arif *Islam Kekuatan Doktrin dan Kegamangan Ummat*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1997), 221

⁹ *Ibid.*

Education

Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif began his education at the elementary school level, formerly known as Sekolah Rakyat. After completing his elementary education, Syafi'i Ma'arif continued his studies at the Muhammadiyah Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, located not far from his home in Sumpurkudus in 1947.

After that, he attended high school in Yogyakarta and also studied at the Madrasah Muallimin. He continued his undergraduate studies in Yogyakarta at a university famous at the time, Cokrominoto University in Surakarta, earning his bachelor's degree in 1964. He then pursued further studies at IKIP Yogyakarta in 1968

He then continued his studies in the United States, specifically at a world-renowned university, Ohio University, where he earned a master's degree (MA) in 1973. After that, he pursued his doctoral studies at the University of Chicago in the United States in 1982.¹⁰

Muhammadiyah as an Islamic Reform Movement in Indonesia.

Before the emergence of the Islamic organization Muhammadiyah formerly known as a reformist or purist movement within Islam Indonesian Muslims were still steeped in various elements of *bid'ah*, *khurafat*, and *taklid* (TBC) in various aspects of their lives.

Evidence of this is that the first Muslims to arrive in Indonesia followed a mystical (Sufi) tradition, whose teachings bore some resemblance to Hindu traditions. This is what caused Muslims in Indonesia at that time to still intermingle *bid'ah* with other forms of worship.

Thus, the arrival and the influence of Muhammadiyah's teachings spurred Muslims to quickly become self-aware regarding the critical importance of the purity of Islamic teachings. The bearer of these teachings was KH. Ahmad Dahlan, whose hallmark was the development of the Hanbali school of thought, as developed by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. The teachings developed by Ahmad Dahlan aimed to restore the purity of Islam, which had deviated for over two centuries due to the rampant prevalence of blind imitation (*taqlid*), innovations (*bid'ah*), and superstitions (*kufr*).

Once Muhammadiyah began to make its presence felt, it had a positive impact on the Muslim community; among the first to embrace it were Sheikh Muhammad Djamil Djambek (1860–1947), Abdul Karim Amrullah (1879–1945), and Haji Abdullah Ahmad in West Sumatra.¹¹ Further developments can be seen in the reform movement launched by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan (1868–1923) on November 12, 1912, At that time, he founded Muhammadiyah as the precursor to educational reform in Indonesia, primarily influenced by the ideas of Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905) regarding the necessity of reforming or modernizing the Islamic education system. The Muhammadiyah organization also represents a continuation of the reformist ideas of Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1728 AH/1328 CE), Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1787 CE), and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839–1879 CE).¹²

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ They were exposed to the ideas of revivalism and renewal whilst studying in Mecca in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Regarding the modernisation movement, see the views of Deliar Noer, in Maskuri Abdillah, *Demokrasi di Persimpangan :Makna Respons Intelektual Muslim Indonesia Terhadap Konsep Demokrasi(1966-1993)* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 1999), h. 24.

¹² *Ibid.*, h. 24-25.

As it approaches its centennial, Muhammadiyah remains a solid organization and continues to reinforce its foundational principles. When KH. Ahmad Dahlan founded Muhammadiyah by advocating for its members, he established a movement rooted in the values of the Muhammadiyah struggle values that must be strengthened.¹³ The idea of a reform movement paves the way for the future empowerment and enlightenment of the Muslim community in Indonesia; typically, the Muhammadiyah organization strives for the changes desired by Muhammadiyah through structural reform, so that its activities and struggles can be clearly seen from a structural perspective.¹⁴

In order to enlighten the community, the implementation of Islamic teachings is a requirement that must be fulfilled. The conditions at the time of Muhammadiyah's founding in 1921 and the conditions faced by Muhammadiyah today are indeed different; however, there are common threads that can be drawn from the struggle of KH. Ahmad Dahlan and the current struggle of the Muhammadiyah community. Therefore, the values of Muhammadiyah's struggle must always be strengthened in defining the struggle.

