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## THE DILEMMA OF MUHAMMADIYAH IN ACEH AMIDST THE RELIGIOUS CONTESTATION BETWEEN WAHHABI AND ASWAJA: A Historical Parallelism

**Muhammad Ridha Basri**

**Universitas Ahmad Dahlan**

*Jl. Kapas No.9, Umbulharjo, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta 55166*

[ridha@lpsi.uad.ac.id](mailto:ridha@lpsi.uad.ac.id)


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### Abstract

*The controversy and rejection surrounding the construction of the Muhammadiyah mosque in Bireuen have marked a new chapter in the history of Muhammadiyah in Aceh. Some studies suggest that this is a conflict between Muhammadiyah and traditional Islamic communities. This article presents a different argument, asserting that Muhammadiyah in Aceh has become an organization inadvertently drawn into a religious contestation between two religious communities: the Wahhabi and the Ablu Sunnah wa Jamaah (Aswaja) groups. Muhammadiyah does not actually have a direct conflict with traditional Islam or the dayah community in Aceh, but it finds itself in a precarious situation when conflicts arise between these two groups. Muhammadiyah becomes entangled with one of these groups due to shared aspects in religious doctrine. The contestation between these two major currents is not only about the domination of doctrines and religious authority but also extends into the competition for access to economic and socio-cultural resources. This situation parallels and echoes the early history of Muhammadiyah in Aceh, where it was inadvertently involved in conflicts between uleebalang/teuku (local rulers) and ulama/teungku (traditional scholars). During that time, Muhammadiyah, allied with uleebalang, found itself confronting ulama.*

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## A. INTRODUCTION

The construction of Muhammadiyah mosques in Juli District and Samalanga District, Bireuen Regency, faced opposition from certain individuals who identified themselves as Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah (Aswaja). This resistance to the construction efforts dates back to 2015 when Muhammadiyah initiated the construction of the At-Taqwa Mosque in Juli District, Bireuen. The opposition intensified further during the establishment of the At-Taqwa mosque in Samalanga District, also known as the "Santri City." This conflict unfolded amid the ongoing tensions between Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah, represented by traditional dayah groups, and the Wahhabi faction in Aceh. Accusations surfaced during this period, asserting that Muhammadiyah was aligned with the Wahhabi faction and did not represent the Sunni Aswaja group, recognized as Aceh's official traditional Islamic sect. Wahhabism faces widespread aversion among the majority of Acehnese people, partly due to the vocal promotion of its puritanical ideology and the perceived efforts to purify teachings and traditions, conflicting with those upheld by scholars and traditional Islamic communities (Amiruddin & Yunus, 2020; Fuadi Mardhatillah, 2019; Miswar, 2017; Nirzalin & Febriandi, 2022; Noviandy, 2022; Noviandy et al., 2022).

The situation in Aceh shows the dynamic development of the Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah theology in Islam. According to Syafiq Mughni, the discussion of Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah has appeared in the book *Syarh Fiqh al-Akbar* which was probably written by Abu al-Lait al-Samarqandi, a follower of the Hanafi school of thought. In the beginning, Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah was a broad school of thought and referred to as a community that the Prophet mentioned in a hadith as a group of survivors. His birth was closely related to medieval theological and political contestation situations. Before the 10th century, the Hanbali school in the field of aqidah became the backbone of the Ahlu Sunnah which contested with the Mu'tazilah and Shia schools. In contrast, the Asy'ariyah and Maturidiyah schools had not yet been born (Mughni, 1995). Among Indonesian Muslims, the understanding of Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah means: (1) the field of jurisprudence (fiqh) follows one of the Imam Hanafi, Maliki, Syafii, Hanbali schools of thought; (2) the field of faith (aqidah) follows the teachings of

one of the formulations of the schools of Imam Abul Hasan al-Asy'ari and Abu Mansur Al-Maturidi; (3) the field of Sufism (tasawuf) adheres to the basic teachings of Imam Abu Qosim Al-Junaid (Dhofier, 2011). The fanaticism of Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah in Aceh strengthened after the tsunami (2004) and MoU Helsinki (2005). This Aswaja group got rid of all threats that would interfere with its existence, especially the Wahhabi group. The case of the rejection of the Muhammadiyah mosque marked a new era for Muhammadiyah in a new conflict. What really happened? What is the theological position of Muhammadiyah? This article attempts to answer some of these questions by exploring historical data and observing facts in the field.

The history of Muhammadiyah in Aceh reveals a distinctive phenomenon that sets it apart from Muhammadiyah in other regions of Indonesia. Muhammadiyah made its entry into Aceh in 1923 when S. Djaja Soekarta, the former secretary of the Betawi branch of Muhammadiyah, was assigned to the Railway Bureau in Kutaraja (now Banda Aceh). Over the subsequent years, Muhammadiyah branches were established along the northern and eastern coastal areas of Aceh. The Sigli branch was founded on July 1, 1927, followed by Muhammadiyah Lhokseumawe in August 1927, Muhammadiyah Kuala Simpang on October 7, 1928, and Muhammadiyah Langsa on October 29, 1928. The inauguration of Muhammadiyah Takengon took place in May 1929, and Muhammadiyah Bireuen was established in 1928. However, in the west and south coast areas of Aceh, the Dutch East Indies government imposed a ban on the presence of Muhammadiyah. In Tapaktuan, South Aceh, an organization named Sumatra Thawalib emerged, directly influenced by the Thawalib school in West Sumatra and managed by Muhammadiyah figures (Ghazali, 1998, p. 120; Reid, 1979, p. 20).

