


**Judul artikel** : Zulkarnain EL Madury and the micro-celebrity ustaz phenomenon: Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace  
**Tautan artikel** : <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13639811.2023.2274708>  
**DOI artikel** : <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2023.2274708>  
**Nama Jurnal** : Indonesia and the Malay World  
**Edisi** : Vol 51, No 151, Tahun terbit 2023, Print ISSN: 1363-9811 Online ISSN: 1469-8382  
**Halaman** : 304-329  
**Penulis** : Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

No	Keterangan	Tanggal
1	Submit artikel	Jun 15, 2021, 12:08 AM
2	Menanyakan progres status artikel	Dec 1, 2021, 1:35 PM
3	Email respon dari pengelola jurnal	Dec 5, 2021, 10:24 PM
4	Permintaan untuk melengkapi detail submission sebagai syarat jika lolos review oleh editorial team	Dec 8, 2021, 1:14 AM
5	Catatan revisi 1 dari reviewer jurnal	Mar 23, 2022, 4:06 AM
6	Email respon penulis Revisi 1	Apr 12, 2022, 11:58 PM
7	Respon dari editorial jurnal	Apr 13, 2022, 10:10 PM
8	Menanyakan progres status artikel setelah Revisi 1	May 25, 2022, 5:02 PM
9	Respon dari editorial jurnal	May 25, 2022, 10:26 PM
10	Menanyakan kembali progres status artikel setelah Revisi 1	Sep 9, 2022, 8:06 PM
11	Respon dari editorial jurnal	Sep 25, 2022, 8:14 PM
12	Catatan revisi 2 dari reviewer jurnal	Oct 15, 2022, 3:27 AM
13	Email respon penulis Revisi 2	Feb 12, 2023, 9:59 AM
14	Accepted for publication	Apr 9, 2023, 4:06 PM
15	Catatan editor jurnal untuk copyediting 1	Oct 4, 2023, 6:41 PM
16	Respon penulis untuk copyediting 1	Oct 7, 2023, 10:07 PM
17	Catatan editor jurnal untuk copyediting 2	Oct 10, 2023, 12:56 AM
18	Respon penulis untuk copyediting 2	Oct 10, 2023, 1:52 PM
19	Catatan editor jurnal untuk copyediting 3	Oct 13, 2023, 10:03 PM
20	Respon penulis untuk copyediting 3	Oct 13, 2023, 11:36 PM
21	Catatan editor jurnal untuk copyediting 4	Oct 16, 2023, 5:48 PM
22	Respon penulis untuk copyediting 4	Oct 17, 2023, 2:34 PM
23	Catatan editor jurnal untuk copyediting 5	Oct 18, 2023, 1:55 PM
24	Respon penulis untuk copyediting 5	Oct 18, 2023, 8:53 PM
25	Catatan editor jurnal untuk copyediting 6	Oct 19, 2023, 4:02 PM
26	Respon penulis untuk copyediting 6	Oct 19, 2023, 8:56 PM
27	Catatan editor jurnal untuk copyediting 7	Oct 20, 2023, 1:38 AM

28	Respon penulis untuk copyediting 7 (final)	Oct 20, 2023, 10:33 AM
29	Email pemberitahuan dari editor jurnal untuk tahap production (typesetting)	Oct 20, 2023, 3:01 PM
30	Email pemberitahuan dari Taylor & Francis bahwa artikel telah diterima untuk publikasi	Oct 20, 2023, 7:31 PM
31	Email dari Taylor & Francis untuk Author Publishing Agreement	Oct 20, 2023, 6:25 PM
32	Review the proofs	Oct 25, 2023, 11:07 PM
33	Catatan setelah proofs dari editor jurnal	Dec 18, 2023, 1:21 AM
34	Email penulis untuk editor jurnal setelah tahap proofs	Dec 18, 2023, 1:00 PM
35	Pemberitahuan final check oleh editor jurnal sebelum publikasi	Dec 18, 2023, 10:57 PM
36	Pemberitahuan dari Taylor & Francis terkait artikel terbit online	Feb 13, 2024, 7:20 PM

**Link Jurnal di Scopus:** <https://www.scopus.com/sourceid/16446>


Scopus Preview

[Author Search](#)
[Sources](#)
[?](#)
[🏛️](#)
[NF](#)

## Source details

[Feedback](#)
[Compare sources](#)

### Indonesia and the Malay World

Formerly known as: [Indonesia Circle](#), [School of Oriental & African Studies](#), [Newsletter](#)

Years currently covered by Scopus: from 2000 to 2025

Publisher: Taylor & Francis

ISSN: 1363-9811 E-ISSN: 1469-8382

Subject area: [Social Sciences: Anthropology](#) [Arts and Humanities: Arts and Humanities \(miscellaneous\)](#)

[Social Sciences: Geography, Planning and Development](#)

Source type: Journal

[View all documents](#)
[Set document alert](#)
[Save to source list](#)

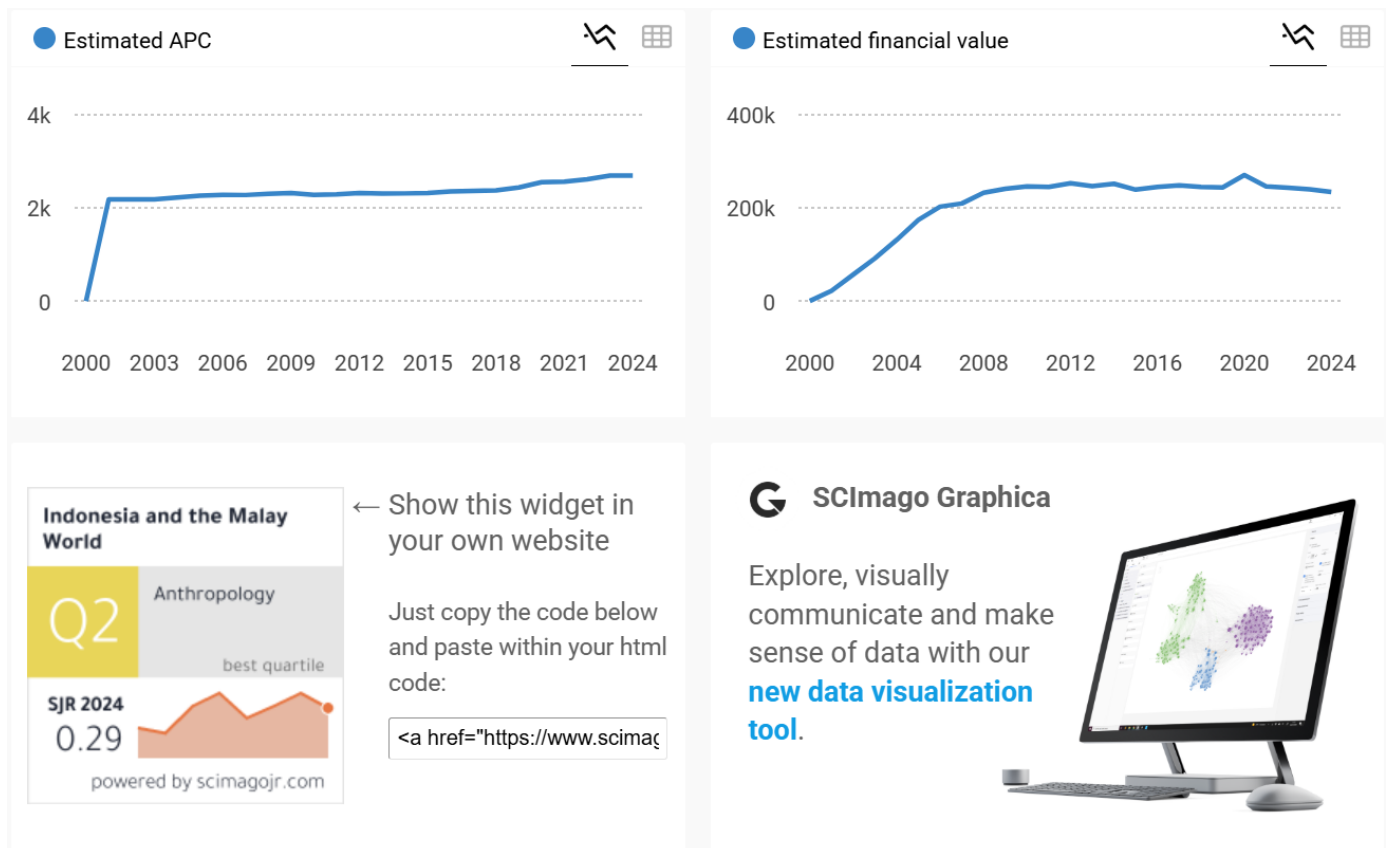
CiteScore 2023  
**2.0**

SJR 2023  
**0.381**

SNIP 2023  
**1.653**



Link Jurnal di Scimago: <https://www.scimagojr.com/journalsearch.php?q=16446&tip=sid>



Link Jurnal di WoS: <https://mjl.clarivate.com/journal-profile>

## INDONESIA AND THE MALAY WORLD

Publisher: ROUTLEDGE JOURNALS, TAYLOR & FRANCIS LTD , 2-4 PARK SQUARE, MILTON PARK, ABINGDON, ENGLAND, OXON, OX14 4RN

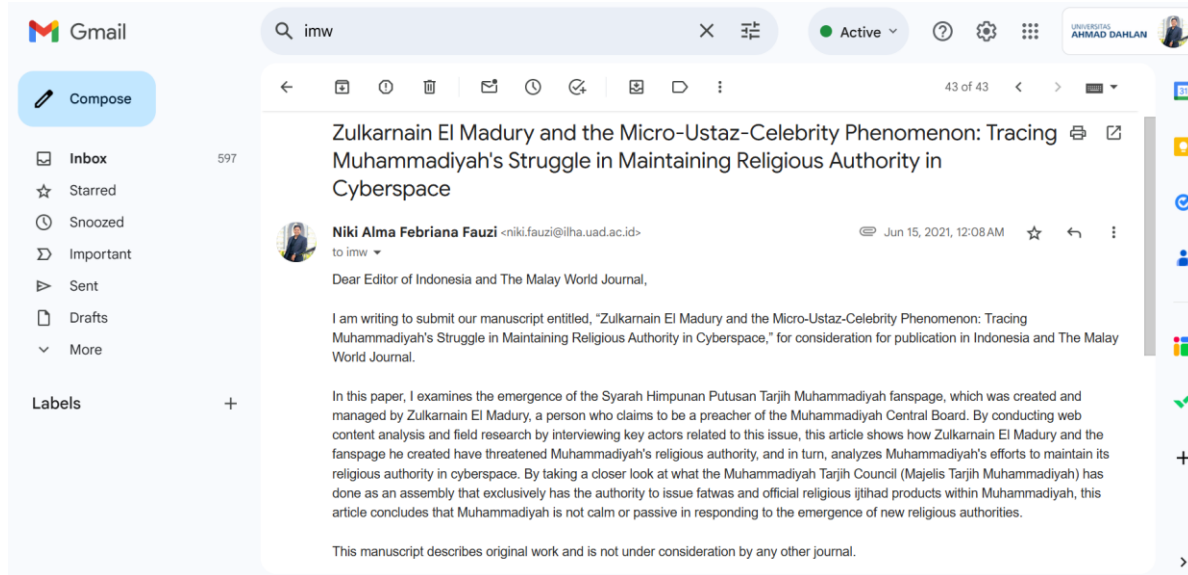
ISSN / eISSN: 1363-9811 / 1469-8382

Web of Science Core Collection: Arts & Humanities Citation Index

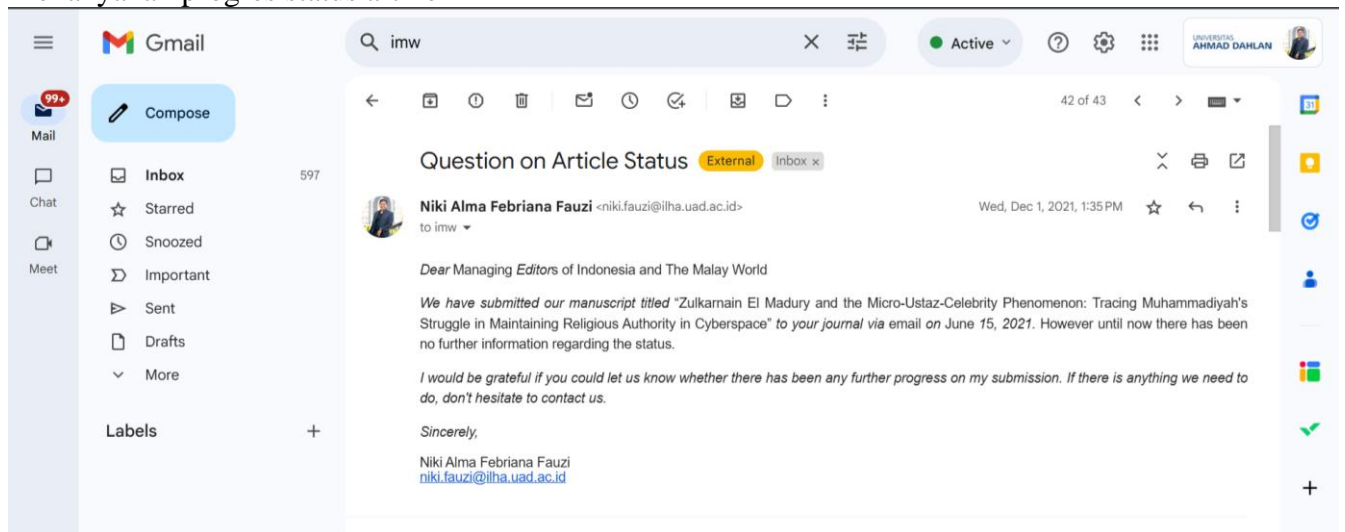
[Share This Journal](#)[View profile page](#)

# Lampiran Bukti Korespondensi Email

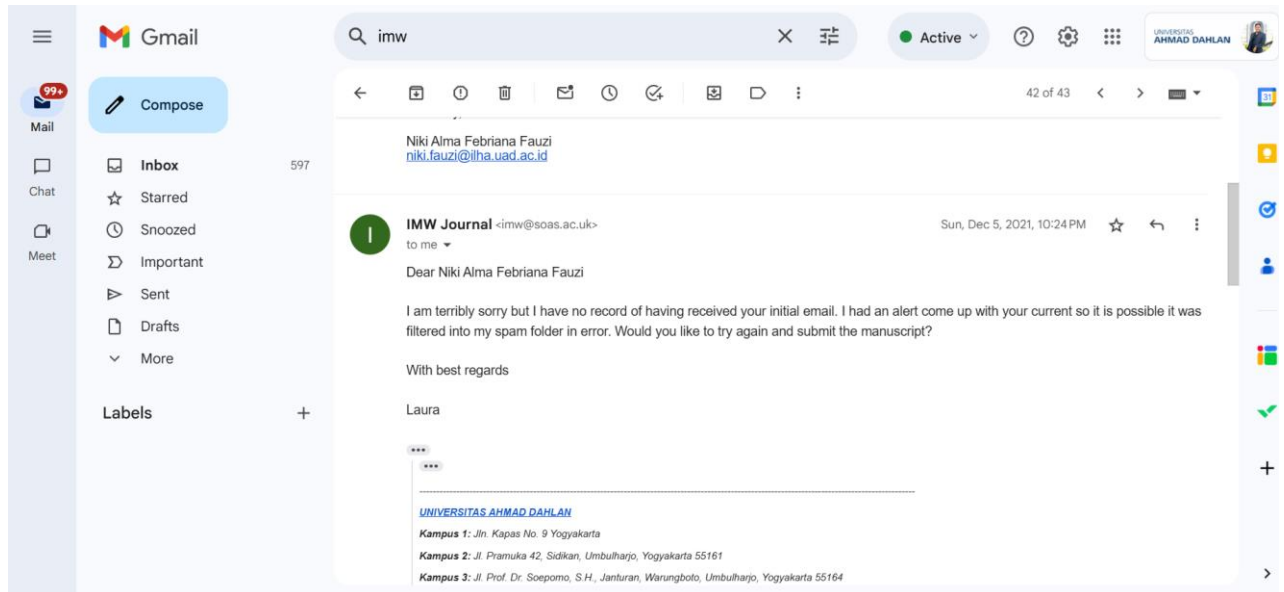
## 1. Submit Artikel



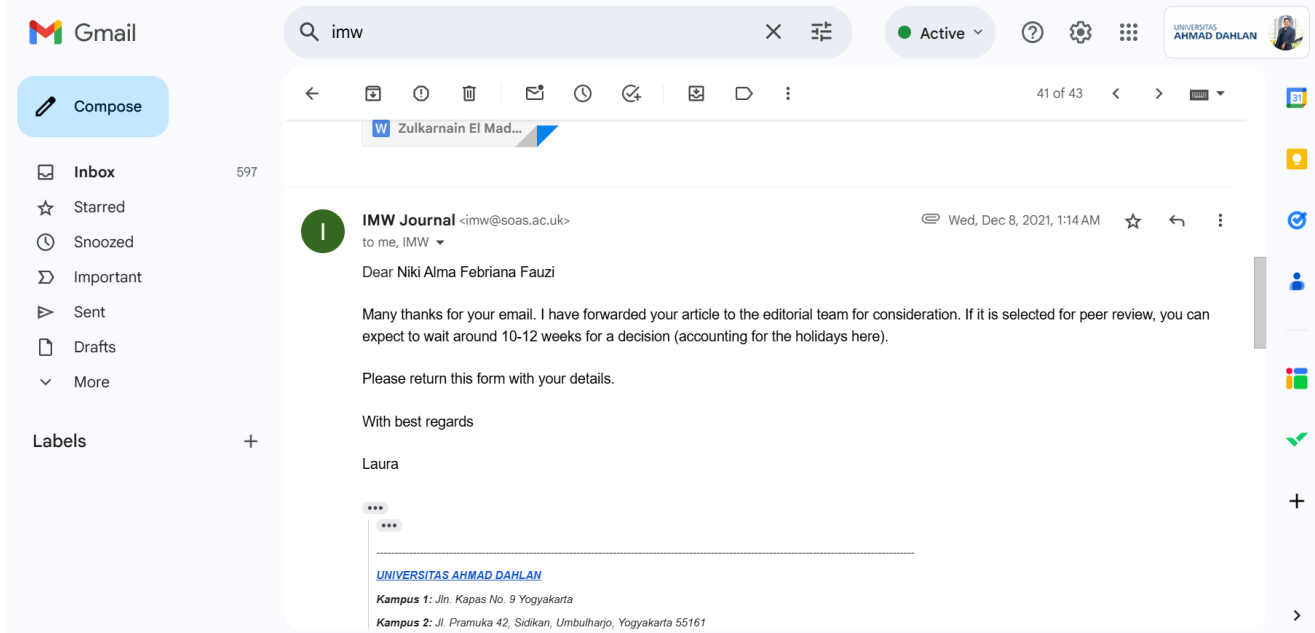
## 2. Menanyakan progres status artikel



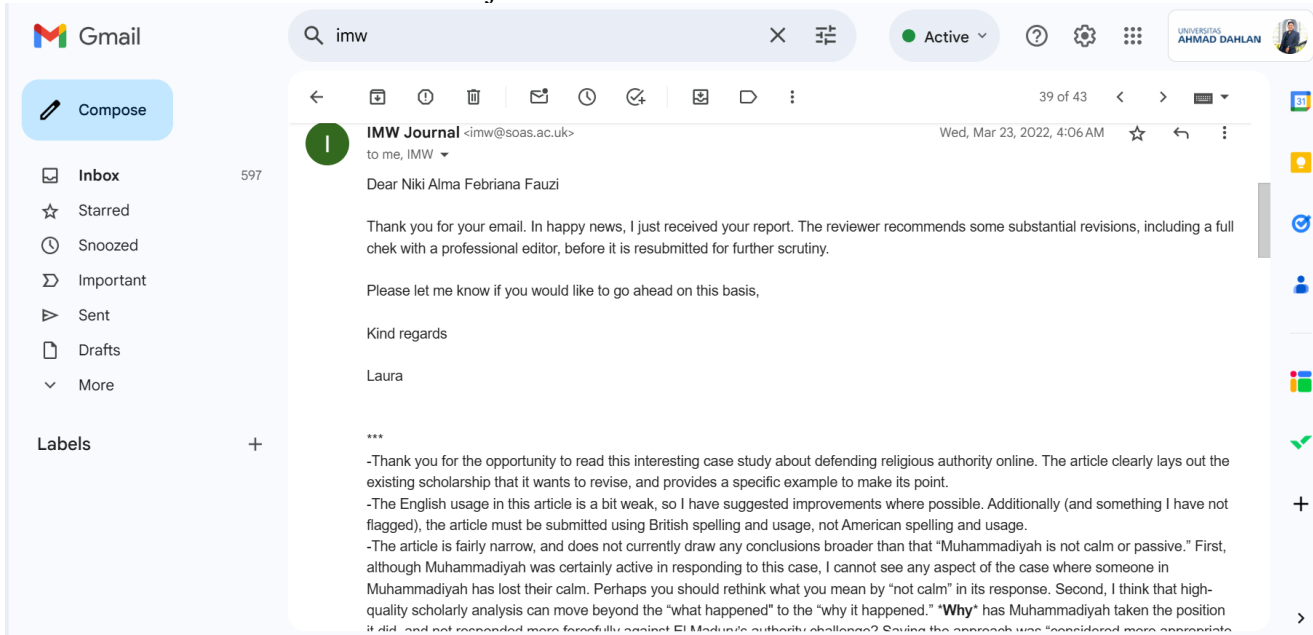
3. Email respon dari pengelola jurnal  
(screenshot email dari reviewer jurnal, lampirkan dokumen jika ada, daftar revisi)



4. Permintaan untuk melengkapi detail submission sebagai syarat jika lolos review oleh editorial team



## 5. Catatan revisi 1 dari reviewer jurnal



## 6. Email respon penulis Revisi 1



Dear Dr Laura Noszlopy,  
Assistant Editor of Indonesia and The Malay World

Greetings from Indonesia and wishing you a great day with happiness and healthy condition in this era COVID-19.

First of all, I would like to thank you for allowing me to submit my revised manuscript entitled "Zulkarnain El Madury and the Micro-Celebrity-Ustaz Phenomenon: Tracing Muhammadiyah's Struggle in Maintaining Religious Authority in Cyberspace". I really appreciate the time and effort that you and the reviewers have dedicated to providing valuable feedback on my manuscript. I am grateful to you and the reviewers for their insightful comments on my paper.

Furthermore, I have revised the manuscript based on the reviewers' comments, suggestions, and remarks. I have marked the revised manuscript with the green color. Furthermore, I resume the revision in the table for responds to reviewers' comments, as follows:

Reviewer's Comment	Respond to Reviewer
<b>Abstract:</b> a) <b>Rolling</b> : poor word choice	<b>Abstract:</b> a) I have changed it: occurrence b) Because there is additional section in my article, there are slight changes in the abstract. I marked the abstract change in green.
<b>Introduction:</b> a) <b>Several years ago</b> : Give the year! There have been several "Aksi Bela Islam" since 2016, so it is best to give the date of the specific one you mean. b) <b>Muhammad Rizieq Shihab, chairman of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI)</b> : Because you do not return to this case in any broader analysis (indeed, the analysis of this draft is quite narrow), it does not make sense to open with the case of the 212 rally and the rising authority of Muhamamd Rizieq Shihab. This should not be the first thing in the article if you do not connect it with any of the main content! Please either integrate this case in a broader analysis of the question of shifting authority, or find another way to open the article. c) <b>A further excess of the internet presence</b> : awkward and poor word choice d) <b>Micro-ustaz-celebrity</b> : This term is poorly formulated and not particularly helpful—especially when it is not used in the latter part of the article. First, on how this is poorly framed in English, by putting "ustaz" in the middle, the new term suggests that the individual's scholarly knowledge is "micro," because the "micro" applies to "ustaz" and not to "celebrity." In fact, I think the intention was that this be an ustaz who is also a micro-celebrity, and therefore "micro-celebrity-ustaz" would be the appropriate term (which also parallels the phrase "celebrity ustaz," which has been used in the literature before (especially in the Malaysian context). Second, the term appears only twice in the final 3/4 of the paper (i.e., only twice after page 8), and thus is not particularly crucial to the case study. e) <b>It can even be said that he is the ustaz or preacher who has the most followers on social media</b> : source? f) <b>Modern</b> : "Modern" is not the same as "modernist" or "reformist." Groups like Nahdlatul Ulama or Nahdlatul Wathan also have AD/ART, sekretaris, bendahara, cabang, ranting, etc. etc. etc. —they are	<b>Introduction:</b> a) I have revised it: The Defend Islam Action (Aksi Bela Islam) I, II, and III that took place in 2016 in Indonesia ... b) I have integrated the FPI and Rizieq Shihab cases with the El Madury case. The explanation can be read on pages 25-26 of my article in sentences that I have coloured in green. c) I have revised it: Further impact of the internet. d) I followed the reviewer's suggestion to change the wrong term that I used, namely micro-ustaz-celebrity, to micro-celebrity-ustaz. Not only that, I have also revised my article by displaying and discussing the term in other parts of my article, namely on pages 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 14, 26, 27, 29, 35, 36. The term micro-celebrity-ustaz, which I mean in my article, is also explained on page 8. I marked the change in green. e) I have added a reference source for the sentence. In addition, I also add additional information. This change is on page 3, and I marked it in green. f) I have revised it: modernist. g) I have obtained a research permit from the university's ethics board through Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. I put the research permit number in footnote number 2, and I coloured it green. h) I have actually conducted interviews with representatives from grassroots, and I have mentioned their names in this article, namely Ariful Hazam, Farida Fardhani, Ilham Ibrahim, and Muhammad Muflih. It is just that I mentioned their other professions, such as Ariful, Farida, and Ilham, as social media admins from the Tarjih Muhamamdiyah Center. Meanwhile, Muflih is a grassroots person who helped Wahyudi Abdurrahim create tanyajawabagama.com application. However, following the reviewer's suggestion, I also mention that they are Muhammadiyah grassroots in this revised version of my article.

<p>also modern in structure (and they certainly exist in the present day, making them modern in historical terms). What they are not is modernist in theology. Please do not confuse the two.</p> <p>g) <b>In conducting the field research:</b> For researchers at Western institutions who conduct interviews with human subjects, it would be appropriate to provide a footnote with the approval from the university ethics board for human subjects research. For researchers at Indonesian universities (that often do not have a research ethics board), it is appropriate to provide the research permit number from the local authority (usually the kabupaten / kota Kesbang Linmas office). If this research has been conducted in Indonesia without a research permit from the local government, then it happened in violation of the law.</p> <p>h) <b>several prominent figures as well as Muhammadiyah activists:</b> Why were no grassroots interviews conducted?</p>	
<p><b>Fragmentation of Religious Authority, New Preacher and Micro-Celebrity-Ustaz Phenomenon:</b></p> <p>a) <b>whether Muslim majority, the Muslim minority, even Shia:</b> Awkward</p> <p>b) <b>namely at the beginning of the 20th century:</b> Religious authority was fragmenting *long* before this! I think it is appropriate to only begin tracking it for this article from the beginning of the 20th century, but please do not let the reader think you are a fool who does not know about the history of contested religious authority in Indonesia before 1900.</p> <p>c) <b>each individual (Muzakka 2018) and group (Pribadi 2019; Rusli 2014) compete to spread ideas (Nisa 2019; Horsfield 2016):</b> I am not convinced that all these citations are necessary or useful here.</p> <p>d) <b>hyper phenomenon:</b> I do not know what it this is supposed to mean, and I am not sure that this aspect of the literature is helpful to the case explored in depth in this article.</p> <p>e) <b>Ulama:</b> I think it is a bit of a stretch to call influencers like Felix Siauw “ulama.” He has none of the credentials that would traditionally be used to make someone an ‘alim. Why is this title appropriate here?</p> <p>f) <b>Art:</b> poor word choice</p>	<p><b>Fragmentation of Religious Authority, New Preacher and Micro-Celebrity-Ustaz Phenomenon:</b></p> <p>a) I have deleted the sentence.</p> <p>b) I have revised the sentence. Revisions are written in green sentences: Especially in Indonesia, the fragmentation of religious authority can be traced far back. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this article, the fragmentation of religious authority that will be discussed here is from the beginning of the 20th century to the present day.</p> <p>c) I have revised it, and only mention two sources: (Nisa 2019; Horsfield 2016).</p> <p>d) I have changed it to another sentence in the hope that the sentence can be understood: Through a hypersemiotic perspective, Maskur and Noor show the various sides in AA Gym's character.</p> <p>e) I have changed the word to a more appropriate word, 'preacher'.</p> <p>f) I have changed the word to a more appropriate word, 'skill'.</p>
<p><b>An Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah Fanspage:</b></p>	<p><b>An Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah Fanspage:</b></p>



<p>a) Like most Madurese people who have a religious tendency towards traditional Islam, El Madury also does the same: Awkward and ungrammatical; rephrase.</p> <p>b) <i>Nahdliyyin</i>: This term is only known by field experts. It would make the article more accessible to say "he grew up in a milieu dominated by the Nahdlatul Ulama traditionalist Islamic organization."</p> <p>c) according to his admission after joining Muhammadiyah: awkward.</p> <p>d) Confession: Confession? Has he been brought before the police for a crime, or brought before a priest to repent? I think this is poor word choice.</p> <p>e) Tarjih: This term *must* be defined for non-experts; otherwise the article will not make sense.</p> <p>f) As of the time of writing (24/9/2020): I am both disappointed that it took over a year from writing to submission—thus the data in this article may be out of date—and that the submission happened before the full actions of Muhammadiyah were allowed to play out. Please update this when revising.</p> <p>g) Several things have been explored from personal interactions through several virtual chats with Zulkarnain and become the background in creating the fanspage: I cannot understand what this sentence is trying to say, and thus do not understand how it is useful to the article.</p> <p>h) Informing: poor word choice.</p>	<p>a) I have revised it: Just as most Madurese are traditionalist Muslims, El Madury is the same.</p> <p>b) Following the advice of the reviewer, I have replaced it with a suggested sentence, namely: He grew up in a milieu dominated by the Nahdlatul Ulama traditionalist Islamic organisation.</p> <p>c) I have revised it: according to him, after becoming a member of Muhammadiyah.</p> <p>d) I have revised it: This fanspage, based on an interview with El Madury, was created in 2014.</p> <p>e) I have added an explanation of the term in footnote 7: Muhammadiyah's use of the word tarjih has changed throughout its development. In its early period, and following its usage in the principles of law (usul al-fiqh), tarjih conveyed the meaning of examining the various opinions of Muslim jurists on a particular question and evaluating them to determine which is most faithful to the original Shari'a sources. Over time this usage gradually included any intellectual endeavour used to study new cases that earlier jurists had not addressed. In short, in Muhammadiyah's perspective, tarjih is identical, or almost identical, to ijtihad (Anwar 2016).</p> <p>f) I have updated the data regarding this.</p> <p>g) I have revised it: Based on an interview with El Madury, several things became the background for him to create this fanpage.</p> <p>I have revised it: announcing.</p>
<p><b>Zulkarnain El Madury and His Efforts in Building Religious Authority:</b></p> <p>a) From his capacity, this alumnus of the Imam Ibn Su'ud University in Saudi Arabia, no doubt: This is not a complete sentence in English. Please rewrite following proper grammar.</p> <p>b) even considered as the successor of Buya Hamka: This is not useful for non-experts who may not know who Hamka was. I suggest you either provide the briefest possible (~10 words) explanation of Hamka, or omit this clause.</p> <p>c) No source whatsoever has been provided for this information about Buya Yun. That is not appropriate in an academic submission.</p> <p>d) Footnotes 9 and 10 can and should be combined into one.</p> <p>e) but also Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who is now maintaining website</p>	<p><b>Zulkarnain El Madury and His Efforts in Building Religious Authority:</b></p> <p>a) I have revised it: Regarding his capacity, this alumnus of Imam Ibn Su'ud University is unquestionable.</p> <p>b) Following the advice of the reviewer, I have removed this sentence.</p> <p>c) I have revised the information about Buya Yun by adding sources. The revisions in my manuscript are coloured in green.</p> <p>d) I have combined both into one.</p> <p>e) I have revised it: but Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who is now maintaining the website tanyajawabagama.com, also got permission from Buya Yun.</p> <p>f) I have revised it: council.</p> <p>g) No category difference. That is my mistake. I have deleted one of those two words.</p> <p>h) I have revised it: forced</p>

<p><b>tanyajawabagama.com:</b> The meaning of this is unclear. Did Wahyudi also get permission from Buya Yun, or did El Madury also get permission from Wahyudi? Please rewrite.</p> <p>f) <b>Assembly:</b> poor word choice.</p> <p>g) <b>ethnicity, ethnicity:</b> Why does this appear twice in row? Was one of them intended to be a different category?</p> <p>h) <b>Blackmailed:</b> poor word choice</p> <p>i) <b>head to head:</b> awkward</p> <p>j) <b>DPP IMM:</b> You have not introduced these terms, and only specialists will know them. You have not once mentioned the Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah. When you write, you should be targeting how to make things easy for your reader.</p> <p>k) <b>the Qur'an and sunnah:</b> Why say "Qur'an and sunnah" here, but "Qur'an and hadith" (with basically the same meaning) just one page earlier? Please be consistent to avoid confusing your readers.</p> <p>l) <b>Genitals:</b> NO! This is not what the word "genitals" means, and it cannot be used in this context.</p>	<p>i) I have revised it: fights and debates tremendously</p> <p>j) I have added an explanation of the term in footnote 15: Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM) or Muhammadiyah Student Association is an exponent of Muhammadiyah in student affairs dimension which basic mission is to realise the real Islamic society as formulated by Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Widodo 2017).</p> <p>k) To be consistent, I have changed the word "hadith" to the word "sunnah."</p> <p>l) I have revised it: 'aurat (parts of the body that should go covered)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I added a few sentences at the beginning of this section to discuss why El Madury became a micro-celebrity-ustaz: This has become a stimulant for enthusiasm and public debate on social media, allowing El Madury to become a micro-celebrity-ustaz. At this point, he is experiencing what Turner has called 'the demotic turn'. When the attention of the public and the online community has been directed to him, El Madury then gradually builds his religious authority.</li> <li>At the end of this section, I have integrated the FPI and Rizieq Shihab cases with the El Madury case. The explanation can be read on pages 25-26 of my article in sentences that I have coloured in green.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Muhammadiyah's Efforts in Maintaining Religious Authority in Cyberspace:</b></p> <p>a) <b>Reactive:</b> poor word choice</p> <p>b) <b>This proposal was considered by its proponents as firm and not too risky as if using the name of the Muhammadiyah organization; even it could be counter-productive:</b> awkward, rephrase.</p> <p>c) <b>Until this article was written, there has been no further meeting to follow up on the previous meeting:</b> The article said earlier (see page 11) that it was written on September 29, 2020. It is entirely unsurprising, then, that there was no follow up meeting in the next four days! This article may have been submitted prematurely, and an update should be provided in the revision.</p> <p>d) <b>which is apart from adults and millennial groups:</b> I do not understand what this phrase is intended to mean. "apart from adults and millennial groups"—so, not adults or millennials? Why then call it "millennialization" in the next line? Is this saying that "millennials" are not adults? The definition of millennials is those born between 1981 and 1996—so those aged 25 to 40 as of the 2020 incident in this article—so why do they not count as "adults"?</p>	<p><b>Muhammadiyah's Efforts in Maintaining Religious Authority in Cyberspace:</b></p> <p>a) I have revised it: responsive</p> <p>b) I have revised it: This proposal was considered by the proponents as a firm proposal and also not too risky</p> <p>c) Indeed, after the meeting, there was never another meeting discussing the El Madury case until this article was written or revised. Therefore, I still use the sentence I used in my manuscript before the revision, only I later added a description of the updated data: Until this article was written (03/04/2022), there has been no further meeting to follow up on the previous meeting.</p> <p>d) I have revised it: which is millennial groups and the generation after.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>According to the reviewer's suggestion, I have translated the sentences in all the figures into English.</li> <li>On pages 29-30, I have also added an explanation that illustrates that the tarjih assembly is not really calm in responding to El Madury as a micro-celebrity-ustaz. I marked this explanation in green.</li> </ul>



<p><b>Conclusion:</b></p> <p>a) <b>Studies:</b> If this is studies in the plural (i.e., more than one), then you must cite more than one. Simply Akmaliah is not enough.</p>	<p><b>Conclusion:</b></p> <p>a) I have added several previous studies which concluded that Muhammadiyah was unresponsive and too calm to the emergence of micro-celebrity-ustaz. I coloured the revision in green.</p>
<p><b>What Lessons Can be Learned from the Case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the Response of the Tarjih and Tajdid Council:</b></p> <p>a) The article is fairly narrow, and does not currently draw any conclusions broader than that “Muhammadiyah is not calm or passive.” First, although Muhammadiyah was certainly active in responding to this case, I cannot see any aspect of the case where someone in Muhammadiyah has lost their calm. Perhaps you should rethink what you mean by “not calm” in its response. Second, I think that high-quality scholarly analysis can move beyond the “what happened” to the “why it happened.” *Why* has Muhammadiyah taken the position it did, and not responded more forcefully against El Madury’s authority challenge? Saying the approach was “considered more appropriate by the proponent” (p. 28) is not only a truism (of course, being a proponent of a specific option obviously means finding that option the most appropriate) but it is also very thin academic analysis. What lessons does this case have for other spheres of activity of Muhammadiyah—for example the use of Muhammadiyah’s name in very public conflicts that involve Islam? I think that the analysis of this article can and must go further.</p>	<p><b>What Lessons Can be Learned from the Case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the Response of the Tarjih and Tajdid Council:</b></p> <p>a) In response to this, I have added a new section to elaborate on the suggestion from the reviewer. The section is entitled "What Lessons Can be Learned from the Case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the Response of the Tarjih and Tajdid Council."</p>
<p><b>Another comment:</b></p> <p>a) The English usage in this article is a bit weak, so I have suggested improvements where possible. Additionally (and something I have not flagged), the article must be submitted using British spelling and usage, not American spelling and usage.</p> <p>b) At several points, the article puts forward information that is far from common knowledge (e.g., Buya Yun’s birth year, or that Felix Siauw has the most followers on social media) without providing any source. I have flagged a few of these,</p>	<p><b>My Respond:</b></p> <p>a) I have corrected the English in my article based on corrections from reviewers. Apart from that, I have also tried changing from American English to British English.</p> <p>b) I have revised it. I coloured the revision in green.</p> <p>c) I have revised it. I coloured the revision in green.</p>

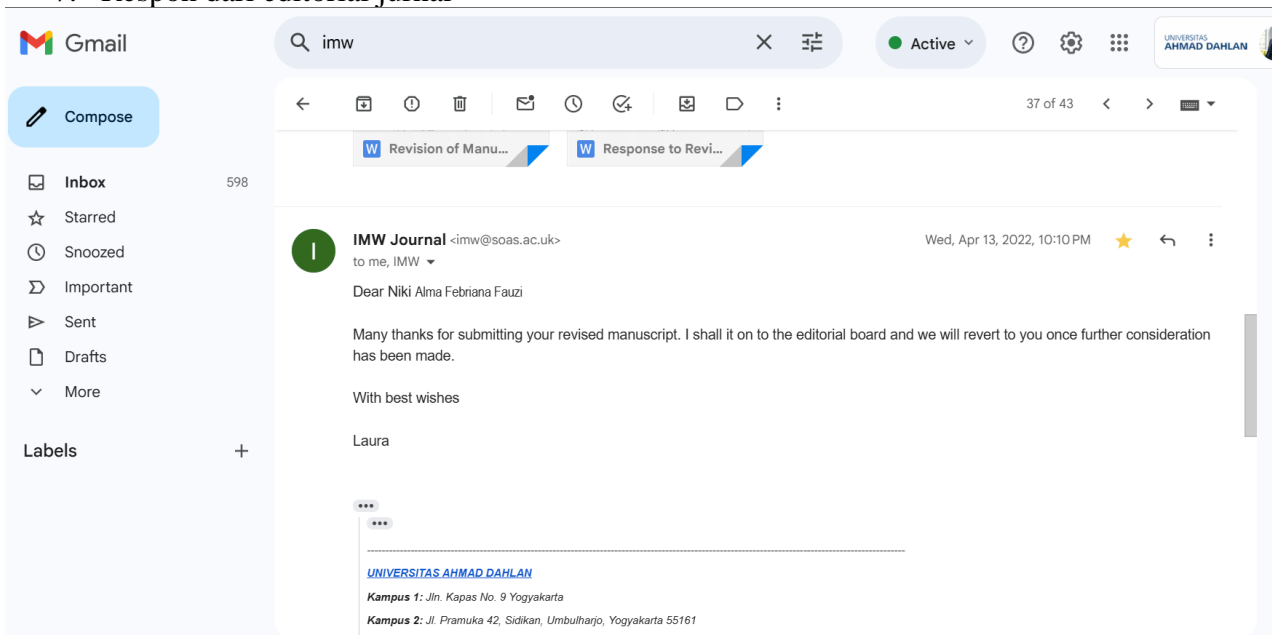
<p>but the revision must be more careful about providing the sources of all information.</p> <p>c) The bibliography is sloppy, with a fair amount of missing information. This must be brought up to the standards of IMW.</p>	
--	--

Lastly, I do hope that this article can be published in Indonesia and The Malay World to contribute my research results to your journal.

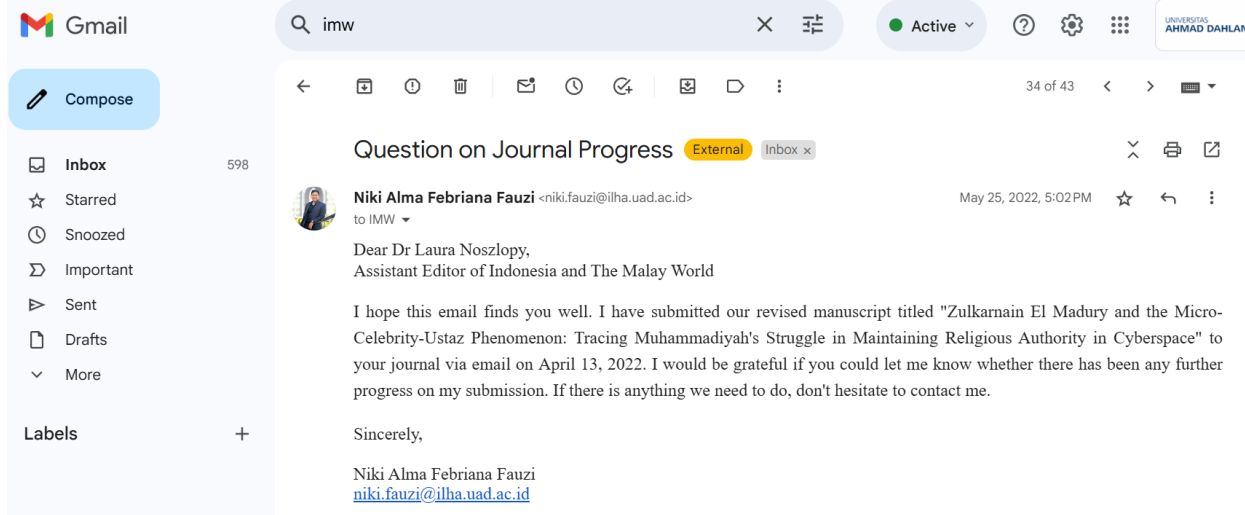
Once again, thank you very much for your cooperation, help, and kindness. I really appreciate your time and look forward to seeing your positive response.

Best wishes,  
Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

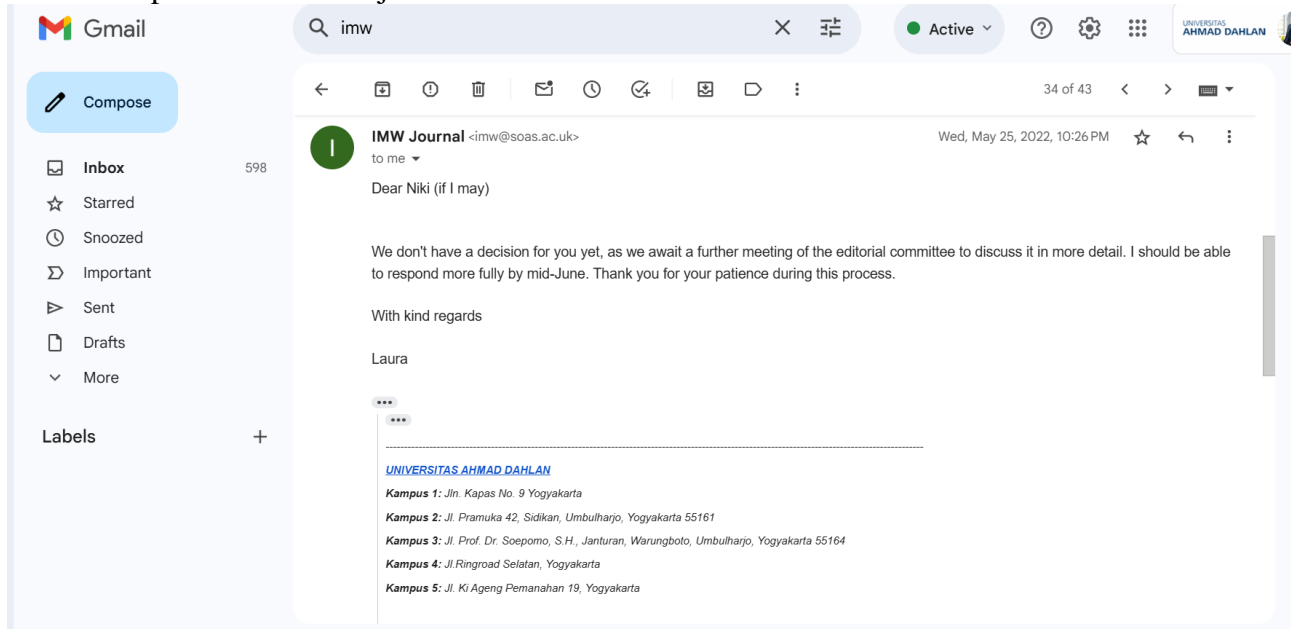
## 7. Respon dari editorial jurnal



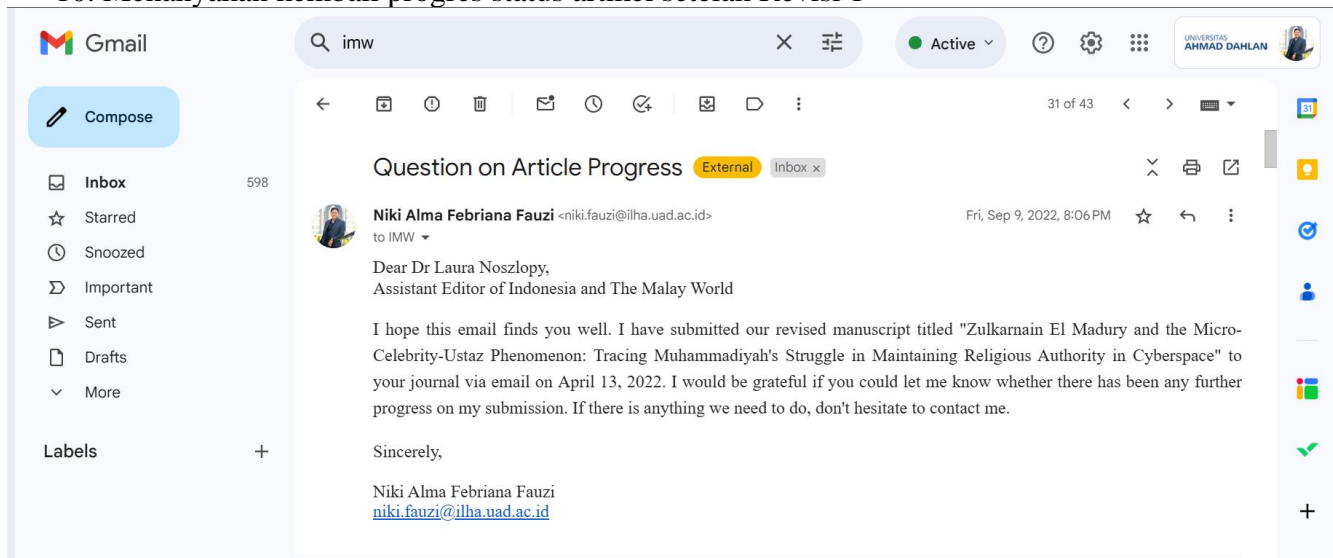
## 8. Menanyakan progres status artikel setelah Revisi 1



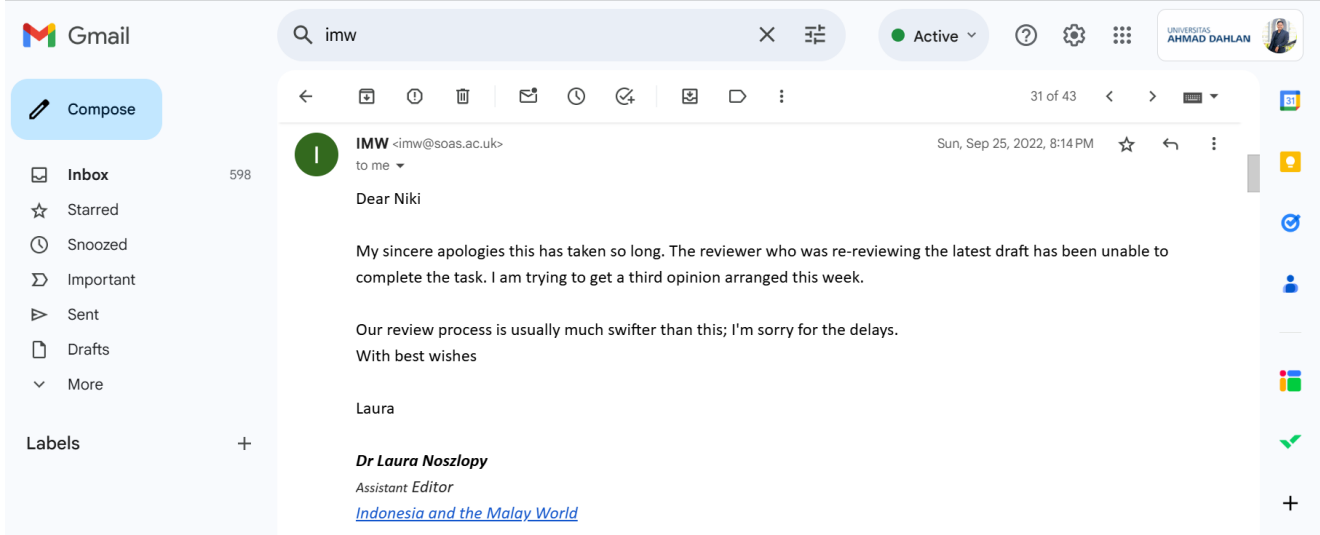
## 9. Respon dari editorial jurnal



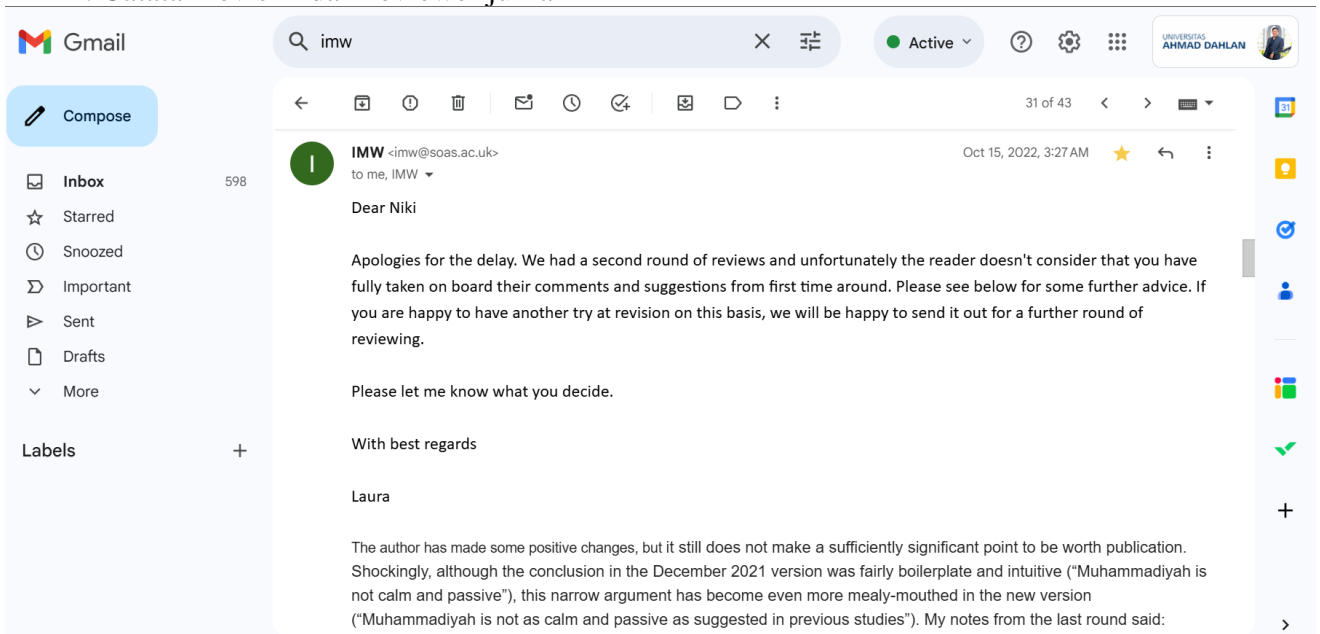
## 10. Menanyakan kembali progres status artikel setelah Revisi 1



## 11. Respon dari editorial jurnal



## 12. Catatan revisi 2 dari reviewer jurnal



Gmail

imw

Active

Compose

Inbox 598

Starred

Snoozed

Important

Sent

Drafts

More

Labels +

31 of 43

(“Muhammadiyah is not as calm and passive as suggested in previous studies”). My notes from the last round said:

The article is fairly narrow, and does not currently draw any conclusions broader than that “Muhammadiyah is not calm or passive.” First, although Muhammadiyah was certainly active in responding to this case, I cannot see any aspect of the case where someone in Muhammadiyah has lost their calm. Perhaps you should rethink what you mean by “not calm” in its response. Second, I think that high-quality scholarly analysis can move beyond the “what happened” to the “why it happened.” **“Why”** has Muhammadiyah taken the position it did, and not responded more forcefully against El Madury’s authority challenge? Saying the approach was “considered more appropriate by the proponent” (p. 28) is not only a truism (of course, being a proponent of a specific option obviously means finding that option the most appropriate) but it is also very thin academic analysis. What lessons does this case have for other spheres of activity of Muhammadiyah—for example the use of Muhammadiyah’s name in very public conflicts that involve Islam? I think that the analysis of this article can and must go further.

I still think the author needs to take the analysis further. After reading 12,000+ words, I still felt like asking “so what?” from this case study. The additional comparative case added as the penultimate section is just an additional case—not a broader conclusion.

I think this author could easily pass the bar if s/he were to actually answer my feedback from the first round that the article lacks a broader argument. **The focus should be in the introduction and conclusion—to craft an argument that is sufficiently bold and broader than this one case.**

### 13. Email respon penulis Revisi 2

Gmail

imw

Active

Compose

Inbox 598

Starred

Snoozed

Important

Sent

Drafts

More

Labels +

31 of 43

**Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi** <niki.fauzi@iilha.uad.ac.id>  
to IMW

Feb 12, 2023, 9:59 AM

Dear Dr Laura Noszlopy

I must apologise for sending you the revised version of my manuscript article so long ago. I hope you are doing well. In this email, I am attaching the second revision of my article manuscript titled “Zulkarnain El Madury and the Micro-Celebrity-Ustaz Phenomenon: Tracing Muhammadiyah’s Struggle in Maintaining Religious Authority in Cyberspace”. I have revised the feedback from the reviewer, especially the introduction and conclusion sections.

Lastly, I do hope that this article can be published in Indonesia and The Malay World to contribute my research results to your journal.

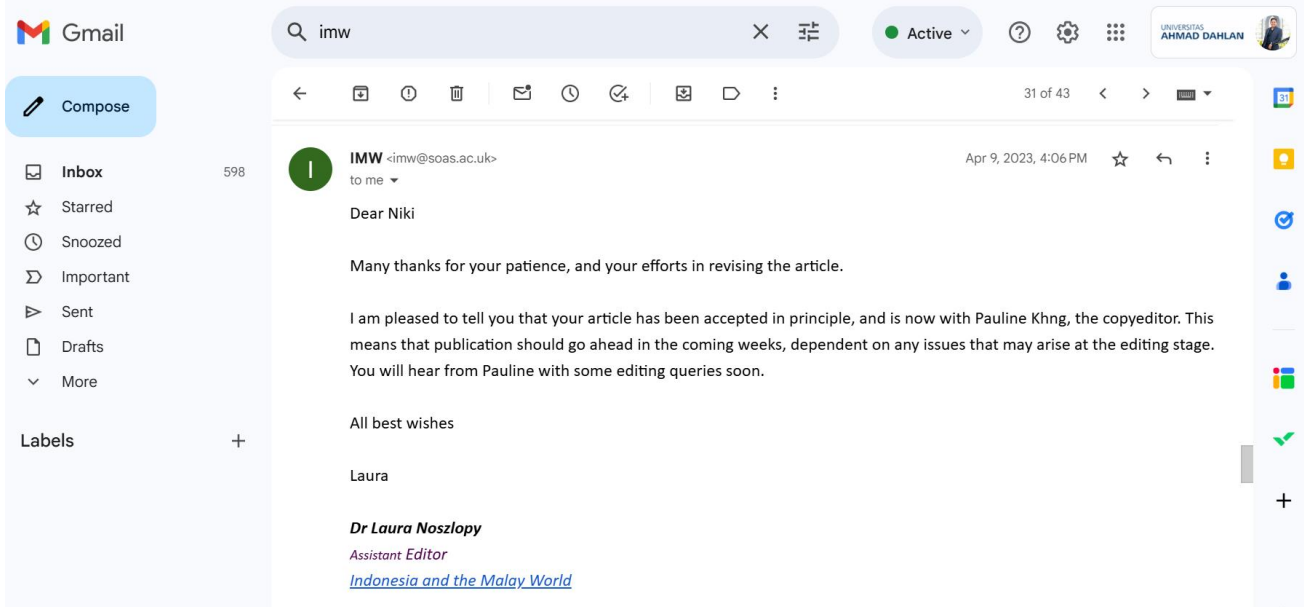
Once again, thank you very much for your cooperation, help, and kindness. I really appreciate your time and look forward to seeing your positive response.

Best wishes,  
Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

One attachment • Scanned by Gmail

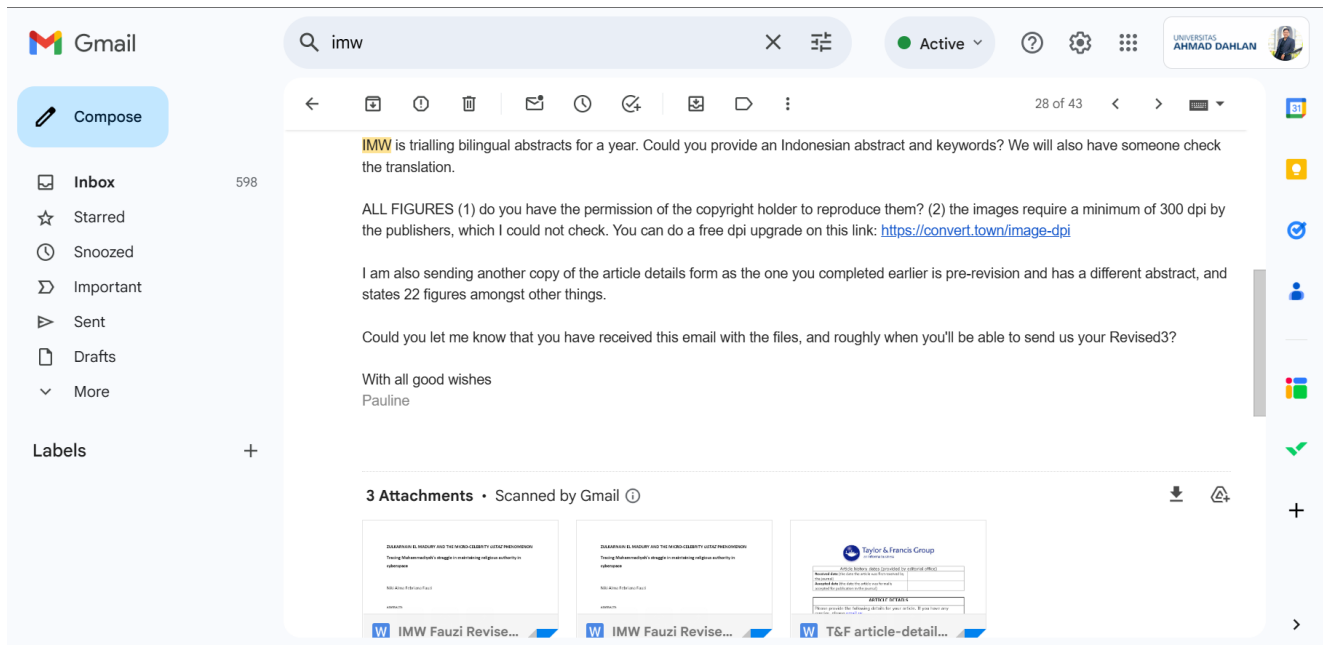
Universitas Ahmad Dahlan

## 14. Accepted for publication

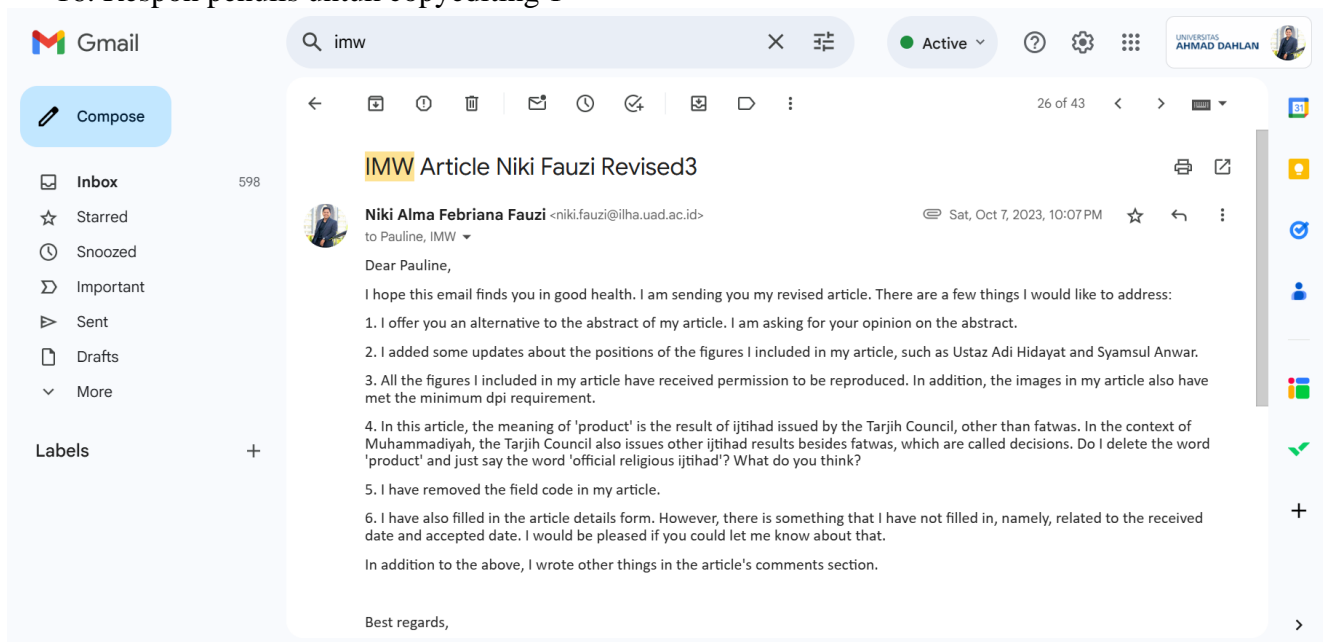


## 15. Catatan editor jurnal untuk copyediting 1

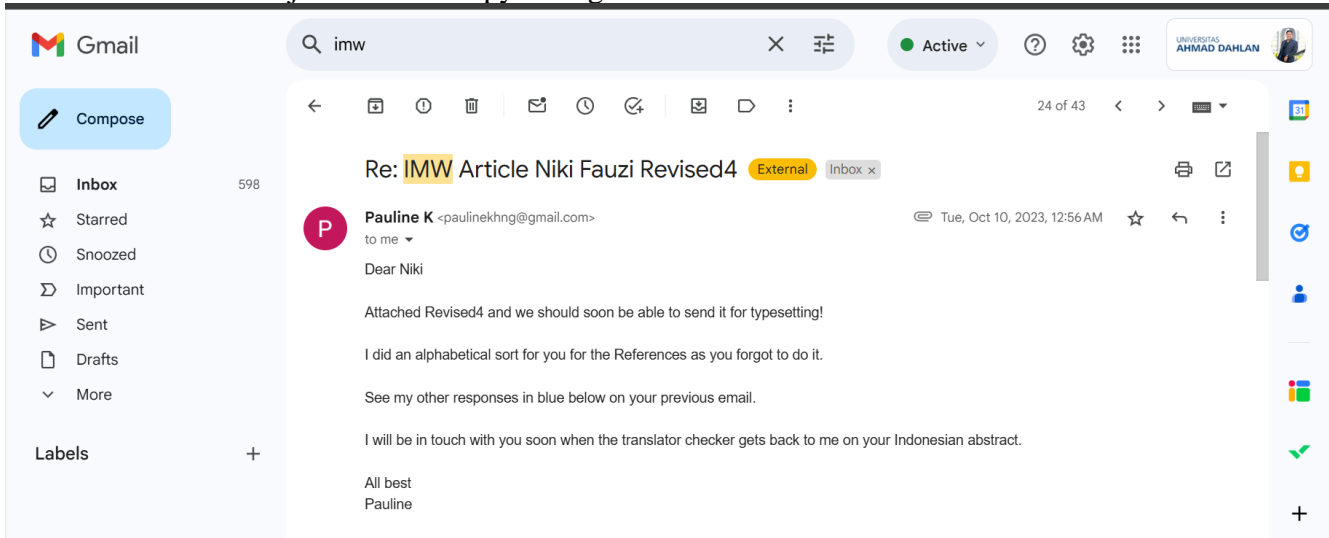




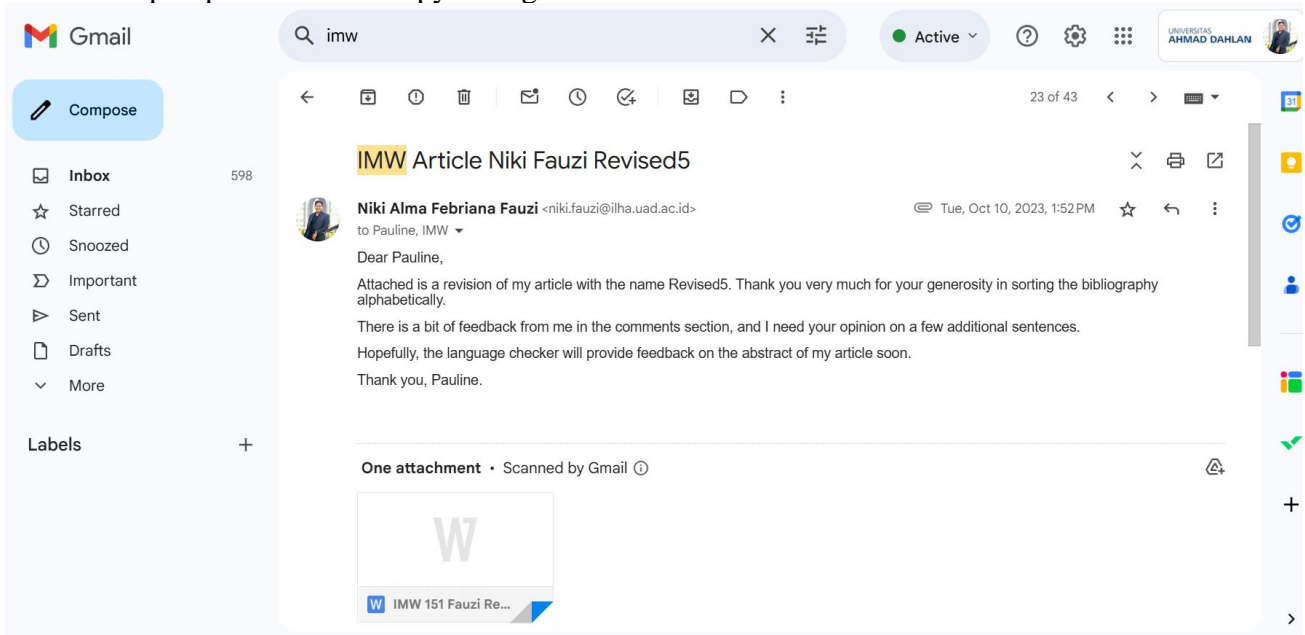
## 16. Respon penulis untuk copyediting 1



## 17. Catatan editor jurnal untuk copyediting 2



## 18. Respon penulis untuk copyediting 2





## 19. Catatan editor jurnal untuk copyediting 3

The screenshot shows a Gmail interface with a search bar containing 'imw'. The left sidebar includes a 'Compose' button, a list of folders (Inbox with 598 items, Starred, Snoozed, Important, Sent, Drafts, and More), and a 'Labels' section with a plus sign. The main email view displays an email from Pauline K <paulinekhng@gmail.com> to Niki Fauzi, dated Friday, October 13, 2023, at 10:03 PM. The subject is 'Re: IMW Article Niki Fauzi Revised6'. The email body contains the following text:

Dear Niki

Attached Revised6 which has the suggested amendments from the abstract translator for the Indonesian abstract for you to agree or disagree.

Thank you so much for including me in the Acknowledgements, that is kind and thoughtful but in my case, it is not necessary, all part of my role. I hope it has been helpful for future submissions to journals on what to look out for.

All best  
Pauline

On Wed, Oct 11, 2023 at 12:33 PM Pauline K <paulinekhng@gmail.com> wrote:  
Dear Niki

Thanks for your new Revised5. I will delete the previous one.

I will get back to you as soon as I can as I am working on another article which is problematic for not following IMW house style.

## 20. Respon penulis untuk copyediting 3

The screenshot shows a Gmail interface with a search bar containing 'imw'. The left sidebar is identical to the previous screenshot. The main email view displays an email from Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi <niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id> to Pauline, IMW, dated October 13, 2023, at 11:36 PM. The subject is 'IMW Article Niki Alma Revised7'. The email body contains the following text:

Dear Pauline,

Attached is Revised7, which I have improved based on your feedback. I want to highlight a few things here:

- 1) I agree with the Indonesian abstract that the IMW team has reviewed. On that basis, I offer the English abstract I have included in Revised7 of my article. I would like to ask your opinion on that.
- 2) I revised some information regarding footnote number 21.
- 3) I also revised the word 'Buda Yun', which should be written 'Buya Yun'. In addition, I deleted a sentence that seemed to be a contradiction.

For more details, you can see them in the article.

Thank you  
Best  
Niki Alma

One attachment • Scanned by Gmail

## 21. Catatan editor jurnal untuk copyediting 4

The screenshot shows a Gmail interface with a search bar containing 'imw'. The left sidebar shows the 'Compose' button and a list of folders: Inbox (598), Starred, Snoozed, Important, Sent, Drafts, and More. The main content area displays an email from Pauline K <paulinekhng@gmail.com> to Niki Alma, dated Monday, October 16, 2023, at 5:48 PM. The subject is 'Re: IMW Article Niki Alma Revised8'. The email body contains the following text:

Dear Niki

Please see Revised8, particularly one query for year in References re Tim Majelis ... and the other in the text on Ahmad Dahlan p.26.

Note that all **IMW** captions range left and not some centred and some on the left.

All best  
Pauline

On Fri, Oct 13, 2023 at 5:37 PM Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi <niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id> wrote:  
Dear Pauline,

Attached is Revised7, which I have improved based on your feedback. I want to highlight a few things here:

- 1) I agree with the Indonesian abstract that the **IMW** team has reviewed. On that basis, I offer the English abstract I have included in Revised7 of my article. I would like to ask your opinion on that.
- 2) I revised some information regarding footnote number 21.

## 22. Respon penulis untuk copyediting 4

The screenshot shows a Gmail interface with a search bar containing 'imw'. The left sidebar shows the 'Compose' button and a list of folders: Inbox (598), Starred, Snoozed, Important, Sent, Drafts, and More. The main content area displays an email from Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi <niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id> to Pauline, IMW, dated Tuesday, October 17, 2023, at 2:34 PM. The subject is 'IMW Article Niki Alma Revised9'. The email body contains the following text:

Dear Pauline,

Attached is Revised9. I highlighted a few things here, namely:

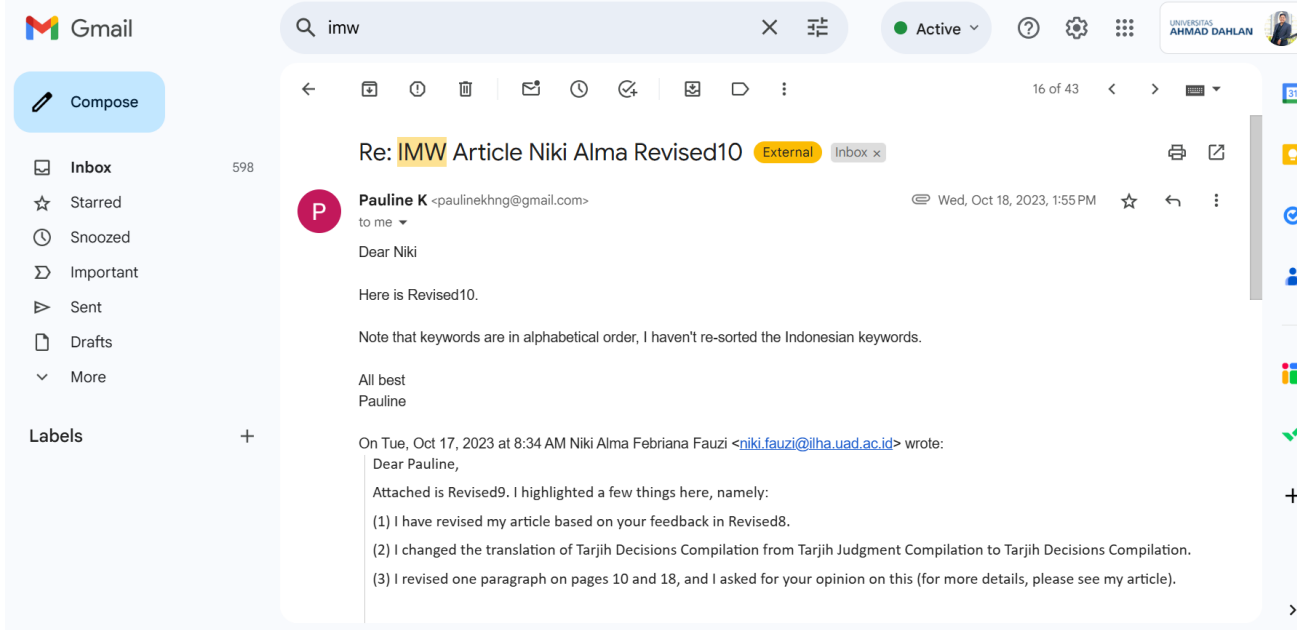
- (1) I have revised my article based on your feedback in Revised8.
- (2) I changed the translation of Tarjih Decisions Compilation from Tarjih Judgment Compilation to Tarjih Decisions Compilation.
- (3) I revised one paragraph on pages 10 and 18, and I asked for your opinion on this (for more details, please see my article).

All the best  
Niki Alma

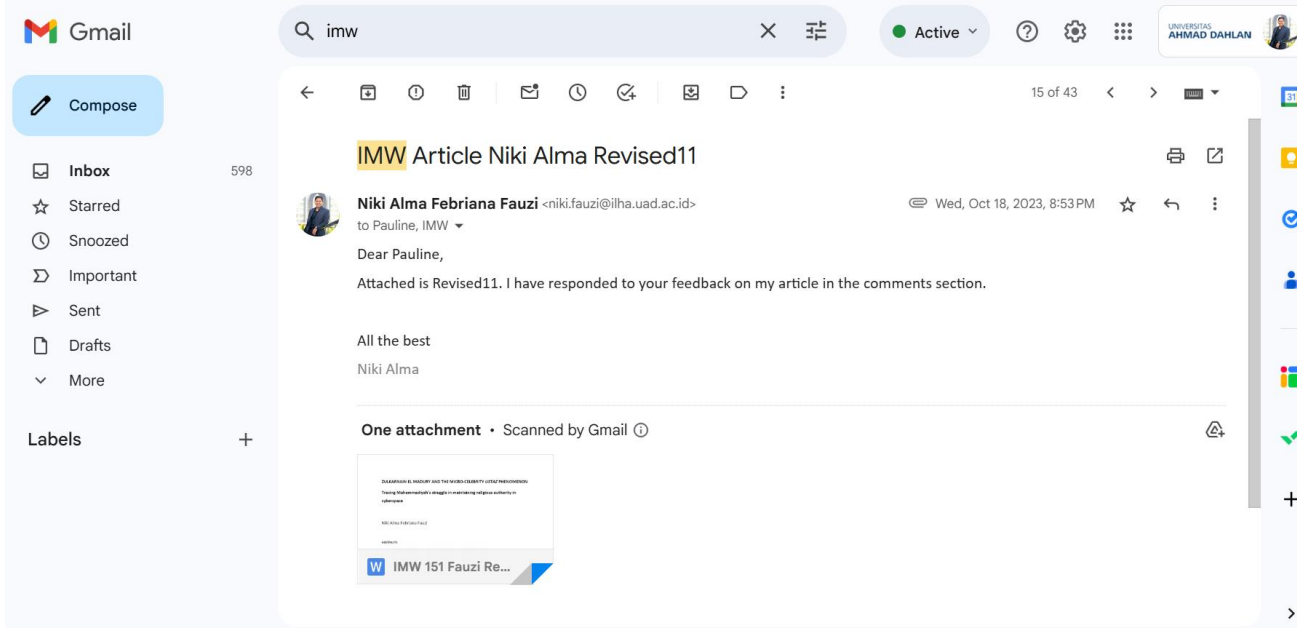
One attachment • Scanned by Gmail

The attachment is a document titled 'Revised9' by Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi.

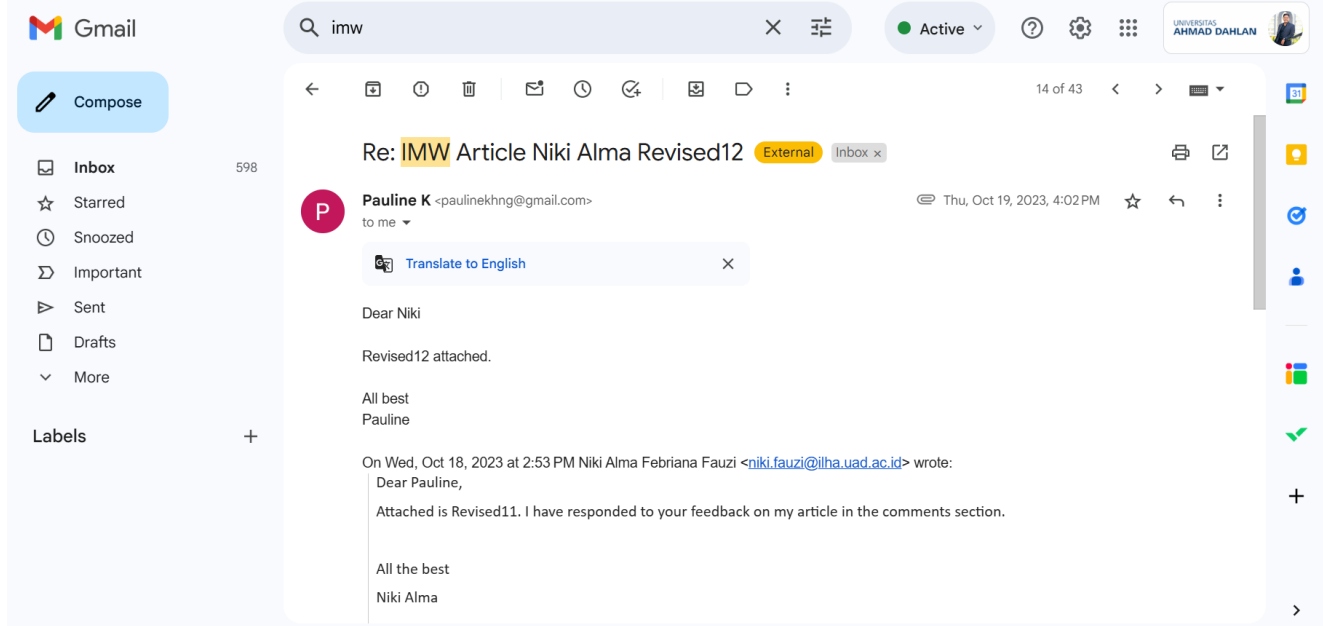
## 23. Catatan editor jurnal untuk copyediting 5



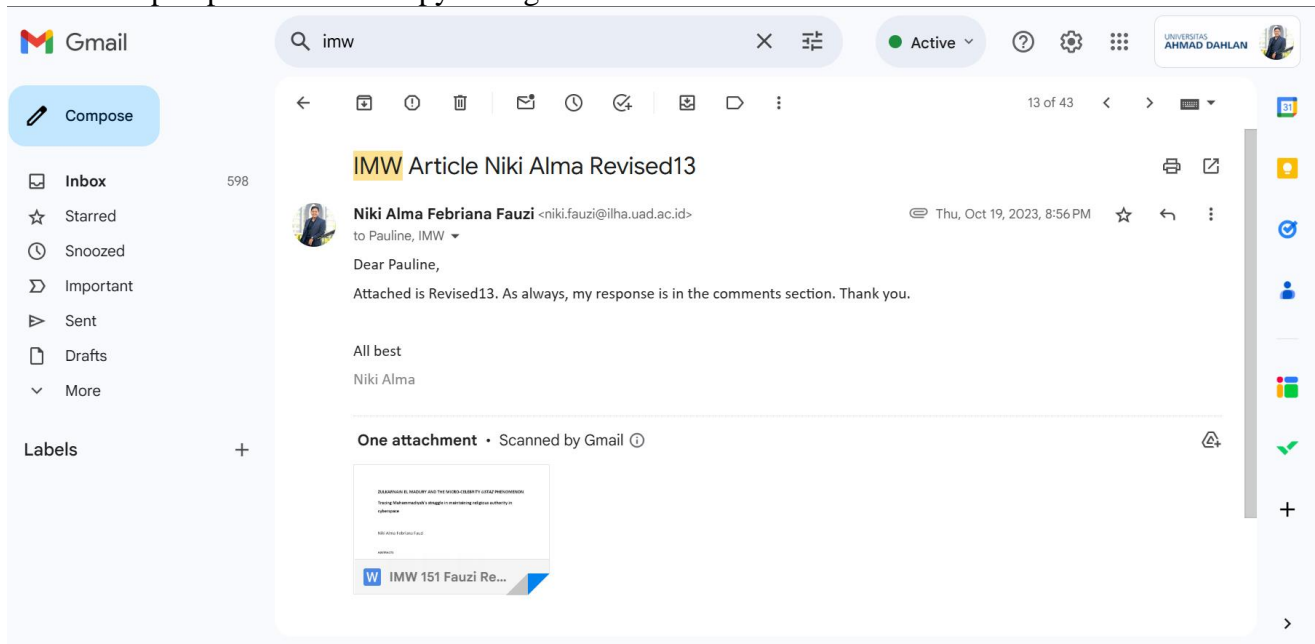
## 24. Respon penulis untuk copyediting 5



## 25. Catatan editor jurnal untuk copyediting 6



## 26. Respon penulis untuk copyediting 6



## 27. Catatan editor jurnal untuk copyediting 7

The screenshot shows a Gmail interface with a search bar containing 'imw'. The left sidebar shows the 'Compose' button and a list of folders: Inbox (598), Starred, Snoozed, Important, Sent, Drafts, and More. The main content area displays an email from Pauline K (paulinekhng@gmail.com) to Niki Alma, dated Friday, October 20, 2023, at 1:38 AM. The subject is 'Re: IMW Article Niki Alma Revised14 - Final?'. The email body contains the following text:

Dear Niki

Attached Revised14. If you are OK with this, I can send it for typesetting.

On your query about people's educational degrees, we don't need to add that so I have removed it for Budi Setiawan (p.19) as you'll have to do it for every single person which then gets unwieldy and is in any case, irrelevant for IMW articles.

All best  
Pauline

On Thu, Oct 19, 2023 at 2:56 PM Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi <niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id> wrote:  
Dear Pauline,  
Attached is Revised13. As always, my response is in the comments section. Thank you.

All best  
Niki Alma

## 28. Respon penulis untuk copyediting 7 (final)

The screenshot shows a Gmail interface with a search bar containing 'imw'. The left sidebar shows the 'Compose' button and a list of folders: Inbox (598), Starred, Snoozed, Important, Sent, Drafts, and More. The main content area displays an email from Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi (niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id) to Pauline, IMW, dated Friday, October 20, 2023, at 10:33 AM. The subject is 'IMW Article Niki Alma Revised15 Final for Typesetting'. The email body contains the following text:

Dear Pauline,

Here is Revised15. There is only one change in this Revised15 version: I removed the education degree for Endang Mintarja and Fathurrahman Kamal. In my opinion, the article as a whole is already OK. You can proceed to the typesetting stage if you think it is also OK.

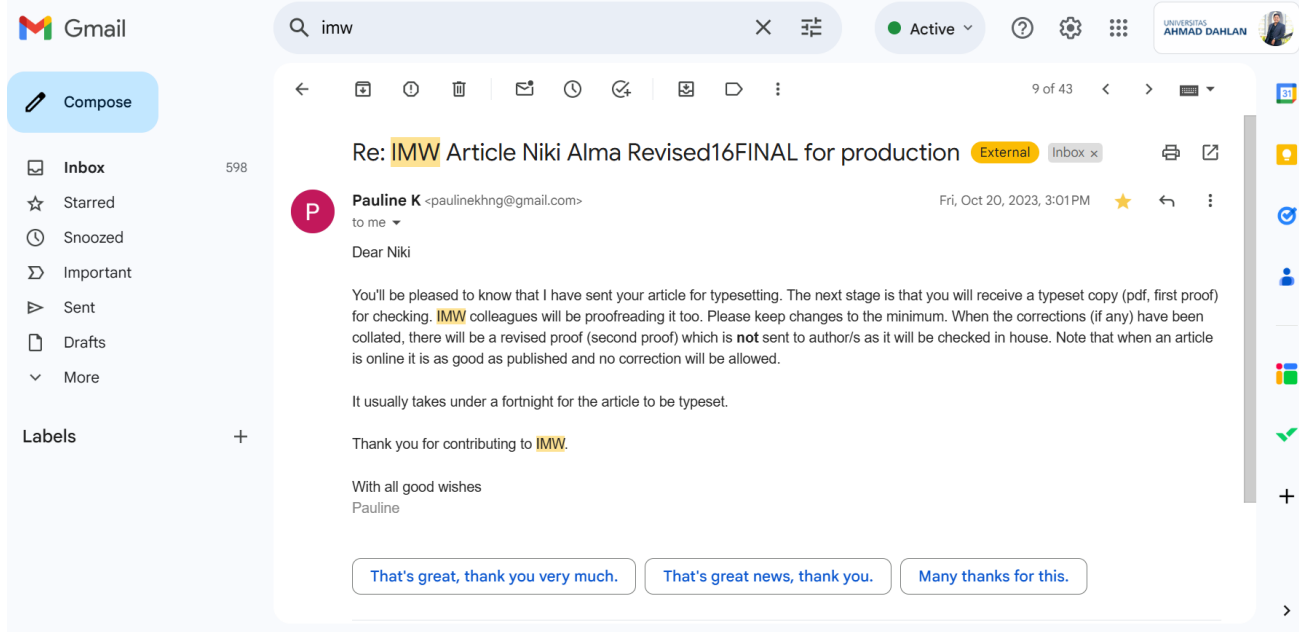
If I may know, how long does the typesetting process take? Thank you.

All the best  
Niki Alma

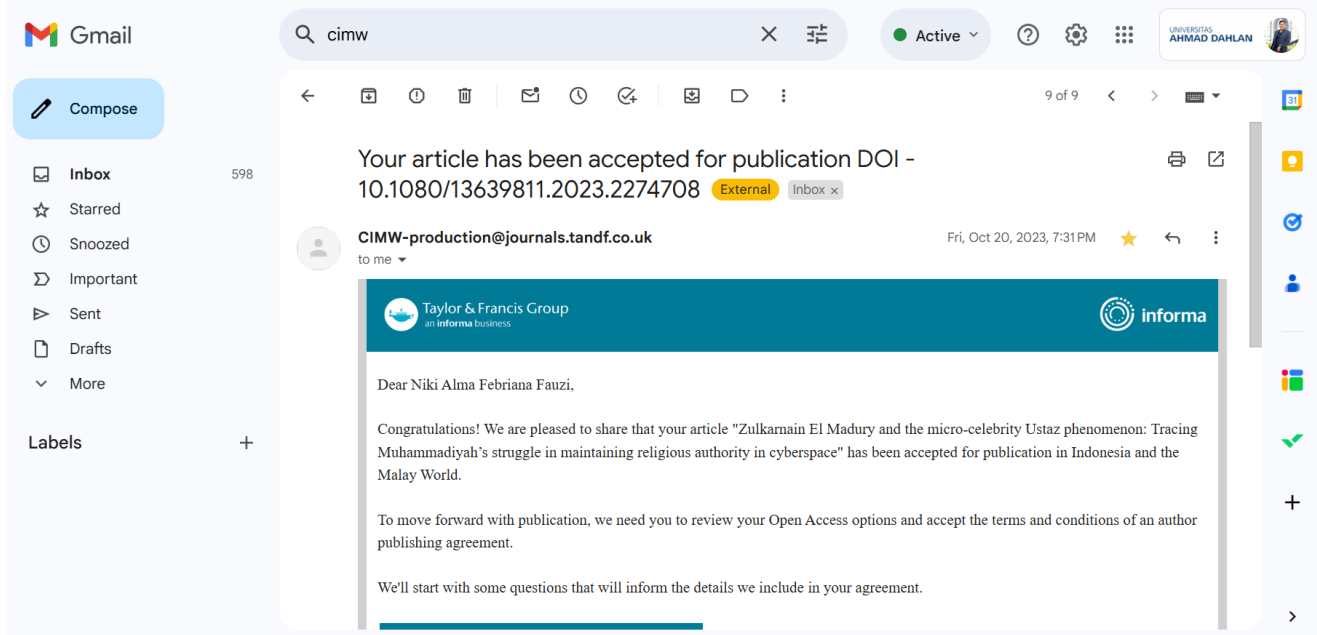
One attachment • Scanned by Gmail

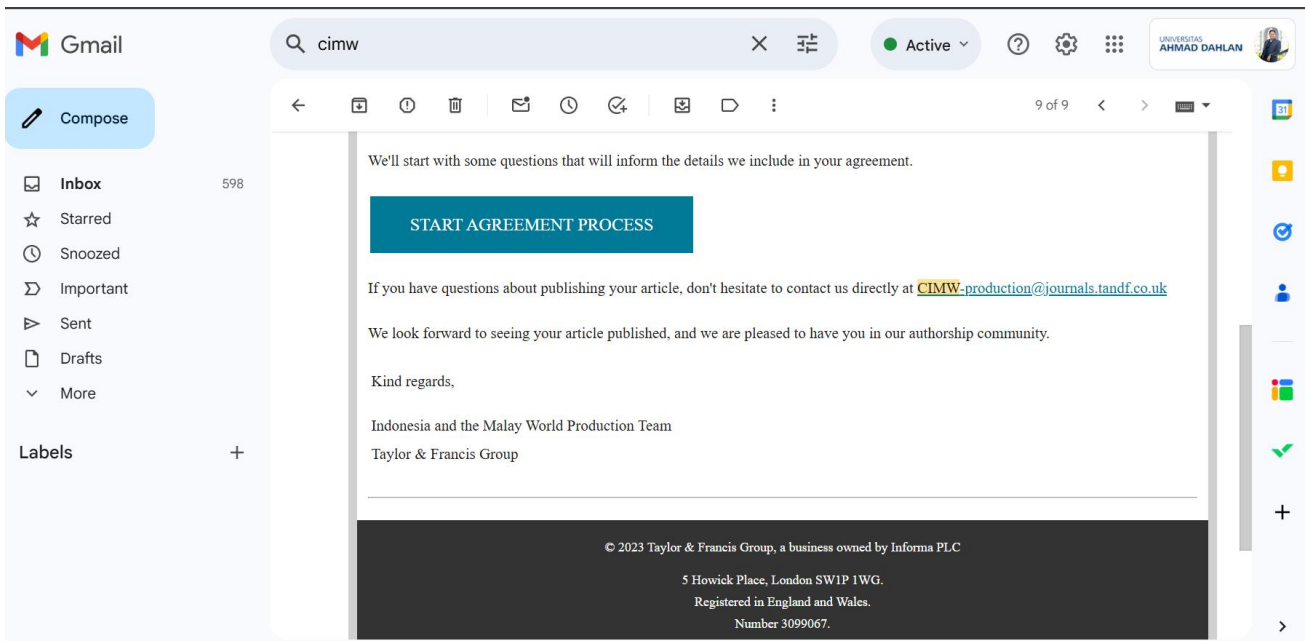
The attachment is a document titled 'IMW 151 Fauzi Re...' with a thumbnail showing a document page.