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As for social movements, throughout its history Muhammadiyah has distinguished itself as a unique phenomenon within Indonesia's religious landscape. As an organization, Muhammadiyah has proven that it is not merely a half-hearted effort but a highly active movement driving the revival of Indonesia's Muslim community. For instance: in the fields of education, social welfare, politics, and the women's wing of Muhammadiyah namely Aisyiyah which stands as the most conducive and progressive women's movement in the Muslim world. What Muhammadiyah has accomplished across its four spheres of activity has established it as a significant Islamic reform movement in Indonesia, notably in its efforts to "purge" deviant religious practices such as bid'ah and khurafat which were particularly prominent during the pre-independence and early independence eras. and has now largely abandoned such bid'ah and khurafat. Meanwhile, in the realm of social activism, Muhammadiyah has naturally positioned itself as a "nearly perfect" social organization in the process of enlightenment and societal transformation through modernization. The "modernization project" of Muhammadiyah is most clearly evident in the educational models it has developed since its inception.¹⁵

The Muhammadiyah educational model, recognized as a Western-style educational model, and the Muhammadiyah political movement during the pre-independence and post-independence eras fostered a spirit of indigenous resistance against Dutch and Japanese colonial rule, enabling the Muslim community to mount

¹³ Ahmad Dimayanti, "Peran Muhammadiyah Dalam mengembalikan Gerakan" [Pedoman] *Suara Muhammadiyah* No. 24 Th. 87 tanggal 31 Desember 2002, h. 3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, h. 4

¹⁵ Zuly Qadir, "Muhamadiyah dan Islam Indonesia" dalam *Suara Muhammadiyah* NO 17 Tahun ke- 89 tanggal 15 September 2004, h. 36.

a full-scale resistance against the colonizers without regard to religion or ethnicity.¹⁶

Syafi'i Ma'arif is one of the Chairmen of the Muhammadiyah Central Board. As it approaches its centennial, Muhammadiyah has positioned itself as a reform movement for the Indonesian nation and state. This is significant because Muhammadiyah is known as a *tajdid* organization and a pioneering movement capable of addressing challenges and fostering development in alignment with struggles that can be adapted to the contemporary conditions of the times without deviating from the Quran and the Sunnah. This principle has become a guiding principle for Muhammadiyah members who seek progress and change.

As a modern Islamic movement that has indeed faced an extraordinary wave of challenges, Muhammadiyah is now confronted with the choice between an eternal, divine path for humanity and, conversely, a purely worldly path that disregards divine matters.¹⁷ Whether to champion the message of religion or a wholly worldly religion that is the extreme dilemma of thought in determining one's stance. Muhammadiyah will certainly stand firm on the religion of *fitrah*, namely Islam, which brings mercy to all creation, a religion that unites *hablumminallah* and *hablumminannas*; if that bond is severed, what follows is catastrophe or ruin. As an Islamic movement capable of presenting Islam through a theological framework as in medieval Arabia and also through a human-centered framework as in the modern era today the challenges facing Muhammadiyah as an Islamic movement are immense.¹⁸

It is here that all Muhammadiyah leaders, cadres, and members will be tested on their moral, intellectual, and practical commitment to carrying the message of Islam, which is their primary commitment. Herein lies the importance of enlightening Islamic commitment within Muhammadiyah as a *da'wah* movement and a movement for enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil the primary guiding principles of Islam capable of reaching the heavens and the earth as well as the Islamic message under Muhammad, the final Prophet.

Muhammadiyah has, in fact, been on the true path of Islam, but the Islamic intellectual products it has produced over more than seven decades appear to remain limited and rudimentary. In other words, the Islamic intellectual products born from the womb of Muhammadiyah are primarily intended for the lower-middle class and below. As for intellectuals and thinkers, they must seek high-quality Islamic thought outside the repository of Muhammadiyah's works.¹⁹

On March 22, 1988, when Dr. Kontowijoyo and several of his friends visited the home of K.H. Ahmad Siddiq in Jember, East Java (K.H. Ahmad Siddiq, who at the time served as Rector of NU and has since passed away, ed.), Syafi'i Ma'arif was deeply impressed by several key concepts that the renowned scholar shared with him. These concepts pertained to the brotherhood of the Muslim community.