The history of Muhammadiyah Aceh has close ties with West Sumatra. The Muhammadiyah Central Representative who lived in Aceh to develop the local Muhammadiyah was a figure from Minang, namely Buya AR Sutan Mansur. The first Muhammadiyah Aceh consul, Teuku Hasan Glumpang Payong, also had ties to Tanah Minang. Teuku Hasan was an early-generation Acehnese uleebalang who was sent to school in Bukittinggi, became a student of Muhammad Djamil



Djambek, a Minang Muhammadiyah figure. Djamil Djambek together with Abdul Karim Amrullah and Abdullah Ahmad were the early proponents of reformist Salafism at the beginning of the 20th century (Basya, 2018, p. 27; Zakariya, 2005). From his interactions with these figures, Teuku Hasan began to be attracted to Muhammadiyah and became a devout Muslim, even though previously he was attached to the characteristics of an *abangan* who paid little attention to ritual matters and still often neglected prayers. Upon returning to Aceh, Teuku Hasan became the first Muhammadiyah consul, from 1927 to 1937 (Hamka, 1969). The connection between Muhammadiyah Aceh and West Sumatra is an indisputable fact, even now, many residents of south-west Aceh still speak Minang and the majority lean towards Muhammadiyah. In several studies, the color of the West Sumatra Muhammadiyah, which has a puritanical character, is different from the more cultural character of the Yogyakarta Muhammadiyah (Burhani, 2016)

## **B. METHODS**

This article is a type of qualitative research. This study seeks to reveal historical parallelism, which has dimensions of resemblance or repetition. The concept of similarity is obtained by comparing two historical phenomena with similar themes in different places, which is also called horizontal parallelism. Horizontal parallelism is used in Geertz and Alfian's work (Alfian, 1989; Geertz, 1968). While the concept of repetition is obtained by comparing historical phenomena with similar themes in the same place at different or different times, it is also called vertical parallelism. This vertical parallelism is seen in Geertz's book and one of Anderson's essays (Anderson, 2000; Geertz, 1967).

This research on Muhammadiyah Aceh uses the historical method offered by Kuntowijoyo. According to him, there are several steps in conducting historical research. First, topic selection, which among others is based on emotional closeness and intellectual closeness. Second, gathering sources, which include written and oral sources. Third, historical verification or criticism, which includes the validity of the source (authenticity) and the relevance of the source (credibility). Fourth, interpretation, which includes analysis and synthesis. Fifth, historical writing (Kuntowijoyo, 2018).

## C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Muhammadiyah Aceh between Ulama and Uleebalang Contest

The first Aceh Muhammadiyah consul, Teuku Hasan became part of the uleebalang who received educational opportunities from the Dutch government since the early 20th century. Previously, Aceh was only known for traditional Islamic education in the form of Islamic boarding schools or dayah. In addition to providing modern education for uleebalangs, the Dutch also worked for people's schools (*sekolah rakyat*) or *sikula mukim* in *gampongs*. The first *sikula mukim* was established in Ulee Lheu on December 30, 1907. Simultaneously, on May 1, 1910, in the Ulee Lheue district, Mukim Meuraksa, a girls' school was founded, which was also assisted by the local uleebalang, Teuku Tengoh. The establishment of this *sekolah rakyat* encountered two challenges: a shortage of teachers and the disapproval of traditional *teungku* or *ulama* towards the existence of modern schools (Wibowo, 2005).

Apart from Teuku Hasan, the next Muhammadiyah consul was also led by the uleebalangs, namely Teuku Cut Hasan. In Aceh, there are two elite groups: (1) the uleebalang as traditional leaders and administrators; and (2) the *ulama* as religious leaders and educators at the Islamic boarding school. The uleebalangs who were believed to be *Zelfbestuurder* who held power for generations on behalf of the sultan, slowly became small kings. Over time, ties with the sultanate weakened, and those who had previously worked hand-in-hand with the *ulama* against the invaders, gradually began to take sides and be loyal to the Dutch. The results of Dutch education have given birth to a new elite in society. They pioneered a new awareness, including a critical attitude towards the Netherlands. The uleebalangs, for example, protested the Dutch government's plan to implement Dutch as the language of instruction in schools. In fact, the uleebalangs proposed the Malay language, so that Acehnese children could mingle crosswise with other Indonesian people. The presence of this educated elite slightly disturbed the existence of the religious elite who had graduated from traditional Islamic boarding schools.

The Dutch government's ethical policy of providing education for the natives has produced capable and loyal employees, but also produced a

disgruntled elite who then led the resistance movement (Ricklefs, 1981, p. 143). Dutch education graduates who were not successfully embraced by the Dutch in Aceh, some of them even joined the ulama. These graduates of Western education gather themselves in organizations. On December 17, 1916, a group of youths founded Vereeniging Atjeh (Serikat Aceh) in Kutaraja. The Serikat Aceh Statute mentions two goals, namely (1) to advance and improve the teaching/education system in Aceh; (2) to change the customs that impede and restrain progress and improve the manners that were in effect in Acehnese society at that time (Sufi, 1998; Wibowo, 2005). Others join in national organizations such as Taman Siswa, Sarekat Islam, and Muhammadiyah. In 1916, the Sarekat Islam (SI) was established in Tapaktuan, followed by Aceh Besar, Pidie, North Aceh, and East Aceh. Several uleebalangs joined SI. SI slowly transformed into a political organization, which was thwarted by the Dutch. Along with the 1926-1927 PKI rebellion, SI figures in Aceh were arrested and exiled to Bouven Digul, including Teuku Chiek Muhammad Said Cunda, Teuku Abdul Latif Geudong, and Teuku Raja Bujang. Meanwhile, Teuku Syekh Abdul Hamid Samalanga escaped arrest and settled in Mecca, Saudi Arabia (Sufi, 1998, pp. 37–38).

While in Mecca, Sheikh Abdul Hamid Samalanga regularly sent the Islamic renewal newspaper/magazine *Ummul Kura* to Teungku Muhammad Daud Beureueh, Teungku Abdullah Ujong Rimba, and other figures. On the sidelines of the *Ummul Kura* newspaper, Sheikh Abdul Hamid wrote his messages in Arabic, especially messages about reforming Islamic education. His advice was welcomed by the Acehnese ulamas who immediately moved under the leadership of Teungku Muhammad Daud Beureueh. Thus began the awareness to renew Islamic education, from the dayah system to the madrasah system which integrated the religious and general curricula. Madrasas also started using benches and blackboards (Hasjmy, 1976, pp. 65–66). Sheikh Abdul Hamid also sent a special letter to Teungku Abdurrahman Meunasah Meucap about the success of modernizing education in Egypt (Alfian, 1997).