## 29. Email pemberitahuan dari editor jurnal untuk tahap production (typesetting)

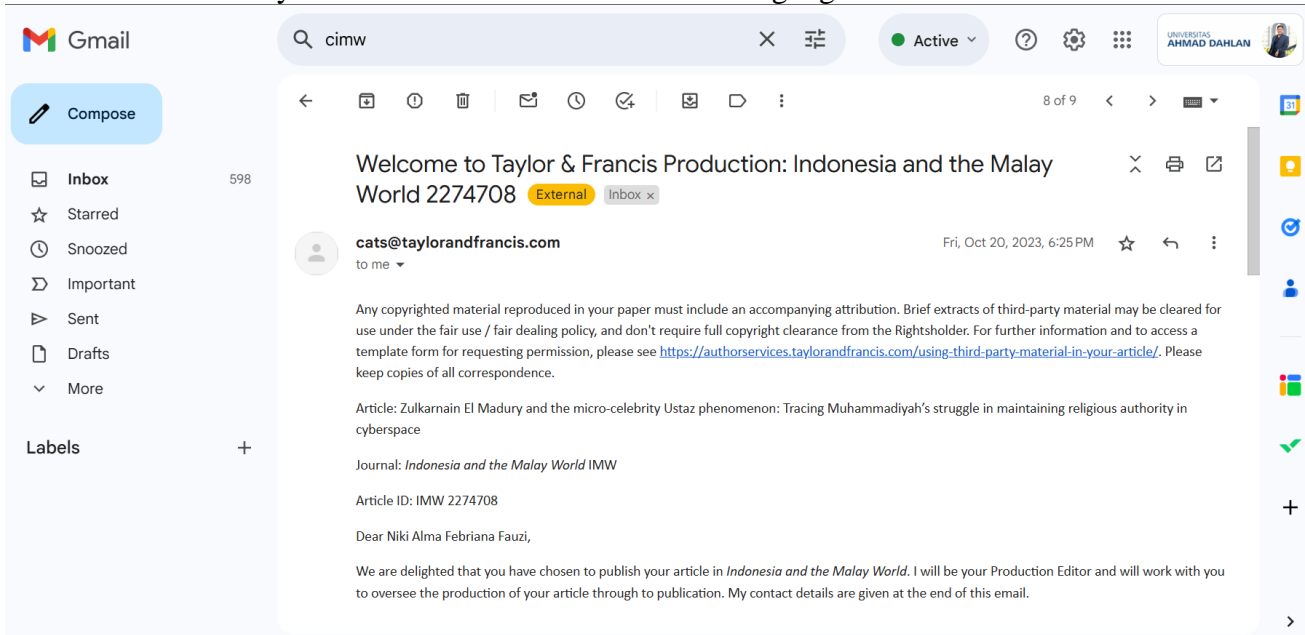


## 30. Email pemberitahuan dari Taylor & Francis bahwa artikel telah diterima untuk publikasi

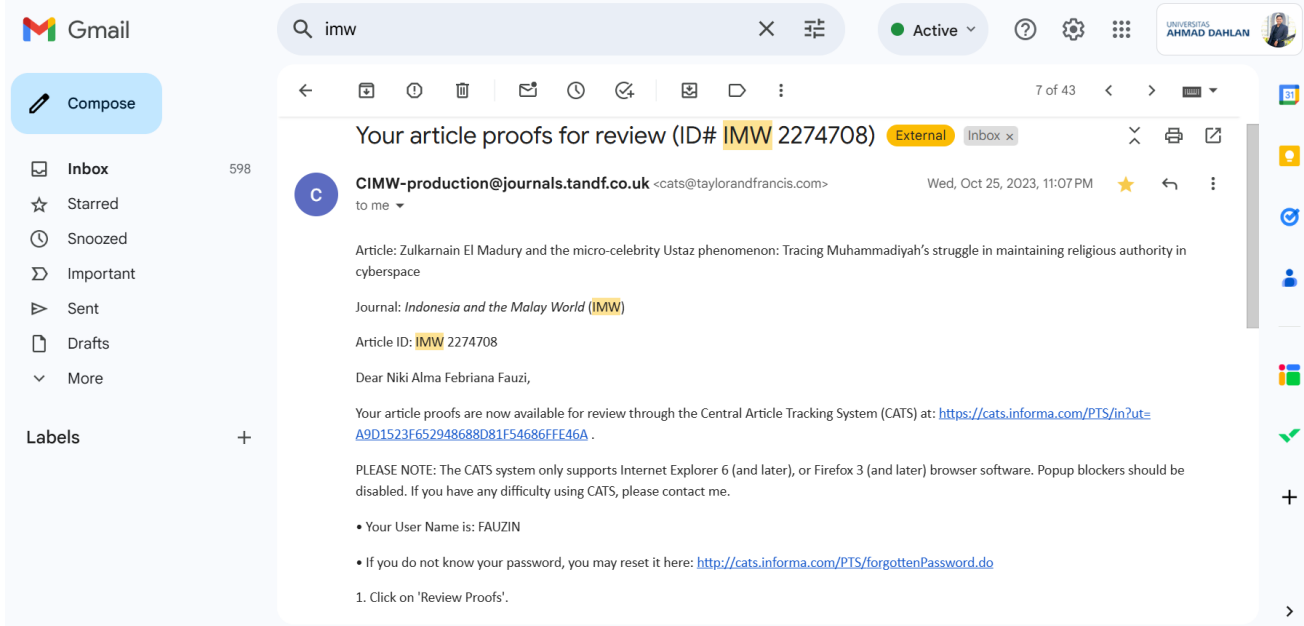




### 31. Email dari Taylor & Francis untuk Author Publishing Agreement



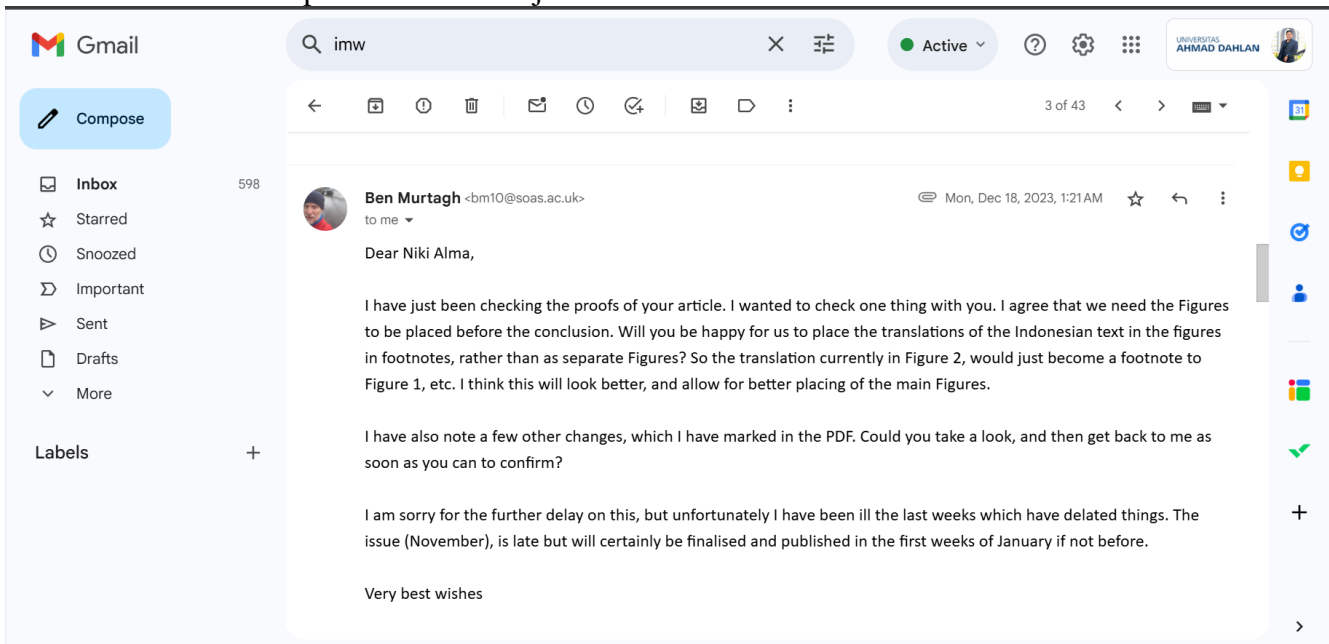
### 32. Review the proofs



The screenshot shows a Gmail interface with a search bar containing 'imw'. The left sidebar lists folders: Compose, Inbox (598), Starred, Snoozed, Important, Sent, Drafts, and More. The main content area displays an email from CIMW-production@journals.tandf.co.uk, dated Wednesday, October 25, 2023, at 11:07 PM. The email subject is 'Your article proofs for review (ID# IMW 2274708)'. The body of the email contains the following information:

- Article: Zulkarnain El Madury and the micro-celebrity Ustadz phenomenon: Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace
- Journal: *Indonesia and the Malay World* (IMW)
- Article ID: IMW 2274708
- Dear Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi,
- Your article proofs are now available for review through the Central Article Tracking System (CATS) at: <https://cats.informa.com/PTS/in?ut=A9D1523F652948688D81F54686FFE46A>.
- PLEASE NOTE: The CATS system only supports Internet Explorer 6 (and later), or Firefox 3 (and later) browser software. Popup blockers should be disabled. If you have any difficulty using CATS, please contact me.
- Your User Name is: FAUZIN
- If you do not know your password, you may reset it here: <http://cats.informa.com/PTS/forgottenPassword.do>
- 1. Click on 'Review Proofs'.

### 33. Catatan setelah proofs dari editor jurnal

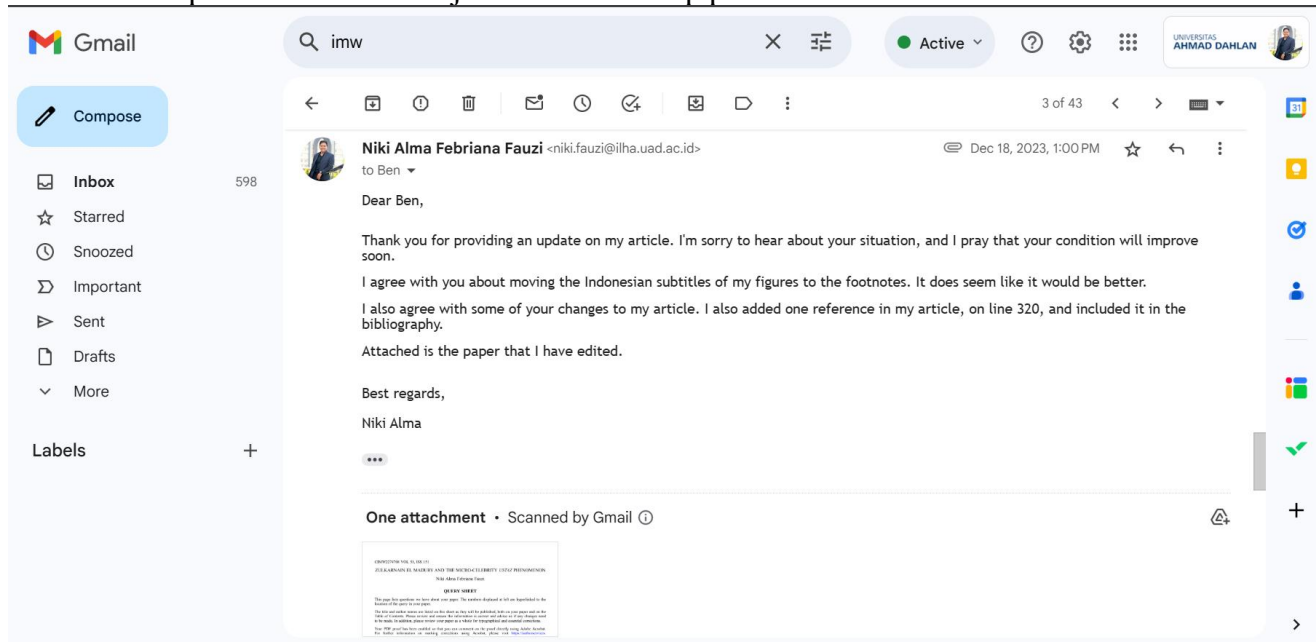


The screenshot shows a Gmail interface with a search bar containing 'imw'. The left sidebar lists folders: Compose, Inbox (598), Starred, Snoozed, Important, Sent, Drafts, and More. The main content area displays an email from Ben Murtagh (bm10@soas.ac.uk), dated Monday, December 18, 2023, at 1:21 AM. The email subject is 'Dear Niki Alma,'. The body of the email contains the following information:

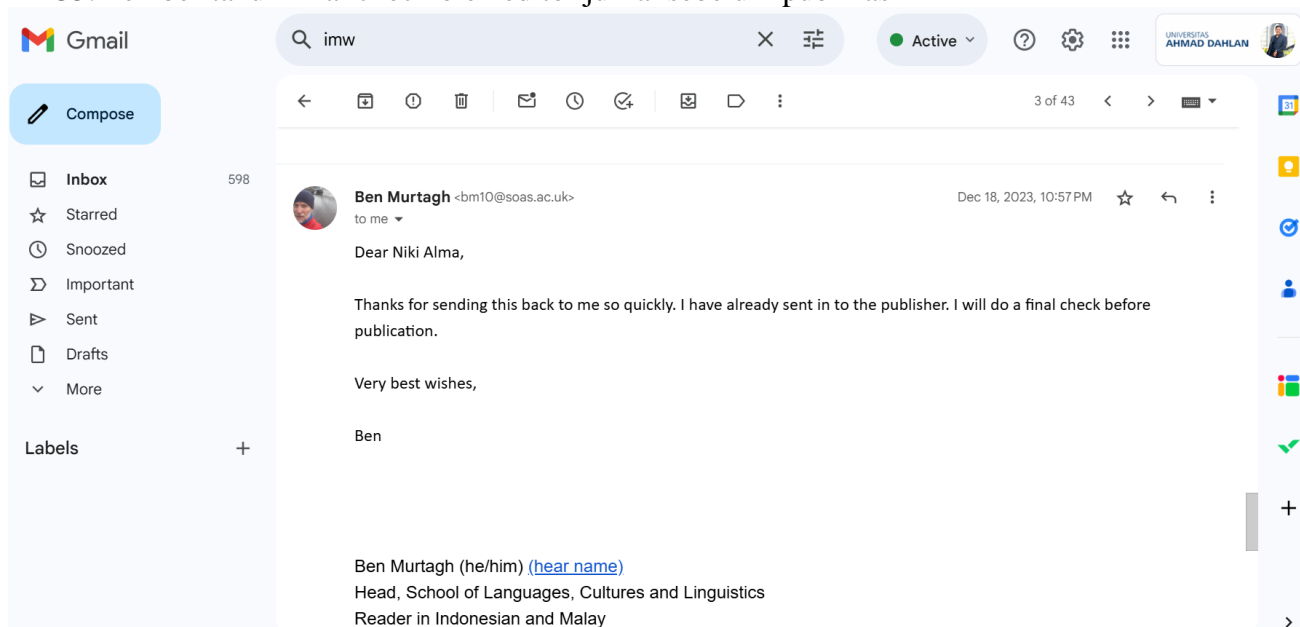
- I have just been checking the proofs of your article. I wanted to check one thing with you. I agree that we need the Figures to be placed before the conclusion. Will you be happy for us to place the translations of the Indonesian text in the figures in footnotes, rather than as separate Figures? So the translation currently in Figure 2, would just become a footnote to Figure 1, etc. I think this will look better, and allow for better placing of the main Figures.
- I have also note a few other changes, which I have marked in the PDF. Could you take a look, and then get back to me as soon as you can to confirm?
- I am sorry for the further delay on this, but unfortunately I have been ill the last weeks which have delated things. The issue (November), is late but will certainly be finalised and published in the first weeks of January if not before.
- Very best wishes



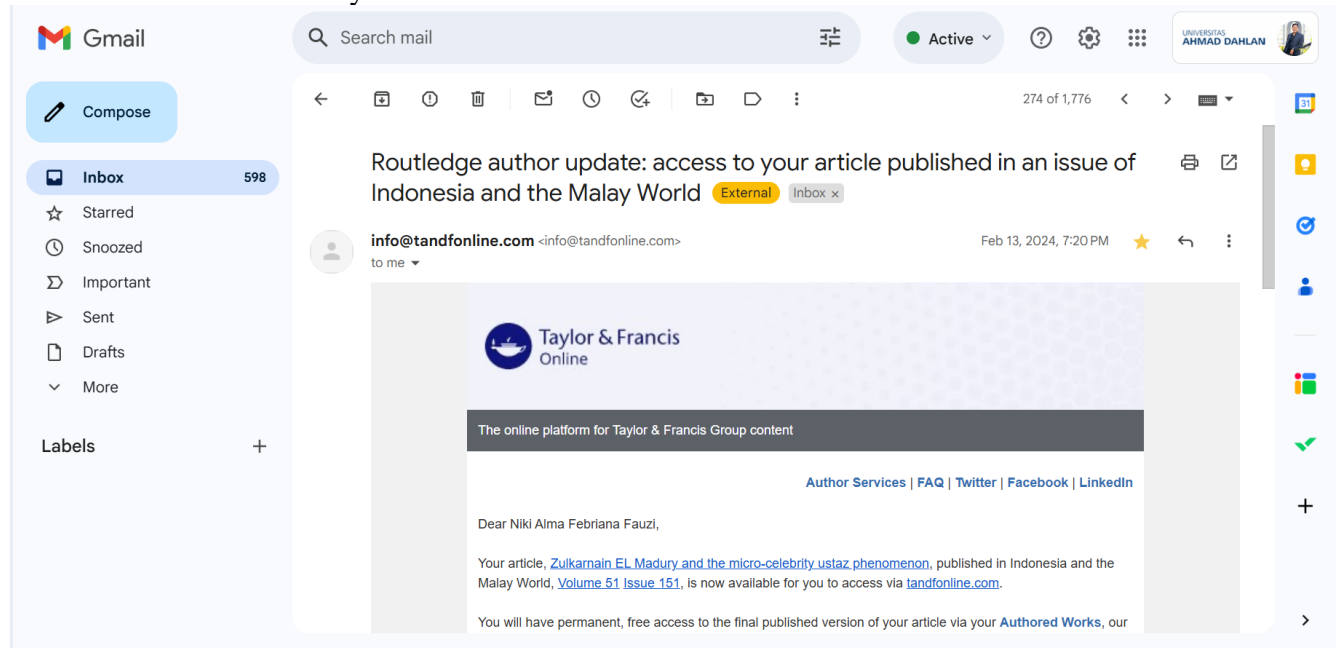
### 34. Email penulis untuk editor jurnal setelah tahap proofs



### 35. Pemberitahuan final check oleh editor jurnal sebelum publikasi



### 36. Pemberitahuan dari Taylor & Francis terkait artikel terbit online



# Bukti Submit Artikel

## Cover Letter

Dear Editor of Indonesia and The Malay World Journal,

I am writing to submit our manuscript entitled, "Zulkarnain El Madury and the Micro-Ustaz-Celebrity Phenomenon: Tracing Muhammadiyah's Struggle in Maintaining Religious Authority in Cyberspace," for consideration for publication in Indonesia and The Malay World Journal.

In this paper, I examine the emergence of the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah fanspage, which was created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, a person who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board. By conducting web content analysis and field research by interviewing key actors related to this issue, this article shows how Zulkarnain El Madury and the fanspage he created have threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority, and in turn, analyzes Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace. By taking a closer look at what the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah) has done as an assembly that exclusively has the authority to issue fatwas and official religious ijihad products within Muhammadiyah, this article concludes that Muhammadiyah is not calm or passive in responding to the emergence of new religious authorities.

This manuscript describes original work and is not under consideration by any other journal.

Thank you for receiving my manuscript and considering it for review. I appreciate your time and look forward to your response.

# **Zulkarnain El Madury and the Micro-Ustaz-Celebrity Phenomenon: Tracing Muhammadiyah's Struggle in Maintaining Religious Authority in Cyberspace**

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Email: [niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id](mailto:niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id)

## **Abstract**

The rolling of important events such as the Defend Islam Action (*Aksi Bela Islam*) and the massive use of the internet to spread specific religious ideas in Indonesia marked the so-called fragmentation of religious authority. The two mainstream religious authorities that have been held by Muhammadiyah and NU are being threatened by new religious authorities. Some previous studies have stated that NU is very reactive to the emergence of new religious authorities, while Muhammadiyah seems to be more calm or passive. This article examines the emergence of the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage, which was created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, a person who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board. By conducting web content analysis and field research by interviewing key actors related to this issue, this article shows how Zulkarnain El Madury and the fanspage he created have threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority, and in turn, analyzes Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace. By taking a closer look at what the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (*Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah*) has done as an assembly that exclusively has the authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* products within Muhammadiyah, this article concludes that Muhammadiyah is not calm or passive in responding to the emergence of new religious authorities.

Keywords: micro-ustaz-celebrity, fragmentation, religious authority, Muhammadiyah, tarjih.

## Introduction

The Defend Islam Action (*Aksi Bela Islam*) that took place several years ago in Indonesia became a momentous event that marked the so-called fragmentation of religious authority (Burhani 2016). This fragmentation can be seen, for example, when the two leaders of the largest religious organization in Indonesia, namely Haedar Nashir and Said Agil Siradj, appealed to their members and followers not to take part in the action. Instead of being followed, their advice was ignored. Some members of Muhammadiyah and NU were also present and seemed to be following the call of a figure who had been regarded as, to borrow the term Ahmad Najib Burhani, a fringe cleric (*'ulama pinggiran*) (Burhani 2016). The series of three events gave birth to an actor whose voice was later considered influential and had authority. He is Muhammad Rizieq Shihab, chairman of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI).

In another context, namely in the digital world, the fragmentation of religious authority also occurs in Indonesian society. In fact, according to Nisa, the proliferation of various kinds of digital platforms that exist today is directly proportional to the increasing fragmentation of religious authority (Nisa 2019). Nadirsyah Hosen shows how Indonesians, especially those who live in urban areas or have easy internet access, will choose 'kyai google' to ask questions about religious issues instead of the traditional fatwa institutions owned by Muhammadiyah, NU, or MUI. According to Hosen, the selection of '*kyai google*' as the new mufti by some Indonesians is inseparable from the convenience provided by the internet. The selection is also based on the internet's characteristics that allow users to hide their identities not to know when asking a question (Hosen 2008). This kind of convenience is not found when a question is asked to a traditional fatwa institution. In addition to writing down the identity, the questioner also has to wait a long time to gain an answer (Hosen 2008). What Hosen explained provides an overview of how the shift in religious authority from offline to online has occurred. It is an excess of the presence of the internet.

A further excess of the internet presence, especially with social media presence, is the birth of micro-celebrity. Theresa M. Senft defines micro-celebrity as a new style of online performance that involves increasing popularity through web technologies such as videos, blogs, and social networking sites (Senft 2008). According to her, these micro-celebrities sometimes seem like conventional celebrities, but they are different (Senft 2008). The most fundamental difference between the two is the place in and from where they were born. In other words, conventional celebrities are born in and from conventional media, while micro-celebrities are born through what is known as new media.

Of course, not all new media users have the predicate of micro-celebrity. Only those who experience what Graeme Turner termed 'the demotic turn', namely the increasing visibility of ordinary people to appear as celebrities in the media, especially online media (G. Turner 2010). In turn, both conventional and micro-celebrity exist in various public spheres, and the discourse on them is characterized as influencers, stimulants of consumerism, enthusiasm, public debate, and various activism (Sadasri 2017).

By borrowing the theory of micro-celebrities in the study of new media, we can then read how these micro-celebrities have also come to the fore in the religious realm. The emergence of *'ulama*, *ustaz*, preachers, and religious leaders who become influencers in new media can perhaps be termed as a form of a micro-ustaz-celebrity image. Felix Siauww perhaps deserves to be mentioned here as an example. The convert, who is now a preacher, has a massive following on social media. It can even be said that he is the *ustaz* or preacher who has the most followers on social media. What Felix Siauww said in his social media has more or less influenced the map of religious authorities in Indonesia. Even if it is related to the event of the Defend Islam Action (*Aksi Bela Islam*), the role of micro-ustaz-celebrities such as Felix Siauww and others is very significant.

The existence of the internet and the development of technology that runs continuously allows the emergence of many other micro-ustaz-celebrities, both in the national arena more generally or more specifically in internal religious organizations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, Persis or others. In the context of Muhammadiyah, the largest modern Islamic organization began to be challenged for its religious authority by a preacher who was said to be part of Muhammadiyah itself, namely Zulkarnain El Madury. He is a person who claims to be a Muhammadiyah cadre and often introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board. In recent years, Zulkarnain El Madury has been noticed by Muhammadiyah administrators and Muhammadiyah cadres.<sup>1</sup> Even the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (*Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah*) even discussed him in a special meeting. This is because the posts on the Facebook fanspage that El Madury manages, namely the *Syarah Himpunan Putus Tarjih Muhammadiyah*, often differ significantly from - and to some extent delegitimize - what has become the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah. Responses from grassroots or Muhammadiyah people varied. This can be seen, for example, from the comments on each post. Some defended and remained adamant with the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah, but not a few were affected and, in turn, followed what was conveyed by Zulkarnain El Madury on the fanspage.

This is where it becomes crucial to see how Muhammadiyah attempts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace, especially its citizens. By conducting web content analysis (Postill and Pink 2012) on the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage and official social media accounts and those affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (*Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah*), this article shows how El Madury builds his narratives and, in turn, how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority in cyberspace. In addition, field

---

<sup>1</sup> Online and offline interview with Amiruddin, Robby Karman, Muhammad Muflih, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, and Arif Nur Kholis, 2019-2020.



research was also conducted to complement the method. In conducting the field research, the key actors related to this research were interviewed offline and online in a semi-structured format.<sup>2</sup> Apart from Zulkarnain El Madury, the key actors are members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (*Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah*), the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Digital Syiar Center (*Pusat Syiar Digital Muhammadiyah*), and several prominent figures as well as Muhammadiyah activists.

## **Fragmentation of Religious Authority, New Ulama and Micro-Ustaz-Celebrity**

### **Phenomenon**

Fragmentation of religious authority is a phenomenon that occurs in various religious communities and is not limited to Islam alone (B. S. Turner 2007; Campbell and Teusner 2011; Hope Cheong 2016). Not only that, but the fragmentation of religious authority is also a global phenomenon. This is illustrated, for example, by the study of Gary R. Bunt (Bunt 2017). He points out that new media have shaped diverse understandings among individual Muslims worldwide about e-jihad (electronic jihad). The definition of electronic jihad is understood and interpreted differently, ranging from online activism to Muslim expression after the events of September 11, 2001. In turn, in his study, Bunt shows that each new media (in this case is the website) has its authority for its respective group segment, whether Muslim majority, the Muslim minority, even Shia.

Especially in Indonesia, the fragmentation of religious authority can be traced far back, namely at the beginning of the 20th century. Jajat Burhanudin (Burhanudin 2004) points out that there has been a shift in religious authority in the historical phase of Indonesian religious thought in the early 20th century due to modernization. The religious authority, which was initially held by traditional groups, shifted to modernist groups. His study, which focuses on

---

<sup>2</sup> Data collection in this study was carried out in the time span between 2018-2020. Because offline interviews were not possible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, some interviews were conducted online.

Islamic print media, further shows that there is a shift in religious authority that used to be in *Kitab Kuning* taught by *kyai* or *ulama* in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), to magazines, journals, newspapers, and books published by modernist circles or organizations.

After that phase, religious authority is always identified with the role of Muhammadiyah and NU. These two religious organizations are always referred to by scholars as the authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016; Akmaliah 2018). The shift in religious authority occurred again in the 1990s when national television stations were gradually born. The Islamic programs presented by the television station show *ustaz* or *ulama*, which in turn build their authority through lectures delivered by them. This phenomenon, in turn, prompted scholars to come up with the term 'Islamic televangelism' (Akmaliah 2018). AA Gym is one example that falls into the category of this television *ustaz*, or in Greg Fealy's terms, he is called a tele-dai (Fealy 2008).

The most obvious and recent picture of the fragmentation of religious authority in Indonesia is the series of events of the Defend Islam Action. Ahmad Najib Burhani hinted that the critical event marked the peak of the fragmentation of religious authorities in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). This series of events has given rise to new actors who challenge the established religious authority over the years. Although it cannot be said to shift or match the role of Muhammadiyah and NU, the emergence of new actors such as Rizieq Shihab provides a new map of religious authority in Indonesia.

This phenomenon of fragmentation of religious authority has increased sharply in the development of what scholars call pop culture, marked by the birth of many new media (Labiq 2019). The spread of internet access to every social class is the main factor for this fragmentation. As a result, many new media have emerged; each individual (Muzakka 2018) and group (Pribadi 2019; Rusli 2014) compete to spread ideas (Nisa 2019; Horsfield 2016).

The rapid development of information technology has given birth to new actors that were previously unthinkable, both in modern economics, culture, and religion. Studies that highlight the emergence of new actors in the religious field, especially in Indonesia, have been carried out by many researchers.

Abdullah Gymnastiar, who is more familiarly called AA Gym, mentioned earlier, can be said to be one of the early actors who emerged in the internet era starting to grow in Indonesia. This can be captured in two interesting studies on AA Gym conducted by James B. Hoesterey (Hoesterey 2008) and Maskur & Irfan Noor (Maskur and Noor 2014). Although the use of the internet as a medium of *da'wah* at that time was not as massive as it is now, the emergence of AA Gym as a new cleric on the national *da'wah* stage through lectures, seminars, and Islamic training is a phenomenon in itself. His preaching journey is fascinating. Hoesterey tries to see the journey of AA Gym as a preacher critically starting from appearing, falling, and then his success in rebranding. The successful rebranding carried out by AA Gym (and the team) succeeded in restoring its religious authority. This is evident, for example, from how the voice of AA Gym was very well listened to during the Defend Islam Action some time ago (“Aa Gym Ajak Ribuan Jamaahnya Ikut Aksi Bela Islam III” n.d.).

Popular culture has also brought AA Gym to be seen not only by the public, especially by his followers, as an *ustaz an sich*, but also singer, actor, book writer, etc. Thus, he has transformed from an ordinary cleric to a celebrity cleric. Through a hypersemiotic perspective, Maskur and Noor show the hyper phenomenon in AA Gym's character.

After the appearance of AA Gym and information technology is developed rapidly, many new *ulama* began to appear. One of the exciting names to be highlighted is *ustaz* Felix Siauw. Wai Weng Hew (Hew 2018) describes how Felix Siauw is a religious teacher with high art in preaching. Being a cleric who has the most followers in cyberspace does not make Felix

forget to spread his *da'wah* in the real world. Hew points out that Felix has blended online and offline *da'wah* very well. Instead of replacing offline *da'wah* with online, Felix actually combined the two harmoniously. The *da'wah* art displayed by Felix aims to spread HTI's ideas and ideologies as the carriage of his *da'wah* identity. According to Hew (Hew 2018) and Farhan (Farhan 2017), one of the keys to Felix's success in preaching is his ability to present an entertaining and straightforward *da'wah*, even though its content is dogmatic and political.

AA Gym and Felix Siauww are descriptions of two *ustaz* or *ulama* who became famous because of the new media's 'blessing'. Both are new clerics who have transformed into micro-ustaz-celebrity. The term micro-ustaz-celebrity is a term that was adopted and reconstructed from the theory of micro-celebrity. There have been many studies on micro-celebrity itself. Most of these studies were carried out from the perspective of pop culture, as has been done, for example, by Theresa M. Senft (Senft 2008), Graeme Turner (G. Turner 2010), Lidwina Mutia Sadasri (Sadasri 2017), Khamis, Ang, and Welling (Khamis, Ang, and Welling 2017), and Khomalia and Rahman (Khomalia and Rahman 2018).

The studies that the author mentioned above all describe the fragmentation of religious authority, marked by the emergence of *new ulama* or micro-ustaz-celebrities. Studies on the efforts or struggles of established religious authorities challenged by new religious authorities have not been touched. One study conducted by Yanwar Pribadi could perhaps be called an exception (Pribadi 2019). His study explains how the efforts of 'local Islam' (*Islam Lokal*) to defend the position of its religious authority from the threat of 'foreign Islam' (*Islam Asing*). However, his study is different from what the author will examine, tracing Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

The study that the author is doing is about a micro-ustaz-celebrity named Zulkarnain El Madury. His name, which is not as popular as AA Gym or Felix Siauww but has a strong

influence in cyberspace, is interesting. His identity as an *ustaz* or preacher from Muhammadiyah who targets Muhammadiyah people with postings that are often different and even delegitimize the official voice of this largest modernist mass organization is another interesting thing that deserves to be investigated. This author's study not only wants to show Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace, but it also wants explicitly to fill the gap in Wahyudi Akmaliah's finding. In his latest study, he shows that Muhammadiyah and NU have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities (Akmaliah 2020). While NU was very reactive to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah said there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah respond that looks less fierce (Akmaliah 2020). This study focuses on looking at the struggle of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (*Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah*) as the only assembly under Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas and products of official religious *ijtihad* within Muhammadiyah. By taking a closer look at what the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council has done, this study shows that Muhammadiyah is not really calm or passive in responding to the emergence of new religious authorities.

### **An Overview of Zulkarnain El Madur and *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih***

#### ***Muhammadiyah* Fanspage**

*Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage was created by Zulkarnain El Madury. He was born in Sumenep Madura in 1963, and his real name is Zulkarnain bin Syamsuri. The man who claims to have studied in Malaysia at the Institute of Business Study always introduces himself as a preacher from the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (*Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah*). He spent his childhood in his homeland. Like most Madurese people who have a religious tendency

towards traditional Islam, El Madury also does the same. He admitted that he grew up in the *Nahdliyyin* environment and used to practice practices such as *tahlilan*, pilgrimage to the grave, and other practices that, according to his admission after joining Muhammadiyah, were not following the Sunnah of the Prophet. He received his religious education at the *Pesantren* at-Taufiqiyyah Sumenep Madura. In 1976 he became acquainted with Muhammadiyah. Through a lecture delivered by a preacher of Muhammadiyah, he became interested in the *da'wah* and religious understanding of the movement founded by Ahmad Dahlan. In 1977, he officially joined Muhammadiyah.<sup>3</sup>

Since joining Muhammadiyah, El Madury has been active as a preacher who spreads religious ideas and understanding, according to Muhammadiyah. In fact, from 1990 to 2007, he was one of the Muhammadiyah preachers who were sent to remote areas under the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (*Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah*). His daily activities are now preaching from one place to another, including creating content on the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage. Now he is domiciled in Jakarta as the chairman of the Tarjih and Tabligh Council of the Pondok Gede Muhammadiyah Branch.<sup>4</sup>

This fanspage based on El Madury's confession was created in 2014.<sup>5</sup> However, in digital history that the author can trace, this fanspage was created in 2015. The earliest traceable post this year is dated January 5, 2015.

According to El Madury, the birth of this fanspage began with the *WhatsApp* group he created. He named this *Whatsapp* group *Tarjih dan Tabligh Institut* (Tarjih and Tabligh Institute) to provide a space to discuss and spread ideas related to tarjih Muhammadiyah. He

---

<sup>3</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18-20 October 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18-20 October 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18-20 October 2020.

put many Muhammadiyah figures and activists into this group, including Buya Yunahar Ilyas. Over time, seeing that El Madury's posts in the group were deemed inconsistent with the tarjih spirit of Muhammadiyah, several people such as Fathurrahman Kamal and Buya Risman gave sharp criticism. El Madury, Kamal, and Risman engage in a heated debate. This information finally reached Buya Yunahar Ilyas. The response given by Buya Yunahar Ilyas at that time, according to El Madury, was different from that of his critics. Buya responded quite positively because he saw the initiative of El Madury, who wanted to provide *syarh* (Arabic) or further explanation of the contents of the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Judgment Compilation). Finally, Buya Yun permitted El Madury and another person, namely Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com).<sup>6</sup>

By looking at the early postings, this fanspage is still relatively consistent in uploading Muhammadiyah fatwas with the format: writing question from the questioner and then answering from the Fatwa Division of the Tarjih Council. This is like the original format of the question and answer administered by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, whose fatwa was later published in *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine. Nevertheless, over time, this fanspage posted different things, not only the dissemination of tarjih products but the personal opinions of El Madury. These opinions are often offensive to other groups and use language that is less ethical and elegant. Not infrequently, his posts contradict the official stance of Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in particular, or Muhammadiyah in general, such as the veil issue. Since Facebook introduced the live broadcast' feature, Zulkarnain has also adapted to using this feature to conduct live lectures.

Nevertheless, this fanspage has many followers and is liked by many people. As of today (24/9/2020), *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage has been followed by

---

<sup>6</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18-20 October 2020.

12,608 and is liked by 7,201 people. His posts also often get a harvest of likes and comments from netizens, both pro and contra.

Several things have been explored from personal interactions through several virtual chats with Zulkarnain and become the background in creating the fanspage. First, this fanspage from the beginning aimed to fortify Muhammadiyah people from all forms of superstition, heresy, and myth; its posts focus on issues related to faith and worship. Second, this fanspage in its development is also to counter some Muhammadiyah activists who have liberal tendencies. In several posts, Zulkarnain openly responded to the discourses of those he considered liberals in Muhammadiyah. Third, this fanspage often openly attacks the religious practices of the Nahdiyyin group in their posts, so that as an excess of that, Zulkarnain has several times clashed with Idrus Ramli, a *Nahdliyyin* figure.<sup>7</sup>

Besides being followed and liked by many people, Zulkarnain El Madury and the fanspage he manages are not without criticism. Many Muhammadiyah people and followers are worried about the posts on the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage. Some even tried to report their anxiety through the official social media accounts of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Center (*Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah*).<sup>8</sup> They generally want to ask for firmness from the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council regarding the fanspage because Zulkarnain has used Tarjih's name in the fanspage's name. The firmness demanded by them to the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, if summarized, includes: (1) asking the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council to reprimand or remind Zulkarnain El Madury not to use symbols or names that are closely related to Tarjih Muhammadiyah for or on the fanspage; (2) make a circular or announcement that the fanspage is not a social media account of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council or the Tarjih Muhamamdiyah Center (*Pusat Tarjih*

---

<sup>7</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18-20 October 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf and Ariful Hazam, November 2020. They are social media admif of *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah*.



*Muhammadiyah*); (3) informing the official social media accounts and websites of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Muhammadiyah Tarjih Center (*Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah*), so that Muhammadiyah people at the grassroots are not fooled by the existence of the fanspage and know where to look for religious reference places, especially in cyberspace.

### **Zulkarnain El Madury and His Efforts in Building Religious Authority**

Zulkarnain El Madury and the fanspage he created, namely *Syarah Himpunan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*, have threatened the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, in this case the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. Many of its posts affect Muhammadiyah people in particular and Muslims in general. It is not only often different from the official stance of Muhammadiyah; the posts from the fanspage, even to some extent, tend to attack the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. From Weber's perspective (Riesebrodt 1999), the authority that El Madury is trying to build appears in two ways. The first is the authority that is built through charisma (charismatic authority). According to Weber, charisma is a particular type of authority whose original form is based on a specific belief contained in a particular person (Riesebrodt 1999). In the context of El Madury, the charisma does not arise purely from El Madury himself but comes from external, namely Yunahar Ilyas. In this case, Yunahar Ilyas is a Muhammadiyah cleric who is very popular and respected by the community, both from Muhammadiyah circles and Muslims in general.

Buya Yun, as he is popularly known, was an interpreter (*mufasssir*) born in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, in 1956 and died in 2020 at the age of 63 years. From his capacity, this alumnus of the Imam Ibn Su'ud University in Saudi Arabia, no doubt. Moreover, Buya Yun has excellent rhetoric in lecturing and conveying religious messages. No doubt, many Muhammadiyah people and Muslims, in general, saw Buya Yun as a charismatic cleric. Not only limited to

Indonesia, in several neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore, Yunahar Ilyas is also known as a charismatic cleric, even considered as the successor of Buya Hamka.

Therefore, when he died in early 2020, many people flocked to pay their last respects to the former chairman of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for these three periods.

Through the charisma of Buya Yun, El Madury, in turn, used it to build religious authority.

On various occasions,<sup>9</sup> including when the author interviewed him, Buya Yun's name has always been an argument and a shield.<sup>10</sup> It was said by him that he created the *Syarah*

*Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* fanspage with the permission of Yunahar Ilyas.<sup>11</sup> Not only did El

Madury get permission from Buya Yun to give a further explanation on *Himpunan Putusan*

*Tarjih* (Tarjih Judgment Compilation), but also Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus

who is now maintaining website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com). When the author interviewed

Wahyudi Abdurrahim, he confirmed what El Madury had claimed.<sup>12</sup> However, according to

Muflih, this is a form of fairness. In other words, the permission from Yunahar Ilyas is a form of appreciation given by someone who is more senior and has a high social position in

Muhammadiyah to someone who is more junior and is classified as a grassroots

Muhammadiyah member.<sup>13</sup> Irrespective of Abdurrahim and Muflih's comments, permission

from Yunahar Ilyas, who has charisma within Muhammadiyah in particular, has become a

tool used by El Madury in building his religious authority.

In the perspective of Weber's charismatic authority, charisma is not only about a belief in the existence of extraordinary or superpowers possessed by or contained in humans but also

---

<sup>9</sup> Several people who informed the author about this, for example, were Muhammad Muflih (initiator of the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com)), Robby Karman (Secretary General of DPP IMM), and several meeting participants who were invited by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council with the agenda of Responding to Emergence '*Syarah HPT*' on Social Media on September 25, 2020.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Online interview with Wahyudi Abdurrahim through WhatsApp, September 2020.

<sup>13</sup> Online interview with Muhammad Muflih through WhatsApp and Facebook, 20 October 2019.

particular objects other than humans (Riesebrodt 1999). From here, we can get an explanation as to why El Madury named his fanpage *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council can be said to be a very respectable and crucial assembly in Muhammadiyah. Founded in 1927, the Council has a function as an assembly that carries out the agenda of purification of religion and the dynamization of social life by conducting research and investigations to find its purity, and accordingly giving fatwas and compiling religious guidelines regarding faith (*'aqīdah*) and worship (*'ibādah*) as well as social relations (*mu'āmalah*) (Anwar 2016; Al 1985). In addition, the function of the Tarjih Council is also to make efforts to resolve differences and disagreements on religious issues, which are usually referred to as *khilafiah* problems, so that they are directed more productively (Anwar 2007; 2016).

Based on the function of the Tarjih Council as stated above, it appears that this institution is a body that is responsible for formulating the ideological basis of the Muhammadiyah movement (Anwar 2007; 2016) and becomes Muhammadiyah's representative in the religious field (Fauzi 2017). As an institution that represents Muhammadiyah in the religious field, the Tarjih Council produces three tarjih products, namely: (1) tarjih fatwa (*fatwa tarjih*), (2) tarjih decision (*putusan tarjih*), and (3) tarjih discourse (*wacara tarjih*) (Anwar 2016). Tarjih fatwa is the Tarjih Council's answer to general questions regarding issues that require an explanation in terms of sharia law. Following the nature of the fatwa in general, the fatwa of the Tarjih Council is not binding, both on organizations and members as individuals. Therefore, even the fatwa can be questioned and discussed. However, because the fatwa contains religious guidance derived from Islamic teaching sources (Anwar 2020), and the general public often does not actually understand the characteristics of such a fatwa, it is still believed to be religious guidance by Muhammadiyah members. On the other hand, the tarjih decision is the official stance of Muhammadiyah in religious matters and is formally binding

on the organization and its members. However, in practice, sometimes Muhammadiyah members exercise their right to freedom not to be bound by the decision because they have different *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

Meanwhile, *tarjih* discourses are ideas or thoughts that are raised and put forward by the Tarjih Council in seminars, *halaqah*, or other forums in addressing various developing issues and at the same time fostering a critical spirit of *ijtihad* and collecting materials or stock of ideas regarding various actual problems in society. The nature of this *tarjih* discourse is not at all binding and does not become a fatwa that must be followed. *Tarjih* discourse is contained in various publications of the Tarjih Council, such as *Jurnal Tarjih* (Tarjih Journal) and various published books (Anwar 2016).

The first two products, namely the *tarjih* decision and the *tarjih* fatwa, have their power within Muhammadiyah. What becomes fatwas and decisions of Muhammadiyah are considered sacred by some members of Muhammadiyah. In summary, it can be said that anything that 'smells *tarjih*' has authority in the collective memory of the Muhammadiyah people. In Khaled Abou El Fadl's perspective, fatwas and *tarjih* decisions have the power of persuasive authority, namely an authority that can influence or direct others because they believed in them (Fadl 2014). The *tarjih* fatwa was officially published through the organization's official magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, and compiled in Tanya Jawab Agama's book.

In comparison, the *tarjih* decisions are codified in a book called *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Judgment Compilation) or commonly known by the abbreviation HPT. Unfortunately, there were only two HPT books until this research was conducted, namely HPT volume 1 and volume 3. At this point, it can be understood why the attribution of the term *tarjih* to particular objects can give rise to charismatic authority, as mentioned by Weber.

What El Madury did can also be seen from the perspective of identity politics. In one sense, identity politics is defined as a political tool of a group such as ethnicity, ethnicity, culture, religion or others for specific purposes, such as a form of resistance or a tool to show the identity of a group (Alfaqi 2015). Within this framework, identity is politicized through extreme interpretation, which aims to gain support from people who feel 'the same', whether by race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements. In the context of El Madury, the use of the tarjih label on the fanspage created by El Madury can be interpreted as a political tool to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muhammadiyah people. Not only that, if seen in some of his sermon videos, El Madury also placed a flag with the Muhammadiyah symbol behind him. In this context, he wants to show the identity of Muhammadiyah and convince the audience that he is a close part of Muhammadiyah. Moreover, he always admits and introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board on many occasions.

According to Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif, identity politics is always related to members of social groups who feel blackmailed and excluded by the domination of the mainstream in a nation or state (Maarif 2010). In line with Ma'arif, Sri Astuti Buchari also sees that the emergence of identity politics is mainly caused by certain factors that an ethnic group sees as the pressure in political injustice felt by them (Buchari 2014). By looking at the observations made by Ahmad Najib Burhani (Burhani 2013), El Madury, in this case, can be categorized as part of a group that feels excluded, threatened, and to some extent feels that he did not get justice within Muhammadiyah. Burhani explained the existence of two opposing thought orientations within Muhammadiyah. The two orientations are referred to by Burhani as 'Pure Islam' (*Islam Murni*) and 'Progressive Islam' (*Islam Progresif*) (Burhani 2013). The conflict between these two schools of thought in Muhammadiyah began to surface at the 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Banda Aceh in 1995 (Burhani 2013).

The dominance of the thought of 'Progressive Islam' in Muhammadiyah strengthened after the 44th Muhammadiyah Congress in Jakarta in 2000. This congress decided Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif as general chairman. He is a progressive Muslim figure, an alumnus of the University of Chicago, and a direct student of the eminent progressive scholar Fazlur Rahman. At this congress, several names representing the 'Progressive Islam' group were included in the ranks of the central leadership of Muhammadiyah, such as Amin Abdullah, Dawam Raharjo, and Abdul Munir Mul Khan. During Ma'arif's leadership, progressive ideas not only dominated culturally but gradually became Muhammadiyah's official programs (Burhani 2013).

Seeing the increasingly apparent threat from the ideas put forward by the 'Progressive Islam' group within Muhammadiyah, representatives of the 'Pure Islam' group did not remain silent. They compete with each other and fight over the religious interpretation, which is the most authentic. These two groups compete on various occasions, such as seminars, discussions, publishing, and other events. They usually have conflicting programs. For example, as mentioned by Burhani, when the Center for the Study of Religion and Civilization (PSAP/*Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban*) raised the theme of pluralism and multiculturalism in its journal, *Tanwir Journal*, the Tabligh Assembly responded with contradictory articles in their magazine, *Majalah Tabligh* (Tabligh Magazine). In Burhani's investigation, during the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress in Malang, this conservative group set up a Pojok Anti-Liberal (Anti-Liberal Corner) booth, which sells books, DVDs, t-shirts, magazines, and other anti-liberal knick-knacks. Strikingly, some of the t-shirts for sale display the words 'Muhammadiyah Anti-Liberal' (Burhani 2013).

At the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress, it seemed that the 'Pure Islam' group was gaining momentum to beat back the 'Progressive Islam' group. The fighting between these two groups took place outside the congress arena and took place in the congress committees. Burhani noted that there were at least three critical issues where the 'Pure Islam' group

defeated the 'Progressive Islam' group in the congress arena, namely: (1) the issue of leadership change; (2) the issue of the position of women; and (3) the issue of resistance to liberal thought (Burhani 2013; 2005).

After the 45th congress, the feud between these two schools of thought continued to roll on with dynamic tensions; sometimes it strengthens, sometimes it fades. The form of the feud now looks more varied along with the development of increasingly advanced information technology. The internet and social media presence have changed their battle arena from a conventional one to a more modern one. In this case, El Madury represents the 'Pure Islam' group, often fights head to head with figures considered representatives of 'Progressive Islam' in cyberspace. Their actions are seen as unsettling by El Madury. In the author's investigation, El Madury, for example, has openly attacked each other quite often with the Secretary-General of the DPP IMM, Robby Karman. Some of the cases are about the veil issue and the Wahhabi issue. According to El Madury, Robby Karman is a young liberal figure in Muhammadiyah who must be fought. Not only personal, but El Madury also often attacks the IBTimes.ID website often contains articles with progressive nuances and, to some extent, controversial. This website is fronted by several former *Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah* (JIMM/Muhammadiyah Youth Intellectual Network) figures, such as Hilman Latief, Azaki Khoiruddin, and Mu'arif. On one occasion, when the chairman of the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Center admonished El Madury not to upload posts that were provocative and contradicted the official stance of the Tarjih Council, he defended himself while chiming in that equally provocative posts from the 'Progressive Islam' group should also be reprimanded and reminded. If the one who was rebuked was only him, while they were not reprimanded, then according to him, an injustice had occurred.<sup>14</sup> El Madury's attitude in the framework of

---

<sup>14</sup> On November 3, 2019, the manager of *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* reprimanded Zulkarnain El Madury regarding his post on the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhamamdiyah* fanspage regarding the veil which contradicts Muhammadiyah's official stance.

identity politics can be seen as an attitude that shows feelings of being excluded and threatened by certain parties. It made him feel that there is injustice. At this point, then, what El Madury does by using specific attributes and identities is not empty of purpose. These attributes and identities are intentionally attached as a form of resistance to the domination of certain groups or thoughts that threaten him.

What has been described above is the process of how El Madury builds his authority through the first way, namely the authority built through charisma (charismatic authority). There is still one more way used by El Madury, namely the authority built through tradition or what Weber calls traditional authority (Riesebrodt 1999; Matheson 1987; Spencer 1970). In simple terms, something can be considered as having traditional authority if it gains legitimacy based on beliefs or norms that have been established in a particular tradition (Chairi 2019). In other words, according to Spencer, traditional authority is legitimized and, at the same time, constrained by traditional norms. Therefore, it is the opposite of charismatic authority. If in charismatic authority, it is the leader or someone who creates the norms, then it is the norms that create the leader or person in the traditional authority. In charismatic authority, the value of influence is generated by a person's personal qualities and is always associated with his personality. While in the case of traditional authority, it is generated by function and is related to someone or something that has traditional values (Spencer 1970).

In the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, *'ulama* and the classical books they wrote can be considered to have this traditional authority value. *'Ulama* in Islamic tradition is called as the heir of the Prophets. The authority of *'ulama* is derived from the legitimacy of religious texts which say that the prophetic tradition will be passed on to them. Therefore, the religious ideas they convey in writings or books contain an authoritative value for the next generation. This is the uniqueness of Islamic scholars and traditions, as mentioned by Muhammad Qasim Zaman (Zaman 2002). According to him, one of the most prominent aspects of pre-modern



intellectual culture is the articulation of religious discourse through the so-called medium of the commentary, which is manifested in various forms such *al-syurūh*, *hawāsyī*, *rasā'il*, and *fatawā*. The various genres of books that contain explanations, descriptions, or responses to a book or social phenomena are a way for scholars to shape the identity and authority of the school or tradition they adhere to. In addition, it is also a means to interpret the meaning of the foundational sources of Islam, namely the al-Quran and hadith (Zaman 2002).

An example is the *hawāsyī* tradition in the Shafii school. The phenomenon of the emergence of the *hawāsyī* genre in the Shafii school, according to Ahmed El-Shamsy, shows the peak of the authority of the two scholars in that school, namely al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī (El Shamsy 2013). Al-Kurdī, as quoted by El Shamsy, called these two scholars 'the higher authorities in the Syafii school'. People who want to know the authoritative opinion of the Shafi'i school must go through the works of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī and the books that explain further the two works of these scholars, namely the books written by Ibn Ḥajar al-Haitamī and Syamsuddīn al-Ramlī. At this point, it appears that the books of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī, and also the books that explain both, have for later generations the value of traditional authority (El Shamsy 2013).

What is the connection between this traditional authority and Zulkarnain El Madury? El Madury in writing his opinions on the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage always relies on the Islamic intellectual tradition. In fact, not only what is written on the fanspage, in religious forums where he is a speaker, El Madury often quotes Islamic intellectual traditions (*turāts*). According to Endang Mintarja, Chairman of the Jakarta Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council, this characteristic has attracted many people to the content of El Madury's lectures.<sup>15</sup> However, regardless of what intellectual tradition is quoted, it is clear

---

<sup>15</sup> This is as expressed by the Chairman of the Jakarta Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council Endang Mintarja in a meeting held by Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board when discussing the phenomenon of the emergence 'Syarah HPT', September 25, 2020

that the opinion put forward by El Madury is always attributed to the books of classical scholars. At this point, El Madury is building his authority.

What El Madury did, Muhammadiyah did not do in many of its fatwas. Perhaps this is a consequence of the spirit of the modernist movement, which became the spirit of Muhammadiyah. The modernist movement initiated by reformers such as Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, and Muḥammad Rasyīd Riḍā in the late 19th and early 20th centuries had the jargon *al-rujū' ilā al-qur'ān wa al-sunnah* (back to al-Quran and Sunnah). According to Syed Junaid A. Quadri, the most obvious indicator of this movement, especially in Islamic law, is its critical attitude towards the structure of pre-modern sharia authority symbols, which are articulated in the language and logic of the institution of *taqlīd*. Therefore, modernist groups always encourage reopening the door to ijtihad and invite Muslims to leave the interpretive monopoly that the *'ulama* class has held (Quadri 2013).

Muhammadiyah, which is heavily inspired by the modernist movement, has more or less the same characteristics. Muhammadiyah is very oriented towards the al-Quran and sunnah (al-Quran and Sunnah oriented) and tends not to attach too much importance to the Islamic intellectual tradition that has been built by *'ulama*. This can be seen from one point in the *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*, which asserts that Muhammadiyah is not affiliated with a particular school, but the opinions of that schools are only considered in determining religious norms (Anwar 2018). This means that understanding religion in the Muhammadiyah perspective is carried out directly from its primary sources, namely the al-Quran and Sunnah through the ijtihad process with existing ijtihad methods. However, it should be noted here that the narration that confirms the opinions of the scholars is taken into account in determining norms is not very clear how they are implemented in tarjih products.

By looking at some of the tarjih products that have been produced, the nuances of the opinions of the scholars, especially pre-modern scholars, seem invisible or deliberately not shown. Even if we look at the Islamic intellectual tradition, we will find from whom or from which school the tarjih opinion came from. So, here it appears that El Madury is actually filling the gap that Muhammadiyah did not fill, namely presenting the authority of the Islamic intellectual tradition in religious narratives. For example, in the veil case, which had become a hot topic of discussion some time ago. The Tarjih Council has issued three fatwas related to the veil, namely in 1993 (T. M. T. dan T. P. P. Muhammadiyah 2019a), 2003 (T. M. T. dan T. P. P. Muhammadiyah 2019b), and 2009 (T. M. T. dan T. P. P. Muhammadiyah 2009). The fatwas issued in 1993 and 2009 emphasized that the veil has no legal basis either in the al-Quran or the Sunnah. What Islamic law commands women to wear is the hijab. These two fatwas base their arguments on the al-Quran and hadith, without citing the Islamic intellectual tradition, which also accommodates opinions about the veil. Although the Tarjih Council remained in its stance and strengthened the opinion that women's genitals are the whole body except the face and the palms of the hands, in the 2003 fatwa, the Tarjih Council provides space for those who want to wear the veil by expressing several opinions from the scholars who think so.

In contrast to the tarjih fatwas, Zulkarnain El Madury in the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage uploaded an article that refutes the tarjih fatwa about the veil. El Madury's article is entitled '*Siapa Bilang Cadar Tak Ada Dalilnya dalam Islam?*' (Who Says The Veil Has No Evidence in Islam?) (El Madury 2019). In the article, he cites various opinions of scholars in the Islamic intellectual tradition who support mandatory veiling as an effort to build religious authority. From this, it appears that El Madury, apart from attacking the tarjih fatwa, also shows a different attitude from the tarjih fatwa in maintaining traditional authority, in this case, the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāts*).

Apart from being seen from the perspective of Weber's authority, what El Madury did in building religious authority can also be captured from what Burhani calls a conversion narrative. Some scholars define conversion narratives differently. For example, the change from one religious tradition to another can be referred to as religious conversion. Meanwhile, William James, as quoted by Burhani, said that religious conversion is not only a matter of changing a person from one religious tradition to another but it can also be interpreted as the conversion of a person who is wallowing in sin (sinner) into a human who pious. According to Burhani, people who experience religious conversion, usually after embracing a new tradition or religious understanding, will 'attack' the previous religious tradition or understanding.

El Madury also experienced a religious conversion. In this case, from the NU tradition to Muhammadiyah. In the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage and his confession when interviewed by the author, he introduced himself as a person who had practised the tradition he called '*kuburiyyun* tradition'<sup>16</sup> and other traditions that did not have examples from the Prophet. To convince his fanspage followers, he posted information about the religious conversion he had done. He also carried out attacks on his previous practices, which were deemed to have no basis in the al-Quran and hadith. Not only that, but he also openly often debates and even attacks each other with an NU *kyai* named Idrus Ramli.

### **Muhammadiyah's Efforts in Maintaining Religious Authority in Cyberspace**

Before the advent of the internet, with various new religious authorities emerging, Muhammadiyah and NU were the two authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). However, after the emergence of the so-called micro-ustaz-celebrity, the two largest religious organizations, according to some scholars, began to face challenges and

---

<sup>16</sup> It means the tradition of visiting the grave with all kinds of practices that are in it.

threats. Based on previous studies, the way the two organizations maintain religious authority does not appear to be the same. Wahyudi Akmaliah's recent study shows that the two organizations have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities (Akmaliah 2020). While NU was very reactive to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah said there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah respond that looks less fierce (Akmaliah 2020). Akmaliah's thesis on several points is correct, but other perspectives deserve to be considered, especially to explore Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority, especially in cyberspace.

According to the author, the weak point from Akmaliah's study is that there is no adequate elaboration of the assembly that exclusively holds religious authority in Muhammadiyah, namely the Tarjih Councils. According to the author, to trace more precisely how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority is to look at the Tarjih and Tadjid Councils. At this point, the author's study attempts to fill that gap.

This discussion will start from the author's experience in attending a meeting held by the Tarjih Council and Tadjid of Muhammadiyah Central Board. The meeting was initiated in response to the emergence of the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* made by Zulkarnain El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim. It should be noted here that besides being made by El Madury, the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* was also written by Abdurrahim, a person who was mentioned at the beginning of this article getting permission from Buya Yun to make *syarḥ* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Judgment Compilation). The difference with El Madury, Abdurrahim wrote *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* in a book. The initial background for holding this meeting, as revealed by the Secretary of the Tarjih Council, Mas'udi, was purely in response to the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* written by Zulkarnain El Madury. However, the existence of information about the

existence of the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* other than the one written by El Madury prompted the board of Tarjih Council to include the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* written by Abdurrahim also to be discussed in the meeting (“Rapat Majelis Tarjih Tentang Menyikapi Munculnya ‘Syarah HPT’ Di Media Sosial” 2020).

On Friday, 7 Safar 1442 AH or coinciding with September 25, 2020, the Tarjih Council invited nine related elements to discuss some people's concerns over the emergence of the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* in cyberspace written by the two people. These nine elements are: (1) the Executive Board of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (2) Fatwa Division of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (3) Chairman/Secretary of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (4) Dr Endang Mintarja, M.Ag. (Chairman of the Jakarta Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council); (5) H. Fathurrahman, Lc., M.S.I. (Chairman of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council); (6) H. Budi Setiawan, S.T.; (7) Arif Nurkholis (Head of Muhammadiyah Digital Syiar Center); (8) Manager of UAD Muhammadiyah Tarjih Center; and (9) Social Media Assistance Team of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (“Rapat Majelis Tarjih Tentang Menyikapi Munculnya ‘Syarah HPT’ Di Media Sosial” 2020).

During the meeting, proposals emerged from the meeting participants concerning how to respond to the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*, especially the one written by El Madury. There are at least four proposals that surfaced. First, report the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage to the Facebook authority so that fanspage is banned for using an institution's name without permission. According to Fathurrahman Kamal, who present at the forum, the fanspage is already in the illegal category. This proposal was considered by its proponents as firm and not too risky as if using the name of the Muhammadiyah organization; even it could be counter-productive. Second, use a persuasive approach. The proposed persuasive approach can be in the form of clarification or an appeal to El Madury not to use the name *Himpunan Putusan Tajih* (HPT) or something that smells of

tarjih. Its proponents consider this approach to be softer and more characteristic of being members of Muhammadiyah in particular and Muslims in general. Third, take an official institutional approach. The point is to use an official letter on behalf of the Tarjih Council addressed to El Madury. In other words, this approach uses institutional authority to respond to El Madury and his fanspage. Fourth, socialize the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it through social media. This approach is considered more appropriate by the proponent. In addition to avoiding being trapped in the substantive content of fanspage, this approach is considered more practical and efficient (“Rapat Majelis Tarjih Tentang Menyikapi Munculnya ‘Syarah HPT’ Di Media Sosial” 2020).

Until the meeting was over, there was no agreement on which approach to the proposal would be executed. This is because the meeting has been running for quite a long time, so the forum participants agreed to discuss it in the following forum. Unfortunately, until this article was written, there has been no further meeting to follow up on the previous meeting. However, it is interesting to note that the Tarjih Council rarely discusses and conducts meetings on something they think is not too important. Therefore, at this point, it can be seen that the phenomenon of the emergence of *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* in cyberspace and its effects have been considered a serious problem by the Tarjih Council. Especially by looking at the proposals that surfaced in the meeting. In other words, the emergence of *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* has been considered a threat to religious authority that has been attached to the Tarjih Council.

Although there has been no follow up from the meeting, what has been done by the *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (Tarjih Muhammadiyah Center) as an official institution supporting the Tarjih Council can illustrate how Muhammadiyah struggles to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace. As a household, the Tarjih Council is the father while the Tarjih Center is the child.

*Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (Tarjih Muhammadiyah Center) is an institution that was founded in 2016 (Dahlan 2016; P. P. Muhammadiyah n.d.). It was established in collaboration between the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Ahmad Dahlan University (P. T. Muhammadiyah, n.d.). Even though it is a new institution, its legality is clear, so it formally has authority. In the Muhammadiyah tradition as an organization, this kind of legality is essential. No matter how strong the arguments issued by a figure in Muhammadiyah, if he or she speaks on his or her behalf, then his or her status will still be inferior to institutions within Muhammadiyah which, although new, have legality. In the context of El Madury and the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage, this is important. Because even though El Madury said he had obtained permission to make *syarḥ* (further explanation) on *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Judgment Compilation) from a charismatic figure in Muhammadiyah, Buya Yunahar, legally it could not be said to be valid. In that context, Buya Yunahar spoke on behalf of himself, not on behalf of Muhammadiyah.

Fronted by young Muhammadiyah cadres, the majority of whom are alumni of *Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (Muhammadiyah Tarjih Ulama Education),<sup>17</sup> *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* plays a role in supporting the Tarjih Council programs, which are relatively under-performing and facing obstacles. They, especially, related to technological advances, such as using social media to disseminate their *ijtihad* products. The members of the Tarjih Council, who are relatively old, need to get support from young cadres. At this point, the *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* played an essential role in assisting the Tarjih Council in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace. Responding to El Madury and his fanspage, *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah*, through the power of its social media, took the initiative to

---

<sup>17</sup> *Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (PUTM) is an educational institution under the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board which is designed to produce a cadre of Muhammadiyah scholars. PUTM organizes a special program that educates and prepares Muhammadiyah tarjih scholars who are competent in the religious field. The birth of PUTM was based on the concern of some Muhammadiyah leaders about the increasing scarcity of '*ulama*' in and from Muhammadiyah. See (Fauzi 2020).



make a poster containing information related to the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it.



Figure 1 Poster containing information related to official social media accounts affiliated with the Tarjih Council

Although the poster above does not directly mention the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage created by El Madury, the main message in it is clear and firm, namely to inform Muhammadiyah people regarding the official accounts of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it. So it is hoped that Muhammadiyah people will understand which Muhammadiyah's official religious voice is disseminated in cyberspace. After that, successively *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* uploaded other, more varied posters to indirectly

counter the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* following posters,



*Figure 3 Information about the website fatwatarjih.or.id, an official website affiliated with the Tarjih Council containing fatwas.*



*Figure 2 Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council*



*Figure 4 Information on the official website of the Tarjih Council*

Figures 1, 2 and 4 are interesting to observe. The use of informal and slang-like language and emoticons typical of millennials indicate the audience that the Tarjih Council wants to target, which is apart from adults and millennial groups. *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* team understands that language that tends to be non-formal will touch the audience's hearts more than rigid formal language. This method not only wants to show the authority of the Tarjih Council but at the same time tries to carry out the so-called tarjih millennialization process. According to Suyadi and Widodo, millennialization is an alternative way to develop

knowledge synergized with various online media and digital technology (Suyadi and Widodo 2019). In the context of tarjih millennialization, tarjih products that tend to be disseminated in a conventional, monotonous, and uncreative manner are now disseminated by utilizing technological advances and presented in more contextual packaging. In addition, the millennialization of tarjih can also mean that the Tarjih Assembly and its various ijihad products, which previously were always identified with the 'old people', have now also touched and greeted the 'young people'.

At this point, it can be said that the religious authority of the Tarjih Council in cyberspace, especially when connected with the appearance of El Madury and his fanspage, was greatly helped by the presence of *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* and the young Muhammadiyah cadres in it. Managing various social media platforms with large followers, *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* has helped maintain Muhammadiyah's religious authority by balancing and suppressing the presence of micro-ustaz-celebrities. The contents contained in it are fatwas and decisions of the Tarjih Council with exciting visualizations. This is expected to reach a wider community, especially the millennial group.

Although the number of social media followers affiliated with the Tarjih Council is not as much as the NU and Salafi groups, for example, at least the presence of *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* has become a kind of compass for Muhammadiyah people who question Muhammadiyah's religious authority, especially with the emergence of El Madury's version of *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* social media admin acknowledge that many questions came in, either through the comments column or direct messages in the inbox, which questioned the authority of *Syarah Himpunan Putusan*

*Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage.<sup>18</sup> Here, the vital role of *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* is increasingly finding its momentum.

## **Conclusion**

This article tries to trace Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace. By focusing on the figure of Zulkarnain El Madury and *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage that he has created and managed, this article finds a different conclusion from previous studies. By analyzing what the Tarjih Council has done as the only institution in Muhammadiyah with authority to issue fatwas, this article shows that Muhammadiyah is not as calm and passive as Akmaliah described in his article (Akmaliah 2020). With the help of *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* as an institution under it, the Tarjih Council made a series of efforts through social media and its official website to counter votes from new authorities that threatened its authority.

## **Acknowledgements**

I am grateful to *ustaz* Zulkarnain El Madury for his exceptional help and support during my fieldwork. I also thank Amiruddin, Arif Nur Kholis, Muhammad Muflih, Wahyudi Abdurrahim, Robby Karman, Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, Ilham Ibrahim, Ariful Hazam, and all members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council for providing a lot of information regarding my research.

## **Funding**

This work was supported by Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian, Unniversitas Ahmad Dahlan.

---

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Ariful Hazam, Ilham Ibrahim, and Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, September 2020. They are *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* social media admin.

## Notes on contributor

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi is a lecturer of Department of Hadith Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He has published widely on a variety of issues relating to Islamic Studies, including al-Quran, hadith, Islamic law, social media and *da'wah*, and Muhammadiyah studies. Email: [niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id](mailto:niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id)

## References

- “Aa Gym Ajak Ribuan Jamaahnya Ikut Aksi Bela Islam III.” n.d. Accessed February 2, 2020.  
<http://www.dakta.com/news/7329/aa-gym-ajak-ribuan-jamaahnya-ikut-aksi-bela-islam-iii>.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2018. “Media Sosial Dan Pergeseran Otoritas Keagamaan.” 2018.  
[https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media\\_sosial\\_dan\\_pergeseran\\_otoritas\\_keagamaan](https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media_sosial_dan_pergeseran_otoritas_keagamaan).
- . 2020. “The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and Reclaiming Religious Authorities.” *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10 (1): 1–24.  
<https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v10i1.1-24>.
- Al, Asjmuni Abdur Rahman et. 1985. “Laporan Penelitian Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (Suatu Studi Tentang Sistem Dan Metode Penentuan Hukum).” Yogyakarta.
- Alfaqi, Mifdal Zusron. 2015. “Memahami Indonesia Melalui Prespektif Nasionalisme, Politik Identitas, Serta Solidaritas.” *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 28 (2).
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2007. *Studi Hukum Islam Kontemporer*. Jakarta: RM Books.
- . 2016. “Fatwā, Purification and Dynamization: A Study of Tarjih in Muhammadiyah.” *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (1): 27–44.

- . 2018. *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Panitia Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih Muhammadiyah XXX.
- . 2020. *Studi Hukum Islam Kontemporer Bagian Dua*. Yogyakarta: UAD Press.
- Buchari, Sri Astuti. 2014. *Kebangkitan Etnis Menuju Politik Identitas*. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Bunt, Gary R. 2017. "Islam in the Digital Age." *Islam in the Digital Age*, 205–11.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt18fs6ck.14>.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2005. "The 45th Muhammadiyah Congress Contest between Literal-Conservative and Liberal-Moderate Muslims in Indonesia." *Studia Islamika* 12 (1).  
<https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v12i1.650>.
- . 2013. "Liberal and Conservative Discourses in the Muhammadiyah: The Struggle for the Face of Reformist Islam in Indonesia." In *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the "Conservative Turn,"* edited by Martin Van Bruinessen. Singapura: ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute.
- . 2016. "Aksi Bela Islam: Konservatisme Dan Fragmentasi Otoritas Keagamaan." *Jurnal Maarif* 11 (2).
- Burhanudin, Jajat. 2004. "The Fragmentation of Religious Authority: Islamic Print Media in Early 20th Century Indonesia." *Studia Islamika* 11 (1): 23–62.  
<https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v11i1.609>.
- Campbell, Heidi, and Paul Emerson Teusner. 2011. "Religious Authority in the Age of the Internet." *Virtual Lives*, 59–68.
- Chairi, Effendi. 2019. "Ketidadaan Otoritas Terpusat Dalam Fenomena Kontemporer Di Indonesia." *SANGKÉP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 2 (2).

<https://doi.org/10.20414/sangkep.v2i2.666>.

Dahlan, Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah dan Universitas Ahmad. 2016. “Nota Kesepakatan Majelis Tarjih Dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Tentang Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di Islamic Center Universitas Ahmad Dahlan.” Yogyakarta.

Fadl, Khaled Abou El. 2014. *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority, and Women*. London: Oneworld Publications.

Farhan, Farhan. 2017. “Pesan Dakwah Felix Siauw Di Media Sosial (Perspektif Meaning and Media).” *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Administrasi Islam*.  
<https://doi.org/10.22373/al-idarah.v1i2.2242>.

Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2017. “Peranan Maqasid Al-Shariah Dalam Memahami Hadith: Kajian Terhadap Fatwa Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah.” University of Malaya.

———. 2020. “PUTM Dan Kaderisasi Ulama: Menelusuri Latar Belakang Lahirnya Lembaga Kaderisasi Ulama Muhammadiyah.” 2020. <https://santricendekia.com/putm-dan-kaderisasi-ulama-menelusuri-latar-belakang-lahirnya-lembaga-kaderisasi-ulama-muhammadiyah/>.

Fealy, Greg. 2008. “Consuming Islam: Commodified Religion and Aspirational Pietism in Contemporary Indonesia.” In *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, edited by Greg Fealy and Sally White. <https://doi.org/10.1355/9789812308528-006>.

Hew, Wai Weng. 2018. “THE ART OF DAKWAH: Social Media, Visual Persuasion and the Islamist Propagation of Felix Siauw.” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (134): 61–79.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2018.1416757>.

Hoesterey, James B. 2008. “Marketing Morality: The Rise, Fall and Rebranding of Aa Gym.”



*In Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia.*

<https://doi.org/10.1355/9789812308528-010>.

Hope Cheong, Pauline. 2016. "Religious Authority and Social Media Branding in a Culture of Religious Celebrification." In *The Media and Religious Authority*. S. Hoover.

Horsfield, Peter. 2016. "The Media and Religious Authority from Ancient to Modern." *The Media and Religious Authority*, no. February: 37–66.

Hosen, Nadirsyah. 2008. "Online Fatwa in Indonesia: From Fatwa Shopping to Googling a Kiai." In *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, edited by Greg Fealy and Sally White, 155–73. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Khamis, Susie, Lawrence Ang, and Raymond Welling. 2017. "Self-Branding, 'Micro-Celebrity' and the Rise of Social Media Influencers." *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191–208.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2016.1218292>.

Khomalia, Isti, and Khairul Arief Rahman. 2018. "Micro Hijabers Celebrity: Membentuk Identitas Dengan Update Self-Story via Instagram (Kasus Dian Pelangi)." *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban Dan Pemikiran Islam* 2 (1): 33.  
<https://doi.org/10.23971/njppi.v2i1.869>.

Labiq. 2019. "Pengaruh 'New Media' Terhadap Pergeseran Otoritas Keagamaan." 2019.  
<https://geotimes.co.id/opini/pengaruh-new-media-terhadap-pergeseran-otoritas-keagamaan/>.

Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. 2010. *Politik Identitas Dan Masa Depan Pluralisme Indonesia*. Edited by Ihsan Ali-Fauzi dan Samsu Rizal Panggabean. Jakarta: Pusat Studi Agama dan Demokrasi (PUSAD) Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina.

Madury, Zulkarnain El. 2019. "Siapa Bilang Cadar Tak Ada Dalilnya Dalam Islam?"

November 2, 2019.

<https://www.facebook.com/zulkarnainsumenep/posts/2386248524961601>.

Maskur, Maskur, and Irfan Noor. 2014. "Ustadz Selebriti Abdullah Gymnastiar Dalam Budaya Populer (Perspektif Hipersemiotika Yasraf Amir Piliang)." *Jurnal Studia Insania* 2 (1): 47. <https://doi.org/10.18592/jsi.v2i1.1091>.

Matheson, Craig. 1987. "Weber and the Classification of Forms of Legitimacy." *The British Journal of Sociology* 38 (2): 199. <https://doi.org/10.2307/590532>.

Muhammadiyah, Pimpinan Pusat. n.d. "Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah Launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Dan MuON." Accessed March 20, 2021. <http://www.umm.ac.id/id/muhammadiyah/7070.html>.

Muhammadiyah, Pusat Tarjih. n.d. *Panduan Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta.

Muhammadiyah, Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat. 2009. "Hukum Tentang Jenggot Dan Cadar." *Suara Muhammadiyah*, September 2009.

———. 2019a. *Fatwa-Fatwa Tarjih: Tanya Jawab Agama Jilid 4*. Cetakan IX. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

———. 2019b. *Fatwa-Fatwa Tarjih: Tanya Jawab Agama Jilid 7*. Cetakan IV. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Muzakka, Ahmad Khotim. 2018. "Otoritas Keagamaan Dan Fatwa Personal Di Indonesia." *Epistémé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 13 (1): 63–88. <https://doi.org/10.21274/epis.2018.13.1.63-88>.

Nisa, Eva F. 2019. "Internet and Muslim Women." *Handbook of Contemporary Islam and*

- Muslim Lives*, 1–19. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73653-2\\_71-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73653-2_71-1).
- Postill, John, and Sarah Pink. 2012. “Social Media Ethnography: The Digital Researcher in a Messy Web.” *Media International Australia*, no. 125. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878x1214500114>.
- Pribadi, Yanwar. 2019. “Fragmentasi Umat Dan Penciptaan Otoritas Keagamaan: Tanggapan Terhadap ‘Islam Lokal’ Dan ‘Islam Asing’ Di Indonesia.” *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 21 (1): 103. <https://doi.org/10.14203/jmb.v21i1.828>.
- Quadri, Syed Junaid A. 2013. “Transformations of Tradition: Modernity in The Thought of Muḥammad Bakhīt Al-Muṭī‘ī.” McGill University.
- “Rapat Majelis Tarjih Tentang Menyikapi Munculnya ‘Syarah HPT’ Di Media Sosial.” 2020. Yogyakarta.
- Riesebrodt, Martin. 1999. “Charisma in Max Weber’s Sociology of Religion.” *Religion* 29 (1). <https://doi.org/10.1006/reli.1999.0175>.
- Rusli, R. 2014. “Progressive Salafism in Online Fatwa.” *Al-Jami’ah* 52 (1): 205–29. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2014.521.205-229>.
- Sadasri, Lidwina Mutia. 2017. “Selebriti Mikro Di Media Baru Kajian Presentasi Diri Dalam Vlog Selebriti Mikro.” *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi Dan Opini Publik* 21 (2): 167–81. <https://jurnal.kominfo.go.id/index.php/jpkop/article/view/1218>.
- Senft, Theresa. 2008. *Camgirls: Celebrity and Community in the Age of Social Networks*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Shamsy, Ahmed El. 2013. “The Ḥāshiya in Islamic Law: A Sketch of the Shāfi‘ī Literature.” *Oriens* 41. <https://doi.org/10.1163/18778372-13413404>.

- Spencer, Martin E. 1970. "Weber on Legitimate Norms and Authority." *The British Journal of Sociology* 21 (2). <https://doi.org/10.2307/588403>.
- Suyadi and Widodo, Suyadi Hendro. 2019. "Millennialization of Islamic Education Based on Neuroscience in The Third Generation University in Yogyakarta Indonesia." *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7 (1): 173–202.  
<https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v7i1.4922>.
- Turner, Bryan S. 2007. "Religious Authority and the New Media." *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2): 117–34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276407075001>.
- Turner, Graeme. 2010. *Ordinary People and the Media: The Demotic Turn*. *Ordinary People and the Media: The Demotic Turn*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446269565>.
- Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.40-5188>.

# Bukti Revisi

1

## **Cover Letter**

Dear Dr Laura Noszlopy,  
Assistant Editor of Indonesia and The Malay World

Greetings from Indonesia and wishing you a great day with happiness and healthy condition in this era COVID-19.

First of all, I would like to thank you for allowing me to submit my revised manuscript entitled “Zulkarnain El Madury and the Micro-Celebrity-Ustaz Phenomenon: Tracing Muhammadiyah's Struggle in Maintaining Religious Authority in Cyberspace”. I really appreciate the time and effort that you and the reviewers have dedicated to providing valuable feedback on my manuscript. I am grateful to you and the reviewers for their insightful comments on my paper.

Furthermore, I have revised the manuscript based on the reviewers' comments, suggestions, and remarks. I have marked the revised manuscript with the green color.

In this email, I am attaching two files. The first is a revision of my manuscript. The second is a file containing the reviewer's comments and my response to them.

Lastly, I do hope that this article can be published in Indonesia and The Malay World to contribute my research results to your journal.

Once again, thank you very much for your cooperation, help, and kindness. I really appreciate your time and look forward to seeing your positive response.

Best wishes,  
Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

Dear Dr Laura Noszlopy,  
Assistant Editor of Indonesia and The Malay World

Greetings from Indonesia and wishing you a great day with happiness and healthy condition in this era COVID-19.

First of all, I would like to thank you for allowing me to submit my revised manuscript entitled “Zulkarnain El Madury and the Micro-Celebrity-Ustaz Phenomenon: Tracing Muhammadiyah's Struggle in Maintaining Religious Authority in Cyberspace”. I really appreciate the time and effort that you and the reviewers have dedicated to providing valuable feedback on my manuscript. I am grateful to you and the reviewers for their insightful comments on my paper.

Furthermore, I have revised the manuscript based on the reviewers' comments, suggestions, and remarks. I have marked the revised manuscript with the green color. Furthermore, I resume the revision in the table for responds to reviewers' comments, as follows:

Reviewer's Comment	Respond to Reviewer
<b>Abstract:</b> a) <b>Rolling</b> : poor word choice	<b>Abstract:</b> a) I have changed it: occurrence b) Because there is additional section in my article, there are slight changes in the abstract. I marked the abstract change in green.
<b>Introduction:</b> a) <b>Several years ago</b> : Give the year! There have been several “Aksi Bela Islam” since 2016, so it is best to give the date of the specific one you mean. b) <b>Muhammad Rizieq Shihab, chairman of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI)</b> : Because you do not return to this case in any broader analysis (indeed, the analysis of this draft is quite narrow), it does not make sense to open with the case of the 212 rally and the rising authority of Muhamamd Rizieq Shihab. This should not be the first thing in the article if you do not connect it with any of the main content! Please either integrate this case in a broader analysis of the question of shifting authority, or find another way to open the article. c) <b>A further excess of the internet presence</b> : awkward and poor word choice d) <b>Micro-ustaz-celebrity</b> : This term is poorly formulated and not particularly helpful—especially when it is not used in the latter part of the article. First, on how this is poorly framed in English, by putting “ustaz” in the middle, the new term suggests that the individual’s scholarly knowledge is “micro,” because the “micro” applies to “ustaz” and not to “celebrity.” In fact, I think the intention was that this be an ustaz who is also a micro-celebrity, and therefore “micro-celebrity-ustaz” would be the appropriate term (which also parallels the phrase “celebrity ustaz,” which has been used	<b>Introduction:</b> a) I have revised it: The Defend Islam Action (Aksi Bela Islam) I, II, and III that took place in 2016 in Indonesia ... b) I have integrated the FPI and Rizieq Shihab cases with the El Madury case. The explanation can be read on pages 25-26 of my article in sentences that I have coloured in green. c) I have revised it: Further impact of the internet. d) I followed the reviewer's suggestion to change the wrong term that I used, namely micro-ustaz-celebrity, to micro-celebrity-ustaz. Not only that, I have also revised my article by displaying and discussing the term in other parts of my article, namely on pages 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 14, 26, 27, 29, 35, 36. The term micro-celebrity-ustaz, which I mean in my article, is also explained on page 8. I marked the change in green. e) I have added a reference source for the sentence. In addition, I also add additional information. This change is on page 3, and I marked it in green. f) I have revised it: modernist. g) I have obtained a research permit from the university's ethics board through Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. I put the research permit number in footnote number 2, and I coloured it green. h) I have actually conducted interviews with representatives from grassroots, and I have mentioned their names in this article, namely Ariful Hazam, Farida Fardhani, Ilham Ibrahim, and Muhammad Muflih. It is just that I mentioned their other professions, such as Ariful, Farida, and Ilham,

<p>in the literature before (especially in the Malaysian context). Second, the term appears only twice in the final 3/4 of the paper (i.e., only twice after page 8), and thus is not particularly crucial to the case study.</p> <p>e) <b>It can even be said that he is the ustaz or preacher who has the most followers on social media:</b> source?</p> <p>f) <b>Modern:</b> "Modern" is not the same as "modernist" or "reformist." Groups like Nahdlatul Ulama or Nahdlatul Wathan also have AD/ART, sekretaris, bendahara, cabang, ranting, etc. etc. etc. –they are also modern in structure (and they certainly exist in the present day, making them modern in historical terms). What they are not is modernist in theology. Please do not confuse the two.</p> <p>g) <b>In conducting the field research:</b> For researchers at Western institutions who conduct interviews with human subjects, it would be appropriate to provide a footnote with the approval from the university ethics board for human subjects research. For researchers at Indonesian universities (that often do not have a research ethics board), it is appropriate to provide the research permit number from the local authority (usually the kabupaten / kota Kesbang Linmas office). If this research has been conducted in Indonesia without a research permit from the local government, then it happened in violation of the law.</p> <p>h) <b>several prominent figures as well as Muhammadiyah activists:</b> Why were no grassroots interviews conducted?</p>	<p>as social media admins from the Tarjih Muhamamdiyah Center. Meanwhile, Muflih is a grassroots person who helped Wahyudi Abdurrahim create tanyajawabagama.com application. However, following the reviewer's suggestion, I also mention that they are Muhammadiyah grassroots in this revised version of my article.</p>
<p><b>Fragmentation of Religious Authority, New Preacher and Micro-Celebrity-Ustaz Phenomenon:</b></p> <p>a) <b>whether Muslim majority, the Muslim minority, even Shia:</b> Awkward</p> <p>b) <b>namely at the beginning of the 20th century:</b> Religious authority was fragmenting *long* before this! I think it is appropriate to only begin tracking it for this article from the beginning of the 20th century, but please do not let the reader think you are a fool who does not know about the history of contested religious authority in Indonesia before 1900.</p> <p>c) <b>each individual (Muzakka 2018) and group (Pribadi 2019; Rusli 2014) compete to spread ideas (Nisa 2019; Horsfield 2016):</b> I am not convinced that all these citations are necessary or useful here.</p> <p>d) <b>hyper phenomenon:</b> I do not know what it this is supposed to mean, and I am not sure that this aspect of the literature is helpful to the case explored in depth in this article.</p>	<p><b>Fragmentation of Religious Authority, New Preacher and Micro-Celebrity-Ustaz Phenomenon:</b></p> <p>a) I have deleted the sentence.</p> <p>b) I have revised the sentence. Revisions are written in green sentences: Especially in Indonesia, the fragmentation of religious authority can be traced far back. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this article, the fragmentation of religious authority that will be discussed here is from the beginning of the 20th century to the present day.</p> <p>c) I have revised it, and only mention two sources: (Nisa 2019; Horsfield 2016).</p> <p>d) I have changed it to another sentence in the hope that the sentence can be understood: Through a hypersemiotic perspective, Maskur and Noor show the various sides in AA Gym's character.</p> <p>e) I have changed the word to a more appropriate word, 'preacher'.</p> <p>f) I have changed the word to a more appropriate word, 'skill'.</p>



<p>e) <b>Ulama</b>: I think it is a bit of a stretch to call influencers like Felix Siauw “ulama.” He has none of the credentials that would traditionally be used to make someone an ‘alim. Why is this title appropriate here?</p> <p>f) <b>Art</b>: poor word choice</p>	
<p><b>An Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah Fanspage:</b></p> <p>a) <b>Like most Madurese people who have a religious tendency towards traditional Islam, El Madury also does the same</b>: Awkward and ungrammatical; rephrase.</p> <p>b) <b>Nahdliyyin</b>: This term is only known by field experts. It would make the article more accessible to say “he grew up in a milieu dominated by the Nahdlatul Ulama traditionalist Islamic organization.”</p> <p>c) <b>according to his admission after joining Muhammadiyah</b>: awkward.</p> <p>d) <b>Confession</b>: Confession? Has he been brought before the police for a crime, or brought before a priest to repent? I think this is poor word choice.</p> <p>e) <b>Tarjih</b>: This term *must* be defined for non-experts; otherwise the article will not make sense.</p> <p>f) <b>As of the time of writing (24/9/2020)</b>: I am both disappointed that it took over a year from writing to submission—thus the data in this article may be out of date—and that the submission happened before the full actions of Muhammadiyah were allowed to play out. Please update this when revising.</p> <p>g) <b>Several things have been explored from personal interactions through several virtual chats with Zulkarnain and become the background in creating the fanspage</b>: I cannot understand what this sentence is trying to say, and thus do not understand how it is useful to the article.</p> <p>h) <b>Informing</b>: poor word choice.</p>	<p><b>An Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah Fanspage:</b></p> <p>a) I have revised it: Just as most Madurese are traditionalist Muslims, El Madury is the same.</p> <p>b) Following the advice of the reviewer, I have replaced it with a suggested sentence, namely: He grew up in a milieu dominated by the Nahdlatul Ulama traditionalist Islamic organisation.</p> <p>c) I have revised it: according to him, after becoming a member of Muhammadiyah.</p> <p>d) I have revised it: This fanspage, based on an interview with El Madury, was created in 2014.</p> <p>e) I have added an explanation of the term in footnote 7: Muhammadiyah’s use of the word tarjih has changed throughout its development. In its early period, and following its usage in the principles of law (usul al-fiqh), tarjih conveyed the meaning of examining the various opinions of Muslim jurists on a particular question and evaluating them to determine which is most faithful to the original Shari’a sources. Over time this usage gradually included any intellectual endeavour used to study new cases that earlier jurists had not addressed. In short, in Muhammadiyah’s perspective, tarjih is identical, or almost identical, to ijihad (Anwar 2016).</p> <p>f) I have updated the data regarding this.</p> <p>g) I have revised it: Based on an interview with El Madury, several things became the background for him to create this fanspage.</p> <p>I have revised it: announcing.</p>
<p><b>Zulkarnain El Madury and His Efforts in Building Religious Authority:</b></p> <p>a) <b>From his capacity, this alumnus of the Imam Ibn Su’ud University in Saudi Arabia, no doubt</b>: This is not a complete sentence in English. Please rewrite following proper grammar.</p> <p>b) <b>even considered as the successor of Buya Hamka</b>: This is not useful for non-experts who may not</p>	<p><b>Zulkarnain El Madury and His Efforts in Building Religious Authority:</b></p> <p>a) I have revised it: Regarding his capacity, this alumnus of Imam Ibn Su’ud University is unquestionable.</p> <p>b) Following the advice of the reviewer, I have removed this sentence.</p>

<p>know who Hamka was. I suggest you either provide the briefest possible (~10 words) explanation of Hamka, or omit this clause.</p> <p>c) No source whatsoever has been provided for this information about Buya Yun. That is not appropriate in an academic submission.</p> <p>d) Footnotes 9 and 10 can and should be combined into one.</p> <p>e) <b>but also Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who is now maintaining website tanyajawabagama.com:</b> The meaning of this is unclear. Did Wahyudi also get permission from Buya Yun, or did El Madury also get permission from Wahyudi? Please rewrite.</p> <p>f) <b>Assembly:</b> poor word choice.</p> <p>g) <b>ethnicity, ethnicity:</b> Why does this appear twice in row? Was one of them intended to be a different category?</p> <p>h) <b>Blackmailed:</b> poor word choice</p> <p>i) <b>head to head:</b> awkward</p> <p>j) <b>DPP IMM:</b> You have not introduced these terms, and only specialists will know them. You have not once mentioned the Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah. When you write, you should be targeting how to make things easy for your reader.</p> <p>k) <b>the Qur'an and sunnah:</b> Why say "Qur'an and sunnah" here, but "Qur'an and hadith" (with basically the same meaning) just one page earlier? Please be consistent to avoid confusing your readers.</p> <p>l) <b>Genitals:</b> NO! This is not what the word "genitals" means, and it cannot be used in this context.</p>	<p>c) I have revised the information about Buya Yun by adding sources. The revisions in my manuscript are coloured in green.</p> <p>d) I have combined both into one.</p> <p>e) I have revised it: but Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who is now maintaining the website tanyajawabagama.com, also got permission from Buya Yun.</p> <p>f) I have revised it: council.</p> <p>g) No category difference. That is my mistake. I have deleted one of those two words.</p> <p>h) I have revised it: forced</p> <p>i) I have revised it: fights and debates tremendously</p> <p>j) I have added an explanation of the term in footnote 15: Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM) or Muhammadiyah Student Association is an exponent of Muhammadiyah in student affairs dimension which basic mission is to realise the real Islamic society as formulated by Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Widodo 2017).</p> <p>k) To be consistent, I have changed the word "hadith" to the word "sunnah."</p> <p>l) I have revised it: 'aurat (parts of the body that should go covered)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I added a few sentences at the beginning of this section to discuss why El Madury became a micro-celebrity-ustaz: This has become a stimulant for enthusiasm and public debate on social media, allowing El Madury to become a micro-celebrity-ustaz. At this point, he is experiencing what Turner has called 'the demotic turn'. When the attention of the public and the online community has been directed to him, El Madury then gradually builds his religious authority.</li> <li>At the end of this section, I have integrated the FPI and Rizieq Shihab cases with the El Madury case. The explanation can be read on pages 25-26 of my article in sentences that I have coloured in green.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Muhammadiyah's Efforts in Maintaining Religious Authority in Cyberspace:</b></p> <p>a) <b>Reactive:</b> poor word choice</p> <p>b) <b>This proposal was considered by its proponents as firm and not too risky as if using the name of the Muhammadiyah organization; even it could be counter-productive:</b> awkward, rephrase.</p> <p>c) <b>Until this article was written, there has been no further meeting to follow up on the previous meeting:</b> The article said earlier (see page 11) that it was written on September 29, 2020. It is entirely unsurprising, then, that there was no follow up meeting in the next four days! This article may have</p>	<p><b>Muhammadiyah's Efforts in Maintaining Religious Authority in Cyberspace:</b></p> <p>a) I have revised it: responsive</p> <p>b) I have revised it: This proposal was considered by the proponents as a firm proposal and also not too risky</p> <p>c) Indeed, after the meeting, there was never another meeting discussing the El Madury case until this article was written or revised. Therefore, I still use the sentence I used in my manuscript before the revision, only I later added a description of the updated data: Until this article was written (03/04/2022), there has been no further meeting to follow up on the previous meeting.</p>

<p>been submitted prematurely, and an update should be provided in the revision.</p> <p>d) <b>which is apart from adults and millennial groups:</b> I do not understand what this phrase is intended to mean. “apart from adults and millennial groups”—so, not adults or millennials? Why then call it “millennialization” in the next line? Is this saying that “millennials” are not adults? The definition of millennials is those born between 1981 and 1996—so those aged 25 to 40 as of the 2020 incident in this article—so why do they not count as “adults”?</p>	<p>d) I have revised it: which is millennial groups and the generation after.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• According to the reviewer's suggestion, I have translated the sentences in all the figures into English.</li> <li>• On pages 29-30, I have also added an explanation that illustrates that the tarjih assembly is not really calm in responding to El Madury as a micro-celebrity-ustaz. I marked this explanation in green.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Conclusion:</b></p> <p>a) <b>Studies:</b> If this is studies in the plural (i.e., more than one), then you must cite more than one. Simply Akmaliah is not enough.</p>	<p><b>Conclusion:</b></p> <p>a) I have added several previous studies which concluded that Muhammadiyah was unresponsive and too calm to the emergence of micro-celebrity-ustaz. I coloured the revision in green.</p>
<p><b>What Lessons Can be Learned from the Case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the Response of the Tarjih and Tajdid Council:</b></p> <p>a) The article is fairly narrow, and does not currently draw any conclusions broader than that “Muhammadiyah is not calm or passive.” First, although Muhammadiyah was certainly active in responding to this case, I cannot see any aspect of the case where someone in Muhammadiyah has lost their calm. Perhaps you should rethink what you mean by “not calm” in its response. Second, I think that high-quality scholarly analysis can move beyond the “what happened” to the “why it happened.” *Why* has Muhammadiyah taken the position it did, and not responded more forcefully against El Madury’s authority challenge? Saying the approach was “considered more appropriate by the proponent” (p. 28) is not only a truism (of course, being a proponent of a specific option obviously means finding that option the most appropriate) but it is also very thin academic analysis. What lessons does this case have for other spheres of activity of Muhammadiyah—for example the use of Muhammadiyah’s name in very public conflicts that involve Islam? I think that the analysis of this article can and must go further.</p>	<p><b>What Lessons Can be Learned from the Case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the Response of the Tarjih and Tajdid Council:</b></p> <p>a) In response to this, I have added a new section to elaborate on the suggestion from the reviewer. The section is entitled “What Lessons Can be Learned from the Case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the Response of the Tarjih and Tajdid Council.”</p>
<p><b>Another comment:</b></p>	<p><b>My Respond:</b></p>

<p>a) The English usage in this article is a bit weak, so I have suggested improvements where possible. Additionally (and something I have not flagged), the article must be submitted using British spelling and usage, not American spelling and usage.</p> <p>b) At several points, the article puts forward information that is far from common knowledge (e.g., Buya Yun's birth year, or that Felix Siauw has the most followers on social media) without providing any source. I have flagged a few of these, but the revision must be more careful about providing the sources of all information.</p> <p>c) The bibliography is sloppy, with a fair amount of missing information. This must be brought up to the standards of IMW.</p>	<p>a) I have corrected the English in my article based on corrections from reviewers. Apart from that, I have also tried changing from American English to British English.</p> <p>b) I have revised it. I coloured the revision in green.</p> <p>c) I have revised it. I coloured the revision in green.</p>
--	---

Lastly, I do hope that this article can be published in Indonesia and The Malay World to contribute my research results to your journal.

Once again, thank you very much for your cooperation, help, and kindness. I really appreciate your time and look forward to seeing your positive response.

Best wishes,  
Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

# **Zulkarnain El Madury and the *Micro-Celebrity-Ustaz* Phenomenon: Tracing Muhammadiyah's Struggle in Maintaining Religious Authority in Cyberspace**

## **Abstract**

The *occurrence* of important events such as the Defend Islam Action (*Aksi Bela Islam*) and the massive use of the internet to spread specific religious ideas in Indonesia marked the so-called fragmentation of religious authority. The mainstream religious authority that has been held by Muhammadiyah and NU is being threatened by new religious authorities. Some previous studies have stated that NU is very reactive to the emergence of new religious authorities, while Muhammadiyah seems to be more calm or passive. This article examines the emergence of the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage, which was created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, a person who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board. By conducting web content analysis and field research by interviewing key actors related to this issue, this article shows how Zulkarnain El Madury and the fanspage he created have threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority, and in turn, analyses Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace. By taking a closer look at what the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (*Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah*) has done as an assembly that has the exclusive authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* products within Muhammadiyah, *this article concludes that Muhammadiyah is not as calm or passive in responding to the emergence of new religious authorities as explained by previous studies. In addition, this article also discusses what lessons can be learned from the case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the response of the Tarjih Council against him.*

Keywords: *micro-celebrity-ustaz*, fragmentation, religious authority, Muhammadiyah, tarjih.

## **Introduction**

The Defend Islam Action (*Aksi Bela Islam*) I, II, and III that took place in 2016 in Indonesia became a momentous event that marked the so-called fragmentation of religious authority (Burhani 2016). This fragmentation can be seen, for example, when the two leaders of the largest religious organisation in Indonesia, namely Haedar Nashir and Said Agil Siradj, appealed to their members and followers not to take part in the action. Instead of being followed, their advice was ignored. Some members of Muhammadiyah and NU were also present and seemed to be following the call of a figure who had been regarded as, to borrow the term Ahmad Najib Burhani, a fringe cleric (*'ulama pinggiran*) (Burhani 2016). The series of three events gave birth to an actor whose voice was later considered influential and had authority: Muhammad Rizieq Shihab, chairman of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI).

In another context, namely in the digital world, the fragmentation of religious authority also occurs in Indonesian society. In fact, according to Nisa, the proliferation of various kinds of digital platforms that exist today is directly proportional to the increasing fragmentation of religious authority (Nisa 2019). Nadirsyah Hosen shows how Indonesians, especially those who live in urban areas or have easy internet access, will choose 'kyai google' to ask questions about religious issues instead of the traditional fatwa institutions owned by Muhammadiyah, NU, or MUI. According to Hosen, the selection of 'kyai google' as the new mufti by some Indonesians is inseparable from the convenience provided by the internet. The selection is also based on the internet's characteristics that allow users to hide their identities when asking a question (Hosen 2008). This kind of convenience is not found when a question is asked to a traditional fatwa institution. In addition to writing down the identity, the questioner also has to wait a long time to gain an answer (Hosen 2008).

Further impact of the internet, especially with social media presence, is the birth of micro-celebrity. Theresa M. Senft defines micro-celebrity as a new style of online performance that involves increasing popularity through web technologies such as videos, blogs, and social

networking sites (Senft 2008). According to her, these micro-celebrities sometimes seem like conventional celebrities, but they are different (Senft 2008). The most fundamental difference between the two is the place in and from where they were born. In other words, conventional celebrities are born in and from conventional media, while micro-celebrities are born through what is known as new media.

Of course, not all new media users have the predicate of micro-celebrity. Only those who experience what Graeme Turner termed 'the demotic turn', namely the increasing visibility of ordinary people to appear as celebrities in the media, especially online media (G. Turner 2010). In turn, both conventional and micro-celebrity exist in various public spheres, and the discourse on them is characterised as influencers, stimulants of consumerism, enthusiasm, public debate, and various activism (Sadasri 2017).