Kiai Siddiq had identified several levels of brotherhood that the Muslim community should cultivate. There is the level of *wathaniyah* brotherhood (fellow

¹⁶ Syafi'i Ma'arif, "Muhammadiyah organisasi islam yang Kokoh dan Islami" [Pedoman] *Suara Muhammadiyah*, No. 4 tahun 89 tanggal 27 Oktober 2003, h. 1.

¹⁷ Haedar Nashir, "Komitmen Keislaman Muhammadiyah" [Pedoman] *Suara Muhammadiyah*, No. 1 tahun ke 88 15 Januari 2003, h. 12.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, h. 13.

¹⁹ See, Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, *Peta Bumi Intelektualisme Islam di Indonesia* (cet; I, Bandung: Mizan, 1993), h. 216.

countrymen), and the level of basyariah brotherhood (universal humanity), which encompasses all of humanity, unbound by differences in religion, race, history, and the like. Following the key concepts of brotherhood presented by Kiai Siddiq above, I would like to attempt to highlight the perspective on internal brotherhood within the Muslim community.²⁰

Among the Islamic movements born in the 20th century, Muhammadiyah and NU deserve to be noted as movements that, within their own ranks, are sometimes perceived as disruptive. Throughout the Islamic world, there are few social and humanitarian movements with a strong Islamic ethos that have successfully overcome various obstacles and challenges political, social, and cultural landmines as demonstrated by the two Islamic movements mentioned above.

Muhammadiyah and NU generally appear to retain a strong sense of self-confidence. In their own distinct ways, both organizations have never lost their identity when faced with historical trials that, at certain times, were quite critical and perilous. Indeed, Muhammadiyah and NU were born amidst Javanese culture: one in Yogyakarta, a sultanate and feudal region, the other in Surabaya, a coastal area and trading city. Although NU was born amidst the clamor of colonialism, its rural roots remained very prominent, particularly before the Proclamation.²¹

Before World War II, when the conflict had not yet reached its current intensity, relations between Muhammadiyah and NU were sometimes marked by mutual suspicion, and at certain times even seemed to negate one another as each sought to present itself as the legitimate Islamic force and uphold its own Islamic paradigm. Judging by the number of followers and sympathizers, there is no doubt that Muhammadiyah and NU sufficiently represent the mainstream of Indonesian Islam.

The Key Ideas of Syafi'i Ma'arif on Islamic Reform in Indonesia **Education**

Syafi'i Ma'arif views the current situation as increasingly challenging, because as we enter the third millennium, there are critical issues in education, namely human resources that are ineffective in understanding the curriculum established by the government, inadequate facilities and infrastructure, and the most prominent weakness: the education system itself. Furthermore, education in Indonesia has been underperforming because the government has been inconsistent and lacking in follow-through when addressing educational issues.²²

In this regard, Syafi'i Ma'arif states that the curriculum, as the standard for education, must be adapted to the advancements of modern civilization so that it can develop effectively and contribute constructively to both the quantity and quality of the educational process. However, the most critical aspect here is implementing changes to improve teacher quality. Therefore, the government is expected to genuinely prioritize teacher quality by improving teachers' welfare. Even so, if the curriculum is good but teacher quality is poor, nothing positive can be expected; conversely, if the curriculum is poor but teacher quality is high, there is a possibility of good outcomes because the teachers possess the ability and

²⁰*Ibid.* h. 216-217.

²¹See, Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, *Islam dan Politik Upaya Membingkai Peradaban* (cet;I, Cirebon : Pustaka Dinamika, 1999), h. 152.