Several ulama started to establish madrasas inspired by madrasas in Egypt and West Sumatra. In Idi, Said Husain led the Ahlussunah Wal-djama'ah Madrasa in 1928, which later changed its name to the Nahdlatul Islam Madrasa. Tengku Muhammad Daud Beureueh together with Teungku Abdullah Ujong Rimba



initiated Jamiyatul Diniyah. Then the two of them, with the help of uleebalang Teuku Bentara Ibrahim, founded the Madrasa Sa'adah Abidiyah in Pidie in 1929. Tengku Abdul Rahman Meunasah Meucap with the help of uleebalang Teuku Chiek Muhammad Johan Alamsyah founded the Al-Muslim Madrasa in Peusangan in 1929. In a short time, Madrasa Al-Muslims have already set up branches in several places.

This educational reform led to disputes among the ulama, between those who sided with reform and those who defended the establishment of traditional religious education. Seeing this situation, Teungku Abdul Rahman Meunasah Meucap held a conference of ulama in Matang Glumpang Dua, Bireuen. The meeting of the ulama coincided with the celebration of the Prophet's birthday (maulid), on May 5, 1939 AD or 12 Rabiul Awal 1358 Hijri. As a result, the PUSA (Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh/All Aceh Ulama Association) was born, and appointed Tengku Muhammad Daud Beureueh as its chairman. PUSA received the blessing of the Peusangan uleebalang, Teuku Chiek Muhammad Johan Alamsyah (Abdullah, 1983, p. 58). In fact, PUSA is known as an organization that has puritan ideological understanding in the religious sphere similar to Muhammadiyah and Wahhabism (Noviandy, 2022). PUSA and Muhammadiyah have similarities in terms of paying attention to educational reform efforts and are both influenced by Islamic modernism in Egypt.

PUSA ulamas generally have their own Islamic boarding schools (dayah), which then agree to change the curriculum to the madrasah system. PUSA designed a standardized curriculum for all madrasas in Aceh. The new curriculum with the addition of general subjects is expected to be an alternative to the existing Dutch education system, including teaching Mathematics, Geography, Dutch, English and so on. Given the resistance to the secular curriculum, PUSA packages the lessons in Arabic, for example Mathematics is called the Science of Hisab. PUSA also established a Normal Islam Institute teacher school. The school for teachers led by M. Nur El Ibrahimy, a graduate of Al Azhar and Darul Ulum Egypt, follows the Normal Islamic curriculum in Padang. Graduates of these teacher schools were distributed to various madrasas in Aceh (Dijk, 1981; Reid, 1979; Syamsuddin, 1985). Not only focusing on educational renewal, PUSA also carries out social reform. Other departments were also formed, for example

Pemuda PUSA led by Teungku Amir Husein Al Mujahid, Muslimat PUSA led by Teungku Nya' Asma (wife of Teungku Daud Beureueh), and Kasysyafatul Islam or Islamic scouting led by Teuku Muhammad. In 1941, PUSA merged with MIAI (A'la Indonesia Islamic Council), an organization founded in Surabaya and consisting of 11 Islamic organizations such as PSII, Muhammadiyah, Persis, Al-Irsyad.

In its journey, PUSA began to highlight political issues and arouse anti-colonialism, especially after the 1940 congress in Sigli. The congress was also attended by modernist ulamas from West Sumatra, Mahmud Yunus (director of Jamiah al-Islamiyah Padang) and Rangkyo Rahmah El-Yunusiah (director of Diniyah Putri Padang Panjang); as well as the uleebalang who was a former Muhammadiyah consul, Teuku Hasan Glumpang Payong. Representing the uleebalang who has good relations with the ulama, Teuku Hasan invites PUSA to act in a good way, as long as it doesn't trigger a fight. PUSA instilled resistance to the Dutch, especially through the PUSA youth and scouting movements. PUSA also publishes the *Penyoeloch* magazine led by Teungku Ismail Yakob, with printing in Bireuen and Medan (Anis, 2015). Slowly, PUSA is increasingly establishing its influence throughout Aceh with agenda of purifying Islam and renewing education as well as resistance to the Dutch; making the traditional ulama who is also the leader of the tarekat and the uleebalang feel disturbed. In March 1942, the PUSA ulamas organized a rebellion against the Dutch. After expelling the Dutch, PUSA embraced the Japanese, enticed by their promise of liberating Asia. The arrival of the Japanese in Aceh was met with a warm reception from PUSA. However, the uleebalangs were displeased with the Japanese presence, supported by the ulama, as they feared it could alter the societal standing of the uleebalangs (El Ibrahimy, 2001).

Japan broke its promise to PUSA leaders, independence was never given. Instead, Japan appointed the uleebalangs who were rivals of the PUSA ulamas, to become Guncho. PUSA figures such as Teungku Daud Beureueh, Tengku Muhammad Amin, Tengku Abdul Wahab Seulimeum, and Husein Al Mujahid were arrested by Kempetai, the Japanese intelligence agency. This situation made the PUSA even more suspicious of the uleebalangs that were secretly approaching Japan. Japan disbanded the PUSA movement and established a new clerical

forum called Maibkatra, which was strictly directed to refrain from involvement in politics. The zenith of PUSA gradually waned during the Japanese colonial period. Simultaneously, the conflict between PUSA ulamas and the uleebalangs intensified. PUSA youth leaders frequently targeted uleebalangs, holding them responsible for the hardships inflicted on the people through compulsory labor policies and tax collection. Uleebalangs assumed roles as overseers in the forced labor implemented by the Japanese. PUSA vehemently criticized the uleebalangs for their alleged non-transparent management of the Baitul Mal treasures, leading to inevitable physical confrontations. In Ie Leubeu, Teuku Amat Asee Le's son, Teuku R. Mat Ali, along with a former HIS Muhammadiyah teacher from Sigli and their followers, raided the PUSA youth office. In Mukim Njong, Teuku Makam, Teuku's cousin Laksamana Umar, and their supporters perpetrated violence against PUSA youth activists in Paru Village, led by Keuchik Ahmad and Teungku Harun (Sulaiman, 1997, p. 109).