By borrowing the theory of micro-celebrities in the study of new media, we can then read how these micro-celebrities have also come to the fore in the religious realm. The emergence of *'ulama*, *ustaz*, preachers, and religious leaders who become influencers in new media can perhaps be termed as a form of a **micro-celebrity-ustaz** image. Felix Siauw is a prominent example. The convert, who is now a preacher, has a massive following on social media. In 2018, for example, he had 2,6 million followers on Twitter, and now in 2022, his followers have reached 3.3 million. Not only Twitter but Felix Siauw's Instagram account also has many followers, around 4.9 million. It can even be said that he is the *ustaz* or preacher who has the most followers on social media ("Dari Aa' Gym Ke Felix Siauw: Ustaz Medsos & Medium Dakwah Politis" 2018) so that making him one of the leading social media preachers in Indonesia today (Hew 2018). What Felix Siauw said in his social media has more or less influenced the map of religious authorities in Indonesia. Even if it is related to the event of the Defend Islam Action (*Aksi Bela Islam*), the role of **micro-celebrity-ustaz** such as Felix Siauw and others is very significant.

The existence of the internet and the continuing development of technology allows the emergence of many other *micro-celebrity-ustaz*, both in the national arena more generally or more specifically in internal religious organisations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, Persis or others. In the context of Muhammadiyah, the largest *modernist* Islamic organisation began to be challenged for its religious authority by a preacher who was said to be part of Muhammadiyah itself, namely Zulkarnain El Madury. He is a person who claims to be a Muhammadiyah cadre and often introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board. In recent years, Zulkarnain El Madury has been noticed by Muhammadiyah administrators and Muhammadiyah cadres.<sup>1</sup> Even the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (*Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah*) even discussed him in a special meeting. This is because the posts on the Facebook fanspage that El Madury manages, namely the *Syarah Himpunan Putus Tarjih Muhammadiyah*, often differ significantly from - and to some extent delegitimise - what has become the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah. Responses from grassroots or Muhammadiyah people varied. This can be seen, for example, from the comments on each post. Some defended and remained adamant with the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah, but not a few were affected and, in turn, followed what was conveyed by Zulkarnain El Madury on the fanspage.

This is where it becomes crucial to see how Muhammadiyah attempts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace, especially among its members and people. By conducting web content analysis (Postill and Pink 2012) on the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage and official social media accounts and those affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (*Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah*), this article shows how El Madury builds his narratives and, in turn, how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority

---

<sup>1</sup> Online and offline interview with Amiruddin, Robby Karman, Muhammad Muflih, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, and Arif Nur Kholis, 2019-2020.



in cyberspace. In addition, field research was also conducted to complement the method. In conducting the field research,<sup>2</sup> the key actors related to this research were interviewed offline and online in a semi-structured format.<sup>3</sup> Apart from Zulkarnain El Madury, the key actors are members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (*Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah*), the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Digital Broadcast Center (*Pusat Syiar Digital Muhammadiyah*), and several prominent figures, Muhammadiyah activists as well as grassroots people of Muhammadiyah.

### **Fragmentation of Religious Authority, New Preacher and Micro-Celebrity-Ustaz Phenomenon**

Fragmentation of religious authority is a phenomenon that occurs in various religious communities and is not limited to Islam alone (B. S. Turner 2007; Campbell and Teusner 2011; Hope Cheong 2016). Not only that, but the fragmentation of religious authority is also a global phenomenon. This is illustrated, for example, by the study of Gary R. Bunt (Bunt 2003). He points out that new media have shaped diverse understandings among individual Muslims worldwide about e-jihad (electronic jihad). The definition of electronic jihad is understood and interpreted differently, ranging from online activism to Muslim expression after the events of September 11, 2001. In turn, in his study, Bunt shows that each new media (in this case, new websites) has authority for its respective group segment.

Especially in Indonesia, the fragmentation of religious authority can be traced far back.

Nevertheless, for the purposes of this article, the fragmentation of religious authority that will be discussed here is from the beginning of the 20th century to the present day. Jajat

---

<sup>2</sup> This research has obtained a research permit from the university ethical board through Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (Ahmad Dahlan University Research and Development Institute) with the number PJB-002/SP3/LPPM-UAD/VI/2020.

<sup>3</sup> Data collection in this study was carried out in the time span between 2018-2020. Because offline interviews were not possible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, some interviews were conducted online.

Burhanudin (Burhanudin 2004) points out that there has been a shift in religious authority in the historical phase of Indonesian religious thought in the early 20th century due to modernisation. The religious authority, which was initially held by traditional groups, shifted to modernist groups. His study, which focuses on Islamic print media, further shows that there is a shift in religious authority that used to be in *Kitab Kuning* taught by *kyai* or *ulama* in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to magazines, journals, newspapers, and books published by modernist circles or organisations.

After that phase, religious authority is always identified with the role of Muhammadiyah and NU. These two religious organisations are always referred to by scholars as the authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016; Akmaliah 2018). The shift in religious authority occurred again in the 1990s when national television stations were gradually born. The Islamic programs presented by the television station show *ustaz* or preacher, which in turn build their authority through lectures delivered by them. This phenomenon, in turn, prompted scholars to come up with the term ‘Islamic televangelism’ (Akmaliah 2018). AA Gym is one example that falls into the category of this television *ustaz*, or in Greg Fealy's terms, he is called a tele-dai (Fealy 2008).

The most obvious and recent picture of the fragmentation of religious authority in Indonesia is the series of events of the Defend Islam Action. Ahmad Najib Burhani hinted that the critical event marked the peak of the fragmentation of religious authorities in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). This series of events has given rise to new actors who challenge the established religious authority over the years. Although it cannot be said to shift or match the role of Muhammadiyah and NU, the emergence of new actors such as Rizieq Shihab provides a new map of religious authority in Indonesia.

This phenomenon of fragmentation of religious authority has increased sharply in the development of what scholars call pop culture, marked by the birth of many new media (Labiq 2019). The spread of internet access to every social class is the main factor for this fragmentation. As a result, many new media have emerged; each individual and group compete to spread ideas (Nisa 2019; Horsfield 2016).

Abdullah Gymnastiar, who is more familiarly called AA Gym, mentioned earlier, can be said to be one of the early actors who emerged in the internet era starting to grow in Indonesia. This can be captured in two interesting studies on AA Gym conducted by James B. Hoesterey (Hoesterey 2008) and Maskur & Irfan Noor (Maskur and Noor 2014). Although the use of the internet as a medium of *da'wah* at that time was not as massive as it is now, the emergence of AA Gym as a new cleric on the national *da'wah* stage through lectures, seminars, and Islamic training is a phenomenon in itself. His preaching journey is fascinating. Hoesterey studies the journey of AA Gym as a preacher critically starting from appearing, falling, and then his success in rebranding. The successful rebranding carried out by AA Gym (and the team) succeeded in restoring its religious authority. This is evident, for example, from how the voice of AA Gym was very well listened to during the Defend Islam Action some time ago (“Aa Gym Ajak Ribuan Jamaahnya Ikut Aksi Bela Islam III” n.d.).

Popular culture has also brought AA Gym to be seen not only by the public, especially by his followers, as an *ustaz an sich*, but also singer, actor, book writer, etc. Thus, he has transformed from an ordinary cleric to a celebrity cleric. Through a hypersemiotic perspective, Maskur and Noor show the various sides in AA Gym's character.

After the appearance of AA Gym and information technology is developed rapidly, many new preachers began to appear. Wai Weng Hew (Hew 2018) describes how Felix Siau is a religious teacher with high skill in preaching. Being a cleric with the most followers in

cyberspace does not make Felix forget to spread his *da'wah* in the real world. Hew points out that Felix has blended online and offline *da'wah* very well. Instead of replacing offline *da'wah* with online, Felix actually combined the two harmoniously. The *da'wah skill* displayed by Felix aims to spread HTI's ideas and ideologies as the carriage of his *da'wah* identity. According to Hew (Hew 2018) and Farhan (Farhan 2017), one of the keys to Felix's success in preaching is his ability to present an entertaining and straightforward *da'wah*, even though its content is dogmatic and political.

AA Gym and Felix Siauwa are descriptions of two *ustaz* who became famous because of the new media's 'blessing'. Both are new clerics who have transformed into *micro-celebrity-ustaz*. The term *micro-celebrity-ustaz* is a term that was adopted and reconstructed from the theory of micro-celebrity. There have been many studies on micro-celebrity itself. Most of these studies were carried out from the perspective of pop culture, as has been done, for example, by Theresa M. Senft (Senft 2008), Graeme Turner (G. Turner 2010), Lidwina Mutia Sadasri (Sadasri 2017), Khamis, Ang, and Welling (Khamis, Ang, and Welling 2017), and Khomalia and Rahman (Khomalia and Rahman 2018).

The studies that the author mentioned above all describe the fragmentation of religious authority, marked by the emergence of *micro-celebrity-ustaz*. The term *micro-celebrity-ustaz* that the author means here is an ordinary *ustaz/ustazah* or preacher who, in turn, has skyrocketed popularity like celebrities on and because of social media so that he or she enables to influence certain people or communities. In other words, it means *ustaz/ustazah* or preacher experienced what Turner called 'the demotic turn' (G. Turner 2010). Studies on the efforts or struggles of established religious authorities challenged by new religious authorities have not been touched. One study conducted by Yanwar Pribadi could perhaps be called an exception (Pribadi 2019). His study explains how the efforts of 'local Islam' (*Islam Lokal*) to defend the position of its religious authority from the threat of 'foreign Islam' (*Islam Asing*).

However, his study is different from what the author will examine, tracing Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

The author's study is about a *micro-celebrity-ustaz* named Zulkarnain El Madury. His name, which is not as popular as AA Gym or Felix Siau but has a strong influence in cyberspace, is interesting. His identity as an *ustaz* or preacher from Muhammadiyah who targets Muhammadiyah people with postings that are often different and even delegitimise the official voice of this largest modernist mass organisation is another interesting thing that deserves to be investigated. This author's study not only wants to show Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace, but it also wants explicitly to fill the gap in previous studies. For instance, in his latest study, Akmaliah shows that Muhammadiyah and NU have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities (Akmaliah 2020). While NU was very reactive to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah said there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah respond that looks less fierce (Akmaliah 2020). In line with Akmaliah's opinion, Sammy (Sammy 2022), Sanjaya (Sanjaya 2022), and Saefullah (Saefullah 2022) also concluded more or less the same thing. They claim that Muhammadiyah is significantly less adaptive to the emergence of new media, and therefore Muhammadiyah's da'wah often loses to *micro-celebrity-ustaz's* da'wah. This study focuses on looking at the struggle of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (*Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah*) as the only assembly under Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas and products of official religious ijtihad within Muhammadiyah. By taking a closer look at what the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council has done, this study shows that Muhammadiyah is not as calm or passive in responding to the emergence of new religious authorities as explained by previous studies.

## **An Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* Fanspage**

*Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage was created by Zulkarnain El Madury. He was born in Sumenep Madura in 1963, and his birth name is Zulkarnain bin Syamsuri. The man who claims to have studied in Malaysia at the Institute of Business Study always introduces himself as a preacher from the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (*Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah*). He spent his childhood on his home island. Just as most Madurese are traditionalist Muslims, El Madury is the same. He grew up in a milieu dominated by the Nahdlatul Ulama traditionalist Islamic organisation. He used to practice practices such as *tahlilan*, pilgrimage to the grave, and other practices that, according to him, after becoming a member of Muhammadiyah, were not following the Sunnah of the Prophet. He received his religious education at the *Pesantren* at-Taufiqiyyah Sumenep Madura. In 1976 he became acquainted with Muhammadiyah. Through a lecture delivered by a preacher of Muhammadiyah, he became interested in the *da'wah* and religious understanding of the movement founded by Ahmad Dahlan. In 1977, he officially joined Muhammadiyah.<sup>4</sup>

Since joining Muhammadiyah, El Madury has been active as a preacher who spreads religious ideas and understanding, according to Muhammadiyah. In fact, from 1990 to 2007, he was one of the Muhammadiyah preachers who were sent to remote areas under the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (*Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah*). His daily activities are now preaching from one place to another, including creating content on the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage. Now he

---

<sup>4</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18-20 October 2020.

is domiciled in Jakarta as the Tarjih and Tabligh Council chairman of the Pondok Gede Muhammadiyah Branch.<sup>5</sup>

This fanspage, [based on an interview with El Madury](#), was created in 2014.<sup>6</sup> However, in digital history that the author can trace, this fanspage was created in 2015. The earliest post that is currently traceable was dated January 5, 2015.

According to El Madury, the birth of this fanspage began with the *WhatsApp* group he created. He named this *Whatsapp* group *Tarjih dan Tabligh Institut* (Tarjih and Tabligh Institute) to provide a space to discuss and spread ideas related to [tarjih](#)<sup>7</sup> Muhammadiyah. He put many Muhammadiyah figures and activists into this group, including Buya Yunahar Ilyas. Over time, seeing that El Madury's posts in the group were deemed inconsistent with the tarjih spirit of Muhammadiyah, several people, such as Fathurrahman Kamal and Buya Risman, gave sharp criticism. El Madury, Kamal, and Risman engage in a heated debate. This information finally reached Buya Yunahar Ilyas. The response given by Buya Yunahar Ilyas at that time, according to El Madury, was different from that of his critics. Buya responded quite positively because he saw the initiative of El Madury, who wanted to provide *syarḥ* (Arabic) or further explanation of the contents of the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Judgment Compilation). Finally, Buya Yun permitted El Madury and another person, namely Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website [tanyajawabagama.com](#).<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18-20 October 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18-20 October 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Muhammadiyah's use of the word *tarjih* has changed throughout its development. In its early period, and following its usage in the principles of law (*usul al-fiqh*), *tarjih* conveyed the meaning of examining the various opinions of Muslim jurists on a particular question and evaluating them to determine which is most faithful to the original Shari'a sources. Over time this usage gradually included any intellectual endeavour used to study new cases that earlier jurists had not addressed. In short, in Muhammadiyah's perspective, *tarjih* is identical, or almost identical, to *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

<sup>8</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18-20 October 2020.

By looking at the early postings, this fanspage is still relatively consistent in uploading Muhammadiyah fatwas with the format: writing questions from the questioner and then answering from the Fatwa Division of the Tarjih Council. This is like the original format of the question and answer administered by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, whose fatwa was later published in *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine. Nevertheless, over time, this fanspage posted different things, not only the dissemination of tarjih products but the personal opinions of El Madury. These opinions are often offensive to other groups and use language that is less ethical and elegant. Not infrequently, his posts contradict the official stance of Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in particular, or Muhammadiyah in general, such as on the veil issue. Since Facebook introduced the ‘live broadcast’ feature, Zulkarnain has also adapted to using this feature to conduct live lectures.

Nevertheless, this fanspage has many followers and is liked by many people. *As of the time of writing (03/04/2022), Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage has been followed by 19,423 and is liked by 8,868 people. His posts also often get many likes and comments from netizens, both pro and contra.

*Based on an interview with El Madury, several things became the background for him to create this fanpage.* First, this fanspage, from the beginning, aimed to fortify Muhammadiyah people from all forms of superstition, heresy, and myth; its posts focus on issues related to faith and worship. Second, this fanspage, in its development, is also to counter some Muhammadiyah activists who have liberal tendencies. In several posts, Zulkarnain openly responded to the discourses of those he considered liberals in Muhammadiyah. Third, this fanspage often openly attacks the religious practices of the *Nahdliyyin* group in their posts, so



as an impact of that, Zulkarnain has several times clashed with Idrus Ramli, a *Nahdliyyin* figure.<sup>9</sup>

Besides being followed and liked by many people, Zulkarnain El Madury and the fanspage he manages are not without criticism. Many Muhammadiyah people and followers are worried about the posts on the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage. Some even tried to report their anxiety through the official social media accounts of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Center (*Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah*).<sup>10</sup> They generally want to ask for firmness from the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council regarding the fanspage because Zulkarnain has used Tarjih's name in the fanspage's name. The firmness demanded by them to the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, if summarised, includes: (1) asking the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council to reprimand or remind Zulkarnain El Madury not to use symbols or names that are closely related to Tarjih Muhammadiyah for or on the fanspage; (2) make a circular or announcement that the fanspage is not a social media account of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council or the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Center (*Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah*); (3) **announcing** the official social media accounts and websites of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Muhammadiyah Tarjih Center (*Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah*), so that Muhammadiyah people at the grassroots are not fooled by the existence of the fanspage and know where to look for religious reference places, especially in cyberspace.

### **Zulkarnain El Madury and His Efforts in Building Religious Authority**

Zulkarnain El Madury and the fanspage he created, namely *Syarah Himpunan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*, have threatened the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, in this case the

---

<sup>9</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18-20 October 2020.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf and Ariful Hazam, November 2020. They are grassroots people of Muhammadiyah and social media admin of *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah*.

Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. Many of its posts affect Muhammadiyah people in particular and Muslims in general. It is not only often different from the official stance of Muhammadiyah; the posts from the fanspage, even to some extent, tend to attack the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. This has become a stimulant for enthusiasm and public debate on social media, allowing El Madury to become a micro-celebrity-*ustaz*. At this point, he is experiencing what Turner has called 'the demotic turn'. When the attention of the public and the online community has been directed to him, El Madury then gradually builds his religious authority. From Weber's perspective (Riesebrodt 1999), the authority that El Madury is trying to build appears in two ways. The first is the authority that is built through charisma (charismatic authority). According to Weber, charisma is a particular type of authority whose original form is based on a specific belief contained in a particular person (Riesebrodt 1999). In the context of El Madury, the charisma does not arise purely from El Madury himself but comes from external, namely Yunahar Ilyas. In this case, Yunahar Ilyas is a Muhammadiyah cleric who is very popular and respected by the community, both from Muhammadiyah circles and Muslims in general.

Buya Yun, as he is popularly known, was an exegete (*mufasssir*) born in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, in 1956 and died in 2020 at the age of 63 years (Ilyas 2012). Regarding his capacity, this alumnus of Imam Ibn Su'ud University is unquestionable. Moreover, Buya Yun has excellent rhetoric in lecturing and conveying religious messages. No doubt, many Muhammadiyah people and Muslims, in general, saw Buya Yun as a charismatic cleric. Not only limited to Indonesia, in several neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore, Yunahar Ilyas is also known as a charismatic cleric (Abror 2020; "Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia Kehilangan Ulama Kharismatik" 2020). Therefore, when he died in early 2020, many people flocked to pay their last respects to the former chairman of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for three periods ("Sejumlah Tokoh Hadiri Prosesi Pemakaman Ketua PP

Muhammadiyah Yunahar Ilyas” n.d.; “Dubes Malaysia Jenguk Ketum MUI Yunahar Ilyas Di Yogyakarta” n.d.).

Through the charisma of Buya Yun, El Madury, in turn, used it to build religious authority.

On various occasions, including when the author interviewed him, Buya Yun's name has always been an argument and a shield.<sup>11</sup> It was said by him that he created the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* fanspage with the permission of Yunahar Ilyas.<sup>12</sup> Not only did El Madury get permission from Buya Yun to give a further explanation on *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Judgment Compilation), but Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who is now maintaining the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com), also got permission from Buya Yun.

When the author interviewed Wahyudi Abdurrahim, he confirmed what El Madury had claimed.<sup>13</sup> However, according to Muflih, this is a form of fairness. In other words, the permission from Yunahar Ilyas is a form of appreciation given by someone who is more senior and has a high social position in Muhammadiyah to someone who is more junior and is classified as a grassroots Muhammadiyah member.<sup>14</sup> Irrespectively of Abdurrahim and Muflih's comments, permission from Yunahar Ilyas, who has charisma within Muhammadiyah in particular, has become a tool used by El Madury in building his religious authority.

In the perspective of Weber's charismatic authority, charisma is not only about a belief in the existence of extraordinary or superpowers possessed by or contained in humans but also about particular objects other than humans (Riesebrodt 1999). From here, we can get an explanation

---

<sup>11</sup> Several people who informed the author about this, for example, were Muhammad Muflih (grassroot of Muhammadiyah and initiator of the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com)), Robby Karman (Secretary General of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association [DPP IMM]), and several meeting participants who were invited by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council with the agenda of Responding to Emergence ‘*Syarah HPT*’ on Social Media on September 25, 2020; and interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Online interview with Wahyudi Abdurrahim through WhatsApp, September 2020.

<sup>14</sup> Online interview with Muhammad Muflih through WhatsApp and Facebook, 20 October 2019.

as to why El Madury named his fanpage *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council can be said to be a very respectable and crucial **council** in Muhammadiyah. Founded in 1927, the Council has a function as an assembly that carries out the agenda of purification of religion and the dynamisation of social life by conducting research and investigations to find its purity, and accordingly giving fatwas and compiling religious guidelines regarding faith (‘*aqīdah*) and worship (‘*ibādah*) as well as social relations (*mu‘āmalah*) (Anwar 2016; Al 1985). In addition, the function of the Tarjih Council is also to make efforts to resolve differences and disagreements on religious issues, which are usually referred to as *khilafiah* problems, so that they are directed more productively (Anwar 2007; 2016).

Based on the function of the Tarjih Council as stated above, this institution is a body that is responsible for formulating the ideological basis of the Muhammadiyah movement (Anwar 2007; 2016) and becomes Muhammadiyah's representative in the religious field (Fauzi 2017). As an institution that represents Muhammadiyah in the religious field, the Tarjih Council produces three tarjih products, namely: (1) tarjih fatwa (*fatwa tarjih*), (2) tarjih decision (*putusan tarjih*), and (3) tarjih discourse (*wacara tarjih*) (Anwar 2016). Tarjih fatwa is the Tarjih Council's answer to general questions regarding issues that require an explanation in terms of sharia law. Following the nature of the fatwa in general, the fatwa of the Tarjih Council is not binding, **neither** on organisations **nor** members as individuals. Therefore, even the fatwa can be questioned and discussed. However, because the fatwa contains religious guidance derived from Islamic teaching sources (Anwar 2020), and the general public often does not actually understand the characteristics of such a fatwa, it is still believed **by Muhammadiyah members** to be religious guidance. On the other hand, the tarjih decision is the official stance of Muhammadiyah in religious matters and is formally binding on the organisation and its members. However, in practice, sometimes Muhammadiyah members

exercise their right to freedom not to be bound by the decision because they have different *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

Meanwhile, *tarjih* discourses are ideas or thoughts that are raised and put forward by the *Tarjih Council* in seminars, *halaqah*, or other forums in addressing various developing issues and at the same time fostering a critical spirit of *ijtihad* and collecting materials or stock of ideas regarding various actual problems in society. The nature of this *tarjih* discourse is not at all binding and does not become a *fatwa* that must be followed. *Tarjih* discourse is contained in various publications of the *Tarjih Council*, such as *Jurnal Tarjih* (*Tarjih Journal*) and various published books (Anwar 2016).

The first two products, namely the *tarjih* decision and the *tarjih* *fatwa*, have their power within *Muhammadiyah*. What becomes *fatwas* and decisions of *Muhammadiyah* are considered sacred by some members of *Muhammadiyah*. In summary, it can be said that anything that 'smells *tarjih*' has authority in the collective memory of the *Muhammadiyah* people. In Khaled Abou El Fadl's perspective, *fatwas* and *tarjih* decisions have the power of persuasive authority, namely an authority that can influence or direct others because they believed in them (Fadl 2014). The *tarjih* *fatwa* was officially published through the organisation's official magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, and compiled in Tanya Jawab Agama's book.

In comparison, the *tarjih* decisions are codified in a book called *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (*Tarjih Judgment Compilation*) or commonly known by the abbreviation HPT. At this point, it can be understood why the attribution of the term *tarjih* to particular objects can give rise to charismatic authority, as mentioned by Weber.

What El Madury did can also be seen from the perspective of identity politics. In one sense, identity politics is defined as a political tool of a group such as, ethnicity, culture, religion or others for specific purposes, such as a form of resistance or a tool to show the identity of a

group (Alfaqi 2015). Within this framework, identity is politicised through extreme interpretation, which aims to gain support from people who feel 'the same', whether by race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements. In the context of El Madury, the use of the tarjih label on the fanspage created by El Madury can be interpreted as a political tool to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muhammadiyah people. Not only that, if seen in some of his sermon videos, El Madury also placed a flag with the Muhammadiyah symbol behind him. In this context, he wants to show the identity of Muhammadiyah and convince the audience that he is a close part of Muhammadiyah. Moreover, he always introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board on many occasions.

According to Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif, identity politics is always related to members of social groups who feel forced and excluded by the domination of the mainstream in a nation or state (Maarif 2010). In line with Ma'arif, Sri Astuti Buchari also sees that the emergence of identity politics is mainly caused by certain factors that an ethnic group sees as the pressure in political injustice felt by them (Buchari 2014). By looking at the observations made by Ahmad Najib Burhani (Burhani 2013), El Madury, in this case, can be categorised as part of a group that feels excluded, threatened, and to some extent feels that he did not get justice within Muhammadiyah. Burhani explained the existence of two opposing thought orientations within Muhammadiyah. The two orientations are referred to by Burhani as 'Pure Islam' (*Islam Murni*) and 'Progressive Islam' (*Islam Progresif*) (Burhani 2013). The conflict between these two schools of thought in Muhammadiyah began to surface at the 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Banda Aceh in 1995 (Burhani 2013).

The dominance of the thought of 'Progressive Islam' in Muhammadiyah strengthened after the 44th Muhammadiyah Congress in Jakarta in 2000. This congress chose Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif as general chairman. He is a progressive Muslim figure, an alumnus of the University of Chicago, and a direct student of the eminent progressive scholar Fazlur Rahman. At this

congress, several names representing the 'Progressive Islam' group were included in the ranks of the central leadership of Muhammadiyah, such as Amin Abdullah, Dawam Raharjo, and Abdul Munir Mul Khan. During Ma'arif's leadership, progressive ideas not only dominated culturally but gradually became Muhammadiyah's official programs (Burhani 2013).

Seeing the increasingly apparent threat from the ideas put forward by the 'Progressive Islam' group within Muhammadiyah, representatives of the 'Pure Islam' group did not remain silent. They compete with each other and fight over the religious interpretation, which is the most authentic. These two groups competed on various occasions, such as seminars, discussions, publishing, and other events. They usually have conflicting programs. For example, as mentioned by Burhani, when the Center for the Study of Religion and Civilization (PSAP/*Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban*) raised the theme of pluralism and multiculturalism in its journal, *Tanwir Journal*, the Tabligh Council responded with articles in opposition in its magazine, *Majalah Tabligh* (Tabligh Magazine). In Burhani's investigation, during the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress in Malang, this conservative group set up a Pojok Anti-Liberal (Anti-Liberal Corner) booth, which sold books, DVDs, t-shirts, magazines, and other anti-liberal knick-knacks. Strikingly, some of the t-shirts for sale displayed the words 'Muhammadiyah Anti-Liberal' (Burhani 2013).

At the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress, it seemed that the 'Pure Islam' group was gaining momentum to beat back the 'Progressive Islam' group. The fighting between these two groups took place outside the congress arena and took place in the congress committees. Burhani noted that there were at least three critical issues where the 'Pure Islam' group defeated the 'Progressive Islam' group in the congress arena, namely: (1) the issue of leadership change; (2) the issue of the position of women; and (3) the issue of resistance to liberal thought (Burhani 2013; 2005).

After the 45th congress, the feud between these two schools of thought has continued with dynamic tensions; sometimes it strengthens, sometimes it fades. The form of the feud now looks more varied along with the development of increasingly advanced information technology. The internet and social media presence have changed their battle arena from a conventional one to a more modern one. In this case, El Madury represents the 'Pure Islam' group, often fights and debates tremendously with figures considered representatives of 'Progressive Islam' in cyberspace. Their actions are seen as unsettling by El Madury. In the author's investigation, for example, El Madury and the Secretary-General of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association (DPP IMM),<sup>15</sup> Robby Karman have openly attacked each other quite often. Some of the cases are about the veil issue and the Wahhabi issue. According to El Madury, Robby Karman is a young liberal figure in Muhammadiyah who must be fought. El Madury also often attacks the IBTimes.ID website, which often contains articles that are progressive and, to some extent, controversial. This website is fronted by several former *Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah* (JIMM/Muhammadiyah Youth Intellectual Network) figures, such as Hilman Latief, Azaki Khoiruddin, and Mu'arif. On one occasion, when the chairman of the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Center admonished El Madury not to upload posts that were provocative and contradicted the official stance of the Tarjih Council, he defended himself while chiming in that equally provocative posts from the 'Progressive Islam' group should also be reprimanded and reminded. If the one who was rebuked was only him, while they were not reprimanded, then according to him, an injustice had occurred.<sup>16</sup> El Madury's attitude in the framework of identity politics can be seen as an attitude that shows feelings of being excluded and threatened by certain parties. It made him

---

<sup>15</sup> Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM) or Muhammadiyah Student Association is an exponent of Muhammadiyah in student affairs dimension which basic mission is to realise the real Islamic society as formulated by Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Widodo 2017).

<sup>16</sup> On November 3, 2019, the manager of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah reprimanded Zulkarnain El Madury regarding his post on the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage regarding the veil which contradicts Muhammadiyah's official stance.



feel that there was injustice. At this point, then, what El Madury did by using specific attributes and identities is not empty of purpose. These attributes and identities are intentionally attached as a form of resistance to the domination of certain groups or thoughts that threaten him.

What has been described above is the process of how El Madury builds his authority through the first way, namely the authority built through charisma (charismatic authority). There is still one more way used by El Madury, namely the authority built through tradition or what Weber calls traditional authority (Riesebrodt 1999; Matheson 1987; Spencer 1970). In simple terms, something can be considered as having traditional authority if it gains legitimacy based on beliefs or norms that have been established in a particular tradition (Chairi 2019). In other words, according to Spencer, traditional authority is legitimised and, at the same time, constrained by traditional norms. Therefore, it is the opposite of charismatic authority. If in charismatic authority, it is the leader or someone who creates the norms, then it is the norms that create the leader or person in the traditional authority. In charismatic authority, the value of influence is generated by a person's personal qualities and is always associated with his personality. While in the case of traditional authority, it is generated by function and is related to someone or something that has traditional values (Spencer 1970).

In the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, *'ulama* and the classical books they wrote can be considered to have this traditional authority value. *'Ulama* in Islamic tradition is called as the heirs of the Prophets. The authority of *'ulama* is derived from the legitimacy of religious texts which say that the prophetic tradition will be passed on to them. Therefore, the religious ideas they convey in writings or books contain an authoritative value for the next generation. This is the uniqueness of Islamic scholars and traditions, as mentioned by Muhammad Qasim Zaman (Zaman 2002). According to him, one of the most prominent aspects of pre-modern intellectual culture is the articulation of religious discourse through the

so-called medium of the commentary, which is manifested in various forms such *al-syurūh*, *hawāsyī*, *rasā'il*, and *fatawā*. The various genres of books that contain explanations, descriptions, or responses to a book or social phenomena are a way for scholars to shape the identity and authority of the school or tradition they adhere to. In addition, it is also a means to interpret the meaning of the foundational sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah (Zaman 2002).

An example is the *hawāsyī* tradition in the Shafii school. The phenomenon of the emergence of the *hawāsyī* genre in the Shafii school, according to Ahmed El-Shamsy, shows the peak of the authority of the two scholars in that school, namely al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī (El Shamsy 2013). Al-Kurdī, as quoted by El Shamsy, called these two scholars 'the higher authorities in the Syafii school'. People who want to know the authoritative opinion of the Shafi'i school must go through the works of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī and the books that explain further the two works of these scholars, namely the books written by Ibn Ḥajar al-Haitamī and Syamsuddīn al-Ramlī. At this point, it appears that the books of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī, and also the books that explain both, have for later generations the value of traditional authority (El Shamsy 2013).

What is the connection between this traditional authority and Zulkarnain El Madury? El Madury in writing his opinions on the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage always relies on the Islamic intellectual tradition. In fact, not only what is written on the fanspage, in religious forums where he is a speaker, El Madury often quotes Islamic intellectual traditions (*turāth*). According to Endang Mintarja, Chairman of the Jakarta branch of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this characteristic has attracted many people to the content of El Madury's lectures.<sup>17</sup> However, regardless of what intellectual tradition is quoted,

---

<sup>17</sup> This is as expressed by Endang Mintarja in a meeting held by Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board when discussing the phenomenon of the emergence 'Syarah HPT', September 25, 2020

it is clear that the opinion put forward by El Madury is always attributed to the books of classical scholars. At this point, El Madury is building his authority.

What El Madury did, Muhammadiyah did not do in many of its fatwas. Perhaps this is a consequence of the spirit of the modernist movement, which became the spirit of Muhammadiyah. The modernist movement initiated by reformers such as Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, and Muḥammad Rasyīd Riḍā in the late 19th and early 20th centuries had the jargon *al-rujū' ilā al-qur'ān wa al-sunnah* (back to the Qur'an and Sunnah). According to Syed Junaid A. Quadri, the most obvious indicator of this movement, especially in Islamic law, is its critical attitude towards the structure of pre-modern sharia authority symbols, which are articulated in the language and logic of the institution of *taqlīd*. Therefore, modernist groups always encourage reopening the door to *ijtihād* and invite Muslims to leave the interpretive monopoly that the '*ulama* class has held (Quadri 2013).

Muhammadiyah, which is heavily inspired by the modernist movement, has more or less the same characteristics. Muhammadiyah is very oriented towards the Qur'an and Sunnah and tends not to attach too much importance to the Islamic intellectual tradition that has been built by '*ulama*. This can be seen from one point in the *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*, which asserts that Muhammadiyah is not affiliated with a particular school, but the opinions of that schools are only considered in determining religious norms (Anwar 2018). This means that understanding religion in the Muhammadiyah perspective is carried out directly from its primary sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah through the *ijtihād* process with existing *ijtihād* methods. However, it should be noted here that the narration that confirms the opinions of the scholars is taken into account in determining norms is not very clear how they are implemented in *tarjih* products.

By looking at some of the tarjih products that have been produced, the nuances of the opinions of the scholars, especially pre-modern scholars, seem invisible or deliberately not shown. Even if we look at the Islamic intellectual tradition, we will find from whom or from which school the Tarjih Council's opinion came from. So, here it appears that El Madury is actually filling the gap that Muhammadiyah did not fill, namely presenting the authority of the Islamic intellectual tradition in religious narratives. For example, in the veil case, which had become a hot topic of discussion some time ago, the Tarjih Council has issued three fatwas related to the veil, namely in 1993 (T. M. T. dan T. P. P. Muhammadiyah 2019a), 2003 (T. M. T. dan T. P. P. Muhammadiyah 2019b), and 2009 (T. M. T. dan T. P. P. Muhammadiyah 2009). The fatwas issued in 1993 and 2009 emphasised that the veil has no legal basis either in the al-Quran or the Sunnah. What Islamic law commands women to wear is the hijab. These two fatwas base their arguments on the Qur'an and Sunnah, without citing the Islamic intellectual tradition, which also accommodates opinions about the veil. Although the Tarjih Council remained in its stance and strengthened the opinion that women's '*aurat* (parts of the body that should go covered) are the whole body except the face and the palms of the hands, in the 2003 fatwa, the Tarjih Council provides space for those who want to wear the veil by expressing several opinions from the scholars who think so.

In contrast to the tarjih fatwas, Zulkarnain El Madury in the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage uploaded an article that refutes the tarjih fatwa about the veil. El Madury's article is entitled '*Siapa Bilang Cadar Tak Ada Dalilnya dalam Islam?*' (Who Says The Veil Has No Evidence in Islam?) (El Madury 2019). In the article, he cites various opinions of scholars in the Islamic intellectual tradition who support mandatory veiling as an effort to build religious authority. From this, it appears that El Madury, apart from attacking the tarjih fatwa, also shows a different attitude from the tarjih fatwa in maintaining traditional authority, in this case, the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāts*).

Apart from being seen from the perspective of Weber's authority, what El Madury did in building religious authority can also be captured from what Burhani calls a conversion narrative. Some scholars define conversion narratives differently. For example, the change from one religious tradition to another can be referred to as religious conversion. Meanwhile, William James, as quoted by Burhani, said that religious conversion is not only a matter of changing a person from one religious tradition to another but it can also be interpreted as the conversion of a person who is wallowing in sin (sinner) into a human who pious. According to Burhani, people who experience religious conversion, usually after embracing a new tradition or religious understanding, will 'attack' the previous religious tradition or understanding (Burhani 2020).

El Madury also experienced a religious conversion. In this case, from the NU tradition to Muhammadiyah. In the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage and his statement when interviewed by the author, he introduced himself as a person who had practised the tradition he called '*kuburiyyun* tradition'<sup>18</sup> and other traditions that did not have examples from the Prophet. To convince his fanspage followers, he posted information about the religious conversion he had done. He also carried out attacks on his previous practices, which were deemed to have no basis in the al-Quran and Sunnah. Not only that, but he also openly often debates and even attacks each other with an NU *kyai* named Idrus Ramli.

The religious authority that El Madury is trying to establish, as explained above, has threatened the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, which is under the Tarjih Council. If this is related to the series of Defend Islam Action (I, II, and III) that occurred in 2016, which marked the increasing fragmentation of religious authority in Indonesia, several things can be explored.

---

<sup>18</sup> It means the tradition of visiting the grave with all kinds of practices that are in it.

First, Rizieq Shihab as the leading actor in the series of Defend Islam Action in 2016 and El Madury as a person who claims to be a preacher from the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (*Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah*) both are micro-celebrity-*ustaz* who emerged from the impact of the democratisation of religious discourse due to the collapse of the New Order regime and the emergence of new media (B. S. Turner 2007; Zamhari, Han, and Zulkifli 2021; Noorhaidi Hasan. 2019). Both have threatened the mainstream religious authorities that have dominated religious discourse in Indonesia. The difference between the two is that Rizieq Shihab threatens the religious authority of Muhammadiyah and NU, while El Madury only threatens the religious authority of Muhammadiyah. Even among the Nahdliyyin group, El Madury's opinions tend to be rejected. It is evident from his debate with one of the NU Kyai, Idrus Ramli.

Second, although they both threaten the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, Rizieq Shihab and El Madury do so in different fields. While Rizieq Shihab threatens Muhammadiyah on the “religious politics” aspect, El Madury threatens the “religious practice or fiqh” aspect. It can be seen, for example, from how Rizieq Shihab succeeded in influencing the Muhammadiyah people to go to protest against Basuki Tjahaja Purnama alias Ahok, the former governor of Jakarta, who was considered to have committed blasphemy (Burhani 2016). The series of demonstrations against Ahok cannot be separated from the issue of religious politics (Ahnaf 2016; Qodir 2016). This is different from El Madury, who threatened Muhammadiyah on the issue of religious practice or fiqh. This can be seen, for example, from how El Madury often behaves differently from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council, as illustrated in the case of the veil in the.

### **Muhammadiyah's Efforts in Maintaining Religious Authority in Cyberspace**

Before the advent of the internet, with various new religious authorities emerging, Muhammadiyah and NU were the two authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). However, after the emergence of the so-called *micro-celebrity-ustaz*, the two largest religious organisations, according to some scholars, began to face challenges and threats. Based on previous studies, the way the two organisations maintain religious authority does not appear to be the same. Wahyudi Akmaliah's recent study shows that the two organisations have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities (Akmaliah 2020). While NU was very *responsive* to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah said there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's response look less fierce (Akmaliah 2020). Akmaliah's thesis on several points is correct, but other perspectives deserve to be considered, especially to explore Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority, especially in cyberspace.

The weak point from Akmaliah's study is that there is no adequate elaboration of the assembly that exclusively holds religious authority in Muhammadiyah, namely the Tarjih Councils. To trace more precisely how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority is to look at the Tarjih and Tajdid Councils.

This discussion will start from the author's experience in attending a meeting held by the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board. The meeting was initiated in response to the emergence of the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* made by Zulkarnain El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim. It should be noted here that besides being made by El Madury, the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* was also written by Abdurrahim, a person who was mentioned at the beginning of this article getting permission from Buya Yun to make *syarḥ* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Judgment Compilation). The difference with El Madury, Abdurrahim wrote *Syarah Himpunan Putusan*

*Tarjih* in a book. The initial background for holding this meeting, as revealed by the Secretary of the Tarjih Council, Mas'udi, was purely in response to the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* written by Zulkarnain El Madury. However, information about the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* other than the one written by El Madury prompted the board of Tarjih Council to include the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* written by Abdurrahim also to be discussed in the meeting.

On Friday, 7 Safar 1442 AH or coinciding with September 25, 2020, the Tarjih Council invited nine related elements to discuss some people's concerns over the emergence of the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* in cyberspace written by the two people. These nine elements are: (1) the Executive Board of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (2) Fatwa Division of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (3) Chairman/Secretary of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (4) Dr Endang Mintarja, M.Ag. (Chairman of the Jakarta Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council); (5) H. Fathurrahman, Lc., M.S.I. (Chairman of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council); (6) H. Budi Setiawan, S.T.; (7) Arif Nurkholis (Head of Muhammadiyah Digital Syiar Center); (8) Manager of UAD Muhammadiyah Tarjih Center; and (9) Social Media Assistance Team of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

During the meeting, proposals emerged from the meeting participants concerning how to respond to the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*, especially the one written by El Madury. There are at least four proposals that surfaced. First, report the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage to the Facebook authority so that fanspage is banned for using an institution's name without permission. According to Fathurrahman Kamal,<sup>19</sup> who was present at the forum, the fanspage is already in the illegal category. **This proposal was considered by the proponents as a firm proposal and also not too risky.** Second, use a

---

<sup>19</sup> He is the chairman of the Tabligh Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board.



persuasive approach. The proposed persuasive approach can be in the form of clarification or an appeal to El Madury not to use the name *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (HPT) or something that smells of tarjih. Its proponents consider this approach to be softer and more characteristic of being members of Muhammadiyah in particular and Muslims in general. Third, take an official institutional approach. The point is to use an official letter on behalf of the Tarjih Council addressed to El Madury. In other words, this approach uses institutional authority to respond to El Madury and his fanspage. Fourth, socialise the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it through social media. In addition to avoiding being trapped in the substantive content of fanspage, this approach is considered more practical and efficient.

Until the meeting was over, there was no agreement on which approach to the proposal would be executed. This is because the meeting has been running for quite a long time, so the forum participants agreed to discuss it in the following forum. [Until this article was written \(03/04/2022\), there has been no further meeting to follow up on the previous meeting.](#)

However, it is interesting to note that the Tarjih Council rarely discusses and conducts meetings on something they think is not too important. Therefore, at this point, it can be seen that the phenomenon of the emergence of *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* in cyberspace and its effects have been considered a serious problem by the Tarjih Council. [Moreover, by looking at the proposals from the meeting participants, they were generally uneasy about the appearance of El Madury and his fanspage. In addition, they want El Madury to be warned or reprimanded.](#) In other words, the emergence of *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* has been considered a threat to religious authority that has been attached to the Tarjih Council. [It also illustrates that Muhammadiyah, through its official religious assembly, the Tarjih Council, is not passive in responding to the emergence of micro-celebrity-ustaz. Even though it is true that not all micro-celebrity-ustaz that appear in](#)

new media are responded to by the Tarjih Council, it seems that only certain cases have indeed received the attention of the Tarjih Council.

Although there has been no follow up from the meeting, what has been done by the *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (Tarjih Muhammadiyah Center) as an official institution supporting the Tarjih Council can illustrate how Muhammadiyah struggles to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

*Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (Tarjih Muhammadiyah Center) is an institution that was founded in 2016 (Dahlan 2016; P. P. Muhammadiyah n.d.). It was established in collaboration between the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Ahmad Dahlan University (P. T. Muhammadiyah, n.d.). Even though it is a new institution, its legality is clear, so it formally has authority. In the Muhammadiyah tradition as an organisation, this kind of legality is essential. No matter how strong the arguments issued by a figure in Muhammadiyah, if he or she speaks on his or her behalf, then his or her status will still be inferior to institutions within Muhammadiyah which, although new, have legality. In the context of El Madury and the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage, this is important. Because even though El Madury said he had obtained permission to make *syarḥ* (further explanation) on *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Judgment Compilation) from a charismatic figure in Muhammadiyah, Buya Yunahar, legally it could not be said to be valid. In that context, Buya Yunahar spoke on behalf of himself, not on behalf of Muhammadiyah.

Fronted by young Muhammadiyah cadres, the majority of whom are alumni of *Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (Muhammadiyah Tarjih Ulama Education),<sup>20</sup> *Pusat Tarjih*

---

<sup>20</sup> *Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (PUTM) is an educational institution under the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board which is designed to produce a cadre of Muhammadiyah scholars. PUTM organises a special program that educates and prepares Muhammadiyah tarjih scholars who are competent in the religious field. The birth of PUTM was based on the concern of some Muhammadiyah leaders about the increasing scarcity of 'ulama in and from Muhammadiyah. See (Fauzi 2020a).

*Muhammadiyah* plays a role in supporting the Tarjih Council programs, which are relatively under-performing and facing obstacles. They, especially, related to technological advances, such as using social media to disseminate their *ijtihad* products. The members of the Tarjih Council, who are relatively old, need to get support from young cadres. At this point, the *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* played an essential role in assisting the Tarjih Council in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace. Responding to El Madury and his fanspage, *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah*, through the power of its social media, took the initiative to make a poster containing information related to the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it.



Figure 1 Poster containing information related to official social media accounts affiliated with the Tarjih Council

***Translation of figure 1:***

Are you often confused about finding sources of reference about Islam from the perspective of Muhammadiyah?

There is no need to be confused anymore because various social media are straightforward for us to access. Tarjih (Council) has come with a more trendy look.

- ✓ Easy to read anywhere
- ✓ Provide updated fatwas
- ✓ Discuss current issues

As members of Muhammadiyah, let's get used to reading the decisions and fatwas of Muhammadiyah

Here are some media that can be accessed very easily. So don't be confused anymore.

Web: [fatwatarjih.or.id](http://fatwatarjih.or.id)

Facebook: [fb.me/fatwamu](https://fb.me/fatwamu)

Instagram: [pusattarjih\\_muhammadiyah](https://pusattarjih_muhammadiyah)

Telegram: [t.me/fatwatarjihmu](https://t.me/fatwatarjihmu)

Youtube: [tarjih channel](#)

Let's spread it to all Muhammadiyah people!

Although the poster above does not directly mention the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage created by El Madury, the main message in it is clear and firm, namely to inform Muhammadiyah people regarding the official accounts of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it. So it is hoped that Muhammadiyah people will understand how Muhammadiyah's official religious voice is disseminated in cyberspace. After that, successively *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* uploaded other, more varied posters to indirectly counter the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage. For example, here are the following posters,



Figure 3 Information about the website *fatwatarjih.or.id*, an official website affiliated with the Tarjih Council containing fatwas.



Figure 2 Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council

### **Translation of figure 2:**

Do you know?

The Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah now have an official YouTube channel, (namely) the Tarjih Channel.

Have you subscribed yet?

### **Translation of figure 3:**

Fatwatarjih.or.id is the official website for the Tarjih and the Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board (MTT).

The Media Team of Fatwa Tarjih, through this website, has been, is and will continue to strive consistently to publish various ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council. Until now, tarjih fatwas collections from 1997 to 2018 have entered the editing stage, and some are just waiting for publishing.



*Figure 4 Information on the official website of the Tarjih Council*

***Translation of figure 4:***

Do you want to know the history (of the Tarjih Council)?  
Or do you want to look for ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council?  
Come on; you can find out on this website: tarjih.or.id

The use of informal and slang-like language and emoticons typical of millennials indicate the audience that the Tarjih Council wants to target, **which is millennial groups and the generation after**. *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* team understands that language that tends to be non-formal will touch the audience's hearts more than rigid formal language. This method not only wants to show the authority of the Tarjih Council but at the same time tries to carry out

the so-called tarjih millennialization process. According to Suyadi and Widodo, millennialization is an alternative way to develop knowledge synergised with various online media and digital technology (Suyadi and Widodo 2019). In the context of tarjih millennialization, tarjih products that tend to be disseminated in a conventional, monotonous, and uncreative manner are now disseminated by utilising technological advances and presented in more contextual packaging. In addition, the millennialization of tarjih can also mean that the Tarjih Council and its various *ijtihad* products, which previously were always identified with the 'old people', have now also touched and greeted the 'young people'.

The religious authority of the Tarjih Council in cyberspace, especially when connected with the appearance of El Madury and his fanspage, was greatly helped by the presence of *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* and the young Muhammadiyah cadres in it. Managing various social media platforms with large followers, *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* has helped maintain Muhammadiyah's religious authority by balancing and suppressing the presence of *micro-celebrity-ustaz*. The contents contained in it are fatwas and decisions of the Tarjih Council with exciting visualisations. This is expected to reach a wider community, especially the millennial group.

Although the number of social media followers affiliated with the Tarjih Council is not as much as the NU and Salafi groups, for example, at least the presence of *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* has become a kind of compass for Muhammadiyah people who question Muhammadiyah's religious authority, especially with the emergence of El Madury's version of *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* social media admin acknowledge that many questions came in, either through the comments column or direct messages in the inbox, which questioned the authority of *Syarah Himpunan Putusan*



*Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage.<sup>21</sup> Here, the vital role of *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* is increasingly finding its momentum.

### **What Lessons Can be Learned from the Case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the Response of the Tarjih and Tajdid Council**

Muhammadiyah is known as a very well-managed organisation (Barton 2014; “Hyung Jun Kim: Sistem Di Muhammadiyah Sungguh Ideal” 2019). All activities are impeccable administratively. This well-systematic organisational culture is the strength and characteristic of Muhammadiyah compared to other religious organisations in Indonesia, such as NU. In other words, it can be said that the authority in Muhammadiyah lies in the organisation or institution itself. Not on personal authority. It is different from NU, for example, whose power and authority tend to lie in personal figures, such as *kyai* or *gus* (Fauzi 2020b).

For the Muhammadiyah people who understand the basic rules of Muhammadiyah, they are not easily influenced by the emergence of micro-celebrity-*ustaz*. They will understand that Muhammadiyah's official religious stance will only be issued by the Tarjih Council. If there are other assemblies besides the Tarjih Council or specific figures in Muhammadiyah that issue religious opinions, then organisationally, it is not valid and cannot be justified from the perspective of Muhammadiyah. Even if, for example, the religious opinion was issued by the chairman of the Tarjih Council as an individual. This actually happened when Syamsul Anwar, the current chairman of the Tarjih Council, had a different opinion from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council on the issue of *iftitāḥ* prayer (opening prayer for night prayer [*qiyām al-lail*]). For Anwar, *iftitāḥ* prayer is a two short rak’ah prayer that is performed before performing *qiyām al-lail*, with the condition that it must be preceded by sleep first. If it is not preceded by sleep, then for Anwar, there is no need to perform the *iftitāḥ*

---

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Ariful Hazamn, Ilham Ibrahim, and Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, September 2020. They are *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* social media admin.



prayer (Anwar 2013). Meanwhile, according to Tarjih Council, *iftitāḥ* prayer is a two short rak'ah prayer that is performed before performing *qiyām al-lail*, whether preceded by sleeping first or not (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2011; T. M. T. dan T. P. P. Muhammadiyah 2019a).

Anwar's opinion is clearly different from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council. Therefore, the prevailing opinion in Muhammadiyah is the opinion of the Tarjih Council, not the opinion of the chairman of the Tarjih Council. In Muhammadiyah, religious differences of opinion like this are commonplace. As this usually happens in *fiqh* discourse in general. The difference with El Madury, Anwar does not act in the name of Muhammadiyah or the Tarjih Council when he has a different opinion. Instead, on many occasions, he urged the Muhammadiyah people to follow the opinion of the Tarjih Council regarding the *iftitāḥ* prayer.<sup>22</sup> At this point, there is an important lesson to be learned from Anwar's attitude. He can compromise his personal religious opinion with his professional attitude in the organisation. In this case, he understands that using the name Muhammadiyah to legitimise individual opinions or interests is not justifiable.

## Conclusion

This article tries to trace Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace. By focusing on the figure of Zulkarnain El Madury and *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage that he has created and managed, this article finds a different conclusion from previous studies. By analysing what the Tarjih Council has done as the only institution in Muhammadiyah with authority to issue fatwas, this article shows that Muhammadiyah is not as calm or passive in responding to the emergence of new religious authorities as explained by previous studies (Akmaliah 2020; Sammy 2022; Sanjaya 2022;

---

<sup>22</sup> On several occasions, the author has heard Syamsul Anwar's appeal directly to the Muhammadiyah people to follow the opinion of the Tarjih Council regarding this *iftitāḥ* prayer.

Saefullah 2022). With the help of *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* as an institution under it, the Tarjih Council made a series of efforts through social media and its official website to counter votes from new authorities that threatened its authority. In a broader context, the case of Zulkarnain El Madury also provides a lesson that using the name Muhammadiyah to justify personal opinions or legitimise particular interests is wrong.

### **Acknowledgements**

I am grateful to *ustaz* Zulkarnain El Madury for his exceptional help and support during my fieldwork. I also thank Amiruddin, Arif Nur Kholis, Muhammad Muflih, Wahyudi Abdurrahim, Robby Karman, Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, Ilham Ibrahim, Ariful Hazam, and the members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council for providing a lot of information regarding my research. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article. Errors, if any, are solely mine.

### **Funding**

This work was supported by Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan.

### **Notes on contributor**

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi is a lecturer of Department of Hadith Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He has published widely on a variety of issues relating to Islamic Studies, including al-Quran, hadith, Islamic law, social media and *da'wah*, and Muhammadiyah studies. Email: [niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id](mailto:niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id)

### **References**

“Aa Gym Ajak Ribuan Jamaahnya Ikut Aksi Bela Islam III.” n.d. Accessed February 2, 2020.  
<http://www.dakta.com/news/7329/aa-gym-ajak-ribuan-jamaahnya-ikut-aksi-bela-islam->

iii.

Abror, Robby. 2020. "Syekh Yunahar, Ulama Muhammadiyah Kharismatik."

Menara62.Com. 2020. <https://menara62.com/syekh-yunahar-ulama-muhammadiyah-kharismatik/>.

Ahnaf, Mohammad Iqbal. 2016. "'Aksi Bela Islam,' Akankah Mengubah Lanskap Muslim Indonesia?" *MAARIF* 11 (2): 30–42.

Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2018. "Media Sosial Dan Pergeseran Otoritas Keagamaan." 2018.

[https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media\\_sosial\\_dan\\_pergeseran\\_otoritas\\_keagamaaan](https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media_sosial_dan_pergeseran_otoritas_keagamaaan).

———. 2020. "The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and Reclaiming Religious Authorities." *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10 (1): 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v10i1.1-24>.

Al, Asjmuni Abdur Rahman et. 1985. "Laporan Penelitian Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (Suatu Studi Tentang Sistem Dan Metode Penentuan Hukum)." Yogyakarta.

Alfaqi, Mifdal Zusron. 2015. "Memahami Indonesia Melalui Prespektif Nasionalisme, Politik Identitas, Serta Solidaritas." *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 28 (2): 111–16.

Anwar, Syamsul. 2007. *Studi Hukum Islam Kontemporer*. Jakarta: RM Books.

———. 2013. *Salat Tarawih Tinjauan Usul Fikih, Sejarah, Dan Fikih*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

———. 2016. "Fatwā, Purification and Dynamization: A Study of Tarjih in Muhammadiyah." *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (1): 27–44.

- . 2018. *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Panitia Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih Muhammadiyah XXX.
- . 2020. *Studi Hukum Islam Kontemporer Bagian Dua*. Yogyakarta: UAD Press.
- Barton, Greg. 2014. “The Gülen Movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: Progressive Islamic Thought, Religious Philanthropy and Civil Society in Turkey and Indonesia.” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25 (3): 287–301.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2014.916124>.
- Buchari, Sri Astuti. 2014. *Kebangkitan Etnis Menuju Politik Identitas*. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Bunt, Gary R. 2003. *Islam in the Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments*. 1st ed. Londong and Virginia: Pluto Press.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2005. “The 45th Muhammadiyah Congress Contest between Literal-Conservative and Liberal-Moderate Muslims in Indonesia.” *Studia Islamika* 12 (1): 185–89. <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v12i1.650>.
- . 2013. “Liberal and Conservative Discourses in the Muhammadiyah: The Struggle for the Face of Reformist Islam in Indonesia.” In *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the “Conservative Turn,”* edited by Martin Van Bruinessen. Singapura: ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute.
- . 2016. “Aksi Bela Islam: Konservatisme Dan Fragmentasi Otoritas Keagamaan.” *Maarif* 11 (2): 15–29.
- . 2020. “Muslim Televangelists in the Making: Conversion Narratives and the Construction of Religious Authority.” *Muslim World* 110 (2): 154–75.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12327>.

- Burhanudin, Jajat. 2004. "The Fragmentation of Religious Authority: Islamic Print Media in Early 20th Century Indonesia." *Studia Islamika* 11 (1): 23–62.  
<https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v11i1.609>.
- Campbell, Heidi, and Paul Emerson Teusner. 2011. "Religious Authority in the Age of the Internet." In *Virtual Lives: Christian Reflection*, 59–68. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press.
- Chairi, Effendi. 2019. "Ketiadaan Otoritas Terpusat Dalam Fenomena Kontemporer Di Indonesia." *SANGKÉP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 2 (2).  
<https://doi.org/10.20414/sangkep.v2i2.666>.
- Dahlan, Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah dan Universitas Ahmad. 2016. "Nota Kesepakatan Majelis Tarjih Dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Tentang Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di Islamic Center Universitas Ahmad Dahlan." Yogyakarta.
- "Dari Aa' Gym Ke Felix Siauw: Ustaz Medsos & Medium Dakwah Politis." 2018. Tirto.Id. 2018. <https://tirto.id/dari-aa-gym-ke-felix-siauw-ustaz-medsos-medium-dakwah-politis-cCGf>.
- "Dubes Malaysia Jenguk Ketum MUI Yunahar Ilyas Di Yogyakarta." n.d. Rm.Id. Accessed April 4, 2022. <https://rm.id/baca-berita/internasional/21745/dubes-malaysia-jenguk-ketum-mui-yunahar-ilyas-di-yogyakarta>.
- Fadl, Khaled Abou El. 2014. *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority, and Women*. London: Oneworld Publications.
- Farhan, Farhan. 2017. "Pesan Dakwah Felix Siauw Di Media Sosial (Perspektif Meaning and Media)." *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Administrasi Islam*.

<https://doi.org/10.22373/al-idarah.v1i2.2242>.

Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2017. “Peranan Maqasid Al-Shariah Dalam Memahami Hadith: Kajian Terhadap Fatwa Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah.” *Master Thesis*. University of Malaya.

———. 2020a. “PUTM Dan Kaderisasi Ulama: Menelusuri Latar Belakang Lahirnya Lembaga Kaderisasi Ulama Muhammadiyah.” 2020. <https://santricendekia.com/putm-dan-kaderisasi-ulama-menelusuri-latar-belakang-lahirnya-lembaga-kaderisasi-ulama-muhammadiyah/>.

———. 2020b. “Tantangan Kader Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di Era 4.0.” *Suara 'Aisyiyah*, 2020.

Fealy, Greg. 2008. “Consuming Islam: Commodified Religion and Aspirational Pietism in Contemporary Indonesia.” In *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, edited by Greg Fealy and Sally White, 15–39. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1355/9789812308528-006>.

Hew, Wai Weng. 2018. “THE ART OF DAKWAH: Social Media, Visual Persuasion and the Islamist Propagation of Felix Siauw.” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (134): 61–79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2018.1416757>.

Hoesterey, James B. 2008. “Marketing Morality: The Rise, Fall and Rebranding of Aa Gym.” In *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, edited by Greg Fealy and Sally White, 95–114. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1355/9789812308528-010>.

Hope Cheong, Pauline. 2016. “Religious Authority and Social Media Branding in a Culture of Religious Celebrification.” In *The Media and Religious Authority*, edited by Stewart M.

- Hoover, 81–102. University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press.
- Horsfield, Peter. 2016. “The Media and Religious Authority from Ancient to Modern.” In *The Media and Religious Authority*, edited by Stewart M. Hoover, 37–66. University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press.
- Hosen, Nadirsyah. 2008. “Online Fatwa in Indonesia: From Fatwa Shopping to Googling a Kiai.” In *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, edited by Greg Fealy and Sally White, 155–73. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- “Hyung Jun Kim: Sistem Di Muhammadiyah Sungguh Ideal.” 2019. Suaramuhamamdiyah.Id. 2019. <https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/08/01/hyung-jun-kim-sistem-di-muhammadiyah-sungguh-ideal/>.
- Ilyas, Yunahar. 2012. *Kuliah Akhlaq*. XII. Yogyakarta: LPPI UMY.
- Khamis, Susie, Lawrence Ang, and Raymond Welling. 2017. “Self-Branding, ‘Micro-Celebrity’ and the Rise of Social Media Influencers.” *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191–208. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2016.1218292>.
- Khomalia, Isti, and Khairul Arief Rahman. 2018. “Micro Hijabers Celebrity: Membentuk Identitas Dengan Update Self-Story via Instagram (Kasus Dian Pelangi).” *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban Dan Pemikiran Islam* 2 (1): 33. <https://doi.org/10.23971/njppi.v2i1.869>.
- Labiq. 2019. “Pengaruh New Media Terhadap Pergeseran Otoritas Keagamaan.” Geotimes.Id. 2019. <https://geotimes.co.id/opini/pengaruh-new-media-terhadap-pergeseran-otoritas-keagamaan>.
- Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. 2010. *Politik Identitas Dan Masa Depan Pluralisme Indonesia*. Edited by Ihsan Ali-Fauzi dan Samsu Rizal Panggabean. Jakarta: Pusat Studi Agama dan

Demokrasi (PUSAD) Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina.

Madury, Zulkarnain El. 2019. "Siapa Bilang Cadar Tak Ada Dalilnya Dalam Islam?"

November 2, 2019.

<https://www.facebook.com/zulkarnainsumenep/posts/2386248524961601>.

Maskur, Maskur, and Irfan Noor. 2014. "Ustadz Selebriti Abdullah Gymnastiar Dalam

Budaya Populer (Perspektif Hipersemiotika Yasraf Amir Piliang)." *Jurnal Studia Insania*

2 (1): 47. <https://doi.org/10.18592/jsi.v2i1.1091>.

Matheson, Craig. 1987. "Weber and the Classification of Forms of Legitimacy." *The British*

*Journal of Sociology* 38 (2): 199. <https://doi.org/10.2307/590532>.

Muhammadiyah, Pimpinan Pusat. n.d. "Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah Launching Pusat

Tarjih Muhammadiyah Dan MuON." Accessed March 20, 2021.

<http://www.umm.ac.id/id/muhammadiyah/7070.html>.

Muhammadiyah, Pusat Tarjih. n.d. *Panduan Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah*.

Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah dan Universitas Ahmad

Dahlan Yogyakarta.

Muhammadiyah, Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat. 2009. "Hukum Tentang

Jenggot Dan Cadar." *Suara Muhammadiyah*, September 2009.

———. 2019a. *Fatwa-Fatwa Tarjih: Tanya Jawab Agama Jilid 4*. Cetakan IX. Yogyakarta:

Suara Muhammadiyah.

———. 2019b. *Fatwa-Fatwa Tarjih: Tanya Jawab Agama Jilid 7*. Cetakan IV. Yogyakarta:

Suara Muhammadiyah.

Nisa, Eva F. 2019. "Internet and Muslim Women." In *Handbook of Contemporary Islam and*

*Muslim Lives*, edited by Ronald Lukens-Bull and Mark Woodward, 1–19. Cham,



Switzerland: Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73653-2\\_71-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73653-2_71-1).

Noorhaidi Hasan., et al. 2019. *Ulama Dan Negara-Bangsa: Membaca Masa Depan Islam Politik Di Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: Pusat Pengkajian Islam, Demokrasi, dan Perdamaian (PusPIDeP).

Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2011. *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. 3rd ed. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Postill, John, and Sarah Pink. 2012. "Social Media Ethnography: The Digital Researcher in a Messy Web." *Media International Australia*, no. 125. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878x1214500114>.

Pribadi, Yanwar. 2019. "Fragmentasi Umat Dan Penciptaan Otoritas Keagamaan: Tanggapan Terhadap 'Islam Lokal' Dan 'Islam Asing' Di Indonesia." *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 21 (1): 103. <https://doi.org/10.14203/jmb.v21i1.828>.

Qodir, Zuly. 2016. "Muhammadiyah Dan Aksi Damai Bela Islam: Rejuvenasi Politik Umat Islam?" *Maarif* 11 (2).

Quadri, Syed Junaid A. 2013. "Transformations of Tradition: Modernity in The Thought of Muḥammad Bakhīt Al-Muṭī'ī." *Doctoral Thesis*. McGill University.

Riesebrodt, Martin. 1999. "Charisma in Max Weber's Sociology of Religion." *Religion* 29 (1). <https://doi.org/10.1006/reli.1999.0175>.

Sadasri, Lidwina Mutia. 2017. "Selebriti Mikro Di Media Baru Kajian Presentasi Diri Dalam Vlog Selebriti Mikro." *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi Dan Opini Publik* 21 (2): 167–81. <https://jurnal.kominfo.go.id/index.php/jpkop/article/view/1218>.

Saefullah, Hikmawan. 2022. "Media Baru, Publik Baru: Mengkonfigurasi Ulang Ruang Publik Islam." In *Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat*

*Digital, Dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah.* Yogyakarta.

Sammy, Abdullah. 2022. "Peluang Dan Tantangan Dakwah Digital Muhammadiyah." In *Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, Dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah.* Yogyakarta.

Sanjaya, Makroen. 2022. "Peta Ideologi Islam Di Media Sosial." In *Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, Dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah.* Yogyakarta.

"Sejumlah Tokoh Hadiri Prosesi Pemakaman Ketua PP Muhammadiyah Yunahar Ilyas." n.d. Accessed April 3, 2022.

<https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/03/19142441/sejumlah-tokoh-hadiri-prosesi-pemakaman-ketua-pp-muhammadiyah-yunahar-ilyas>.

Senft, Theresa. 2008. *Camgirls: Celebrity and Community in the Age of Social Networks.* New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Shamsy, Ahmed El. 2013. "The Ḥāshiya in Islamic Law: A Sketch of the Shāfi'ī Literature." *Oriens* 41. <https://doi.org/10.1163/18778372-13413404>.

Spencer, Martin E. 1970. "Weber on Legitimate Norms and Authority." *The British Journal of Sociology* 21 (2). <https://doi.org/10.2307/588403>.

Suyadi and Widodo, Suyadi Hendro. 2019. "Millennialization of Islamic Education Based on Neuroscience in The Third Generation University in Yogyakarta Indonesia." *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7 (1): 173–202. <https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v7i1.4922>.

Turner, Bryan S. 2007. "Religious Authority and the New Media." *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2): 117–34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276407075001>.

Turner, Graeme. 2010. *Ordinary People and The Media: The Demotic Turn*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC: Sage Publication Ltd.

Widodo, Arif. 2017. "Transformative Intellectual Discourse and Movement of Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM)." *Iseedu: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices* 1 (1). <https://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/iseedu/article/view/5423/3542>.

"Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia Kehilangan Ulama Kharismatik." 2020. Gesuri.Id. 2020. <https://www.gesuri.id/internal/yunahar-ilyas-wafat-indonesia-kehilangan-ulama-kharismatik-b1YFoZpRY>.

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change*. Princetoon, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.40-5188>.

Zamhari, Arif, Muhamad Ibtissam Han, and Zulkifli. 2021. "Traditional Religious Authorities in New Media: A Study of the Cariustadz.Id Platform as an Alternative Cyber Fatwa and Da'wah Media among the Middle-Class Urban Muslims." *Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 21 (1). <https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v21i1.20300>.

# Bukti Revisi

2

## Cover Letter

Dear Dr Laura Noszlopy

I must apologise for sending you the revised version of my manuscript article so long ago. I hope you are doing well. In this email, I am attaching the second revision of my article manuscript titled "Zulkarnain El Madury and the Micro-Celebrity-Ustaz Phenomenon: Tracing Muhammadiyah's Struggle in Maintaining Religious Authority in Cyberspace". I have revised the feedback from the reviewer, especially the introduction and conclusion sections.

Lastly, I do hope that this article can be published in Indonesia and The Malay World to contribute my research results to your journal.

Once again, thank you very much for your cooperation, help, and kindness. I really appreciate your time and look forward to seeing your positive response.

Best wishes,  
Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

# **Zulkarnain El Madury and the *Micro-Celebrity-Ustaz* Phenomenon: Tracing Muhammadiyah's Struggle in Maintaining Religious Authority in Cyberspace**

## **Abstract**

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the fragmentation of religious authority. In the Indonesian context, the mainstream religious authority that Muhammadiyah and NU have held has also been challenged and threatened by micro-celebrity-*ustaz*. Some studies showed that while NU tends to be very reactive in responding to the emergence of micro-celebrity-*ustaz*, Muhammadiyah seems passive. This article examines the emergence of the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage, which was created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, a person who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board. By conducting web content analysis and field research by interviewing key actors related to this issue, this article shows how Zulkarnain El Madury and the fanspage he created have threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority, and in turn, analyses Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace. By taking a closer look at what the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (*Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah*) has done, as an assembly that has the exclusive authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* products within Muhammadiyah, this article shows another perspective on Muhammadiyah's response to the emergence of new religious authorities, which is different from previous studies. In this case, Muhammadiyah remains active in responding to the emergence of new religious authorities, but in a typical Muhammadiyah style that is not frontal. In addition, this article also discusses what lessons can be learned from the case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the response of the Tarjih Council against him.

**Keywords:** *micro-celebrity-ustaz*, fragmentation, religious authority, Muhammadiyah, tarjih.

## Introduction

The Alvara Research Center survey released in May 2020 was quite surprising (Center 2020). It stated that the clerics most heard by the public, especially in Ramadan 2020, did not come from the official Muhammadiyah board. Although *Ustaz* Adi Hidayat was included as one of the fifteen most popular clerics in the survey, he cannot be said to be an official representative of Muhammadiyah. He is indeed an alumnus of the Darul Arqam Muhammadiyah Garut Islamic Boarding School. Still, apart from not being involved in Muhammadiyah, he does not convey Muhammadiyah's religious ideas in his lectures. About two months after the Alvara Research Center survey was released, IBTimes.id, an Islamic website culturally managed by young Muhammadiyah intellectuals, published a report on ranking the 100 most popular Islamic websites in Indonesia (“100 Situs Islam Indonesia, NU Online Peringkat Pertama” 2020). The majority of the 100 Islamic sites are managed or affiliated with *Nahdliyyin* and *Salafi* groups. Only very few Islamic websites are operated or affiliated with Muhammadiyah.

The Alvara Research Center survey and the IBTimes.id report shows at least one thing, namely that Muhammadiyah, in terms of influence and religious authority in cyberspace, is losing or lagging behind other religious groups. It is ironic for an organisation claiming to represent the progressive Islamic group.

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the so-called fragmentation of religious authority. Nisa, for example, mentions that the proliferation of various digital platforms is directly proportional to the increasing fragmentation of religious authority (Nisa 2019). Islamic discourse is monopolised not only by an elite group of scholars, or mainstream religious groups but also by persons or groups that have not been considered in Islamic discourse. Furthermore, the presence of the internet and social media has led to the birth of what is called micro-celebrity. Theresa M. Senft defines micro-celebrity as a new style of

online performance that involves increasing popularity through web technologies such as videos, blogs, and social networking sites (Senft 2008). According to her, these micro-celebrities sometimes seem like conventional celebrities, but they are different (Senft 2008). The most fundamental difference between the two is the place in and from where they were born. In other words, conventional celebrities are born in and from conventional media, while micro-celebrities are born through what is known as new media.

Of course, not all new media users have the predicate of micro-celebrity. Only those who experience what Graeme Turner termed 'the demotic turn', namely the increasing visibility of ordinary people to appear as celebrities in the media, especially online media (G. Turner 2010). In turn, both conventional and micro-celebrity exist in various public spheres, and the discourse on them is characterised as influencers, stimulants of consumerism, enthusiasm, public debate, and various activism (Sadasri 2017).

By borrowing the theory of micro-celebrities in the study of new media, we can then read how these micro-celebrities have also come to the fore in the religious realm. The emergence of '*ulama*, *ustaz*, preachers, and religious leaders who become influencers in new media can perhaps be termed as a form of a *micro-celebrity-ustaz* image. Felix Siauw is a prominent example. The convert, who is now a preacher, has a massive following on social media. In 2018, for example, he had 2,6 million followers on Twitter, and now in 2022, his followers have reached 3.3 million. Not only Twitter but Felix Siauw's Instagram account also has many followers, around 4.9 million. It can even be said that he is the *ustaz* or preacher who has the most followers on social media ("Dari Aa' Gym Ke Felix Siauw: Ustaz Medsos & Medium Dakwah Politis" 2018) so that making him one of the leading social media preachers in Indonesia today (Hew 2018). What Felix Siauw said in his social media has more or less influenced the map of religious authorities in Indonesia.



The existence of the internet and the continuing development of technology allows the emergence of many other *micro-celebrity-ustaz*, both in the national arena more generally or more specifically in internal religious organisations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, Persis or others. In the context of Muhammadiyah, the largest *modernist* Islamic organisation began to be challenged for its religious authority by a preacher who was said to be part of Muhammadiyah itself, namely Zulkarnain El Madury. He is a person who claims to be a Muhammadiyah cadre and often introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board. In recent years, Zulkarnain El Madury has been noticed by Muhammadiyah administrators and Muhammadiyah cadres.<sup>1</sup> Even the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (*Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah*) even discussed him in a special meeting. This is because the posts on the Facebook fanspage that El Madury manages, namely the *Syarah Himpunan Putus Tarjih Muhammadiyah*, often differ significantly from - and to some extent delegitimise - what has become the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah. Responses from grassroots or Muhammadiyah people varied. This can be seen, for example, from the comments on each post. Some defended and remained adamant with the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah, but not a few were affected and, in turn, followed what was conveyed by Zulkarnain El Madury on the fanspage.

This is where it becomes crucial to see how Muhammadiyah attempts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace, especially among its members and people. By conducting web content analysis (Postill and Pink 2012) on the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage and official social media accounts and those affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (*Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah*), this article shows how El Madury builds his narratives and, in turn, how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority

---

<sup>1</sup> Online and offline interview with Amiruddin, Robby Karman, Muhammad Muflih, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, and Arif Nur Kholis, 2019-2020.

in cyberspace. In addition, field research was also conducted to complement the method. In conducting the field research,<sup>2</sup> the key actors related to this research were interviewed offline and online in a semi-structured format.<sup>3</sup> Apart from Zulkarnain El Madury, the key actors are members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (*Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah*), the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Digital Broadcast Center (*Pusat Syiar Digital Muhammadiyah*), and several prominent figures, Muhammadiyah activists as well as grassroots people of Muhammadiyah.

### **Fragmentation of Religious Authority, New Preacher and Micro-Celebrity-Ustaz Phenomenon**

Fragmentation of religious authority is a phenomenon that occurs in various religious communities and is not limited to Islam alone (B. S. Turner 2007; Campbell and Teusner 2011; Hope Cheong 2016). Not only that, but the fragmentation of religious authority is also a global phenomenon. This is illustrated, for example, by the study of Gary R. Bunt (Bunt 2003). He points out that new media have shaped diverse understandings among individual Muslims worldwide about e-jihad (electronic jihad). The definition of electronic jihad is understood and interpreted differently, ranging from online activism to Muslim expression after the events of September 11, 2001. In turn, in his study, Bunt shows that each new media (in this case, new websites) has authority for its respective group segment.

Especially in Indonesia, the fragmentation of religious authority can be traced far back.

Nevertheless, for the purposes of this article, the fragmentation of religious authority that will be discussed here is from the beginning of the 20th century to the present day. Jajat

---

<sup>2</sup> This research has obtained a research permit from the university ethical board through Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (Ahmad Dahlan University Research and Development Institute) with the number PJB-002/SP3/LPPM-UAD/VI/2020.

<sup>3</sup> Data collection in this study was carried out in the time span between 2018-2020. Because offline interviews were not possible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, some interviews were conducted online.

Burhanudin (Burhanudin 2004) points out that there has been a shift in religious authority in the historical phase of Indonesian religious thought in the early 20th century due to modernisation. The religious authority, which was initially held by traditional groups, shifted to modernist groups. His study, which focuses on Islamic print media, further shows that there is a shift in religious authority that used to be in *Kitab Kuning* taught by *kyai* or *ulama* in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to magazines, journals, newspapers, and books published by modernist circles or organisations.

After that phase, religious authority is always identified with the role of Muhammadiyah and NU. These two religious organisations are always referred to by scholars as the authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016; Akmaliah 2018). The shift in religious authority occurred again in the 1990s when national television stations were gradually born. The Islamic programs presented by the television station show *ustaz* or preacher, which in turn build their authority through lectures delivered by them. This phenomenon, in turn, prompted scholars to come up with the term ‘Islamic televangelism’ (Akmaliah 2018). AA Gym is one example that falls into the category of this television *ustaz*, or in Greg Fealy's terms, he is called a tele-dai (Fealy 2008).

The most obvious and recent picture of the fragmentation of religious authority in Indonesia is the series of events of the Defend Islam Action. Ahmad Najib Burhani hinted that the critical event marked the peak of the fragmentation of religious authorities in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). This series of events has given rise to new actors who challenge the established religious authority over the years. Although it cannot be said to shift or match the role of Muhammadiyah and NU, the emergence of new actors such as Rizieq Shihab provides a new map of religious authority in Indonesia.

This phenomenon of fragmentation of religious authority has increased sharply in the development of what scholars call pop culture, marked by the birth of many new media (Labiq 2019). The spread of internet access to every social class is the main factor for this fragmentation. As a result, many new media have emerged; each individual and group compete to spread ideas (Nisa 2019; Horsfield 2016).

Abdullah Gymnastiar, who is more familiarly called AA Gym, mentioned earlier, can be said to be one of the early actors who emerged in the internet era starting to grow in Indonesia. This can be captured in two interesting studies on AA Gym conducted by James B. Hoesterey (Hoesterey 2008) and Maskur & Irfan Noor (Maskur and Noor 2014). Although the use of the internet as a medium of *da'wah* at that time was not as massive as it is now, the emergence of AA Gym as a new cleric on the national *da'wah* stage through lectures, seminars, and Islamic training is a phenomenon in itself. His preaching journey is fascinating. Hoesterey studies the journey of AA Gym as a preacher critically starting from appearing, falling, and then his success in rebranding. The successful rebranding carried out by AA Gym (and the team) succeeded in restoring its religious authority. This is evident, for example, from how the voice of AA Gym was very well listened to during the Defend Islam Action some time ago ("Aa Gym Ajak Ribuan Jamaahnya Ikut Aksi Bela Islam III" n.d.).

Popular culture has also brought AA Gym to be seen not only by the public, especially by his followers, as an *ustaz an sich*, but also singer, actor, book writer, etc. Thus, he has transformed from an ordinary cleric to a celebrity cleric. Through a hypersemiotic perspective, Maskur and Noor show the various sides in AA Gym's character.

After the appearance of AA Gym and information technology is developed rapidly, many new preachers began to appear. Wai Weng Hew (Hew 2018) describes how Felix Siau is a religious teacher with high skill in preaching. Being a cleric with the most followers in

cyberspace does not make Felix forget to spread his *da'wah* in the real world. Hew points out that Felix has blended online and offline *da'wah* very well. Instead of replacing offline *da'wah* with online, Felix actually combined the two harmoniously. The *da'wah skill* displayed by Felix aims to spread HTI's ideas and ideologies as the carriage of his *da'wah* identity. According to Hew (Hew 2018) and Farhan (Farhan 2017), one of the keys to Felix's success in preaching is his ability to present an entertaining and straightforward *da'wah*, even though its content is dogmatic and political.

AA Gym and Felix Siauwh are descriptions of two *ustaz* who became famous because of the new media's 'blessing'. Both are new clerics who have transformed into *micro-celebrity-ustaz*. The term *micro-celebrity-ustaz* is a term that was adopted and reconstructed from the theory of micro-celebrity. There have been many studies on micro-celebrity itself. Most of these studies were carried out from the perspective of pop culture, as has been done, for example, by Theresa M. Senft (Senft 2008), Graeme Turner (G. Turner 2010), Lidwina Mutia Sadasri (Sadasri 2017), Khamis, Ang, and Welling (Khamis, Ang, and Welling 2017), and Khomalia and Rahman (Khomalia and Rahman 2018).

The studies that the author mentioned above all describe the fragmentation of religious authority, marked by the emergence of *micro-celebrity-ustaz*. The term *micro-celebrity-ustaz* that the author means here is an ordinary *ustaz/ustazah* or preacher who, in turn, has skyrocketed popularity like celebrities on and because of social media so that he or she enables to influence certain people or communities. In other words, it means *ustaz/ustazah* or preacher experienced what Turner called 'the demotic turn' (G. Turner 2010). Studies on the efforts or struggles of established religious authorities challenged by new religious authorities have not been touched. One study conducted by Yanwar Pribadi could perhaps be called an exception (Pribadi 2019). His study explains how the efforts of 'local Islam' (*Islam Lokal*) to defend the position of its religious authority from the threat of 'foreign Islam' (*Islam Asing*).

However, his study is different from what the author will examine, tracing Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

The author's study is about a [micro-celebrity-ustaz](#) named Zulkarnain El Madury. His name, which is not as popular as AA Gym or Felix Siauw but has a strong influence in cyberspace, is interesting. His identity as an *ustaz* or preacher from Muhammadiyah who targets Muhammadiyah people with postings that are often different and even delegitimise the official voice of this largest modernist mass organisation is another interesting thing that deserves to be investigated. This author's study not only wants to show Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace, but it also wants explicitly to fill the gap in previous studies. For instance, in his latest study, Akmaliah shows that Muhammadiyah and NU have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities (Akmaliah 2020). While NU was very reactive to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah said there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah respond that looks less fierce (Akmaliah 2020). [In line with Akmaliah's opinion, Sammy \(Sammy 2022\), Sanjaya \(Sanjaya 2022\), and Saefullah \(Saefullah 2022\) also concluded more or less the same thing. They claim that Muhammadiyah is significantly less adaptive to the emergence of new media, and therefore Muhammadiyah's da'wah often loses to micro-celebrity-ustaz's da'wah.](#) This study focuses on looking at the struggle of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (*Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah*) as the only assembly under Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas and products of official religious *ijtihad* within Muhammadiyah.

### **An Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* Fanspage**

*Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage was created by Zulkarnain El Madury. He was born in Sumenep Madura in 1963, and his birth name is Zulkarnain bin Syamsuri. The man who claims to have studied in Malaysia at the Institute of Business Study always introduces himself as a preacher from the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (*Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah*). He spent his childhood on his home island. Just as most Madurese are traditionalist Muslims, El Madury is the same. He grew up in a milieu dominated by the Nahdlatul Ulama traditionalist Islamic organisation. He used to practice practices such as *tahlilan*, pilgrimage to the grave, and other practices that, according to him, after becoming a member of Muhammadiyah, were not following the Sunnah of the Prophet. He received his religious education at the *Pesantren at-Taufiqiyyah* Sumenep Madura. In 1976 he became acquainted with Muhammadiyah. Through a lecture delivered by a preacher of Muhammadiyah, he became interested in the *da'wah* and religious understanding of the movement founded by Ahmad Dahlan. In 1977, he officially joined Muhammadiyah.<sup>4</sup>

Since joining Muhammadiyah, El Madury has been active as a preacher who spreads religious ideas and understanding, according to Muhammadiyah. In fact, from 1990 to 2007, he was one of the Muhammadiyah preachers who were sent to remote areas under the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (*Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah*). His daily activities are now preaching from one place to another, including creating content on the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage. Now he is domiciled in Jakarta as the Tarjih and Tabligh Council chairman of the Pondok Gede Muhammadiyah Branch.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18-20 October 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18-20 October 2020.

This fanspage, based on an interview with El Madury, was created in 2014.<sup>6</sup> However, in digital history that the author can trace, this fanspage was created in 2015. The earliest post that is currently traceable was dated January 5, 2015.

According to El Madury, the birth of this fanspage began with the *WhatsApp* group he created. He named this *Whatsapp* group *Tarjih dan Tabligh Institut* (Tarjih and Tabligh Institute) to provide a space to discuss and spread ideas related to *tarjih*<sup>7</sup> Muhammadiyah. He put many Muhammadiyah figures and activists into this group, including Buya Yunahar Ilyas. Over time, seeing that El Madury's posts in the group were deemed inconsistent with the *tarjih* spirit of Muhammadiyah, several people, such as Fathurrahman Kamal and Buya Risman, gave sharp criticism. El Madury, Kamal, and Risman engage in a heated debate. This information finally reached Buya Yunahar Ilyas. The response given by Buya Yunahar Ilyas at that time, according to El Madury, was different from that of his critics. Buya responded quite positively because he saw the initiative of El Madury, who wanted to provide *syarh* (Arabic) or further explanation of the contents of the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Judgment Compilation). Finally, Buya Yun permitted El Madury and another person, namely Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com).<sup>8</sup>

By looking at the early postings, this fanspage is still relatively consistent in uploading Muhammadiyah fatwas with the format: writing questions from the questioner and then answering from the Fatwa Division of the Tarjih Council. This is like the original format of

---

<sup>6</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18-20 October 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Muhammadiyah's use of the word *tarjih* has changed throughout its development. In its early period, and following its usage in the principles of law (*usul al-fiqh*), *tarjih* conveyed the meaning of examining the various opinions of Muslim jurists on a particular question and evaluating them to determine which is most faithful to the original Shari'a sources. Over time this usage gradually included any intellectual endeavour used to study new cases that earlier jurists had not addressed. In short, in Muhammadiyah's perspective, *tarjih* is identical, or almost identical, to *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

<sup>8</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18-20 October 2020.



the question and answer administered by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, whose fatwa was later published in *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine. Nevertheless, over time, this fanspage posted different things, not only the dissemination of tarjih products but the personal opinions of El Madury. These opinions are often offensive to other groups and use language that is less ethical and elegant. Not infrequently, his posts contradict the official stance of Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in particular, or Muhammadiyah in general, such as on the veil issue. Since Facebook introduced the 'live broadcast' feature, Zulkarnain has also adapted to using this feature to conduct live lectures.

Nevertheless, this fanspage has many followers and is liked by many people. *As of the time of writing (03/04/2022), Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage has been followed by 19,423 and is liked by 8,868 people. His posts also often get many likes and comments from netizens, both pro and contra.

*Based on an interview with El Madury, several things became the background for him to create this fanspage.* First, this fanspage, from the beginning, aimed to fortify Muhammadiyah people from all forms of superstition, heresy, and myth; its posts focus on issues related to faith and worship. Second, this fanspage, in its development, is also to counter some Muhammadiyah activists who have liberal tendencies. In several posts, Zulkarnain openly responded to the discourses of those he considered liberals in Muhammadiyah. Third, this fanspage often openly attacks the religious practices of the *Nahdliyyin* group in their posts, so as an impact of that, Zulkarnain has several times clashed with Idrus Ramli, a *Nahdliyyin* figure.<sup>9</sup>

Besides being followed and liked by many people, Zulkarnain El Madury and the fanspage he manages are not without criticism. Many Muhammadiyah people and followers are worried

---

<sup>9</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18-20 October 2020.

about the posts on the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage. Some even tried to report their anxiety through the official social media accounts of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Center (*Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah*).<sup>10</sup> They generally want to ask for firmness from the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council regarding the fanspage because Zulkarnain has used Tarjih's name in the fanspage's name. The firmness demanded by them to the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, if summarised, includes: (1) asking the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council to reprimand or remind Zulkarnain El Madury not to use symbols or names that are closely related to Tarjih Muhammadiyah for or on the fanspage; (2) make a circular or announcement that the fanspage is not a social media account of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council or the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Center (*Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah*); (3) **announcing** the official social media accounts and websites of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Muhammadiyah Tarjih Center (*Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah*), so that Muhammadiyah people at the grassroots are not fooled by the existence of the fanspage and know where to look for religious reference places, especially in cyberspace.

### **Zulkarnain El Madury and His Efforts in Building Religious Authority**

Zulkarnain El Madury and the fanspage he created, namely *Syarah Himpunan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*, have threatened the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, in this case the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. Many of its posts affect Muhammadiyah people in particular and Muslims in general. It is not only often different from the official stance of Muhammadiyah; the posts from the fanspage, even to some extent, tend to attack the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. **This has become a stimulant for enthusiasm and public debate on social media, allowing El Madury to become a micro-celebrity-ustaz. At this point,**

---

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf and Ariful Hazam, November 2020. They are grassroots people of Muhammadiyah and social media admin of *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah*.

he is experiencing what Turner has called 'the demotic turn'. When the attention of the public and the online community has been directed to him, El Madury then gradually builds his religious authority. From Weber's perspective (Riesebrodt 1999), the authority that El Madury is trying to build appears in two ways. The first is the authority that is built through charisma (charismatic authority). According to Weber, charisma is a particular type of authority whose original form is based on a specific belief contained in a particular person (Riesebrodt 1999). In the context of El Madury, the charisma does not arise purely from El Madury himself but comes from external, namely Yunahar Ilyas. In this case, Yunahar Ilyas is a Muhammadiyah cleric who is very popular and respected by the community, both from Muhammadiyah circles and Muslims in general.

Buya Yun, as he is popularly known, was an exegete (*mufassir*) born in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, in 1956 and died in 2020 at the age of 63 years (Ilyas 2012). Regarding his capacity, this alumnus of Imam Ibn Su'ud University is unquestionable. Moreover, Buya Yun has excellent rhetoric in lecturing and conveying religious messages. No doubt, many Muhammadiyah people and Muslims, in general, saw Buya Yun as a charismatic cleric. Not only limited to Indonesia, in several neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore, Yunahar Ilyas is also known as a charismatic cleric (Abror 2020; "Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia Kehilangan Ulama Kharismatik" 2020). Therefore, when he died in early 2020, many people flocked to pay their last respects to the former chairman of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for three periods ("Sejumlah Tokoh Hadiri Prosesi Pemakaman Ketua PP Muhammadiyah Yunahar Ilyas" n.d.; "Dubes Malaysia Jenguk Ketum MUI Yunahar Ilyas Di Yogyakarta" n.d.).

Through the charisma of Buya Yun, El Madury, in turn, used it to build religious authority. On various occasions, including when the author interviewed him, Buya Yun's name has

always been an argument and a shield.<sup>11</sup> It was said by him that he created the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* fanspage with the permission of Yunahar Ilyas.<sup>12</sup> Not only did El Madury get permission from Buya Yun to give a further explanation on *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Judgment Compilation), but Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who is now maintaining the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com), also got permission from Buya Yun. When the author interviewed Wahyudi Abdurrahim, he confirmed what El Madury had claimed.<sup>13</sup> However, according to Muflih, this is a form of fairness. In other words, the permission from Yunahar Ilyas is a form of appreciation given by someone who is more senior and has a high social position in Muhammadiyah to someone who is more junior and is classified as a grassroots Muhammadiyah member.<sup>14</sup> Irrespectively of Abdurrahim and Muflih's comments, permission from Yunahar Ilyas, who has charisma within Muhammadiyah in particular, has become a tool used by El Madury in building his religious authority.

In the perspective of Weber's charismatic authority, charisma is not only about a belief in the existence of extraordinary or superpowers possessed by or contained in humans but also about particular objects other than humans (Riesebrodt 1999). From here, we can get an explanation as to why El Madury named his fanspage *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council can be said to be a very respectable and crucial council in Muhammadiyah. Founded in 1927, the Council has a function as an assembly that carries out the agenda of purification of religion and the dynamisation of social life by conducting research and investigations to find its purity, and accordingly giving fatwas and compiling

---

<sup>11</sup> Several people who informed the author about this, for example, were Muhammad Muflih (grassroot of Muhammadiyah and initiator of the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com)), Robby Karman (Secretary General of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association [DPP IMM]), and several meeting participants who were invited by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council with the agenda of Responding to Emergence 'Syarah HPT' on Social Media on September 25, 2020; and interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Online interview with Wahyudi Abdurrahim through WhatsApp, September 2020.

<sup>14</sup> Online interview with Muhammad Muflih through WhatsApp and Facebook, 20 October 2019.

religious guidelines regarding faith (*'aqīdah*) and worship (*'ibādah*) as well as social relations (*mu'āmalah*) (Anwar 2016; Al 1985). In addition, the function of the Tarjih Council is also to make efforts to resolve differences and disagreements on religious issues, which are usually referred to as *khilafiah* problems, so that they are directed more productively (Anwar 2007, 2016).

Based on the function of the Tarjih Council as stated above, this institution is a body that is responsible for formulating the ideological basis of the Muhammadiyah movement (Anwar 2007, 2016) and becomes Muhammadiyah's representative in the religious field (Fauzi 2017).

As an institution that represents Muhammadiyah in the religious field, the Tarjih Council produces three tarjih products, namely: (1) tarjih fatwa (*fatwa tarjih*), (2) tarjih decision (*putusan tarjih*), and (3) tarjih discourse (*wacara tarjih*) (Anwar 2016). Tarjih fatwa is the Tarjih Council's answer to general questions regarding issues that require an explanation in terms of sharia law. Following the nature of the fatwa in general, the fatwa of the Tarjih Council is not binding, neither on organisations nor members as individuals. Therefore, even the fatwa can be questioned and discussed. However, because the fatwa contains religious guidance derived from Islamic teaching sources (Anwar 2020), and the general public often does not actually understand the characteristics of such a fatwa, it is still believed by Muhammadiyah members to be religious guidance. On the other hand, the tarjih decision is the official stance of Muhammadiyah in religious matters and is formally binding on the organisation and its members. However, in practice, sometimes Muhammadiyah members exercise their right to freedom not to be bound by the decision because they have different *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

Meanwhile, tarjih discourses are ideas or thoughts that are raised and put forward by the Tarjih Council in seminars, *halaqah*, or other forums in addressing various developing issues and at the same time fostering a critical spirit of *ijtihad* and collecting materials or stock of

ideas regarding various actual problems in society. The nature of this tarjih discourse is not at all binding and does not become a fatwa that must be followed. Tarjih discourse is contained in various publications of the Tarjih Council, such as *Jurnal Tarjih* (Tarjih Journal) and various published books (Anwar 2016).

The first two products, namely the tarjih decision and the tarjih fatwa, have their power within Muhammadiyah. What becomes fatwas and decisions of Muhammadiyah are considered sacred by some members of Muhammadiyah. In summary, it can be said that anything that 'smells tarjih' has authority in the collective memory of the Muhammadiyah people. In Khaled Abou El Fadl's perspective, fatwas and tarjih decisions have the power of persuasive authority, namely an authority that can influence or direct others because they believed in them (Fadl 2014). The tarjih fatwa was officially published through the organisation's official magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, and compiled in Tanya Jawab Agama's book.

In comparison, the tarjih decisions are codified in a book called *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Judgment Compilation) or commonly known by the abbreviation HPT. At this point, it can be understood why the attribution of the term tarjih to particular objects can give rise to charismatic authority, as mentioned by Weber.

What El Madury did can also be seen from the perspective of identity politics. In one sense, identity politics is defined as a political tool of a group such as, ethnicity, culture, religion or others for specific purposes, such as a form of resistance or a tool to show the identity of a group (Alfaqi 2015). Within this framework, identity is politicised through extreme interpretation, which aims to gain support from people who feel 'the same', whether by race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements. In the context of El Madury, the use of the tarjih label on the fanspage created by El Madury can be interpreted as a political tool to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muhammadiyah people. Not only that, if seen in some of his

sermon videos, El Madury also placed a flag with the Muhammadiyah symbol behind him. In this context, he wants to show the identity of Muhammadiyah and convince the audience that he is a close part of Muhammadiyah. Moreover, he always introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board on many occasions.

According to Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif, identity politics is always related to members of social groups who feel **forced** and excluded by the domination of the mainstream in a nation or state (Maarif 2010). In line with Ma'arif, Sri Astuti Buchari also sees that the emergence of identity politics is mainly caused by certain factors that an ethnic group sees as the pressure in political injustice felt by them (Buchari 2014). By looking at the observations made by Ahmad Najib Burhani (Burhani 2013), El Madury, in this case, can be categorised as part of a group that feels excluded, threatened, and to some extent feels that he did not get justice within Muhammadiyah. Burhani explained the existence of two opposing thought orientations within Muhammadiyah. The two orientations are referred to by Burhani as 'Pure Islam' (*Islam Murni*) and 'Progressive Islam' (*Islam Progresif*) (Burhani 2013). The conflict between these two schools of thought in Muhammadiyah began to surface at the 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Banda Aceh in 1995 (Burhani 2013).

The dominance of the thought of 'Progressive Islam' in Muhammadiyah strengthened after the 44th Muhammadiyah Congress in Jakarta in 2000. This congress **chose** Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif as general chairman. He is a progressive Muslim figure, an alumnus of the University of Chicago, and a direct student of the eminent progressive scholar Fazlur Rahman. At this congress, several names representing the 'Progressive Islam' group were included in the ranks of the central leadership of Muhammadiyah, such as Amin Abdullah, Dawam Raharjo, and Abdul Munir Mulkhan. During Ma'arif's leadership, progressive ideas not only dominated culturally but gradually became Muhammadiyah's official programs (Burhani 2013).

Seeing the increasingly apparent threat from the ideas put forward by the ‘Progressive Islam’ group within Muhammadiyah, representatives of the ‘Pure Islam’ group did not remain silent. They compete with each other and fight over the religious interpretation, which is the most authentic. These two groups competed on various occasions, such as seminars, discussions, publishing, and other events. They usually have conflicting programs. For example, as mentioned by Burhani, when the Center for the Study of Religion and Civilization (PSAP/*Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban*) raised the theme of pluralism and multiculturalism in its journal, *Tanwir Journal*, the Tabligh Council responded with articles in opposition in its magazine, *Majalah Tabligh* (Tabligh Magazine). In Burhani's investigation, during the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress in Malang, this conservative group set up a Pojok Anti-Liberal (Anti-Liberal Corner) booth, which sold books, DVDs, t-shirts, magazines, and other anti-liberal knick-knacks. Strikingly, some of the t-shirts for sale displayed the words ‘Muhammadiyah Anti-Liberal’ (Burhani 2013).