²² See, Syafi'i Ma'arif, *Peta Bumi Intelektual Islam di Indonesia* (cet;1, Bandung: Mizan, 1993), h. 149

creativity. If both are poor, education will be fragile. Therefore, to enter the third millennium successfully, the curriculum must be good and the quality of teachers must also be good, so that it will produce high-quality students for the nation.²³

Given that education is a key priority for the government in addressing educational issues, the conference of education ministers in the UK held in March 1999 emphasized that to advance education, four key areas must be improved: First, teachers must be qualified and competent; second, a well-designed curriculum; third, full trust in schools or educational institutions; and fourth, broad community participation. Therefore, the most important thing now is to view education as a measure of a nation's quality and to bear the consequences of that, meaning the government must allocate adequate funding, which is politically preferable, while other sectors simply manage the details.²⁴

The decline in education within the paradigm of liberation in the contemporary era stems from the fact that teachers' professionalism and discipline do not meet the standards expected by parents; thus, Syafi'i Ma'arif argues that an educational system and orientation are needed—specifically, an educational model capable of liberating people from a culture that is overly verbal, mechanistic, and superficial to transform the education system as a whole.

Furthermore, there needs to be a movement toward professionalism and discipline in the field of education to improve educational quality, as issues of professionalism and discipline are often overlooked, particularly in educational institutions managed by educational associations in general.

In terms of the nation's intellectual development, education in Indonesia has been relatively successful. To this day, the quality of education must be addressed, and educational issues must be given serious attention, as many citizens have not yet had access to formal education; only a small portion approximately 25% has managed to complete their education, a figure that is extremely low compared to other nations. Thus, the majority of our people still struggle with “the curse of illiteracy,” a symbol of severe underdevelopment.²⁵ Since the majority of Indonesians are Muslim, even with independence, Indonesian society has not yet acquired the resources to compete with other nations.

From a moral standpoint and in terms of educational reform and effectiveness, education requires more serious attention and action from the public, especially from those who lack formal education yet are entrusted with the responsibility of shaping and managing the education system.

The high rates of corruption, crime, and brutality among certain segments of society due to their failure to secure a decent standard of living can be seen in the deeply concerning phenomena of recent times. Currently, Indonesia ranks among the most corrupt nations, leading to the neglect of educational issues within the country. Various parties, including the current government, have indeed made efforts to ensure that educational aspects, moral education, and effective integration into the teaching-learning process in the education sector are prioritized to a greater

²³ See, Syafi'i Ma'arif, *Peta Bumi Intelektual Islam di Indonesia* (cet;1, Bandung: Mizan, 1993), h. 149

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, *Sistem Pendidikan Kita Masih Rapuh* : suara Muhammadiyah No 1. Tahun 1985, h. 10.

extent than in the past, resulting in the inclusion of religious education and Pancasila moral values at all levels of education.²⁶

Social and Community Affairs.

Islam and religion are essential aspects of human spiritual life. Every human being tends to align themselves with a higher power, whether it be a supernatural force or a monotheistic deity.²⁷ To believe in such a power, one must cultivate a sense of conviction in the religion they practice.²⁸

Reinterpreting one's faith serves to deepen one's belief in the spiritual realm. This can be achieved through mystical paths and the sharpening of rationality via the realm of philosophy.²⁹ The stages traversed by the seeker of wisdom involve cultivating moral consciousness in religious, social, and civic life. Although it cannot be denied that in everyday human life, perceptions and assumptions sometimes arise suggesting that conflicts emerge because each religion asserts its own truth claim, while other religions are perceived as being entirely erroneous.³⁰

From the perspective of the Muslim community, religion and culture are appreciative of artistic works among Muslim cultural figures. On the other hand, it has long been felt that the world of Islamic boarding schools generally lacks genuine cultural empowerment activities.³¹ It must be integrated with the social and humanitarian activities widely carried out by the Muslim community. According to Syafi'i Ma'arif, religion in this case, Islam not only stimulates the potential of human intellect to continuously create and develop the nobility of the dignity of worldly life, but this is also an integral part of religious life. Without the support of culture, human life in the world would lose its deepest emotional resonance.³² And ultimately, the phenomenon of life within the Islamic framework as both a religion and a culture would become a ritualistic display devoid of social and humanitarian value, lacking the essence of cultural symbolism.³³

According to Syafi'i Ma'arif, from an Islamic perspective, the individual is more important than society; there is a clear interdependence and connection between the individual and society for example, there can be no individual without society (a sociocultural individual).³⁴ What Syafi'i Ma'arif strongly emphasizes is the need for ontological security in the construction of society and civilization, where transcendental moral principles serve as the primary foundation. Without a solid moral foundation, one cannot expect that justice the eternal ideal of humanity will

²⁶ Syafi'i Ma'arif, *Loc. Cit*

²⁷ Jalaluddin Rahmat *Islam Alternatif* (cet;iv, Bandung: Mizan, 1991), h. 37.