During the Japanese government's rule, PUSA and the uleebalang vied for influence. Following Japan's defeat at the hands of the Allied forces, both the uleebalangs and PUSA sought to outmaneuver each other. These two factions, each with their fervent followers, seized weapons from the surrendered Japanese soldiers. The two groups were involved in physical clashes when trying to control three Japanese weapons warehouses in Sigli, namely Yasinsoko Leupeum, Yasinsoko Titue, and Yasinsoko Lingkok. The pinnacle of the political rivalry between the ulama (teungku) and uleebalang (teuku) factions ignited the Cumbok War in Pidie Regency, spanning from December 2, 1945, to January 16, 1946. PUSA emerged victorious and subsequently restructured the organization. Between 1952 and 1962, as some PUSA figures felt disillusioned by the central government, a portion of them participated in the Darul Islam struggle, which also gained strength in West Java and South Sulawesi (Dijk, 1981).

In the 1980s and 1990s, the influence of PUSA waned in tandem with the rising popularity of GAM (Free Aceh Movement) and traditionalist Islamic groups propelled by dayah ulamas.

Compared to other national organizations (Budi Utomo, Islamic Union, Taman Siswa, Jong Islamieten Bond), Muhammadiyah is more able to develop in Aceh. When PUSA strengthened, many national organizations weakened in Aceh.

Taman Siswa joined with PUSA's youth and scouting wing, *Kasysyafatul Islam* (Ismuha, 1969, p. 34). Even though Muhammadiyah is still growing, as Hamka said in *Panji Masyarakat*,

"Muhamadiyah is not 'attached' to the Acehnese people themselves. Only Minangkabau children who live in Aceh have joined this union, from Kuala Simpang to Takengon. Except for West Aceh, because there the souls of the people are already close to the Minangkabau too. For many years Muhammadiyah was like oil and water with the native Acehnese." (Hamka, 2020)

Muhamadiyah at that time was labeled as part of the *uleebalang*. In fact, Muhammadiyah's ideas are actually the same as PUSA's ideals. PUSA aims to advance a society that has sunk into the valley of backwardness and darkness; unite the ulama and people who have clashed in various *khilafiyah* affairs; as well as updating the education curriculum or *leer plan* for religious schools in Aceh (Latif, 1992; Wibowo et al., 2015). PUSA's goals were very much in line with the reasons and objectives for the establishment of Muhammadiyah, which were to promote and encourage Islamic teaching and learning in the Dutch East Indies; uphold the Islamic religion. Muhammadiyah and PUSA both offer a renewal of the concept of education, namely combining general and religious subjects; and fighting superstition (Ridha, 2018; Salam, 2009).

Hamka said that the Muhammadiyah consul after Teuku Hasan, namely Teuku Cut (Tjoet) had used Muhammadiyah as a political tool to maintain the position of the *uleebalang*. Teuku Tjoet has his own reasons, that he uses Muhammadiyah as part of the *uleebalang* so that Muhammadiyah is more accepted by the local community. This was confirmed in Anthony Reid's study which stated that Muhammadiyah and Taman Siswa received Minangkabau and Javanese stamps among the local community. According to Reid, to overcome this obstacle, Muhammadiyah placed itself under the protection of the Acehnese educated *uleebalangs*. The *uleebalang* figure was appointed as the regional consul of Muhammadiyah (Reid, 2011). In order not to lose identity and not to become part of the *uleebalang*, Muhammadiyah also sent its central figures to foster ideology, namely AR Sutan Mansur and H Fachroedin (Hamka, 1969). In another part, Hamka wrote his testimony while attending a Muhammadiyah conference in Mereudu, Pidie.

“It seems clear that Muhammadiyah at that time was a tool in the hands of the nobility. Of course the PUSA, and that is the people, also held such a conference near the same place. And of course attended by more crowded masses. On December 7, 1941, apart from the international crisis, there was also a very clear crisis between the people (its incarnation was PUSA) and the uleebalang (its incarnation was Muhammadiyah). When I met my friends in PUSA, who so far had good relations, they looked at me with hateful eyes. Because I am a member of Muhammadiyah, they think that of course I will defend the uleebalang.” (Hamka, 2020)

In the midst of this rivalry, Teuku Hasan Glumpang Payong, who represents the uleebalang and Muhammadiyah, is still trying to maintain good relations with Teuku Muhammad Daud Beureueh as a PUSA figure. Tengku Daud Beureueh once said, “if Ampon Chik (Teuku Hasan) was still alive, maybe the Cumbok War would never have happened.” This is because Teuku Hasan has the capacity for authority in bridging the feud between the uleebalangs and the ulama. This attitude is similar to that of AR Fachruddin who maintains relations with Teungku Muhammad Daud Beureueh. Abdul Rozak Fachruddin met with Daud Beureueh after attending the Aceh Muhammadiyah Regional Conference in Kutaraja in 1953. The meeting of these two figures took place in the jungle (Suara Muhammadiyah, 2016). During that period, Teungku Daud Beureueh had gained prominence as a figure sought after by Jakarta, having become associated with Darul Islam-Indonesian Islamic State (DI-TII), advocating for Aceh to reclaim its glory based on Islamic principles, reminiscent of the era when Sultan Iskandar Muda led the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam (Compton, 1995).