At the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress, it seemed that the ‘Pure Islam’ group was gaining momentum to beat back the ‘Progressive Islam’ group. The fighting between these two groups took place outside the congress arena and took place in the congress committees. Burhani noted that there were at least three critical issues where the ‘Pure Islam’ group defeated the ‘Progressive Islam’ group in the congress arena, namely: (1) the issue of leadership change; (2) the issue of the position of women; and (3) the issue of resistance to liberal thought (Burhani 2013, 2005).

After the 45th congress, the feud between these two schools of thought has continued with dynamic tensions; sometimes it strengthens, sometimes it fades. The form of the feud now looks more varied along with the development of increasingly advanced information technology. The internet and social media presence have changed their battle arena from a conventional one to a more modern one. In this case, El Madury represents the ‘Pure Islam’



group, often fights and debates tremendously with figures considered representatives of 'Progressive Islam' in cyberspace. Their actions are seen as unsettling by El Madury. In the author's investigation, for example, El Madury and the Secretary-General of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association (DPP IMM),<sup>15</sup> Robby Karman have openly attacked each other quite often. Some of the cases are about the veil issue and the Wahhabi issue. According to El Madury, Robby Karman is a young liberal figure in Muhammadiyah who must be fought. El Madury also often attacks the IBTimes.ID website, which often contains articles that are progressive and, to some extent, controversial. This website is fronted by several former *Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah* (JIMM/Muhammadiyah Youth Intellectual Network) figures, such as Hilman Latief, Azaki Khoiruddin, and Mu'arif. On one occasion, when the chairman of the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Center admonished El Madury not to upload posts that were provocative and contradicted the official stance of the Tarjih Council, he defended himself while chiming in that equally provocative posts from the 'Progressive Islam' group should also be reprimanded and reminded. If the one who was rebuked was only him, while they were not reprimanded, then according to him, an injustice had occurred.<sup>16</sup> El Madury's attitude in the framework of identity politics can be seen as an attitude that shows feelings of being excluded and threatened by certain parties. It made him feel that there was injustice. At this point, then, what El Madury did by using specific attributes and identities is not empty of purpose. These attributes and identities are intentionally attached as a form of resistance to the domination of certain groups or thoughts that threaten him.

---

<sup>15</sup> Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM) or Muhammadiyah Student Association is an exponent of Muhammadiyah in student affairs dimension which basic mission is to realise the real Islamic society as formulated by Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Widodo 2017).

<sup>16</sup> On November 3, 2019, the manager of *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* reprimanded Zulkarnain El Madury regarding his post on the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhamamdiyah* fanspage regarding the veil which contradicts Muhammadiyah's official stance.

What has been described above is the process of how El Madury builds his authority through the first way, namely the authority built through charisma (charismatic authority). There is still one more way used by El Madury, namely the authority built through tradition or what Weber calls traditional authority (Riesebrodt 1999; Matheson 1987; Spencer 1970). In simple terms, something can be considered as having traditional authority if it gains legitimacy based on beliefs or norms that have been established in a particular tradition (Chairi 2019). In other words, according to Spencer, traditional authority is legitimised and, at the same time, constrained by traditional norms. Therefore, it is the opposite of charismatic authority. If in charismatic authority, it is the leader or someone who creates the norms, then it is the norms that create the leader or person in the traditional authority. In charismatic authority, the value of influence is generated by a person's personal qualities and is always associated with his personality. While in the case of traditional authority, it is generated by function and is related to someone or something that has traditional values (Spencer 1970).

In the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, *'ulama* and the classical books they wrote can be considered to have this traditional authority value. *'Ulama* in Islamic tradition is called as the heirs of the Prophets. The authority of *'ulama* is derived from the legitimacy of religious texts which say that the prophetic tradition will be passed on to them. Therefore, the religious ideas they convey in writings or books contain an authoritative value for the next generation. This is the uniqueness of Islamic scholars and traditions, as mentioned by Muhammad Qasim Zaman (Zaman 2002). According to him, one of the most prominent aspects of pre-modern intellectual culture is the articulation of religious discourse through the so-called medium of the commentary, which is manifested in various forms such *al-syurūh*, *ḥawāsyī*, *rasā'il*, and *fatawā*. The various genres of books that contain explanations, descriptions, or responses to a book or social phenomena are a way for scholars to shape the identity and authority of the school or tradition they adhere to. In addition, it is also a means

to interpret the meaning of the foundational sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah (Zaman 2002).

An example is the *hawāsyī* tradition in the Shafii school. The phenomenon of the emergence of the *hawāsyī* genre in the Shafii school, according to Ahmed El-Shamsy, shows the peak of the authority of the two scholars in that school, namely al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī (El Shamsy 2013). Al-Kurdī, as quoted by El Shamsy, called these two scholars 'the higher authorities in the Syafii school'. People who want to know the authoritative opinion of the Shafi'i school must go through the works of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī and the books that explain further the two works of these scholars, namely the books written by Ibn Ḥajar al-Haitamī and Syamsuddīn al-Ramlī. At this point, it appears that the books of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī, and also the books that explain both, have for later generations the value of traditional authority (El Shamsy 2013).

What is the connection between this traditional authority and Zulkarnain El Madury? El Madury in writing his opinions on the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage always relies on the Islamic intellectual tradition. In fact, not only what is written on the fanspage, in religious forums where he is a speaker, El Madury often quotes Islamic intellectual traditions (*turāth*). According to Endang Mintarja, Chairman of the Jakarta branch of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this characteristic has attracted many people to the content of El Madury's lectures.<sup>17</sup> However, regardless of what intellectual tradition is quoted, it is clear that the opinion put forward by El Madury is always attributed to the books of classical scholars. At this point, El Madury is building his authority.

What El Madury did, Muhammadiyah did not do in many of its fatwas. Perhaps this is a consequence of the spirit of the modernist movement, which became the spirit of

---

<sup>17</sup> This is as expressed by Endang Mintarja in a meeting held by Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board when discussing the phenomenon of the emergence 'Syarah HPT', September 25, 2020

Muhammadiyah. The modernist movement initiated by reformers such as Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, and Muḥammad Rasyīd Riḍā in the late 19th and early 20th centuries had the jargon *al-rujū' ilā al-qur'ān wa al-sunnah* (back to the Qur'an and Sunnah). According to Syed Junaid A. Quadri, the most obvious indicator of this movement, especially in Islamic law, is its critical attitude towards the structure of pre-modern sharia authority symbols, which are articulated in the language and logic of the institution of *taqlīd*. Therefore, modernist groups always encourage reopening the door to ijtihad and invite Muslims to leave the interpretive monopoly that the '*ulama* class has held (Quadri 2013).

Muhammadiyah, which is heavily inspired by the modernist movement, has more or less the same characteristics. Muhammadiyah is very oriented towards the Qur'an and Sunnah and tends not to attach too much importance to the Islamic intellectual tradition that has been built by '*ulama*. This can be seen from one point in the *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*, which asserts that Muhammadiyah is not affiliated with a particular school, but the opinions of that schools are only considered in determining religious norms (Anwar 2018). This means that understanding religion in the Muhammadiyah perspective is carried out directly from its primary sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah through the ijtihad process with existing ijtihad methods. However, it should be noted here that the narration that confirms the opinions of the scholars is taken into account in determining norms is not very clear how they are implemented in tarjih products.

By looking at some of the tarjih products that have been produced, the nuances of the opinions of the scholars, especially pre-modern scholars, seem invisible or deliberately not shown. Even if we look at the Islamic intellectual tradition, we will find from whom or from which school the Tarjih Council's opinion came from. So, here it appears that El Madury is actually filling the gap that Muhammadiyah did not fill, namely presenting the authority of the Islamic intellectual tradition in religious narratives. For example, in the veil case, which

had become a hot topic of discussion some time ago, the Tarjih Council has issued three fatwas related to the veil, namely in 1993 (T. M. T. dan T. P. P. Muhammadiyah 2019a), 2003 (T. M. T. dan T. P. P. Muhammadiyah 2019b), and 2009 (T. M. T. dan T. P. P. Muhammadiyah 2009). The fatwas issued in 1993 and 2009 emphasised that the veil has no legal basis either in the al-Quran or the Sunnah. What Islamic law commands women to wear is the hijab. These two fatwas base their arguments on the Qur'an and Sunnah, without citing the Islamic intellectual tradition, which also accommodates opinions about the veil. Although the Tarjih Council remained in its stance and strengthened the opinion that women's '*aurat* (parts of the body that should go covered) are the whole body except the face and the palms of the hands, in the 2003 fatwa, the Tarjih Council provides space for those who want to wear the veil by expressing several opinions from the scholars who think so.

In contrast to the tarjih fatwas, Zulkarnain El Madury in the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage uploaded an article that refutes the tarjih fatwa about the veil. El Madury's article is entitled '*Siapa Bilang Cadar Tak Ada Dalilnya dalam Islam?*' (Who Says The Veil Has No Evidence in Islam?) (El Madury 2019). In the article, he cites various opinions of scholars in the Islamic intellectual tradition who support mandatory veiling as an effort to build religious authority. From this, it appears that El Madury, apart from attacking the tarjih fatwa, also shows a different attitude from the tarjih fatwa in maintaining traditional authority, in this case, the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāts*).

Apart from being seen from the perspective of Weber's authority, what El Madury did in building religious authority can also be captured from what Burhani calls a conversion narrative. Some scholars define conversion narratives differently. For example, the change from one religious tradition to another can be referred to as religious conversion. Meanwhile, William James, as quoted by Burhani, said that religious conversion is not only a matter of changing a person from one religious tradition to another but it can also be interpreted as the

conversion of a person who is wallowing in sin (sinner) into a human who pious. According to Burhani, people who experience religious conversion, usually after embracing a new tradition or religious understanding, will 'attack' the previous religious tradition or understanding (Burhani 2020).

El Madury also experienced a religious conversion. In this case, from the NU tradition to Muhammadiyah. In the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage and his statement when interviewed by the author, he introduced himself as a person who had practised the tradition he called '*kuburiyyun* tradition'<sup>18</sup> and other traditions that did not have examples from the Prophet. To convince his fanspage followers, he posted information about the religious conversion he had done. He also carried out attacks on his previous practices, which were deemed to have no basis in the al-Quran and Sunnah. Not only that, but he also openly often debates and even attacks each other with an NU *kyai* named Idrus Ramli.

### **Muhammadiyah's Efforts in Maintaining Religious Authority in Cyberspace**

Before the advent of the internet, with various new religious authorities emerging, Muhammadiyah and NU were the two authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). However, after the emergence of the so-called *micro-celebrity-ustaz*, the two largest religious organisations, according to some scholars, began to face challenges and threats. Based on previous studies, the way the two organisations maintain religious authority does not appear to be the same. Wahyudi Akmaliah's recent study shows that the two organisations have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities (Akmaliah 2020). While NU was very *responsive* to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah said there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's response look less

---

<sup>18</sup> It means the tradition of visiting the grave with all kinds of practices that are in it.

fierce (Akmaliah 2020). Akmaliah's thesis on several points is correct, but other perspectives deserve to be considered, especially to explore Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority, especially in cyberspace.

The weak point from Akmaliah's study is that there is no adequate elaboration of the assembly that exclusively holds religious authority in Muhammadiyah, namely the Tarjih Councils. To trace more precisely how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority is to look at the Tarjih and Tajdid Councils.

This discussion will start from the author's experience in attending a meeting held by the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board. The meeting was initiated in response to the emergence of the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* made by Zulkarnain El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim. It should be noted here that besides being made by El Madury, the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* was also written by Abdurrahim, a person who was mentioned at the beginning of this article getting permission from Buya Yun to make *syarḥ* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Judgment Compilation). The difference with El Madury, Abdurrahim wrote *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* in a book. The initial background for holding this meeting, as revealed by the Secretary of the Tarjih Council, Mas'udi, was purely in response to the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* written by Zulkarnain El Madury. However, information about the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* other than the one written by El Madury prompted the board of Tarjih Council to include the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* written by Abdurrahim also to be discussed in the meeting.

On Friday, 7 Safar 1442 AH or coinciding with September 25, 2020, the Tarjih Council invited nine related elements to discuss some people's concerns over the emergence of the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* in cyberspace written by the two people. These nine

elements are: (1) the Executive Board of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (2) Fatwa Division of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (3) Chairman/Secretary of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (4) Dr Endang Mintarja, M.Ag. (Chairman of the Jakarta Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council); (5) H. Fathurrahman, Lc., M.S.I. (Chairman of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council); (6) H. Budi Setiawan, S.T.; (7) Arif Nurkholis (Head of Muhammadiyah Digital Syiar Center); (8) Manager of UAD Muhammadiyah Tarjih Center; and (9) Social Media Assistance Team of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

During the meeting, proposals emerged from the meeting participants concerning how to respond to the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*, especially the one written by El Madury. There are at least four proposals that surfaced. First, report the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage to the Facebook authority so that fanspage is banned for using an institution's name without permission. According to Fathurrahman Kamal,<sup>19</sup> who was present at the forum, the fanspage is already in the illegal category. **This proposal was considered by the proponents as a firm proposal and also not too risky.** Second, use a persuasive approach. The proposed persuasive approach can be in the form of clarification or an appeal to El Madury not to use the name *Himpunan Putusan Tajih* (HPT) or something that smells of tarjih. Its proponents consider this approach to be softer and more characteristic of being members of Muhammadiyah in particular and Muslims in general. Third, take an official institutional approach. The point is to use an official letter on behalf of the Tarjih Council addressed to El Madury. In other words, this approach uses institutional authority to respond to El Madury and his fanspage. Fourth, socialise the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it through social media. In addition to avoiding being

---

<sup>19</sup> He is the chairman of the Tabligh Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board.



trapped in the substantive content of fanspage, this approach is considered more practical and efficient.

Until the meeting was over, there was no agreement on which approach to the proposal would be executed. This is because the meeting has been running for quite a long time, so the forum participants agreed to discuss it in the following forum. *Until this article was written (03/04/2022), there has been no further meeting to follow up on the previous meeting.*

However, it is interesting to note that the Tarjih Council rarely discusses and conducts meetings on something they think is not too important. Therefore, at this point, it can be seen that the phenomenon of the emergence of *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* in cyberspace and its effects have been considered a serious problem by the Tarjih Council.

*Moreover, by looking at the proposals from the meeting participants, they were generally uneasy about the appearance of El Madury and his fanspage. In addition, they want El Madury to be warned or reprimanded.* In other words, the emergence of *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* has been considered a threat to religious authority that has been attached to the Tarjih Council. *It also illustrates that Muhammadiyah, through its official religious assembly, the Tarjih Council, is not passive in responding to the emergence of micro-celebrity-ustaz. Even though it is true that not all micro-celebrity-ustaz that appear in new media are responded to by the Tarjih Council, it seems that only certain cases have indeed received the attention of the Tarjih Council.*

Although there has been no follow up from the meeting, what has been done by the *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (Tarjih Muhammadiyah Center) as an official institution supporting the Tarjih Council can illustrate how Muhammadiyah struggles to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

*Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (Tarjih Muhammadiyah Center) is an institution that was founded in 2016 (Dahlan 2016; P. P. Muhammadiyah n.d.). It was established in collaboration between the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Ahmad Dahlan University (P. T. Muhammadiyah, n.d.). Even though it is a new institution, its legality is clear, so it formally has authority. In the Muhammadiyah tradition as an organisation, this kind of legality is essential. No matter how strong the arguments issued by a figure in Muhammadiyah, if he or she speaks on his or her behalf, then his or her status will still be inferior to institutions within Muhammadiyah which, although new, have legality. In the context of El Madury and the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage, this is important. Because even though El Madury said he had obtained permission to make *syarḥ* (further explanation) on *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Judgment Compilation) from a charismatic figure in Muhammadiyah, Buya Yunahar, legally it could not be said to be valid. In that context, Buya Yunahar spoke on behalf of himself, not on behalf of Muhammadiyah.

Fronted by young Muhammadiyah cadres, the majority of whom are alumni of *Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (Muhammadiyah Tarjih Ulama Education),<sup>20</sup> *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* plays a role in supporting the Tarjih Council programs, which are relatively under-performing and facing obstacles. They, especially, related to technological advances, such as using social media to disseminate their *ijtihad* products. The members of the Tarjih Council, who are relatively old, need to get support from young cadres. At this point, the *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* played an essential role in assisting the Tarjih Council in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace. Responding to El Madury and his fanspage, *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah*, through the power of its social media, took the initiative to

---

<sup>20</sup> *Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (PUTM) is an educational institution under the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board which is designed to produce a cadre of Muhammadiyah scholars. PUTM organises a special program that educates and prepares Muhammadiyah tarjih scholars who are competent in the religious field. The birth of PUTM was based on the concern of some Muhammadiyah leaders about the increasing scarcity of '*ulama*' in and from Muhammadiyah. See (Fauzi 2020a).

make a poster containing information related to the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it.



Figure 1 Poster containing information related to official social media accounts affiliated with the Tarjih Council

### **Translation of figure 1:**

Are you often confused about finding sources of reference about Islam from the perspective of Muhammadiyah?

There is no need to be confused anymore because various social media are straightforward for us to access. Tarjih (Council) has come with a more trendy look.

- ✓ Easy to read anywhere
- ✓ Provide updated fatwas
- ✓ Discuss current issues

As members of Muhammadiyah, let's get used to reading the decisions and fatwas of Muhammadiyah

Here are some media that can be accessed very easily. So don't be confused anymore.

Web: [fatwatarjih.or.id](http://fatwatarjih.or.id)

Facebook: [fb.me/fatwamu](https://fb.me/fatwamu)

Instagram: [pusattarjih\\_muhammadiyah](#)  
Telegram: [t.me/fatwatarjihmu](#)  
Youtube: [tarjih channel](#)  
Let's spread it to all Muhammadiyah people!

Although the poster above does not directly mention the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage created by El Madury, the main message in it is clear and firm, namely to inform Muhammadiyah people regarding the official accounts of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it. So it is hoped that Muhammadiyah people will understand how Muhammadiyah's official religious voice is disseminated in cyberspace. After that, successively *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* uploaded other, more varied posters to indirectly counter the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage. For example, here are the following posters,



**fatwatarjih.or.id**

Fatwatarjih.or.id merupakan website resmi Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah (MTT).

Tim Media Fatwa Tarjih, melalui website ini telah, sedang dan akan terus berupaya secara konsisten untuk mempublish berbagai produk-produk tarjih. Hingga kini, kumpulan-kumpulan fatwa-fatwa tarjih mulai dari tahun 1997 hingga 2018 telah masuk tahap editing dan beberapa tinggal menunggu waktu publishing.



Figure 3 Information about the website fatwatarjih.or.id, an official website affiliated with the Tarjih Council containing fatwas.

**Translation of figure 3**  
Do you know?

The Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah now has an official website (namely) the Tarjih Channel. Have you subscribed?

**Translation of figure 4**

Fatwatarjih.or.id is the official website for the Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board.

The Media Team of Fatwa Tarjih, through this website, strive consistently to publish various ijtihad products. tarjih fatwas collections from 1997 to 2018 have entered the editing stage and some are waiting for publishing.

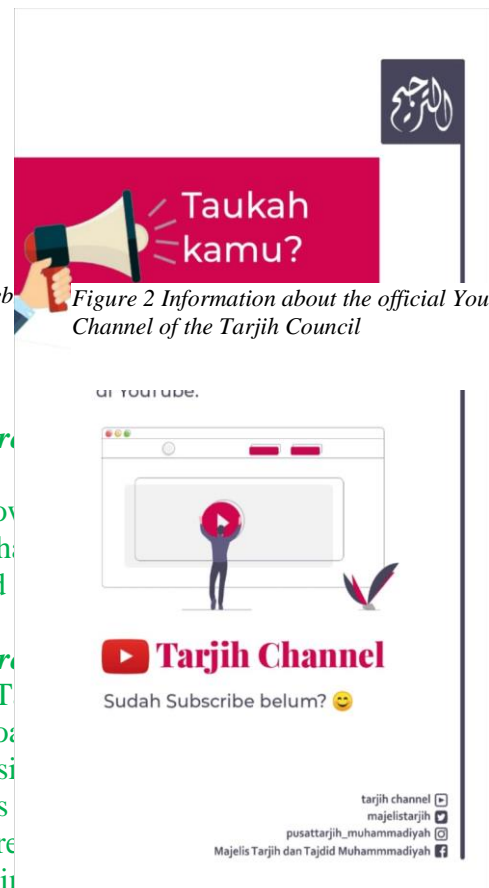


Figure 2 Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council



*Figure 4 Information on the official website of the Tarjih Council*

***Translation of figure 4:***

Do you want to know the history (of the Tarjih Council)?  
Or do you want to look for ijihad products from the Tarjih Council?  
Come on; you can find out on this website: [tarjih.or.id](http://tarjih.or.id)

The use of informal and slang-like language and emoticons typical of millennials indicate the audience that the Tarjih Council wants to target, **which is millennial groups and the generation after**. *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* team understands that language that tends to be non-formal will touch the audience's hearts more than rigid formal language. This method not only wants to show the authority of the Tarjih Council but at the same time tries to carry out

the so-called tarjih millennialization process. According to Suyadi and Widodo, millennialization is an alternative way to develop knowledge synergised with various online media and digital technology (Suyadi and Widodo 2019). In the context of tarjih millennialization, tarjih products that tend to be disseminated in a conventional, monotonous, and uncreative manner are now disseminated by utilising technological advances and presented in more contextual packaging. In addition, the millennialization of tarjih can also mean that the Tarjih Council and its various *ijtihad* products, which previously were always identified with the 'old people', have now also touched and greeted the 'young people'.

The religious authority of the Tarjih Council in cyberspace, especially when connected with the appearance of El Madury and his fanspage, was greatly helped by the presence of *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* and the young Muhammadiyah cadres in it. Managing various social media platforms with large followers, *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* has helped maintain Muhammadiyah's religious authority by balancing and suppressing the presence of *micro-celebrity-ustaz*. The contents contained in it are fatwas and decisions of the Tarjih Council with exciting visualisations. This is expected to reach a wider community, especially the millennial group.

Although the number of social media followers affiliated with the Tarjih Council is not as much as the NU and Salafi groups, for example, at least the presence of *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* has become a kind of compass for Muhammadiyah people who question Muhammadiyah's religious authority, especially with the emergence of El Madury's version of *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* social media admin acknowledge that many questions came in, either through the comments column or direct messages in the inbox, which questioned the authority of *Syarah Himpunan Putusan*

*Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage.<sup>21</sup> Here, the vital role of *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* is increasingly finding its momentum.

## Conclusion

Although it can be said that Muhammadiyah's religious influence and authority in cyberspace are inferior and lag behind other religious groups, Muhammadiyah is still trying to manage its authority in cyberspace, especially when facing threats from micro-celebrity-*ustaz*. By focusing on the figure of Zulkarnain El Madury and *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanspage that he has created and managed, this article offers a different perspective from previous studies. By analyzing what has been done by Majelis Tarjih as the only institution in Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas, this article shows that Muhammadiyah has its own way of responding to the emergence of new religious authorities. With the help of *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* as an institution under it, the Tarjih Council made a series of efforts through social media and its official website to counter votes from new authorities that threatened its authority. In this case, Muhammadiyah did not respond frontally and radically. However, Muhammadiyah responded gently by clarifying without mentioning who precisely was being targeted. What Muhammadiyah did was in line with the Javanese proverb that says, "*Ngluruk Tanpo Bolo, Menang Tanpo Ngasorake*" (fighting without the need to bring the masses; winning without demeaning or humiliating). The characteristics of this kind of Muhammadiyah response were inherited from the founder of Muhammadiyah, namely Ahmad Dahlan. From Peacock's perspective (Peacock 1978), Dahlan carried out many social transformations in response to the reality he faced calmly and systematically, not in revolutionary ways.

---

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Ariful Hazamn, Ilham Ibrahim, and Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, September 2020. They are *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* social media admin.



In a broader context, the case of Zulkarnain El Madury also provides a lesson that using the name Muhammadiyah to justify personal opinions or legitimise particular interests is wrong. Muhammadiyah is known as a very well-managed organisation (Barton 2014; “Hyung Jun Kim: Sistem Di Muhammadiyah Sungguh Ideal” 2019). All activities are impeccable administratively. This well-systematic organisational culture is the strength and characteristic of Muhammadiyah compared to other religious organisations in Indonesia, such as NU. In other words, it can be said that the authority in Muhammadiyah lies in the organisation or institution itself. Not on personal authority. It is different from NU, for example, whose power and authority tend to lie in personal figures, such as *kyai* or *gus* (Fauzi 2020b).

For the Muhammadiyah people who understand the basic rules of Muhammadiyah, they are not easily influenced by the emergence of micro-celebrity-*ustaz*. They will understand that Muhammadiyah's official religious stance will only be issued by the Tarjih Council. If there are other assemblies besides the Tarjih Council or specific figures in Muhammadiyah that issue religious opinions, then organisationally, it is not valid and cannot be justified from the perspective of Muhammadiyah. Even if, for example, the religious opinion was issued by the chairman of the Tarjih Council as an individual. This actually happened when Syamsul Anwar, the current chairman of the Tarjih Council, had a different opinion from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council on the issue of *iftitāḥ* prayer (opening prayer for night prayer [*qiyām al-lail*]). For Anwar, *iftitāḥ* prayer is a two short rak'ah prayer that is performed before performing *qiyām al-lail*, with the condition that it must be preceded by sleep first. If it is not preceded by sleep, then for Anwar, there is no need to perform the *iftitāḥ* prayer (Anwar 2013). Meanwhile, according to Tarjih Council, *iftitāḥ* prayer is a two short rak'ah prayer that is performed before performing *qiyām al-lail*, whether preceded by sleeping first or not (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2011; T. M. T. dan T. P. P. Muhammadiyah 2019a).

Anwar's opinion is clearly different from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council. Therefore, the prevailing opinion in Muhammadiyah is the opinion of the Tarjih Council, not the opinion of the chairman of the Tarjih Council. In Muhammadiyah, religious differences of opinion like this are commonplace. As this usually happens in *fiqh* discourse in general. The difference with El Madury, Anwar does not act in the name of Muhammadiyah or the Tarjih Council when he has a different opinion. Instead, on many occasions, he urged the Muhammadiyah people to follow the opinion of the Tarjih Council regarding the *iftitāḥ* prayer.<sup>22</sup> At this point, there is an important lesson to be learned from Anwar's attitude. He can compromise his personal religious opinion with his professional attitude in the organisation. In this case, he understands that using the name Muhammadiyah to legitimise individual opinions or interests is not justifiable.

### **Acknowledgements**

I am grateful to *ustaz* Zulkarnain El Madury for his exceptional help and support during my fieldwork. I also thank Amiruddin, Arif Nur Kholis, Muhammad Muflih, Wahyudi Abdurrahim, Robby Karman, Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, Ilham Ibrahim, Ariful Hazam, and the members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council for providing a lot of information regarding my research. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article. Errors, if any, are solely mine.

### **Funding**

This work was supported by Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan.

### **Notes on contributor**

---

<sup>22</sup> On several occasions, the author has heard Syamsul Anwar's appeal directly to the Muhammadiyah people to follow the opinion of the Tarjih Council regarding this *iftitāḥ* prayer.

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi is a lecturer of Department of Hadith Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He has published widely on a variety of issues relating to Islamic Studies, including al-Quran, hadith, Islamic law, social media and *da'wah*, and Muhammadiyah studies. Email: [niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id](mailto:niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id)

## References

“100 Situs Islam Indonesia, NU Online Peringkat Pertama.” 2020. IBTimes.Id. 2020.

<https://ibtimes.id/100-situs-islam-indonesia-nu-online-peringkat-pertama/>.

“Aa Gym Ajak Ribuan Jamaahnya Ikut Aksi Bela Islam III.” n.d. Accessed February 2, 2020.

<http://www.dakta.com/news/7329/aa-gym-ajak-ribuan-jamaahnya-ikut-aksi-bela-islam-iii>.

Abror, Robby. 2020. “Syeikh Yunahar, Ulama Muhammadiyah Kharismatik.”

Menara62.Com. 2020. <https://menara62.com/syeikh-yunahar-ulama-muhammadiyah-kharismatik/>.

Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2018. “Media Sosial Dan Pergeseran Otoritas Keagamaan.” 2018.

[https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media\\_sosial\\_dan\\_pergeseran\\_otoritas\\_keagamaan](https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media_sosial_dan_pergeseran_otoritas_keagamaan).

———. 2020. “The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and Reclaiming Religious Authorities.” *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10 (1): 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v10i1.1-24>.

Al, Asjmuni Abdur Rahman et. 1985. “Laporan Penelitian Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (Suatu Studi Tentang Sistem Dan Metode Penentuan Hukum).” Yogyakarta.

Alfaqi, Mifdal Zusron. 2015. “Memahami Indonesia Melalui Prespektif Nasionalisme, Politik Identitas, Serta Solidaritas.” *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 28

(2): 111–16.

Anwar, Syamsul. 2007. *Studi Hukum Islam Kontemporer*. Jakarta: RM Books.

———. 2013. *Salat Tarawih Tinjauan Usul Fikih, Sejarah, Dan Fikih*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

———. 2016. “Fatwā, Purification and Dynamization: A Study of Tarjih in Muhammadiyah.” *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (1): 27–44.

———. 2018. *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Panitia Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih Muhammadiyah XXX.

———. 2020. *Studi Hukum Islam Kontemporer Bagian Dua*. Yogyakarta: UAD Press.

Barton, Greg. 2014. “The Gülen Movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: Progressive Islamic Thought, Religious Philanthropy and Civil Society in Turkey and Indonesia.” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25 (3): 287–301.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2014.916124>.

Buchari, Sri Astuti. 2014. *Kebangkitan Etnis Menuju Politik Identitas*. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.

Bunt, Gary R. 2003. *Islam in the Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments*. 1st ed. Londong and Virginia: Pluto Press.

Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2005. “The 45th Muhammadiyah Congress Contest between Literal-Conservative and Liberal-Moderate Muslims in Indonesia.” *Studia Islamika* 12 (1): 185–89. <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v12i1.650>.

———. 2013. “Liberal and Conservative Discourses in the Muhammadiyah: The Struggle for the Face of Reformist Islam in Indonesia.” In *Contemporary Developments in*

- Indonesian Islam: Explaining the “Conservative Turn,”* edited by Martin Van Bruinessen. Singapura: ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute.
- . 2016. “Aksi Bela Islam: Konservatisme Dan Fragmentasi Otoritas Keagamaan.” *Maarif* 11 (2): 15–29.
- . 2020. “Muslim Televangelists in the Making: Conversion Narratives and the Construction of Religious Authority.” *Muslim World* 110 (2): 154–75.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12327>.
- Burhanudin, Jajat. 2004. “The Fragmentation of Religious Authority: Islamic Print Media in Early 20th Century Indonesia.” *Studia Islamika* 11 (1): 23–62.  
<https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v11i1.609>.
- Campbell, Heidi, and Paul Emerson Teusner. 2011. “Religious Authority in the Age of the Internet.” In *Virtual Lives: Christian Reflection*, 59–68. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press.
- Center, Alvara Research. 2020. “Ramadhan Dan Pandemi Covid-19: Semangat Ibadah Tak Surut, Konsumsi Tersendat.”  
[https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN DAN PANDEMI COVID-19: SEMANGAT IBADAH TAK SURUT, KONSUMSI TERSENDAT.pdf](https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN%20DAN%20PANDEMI%20COVID-19%3A%20SEMANGAT%20IBADAH%20TAK%20SURUT,%20KONSUMSI%20TERSENDAT.pdf).
- Chairi, Effendi. 2019. “Ketiadaan Otoritas Terpusat Dalam Fenomena Kontemporer Di Indonesia.” *SANGKÉP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 2 (2).  
<https://doi.org/10.20414/sangkep.v2i2.666>.
- Dahlan, Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah dan Universitas Ahmad. 2016. “Nota Kesepakatan Majelis Tarjih Dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Tentang Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di

- Islamic Center Universitas Ahmad Dahlan.” Yogyakarta.
- “Dari Aa’ Gym Ke Felix Siauw: Ustaz Medsos & Medium Dakwah Politis.” 2018. Tirto.Id. 2018. <https://tirto.id/dari-aa-gym-ke-felix-siauw-ustaz-medsos-medium-dakwah-politis-cCGf>.
- “Dubes Malaysia Jenguk Ketum MUI Yunahar Ilyas Di Yogyakarta.” n.d. Rm.Id. Accessed April 4, 2022. <https://rm.id/baca-berita/internasional/21745/dubes-malaysia-jenguk-ketum-mui-yunahar-ilyas-di-yogyakarta>.
- Fadl, Khaled Abou El. 2014. *Speaking in God’s Name: Islamic Law, Authority, and Women*. London: Oneworld Publications.
- Farhan, Farhan. 2017. “Pesan Dakwah Felix Siauw Di Media Sosial (Perspektif Meaning and Media).” *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Administrasi Islam*. <https://doi.org/10.22373/al-idarah.v1i2.2242>.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2017. “Peranan Maqasid Al-Shariah Dalam Memahami Hadith: Kajian Terhadap Fatwa Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah.” *Master Thesis*. University of Malaya.
- . 2020a. “PUTM Dan Kaderisasi Ulama: Menelusuri Latar Belakang Lahirnya Lembaga Kaderisasi Ulama Muhammadiyah.” 2020. <https://santricendekia.com/putm-dan-kaderisasi-ulama-menelusuri-latar-belakang-lahirnya-lembaga-kaderisasi-ulama-muhammadiyah/>.
- . 2020b. “Tantangan Kader Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di Era 4.0.” *Suara ’Aisyiyah*, 2020.
- Fealy, Greg. 2008. “Consuming Islam: Commodified Religion and Aspirational Pietism in Contemporary Indonesia.” In *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*,

- edited by Greg Fealy and Sally White, 15–39. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.  
<https://doi.org/10.1355/9789812308528-006>.
- Hew, Wai Weng. 2018. “THE ART OF DAKWAH: Social Media, Visual Persuasion and the Islamist Propagation of Felix Siauw.” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (134): 61–79.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2018.1416757>.
- Hoesterey, James B. 2008. “Marketing Morality: The Rise, Fall and Rebranding of Aa Gym.” In *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, edited by Greg Fealy and Sally White, 95–114. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.  
<https://doi.org/10.1355/9789812308528-010>.
- Hope Cheong, Pauline. 2016. “Religious Authority and Social Media Branding in a Culture of Religious Celebrification.” In *The Media and Religious Authority*, edited by Stewart M. Hoover, 81–102. University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press.
- Horsfield, Peter. 2016. “The Media and Religious Authority from Ancient to Modern.” In *The Media and Religious Authority*, edited by Stewart M. Hoover, 37–66. University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press.
- “Hyung Jun Kim: Sistem Di Muhammadiyah Sungguh Ideal.” 2019. Suaramuhamamdiyah.Id. 2019. <https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/08/01/hyung-jun-kim-sistem-di-muhammadiyah-sungguh-ideal/>.
- Ilyas, Yunahar. 2012. *Kuliah Akhlaq*. XII. Yogyakarta: LPPI UMY.
- Khamis, Susie, Lawrence Ang, and Raymond Welling. 2017. “Self-Branding, ‘Micro-Celebrity’ and the Rise of Social Media Influencers.” *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191–208.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2016.1218292>.
- Khomalia, Isti, and Khairul Arief Rahman. 2018. “Micro Hijabers Celebrity: Membentuk

- Identitas Dengan Update Self-Story via Instagram (Kasus Dian Pelangi).” *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban Dan Pemikiran Islam* 2 (1): 33.  
<https://doi.org/10.23971/njppi.v2i1.869>.
- Labiq. 2019. “Pengaruh New Media Terhadap Pergeseran Otoritas Keagamaan.” Geotimes.Id. 2019. <https://geotimes.co.id/opini/pengaruh-new-media-terhadap-pergeseran-otoritas-keagamaan>.
- Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. 2010. *Politik Identitas Dan Masa Depan Pluralisme Indonesia*. Edited by Ihsan Ali-Fauzi dan Samsu Rizal Panggabean. Jakarta: Pusat Studi Agama dan Demokrasi (PUSAD) Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina.
- Madury, Zulkarnain El. 2019. “Siapa Bilang Cadar Tak Ada Dalilnya Dalam Islam?” November 2, 2019.  
<https://www.facebook.com/zulkarnainsumenep/posts/2386248524961601>.
- Maskur, Maskur, and Irfan Noor. 2014. “Ustadz Selebriti Abdullah Gymnastiar Dalam Budaya Populer (Perspektif Hipersemiotika Yasraf Amir Piliang).” *Jurnal Studia Insania* 2 (1): 47. <https://doi.org/10.18592/jsi.v2i1.1091>.
- Matheson, Craig. 1987. “Weber and the Classification of Forms of Legitimacy.” *The British Journal of Sociology* 38 (2): 199. <https://doi.org/10.2307/590532>.
- Muhammadiyah, Pimpinan Pusat. n.d. “Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah Launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Dan MuON.” Accessed March 20, 2021.  
<http://www.umm.ac.id/id/muhammadiyah/7070.html>.
- Muhammadiyah, Pusat Tarjih. n.d. *Panduan Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta.



- Muhammadiyah, Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat. 2009. "Hukum Tentang Jenggot Dan Cadar." *Suara Muhammadiyah*, September 2009.
- . 2019a. *Fatwa-Fatwa Tarjih: Tanya Jawab Agama Jilid 4*. Cetakan IX. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- . 2019b. *Fatwa-Fatwa Tarjih: Tanya Jawab Agama Jilid 7*. Cetakan IV. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Nisa, Eva F. 2019. "Internet and Muslim Women." In *Handbook of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Lives*, edited by Ronald Lukens-Bull and Mark Woodward, 1–19. Cham, Switzerland: Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73653-2\\_71-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73653-2_71-1).
- Peacock, James L. 1978. *Purifying the Faith: The Muhammadiyah Movement in Indonesian Islam*. The University of North Carolina Press. California: The University of North Carolina Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2756824>.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2011. *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. 3rd ed. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Postill, John, and Sarah Pink. 2012. "Social Media Ethnography: The Digital Researcher in a Messy Web." *Media International Australia*, no. 125. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878x1214500114>.
- Pribadi, Yanwar. 2019. "Fragmentasi Umat Dan Penciptaan Otoritas Keagamaan: Tanggapan Terhadap 'Islam Lokal' Dan 'Islam Asing' Di Indonesia." *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 21 (1): 103. <https://doi.org/10.14203/jmb.v21i1.828>.
- Quadri, Syed Junaid A. 2013. "Transformations of Tradition: Modernity in The Thought of Muḥammad Bakhīt Al-Muṭī'ī." *Doctoral Thesis*. McGill University.
- Riesebrodt, Martin. 1999. "Charisma in Max Weber's Sociology of Religion." *Religion* 29

- (1). <https://doi.org/10.1006/reli.1999.0175>.
- Sadasri, Lidwina Mutia. 2017. "Selebriti Mikro Di Media Baru Kajian Presentasi Diri Dalam Vlog Selebriti Mikro." *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi Dan Opini Publik* 21 (2): 167–81. <https://jurnal.kominfo.go.id/index.php/jpkop/article/view/1218>.
- Saefullah, Hikmawan. 2022. "Media Baru, Publik Baru: Mengkonfigurasi Ulang Ruang Publik Islam." In *Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, Dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta.
- Sammy, Abdullah. 2022. "Peluang Dan Tantangan Dakwah Digital Muhammadiyah." In *Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, Dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta.
- Sanjaya, Makroen. 2022. "Peta Ideologi Islam Di Media Sosial." In *Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, Dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta.
- "Sejumlah Tokoh Hadiri Prosesi Pemakaman Ketua PP Muhammadiyah Yunahar Ilyas." n.d. Accessed April 3, 2022. <https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/03/19142441/sejumlah-tokoh-hadiri-prosesi-pemakaman-ketua-pp-muhammadiyah-yunahar-ilyas>.
- Senft, Theresa. 2008. *Camgirls: Celebrity and Community in the Age of Social Networks*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Shamsy, Ahmed El. 2013. "The Ḥāshiya in Islamic Law: A Sketch of the Shāfi'ī Literature." *Oriens* 41. <https://doi.org/10.1163/18778372-13413404>.
- Spencer, Martin E. 1970. "Weber on Legitimate Norms and Authority." *The British Journal of Sociology* 21 (2). <https://doi.org/10.2307/588403>.

- Suyadi and Widodo, Suyadi Hendro. 2019. "Millennialization of Islamic Education Based on Neuroscience in The Third Generation University in Yogyakarta Indonesia." *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7 (1): 173–202.  
<https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v7i1.4922>.
- Turner, Bryan S. 2007. "Religious Authority and the New Media." *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2): 117–34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276407075001>.
- Turner, Graeme. 2010. *Ordinary People and The Media: The Demotic Turn*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC: Sage Publication Ltd.
- Widodo, Arif. 2017. "Transformative Intellectual Discourse and Movement of Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM)." *Iseedu: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices* 1 (1). <https://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/iseedu/article/view/5423/3542>.
- "Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia Kehilangan Ulama Kharismatik." 2020. Gesuri.Id. 2020.  
<https://www.gesuri.id/internal/yunahar-ilyas-wafat-indonesia-kehilangan-ulama-kharismatik-b1YFoZpRY>.
- Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change*. Princetoon, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.40-5188>.

## ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY *USTAZ* PHENOMENON

### Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

#### ABSTRACTS

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the fragmentation of religious authority. In the Indonesian context, the mainstream religious authority ~~that held by~~ Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) ~~has~~ ~~ve held~~ ~~has also~~ been challenged and threatened by micro-celebrity *ustaz*. ~~Some studies showed that while NU tends to be very reactive in responding to the emergence of micro-celebrity ustaz, Muhammadiyah seems passive.~~ This article examines the emergence of the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* ~~fanpage~~ ~~on Facebook~~, created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board. ~~By conducting web content analysis and field research by interviewing key actors related to this issue, this article shows how Zulkarnain El Madury and the fanpage he created have~~ ~~as it has~~ threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority. ~~and in turn~~ ~~It~~ analyses Muhammadiyah's efforts ~~to in~~ maintaining ~~ing~~ its religious authority in cyberspace. ~~By taking~~ ~~It also takes~~ a closer look at ~~what~~ the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah) ~~has done, as~~ an assembly that has the exclusive authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* ~~products~~ within Muhammadiyah, ~~this article shows another perspective on Muhammadiyah's response to the emergence of new religious authorities, which that is~~ ~~different~~ from previous studies. ~~In this case, Muhammadiyah remains active in responding to the emergence of new religious authorities, but in a typical Muhammadiyah style that is not frontal. In addition,~~ ~~t~~ This article also discusses ~~what~~ lessons ~~that~~ can be learned from the case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the response of the Tarjih Council ~~against him~~.

#### KEYWORDS

micro-celebrity *ustaz*, fragmentation, religious authority, Muhammadiyah, tarjih.

Commented [MOU1]: Should be fanpage (no S).

Formatted: Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

Commented [MOU2]: Unclear what you mean by products.

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Would you be able to provide abstract in Indonesian, max words 250 and keywords?

## Introduction

The Alvara Research Center (2020) survey released in May 2020 was quite surprising (Center 2020). It stated that the clerics most heard by the public, especially in Ramadan 2020, did not come from the official Muhammadiyah board. Although Ustaz Adi Hidayat was included as one of the fifteen 15 most popular clerics in the survey, he cannot be said to be an official representative of Muhammadiyah. He is indeed an alumnus of the Darul Arqam Muhammadiyah Garut Islamic Boarding School. Still, apart from not being involved in Muhammadiyah, he does not convey Muhammadiyah's religious ideas in his lectures. About two months Shortly after the Alvara Research Center survey was released, IBTimes.id (2020), an Islamic website culturally managed by young Muhammadiyah intellectuals, published a report on ranking the 100 most popular Islamic websites in Indonesia ("100 Situs Islam Indonesia, NU Online Peringkat Pertama" 2020). The majority of the 100 Islamic these sites are managed by or affiliated with to Nahdliyyin (NU followers) and Salafi groups. Only very few Islamic websites such sites are operated by or affiliated with to Muhammadiyah.

The Alvara Research Center survey and the IBTimes.id report shows at least one thing, namely that Muhammadiyah, in terms of influence and religious authority in cyberspace on the internet, is losing or lagging behind other religious groups. It which is ironic for an organisation claiming to represent the progressive Islamic group.

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the so-called fragmentation of religious authority. Eva F. Nisa (2019), for example, mentions that the proliferation of various digital platforms is directly proportional to the increasing fragmentation of religious authority (Nisa 2019). Islamic discourse is monopolised not only by an elite group of scholars, or mainstream religious groups, but also by persons or groups that have not been considered in Islamic discourse. Furthermore, the presence of the internet and social media has led to the birth of what is called micro-celebrity. Theresa M. Senft (2008) defines micro-celebrity as a new style of online performance that involves increasing popularity through web technologies on social media such as videos, blogs, and social-networking sites (Senft 2008). According to her, these micro-celebrities sometimes unseem like conventional celebrities, but they are different (Senft 2008). The most fundamental difference between the two is the place in and from where they were born. In other words, conventional celebrities are born in

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

**Formatted:** Highlight

**Commented [MOU3]:** Added English gloss – is this correct?

**Commented [MOU4]:** Should there be a fn on Salafi groups e.g. pointing readers to Chris Chaplin (2022) - [https://brill.com/view/journals/bki/178/2-3/article-p338\\_9.xml](https://brill.com/view/journals/bki/178/2-3/article-p338_9.xml)

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

~~and from conventional media, while micro-celebrities are born-emerge through from~~ what is known as new media (Senft 2008).

Of course, not all new media users have the ~~predicate adjective of~~ ‘micro-celebrity’. Only those who experience what Graeme Turner (2010) ~~termed terms~~ ‘the ~~the~~ demotic turn’, namely, the increasing visibility of ordinary people to appear as celebrities in the media, especially online media (~~G. Turner 2010~~). In turn, both conventional and micro-celebrity exist in various public spheres, and the discourse on them is characterised as influencers, stimulants of consumerism, enthusiasm, public debate, and various activism (Sadasri 2017).

By borrowing the theory of micro-celebrities in the study of new media, we can then read how these micro-celebrities have also come to the fore in the religious realm. The emergence of ~~ulama~~ ulama, ustaz, ~~(religious teachers)~~, ~~preachers~~, and religious leaders who become influencers in new media can perhaps be termed as a form of a micro-celebrity ~~ustaz~~ image. Felix Siauw is a prominent example. ~~The~~ A convert, who is now a preacher, Siauw has a massive following on social media. In 2018, for example, he had 2.6 million followers on Twitter, and ~~now~~ in 2022 ~~it reavched~~, ~~his followers have reached~~ 3.3 million. ~~Not only Twitter but~~ Felix Siauw’s Instagram account ~~also has many followers~~, around 4.9 million ~~followers~~. It can even be said that he is the ~~ustaz or preacher~~ who has the most followers on social media (~~“Dari Aa’ Gym Ke Felix Siauw: Ustaz Medsos & Medium Dakwah Politis” 2018~~ Tirta 2018), ~~so that~~ making him one of the leading social media preachers in Indonesia today (Hew 2018). What Felix Siauw ~~said posts on in~~ his social media has more or less influenced the map of religious authorities in Indonesia.

The existence of the internet and the continuing development of technology allows the emergence of many other micro-celebrity ~~ustaz~~, both in the national arena more generally or more specifically in internal religious organisations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, Persis (Persatuan Islam) or others. In the context of Muhammadiyah, the largest modernist Islamic organisation began to be challenged for its religious authority by a preacher who was said to be part of Muhammadiyah itself, namely Zulkarnain El Madury. He ~~is a person who~~ claims to be a Muhammadiyah cadre and often introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board. In recent years, ~~Zulkarnain~~ El Madury has been noticed by Muhammadiyah administrators and Muhammadiyah cadres.<sup>1</sup> ~~Even and~~ the Muhammadiyah

<sup>1</sup> ~~This author’s o~~Online and offline interviews with Amiruddin, Robby Karman, Muhammad Muflih, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, and Arif Nur Kholis, 2019–2020.

**Commented [MOU5]:** English gloss added here at first mention.

**Formatted:** Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah) ~~even has~~ discussed him in a special meeting. This is because the posts on the Facebook ~~fans~~page that El Madury manages, ~~namely the~~ *Syarah Himpunan Putus Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (~~henceforth~~ SHPTM), often differ significantly from ~~—~~ and to some extent delegitimise ~~—~~ ~~what a Muhammadiyah has become~~ the fatwa or official decision ~~of Muhammadiyah~~. Responses from grassroots or Muhammadiyah ~~people-followers~~ varied. This can be seen, for example, from the comments on each post. Some defended and remained adamant ~~with on~~ the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah, but not a few were affected and ~~in turn~~ followed what was conveyed by ~~Zulkarnain~~ El Madury on ~~the his fanspage~~ Facebook page.

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

This is where it becomes crucial to see how Muhammadiyah attempts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace, especially among its members and ~~people~~the public. By conducting web content analysis (Postill and Pink 2012) on ~~the SHPTM Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah fanspage~~ and official social media accounts and those affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (~~Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah~~), this article shows how El Madury builds his narratives and, in turn, how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority ~~in cyberspace on the internet~~. ~~In a~~ Additionally, ~~field research was also conducted to complement the method. In conducting the field research~~<sup>2</sup> ~~was conducted and the~~ key actors ~~related to this research~~ were interviewed offline and online in a semi-structured format.<sup>3</sup> Apart from ~~Zulkarnain~~ El Madury, the key actors are members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (~~Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah~~), the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Digital Broadcast Centre ~~reer~~ (Pusat Syiar Digital Muhammadiyah), ~~and~~ several prominent figures, Muhammadiyah activists as well as ~~Muhammadiyah~~ grassroots ~~people of Muhammadiyah~~.

**Commented [MOU6]:** Superscript delete and info moved to end of article before References, under Acknowledgements.

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

**Commented [MOU7]:** Unclear who the prominent figures are – did you mean those Muhammadiyah activists and grassroots – or others?

### Fragmentation of religious authority, new preacher and micro-celebrity *ustaz* phenomenon

<sup>2</sup> This research has obtained a research permit from the university ethical board through Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (Ahmad Dahlan University Research and Development Institute) with the number PJB-002/SP3/LPPM UAD/VI/2020.

<sup>3</sup> Data collection in this study was carried out ~~in the time span~~ between 2018 ~~and~~ 2020. ~~Because offline~~ As ~~personal~~ interviews were not possible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, some interviews were conducted online.

Fragmentation of religious authority is a phenomenon that occurs in various religious communities and is not limited to Islam ~~alone~~ (B.-S. Turner 2007; Campbell and Teusner 2011; Hope Cheong 2016). ~~Not only that, but~~ The fragmentation of religious authority is also a global phenomenon ~~as pointed out by Gary R. Bunt (2003) who states. This is illustrated, for example, by the study of Gary R. Bunt (Bunt 2003). He points out that~~ the new media have shaped diverse understandings among individual Muslims worldwide about e-jihad (electronic jihad). The definition of electronic jihad is understood and interpreted differently, ranging from online activism to Muslim ~~expression-articulation~~ after the events of 11 September ~~11~~, 2001. ~~In turn, in his study,~~ Bunt (2003) shows that each new media (in this case, new websites) has authority for its respective group segment.

~~Especially i~~n Indonesia, the fragmentation of religious authority can be traced far back ~~but. Nevertheless,~~ for the purposes of this article, the fragmentation ~~of religious authority~~ that will be discussed here is from the beginning of the 20th century to the present ~~day~~. Jajat Burhanudin (~~Burhanudin~~ 2004) points out that there has been a shift in religious authority in the historical phase of Indonesian religious thought in the early 20th century due to modernisation. ~~The religious authority, which was initially held by traditional groups, shifted to modernist groups.~~ His study, which focuses on ~~the~~ Islamic print media, further shows that there is a shift in religious authority that used to be in *Kitab Kuning*<sup>4</sup> taught by *kyai* or *ulama* in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to magazines, journals, newspapers, and books published by modernist circles or organisations.

~~After that phase, r~~eligious authority ~~since the early 20th century is has~~ always ~~identified-stayed~~ with ~~the role of~~ Muhammadiyah and NU. These two religious organisations are ~~always-often~~ referred to by scholars as the authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016; Akmaliah 2018). The shift in religious authority occurred again in the 1990s when national television stations ~~were gradually born~~ emerged. The Islamic programmes presented by the television stations ~~s~~ show ~~the ustaz (religious teachers) or preacher,~~ which in turn build their authority through lectures delivered by ~~them these preachers~~. This phenomenon, ~~in turn,~~ prompted scholars to come up with the term 'Islamic televangelism' (Akmaliah 2018). ~~Abdullah Gymnastiar who is better known as~~ ~~AA~~ Aa Gym

<sup>4</sup> So-called because the books were printed on yellow paper. These were the Islamic texts used in the education of Islamic schools.

**Commented [MOU8]:** How far back?

**Commented [MOU9]:** I added this, OK with you?

**Commented [MOU10]:** No need for italics as it is an accepted loanword in English.

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

**Commented [MOU11]:** Is it AA or Aa? If latter, please make all relevant changes in your article.

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Complex Script Font: +Headings CS (Times New Roman)

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Complex Script Font: +Headings CS (Times New Roman)

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Complex Script Font: +Headings CS (Times New Roman)

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Complex Script Font: +Headings CS (Times New Roman), English (United Kingdom)



is one example that falls into the category of ~~this a~~ television *ustaz*, or ~~a 'tele-dai' in as coined by Greg Fealy: (s terms, he is called a tele dai (Fealy-2008).~~

The most obvious and recent picture of the fragmentation of religious authority in Indonesia is the series of events of the Defend Islam Action (~~Aksi Bela Islam~~). Ahmad Najib Burhani (2016) hints~~ed~~ that ~~the these~~ critical events marked the peak of the fragmentation of religious authorities in Indonesia ~~as they gave. (Burhani 2016). This series of events has given~~ rise to new actors who challenge the established religious authority ~~over the years~~. Although it cannot be said to shift or match the role of Muhammadiyah and NU, the emergence of new actors such as Rizieq Shihab provides a new map of religious authority in Indonesia.

This phenomenon of ~~the fragmentation of religious authority fragmentation of religious authority~~ has increased sharply in the development of what scholars call pop culture, marked by the birth of many new media (Labiq 2019). The ~~spread-availability~~ of internet access to every social class is the main factor for this fragmentation. As a result, many new media have emerged ~~with;~~ each individual and group ~~-competinge~~ to spread ideas (~~Horsfield 2016; Nisa 2019; Horsfield 2016~~).

~~Abdullah Gymnastiar, who is more familiarly called AaAa Gym, mentioned earlier, can be said to be is~~ one of the early actors who emerged in the internet era ~~starting to grow in~~ Indonesia. This can be captured in two interesting studies on ~~AA-Aa Gym conducted by~~ James B. Hoesterey (Hoesterey-2008), and Maskur ~~& and Irfan Noor (Maskur and Noor 2014).~~ Although the use of the internet as a medium of ~~da'wah at that time~~ was not as massive as it is now, the emergence of ~~AA-Aa Gym as a new cleric on the national da'wah stage through lectures, seminars, and Islamic training is a phenomenon in itself. His preaching journey is fascinating.~~ Hoesterey (2008) studies the journey of ~~AA-Aa Gym as from his first appearance as a preacher, critically starting from appearing, failing, and then his successfully in-rebranding. The successful rebranding carried out by AA Gym (and the team) succeeded into restoring restore its his~~ religious authority. This is evident, for example, from how ~~the voice of AaAa Gym was very well listened to during the Defend Islam Action some time ago has many listeners (Dakta.com 2016). ("Aa Gym Ajak Ribuan Jamaahnya Ikut Aksi Bela Islam III" n.d.).~~

Popular culture has also brought ~~AaAa~~ Gym to be seen not only by the public, especially by his followers, as ~~an ustaz an sieh, but~~ also singer, actor, ~~book writer~~author, etc. Thus, he has transformed from an ordinary cleric to a celebrity cleric. Through a hypersemiotic

Commented [MOU12]: Added, is this correct?

Commented [MOU13]: When roughly is 'at that time'?

Formatted: Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

Formatted: Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

Commented [MOU14]: Did you mean failing?

Commented [MOU15]: There is a date if you look at the link you gave, it is above the article title.

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Not Highlight

perspective, Maskur and Noor (2014) show the various ~~sides-aspects in of AaA Gym's~~ character/personality.

Formatted: Not Highlight

After Following the appearance of AaA Gym and ~~with further rapid development of~~ information technology ~~is developed rapidly~~, many ~~other~~ new preachers began to appear. Hew Wai Weng Hew (Hew-2018) describes how Felix Siau is ~~another skilful~~ religious ~~teacher~~ ~~with high skill in~~ preaching. Being a cleric with the most followers ~~on the internet in~~ ~~cyberspace doesid~~ not make ~~FelixSiau~~ ~~forget neglect~~ to spread his da'wah in the real world. Hew (2018) points out that ~~Felix-Siau~~ has blended online and offline da'wah ~~very~~ ~~well. Instead of replacing offline da'wah with online, Felix actually combined the two~~ harmoniously. ~~The da'wah skill displayed by~~ Felix Siau aims to spread ~~HTI's the ideology~~ ~~ideas of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) and ideologies as the carriage of in~~ his da'wah identity. According to Hew (Hew-2018) and Farhan (Farhan-2017), one of the keys to ~~FelixSiau~~'s success in preaching is his ability to present an entertaining and straightforward da'wah, even though its content is dogmatic and political.

Formatted: Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

Formatted: Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

Commented [MOU16]: Suggest footnote on what HTI ideology is and is HTI now banned? If so, where does that put Felix Siau?  
<https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2019/06/20/is-hizbut-tahrir-a-threat-to-indonesia.html>

Formatted: Font: (Default) +Headings CS (Times New Roman), 12 pt, Complex Script Font: +Headings CS (Times New Roman), 12 pt

Formatted: Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

Formatted: Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

~~AaAa~~ Gym and Felix Siau are ~~descriptions of two~~ ~~micro-celebrity ustaz who became famous because of~~ ~~as a result of~~ the new media's 'blessing'. ~~Both are new clerics who have transformed into micro-celebrity ustaz.~~ The term micro-celebrity ~~ustaz~~ ~~is a term that~~ was adopted and reconstructed from the theory of micro-celebrity. ~~There have been many studies on micro-celebrity itself.~~ Most of these studies ~~were carried out~~ ~~conducted~~ from the perspective of pop culture, ~~as has been done, for example, by Theresa M. Senft (Senft 2008);~~ ~~Graeme Turner (G.~~ Turner 2010; ~~);Khamis, Ang and Welling 2017;~~ ~~Lidwina Mutia Sadasri (Sadasri 2017);~~ ~~Khamis, Ang, and Welling (Khamis, Ang, and Welling 2017), and~~ Khomalia and Rahman (~~Khomalia and Rahman~~ 2018).

~~The studies that the author mentioned above all~~ describe the fragmentation of religious authority, marked by the emergence of micro-celebrity ~~ustaz~~. ~~The By this term micro-celebrity ustaz that the this~~ author means ~~here is~~ an ordinary ~~ustaz/ustazah or preacher~~ who, ~~in turn,~~ has skyrocketed ~~in~~ popularity ~~like and is~~ ~~celebrityies~~ on and because of social media so that he or she ~~is enables~~ to influence certain people or communities. In other words, it means ~~the ustaz/ustazah has or preacher~~ experienced what ~~G. Turner (2010) callsed~~ 'the demotic turn', ~~(G. Turner 2010) when ordinary people are highly visible on social media and become celebrities.~~ ~~Studies on the Challenges efforts or struggles of to~~ established religious authorities ~~challenged~~ by new religious ~~authorities personalities or groups are~~ ~~have not been~~

~~touch~~ rarely touched on except ~~One study conducted by that of~~ Yanwar Pribadi (2019). ~~could perhaps be called an exception (Pribadi 2019).~~ His study explains ~~how the~~ the efforts of 'local Islam' (*Islam Lokal*) to defend ~~the position of~~ its religious authority from the threat of 'foreign Islam' (*Islam asing*). However, his study ~~is different~~ from what ~~this~~ author will examine ~~in~~ tracing Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

~~The author's study is about~~ This study is on a micro-celebrity ~~ustaz, named~~ Zulkarnain El Madury. ~~His name, who which is not~~ less as well known when compared to popular as Aa Gym or Felix Siauw but ~~he~~ has a strong influence ~~in cyberspace, is interesting on the internet.~~ His identity as ~~an ustaz or a~~ preacher from Muhammadiyah who targets Muhammadiyah ~~people followers~~ with postings that are often different and even delegitimise the official voice of this largest modernist mass organisation ~~is another interesting thing that deserves to be investigated.~~ This ~~author's~~ study, ~~apart from not only wants to showing~~ Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority ~~in cyberspace on the internet,~~ ~~but it also wants seeks~~ explicitly to fill the gap in previous studies. ~~For instance, in~~ In his latest study, Akmaliah (2020) shows that Muhammadiyah and NU have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities ~~(Akmaliah 2020).~~ While NU was ~~very strongly~~ reactive to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) ~~said indicates~~ there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's response ~~seem that looks less fierce~~ less hostile ~~(Akmaliah 2020).~~ ~~In line with Akmaliah's opinion,~~ Sammy (Sammy 2022), Sanjaya (Sanjaya 2022), and Saefullah (Saefullah 2022) ~~also came to the same concluded conclusion as Akmaliah, more or less the same thing. They~~ claiming that Muhammadiyah is significantly less adaptive to the emergence of new media, and therefore ~~Muhammadiyah's its da'wah da'wah~~ often loses to ~~that of the~~ micro-celebrity ~~ustaz's da'wah~~. This study focuses on ~~looking at~~ the struggle of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council ~~(Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah)~~ as the only assembly under Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas and **products** of official religious *ijtihad* within Muhammadiyah.

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

**Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah fanspage**

The Facebook ~~Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah~~ SHPTM fanspage was created by Zulkarnain El Madury. He was born in Sumenep ~~on the island of~~ Madura in 1963, ~~and his birth name is with the name~~ Zulkarnain bin Syamsuri. ~~The man who~~ He claims to have studied in Malaysia at the Institute of Business Study ~~and~~ always introduces himself as a preacher from the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (~~Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah~~). He spent his childhood ~~in Madura and was a traditionalist Muslim like others on the island on his home island. Just as most Madurese are traditionalist Muslims, El Madury is the same.~~ He grew up in a milieu dominated by the ~~Nahdlatul Ulama~~ NU traditionalist Islamic organisation. He used to ~~practice~~ perform practices ~~such as tahlilan~~, (pilgrimage to the grave), and other practices that, according to him, after becoming a member of Muhammadiyah, were not following the Sunnah of the Prophet. He received his religious education at the ~~Pesantren~~ Islamic boarding school at-Taufiqiyyah Sumenep Madura. In 1976 he became acquainted with Muhammadiyah. Through a lecture delivered by a preacher ~~of Muhammadiyah~~, He became interested in the da'wah and religious understanding of the ~~Muhammadiyah~~ movement founded by Ahmad Dahlan ~~after listening to a lecture by one of its preachers~~. In 1977, he officially joined Muhammadiyah.<sup>5</sup>

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

Since joining Muhammadiyah, ~~El Madury~~ El Madury has been active as a preacher who spreads religious ideas and understanding, ~~according to Muhammadiyah. In fact, f~~ From 1990 to 2007, he was one of the Muhammadiyah preachers who ~~were was~~ sent to remote areas ~~under by~~ the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (~~Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah~~). His daily activities are now preaching ~~from one place to another~~ at different places as well as, ~~including~~ creating content on ~~the for~~ Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah SHPTM fanspage. ~~Now he is domiciled~~ He now lives in Jakarta as the Tarjih and Tabligh ~~Council~~ council chairman of the Pondok Gede Muhammadiyah Branch.<sup>6</sup>

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

~~This Hefanspage, based on an interview with El Madury, was~~ created SHPTM in 2014.<sup>7</sup> However, in ~~the~~ digital history that ~~thise~~ author can trace, ~~theis~~ fanspage was created in 2015 ~~as t~~. The earliest post that is currently traceable ~~was is~~ dated ~~5~~ January ~~5~~, 2015.

According to ~~El Madury~~ El Madury, the ~~birth of this~~ fanspage began with the WhatsApp group he created. ~~He named this Whatsapp group which he named~~ Tarjih dan Tabligh Institut

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

<sup>5</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

(Tarjih and Tabligh Institute) to provide a space to discuss and spread ideas related to *tarjih*.<sup>8</sup> ~~Muhammadiyah~~. He ~~put included~~ many Muhammadiyah figures and activists ~~into~~ this group, including ~~(the now late)~~ Buya Yunahar Ilyas. Over time, seeing that ~~El Madury~~ El Madury's posts ~~in the group on~~ SHPTM were deemed inconsistent with the *tarjih* spirit of Muhammadiyah, several people, such as Fathurrahman Kamal and Buya Risman, ~~gave~~ sharply criticised ~~the postings on~~. ~~El Madury~~ El Madury, Fathurrahman Kamal, and Buya Risman ~~were then~~ engaged in a heated debate. ~~This information which was relayed later to finally reached~~ Buya Yunahar Ilyas. The response ~~given~~ by Buya Yunahar Ilyas at that time, according to ~~El Madury~~ El Madury, ~~was different~~ differed from that of his critics. Buya Yun responded quite positively because he saw ~~the El Madury's initiative of El Madury as providing who wanted to provide~~ syarh (explanation) (Arabic) or further explanation of the contents of the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Judgment Compilation). Finally, ~~Buya Yun~~ he gave his permission to El Madury ~~permitted El Madury and another person, namely~~ Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website tanyajawabagama.com.<sup>9</sup>

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Commented [MOU17]: English gloss from p.18 added here at first mention.

El Madury's ~~By looking at the~~ early postings, ~~this on SHPTM fanspage, were is~~ still relatively consistent in uploading Muhammadiyah fatwas ~~with the in the format question (from someone) and - writing questions from the questioner and then answering format~~ from the ~~Fatwa d~~ Division of the Tarjih Council. This is ~~like similar to the~~ the original ~~question and answer~~ format ~~of the question and answer~~ administered by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, whose fatwas ~~were was~~ later published in ~~the~~ *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine. ~~Nevertheless~~ However, over time, ~~this fanspage SHPTM posted different things, had posts that apart from the not only the~~ dissemination of *tarjih* ~~products but included~~ the personal opinions of ~~El Madury~~ El Madury. These opinions ~~in inelegant words~~ are often offensive to other groups ~~and use language that is less ethical and elegant~~. Not infrequently, his posts contradict the official stance of ~~the~~ Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in particular, or Muhammadiyah in general, such as on the veil issue ~~(see below)~~. Since Facebook introduced ~~the its~~ 'live

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Highlight

<sup>8</sup> Muhammadiyah's use of the word *tarjih* has changed throughout its development. In its early period, and following its usage in the principles of law (*usul al-fiqh*), *tarjih* conveyed the meaning of examining the various opinions of Muslim jurists on a particular question and evaluating them to determine which is most faithful to the original Shari'a sources. Over time this usage gradually included any intellectual endeavour used to study new cases that earlier jurists had not addressed. In short, in Muhammadiyah's perspective, *tarjih* is identical, or almost identical, to *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

broadcast' feature, Zulkarnain El Madury has also ~~adapted to using this feature~~ availed of it to conduct live lectures.

~~The SHPTM Nevertheless, this is popular with netizens. fanpage has many followers and is liked by many people.~~ As of the time of writing (03/04/3 April 2022), it Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah fanpage has been followed by 19,423 and is 'liked' by 8,868 people. His posts also often ~~get many likes and receive both positive and critical~~ comments from ~~netizens viewers, both pro and contra.~~

~~Based on an interview with El Madury~~ El Madury gave, several ~~things became the background for him~~ reasons that brought about the creation of his ~~to create this~~ fanpage. Firstly, ~~this fanpage it is, from the beginning,~~ aimed to at fortifying Muhammadiyah ~~people followers from against~~ all forms of superstition, heresy, and myth ~~as~~ its posts focus on issues related to faith and worship. Secondly, ~~this fanpage, in its development, he aims is also to counter some those liberal Muhammadiyah activists who have liberal tendencies. In several posts, Zulkarnain openly responded to the discourses of those he considered liberals in Muhammadiyah and has openly responded to such views. His Third, this fanpage posts often openly attacks the religious practices of the the Nahdliyyin group in their posts, so as an impact of that, resulting in several clashes between Zulkarnain him has several times clashed with and the Nahdliyyin figure, Idrus Ramli, a Nahdliyyin figure.~~ Third, this fanpage posts often openly attacks the religious practices of the the Nahdliyyin group in their posts, so as an impact of that, resulting in several clashes between Zulkarnain him has several times clashed with and the Nahdliyyin figure, Idrus Ramli, a Nahdliyyin figure.<sup>10</sup>

~~Besides Despite being followed and liked by many people~~ having many followers El Madury, Zulkarnain El Madury and the his fanpage SHPTM he manages are not without criticism do have critics. Many Muhammadiyah ~~people and~~ followers are ~~worried concerned~~ about the SHPTM posts on the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah fanpage. Some ~~even have~~ tried to ~~report convey~~ their anxiety through the official social media accounts of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre ~~reer~~ (Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah).<sup>11</sup> ~~Those concerned~~ they generally want to ask for firm actionness from the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as regarding the El Madury fanpage because Zulkarnain has used included 'Tarjih's Tarjih Muhammadiyah' name in the his fanpage's name. The firmness demanded by them to the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, ~~if when~~ summarised, includes: (1) asking that the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council ~~to~~ reprimand or remind Zulkarnain El Madury not to use symbols or names that are closely related to Tarjih Muhammadiyah for or on the

<sup>10</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Interviews with Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf and Ariful Hazam, November 2020. They who are grassroots people of Muhammadiyah, and social media administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

his fanspage; (2) making ~~and circulating a circular or an~~ announcement that the fanspage is not a social media account of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council or the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre ~~reer (Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah)~~; (3) announcing the official social media accounts and websites of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre ~~reer (Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah)~~, so that Muhammadiyah people at the grassroots are not ~~fooled-deceived~~ by the existence of the fanspage and know where to look for religious reference ~~placessites~~, especially ~~in cyberspace on the internet~~.

### Zulkarnain El Madury and his efforts in building religious authority

Zulkarnain El Madury and ~~the his~~ fanspage ~~he created, namely Syarah Himpunan Tarjih Muhammadiyah SHPTM~~, have threatened the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, ~~and in this case specifically~~, the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. Many of ~~its his~~ posts affect Muhammadiyah ~~people followers~~ in particular and Muslims in general. ~~It is not only as these posts often differ~~ from the official stance of Muhammadiyah, ~~and in some cases~~ ~~contradict the posts from the fanspage, even to some extent, tend to attack the~~ Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. This has ~~become a~~ stimulated ~~ent for enthusiasm and~~ public debate on social media, allowing ~~El Madury El Madury~~ to become a micro-celebrity. ~~ustaz~~. ~~At this point, he is~~ experiencing what G. Turner (2010) has called ~~s~~ 'the demotic turn'. ~~When the attention of~~ As a result of the ~~general~~ public and the online community ~~has been~~ attention directed to him, ~~El Madury El Madury then has been able to~~ gradually build ~~ups~~ his religious authority. From ~~the Weberian's~~ perspective (Riesebrodt 1999), ~~the authority that El Madury he has been is trying to build appears~~ able to do this in ~~two ways~~. The first is ~~the authority that is built~~ through charisma (charismatic authority). According to Weber, charisma is a particular type of authority whose original form is based on a specific belief contained in a particular person (Riesebrodt 1999). ~~In the context of El Madury~~ Secondly, El Madury claims he has the endorsement of the charisma does not arise purely from El Madury himself but comes from external, namely Yunahar Ilyas. ~~In this case, Yunahar Ilyas is a very popular Muhammadiyah cleric who is very popular and~~ respected by the community, ~~both~~ from within the Muhammadiyah circles and ~~from~~ Muslims in general ~~which is a form of traditional authority~~.

Yunahar Ilyas (1956–2020) or Buya Yun, as he ~~is was~~ popularly known, was an exegete (*mufasssir*; Ilyas 2012) ~~born~~ in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, ~~in 1956 and died in 2020 who died~~ at the age of 63, ~~years (Ilyas 2012). Regarding his~~ He was an ~~capacity, this~~ alumnus of Imam

**Commented [MOU18]:** You've mentioned this twice before on p.2 and p.10, suggest delete.

**Commented [MOU19]:** What are the 2 ways if the first is via charisma? I've edited that the second is endorsement from Buda Yun – is this what you mean?



Ibn Su'ud University (Saudi Arabia) is unquestionable. Moreover, Buya Yun has an excellent rhetoric in lecturing and conveying religious messages. He was seen as a charismatic cleric. No doubt, by many Muhammadiyah people-followers and Muslims, in general, saw Buya Yun as a charismatic cleric and this reputation extended to. Not only limited to Indonesia, in several neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore, Yunahar Ilyas is also known as a charismatic cleric (Abror 2020; "Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia Kehilangan Ulama Kharismatik" 2020; Gesuri 2020). Therefore, when he died in On his death in early 2020, many people flocked to pay their last respects to Buya Yun who the former held the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for three periods-terms (Kompas 2020; "Sejumlah Tokoh Hadiri Prosesi Pemakaman Ketua PP Muhammadiyah Yunahar Ilyas" n.d.; "Dubes Malaysia Jenguk Ketum MUI Yunahar Ilyas Di Yogyakarta" n.d.; Rakyat Merdeka 2019).

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Through By harnessing the charisma of Buya Yun, El Madury El Madury, in turn, used it was able to build-increase his religious authority. On various occasions, including when this author interviewed him, Buya Yun's name has was always been often mentioned as an argument and a shield.<sup>12</sup> It was said by him El Madury insisted that he created the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih SHPTM fanspage Facebook site with the permission of Yunahar Ilyas.<sup>13</sup> Not only did El Madury get permission from Buya Yun to who had give provided a further explanation on Himpunan Putusan Tarjih (of the Tarjih Judgment Compilation). He added, but that Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who is now maintainsing the website tanya jawab agama.com, also go had similarly received permission from Buya Yun. Wahyudi Abdurrahim confirmed Zulkarnain's claims and Muhammad Muflih, a grassroots representative added that it is a form of fairness. When the author interviewed Wahyudi Abdurrahim, he confirmed what El Madury had claimed.<sup>14</sup> However, according to Muflih, this is a form of fairness. In other words, Buda Yun's the permission from Yunahar Ilyas is a form of appreciation given by someone who is more senior and has a high social position in Muhammadiyah to someone who is more junior and is classified as a grassroots

Formatted: Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

<sup>12</sup> Several people who informed the author about this, for example, were This author's informants include Muhammad Muflih (grassroot of Muhammadiyah and initiator of the website tanya jawab agama.com), Robby Karman (Secretary-secretary-General of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association [DPP IMM]), and several meeting participants who were invited by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council with the agenda of 'Responding to Emergence of 'Syarah HPT' on Social Media' on 25 September 2020; and interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Online interview with Wahyudi Abdurrahim through WhatsApp, September 2020.

Formatted: Font color: Auto



Muhammadiyah member.<sup>15</sup> ~~Irrespective of Abdurrahim and Muflih's comments,~~  
~~p~~Permission from ~~Yunahar HyasBuda Yun~~, who has charisma within Muhammadiyah in particular, has become a tool used by ~~El MaduryEl Madury~~ in building his religious authority.

In ~~the perspective of~~ Weberian's charismatic authority, charisma is not only about a belief in the existence of extraordinary or superpowers possessed by or contained in humans but also about particular objects other than humans (Riesebrodt 1999). ~~From here, we can get~~  
~~an~~We thus have an explanation as to why El Madury named his fanpage *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. ~~The~~ Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council ~~can be said to be as a~~  
~~highly very~~-respectable and crucial council in Muhammadiyah. Founded in 1927, the Council ~~has a function~~s as an assembly that carries out ~~the-its~~ agenda of purification of religion and the dynamisation of social life, ~~by-It~~ conductsing research and investigations ~~to find~~  
~~itstowards this~~ purity, and accordingly givesing fatwas and compilesing religious guidelines ~~regarding-on~~ faith ('*aqidah*) and worship ('*ibadah*) as well as social relations (*mu'āmalah*) ( ~~Rahman et al. 1985; Anwar 2016; Al-1985~~). In addition, ~~the function of the Tarjihthis~~ Council ~~is also to makes~~ efforts to resolve differences and disagreements on religious issues, which are usually referred to as *khilafiah* problems, so that they are directed more productively (Anwar 2007, 2016).

~~The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council Based on the function of the Tarjih Council as stated above, this institution~~ is a body that is responsible for formulating the ideological basis of the Muhammadiyah movement (Anwar 2007, 2016) and ~~becomes-is~~ Muhammadiyah's representative in the religious field (Fauzi 2017). ~~As an institution that represents Muhammadiyah in the religious field,~~  
The Tarjih Council produces three *tarjih* products, namely: (1) *tarjih* fatwa (*fatwa tarjih*), (2) *tarjih* decision (*putusan tarjih*), and (3) *tarjih* discourse (*wacara tarjih*) (Anwar 2016). *Tarjih* fatwa is the ~~Tarjih~~ Council's answer to general questions ~~regarding-on~~ issues that require an explanation in terms of sharia law. Following the nature of the fatwa in general, ~~the fatwa of the Tarjih Council's fatwa~~ is non-~~t~~ binding, ~~neither~~ on ~~either~~ organisations ~~nor~~ members as individuals. Therefore, even the fatwa can be questioned and discussed. However, because the fatwa contains religious guidance derived from Islamic teaching sources (Anwar 2020), and the general public often does not actually understand the ~~characteristics-aspects~~ of such a fatwa, it is still believed by Muhammadiyah members to be religious guidance. ~~On the other hand~~However, the *tarjih*

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

<sup>15</sup> Online interview with Muhammad Muflih through WhatsApp and Facebook, 20 October 2019.

decision is the official stance of Muhammadiyah in religious matters and is formally binding on the organisation and its members. ~~However~~But, in practice, sometimes Muhammadiyah members exercise their right to freedom not to be bound by the decision because they have different *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

Meanwhile, *tarjih* discourses are ideas or thoughts that are raised and put forward by the ~~Tarjih~~ Council in seminars, *halaqah* (religious gathering or meeting to discuss the Qur'an or Islam), or other forums in addressing various developing issues and at the same time fostering a critical spirit of *ijtihad* and collecting materials or ~~stock of~~ ideas ~~regarding on~~ various actual problems in society. The nature of this *tarjih* discourse is ~~not at all non~~-binding and does not become a fatwa that must be followed. *Tarjih* discourse is contained in various publications of the ~~Tarjih~~ Council, such as *Jurnal Tarjih* (Tarjih Journal) and various published books (Anwar 2016).

~~The first two products, namely (The~~ *tarjih* decision and the *tarjih* fatwa, ~~have their~~ ~~powerhold their strength~~ within Muhammadiyah. ~~What becomes fatwas and decisions of Muhammadiyah areas these are considered~~ considered sacred by some ~~of its~~ members ~~of Muhammadiyah~~. In ~~summary~~short, it can be said that anything that 'smells *tarjih*!' has authority in the collective memory of ~~the~~ Muhammadiyah ~~people~~followers. In ~~the perspective of~~ Khaled Abou El Fadl (2014)'s perspective, fatwas and *tarjih* decisions have the power of persuasive authority, ~~namely an authority as these that~~ can influence or direct others because they believed in them (~~Fadl~~ 2014). The *tarjih* fatwa was officially published through the organisation's official magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, and compiled in ~~the~~ Tanya Jawab Agama's book.

In comparison, the *tarjih* decisions are codified in a book called *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (~~Tarjih Judgment Compilation~~), or commonly known by the abbreviation HPT. ~~At this point~~Thus, it can be understood why the attribution of the term *tarjih* to particular objects can give rise to charismatic authority, as mentioned by Weber.

What El Madury did can also be seen ~~from the perspective of~~as identity politics. ~~In one sense, identity politics which~~ is defined as a political tool of a group ~~such as, whether it be~~ ethnicity, cultural, religious or others for specific purposes, such as a form of resistance or ~~a tool~~to show the identity of a group (Alfaqi 2015). Within this framework, identity is politicised through extreme interpretation, which aims to gain support from people who feel 'the same', ~~through whether by~~ race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements. In the

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Commented [MOU20]: There is only one tarjih fatwa? And when was that published?

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

context of El Madury, the use of the *tarjih* label on ~~the his~~ fan page ~~created by El Madury~~ can be interpreted as a political tool to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muhammadiyah ~~people~~ members. ~~Not only that~~ And, if ~~as~~ seen in some of his sermon videos, El Madury also placed a flag with the Muhammadiyah symbol behind him. In this context, he wants to ~~show~~ ~~the identity of Muhammadiyah and~~ convince the ~~audience-viewers~~ that he is ~~a~~ close ~~to part of~~ Muhammadiyah. ~~Moreover, h~~ He ~~has always~~ introduced ~~ds~~ himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board on many occasions.

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

According to Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif (2010), identity politics is always related to members of social groups who feel ~~forced and~~ excluded by the ~~domination of the~~ mainstream in a nation or state (Maarif 2010). In line with Ma'arif, Sri Astuti Buchari (2014) also ~~sees~~ ~~finds~~ that the emergence of identity politics is mainly caused by certain factors that an ethnic group sees as ~~the~~ pressure ~~in from the~~ political injustice ~~felt by them~~ (Buchari 2014). By looking at the observations made by Ahmad Najib Burhani (Burhani 2013), El Madury, in this case, can be categorised as part of a group that feels excluded, threatened, and to some extent ~~feels that he did in need of not get~~ justice within Muhammadiyah. Burhani (2013) explained ~~ed~~ the existence of two opposing ~~thought orientations~~ schools of thought within Muhammadiyah ~~which he refers to as~~. The two orientations are referred to by Burhani as 'Pure Islam' (*Islam Murni*) and 'Progressive Islam' (*Islam Progresif*) (Burhani 2013). The conflict between these two schools of thought in Muhammadiyah began to surface at the 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Banda Aceh in 1995 (Burhani 2013).

The dominance of ~~the thought of~~ 'Progressive Islam' in Muhammadiyah strengthened after ~~the its~~ 44th Muhammadiyah C congress in Jakarta in 2000. This congress chose Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif as general chair ~~man~~. He is a progressive Muslim figure, an alumnus of the University of Chicago, and a ~~direct~~ student of the eminent progressive scholar Fazlur Rahman. At this congress, several names representing the 'Progressive Islam' group were included in the ranks of the central leadership of Muhammadiyah, such as Amin Abdullah, Dawam Raharjo, and Abdul Munir Mulkhan. During Ma'arif's leadership, progressive ideas not only dominated culturally but gradually became Muhammadiyah's official programmes (Burhani 2013).

Seeing the increasingly apparent threat from the ideas put forward by the 'Progressive Islam' group within Muhammadiyah, representatives of the 'Pure Islam' group did not remain silent. They compete ~~with each other~~ and ~~fight squabble~~ over ~~the~~ religious interpretations ~~as~~

to, which is the most authentic. These two groups ~~competed-challenge each other on various occasions through various channels, such as including~~ seminars, discussions, publications, ~~and other events~~. They usually have conflicting programmes. For example, as mentioned by Burhani (2013), when the Centre for the Study of Religion and Civilization (PSAP/Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban) raised the theme of pluralism and multiculturalism in its journal, *Tanwir Journal*, the Tabligh Council responded with articles in opposition in its magazine, *Majalah Tabligh* (~~Tabligh Magazine~~). In Burhani's investigation, during the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress in Malang, this conservative group set up a Pojok Anti-Liberal (anti-liberal corner) booth, which sold books, DVDs, t-shirts, magazines, and other anti-liberal ~~knick-knacks mementos~~. Strikingly, some of the t-shirts for sale displayed the words 'Muhammadiyah Anti-Liberal' (Burhani 2013).

At the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress, it seemed that the 'Pure Islam' group was gaining momentum to beat back the 'Progressive Islam' group. The ~~fighting quarrels~~ between these two groups ~~took place outside occurred within congress committees and in the external the congress arena and took place in the congress committees~~. Burhani (2005; 2013) noted ~~that there were~~ at least three critical issues where the 'Pure Islam' group defeated the 'Progressive Islam' group in the congress arena, namely: (1) ~~the issue of~~ leadership change; (2) ~~the issue of~~ the position of women; and (3) ~~the issue of~~ resistance to liberal thought (Burhani 2013, 2005).

After the 45th congress, the feud between these two schools of thought has continued ~~with dynamic tensions; sometimes it strengthens, sometimes it fades though waxing and waning at different times~~. The form of the feud now looks more varied ~~along with the development of given the availability of increasingly advanced information technology the internet where the presence of - The internet and~~ social media ~~presence have~~ changed the battle arena from a conventional ~~one~~ to a more modern one. ~~In this case,~~ El Madury represents the 'Pure Islam' group, ~~often fights and debates tremendously and has heated online debates~~ with figures considered representatives of 'Progressive Islam' ~~whose actions in cyberspace. Their actions are seen he sees~~ as unsettling ~~by El Madury. In the author's investigation, f~~For example, El Madury and the ~~Secretary secretary-g~~General of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association (DPP IMM),<sup>16</sup> Robby Karman, have openly ~~and~~

<sup>16</sup> Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM) or Muhammadiyah Student Association is ~~an exa~~ a proponent of Muhammadiyah in student affairs ~~dimension which with the basic mission is to of realising the real real~~ Islamic society as formulated by Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Widodo 2017).

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

**Commented [MOU21]:** What is the tabligh council? Is it part of Muhammadiyah, the anti-liberal wing?

**Formatted:** Font color: Auto

**Formatted:** Font color: Auto

**Formatted:** Font color: Auto

frequently attacked-castigated each other quite often. Some of the cases are about on for example, issues about the veil issue and the Wahhabi-issue. According to El Madury El Madury, Robby Karman is a young liberal figure in Muhammadiyah who must be fought should be challenged. El Madury also often attacks the IBTimes.ID website, which often as it frequently contains articles that are progressive and, to some extent, controversial. This website is fronted by has several former Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah (JIMM/Muhammadiyah Youth Intellectual Network) figures, such as Hilman Latief, Azaki Khoiruddin, and Mu'arif. On one occasion, when the chairman of the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centreer admonished El Madury not to for uploading provocative posts that were provocative and contradicted the official stance of the Tarjih Council, he defended himself while chiming in by stating that equally provocative posts from the 'Progressive Islam' group should also be similarly reprimanded and reminded. If the one who was he is the only one selected for rebuked was only him, while they were not reprimanded, then according to him he felt an injustice had occurred been done.<sup>17</sup> El Madury El Madury's attitude in the framework of identity politics can be seen as an attitude that shows feelings of being reflects someone who feels excluded and threatened by certain parties. It made him feel that there was injustice. At this point such, then, what El Madury did by using his specific attributes and identities is are a deliberate not empty of purpose. These attributes and identities are intentionally attached as a form of resistance to the domination of certain groups or thoughts that threaten him.

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

What has been described above is the process of how The above describes how El Madury builds his authority through the first way, namely the authority built through charisma (charismatic authority). There is still one more way used by El Madury, namely the The other is authority built through tradition or what Weber calls traditional authority (Spencer 1970; Matheson 1987; Riesebrodt 1999; Matheson 1987; Spencer 1970). In simple terms, something can be considered as having traditional authority if it gains legitimacy based on beliefs or norms that have been established in a particular tradition (Chairi 2019). In other words, according to Spencer (1970), traditional authority is legitimised and, at the same time, constrained by traditional norms. Therefore, it is the opposite of charismatic authority. If in charismatic authority, it is the leader or someone who creates the norms, then it is the norms that create the leader or person in the traditional authority. In charismatic authority, the value of influence is generated by a person's personal qualities and is always associated with his

<sup>17</sup> On 3 November 3, 2019, the manager of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah reprimanded Zulkarnain El Madury regarding about his post on SHPTM the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhamamdiyah fanspage regarding on the veil which contradicts Muhammadiyah's official stance.

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

personality. While in the case of traditional authority, it is generated by function and is related to someone or something that has traditional values (Spencer 1970).

In the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, <sup>1</sup>ulama and the classical books they wrote can be considered to have this traditional authority <sup>value</sup>. <sup>1</sup>Ulama in Islamic tradition <sup>is</sup> <sup>are</sup> called <sup>as the</sup> heirs of the <sup>Prophets</sup>. The authority of <sup>ulama</sup> <sup>the ulama</sup> is derived from the legitimacy of religious texts which <sup>say</sup> <sup>state</sup> that the prophetic tradition will be passed on to them. Therefore, the religious ideas they convey in writings or books contain an authoritative value for the next generation. This is the uniqueness of Islamic scholars and traditions, as mentioned by Muhammad Qasim Zaman (<sup>Zaman</sup> 2002) <sup>who states that</sup>. <sup>According to him</sup>, one of the most prominent aspects of pre-modern intellectual culture is the articulation of religious discourse through the so-called medium of the commentary. <sup>This</sup> <sup>which</sup> is manifested in various forms such *al-syurūh*, *hawāsyī*, *rasā'il*, and *fatawā*. The various genres of books that contain explanations, descriptions, or responses to a book or social phenomena are a way for scholars to shape the identity and authority of the school or tradition they adhere to. In addition, it is also a means to interpreting the meaning of the foundational sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah (Zaman 2002).

An example is the *hawāsyī* tradition in the Shafii school. <sup>The</sup> <sup>Its</sup> <sup>phenomenon of the</sup> <sup>emergence of the</sup> <sup>hawāsyī genre in the Shafii school</sup>, according to Ahmed El-Shamsy (2013), shows the peak of the authority of <sup>the</sup> two scholars in that school, namely al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī (<sup>El Shamsy</sup> 2013). Al-Kurdī, as <sup>quoted</sup> by El Shamsy, called these two scholars 'the higher authorities in the Syafii school'. <sup>People</sup> <sup>Those</sup> who want to know the authoritative opinion of the Shafi'i school <sup>must have to</sup> go through the works of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī, and the books that explain further <sup>the two works of these scholars</sup> <sup>their works</sup>, namely the books written by Ibn Hajar al-Haitamī and Syamsuddīn al-Ramlī. <sup>At this point, it appears that</sup> <sup>These books</sup> <sup>books of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī, and also the books that explain both</sup>, have for later generations the value of traditional authority (<sup>El</sup> Shamsy 2013).

What is the connection between this traditional authority and <sup>Zulkarnain</sup> El Madury? <sup>El</sup> <sup>Madury</sup> <sup>El Madury's in writing his opinions</sup> <sup>posts on the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah</sup> <sup>SHPTM fanspage</sup> <sup>and at religious forums where he speaks</sup> always <sup>rely</sup> <sup>ies</sup> on the Islamic intellectual tradition. <sup>In fact, not only what is written on the fanspage, in religious forums where he is a speaker, El Madury often quotes Islamic intellectual traditions</sup> (*turāth*). According to Endang Mintarja, <sup>c</sup>Chairman of the Jakarta branch of the Muhammadiyah

Commented [MOU22]: Query – singular or plural?

Formatted: Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

Formatted: Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

Commented [MOU23]: Provide page no. of quote in Shamsy (2013)

Tarjih Council, this ~~characteristic aspect~~ has ~~attracted-drawn~~ many people to ~~the content of El Madury's~~ El Madury's lectures.<sup>18</sup> ~~However, regardless of what intellectual tradition is quoted, it is clear that the opinion put forward by El Madury is always attributed to the books of classical scholars. At this point, El Madury is building his authority.~~

What ~~El Madury~~ El Madury did, Muhammadiyah did not do in many of its fatwas ~~in~~ ~~citing intellectual tradition~~. Perhaps this is a consequence of the ~~spirit of the~~ modernist movement, which became the spirit of Muhammadiyah. The modernist movement initiated by reformers such as Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, and Muḥammad Rasyīd Riḍā in the late 19th and early 20th centuries ~~had the jargon used the term~~ *al-rujū' ilā al-qur'ān wa al-sunnah* ('back to the Qur'an and Sunnah'). According to Syed Junaid A. Quadri (2013), the most obvious indicator of this movement, especially in Islamic law, is its critical attitude towards the structure of pre-modern sharia authority symbols, which are articulated in the language and logic of the institution of *taqlīd*. ~~Therefore, m~~ Modernist groups always encourage reopening the door to *ijtihād* and invite Muslims to leave the interpretive monopoly that the ~~ulama~~ class has held (Quadri 2013).

Muhammadiyah, which is heavily inspired by the modernist movement, ~~is has more or less the same characteristics. Muhammadiyah is very~~ oriented towards the Qur'an and Sunnah and tends ~~not to~~ attach ~~too much less~~ importance to the Islamic intellectual tradition that has been built by ~~the~~ ulama. This can be seen from ~~one point in the its~~ *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*, which asserts that Muhammadiyah is not affiliated ~~with to~~ a particular school, but the opinions of ~~that these~~ schools are only considered in determining religious norms (Anwar 2018). This means that understanding religion in the Muhammadiyah perspective is ~~carried out derived~~ directly from its primary sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah through the *ijtihād* process ~~with existing ijthid methods~~. However, it should be noted here that the narration that confirms the opinions of the scholars is taken into account in determining norms is not ~~very that~~ clear how they are implemented in *tarjih* ~~products issues~~.

By ~~looking at~~ some of ~~the its tarjih~~ *products* ~~that have been produced~~, the nuances of the opinions of ~~the~~ scholars, especially ~~the~~ pre-modern ~~scholarsones~~, ~~seem invisible or deliberately do not appear, by choice or otherwise not shown~~. The *Tarjih Council's* opinion ~~Even if indicates the source of we look at~~ the Islamic intellectual tradition, ~~we will find~~ from

**Commented [MOU24]:** Added, is this correct as you need to state the difference in this sentence - and expand it later which you have done.

**Formatted:** Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

**Commented [MOU25]:** What is this? Principles of Manhaj Tarjih?

**Formatted:** Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

**Formatted:** Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

**Formatted:** Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

**Formatted:** Highlight

**Commented [MOU26]:** Unclear – is the Tarjih Council not part of Muhammadiyah?

<sup>18</sup> ~~This is as expressed by~~ Endang Mintarja ~~in voiced this at~~ a meeting held by Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board ~~when discussing the phenomenon of on~~ the emergence 'Syarah HPT', 25 September 25, 2020.



whom or ~~from which~~ particular school ~~school~~ the Tarjih Council's opinion came from of thought. ~~So, here~~ Thus it appears that El Madury is ~~actually~~ filling the Muhammadiyah gap ~~that in Muhammadiyah did not fill, namely~~ presenting the authority of the Islamic intellectual tradition in religious narratives. For example, in the controversial veil case, ~~which had become a hot topic of discussion some time ago,~~ the Tarjih Council ~~has~~ issued three fatwas ~~related to the veil, namely~~ in 1993 (Tim Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat T. M. T. dan T. P. P. Muhammadiyah 2019a), 2003 (T. M. T. dan T. P. P. Muhammadiyah ibid. 2019b), and 2009 (T. M. T. dan T. P. P. ibid. Muhammadiyah 2009). The fatwas issued in 1993 and 2009 emphasised that the veil has no legal basis either in the ~~al-Qur'an~~ or the Sunnah ~~but that: What~~ Islamic law commands women to wear ~~is~~ the hijab. These two fatwas ~~base their arguments on the Qur'an and Sunnah, without~~ did not citing the Islamic intellectual tradition, which also accommodates opinions about the veil. Although the Tarjih Council ~~remained kept~~ in its stance and strengthened the opinion that women's 'aurat (parts of the body that should go covered) are the whole body except the face and the palms of the hands, in the 2003 fatwa, the Tarjih Council provides space for those who want to wear the veil by expressing several opinions from the scholars who think so.

Formatted: Highlight

In contrast to the tarjih fatwas, Zulkarnain El Madury (2019) El Madury in the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah fanspage uploaded an article Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam? ('Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?') on SHPTM site ~~that refutes~~ refuting the tarjih fatwa ~~about the veil~~. El Madury's article is entitled 'Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam?' (Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?) (El Madury 2019). In the article, he cites various opinions of scholars in the Islamic intellectual tradition who support mandatory veiling as an effort to build religious authority. From this, it appears that El Madury, apart from attacking the tarjih fatwa, ~~also shows a different attitude from the tarjih fatwa~~ believes in maintaining traditional authority, in this case, the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāts*).

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

~~Apart from being seen from the perspective of Weber's authority, w~~ What El Madury did in building religious authority can also be captured from what Burhani calls a conversion narrative. Some scholars define religious conversion narratives differently ~~as .f~~ For example, in the change from one religious tradition to another ~~can be referred to as religious conversion~~. ~~Meanwhile,~~ William James, as quoted by Burhani (2020: ??), ~~said states~~ that religious conversion ~~is not only a matter of changing a person from one religious tradition to another but it~~ can also be interpreted as the conversion of a person who is ~~wallowing in sin (a~~

Commented [MOU27]: Provide page no. of quote.



sinner) ~~into a human who into someone~~ pious. According to Burhani (2020), people who experience religious conversion, usually after embracing a new tradition or religious understanding, will ~~'attack' be hostile to~~ the previous religious tradition or understanding (Burhani 2020).

El Madury also experienced a religious conversion. ~~In~~ In this case, from the NU tradition to Muhammadiyah. ~~In the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah~~ On SHPTM ~~fanspage and as well as~~ his ~~statement views~~ when interviewed by ~~this~~ the author, he introduced himself as ~~a person someone~~ who had practised the ~~tradition he called~~ 'kuburiyyun tradition'<sup>19</sup> and other ~~traditions actions~~ that did not have examples from the Prophet. To convince his ~~fanspage~~ followers, he posted information about ~~the his~~ religious conversion- ~~from NU to Muhammadiyah he had done~~. ~~He also Besides~~ carried out attacks on ~~condemning~~ his previous practices, which were deemed to have no basis in the ~~al-Qur'an and Sunnah~~, ~~he has had~~ ~~acrimonious debates with~~. ~~Not only that, but he also openly often debates and even attacks each other with an the~~ NU kyai, ~~named~~ Idrus Ramli ~~on what?~~.