²⁸ Syafi'i Ma'arif, *Peta Bumi ntelektualisme Islam di Indonesia* (cet; 1, Bandung :Mizan, 1993), h. 36.

²⁹ Lihat Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, *Dialog Agama dan Spiritualisme di SCTV* bulan Juli 1999 jam 06.00 WIB.

³⁰ Syafi'i Ma'arif, *Permasalahan Umat Islam Indonesia* dimuat dalam artikel Tanggal 19 Nopember 2004, h. 200.

³¹ Joseph A. Camilleri, *Civilization Criziz :Human Prepective in Changing World* (London: Cambridge Univercity Press, 1976), h. 33

³² Here, the term 'Islam' refers to universal Islam. See Syafi'i Ma'arif, *Peta Bumi Intelektualisme Islam Indonesia* (cet;1, Bandung: Mizan, 1993), h. 36.

³³Lihat *Ibid*.

³⁴ Syafi'i Ma'arif, *Islam*, Makalah disampaikan pada Simposium Kebudayaan Indonesia – Malaysia ke-4 pada tanggal 26-27 Nopember 1991, h. 6

be realized. The mechanistic conception of society does not afford the community the opportunity to become fully human and free; as a movement for moral and societal renewal, it faces the reality of increasingly complex social issues. Making the Quran the primary moral foundation as a moral document seems destined to continue to resonate in the minds and hearts of humanity as the greatest source of inspiration for resolving the complexities of humanity in the times to come.

Furthermore, Syafi'i Ma'arif states that the many crises occurring within the Muslim community, particularly the current social trends, can be explained through three core issues facing the community: first, a crisis of Islamic identity among the community; second, the weakening of the social orientation of Islamic teachings; and third, a crisis of courage and leadership within the community.³⁵

Nevertheless, who would have thought that these fundamental concepts of spiritual orientation would originate in Yogyakarta, only to eventually extend their reach across the entire archipelago? In Syafi'i's view, Yogyakarta remains a city that challenges those willing to engage in deep contemplation, reflecting on the issues of the nation's cultural development with a forward-looking perspective, yet grounded in the Indonesian archipelago so that the future can be directed toward moral goals; therefore, the pre-scholars, cultural figures, and intellectuals who are said to dwell in the clouds must occasionally engage in open dialogue regarding cultural issues in a broad sense.³⁶

The Field of Religious Thought and Modernization

Islam, as a religion, when viewed as a comprehensive way of life, encompasses a spiritual system (guiding believers toward spiritual piety), a moral system (moral piety), a political and economic system, and a social system (social piety).

Therefore, Islam is a total way of life that encompasses the entirety of existencematerial and moral, personal and societal, economic and political, legal and cultural, national and international. And indeed it is! Islam, as a comprehensive system of life, not only regulates human behavior carried out consciously but also extends to behavior performed instinctively (by nature), such as the case of "sneezing": for one who sneezes, it is sunnah to say "alhamdulillah," and for one who hears that phrase, it is also sunnah to say "yarhamukumullah."

Muslims' attitudes and behavior toward Islam, as a comprehensive way of life, must embrace Islam in its entirety and without reservation. This principle is enshrined in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah (2:208): "O you who have believed, enter into Islam completely and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy."

Therefore, Muslims are forbidden from accepting Islam only partially accepting some aspects while rejecting others. The consistency of the Muslim community in adhering to Islam ensures that their lives remain pure and clean, both spiritually and materially. For the purpose of Islam's revelation on this Earth is to purify and cleanse human life, as stated in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Jumu'ah (62): 2: "It is He who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from among themselves, who recites to them His verses to them, purifies them, and teaches them the Book and wisdom. And indeed, they were previously in manifest error."

³⁵ Syafi'i Ma'arif, *Permasalahan,...* Op. Cit. h. 201.