## **2. The New Era of Muhammadiyah Aceh between the Wahhabi and Aswaja**

Contest Muhammadiyah Aceh's new struggle is in the middle of the conflict between traditional ulama and Wahhabis. Muhammadiyah is again dragged into the struggle for religious authority in Acehese society. In the context of Aceh's religious contestation, there are ambivalences and contradictions. For example, PUSA should be close to Muhammadiyah, but Muhammadiyah has an alliance with the uleebalang group. In today's context,

some characteristics of the Wahhabi group are also practiced by the Aswaja community, such as the face-veiled and robe (jubah) which are familiar in the dayahs. However, of course there is complexity behind the phenomenon. Several studies see the issue of Wahhabism and Aswaja as a struggle for influence and a struggle for religious authority. The contestation spread to political and economic affairs (Noviandy et al., 2022).

In the past, youth in Aceh studied the Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah religion in stages at the dayahs. In various areas in Aceh, various dayahs were born. During the Dutch era, some Islamic boarding school institutions also received intervention so that they only focused on teaching tauhid, fiqh, and tasawuf. The Dutch wanted the ulema not to mobilize students and society to fight against the Dutch. In a situation where the ulema and uleebalang clashed, there were some ulemas who chose to stay away from the conflict, focusing on cultivating dayah and developing tarekat: Naqshabandiyah, Qadiriyyah, Syathariah, Samaniyyah, and so on. In its development, the new generation of Acehnese learn religion from new ustadz who were not born from the dayah tradition. Some of the new ustadz who are closer to the Wahhabi-style purification teachings of Islam have begun to disturb the establishment of the old religious authorities, to promote practices that have thrived in society. This creates a reaction of rejection from traditional circles, including triggering mobilization and acts of intolerance. There have been many studies discussing the contestation of Aswaja and Wahhabism (Amiruddin & Yunus, 2020; Juwaini et al., 2021; Miswar, 2017; Nirzalin & Febriandi, 2022; Noviandy et al., 2022).

In this situation, the government intervened by issuing Qanuns regarding the implementation of religious services which must maintain conduciveness in society. During the reign of governors Zaini Abdullah and Muzakkir Manaf from the Aceh Party, the influence of traditional ulamas was strengthening again. The alliance of traditional ulamas with the Aceh Party which brought together the former GAM is bound by their collective memory which is resistant to the central government (Nirzalin & Febriandi, 2022). After the signing of the peace MoU between the Government of Indonesia and GAM on August 15, 2005 in Helsinki, the Aswaja community attempted to strengthen religious influence and authority in Acehnese society. During the Zaini Abdullah-Muzakkir Manaf period, two



Qanuns were issued related to religious views and implementation, namely Aceh Qanun number 8 of 2014 concerning Principles of Islamic Sharia and Aceh Qanun Number 4 of 2016 concerning Guidelines for the Maintenance of Religious Harmony and the Establishment of Places of Worship. In ibadah and aqidah, it is stated that religious understanding in Aceh follows the Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah (Sunni) beliefs. Article 14 of this Qanun states:

(1) The implementation of worship in Aceh must be carried out in accordance with sharia guidelines. (2) The implementation of worship as referred to in paragraph (1) is practiced by prioritizing the procedures for practicing worship according to the Shafi'i school of thought. (3) The implementation of worship that does not refer to the procedures of the Shafi'i school of thought is permissible as long as it is within the framework of the Hanafi, Maliki and Hambali schools of thought by always prioritizing harmony, brotherhood Islamiyah and peace among Muslims. (4) If there are community groups in Aceh who have practiced the Hanafi, Maliki or Hambali schools, they cannot be forced to practice the Shafi'i school. (5) In the event that there are groups of people who practice their worship following the understanding of religious organizations in accordance with the Al-Quran and Hadith and are legally recognized by the state, they are still justified/protected (Aceh Qanun number 8 of 2014 concerning Principles of Islamic Sharia 2014). (Qanun Aceh Nomor 8 Tahun 2014 Tentang Pokok Pokok Syariat Islam, 2014).

After the tsunami (2004) and the Helsinki MoU (2005), the situation in Aceh tends to be more open, which causes various sects to start reappearing. Various religious groups are trying to consolidate themselves and try to re-establish themselves after they had been lying down during the conflict between the TNI and GAM. The euphoria after the conflict and the big disaster has opened many blockages for the religious movement which was previously divided to save itself. Among the groups that have strengthened are the majority of traditional dayah (Aswaja) and also the Wahhabi group. The birth of the Wahhabi group, which primarily receives funding from the Middle East, is seen as disruptive to the dayah or traditionalists who want to strengthen their position again. Wahhabi leaders are quite aggressive in carrying out purification of the teachings that have been firmly established in society.

One practice that is opposed by the Wahhabis is the commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday (maulid). In Acehese society, the birthday of the Prophet is a very sacred and festive tradition of celebration, which is even carried out for up to four months. While the Wahhabis reject this ingrained tradition on the grounds that it is an act of heresy. Wahhabism also disturbs the traditional way of praising the Prophet Muhammad which is considered excessive. Apart from alluding to the prohibition of maulid, he did not use the word "sayyidina", to the point where, for example, he called the Prophet's father going to hell (Sidawi, 2016). This made the traditional community and especially the dayah in Aceh furious towards Wahhabism. Wahhabi figures introduced the concept of tauhid al-Usul al-Tsalatsah (rububiyah, uluhiyah, asma wa al- sifat) which refers to Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab. This violates the learning of aqeedah in Aceh by learning twenty traits taken from Asy'ari teachings. Wahhabis began to encourage things that were considered to be part of the sunnah of the Prophet, such as beards, abayas, jalabiyas, non-isbal trousers.

Wahhabism and Muhammadiyah are both minorities in the midst of traditional Islam in Aceh. This situation as a party who feels discriminated against creates imagined solidarity in the concept of Asef Bayat (Bayat, 2005). They form consensus spontaneously on the basis of common interests or shared values, even though they are not completely uniform. In certain cases, several Wahhabi figures chose to become members of Muhammadiyah. This is because Muhammadiyah is more acceptable and has legality. At the same time, Muhammadiyah still lacks cadres, so when there is a Wahhabi figure who has expertise in religion and is a graduate of the Middle East, it will be easy to be given a red carpet to become Muhammadiyah administrator.