Formatted: Font color: Red, Highlight

### Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Before the advent of the internet, ~~and the emergence of with~~ various new religious authorities, ~~emerging~~, Muhammadiyah and NU were the two ~~largest religious organisations~~ ~~and~~ authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). However, ~~after~~ ~~following~~ the emergence of the so-called micro-celebrity ~~ustaz~~, ~~these~~ two ~~groups largest religious organisations~~, according to some scholars, began to face challenges and threats. ~~The recent study by~~ ~~Based on previous studies, the way the two organisations maintain religious authority does not appear to be the same~~. Wahyudi Akmaliah's (2020) ~~recent study~~ shows that the two organisations have ~~different responses responded differently~~ to the emergence of new religious authorities ~~(Akmaliah 2020)~~. While NU was ~~very responsive~~ ~~more combative about~~ ~~to~~ their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) ~~maintainsaid~~ there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's response look less ~~fierceaggressive~~ (Akmaliah 2020). Akmaliah's ~~is correct thesis~~ on several points ~~is correct~~, but other perspectives deserve to be

Commented [MOU28]: Unclear - do you mean by the similarities that the new religious authorities were as uncombative as Muhammdiyah which isn't the case with El Madury?

<sup>19</sup> ~~It means~~ ~~the~~ The tradition of visiting the grave with ~~all kinds of its associated~~ practices ~~that are in it~~.

considered, especially ~~to explore~~ Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority, especially ~~in cyberspace on the internet~~.

The weak point from Akmaliah's study is that there is no adequate elaboration of the assembly that exclusively holds religious authority in Muhammadiyah, namely the Tarjih Councils. To trace more precisely how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority is to look at the Tarjih and Tajdid Councils.

This discussion will start from the author's experience in attending a meeting held by the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board. The meeting was initiated in response to the emergence of El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim's ~~the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah SHPTM site made by Zulkarnain El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim~~. It should be noted here ~~that that besides being made by El Madury, the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah was also written by Abdurrahim also contributed writings to this website. He was earlier, a person who was mentioned at the beginning of this article as having had getting~~ permission from Buya Yun to ~~make give~~ syarh (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Judgment Compilation) ~~and is the author of -The difference with El Madury, Abdurrahim wrote Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih in a book~~. The initial background for holding this meeting, as revealed by the Secretary of the Tarjih Council, Mas'udi, was purely in response to the ~~Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih SHPTM posts written by Zulkarnain El Madury~~. However, information about the ~~Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih SHPTM~~ other than the one written by El Madury prompted the board of the Tarjih Council to include the ~~Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih book by Abdurrahim with the same title written by Abdurrahim also to be discussed in the meeting for the agenda~~.

On Friday, 7 Safar 1442 AH ~~or coinciding with (-25 September -25, 2020)~~, the Tarjih Council invited nine related ~~elements sectors~~ to discuss ~~some people's~~ concerns over the emergence of the ~~Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih HPTM in cyberspace on the internet~~ written by the ~~two people~~ El Madury and Abdurrahim. These nine ~~sector elements~~ ~~are participants were~~: (1) the ~~Executive executive b~~ Board of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (2) ~~Fatwa d~~ Division of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (3) ~~c~~ Chairman/s Secretary of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (4) Dr Endang Mintarja, M.Ag. (Chairman of the Jakarta Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council); (5) H. Fathurrahman, Lc., M.S.I. (Chairman of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council); (6) H. Budi Setiawan, S.T.; (7) Arif Nurkholis (~~h~~ Head of Muhammadiyah Digital Syiar Center); (8) ~~the m~~ Manager of UAD

Commented [MOU29]: There is more than one council?

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Highlight

Commented [MOU30]: What is the difference between these two councils?

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

Formatted: Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre; and (9) the social media assistance team of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

During the meeting, there were at least four proposals emerged from the meeting participants concerning on how best to respond to the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih HPTM, especially the one article written by El Madury. There are at least four proposals that surfaced. First The first was to complain to Facebook about report the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah HPTM fanspage to the Facebook authority so that fanspage is it could be banned for using including an institution's name without permission. According to Fathurrahman Kamal,<sup>20</sup> who was present at the forum, the fanspage is already in the illegal category. This proposal was considered by the proponents as a firm proposal and also not too risky. Second The second was to use a persuasive approach. The proposed persuasive approach can be in the form of clarification or an appeal to El Madury not to use the name *Himpunan Putusan Tajih* (HPT) or something that smells of is associated with tarjih. Its proponents consider this approach to be softer and more characteristic reflective of being members of Muhammadiyah members in particular, and Muslims in general. The t Third proposal was to take an official institutional approach. The point is to use use institutional authority in writing an official letter on behalf of the Tarjih Council addressed to El Madury. The In other words, this approach uses institutional authority to respond to El Madury and his fanspage. Fourth idea that was considered more practical and efficient was to socialise replace the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it through on social media. In addition to This would avoiding being trapped drawn into unfruitful the substantive content of correspondence on SHPTM fanspage, this approach is considered more practical and efficient.

Until the meeting was over However, there was no agreement on which approach should be undertaken despite long discussion to the proposal would be executed. It was agreed instead that there would be a follow up with another forum. Since this author started writing (3 April 2022) This is because the meeting has been running for quite a long time, so the forum participants agreed to discuss it in the following forum. Until this article was written (03/04/2022), there has been no further meeting to follow up on the previous meeting. However, it is interesting to note that the Tarjih Council rarely discusses and conducts meetings on something they think is not too important. Therefore, at this point, it can be seen

<sup>20</sup> He is the chairman Chair of the Tabligh Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board.

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

**Commented [MOU31]:** Which particular article?

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

**Commented [MOU32]:** What do you mean by risky – less aggressive?

**Formatted:** Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

~~that the phenomenon of~~ The emergence of ~~Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah~~ HPTM in cyberspace ~~on the internet~~ and its effects have been considered a serious problem by the Tarjih Council. ~~Moreover, by looking at the proposals from~~ The meeting's participants, ~~they~~ were generally uneasy about the appearance of El Madury and his fanpage. In addition, they wanted ~~ed~~ El Madury to be warned or reprimanded. ~~since In other words, the emergence of Syarah SHimpunan Putusan TarjihHPTM Muhammadiyah has beenis~~ considered a threat to religious authority ~~that has been attached toof~~ the Tarjih Council. ~~It also~~ This illustrates that Muhammadiyah, through its official religious assembly, the Tarjih Council, is not passive in responding to the emergence of micro-celebrity ~~\_ustaz~~. ~~Even~~ However, only certain cases and ~~though it is true that~~ not all micro-celebrity ~~\_ustaz~~ ~~that who~~ appear ~~on social in new-media~~ ~~are responded to~~ have drawn by the Tarjih Council's attention. ~~it seems that only certain cases have indeed received the attention of the Tarjih Council.~~

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

Although there has ~~yet to~~ be ~~aen no~~ follow up ~~from the~~ meeting, ~~what has been done by~~ the Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah (~~Tarjih Muhammadiyah Center~~) as an official institution supporting the Tarjih Council ~~ean~~ illustrates how Muhammadiyah struggles to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah (~~Tarjih Muhammadiyah Center~~) is an institution that was founded in 2016 (~~Majelis Tarjih Dahlan 2016; Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah n.d-2016~~) ~~by. It was established in collaboration between~~ the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Ahmad Dahlan University (~~Pimpinan Pusat P. T. Muhammadiyah, n.d.~~). ~~Even though~~ Despite ~~being it is~~ a new institution, its legality is clear, ~~so and~~ it ~~has~~ formally ~~has~~ authority. In the Muhammadiyah tradition as an organisation, ~~this kind of~~ such legality is essential. ~~No matter how strong the arguments issued by~~ Thus when someone from a figure in Muhammadiyah, ~~if he or she~~ speaks ~~on another person's behalf or endorses an approach, on his or her behalf, then his or her~~ the speaker's status ~~will still be in~~ is below that of the institution and cannot ~~be assumed to be that of~~ ~~rior to~~ institutions within Muhammadiyah which, although new, have legality. In the context of El Madury and the ~~Syarah SHimpunan Putusan TarjihHYTM Muhammadiyah~~ fanpage, this is important. ~~Because e~~ Even though El Madury ~~said claims~~ he has ~~ed~~ obtained permission to make *syarah* (~~further explanation~~) on ~~the Himpunan Putusan Tarjih (Tarjih Judgment Compilation)~~ from a charismatic figure in Muhammadiyah, Buya Yunahar, legally it ~~could not be said to be~~ is not valid. In that context, Buya Yunahar spoke on behalf of himself, not on behalf of Muhammadiyah.

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

**Commented [MOU33]:** There is a date if you mean this article: <https://tarjih.or.id/pembukaan-halaqah-majelis-tarjih-launching-pusat-tarjih-muhammadiyah-dan-muhammadiyah-observatorium-network/>  
Note that your url in References does not bring up the article.

Fronted by young Muhammadiyah cadres, the majority of whom are alumni of Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Tarjih Ulama Education, PUTM).<sup>21</sup> Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays a role in supporting the Tarjih Council programmes, which These are relatively under-performing and facing obstacles. They, especially, related to technological advances, particularly on such as using social media to disseminate their *ijtihad* products. The members of the Tarjih Council, who are relatively old, need to get support from young cadres. At this point, The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah played an essential role in assisting the Tarjih Council in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace on the internet. It responded Responding to El Madury and his fanspage SHPTM, by being pro-active with Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah, through the power of its social media, took the initiative to make a poster (Figure 1) containing information related to the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with to it.

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

**Formatted:** Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

**Formatted:** Highlight

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

**Commented [MOU34]:** Was this poster only a paper version or was it on social media too?

<sup>21</sup> Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah (PUTM) is an educational institution under the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board which is designed to produce a cadre of Muhammadiyah scholars. PUTM organises a special programme that educates and prepares Muhammadiyah *tarjih* scholars who are competent in the religious field. The birth of PUTM was based on the concern of some Muhammadiyah leaders about the increasing scarcity of <sup>4</sup>ulama in and from Muhammadiyah. See (Fauzi 2020a).

**Formatted:** Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic



Figure 1 Figure 11. Poster containing with information related to the official social media accounts affiliated with the Tarjih Council.

Figure 21. Poster with information on the official social media accounts affiliated to the Tarjih Council.

Are you often confused about finding sources of reference about Islam from the perspective of Muhammadiyah?

There is no need to be confused anymore because various social media are straightforward for us to access. Tarjih (Council) has come with a more trendy look.

- ✓ Easy to read anywhere
- ✓ Provide updated fatwas
- ✓ Discuss current issues

As members of Muhammadiyah, let's get used to reading the decisions and fatwas of Muhammadiyah

- Formatted:** Font: Bold, Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Bold, Not Italic
- Formatted:** Font: Bold, Complex Script Font: Bold
- Formatted:** Font: Bold, Complex Script Font: Bold
- Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic
- Commented [MOU35]:** As with ALL figures, do you have permission to reproduce these from the copyright holders? Note that all figures require minimum of 300 dpi.
- Formatted:** Left

Here are some media that can be accessed very easily. So don't be confused anymore.

Web: fatwatarjih.or.id

Facebook: fb.me/fatwamu

Instagram: pusattarjih\_muhammadiyah

Telegram: t.me/fatwatarjihmu

Youtube: tarjih channel

Let's spread it to all Muhammadiyah people!

Figure 2. Translation of Figure 1.

Although the poster above does not directly mention the [Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih SHPTM Muhammadiyah fans page site](#) created by El Madury, the main message in it is clear and firm, namely to inform [the Muhammadiyah people regarding followers about the official accounts of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with to it. So it This would hopefully let is hoped that Muhammadiyah people will members understand how Muhammadiyah's its official religious voice is disseminated in cyberspace on the internet. After that Following this, successively Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah successively uploaded](#) other [Mu](#) [example](#) counter the [Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih](#) [ample, here are the following posters. Some other](#) [figures 3 and 5.](#)



Formatted: Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

Formatted: Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

**Figure 3.** Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council.

*Figure 3.2 Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council*

Do you know?

The Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah now have an official YouTube channel, (namely) the Tarjih Channel.

Have you subscribed yet?

**Figure 4.** Translation of Figure 3.





**Figure 5.** Information about the website fatwatarjih.or.id, an official website affiliated to the Tarjih Council containing fatwas.

Fatwatarjih.or.id is the official website for the Tarjih and the Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board (MTT).

The Media Team of Fatwa Tarjih, through this website, has been, is and will continue to strive consistently to publish various ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council. Until now, tarjih fatwas collections from 1997 to 2018 have entered the editing stage, and some are just waiting ~~for publishing~~ to be published.

**Figure 6.** Translation of Figure 5.



**Figure 7.** Information on the official website of the Tarjih Council.

Do you want to know the full history (of the Tarjih Council)?  
 Or do you want to look for ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council?  
 Come on; you can find out on this website: tarjih.or.id

**Figure 8.** Translation of Figure 7.

The use of informal and slang-like language and emoticons typical of millennials indicate the audience that the Tarjih Council wants to target, which is millennial groups and the generation after. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah team understands that informal language that tends to be non-formal will touch will appeal to its target-the audience's hearts more than rigid formal language. This method is aimed at not only wants to show establishing

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) +Body (Calibri), 10 pt,  
Complex Script Font: +Body (Calibri), 10 pt

**Formatted:** Centered

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not  
Italic

the authority of the Tarjih Council but ‘millennialisation’ i.e. ~~at the same time tries to carry out the so-called tarjih millennialization process~~ reach out to the younger generation familiar with social media. ~~According to~~ Suyadi and Widodo (2019) ~~note that~~, millennialization is an alternative way to develop knowledge ~~that will~~ synergised with various online media and digital technology ~~(Suyadi and Widodo 2019)~~. In the context of ~~tarjih millennialization~~, ~~tarjih~~ products that tend to be disseminated in a conventional, monotonous, and uncreative manner are now ~~disseminated communicated by utilising technological advances through social media in and presented in~~ more contextual packaging. ~~In addition, the millennialization of This means that tarjih can also mean~~ that the Tarjih Council and its various ~~ijtihad~~ products, which previously were always identified with the ‘old’, ~~have now also touched and greeted~~ are now ~~consciously aiming to include~~ ‘young people’<sup>2</sup>.

The religious authority of the Tarjih Council in cyberspace, especially when connected with the appearance of El Madury and ~~his fanspage SHPTM~~, was greatly helped by the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah and ~~the-its~~ young Muhammadiyah cadres ~~in it~~. ~~It manages Managing~~ various social media platforms with large numbers of followers, ~~Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah and~~ has helped maintain Muhammadiyah’s religious authority by balancing and suppressing the presence of micro-celebrity ~~-ustaz~~. ~~The-Its~~ contents ~~contained in it~~ are fatwas and decisions of the Tarjih Council with ~~exciting visualisations~~ more appealing visualisation to reach out to the millenials. ~~This is expected to reach a wider community, especially the millennial group.~~

Although the number of social media followers ~~affiliated with of~~ the Tarjih Council is ~~not as much as less than that for~~ the NU and Salafi groups, ~~for example~~, at least the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah ~~has become a kind of acts as a~~ compass for Muhammadiyah ~~people followers-~~ who question ~~Muhammadiyah's-its~~ religious authority, especially with the emergence of El Madury’s version ~~of in Syarah SHimpunan Putusan Tarjih HPTM Muhammadiyah~~. ~~The administrators of~~ Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah’s ~~-social media admin~~ ~~acknowledge have received~~ that many ~~questions messages came in~~, either through the comments column or direct messages in ~~the-its~~ inbox, which questioned the authority of ~~Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih SHPTM Muhammadiyah fanspage~~.<sup>22</sup> Here, the vital role of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is increasingly finding its momentum.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Ariful Hazamn, Ilham Ibrahim, and Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, September 2020. They are Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah social media admin.

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

Formatted: Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

Formatted: Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

Formatted: Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

## Conclusion

Although it can be said that Muhammadiyah's religious influence and authority ~~in cyberspace~~ on the internet are inferior and lag behind other religious groups, Muhammadiyah is still trying to manage its authority ~~in cyberspace~~, especially when facing threats from micro-celebrity *-ustaz*. By focusing on ~~the figure of~~ Zulkarnain El Madury and ~~his~~ *Syarah SHimpunan Putusan Tarjih* ~~HPTM Muhammadiyah fans~~ social media ~~page, that he has created and managed~~, this article offers a different perspective from previous studies ~~by~~. By analysing ~~what has been done by~~ the work of the Majelis Tarjih as the only institution in Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas, ~~this~~ This article shows that Muhammadiyah has its own way of responding to the emergence of new religious authorities. With the help of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an institution ~~under it~~ in its fold, the Tarjih Council has made ~~a series of~~ continuous efforts through social media and its official website to counter ~~votes~~ from new ~~authorities~~ voices that threatened its authority. ~~In this case~~, Muhammadiyah's response was ~~neither aggressive nor radical~~ did not respond frontally and radically. However, Muhammadiyah responded gently ~~by~~ but it clarified its stance clarifying without mentioning who precisely was being targeted. What Muhammadiyah did was in line with the Javanese proverb that says, "Ngluruk tanpo bolo, menang tanpo ngasorake" ('fighting without the need to bring the masses; winning without demeaning or humiliating'). The ~~characteristics of this kind~~ form of Muhammadiyah's response ~~were~~ is inherited from ~~the founder of Muhammadiyah~~ its founder, ~~namely~~ Ahmad Dahlan. ~~From~~ As seen by Peacock's perspective (Peacock-1978), Ahmad Dahlan carried out many social transformations ~~in response to the reality he faced~~ calmly and systematically, not rather than in revolutionary ways.

In a broader context, the case of Zulkarnain El Madury also provides a lesson that using the name Muhammadiyah to justify personal opinions or legitimise particular interests is wrong. Muhammadiyah ~~is known~~ has the reputation of ~~as~~ a very well-managed organisation (Barton 2014; *Suara Muhammadiyah* "Hyung Jun Kim: Sistem Di Muhammadiyah Sungguh Ideal" 2019) which is its. ~~All activities are impeccable administratively. This well-systematic organisational culture is the strength and characteristic of~~ gives it clout compared Muhammadiyah compared to other religious organisations in Indonesia, such as NU. In ~~other words~~ short, ~~it can be said that the~~ authority in Muhammadiyah lies in the ~~organisation or~~

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

**Commented [MOU36]:** What do you mean by votes?

**Commented [MOU37]:** The translation I got was: win without defeat, win without humiliation (of others)

**Formatted:** Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

institution itself ~~and is not based on personality. Not on personal authority. It is different~~ differs from NU, ~~for example, whose where~~ power and authority tend to lie in personal figures, such as *kyai* or *gus* (Fauzi 2020b).

~~For the~~ Muhammadiyah ~~people-followers~~ who understand ~~the-its~~ basic rules ~~of Muhammadiyah, they~~ are not easily influenced by the emergence of micro-celebrity ~~-ustaz~~. They ~~will understand~~ are aware that Muhammadiyah's official religious stance ~~will-is~~ only be issued by the Tarjih Council ~~and that those external to. If there are other assemblies besides~~ the Tarjih Council or ~~even~~ specific Muhammadiyah figures ~~in Muhammadiyah that issue who~~ give religious opinions, ~~ally, it is not valid and cannot be justified from the perspective of Muhammadiyah. Even if. This would be the case,~~ speak only for themselves as individuals and not ~~the~~ organisation. ~~ally, it is not valid and cannot be justified from the perspective of Muhammadiyah. Even if. This would be the case,~~ for example, ~~even if~~ the religious opinion ~~was issued by emanates from~~ the chairman of the Tarjih Council as an individual. This ~~actually happened~~ did occur when Syamsul Anwar, the current chairman of the Tarjih Council, had a different opinion from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council on the issue of *iftitāh* prayer (opening prayer for night prayer [*qiyām al-lail*]). For Anwar, *iftitāh* prayer ~~is~~ a two short *rak'ah* prayer that is performed before ~~performing~~ *qiyām al-lail*, with the condition that it must be preceded by sleep first. If it is not preceded by sleep, then for Anwar (2013), there is no need to perform the *iftitāh* prayer ~~(Anwar 2013). Meanwhile~~ However, according to ~~the~~ Tarjih Council, ~~the~~ *iftitāh* prayer is ~~a two short rak'ah prayer~~ that is performed before ~~performing~~ *qiyām al-lail*, whether preceded by sleeping first or not (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2011; Tim: Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2019a).

~~While~~ Anwar's opinion ~~is~~ clearly different ~~sent~~ from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council. ~~Therefore,~~ the prevailing opinion in Muhammadiyah is ~~the opinion that~~ of the Tarjih Council, not ~~the opinion of~~ the chairman of the Tarjih Council. ~~In~~ Within Muhammadiyah, ~~such~~ religious differences of opinion ~~like this~~ are common ~~place. As this~~ usually happens in *fiqh* discourse in general. The difference ~~with-between~~ El Madury ~~and~~ Anwar ~~is that the latter~~ does not act in the name of Muhammadiyah or the Tarjih Council when he has a different ~~opinion~~ view. Instead, on many occasions, he urges ~~sd the~~ Muhammadiyah ~~people-followers~~ to ~~follow~~ abide by the opinion of the Tarjih Council ~~regarding-on~~ the *iftitāh* prayer.<sup>23</sup> ~~At this point, there is an important lesson to be learned from Anwar's attitude. He~~ Thus Anwar has shown he can compromise his personal religious opinion

<sup>23</sup> On several occasions, this author has heard Syamsul Anwar's ~~direct~~ appeal ~~directly to the~~ Muhammadiyah ~~people-members~~ to follow the opinion of the Tarjih Council ~~regarding-on~~ this ~~aspect of the~~ *iftitāh* prayer.

Commented [MOU38]: Unclear, why the 'a' - did you mean ARE two short *rak'ah* prayers?

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font color: Auto

with his professional attitude in the organisation. In this case, he understands that using the name Muhammadiyah to legitimise individual opinions or interests is not justifiable.

### Acknowledgements

[Permission for this research PJB-002/SP3/LPPM-UAD/VI/2020 and funding were provided by the ethical board of Ahmad Dahlan University Research and Development Institute \(Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan\).](#)

Formatted: Space After: 0 pt

I am grateful to *ustaz* Zulkarnain El Madury for his exceptional help and support during my fieldwork. I also thank Amiruddin, Arif Nur Kholis, Muhammad Muflih, Wahyudi Abdurrahim, Robby Karman, Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, Ilham Ibrahim, Ariful Hazam, and the members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council for providing ~~a lot of~~ information regarding my research. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article. Errors, if any, are solely mine.

Formatted: Indent: First line: 0.39", Space After: 0 pt

### Funding

~~This work was supported by Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan.~~

### Acknowledgements

~~This research has obtained a research permit from the university ethical board through Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (Ahmad Dahlan University Research and Development Institute) with the number PJB-002/SP3/LPPM-UAD/VI/2020~~

### Note on contributor

*Niki Fauzi* is **xxx**. Email: niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

### References

[Alvara Research Center. 2020. Ramadhan dan pandemi Covid-19: semangat ibadah tak surut.](#)

Commented [MOU39]: Please remove all bibliographic import code from Reference entries and in text citations.

konsumsi tersendat. <[https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN DAN PANDEMI COVID-19: SEMANGAT IBADAH TAK SURUT, KONSUMSI TERSENDAT.pdf](https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN_DAN_PANDEMI_COVID-19_SEMANGAT_IBADAH_TAK_SURUT_KONSUMSI_TERSENDAT.pdf)> Accessed day month year - this format eg 23 February 2023.

IB Times Indonesia. 2020. "100 situs Islam Indonesia, NU Online peringkat pertama insert English translation here within square brackets". 10 July. 2020. <IBTimes.Id. 2020. <<https://ibtimes.id/100-situs-islam-indonesia-nu-online-peringkat-pertama/>> Accessed day month year -

Dakta.com. 2016. "Aa Gym ajak ribuan jamaahnya ikut aksi bela Islam III provide English translation here within square brackets". 29 November. <<http://www.dakta.com/news/7329/aa-gym-ajak-ribuan-jamaahnya-ikut-aksi-bela-islam-iii>> Accessed 2 February 2020.

"Aa Gym Ajak Ribuan Jamaahnya Ikut Aksi Bela Islam III." n.d. Accessed February 2, 2020. <http://www.dakta.com/news/7329/aa-gym-ajak-ribuan-jamaahnya-ikut-aksi-bela-islam-iii>.

Abror, Robby. 2020. "Syekh Yunahar, ulama Muhammadiyah kharismatik English translation". 3 Jan. ~~Menara62.Com~~. 2020. <<https://menara62.com/syekh-yunahar-ulama-muhammadiyah-kharismatik/>> Accessed day month year.

Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2018. "Media sosial dan pergeseran otoritas keagamaan." ~~2018~~ 12 December. <[https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media\\_sosial\\_dan\\_pergeseran\\_otoritas\\_keagamaan](https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media_sosial_dan_pergeseran_otoritas_keagamaan)> Accessed day month year.

Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2020. "The demise of moderate Islam: new media, contestation, and reclaiming religious authorities." *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10 (1): 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v10i1.1-24>.

Rahman, Al-Asjmun Abdur Rahman et al. 1985. "Laporan penelitian Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (suatu studi tentang sistem dan metode penentuan hukum) include English translation here". Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga.

Alfaqi, Mifdal Zusron. 2015. "Memahami Indonesia melalui prespektif nasionalisme, politik identitas, serta solidaritas include English translation here". *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 28 (2): 111–116.

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Font color: Red

Commented [MOU40]: Note there is a date if you look at the text before the title on the link you provided.

Formatted: Line spacing: 1.5 lines

Formatted: Font color: Red

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Highlight

Anwar, Syamsul. 2007. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer* [insert English translation here in roman not italics]. Jakarta: RM Books.

Formatted: Highlight

Anwar, Syamsul. 2013. *Salat Tarawih tinjauan usul fikih, sejarah, dan fikih* [insert English translation here in roman not italics]. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Anwar, Syamsul. 2016. Fatwā, purification and dynamization: a study of tarjih in Muhammadiyah.<sup>22</sup> *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (1): 27–44.

Anwar, Syamsul. 2018. *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Panitia Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih Muhammadiyah XXX.

Anwar, Syamsul. 2020. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer Bagian dua*. Yogyakarta: UAD Press.

Barton, Greg. 2014. The Gülen movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: progressive Islamic thought, religious philanthropy and civil society in Turkey and Indonesia. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25 (3): 287–301.

Buchari, Sri Astuti. 2014. *Kebangkitan etnis menuju politik identitas* [include English translation here]. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.

Bunt, Gary R. 2003. *Islam in the digital age: e-jihad, online fatwas and cyber Islamic environments*. 1st ed. Londong and Virginia: Pluto Press.

Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2005. “The 45th Muhammadiyah Congress contest between literal-conservative and liberal-moderate Muslims in Indonesia.” *Studia Islamika* 12 (1): 185–189. <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v12i1.650>.

Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2013. Liberal and conservative discourses in the Muhammadiyah: the struggle for the face of reformist Islam in Indonesia. In Martin van Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary developments in Indonesian Islam: explaining the ‘conservative turn’*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2016. Aksi bela Islam: konservatisme dan fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. *Maarif* 11 (2): 15–29.

Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2020. Muslim televangelists in the making: conversion narratives and the construction of religious authority. *Muslim World* 110 (2): 154–175.

Burhanudin, Jajat. 2004. “The fragmentation of religious authority: Islamic print media in



early 20th ~~Century-century~~ Indonesia.” *Studia Islamika* 11 (1): 23–62.  
<https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v11i1.609>.

Campbell, Heidi, and ~~Teusner~~, Paul Emerson ~~Teusner~~. 2011. “Religious authority in the age of the internet.” In *Virtual Lives: Christian Reflection*, *Virtual Lives*, 59–68. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press.

~~Center, Alvira Research~~. 2020. “Ramadhan dan pandemi Covid-19: semangat ibadah tak surut, konsumsi tersendat.” [https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN\\_DAN\\_PANDEMI\\_COVID-19\\_SEMANGAT\\_IBADAH\\_TAK\\_SURUT\\_KONSUMSI\\_TERSENDAT.pdf](https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN_DAN_PANDEMI_COVID-19_SEMANGAT_IBADAH_TAK_SURUT_KONSUMSI_TERSENDAT.pdf).

Chairi, Effendi. 2019. “Ketiadaan otoritas terpusat dalam fenomena kontemporer di Indonesia [include English translation here].” *SANGKÉP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 2 (2): 197–215. <https://doi.org/10.20414/sangkep.v2i2.666>.

~~Dahlan~~, Majelis Tarjih ~~Dahlan~~, dan Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah ~~dan and~~ Universitas Ahmad. 2016. “Nota Kesepakatan Majelis Tarjih Dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Tentang Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di Islamic Center Universitas Ahmad Dahlan [include English translation here].” Yogyakarta.

~~Tirto.id~~. 2018. Dari Aa’ Gym ke Felix Siauw: ustaz medsos & medium dakwah politis. Tirto.Id. 16 January. <<https://tirto.id/dari-aa-gym-ke-felix-siauw-ustaz-medsos-medium-dakwah-politis-cCGf>> Accessed day month year.

“Dari Aa’ Gym Ke Felix Siauw: Ustaz Medsos & Medium Dakwah Politis.” 2018. Tirto.Id. 2018. <https://tirto.id/dari-aa-gym-ke-felix-siauw-ustaz-medsos-medium-dakwah-politis-cCGf>.

~~Rakyat Merdeka~~. 2019. “Dubes Malaysia jenguk ketum MUI Yunahar Ilyas di Yogyakarta [insert English translation here].” n.d. 5 November. ~~Rm.Id~~. Accessed April 4, 2022. <<https://rm.id/baca-berita/internasional/21745/dubes-malaysia-jenguk-ketum-mui-yunahar-ilyas-di-yogyakarta>> Accessed 4 April 2022.-

Fadl, Khaled Abou El. 2014. *Speaking in God’s Name: Islamic law, authority, and women*. London: Oneworld Publications.

Farhan, Farhan. 2017. “Pesan ~~Dakwah-dakwah~~ Felix Siauw di media sosial (perspektif

Formatted: Line spacing: 1.5 lines

meaning and media).<sup>22</sup> *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Administrasi Islam*: 209–226. <https://doi.org/10.22373/al-idarah.v1i2.2242>.

Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2017. “Peranan Maqasid Al-Shariah dalam memahami Hadith: kajian terhadap fatwa Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah [\[insert English translation here\]](#).” *Master Thesis. MA thesis*. University of Malaya.

Formatted: Highlight

[Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana](#)———. 2020a. “PUTM dan kaderisasi ulama: menelusuri latar belakang lahirnya Lembaga Kaderisasi Ulama Muhammadiyah.” 2020. <https://santricendekia.com/putm-dan-kaderisasi-ulama-menelusuri-latar-belakang-lahirnya-lembaga-kaderisasi-ulama-muhammadiyah/>

Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020b. “Tantangan kader ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah di era 4.0 [\[insert English translation here\]](#).” 21 July. *Suara 'Aisyiyah* <https://suaraaisyiyah.id/tantangan-kader-ulama-tarjih-muhammadiyah-di-era-4-0/> 2020.

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

Fealy, Greg. 2008. “Consuming Islam: commodified religion and aspirational pietism in contemporary Indonesia.” In [Greg Fealy and Sally White \(eds\)](#), *Expressing Islam: religious life and politics in Indonesia*, edited by Greg Fealy and Sally White, 15–39. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1355/9789812308528-006>.

Hew, Wai Weng. 2018. “The art of dakwah: social media, visual persuasion and the Islamist propagation of Felix Siauw.” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (134): 61–79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2018.1416757>.

Hoesterey, James B. 2008. “Marketing morality: the rise, fall and rebranding of Aa Gym.” In [Greg Fealy and Sally White \(eds\)](#), *Expressing Islam: Religious life and politics in Indonesia*, edited by Greg Fealy and Sally White, 95–114. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing. pp. 95–114. <https://doi.org/10.1355/9789812308528-010>.

Hope Cheong, Pauline. 2016. “Religious authority and social media branding in a culture of religious celebrification.” In [Stewart M. Hoover \(ed.\)](#), *The media and religious authority*, edited by Stewart M. Hoover, 81–102. University Park, Pennsylvania PA: Penn State University Press. pp. 81–102.

Horsfield, Peter. 2016. “The media and religious authority from ancient to modern.” In [Stewart M. Hoover \(ed.\)](#), *The media and religious authority*, edited by Stewart M. Hoover, 37–66. University Park PA, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press. pp. 37–

66.-

Suara Muhammadiyah. 2019. "Hyung Jun Kim: sistem di Muhammadiyah sungguh ideal [\[provide English translation here\]](#)." <2019. Suaramuhammadiyah.Id. 2019. <https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/08/01/hyung-jun-kim-sistem-di-muhammadiyah-sungguh-ideal/>> Accessed day month year.-

Formatted: Highlight

Ilyas, Yunahar. 2012. *Kuliah Akhlaq* [\[English translation in roman here\]](#). XII. Yogyakarta: LPPI UMY Universitas Muhammdiyah Yogyakarta.

Formatted: Highlight

Khamis, S~~usie~~, Lawrence-Ang, L. and Welling, Raymond Welling. 2017. "Self-branding, 'micro-celebrity' and the rise of social media influencers." *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191–208. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2016.1218292>.

Khomalia, Isti, and Rahman, Khairul Arief Rahman. 2018. "Micro hijabers celebrity: membentuk identitas dengan update self-story via instagram (kasus dian pelangi)." *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban dan Pemikiran Islam* 2 (1): 33–42. <https://doi.org/10.23971/njppi.v2i1.869>.

Labiq. 2019. "Pengaruh new media terhadap pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [\[insert English translation here\]](#)." 19 April. *Geotimes.Id. 2019*. <<https://geotimes.co.id/opini/pengaruh-new-media-terhadap-pergeseran-otoritas-keagamaan>> Accessed day month year.

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Highlight

Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. 2010. *Politik identitas dan masa depan pluralisme Indonesia*. Edited by ~~Ihsan Ali Fauzi dan~~ Samsu Rizal Panggabean ~~et al.~~. Jakarta: ~~Pusat Studi Agama dan Demokrasi~~ Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (PUSAD) Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina.

Madury, Zulkarnain El. 2019. "Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam? [\[English translation here\]](#)." 2 November 2, 2019.

Formatted: Highlight

<<https://www.facebook.com/zulkarnainsumenep/posts/2386248524961601>> Accessed day month year.

Formatted: Highlight

Maskur, Maskur, and Irfan Noor. 2014. "Ustadz ~~Selebriti-selebriti~~ Abdullah Gymnastiar dalam budaya populer (perspektif hipersemiotika ~~Yasraf Amir Piliang~~) [\[insert English translation here\]](#)." *Jurnal Studia Insania* 2 (1): 47–57. <https://doi.org/10.18592/jsi.v2i1.1091>.

Formatted: Highlight

Matheson, Craig. 1987. "Weber and the classification of forms of legitimacy." ~~The British~~

*Journal of Sociology* 38 (2): 199–215. <https://doi.org/10.2307/590532>.

Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, Pimpinan Pusat. n.d.2016. “Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah ~~Launching-launching~~ Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah ~~Dan-dan~~ MuON. 20 August. <<http://www.umm.ac.id/id/muhammadiyah/7070.html>> Accessed 20 March 2021.-

Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah, Pusat Tarjih. n.d. *Panduan ~~Pengelolaan-pengelolaan~~ Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre management guide]*. Majelis Tarjih, ~~dan~~ Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah ~~dan-and~~ Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta. ~~Where was this published? In Yogyakarta~~

Formatted: Highlight

Tim Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah, Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat. 2009. “Hukum tentang jenggot dan cadar.” *Suara Muhammadiyah*, September-2009. ~~Where was this published? Does where or is there is still like~~

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Highlight

Tim Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat———. 2019a. *Fatwa-Fatwa Tarjih: Tanya Jawab Agama Jilid 4*. Cetakan IX. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Tim Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat———. 2019b. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 7*. Cetakan IV. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Nisa, Eva F. 2019. “Internet and Muslim ~~w~~Women.” In Ronald Lukens-Bull and Mark Woodward (eds), *Handbook of ~~Contemporary-contemporary~~ Islam and Muslim ~~L~~ives*, edited by Ronald Lukens-Bull and Mark Woodward, 1–19. Cham, Switzerland: Springer, pp. –1–19. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73653-2\\_71-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73653-2_71-1).

Peacock, James L. 1978. *Purifying the Faith: the Muhammadiyah ~~Movement-movement~~ in Indonesian Islam*. ~~The University of North Carolina Press. California~~Chapel Hill NC: ~~The University of North Carolina Press.~~ <https://doi.org/10.2307/2756824>.

Formatted: Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2011. *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. ~~3rd ed.~~ Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Postill, John, and ~~Sarah~~ Pink, Sarah. 2012. “Social media ethnography: the digital researcher in a messy web.” *Media International Australia*, no. 125 145 (1): 123–134. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878x1214500114>.

Pribadi, Yanwar. 2019. “Fragmentasi umat dan penciptaan otoritas keagamaan: tanggapan terhadap ‘Islam lokal’ dan ‘Islam asing’ di Indonesia ~~[include English translation here]~~.”

Formatted: Highlight

*Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 21 (1): 103–119.

<https://jmb.lipi.go.id/jmb/article/view/828/455>

<https://doi.org/10.14203/jmb.v21i1.828>.

Quadri, Syed Junaid A. 2013. “Transformations of tradition: modernity in the thought of Muḥammad Bakhīt Al-Muṭī.” *Doctoral Thesis-PhD thesis*. McGill University.

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

Riesebrodt, Martin. 1999. “Charisma in Max Weber’s Sociology of Religion.” *Religion* 29 (1): 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1006/reli.1999.0175>.

Sadasri, Lidwina Mutia. 2017. “Selebriti mikro di media baru kajian presentasi diri dalam vlog selebriti mikro [\[include English translation here\]](#).” *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi Dan Opini Publik* 21 (2): 167–181.

<https://jurnal.kominfo.go.id/index.php/jpkop/article/view/1218>. <https://jurnal.kominfo.go.id/index.php/jpkop/article/view/1218/720>

Saefullah, Hikmawan. 2022. “Media baru, publik baru: mengkonfigurasi ulang ruang publik Islam [\[include English translation here\]](#).” *Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta, 17 March.

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

Sammy, Abdullah. 2022. “Peluang dan tantangan dakwah digital Muhammadiyah [\[include English translation here\]](#).” *Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta, 17 March.

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

Sanjaya, Makroen. 2022. “Peta ideologi islam di media sosial [\[include English translation here\]](#).” *Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March*. In *Seminar Pra Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, Dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta.

*Kompas*. 2020. “Sejumlah tokoh hadir proses pemakaman ketua PP Muhammadiyah

Yunahar Ilyas [\[include English translation here\]](#). n.d. 3 January. [Accessed April 3, 2022](https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/03/19142441/sejumlah-tokoh-hadiri-prosesi-pemakaman-ketua-pp-muhammadiyah-yunahar-ilyas). <https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/03/19142441/sejumlah-tokoh-hadiri-prosesi-pemakaman-ketua-pp-muhammadiyah-yunahar-ilyas>. Accessed 3 April 2022.

**Formatted:** Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Senft, Theresa M. 2008. *Camgirls: celebrity and community in the age of social networks*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

- Shamsy, Ahmed El. 2013. "The Hāshiya in Islamic law: a sketch of the Shāfi'ī literature." *Oriens* 41 (3-4): 289–315. [https://doi.org/10.1163/18778372\\_13413404](https://doi.org/10.1163/18778372_13413404).
- Spencer, Martin E. 1970. "Weber on legitimate norms and authority." *The British Journal of Sociology* 21 (2): 123–134. <https://doi.org/10.2307/588403>.
- Suyadi and Widodo, Suyadi-Hendro. 2019. "Millennialization of Islamic education based on neuroscience in the third generation university in Yogyakarta Indonesia." *Qudus-OJIS International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7 (1): 173–202. <https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v7i1.4922>.
- Turner, Bryan S. 2007. "Religious authority and the new media." *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2): 117–134. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276407075001>.
- Turner, Graeme. 2010. *Ordinary people and the media: the demotic turn*. Los Angeles ~~CA~~, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC: Sage ~~Publication Ltd~~.
- Widodo, Arif. 2017. "Transformative intellectual discourse and movement of Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM)." *Iseedu: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices* 1 (1): 126–151. <https://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/iseedu/article/view/5423/3542>.
- ~~Gesuri. 2020. "Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia kehilangan ulama kharismatik." 2020. Gesuri.Id. 20203 January. <https://www.gesuri.id/internal/yunahar-ilyas-wafat-indonesia-kehilangan-ulama-kharismatik-b1YFoZpRY.> Accessed day month year.~~
- Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change*. Princetoon, ~~New Jersey NJ~~: Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.40-5188>.

#### Websites

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) +Headings CS (Times New Roman), 12 pt, Not Bold, Complex Script Font: +Headings CS (Times New Roman), 12 pt, Not Bold

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Complex Script Font: +Headings CS (Times New Roman)

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) +Headings CS (Times New Roman), 12 pt, Not Bold, Complex Script Font: +Headings CS (Times New Roman), 12 pt, Not Bold

**Formatted:** Font: 12 pt, Complex Script Font: 12 pt

**Formatted:** Indent: Before: 0", First line: 0", Line spacing: 1.5 lines, Widow/Orphan control, Adjust space between Latin and Asian text, Adjust space between Asian text and numbers



## ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY *USTAZ* PHENOMENON

### Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

#### ABSTRACTS

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the fragmentation of religious authority. In the Indonesian context, the mainstream religious authority held by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has been challenged and threatened by micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This article examines the emergence of the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage on Facebook, created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board as it has threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority. It analyses Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace. It also takes a closer look at the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah), an assembly that has the exclusive authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* products within Muhammadiyah, that differs from previous studies. This article also discusses lessons that can be learned from the case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the response of the Tarjih Council.

#### KEYWORDS

micro-celebrity *ustaz*, fragmentation, religious authority, Muhammadiyah, tarjih.

Would you be able to provide abstract in Indonesian, max words 250 and keywords?

#### Abstrak

Kemunculan internet dan media sosial telah mempertajam fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. Dalam konteks Indonesia, otoritas keagamaan arus utama yang dipegang oleh Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) telah ditantang dan diancam oleh para ustaz

Commented [MOU1]: Should be fanpage (no S).

Commented [nf2R1]: Ok

Commented [MOU3]: Unclear what you mean by products.

Commented [nf4R3]: In this article, the meaning of 'product' is the result of *ijtihad* issued by the Tarjih Council, other than fatwas. In the context of Muhammadiyah, the Tarjih Council also issues other *ijtihad* results besides fatwas, which are called decisions (*putusan*).

Do I delete the word 'product' and just say the word 'official religious *ijtihad*'? What do you think?

Commented [nf5]: Regarding your improved abstract, I have an alternative for my article abstract. Can this article use the abstract below?

#### ABSTRACT

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the fragmentation of religious authority. In the Indonesian context, the mainstream religious authority held by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has been challenged and threatened by micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This article examines the emergence of the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage on Facebook, created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board as it has threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority. It analyses Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace, by taking a closer look at what has been done by Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, an assembly that has the exclusive authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* within Muhammadiyah. This article also discusses lessons that can be learned from the case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the response of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

Commented [nf6]: Of course! I'll put it in the article and colour it blue.

Formatted: Pattern: Clear (Accent 5)

Formatted: Font: (Default) +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Not Bold, Complex Script Font: +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Not Bold



mikro-selebri. Artikel ini mengkaji kemunculan *fanpage* Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah di Facebook, yang dibuat dan dikelola oleh Zulkarnain El Madury, seseorang yang mengklaim sebagai ustaz Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, karena dianggap mengancam otoritas keagamaan Muhammadiyah. Penelitian ini menganalisis upaya Muhammadiyah dalam mempertahankan otoritas keagamaannya di dunia maya, dengan melihat lebih dekat pada apa yang telah dilakukan oleh Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah, sebuah majelis yang memiliki otoritas eksklusif untuk mengeluarkan fatwa dan produk ijtihad keagamaan resmi di dalam Muhammadiyah. Artikel ini juga membahas pelajaran yang dapat dipetik dari kasus Zulkarnain El Madury dan respon Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

### Kata kunci

Ustaz mikro-selebri, fragmentasi, otoritas keagamaan, Muhammadiyah, tarjih.

### Introduction

The Alvira Research Center (2020) survey was surprising as it stated that the clerics most heard by the public, especially in Ramadan 2020, were not from the official Muhammadiyah board. Although Ustaz Adi Hidayat was included as one of the 15 most popular clerics in the survey, he cannot be said to be an official representative of Muhammadiyah.<sup>1</sup> He is indeed an alumnus of the Darul Arqam Muhammadiyah Garut Islamic Boarding School. Apart from not being involved in Muhammadiyah, he does not convey Muhammadiyah's religious ideas in his lectures. Shortly after the Alvira Research Center survey was released, IBTimes.id (2020), an Islamic website managed by young Muhammadiyah intellectuals, published a report ranking the 100 most popular Islamic websites in Indonesia. The majority of these sites are managed by or affiliated to Nahdliyyin (NU followers) and Salafi<sup>2</sup> groups with few such sites operated by or affiliated to Muhammadiyah. The Alvira Research Center survey and the IBTimes.id report show that Muhammadiyah, in terms of influence and religious authority on the internet, is lagging behind other religious groups which is ironic for an organisation claiming to represent the progressive Islamic group.

<sup>1</sup> As this article is about to be published, the Muhammadiyah Central Board has included Ustaz Adi Hidayat in the board of the Tabligh Council of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the period 2022-2027. See more <https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>

<sup>2</sup> For more comprehensive information on the activism of Salafi groups, readers can refer to a work written by Chris Chaplin entitled *Salafism and the State: Islamic Activism and National Identity in Contemporary Indonesia* (2022).

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Not Bold, Italic, Complex Script Font: +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Not Bold, Italic

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Not Bold, Complex Script Font: +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Not Bold

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Not Bold, Complex Script Font: +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Not Bold

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Not Bold, Complex Script Font: +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Not Bold

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Not Bold, Complex Script Font: +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Not Bold

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Not Bold, Complex Script Font: +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Not Bold

**Formatted:** Font: Bold, Complex Script Font: Bold

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Not Bold, Complex Script Font: +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Not Bold

**Commented [nf7]:** I am adding a footnote here explaining the latest Adi Hidayat update. What do you think?

**Commented [MOU8]:** Added English gloss – is this correct?

**Commented [nf9R8]:** Yes, correct.

**Commented [MOU10]:** Should there be a fn on Salafi groups e.g. pointing readers to Chris Chaplin (2022) - [https://brill.com/view/journals/bki/178/2-3/article-p338\\_9.xml](https://brill.com/view/journals/bki/178/2-3/article-p338_9.xml)

**Commented [nf11R10]:** I agree with you. I will add a footnote for readers to pay attention to Chaplin's work.

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Complex Script Font: +Headings CS (Times New Roman)

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Complex Script Font: +Headings CS (Times New Roman)

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Complex Script Font: +Headings CS (Times New Roman)

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Italic, Complex Script Font: +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Italic

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) +Headings CS (Times New Roman), Complex Script Font: +Headings CS (Times New Roman)

**Formatted:** English (United States)

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the so-called fragmentation of religious authority. Eva F. Nisa (2019), for example, mentions that the proliferation of various digital platforms is directly proportional to the increasing fragmentation of religious authority. Islamic discourse is monopolised not only by an elite group of scholars or mainstream religious groups, but also by persons or groups that have not been considered in Islamic discourse. Furthermore, the presence of the internet and social media has led to the birth of what is called micro-celebrity. Theresa M. Senft (2008) defines micro-celebrity as a new style of online performance that involves increasing popularity on social media such as videos, blogs, and networking sites. These micro-celebrities unlike conventional celebrities, emerge from what is known as new media (Senft 2008).

Of course, not all new media users have the adjective 'micro-celebrity'. Only those who experience what Graeme Turner (2010) terms 'the demotic turn', namely, the increasing visibility of ordinary people to appear as celebrities in the media, especially online media. In turn, both conventional and micro-celebrity exist in various public spheres, and the discourse on them is characterised as influencers, stimulants of consumerism, enthusiasm, public debate, and various activism (Sadasri 2017).

By borrowing the theory of micro-celebrities in the study of new media, we can then read how these micro-celebrities have also come to the fore in the religious realm. The emergence of ulama, *ustaz* (religious teachers), and religious leaders who become influencers in new media can perhaps be termed as a form of a micro-celebrity *ustaz* image. Felix Siauw is a prominent example. A convert, who is now a preacher, Siauw has a massive following on social media. In 2018, for example, he had 2.6 million followers on Twitter, and in 2022 it reached 3.3 million. Felix Siauw's Instagram account has around 4.9 million followers. It can even be said that he is the *ustaz* who has the most followers on social media (Tirto 2018), making him one of the leading social media preachers in Indonesia today (Hew 2018). What Felix Siauw posts on his social media has more or less influenced the map of religious authorities in Indonesia.

The existence of the internet and the continuing development of technology allows the emergence of many other micro-celebrity *ustaz*, both in the national arena more generally or more specifically in internal religious organisations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, Persis (Persatuan Islam) or others. In the context of Muhammadiyah, the largest modernist Islamic organisation began to be challenged for its religious authority by a preacher who was said to

Commented [MOU12]: English gloss added here at first mention.

Commented [nf13R12]: ok

be part of Muhammadiyah itself, namely Zulkarnain El Madury. He claims to be a Muhammadiyah cadre and often introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board. In recent years, El Madury has been noticed by Muhammadiyah administrators and Muhammadiyah cadres<sup>3</sup> and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah) has discussed him in a special meeting. This is because the posts on the Facebook page that El Madury manages, *Syarah Himpunan Putus Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (henceforth SHPTM), often differ significantly from – and to some extent delegitimise – a Muhammadiyah fatwa or official decision. Responses from grassroots or Muhammadiyah followers vary. This can be seen, for example, from the comments on each post. Some defend and remain adamant on the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah, but not a few were affected and followed what was conveyed by El Madury on his Facebook page.

This is where it becomes crucial to see how Muhammadiyah attempts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace, especially among its members and the public. By conducting web content analysis (Postill and Pink 2012) on SHPTM and official social media accounts and those affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this article shows how El Madury builds his narratives and, in turn, how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority on the internet. Additionally, field research was conducted and key actors were interviewed offline and online in a semi-structured format.<sup>4</sup> Apart from El Madury, the key actors are members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Digital Broadcast Centre (Pusat Syiar Digital Muhammadiyah), **several prominent figures**, Muhammadiyah activists as well as Muhammadiyah grassroots.

### **Fragmentation of religious authority, new preacher and micro-celebrity *ustaz* phenomenon**

Fragmentation of religious authority is a phenomenon that occurs in various religious communities and is not limited to Islam (B.S. Turner 2007; Campbell and Teusner 2011; Hope Cheong 2016). The fragmentation of religious authority is also a global phenomenon as pointed out by Gary R. Bunt (-2003) who states that the new media have shaped diverse understandings among individual Muslims worldwide about e-jihad (electronic jihad). The

<sup>3</sup> This author's online and offline interviews with Amiruddin, Robby Karman, Muhammad Muflih, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, and Arif Nur Kholis, 2019–2020.

<sup>4</sup> Data collection in this study was carried out between 2018 and 2020. As personal interviews were not possible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, some interviews were conducted online.

**Commented [MOU14]:** Unclear who the prominent figures are – did you mean those Muhammadiyah activists and grassroots – or others?

**Commented [nf15R14]:** Yes, I did. I think the word 'several prominent figures' should be deleted, right?

definition of electronic jihad is understood and interpreted differently, ranging from online activism to Muslim articulation after the events of 11 September 2001. Bunt (2003) shows that each new media (in this case, new websites) has authority for its respective group segment.

In Indonesia, the fragmentation of religious authority can be traced far back but for the purposes of this article, the fragmentation that will be discussed here is from the beginning of the 20th century to the present. Jajat Burhanudin (2004) points out that there has been a shift in religious authority in the historical phase of Indonesian religious thought in the early 20th century due to modernisation. His study, which focuses on the Islamic print media, further shows that there is a shift in religious authority that used to be in *Kitab Kuning*<sup>5</sup> taught by *kyai* or *ulama* in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to magazines, journals, newspapers, and books published by modernist circles or organisations.

Religious authority since the early 20th century has always stayed with Muhammadiyah and NU. These two religious organisations are often referred to by scholars as the authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016; Akmaliah 2018). The shift in religious authority occurred again in the 1990s when national television stations emerged. The Islamic programmes presented by the television stations show the *ustaz* (religious teachers), which in turn build their authority through lectures delivered by these preachers. This phenomenon prompted scholars to come up with the term 'Islamic televangelism' (Akmaliah 2018). Abdullah Gymnastiar who is better known as Aa Gym is one example that falls into the category of a television *ustaz*, or a 'tele-dai' as coined by Greg Fealy (2008).

The most obvious and recent picture of the fragmentation of religious authority in Indonesia is the series of events of the Defend Islam Action (*Aksi Bela Islam*). Ahmad Najib Burhani (2016) hints that these critical events marked the peak of the fragmentation of religious authorities in Indonesia as they gave rise to new actors who challenge the established religious authority. Although it cannot be said to shift or match the role of Muhammadiyah and NU, the emergence of new actors such as Rizieq Shihab provides a new map of religious authority in Indonesia.

This phenomenon of the fragmentation of religious authority has increased sharply in the development of what scholars call pop culture, marked by the birth of many new media

<sup>5</sup> So-called because the books were printed on yellow paper. These were the Islamic texts used in the education of Islamic schools.

**Commented [MOU16]:** How far back?

**Commented [nf17R16]:** Before the 20th century, for example, as Kaptein observes in his article, the religious authority of Indonesians and Malay people before the 20th century was once located in the holy city of Mecca. It was because people in the Indonesian-Malay archipelago asked muftis in Mecca about religious matters. However, there are already scholars in the Indonesian-Malay archipelago who have the capability to issue fatwas.

Kaptein's article:  
<https://journals.openedition.org/assr/pdf/1038>

**Commented [MOU18]:** I added this, OK with you?

**Commented [nf19R18]:** Ok

**Commented [MOU20]:** No need for italics as it is an accepted loanword in English.

**Commented [nf21R20]:** ok

**Commented [MOU22]:** Added, is this correct?

**Commented [nf23R22]:** correct

(Labiq 2019). The availability of internet access to every social class is the main factor for this fragmentation. As a result, many new media have emerged with each individual and group competing to spread ideas (Horsfield 2016; Nisa 2019).

Aa Gym is one of the early actors who emerged in the internet era in Indonesia. This can be captured in two interesting studies on Aa Gym by James B. Hoesterey (2008), and Maskur and Noor (2014). Although the use of the internet as a medium of da'wah at that time was not as massive as it is now, the emergence of Aa Gym as a new cleric on the national da'wah stage through lectures, seminars, and Islamic training is a phenomenon in itself. Hoesterey (2008) studies the journey of Aa Gym from his first appearance as a preacher, failing, and then successfully rebranding to restore his religious authority. This is evident, for example, from how Aa Gym has many listeners (*Dakta.com* 2016). Popular culture has also brought Aa Gym to be seen not only by the public, especially by his followers, as also singer, actor, author, etc. Thus, he has transformed from an ordinary cleric to a celebrity cleric. Through a hypersemiotic perspective, Maskur and Noor (2014) show the various aspects of Aa Gym's personality.

Following the appearance of Aa Gym and with further rapid development of information technology, many other new preachers began to appear. Hew Wai Weng (2018) describes how Felix Siauw is another skilful religious preacher. Being a cleric with the most followers on the internet did not make Siauw neglect to spread his da'wah in the real world. Hew (2018) points out that Siauw has blended online and offline da'wah harmoniously. Felix Siauw aims to spread the ideology of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) in his da'wah identity. According to Hew (2018) and Farhan (2017), one of the keys to Siauw's success in preaching is his ability to present an entertaining and straightforward da'wah, even though its content is dogmatic and political.

Aa Gym and Felix Siauw are two micro-celebrity *ustaz* as a result of the new media. The term micro-celebrity *ustaz* was adopted and reconstructed from the theory of micro-celebrity. Most of these studies conducted from the perspective of pop culture (Senft 2008; G. Turner 2010; Khamis, Ang and Welling 2017; Sadasri 2017; Khomalia and Rahman 2018). describe the fragmentation of religious authority, marked by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By this term this author means an ordinary *ustaz/ustazah* who has skyrocketed in popularity and is celebrity on and because of social media so that he or she is able to influence certain people or communities. In other words, it means the *ustaz/ustazah* has experienced

**Commented [MOU24]:** When roughly is 'at that time'?

**Commented [nf25R24]:** Around the 2000s, a time when AA Gym was rising as a popular preacher

**Commented [MOU26]:** Did you mean failing?

**Commented [nf27R26]:** I think the right word is not 'failing' but 'falling' because AA Gym's career as a preacher fell because he practised polygamy.

**Commented [MOU28]:** There is a date if you look at the link you gave, it is above the article title.

**Commented [nf29R28]:** thank you for adding the date

**Commented [MOU30]:** Suggest footnote on what HTI ideology is and is HTI now banned? If so, where does that put Felix Siauw?  
<https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2019/06/20/is-hizbut-tahrir-a-threat-to-indonesia.html>

**Commented [nf31R30]:** In fact, Felix Siauw's overall preaching is not about spreading HTI ideology. His preaching concerns moral issues, young people, and daily life. It's just that he is known as a figure with HTI ideology, especially about establishing the Islamic caliphate. Therefore, the paragraph that explains "Felix Siauw aims to spread the ideology of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) in his da'wah identity" seems better deleted. What do you think about this?

what G. Turner (2010) calls ‘the demotic turn’, when ordinary people are highly visible on social media and become celebrities. Challenges to established religious authorities by new religious personalities or groups are rarely touched on except that of Yanwar Pribadi (2019). His study explains the efforts of ‘local Islam’ (*Islam lokal*) to defend its religious authority from the threat of ‘foreign Islam’ (*Islam asing*). However, his study differs from what this author will examine in tracing Muhammadiyah’s efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

This study is on a micro-celebrity *ustaz*, Zulkarnain El Madury who is less well known when compared to Aa Gym or Felix Siauw but he has a strong influence on the internet. His identity as a preacher from Muhammadiyah who targets Muhammadiyah followers with postings that are often different and even delegitimise the official voice of this largest modernist mass organisation deserves to be investigated. This study, apart from showing Muhammadiyah’s efforts in maintaining its religious authority on the internet, also seeks explicitly to fill the gap in previous studies. In his latest study, Akmaliah (2020) shows that Muhammadiyah and NU have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was strongly reactive to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) indicates there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah’s responses less hostile. Sammy (2022), Sanjaya (2022), and Saefullah (2022) came to the same conclusion as Akmaliah, claiming that Muhammadiyah is significantly less adaptive to the emergence of new media, and therefore its da’wah often loses to that of the micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This study focuses on the struggle of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as the only assembly under Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas and ~~products of~~ official religious *ijtihad* within Muhammadiyah.

### **Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage**

The Facebook SHPTM fanpage was created by Zulkarnain El Madury. He was born in Sumenep on the island of Madura in 1963, with the name Zulkarnain bin Syamsuri. He claims to have studied in Malaysia at the Institute of Business Study and always introduces himself as a preacher from the Special Da’wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah). He spent his childhood in Madura and

was a traditionalist Muslim like others on the island. He grew up in a milieu dominated by the NU traditionalist Islamic organisation. He used to perform *tahlilan* (pilgrimage to the grave), and other practices that, according to him, after becoming a member of Muhammadiyah, were not following the Sunnah of the Prophet. He received his religious education at the Islamic boarding school at-Taufiqiyyah Sumenep Madura. In 1976 he became acquainted with Muhammadiyah. Through a lecture delivered by a preacher, He became interested in the da'wah and religious understanding of the Muhammadiyah movement founded by Ahmad Dahlan after listening to a lecture by one of its preachers. In 1977, he officially joined Muhammadiyah.<sup>6</sup>

Since joining Muhammadiyah, El Madury has been active as a preacher who spreads religious ideas and understanding. From 1990 to 2007, he was one of the Muhammadiyah preachers who was sent to remote areas by the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board. His daily activities are now preaching at different places as well as creating content on for SHPTM fanpage. He now lives in Jakarta as the Tarjih and Tabligh council chair of the Pondok Gede Muhammadiyah Branch.<sup>7</sup> He created SHPTM in 2014.<sup>8</sup> However, in the digital history that this author can trace, the fanpage was created in 2015 as the earliest post that is currently traceable is dated 5 January 2015.

According to El Madury, the fanpage began with the WhatsApp group he created which he named *Tarjih dan Tabligh Institut* (Tarjih and Tabligh Institute) to provide a space to discuss and spread ideas related to *tarjih*.<sup>9</sup> He included many Muhammadiyah figures and activists in this group, including (the now late) Buya Yunahar Ilyas. Over time, seeing that El Madury's posts on SHPTM were deemed inconsistent with the *tarjih* spirit of Muhammadiyah, several people, such as Fathurrahman Kamal and Buya Risman, sharply criticised the postings. El Madury, Fathurrahman Kamal, and Buya Risman were then engaged in a heated debate which was relayed later to Buya Yunahar Ilyas. The response by Buya Yunahar Ilyas at that time, according to El Madury, differed from that of his critics.

---

<sup>6</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Muhammadiyah's use of the word *tarjih* has changed throughout its development. In its early period, and following its usage in the principles of law (*usul al-fiqh*), *tarjih* conveyed the meaning of examining the various opinions of Muslim jurists on a particular question and evaluating them to determine which is most faithful to the original Shari'a sources. Over time this usage gradually included any intellectual endeavour used to study new cases that earlier jurists had not addressed. In short, in Muhammadiyah's perspective, *tarjih* is identical, or almost identical, to *ijihad* (Anwar 2016).

Buya Yun responded quite positively because he saw El Madury's initiative as providing *syarh* (explanation) or further explanation of the contents of the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Judgment Compilation). Finally, he gave his permission to El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com).<sup>10</sup>

El Madury's early postings on SHPTM, were still relatively consistent in uploading Muhammadiyah fatwas in the question (from someone) and answer format from the fatwa division of the Tarjih Council. This is similar to the the original question and answer format administered by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, whose fatwas were later published in the *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine. However, over time, SHPTM had posts that apart from the dissemination of *Muhammadiyah's official religious ijtihad tarjih products* included the personal opinions of El Madury. These opinions in inelegant words are often offensive to other groups. Not infrequently, his posts contradict the official stance of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in particular, or Muhammadiyah in general, such as on the veil issue (see below). Since Facebook introduced its 'live broadcast' feature, El Madury has also availed of it to conduct live lectures. The SHPTM is popular with netizens. As of the time of writing (3 April 2022), it has been followed by 19,423 and is 'liked' by 8,868 people. His posts also often receive both positive and critical comments from viewers.

El Madury gave several reasons that brought about the creation of his fanpage. Firstly, it is aimed at fortifying Muhammadiyah followers against all forms of superstition, heresy, and myth as its posts focus on issues related to faith and worship. Secondly, he aims to counter those liberal Muhammadiyah activists and has openly responded to such views. His posts often openly attacks the religious practices of the the Nahdliyyin, resulting in several clashes between him and the Nahdliyyin figure, Idrus Ramli.<sup>11</sup>

Despite having many followers El Madury and his SHPTM do have critics. Many Muhammadiyah followers are concerned about the SHPTM posts. Some have tried to convey their anxiety through the official social media accounts of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre (Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah).<sup>12</sup> Those concerned generally want to ask for firm action from the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as El Madury has included 'Tarjih Muhammdiyah' in his fanpage name. The demands to the

Commented [MOU32]: English gloss from p.18 added here at first mention.

Commented [nf33R32]: Ok

<sup>10</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Interviews with Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf and Ariful Hazam, November 2020 who are grassroots of Muhammadiyah, and social media administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah.



Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, when summarised, include: (1) that the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council reprimand or remind Zulkarnain El Madury not to use symbols or names that are closely related to Tarjih Muhammadiyah for or on his fanpage; (2) making and circulating an announcement that the fanpage is not a social media account of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council or the Tarjih Muhamamdiyah Centre; (3) announcing the official social media accounts and websites of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre, so that Muhammadiyah people at the grassroots are not deceived by the existence of the fanpage and know where to look for religious reference sites, especially on the internet.

### **Zulkarnain El Madury and his efforts in building religious authority**

Zulkarnain El Madury and his fanpage SHPTM, have threatened the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, and specifically, the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. Many of his posts affect Muhammadiyah followers in particular and Muslims in general as these posts often differ from the official stance of Muhammadiyah, and in some cases contradict the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. This has stimulated public debate on social media, allowing El Madury to become a micro-celebrity *ustaz*, ~~experiencing what G. Turner (2010) calls 'the demotic turn'~~. As a result of the general public and the online community attention, El Madury has been able to gradually build up his religious authority. From the Weberian perspective (Riesebrodt 1999), he has been able to do this in two ways. The first is through charisma (charismatic authority). According to Weber, charisma is a particular type of authority whose original form is based on a specific belief contained in a particular person (Riesebrodt 1999). Secondly, El Madury claims he has the endorsement of Yunahar Ilyas, -a very popular Muhammadiyah cleric respected by the community from within the Muhammadiyah circle and from Muslims in general which is a form of traditional authority.

Yunahar Ilyas (1956–2020) or Buya Yun as he was popularly known, was an exegete (*mufasssir*; Ilyas 2012) in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, who died at the age of 63. He was an alumnus of Imam Ibn Su'ud University (Saudi Arabia) and an excellent lecturer in conveying religious messages. He was seen as a charismatic cleric by Muhammadiyah followers and Muslims, in general, and this reputation extended to neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore (Abror 2020; *Gesuri* 2020). On his death in early 2020, many people flocked to pay their last respects to Buya Yun who held the chair of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for three terms (*Kompas* 2020; *Rakyat Merdeka* 2019).

**Commented [MOU34]:** You've mentioned this twice before on p.2 and p.10, suggest delete.

**Commented [nf35R34]:** Ok. I agree with you.

**Commented [MOU36]:** What are the 2 ways if the first is via charisma? I've edited that the second is endorsement from Buda Yun – is this what you mean?

**Commented [nf37R36]:** Yes, it is.

By harnessing the charisma of Buya Yun, El Madury was able to increase his religious authority. On various occasions, including when this author interviewed him, Buya Yun's name was often mentioned as an argument and a shield.<sup>13</sup> El Madury insisted that he created the SHPTM Facebook site with the permission of Yunahar Ilyas<sup>14</sup> who had provided a further explanation on of the Tarjih Judgment Compilation). He added that Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website tanyajawabagama.com, had similarly received permission from Buya Yun. Wahyudi Abdurrahim confirmed Zulkarnain's claims and Muhammad Muflih, a grassroots representative added that it is a form of fairness.<sup>15</sup> In other words, Buya Yun's permission is a form of appreciation given by someone who is more senior and has a high social position in Muhammadiyah to someone who is more junior and is classified as a grassroots Muhammadiyah member.<sup>16</sup> Permission from Buya Yun, who has charisma within Muhammadiyah in particular, has become a tool used by El Madury in building his religious authority.

In Weberian charismatic authority, charisma is not only about a belief in the existence of extraordinary or superpowers possessed by or contained in humans but also about particular objects other than humans (Riesebrodt 1999). We thus have an explanation as to why El Madury named his fanpage *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a highly respectable and crucial council in Muhammadiyah. Founded in 1927, the Council functions as an assembly that carries out its agenda of purification of religion and the dynamisation of social life. It conducts research and investigations towards this purity, and accordingly gives fatwas and compiles religious guidelines on faith ('*aqidah*) and worship ('*ibadah*) as well as social relations (*mu'amalah*) (Rahman et al. 1985; Anwar 2016). In addition, this Council makes efforts to resolve differences and disagreements on religious issues, which are usually referred to as *khilafiah* problems, so that they are directed more productively (Anwar 2007, 2016).

The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a body that is responsible for formulating the ideological basis of the Muhammadiyah movement (Anwar 2007, 2016) and is

<sup>13</sup> This author's informants include Muhammad Muflih (grassroot of Muhammadiyah and initiator of the website tanyajawabagama.com), Robby Karman (secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association [DPP IMM]), and several participants invited by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council with the agenda of 'Responding to Emergence of *Syarah HPT* on Social Media' on 25 September, 2020; interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Online interview with Wahyudi Abdurrahim through WhatsApp, September 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Online interview with Muhammad Muflih through WhatsApp and Facebook, 20 October 2019.

Muhammadiyah's representative in the religious field (Fauzi 2017). The Council produces three types of *ijtihad-tarjih* products, namely: (1) *tarjih* fatwa (*fatwa tarjih*), (2) *tarjih* decision (*putusan tarjih*), and (3) *tarjih* discourse (*wacara tarjih*) (Anwar 2016). *Tarjih* fatwa is the Council's answer to general questions on issues that require an explanation in terms of sharia law. Following the nature of the fatwa in general, the Council's fatwa is non-binding, on either organisations or members as individuals. Therefore, even the fatwa can be questioned and discussed. However, because the fatwa contains religious guidance derived from Islamic teaching sources (Anwar 2020), and the general public often does not actually understand the aspects of such a fatwa, it is still believed by Muhammadiyah members to be religious guidance. However, the *tarjih* decision is the official stance of Muhammadiyah in religious matters and is formally binding on the organisation and its members. But, in practice, sometimes Muhammadiyah members exercise their right to freedom not to be bound by the decision because they have different *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

Meanwhile, *tarjih* discourses are ideas or thoughts that are raised and put forward by the Council in seminars, *halaqah* (religious gathering or meeting to discuss the Qur'an or Islam), or other forums in addressing various developing issues and at the same time fostering a critical spirit of *ijtihad* and collecting materials or ideas on various actual problems in society. The nature of this *tarjih* discourse is non-binding and does not become a fatwa that must be followed. *Tarjih* discourse is contained in various publications of the Council, such as *Jurnal Tarjih* (Tarjih Journal) and various published books (Anwar 2016).

The *tarjih* decision and the *tarjih* fatwa, hold their strength within Muhammadiyah as these are considered sacred by some of its members. In short, it can be said that anything that 'smells *tarjih*' has authority in the collective memory of Muhammadiyah followers. In the perspective of Khaled Abou El Fadl (2014), fatwas and *tarjih* decisions have the power of persuasive authority, as these can influence or direct others because they believed in them. The *tarjih* fatwas was officially published through the organisation's official magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, and compiled in the *Tanya Jawab Agama* book. In comparison, the *tarjih* decisions are codified in a book called *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*, commonly known by the abbreviation HPT. Thus, it can be understood why the attribution of the term *tarjih* to particular objects can give rise to charismatic authority, as mentioned by Weber.

What El Madury did can also be seen as identity politics which is defined as a political tool of a group whether it be ethnic, cultural, religious or others for specific purposes, such as

**Commented [MOU38]:** There is only one *tarjih* fatwa? And when was that published?

**Commented [nf39R38]:** No. Many fatwas. I apologise for not adding the article 's'.

a form of resistance or to show the identity of a group (Alfaqi 2015). Within this framework, identity is politicised through extreme interpretation, which aims to gain support from people who feel 'the same', through race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements. In the context of El Madury, the use of the *tarjih* label on his fanpage can be interpreted as a political tool to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muhammadiyah members. And, as seen in some of his sermon videos, El Madury also placed a flag with the Muhammadiyah symbol behind him. In this context, he wants to convince the viewers that he is close to Muhammadiyah. He has introduced himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board on many occasions.

According to Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif (2010), identity politics is always related to members of social groups who feel excluded by the mainstream in a nation or state. Sri Astuti Buchari (2014) also finds that the emergence of identity politics is mainly caused by certain factors that an ethnic group sees as pressure from the political injustice. By looking at the observations made by Ahmad Najib Burhani (2013), El Madury, in this case, can be categorised as part of a group that feels excluded, threatened, and to some extent in need of justice within Muhammadiyah. Burhani (2013) explains the existence of two opposing schools of thought within Muhammadiyah which he refers to as 'Pure Islam' (*Islam Murni*) and 'Progressive Islam' (*Islam Progresif*). The conflict between these two schools of thought in Muhammadiyah began to surface at the 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Banda Aceh in 1995 (Burhani 2013).

The dominance of 'Progressive Islam' in Muhammadiyah strengthened after its 44th congress in Jakarta in 2000. This congress chose Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif as general chair. He is a progressive Muslim figure, an alumnus of the University of Chicago, and a student of the eminent progressive scholar Fazlur Rahman. At this congress, several names representing the 'Progressive Islam' group were included in the ranks of the central leadership of Muhammadiyah, such as Amin Abdullah, Dawam Raharjo, and Abdul Munir Mulkhan. During Ma'arif's leadership, progressive ideas not only dominated culturally but gradually became Muhammadiyah's official programmes (Burhani 2013).

Seeing the increasingly apparent threat from the ideas put forward by the 'Progressive Islam' group within Muhammadiyah, representatives of the 'Pure Islam' group did not remain silent. They compete and squabble over religious interpretations as to which is the most authentic. These two groups challenge each other through various channels, including

seminars, discussions, publications. They usually have conflicting programmes. For example, as mentioned by Burhani (2013), when the Centre for the Study of Religion and Civilisation (PSAP/Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban) raised the theme of pluralism and multiculturalism in its journal, *Tanwir Journal*, the **Tabligh Council** responded with articles in opposition in its magazine, *Majalah Tabligh*. In Burhani's investigation, during the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress in Malang, this conservative group set up a Pojok Anti-Liberal (anti-liberal corner) booth, which sold books, DVDs, t-shirts, magazines, and other anti-liberal mementos. Strikingly, some of the t-shirts for sale displayed the words 'Muhammadiyah Anti-Liberal' (Burhani 2013).

At the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress, it seemed that the 'Pure Islam' group was gaining momentum to beat back the 'Progressive Islam' group. The quarrels between these two groups occurred within congress committees and in the external arena. Burhani (2005; 2013) noted at least three critical issues where the 'Pure Islam' group defeated the 'Progressive Islam' in the congress arena, namely: (1) leadership change; (2) the position of women; and (3) resistance to liberal thought.

After the 45th congress, the feud between these two schools of thought has continued though waxing and waning at different times. The form of the feud now looks more varied given the availability of the internet where the presence of social media has changed the battle arena from a conventional to a more modern one. El Madury represents the 'Pure Islam' group, and has heated online debates with figures considered representatives of 'Progressive Islam' whose actions he sees as unsettling. For example, El Madury and the secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association (DPP IMM),<sup>17</sup> Robby Karman, have openly and frequently castigated each other on for example, issues about the veil and the Wahhabi. According to El Madury, Robby Karman is a young liberal figure in Muhammadiyah who should be challenged. El Madury also often attacks the IBTimes.ID website, as it frequently contains articles that are progressive and, to some extent, controversial. This website has several former Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah (JIMM/Muhammadiyah Youth Intellectual Network) figures, such as Hilman Latief, Azaki Khoiruddin, and Mu'arif. On one occasion, when the chair of the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre admonished El Madury for uploading provocative posts that contradicted the official

**Commented [MOU40]:** What is the tabligh council? Is it part of Muhammadiyah, the anti-liberal wing?

**Commented [nf41R40]:** Majelis Tabligh is one of the assemblies in Muhammadiyah, apart from Majelis Tarjih. So, Muhammadiyah has many assemblies, each with its own functions and responsibilities. Organisationally, Majelis Tarjih is responsible for producing religious thoughts through fatwas and decisions, while Majelis Tabligh is responsible for disseminating them. Historically, Majelis Tabligh is known in Muhammadiyah as the anti-liberal wing. Therefore, Majelis Tarjih and Majelis Tabligh sometimes cannot collaborate well because some fatwas were issued by Majelis Tarjih, which, according to Majelis Tabligh, are considered the result of liberal thinking.

<sup>17</sup> Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM) or Muhammadiyah Student Association is a proponent of Muhammadiyah in student affairs with the basic mission of realising the real Islamic society as formulated by Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Widodo 2017).

stance of the Tarjih Council, he defended himself by stating that equally provocative posts from the ‘Progressive Islam’ group should be similarly reprimanded. If he is the only one selected for rebuke then he felt an injustice had been done.<sup>18</sup> El Madury’s attitude in the framework of identity politics reflects someone who feels excluded and threatened by certain parties. At such, his specific attributes and identity are a deliberate form of resistance to the domination of certain groups or thoughts that threaten him.

The above describes how El Madury builds his charismatic authority. The other is authority built through tradition or what Weber calls traditional authority (Spencer 1970; Matheson 1987; Riesebrodt 1999). In simple terms, something can be considered as having traditional authority if it gains legitimacy based on beliefs or norms that have been established in a particular tradition (Chairi 2019). In other words, according to Spencer (1970), traditional authority is legitimised and, at the same time, constrained by traditional norms. Therefore, it is the opposite of charismatic authority. If in charismatic authority, it is the leader or someone who creates the norms, then it is the norms that create the leader or person in the traditional authority. In charismatic authority, the value of influence is generated by a person’s personal qualities and is always associated with his personality. While in the case of traditional authority, it is generated by function and is related to someone or something that has traditional values (Spencer 1970).

In the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, ulama and the classical books they wrote can be considered to have this traditional authority. Ulama in Islamic tradition are called heirs of the **Prophets**. The authority of the ulama is derived from the legitimacy of religious texts which state that the prophetic tradition will be passed on to them. Therefore, the religious ideas they convey in writings or books contain an authoritative value for the next generation. This is the uniqueness of Islamic scholars and traditions, as mentioned by Muhammad Qasim Zaman (2002) who states that one of the most prominent aspects of pre-modern intellectual culture is the articulation of religious discourse through the so-called medium of the commentary. This is manifested in various forms such *al-syurūh*, *hawāsyī*, *rasā’il*, and *fatawā*. The various genres of books that contain explanations, descriptions, or responses to a book or social phenomena are a way for scholars to shape the identity and authority of the school or tradition they adhere to. In addition, it is also a means to

<sup>18</sup> On 3 November 2019, the manager of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah reprimanded Zulkarnain El Madury about his post on SHPTM on the veil which contradicts Muhammadiyah’s official stance.

**Commented [MOU42]:** Query – singular or plural?

**Commented [nf43R42]:** Plural. Because it is a translation of the Arabic word ‘*waratsatul anbiya*’. In Arabic, *al-anbiya*’ is the plural form of the word *nabiy*.

interpreting the meaning of the foundational sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah (Zaman 2002).

An example is the *hawāsyī* tradition in the Shafii school. Its emergence, according to Ahmed El-Shamsy (2013), shows the peak of the authority of two scholars in that school, namely al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī. Al-Kurdī, as **quoted** by El Shamsy, called these two scholars 'the higher authorities in the Syafii school'. Those who want to know the authoritative opinion of the Shafi'i school have to go through the works of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī, and the books that explain further their works, namely the books written by Ibn Hajar al-Haitamī and Syamsuddīn al-Ramlī. These books have for later generations the value of traditional authority (Shamsy 2013: [292](#)).

What is the connection between this traditional authority and El Madury? El Madury's posts on SHPTM and at religious forums where he speaks always rely on the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāth*). According to Endang Mintarja, chair of the Jakarta branch of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this aspect has drawn many people to El Madury's lectures.<sup>19</sup>

What El Madury did, Muhammadiyah did not do in many of its fatwas **in citing intellectual tradition**. **In many of its fatwas, Muhammadiyah often only quotes verses of the Qur'an or hadith to strengthen its argument, without citing the opinions of scholars scattered in the Islamic intellectual tradition.** Perhaps this is a consequence of the modernist movement, which became the spirit of Muhammadiyah. The modernist movement initiated by reformers such as Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, and Muḥammad Rasyīd Riḍā in the late 19th and early 20th centuries used the term *al-rujū' ilā al-qur'ān wa al-sunnah* ('back to the Qur'an and Sunnah'). According to Syed Junaid A. Quadri (2013), the most obvious indicator of this movement, especially in Islamic law, is its critical attitude towards the structure of pre-modern sharia authority symbols, which are articulated in the language and logic of the institution of *taqlīd*. Modernist groups always encourage reopening the door to *ijtihād* and invite Muslims to leave the interpretive monopoly that the ulama class has held (Quadri 2013).

Muhammadiyah, which is heavily inspired by the modernist movement, is oriented towards the Qur'an and Sunnah and tends to attach less importance to the Islamic intellectual

<sup>19</sup> Endang Mintarja voiced this at a meeting held by Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board on the emergence 'Syarah HPT', 25 September 2020.

**Commented [MOU44]:** Provide page no. of quote in Shamsy (2013)

**Commented [nf45R44]:** Ok.

**Commented [MOU46]:** Added, is this correct as you need to state the difference in this sentence - and expand it later which you have done.

**Commented [nf47R46]:** Yes, correct. I added this sentence:

In many of its fatwas, Muhammadiyah often only quotes verses of the Qur'an or hadith to strengthen its argument, without citing the opinions of scholars scattered in the Islamic intellectual tradition.

tradition that has been built by the ulama. This can be seen from its *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (methodology Muhammadiyah uses in conducting *ijtihad*), which asserts that Muhammadiyah is not affiliated to a particular school, but the opinions of these schools are only considered in determining religious norms (Anwar 2018). This means that understanding religion in the Muhammadiyah perspective is derived directly from its primary sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah through the *ijtihad* process. However, it should be noted here that the narration that confirms the opinions of the scholars is taken into account in determining norms is not that clear how they are implemented in *tarjih* issues.

In some of its *official religious ijtihad/tarjih products*, the nuances of the opinions of scholars, especially the pre-modern ones do not appear, by choice or otherwise.

Muhammadiyah's The Tarjih Council's opinion indicates the source of the Islamic intellectual tradition, from whom or which particular school of thought. Thus it appears that El Madury is filling the Muhammadiyah gap in presenting the authority of the Islamic intellectual tradition in religious narratives. For example, in the controversial veil case, the Tarjih Council issued three fatwas in 1993 (Tim Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat 2019a), 2003 (ibid. 2019b), and 2009 (ibid. 2009). The fatwas issued in 1993 and 2009 emphasised that the veil has no legal basis either in the Qur'an or the Sunnah but that Islamic law commands women to wear the hijab. These two fatwas did not cite the Islamic intellectual tradition, which also accommodates opinions about the veil. Although the Tarjih Council kept in its stance and strengthened the opinion that women's '*aurat* (parts of the body that should go covered) are the whole body except the face and the palms of the hands, in the 2003 fatwa, the Tarjih Council provides space for those who want to wear the veil by expressing several opinions from the scholars who think so.

In contrast to the *tarjih* fatwas, El Madury (2019) uploaded an article *Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam?* ('Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?') on SHPTM site refuting the *tarjih* fatwa. In the article, he cites various opinions of scholars in the Islamic intellectual tradition who support mandatory veiling as an effort to build religious authority. From this, it appears that El Madury, apart from attacking the *tarjih* fatwa, believes in maintaining traditional authority, in this case, the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāts*).

What El Madury did in building religious authority can also be captured from what Burhani calls a conversion narrative. Some scholars define religious conversion narratives differently as for example, in the change from one religious tradition to another. William

**Commented [MOU48]:** What is this? Principles of Manhaj Tarjih?

**Commented [nf49R48]:** Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah is the official name for the methodology Muhammadiyah uses in conducting *ijtihad*. Perhaps it would be better to add an explanation in brackets. What do you think?

**Commented [MOU50]:** Unclear – is the Tarjih Council not part of Muhammadiyah?

**Commented [nf51R50]:** The Tarjih Council is part of Muhammadiyah. Perhaps it would be better if the word Majelis Tarjih was changed to Muhammadiyah. What do you think?



James, as quoted by Burhani (2020: 158<sup>[22]</sup>), states that religious conversion can also be interpreted as the conversion of a person who is a sinner into someone pious. According to Burhani (2020), people who experience religious conversion, usually after embracing a new tradition or religious understanding, will be hostile to the previous religious tradition or understanding.

El Madury also experienced a religious conversion, in this case, from the NU tradition to Muhammadiyah. On SHPTM as well as his views when interviewed by this author, he introduced himself as someone who had practised the '*kuburiyyun* tradition'<sup>20</sup> and other actions that did not have examples from the Prophet. To convince his fanpage followers, he posted information about his religious conversion from NU to Muhammadiyah. Besides condemning his previous practices, which were deemed to have no basis in the Qur'an and Sunnah, he has had acrimonious debates with the NU *kyai*, Idrus Ramli on various issues, such as *ahlus sunnah wal jamaah* and *wahabi, nahdliyyin* traditions that are often considered heresy, and so on on what?

### Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Before the advent of the internet and the emergence of various new religious authorities, Muhammadiyah and NU were the two largest religious organisations and authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). However, following the emergence of the so-called micro-celebrity *ustaz*, these two groups, according to some scholars, began to face challenges and threats. The recent study by Wahyudi Akmaliah (2020) shows that the two organisations have responded differently to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was more combative about their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) maintain there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's response look less aggressive. Akmaliah is correct on several points, but other perspectives deserve to be considered, especially Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority, especially on the internet.

The weak point, from Akmaliah's study is that there is no adequate elaboration of the assembly that exclusively holds religious authority in Muhammadiyah, namely the Tarjih

<sup>20</sup> The tradition of visiting the grave with its associated practices.

Commented [MOU52]: Provide page no. of quote.

Commented [nf53R52]: ok

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Commented [MOU54]: Unclear - do you mean by the similarities that the new religious authorities were as uncombative as Muhammadiyah which isn't the case with El Madury?

Commented [nf55R54]: I didn't mean it that way. The opinion that there are similarities between Muhammadiyah and people who are considered new religious authorities is the opinion of Wahyudi Akmaliah in his article entitled "The demise of moderate Islam: new media, contestation, and reclaiming religious authorities". The point of Akmaliah's opinion is that there are ideological similarities and similar geographical follower bases between Muhammadiyah and them. According to Akmaliah, these similarities make Muhammadiyah appear less aggressive in responding to the new religious authorities. See the full article: <https://ijims.iainsalatiga.ac.id/index.php/ijims/article/view/3227/pdf>

Council.<sup>21</sup> To trace more precisely how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority is to look at the Tarjih and Tajdid Councils.

This discussion will start from the author's experience in attending a meeting held by the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board. The meeting was initiated in response to the emergence of El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim's SHPTM site. It should be noted here that Abdurrahim also contributed writings to this website. He was earlier mentioned as having had permission from Buya Yun to give *syarah* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Judgment Compilation) and is the author of *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*. The initial background for holding this meeting, as revealed by the secretary of the Tarjih Council, Mas'udi, was purely in response to the SHPTM posts by El Madury. However, information about the SHPTM other than the one written by El Madury prompted the board of the Tarjih Council to include the book by Abdurrahim with the same title for the agenda.

On Friday, 7 Safar 1442 AH (25 September 2020), the Tarjih Council invited nine related sectors to discuss concerns over the emergence of the SHPTM on the internet written by the El Madury and Abdurrahim. The nine sector participants were: (1) the executive board of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (2) fatwa division of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (3) chair/secretary of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (4) Dr Endang Mintarja, M.Ag. (Chair of the Jakarta Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council); (5) H. Fathurrahman, Lc., M.S.I. (Chair of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council); (6) H. Budi Setiawan, S.T.; (7) Arif Nurkholis (head of Muhammadiyah Digital Syiar Centre); (8) the manager of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre; and (9) the social media assistance team of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

During the meeting, there were at least four proposals from participants on how best to respond to the SHPTM, especially the article by El Madury. The first was to complain to Facebook about the SHPTM so that it could be banned for including an institution's name without permission. According to Fathurrahman Kamal,<sup>21</sup> who was present at the forum, the fanpage is already in the illegal category. This proposal was considered by the proponents as a firm proposal and also ~~not~~ too risky. The second was to use a persuasive approach in the form of clarification or an appeal to El Madury not to use the name *Himpunan Putusan Tajih* (HPT) or something that is associated with *tarjih*. Its proponents consider this approach to be softer and more reflective of being Muhammadiyah members in particular, and Muslims in

**Commented [MOU56]:** There is more than one council?

**Commented [nf57R56]:** Sorry, I made the mistake of adding the article 's'. I deleted it.

**Commented [MOU58]:** What is the difference between these two councils?

**Commented [nf59R58]:** There is no difference between Tarjih Council and Tarjih and Tajdid Council. Both are the same. However, for brevity, people often refer to Tarjih Council only, without mentioning the assembly's full name, namely Tarjih and Tajdid Council (Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid in Indonesia).

**Commented [MOU60]:** Which particular article?

**Commented [nf61R60]:** Particularly, the article is about the veil.

**Commented [MOU62]:** What do you mean by risky – less aggressive?

**Commented [nf63R62]:** I apologise; I didn't write that sentence correctly. I meant too risky, without the word 'not'.

<sup>21</sup> Chair of the Tabligh Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board.

general. The third proposal was to use institutional authority in writing an official letter on behalf of the Tarjih Council to El Madury. The fourth idea that was considered more practical and efficient was to place the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it on social media. This would avoid being drawn into unfruitful correspondence on SHPTM.

However, there was no agreement on which approach should be undertaken despite long discussions. It was agreed instead that there would be a follow up with another forum. Since this author started writing (3 April 2022) there has been no further meeting. The emergence of SHPTM on the internet and its effects have been considered a serious problem by the Tarjih Council. The meeting's participants were generally uneasy about the appearance of El Madury and his fanpage. In addition, they wanted El Madury to be warned or reprimanded since SHPTM is considered a threat to religious authority of the Tarjih Council. This illustrates that Muhammadiyah, through its official religious assembly, the Tarjih Council, is not passive in responding to the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. However, only certain cases and not all micro-celebrity *ustaz* who appear on social media have drawn the Tarjih Council's attention. Although there has yet to be a follow up meeting, the Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an official institution supporting the Tarjih Council illustrates how Muhammadiyah struggles to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is an institution that was founded in 2016 (~~Majelis Tarjih Dahlan 2016; Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid~~ Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah ~~dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan~~ 2016) by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Ahmad Dahlan University (~~tarjih.or.id~~ 2016) (~~Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, n.d.~~). Despite being a new institution, its legality is clear, and it has formal authority. In the Muhammadiyah tradition as an organisation, such legality is essential. Thus when someone from Muhammadiyah, speaks on another person's behalf or endorses an approach, the speaker's status is below that of the institution and cannot be assumed to be that of institutions within Muhammadiyah which, although new, have legality. In the context of El Madury and the SHPTM fanpage, this is important. Even though El Madury claims he has obtained permission to make *syarh* on the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* from a charismatic figure in Muhammadiyah, Buya Yunahar, legally it is not valid. In that context, Buya Yunahar spoke on behalf of himself, not on behalf of Muhammadiyah.

Fronted by young Muhammadiyah cadres, the majority of whom are alumni of Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Tarjih Ulama Education,

**Commented [MOU64]:** There is a date if you mean this article: <https://tarjih.or.id/pembukaan-halaqah-majelis-tarjih-launching-pusat-tarjih-muhammadiyah-dan-muhammadiyah-observatorium-network/>  
Note that your url in References does not bring up the article.

**Commented [nf65R64]:** Ok. I fixed it.

**Formatted:** Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

PUTM),<sup>22</sup> Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays a role in supporting the Tarjih Council programmes. These are relatively under-performing and facing obstacles, particularly on using social media to disseminate their official religious ijtihad-products. The members of the Tarjih Council, who are relatively old, need support from young cadres. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays an essential role in assisting the Tarjih Council in maintaining its religious authority on the internet. It responded to El Madury and SHPTM, by being proactive with a poster (Figure 1) containing information related to the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it.



Figure 1. Poster with information on the official social media accounts affiliated to the Tarjih Council.

<sup>22</sup> PUTM is an educational institution under the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board designed to produce a cadre of Muhammadiyah scholars. PUTM organises a special programme that educates and prepares Muhammadiyah *tarjih* scholars who are competent in the religious field. The birth of PUTM was based on the concern of some Muhammadiyah leaders about the increasing scarcity of ulama in and from Muhammadiyah (Fauzi 2020a).

**Commented [MOU66]:** Was this poster only a paper version or was it on social media too?

**Commented [nf67R66]:** this poster is on social media too

**Commented [MOU68]:** As with ALL figures, do you have permission to reproduce these from the copyright holders? Note that all figures require minimum of 300 dpi.

**Commented [nf69R68]:** Yes, I do.

And all figures have met the minimum dpi requirement

Are you often confused about finding sources of reference about Islam from the perspective of Muhammadiyah?

There is no need to be confused anymore because various social media are straightforward for us to access. Tarjih (Council) has come with a more trendy look.

- ✓ Easy to read anywhere
- ✓ Provide updated fatwas
- ✓ Discuss current issues

As members of Muhammadiyah, let's get used to reading the decisions and fatwas of Muhammadiyah

Here are some media that can be accessed very easily. So don't be confused anymore.

Web: [fatwatarijih.or.id](http://fatwatarijih.or.id)

Facebook: [fb.me/fatwamu](https://www.facebook.com/fatwamu)

Instagram: [pusattarijih\\_muhammadiyah](https://www.instagram.com/pusattarijih_muhammadiyah)

Telegram: [t.me/fatwatarijihmu](https://t.me/fatwatarijihmu)

Youtube: [tarjih channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

Let's spread it to all Muhammadiyah people!

**Figure 2.** Translation of Figure 1.

Formatted: Centered

Although the poster above does not directly mention the SHPTM site created by El Madury, the main message in it is clear and firm, namely to inform the Muhammadiyah followers about the official accounts of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it. This would hopefully let Muhammadiyah members understand how its official religious voice is disseminated on the internet. Following this, Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah successively uploaded other, more varied posters to indirectly counter the SHPTM fanpage. Some other examples of these posters are shown in Figures 3 and 5.



**Figure 3.** Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council.

Formatted: Centered

Do you know?

The Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah now have an official YouTube channel, (namely) the Tarjih Channel.

Have you subscribed yet?

**Figure 4.** Translation of Figure 3.



**Figure 5.** Information about the website fatwatarjih.or.id, an official website affiliated to the Tarjih Council containing fatwas.

Fatwatarjih.or.id is the official website for the Tarjih and the Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board (MTT).

The Media Team of Fatwa Tarjih, through this website, has been, is and will continue to strive consistently to publish various ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council. Until now, tarjih fatwa collections from 1997 to 2018 have entered the editing stage, and some are just waiting to be published.

**Figure 6.** Translation of Figure 5.



**Figure 7.** Information on the official website of the Tarjih Council.

Do you want to know the full history (of the Tarjih Council)?  
 Or do you want to look for ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council?  
 Come on; you can find out on this website: tarjih.or.id

**Figure 8.** Translation of Figure 7.

The use of informal language and emoticons typical of millennials indicate the audience that the Tarjih Council wants to target. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah team understands that informal language will appeal to its target audience. This is aimed at not only establishing the authority of the Tarjih Council but ‘millennialisation’ i.e. to reach out to the younger generation familiar with social media. Suyadi and Widodo (2019) note that millennialisation



is an alternative way to develop knowledge that will synergised with various online media and digital technology. In the context of *tarjih* millennialisation, *Muhammadiyah's tarjih products* official religious *ijtihad* that tend to be disseminated in a conventional, monotonous, and uncreative manner are now communicated through social media in more contextual packaging. This means that that the Tarjih Council and its various official religious *ijtihad* products, which previously were always identified with the 'old', are now consciously aiming to include young people.

The religious authority of the Tarjih Council in cyberspace, especially when connected with the appearance of El Madury and SHPTM, was greatly helped by the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah and its young Muhammadiyah cadres. It manages various social media platforms with large numbers of followers, and has helped maintain Muhammadiyah's religious authority by balancing and suppressing the presence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. Its contents are fatwas and decisions of the Tarjih Council with more appealing visualisation to reach out to the millennials.

Although the number of social media followers of the Tarjih Council is less than that for the NU and Salafi groups, at least the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah acts as a compass for Muhammadiyah followers who question its religious authority, especially with the emergence of El Madury's version in SHPTM. The administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah's social media have received many messages either through the comments column or direct messages in its inbox, which question the authority of SHPTM.<sup>23</sup> Here, the vital role of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is increasingly finding its momentum.

## Conclusion

Although it can be said that Muhammadiyah's religious influence and authority on the internet are inferior and lag behind other religious groups, Muhammadiyah is still trying to manage its authority, especially when facing threats from micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By focusing on Zulkarnain El Madury and his SHPTM social media page, this article offers a different perspective from previous studies by analysing the work of the *Majelis Tarjih Tarjih Council* as the only institution in Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas. This article shows that Muhammadiyah has its own way of responding to the emergence of new religious

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Ariful Hazam, Ilham Ibrahim, and Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, September 2020. They are Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah social media admin.

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

authorities. With the help of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an institution in its fold, the Tarjih Council has made continuous efforts through social media and its official website to counter new voices that threaten its authority. Muhammadiyah's response was neither aggressive nor radical but it clarified its stance without mentioning who precisely was being targeted. What Muhammadiyah did was in line with the Javanese proverb *Ngluruk tanpo bolo, menang tanpo ngasorake* ('win without defeat, win without humiliation (of others) fighting without the need to bring the masses; winning without demeaning or humiliating'). The form of Muhammadiyah's response is inherited from its founder, Ahmad Dahlan. As seen by Peacock (1978), Ahmad Dahlan carried out many social transformations calmly and systematically rather than in revolutionary ways.