³⁶ *Ibid.* h. 37

Thus, Islam does not condone a profane (vile, filthy) or secular (excluding Islamic values from life) way of life; rather, Islam commands the elimination of what is vile, evil, and unjust, as stated in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Nahl (16): "Indeed, Allah commands you to act justly and do good and to support relatives, and He forbids all that is vile, evil, and unjust; He admonishes you so that you may take heed."

Borrowing the term from Roger Garaudy, he states that: "Understanding and developing the divine dimension and divine love as expounded by Ibn 'Arabi, to counter formalistic-ritualistic and empty literalist religious views, so that the meaning of prayer is experienced as 'union with Allah,' zakat as 'union with humanity,' hajj as 'the unification of the entire ummah,' and fasting as a means to remember both Allah and the hungry... This radically transforms religious education programs, thereby putting an end to dry religious 'formalism.'"³⁷

Muhammad al-Bahiy, in *The World of Islamic Thought and Its Development**, states that: "Sufism, which has fallen into Brahmanic (Hindu) pantheism and Christian incarnation, is the very form that has earned praise from Western Orientalists. For in this way, Islam would be drawn toward Christianity, which would confine it solely to the realm of spiritual practice and what is termed "the purity of the individual soul." More importantly, this Sufi teaching brings Allah closer through the ideas of pantheism and incarnation, uniting Him with humanity in the form of the divinity of Jesus Christ for priests or saints. This is what Western Orientalists have proclaimed and what they expect from religion. For in their view, religion is merely for the satisfaction of the soul and the individual alone."³⁸

In the realm of religious thought and modernization, Syafi'i Ma'arif leans toward a value-oriented approach, seeking the application of religious values in daily life across various spheres of existence. The application of these down-to-earth religious values must refer to the values of modernity namely, the moral and cultural values of the nation which must not negate the development of modernity. Since the development of modernity is also a natural course of change, religion must therefore serve as its mainstream.

In the realm of religious thought and modernization, Syafi'i Ma'arif leans toward a value-oriented approach, which seeks the application of religious values in daily life across various spheres of existence. The application of these down-to-earth religious values must align with the values of modernity namely, the moral and cultural values of the nation which must not negate the progress of modernity. Since the development of modernity is also a natural course of divine law, religion must serve as its mainstream.

Islam, as a missionary religion, aims to guide humanity toward the perfection of life. According to Syafi'i Ma'arif, the mission and vision of a missionary religion Islam is to shape human life with the values of faith, Islam, and piety for the sake of happiness in this world and the hereafter.³⁹ This work is a never-ending task that we must always complete and perfect in accordance with the potential and time available to every believer. Furthermore, Syafi'i states that in the eyes of the Quran,

³⁷Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Doktrin dan Peradaban: Sebuah Telaah Kritis tentang Masalah Keimanan, Kemanusiaan dan Kemodernan* (Jakarta: Yayasan Paramadina 1992), h. 22-23.

³⁸ Muhammad Al Bahiy, *Alam Pikiran Islam dan Perkembangannya* (terjemahan), Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1987).h. 150

³⁹ Lihat Syafi'i Ma'arif, *Membumikan Islam* (Jogjakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1995), h. 101

the best words are those of a person who calls to Allah, performs righteous deeds, and proclaims themselves as one who strengthens faith within the Muslim community a community grounded in the moral pillars of faith, Islam, and piety, understood in a cohesive, holistic, and correct manner.⁴⁰

Furthermore, Syafi'i clarifies that it is only through the strength of faith and intelligence that humans will be able to make the right choices in the face of changes occurring in society, while simultaneously providing a moral compass for those changes. As a Renaissance movement aimed at building a civilized society, the Islamic da'wah movement emerged as a continuation of the Renaissance movement to provide spiritual and transcendental values and orientation, offering a fresh, alternative civilization demanded by every social change occurring among the Muslim community.

Based on the above discussion, the following strategic steps are proposed.