The development of Muhammadiyah in Bireuen Regency was influenced by the important role of Athaillah A Latif, a doctor who was intensely involved in the Muhammadiyah cadre. He went to school for six years at the school for creating Muhammadiyah cadres, namely at the Madrasah Muallimin Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. After that, he was involved in one of Muhammadiyah's autonomous organizational cadres, namely the Muhammadiyah Student Association (IPM), up to the top position as general chairman of the IPM central leadership. Meanwhile, he is studying at the Faculty of Medicine, Gajah

Mada University, Yogyakarta. After having a lot of experience in the Muhammadiyah organization at the national level, Athaillah returned to Bireuen in 2008. In 2011, he became chairman of the Bireuen Muhammadiyah. At the same time, the Regent of Bireuen who was a former GAM intellectual figure, Nurdin Abdul Rahman, helped develop Muhammadiyah in Bireuen. Muhammadiyah succeeded in building a mosque and several schools in the central area of the capital Bireuen. PDM Bireuen under the leadership of Athaillah succeeded in trying to establish a Nursing Academy, Dayah Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS), Elementary Schools (SD), Junior High Schools (SMP), Special Schools (SLB), and Mahakarya Muhammadiyah University of Aceh (Basri, 2020).

Along with the development of Muhammadiyah in the central area of Bireuen, its passion also spread to several sub-districts. In Peusangan District, where the sub-district capital is Matang Glumpang Dua, which is the birthplace of PUSA. Several local Muhammadiyah figures took the initiative to establish the At-Taqwa Muhammadiyah Peusangan mosque in Gampong Raya Dagang. Construction began in July 2017. In July 2020, which coincided with Eid al-Adha 1441 Hijriah, the first Friday prayer was held with the Khatib of the PP Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council, Syakir Jamaluddin. Interestingly, the laying of the first stone for the construction of the Muhammadiyah Peusangan Mosque and the Muhammadiyah Samalanga Mosque began simultaneously on August 31, 2017. This activity coincided with the arrival of Din Syamsuddin to Bireuen who became the preacher of the Eid al-Adha 1438 H sermon at the At-Taqwa Muhammadiyah Bireuen Mosque. In Peusangan, the construction of the Muhammadiyah mosque went smoothly and almost without resistance, like in the capital city of Bireuen.

In contrast to the capital city of Bireuen and Peusangan, the construction of Muhammadiyah mosques in Juli and Samalanga districts was rejected by those who said they were Aswaja. I see that there is a slight difference in the character of the Muhammadiyah in Peusangan, Juli and Samalanga. Muhammadiyah administrators in Peusangan generally are figures who are quite respected and have roots in the community. Even though they adhere to Muhammadiyah, they are able to mingle with society in general who adheres to traditional Islam.

Muhammadiyah leaders in Peusangan can often be seen in coffee shops in Matang Glumpang Dua, mingling with traditional religious leaders. They can mingle in the coffee shop even though they have different religious understandings. In Peusangan, all development funds are collected by administrators from the local community. Communities contribute to development infaq. This seemed different in July, when it was rumored that funds were flowing from Qatar (Amiruddin & Yunus, 2020). This flow of funds from Arab countries reinforces their perception that this mosque is a Wahhabi mosque connected to the Wahhabi authorities in the Middle East.

Another reason for refusal was regarding the provisions for establishing a mosque in a residential area in Aceh. In Aceh, several villages form one mukim. Mukim is a legal community unit under the sub-district which consists of a combination of several gampongs that have certain territorial boundaries led by an Imeum mukim or another name and is directly under the sub-district head (Qanun Aceh Nomor 10 tahun 2008 tentang Lembaga Adat Aceh, Pasal 1). There may only be one jamik mosque in one mukim, although there may be several meunasah. However, the meunasah only holds five daily prayers and cannot hold Friday prayers. The At-Taqwa Muhammadiyah Sangso Samalanga Mosque is located in a mukim that already has a Jamik Mosque which accommodates a large number of worshipers. The Samalanga Jamik Mosque oversees Gampong Sangso, Pante Rheng, Keude Aceh, and Meuliek.

This reason became the reason for the Aswaja group led by Tu Hanan to reject the Muhammadiyah Samalanga mosque (Nirzalin & Febriandi, 2022). In existing mosques, the number of worshipers is still small. "There should be a discussion first, involving village officials, the mukim priest, Muspika and the mosque imam. This is to be built near a large mosque, the congregation is not yet full, so there is no need to build a new one," said Afifuddin, Head of Sangso Village (Fuadi Mardhatillah, 2019). A similar complaint was conveyed by the high priest of the Samalanga Grand Mosque, Tgk Abdul Hannan Yahya. In the PTUN court decision sheet, Hannan also mentioned his concern about the number of mosque congregations. "If the Friday prayer at the Jamik mosque, it contains only eight rows, while the other ten are still empty," he wrote (Putusan PTUN BANDA ACEH Nomor 2/G/2019/PTUN.BNA, 2019). Afifuddin questioned

the social interaction patterns of Muhammadiyah members in Sangso. One of them, the meunasah priest, who at that time was held by the Muhammadiyah, was often absent from religious activities in the gampong. This further strengthens the perception that Muhammadiyah is quite exclusive and like the Wahhabis who view this tradition as heresy. Another thing that was also highlighted by Afifuddin was that Muhammadiyah members did not hold consultations with village officials regarding the plan to build the At-Taqwa Muhammadiyah Samalanga mosque (Fuadi Mardhatillah, 2019).