In a broader context, the case of Zulkarnain El Madury also provides a lesson that using the name Muhammadiyah to justify personal opinions or legitimise particular interests is wrong. Muhammadiyah has the reputation of a very well managed organisation (Barton 2014; *Suara Muhammadiyah* 2019) which is its strength and gives it clout compared to other religious organisations in Indonesia, such as NU. In short, authority in Muhammadiyah lies in the institution itself and is not based on personality. It differs from NU, where power and authority tend to lie in personal figures, such as *kyai* or *gus* (Fauzi 2020b).

Muhammadiyah followers who understand its basic rules are not easily influenced by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. They are aware that Muhammadiyah's official religious stance is only be issued by the Tarjih Council and that those external to the Tarjih Council or even specific Muhammadiyah figures who give religious opinions, speak only for themselves as individuals and not the organisation. This would be the case, for example, even if the religious opinion emanates from the chair of the Tarjih Council as an individual. This did occur when Syamsul Anwar,<sup>24</sup> the current chair of the Tarjih Council, had a different opinion from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council on the issue of *iftitāḥ* prayer (opening prayer for night prayer [*qiyām al-lail*]). For Anwar, *iftitāḥ* prayer is a two short *rak'ah* prayer that is performed before *qiyām al-lail*, with the condition that it must be preceded by sleep first. If it is not preceded by sleep, then for Anwar (2013), there is no need to perform the *iftitāḥ* prayer. However, according to the Tarjih Council, the *iftitāḥ* prayer is

<sup>24</sup> As this article is about to be published, Muhammadiyah will hold a five-year event to elect its chairs. This event is called *Muktamar Muhammadiyah* (Muhammadiyah Congress). At the 48<sup>th</sup> Muhammadiyah Congress in Solo last November 2022, Syamsul Anwar was elected as one of the thirteen General Chairs of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the period 2022-2027. See more <https://muhammadiyah.or.id/berikut-susunan-pimpinan-pusat-muhammadiyah-periode-2022-2027/>.

**Commented [MOU70]:** The translation I got was: win without defeat, win without humiliation (of others)

**Commented [nf71R70]:** It's ok. I agreed with you. I changed it.

**Commented [nf72]:** I added updated information about Samsul Anwar's position in Muhammadiyah. What do you think?

**Commented [MOU73]:** Unclear, why the 'a' - did you mean ARE two short *rak'ah* prayer?

**Commented [nf74R73]:** I was mistaken again it seems. I changed it.

**Formatted:** Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

**Formatted:** Superscript

**Formatted:** English (United States)

two short *rak'ah* prayer that is performed before *qiyām al-lail*, whether preceded by sleep or not (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2011; Tim Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2019a).

While Anwar's opinion clearly differs from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council, the prevailing opinion in Muhammadiyah is that of the Tarjih Council, not the chair of the Tarjih Council. Within Muhammadiyah, such religious differences of opinion are common as usually happens in *fiqh* discourse in general. The difference between El Madury and Anwar is that the latter does not act in the name of Muhammadiyah or the Tarjih Council when he has a different view. Instead, on many occasions, he urges Muhammadiyah followers to abide by the opinion of the Tarjih Council on the *iftitāh* prayer.<sup>25</sup> Thus Anwar has shown he can compromise his personal religious opinion with his professional attitude in the organisation. In this case, he understands that using the name Muhammadiyah to legitimise individual opinions or interests is not justifiable.

#### Acknowledgements

Permission for this research PJB-002/SP3/LPPM-UAD/VI/2020 and funding were provided by the ethical board of Ahmad Dahlan University Research and Development Institute (Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan).

I am grateful to *ustaz* Zulkarnain El Madury for his exceptional help and support during my fieldwork. I also thank Amiruddin, Arif Nur Kholis, Muhammad Muflih, Wahyudi Abdurrahim, Robby Karman, Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, Ilham Ibrahim, Ariful Hazam, and the members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council for providing information regarding my research. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article. Errors, if any, are solely mine.

#### Note on contributor

*Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi* is a lecturer of Department of Hadith Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He has published widely on a variety of issues relating to Islamic Studies, including al-Quran, hadith, Islamic law, social

<sup>25</sup> On several occasions, this author has heard Syamsul Anwar's direct appeal to Muhammadiyah members to follow the opinion of the Tarjih Council on this aspect of the *iftitāh* prayer.

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

media and da'wah, and Muhammadiyah studies. Email: niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id Niki Fauzi is  
xxx Email: niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id

## References

Alvara Research Center. 2020. Ramadhan dan pandemi Covid-19: semangat ibadah tak surut, konsumsi tersendat. <[https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN DAN PANDEMI COVID-19: SEMANGAT IBADAH TAK SURUT, KONSUMSI TERSENDAT.pdf](https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN%20DAN%20PANDEMI%20COVID-19%3A%20SEMANGAT%20IBADAH%20TAK%20SURUT,%20KONSUMSI%20TERSENDAT.pdf)> Accessed day-month-year this format eg 23 February 2023.

IB Times Indonesia. 2020. 100 situs Islam Indonesia, NU Online peringkat pertama [100 Indonesian Islamic websites, NU Online ranks first insert English translation here within square brackets]. 10 July. <IBTimes.Id. 2020. <<https://ibtimes.id/100-situs-islam-indonesia-nu-online-peringkat-pertama/>> Accessed day-month-year 23 February 2023.

Dakta.com. [2016. Aa Gym ajak ribuan jamaahnya ikut aksi bela Islam III [Aa Gym invites thousands of congregants to join Islamic Defence Action III provide English translation here within square brackets]. 29 November. <<http://www.dakta.com/news/7329/aa-gym-ajak-ribuan-jamaahnya-ikut-aksi-bela-islam-iii>> Accessed 2 February 2020.

Abror, Robby. 2020. Syeikh Yunahar, ulama Muhammadiyah kharismatik [Sheikh Yunahar, a charismatic Muhammadiyah cleric English translation]. 3 Jan. <<https://menara62.com/syeikh-yunahar-ulama-muhammadiyah-kharismatik/>> Accessed day-month-year 3 February 2020.

Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2018. Media sosial dan pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [Social media and shifting religious authority]. 12 December. <[https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media\\_sosial\\_dan\\_pergeseran\\_otoritas\\_keagamaan](https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media_sosial_dan_pergeseran_otoritas_keagamaan)> Accessed day-month-year 3 February 2020.

Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2020. The demise of moderate Islam: new media, contestation, and reclaiming religious authorities. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10 (1): 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v10i1.1-24>.

Rahman, Asjmuni Abdur et al. 1985. Laporan penelitian Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (suatu studi tentang sistem dan metode penentuan hukum) [Research report of Mailis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (a study of the system and method of determining the law) include

Commented [MOU75]: Please remove all bibliographic import code from Reference entries and in text citations.

Commented [nf76R75]: Ok. I did it.

Commented [MOU77]: Note there is a date if you look at the text before the title on the link you provided.

Commented [nf78R77]: ok

- [English translation here]. Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga.
- Alfaqi, Mifdal Zusron. 2015. Memahami Indonesia melalui prespektif nasionalisme, politik identitas, serta solidaritas [Understanding Indonesia through the perspectives of nationalism, identity politics, and solidarity include English translation here]. *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 28 (2): 111–116.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2007. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer* [Contemporary Islamic law studies insert English translation here in roman not italics]. Jakarta: RM Books.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2013. *Salat Tarawih: Tinjauan usul fikih, sejarah, dan fikih* [Tarawih prayer: usul fiqh, history, and fiqh perspectives insert English translation here in roman not italics]. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2016. Fatwā, purification and dynamization: a study of tarjīh in Muhammadiyah. *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (1): 27–44.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2018. *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Panitia Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih Muhammadiyah XXX.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2020. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer Bagian dua*. Yogyakarta: UAD Press.
- Barton, Greg. 2014. The Gülen movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: progressive Islamic thought, religious philanthropy and civil society in Turkey and Indonesia. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25 (3): 287–301.
- Buchari, Sri Astuti. 2014. *Kebangkitan etnis menuju politik identitas* [Ethnic awakening towards identity politics include English translation here]. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Bunt, Gary R. 2003. *Islam in the digital age: e-jihad, online fatwas and cyber Islamic environments*. London: Pluto Press.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2005. The 45th Muhammadiyah Congress contest between literal-conservative and liberal-moderate Muslims in Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 12 (1): 185–189.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2013. Liberal and conservative discourses in the Muhammadiyah: the struggle for the face of reformist Islam in Indonesia. In Martin van Bruinessen (ed.),

*Contemporary developments in Indonesian Islam: explaining the 'conservative turn'.* Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2016. Aksi bela Islam: konservatisme dan fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. *Maarif* 11 (2): 15–29.

Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2020. Muslim televangelists in the making: conversion narratives and the construction of religious authority. *Muslim World* 110 (2): 154–175.

Burhanudin, Jajat. 2004. The fragmentation of religious authority: Islamic print media in early 20th century Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 11 (1): 23–62.

Campbell, Heidi, and Teusner, Paul Emerson. 2011. Religious authority in the age of the internet. In *Christian Reflection, Virtual Lives*: 59–68. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press.

Chairi, Effendi. 2019. Ketiadaan otoritas terpusat dalam fenomena kontemporer di Indonesia [[The absence of a centralised authority in contemporary phenomena in Indonesia](#) [include English translation here](#)]. *SANGKĒP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 2 (2):197–215.

Majelis Tarjih ~~Dahlan, dan~~ Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad ~~Dahlan~~. 2016. Nota Kesepakatan Majelis Tarjih Dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Tentang Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di Islamic Center Universitas Ahmad Dahlan [[Memorandum of Agreement between the Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board and Ahmad Dahlan University on the Management of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre at the Islamic Centre of Ahmad Dahlan University](#) [include English translation here](#)]. Yogyakarta.

Tirto.id. 2018. Dari Aa' Gym ke Felix Siauw: ustaz medsos & medium dakwah politis. Tirto.Id. 16 January. <<https://tirto.id/dari-aa-gym-ke-felix-siauw-ustaz-medsos-medium-dakwah-politis-cCGf>> Accessed [5 February 2020](#) [day month year](#).

Rakyat Merdeka. 2019. Dubes Malaysia jenguk ketum MUI Yunahar Ilyas di Yogyakarta [[Malaysian ambassador visits MUI chairman Yunahar Ilyas in Yogyakarta](#) [insert English translation here](#)]. 5 November. <<https://rm.id/baca-berita/internasional/21745/dubes-malaysia-jenguk-ketum-mui-yunahar-ilyas-di-yogyakarta>> Accessed 4 April 2022.

Fadl, Khaled Abou El. 2014. *Speaking in God's name: Islamic law, authority, and women*. London: Oneworld Publications.

- Farhan, Farhan. 2017. Pesan dakwah Felix Siauw di media sosial (perspektif meaning and media). *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Administrasi Islam*: 209–226.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2017. Peranan Maqasid Al-Shariah dalam memahami Hadith: kajian terhadap fatwa Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah [[The role of Maqasid Al-Shariah in understanding Hadith: a study of the fatwa of the Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah](#)insert English translation here]. MA thesis, University of Malaya.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020a. PUTM dan kaderisasi ulama: menelusuri latar belakang lahirnya Lembaga Kaderisasi Ulama Muhammadiyah [[PUTM and clerical regeneration: tracing the background of the birth of the Muhammadiyah Clerical Cadre Institute](#)]. <<https://santricendekia.com/putm-dan-kaderisasi-ulama-menelusuri-latar-belakang-lahirnya-lembaga-kaderisasi-ulama-muhammadiyah/>> [Accessed 4 April 2022](#).
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020b. Tantangan kader ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah di era 4.0 [[Challenges for Tarjih Muhammadiyah ulama cadres in the 4.0 era](#)insert English translation here]. 21 July. *Suara 'Aisyiyah* <<https://suaraaisyiyah.id/tantangan-kader-ulama-tarjih-muhammadiyah-di-era-4-0/>> [Accessed 4 April 2022](#).
- Fealy, Greg. 2008. Consuming Islam: commodified religion and aspirational pietism in contemporary Indonesia. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.
- Hew, Wai Weng. 2018. The art of dakwah: social media, visual persuasion and the Islamist propagation of Felix Siauw. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (134): 61–79.
- Hoesterey, James B. 2008. Marketing morality: the rise, fall and rebranding of Aa Gym. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: Religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, pp. 95–114.
- Hope Cheong, Pauline. 2016. Religious authority and social media branding in a culture of religious celebrification. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*, University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 81–102.
- Horsfield, Peter. 2016. The media and religious authority from ancient to modern. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*. University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 37–66.
- Suara Muhammadiyah. 2019. Hyung Jun Kim: sistem di Muhammadiyah sungguh ideal

- [Hyung Jun Kim: Muhammadiyah's system is ideal [provide English translation here](#)].  
<<https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/08/01/hyung-jun-kim-sistem-di-muhammadiyah-sungguh-ideal/>> Accessed [day-month-year](#) 9 April 2022.
- Ilyas, Yunahar. 2012. *Kuliah Akhlaq* [[Akhlaq Lecture](#) [English translation in roman here](#)]. XII. Yogyakarta: LPPI Universitas Muhammdiyah Yogyakarta.
- Khamis, S., Ang, L. and Welling, R. 2017. Self-branding, 'micro-celebrity' and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191–208.
- Khomalia, Isti and Rahman, Khairul Arief. 2018. Micro hijabers celebrity: membentuk identitas dengan update self-story via instagram (kasus dian pelangi). *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban dan Pemikiran Islam* 2 (1): 33–42. <<https://doi.org/10.23971/njppi.v2i1.869>>
- Labiq. 2019. Pengaruh new media terhadap pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [[The influence of new media on shifting religious authority](#) [insert English translation here](#)]. 19 April. <<https://geotimes.co.id/opini/pengaruh-new-media-terhadap-pergeseran-otoritas-keagamaan>> Accessed [19 October 2020](#). [day-month-year](#).
- Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. 2010. *Politik identitas dan masa depan pluralisme Indonesia*. Edited by Samsu Rizal Panggabean et al. Jakarta: Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (PUSAD) Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina.
- Madury, Zulkarnain El. 2019. Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam? [[Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?](#) [English translation here](#)]. 2 November. <<https://www.facebook.com/zulkarnainsumenep/posts/2386248524961601>> [Accessed](#) [day-month-year](#) 5 May 2020.
- Maskur, Maskur and Irfan Noor. 2014. Ustadz selebriti Abdullah Gymnastiar dalam budaya populer (perspektif hipersemiotika Yasraf Amir Piliang) [[Celebrity Ustadz Abdullah Gymnastiar in popular culture \(Yasraf Amir Piliang's hyper semiotics perspective\)](#) [insert English translation here](#)]. *Jurnal Studia Insania* 2 (1): 47–57. <<https://doi.org/10.18592/jsi.v2i1.1091>>
- Matheson, Craig. 1987. Weber and the classification of forms of legitimacy. *British Journal of Sociology* 38 (2): 199–215.
- [Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Majelis Tabligh \[Tabligh Council\]. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 07 October 2023.](#)



Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Berikut Susunan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Periode 2022-2027 [The following is the composition of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the 2022-2027 Period]<<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/berikut-susunan-pimpinan-pusat-muhammadiyah-periode-2022-2027/>> Accessed 07 October 2023.

Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2016. Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan MuON [[Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and MuON](#)]. 20 August.  
<<http://www.umm.ac.id/id/muhammadiyah/7070.html>> Accessed 20 March 2021.

Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah. n.d. *Panduan pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre management guide]. Majelis Tarjih, Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta. [Where was this published? Is Yogyakarta.](#)

Tim Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat. 2009. Hukum tentang jenggot dan cadar [[Islamic law perspective on beards and veils](#)]. *Suara Muhammadiyah magazine*, September. [Was this published, if yes where or is there is url link?](#)

Tim Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat. 2019a. *Fatwa-Fatwa Tarjih: Tanya Jawab Agama Jilid 4*. Cetakan IX. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Tim Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat. 2019b. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 7*. Cetakan IV. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Nisa, Eva F. 2019. Internet and Muslim women. In Ronald Lukens-Bull and Mark Woodward (eds), *Handbook of contemporary Islam and Muslim lives*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer, pp. 1–19.

Peacock, James L. 1978. *Purifying the Faith: the Muhammadiyah movement in Indonesian Islam*. Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2011. *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Postill, John and Pink, Sarah. 2012. Social media ethnography: the digital researcher in a messy web. *Media International Australia* 145 (1): 123–134.

Pribadi, Yanwar. 2019. Fragmentasi umat dan penciptaan otoritas keagamaan: tanggapan terhadap ‘Islam lokal’ dan ‘Islam asing’ di Indonesia [[Ummah fragmentation and the](#)

[creation of religious authority: responses to 'local Islam' and 'foreign Islam' in Indonesia](#) [include English translation here](#). *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 21 (1): 103–119. <<https://jmb.lipi.go.id/jmb/article/view/828/455>>

Quadri, Syed Junaid A. 2013. Transformations of tradition: modernity in the thought of Muḥammad Bakhīt Al-Muṭṭī. PhD thesis, McGill University.

Riesebrodt, Martin. 1999. Charisma in Max Weber's Sociology of Religion. *Religion* 29 (1): 1–14.

Sadasri, Lidwina Mutia. 2017. Selebriti mikro di media baru kajian presentasi diri dalam vlog selebriti mikro [[Micro-celebrities in new media: a study of self-presentation in micro-celebrity vlogs](#) [include English translation here](#)]. *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi Dan Opini Publik* 21 (2): 167–181. <<https://jurnal.kominfo.go.id/index.php/jpkop/article/view/1218/720>>

Saefullah, Hikmawan. 2022. Media baru, publik baru: mengkonfigurasi ulang ruang publik Islam [[New media, new publics: reconfiguring the Islamic public sphere](#) [include English translation here](#)]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.

Sammy, Abdullah. 2022. Peluang dan tantangan dakwah digital Muhammadiyah [[Opportunities and challenges of Muhammadiyah digital da'wah](#) [include English translation here](#)]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.

Sanjaya, Makroen. 2022. Peta ideologi islam di media sosial [[The map of Islamic ideology on social media](#) [include English translation here](#)]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.

Kompas. 2020. Sejumlah tokoh hadir prosesi pemakaman ketua PP Muhammadiyah Yunahar Ilyas [[Many figures attended the funeral procession of Muhammadiyah chairman Yunahar Ilyas](#) [include English translation here](#)]. 3 January. <<https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/03/19142441/sejumlah-tokoh-hadiri-prosesi-pemakaman-ketua-pp-muhammadiyah-yunahar-ilyas>> Accessed 3 April 2022.

Senft, Theresa M. 2008. *Camgirls: celebrity and community in the age of social networks*. New York: Peter Lang.

Shamsy, Ahmed El. 2013. The Ḥāshiya in Islamic law: a sketch of the Shāfi‘ī literature. *Oriens* 41 (3-4): 289–315.

Spencer, Martin E. 1970. Weber on legitimate norms and authority. *British Journal of Sociology* 21 (2): 123–134.

Suyadi and Widodo, Hendro. 2019. Millennialization of Islamic education based on neuroscience in the third generation university in Yogyakarta Indonesia. *QIJS International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7 (1): 173–202.

[tarjih.or.id. 2016. Pembukaan Halaqah, Majelis Tarjih Launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan Muhammadiyah Observatorium Network \[Halaqah Opening, Tarjih Council Launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and Muhammadiyah Observatory Network\]. <https://tarjih.or.id/pembukaan-halaqah-majelis-tarjih-launching-pusat-tarjih-muhammadiyah-dan-muhammadiyah-observatorium-network/> accessed 06 October 2023.](https://tarjih.or.id/pembukaan-halaqah-majelis-tarjih-launching-pusat-tarjih-muhammadiyah-dan-muhammadiyah-observatorium-network/)

Turner, Bryan S. 2007. Religious authority and the new media. *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2): 117–134.

Turner, Graeme. 2010. *Ordinary people and the media: the demotic turn*. Los Angeles CA: Sage.

Widodo, Arif. 2017. Transformative intellectual discourse and movement of Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM). *Iseedu: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices* 1 (1): 126–151.  
<<https://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/iseedu/article/view/5423/3542>>

Gesuri. 2020. Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia kehilangan ulama kharismatik [[Yunahar Ilyas passed away, Indonesia lost a charismatic scholar](https://www.gesuri.id/internal/yunahar-ilyas-wafat-indonesia-kehilangan-ulama-kharismatik-b1YFoZpRY)]. 3 January.  
<<https://www.gesuri.id/internal/yunahar-ilyas-wafat-indonesia-kehilangan-ulama-kharismatik-b1YFoZpRY>> Accessed ~~day month year~~20 March 2020.

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change*. Princetoon NJ: Princeton University Press.



## ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY *USTAZ* PHENOMENON

### Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

#### ABSTRACTS

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the fragmentation of religious authority. In the Indonesian context, the mainstream religious authority held by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has been challenged and threatened by micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This article examines the emergence of the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage on Facebook, that has threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority. It was created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board. It analyses Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace. It also takes a closer look at the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah), an assembly that has the exclusive authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* decisions other than fatwas within Muhammadiyah, that differs from previous studies. This article also discusses lessons that can be learned from the case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the response of the Tarjih Council.

#### KEYWORDS

Fragmentation of religious authority; micro-celebrity *ustaz*; Muhammadiyah; religious authority; *tarjih*.

#### ABSTRAK

Kemunculan internet dan media sosial telah mempertajam fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. Dalam konteks Indonesia, otoritas keagamaan arus utama yang dipegang oleh Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) telah ditantang dan diancam oleh para ustaz mikro-selebriti. Artikel ini mengkaji kemunculan *fanpage* Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah di Facebook, yang dibuat dan dikelola oleh Zulkarnain El Madury, seseorang

yang mengklaim sebagai ustaz Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, karena dianggap mengancam otoritas keagamaan Muhammadiyah. Penelitian ini menganalisis upaya Muhammadiyah dalam mempertahankan otoritas keagamaannya di dunia maya, dengan melihat lebih dekat pada apa yang telah dilakukan oleh Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah, sebuah majelis yang memiliki otoritas eksklusif untuk mengeluarkan fatwa dan produk ijtihad keagamaan resmi di dalam Muhammadiyah. Artikel ini juga membahas pelajaran yang dapat dipetik dari kasus Zulkarnain El Madury dan respon Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

#### KATA KUNCI

Ustaz mikro-selebriti; fragmentasi; otoritas keagamaan; Muhammadiyah; tarjih.

#### Introduction

The Alvara Research Center (2020) survey was surprising as it stated that the clerics most heard by the public, especially in Ramadan 2020, were not from the official Muhammadiyah board. Although Ustaz Adi Hidayat was included as one of the 15 most popular clerics in the survey, he cannot be said to be an official representative of Muhammadiyah.<sup>1</sup> He is indeed an alumnus of the Darul Arqam Muhammadiyah Garut Islamic Boarding School. Apart from not being involved in Muhammadiyah, he does not convey Muhammadiyah's religious ideas in his lectures. Shortly after the Alvara Research Center survey was released, IBTimes.id (2020), an Islamic website managed by young Muhammadiyah intellectuals, published a report ranking the 100 most popular Islamic websites in Indonesia. The majority of these sites are managed by or affiliated to Nahdliyyin (NU followers) and Salafi groups with few such sites operated by or affiliated to Muhammadiyah. The Alvara Research Center survey and the IBTimes.id report show that Muhammadiyah, in terms of influence and religious authority on the internet, is lagging behind other religious groups which is ironic for an organisation claiming to represent the progressive Islamic group.

<sup>1</sup> As this article is about to be published, the Muhammadiyah Central Board has included Ustaz Adi Hidayat on the board of the Tabligh Council of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the period 2022–2027. See more <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>>

<sup>2</sup> For more comprehensive information on the activism of Salafi groups, readers can refer to a work written by see Chris Chaplin entitled *Salafism and the State: Islamic Activism and National Identity in Contemporary Indonesia* (2012).

**Commented [nf1]:** I am adding a footnote here explaining the latest Adi Hidayat update. What do you think?  
PK – That's fine but wouldn't you need to rephrase the text since it now makes him a representative of the Tabligh Council of the Muhammadiyah Central Board – so does that mean he is an official representative?

**Formatted:** Not Highlight

**Commented [MOU2]:** Should there be a fn on Salafi groups e.g. pointing readers to Chris Chaplin (2022) - [https://brill.com/view/journals/bki/178/2-3/article-p338\\_9.xml](https://brill.com/view/journals/bki/178/2-3/article-p338_9.xml)

**Commented [nf3R2]:** I agree with you. I will add a footnote for readers to pay attention to Chaplin's work.

PK – you need then to include Chaplin in the References which I have done for you. And my googling brings up his publication date as 2021, not 2022.  
[https://brill.com/view/journals/bki/178/2-3/article-p338\\_9.xml?language=en](https://brill.com/view/journals/bki/178/2-3/article-p338_9.xml?language=en)

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** English (United States)

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the so-called fragmentation of religious authority. Eva F. Nisa (2019), for example, mentions that the proliferation of various digital platforms is directly proportional to the increasing fragmentation of religious authority. Islamic discourse is monopolised not only by an elite group of scholars or mainstream religious groups, but also by persons or groups that have not been considered in Islamic discourse. Furthermore, the presence of the internet and social media has led to the birth of what is called micro-celebrity. Theresa M. Senft (2008) defines micro-celebrity as a new style of online performance that involves increasing popularity on social media such as videos, blogs, and networking sites. These micro-celebrities unlike conventional celebrities, emerge from what is known as new media (Senft 2008).

Of course, not all new media users have the adjective 'micro-celebrity'. Only those who experience what Graeme Turner (2010) terms 'the demotic turn', namely, the increasing visibility of ordinary people to appear as celebrities in the media, especially online media. In turn, both conventional and micro-celebrity exist in various public spheres, and the discourse on them is characterised as influencers, stimulants of consumerism, enthusiasm, public debate, and various activism (Sadasri 2017).

By borrowing the theory of micro-celebrities in the study of new media, we can then read how these micro-celebrities have also come to the fore in the religious realm. The emergence of ulama, *ustaz* (religious teachers), and religious leaders who become influencers in new media can perhaps be termed as a form of a micro-celebrity *ustaz* image. Felix Siauw is a prominent example. A convert, who is now a preacher, Siauw has a massive following on social media. In 2018, for example, he had 2.6 million followers on Twitter, and in 2022 it reached 3.3 million. Felix Siauw's Instagram account has around 4.9 million followers. It can even be said that he is the *ustaz* who has the most followers on social media (Tirto 2018), making him one of the leading social media preachers in Indonesia today (Hew 2018). What Felix Siauw posts on his social media has more or less influenced the map of religious authorities in Indonesia.

The existence of the internet and the continuing development of technology allows the emergence of many other micro-celebrity *ustaz*, both in the national arena more generally or more specifically in internal religious organisations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, Persis (Persatuan Islam) or others. In the context of Muhammadiyah, the largest modernist Islamic organisation began to be challenged for its religious authority by a preacher who was said to

be part of Muhammadiyah itself, namely Zulkarnain El Madury. He claims to be a Muhammadiyah cadre and often introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board. In recent years, El Madury has been noticed by Muhammadiyah administrators and Muhammadiyah cadres<sup>3</sup> and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah) has discussed him in a special meeting. This is because the posts on the Facebook page that El Madury manages, *Syarah Himpunan Putus Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (henceforth SHPTM), often differ significantly from – and to some extent delegitimise – a Muhammadiyah fatwa or official decision. Responses from grassroots or Muhammadiyah followers vary. This can be seen, for example, from the comments on each post. Some defend and remain adamant on the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah, but not a few were affected and followed what was conveyed by El Madury on his Facebook page.

This is where it becomes crucial to see how Muhammadiyah attempts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace, especially among its members and the public. By conducting web content analysis (Postill and Pink 2012) on SHPTM and official social media accounts and those affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this article shows how El Madury builds his narratives and, in turn, how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority on the internet. Additionally, field research was conducted and key actors were interviewed offline and online in a semi-structured format.<sup>4</sup> Apart from El Madury, the key actors are members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Digital Broadcast Centre (Pusat Syiar Digital Muhammadiyah), ~~several prominent figures,~~ Muhammadiyah activists as well as Muhammadiyah grassroots.

### **Fragmentation of religious authority, new preacher and micro-celebrity *ustaz* phenomenon**

Fragmentation of religious authority is a phenomenon that occurs in various religious communities and is not limited to Islam (B.S. Turner 2007; Campbell and Teusner 2011; Hope Cheong 2016). The fragmentation of religious authority is also a global phenomenon as pointed out by Gary R. Bunt (-2003) who states that the new media have shaped diverse understandings among individual Muslims worldwide about e-jihad (electronic jihad). The

<sup>3</sup> This author's online and offline interviews with Amiruddin, Robby Karman, Muhammad Muflih, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, and Arif Nur Kholis, 2019–2020.

<sup>4</sup> Data collection in this study was carried out between 2018 and 2020. As personal interviews were not possible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, some interviews were conducted online.



definition of electronic jihad is understood and interpreted differently, ranging from online activism to Muslim articulation after the events of 11 September 2001. Bunt (2003) shows that each new media (in this case, new websites) has authority for its respective group segment.

~~In Indonesia, the fragmentation of religious authority can be traced far back but for the purposes of this article, the fragmentation that will be~~ discussed here is from ~~the beginning of~~ the 20th century to the present. Jajat Burhanudin (2004) points out that there has been a shift in religious authority in the historical phase of Indonesian religious thought in the early 20th century due to modernisation. His study, which focuses on the Islamic print media, further shows that there is a shift in religious authority that used to be in *Kitab Kuning*<sup>5</sup> taught by *kyai* or ulama in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to magazines, journals, newspapers, and books published by modernist circles or organisations.

Religious authority since the early 20th century has always stayed with Muhammadiyah and NU. These two religious organisations are often referred to by scholars as the authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016; Akmaliah 2018). The shift in religious authority occurred again in the 1990s when national television stations emerged. The Islamic programmes presented by the television stations show the *ustaz* (religious teachers), which in turn build their authority through lectures delivered by these preachers. This phenomenon prompted scholars to come up with the term ‘Islamic televangelism’ (Akmaliah 2018). Abdullah Gymnastiar who is better known as Aa Gym is one example that falls into the category of a television *ustaz*, or a ‘tele-dai’ as coined by Greg Fealy (2008).

The most obvious and recent picture of the fragmentation of religious authority in Indonesia is the series of events of the Defend Islam Action (Aksi Bela Islam). Ahmad Najib Burhani (2016) hints that these critical events marked the peak of the fragmentation of religious authorities in Indonesia as they gave rise to new actors who challenge the established religious authority. Although it cannot be said to shift or match the role of Muhammadiyah and NU, the emergence of new actors such as Rizieq Shihab provides a new map of religious authority in Indonesia.

This phenomenon of the fragmentation of religious authority has increased sharply in the development of what scholars call pop culture, marked by the birth of many new media

<sup>5</sup> So-called because the books were printed on yellow paper. These were the Islamic texts used in the education of Islamic schools.

**Commented [MOU4]:** How far back?

**Commented [nf5R4]:** Before the 20th century, for example, as Kaptein observes in his article, the religious authority of Indonesians and Malay people before the 20th century was once located in the holy city of Mecca. It was because people in the Indonesian-Malay archipelago asked muftis in Mecca about religious matters. However, there are already scholars in the Indonesian-Malay archipelago who have the capability to issue fatwas.

Kaptein's article:  
<https://journals.openedition.org/assr/pdf/1038>

(Labiq 2019). The availability of internet access to every social class is the main factor for this fragmentation. As a result, many new media have emerged with each individual and group competing to spread ideas (Horsfield 2016; Nisa 2019).

Aa Gym is one of the early actors who emerged in the internet era in Indonesia. This can be captured in two interesting studies on Aa Gym by James B. Hoesterey (2008), and Maskur and Noor (2014). Although the use of the internet as a medium of da'wah ~~at that time~~around during the early 2000s was not as massive as it is now, the emergence of Aa Gym as a new cleric on the national da'wah stage through lectures, seminars, and Islamic training is a phenomenon in itself. Hoesterey (2008) studies the journey of Aa Gym from his first appearance as a preacher, ~~falling~~, and then successfully rebranding to restore his religious authority. This is evident, for example, from how Aa Gym has many listeners (*Dakta.com* 2016). Popular culture has also brought Aa Gym to be seen not only by the public, especially by his followers, as also singer, actor, author, etc. Thus, he has transformed from an ordinary cleric to a celebrity cleric. Through a hypersemiotic perspective, Maskur and Noor (2014) show the various aspects of Aa Gym's personality.

Following the appearance of Aa Gym and with further rapid development of information technology, many other new preachers began to appear. Hew Wai Weng (2018) describes how Felix Siauw is another skilful religious preacher. Being a cleric with the most followers on the internet did not make Siauw neglect to spread his da'wah in the real world. Hew (2018) points out that Siauw has blended online and offline da'wah harmoniously. ~~Felix Siauw aims to spread the ideology of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) in his da'wah identity.~~ According to Hew (2018) and Farhan (2017), one of the keys to Siauw's success in preaching is his ability to present an entertaining and straightforward da'wah, even though its content is dogmatic and political.

Aa Gym and Felix Siauw are two micro-celebrity *ustaz* as a result of the new media. The term micro-celebrity *ustaz* was adopted and reconstructed from the theory of micro-celebrity. Most of these studies conducted from the perspective of pop culture (Senft 2008; G. Turner 2010; Khamis, Ang and Welling 2017; Sadasri 2017; Khomalia and Rahman 2018). describe the fragmentation of religious authority, marked by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By this term this author means an ordinary *ustaz/ustazah* who has skyrocketed in popularity and is celebrity on and because of social media so that he or she is able to influence certain people or communities. In other words, it means the *ustaz/ustazah* has experienced

**Commented [MOU6]:** Suggest footnote on what HTI ideology is and is HTI now banned? If so, where does that put Felix Siauw?  
<https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2019/06/20/is-hizbut-tahrir-a-threat-to-indonesia.html>

**Commented [nf7R6]:** In fact, Felix Siauw's overall preaching is not about spreading HTI ideology. His preaching concerns moral issues, young people, and daily life. It's just that he is known as a figure with HTI ideology, especially about establishing the Islamic caliphate. Therefore, the paragraph that explains "Felix Siauw aims to spread the ideology of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) in his da'wah identity" seems better deleted. What do you think about this?

what G. Turner (2010) calls ‘the demotic turn’, when ordinary people are highly visible on social media and become celebrities. Challenges to established religious authorities by new religious personalities or groups are rarely touched on except that of Yanwar Pribadi (2019). His study explains the the efforts of ‘local Islam’ (*Islam lokal*) to defend its religious authority from the threat of ‘foreign Islam’ (*Islam asing*). However, his study differs from what this author will examine in tracing Muhammadiyah’s efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

This study is on a micro-celebrity *ustaz*, Zulkarnain El Madury who is less well known when compared to Aa Gym or Felix Siauw but he has a strong influence on the internet. His identity as a preacher from Muhammadiyah who targets Muhammadiyah followers with postings that are often different and even delegitimise the official voice of this largest modernist mass organisation deserves to be investigated. This study, apart from showing Muhammadiyah’s efforts in maintaining its religious authority on the internet, also seeks explicitly to fill the gap in previous studies. In his latest study, Akmaliah (2020) shows that Muhammadiyah and NU have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was strongly reactive to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) indicates there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah’s responses less hostile. Sammy (2022), Sanjaya (2022), and Saefullah (2022) came to the same conclusion as Akmaliah, claiming that Muhammadiyah is significantly less adaptive to the emergence of new media, and therefore its da’wah often loses to that of the micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This study focuses on the struggle of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as the only assembly under Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas and ~~products of~~ official religious *ijtihad* exposition within Muhammadiyah.

Commented [MOU8]: Added, OK with you?

### **Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage**

The Facebook SHPTM fanpage was created by Zulkarnain El Madury. He was born in Sumenep on the island of Madura in 1963, with the name Zulkarnain bin Syamsuri. He claims to have studied in Malaysia at the Institute of Business Study and always introduces himself as a preacher from the Special Da’wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah). He spent his childhood in Madura and

was a traditionalist Muslim like others on the island. He grew up in a milieu dominated by the NU traditionalist Islamic organisation. He used to perform *tahlilan* (pilgrimage to the grave), and other practices that, according to him, after becoming a member of Muhammadiyah, were not following the Sunnah of the Prophet. He received his religious education at the Islamic boarding school at-Taufiqiyyah Sumenep Madura. In 1976 he became acquainted with Muhammadiyah. Through a lecture delivered by a preacher, He became interested in the da'wah and religious understanding of the Muhammadiyah movement founded by Ahmad Dahlan after listening to a lecture by one of its preachers. In 1977, he officially joined Muhammadiyah.<sup>6</sup>

Since joining Muhammadiyah, El Madury has been active as a preacher who spreads religious ideas and understanding. From 1990 to 2007, he was one of the Muhammadiyah preachers who was sent to remote areas by the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board. His daily activities are now preaching at different places as well as creating content on for SHPTM fanpage. He now lives in Jakarta as the **Tarjih and Tabligh council** chair of the Pondok Gede Muhammadiyah Branch.<sup>7</sup> He created SHPTM in 2014.<sup>8</sup> However, in the digital history that this author can trace, the fanpage was created in 2015 as the earliest post that is currently traceable is dated 5 January 2015.

According to El Madury, the fanpage began with the WhatsApp group he created which he named *Tarjih dan Tabligh Institut* (Tarjih and Tabligh Institute) to provide a space to discuss and spread ideas related to *tarjih*.<sup>9</sup> He included many Muhammadiyah figures and activists in this group, including (the now late) Buya Yunahar Ilyas. Over time, seeing that El Madury's posts on SHPTM were deemed inconsistent with the *tarjih* spirit of Muhammadiyah, several people, such as Fathurrahman Kamal and Buya Risman, sharply criticised the postings. El Madury, Fathurrahman Kamal, and Buya Risman were then engaged in a heated debate which was relayed later to Buya Yunahar Ilyas. The response by Buya Yunahar Ilyas at that time, according to El Madury, differed from that of his critics. Buya Yun responded quite positively because he saw El Madury's initiative as providing

**Commented [MOU9]:** Unclear - If this is branch council, does it not make him a representative of the Muhammadiyah after all?

<sup>6</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>7</sup> [Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020. Ibid.](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020. Ibid.](#)

<sup>9</sup> Muhammadiyah's use of the word *tarjih* has changed throughout its development. In its early period, and following its usage in the principles of law (*usul al-fiqh*), *tarjih* conveyed the meaning of examining the various opinions of Muslim jurists on a particular question and evaluating them to determine which is most faithful to the original Shari'a sources. Over time this usage gradually included any intellectual endeavour used to study new cases that earlier jurists had not addressed. In short, in Muhammadiyah's perspective, *tarjih* is identical, or almost identical, to *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

syarh (explanation) or further ~~explanation-explication~~ of the ~~contents of the~~ *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Judgment Compilation). Finally, he gave his permission to El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website tanyajawabagama.com.<sup>10</sup>

El Madury's early postings on SHPTM, were still relatively consistent in uploading Muhammadiyah fatwas in the question (from someone) and answer format from the fatwa division of the Tarjih Council. This is similar to the the original question and answer format administered by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, whose fatwas were later published in the *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine. However, over time, SHPTM had posts that apart from the dissemination of ~~Muhammadiyah's official religious *ijtihad tarjih* products~~ included the personal opinions of El Madury. These opinions in inelegant words are often offensive to other groups. Not infrequently, his posts contradict the official stance of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in particular, or Muhammadiyah in general, such as on the veil issue (see below). Since Facebook introduced its 'live broadcast' feature, El Madury has also availed of it to conduct live lectures. The SHPTM is popular with netizens. As of the time of writing (3 April 2022), it has been followed by 19,423 and is 'liked' by 8,868 people. His posts also often receive both positive and critical comments from viewers.

El Madury gave several reasons that brought about the creation of his fanpage. Firstly, it is aimed at fortifying Muhammadiyah followers against all forms of superstition, heresy, and myth as its posts focus on issues related to faith and worship. Secondly, he aims to counter those liberal Muhammadiyah activists and has openly responded to such views. His posts often openly attacks the religious practices of the the Nahdliyyin, resulting in several clashes between him and the Nahdliyyin figure, Idrus Ramli.<sup>11</sup>

Despite having many followers El Madury and his SHPTM do have critics. Many Muhammadiyah followers are concerned about the SHPTM posts. Some have tried to convey their anxiety through the official social media accounts of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre (Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah).<sup>12</sup> Those concerned generally want to ask for firm action from the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as El Madury has included 'Tarjih Muhammdiyah' in his fanpage name. The demands to the

<sup>10</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Interviews with Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf and Ariful Hazam, November 2020 who are grassroots of Muhammadiyah, and social media administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, when summarised, include: (1) that the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council reprimand or remind Zulkarnain El Madury not to use symbols or names that are closely related to Tarjih Muhammadiyah for or on his fanpage; (2) making and circulating an announcement that the fanpage is not a social media account of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council or the Tarjih Muhamamdiyah Centre; (3) announcing the official social media accounts and websites of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre, so that Muhammadiyah people at the grassroots are not deceived by the existence of the fanpage and know where to look for religious reference sites, especially on the internet.

### **Zulkarnain El Madury and his efforts in building religious authority**

Zulkarnain El Madury and his fanpage SHPTM, have threatened the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, and specifically, the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. Many of his posts affect Muhammadiyah followers in particular and Muslims in general as these posts often differ from the official stance of Muhammadiyah, and in some cases contradict the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. This has stimulated public debate on social media, allowing El Madury to become a micro-celebrity *ustaz*, ~~experiencing what G. Turner (2010) calls 'the demotic turn'~~. As a result of the general public and the online community attention, El Madury has been able to gradually build up his religious authority. From the Weberian perspective (Riesebrodt 1999), he has been able to do this in two ways. The first is through charisma (charismatic authority). According to Weber, charisma is a particular type of authority whose original form is based on a specific belief contained in a particular person (Riesebrodt 1999). Secondly, El Madury claims he has the endorsement of Yunahar Ilyas, -a very popular Muhammadiyah cleric respected by the community from within the Muhammadiyah circle and from Muslims in general which is a form of traditional authority.

Yunahar Ilyas (1956–2020) or Buya Yun as he was popularly known, was an exegete (*mufasssir*; Ilyas 2012) in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, who died at the age of 63. He was an alumnus of Imam Ibn Su'ud University (Saudi Arabia) and an excellent lecturer in conveying religious messages. He was seen as a charismatic cleric by Muhammadiyah followers and Muslims, in general, and this reputation extended to neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore (Abror 2020; *Gesuri* 2020). On his death in early 2020, many people flocked to pay their last respects to Buya Yun who held the chair of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for three terms (*Kompas* 2020; *Rakyat Merdeka* 2019).

**Commented [MOU10]:** You've mentioned this twice before on p.2 and p.10, suggest delete.

**Commented [nf11R10]:** Ok. I agree with you.

By harnessing the charisma of Buya Yun, El Madury was able to increase his religious authority. On various occasions, including when this author interviewed him, Buya Yun's name was often mentioned as an argument and a shield.<sup>13</sup> El Madury insisted that he created the SHPTM Facebook site with the permission of Yunahar Ilyas<sup>14</sup> who had provided a further explanation on of the Tarjih Judgment Compilation). He added that Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com), had similarly received permission from Buya Yun. Wahyudi Abdurrahim confirmed Zulkarnain's claims and Muhammad Muflih, a grassroots representative added that it is a form of fairness.<sup>15</sup> In other words, Buya Yun's permission is a form of appreciation given by someone who is more senior and has a high social position in Muhammadiyah to someone who is more junior and is classified as a grassroots Muhammadiyah member.<sup>16</sup> Permission from Buya Yun, who has charisma within Muhammadiyah in particular, has become a tool used by El Madury in building his religious authority.

In Weberian charismatic authority, charisma is not only about a belief in the existence of extraordinary or superpowers possessed by or contained in humans but also about particular objects other than humans (Riesebrodt 1999). We thus have an explanation as to why El Madury named his fanpage *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a highly respectable and crucial council in Muhammadiyah. Founded in 1927, the Council functions as an assembly that carries out its agenda of purification of religion and the dynamisation of social life. It conducts research and investigations towards this purity, and accordingly gives fatwas and compiles religious guidelines on faith ('*aqidah*) and worship ('*ibadah*) as well as social relations (*mu'amalah*) (Rahman et al. 1985; Anwar 2016). In addition, this Council makes efforts to resolve differences and disagreements on religious issues, which are usually referred to as *khilafiah* problems, so that they are directed more productively (Anwar 2007, 2016).

The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a body that is responsible for formulating the ideological basis of the Muhammadiyah movement (Anwar 2007, 2016) and is Muhammadiyah's representative in the religious field (Fauzi 2017). The Council produces

<sup>13</sup> This author's informants include Muhammad Muflih (grassroot of Muhammadiyah and initiator of the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com)), Robby Karman (secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association [DPP IMM]), and several participants invited by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council with the agenda of 'Responding to Emergence of *Syarah HPT* on Social Media' on 25 September, 2020; interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Online interview with Wahyudi Abdurrahim through WhatsApp, September 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Online interview with Muhammad Muflih through WhatsApp and Facebook, 20 October 2019.

three ~~types of *ijtihad-tarjih* products~~, namely: (1) *tarjih* fatwa (*fatwa tarjih*), (2) *tarjih* decision (*putusan tarjih*), and (3) *tarjih* discourse (*wacara tarjih*) (Anwar 2016). *Tarjih* fatwa is the Council's answer to general questions on issues that require an explanation in terms of sharia law. Following the nature of the fatwa in general, the Council's fatwa is non-binding, on either organisations or members as individuals. Therefore, even the fatwa can be questioned and discussed. However, because the fatwa contains religious guidance derived from Islamic teaching sources (Anwar 2020), and the general public often does not actually understand the aspects of such a fatwa, it is still believed by Muhammadiyah members to be religious guidance. However, the *tarjih* decision is the official stance of Muhammadiyah in religious matters and is formally binding on the organisation and its members. But, in practice, sometimes Muhammadiyah members exercise their right to freedom not to be bound by the decision because they have different *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

Meanwhile, *tarjih* discourses are ideas or thoughts that are raised and put forward by the Council in seminars, *halaqah* (religious gathering or meeting to discuss the Qur'an or Islam), or other forums in addressing various developing issues and at the same time fostering a critical spirit of *ijtihad* and collecting materials or ideas on various actual problems in society. The nature of this *tarjih* discourse is non-binding and does not become a fatwa that must be followed. *Tarjih* discourse is contained in various publications of the Council, such as *Jurnal Tarjih* (*Tarjih Journal*) and various published books (Anwar 2016).

The *tarjih* decision and the *tarjih* fatwa, hold their strength within Muhammadiyah as these are considered sacred by some of its members. In short, it can be said that anything that 'smells *tarjih*' has authority in the collective memory of Muhammadiyah followers. In the perspective of Khaled Abou El Fadl (2014), fatwas and *tarjih* decisions have the power of persuasive authority, as these can influence or direct others because they believed in them. The *tarjih* fatwas ~~were~~<sup>as</sup> officially published through the organisation's official magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, and compiled in the *Tanya Jawab Agama* book. In comparison, the *tarjih* decisions are codified in a book called *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*, commonly known by the abbreviation HPT. Thus, it can be understood why the attribution of the term *tarjih* to particular objects can give rise to charismatic authority, as mentioned by Weber.

What El Madury did can also be seen as identity politics which is defined as a political tool of a group whether it be ethnic, cultural, religious or others for specific purposes, such as a form of resistance or to show the identity of a group (Alfaqi 2015). Within this framework,



identity is politicised through extreme interpretation, which aims to gain support from people who feel 'the same', through race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements. In the context of El Madury, the use of the *tarjih* label on his fanpage can be interpreted as a political tool to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muhammadiyah members. And, as seen in some of his sermon videos, El Madury also placed a flag with the Muhammadiyah symbol behind him. In this context, he wants to convince the viewers that he is close to Muhammadiyah. He has introduced himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board on many occasions.

According to Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif (2010), identity politics is always related to members of social groups who feel excluded by the mainstream in a nation or state. Sri Astuti Buchari (2014) also finds that the emergence of identity politics is mainly caused by certain factors that an ethnic group sees as pressure from the political injustice. By looking at the observations made by Ahmad Najib Burhani (2013), El Madury, in this case, can be categorised as part of a group that feels excluded, threatened, and to some extent in need of justice within Muhammadiyah. Burhani (2013) explains the existence of two opposing schools of thought within Muhammadiyah which he refers to as 'Pure Islam' (*Islam Murni*) and 'Progressive Islam' (*Islam Progresif*). The conflict between these two schools of thought in Muhammadiyah began to surface at the 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Banda Aceh in 1995 (Burhani 2013).

The dominance of 'Progressive Islam' in Muhammadiyah strengthened after its 44th congress in Jakarta in 2000. This congress chose Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif as general chair. He is a progressive Muslim figure, an alumnus of the University of Chicago, and a student of the eminent progressive scholar Fazlur Rahman. At this congress, several names representing the 'Progressive Islam' group were included in the ranks of the central leadership of Muhammadiyah, such as Amin Abdullah, Dawam Raharjo, and Abdul Munir Mulkhan. During Ma'arif's leadership, progressive ideas not only dominated culturally but gradually became Muhammadiyah's official programmes (Burhani 2013).

Seeing the increasingly apparent threat from the ideas put forward by the 'Progressive Islam' group within Muhammadiyah, representatives of the 'Pure Islam' group did not remain silent. They compete and squabble over religious interpretations as to which is the most authentic. These two groups challenge each other through various channels, including seminars, discussions, publications. They usually have conflicting programmes. For example,

as mentioned by Burhani (2013), when the Centre for the Study of Religion and Civilisation (PSAP/Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban) raised the theme of pluralism and multiculturalism in its journal, *Tanwir Journal*, the [Tabligh Council](#)<sup>17</sup> responded with articles in opposition in its magazine, *Majalah Tabligh*. In Burhani's investigation, during the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress in Malang, this conservative group set up a Pojok Anti-Liberal (anti-liberal corner) booth, which sold books, DVDs, t-shirts, magazines, and other anti-liberal mementos. Strikingly, some of the t-shirts for sale displayed the words 'Muhammadiyah Anti-Liberal' (Burhani 2013).

At the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress, it seemed that the 'Pure Islam' group was gaining momentum to beat back the 'Progressive Islam' group. The quarrels between these two groups occurred within congress committees and in the external arena. Burhani (2005, 2013) noted at least three critical issues where the 'Pure Islam' group defeated the 'Progressive Islam' in the congress arena, namely: (1) leadership change; (2) the position of women; and (3) resistance to liberal thought.

After the 45th congress, the feud between these two schools of thought has continued though waxing and waning at different times. The form of the feud now looks more varied given the availability of the internet where the presence of social media has changed the battle arena from a conventional to a more modern one. El Madury represents the 'Pure Islam' group, and has heated online debates with figures considered representatives of 'Progressive Islam' whose actions he sees as unsettling. For example, El Madury and the secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association (DPP IMM),<sup>18</sup> Robby Karman, have openly and frequently castigated each other on for example, issues about the veil and the Wahhabi. According to El Madury, Robby Karman is a young liberal figure in Muhammadiyah who should be challenged. El Madury also often attacks the [IBTimes.id](#) website, as it frequently contains articles that are progressive and, to some extent, controversial. This website has several former Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah (JIMM/Muhammadiyah Youth Intellectual Network) figures, such as Hilman Latief, Azaki

<sup>17</sup> Muhammadiyah has many assemblies such as Majelis Tabligh and Majelis Tarjih, each with its own functions and responsibilities. Majelis Tarjih is responsible for producing religious thoughts through fatwas and decisions, while Majelis Tabligh is responsible for disseminating them. Historically, Majelis Tabligh is known in Muhammadiyah as the anti-liberal wing and thus there at times poor collaboration between Majelis Tarjih and Majelis Tabligh. For example, some fatwas issued by Majelis Tarjih, in Majelis Tabligh's perspective, are the result of liberal thinking.

<sup>18</sup> Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM) or Muhammadiyah Student Association is a proponent of Muhammadiyah in student affairs with the basic mission of realising the real Islamic society as formulated by Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Widodo 2017).

**Commented [MOU12]:** What is the tabligh council? Is it part of Muhammadiyah, the anti-liberal wing?

**Commented [nf13R12]:** Majelis Tabligh is one of the assemblies in Muhammadiyah, apart from Majelis Tarjih. So, Muhammadiyah has many assemblies, each with its own functions and responsibilities. Organisationally, Majelis Tarjih is responsible for producing religious thoughts through fatwas and decisions, while Majelis Tabligh is responsible for disseminating them. Historically, Majelis Tabligh is known in Muhammadiyah as the anti-liberal wing. Therefore, Majelis Tarjih and Majelis Tabligh sometimes cannot collaborate well because some fatwas were issued by Majelis Tarjih, which, according to Majelis Tabligh, are considered the result of liberal thinking.

PK – for IMW readers the info you gave above is helpful and should be in a footnote which I have done. OK with you?

**Formatted:** Pattern: 15% (Auto Foreground, White Background)

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Comment Text

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, English

Khoiruddin, and Mu'arif. On one occasion, when the chair of the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre admonished El Madury for uploading provocative posts that contradicted the official stance of the Tarjih Council, he defended himself by stating that equally provocative posts from the 'Progressive Islam' group should be similarly reprimanded. If he is the only one selected for rebuke then he felt an injustice had been done.<sup>19</sup> El Madury's attitude in the framework of identity politics reflects someone who feels excluded and threatened by certain parties. At such, his specific attributes and identity are a deliberate form of resistance to the domination of certain groups or thoughts that threaten him.

The above describes how El Madury builds his charismatic authority. The other is authority built through tradition or what Weber calls traditional authority (Spencer 1970; Matheson 1987; Riesebrodt 1999). In simple terms, something can be considered as having traditional authority if it gains legitimacy based on beliefs or norms that have been established in a particular tradition (Chairi 2019). In other words, according to Spencer (1970), traditional authority is legitimised and, at the same time, constrained by traditional norms. Therefore, it is the opposite of charismatic authority. If in charismatic authority, it is the leader or someone who creates the norms, then it is the norms that create the leader or person in the traditional authority. In charismatic authority, the value of influence is generated by a person's personal qualities and is always associated with his personality. While in the case of traditional authority, it is generated by function and is related to someone or something that has traditional values (Spencer 1970).

In the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, ulama and the classical books they wrote can be considered to have this traditional authority. Ulama in Islamic tradition are called heirs of the Prophets. The authority of the ulama is derived from the legitimacy of religious texts which state that the prophetic tradition will be passed on to them. Therefore, the religious ideas they convey in writings or books contain an authoritative value for the next generation. This is the uniqueness of Islamic scholars and traditions, as mentioned by Muhammad Qasim Zaman (2002) who states that one of the most prominent aspects of pre-modern intellectual culture is the articulation of religious discourse through the so-called medium of the commentary. This is manifested in various forms such *al-syurūh*, *hawāsyī*, *rasā'il*, and *fatawā*. The various genres of books that contain explanations, descriptions, or responses to a book or social phenomena are a way for scholars to shape the identity and

<sup>19</sup> On 3 November 2019, the manager of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah reprimanded Zulkarnain El Madury [about](#) [for](#) his post on SHPTM on the veil which contradicts Muhammadiyah's official stance.

authority of the school or tradition they adhere to. In addition, it is also a means to interpreting the meaning of the foundational sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah (Zaman 2002).

An example is the *hawāsyī* tradition in the Shafii school. Its emergence, according to Ahmed El-Shamsy (2013), shows the peak of the authority of two scholars in that school, namely al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī. Al-Kurdī, as quoted by El Shamsy, called these two scholars 'the higher authorities in the Syafii school'. Those who want to know the authoritative opinion of the Shafi'i school have to go through the works of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī, and the books that explain further their works, namely the books written by Ibn Hajar al-Haitamī and Syamsuddīn al-Ramlī. These books have for later generations the value of traditional authority (Shamsy 2013: 292).

What is the connection between this traditional authority and El Madury? El Madury's posts on SHPTM and at religious forums where he speaks always rely on the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāth*). According to Endang Mintarja, chair of the Jakarta branch of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this aspect has drawn many people to El Madury's lectures.<sup>20</sup>

What El Madury did, Muhammadiyah did not do in many of its fatwas in citing intellectual tradition. In many of its fatwas, Muhammadiyah often only quotes verses of the Qur'an or hadith to strengthen its argument, without citing the opinions of other scholars scattered in the Islamic intellectual tradition. Perhaps this is a consequence of the modernist movement, which became the spirit of Muhammadiyah. The modernist movement initiated by reformers such as Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, and Muḥammad Rasyīd Riḍā in the late 19th and early 20th centuries used the term *al-rujū' ilā al-qur'ān wa al-sunnah* ('back to the Qur'an and Sunnah'). According to Syed Junaid A. Quadri (2013), the most obvious indicator of this movement, especially in Islamic law, is its critical attitude towards the structure of pre-modern sharia authority symbols, which are articulated in the language and logic of the institution of *taqlīd*. Modernist groups always encourage reopening the door to *ijtihād* and invite Muslims to leave the interpretive monopoly that the ulama class has held (Quadri 2013).

<sup>20</sup> Endang Mintarja voiced this at a meeting held by Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board on the emergence 'Syarah HPT', 25 September 2020.

**Commented [MOU14]:** Added, is this correct as you need to state the difference in this sentence - and expand it later which you have done.

**Commented [nf15R14]:** Yes, correct. I added this sentence:

In many of its fatwas, Muhammadiyah often only quotes verses of the Qur'an or hadith to strengthen its argument, without citing the opinions of scholars scattered in the Islamic intellectual tradition.

PK – I have added 'other' and removed 'scattered'.

Muhammadiyah, which is heavily inspired by the modernist movement, is oriented towards the Qur'an and Sunnah and tends to attach less importance to the Islamic intellectual tradition that has been built by the ulama. This can be seen from its *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (the methodology Muhammadiyah uses in conducting *ijtihad*), which asserts that Muhammadiyah is not affiliated to a particular school, but the opinions of these schools are only considered in determining religious norms (Anwar 2018). This means that understanding religion in the Muhammadiyah perspective is derived directly from its primary sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah through the *ijtihad* process. However, it should be noted here that the narration that confirms the opinions of the scholars is taken into account in determining norms is not that clear how they are implemented in *tarjih* issues.

In some of its *official religious ijtihad/tarjih products*, the nuances of the opinions of scholars, especially the pre-modern ones do not appear, by choice or otherwise. *Muhammadiyah's The Tarjih Council's* opinion indicates the source of the Islamic intellectual tradition, from whom or which particular school of thought. Thus it appears that El Madury is filling the Muhammadiyah gap in presenting the authority of the Islamic intellectual tradition in religious narratives. For example, in the controversial veil case, the Tarjih Council issued three fatwas in 1993, 2003 and 2009<sup>[21]</sup> (Tim Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat 2019a), 2003 (ibid. 2019b), and 2009 (ibid. 2009). The fatwas issued in 1993 and 2009 emphasised that the veil has no legal basis either in the Qur'an or the Sunnah but that Islamic law commands women to wear the hijab. These two fatwas did not cite the Islamic intellectual tradition, which also accommodates opinions about the veil. Although the Tarjih Council kept in its stance and strengthened the opinion that women's '*aurat*' (parts of the body that should go covered) are the whole body except the face and the palms of the hands, in the 2003 fatwa, the Tarjih Council provides space for those who want to wear the veil by expressing several opinions from the scholars who think so.

In contrast to the *tarjih* fatwas, El Madury's (2019) *uploaded an* article *Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam?* ('Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?') on the SHPTM site refuting the *tarjih* fatwa. In the article, he cites various opinions of scholars in the Islamic intellectual tradition who support mandatory veiling as an effort to build religious authority. From this, it appears that El Madury, apart from attacking the *tarjih* fatwa,

<sup>21</sup> Tim Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat (2009, 2019a, 2019b).

**Commented [MOU16]:** What is this? Principles of Manhaj Tarjih?

**Commented [nf17R16]:** Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah is the official name for the methodology Muhammadiyah uses in conducting *ijtihad*. Perhaps it would be better to add an explanation in brackets. What do you think?

PK – I think it is OK as it is and I have added 'the'.

**Formatted:** Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

**Commented [MOU18]:** Unclear – is the Tarjih Council not part of Muhammadiyah?

**Commented [nf19R18]:** The Tarjih Council is part of Muhammadiyah. Perhaps it would be better if the word Majelis Tarjih was changed to Muhammadiyah. What do you think?

**Commented [MOU20]:** I have moved the citation into footnote as it is a long one.

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: 10 pt, Complex Script Font: 10 pt

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, English (United Kingdom)

believes in maintaining traditional authority, in this case, the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāts*).

What El Madury did in building religious authority can also be captured from what Burhani calls a conversion narrative. Some scholars define religious conversion narratives differently as for example, in the change from one religious tradition to another. William James, as quoted by Burhani (2020: 158<sup>22</sup>), states that religious conversion can also be interpreted as the conversion of a person who is a sinner into someone pious. According to Burhani (2020), people who experience religious conversion, usually after embracing a new tradition or religious understanding, will be hostile to the previous religious tradition or understanding.

El Madury also experienced a religious conversion, in this case, from the NU tradition to Muhammadiyah. On SHPTM as well as his views when interviewed by this author, he introduced himself as someone who had practised the '*kuburiyyun* tradition'<sup>22</sup> and other actions that did not have examples from the Prophet. To convince his fanpage followers, he posted information about his religious conversion from NU to Muhammadiyah. Besides condemning his previous practices, which were deemed to have no basis in the Qur'an and Sunnah, he has had acrimonious debates with the NU *kyai*, Idrus Ramli on various issues, such as *ahlus sunnah wal jamaah* and *wahabi, nahdliyyin* traditions that are often considered heresy, and so on.<sup>on what?</sup>

Commented [MOU21]: Provide page no. of quote.

Commented [nf22R21]: ok

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

### Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Before the advent of the internet and the emergence of various new religious authorities, Muhammadiyah and NU were the two largest religious organisations and authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). However, following the emergence of the so-called micro-celebrity *ustaz*, these two groups, according to some scholars, began to face challenges and threats. The recent study by Wahyudi Akmaliah (2020) shows that the two organisations have responded differently to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was more combative about their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) maintains there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's response look less aggressive.

<sup>22</sup> The tradition of visiting the grave with its associated practices.

Akmaliah is correct on several points, but other perspectives deserve to be considered, especially Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority, especially on the internet.

The weak point, from Akmaliah's study is that there is no adequate elaboration of the assembly that exclusively holds religious authority in Muhammadiyah, namely the Tarjih Council.<sup>23</sup> To trace more precisely how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority ~~is-we~~ have to look at the ~~Tarjih and Tajdid Councils~~.

This ~~discussion will start~~s from the author's experience in attending a meeting held by the Tarjih Council and Tadjid of Muhammadiyah Central Board. The meeting was initiated in response to the emergence of El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim's SHPTM site. It should be noted here that Abdurrahim also contributed writings to this website. He was earlier mentioned as having had permission from Buya Yun to give *syarh* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Judgment Compilation) and is the author of *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*. The initial background for holding this meeting, as revealed by the secretary of the Tarjih Council, Mas'udi, was purely in response to the SHPTM posts by El Madury. However, information about the SHPTM other than the one written by El Madury prompted the board of the Tarjih Council to include the book by Abdurrahim with the same title for the agenda.

On Friday, 7 Safar 1442 AH (25 September 2020), the Tarjih Council invited nine related sectors to discuss concerns over the emergence of the SHPTM on the internet written by the El Madury and Abdurrahim. The nine sector participants were: (1) the executive board of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (2) fatwa division of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (3) chair/secretary of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (4) Dr Endang Mintarja, M.Ag. (Chair of the Jakarta Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council); (5) H. Fathurrahman, Lc., M.S.I. (Chair of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council); (6) H. Budi Setiawan, S.T.; (7) Arif Nurkholis (head of Muhammadiyah Digital Syiar Centre); (8) the manager of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre; and (9) the social media assistance team of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

During the meeting, there were at least four proposals from participants on how best to respond to the SHPTM, especially the article [about the veil](#) by El Madury. The first was to complain to Facebook about the SHPTM so that it could be banned for including an institution's name without permission. According to Fathurrahman Kamal,<sup>23</sup> who was present

<sup>23</sup> Chair of the Tabligh Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board.

Formatted: Indent: First line: 0"

Formatted: Not Highlight

Formatted: Not Highlight

Formatted: Font color: Auto

Formatted: Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

at the forum, the fanpage is already in the illegal category. This proposal was considered by the proponents as a firm proposal ~~and also~~ but that it was ~~not~~ too risky. The second was to use a persuasive approach in the form of clarification or an appeal to El Madury not to use the name *Himpunan Putusan Tajih* (HPT) or something that is associated with *tarjih*. Its proponents consider this approach to be softer and more reflective of being Muhammadiyah members in particular, and Muslims in general. The third proposal was to use institutional authority in writing an official letter on behalf of the Tarjih Council to El Madury. The fourth idea that was considered more practical and efficient was to place the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it on social media. This would avoid being drawn into unfruitful correspondence on SHPTM.

However, there was no agreement on which approach should be undertaken despite long discussions. It was agreed instead that there would be a follow up with another forum. Since this author started writing (3 April 2022) there has been no further meeting. The emergence of SHPTM on the internet and its effects have been considered a serious problem by the Tarjih Council. The meeting's participants were generally uneasy about the appearance of El Madury and his fanpage. In addition, they wanted El Madury to be warned or reprimanded since SHPTM is considered a threat to religious authority of the Tarjih Council. This illustrates that Muhammadiyah, through its official religious assembly, the Tarjih Council, is not passive in responding to the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. However, only certain cases and not all micro-celebrity *ustaz* who appear on social media have drawn the Tarjih Council's attention. Although there has yet to be a follow up meeting, the Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an official institution supporting the Tarjih Council illustrates how Muhammadiyah struggles to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is an institution that was founded in 2016 (~~Majelis Tarjih Dahlan 2016; Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan 2016~~) by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Ahmad Dahlan University (~~Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah tarjih.or.id 2016~~) (~~Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, n.d.~~). Despite being a new institution, its legality is clear, and it has formal authority. In the Muhammadiyah tradition as an organisation, such legality is essential. Thus when someone from Muhammadiyah, speaks on another person's behalf or endorses an approach, the speaker's status is below that of the institution and cannot be assumed to be that of institutions within Muhammadiyah which, although new, have legality. In the context of El Madury and the SHPTM fanpage, this is important. Even though El Madury claims he has

**Commented [MOU23]:** What do you mean by risky – less aggressive?

**Commented [nf24R23]:** I apologise; I didn't write that sentence correctly. I meant too risky, without the word 'not'.

PK – should be **but that it was also too risky**. You don't explain why it is 'too risky'.

**Commented [MOU25]:** There is a date if you mean this article: <https://tarjih.or.id/pembukaan-halaqah-majelis-tarjih-launching-pusat-tarjih-muhammadiyah-dan-muhammadiyah-observatorium-network/>. Note that your url in References does not bring up the article.

**Commented [nf26R25]:** Ok. I fixed it.



obtained permission to make *syarah* on the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* from a charismatic figure in Muhammadiyah, Buya Yunahar, legally it is not valid. In that context, Buya Yunahar spoke on behalf of himself, not on behalf of Muhammadiyah.

Fronted by young Muhammadiyah cadres, the majority of whom are alumni of Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Tarjih Ulama Education, PUTM),<sup>24</sup> Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays a role in supporting the Tarjih Council programmes. These are relatively under-performing and facing obstacles, particularly on using social media to disseminate their official religious *ijtihad*~~products~~. The members of the Tarjih Council, who are relatively old, need support from young cadres. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays an essential role in assisting the Tarjih Council in maintaining its religious authority on the internet. It responded to El Madury and SHPTM, by being proactive with a poster (Figure 1) on social media and in print form, containing information related to the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it.

---

<sup>24</sup> PUTM is an educational institution under the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board designed to produce a cadre of Muhammadiyah scholars. PUTM organises a special programme that educates and prepares Muhammadiyah *tarjih* scholars who are competent in the religious field. The birth of PUTM was based on the concern of some Muhammadiyah leaders about the increasing scarcity of ulama in and from Muhammadiyah (Fauzi 2020a).



Figure 1. Poster with information on the official social media accounts affiliated to the Tarjih Council. Source: Muhammadiyah Central Board's Tarjih Council, year?

Are you often confused about finding sources of reference about Islam from the perspective of Muhammadiyah?

There is no need to be confused anymore because various social media are straightforward for us to access. Tarjih (Council) has come with a more trendy look.

✓ Easy to read anywhere

**Commented [MOU27]:** As with ALL figures, do you have permission to reproduce these from the copyright holders? Note that all figures require minimum of 300 dpi.

**Commented [nf28R27]:** Yes, I do.

And all figures have met the minimum dpi requirement

PK – please add the year it appeared for ALL figures, excluding translated ones.

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Calibri, Complex Script  
Font: Arial, English (United States), Check spelling and grammar

**Formatted:** Normal

As members of Muh

Here are some media



decisions and fatwas of

't be confused anymore.

1

ole!

Formatted: Centered

Although the poster at  
Madury, the main message i

IPTM site created by El  
n the Muhammadiyah

followers about the official accounts of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it. This would hopefully let Muhammadiyah members understand how its official religious voice is disseminated on the internet. Following this, Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah successively uploaded other, more varied posters to indirectly counter the SHPTM fanpage. Some other examples of these posters are shown in Figures 3 and 5.

**Figure 3.** Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council. Source: Muhammadiyah Central Board's Tarjih Council, **year?**

Do you know?

The Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah now have an official YouTube channel, (namely) the Tarjih Channel.

Have you subscribed yet?

**Figure 4.** Translation of Figure 3.



**Figure 5.** Information about the website fatwatarjih.or.id, an official website affiliated to the Tarjih Council containing fatwas. Source: Muhammadiyah Central Board's Tarjih Council, **year?**

Fatwatarjih.or.id is the official website for the Tarjih and the Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board (MTT).

The Media Team of Fatwa Tarjih, through this website, has been, is and will continue to strive consistently to publish various ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council. Until now, tarjih fatwa collections from 1997 to 2018 have entered the editing stage, and some are just waiting to be published.

**Figure 6.** Translation of Figure 5.



Mau tau sejarah lengkapnya?  
Atau mau cari produk tarjih?  
yuk bisa kalian kepoin di sini 🗨️

**tarjih.or.id**

tarjih channel  
majelistarjih  
pusattarjih\_muhammadiyah  
Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Muhammadiyah

tarjih.or.id  
fatwatatarjih.or.id



**Figure 7.** Information on the official website of the Tarjih Council. [Source: Muhammadiyah Central Board's Tarjih Council, year?](#)

**Formatted:** Font color: Red

Do you want to know the full history (of the Tarjih Council)?  
Or do you want to look for ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council?  
Come on; you can find out on this website: tarjih.or.id

**Figure 8.** Translation of Figure 7.

The use of informal language and emoticons typical of millennials indicate the audience that the Tarjih Council wants to target. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah team understands that informal language will appeal to its target audience. This is aimed at not only establishing the authority of the Tarjih Council but 'millennialisation' i.e. to reach out to the younger generation familiar with social media. Suyadi and Widodo (2019) note that millennialisation

is an alternative way to develop knowledge that will synergised with various online media and digital technology. In the context of *tarjih* millennialisation, *Muhammadiyah's tarjih products* official religious *ijtihad* that tend to be disseminated in a conventional, monotonous, and uncreative manner are now communicated through social media in more contextual packaging. This means that that the Tarjih Council and its various official religious *ijtihad* products, which previously were always identified with the 'old', are now consciously aiming to include young people.

The religious authority of the Tarjih Council in cyberspace, especially when connected with the appearance of El Madury and SHPTM, was greatly helped by the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah and its young Muhammadiyah cadres. It manages various social media platforms with large numbers of followers, and has helped maintain Muhammadiyah's religious authority by balancing and suppressing the presence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. Its contents are fatwas and decisions of the Tarjih Council with more appealing visualisation to reach out to the millennials.

Although the number of social media followers of the Tarjih Council is less than that for the NU and Salafi groups, at least the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah acts as a compass for Muhammadiyah followers who question its religious authority, especially with the emergence of El Madury's version in SHPTM. The administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah's social media have received many messages either through the comments column or direct messages in its inbox, which question the authority of SHPTM.<sup>25</sup> Here, the vital role of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is increasingly finding its momentum.

## Conclusion

Although it can be said that Muhammadiyah's religious influence and authority on the internet are inferior and lag behind other religious groups, Muhammadiyah is still trying to manage its authority, especially when facing threats from micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By focusing on Zulkarnain El Madury and his SHPTM social media page, this article offers a different perspective from previous studies by analysing the work of the *Majelis Tarjih Tarjih Council* as the only institution in Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas. This article shows that Muhammadiyah has its own way of responding to the emergence of new religious

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Ariful Hazam, Ilham Ibrahim, and Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, September 2020. They are Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah social media admin.

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

authorities. With the help of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an institution in its fold, the Tarjih Council has made continuous efforts through social media and its official website to counter new voices that threaten its authority. Muhammadiyah's response was neither aggressive nor radical but it clarified its stance without mentioning who precisely was being targeted. What Muhammadiyah did was in line with the Javanese proverb *Ngluruk tanpo bolo, menang tanpo ngasorake* ('win without defeat, win without humiliation [of others]'). The form of Muhammadiyah's response is inherited from its founder, Ahmad Dahlan. As seen by Peacock (1978), Ahmad Dahlan carried out many social transformations calmly and systematically rather than in revolutionary ways without being provocative.

In a broader context, the case of Zulkarnain El Madury also provides a lesson that using the name Muhammadiyah to justify personal opinions or legitimise particular interests is wrong. Muhammadiyah has the reputation of a very well managed organisation (Barton 2014; *Suara Muhammadiyah* 2019) which is its strength and gives it clout compared to other religious organisations in Indonesia, such as NU. In short, authority in Muhammadiyah lies in the institution itself and is not based on personality. It differs from NU, where power and authority tend to lie in personal figures, such as *kyai* or *gus* (Fauzi 2020b).

Muhammadiyah followers who understand its basic rules are not easily influenced by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. They are aware that Muhammadiyah's official religious stance is only be issued by the Tarjih Council and that those external to the Tarjih Council or even specific Muhammadiyah figures who give religious opinions, speak only for themselves as individuals and not the organisation. This would be the case, for example, even if the religious opinion emanates from the chair of the Tarjih Council as an individual. This did occur when Syamsul Anwar,<sup>26</sup> the current chair of the Tarjih Council, ~~had a different~~ opinion from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council on the issue of *iftitāh* prayer (opening prayer for night prayer [*qiyām al-lail*]).<sup>27</sup> For Anwar, iftitāh prayer is a two short rak'ah prayer that is performed before qiyām al-lail, with the condition that it must be

<sup>26</sup> As this article is about to be published, Muhammadiyah will hold a five-year event to elect its chairs. This event is called *Muktamar Muhammadiyah* (Muhammadiyah Congress). At the 48th Muhammadiyah Congress in Solo last November 2022, Syamsul Anwar was elected as one of the thirteen General Chairs of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the period 2022–2027. See more <https://muhammadiyah.or.id/berikut-susunan-pimpinan-pusat-muhammadiyah-periode-2022-2027/>

<sup>27</sup> For Anwar (2013), the *iftitāh* prayer comprises two short *rak'ah* prayers that are performed before *qiyām al-lail*, with the condition that it must be preceded by sleep, otherwise there is no need to perform the *iftitāh* prayer. However, the Tarjih Council holds that the *iftitāh* prayer consists of two short *rak'ah* prayers performed before *qiyām al-lail*, whether preceded by sleep or not (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2011; Tim Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2019a).

**Commented [MOU29]:** Changed phrasing – OK with you?

**Formatted:** English (United Kingdom)

**Commented [nf30]:** I added updated information about Samsul Anwar's position in Muhammadiyah. What do you think?

PK – I think this info is extraneous and unnecessary. The different opinion for the night prayer is not critical for the article either but we could put it in a fn.

**Commented [MOU31]:** Unclear on your fn text – is this something new the 5-year election or routine?

**Commented [MOU32]:** I added updated information about Samsul Anwar's position in Muhammadiyah. What do you think?

PK – I think this info is extraneous and unnecessary and have deleted the footnote. The different opinion for the night prayer is not critical for the article either but it is an interesting example and I have put it in a fn.

**Commented [MOU33]:** Unclear, why the 'a' - did you mean ARE two short *rak'ah* prayers?

**Commented [nf34R33]:** I was mistaken again it seems. I changed it.

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, Strikethrough, Not Superscript/ Subscript

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, 10 pt, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, 10 pt

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, 10 pt, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, 10 pt

**Formatted:** Font: 10 pt, Complex Script Font: 10 pt

**Formatted:** Font: 10 pt, Complex Script Font: 10 pt

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, 10 pt, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, 10 pt

**Formatted:** Font: 10 pt, Complex Script Font: 10 pt

**Formatted:** Indent: First line: 0", Space After: 0 pt, Line spacing: single

**Formatted:** Font: 10 pt, Complex Script Font: 10 pt, Not Highlight

**Formatted:** Font: 10 pt, Complex Script Font: 10 pt

**Formatted:** English (United Kingdom)



preceded by sleep first. If it is not preceded by sleep, then for Anwar (2013), there is no need to perform the *iftitāh* prayer. However, according to the Tarjih Council, the *iftitāh* prayer is two short *rak'ah* prayer that is performed before *qiyām al-lail*, whether preceded by sleep or not (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2011; Tim Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2019a).

While Anwar's opinion clearly differs from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council, the prevailing opinion in Muhammadiyah is that of the Tarjih Council, not the chair of the Tarjih Council. Within Muhammadiyah, such religious differences of opinion are common as usually happens in *fiqh* discourse in general. The difference between El Madury and Anwar is that the latter does not act in the name of Muhammadiyah or the Tarjih Council when he has a different view. Instead, on many occasions, he urges Muhammadiyah followers to abide by the opinion of the Tarjih Council on the *iftitāh* prayer.<sup>28</sup> Thus Anwar has shown he can compromise his personal religious opinion with his professional attitude in the organisation. In this case, he understands that using the name Muhammadiyah to legitimise individual opinions or interests is not justifiable.

### Acknowledgements

Permission for this research PJB-002/SP3/LPPM-UAD/VI/2020 and funding were provided by the ethical board of Ahmad Dahlan University Research and Development Institute (Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan).

I am grateful to *ustaz* Zulkarnain El Madury for his exceptional help and support during my fieldwork. I also thank Amiruddin, Arif Nur Kholis, Muhammad Muflih, Wahyudi Abdurrahim, Robby Karman, Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, Ilham Ibrahim, Ariful Hazam, and the members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council for providing information regarding my research. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article. Errors, if any, are solely mine.

### Note on contributor

<sup>28</sup> On several occasions, this author has heard Syamsul Anwar's direct appeal to Muhammadiyah members to follow the opinion of the Tarjih Council on this aspect of the *iftitāh* prayer.

*Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi* is a lecturer in the Department of Hadith Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He has published widely on a variety of issues relating to Islamic Studies, including al-Quran, hadith, Islamic law, social media and da'wah, and Muhammadiyah studies. Email: niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id

## References

- Abror, Robby. 2020. Syeikh Yunahar, ulama Muhammadiyah kharismatik [Sheikh Yunahar, a charismatic Muhammadiyah cleric]. 3 January. <<https://menara62.com/syeikh-yunahar-ulama-muhammadiyah-kharismatik/>> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2018. Media sosial dan pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [Social media and shifting religious authority]. 12 December. <[https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media\\_sosial\\_dan\\_pergeseran\\_otoritas\\_keagamaan](https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media_sosial_dan_pergeseran_otoritas_keagamaan)> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2020. The demise of moderate Islam: new media, contestation, and reclaiming religious authorities. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10 (1): 1–24.
- Alfaqi, Mifdal Zusron. 2015. Memahami Indonesia melalui prespektif nasionalisme, politik identitas, serta solidaritas [Understanding Indonesia through the perspectives of nationalism, identity politics, and solidarity]. *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 28 (2): 111–116.
- Alvara Research Center. 2020. Ramadhan dan pandemi Covid-19: semangat ibadah tak surut, konsumsi tersendat. <[https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN\\_DAN\\_PANDEMI\\_COVID-19\\_SEMANGAT\\_IBADAH\\_TAK\\_SURUT\\_KONSUMSI\\_TERSENDAT.pdf](https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN_DAN_PANDEMI_COVID-19_SEMANGAT_IBADAH_TAK_SURUT_KONSUMSI_TERSENDAT.pdf)> Accessed 23 February 2023.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2007. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer* [Contemporary Islamic law studies]. Jakarta: RM Books.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2013. *Salat Tarawih: Tinjauan usul fiqh, sejarah, dan fiqh* [Tarawih prayer: usul fiqh, history, and fiqh perspectives]. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2016. Fatwā, purification and dynamization: a study of tarjīh in Muhammadiyah. *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (1): 27–44.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2018. *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Panitia Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih Muhammadiyah XXX.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2020. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer Bagian dua* [insert English

**Commented [MOU35]:** Note: IMW housestyle **does not** include DOI links unless it brings the reader to the full article via Open Access and not to some login page.

**Commented [MOU36]:** Is the year of your accession correct – that you accessed it after you wrote the article?

[translation here in roman]. Yogyakarta: UAD Press.

- Barton, Greg. 2014. The Gülen movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: progressive Islamic thought, religious philanthropy and civil society in Turkey and Indonesia. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25 (3): 287–301.
- Buchari, Sri Astuti. 2014. *Kebangkitan etnis menuju politik identitas* [Ethnic awakening towards identity politics]. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Bunt, Gary R. 2003. *Islam in the digital age: e-jihad, online fatwas and cyber Islamic environments*. London: Pluto Press.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2005. The 45th Muhammadiyah Congress contest between literal-conservative and liberal-moderate Muslims in Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 12 (1): 185–189.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2013. Liberal and conservative discourses in the Muhammadiyah: the struggle for the face of reformist Islam in Indonesia. In Martin van Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary developments in Indonesian Islam: explaining the 'conservative turn'*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2016. Aksi bela Islam: konservatisme dan fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. *Maarif* 11 (2): 15–29.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2020. Muslim televangelists in the making: conversion narratives and the construction of religious authority. *Muslim World* 110 (2): 154–175.
- Burhanudin, Jajat. 2004. The fragmentation of religious authority: Islamic print media in early 20th century Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 11 (1): 23–62.
- Campbell, H.A. and Teusner, P.E. 2011. Religious authority in the age of the internet. In *Christian Reflection, Virtual Lives*. Waco TX: Baylor University Press, pp. 59–68. <<https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/130950.pdf>>
- Chairi, Effendi. 2019. Ketiadaan otoritas terpusat dalam fenomena kontemporer di Indonesia [The absence of a centralised authority in contemporary phenomena in Indonesia]. *SANGKĕP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 2 (2):197–215.
- Chaplin. Chris. 2021. *Salafism and the State: Islamic activism and national identity in contemporary Indonesia*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.
- Dakta.com. 2016. Aa Gym ajak ribuan jamaahnya ikut aksi bela Islam III [Aa Gym invites thousands of congregants to join Islamic Defence Action III]. 29 November. <<http://www.dakta.com/news/7329/aa-gym-ajak-ribuan-jamaahnya-ikut-aksi-bela-islam-iii>> Accessed 2 February 2020.
- Fadl, Khaled Abou El. 2014. *Speaking in God's name: Islamic law, authority, and women*.

London: Oneworld Publications.

- Farhan, Farhan. 2017. Pesan dakwah Felix Siauw di media sosial (perspektif meaning and media). *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Administrasi Islam* 1 (2): 209–226.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2017. Peranan Maqasid Al-Shariah dalam memahami Hadith: kajian terhadap fatwa Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah [The role of Maqasid Al-Shariah in understanding Hadith: a study of the fatwa of the Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah]. MA thesis, University of Malaya.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020a. PUTM dan kaderisasi ulama: menelusuri latar belakang lahirnya Lembaga Kaderisasi Ulama Muhammadiyah [PUTM and clerical regeneration: tracing the background of the birth of the Muhammadiyah Clerical Cadre Institute]. <<https://santricendekia.com/putm-dan-kaderisasi-ulama-menelusuri-latar-belakang-lahirnya-lembaga-kaderisasi-ulama-muhammadiyah/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020b. Tantangan kader ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah di era 4.0 [Challenges for Tarjih Muhammadiyah ulama cadres in the 4.0 era]. 21 July. *Suara 'Aisyiyah* <<https://suaraaisyiyah.id/tantangan-kader-ulama-tarjih-muhammadiyah-di-era-4-0/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Fealy, Greg. 2008. Consuming Islam: commodified religion and aspirational pietism in contemporary Indonesia. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.
- Gesuri. 2020. Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia kehilangan ulama kharismatik [Yunahar Ilyas passed away, Indonesia lost a charismatic scholar]. 3 January. <<https://www.gesuri.id/internal/yunahar-ilyas-wafat-indonesia-kehilangan-ulama-kharismatik-b1YFoZpRY>> Accessed 20 March 2020.
- Hew, Wai Weng. 2018. The art of dakwah: social media, visual persuasion and the Islamist propagation of Felix Siauw. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (134): 61–79.
- Hoesterey, James B. 2008. Marketing morality: the rise, fall and rebranding of Aa Gym. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: Religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, pp. 95–114.
- Hope Cheong, Pauline. 2016. Religious authority and social media branding in a culture of religious celebrification. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*, University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 81–102.
- Horsfield, Peter. 2016. The media and religious authority from ancient to modern. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*. University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 37–66.

- IB Times Indonesia. 2020. 100 situs Islam Indonesia, NU Online peringkat pertama [100 Indonesian Islamic websites, NU Online ranks first]. 10 July. <IBTimes.Id. 2020. <<https://ibtimes.id/100-situs-islam-indonesia-nu-online-peringkat-pertama/>> Accessed 23 February 2023.
- Ilyas, Yunahar. 2012. *Kuliah Akhlaq* [Akhlaq lecture]. XII. Yogyakarta: LPPI Universitas Muhammdiyah Yogyakarta.
- Khamis, S., Ang, L. and Welling, R. 2017. Self-branding, ‘micro-celebrity’ and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191–208.
- Khomalia, Isti and Rahman, Khairul Arief. 2018. Micro hijabers celebrity: membentuk identitas dengan update self-story via instagram (kasus dian pelangi). *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban dan Pemikiran Islam* 2 (1): 33–42.
- Kompas. 2020. Sejumlah tokoh hadir prosesi pemakaman ketua PP Muhammadiyah Yunahar Ilyas [Many figures attended the funeral procession of Muhammadiyah chairman Yunahar Ilyas]. 3 January. <<https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/03/19142441/sejumlah-tokoh-hadiri-prosesi-pemakaman-ketua-pp-muhammadiyah-yunahar-ilyas>> Accessed 3 April 2022.
- Labiq. 2019. Pengaruh new media terhadap pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [The influence of new media on shifting religious authority]. 19 April. <<https://geotimes.co.id/opini/pengaruh-new-media-terhadap-pergeseran-otoritas-keagamaan>> Accessed 19 October 2020.
- Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. 2010. *Politik identitas dan masa depan pluralisme Indonesia*. Edited by Samsu Rizal Panggabean et al. Jakarta: Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (PUSAD) Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina.
- Madury, Zulkarnain El. 2019. Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam? [Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?]. 2 November. <<https://www.facebook.com/zulkarnainsumenep/posts/2386248524961601>> Accessed 5 May 2020.
- Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah. 2016. Pembukaan Halaqah, Majelis Tarjih Launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan Muhammadiyah Observatorium Network [Halaqah opening, Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and Muhammadiyah Observatory Network]. 20 August. <<https://tarjih.or.id/pembukaan-halaqah-majelis-tarjih-launching-pusat-tarjih-muhammadiyah-dan-muhammadiyah-observatorium-network/>> Accessed 6 October 2023.
- Majelis Tarjih Dahlan, Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. 2016.

Commented [MOU37]: Note I have changed entry name from tajdid.or.id

- Nota Kesepakatan Majelis Tarjih Dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Tentang Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di Islamic Center Universitas Ahmad Dahlan [Memorandum of Agreement between the Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board and Ahmad Dahlan University on the Management of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre at the Islamic Centre of Ahmad Dahlan University]. Yogyakarta.
- Maskur, Maskur and Noor, Irfan Noor. 2014. Ustadz selebriti Abdullah Gymnastiar dalam budaya populer (perspektif hipersemiotika Yasraf Amir Piliang) [Celebrity Ustadz Abdullah Gymnastiar in popular culture (Yasraf Amir Piliang's hyper semiotics perspective)]. *Jurnal Studia Insania* 2 (1): 47–57.
- Matheson, Craig. 1987. Weber and the classification of forms of legitimacy. *British Journal of Sociology* 38 (2): 199–215.
- Muhammadiyah Central Board. 2023. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed **day month year**.
- Nisa, Eva F. 2019. Internet and Muslim women. In Ronald Lukens-Bull and Mark Woodward (eds), *Handbook of contemporary Islam and Muslim lives*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer, pp. 1–19.
- Peacock, James L. 1978. *Purifying the Faith: the Muhammadiyah movement in Indonesian Islam*. Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2011. *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2016. Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan MuON [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and MuON]. 20 August. <<http://www.umm.ac.id/id/muhammadiyah/7070.html>> Accessed 20 March 2021.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Berikut Susunan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah pPeriode 2022–2027 [The following is the composition of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the 2022–2027 pPeriod] <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/berikut-susunan-pimpinan-pusat-muhammadiyah-periode-2022-2027/>> Accessed 07 October 2023.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Majelis Tabligh [Tabligh Council]. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 07 October 2023.
- Postill, John and Pink, Sarah. 2012. Social media ethnography: the digital researcher in a messy web. *Media International Australia* 145 (1): 123–134.
- Pribadi, Yanwar. 2019. Fragmentasi umat dan penciptaan otoritas keagamaan: tanggapan

terhadap ‘Islam lokal’ dan ‘Islam asing’ di Indonesia [Ummah fragmentation and the creation of religious authority: responses to ‘local Islam’ and ‘foreign Islam’ in Indonesia]. *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 21 (1): 103–119.  
<<https://jmb.lipi.go.id/jmb/article/view/828/455>>

- Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah. n.d. *Panduan pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre management guide]. Majelis Tarjih, Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta.
- Quadri, Syed Junaid A. 2013. Transformations of tradition: modernity in the thought of Muḥammad Bakhīt Al-Muṭī‘ī. PhD thesis, McGill University.
- Rahman, Asjmuni Abdur et al. 1985. Laporan penelitian Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (suatu studi tentang sistem dan metode penentuan hukum) [Research report of Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (a study of the system and method of determining the law)]. Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga.
- Rakyat Merdeka. 2019. Dubes Malaysia jenguk ketum MUI Yunahar Ilyas di Yogyakarta [Malaysian ambassador visits MUI chairman Yunahar Ilyas in Yogyakarta]. 5 November. <<https://rm.id/baca-berita/internasional/21745/dubes-malaysia-jenguk-ketum-mui-yunahar-ilyas-di-yogyakarta>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Riesebrodt, Martin. 1999. Charisma in Max Weber’s Sociology of Religion. *Religion* 29 (1): 1–14.
- Sadasri, Lidwina Mutia. 2017. Selebriti mikro di media baru kajian presentasi diri dalam vlog selebriti mikro [Micro-celebrities in new media: a study of self-presentation in micro-celebrity vlogs]. *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi Dan Opini Publik* 21 (2): 167–181.  
<<https://jurnal.kominfo.go.id/index.php/jpkop/article/view/1218/720>>
- Saefullah, Hikmawan. 2022. Media baru, publik baru: mengkonfigurasi ulang ruang publik Islam [New media, new publics: reconfiguring the Islamic public sphere]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sammy, Abdullah. 2022. Peluang dan tantangan dakwah digital Muhammadiyah [Opportunities and challenges of Muhammadiyah digital da’wah]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sanjaya, Makroen. 2022. Peta ideologi islam di media sosial [The map of Islamic ideology on social media]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.

- Senft, Theresa M. 2008. *Camgirls: celebrity and community in the age of social networks*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Shamsy, Ahmed El. 2013. The Ḥāshiyah in Islamic law: a sketch of the Shāfi‘ī literature. *Oriens* 41 (3-4): 289–315.
- Spencer, Martin E. 1970. Weber on legitimate norms and authority. *British Journal of Sociology* 21 (2): 123–134.
- Suara Muhammadiyah. 2019. Hyung Jun Kim: sistem di Muhammadiyah sungguh ideal [Hyung Jun Kim: Muhammadiyah’s system is ideal]. <<https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/08/01/hyung-jun-kim-sistem-di-muhammadiyah-sungguh-ideal/>> Accessed 9 April 2022.
- Suyadi and Widodo, Hendro. 2019. Millennialization of Islamic education based on neuroscience in the third generation university in Yogyakarta Indonesia. *QIIS International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7 (1): 173–202.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat. 2009. Hukum tentang jenggot dan cadar [Islamic law perspective on beards and veils]. *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine, September. Yogyakarta.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat. 2019a. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 4*. Cetakan IX. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat. 2019b. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 7*. Cetakan IV. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Tirto.id. 2018. Dari Aa’ Gym ke Felix Siauw: ustaz medsos & medium dakwah politis. Tirto.Id. 16 January. <<https://tirto.id/dari-aa-gym-ke-felix-siauw-ustaz-medsos-medium-dakwah-politis-cCGf>> Accessed 5 February 2020.
- Turner, Bryan S. 2007. Religious authority and the new media. *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2): 117–134.
- Turner, Graeme. 2010. *Ordinary people and the media: the demotic turn*. Los Angeles CA: Sage.
- Widodo, Arif. 2017. Transformative intellectual discourse and movement of Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM). *Iseedu: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices* 1 (1): 126–151. <<https://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/iseedu/article/view/5423/3542>>
- Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change*. Princetoon NJ: Princeton University Press.

Formatted: Indent: Before: 0", Hanging: 0.39"



—

## ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY *USTAZ* PHENOMENON

### Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

#### ABSTRACTS

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the fragmentation of religious authority. In the Indonesian context, the mainstream religious authority held by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has been challenged and threatened by micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This article examines the emergence of the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage on Facebook, that has threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority. It was created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board. It analyses Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace. It also takes a closer look at the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah), an assembly that has the exclusive authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* decisions other than fatwas within Muhammadiyah, that differs from previous studies. This article also discusses lessons that can be learned from the case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the response of the Tarjih Council.

#### KEYWORDS

Fragmentation of religious authority; micro-celebrity *ustaz*; Muhammadiyah; religious authority; *tarjih*.

#### ABSTRAK

Kemunculan internet dan media sosial telah mempertajam fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. Dalam konteks Indonesia, otoritas keagamaan arus utama yang dipegang oleh Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) telah ditantang dan diancam oleh para ustaz mikro-selebriti. Artikel ini mengkaji kemunculan *fanpage* Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah di Facebook, yang dibuat dan dikelola oleh Zulkarnain El Madury, seseorang

yang mengklaim sebagai ustaz Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, karena dianggap mengancam otoritas keagamaan Muhammadiyah. Penelitian ini menganalisis upaya Muhammadiyah dalam mempertahankan otoritas keagamaannya di dunia maya, dengan melihat lebih dekat pada apa yang telah dilakukan oleh Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah, sebuah majelis yang memiliki otoritas eksklusif untuk mengeluarkan fatwa dan produk ijtihad keagamaan resmi di dalam Muhammadiyah. Artikel ini juga membahas pelajaran yang dapat dipetik dari kasus Zulkarnain El Madury dan respon Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

#### KATA KUNCI

Ustaz mikro-selebriti; fragmentasi; otoritas keagamaan; Muhammadiyah; tarjih.

#### Introduction

The Alvira Research Center (2020) survey was surprising as it stated that the clerics most heard by the public, especially in Ramadan 2020, were not from the official Muhammadiyah board. Although Ustaz Adi Hidayat was included as one of the 15 most popular clerics in the survey, he cannot be said to be an official representative of Muhammadiyah.<sup>1</sup> He is indeed an alumnus of the Darul Arqam Muhammadiyah Garut Islamic Boarding School. Apart from not being involved in Muhammadiyah, he does not convey Muhammadiyah's religious ideas in his lectures. Shortly after the Alvira Research Center survey was released, IBTimes.id (2020), an Islamic website managed by young Muhammadiyah intellectuals, published a report ranking the 100 most popular Islamic websites in Indonesia. The majority of these sites are managed by or affiliated to Nahdliyyin (NU followers) and Salafi groups with few such sites operated by or affiliated to Muhammadiyah. The Alvira Research Center survey and the IBTimes.id report show that Muhammadiyah, in terms of influence and religious authority on the internet, is lagging behind other religious groups which is ironic for an organisation claiming to represent the progressive Islamic group.

<sup>1</sup> As this article is about to be published, the Muhammadiyah Central Board has included Ustaz Adi Hidayat on the board of the Tabligh Council of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the period 2022–2027. See more <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>>

<sup>2</sup> For more comprehensive information on the activism of Salafi groups, readers can refer to a work written by see Chris Chaplin entitled *Salafism and the State: Islamic Activism and National Identity in Contemporary Indonesia* (2012).

**Commented [nf1]:** I am adding a footnote here explaining the latest Adi Hidayat update. What do you think?

PK – That's fine but wouldn't you need to rephrase the text since it now makes him a representative of the Tabligh Council of the Muhammadiyah Central Board – so does that mean he is an official representative?

**Commented [nf2R1]:** Okay. I re-paraphrased the text to be as below. What do you think?

Although Ustaz Adi Hidayat, a rising young preacher and an alumnus of the Darul Arqam Muhammadiyah Garut Islamic Boarding School, was included as one of the 15 most popular clerics in the survey, he cannot be said to be an official representative of Muhammadiyah. Indeed, after the 48th Muhammadiyah Congress (Muktamar Muhammadiyah) in Solo in 2022, he was included in the board of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council of the Muhammadiyah Central Board. However, apart from the fact that in 2020 and before, he was not officially included in the Muhammadiyah board, he also did not convey official Muhammadiyah religious ideas in his lectures.