First, Islamic da'wah is a mission aimed at awakening and nurturing humanity's innate potential so that their existence holds meaning before God and history. This da'wah is the collective duty of the entire Muslim community, not merely the responsibility of specific groups within it. Therefore, to ensure da'wah achieves its long-term strategic goals—namely, shaping the future in an Islamic manner—internal solidarity among the Muslim community must be continuously nurtured. A community that is hollow from within, no matter how opulent it may appear on the outside, cannot be relied upon to move toward its goals.

Second, in line with the changes taking place in society, the qualifications of da'i in the broadest sense must receive serious attention from the driving forces of da'wah. As one of these forces, Muhammadiyah bears a significant and weighty responsibility to disseminate high-quality Islamic messages to the public. For Muhammadiyah to maintain its authority as a reliable Islamic movement, the quality of its leaders and members must constantly be self-reflected upon, for the sake of Islam and the ummah.

Third, as a consequence of a steadfast faith, the sincere character in striving must not be neglected. Once it is neglected, do not expect too much that God will intervene in our struggle.⁴¹

To further emphasize the first point, the nurturing of the community and Islamic brotherhood can only become a reality if the ethics of the Qur'an are truly internalized and made the foundation of our social interactions. We must abandon the group-oriented ethics that carry a "pre-Islamic" flavor.

As an Islamic modernist, Syafi'i Ma'arif not only spearheaded an intellectual movement in the fields of theology and philosophy, but also in many other areas, which made him popular and widely accepted. The central theme of his focus is modernization. According to Syafi'i Ma'arif, modernity is not only inevitable but also a historical necessity that humanity must inevitably face. Thus, it is not a matter of choice.⁴² Fundamentally, the issue of modernity is not a monopoly of a particular group of people but a historical necessity for humanity. Nor is it a conflict between

⁴⁰ Maksudnya memahami Islam tidak hanya pada batas ritual saja tetapi lebih dari itu yaitu memahami dan mengamalkan secara totalitas.

⁴¹ Lihat, Syafi'i Ma'arif, *Membumikan Islam* (Jogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1993), h.109

⁴² Abad agraria terus menerus mengalami perkembangan secara progresif, dengan perbaikan tidak saja dalam hal yang bersangkutan dengan pertanian tetapi lebih penting bagi peningkatan konsep humanitasnya yang lebih menjadi implikasinya, lihat Nurcholish Madjid, *Khazanah Intelektual Islam* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1994), h. 52

East and West, Asia versus Europe, or Islam versus Christianity. Rather, what is fundamentally at play is the confrontation between two eras or centuries: the agrarian age and the technological age.⁴³

Objectively speaking, according to Syafi'i Ma'arif, it can be said that the superiority of the Muslim community during its centuries of glory was a relative superiority among agrarian societies. Meanwhile, Western Europe's superiority over Islam occurred in a more fundamental historical sense and dimension, namely the superiority of the technological age over the agrarian age.⁴⁴ Therefore, the impression that Islam is traditional and the West is modern is merely a form of apologetic psychology. On this basis, Syafi'i Ma'arif fosters a strong sense of self-confidence and a spirit of modernization among Muslims as they face the modern world.

The issue of the existence of Indonesian Muslims, in Syafi'i Ma'arif's view, is that they should be people who are always modern, advanced, and progressive, because modernization is synonymous with rationalization. Meanwhile, Islam is a religion that upholds the dimension of rationality. Thus, something is considered modern when it is rational, scientific, and always in accordance with the laws of nature. Therefore, there is a need for a group of liberal Islamic reformers who are non-traditionalist and non-sectarian.

Thus, according to Syafi'i Ma'arif, Muslims will sooner or later enter modernity, because modernity can raise Muslims' awareness that Indonesia's progress or regression will result in Islam and its followers being either credited or discredited.⁴⁵

Regarding the role of liberal Islamic reformers those who are non-traditionalist and non-sectarian Syafi'i Ma'arif can be categorized as a modernist capable of clarifying traditionalist authority. His reasoning is that, in his view, any reform movement must be carried out through the method of *ijtihad*. According to him, it is very important to understand and perceive the classical period of Islam known as the *salaf* period, namely the past era that was authoritative and held power.