From a legal standpoint, there were no violations of the law during the construction process of the At-Taqwa Muhammadiyah Mosque. Muhammadiyah has adhered to all applicable regulations. The banning of the Muhammadiyah July Mosque was claimed to have played a role in expediting the issuance of Aceh Qanun Number 4 of 2016, which addresses guidelines for the Maintenance of Religious Harmony and the Establishment of Places of Worship. This regulation removes the recommendation requirements for obtaining permits for the construction of places of worship for Muslims in Aceh. "Based on this Qanun, Muslims do not need permission from any party to build a mosque," said the chairman of PDM Bireuen, Athaillah A Latif. Supposedly, this rule will make the process of building the Muhammadiyah Samalanga Mosque easier, but in reality it doesn't. The government, which was supposed to be neutral, sided with the traditionalist majority group to get votes in the election (Basri, 2020).

Samalanga is known as a santri city, taking shelter in many old dayah. Dayah Mudi Mesra led by Tgk Hasanoel Bashry (Abu Mudi) is one of the most influential, which has existed since the time of Sultan Iskandar Muda. Not far from it, stood Dayah Ummul Ayman led by Teungku Nuruzzahry (Waled Nu). Abu Mudi and Waled Nu are two highly respected charismatic ulama in Aceh. Many hoped that these two figures would give an explanation to the public to accept the presence of Muhammadiyah. However, Abu Mudi seemed still silent. One of the students from the two ulama, Tu Hanan, became a figure who led the Aswaja group which rejected Muhammadiyah. He is worried that the Muhammadiyah mosque in Samalanga will become a center for the spread of Wahhabi teachings which threaten the existence of Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah teachings. On the other hand, the Ulama Consultative Council (Majelis

Permusyawaratan Ulama/MPU) is held by traditional ulama, so religious recommendations are not in favor of Muhammadiyah. The recommendations of the old ulama at the MPU are quite influential and are carried out by the government (Nirzalin & Febriandi, 2022).

For the Aswajas, the attempt to thwart the construction of a Muhammadiyah mosque in Samalanga is perceived as a preventive measure to disrupt the progression of Wahhabi influence that poses a threat to their amaliah (tradition). The prohibition of the Muhammadiyah mosque is viewed as an endeavor to uphold the dominance and authority of the Samalanga traditionalist group, which has hitherto played a significant role in steering religious discourse and dynamics in Bireuen and Aceh (Permana, 2021). Samalanga's status as a santri city with some of the oldest Islamic boarding schools and as a center for the existence of old ulema from traditional groups, has made traditional circles try hard to maintain Samalanga's homogeneity and defend Samalanga from the influence of other groups. On 22 October 2020 to coincide with the commemoration of the national santri day, the Government of Aceh declared Bireuen as the Santri City. The granting of the status of a santri city has further strengthened Bireuen's legitimacy as the center of Aswaja.

### **3. Muhammadiyah and Wahhabism, Meeting Point and Separating Point**

In the midst of the conflict between Aswaja and Wahhabism in Aceh, Muhammadiyah was also labeled as part of Wahhabism. Buya Hamka once mentioned that the term Wahhabi has been used pejoratively in the history of the people of the archipelago (Hamka, 1982, pp. 114–137). Several studies have refuted views that equate Muhammadiyah and Wahhabism (Jaenuri et al., 2013; Trigiyatno & Al-Faruqi, 2023). Al Yasa divides three religious groups based on their orientation in understanding the Qur'an and Sunnah: (1) salafiyah, understanding Islamic teachings by following the understanding of salaf al-shalih; (2) mazhabiyah, understanding Islamic teachings by following the results of understanding that have been codified in certain schools; (3) tajdidiyah, understanding Islamic teachings by developing tajdid or renewal in order to make Islamic teachings more in line with today's needs. This tajdidiyah group



understands that the results of the understanding of the ulama in the past departed from subjectivity which may have deficiencies and needs to be reviewed to suit the present (Abubakar, 2011). In that category, he included Muhammadiyah as a representative of the tajdidiyah group, Wahhabism as a representative of the salafiyah group, and traditional Islamic circles or dayah circles in Aceh as part of the mazhabiyah group. This categorization is sufficient to provide clear boundaries in the context of Islamic society in Aceh.

The birth of Muhammadiyah was inspired by the Egyptian renewal movement, which at the beginning of the 20th century became the entry point for modernization and renewal discourse from Europe to the Islamic world. The characters include Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Ridha. Cairo at that time became a city that already had a printing machine (Laffan, 2004). In its early days or at the beginning of the 20th century, the Muhammadiyah tajdid movement touched on issues that had not been touched by modernization. Muhammadiyah offers modernization that brings new enthusiasm to indigenous people who are currently in the colonial period. Meanwhile, with its character that is non-sectarian or not bound by schools of thought, Muhammadiyah seeks to return Islamic teachings to their original sources, while abandoning taklid, bid'ah, and superstition (Mughni, 1995). While Wahhabism, is rooted in the purification movement inflamed by Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab who later formed an alliance with Ibn Saud to establish the Saudi state. The Wahhabi movement purifies aqeedah with a strict and rigid approach. They asked the public to turn to monotheistic teachings which were pure according to the understanding of the muwahhidun (Algar, 2002).

Muhammadiyah uses reason to understand the Qur'an and Hadith so that they are relevant throughout the ages. Muhammadiyah uses maqashid sharia tools, where ijihad is carried out using three methods: ijihad bayani, ijihad istishlahi, and ijihad qiyasi (Abdurrahman, 2012; Hosen, 2002). While the Wahhabis understand revelation textually, based on the understanding of salaf al-salih. For example, Wahhabis understand the hadith "kullu bid'atin dhalalah" absolutely, that everything that is new, that is not done by the Prophet and the generation of salaf al-salih is absolutely heresy. Wahhabism consider all traditions related to religion, such as the birthday of the Prophet or shaking hands after prayer, as

misleading bid'ah. Absolute must be avoided, because in the continuation of the hadith, "wa kullu dhalalatin finnar". It is understood that all additions to religion are bid'ah, all bid'ah will result in misguidance, and misguidance will end in hell. With this principle, Wahhabism echoes the dividing line with those who are considered as Muslims who are wallowing in heresy. Among the Wahhabis, terms such as "masjid sunnah" or "pengajian sunnah" are quite well known, which indirectly differentiate them from "masjid bid'ah" or "pengajian bid'ah". In their doctrine, there is the concept of loyalty and disloyalty, al-wara wa al-bara (Ali, 2015; Hasyim, 2017; Lauzière, 2015).