**Formatted:** Not Highlight

**Commented [MOU3]:** Should there be a fn on Salafi groups e.g. pointing readers to Chris Chaplin (2022) - [https://brill.com/view/journals/bki/178/2-3/article-p338\\_9.xml](https://brill.com/view/journals/bki/178/2-3/article-p338_9.xml)

**Commented [nf4R3]:** I agree with you. I will add a footnote for readers to pay attention to Chaplin's work.

PK – you need then to include Chaplin in the References which I have done for you. And my googling brings up his publication date as 2021, not 2022. [https://brill.com/view/journals/bki/178/2-3/article-p338\\_9.xml?language=en](https://brill.com/view/journals/bki/178/2-3/article-p338_9.xml?language=en)

**Commented [nf5R3]:** Thank you, Pauline.

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, English

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the so-called fragmentation of religious authority. Eva F. Nisa (2019), for example, mentions that the proliferation of various digital platforms is directly proportional to the increasing fragmentation of religious authority. Islamic discourse is monopolised not only by an elite group of scholars or mainstream religious groups, but also by persons or groups that have not been considered in Islamic discourse. Furthermore, the presence of the internet and social media has led to the birth of what is called micro-celebrity. Theresa M. Senft (2008) defines micro-celebrity as a new style of online performance that involves increasing popularity on social media such as videos, blogs, and networking sites. These micro-celebrities unlike conventional celebrities, emerge from what is known as new media (Senft 2008).

Of course, not all new media users have the adjective 'micro-celebrity'. Only those who experience what Graeme Turner (2010) terms 'the demotic turn', namely, the increasing visibility of ordinary people to appear as celebrities in the media, especially online media. In turn, both conventional and micro-celebrity exist in various public spheres, and the discourse on them is characterised as influencers, stimulants of consumerism, enthusiasm, public debate, and various activism (Sadasri 2017).

By borrowing the theory of micro-celebrities in the study of new media, we can then read how these micro-celebrities have also come to the fore in the religious realm. The emergence of ulama, *ustaz* (religious teachers), and religious leaders who become influencers in new media can perhaps be termed as a form of a micro-celebrity *ustaz* image. Felix Siauw is a prominent example. A convert, who is now a preacher, Siauw has a massive following on social media. In 2018, for example, he had 2.6 million followers on Twitter, and in 2022 it reached 3.3 million. Felix Siauw's Instagram account has around 4.9 million followers. It can even be said that he is the *ustaz* who has the most followers on social media (Tirto 2018), making him one of the leading social media preachers in Indonesia today (Hew 2018). What Felix Siauw posts on his social media has more or less influenced the map of religious authorities in Indonesia.

The existence of the internet and the continuing development of technology allows the emergence of many other micro-celebrity *ustaz*, both in the national arena more generally or more specifically in internal religious organisations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, Persis (Persatuan Islam) or others. In the context of Muhammadiyah, the largest modernist Islamic organisation began to be challenged for its religious authority by a preacher who was said to

be part of Muhammadiyah itself, namely Zulkarnain El Madury. He claims to be a Muhammadiyah cadre and often introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board. In recent years, El Madury has been noticed by Muhammadiyah administrators and Muhammadiyah cadres<sup>3</sup> and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah) has discussed him in a special meeting. This is because the posts on the Facebook page that El Madury manages, *Syarah Himpunan Putus Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (henceforth SHPTM), often differ significantly from – and to some extent delegitimise – a Muhammadiyah fatwa or official decision. Responses from grassroots or Muhammadiyah followers vary. This can be seen, for example, from the comments on each post. Some defend and remain adamant on the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah, but not a few were affected and followed what was conveyed by El Madury on his Facebook page.

This is where it becomes crucial to see how Muhammadiyah attempts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace, especially among its members and the public. By conducting web content analysis (Postill and Pink 2012) on SHPTM and official social media accounts and those affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this article shows how El Madury builds his narratives and, in turn, how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority on the internet. Additionally, field research was conducted and key actors were interviewed offline and online in a semi-structured format.<sup>4</sup> Apart from El Madury, the key actors are members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Digital Broadcast Centre (Pusat Syiar Digital Muhammadiyah), ~~several prominent figures,~~ Muhammadiyah activists as well as Muhammadiyah grassroots.

### **Fragmentation of religious authority, new preacher and micro-celebrity *ustaz* phenomenon**

Fragmentation of religious authority is a phenomenon that occurs in various religious communities and is not limited to Islam (B.S. Turner 2007; Campbell and Teusner 2011; Hope Cheong 2016). The fragmentation of religious authority is also a global phenomenon as pointed out by Gary R. Bunt (-2003) who states that the new media have shaped diverse understandings among individual Muslims worldwide about e-jihad (electronic jihad). The

<sup>3</sup> This author's online and offline interviews with Amiruddin, Robby Karman, Muhammad Muflih, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, and Arif Nur Kholis, 2019–2020.

<sup>4</sup> Data collection in this study was carried out between 2018 and 2020. As personal interviews were not possible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, some interviews were conducted online.

definition of electronic jihad is understood and interpreted differently, ranging from online activism to Muslim articulation after the events of 11 September 2001. Bunt (2003) shows that each new media (in this case, new websites) has authority for its respective group segment.

~~In Indonesia, the fragmentation of religious authority can be traced far back but for the purposes of this article, the fragmentation that will be~~ discussed here is from ~~the beginning of~~ the 20th century to the present. Jajat Burhanudin (2004) points out that there has been a shift in religious authority in the historical phase of Indonesian religious thought in the early 20th century due to modernisation. His study, which focuses on the Islamic print media, further shows that there is a shift in religious authority that used to be in *Kitab Kuning*<sup>5</sup> taught by *kyai* or ulama in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to magazines, journals, newspapers, and books published by modernist circles or organisations.

Religious authority since the early 20th century has always stayed with Muhammadiyah and NU. These two religious organisations are often referred to by scholars as the authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016; Akmaliah 2018). The shift in religious authority occurred again in the 1990s when national television stations emerged. The Islamic programmes presented by the television stations show the *ustaz* (religious teachers), which in turn build their authority through lectures delivered by these preachers. This phenomenon prompted scholars to come up with the term ‘Islamic televangelism’ (Akmaliah 2018). Abdullah Gymnastiar who is better known as Aa Gym is one example that falls into the category of a television *ustaz*, or a ‘tele-dai’ as coined by Greg Fealy (2008).

The most obvious and recent picture of the fragmentation of religious authority in Indonesia is the series of events of the Defend Islam Action (Aksi Bela Islam). Ahmad Najib Burhani (2016) hints that these critical events marked the peak of the fragmentation of religious authorities in Indonesia as they gave rise to new actors who challenge the established religious authority. Although it cannot be said to shift or match the role of Muhammadiyah and NU, the emergence of new actors such as Rizieq Shihab provides a new map of religious authority in Indonesia.

This phenomenon of the fragmentation of religious authority has increased sharply in the development of what scholars call pop culture, marked by the birth of many new media

<sup>5</sup> So-called because the books were printed on yellow paper. These were the Islamic texts used in the education of Islamic schools.

**Commented [MOU6]:** How far back?

**Commented [nf7R6]:** Before the 20th century, for example, as Kaptein observes in his article, the religious authority of Indonesians and Malay people before the 20th century was once located in the holy city of Mecca. It was because people in the Indonesian-Malay archipelago asked muftis in Mecca about religious matters. However, there are already scholars in the Indonesian-Malay archipelago who have the capability to issue fatwas.

Kaptein's article:  
<https://journals.openedition.org/assr/pdf/1038>

(Labiq 2019). The availability of internet access to every social class is the main factor for this fragmentation. As a result, many new media have emerged with each individual and group competing to spread ideas (Horsfield 2016; Nisa 2019).

Aa Gym is one of the early actors who emerged in the internet era in Indonesia. This can be captured in two interesting studies on Aa Gym by James B. Hoesterey (2008), and Maskur and Noor (2014). Although the use of the internet as a medium of da'wah ~~at that time~~around during the early 2000s was not as massive as it is now, the emergence of Aa Gym as a new cleric on the national da'wah stage through lectures, seminars, and Islamic training is a phenomenon in itself. Hoesterey (2008) studies the journey of Aa Gym from his first appearance as a preacher, ~~falling~~, and then successfully rebranding to restore his religious authority. This is evident, for example, from how Aa Gym has many listeners (*Dakta.com* 2016). Popular culture has also brought Aa Gym to be seen not only by the public, especially by his followers, as also singer, actor, author, etc. Thus, he has transformed from an ordinary cleric to a celebrity cleric. Through a hypersemiotic perspective, Maskur and Noor (2014) show the various aspects of Aa Gym's personality.

Following the appearance of Aa Gym and with further rapid development of information technology, many other new preachers began to appear. Hew Wai Weng (2018) describes how Felix Siauw is another skilful religious preacher. Being a cleric with the most followers on the internet did not make Siauw neglect to spread his da'wah in the real world. Hew (2018) points out that Siauw has blended online and offline da'wah harmoniously. ~~Felix Siauw aims to spread the ideology of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) in his da'wah identity.~~ According to Hew (2018) and Farhan (2017), one of the keys to Siauw's success in preaching is his ability to present an entertaining and straightforward da'wah, even though its content is dogmatic and political.

Aa Gym and Felix Siauw are two micro-celebrity *ustaz* as a result of the new media. The term micro-celebrity *ustaz* was adopted and reconstructed from the theory of micro-celebrity. Most of these studies conducted from the perspective of pop culture (Senft 2008; G. Turner 2010; Khamis, Ang and Welling 2017; Sadasri 2017; Khomalia and Rahman 2018). describe the fragmentation of religious authority, marked by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By this term this author means an ordinary *ustaz/ustazah* who has skyrocketed in popularity and is celebrity on and because of social media so that he or she is able to influence certain people or communities. In other words, it means the *ustaz/ustazah* has experienced

**Commented [MOU8]:** Suggest footnote on what HTI ideology is and is HTI now banned? If so, where does that put Felix Siauw?  
<https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2019/06/20/is-hizbut-tahrir-a-threat-to-indonesia.html>

**Commented [nf9R8]:** In fact, Felix Siauw's overall preaching is not about spreading HTI ideology. His preaching concerns moral issues, young people, and daily life. It's just that he is known as a figure with HTI ideology, especially about establishing the Islamic caliphate. Therefore, the paragraph that explains "Felix Siauw aims to spread the ideology of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) in his da'wah identity" seems better deleted. What do you think about this?

what G. Turner (2010) calls ‘the demotic turn’, when ordinary people are highly visible on social media and become celebrities. Challenges to established religious authorities by new religious personalities or groups are rarely touched on except that of Yanwar Pribadi (2019). His study explains the the efforts of ‘local Islam’ (*Islam lokal*) to defend its religious authority from the threat of ‘foreign Islam’ (*Islam asing*). However, his study differs from what this author will examine in tracing Muhammadiyah’s efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

This study is on a micro-celebrity *ustaz*, Zulkarnain El Madury who is less well known when compared to Aa Gym or Felix Siauw but he has a strong influence on the internet. His identity as a preacher from Muhammadiyah who targets Muhammadiyah followers with postings that are often different and even delegitimise the official voice of this largest modernist mass organisation deserves to be investigated. This study, apart from showing Muhammadiyah’s efforts in maintaining its religious authority on the internet, also seeks explicitly to fill the gap in previous studies. In his latest study, Akmaliah (2020) shows that Muhammadiyah and NU have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was strongly reactive to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) indicates there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah’s responses less hostile. Sammy (2022), Sanjaya (2022), and Saefullah (2022) came to the same conclusion as Akmaliah, claiming that Muhammadiyah is significantly less adaptive to the emergence of new media, and therefore its da’wah often loses to that of the micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This study focuses on the struggle of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as the only assembly under Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas and ~~products of~~ official religious *ijtihad* exposition within Muhammadiyah.

Commented [MOU10]: Added, OK with you?

Commented [nf11R10]: Ok.

### **Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage**

The Facebook SHPTM fanpage was created by Zulkarnain El Madury. He was born in Sumenep on the island of Madura in 1963, with the name Zulkarnain bin Syamsuri. He claims to have studied in Malaysia at the Institute of Business Study and always introduces himself as a preacher from the Special Da’wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah). He spent his childhood in Madura and



was a traditionalist Muslim like others on the island. He grew up in a milieu dominated by the NU traditionalist Islamic organisation. He used to perform *tahlilan* (pilgrimage to the grave), and other practices that, according to him, after becoming a member of Muhammadiyah, were not following the Sunnah of the Prophet. He received his religious education at the Islamic boarding school at-Taufiqiyyah Sumenep Madura. In 1976 he became acquainted with Muhammadiyah. Through a lecture delivered by a preacher, He became interested in the da'wah and religious understanding of the Muhammadiyah movement founded by Ahmad Dahlan after listening to a lecture by one of its preachers. In 1977, he officially joined Muhammadiyah.<sup>6</sup>

Since joining Muhammadiyah, El Madury has been active as a preacher who spreads religious ideas and understanding. From 1990 to 2007, he was one of the Muhammadiyah preachers who was sent to remote areas by the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board. His daily activities are now preaching at different places as well as creating content on for SHPTM fanpage. He now lives in Jakarta as the [Tarjih and Tabligh council](#) chair of the Pondok Gede Muhammadiyah Branch.<sup>7</sup> He created SHPTM in 2014.<sup>8</sup> However, in the digital history that this author can trace, the fanpage was created in 2015 as the earliest post that is currently traceable is dated 5 January 2015.

According to El Madury, the fanpage began with the WhatsApp group he created which he named *Tarjih dan Tabligh Institut* (Tarjih and Tabligh Institute) to provide a space to discuss and spread ideas related to *tarjih*.<sup>9</sup> He included many Muhammadiyah figures and activists in this group, including (the now late) Buya Yunahar Ilyas. Over time, seeing that El Madury's posts on SHPTM were deemed inconsistent with the *tarjih* spirit of Muhammadiyah, several people, such as Fathurrahman Kamal and Buya Risman, sharply criticised the postings. El Madury, Fathurrahman Kamal, and Buya Risman were then engaged in a heated debate which was relayed later to Buya Yunahar Ilyas. The response by Buya Yunahar Ilyas at that time, according to El Madury, differed from that of his critics. Buya Yun responded quite positively because he saw El Madury's initiative as providing

<sup>6</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>7</sup> [Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020. Ibid.](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020. Ibid.](#)

<sup>9</sup> Muhammadiyah's use of the word *tarjih* has changed throughout its development. In its early period, and following its usage in the principles of law (*usul al-fiqh*), *tarjih* conveyed the meaning of examining the various opinions of Muslim jurists on a particular question and evaluating them to determine which is most faithful to the original Shari'a sources. Over time this usage gradually included any intellectual endeavour used to study new cases that earlier jurists had not addressed. In short, in Muhammadiyah's perspective, *tarjih* is identical, or almost identical, to *ijihad* (Anwar 2016).

**Commented [MOU12]:** Unclear - If this is branch council, does it not make him a representative of the Muhammadiyah after all?

**Commented [nf13R12]:** In Muhammadiyah's organisational culture, it is possible for someone to serve as a Muhammadiyah administrator at various levels. For example, someone can be the chairman of the Muhammadiyah branch board in a place and simultaneously become the secretary at the Muhammadiyah central board. This kind of phenomenon in Muhammadiyah is widespread. It was included in the case of Zulkarnain El Madury.

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

syarh (explanation) or further ~~explanation-explication~~ of the ~~contents of the~~ *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Judgment Compilation). Finally, he gave his permission to El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website tanyajawabagama.com.<sup>10</sup>

El Madury's early postings on SHPTM, were still relatively consistent in uploading Muhammadiyah fatwas in the question (from someone) and answer format from the fatwa division of the Tarjih Council. This is similar to the the original question and answer format administered by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, whose fatwas were later published in the *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine. However, over time, SHPTM had posts that apart from the dissemination of ~~Muhammadiyah's official religious ijihad tarjih products~~ included the personal opinions of El Madury. These opinions in inelegant words are often offensive to other groups. Not infrequently, his posts contradict the official stance of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in particular, or Muhammadiyah in general, such as on the veil issue (see below). Since Facebook introduced its 'live broadcast' feature, El Madury has also availed of it to conduct live lectures. The SHPTM is popular with netizens. As of the time of writing (3 April 2022), it has been followed by 19,423 and is 'liked' by 8,868 people. His posts also often receive both positive and critical comments from viewers.

El Madury gave several reasons that brought about the creation of his fanpage. Firstly, it is aimed at fortifying Muhammadiyah followers against all forms of superstition, heresy, and myth as its posts focus on issues related to faith and worship. Secondly, he aims to counter those liberal Muhammadiyah activists and has openly responded to such views. His posts often openly attacks the religious practices of the the Nahdliyyin, resulting in several clashes between him and the Nahdliyyin figure, Idrus Ramli.<sup>11</sup>

Despite having many followers El Madury and his SHPTM do have critics. Many Muhammadiyah followers are concerned about the SHPTM posts. Some have tried to convey their anxiety through the official social media accounts of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre (Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah).<sup>12</sup> Those concerned generally want to ask for firm action from the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as El Madury has included 'Tarjih Muhammdiyah' in his fanpage name. The demands to the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, when summarised, include: (1) that the Muhammadiyah

<sup>10</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Interviews with Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf and Ariful Hazam, November 2020 who are grassroots of Muhammadiyah, and social media administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman,  
Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman,  
Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman,  
Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

Tarjih Council reprimand or remind Zulkarnain El Madury not to use symbols or names that are closely related to Tarjih Muhammadiyah for or on his fanpage; (2) making and circulating an announcement that the fanpage is not a social media account of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council or the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre; (3) announcing the official social media accounts and websites of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre, so that Muhammadiyah people at the grassroots are not deceived by the existence of the fanpage and know where to look for religious reference sites, especially on the internet.

### **Zulkarnain El Madury and his efforts in building religious authority**

Zulkarnain El Madury and his fanpage SHPTM, have threatened the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, and specifically, the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. Many of his posts affect Muhammadiyah followers in particular and Muslims in general as these posts often differ from the official stance of Muhammadiyah, and in some cases contradict the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. This has stimulated public debate on social media, allowing El Madury to become a micro-celebrity *ustaz*, ~~experiencing what G. Turner (2010) calls the~~ *demotic turn*. As a result of the general public and the online community attention, El Madury has been able to gradually build up his religious authority. From the Weberian perspective (Riesebrodt 1999), he has been able to do this in two ways. The first is through charisma (charismatic authority). According to Weber, charisma is a particular type of authority whose original form is based on a specific belief contained in a particular person (Riesebrodt 1999). Secondly, El Madury claims he has the endorsement of Yunahar Ilyas, -a very popular Muhammadiyah cleric respected by the community from within the Muhammadiyah circle and from Muslims in general which is a form of traditional authority.

Yunahar Ilyas (1956–2020) or Buya Yun as he was popularly known, was an exegete (*mufassir*; Ilyas 2012) in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, who died at the age of 63. He was an alumnus of Imam Ibn Su'ud University (Saudi Arabia) and an excellent lecturer in conveying religious messages. He was seen as a charismatic cleric by Muhammadiyah followers and Muslims, in general, and this reputation extended to neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore (Abror 2020; *Gesuri* 2020). On his death in early 2020, many people flocked to pay their last respects to Buya Yun who held the chair of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for three terms (*Kompas* 2020; *Rakyat Merdeka* 2019).

**Commented [MOU14]:** You've mentioned this twice before on p.2 and p.10, suggest delete.

**Commented [nf15R14]:** Ok. I agree with you.

By harnessing the charisma of Buya Yun, El Madury was able to increase his religious authority. On various occasions, including when this author interviewed him, Buya Yun's name was often mentioned as an argument and a shield.<sup>13</sup> El Madury insisted that he created the SHPTM Facebook site with the permission of Yunahar Ilyas<sup>14</sup> who had provided a further explanation on of the Tarjih Judgment Compilation). He added that Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website tanyajawabagama.com, had similarly received permission from Buya Yun. Wahyudi Abdurrahim confirmed Zulkarnain's claims and Muhammad Muflih, a grassroot representative added that it is a form of fairness.<sup>15</sup> In other words, Buda Yun's permission is a form of appreciation given by someone who is more senior and has a high social position in Muhammadiyah to someone who is more junior and is classified as a grassroots Muhammadiyah member.<sup>16</sup> Permission from Buda Yun, who has charisma within Muhammadiyah in particular, has become a tool used by El Madury in building his religious authority.

In Weberian charismatic authority, charisma is not only about a belief in the existence of extraordinary or superpowers possessed by or contained in humans but also about particular objects other than humans (Riesebrodt 1999). We thus have an explanation as to why El Madury named his fanpage *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a highly respectable and crucial council in Muhammadiyah. Founded in 1927, the Council functions as an assembly that carries out its agenda of purification of religion and the dynamisation of social life. It conducts research and investigations towards this purity, and accordingly gives fatwas and compiles religious guidelines on faith ('*aqidah*) and worship ('*ibadah*) as well as social relations (*mu'āmalah*) (Rahman et al. 1985; Anwar 2016). In addition, this Council makes efforts to resolve differences and disagreements on religious issues, which are usually referred to as *khilafiah* problems, so that they are directed more productively (Anwar 2007, 2016).

The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a body that is responsible for formulating the ideological basis of the Muhammadiyah movement (Anwar 2007, 2016) and is Muhammadiyah's representative in the religious field (Fauzi 2017). The Council produces

<sup>13</sup> This author's informants include Muhammad Muflih (grassroot of Muhammadiyah and initiator of the website tanyajawabagama.com), Robby Karman (secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association [DPP IMM] *for the periode 2018-2021*), and several participants invited by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council with the agenda of 'Responding to Emergence of *Syarah HPT* on Social Media' on 25 September, 2020; interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Online interview with Wahyudi Abdurrahim through WhatsApp, September 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Online interview with Muhammad Muflih through WhatsApp and Facebook, 20 October 2019.

**Commented [nf16]:** I added a description of the period in which Karman was IMM's general secretary. OK with you?

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Pattern: Clear (Light Green)

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

three ~~types of *ijtihad-tarjih* products~~, namely: (1) *tarjih* fatwa (*fatwa tarjih*), (2) *tarjih* decision (*putusan tarjih*), and (3) *tarjih* discourse (*wacara tarjih*) (Anwar 2016). *Tarjih* fatwa is the Council's answer to general questions on issues that require an explanation in terms of sharia law. Following the nature of the fatwa in general, the Council's fatwa is non-binding, on either organisations or members as individuals. Therefore, even the fatwa can be questioned and discussed. However, because the fatwa contains religious guidance derived from Islamic teaching sources (Anwar 2020), and the general public often does not actually understand the aspects of such a fatwa, it is still believed by Muhammadiyah members to be religious guidance. However, the *tarjih* decision is the official stance of Muhammadiyah in religious matters and is formally binding on the organisation and its members. But, in practice, sometimes Muhammadiyah members exercise their right to freedom not to be bound by the decision because they have different *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

Meanwhile, *tarjih* discourses are ideas or thoughts that are raised and put forward by the Council in seminars, *halaqah* (religious gathering or meeting to discuss the Qur'an or Islam), or other forums in addressing various developing issues and at the same time fostering a critical spirit of *ijtihad* and collecting materials or ideas on various actual problems in society. The nature of this *tarjih* discourse is non-binding and does not become a fatwa that must be followed. *Tarjih* discourse is contained in various publications of the Council, such as *Jurnal Tarjih* (*Tarjih Journal*) and various published books (Anwar 2016).

The *tarjih* decision and the *tarjih* fatwa, hold their strength within Muhammadiyah as these are considered sacred by some of its members. In short, it can be said that anything that 'smells *tarjih*' has authority in the collective memory of Muhammadiyah followers. In the perspective of Khaled Abou El Fadl (2014), fatwas and *tarjih* decisions have the power of persuasive authority, as these can influence or direct others because they believed in them. The *tarjih* fatwas ~~were~~<sup>as</sup> officially published through the organisation's official magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, and compiled in the *Tanya Jawab Agama* book. In comparison, the *tarjih* decisions are codified in a book called *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*, commonly known by the abbreviation HPT. Thus, it can be understood why the attribution of the term *tarjih* to particular objects can give rise to charismatic authority, as mentioned by Weber.

What El Madury did can also be seen as identity politics which is defined as a political tool of a group whether it be ethnic, cultural, religious or others for specific purposes, such as a form of resistance or to show the identity of a group (Alfaqi 2015). Within this framework,

identity is politicised through extreme interpretation, which aims to gain support from people who feel 'the same', through race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements. In the context of El Madury, the use of the *tarjih* label on his fanpage can be interpreted as a political tool to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muhammadiyah members. And, as seen in some of his sermon videos, El Madury also placed a flag with the Muhammadiyah symbol behind him. In this context, he wants to convince the viewers that he is close to Muhammadiyah. He has introduced himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board on many occasions.

According to Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif (2010), identity politics is always related to members of social groups who feel excluded by the mainstream in a nation or state. Sri Astuti Buchari (2014) also finds that the emergence of identity politics is mainly caused by certain factors that an ethnic group sees as pressure from the political injustice. By looking at the observations made by Ahmad Najib Burhani (2013), El Madury, in this case, can be categorised as part of a group that feels excluded, threatened, and to some extent in need of justice within Muhammadiyah. Burhani (2013) explains the existence of two opposing schools of thought within Muhammadiyah which he refers to as 'Pure Islam' (*Islam Murni*) and 'Progressive Islam' (*Islam Progresif*). The conflict between these two schools of thought in Muhammadiyah began to surface at the 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Banda Aceh in 1995 (Burhani 2013).

The dominance of 'Progressive Islam' in Muhammadiyah strengthened after its 44th congress in Jakarta in 2000. This congress chose Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif as general chair. He is a progressive Muslim figure, an alumnus of the University of Chicago, and a student of the eminent progressive scholar Fazlur Rahman. At this congress, several names representing the 'Progressive Islam' group were included in the ranks of the central leadership of Muhammadiyah, such as Amin Abdullah, Dawam Raharjo, and Abdul Munir Mulkhan. During Ma'arif's leadership, progressive ideas not only dominated culturally but gradually became Muhammadiyah's official programmes (Burhani 2013).

Seeing the increasingly apparent threat from the ideas put forward by the 'Progressive Islam' group within Muhammadiyah, representatives of the 'Pure Islam' group did not remain silent. They compete and squabble over religious interpretations as to which is the most authentic. These two groups challenge each other through various channels, including seminars, discussions, publications. They usually have conflicting programmes. For example,

as mentioned by Burhani (2013), when the Centre for the Study of Religion and Civilisation (PSAP/Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban) raised the theme of pluralism and multiculturalism in its journal, *Tanwir Journal*, the [Tabligh Council](#)<sup>17</sup> responded with articles in opposition in its magazine, *Majalah Tabligh*. In Burhani's investigation, during the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress in Malang, this conservative group set up a Pojok Anti-Liberal (anti-liberal corner) booth, which sold books, DVDs, t-shirts, magazines, and other anti-liberal mementos. Strikingly, some of the t-shirts for sale displayed the words 'Muhammadiyah Anti-Liberal' (Burhani 2013).

At the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress, it seemed that the 'Pure Islam' group was gaining momentum to beat back the 'Progressive Islam' group. The quarrels between these two groups occurred within congress committees and in the external arena. Burhani (2005, 2013) noted at least three critical issues where the 'Pure Islam' group defeated the 'Progressive Islam' in the congress arena, namely: (1) leadership change; (2) the position of women; and (3) resistance to liberal thought.

After the 45th congress, the feud between these two schools of thought has continued though waxing and waning at different times. The form of the feud now looks more varied given the availability of the internet where the presence of social media has changed the battle arena from a conventional to a more modern one. El Madury represents the 'Pure Islam' group, and has heated online debates with figures considered representatives of 'Progressive Islam' whose actions he sees as unsettling. For example, El Madury and the secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association (DPP IMM),<sup>18</sup> Robby Karman, have openly and frequently castigated each other on for example, issues about the veil and the Wahhabi. According to El Madury, Robby Karman is a young liberal figure in Muhammadiyah who should be challenged. El Madury also often attacks the [IBTimes.id](#) website, as it frequently contains articles that are progressive and, to some extent, controversial. This website has several former Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah (JIMM/Muhammadiyah Youth Intellectual Network) figures, such as Hilman Latief, Azaki

<sup>17</sup> Muhammadiyah has many assemblies such as Majelis Tabligh and Majelis Tarjih, each with its own functions and responsibilities. Majelis Tarjih is responsible for producing religious thoughts through fatwas and decisions, while Majelis Tabligh is responsible for disseminating them. Historically, Majelis Tabligh is known in Muhammadiyah as the anti-liberal wing and thus there at times poor collaboration between Majelis Tarjih and Majelis Tabligh. For example, some fatwas issued by Majelis Tarjih, in Majelis Tabligh's perspective, are the result of liberal thinking. See Burhani (2013) and Palahuddin (2020).

<sup>18</sup> Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM) or Muhammadiyah Student Association is a proponent of Muhammadiyah in student affairs with the basic mission of realising the real Islamic society as formulated by Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Widodo 2017).

**Commented [MOU17]:** What is the tabligh council? Is it part of Muhammadiyah, the anti-liberal wing?

**Commented [nf18R17]:** Majelis Tabligh is one of the assemblies in Muhammadiyah, apart from Majelis Tarjih. So, Muhammadiyah has many assemblies, each with its own functions and responsibilities. Organisationally, Majelis Tarjih is responsible for producing religious thoughts through fatwas and decisions, while Majelis Tabligh is responsible for disseminating them. Historically, Majelis Tabligh is known in Muhammadiyah as the anti-liberal wing. Therefore, Majelis Tarjih and Majelis Tabligh sometimes cannot collaborate well because some fatwas were issued by Majelis Tarjih, which, according to Majelis Tabligh, are considered the result of liberal thinking.

PK – for IMW readers the info you gave above is helpful and should be in a footnote which I have done. OK with you?

**Commented [nf19R17]:** Sure. To add to the argument, I added a reference about the conservative turn in Muhammadiyah from Ahmad Najib Burhani's article. OK, with you?

**Formatted:** Pattern: 15% (Auto Foreground, White Background)

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Comment Text

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, English

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

Khoiruddin, and Mu'arif. On one occasion, when the chair of the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre admonished El Madury for uploading provocative posts that contradicted the official stance of the Tarjih Council, he defended himself by stating that equally provocative posts from the 'Progressive Islam' group should be similarly reprimanded. If he is the only one selected for rebuke then he felt an injustice had been done.<sup>19</sup> El Madury's attitude in the framework of identity politics reflects someone who feels excluded and threatened by certain parties. At such, his specific attributes and identity are a deliberate form of resistance to the domination of certain groups or thoughts that threaten him.

The above describes how El Madury builds his charismatic authority. The other is authority built through tradition or what Weber calls traditional authority (Spencer 1970; Matheson 1987; Riesebrodt 1999). In simple terms, something can be considered as having traditional authority if it gains legitimacy based on beliefs or norms that have been established in a particular tradition (Chairi 2019). In other words, according to Spencer (1970), traditional authority is legitimised and, at the same time, constrained by traditional norms. Therefore, it is the opposite of charismatic authority. If in charismatic authority, it is the leader or someone who creates the norms, then it is the norms that create the leader or person in the traditional authority. In charismatic authority, the value of influence is generated by a person's personal qualities and is always associated with his personality. While in the case of traditional authority, it is generated by function and is related to someone or something that has traditional values (Spencer 1970).

In the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, ulama and the classical books they wrote can be considered to have this traditional authority. Ulama in Islamic tradition are called heirs of the Prophets. The authority of the ulama is derived from the legitimacy of religious texts which state that the prophetic tradition will be passed on to them. Therefore, the religious ideas they convey in writings or books contain an authoritative value for the next generation. This is the uniqueness of Islamic scholars and traditions, as mentioned by Muhammad Qasim Zaman (2002) who states that one of the most prominent aspects of pre-modern intellectual culture is the articulation of religious discourse through the so-called medium of the commentary. This is manifested in various forms such *al-syurūh*, *hawāsyī*, *rasā'il*, and *fatawā*. The various genres of books that contain explanations, descriptions, or responses to a book or social phenomena are a way for scholars to shape the identity and

<sup>19</sup> On 3 November 2019, the manager of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah reprimanded Zulkarnain El Madury [about](#) [for](#) his post on SHPTM on the veil which contradicts Muhammadiyah's official stance.



authority of the school or tradition they adhere to. In addition, it is also a means to interpreting the meaning of the foundational sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah (Zaman 2002).

An example is the *hawāsyī* tradition in the Shafii school. Its emergence, according to Ahmed El-Shamsy (2013), shows the peak of the authority of two scholars in that school, namely al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī. Al-Kurdī, as quoted by El Shamsy, called these two scholars 'the higher authorities in the Syafii school'. Those who want to know the authoritative opinion of the Shafi'i school have to go through the works of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī, and the books that explain further their works, namely the books written by Ibn Hajar al-Haitamī and Syamsuddīn al-Ramlī. These books have for later generations the value of traditional authority (Shamsy 2013: 292).

What is the connection between this traditional authority and El Madury? El Madury's posts on SHPTM and at religious forums where he speaks always rely on the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāth*). According to Endang Mintarja, chair of the Jakarta branch of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this aspect has drawn many people to El Madury's lectures.<sup>20</sup>

What El Madury did, Muhammadiyah did not do in many of its fatwas in citing intellectual tradition. In many of its fatwas, Muhammadiyah often only quotes verses of the Qur'an or hadith to strengthen its argument, without citing the opinions of other scholars scattered in the Islamic intellectual tradition. Perhaps this is a consequence of the modernist movement, which became the spirit of Muhammadiyah. The modernist movement initiated by reformers such as Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, and Muḥammad Rasyīd Riḍā in the late 19th and early 20th centuries used the term *al-rujū' ilā al-qur'ān wa al-sunnah* ('back to the Qur'an and Sunnah'). According to Syed Junaid A. Quadri (2013), the most obvious indicator of this movement, especially in Islamic law, is its critical attitude towards the structure of pre-modern sharia authority symbols, which are articulated in the language and logic of the institution of *taqlīd*. Modernist groups always encourage reopening the door to *ijtihād* and invite Muslims to leave the interpretive monopoly that the ulama class has held (Quadri 2013).

<sup>20</sup> Endang Mintarja voiced this at a meeting held by Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board on the emergence 'Syarah HPT', 25 September 2020.

**Commented [MOU20]:** Added, is this correct as you need to state the difference in this sentence - and expand it later which you have done.

**Commented [nf21R20]:** Yes, correct. I added this sentence:

In many of its fatwas, Muhammadiyah often only quotes verses of the Qur'an or hadith to strengthen its argument, without citing the opinions of scholars scattered in the Islamic intellectual tradition.

PK – I have added 'other' and removed 'scattered'.

**Commented [nf22R20]:** OK

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

Muhammadiyah, which is heavily inspired by the modernist movement, is oriented towards the Qur'an and Sunnah and tends to attach less importance to the Islamic intellectual tradition that has been built by the ulama. This can be seen from its *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (the methodology Muhammadiyah uses in conducting *ijtihad*), which asserts that Muhammadiyah is not affiliated to a particular school, but the opinions of these schools are only considered in determining religious norms (Anwar 2018). This means that understanding religion in the Muhammadiyah perspective is derived directly from its primary sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah through the *ijtihad* process. However, it should be noted here that the narration that confirms the opinions of the scholars is taken into account in determining norms is not that clear how they are implemented in *tarjih* issues.

In some of its *official religious ijtihad/tarjih products*, the nuances of the opinions of scholars, especially the pre-modern ones do not appear, by choice or otherwise. *Muhammadiyah's The Tarjih Council's* opinion indicates the source of the Islamic intellectual tradition, from whom or which particular school of thought. Thus it appears that El Madury is filling the Muhammadiyah gap in presenting the authority of the Islamic intellectual tradition in religious narratives. For example, in the controversial veil case, the Tarjih Council issued three fatwas in 1993, 2003 and 2009<sup>[21]</sup> (Tim Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat 2019a), 2003 (ibid. 2019b), and 2009 (ibid. 2009). The fatwas issued in 1993 and 2009 emphasised that the veil has no legal basis either in the Qur'an or the Sunnah but that Islamic law commands women to wear the hijab. These two fatwas did not cite the Islamic intellectual tradition, which also accommodates opinions about the veil. Although the Tarjih Council kept in its stance and strengthened the opinion that women's '*aurat*' (parts of the body that should go covered) are the whole body except the face and the palms of the hands, in the 2003 fatwa, the Tarjih Council provides space for those who want to wear the veil by expressing several opinions from the scholars who think so.

In contrast to the *tarjih* fatwas, El Madury's (2019) *uploaded an* article *Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam?* ('Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?') on the SHPTM site refuting the *tarjih* fatwa. In the article, he cites various opinions of scholars in the Islamic intellectual tradition who support mandatory veiling as an effort to build religious authority. From this, it appears that El Madury, apart from attacking the *tarjih* fatwa,

<sup>21</sup> Tim Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat (2009, 2019a, 2019b).

**Commented [MOU23]:** What is this? Principles of Manhaj Tarjih?

**Commented [nf24R23]:** Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah is the official name for the methodology Muhammadiyah uses in conducting *ijtihad*. Perhaps it would be better to add an explanation in brackets. What do you think?

PK – I think it is OK as it is and I have added 'the'.

**Commented [nf25R23]:** Ok. It looks good.

**Formatted:** Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

**Commented [MOU26]:** Unclear – is the Tarjih Council not part of Muhammadiyah?

**Commented [nf27R26]:** The Tarjih Council is part of Muhammadiyah. Perhaps it would be better if the word Majelis Tarjih was changed to Muhammadiyah. What do you think?

**Commented [MOU28]:** I have moved the citation into footnote as it is a long one.

**Commented [nf29R28]:** OK

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: 10 pt, Complex Script Font: 10 pt

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, English (United Kingdom)

believes in maintaining traditional authority, in this case, the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāts*).

What El Madury did in building religious authority can also be captured from what Burhani calls a conversion narrative. Some scholars define religious conversion narratives differently as for example, in the change from one religious tradition to another. William James, as quoted by Burhani (2020: 158<sup>22</sup>), states that religious conversion can also be interpreted as the conversion of a person who is a sinner into someone pious. According to Burhani (2020), people who experience religious conversion, usually after embracing a new tradition or religious understanding, will be hostile to the previous religious tradition or understanding.

El Madury also experienced a religious conversion, in this case, from the NU tradition to Muhammadiyah. On SHPTM as well as his views when interviewed by this author, he introduced himself as someone who had practised the '*kuburiyyun* tradition'<sup>22</sup> and other actions that did not have examples from the Prophet. To convince his fanpage followers, he posted information about his religious conversion from NU to Muhammadiyah. Besides condemning his previous practices, which were deemed to have no basis in the Qur'an and Sunnah, he has had acrimonious debates with the NU *kyai*, Idrus Ramli on various issues, such as *ahlus sunnah wal jamaah* and *wahabi, nahdliyyin* traditions that are often considered heresy, and so on.<sup>on what?</sup>

### Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Before the advent of the internet and the emergence of various new religious authorities, Muhammadiyah and NU were the two largest religious organisations and authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). However, following the emergence of the so-called micro-celebrity *ustaz*, these two groups, according to some scholars, began to face challenges and threats. The recent study by Wahyudi Akmaliah (2020) shows that the two organisations have responded differently to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was more combative about their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) maintains there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's response look less aggressive.

<sup>22</sup> The tradition of visiting the grave with its associated practices.

Commented [MOU30]: Provide page no. of quote.

Commented [nf31R30]: ok

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

Akmaliah is correct on several points, but other perspectives deserve to be considered, especially Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority, especially on the internet.

The weak point, from Akmaliah's study is that there is no adequate elaboration of the assembly that exclusively holds religious authority in Muhammadiyah, namely the Tarjih Council.<sup>23</sup> To trace more precisely how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority ~~is-we~~ have to look at the Tarjih ~~and Tadjid~~ Councils.

This discussion ~~will~~ starts from the author's experience in attending a meeting held by the Tarjih Council and Tadjid of Muhammadiyah Central Board. The meeting was initiated in response to the emergence of El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim's SHPTM site. It should be noted here that Abdurrahim also contributed writings to this website. He was earlier mentioned as having had permission from Buya Yun to give *syarh* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Judgment Compilation) and is the author of *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*. The initial background for holding this meeting, as revealed by the secretary of the Tarjih Council, Mas'udi, was purely in response to the SHPTM posts by El Madury. However, information about the SHPTM other than the one written by El Madury prompted the board of the Tarjih Council to include the book by Abdurrahim with the same title for the agenda.

On Friday, 7 Safar 1442 AH (25 September 2020), the Tarjih Council invited nine related sectors to discuss concerns over the emergence of the SHPTM on the internet written by the El Madury and Abdurrahim. The nine sector participants were: (1) the executive board of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (2) fatwa division of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (3) chair/secretary of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (4) Dr Endang Mintarja, M.Ag. (Chair of the Jakarta Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council); (5) H. Fathurrahman, Lc., M.S.I. (Chair of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council); (6) H. Budi Setiawan, S.T.; (7) Arif Nurkholis (head of Muhammadiyah Digital Syiar Centre); (8) the manager of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre; and (9) the social media assistance team of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

During the meeting, there were at least four proposals from participants on how best to respond to the SHPTM, especially the article [about the veil](#) by El Madury. The first was to complain to Facebook about the SHPTM so that it could be banned for including an institution's name without permission. According to Fathurrahman Kamal,<sup>23</sup> who was present

<sup>23</sup> Chair of the Tabligh Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board.

Formatted: Indent: First line: 0"

Formatted: Not Highlight

Formatted: Not Highlight

Formatted: Font color: Auto

Formatted: Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

at the forum, the fanpage is already in the illegal category. This proposal was considered by the proponents as a firm proposal ~~and also~~ but that it was ~~not~~ too risky. The second was to use a persuasive approach in the form of clarification or an appeal to El Madury not to use the name *Himpunan Putusan Tajih* (HPT) or something that is associated with *tarjih*. Its proponents consider this approach to be softer and more reflective of being Muhammadiyah members in particular, and Muslims in general. The third proposal was to use institutional authority in writing an official letter on behalf of the Tarjih Council to El Madury. The fourth idea that was considered more practical and efficient was to place the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it on social media. This would avoid being drawn into unfruitful correspondence on SHPTM.

However, there was no agreement on which approach should be undertaken despite long discussions. It was agreed instead that there would be a follow up with another forum. Since this author started writing (3 April 2022) there has been no further meeting. The emergence of SHPTM on the internet and its effects have been considered a serious problem by the Tarjih Council. The meeting's participants were generally uneasy about the appearance of El Madury and his fanpage. In addition, they wanted El Madury to be warned or reprimanded since SHPTM is considered a threat to religious authority of the Tarjih Council. This illustrates that Muhammadiyah, through its official religious assembly, the Tarjih Council, is not passive in responding to the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. However, only certain cases and not all micro-celebrity *ustaz* who appear on social media have drawn the Tarjih Council's attention. Although there has yet to be a follow up meeting, the Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an official institution supporting the Tarjih Council illustrates how Muhammadiyah struggles to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is an institution that was founded in 2016 ([Majelis Tarjih Dahlan 2016; Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan 2016](#)) by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Ahmad Dahlan University ([Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah tarjih.or.id 2016](#)) ([Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, n.d.](#)). Despite being a new institution, its legality is clear, and it has formal authority. In the Muhammadiyah tradition as an organisation, such legality is essential. Thus when someone from Muhammadiyah, speaks on another person's behalf or endorses an approach, the speaker's status is below that of the institution and cannot be assumed to be that of institutions within Muhammadiyah which, although new, have legality. In the context of El Madury and the SHPTM fanpage, this is important. Even though El Madury claims he has

**Commented [MOU32]:** What do you mean by risky – less aggressive?

**Commented [nf33R32]:** I apologise; I didn't write that sentence correctly. I meant too risky, without the word 'not'.

PK – should be **but that it was also too risky**. You don't explain why it is 'too risky'.

**Commented [nf34R32]:** In the meeting, the meaning of 'too risky' was that Muhammadiyah was not used to using offensive methods to remind its own people. After all, Zulkarnain El Madury is a Muhammadiyah person. So, the treatment of him should not be offensive. Such offensive treatment would be counter-productive and drive El Madury and other Muhammadiyah citizens away from Muhammadiyah.

**Commented [MOU35]:** There is a date if you mean this article: <https://tarjih.or.id/pembukaan-halaqah-majelis-tarjih-launching-pusat-tarjih-muhammadiyah-dan-muhammadiyah-observatorium-network/>. Note that your url in References does not bring up the article.

**Commented [nf36R35]:** Ok. I fixed it.

obtained permission to make *syarah* on the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* from a charismatic figure in Muhammadiyah, Buya Yunahar, legally it is not valid. In that context, Buya Yunahar spoke on behalf of himself, not on behalf of Muhammadiyah.

Fronted by young Muhammadiyah cadres, the majority of whom are alumni of Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Tarjih Ulama Education, PUTM),<sup>24</sup> Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays a role in supporting the Tarjih Council programmes. These are relatively under-performing and facing obstacles, particularly on using social media to disseminate their official religious *ijtihad*~~products~~. The members of the Tarjih Council, who are relatively old, need support from young cadres. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays an essential role in assisting the Tarjih Council in maintaining its religious authority on the internet. It responded to El Madury and SHPTM, by being proactive with a poster (Figure 1) on social media and in print form, containing information related to the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it.

<sup>24</sup> PUTM is an educational institution under the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board designed to produce a cadre of Muhammadiyah scholars. PUTM organises a special programme that educates and prepares Muhammadiyah *tarjih* scholars who are competent in the religious field. The birth of PUTM was based on the concern of some Muhammadiyah leaders about the increasing scarcity of ulama in and from Muhammadiyah (Fauzi 2020a).

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman,  
Complex Script Font: Times New Roman



Figure 1. Poster with information on the official social media accounts affiliated to the Tarjih Council. Source: [Tarijih Muhammadiyah Centre](#) [Muhammadiyah Central Board's Tarjih Council](#), 2020 year?

Are you often confused about finding sources of reference about Islam from the perspective of Muhammadiyah?

There is no need to be confused anymore because various social media are straightforward for us to access. Tarjih (Council) has come with a more trendy look.

✓ Easy to read anywhere

**Commented [MOU37]:** As with ALL figures, do you have permission to reproduce these from the copyright holders? Note that all figures require minimum of 300 dpi.

**Commented [nf38R37]:** Yes, I do.

And all figures have met the minimum dpi requirement

PK – please add the year it appeared for ALL figures, excluding translated ones.

**Commented [nf39R37]:** OK. I added

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Calibri, Complex Script  
Font: Arial, English (United States), Check spelling and grammar

**Formatted:** Normal

As members of Muh

Here are some media



decisions and fatwas of

't be confused anymore.

1

ole!

Formatted: Centered

Although the poster at  
Madury, the main message i

IPTM site created by El  
n the Muhammadiyah

followers about the official accounts of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it. This would hopefully let Muhammadiyah members understand how its official religious voice is disseminated on the internet. Following this, Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah successively uploaded other, more varied posters to indirectly counter the SHPTM fanpage. Some other examples of these posters are shown in Figures 3 and 5.



**Figure 3.** Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council. Source: [Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre](#)~~Muhammadiyah Central Board's Tarjih Council, 2020 year?~~

Do you know?

The Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah now have an official YouTube channel, (namely) the Tarjih Channel.

Have you subscribed yet?

**Figure 4.** Translation of Figure 3.



**Figure 5.** Information about the website fatwatarjih.or.id, an official website affiliated to the Tarjih Council containing fatwas. Source: [Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre](#)~~Muhammadiyah Central Board's Tarjih Council~~, 2020 year?

Fatwatarjih.or.id is the official website for the Tarjih and the Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board (MTT).

The Media Team of Fatwa Tarjih, through this website, has been, is and will continue to strive consistently to publish various ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council. Until now, tarjih fatwa collections from 1997 to 2018 have entered the editing stage, and some are just waiting to be published.

**Figure 6.** Translation of Figure 5.



**Figure 7.** Information on the official website of the Tarjih Council. [Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre Muhammadiyah Central Board's Tarjih Council, 2020 year?](#)

Do you want to know the full history (of the Tarjih Council)?  
Or do you want to look for ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council?  
Come on; you can find out on this website: tarjih.or.id

**Figure 8.** Translation of Figure 7.

The use of informal language and emoticons typical of millennials indicate the audience that the Tarjih Council wants to target. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah team understands that informal language will appeal to its target audience. This is aimed at not only establishing the authority of the Tarjih Council but 'millennialisation' i.e. to reach out to the younger generation familiar with social media. Suyadi and Widodo (2019) note that millennialisation

is an alternative way to develop knowledge that will synergised with various online media and digital technology. In the context of *tarjih* millenialisation, *Muhammadiyah's tarjih products* official religious *ijtihad* that tend to be disseminated in a conventional, monotonous, and uncreative manner are now communicated through social media in more contextual packaging. This means that that the Tarjih Council and its various official religious *ijtihad* products, which previously were always identified with the 'old', are now consciously aiming to include young people.

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

The religious authority of the Tarjih Council in cyberspace, especially when connected with the appearance of El Madury and SHPTM, was greatly helped by the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah and its young Muhammadiyah cadres. It manages various social media platforms with large numbers of followers, and has helped maintain Muhammadiyah's religious authority by balancing and suppressing the presence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. Its contents are fatwas and decisions of the Tarjih Council with more appealing visualisation to reach out to the millenials.

Although the number of social media followers of the Tarjih Council is less than that for the NU and Salafi groups, at least the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah acts as a compass for Muhammadiyah followers who question its religious authority, especially with the emergence of El Madury's version in SHPTM. The administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah's social media have received many messages either through the comments column or direct messages in its inbox, which question the authority of SHPTM.<sup>25</sup> Here, the vital role of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is increasingly finding its momentum.

## Conclusion

Although it can be said that Muhammadiyah's religious influence and authority on the internet are inferior and lag behind other religious groups, Muhammadiyah is still trying to manage its authority, especially when facing threats from micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By focusing on Zulkarnain El Madury and his SHPTM social media page, this article offers a different perspective from previous studies by analysing the work of the *Majelis Tarjih Tarjih Council* as the only institution in Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas. This article shows that Muhammadiyah has its own way of responding to the emergence of new religious

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Ariful Hazamn, Ilham Ibrahim, and Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, September 2020. They are Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah social media admin.

Formatted: Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

authorities. With the help of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an institution in its fold, the Tarjih Council has made continuous efforts through social media and its official website to counter new voices that threaten its authority. Muhammadiyah's response was neither aggressive nor radical but it clarified its stance without mentioning who precisely was being targeted. What Muhammadiyah did was in line with the Javanese proverb *Ngluruk tanpo bolo, menang tanpo ngasorake* ('win without defeat, win without humiliation [of others]'). The form of Muhammadiyah's response is inherited from its founder, Ahmad Dahlan. As seen by Peacock (1978), Ahmad Dahlan carried out many social transformations calmly and systematically ~~rather than in revolutionary ways without being provocative.~~

In a broader context, the case of Zulkarnain El Madury also provides a lesson that using the name Muhammadiyah to justify personal opinions or legitimise particular interests is wrong. Muhammadiyah has the reputation of a very well managed organisation (Barton 2014; *Suara Muhammadiyah* 2019) which is its strength and gives it clout compared to other religious organisations in Indonesia, such as NU. In short, authority in Muhammadiyah lies in the institution itself and is not based on personality. It differs from NU, where power and authority tend to lie in personal figures, such as *kyai* or *gus* (Fauzi 2020b).

Muhammadiyah followers who understand its basic rules are not easily influenced by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. They are aware that Muhammadiyah's official religious stance is only be issued by the Tarjih Council and that those external to the Tarjih Council or even specific Muhammadiyah figures who give religious opinions, speak only for themselves as individuals and not the organisation. This would be the case, for example, even if the religious opinion emanates from the chair of the Tarjih Council as an individual. This did occur when Syamsul Anwar,<sup>26</sup> the current chair of the Tarjih Council, ~~had a different~~ *opinion* from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council on the issue of *iftitāh* prayer (opening prayer for night prayer [*qiyām al-lail*]).<sup>27</sup> ~~For Anwar, iftitāh prayer is a two short rak'ah prayer that is performed before qiyām al-lail, with the condition that it must be~~

<sup>26</sup> As this article is about to be published, Muhammadiyah will hold a five-year event to elect its chairs. This event is called *Muktamar Muhammadiyah* (Muhammadiyah Congress). At the 48th Muhammadiyah Congress in Solo last November 2022, Syamsul Anwar was elected as one of the thirteen General Chairs of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the period 2022–2027. See more <https://muhammadiyah.or.id/berikut-susunan-pimpinan-pusat-muhammadiyah-periode-2022-2027/>

<sup>27</sup> For Anwar (2013), the *iftitāh* prayer comprises two short *rak'ah* prayers that are performed before *qiyām al-lail*, with the condition that it must be preceded by sleep, otherwise there is no need to perform the *iftitāh* prayer. However, the Tarjih Council holds that the *iftitāh* prayer consists of two short *rak'ah* prayers performed before *qiyām al-lail*, whether preceded by sleep or not (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2011; Tim Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2019a).

**Commented [MOU40]:** Changed phrasing – OK with you?

**Commented [nf41R40]:** OK

**Formatted:** English (United Kingdom)

**Commented [nf42]:** I added updated information about Samsul Anwar's position in Muhammadiyah. What do you think?

PK – I think this info is extraneous and unnecessary. The different opinion for the night prayer is not critical for the article either but we could put it in a fn.

**Commented [MOU43]:** Unclear on your fn text – is this something new the 5-year election or routine?

**Commented [MOU44]:** I added updated information about Samsul Anwar's position in Muhammadiyah. What do you think?

PK – I think this info is extraneous and unnecessary and have deleted the footnote. The different opinion for the night prayer is not critical for the article either but it is an interesting example and I have put it in a fn.

**Commented [nf45R44]:** OK. I agreed with you.

**Commented [MOU46]:** Unclear, why the 'a' - did you mean ARE two short *rak'ah* prayers?

**Commented [nf47R46]:** I was mistaken again it seems. I changed it.

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, Strikethrough, Not Superscript/ Subscript

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, 10 pt, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, 10 pt

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, 10 pt, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, 10 pt

**Formatted:** Font: 10 pt, Complex Script Font: 10 pt

**Formatted:** Font: 10 pt, Complex Script Font: 10 pt

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, 10 pt, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, 10 pt

**Formatted:** Font: 10 pt, Complex Script Font: 10 pt

**Formatted:** Indent: First line: 0", Space After: 0 pt, Line spacing: single

**Formatted:** Font: 10 pt, Complex Script Font: 10 pt, Not Highlight

**Formatted:** Font: 10 pt, Complex Script Font: 10 pt

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, English (United Kingdom)

preceded by sleep first. If it is not preceded by sleep, then for Anwar (2013), there is no need to perform the *iftitāh* prayer. However, according to the Tarjih Council, the *iftitāh* prayer is two short *rak'ah* prayer that is performed before *qiyām al-lail*, whether preceded by sleep or not (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2011; Tim Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2019a).

While Anwar's opinion clearly differs from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council, the prevailing opinion in Muhammadiyah is that of the Tarjih Council, not the chair of the Tarjih Council. Within Muhammadiyah, such religious differences of opinion are common as usually happens in *fiqh* discourse in general. The difference between El Madury and Anwar is that the latter does not act in the name of Muhammadiyah or the Tarjih Council when he has a different view. Instead, on many occasions, he urges Muhammadiyah followers to abide by the opinion of the Tarjih Council on the *iftitāh* prayer.<sup>28</sup> Thus Anwar has shown he can compromise his personal religious opinion with his professional attitude in the organisation. In this case, he understands that using the name Muhammadiyah to legitimise individual opinions or interests is not justifiable.

### Acknowledgements

Permission for this research PJB-002/SP3/LPPM-UAD/VI/2020 and funding were provided by the ethical board of Ahmad Dahlan University Research and Development Institute (Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan).

I am grateful to *ustaz* Zulkarnain El Madury for his exceptional help and support during my fieldwork. I also thank Amiruddin, Arif Nur Kholis, Muhammad Muflih, Wahyudi Abdurrahim, Robby Karman, Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, Ilham Ibrahim, Ariful Hazam, and the members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council for providing information regarding my research. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article. I would also like to thank the editors of the *Indonesia and the Malay World Journal*, especially Pauline Khng, for her generosity and patience in editing my English and technical errors in my article. Errors, if any, are solely mine.

### Note on contributor

<sup>28</sup> On several occasions, this author has heard Syamsul Anwar's direct appeal to Muhammadiyah members to follow the opinion of the Tarjih Council on this aspect of the *iftitāh* prayer.

**Formatted:** Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

**Commented [nf48]:** In this regard, let me also thank the editors of the IMW journal.

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi is a lecturer in the Department of Hadith Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He has published widely on a variety of issues relating to Islamic Studies, including al-Quran, hadith, Islamic law, social media and da'wah, and Muhammadiyah studies. Email: niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id

## References

- Abror, Robby. 2020. Syekh Yunahar, ulama Muhammadiyah kharismatik [Sheikh Yunahar, a charismatic Muhammadiyah cleric]. 3 January. <<https://menara62.com/syeikh-yunahar-ulama-muhammadiyah-kharismatik/>> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2018. Media sosial dan pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [Social media and shifting religious authority]. 12 December. <[https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media\\_sosial\\_dan\\_pergeseran\\_otoritas\\_keagamaan](https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media_sosial_dan_pergeseran_otoritas_keagamaan)> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2020. The demise of moderate Islam: new media, contestation, and reclaiming religious authorities. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10 (1): 1–24.
- Alfaqi, Mifdal Zusron. 2015. Memahami Indonesia melalui prespektif nasionalisme, politik identitas, serta solidaritas [Understanding Indonesia through the perspectives of nationalism, identity politics, and solidarity]. *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 28 (2): 111–116.
- Alvara Research Center. 2020. Ramadhan dan pandemi Covid-19: semangat ibadah tak surut, konsumsi tersendat. <[https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN\\_DAN\\_PANDEMI\\_COVID-19\\_SEMANGAT\\_IBADAH\\_TAK\\_SURUT\\_KONSUMSI\\_TERSENDAT.pdf](https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN_DAN_PANDEMI_COVID-19_SEMANGAT_IBADAH_TAK_SURUT_KONSUMSI_TERSENDAT.pdf)> [Accessed 23 February 2021].
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2007. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer* [Contemporary Islamic law studies]. Jakarta: RM Books.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2013. *Salat Tarawih: Tinjauan usul fiqh, sejarah, dan fiqh* [Tarawih prayer: usul fiqh, history, and fiqh perspectives]. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2016. Fatwā, purification and dynamization: a study of tarjīh in Muhammadiyah. *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (1): 27–44.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2018. *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Panitia Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih Muhammadiyah XXX.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2020. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer Bagian dua* [Contemporary Islamic

**Commented [MOU49]:** Note: IMW housestyle **does not include** DOI links unless it brings the reader to the full article via Open Access and not to some login page.

**Commented [nf50R49]:** Thank you for the information.

**Commented [MOU51]:** Is the year of your accession correct – that you accessed it after you wrote the article?

**Commented [nf52R51]:** I'm very sorry. I was mistaken. The correct one is 2021

legal studies Part twoinsert English translation here in roman]. Yogyakarta: UAD Press.

- Barton, Greg. 2014. The Gülen movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: progressive Islamic thought, religious philanthropy and civil society in Turkey and Indonesia. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25 (3): 287–301.
- Buchari, Sri Astuti. 2014. *Kebangkitan etnis menuju politik identitas* [Ethnic awakening towards identity politics]. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Bunt, Gary R. 2003. *Islam in the digital age: e-jihad, online fatwas and cyber Islamic environments*. London: Pluto Press.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2005. The 45th Muhammadiyah Congress contest between literal-conservative and liberal-moderate Muslims in Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 12 (1): 185–189.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2013. Liberal and conservative discourses in the Muhammadiyah: the struggle for the face of reformist Islam in Indonesia. In Martin van Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary developments in Indonesian Islam: explaining the 'conservative turn'*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2016. Aksi bela Islam: konservatisme dan fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. *Maarif* 11 (2): 15–29.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2020. Muslim televangelists in the making: conversion narratives and the construction of religious authority. *Muslim World* 110 (2): 154–175.
- Burhanudin, Jajat. 2004. The fragmentation of religious authority: Islamic print media in early 20th century Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 11 (1): 23–62.
- Campbell, H.A. and Teusner, P.E. 2011. Religious authority in the age of the internet. In *Christian Reflection, Virtual Lives*. Waco TX: Baylor University Press, pp. 59–68. <<https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/130950.pdf>>
- Chairi, Effendi. 2019. Ketidadaan otoritas terpusat dalam fenomena kontemporer di Indonesia [The absence of a centralised authority in contemporary phenomena in Indonesia]. *SANGKĒP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 2 (2):197–215.
- Chaplin. Chris. 2021. *Salafism and the State: Islamic activism and national identity in contemporary Indonesia*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.
- Dakta.com. 2016. Aa Gym ajak ribuan jamaahnya ikut aksi bela Islam III [Aa Gym invites thousands of congregants to join Islamic Defence Action III]. 29 November. <<http://www.dakta.com/news/7329/aa-gym-ajak-ribuan-jamaahnya-ikut-aksi-bela-islam-iii>> Accessed 2 February 2020.
- Fadl, Khaled Abou El. 2014. *Speaking in God's name: Islamic law, authority, and women*.



London: Oneworld Publications.

- Farhan, Farhan. 2017. Pesan dakwah Felix Siauw di media sosial (perspektif meaning and media). *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Administrasi Islam* 1 (2): 209–226.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2017. Peranan Maqasid Al-Shariah dalam memahami Hadith: kajian terhadap fatwa Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah [The role of Maqasid Al-Shariah in understanding Hadith: a study of the fatwa of the Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah]. MA thesis, University of Malaya.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020a. PUTM dan kaderisasi ulama: menelusuri latar belakang lahirnya Lembaga Kaderisasi Ulama Muhammadiyah [PUTM and clerical regeneration: tracing the background of the birth of the Muhammadiyah Clerical Cadre Institute]. <<https://santricendekia.com/putm-dan-kaderisasi-ulama-menelusuri-latar-belakang-lahirnya-lembaga-kaderisasi-ulama-muhammadiyah/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020b. Tantangan kader ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah di era 4.0 [Challenges for Tarjih Muhammadiyah ulama cadres in the 4.0 era]. 21 July. *Suara 'Aisyiyah* <<https://suaraaisyiyah.id/tantangan-kader-ulama-tarjih-muhammadiyah-di-era-4-0/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Fealy, Greg. 2008. Consuming Islam: commodified religion and aspirational pietism in contemporary Indonesia. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.
- Gesuri. 2020. Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia kehilangan ulama kharismatik [Yunahar Ilyas passed away, Indonesia lost a charismatic scholar]. 3 January. <<https://www.gesuri.id/internal/yunahar-ilyas-wafat-indonesia-kehilangan-ulama-kharismatik-b1YFoZpRY>> Accessed 20 March 2020.
- Hew, Wai Weng. 2018. The art of dakwah: social media, visual persuasion and the Islamist propagation of Felix Siauw. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (134): 61–79.
- Hoesterey, James B. 2008. Marketing morality: the rise, fall and rebranding of Aa Gym. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: Religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, pp. 95–114.
- Hope Cheong, Pauline. 2016. Religious authority and social media branding in a culture of religious celebrification. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*, University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 81–102.
- Horsfield, Peter. 2016. The media and religious authority from ancient to modern. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*. University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 37–66.

- IB Times Indonesia. 2020. 100 situs Islam Indonesia, NU Online peringkat pertama [100 Indonesian Islamic websites, NU Online ranks first]. 10 July. <IBTimes.Id. 2020. <<https://ibtimes.id/100-situs-islam-indonesia-nu-online-peringkat-pertama/>> Accessed 23 February 2023.
- Ilyas, Yunahar. 2012. *Kuliah Akhlaq* [Akhlaq lecture]. XII. Yogyakarta: LPPI Universitas Muhammdiyah Yogyakarta.
- Khamis, S., Ang, L. and Welling, R. 2017. Self-branding, ‘micro-celebrity’ and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191–208.
- Khomalia, Isti and Rahman, Khairul Arief. 2018. Micro hijabers celebrity: membentuk identitas dengan update self-story via instagram (kasus dian pelangi). *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban dan Pemikiran Islam* 2 (1): 33–42.
- Kompas. 2020. Sejumlah tokoh hadir prosesi pemakaman ketua PP Muhammadiyah Yunahar Ilyas [Many figures attended the funeral procession of Muhammadiyah chairman Yunahar Ilyas]. 3 January. <<https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/03/19142441/sejumlah-tokoh-hadiri-prosesi-pemakaman-ketua-pp-muhammadiyah-yunahar-ilyas>> Accessed 3 April 2022.
- Labiq. 2019. Pengaruh new media terhadap pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [The influence of new media on shifting religious authority]. 19 April. <<https://geotimes.co.id/opini/pengaruh-new-media-terhadap-pergeseran-otoritas-keagamaan>> Accessed 19 October 2020.
- Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. 2010. *Politik identitas dan masa depan pluralisme Indonesia*. Edited by Samsu Rizal Panggabean et al. Jakarta: Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (PUSAD) Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina.
- Madury, Zulkarnain El. 2019. Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam? [Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?]. 2 November. <<https://www.facebook.com/zulkarnainsumenep/posts/2386248524961601>> Accessed 5 May 2020.
- Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah. 2016. Pembukaan Halaqah, Majelis Tarjih Launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan Muhammadiyah Observatorium Network [Halaqah opening, Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and Muhammadiyah Observatory Network]. 20 August. <<https://tarjih.or.id/pembukaan-halaqah-majelis-tarjih-launching-pusat-tarjih-muhammadiyah-dan-muhammadiyah-observatorium-network/>> Accessed 6 October 2023.
- Majelis Tarjih Dahlan, Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. 2016.

Commented [MOU53]: Note I have changed entry name from tajdid.or.id

Commented [nf54R53]: OK

Nota Kesepakatan Majelis Tarjih Dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Tentang Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di Islamic Center Universitas Ahmad Dahlan [Memorandum of Agreement between the Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board and Ahmad Dahlan University on the Management of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre at the Islamic Centre of Ahmad Dahlan University]. Yogyakarta.

Maskur, Maskur and Noor, Irfan Noor. 2014. Ustadz selebriti Abdullah Gymnastiar dalam budaya populer (perspektif hipersemiotika Yasraf Amir Piliang) [Celebrity Ustadz Abdullah Gymnastiar in popular culture (Yasraf Amir Piliang's hyper semiotics perspective)]. *Jurnal Studia Insania* 2 (1): 47–57.

Matheson, Craig. 1987. Weber and the classification of forms of legitimacy. *British Journal of Sociology* 38 (2): 199–215.

Muhammadiyah Central Board. 2023. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>>

Accessed ~~day-month-year~~08 October 2023.

Nisa, Eva F. 2019. Internet and Muslim women. In Ronald Lukens-Bull and Mark Woodward (eds), *Handbook of contemporary Islam and Muslim lives*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer, pp. 1–19.

Palahuddin. 2020. The Typology of religious thought in Muhammadiyah. *International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 3 (2): 74-81.  
<<http://journal2.uad.ac.id/index.php/ijish/article/view/2233>>

Peacock, James L. 1978. *Purifying the Faith: the Muhammadiyah movement in Indonesian Islam*. Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2011. *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2016. Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan MuON [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and MuON]. 20 August.

<<http://www.umm.ac.id/id/muhammadiyah/7070.html>> Accessed 20 March 2021.

Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Berikut Susunan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah pPeriode 2022–2027 [The following is the composition of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the 2022–2027 pPeriod] <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/berikut-susunan-pimpinan-pusat-muhammadiyah-periode-2022-2027/>> Accessed 07 October 2023.

Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Majelis Tabligh [Tabligh Council]. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 07 October 2023.

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

- Postill, John and Pink, Sarah. 2012. Social media ethnography: the digital researcher in a messy web. *Media International Australia* 145 (1): 123–134.
- Pribadi, Yanwar. 2019. Fragmentasi umat dan penciptaan otoritas keagamaan: tanggapan terhadap ‘Islam lokal’ dan ‘Islam asing’ di Indonesia [Ummah fragmentation and the creation of religious authority: responses to ‘local Islam’ and ‘foreign Islam’ in Indonesia]. *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 21 (1): 103–119.  
<<https://jmb.lipi.go.id/jmb/article/view/828/455>>
- Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah. n.d. *Panduan pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre management guide]. Majelis Tarjih, Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta.
- Quadri, Syed Junaid A. 2013. Transformations of tradition: modernity in the thought of Muḥammad Bakhīt Al-Muṭī‘ī. PhD thesis, McGill University.
- Rahman, Asjmuni Abdur et al. 1985. Laporan penelitian Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (suatu studi tentang sistem dan metode penentuan hukum) [Research report of Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (a study of the system and method of determining the law)]. Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga.
- Rakyat Merdeka. 2019. Dubes Malaysia jenguk ketum MUI Yunahar Ilyas di Yogyakarta [Malaysian ambassador visits MUI chairman Yunahar Ilyas in Yogyakarta]. 5 November. <<https://rm.id/baca-berita/internasional/21745/dubes-malaysia-jenguk-ketum-mui-yunahar-ilyas-di-yogyakarta>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Riesebrodt, Martin. 1999. Charisma in Max Weber’s Sociology of Religion. *Religion* 29 (1): 1–14.
- Sadasri, Lidwina Mutia. 2017. Selebriti mikro di media baru kajian presentasi diri dalam vlog selebriti mikro [Micro-celebrities in new media: a study of self-presentation in micro-celebrity vlogs]. *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi Dan Opini Publik* 21 (2): 167–181.  
<<https://jurnal.kominfo.go.id/index.php/jpkop/article/view/1218/720>>
- Saefullah, Hikmawan. 2022. Media baru, publik baru: mengkonfigurasi ulang ruang publik Islam [New media, new publics: reconfiguring the Islamic public sphere]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sammy, Abdullah. 2022. Peluang dan tantangan dakwah digital Muhammadiyah [Opportunities and challenges of Muhammadiyah digital da’wah]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.

- Sanjaya, Makroen. 2022. Peta ideologi islam di media sosial [The map of Islamic ideology on social media]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Senft, Theresa M. 2008. *Camgirls: celebrity and community in the age of social networks*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Shamsy, Ahmed El. 2013. The Hāshiyā in Islamic law: a sketch of the Shāfi‘ī literature. *Oriens* 41 (3-4): 289–315.
- Spencer, Martin E. 1970. Weber on legitimate norms and authority. *British Journal of Sociology* 21 (2): 123–134.
- Suara Muhammadiyah. 2019. Hyung Jun Kim: sistem di Muhammadiyah sungguh ideal [Hyung Jun Kim: Muhammadiyah’s system is ideal]. <<https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/08/01/hyung-jun-kim-sistem-di-muhammadiyah-sungguh-ideal/>> Accessed 9 April 2022.
- Suyadi and Widodo, Hendro. 2019. Millennialization of Islamic education based on neuroscience in the third generation university in Yogyakarta Indonesia. *QIIS International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7 (1): 173–202.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat. 2009. Hukum tentang jenggot dan cadar [Islamic law perspective on beards and veils]. *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine, September. Yogyakarta.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat. 2019a. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 4*. Cetakan IX. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat. 2019b. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 7*. Cetakan IV. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Tirto.id. 2018. Dari Aa’ Gym ke Felix Siauw: ustaz medsos & medium dakwah politis. Tirto.Id. 16 January. <<https://tirto.id/dari-aa-gym-ke-felix-siauw-ustaz-medsos-medium-dakwah-politis-cCGf>> Accessed 5 February 2020.
- Turner, Bryan S. 2007. Religious authority and the new media. *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2): 117–134.
- Turner, Graeme. 2010. *Ordinary people and the media: the demotic turn*. Los Angeles CA: Sage.
- Widodo, Arif. 2017. Transformative intellectual discourse and movement of Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM). *Iseedu: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices* 1 (1): 126–151. <<https://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/iseedu/article/view/5423/3542>>

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change*.  
Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

**Formatted:** Indent: Before: 0", Hanging: 0.39"

## ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY *USTAZ* PHENOMENON

### Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

#### ABSTRACTS

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the fragmentation of religious authority. In the Indonesian context, the mainstream religious authority held by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has been challenged and threatened by micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This article examines the emergence of the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage on Facebook, that has threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority. It was created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board. It analyses Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace. It also takes a closer look at the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah), an assembly that has the exclusive authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* decisions other than fatwas within Muhammadiyah, that differs from previous studies. This article also discusses lessons that can be learned from the case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the response of the Tarjih Council.

#### KEYWORDS

Fragmentation of religious authority; micro-celebrity *ustaz*; Muhammadiyah; religious authority; *tarjih*.

#### ABSTRAK

Kemunculan internet dan media sosial telah mempertajam fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. Dalam konteks Indonesia, otoritas keagamaan arus utama yang dipegang oleh Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) telah ditantang, disaingi dan diancam oleh para ustaz mikro-selebriti/celebritas. Artikel ini mengkaji kemunculan *fanpage Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah di Facebook*, yang dibuat dan dikelola oleh Zulkarnain El

Madury, seseorang yang mengklaim sebagai ustaz Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, karena dianggap mengancam otoritas keagamaan Muhammadiyah. Penelitian ini menganalisis upaya Muhammadiyah dalam mempertahankan otoritas keagamaannya di dunia maya- dengan melihat lebih dekat pada apa yang telah dilakukan oleh Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah, sebuah majelis yang memiliki otoritas eksklusif untuk mengeluarkan fatwa dan produk-ijtihad keagamaan resmi di-dalam Muhammadiyah. Artikel ini juga membahas pelajaran yang dapat dipetik dari kasus Zulkarnain El Madury dan respon-respons Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

#### KATA KUNCI

Ustaz mikro-selebriti; fragmentasi; otoritas keagamaan; otoritas keagamaan; Muhammadiyah; tarjih-

#### Introduction

The Alvara Research Center (2020) survey was surprising as it stated that the clerics most heard by the public, especially in Ramadan 2020, were not from the official Muhammadiyah board.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the Alvara Research Center survey was released (IBTimes.id 2020), an Islamic website managed by young Muhammadiyah intellectuals, published a report ranking the 100 most popular Islamic websites in Indonesia. The majority of these sites are managed by or affiliated to Nahdliyyin (NU followers) and Salafi<sup>2</sup> groups with few such sites operated by or affiliated to Muhammadiyah. The Alvara Research Center survey and the IBTimes.id report show that Muhammadiyah, in terms of influence and religious authority on the internet, lags behind other religious groups which is ironic for an organisation claiming to represent the progressive Islamic group.

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the so-called fragmentation of religious authority. Eva F. Nisa (2019), for example, mentions that the proliferation of various digital platforms is directly proportional to the increasing fragmentation of religious authority. Islamic discourse is monopolised not only by an elite group of scholars or mainstream religious groups, but also by persons or groups that have not been considered in Islamic discourse. Furthermore, the presence of the internet and social media has led to the birth of

<sup>1</sup> One of the 15 most popular clerics mentioned in the report, Ustaz Ali Hidayat, has since been included on the Muhammadiyah Central Board's Tabligh Council (2022–2027; Muhammadiyah Central Board 2023). Prior to that, he did not convey official Muhammadiyah ideas in his lectures.

<sup>2</sup> For more comprehensive information on the activism of Salafi groups, see Chris Chaplin (2021).<sup>2</sup>

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, 12 pt

**Formatted:** Line spacing: 1.5 lines

**Commented [nf1]:** I am adding a footnote here explaining the latest Adi Hidayat update. What do you think?

PK – That's fine but wouldn't you need to rephrase the text since it now makes him a representative of the Tabligh Council of the Muhammadiyah Central Board – so does that mean he is an official representative?

**Commented [nf2R1]:** Okay. I re-paraphrased the text to be as below. What do you think?

Although Ustaz Adi Hidayat, a rising young preacher and an alumnus of the Darul Arqam Muhammadiyah Garut Islamic Boarding School, was included as one of the 15 most popular clerics in the survey, he cannot be said to be an official representative of Muhammadiyah. Indeed, after the 48th Muhammadiyah Congress (Muktamar Muhammadiyah) in Solo in 2022, he was included in the board of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council of the Muhammadiyah Central Board. However, apart from the fact that in 2020 and before, he was not officially included in the Muhammadiyah board, he also did not convey official Muhammadiyah religious ideas in his lectures.

PK – I have shortened it in the amended footnote. For the first para of your article it would detract from what you want to say so I have moved the info to the footnote as well as shortened it..

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, English



what is called micro-celebrity. Theresa M. Senft (2008) defines micro-celebrity as a new style of online performance that involves increasing popularity on social media such as videos, blogs, and networking sites. These micro-celebrities unlike conventional celebrities, emerge from what is known as new media (Senft 2008).

Of course, not all new media users have the adjective ‘micro-celebrity’. Only those who experience what Graeme Turner (2010) terms ‘the demotic turn’, namely, the increasing visibility of ordinary people to appear as celebrities in the media, especially online media. In turn, both conventional and micro-celebrity exist in various public spheres, and the discourse on them is characterised as influencers, stimulants of consumerism, enthusiasm, public debate, and various activism (Sadasri 2017).

By borrowing the theory of micro-celebrities in the study of new media, we can then read how these micro-celebrities have also come to the fore in the religious realm. The emergence of ulama, *ustaz* (religious teachers), and religious leaders who become influencers in new media can perhaps be termed as a form of a micro-celebrity *ustaz* image. Felix Siauw is a prominent example. A convert, who is now a preacher, Siauw has a massive following on social media. In 2018, for example, he had 2.6 million followers on Twitter, and in 2022 it reached 3.3 million. Felix Siauw’s Instagram account has around 4.9 million followers. It can even be said that he is the *ustaz* who has the most followers on social media (Tirto 2018), making him one of the leading social media preachers in Indonesia today (Hew 2018). What Felix Siauw posts on his social media has more or less influenced the map of religious authorities in Indonesia.

The existence of the internet and the continuing development of technology allows the emergence of many other micro-celebrity *ustaz*, both in the national arena more generally or more specifically in internal religious organisations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, Persis (Persatuan Islam) or others. In the context of Muhammadiyah, the largest modernist Islamic organisation began to be challenged for its religious authority by a preacher who was said to be part of Muhammadiyah itself, namely Zulkarnain El Madury. He claims to be a Muhammadiyah cadre and often introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board. In recent years, El Madury has been noticed by Muhammadiyah administrators and Muhammadiyah cadres<sup>3</sup> and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah) has discussed him in a special meeting. This is because the posts on the

---

<sup>3</sup> This author’s online and offline interviews with Amiruddin, Robby Karman, Muhammad Muflih, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, and Arif Nur Kholis, 2019–2020.

Facebook page that El Madury manages, *Syarah Himpunan Putus Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (henceforth SHPTM), often differ significantly from – and to some extent delegitimise – a Muhammadiyah fatwa or official decision. Responses from grassroots or Muhammadiyah followers vary. This can be seen, for example, from the comments on each post. Some defend and remain adamant on the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah, but not a few were affected and followed what was conveyed by El Madury on his Facebook page.

This is where it becomes crucial to see how Muhammadiyah attempts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace, especially among its members and the public. By conducting web content analysis (Postill and Pink 2012) on SHPTM and official social media accounts and those affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this article shows how El Madury builds his narratives and, in turn, how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority on the internet. Additionally, field research was conducted and key actors were interviewed offline and online in a semi-structured format.<sup>4</sup> Apart from El Madury, the key actors are members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Digital Broadcast Centre (Pusat Syiar Digital Muhammadiyah), Muhammadiyah activists as well as Muhammadiyah grassroots.

### **Fragmentation of religious authority, new preacher and micro-celebrity *ustaz* phenomenon**

Fragmentation of religious authority is a phenomenon that occurs in various religious communities and is not limited to Islam (B.S. Turner 2007; Campbell and Teusner 2011; Hope Cheong 2016). The fragmentation of religious authority is also a global phenomenon as pointed out by Gary R. Bunt (2003) who states that the new media have shaped diverse understandings among individual Muslims worldwide about e-jihad (electronic jihad). The definition of electronic jihad is understood and interpreted differently, ranging from online activism to Muslim articulation after the events of 11 September 2001. Bunt (2003) shows that each new media (in this case, new websites) has authority for its respective group segment.

The fragmentation of religious authority discussed here is from the 20th century to the present. Jajat Burhanudin (2004) points out that there has been a shift in religious authority in

---

<sup>4</sup> Data collection in this study was carried out between 2018 and 2020. As personal interviews were not possible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, some interviews were conducted online.

the historical phase of Indonesian religious thought in the early 20th century due to modernisation. His study, which focuses on the Islamic print media, further shows that there is a shift in religious authority that used to be in *Kitab Kuning*<sup>5</sup> taught by *kyai* or ulama in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to magazines, journals, newspapers, and books published by modernist circles or organisations.

Religious authority since the early 20th century has always stayed with Muhammadiyah and NU. These two religious organisations are often referred to by scholars as the authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016; Akmaliah 2018). The shift in religious authority occurred again in the 1990s when national television stations emerged. The Islamic programmes presented by the television stations show the *ustaz* (religious teachers), which in turn build their authority through lectures delivered by these preachers. This phenomenon prompted scholars to come up with the term ‘Islamic televangelism’ (Akmaliah 2018). Abdullah Gymnastiar who is better known as Aa Gym is one example that falls into the category of a television *ustaz*, or a ‘tele-dai’ as coined by Greg Fealy (2008).

The most obvious and recent picture of the fragmentation of religious authority in Indonesia is the series of events of the Defend Islam Action (Aksi Bela Islam). Ahmad Najib Burhani (2016) hints that these critical events marked the peak of the fragmentation of religious authorities in Indonesia as they gave rise to new actors who challenge the established religious authority. Although it cannot be said to shift or match the role of Muhammadiyah and NU, the emergence of new actors such as Rizieq Shihab provides a new map of religious authority in Indonesia.

This phenomenon of the fragmentation of religious authority has increased sharply in the development of what scholars call pop culture, marked by the birth of many new media (Labiq 2019). The availability of internet access to every social class is the main factor for this fragmentation. As a result, many new media have emerged with each individual and group competing to spread ideas (Horsfield 2016; Nisa 2019).

Aa Gym is one of the early actors who emerged in the internet era in Indonesia. This can be captured in two interesting studies on Aa Gym by James B. Hoesterey (2008), and Maskur and Noor (2014). Although the use of the internet as a medium of da’wah around during the early 2000s was not as massive as it is now, the emergence of Aa Gym as a new

---

<sup>5</sup> So-called because the books were printed on yellow paper. These were the Islamic texts used in the education of Islamic schools.

cleric on the national da'wah stage through lectures, seminars, and Islamic training is a phenomenon in itself. Hoesterey (2008) studies the journey of Aa Gym from his first appearance as a preacher, *faliling*, and then successfully rebranding to restore his religious authority. This is evident, for example, from how Aa Gym has many listeners (*Dakta.com* 2016). Popular culture has also brought Aa Gym to be seen not only by the public, especially by his followers, as also singer, actor, author, etc. Thus, he has transformed from an ordinary cleric to a celebrity cleric. Through a hypersemiotic perspective, Maskur and Noor (2014) show the various aspects of Aa Gym's personality.

Following the appearance of Aa Gym and with further rapid development of information technology, many other new preachers began to appear. Hew Wai Weng (2018) describes how Felix Siauww is another skilful religious preacher. Being a cleric with the most followers on the internet did not make Siauww neglect to spread his da'wah in the real world. Hew (2018) points out that Siauww has blended online and offline da'wah harmoniously. According to Hew (2018) and Farhan (2017), one of the keys to Siauww's success in preaching is his ability to present an entertaining and straightforward da'wah, even though its content is dogmatic and political.

Aa Gym and Felix Siauww are two micro-celebrity *ustaz* as a result of the new media. The term micro-celebrity *ustaz* was adopted and reconstructed from the theory of micro-celebrity. Most of these studies conducted from the perspective of pop culture (Senft 2008; G. Turner 2010; Khamis, Ang and Welling 2017; Sadasri 2017; Khomalia and Rahman 2018). describe the fragmentation of religious authority, marked by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By this term this author means an ordinary *ustaz/ustazah* who has skyrocketed in popularity and is celebrity on and because of social media so that he or she is able to influence certain people or communities. In other words, it means the *ustaz/ustazah* has experienced what G. Turner (2010) calls 'the demotic turn', when ordinary people are highly visible on social media and become celebrities. Challenges to established religious authorities by new religious personalities or groups are rarely touched on except that of Yanwar Pribadi (2019). His study explains the the efforts of 'local Islam' (*Islam lokal*) to defend its religious authority from the threat of 'foreign Islam' (*Islam asing*). However, his study differs from what this author will examine in tracing Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

This study is on a micro-celebrity *ustaz*, Zulkarnain El Madury who is less well known when compared to Aa Gym or Felix Siauw but he has a strong influence on the internet. His identity as a preacher from Muhammadiyah who targets Muhammadiyah followers with postings that are often different and even delegitimise the official voice of this largest modernist mass organisation deserves to be investigated. This study, apart from showing Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority on the internet, also seeks explicitly to fill the gap in previous studies. In his latest study, Akmaliah (2020) shows that Muhammadiyah and NU have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was strongly reactive to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) indicates there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's responses less hostile. Sammy (2022), Sanjaya (2022), and Saefullah (2022) came to the same conclusion as Akmaliah, claiming that Muhammadiyah is significantly less adaptive to the emergence of new media, and therefore its da'wah often loses to that of the micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This study focuses on the struggle of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as the only assembly under Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* exposition within Muhammadiyah.

#### **Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage**

The Facebook SHPTM fanpage was created by Zulkarnain El Madury. He was born in Sumenep on the island of Madura in 1963, with the name Zulkarnain bin Syamsuri. He claims to have studied in Malaysia at the Institute of Business Study and always introduces himself as a preacher from the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah). He spent his childhood in Madura and was a traditionalist Muslim like others on the island. He grew up in a milieu dominated by the NU traditionalist Islamic organisation. He used to perform *tahlilan* (pilgrimage to the grave), and other practices that, according to him, after becoming a member of Muhammadiyah, were not following the Sunnah of the Prophet. He received his religious education at the Islamic boarding school at-Taufiqiyyah Sumenep Madura. In 1976 he became acquainted with Muhammadiyah. Through a lecture delivered by a preacher, He became interested in the da'wah and religious understanding of the Muhammadiyah movement founded by Ahmad

Dahlan after listening to a lecture by one of its preachers. In 1977, he officially joined Muhammadiyah.<sup>6</sup>

Since joining Muhammadiyah, El Madury has been active as a preacher who spreads religious ideas and understanding. From 1990 to 2007, he was one of the Muhammadiyah preachers who was sent to remote areas by the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board. His daily activities are now preaching at different places as well as creating content on for SHPTM fanpage. He now lives in Jakarta as the *tarjih* and *tabligh* council chair of the Pondok Gede Muhammadiyah Branch.<sup>7</sup> He created SHPTM in 2014.<sup>8</sup> However, in the digital history that this author can trace, the fanpage was created in 2015 as the earliest post that is currently traceable is dated 5 January 2015.

According to El Madury, the fanpage began with the WhatsApp group he created which he named *Tarjih dan Tabligh Institut* (Tarjih and Tabligh Institute) to provide a space to discuss and spread ideas related to *tarjih*.<sup>9</sup> He included many Muhammadiyah figures and activists in this group, including (the now late) Buya Yunahar Ilyas. Over time, seeing that El Madury's posts on SHPTM were deemed inconsistent with the *tarjih* spirit of Muhammadiyah, several people, such as Fathurrahman Kamal and Buya Risman, sharply criticised the postings. El Madury, Fathurrahman Kamal, and Buya Risman were then engaged in a heated debate which was relayed later to Buya Yunahar Ilyas. The response by Buya Yunahar Ilyas at that time, according to El Madury, differed from that of his critics. Buya Yun responded quite positively because he saw El Madury's initiative as providing *syarh* (explanation) or further explication of the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Judgment Compilation). Finally, he gave his permission to El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com).<sup>10</sup>

El Madury's early postings on SHPTM, were still relatively consistent in uploading Muhammadiyah fatwas in the question (from someone) and answer format from the fatwa division of the Tarjih Council. This is similar to the the original question and answer format

---

<sup>6</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Muhammadiyah's use of the word *tarjih* has changed throughout its development. In its early period, and following its usage in the principles of law (*usul al-fiqh*), *tarjih* conveyed the meaning of examining the various opinions of Muslim jurists on a particular question and evaluating them to determine which is most faithful to the original Shari'a sources. Over time this usage gradually included any intellectual endeavour used to study new cases that earlier jurists had not addressed. In short, in Muhammadiyah's perspective, *tarjih* is identical, or almost identical, to *ijihad* (Anwar 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

administered by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, whose fatwas were later published in the *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine. However, over time, SHPTM included posts that apart from the dissemination of Muhammadiyah's official religious *ijtihad* included the personal opinions of El Madury. These opinions in inelegant words are often offensive to other groups. Not infrequently, his posts contradict the official stance of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in particular, or Muhammadiyah in general, such as on the veil issue (see below). Since Facebook introduced its 'live broadcast' feature, El Madury has also availed of it to conduct live lectures. The SHPTM is popular with netizens. As of the time of writing (3 April 2022), it has been followed by 19,423 and is 'liked' by 8,868 people. His posts also often receive both positive and critical comments from viewers.

El Madury gave several reasons that brought about the creation of his fanpage. Firstly, it is aimed at fortifying Muhammadiyah followers against all forms of superstition, heresy, and myth as its posts focus on issues related to faith and worship. Secondly, he aims to counter those liberal Muhammadiyah activists and has openly responded to such views. His posts often openly attacks the religious practices of the the Nahdliyyin, resulting in several clashes between him and the Nahdliyyin figure, Idrus Ramli.<sup>11</sup>

Despite having many followers El Madury and his SHPTM do have critics. Many Muhammadiyah followers are concerned about the SHPTM posts. Some have tried to convey their anxiety through the official social media accounts of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre (Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah).<sup>12</sup> Those concerned generally want to ask for firm action from the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as El Madury has included 'Tarjih Muhammdiyah' in his fanpage name. The demands to the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, when summarised, include: (1) that the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council reprimand or remind Zulkarnain El Madury not to use symbols or names that are closely related to Tarjih Muhammadiyah for or on his fanpage; (2) making and circulating an announcement that the fanpage is not a social media account of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council or the Tarjih Muhamamdiyah Centre; (3) announcing the official social media accounts and websites of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre, so that Muhammadiyah people at the grassroots are not deceived by the existence of the fanpage and know where to look for religious reference sites, especially on the internet.

<sup>11</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Interviews with Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf and Ariful Hazam, November 2020 who are grassroots of Muhammadiyah, and social media administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

**Commented [MOU3]:** Is there such a thing as unreligious/secular *ijtihad*? If not, delete adjective.

### **Zulkarnain El Madury and his efforts in building religious authority**

Zulkarnain El Madury and his fanpage SHPTM, have threatened the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, and specifically, the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. Many of his posts affect Muhammadiyah followers in particular and Muslims in general as these posts often differ from the official stance of Muhammadiyah, and in some cases contradict the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. This has stimulated public debate on social media, allowing El Madury to become a micro-celebrity *ustaz*. As a result of the general public and the online community attention, El Madury has been able to gradually build up his religious authority. From the Weberian perspective (Riesebrodt 1999), he has been able to do this in two ways. The first is through charisma (charismatic authority). According to Weber, charisma is a particular type of authority whose original form is based on a specific belief contained in a particular person (Riesebrodt 1999). Secondly, El Madury claims he has the endorsement of Yunahar Ilyas, -a very popular Muhammadiyah cleric respected by the community from within the Muhammadiyah circle and from Muslims in general which is a form of traditional authority.

Yunahar Ilyas (1956–2020) or Buya Yun as he was popularly known, was an exegete (*mufasssir*; Ilyas 2012) in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, who died at the age of 63. He was an alumnus of Imam Ibn Su'ud University (Saudi Arabia) and an excellent lecturer in conveying religious messages. He was seen as a charismatic cleric by Muhammadiyah followers and Muslims, in general, and this reputation extended to neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore (Abror 2020; *Gesuri* 2020). On his death in early 2020, many people flocked to pay their last respects to Buya Yun who held the chair of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for three terms (*Kompas* 2020; *Rakyat Merdeka* 2019).

By harnessing the charisma of Buya Yun, El Madury was able to increase his religious authority. On various occasions, including when this author interviewed him, Buya Yun's name was often mentioned as an argument and a shield.<sup>13</sup> El Madury insisted that he created the SHPTM Facebook site with the permission of Yunahar Ilyas<sup>14</sup> who had provided a further

<sup>13</sup> This author's informants include Muhammad Muflih (grassroot of Muhammadiyah and initiator of the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com)), Robby Karman (secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association [DPP IMM] 2018–2021), and several participants invited by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council with the agenda 'Responding to Emergence of Syarah HPT on Social Media' on 25 September, 2020; interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.



explanation on of the Tarjih Judgment Compilation). He added that Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com), had similarly received permission from Buya Yun. Wahyudi Abdurrahim confirmed Zulkarnain's claims and Muhammad Muflih, a grassroots representative added that it is a form of fairness.<sup>15</sup> In other words, Buda Yun's permission is a form of appreciation given by someone who is more senior and has a high social position in Muhammadiyah to someone who is more junior and is classified as a grassroots Muhammadiyah member.<sup>16</sup> Permission from Buda Yun, who has charisma within Muhammadiyah in particular, has become a tool used by El Madury in building his religious authority.

In Weberian charismatic authority, charisma is not only about a belief in the existence of extraordinary or superpowers possessed by or contained in humans but also about particular objects other than humans (Riesebrodt 1999). We thus have an explanation as to why El Madury named his fanpage *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a highly respectable and crucial council in Muhammadiyah. Founded in 1927, the Council functions as an assembly that carries out its agenda of purification of religion and the dynamisation of social life. It conducts research and investigations towards this purity, and accordingly gives fatwas and compiles religious guidelines on faith (*'aqidah*) and worship (*'ibadah*) as well as social relations (*mu'āmalah*) (Rahman et al. 1985; Anwar 2016). In addition, this Council makes efforts to resolve differences and disagreements on religious issues, which are usually referred to as *khilafiah* problems, so that they are directed more productively (Anwar 2007, 2016).

The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a body that is responsible for formulating the ideological basis of the Muhammadiyah movement (Anwar 2007, 2016) and is Muhammadiyah's representative in the religious field (Fauzi 2017). The Council produces three types of *ijtihad*, namely: (1) tarjih fatwa (*fatwa tarjih*), (2) tarjih decision (*putusan tarjih*), and (3) tarjih discourse (*wacara tarjih*) (Anwar 2016). *Tarjih* fatwa is the Council's answer to general questions on issues that require an explanation in terms of sharia law. Following the nature of the fatwa in general, the Council's fatwa is non-binding, on either organisations or members as individuals. Therefore, even the fatwa can be questioned and discussed. However, because the fatwa contains religious guidance derived from Islamic teaching sources (Anwar 2020), and the general public often does not actually understand the

<sup>15</sup> Online interview with Wahyudi Abdurrahim through WhatsApp, September 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Online interview with Muhammad Muflih through WhatsApp and Facebook, 20 October 2019.

aspects of such a fatwa, it is still believed by Muhammadiyah members to be religious guidance. However, the *tarjih* decision is the official stance of Muhammadiyah in religious matters and is formally binding on the organisation and its members. But, in practice, sometimes Muhammadiyah members exercise their right to freedom not to be bound by the decision because they have different *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

Meanwhile, *tarjih* discourses are ideas or thoughts that are raised and put forward by the Council in seminars, *halaqah* (religious gathering or meeting to discuss the Qur'an or Islam), or other forums in addressing various developing issues and at the same time fostering a critical spirit of *ijtihad* and collecting materials or ideas on various actual problems in society. The nature of this *tarjih* discourse is non-binding and does not become a fatwa that must be followed. *Tarjih* discourse is contained in various publications of the Council, such as *Jurnal Tarjih* (Tarjih Journal) and various published books (Anwar 2016).

The *tarjih* decision and the *tarjih* fatwa, hold their strength within Muhammadiyah as these are considered sacred by some of its members. In short, it can be said that anything that 'smells *tarjih*' has authority in the collective memory of Muhammadiyah followers. In the perspective of Khaled Abou El Fadl (2014), fatwa and *tarjih* decisions have the power of persuasive authority, as these can influence or direct others because they believed in them. The *tarjih* fatwas ~~were~~ [are](#) officially published through the organisation's official magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, and compiled in the Tanya Jawab Agama book. In comparison, the *tarjih* decisions are codified in a book called *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*, commonly known by the abbreviation HPT. Thus, it can be understood why the attribution of the term *tarjih* to particular objects can give rise to charismatic authority, as mentioned by Weber.

What El Madury did can also be seen as identity politics which is defined as a political tool of a group whether it be ethnic, cultural, religious or others for specific purposes, such as a form of resistance or to show the identity of a group (Alfaqi 2015). Within this framework, identity is politicised through extreme interpretation, which aims to gain support from people who feel 'the same', through race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements. In the context of El Madury, the use of the *tarjih* label on his fanpage can be interpreted as a political tool to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muhammadiyah members. And, as seen in some of his sermon videos, El Madury also placed a flag with the Muhammadiyah symbol behind him. In this context, he wants to convince the viewers that he is close to

Muhammadiyah. He has introduced himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board on many occasions.