A key point raised by Syafi'i Ma'arif despite the controversial nature of studies on the *Salaf* is that the *Salaf* consisted of individuals who had a deep understanding of their religious teachings and were committed to practicing them.⁴⁶

Syafi'i Ma'arif's argument regarding the importance of the *Salaf* in relation to *ijtihad* is that the process of *ijtihad* and intellectual renewal cannot begin from scratch, but must proceed through an evolutionary historical lineage. Thus, attempting to develop thought entirely from the beginning would only result in intellectual poverty.

As a true Muslim intellectual, Syafi'i Ma'arif adopts a balanced and neutral perspective in evaluating tradition and modernity, even though both possess positive and negative aspects. In his view, tradition, on one hand, is problematic because it can be restrictive, yet on the other hand, it is beneficial as it provides a foundation for development specifically, the development of thought. Conversely,

⁴³Abad teknik sering dikenal bahkan lebih tepat dengan abad modern, sebagaimana pandangan Marshal G.S, Hodgson, lihat, *Ibid.* h. 50

⁴⁴ Amir Aziz, *op. cit.* h. 25.

⁴⁵ Nurcholish, *Islam Doktrin dan Peradaban*, *op. cit.* h. 574-575.

⁴⁶Nurcholish Madjid: *Kontekstual Doktrin Islam dalam Sejarah* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1992), h.387.

modernity is, on one hand, problematic due to the negative excesses it generates, yet on the other hand, its presence cannot be denied and has even become a historical necessity. In this context, he formulates what Islamic renewal must build: an effort to revitalize understanding.⁴⁷

Thus, renewal or modernization is, at its core, the updating of people's understanding of their religious teachings and the ways in which those teachings are manifested in society. The goal of modernization is to make the religion in question more functional and to provide answers to modern challenges. It turns out that from this explanation, it can be understood that Syafi'i Ma'arif's thinking indeed transcends the boundaries of traditionalism or modernism. Nurcholish himself appears unwilling to be trapped at all within the dichotomy of one or the other. It is on this basis that the author argues that Syafi'i is a figure of modernism.

CONCLUSION

Syafi'i Ma'arif, as a modernist, possesses distinctive thought, particularly in the fields of religious, political, and educational thought. The process of renewing Syafi'i Ma'arif's Islamic thought has developed dynamically and has also influenced the recent emergence of more prominent Islamic modernists, who desire that Muslims interpret Islam as rationally as possible in various aspects of life, particularly in theology, philosophy, and Sufism. Syafi'i Ma'arif is a modernist with a highly rational typology of thought, successfully producing various concepts relevant to the development of Islamic modernization in education, politics, and socio-cultural aspects. These concepts have been quite influential among society, especially among intellectuals and the educated, who can bring about change and renewal in Indonesia.

According to Syafi'i Ma'arif, educational thinking within the contemporary liberation paradigm is severely lacking, leading to a decline in education because teacher professionalism and discipline do not reach the level desired by parents. Therefore, Syafi'i Ma'arif stated that the proposed educational system and orientation should be a model that can liberate humanity from a culture that is purely verbal, mechanistic, and shallow. Furthermore, a movement for educational professionalism is needed to improve the quality of education. Professionalism and discipline are often overlooked in the management of educational charitable endeavors managed by the Muhammadiyah Association, thus eliminating them.

Regarding social and societal religious thinking, Islam, as a missionary or missionary religion, aims to guide humanity towards a perfect life. The mission and vision of a religion the mission of Islam is to cultivate the lives of humanity with the values of faith, Islam, and piety for happiness now and in the future.

According to Syafi'i Ma'arif, religion and politics in Indonesia are a necessity that must be understood and never become stale. Furthermore, Syafi'i Ma'arif must be understood from at least three dimensions, inherent to his intellectual activities and the context of his personality. First, Syafi'i Ma'arif is positioned as a discourse of inclusivity for the dynamics of renewal, as he has introduced the public to openness, a principle that remains consistent. Second, Syafi'i Ma'arif has more potential implications for the discourse of religious understanding, while simultaneously transforming (but not drastically) the stagnation of religious ideas. Third, Syafi'i Ma'arif has established a regime of thought.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

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