In contrast to Wahhabism which only emphasizes purification, the tajdid character of Muhammadiyah flies between renewal and purification. For Muhammadiyah, not all new things are called bid'ah. In Muhammadiyah, purification is carried out in the area of aqidah and ibadah mahdhah, and renewal is carried out in the mu'amalah dunyawiyah area. All matters are first divided into three major themes: aqidah, ibadah, muamalah. The legal istimbath method of the Majelis Tarjih referred to the formula al-masail al-khamsah which was formulated since 1935, including the concepts of: al-din, al-dunya, al-ibadah, sabilillah, and al-qiyas (ijtihad). Understanding of religion in Muhammadiyah uses manhaj tarjih, which uses the norm ranking method. In carrying out legal istimbat, Majelis Tarjih first explores the basic norms, which, among other things, depart from the universal values of the Qur'an and Hadith, the concept of maslahah, maqasid sharia, and so on. Manhaj Tarjih also contains a set of religious insights; tadjid insight, tolerance, openness, and not affiliated with mazhab (Anwar, 2018; Fauzi, 2016; Nashir, 2016).

Muhammadiyah stated that purification was only carried out in the realm of aqidah and ibadah mahdhah. Departing from the rule of ushul fiqh that, all things in religion, the original law is haram, until there is an argument that commands it. So, in all matters related to worship, Muhammadiyah is guided by the texts of the Qur'an and Hadith. His understanding uses a thorough understanding, integrating bayani, burhani, and irfani approaches. While outside the matters of aqidah and ibadah, it is categorized as the mu'amalah dunyawiyah area. In the case of mu'amalah, the rule of ushul fiqh applies that everything is permissible until there is an argument that forbids it. The original law of all

muamalah matters is permissible, understood by the hadith, "you know more about your worldly matters." These worldly affairs are not part of the task of the prophetic message. In *Masail al-Khamsah* it is explained that even the affairs of the world are all things that were not the task of being sent by the Prophets, namely matters/work/affairs left to human wisdom (Abdurrahman, 2012; Anwar, 2018; Nashir, 2016)

In religious practices in Aceh, the dividing line between Muhammadiyah and Wahhabism is sometimes clear and sometimes vague. Several Aceh Muhammadiyah Regional Leaders admit that people often cannot distinguish between Muhammadiyah and Wahhabism, as revealed by the Chairperson of PWM Aceh, Malik Musa, in the Pengajian Ramadhan PP Muhammadiyah on March 23, 2023 at UMY. As an effort to strengthen ideology, PP Muhammadiyah sent Agung Danarto to Aceh on 27-28 July 2019 to provide an understanding of Muhammadiyah ideology and its differences from the Wahhabi group. This situation is similar to the situation in the past when Sutan Mansur was sent by HB Muhammadiyah to Aceh to carry out ideological coaching. This shows that Muhammadiyah Aceh has its own uniqueness. Malik Musa admits that there are Wahhabism who use Muhammadiyah to reap social benefits. Muhammadiyah, which has long roots in Indonesian history, is often used as a shelter for the Wahhabis. So far, almost no one has defended and advocated against Wahhabism in Aceh. The situation was different when Muhammadiyah was disturbed, Muhammadiyah networks throughout Indonesia and even the central government also paid attention and provided advocacy.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Muhammadiyah, originating in Yogyakarta, has expanded its presence across Indonesia, including its entry into Aceh in 1923. During its early years, Muhammadiyah in Aceh aligned itself with the *uleebalangs*, establishing the organization as a significant force in Acehnese society. However, this collaboration led to conflicts with other elite groups, particularly the *ulama*. The Acehnese *ulama* who sought refuge in PUSA actually shared similarities in ideology, vision, and mission with Muhammadiyah. At that time, the *ulama* were seen as representing the voice of the majority, while the *uleebalangs* were

associated with the elite class close to the Dutch colonialists. Despite some exceptions, where some ulama did not support PUSA and certain uleebalangs joined PUSA, the overall dynamic showcased the complexities of alliances during this historical period.

After decades, Muhammadiyah found itself once again entangled in a conflict, this time between the traditional Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah and the Salafi-Wahabi group. Following the tsunami disaster in 2004 and the subsequent peace agreement between GAM and the Government of Indonesia in 2005, Aceh entered a new era of openness, witnessing the revival of traditional Dayah institutions. However, the educational landscape expanded, offering choices beyond the traditional dayah setting. Many individuals from Aceh pursued education in the Middle East, contributing to the emergence of a new middle class. The santri dayah group evolved into a new societal class, fostering awareness to fortify Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah teachings. Conversely, the Wahhabi group poses a threat to the existence and stability of Aswaja and traditional dayah groups. This inevitable clash between the two factions has resulted in a struggle for religious authority, extending into a competition for access to social and economic resources.

In Bireuen, the Aswaja group opposed the construction of a Muhammadiyah mosque in Juli and Samalanga sub-districts. Samalanga is the central area of the "santri city" with the presence of traditional dayahs led by reputable ulama in Aceh. It is feared that Muhammadiyah's presence will disrupt the status of Samalanga and Bireuen as centers of religious discourse and centers of authority for Aswaja teachings in Aceh. Muhammadiyah, with its purification stance, is unfortunately perceived as aligned with the Wahhabis, posing a perceived threat to their existence. There is a lack of understanding that Muhammadiyah differs from Wahhabism, which actively engages in purifying religious practices and traditions, causing disruptions in the established structures of traditional Islamic groups or Aswaja circles.

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