According to Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif (2010), identity politics is always related to members of social groups who feel excluded by the mainstream in a nation or state. Sri Astuti Buchari (2014) also finds that the emergence of identity politics is mainly caused by certain factors that an ethnic group sees as pressure from the political injustice. By looking at the observations made by Ahmad Najib Burhani (2013), El Madury, in this case, can be categorised as part of a group that feels excluded, threatened, and to some extent in need of justice within Muhammadiyah. Burhani (2013) explains the existence of two opposing schools of thought within Muhammadiyah which he refers to as 'Pure Islam' (*Islam Murni*) and 'Progressive Islam' (*Islam Progresif*). The conflict between these two schools of thought in Muhammadiyah began to surface at the 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Banda Aceh in 1995 (Burhani 2013).

The dominance of 'Progressive Islam' in Muhammadiyah strengthened after its 44th congress in Jakarta in 2000. This congress chose Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif as general chair. He is a progressive Muslim figure, an alumnus of the University of Chicago, and a student of the eminent progressive scholar Fazlur Rahman. At this congress, several names representing the 'Progressive Islam' group were included in the ranks of the central leadership of Muhammadiyah, such as Amin Abdullah, Dawam Raharjo, and Abdul Munir Mulkhan. During Ma'arif's leadership, progressive ideas not only dominated culturally but gradually became Muhammadiyah's official programmes (Burhani 2013).

Seeing the increasingly apparent threat from the ideas put forward by the 'Progressive Islam' group within Muhammadiyah, representatives of the 'Pure Islam' group did not remain silent. They compete and squabble over religious interpretations as to which is the most authentic. These two groups challenge each other through various channels, including seminars, discussions, publications. They usually have conflicting programmes. For example, as mentioned by Burhani (2013), when the Centre for the Study of Religion and Civilisation (PSAP/Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban) raised the theme of pluralism and multiculturalism in its journal, *Tanwir Journal*, the Tabligh Council<sup>17</sup> responded with articles in opposition in

---

<sup>17</sup> Muhammadiyah has many assemblies such as Majelis Tabligh and Majelis Tarjih, each with its own functions and responsibilities. Majelis Tarjih is responsible for producing religious thoughts through fatwas and decisions, while Majelis Tabligh is responsible for disseminating them. Historically, Majelis Tabligh is known in Muhammadiyah as the anti-liberal wing and thus there are at times poor collaboration between Majelis Tarjih

its magazine, *Majalah Tabligh*. In Burhani's investigation, during the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress in Malang, this conservative group set up a Pojok Anti-Liberal (anti-liberal corner) booth, which sold books, DVDs, t-shirts, magazines, and other anti-liberal mementos. Strikingly, some of the t-shirts for sale displayed the words 'Muhammadiyah Anti-Liberal' (Burhani 2013).

At the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress, it seemed that the 'Pure Islam' group was gaining momentum to beat back the 'Progressive Islam' group. The quarrels between these two groups occurred within congress committees and in the external arena. Burhani (2005, 2013) noted at least three critical issues where the 'Pure Islam' group defeated the 'Progressive Islam' in the congress arena, namely: (1) leadership change; (2) the position of women; and (3) resistance to liberal thought.

After the 45th congress, the feud between these two schools of thought has continued though waxing and waning at different times. The form of the feud now looks more varied given the availability of the internet where the presence of social media has changed the battle arena from a conventional to a more modern one. El Madury represents the 'Pure Islam' group, and has heated online debates with figures considered representatives of 'Progressive Islam' whose actions he sees as unsettling. For example, El Madury and the secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association (DPP IMM),<sup>18</sup> Robby Karman, have openly and frequently castigated each other on for example, issues about the veil and the Wahhabi. According to El Madury, Robby Karman is a young liberal figure in Muhammadiyah who should be challenged. El Madury also often attacks the [IBTimes.id](http://IBTimes.id) website, as it frequently contains articles that are progressive and, to some extent, controversial. This website has several former Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah (JIMM/Muhammadiyah Youth Intellectual Network) figures, such as Hilman Latief, Azaki Khoiruddin, and Mu'arif. On one occasion, when the chair of the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre admonished El Madury for uploading provocative posts that contradicted the official stance of the Tarjih Council, he defended himself by stating that equally provocative posts from the 'Progressive Islam' group should be similarly reprimanded. If he is the only one

---

and Majelis Tabligh. For example, some fatwas issued by Majelis Tarjih, in Majelis Tabligh's perspective, are the result of liberal thinking. See Burhani (2013) and Palahuddin (2020).

<sup>18</sup> Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM) or Muhammadiyah Student Association is a proponent of Muhammadiyah in student affairs with the basic mission of realising the real Islamic society as formulated by Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Widodo 2017).

selected for rebuke then he felt an injustice had been done.<sup>19</sup> El Madury's attitude in the framework of identity politics reflects someone who feels excluded and threatened by certain parties. At such, his specific attributes and identity are a deliberate form of resistance to the domination of certain groups or thoughts that threaten him.

The above describes how El Madury builds his charismatic authority. The other is authority built through tradition or what Weber calls traditional authority (Spencer 1970; Matheson 1987; Riesebrodt 1999). In simple terms, something can be considered as having traditional authority if it gains legitimacy based on beliefs or norms that have been established in a particular tradition (Chairi 2019). In other words, according to Spencer (1970), traditional authority is legitimised and, at the same time, constrained by traditional norms. Therefore, it is the opposite of charismatic authority. If in charismatic authority, it is the leader or someone who creates the norms, then it is the norms that create the leader or person in the traditional authority. In charismatic authority, the value of influence is generated by a person's personal qualities and is always associated with his personality. While in the case of traditional authority, it is generated by function and is related to someone or something that has traditional values (Spencer 1970).

In the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, ulama and the classical books they wrote can be considered to have this traditional authority. Ulama in Islamic tradition are called heirs of the Prophets. The authority of the ulama is derived from the legitimacy of religious texts which state that the prophetic tradition will be passed on to them. Therefore, the religious ideas they convey in writings or books contain an authoritative value for the next generation. This is the uniqueness of Islamic scholars and traditions, as mentioned by Muhammad Qasim Zaman (2002) who states that one of the most prominent aspects of pre-modern intellectual culture is the articulation of religious discourse through the so-called medium of the commentary. This is manifested in various forms such *al-syurūḥ*, *ḥawāsyī*, *rasā'il*, and *fatawā*. The various genres of books that contain explanations, descriptions, or responses to a book or social phenomena are a way for scholars to shape the identity and authority of the school or tradition they adhere to. In addition, it is also a means to interpreting the meaning of the foundational sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah (Zaman 2002).

---

<sup>19</sup> On 3 November 2019, the manager of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah reprimanded Zulkarnain El Madury for his post on SHPTM on the veil which contradicts Muhammadiyah's official stance.

An example is the *hawāsyī* tradition in the Shafii school. Its emergence, according to Ahmed El-Shamsy (2013), shows the peak of the authority of two scholars in that school, namely al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi‘ī. Al-Kurdī, as quoted by El Shamsy, called these two scholars ‘the higher authorities in the Syafii school’. Those who want to know the authoritative opinion of the Shafi‘i school have to go through the works of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi‘ī, and the books that explain further their works, namely the books written by Ibn Ḥajar al-Haitamī and Syamsuddīn al-Ramlī. These books have for later generations the value of traditional authority (Shamsy 2013: 292).

What is the connection between this traditional authority and El Madury? El Madury’s posts on SHPTM and at religious forums where he speaks always rely on the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāth*). According to Endang Mintarja, chair of the Jakarta branch of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this aspect has drawn many people to El Madury’s lectures.<sup>20</sup> What El Madury did, which Muhammadiyah did not do in many of its fatwas was to cite the Islamic intellectual tradition. In many of its fatwas, Muhammadiyah often only quotes the Qur’an or hadith to strengthen its argument, without citing the opinions of other Islamic scholars. Perhaps this is a consequence of the modernist movement, which became the spirit of Muhammadiyah. The modernist movement initiated by reformers such as Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad ‘Abduh, and Muḥammad Rasyīd Riḍā in the late 19th and early 20th centuries used the term *al-rujū’ ilā al-qur’ān wa al-sunnah* (‘back to the Qur’an and Sunnah’). According to Syed Junaid A. Quadri (2013), the most obvious indicator of this movement, especially in Islamic law, is its critical attitude towards the structure of pre-modern sharia authority symbols, which are articulated in the language and logic of the institution of *taqlīd*. Modernist groups always encourage reopening the door to *ijtihād* and invite Muslims to leave the interpretive monopoly that the ulama class has held (Quadri 2013).

Muhammadiyah, which is heavily inspired by the modernist movement, is oriented towards the Qur’an and Sunnah and tends to attach less importance to the Islamic intellectual tradition that has been built by the ulama. This can be seen from its *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (the methodology Muhammadiyah uses in conducting *ijtihād*), which asserts that Muhammadiyah is not affiliated to a particular school, but the opinions of these schools are only considered in determining religious norms (Anwar 2018). This means that understanding religion in the Muhammadiyah perspective is derived directly from its primary

<sup>20</sup> Endang Mintarja voiced this at a Muhammadiyah Central Board Tarjih Council meeting of on the emergence ‘Syarah HPT’, 25 September 2020.

**Commented [MOU4]:** I have merged these two paras as the preceding para was too short and when typeset you only get one or two lines.

sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah through the *ijtihad* process. However, it should be noted here that the narration that confirms the opinions of the scholars is taken into account in determining norms is not that clear how they are implemented in *tarjih* issues.

In some of its official religious *ijtihad*, the nuances of the opinions of scholars, especially the pre-modern ones do not appear, by choice or otherwise. Muhammadiyah's opinion indicates the source of the Islamic intellectual tradition, from whom or which particular school of thought. Thus it appears that El Madury is filling the Muhammadiyah gap in presenting the authority of the Islamic intellectual tradition in religious narratives. For example, in the controversial veil case, the Tarjih Council issued three fatwas in 1993, 2003 and 2009.<sup>21</sup> The fatwas issued in 1993 and 2009 emphasised that the veil has no legal basis either in the Qur'an or the Sunnah but that Islamic law commands women to wear the hijab. These two fatwas did not cite the Islamic intellectual tradition, which also accommodates opinions about the veil. Although the Tarjih Council kept in its stance and strengthened the opinion that women's 'aurat (parts of the body that should go covered) are the whole body except the face and the palms of the hands, in the 2003 fatwa, the Tarjih Council provides space for those who want to wear the veil by expressing several opinions from the scholars who think so.

In contrast to the *tarjih* fatwas, El Madury's (2019) article *Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam?* ('Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?') on the SHPTM site refutes the *tarjih* fatwa. He cites various opinions of scholars in the Islamic intellectual tradition who support mandatory veiling as an effort to build religious authority. From this, it appears that El Madury, apart from attacking the *tarjih* fatwa, believes in maintaining traditional authority, in this case, the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāts*).

What El Madury did in building religious authority can also be captured from what Burhani calls a conversion narrative. Some scholars define religious conversion narratives differently as for example, in the change from one religious tradition to another. William James, as quoted by Burhani (2020: 158), states that religious conversion can also be interpreted as the conversion of a person who is a sinner into someone pious. According to Burhani (2020), people who experience religious conversion, usually after embracing a new tradition or religious understanding, will be hostile to the previous religious tradition or understanding.

<sup>21</sup> Tim Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat (2009, 2019a, 2019b).

**Commented [MOU5]:** Doesn't this contradict the next sentence if you say Muhammdiaah indicates the source of the intellectual tradition? Which gap would El Madury be filling?

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, English (United Kingdom)

El Madury also experienced a religious conversion, in this case, from the NU tradition to Muhammadiyah's. On SHPTM as well as his views when interviewed by this author, he introduced himself as someone who had practised the '*kuburiyyun* tradition'<sup>22</sup> and other actions that did not have examples from the Prophet. To convince his followers, he posted information about his religious conversion from NU to Muhammadiyah. Besides condemning his previous practices, which were deemed to have no basis in the Qur'an and Sunnah, he has had acrimonious debates with the NU *kyai*, Idrus Ramli on various issues, such as *ahlus sunnah wal jamaah* and *wahabi, nahdliyyin* traditions that are often considered heresy, and so on.

### Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Before the advent of the internet and the emergence of various new religious authorities, Muhammadiyah and NU were the two largest religious organisations and authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). However, following the emergence of the so-called micro-celebrity *ustaz*, these two groups, according to some scholars, began to face challenges and threats. The recent study by Wahyudi Akmaliah (2020) shows that the two organisations have responded differently to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was more combative about their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) maintains there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's response look less aggressive. Akmaliah is correct on several points, but other perspectives deserve to be considered, especially Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority, especially on the internet. The weak point, ~~from as shown in~~ Akmaliah's study is that there is no adequate elaboration of the assembly that exclusively holds religious authority in Muhammadiyah, namely the Tarjih Council. To trace more precisely how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority we have to look at the Tarjih Council.

This discussion starts from the author's experience in attending a meeting held by the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board. The meeting was initiated in response to the emergence of El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim's SHPTM site. It should be noted here that Abdurrahim also contributed writings to this website. He was earlier mentioned as having had permission from Buya Yun to give *syarh* (explanation) on HPT

<sup>22</sup> The tradition of visiting the grave with its associated practices.

Commented [MOU6]: I have merged these two paras.

Commented [MOU7]: Amended, is this what you mean?

Formatted: Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman



(Tarjih Judgment Compilation) and is the author of *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*. The initial background for holding this meeting, as revealed by the secretary of the Tarjih Council, Mas'udi, was purely in response to the SHPTM posts by El Madury. However, information about the SHPTM other than the one written by El Madury prompted the board of the Tarjih Council to include the book by Abdurrahim with the same title for the agenda.

On Friday, 7 Safar 1442 AH (25 September 2020), the Tarjih Council invited nine related sectors to discuss concerns over the emergence of the SHPTM on the internet written by the El Madury and Abdurrahim. The nine sector participants were: (1) the executive board of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (2) fatwa division of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (3) chair/secretary of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (4) Dr Endang Mintarja, M.Ag. (Chair of the Jakarta Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council); (5) H. Fathurrahman, Lc., M.S.I. (Chair of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council); (6) H. Budi Setiawan, S.T.; (7) Arif Nurkholis (head of Muhammadiyah Digital Syiar Centre); (8) the manager of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre; and (9) the social media assistance team of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

During the meeting, there were at least four proposals from participants on how best to respond to the SHPTM, especially-particularly El Madury's article about the veil. The first was to complain to Facebook about the SHPTM so that it could be banned for including an institution's name without permission. According to the chair of the Tabligh Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board, Fathurrahman Kamal, who was present at the forum, the fanpage is already in the illegal category. This proposal was considered by the proponents as a firm proposal but that it risked unnecessary antagonism. The second was to use a persuasive approach in the form of clarification or an appeal to El Madury not to use the name *Himpunan Putusan Tajih* (HPT) or something that is associated with *tarjih*. Its proponents consider this approach to be softer and more reflective of being Muhammadiyah members in particular, and Muslims in general. The third proposal was to use institutional authority in writing an official letter on behalf of the Tarjih Council to El Madury. The fourth idea that was considered more practical and efficient was to place the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it on social media. This would avoid being drawn into unfruitful correspondence on SHPTM.

However, there was no agreement on which approach should be undertaken despite long discussions. It was agreed instead that there would be a follow up with another forum. Since

**Commented [MOU8]:** Is it illegal or illicit? Did El Madury break the law?

Illegal activities are those that are forbidden by law. Illicit activities are considered improper or socially forbidden; they may or may not be illegal but they go against social norms and values. 12 Dec 202

this author started writing (3 April 2022) there has been no further meeting. The emergence of SHPTM on the internet and its effects have been considered a serious problem by the Tarjih Council. The meeting's participants were generally uneasy about the appearance of El Madury and his fanpage. In addition, they wanted El Madury to be warned or reprimanded since SHPTM is considered a threat to religious authority of the Tarjih Council. This illustrates that Muhammadiyah, through its official religious assembly, the Tarjih Council, is not passive in responding to the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. However, only certain cases and not all micro-celebrity *ustaz* who appear on social media have drawn the Tarjih Council's attention. Although there has yet to be a follow up meeting, the Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an official institution supporting the Tarjih Council illustrates how Muhammadiyah struggles to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is an institution that was founded in 2016 by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Ahmad Dahlan University (Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah 2016). Despite being a new institution, its legality is clear, and it has formal authority. In the Muhammadiyah tradition as an organisation, such legality is essential. Thus when someone from Muhammadiyah, speaks on another person's behalf or endorses an approach, the speaker's status is below that of the institution and cannot be assumed to be that of institutions within Muhammadiyah which, although new, have legality. In the context of El Madury and the SHPTM fanpage, this is important. Even though El Madury claims he has obtained permission to make *syarah* on the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* from a charismatic figure in Muhammadiyah, Buya Yunahar, legally it is not valid. In that context, Buya Yunahar spoke on behalf of himself, not on behalf of Muhammadiyah.

Fronted by young Muhammadiyah cadres, the majority of whom are alumni of Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Tarjih Ulama Education, PUTM),<sup>23</sup> Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays a role in supporting the Tarjih Council programmes. These are relatively under-performing and facing obstacles, particularly on using social media to disseminate their official religious *ijtihad*. The members of the Tarjih Council, who are relatively old, need support from young cadres. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays an essential role in assisting the Tarjih Council in maintaining its

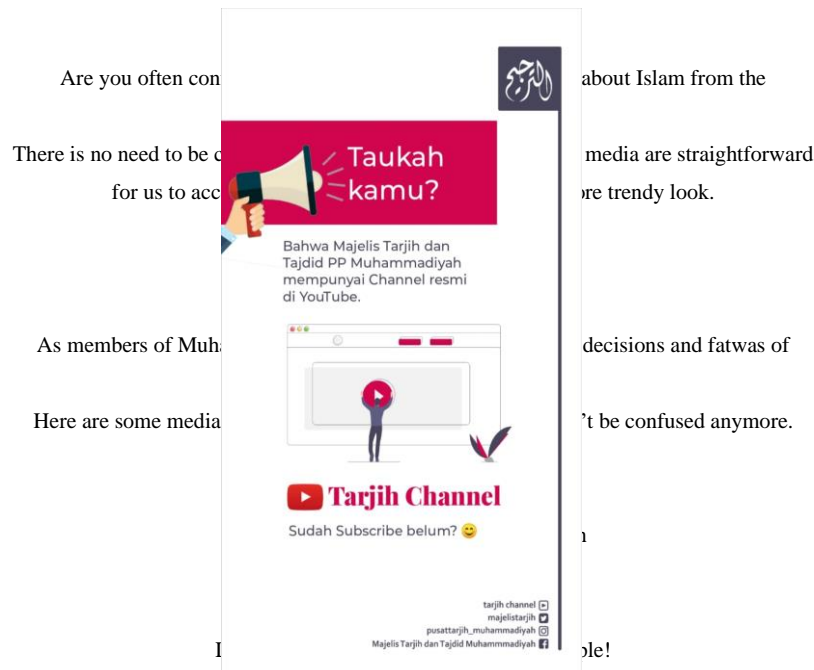
---

<sup>23</sup> PUTM is an educational institution under the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board designed to produce a cadre of Muhammadiyah scholars. PUTM organises a special programme that educates and prepares Muhammadiyah *tarjih* scholars who are competent in the religious field. The birth of PUTM was based on the concern of some Muhammadiyah leaders about the increasing scarcity of ulama in and from Muhammadiyah (Fauzi 2020a).

religious authority on the internet. It responded to El Madury and SHPTM, by being proactive with a poster (Figure 1) on social media and in print form, containing information related to the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it.



Figure 1. Poster with information on the official social media accounts affiliated to the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.



**Figure 2.** Translation of Figure 1.

Although the poster above does not directly mention the SHPTM site created by El Madury, the main message in it is clear and firm, namely to inform the Muhammadiyah followers about the official accounts of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it. This would hopefully let Muhammadiyah members understand how its official religious voice is disseminated on the internet. Following this, Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah successively uploaded other, more varied posters to indirectly counter the SHPTM fanpage. Some other examples of these posters are shown in Figures 3 and 5.

**Figure 3.** Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Do you know?  
The Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah now have an official YouTube  
channel, (namely) the Tarjih Channel.  
Have you subscribed yet?

**Figure 4.** Translation of Figure 3.



**Figure 5.** Information about the website fatwatarjih.or.id, an official website affiliated to the Tarjih Council containing fatwas. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Fatwatarjih.or.id is the official website for the Tarjih and the Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board (MTT).

The Media Team of Fatwa Tarjih, through this website, has been, is and will continue to strive consistently to publish various ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council. Until now, tarjih fatwa collections from 1997 to 2018 have entered the editing stage, and some are just waiting to be published.

**Figure 6.** Translation of Figure 5.



**Figure 7.** Information on the official website of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Do you want to know the full history (of the Tarjih Council)?  
 Or do you want to look for ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council?  
 Come on; you can find out on this website: tarjih.or.id

**Figure 8.** Translation of Figure 7.

The use of informal language and emoticons typical of millennials indicate the audience that the Tarjih Council wants to target. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah team understands that informal language will appeal to its target audience. This is aimed at not only establishing the authority of the Tarjih Council but ‘millennialisation’ i.e. to reach out to the younger generation familiar with social media. Suyadi and Widodo (2019) note that millennialisation is an alternative way to develop knowledge that will synergised with various online media and

digital technology. In the context of *tarjih* millennialisation, Muhammadiyah's official religious *ijtihad* that tend to be disseminated in a conventional, monotonous, and uncreative manner are now communicated through social media in more contextual packaging. This means that the Tarjih Council and its various official religious *ijtihad*, which previously were always identified with the 'old', are now consciously aiming to include young people.

The religious authority of the Tarjih Council in cyberspace, especially when connected with the appearance of El Madury and SHPTM, was greatly helped by the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah and its young Muhammadiyah cadres. It manages various social media platforms with large numbers of followers, and has helped maintain Muhammadiyah's religious authority by balancing and suppressing the presence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. Its contents are fatwas and decisions of the Tarjih Council with more appealing visualisation to reach out to the millennials.

Although the number of social media followers of the Tarjih Council is less than that for the NU and Salafi groups, at least the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah acts as a compass for Muhammadiyah followers who question its religious authority, especially with the emergence of El Madury's version in SHPTM. The administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah's social media have received many messages either through the comments column or direct messages in its inbox, which question the authority of SHPTM.<sup>24</sup> Here, the vital role of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is increasingly finding its momentum.

## Conclusion

Although it can be said that Muhammadiyah's religious influence and authority on the internet are inferior and lag behind other religious groups, Muhammadiyah is still trying to manage its authority, especially when facing threats from micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By focusing on Zulkarnain El Madury and his SHPTM social media page, this article offers a different perspective from previous studies by analysing the work of the Tarjih Council as the only institution in Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas. This article shows that Muhammadiyah has its own way of responding to the emergence of new religious authorities. With the help of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an institution in its fold, the Tarjih Council has made continuous efforts through social media and its official website to counter new

---

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Ariful Hazam, Ilham Ibrahim, and Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, September 2020. They are Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah social media administrators.



voices that threaten its authority. Muhammadiyah's response was neither aggressive nor radical but it clarified its stance without mentioning who precisely was being targeted. What Muhammadiyah did was in line with the Javanese proverb *Ngluruk tanpo bolo, menang tanpo ngasorake* ('win without defeat, win without humiliation [of others]'). The form of Muhammadiyah's response is inherited from its founder, Ahmad Dahlan. As seen by Peacock (1978), Ahmad Dahlan carried out many social transformations calmly and systematically without being antagonistic.

In a broader context, the case of Zulkarnain El Madury also provides a lesson that using the name Muhammadiyah to justify personal opinions or legitimise particular interests is wrong. Muhammadiyah has the reputation of a very well managed organisation (Barton 2014; *Suara Muhammadiyah* 2019) which is its strength and gives it clout compared to other religious organisations in Indonesia, such as NU. In short, authority in Muhammadiyah lies in the institution itself and is not based on personality. It differs from NU, where power and authority tend to lie in personal figures, such as *kyai* or *gus* (Fauzi 2020b).

Muhammadiyah followers who understand its basic rules are not easily influenced by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. They are aware that Muhammadiyah's official religious stance is only be issued by the Tarjih Council and that those external to the Tarjih Council or even specific Muhammadiyah figures who give religious opinions, speak only for themselves as individuals and not the organisation. This would be the case, for example, even if the religious opinion emanates from the chair of the Tarjih Council as an individual. This did occur when Syamsul Anwar, the current chair of the Tarjih Council, differed from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council on the issue of *iftitāh* prayer (opening ~~prayer for~~ night prayer [*qiyām al-lail*]).<sup>25</sup>

While Anwar's opinion clearly differs from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council, the prevailing opinion in Muhammadiyah is that of the Tarjih Council, not the chair of the Tarjih Council. Within Muhammadiyah, such religious differences of opinion are common as usually happens in *fiqh* discourse in general. The difference between El Madury and Anwar is that the latter does not act in the name of Muhammadiyah or the Tarjih Council when he has a different view. Instead, on many occasions, he urges Muhammadiyah followers

<sup>25</sup> For Anwar (2013), the *iftitāh* prayer comprises two short *rak'ah* prayers that are performed before *qiyām al-lail*, with the condition that it must be preceded by sleep, otherwise there is no need to perform the *iftitāh* prayer. However, the Tarjih Council holds that the *iftitāh* prayer consists of two short *rak'ah* prayers performed before *qiyām al-lail*, whether preceded by sleep or not (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2011; Tim Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2019a).

to abide by the opinion of the Tarjih Council on the *iftitāh* prayer.<sup>26</sup> Thus Anwar has shown he can compromise his personal religious opinion with his professional attitude in the organisation. In this case, he understands that using the name Muhammadiyah to legitimise individual opinions or interests is not justifiable.

### Acknowledgements

Permission for this research PJB-002/SP3/LPPM-UAD/VI/2020 and funding were provided by the ethical board of Ahmad Dahlan University Research and Development Institute (Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan).

I am grateful to *ustaz* Zulkarnain El Madury for his exceptional help and support during my fieldwork. I also thank Amiruddin, Arif Nur Kholis, Muhammad Muflih, Wahyudi Abdurrahim, Robby Karman, Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, Ilham Ibrahim, Ariful Hazam, and the members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council for providing information regarding my research. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article and to the editors of the *Indonesia and the Malay World*. Errors, if any, are solely mine.

### Note on contributor

*Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi* is a lecturer in the Department of Hadith Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He has published widely on a variety of issues relating to Islamic Studies, including al-Quran, hadith, Islamic law, social media and da'wah, and Muhammadiyah studies. Email: niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id

### References

- Abror, Robby. 2020. Syeikh Yunahar, ulama Muhammadiyah kharismatik [Sheikh Yunahar, a charismatic Muhammadiyah cleric]. 3 January. <<https://menara62.com/syeikh-yunahar-ulama-muhammadiyah-kharismatik/>> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2018. Media sosial dan pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [Social media and shifting religious authority]. 12 December.

---

<sup>26</sup> On several occasions, this author has heard Syamsul Anwar's direct appeal to Muhammadiyah members to follow the opinion of the Tarjih Council on this aspect of the *iftitāh* prayer.

<[https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media\\_sosial\\_dan\\_pergeseran\\_otoritas\\_keagamaan](https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media_sosial_dan_pergeseran_otoritas_keagamaan)> Accessed 3 February 2020.

- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2020. The demise of moderate Islam: new media, contestation, and reclaiming religious authorities. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10 (1): 1–24.
- Alfaqi, Mifdal Zusron. 2015. Memahami Indonesia melalui perspektif nasionalisme, politik identitas, serta solidaritas [Understanding Indonesia through the perspectives of nationalism, identity politics, and solidarity]. *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 28 (2): 111–116.
- Alvara Research Center. 2020. Ramadhan dan pandemi Covid-19: semangat ibadah tak surut, konsumsi tersendat. <[https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN\\_DAN\\_PANDEMI\\_COVID-19\\_SEMANGAT\\_IBADAH\\_TAK\\_SURUT\\_KONSUMSI\\_TERSENDAT.pdf](https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN_DAN_PANDEMI_COVID-19_SEMANGAT_IBADAH_TAK_SURUT_KONSUMSI_TERSENDAT.pdf)> Accessed 23 February 2021<sup>3</sup>.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2007. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer* [Contemporary Islamic law studies]. Jakarta: RM Books.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2013. *Salat Tarawih: Tinjauan usul fiqh, sejarah, dan fiqh* [Tarawih prayer: usul fiqh, history, and fiqh perspectives]. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2016. Fatwā, purification and dynamization: a study of tarjih in Muhammadiyah. *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (1): 27–44.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2018. *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Panitia Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih Muhammadiyah XXX.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2020. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer Bagian dua* [Contemporary Islamic legal studies Part two]. Yogyakarta: UAD Press.
- Barton, Greg. 2014. The Gülen movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: progressive Islamic thought, religious philanthropy and civil society in Turkey and Indonesia. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25 (3): 287–301.
- Buchari, Sri Astuti. 2014. *Kebangkitan etnis menuju politik identitas* [Ethnic awakening towards identity politics]. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Bunt, Gary R. 2003. *Islam in the digital age: e-jihad, online fatwas and cyber Islamic environments*. London: Pluto Press.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2005. The 45th Muhammadiyah Congress contest between literal-conservative and liberal-moderate Muslims in Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 12 (1): 185–189.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2013. Liberal and conservative discourses in the Muhammadiyah: the

- struggle for the face of reformist Islam in Indonesia. In Martin van Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary developments in Indonesian Islam: explaining the 'conservative turn'*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2016. Aksi bela Islam: konservatisme dan fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. *Maarif* 11 (2): 15–29.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2020. Muslim televangelists in the making: conversion narratives and the construction of religious authority. *Muslim World* 110 (2): 154–175.
- Burhanudin, Jajat. 2004. The fragmentation of religious authority: Islamic print media in early 20th century Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 11 (1): 23–62.
- Campbell, H.A. and Teusner, P.E. 2011. Religious authority in the age of the internet. In *Christian Reflection, Virtual Lives*. Waco TX: Baylor University Press, pp. 59–68. <<https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/130950.pdf>>
- Chairi, Effendi. 2019. Ketidadaan otoritas terpusat dalam fenomena kontemporer di Indonesia [The absence of a centralised authority in contemporary phenomena in Indonesia]. *SANGKĒP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 2 (2):197–215.
- Chaplin. Chris. 2021. *Salafism and the State: Islamic activism and national identity in contemporary Indonesia*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.
- Dakta.com. 2016. Aa Gym ajak ribuan jamaahnya ikut aksi bela Islam III [Aa Gym invites thousands of congregants to join Islamic Defence Action III]. 29 November. <<http://www.dakta.com/news/7329/aa-gym-ajak-ribuan-jamaahnya-ikut-aksi-bela-islam-iii>> Accessed 2 February 2020.
- Fadl, Khaled Abou El. 2014. *Speaking in God's name: Islamic law, authority, and women*. London: Oneworld Publications.
- Farhan, Farhan. 2017. Pesan dakwah Felix Siauw di media sosial (perspektif meaning and media). *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Administrasi Islam* 1 (2): 209–226.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2017. Peranan Maqasid Al-Shariah dalam memahami Hadith: kajian terhadap fatwa Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah [The role of Maqasid Al-Shariah in understanding Hadith: a study of the fatwa of the Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah]. MA thesis, University of Malaya.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020a. PUTM dan kaderisasi ulama: menelusuri latar belakang lahirnya Lembaga Kaderisasi Ulama Muhammadiyah [PUTM and clerical regeneration: tracing the background of the birth of the Muhammadiyah Clerical Cadre Institute]. <<https://santricendekia.com/putm-dan-kaderisasi-ulama-menelusuri-latar-belakang-lahirnya-lembaga-kaderisasi-ulama-muhammadiyah/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.

- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020b. Tantangan kader ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah di era 4.0 [Challenges for Tarjih Muhammadiyah ulama cadres in the 4.0 era]. 21 July. *Suara 'Aisyiyah* <<https://suaraaisyiyah.id/tantangan-kader-ulama-tarjih-muhammadiyah-di-era-4-0/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Fealy, Greg. 2008. Consuming Islam: commodified religion and aspirational pietism in contemporary Indonesia. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.
- Gesuri. 2020. Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia kehilangan ulama kharismatik [Yunahar Ilyas passed away, Indonesia lost a charismatic scholar]. 3 January. <<https://www.gesuri.id/internal/yunahar-ilyas-wafat-indonesia-kehilangan-ulama-kharismatik-b1YFoZpRY>> Accessed 20 March 2020.
- Hew, Wai Weng. 2018. The art of dakwah: social media, visual persuasion and the Islamist propagation of Felix Siauw. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (134): 61–79.
- Hoesterey, James B. 2008. Marketing morality: the rise, fall and rebranding of Aa Gym. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: Religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, pp. 95–114.
- Hope Cheong, Pauline. 2016. Religious authority and social media branding in a culture of religious celebrification. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*, University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 81–102.
- Horsfield, Peter. 2016. The media and religious authority from ancient to modern. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*. University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 37–66.
- IB Times Indonesia. 2020. 100 situs Islam Indonesia, NU Online peringkat pertama [100 Indonesian Islamic websites, NU Online ranks first]. 10 July. <<https://ibtimes.id/100-situs-islam-indonesia-nu-online-peringkat-pertama/>> Accessed 23 February 2023.
- Ilyas, Yunahar. 2012. *Kuliah Akhlaq* [Akhlaq lecture]. XII. Yogyakarta: LPPI Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta.
- Khamis, S., Ang, L. and Welling, R. 2017. Self-branding, 'micro-celebrity' and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191–208.
- Khomalia, Isti and Rahman, Khairul Arief. 2018. Micro hijabers celebrity: membentuk identitas dengan update self-story via instagram (kasus dian pelangi). *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban dan Pemikiran Islam* 2 (1): 33–42.
- Kompas. 2020. Sejumlah tokoh hadir prosesi pemakaman ketua PP Muhammadiyah Yunahar

- Ilyas [Many figures attended the funeral procession of Muhammadiyah chairman Yunahar Ilyas]. 3 January.  
 <<https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/03/19142441/sejumlah-tokoh-hadiri-prosesi-pemakaman-ketua-pp-muhammadiyah-yunahar-ilyas>> Accessed 3 April 2022.
- Labiq. 2019. Pengaruh new media terhadap pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [The influence of new media on shifting religious authority]. 19 April.  
 <<https://geotimes.co.id/opini/pengaruh-new-media-terhadap-pergeseran-otoritas-keagamaan>> Accessed 19 October 2020.
- Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. 2010. *Politik identitas dan masa depan pluralisme Indonesia*. Edited by Samsu Rizal Panggabean et al. Jakarta: Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (PUSAD) Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina.
- Madury, Zulkarnain El. 2019. Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam? [Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?]. 2 November.  
 <<https://www.facebook.com/zulkarnainsumenep/posts/2386248524961601>> Accessed 5 May 2020.
- Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah. 2016. Pembukaan Halaqah, Majelis Tarjih Launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan Muhammadiyah Observatorium Network [Halaqah opening, Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and Muhammadiyah Observatory Network]. 20 August. <<https://tarjih.or.id/pembukaan-halaqah-majelis-tarjih-launching-pusat-tarjih-muhammadiyah-dan-muhammadiyah-observatorium-network/>> Accessed 6 October 2023.
- Majelis Tarjih Dahlan, Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. 2016. Nota Kesepakatan Majelis Tarjih Dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Tentang Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di Islamic Center Universitas Ahmad Dahlan [Memorandum of Agreement between the Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board and Ahmad Dahlan University on the Management of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre at the Islamic Centre of Ahmad Dahlan University]. Yogyakarta.
- Maskur, Maskur and Noor, Irfan Noor. 2014. Ustadz selebriti Abdullah Gymnastiar dalam budaya populer (perspektif hipersemiotika Yasraf Amir Piliang) [Celebrity Ustadz Abdullah Gymnastiar in popular culture (Yasraf Amir Piliang's hyper semiotics perspective)]. *Jurnal Studia Insania* 2 (1): 47–57.
- Matheson, Craig. 1987. Weber and the classification of forms of legitimacy. *British Journal of Sociology* 38 (2): 199–215.

- Muhammadiyah Central Board. 2023. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 8 October 2023.
- Nisa, Eva F. 2019. Internet and Muslim women. In Ronald Lukens-Bull and Mark Woodward (eds), *Handbook of contemporary Islam and Muslim lives*. Cham: Springer, pp. 1–19.
- Palahuddin. 2020. The typology of religious thought in Muhammadiyah. *International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 3 (2): 74–81.  
<<http://journal2.uad.ac.id/index.php/ijish/article/view/2233/pdf>>
- Peacock, James L. 1978. *Purifying the Faith: the Muhammadiyah movement in Indonesian Islam*. Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2011. *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2016. Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan MuON [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and MuON]. 20 August.  
<<http://www.umm.ac.id/id/muhammadiyah/7070.html>> Accessed 20 March 2021.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Berikut Susunan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah pPeriode 2022–2027 [The following is the composition of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the 2022–2027 period] <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/berikut-susunan-pimpinan-pusat-muhammadiyah-periode-2022-2027/>> Accessed 7 October 2023.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Majelis Tabligh [Tabligh Council]. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 07 October 2023.
- Postill, John and Pink, Sarah. 2012. Social media ethnography: the digital researcher in a messy web. *Media International Australia* 145 (1): 123–134.
- Pribadi, Yanwar. 2019. Fragmentasi umat dan penciptaan otoritas keagamaan: tanggapan terhadap ‘Islam lokal’ dan ‘Islam asing’ di Indonesia [Ummah fragmentation and the creation of religious authority: responses to ‘local Islam’ and ‘foreign Islam’ in Indonesia]. *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 21 (1): 103–119.  
<<https://jmb.lipi.go.id/jmb/article/view/828/455>>
- Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah. n.d. *Panduan pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre management guide]. Majelis Tarjih, Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta.
- Quadri, Syed Junaid A. 2013. Transformations of tradition: modernity in the thought of Muḥammad Bakhīr Al-Muṭī‘ī. PhD thesis, McGill University.
- Rahman, Asjmuni Abdur et al. 1985. Laporan penelitian Majlis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (suatu

- studi tentang sistem dan metode penentuan hukum) [Research report of Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (a study of the system and method of determining the law)]. Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga.
- Rakyat Merdeka. 2019. Dubes Malaysia jenguk ketum MUI Yunahar Ilyas di Yogyakarta [Malaysian ambassador visits MUI chairman Yunahar Ilyas in Yogyakarta]. 5 November. <<https://rm.id/baca-berita/internasional/21745/dubes-malaysia-jenguk-ketum-mui-yunahar-ilyas-di-yogyakarta>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Riesebrodt, Martin. 1999. Charisma in Max Weber's Sociology of Religion. *Religion* 29 (1): 1–14.
- Sadasri, Lidwina Mutia. 2017. Selebriti mikro di media baru kajian presentasi diri dalam vlog selebriti mikro [Micro-celebrities in new media: a study of self-presentation in micro-celebrity vlogs]. *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi Dan Opini Publik* 21 (2): 167–181. <<https://jurnal.kominfo.go.id/index.php/jpkop/article/view/1218/720>>
- Saefullah, Hikmawan. 2022. Media baru, publik baru: mengkonfigurasi ulang ruang publik Islam [New media, new publics: reconfiguring the Islamic public sphere]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sammy, Abdullah. 2022. Peluang dan tantangan dakwah digital Muhammadiyah [Opportunities and challenges of Muhammadiyah digital da'wah]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sanjaya, Makroen. 2022. Peta ideologi islam di media sosial [The map of Islamic ideology on social media]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Senft, Theresa M. 2008. *Camgirls: celebrity and community in the age of social networks*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Shamsy, Ahmed El. 2013. The Ḥāshiyā in Islamic law: a sketch of the Shāfi'ī literature. *Oriens* 41 (3-4): 289–315.
- Spencer, Martin E. 1970. Weber on legitimate norms and authority. *British Journal of Sociology* 21 (2): 123–134.
- Suara Muhammadiyah. 2019. Hyung Jun Kim: sistem di Muhammadiyah sungguh ideal [Hyung Jun Kim: Muhammadiyah's system is ideal]. <<https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/08/01/hyung-jun-kim-sistem-di-muhammadiyah-sungguh-ideal/>> Accessed 9 April 2022.



- Suyadi and Widodo, Hendro. 2019. Millennialization of Islamic education based on neuroscience in the third generation university in Yogyakarta Indonesia. *QIIS International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7 (1): 173–202.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat. 2009. Hukum tentang jenggot dan cadar [Islamic law perspective on beards and veils]. *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine, September. Yogyakarta.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat. 2019a. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 4*. Cetakan IX. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat. 2019b. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 7*. Cetakan IV. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Tirto.id. 2018. Dari Aa' Gym ke Felix Siauw: ustaz medsos & medium dakwah politis. Tirto.Id. 16 January. <<https://tirto.id/dari-aa-gym-ke-felix-siauw-ustaz-medsos-medium-dakwah-politis-cGf>> Accessed 5 February 2020.
- Turner, Bryan S. 2007. Religious authority and the new media. *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2): 117–134.
- Turner, Graeme. 2010. *Ordinary people and the media: the demotic turn*. Los Angeles CA: Sage.
- Widodo, Arif. 2017. Transformative intellectual discourse and movement of Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM). *Iseedu: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices* 1 (1): 126–151.  
<<https://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/iseedu/article/view/5423/3542>>
- Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change*. Princetoon NJ: Princeton University Press.

## ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY *USTAZ* PHENOMENON

### Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

#### ABSTRACTS

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the fragmentation of religious authority. In the Indonesian context, the mainstream religious authority held by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has been challenged and threatened by micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This article examines the emergence of the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage on Facebook, created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board as it has threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority. It analyses Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace, by taking a closer look at what has been done by Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, an assembly that has the exclusive authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* within Muhammadiyah. This article also discusses lessons that can be learned from the case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the response of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the fragmentation of religious authority. In the Indonesian context, the mainstream religious authority held by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has been challenged and threatened by micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This article examines the emergence of the *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage on Facebook, that has threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority. It was created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board. It analyses Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace. It also takes a closer look at the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah), an assembly that has the exclusive authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* decisions other than fatwas within Muhammadiyah, that differs from previous studies. This

article also discusses lessons that can be learned from the case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the response of the Tarjih Council.

**Commented [nf1]:** I offer this English abstract based on my approved translation of the Indonesian abstract below. This English abstract is based on the Indonesian version of the abstract. What do you think?

#### KEYWORDS

Fragmentation of religious authority; micro-celebrity *ustaz*; Muhammadiyah; religious authority; *tarjih*.

#### ABSTRAK

Kemunculan internet dan media sosial telah mempertajam fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. Dalam konteks Indonesia, otoritas keagamaan arus utama yang dipegang oleh Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) telah ditantang dan diancam oleh para ustaz mikro-selebriti. Artikel ini mengkaji kemunculan *fanpage* Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah di Facebook, yang dibuat dan dikelola oleh Zulkarnain El Madury, seseorang yang mengklaim sebagai ustaz Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, karena dianggap mengancam otoritas keagamaan Muhammadiyah. Penelitian ini menganalisis upaya Muhammadiyah dalam mempertahankan otoritas keagamaannya di dunia maya, dengan melihat lebih dekat pada apa yang telah dilakukan oleh Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah, sebuah majelis yang memiliki otoritas eksklusif untuk mengeluarkan fatwa dan produk ijtihad keagamaan resmi di dalam Muhammadiyah. Artikel ini juga membahas pelajaran yang dapat dipetik dari kasus Zulkarnain El Madury dan respons Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

**Commented [nf2]:** I agree with this Indonesian abstract translation.

#### KATA KUNCI

Ustaz mikro-selebriti; fragmentasi; otoritas keagamaan; otoritas keagamaan; Muhammadiyah; tarjih.

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, 12 pt  
**Formatted:** Line spacing: 1.5 lines

#### Introduction

The Alvara Research Center (2020) survey was surprising as it stated that the clerics most heard by the public, especially in Ramadan 2020, were not from the official Muhammadiyah

board.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the Alvara Research Center survey was released (IBTimes.id 2020), an Islamic website managed by young Muhammadiyah intellectuals, published a report ranking the 100 most popular Islamic websites in Indonesia. The majority of these sites are managed by or affiliated to Nahdliyyin (NU followers) and Salafi<sup>2</sup> groups with few such sites operated by or affiliated to Muhammadiyah. The Alvara Research Center survey and the IBTimes.id report show that Muhammadiyah, in terms of influence and religious authority on the internet, lags behind other religious groups which is ironic for an organisation claiming to represent the progressive Islamic group.

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the so-called fragmentation of religious authority. Eva F. Nisa (2019), for example, mentions that the proliferation of various digital platforms is directly proportional to the increasing fragmentation of religious authority. Islamic discourse is monopolised not only by an elite group of scholars or mainstream religious groups, but also by persons or groups that have not been considered in Islamic discourse. Furthermore, the presence of the internet and social media has led to the birth of what is called micro-celebrity. Theresa M. Senft (2008) defines micro-celebrity as a new style of online performance that involves increasing popularity on social media such as videos, blogs, and networking sites. These micro-celebrities unlike conventional celebrities, emerge from what is known as new media (Senft 2008).

Of course, not all new media users have the adjective ‘micro-celebrity’. Only those who experience what Graeme Turner (2010) terms ‘the demotic turn’, namely, the increasing visibility of ordinary people to appear as celebrities in the media, especially online media. In turn, both conventional and micro-celebrity exist in various public spheres, and the discourse on them is characterised as influencers, stimulants of consumerism, enthusiasm, public debate, and various activism (Sadasri 2017).

By borrowing the theory of micro-celebrities in the study of new media, we can then read how these micro-celebrities have also come to the fore in the religious realm. The emergence of ulama, *ustaz* (religious teachers), and religious leaders who become influencers in new media can perhaps be termed as a form of a micro-celebrity *fustaz* image. Felix Siauw is a prominent example. A convert, who is now a preacher, Siauw has a massive following on social media. In 2018, for example, he had 2.6 million followers on Twitter, and in 2022 it

<sup>1</sup> One of the 15 most popular clerics mentioned in the report, Ustad Ali Hidayat, has since been included on the Muhammadiyah Central Board’s Tabligh Council (2022–2027; Muhammadiyah Central Board 2023). Prior to that, he did not convey official Muhammadiyah ideas in his lectures.

<sup>2</sup> For more comprehensive information on the activism of Salafi groups, see Chris Chaplin (2021).

**Commented [nf3]:** I am adding a footnote here explaining the latest Adi Hidayat update. What do you think?

PK – That’s fine but wouldn’t you need to rephrase the text since it now makes him a representative of the Tabligh Council of the Muhammadiyah Central Board – so does that mean he is an official representative?

**Commented [nf4R3]:** Okay. I re-paraphrased the text to be as below. What do you think?

Although Ustad Ali Hidayat, a rising young preacher and an alumnus of the Darul Arqam Muhammadiyah Garut Islamic Boarding School, was included as one of the 15 most popular clerics in the survey, he cannot be said to be an official representative of Muhammadiyah. Indeed, after the 48th Muhammadiyah Congress (Muktamar Muhammadiyah) in Solo in 2022, he was included in the board of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council of the Muhammadiyah Central Board. However, apart from the fact that in 2020 and before, he was not officially included in the Muhammadiyah board, he also did not convey official Muhammadiyah religious ideas in his lectures.

PK – I have shortened it in the amended footnote. For the first para of your article it would detract from what you want to say so I have moved the info to the footnote as well as shortened it..

**Commented [nf5R3]:** OK. Agreed with you. I think it looks good

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, English

reached 3.3 million. Felix Siauw's Instagram account has around 4.9 million followers. It can even be said that he is the *ustaz* who has the most followers on social media (Tirto 2018), making him one of the leading social media preachers in Indonesia today (Hew 2018). What Felix Siauw posts on his social media has more or less influenced the map of religious authorities in Indonesia.

The existence of the internet and the continuing development of technology allows the emergence of many other micro-celebrity *ustaz*, both in the national arena more generally or more specifically in internal religious organisations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, Persis (Persatuan Islam) or others. In the context of Muhammadiyah, the largest modernist Islamic organisation began to be challenged for its religious authority by a preacher who was said to be part of Muhammadiyah itself, namely Zulkarnain El Madury. He claims to be a Muhammadiyah cadre and often introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board. In recent years, El Madury has been noticed by Muhammadiyah administrators and Muhammadiyah cadres<sup>3</sup> and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah) has discussed him in a special meeting. This is because the posts on the Facebook page that El Madury manages, *Syarah Himpunan Putus Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (henceforth SHPTM), often differ significantly from – and to some extent delegitimise – a Muhammadiyah fatwa or official decision. Responses from grassroots or Muhammadiyah followers vary. This can be seen, for example, from the comments on each post. Some defend and remain adamant on the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah, but not a few were affected and followed what was conveyed by El Madury on his Facebook page.

This is where it becomes crucial to see how Muhammadiyah attempts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace, especially among its members and the public. By conducting web content analysis (Postill and Pink 2012) on SHPTM and official social media accounts and those affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this article shows how El Madury builds his narratives and, in turn, how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority on the internet. Additionally, field research was conducted and key actors were interviewed offline and online in a semi-structured format.<sup>4</sup> Apart from El Madury, the key actors are members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, the chairman of the

---

<sup>3</sup> This author's online and offline interviews with Amiruddin, Robby Karman, Muhammad Muflih, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, and Arif Nur Kholis, 2019–2020.

<sup>4</sup> Data collection in this study was carried out between 2018 and 2020. As personal interviews were not possible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, some interviews were conducted online.

Muhammadiyah Digital Broadcast Centre (Pusat Syiar Digital Muhammadiyah), Muhammadiyah activists as well as Muhammadiyah grassroots.

### **Fragmentation of religious authority, new preacher and micro-celebrity *ustaz* phenomenon**

Fragmentation of religious authority is a phenomenon that occurs in various religious communities and is not limited to Islam (B.S. Turner 2007; Campbell and Teusner 2011; Hope Cheong 2016). The fragmentation of religious authority is also a global phenomenon as pointed out by Gary R. Bunt (2003) who states that the new media have shaped diverse understandings among individual Muslims worldwide about e-jihad (electronic jihad). The definition of electronic jihad is understood and interpreted differently, ranging from online activism to Muslim articulation after the events of 11 September 2001. Bunt (2003) shows that each new media (in this case, new websites) has authority for its respective group segment.

The fragmentation of religious authority discussed here is from the 20th century to the present. Jajat Burhanudin (2004) points out that there has been a shift in religious authority in the historical phase of Indonesian religious thought in the early 20th century due to modernisation. His study, which focuses on the Islamic print media, further shows that there is a shift in religious authority that used to be in *Kitab Kuning*<sup>5</sup> taught by *kyai* or ulama in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to magazines, journals, newspapers, and books published by modernist circles or organisations.

Religious authority since the early 20th century has always stayed with Muhammadiyah and NU. These two religious organisations are often referred to by scholars as the authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016; Akmaliah 2018). The shift in religious authority occurred again in the 1990s when national television stations emerged. The Islamic programmes presented by the television stations show the *ustaz* (religious teachers), which in turn build their authority through lectures delivered by these preachers. This phenomenon prompted scholars to come up with the term ‘Islamic televangelism’ (Akmaliah 2018). Abdullah Gymnastiar who is better known as Aa Gym is one example that falls into the category of a television *ustaz*, or a ‘tele-dai’ as coined by Greg Fealy (2008).

---

<sup>5</sup> So-called because the books were printed on yellow paper. These were the Islamic texts used in the education of Islamic schools.

The most obvious and recent picture of the fragmentation of religious authority in Indonesia is the series of events of the Defend Islam Action (Aksi Bela Islam). Ahmad Najib Burhani (2016) hints that these critical events marked the peak of the fragmentation of religious authorities in Indonesia as they gave rise to new actors who challenge the established religious authority. Although it cannot be said to shift or match the role of Muhammadiyah and NU, the emergence of new actors such as Rizieq Shihab provides a new map of religious authority in Indonesia.

This phenomenon of the fragmentation of religious authority has increased sharply in the development of what scholars call pop culture, marked by the birth of many new media (Labiq 2019). The availability of internet access to every social class is the main factor for this fragmentation. As a result, many new media have emerged with each individual and group competing to spread ideas (Horsfield 2016; Nisa 2019).

Aa Gym is one of the early actors who emerged in the internet era in Indonesia. This can be captured in two interesting studies on Aa Gym by James B. Hoesterey (2008), and Maskur and Noor (2014). Although the use of the internet as a medium of da'wah around during the early 2000s was not as massive as it is now, the emergence of Aa Gym as a new cleric on the national da'wah stage through lectures, seminars, and Islamic training is a phenomenon in itself. Hoesterey (2008) studies the journey of Aa Gym from his first appearance as a preacher, failing, and then successfully rebranding to restore his religious authority. This is evident, for example, from how Aa Gym has many listeners (*Dakta.com* 2016). Popular culture has also brought Aa Gym to be seen not only by the public, especially by his followers, as also singer, actor, author, etc. Thus, he has transformed from an ordinary cleric to a celebrity cleric. Through a hypersemiotic perspective, Maskur and Noor (2014) show the various aspects of Aa Gym's personality.

Following the appearance of Aa Gym and with further rapid development of information technology, many other new preachers began to appear. Hew Wai Weng (2018) describes how Felix Siauw is another skilful religious preacher. Being a cleric with the most followers on the internet did not make Siauw neglect to spread his da'wah in the real world. Hew (2018) points out that Siauw has blended online and offline da'wah harmoniously. According to Hew (2018) and Farhan (2017), one of the keys to Siauw's success in preaching is his ability to present an entertaining and straightforward da'wah, even though its content is dogmatic and political.

Aa Gym and Felix Siauw are two micro-celebrity *ustaz* as a result of the new media. The term micro-celebrity *ustaz* was adopted and reconstructed from the theory of micro-celebrity. Most of these studies conducted from the perspective of pop culture (Senft 2008; G. Turner 2010; Khamis, Ang and Welling 2017; Sadasri 2017; Khomalia and Rahman 2018). describe the fragmentation of religious authority, marked by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By this term this author means an ordinary *ustaz/ustazah* who has skyrocketed in popularity and is celebrity on and because of social media so that he or she is able to influence certain people or communities. In other words, it means the *ustaz/ustazah* has experienced what G. Turner (2010) calls ‘the demotic turn’, when ordinary people are highly visible on social media and become celebrities. Challenges to established religious authorities by new religious personalities or groups are rarely touched on except that of Yanwar Pribadi (2019). His study explains the the efforts of ‘local Islam’ (*Islam lokal*) to defend its religious authority from the threat of ‘foreign Islam’ (*Islam asing*). However, his study differs from what this author will examine in tracing Muhammadiyah’s efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

This study is on a micro-celebrity *ustaz*, Zulkarnain El Madury who is less well known when compared to Aa Gym or Felix Siauw but he has a strong influence on the internet. His identity as a preacher from Muhammadiyah who targets Muhammadiyah followers with postings that are often different and even delegitimise the official voice of this largest modernist mass organisation deserves to be investigated. This study, apart from showing Muhammadiyah’s efforts in maintaining its religious authority on the internet, also seeks explicitly to fill the gap in previous studies. In his latest study, Akmaliah (2020) shows that Muhammadiyah and NU have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was strongly reactive to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) indicates there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah’s responses less hostile. Sammy (2022), Sanjaya (2022), and Saefullah (2022) came to the same conclusion as Akmaliah, claiming that Muhammadiyah is significantly less adaptive to the emergence of new media, and therefore its da’wah often loses to that of the micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This study focuses on the struggle of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as the only assembly under Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas and official ~~religious~~ *ijtihad* exposition within Muhammadiyah.



## Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage

The Facebook SHPTM fanpage was created by Zulkarnain El Madury. He was born in Sumenep on the island of Madura in 1963, with the name Zulkarnain bin Syamsuri. He claims to have studied in Malaysia at the Institute of Business Study and always introduces himself as a preacher from the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah). He spent his childhood in Madura and was a traditionalist Muslim like others on the island. He grew up in a milieu dominated by the NU traditionalist Islamic organisation. He used to perform *tahlilan* (pilgrimage to the grave), and other practices that, according to him, after becoming a member of Muhammadiyah, were not following the Sunnah of the Prophet. He received his religious education at the Islamic boarding school at-Taufiqiyyah Sumenep Madura. In 1976 he became acquainted with Muhammadiyah. Through a lecture delivered by a preacher, He became interested in the da'wah and religious understanding of the Muhammadiyah movement founded by Ahmad Dahlan after listening to a lecture by one of its preachers. In 1977, he officially joined Muhammadiyah.<sup>6</sup>

Since joining Muhammadiyah, El Madury has been active as a preacher who spreads religious ideas and understanding. From 1990 to 2007, he was one of the Muhammadiyah preachers who was sent to remote areas by the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board. His daily activities are now preaching at different places as well as creating content on for SHPTM fanpage. He now lives in Jakarta as the *tarjih* and *tabligh* council chair of the Pondok Gede Muhammadiyah Branch.<sup>7</sup> He created SHPTM in 2014.<sup>8</sup> However, in the digital history that this author can trace, the fanpage was created in 2015 as the earliest post that is currently traceable is dated 5 January 2015.

According to El Madury, the fanpage began with the WhatsApp group he created which he named *Tarjih dan Tabligh Institut* (Tarjih and Tabligh Institute) to provide a space to discuss and spread ideas related to *tarjih*.<sup>9</sup> He included many Muhammadiyah figures and

---

<sup>6</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Muhammadiyah's use of the word *tarjih* has changed throughout its development. In its early period, and following its usage in the principles of law (*usul al-fiqh*), *tarjih* conveyed the meaning of examining the various opinions of Muslim jurists on a particular question and evaluating them to determine which is most faithful to the original Shari'a sources. Over time this usage gradually included any intellectual endeavour used to study

activists in this group, including (the now late) Buya Yunahar Ilyas. Over time, seeing that El Madury's posts on SHPTM were deemed inconsistent with the *tarjih* spirit of Muhammadiyah, several people, such as Fathurrahman Kamal and Buya Risman, sharply criticised the postings. El Madury, Fathurrahman Kamal, and Buya Risman were then engaged in a heated debate which was relayed later to Buya Yunahar Ilyas. The response by Buya Yunahar Ilyas at that time, according to El Madury, differed from that of his critics. Buya Yunahar Ilyas responded quite positively because he saw El Madury's initiative as providing *syarh* (explanation) or further explication of the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Judgment Compilation). Finally, he gave his permission to El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com).<sup>10</sup>

El Madury's early postings on SHPTM, were still relatively consistent in uploading Muhammadiyah fatwas in the question (from someone) and answer format from the fatwa division of the Tarjih Council. This is similar to the the original question and answer format administered by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, whose fatwas were later published in the *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine. However, over time, SHPTM included posts that apart from the dissemination of Muhammadiyah's official ~~religious~~ *ijtihad* included the personal opinions of El Madury. These opinions in inelegant words are often offensive to other groups. Not infrequently, his posts contradict the official stance of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in particular, or Muhammadiyah in general, such as on the veil issue (see below). Since Facebook introduced its 'live broadcast' feature, El Madury has also availed of it to conduct live lectures. The SHPTM is popular with netizens. As of the time of writing (3 April 2022), it has been followed by 19,423 and is 'liked' by 8,868 people. His posts also often receive both positive and critical comments from viewers.

El Madury gave several reasons that brought about the creation of his fanpage. Firstly, it is aimed at fortifying Muhammadiyah followers against all forms of superstition, heresy, and myth as its posts focus on issues related to faith and worship. Secondly, he aims to counter those liberal Muhammadiyah activists and has openly responded to such views. His posts often openly attacks the religious practices of the the Nahdliyyin, resulting in several clashes between him and the Nahdliyyin figure, Idrus Ramli.<sup>11</sup>

---

new cases that earlier jurists had not addressed. In short, in Muhammadiyah's perspective, *tarjih* is identical, or almost identical, to *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

**Commented [MOU6]:** Is there such a thing as unreligious/secular *ijtihad*? If not, delete adjective.

**Commented [nf7R6]:** No secular *ijtihad*. Yes, I agree with you. It would seem better if the word 'religious' were deleted, and I have deleted it.

Despite having many followers El Madury and his SHPTM do have critics. Many Muhammadiyah followers are concerned about the SHPTM posts. Some have tried to convey their anxiety through the official social media accounts of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre (Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah).<sup>12</sup> Those concerned generally want to ask for firm action from the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as El Madury has included 'Tarjih Muhammdiyah' in his fanpage name. The demands to the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, when summarised, include: (1) that the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council reprimand or remind Zulkarnain El Madury not to use symbols or names that are closely related to Tarjih Muhammadiyah for or on his fanpage; (2) making and circulating an announcement that the fanpage is not a social media account of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council or the Tarjih Muhamamdiyah Centre; (3) announcing the official social media accounts and websites of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre, so that Muhammadiyah people at the grassroots are not deceived by the existence of the fanpage and know where to look for religious reference sites, especially on the internet.

#### **Zulkarnain El Madury and his efforts in building religious authority**

Zulkarnain El Madury and his fanpage SHPTM, have threatened the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, and specifically, the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. Many of his posts affect Muhammadiyah followers in particular and Muslims in general as these posts often differ from the official stance of Muhammadiyah, and in some cases contradict the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. This has stimulated public debate on social media, allowing El Madury to become a micro-celebrity *ustaz*. As a result of the general public and the online community attention, El Madury has been able to gradually build up his religious authority. From the Weberian perspective (Riesebrodt 1999), he has been able to do this in two ways. The first is through charisma (charismatic authority). According to Weber, charisma is a particular type of authority whose original form is based on a specific belief contained in a particular person (Riesebrodt 1999). Secondly, El Madury claims he has the endorsement of Yunahar Ilyas, a very popular Muhammadiyah cleric respected by the community from within the Muhammadiyah circle and from Muslims in general which is a form of traditional authority.

---

<sup>12</sup> Interviews with Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf and Ariful Hazam, November 2020 who are grassroots of Muhammadiyah, and social media administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

Yunahar Ilyas (1956–2020) or Buya Yun as he was popularly known, was an exegete (*mufassir*; Ilyas 2012) in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, who died at the age of 63. He was an alumnus of Imam Ibn Su'ud University (Saudi Arabia) and an excellent lecturer in conveying religious messages. He was seen as a charismatic cleric by Muhammadiyah followers and Muslims, in general, and this reputation extended to neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore (Abror 2020; *Gesuri* 2020). On his death in early 2020, many people flocked to pay their last respects to Buya Yun who held the chair of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for three terms (*Kompas* 2020; *Rakyat Merdeka* 2019).

By harnessing the charisma of Buya Yun, El Madury was able to increase his religious authority. On various occasions, including when this author interviewed him, Buya Yun's name was often mentioned as an argument and a shield.<sup>13</sup> El Madury insisted that he created the SHPTM Facebook site with the permission of Yunahar Ilyas<sup>14</sup> who had provided a further explanation on of the Tarjih Judgment Compilation). He added that Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com), had similarly received permission from Buya Yun. Wahyudi Abdurrahim confirmed Zulkarnain's claims and Muhammad Muflih, a grassroots representative added that it is a form of fairness.<sup>15</sup> In other words, Buyda Yun's permission is a form of appreciation given by someone who is more senior and has a high social position in Muhammadiyah to someone who is more junior and is classified as a grassroots Muhammadiyah member.<sup>16</sup> Permission from Buyda Yun, who has charisma within Muhammadiyah in particular, has become a tool used by El Madury in building his religious authority.

In Weberian charismatic authority, charisma is not only about a belief in the existence of extraordinary or superpowers possessed by or contained in humans but also about particular objects other than humans (Riesebrodt 1999). We thus have an explanation as to why El Madury named his fanpage *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a highly respectable and crucial council in Muhammadiyah. Founded in 1927, the Council functions as an assembly that carries out its agenda of purification of religion and the dynamisation of social life. It conducts research and

<sup>13</sup> This author's informants include Muhammad Muflih (grassroot of Muhammadiyah and initiator of the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com)), Robby Karman (secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association [DPP IMM] 2018–2021), and several participants invited by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council with the agenda 'Responding to Emergence of Syarah HPT on Social Media' on 25 September, 2020; interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Online interview with Wahyudi Abdurrahim through WhatsApp, September 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Online interview with Muhammad Muflih through WhatsApp and Facebook, 20 October 2019.

investigations towards this purity, and accordingly gives fatwas and compiles religious guidelines on faith (*'aqīdah*) and worship (*'ibādah*) as well as social relations (*mu'āmalah*) (Rahman et al. 1985; Anwar 2016). In addition, this Council makes efforts to resolve differences and disagreements on religious issues, which are usually referred to as *khilafiah* problems, so that they are directed more productively (Anwar 2007, 2016).

The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a body that is responsible for formulating the ideological basis of the Muhammadiyah movement (Anwar 2007, 2016) and is Muhammadiyah's representative in the religious field (Fauzi 2017). The Council produces three types of *ijtihad*, namely: (1) tarjih fatwa (*fatwa tarjih*), (2) *tarjih* decision (*putusan tarjih*), and (3) *tarjih* discourse (*wacara tarjih*) (Anwar 2016). *Tarjih* fatwa is the Council's answer to general questions on issues that require an explanation in terms of sharia law. Following the nature of the fatwa in general, the Council's fatwa is non-binding, on either organisations or members as individuals. Therefore, even the fatwa can be questioned and discussed. However, because the fatwa contains religious guidance derived from Islamic teaching sources (Anwar 2020), and the general public often does not actually understand the aspects of such a fatwa, it is still believed by Muhammadiyah members to be religious guidance. However, the *tarjih* decision is the official stance of Muhammadiyah in religious matters and is formally binding on the organisation and its members. But, in practice, sometimes Muhammadiyah members exercise their right to freedom not to be bound by the decision because they have different *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

Meanwhile, *tarjih* discourses are ideas or thoughts that are raised and put forward by the Council in seminars, *halaqah* (religious gathering or meeting to discuss the Qur'an or Islam), or other forums in addressing various developing issues and at the same time fostering a critical spirit of *ijtihad* and collecting materials or ideas on various actual problems in society. The nature of this *tarjih* discourse is non-binding and does not become a fatwa that must be followed. *Tarjih* discourse is contained in various publications of the Council, such as *Jurnal Tarjih* (Tarjih Journal) and various published books (Anwar 2016).

The *tarjih* decision and the *tarjih* fatwa, hold their strength within Muhammadiyah as these are considered sacred by some of its members. In short, it can be said that anything that 'smells *tarjih*' has authority in the collective memory of Muhammadiyah followers. In the perspective of Khaled Abou El Fadl (2014), fatwa and *tarjih* decisions have the power of persuasive authority, as these can influence or direct others because they believed in them.

The *tarjih* fatwas ~~were~~<sup>are</sup> officially published through the organisation's official magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, and compiled in the *Tanya Jawab Agama* book. In comparison, the *tarjih* decisions are codified in a book called *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*, commonly known by the abbreviation HPT. Thus, it can be understood why the attribution of the term *tarjih* to particular objects can give rise to charismatic authority, as mentioned by Weber.

What El Madury did can also be seen as identity politics which is defined as a political tool of a group whether it be ethnic, cultural, religious or others for specific purposes, such as a form of resistance or to show the identity of a group (Alfaqi 2015). Within this framework, identity is politicised through extreme interpretation, which aims to gain support from people who feel 'the same', through race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements. In the context of El Madury, the use of the *tarjih* label on his fanpage can be interpreted as a political tool to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muhammadiyah members. And, as seen in some of his sermon videos, El Madury also placed a flag with the Muhammadiyah symbol behind him. In this context, he wants to convince the viewers that he is close to Muhammadiyah. He has introduced himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board on many occasions.

According to Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif (2010), identity politics is always related to members of social groups who feel excluded by the mainstream in a nation or state. Sri Astuti Buchari (2014) also finds that the emergence of identity politics is mainly caused by certain factors that an ethnic group sees as pressure from the political injustice. By looking at the observations made by Ahmad Najib Burhani (2013), El Madury, in this case, can be categorised as part of a group that feels excluded, threatened, and to some extent in need of justice within Muhammadiyah. Burhani (2013) explains the existence of two opposing schools of thought within Muhammadiyah which he refers to as 'Pure Islam' (*Islam Murni*) and 'Progressive Islam' (*Islam Progresif*). The conflict between these two schools of thought in Muhammadiyah began to surface at the 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Banda Aceh in 1995 (Burhani 2013).

The dominance of 'Progressive Islam' in Muhammadiyah strengthened after its 44<sup>th</sup> congress in Jakarta in 2000. This congress chose Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif as general chair. He is a progressive Muslim figure, an alumnus of the University of Chicago, and a student of the eminent progressive scholar Fazlur Rahman. At this congress, several names representing the 'Progressive Islam' group were included in the ranks of the central leadership of

Formatted: Superscript

Muhammadiyah, such as Amin Abdullah, Dawam Raharjo, and Abdul Munir Mulkhan. During Ma'arif's leadership, progressive ideas not only dominated culturally but gradually became Muhammadiyah's official programmes (Burhani 2013).

Seeing the increasingly apparent threat from the ideas put forward by the 'Progressive Islam' group within Muhammadiyah, representatives of the 'Pure Islam' group did not remain silent. They compete and squabble over religious interpretations as to which is the most authentic. These two groups challenge each other through various channels, including seminars, discussions, publications. They usually have conflicting programmes. For example, as mentioned by Burhani (2013), when the Centre for the Study of Religion and Civilisation (PSAP/Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban) raised the theme of pluralism and multiculturalism in its journal, *Tanwir Journal*, the Tabligh Council<sup>17</sup> responded with articles in opposition in its magazine, *Majalah Tabligh*. In Burhani's investigation, during the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress in Malang, this conservative group set up a Pojok Anti-Liberal (anti-liberal corner) booth, which sold books, DVDs, t-shirts, magazines, and other anti-liberal mementos. Strikingly, some of the t-shirts for sale displayed the words 'Muhammadiyah Anti-Liberal' (Burhani 2013).

At the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress, it seemed that the 'Pure Islam' group was gaining momentum to beat back the 'Progressive Islam' group. The quarrels between these two groups occurred within congress committees and in the external arena. Burhani (2005, 2013) noted at least three critical issues where the 'Pure Islam' group defeated the 'Progressive Islam' in the congress arena, namely: (1) leadership change; (2) the position of women; and (3) resistance to liberal thought.

After the 45th congress, the feud between these two schools of thought has continued though waxing and waning at different times. The form of the feud now looks more varied given the availability of the internet where the presence of social media has changed the battle arena from a conventional to a more modern one. El Madury represents the 'Pure Islam' group, and has heated online debates with figures considered representatives of 'Progressive Islam' whose actions he sees as unsettling. For example, El Madury and the secretary-general

---

<sup>17</sup> Muhammadiyah has many assemblies such as Majelis Tabligh and Majelis Tarjih, each with its own functions and responsibilities. Majelis Tarjih is responsible for producing religious thoughts through fatwas and decisions, while Majelis Tabligh is responsible for disseminating them. Historically, Majelis Tabligh is known in Muhammadiyah as the anti-liberal wing and thus there are at times poor collaboration between Majelis Tarjih and Majelis Tabligh. For example, some fatwas issued by Majelis Tarjih, in Majelis Tabligh's perspective, are the result of liberal thinking. See Burhani (2013) and Palahuddin (2020).

of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association (DPP IMM),<sup>18</sup> Robby Karman, have openly and frequently castigated each other on for example, issues about the veil and the Wahhabi. According to El Madury, Robby Karman is a young liberal figure in Muhammadiyah who should be challenged. El Madury also often attacks the IBTimes.id website, as it frequently contains articles that are progressive and, to some extent, controversial. This website has several former Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah (JIMM/Muhammadiyah Youth Intellectual Network) figures, such as Hilman Latief, Azaki Khoiruddin, and Mu'arif. On one occasion, when the chair of the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre admonished El Madury for uploading provocative posts that contradicted the official stance of the Tarjih Council, he defended himself by stating that equally provocative posts from the 'Progressive Islam' group should be similarly reprimanded. If he is the only one selected for rebuke then he felt an injustice had been done.<sup>19</sup> El Madury's attitude in the framework of identity politics reflects someone who feels excluded and threatened by certain parties. At such, his specific attributes and identity are a deliberate form of resistance to the domination of certain groups or thoughts that threaten him.

The above describes how El Madury builds his charismatic authority. The other is authority built through tradition or what Weber calls traditional authority (Spencer 1970; Matheson 1987; Riesebrodt 1999). In simple terms, something can be considered as having traditional authority if it gains legitimacy based on beliefs or norms that have been established in a particular tradition (Chairi 2019). In other words, according to Spencer (1970), traditional authority is legitimised and, at the same time, constrained by traditional norms. Therefore, it is the opposite of charismatic authority. If in charismatic authority, it is the leader or someone who creates the norms, then it is the norms that create the leader or person in the traditional authority. In charismatic authority, the value of influence is generated by a person's personal qualities and is always associated with his personality. While in the case of traditional authority, it is generated by function and is related to someone or something that has traditional values (Spencer 1970).

In the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, ulama and the classical books they wrote can be considered to have this traditional authority. Ulama in Islamic tradition are

---

<sup>18</sup> Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM) or Muhammadiyah Student Association is a proponent of Muhammadiyah in student affairs with the basic mission of realising the real Islamic society as formulated by Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Widodo 2017).

<sup>19</sup> On 3 November 2019, the manager of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah reprimanded Zulkarnain El Madury for his post on SHPTM on the veil which contradicts Muhammadiyah's official stance.



called heirs of the Prophets. The authority of the ulama is derived from the legitimacy of religious texts which state that the prophetic tradition will be passed on to them. Therefore, the religious ideas they convey in writings or books contain an authoritative value for the next generation. This is the uniqueness of Islamic scholars and traditions, as mentioned by Muhammad Qasim Zaman (2002) who states that one of the most prominent aspects of pre-modern intellectual culture is the articulation of religious discourse through the so-called medium of the commentary. This is manifested in various forms such *al-syurūh*, *hawāsyī*, *rasā'il*, and *fatawā*. The various genres of books that contain explanations, descriptions, or responses to a book or social phenomena are a way for scholars to shape the identity and authority of the school or tradition they adhere to. In addition, it is also a means to interpreting the meaning of the foundational sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah (Zaman 2002).

An example is the *hawāsyī* tradition in the Shafii school. Its emergence, according to Ahmed El-Shamsy (2013), shows the peak of the authority of two scholars in that school, namely al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī. Al-Kurdī, as quoted by El Shamsy, called these two scholars 'the higher authorities in the Syafii school'. Those who want to know the authoritative opinion of the Shafi'i school have to go through the works of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī, and the books that explain further their works, namely the books written by Ibn Hajar al-Haitamī and Syamsuddīn al-Ramlī. These books have for later generations the value of traditional authority (Shamsy 2013: 292).

What is the connection between this traditional authority and El Madury? El Madury's posts on SHPTM and at religious forums where he speaks always rely on the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāth*). According to Endang Mintarja, chair of the Jakarta branch of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this aspect has drawn many people to El Madury's lectures.<sup>20</sup> What El Madury did, which Muhammadiyah did not do in many of its fatwas was to cite the Islamic intellectual tradition. In many of its fatwas, Muhammadiyah often only quotes the Qur'an or hadith to strengthen its argument, without citing the opinions of other Islamic scholars. Perhaps this is a consequence of the modernist movement, which became the spirit of Muhammadiyah. The modernist movement initiated by reformers such as Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, and Muḥammad Rasyīd Riḍā in the late 19th and early 20th centuries used the term *al-rujū' ilā al-qur'ān wa al-sunnah* ('back to the Qur'an and Sunnah').

<sup>20</sup> Endang Mintarja voiced this at a Muhammadiyah Central Board Tarjih Council meeting of on the emergence 'Syarah HPT', 25 September 2020.

Commented [MOU8]: I have merged these two paras as the preceding para was too short and when typeset you only get one or two lines.

Commented [nf9R8]: OK

According to Syed Junaid A. Quadri (2013), the most obvious indicator of this movement, especially in Islamic law, is its critical attitude towards the structure of pre-modern sharia authority symbols, which are articulated in the language and logic of the institution of *taqlīd*. Modernist groups always encourage reopening the door to *ijtihad* and invite Muslims to leave the interpretive monopoly that the ulama class has held (Quadri 2013).

Muhammadiyah, which is heavily inspired by the modernist movement, is oriented towards the Qur'an and Sunnah and tends to attach less importance to the Islamic intellectual tradition that has been built by the ulama. This can be seen from its *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (the methodology Muhammadiyah uses in conducting *ijtihad*), which asserts that Muhammadiyah is not affiliated to a particular school, but the opinions of these schools are only considered in determining religious norms (Anwar 2018). This means that understanding religion in the Muhammadiyah perspective is derived directly from its primary sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah through the *ijtihad* process. However, it should be noted here that the narration that confirms the opinions of the scholars is taken into account in determining norms is not that clear how they are implemented in *tarjih* issues.

In some of its official ~~religious~~ *ijtihad*, the nuances of the opinions of scholars, especially the pre-modern ones do not appear, by choice or otherwise. ~~Muhammadiyah's opinion indicates the source of the Islamic intellectual tradition, from whom or which particular school of thought.~~ Thus it appears that El Madury is filling the Muhammadiyah gap in presenting the authority of the Islamic intellectual tradition in religious narratives. For example, in the controversial veil case, the Tarjih Council issued three fatwas in 1993, 2003 and 2009.<sup>21</sup> The fatwas issued in 1993 and 2009 emphasised that the veil has no legal basis either in the Qur'an or the Sunnah but that Islamic law commands women to wear the hijab. These two fatwas did not cite the Islamic intellectual tradition, which also accommodates opinions about the veil. Although the Tarjih Council kept in its stance and strengthened the opinion that women's 'aurat (parts of the body that should go covered) are the whole body except the face and the palms of the hands, in the 2003 fatwa, the Tarjih Council provides space for those who want to wear the veil by expressing several opinions from the scholars who think so.

In contrast to the *tarjih* fatwas, El Madury's (2019) article *Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam?* ('Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?') on the SHPTM site

<sup>21</sup> Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Tim Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat (2009, 2019a, 2019b).

**Commented [MOU10]:** Doesn't this contradict the next sentence if you say Muhammdiaah indicates the source of the intellectual tradition? Which gap would El Madury be filling?

**Commented [nf11R10]:** I don't think this sentence is necessary. So, I will delete this sentence. OK with you?

**Commented [nf12]:** I have slightly revised the information related to footnote writing, and I have also modified the bibliography section.

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, English (United Kingdom)

refutes the *tarjih* fatwa. He cites various opinions of scholars in the Islamic intellectual tradition who support mandatory veiling as an effort to build religious authority. From this, it appears that El Madury, apart from attacking the *tarjih* fatwa, believes in maintaining traditional authority, in this case, the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāts*).

What El Madury did in building religious authority can also be captured from what Burhani calls a conversion narrative. Some scholars define religious conversion narratives differently as for example, in the change from one religious tradition to another. William James, as quoted by Burhani (2020: 158), states that religious conversion can also be interpreted as the conversion of a person who is a sinner into someone pious. According to Burhani (2020), people who experience religious conversion, usually after embracing a new tradition or religious understanding, will be hostile to the previous religious tradition or understanding.

El Madury also experienced a religious conversion, in this case, from the NU tradition to Muhammadiyah's. On SHPTM as well as his views when interviewed by this author, he introduced himself as someone who had practised the '*kuburiyyun* tradition'<sup>22</sup> and other actions that did not have examples from the Prophet. To convince his followers, he posted information about his religious conversion from NU to Muhammadiyah. Besides condemning his previous practices, which were deemed to have no basis in the Qur'an and Sunnah, he has had acrimonious debates with the NU *kyai*, Idrus Ramli on various issues, such as *ahlus sunnah wal jamaah* and *wahabi, nahdliyyin* traditions that are often considered heresy, and so on.

### **Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace**

Before the advent of the internet and the emergence of various new religious authorities, Muhammadiyah and NU were the two largest religious organisations and authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). However, following the emergence of the so-called micro-celebrity *ustaz*, these two groups, according to some scholars, began to face challenges and threats. The recent study by Wahyudi Akmaliah (2020) shows that the two organisations have responded differently to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was more combative about their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah

<sup>22</sup> The tradition of visiting the grave with its associated practices.

(2020) maintains there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's response look less aggressive. Akmaliah is correct on several points, but other perspectives deserve to be considered, especially Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority, especially on the internet. The weak point, ~~from as shown in~~ Akmaliah's study is that there is no adequate elaboration of the assembly that exclusively holds religious authority in Muhammadiyah, namely the Tarjih Council. To trace more precisely how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority we have to look at the Tarjih Council.

This discussion starts from the author's experience in attending a meeting held by the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board. The meeting was initiated in response to the emergence of El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim's SHPTM site. It should be noted here that Abdurrahim also contributed writings to this website. He was earlier mentioned as having had permission from Buya Yun to give *syarah* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Judgment Compilation) and is the author of *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*. The initial background for holding this meeting, as revealed by the secretary of the Tarjih Council, Mas'udi, was purely in response to the SHPTM posts by El Madury. However, information about the SHPTM other than the one written by El Madury prompted the board of the Tarjih Council to include the book by Abdurrahim with the same title for the agenda.

On Friday, 7 Safar 1442 AH (25 September 2020), the Tarjih Council invited nine related sectors to discuss concerns over the emergence of the SHPTM on the internet written by the El Madury and Abdurrahim. The nine sector participants were: (1) the executive board of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (2) fatwa division of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (3) chair/secretary of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (4) Dr Endang Mintarja, M.Ag. (Chair of the Jakarta Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council); (5) H. Fathurrahman, Lc., M.S.I. (Chair of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council); (6) H. Budi Setiawan, S.T.; (7) Arif Nurkholis (head of Muhammadiyah Digital Syiar Centre); (8) the manager of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre; and (9) the social media assistance team of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

During the meeting, there were at least four proposals from participants on how best to respond to the SHPTM, ~~especially-particularly~~ El Madury's article about the veil. The first was to complain to Facebook about the SHPTM so that it could be banned for including an institution's name without permission. According to [the chair of the Tabligh Council of](#)

Commented [MOU13]: I have merged these two paras.

Commented [nf14R13]: OK

Commented [MOU15]: Amended, is this what you mean?

Commented [nf16R15]: Yes, this is.

[Muhammadiyah Central Board](#), Fathurrahman Kamal, who was present at the forum, the fanpage is already in the ~~illicit~~<sup>legal</sup> category. This proposal was considered by the proponents as a firm proposal but that it risked unnecessary antagonism. The second was to use a persuasive approach in the form of clarification or an appeal to El Madury not to use the name *Himpunan Putusan Tajih* (HPT) or something that is associated with *tarjih*. Its proponents consider this approach to be softer and more reflective of being Muhammadiyah members in particular, and Muslims in general. The third proposal was to use institutional authority in writing an official letter on behalf of the Tarjih Council to El Madury. The fourth idea that was considered more practical and efficient was to place the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it on social media. This would avoid being drawn into unfruitful correspondence on SHPTM.

However, there was no agreement on which approach should be undertaken despite long discussions. It was agreed instead that there would be a follow up with another forum. Since this author started writing (3 April 2022) there has been no further meeting. The emergence of SHPTM on the internet and its effects have been considered a serious problem by the Tarjih Council. The meeting's participants were generally uneasy about the appearance of El Madury and his fanpage. In addition, they wanted El Madury to be warned or reprimanded since SHPTM is considered a threat to religious authority of the Tarjih Council. This illustrates that Muhammadiyah, through its official religious assembly, the Tarjih Council, is not passive in responding to the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. However, only certain cases and not all micro-celebrity *ustaz* who appear on social media have drawn the Tarjih Council's attention. Although there has yet to be a follow up meeting, the Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an official institution supporting the Tarjih Council illustrates how Muhammadiyah struggles to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is an institution that was founded in 2016 by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Ahmad Dahlan University (Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah 2016). Despite being a new institution, its legality is clear, and it has formal authority. In the Muhammadiyah tradition as an organisation, such legality is essential. Thus when someone from Muhammadiyah, speaks on another person's behalf or endorses an approach, the speaker's status is below that of the institution and cannot be assumed to be that of institutions within Muhammadiyah which, although new, have legality. In the context of El Madury and the SHYTM fanpage, this is important. Even though El Madury claims he has obtained permission to make *syarh* on the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* from a charismatic

**Commented [MOU17]:** Is it illegal or illicit? Did El Madury break the law?

Illegal activities are those that are forbidden by law. Illicit activities are considered improper or socially forbidden; they may or may not be illegal but they go against social norms and values. 12 Dec 202

**Commented [nf18R17]:** It seems more appropriate to use the word 'illicit'. I changed it.

figure in Muhammadiyah, Buya Yunahar, legally it is not valid. In that context, Buya Yunahar spoke on behalf of himself, not on behalf of Muhammadiyah.

Fronted by young Muhammadiyah cadres, the majority of whom are alumni of Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Tarjih Ulama Education, PUTM),<sup>23</sup> Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays a role in supporting the Tarjih Council programmes. These are relatively under-performing and facing obstacles, particularly on using social media to disseminate their official ~~religious~~ *ijtihad*. The members of the Tarjih Council, who are relatively old, need support from young cadres. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays an essential role in assisting the Tarjih Council in maintaining its religious authority on the internet. It responded to El Madury and SHPTM, by being proactive with a poster (Figure 1) on social media and in print form, containing information related to the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it.

---

<sup>23</sup> PUTM is an educational institution under the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board designed to produce a cadre of Muhammadiyah scholars. PUTM organises a special programme that educates and prepares Muhammadiyah *tarjih* scholars who are competent in the religious field. The birth of PUTM was based on the concern of some Muhammadiyah leaders about the increasing scarcity of ulama in and from Muhammadiyah (Fauzi 2020a).



Figure 1. Poster with information on the official social media accounts affiliated to the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Are you often confused about finding sources of reference about Islam from the perspective of Muhammadiyah?

There is no need to be confused anymore because various social media are straightforward for us to access. Tarjih (Council) has come with a more trendy look.

- ✓ Easy to read anywhere
- ✓ Provide updated fatwas
- ✓ Discuss current issues

As members of Muhammadiyah, let's get used to reading the decisions and fatwas of Muhammadiyah

Here are some media that can be accessed very easily. So don't be confused anymore.

Web: [fatwatarjih.or.id](http://fatwatarjih.or.id)

Facebook: [fb.me/fatwamu](https://fb.me/fatwamu)

Instagram: [pusattarjih\\_muhammadiyah](https://pusattarjih_muhammadiyah)

Telegram: [t.me/fatwatarjihmu](https://t.me/fatwatarjihmu)

Youtube: [tarjih channel](https://tarjih_channel)

Let's spread it to all Muhammadiyah people!

**Figure 2.** Translation of Figure 1.

Although the poster above does not directly mention the SHPTM site created by El Madury, the main message in it is clear and firm, namely to inform the Muhammadiyah followers about the official accounts of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it. This would hopefully let Muhammadiyah members understand how its official religious voice is disseminated on the internet. The poster also mentions that Muhammadiyah successively uploaded other, more varied examples of these posters at the SHPTM fanpage. Some other



Formatted: Centered



Figure 3. Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Do you know?

The Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah now have an official YouTube channel. (namely) the Tarjih Channel.

Have you subscribed yet?

Figure 4. Translation of Figure 3.

Formatted: Centered

~~Although the poster above does not directly mention the SHPTM site created by El Madury, the main message in it is clear and firm, namely to inform the Muhammadiyah followers about the official accounts of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it. This would hopefully let Muhammadiyah members understand how its official religious voice is disseminated on the internet. Following this, Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah successively uploaded other, more varied posters to indirectly counter the SHPTM fanpage. Some other examples of these posters are shown in Figures 3 and 5.~~

**Figure 3.** Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Do you know?

The Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah now have an official YouTube channel, (namely) the Tarjih Channel.

Have you subscribed yet?

**Figure 4.** Translation of Figure 3.

Formatted: Left

Formatted: Left

Formatted: Left

Formatted: Left



**Figure 5.** Information about the website fatwatarjih.or.id, an official website affiliated to the Tarjih Council containing fatwas. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Fatwatarjih.or.id is the official website for the Tarjih and the Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board (MTT).

The Media Team of Fatwa Tarjih, through this website, has been, is and will continue to strive consistently to publish various ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council. Until now, tarjih fatwa collections from 1997 to 2018 have entered the editing stage, and some are just waiting to be published.

**Figure 6.** Translation of Figure 5.



**Figure 7.** Information on the official website of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Do you want to know the full history (of the Tarjih Council)?  
 Or do you want to look for ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council?  
 Come on; you can find out on this website: tarjih.or.id

**Figure 8.** Translation of Figure 7.

Formatted: Centered

The use of informal language and emoticons typical of millennials indicate the audience that the Tarjih Council wants to target. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah team understands that informal language will appeal to its target audience. This is aimed at not only establishing the authority of the Tarjih Council but ‘millennialisation’ i.e. to reach out to the younger generation familiar with social media. Suyadi and Widodo (2019) note that millennialisation is an alternative way to develop knowledge that will synergised with various online media and

digital technology. In the context of *tarjih* millennialisation, Muhammadiyah's official ~~religious-ijtihād~~ that tend to be disseminated in a conventional, monotonous, and uncreative manner are now communicated through social media in more contextual packaging. This means that the Tarjih Council and its various official ~~religious-ijtihād~~, which previously were always identified with the 'old', are now consciously aiming to include young people.

The religious authority of the Tarjih Council in cyberspace, especially when connected with the appearance of El Madury and SHPTM, was greatly helped by the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah and its young Muhammadiyah cadres. It manages various social media platforms with large numbers of followers, and has helped maintain Muhammadiyah's religious authority by balancing and suppressing the presence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. Its contents are fatwas and decisions of the Tarjih Council with more appealing visualisation to reach out to the millennials.

Although the number of social media followers of the Tarjih Council is less than that for the NU and Salafi groups, at least the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah acts as a compass for Muhammadiyah followers who question its religious authority, especially with the emergence of El Madury's version in SHPTM. The administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah's social media have received many messages either through the comments column or direct messages in its inbox, which question the authority of SHPTM.<sup>24</sup> Here, the vital role of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is increasingly finding its momentum.

## Conclusion

Although it can be said that Muhammadiyah's religious influence and authority on the internet are inferior and lag behind other religious groups, Muhammadiyah is still trying to manage its authority, especially when facing threats from micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By focusing on Zulkarnain El Madury and his SHPTM social media page, this article offers a different perspective from previous studies by analysing the work of the Tarjih Council as the only institution in Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas. This article shows that Muhammadiyah has its own way of responding to the emergence of new religious authorities. With the help of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an institution in its fold, the Tarjih Council has made continuous efforts through social media and its official website to counter new

---

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Ariful Hazam, Ilham Ibrahim, and Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, September 2020. They are *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* social media administrators.

voices that threaten its authority. Muhammadiyah's response was neither aggressive nor radical but it clarified its stance without mentioning who precisely was being targeted. What Muhammadiyah did was in line with the Javanese proverb *Ngluruk tanpo bolo, menang tanpo ngasorake* ('win without defeat, win without humiliation [of others]'). The form of Muhammadiyah's response is inherited from its founder, Ahmad Dahlan. As seen by Peacock (1978), Ahmad Dahlan carried out many social transformations calmly and systematically without being antagonistic.

In a broader context, the case of Zulkarnain El Madury also provides a lesson that using the name Muhammadiyah to justify personal opinions or legitimise particular interests is wrong. Muhammadiyah has the reputation of a very well managed organisation (Barton 2014; *Suara Muhammadiyah* 2019) which is its strength and gives it clout compared to other religious organisations in Indonesia, such as NU. In short, authority in Muhammadiyah lies in the institution itself and is not based on personality. It differs from NU, where power and authority tend to lie in personal figures, such as *kyai* or *gus* (Fauzi 2020b).

Muhammadiyah followers who understand its basic rules are not easily influenced by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. They are aware that Muhammadiyah's official religious stance is only be issued by the Tarjih Council and that those external to the Tarjih Council or even specific Muhammadiyah figures who give religious opinions, speak only for themselves as individuals and not the organisation. This would be the case, for example, even if the religious opinion emanates from the chair of the Tarjih Council as an individual. This did occur when Syamsul Anwar, the current chair of the Tarjih Council, differed from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council on the issue of *iftitāh* prayer (opening ~~prayer for~~ night prayer [*qiyām al-lail*]).<sup>25</sup>

While Anwar's opinion clearly differs from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council, the prevailing opinion in Muhammadiyah is that of the Tarjih Council, not the chair of the Tarjih Council. Within Muhammadiyah, such religious differences of opinion are common as usually happens in *fiqh* discourse in general. The difference between El Madury and Anwar is that the latter does not act in the name of Muhammadiyah or the Tarjih Council when he has a different view. Instead, on many occasions, he urges Muhammadiyah followers

<sup>25</sup> For Anwar (2013), the *iftitāh* prayer comprises two short *rak'ah* prayers that are performed before *qiyām al-lail*, with the condition that it must be preceded by sleep, otherwise there is no need to perform the *iftitāh* prayer. However, the Tarjih Council holds that the *iftitāh* prayer consists of two short *rak'ah* prayers performed before *qiyām al-lail*, whether preceded by sleep or not (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2011; Tim Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2019a).

to abide by the opinion of the Tarjih Council on the *iftitāh* prayer.<sup>26</sup> Thus Anwar has shown he can compromise his personal religious opinion with his professional attitude in the organisation. In this case, he understands that using the name Muhammadiyah to legitimise individual opinions or interests is not justifiable.

### Acknowledgements

Permission for this research PJB-002/SP3/LPPM-UAD/VI/2020 and funding were provided by the ethical board of Ahmad Dahlan University Research and Development Institute (Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan).

I am grateful to *ustaz* Zulkarnain El Madury for his exceptional help and support during my fieldwork. I also thank Amiruddin, Arif Nur Kholis, Muhammad Muflih, Wahyudi Abdurrahim, Robby Karman, [Ahmad Muttaqin Alim](#), Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, Ilham Ibrahim, Ariful Hazam, and the members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council for providing information regarding my research. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article and to the editors of the *Indonesia and the Malay World*. Errors, if any, are solely mine.

### Note on contributor

*Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi* is a lecturer in the Department of Hadith Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He has published widely on a variety of issues relating to Islamic Studies, including al-Quran, hadith, Islamic law, social media and da'wah, and Muhammadiyah studies. Email: [niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id](mailto:niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id)

### References

- Abror, Robby. 2020. Syeikh Yunahar, ulama Muhammadiyah kharismatik [Sheikh Yunahar, a charismatic Muhammadiyah cleric]. 3 January. <<https://menara62.com/syeikh-yunahar-ulama-muhammadiyah-kharismatik/>> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2018. Media sosial dan pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [Social media and shifting religious authority]. 12 December.

---

<sup>26</sup> On several occasions, this author has heard Syamsul Anwar's direct appeal to Muhammadiyah members to follow the opinion of the Tarjih Council on this aspect of the *iftitāh* prayer.

<[https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media\\_sosial\\_dan\\_pergeseran\\_otoritas\\_keagamaan](https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media_sosial_dan_pergeseran_otoritas_keagamaan)> Accessed 3 February 2020.

- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2020. The demise of moderate Islam: new media, contestation, and reclaiming religious authorities. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10 (1): 1–24.
- Alfaqi, Mifdal Zusron. 2015. Memahami Indonesia melalui prespektif nasionalisme, politik identitas, serta solidaritas [Understanding Indonesia through the perspectives of nationalism, identity politics, and solidarity]. *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 28 (2): 111–116.
- Alvara Research Center. 2020. Ramadhan dan pandemi Covid-19: semangat ibadah tak surut, konsumsi tersendat. <[https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN\\_DAN\\_PANDEMI\\_COVID-19\\_SEMANGAT\\_IBADAH\\_TAK\\_SURUT\\_KONSUMSI\\_TERSENDAT.pdf](https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN_DAN_PANDEMI_COVID-19_SEMANGAT_IBADAH_TAK_SURUT_KONSUMSI_TERSENDAT.pdf)> Accessed 23 February 2021<sup>3</sup>.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2007. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer* [Contemporary Islamic law studies]. Jakarta: RM Books.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2013. *Salat Tarawih: Tinjauan usul fiqh, sejarah, dan fiqh* [Tarawih prayer: usul fiqh, history, and fiqh perspectives]. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2016. Fatwā, purification and dynamization: a study of tarjih in Muhammadiyah. *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (1): 27–44.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2018. *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Panitia Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih Muhammadiyah XXX.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2020. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer Bagian dua* [Contemporary Islamic legal studies Part two]. Yogyakarta: UAD Press.
- Barton, Greg. 2014. The Gülen movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: progressive Islamic thought, religious philanthropy and civil society in Turkey and Indonesia. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25 (3): 287–301.
- Buchari, Sri Astuti. 2014. *Kebangkitan etnis menuju politik identitas* [Ethnic awakening towards identity politics]. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Bunt, Gary R. 2003. *Islam in the digital age: e-jihad, online fatwas and cyber Islamic environments*. London: Pluto Press.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2005. The 45th Muhammadiyah Congress contest between literal-conservative and liberal-moderate Muslims in Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 12 (1): 185–189.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2013. Liberal and conservative discourses in the Muhammadiyah: the



- struggle for the face of reformist Islam in Indonesia. In Martin van Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary developments in Indonesian Islam: explaining the 'conservative turn'*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2016. Aksi bela Islam: konservatisme dan fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. *Maarif* 11 (2): 15–29.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2020. Muslim televangelists in the making: conversion narratives and the construction of religious authority. *Muslim World* 110 (2): 154–175.
- Burhanudin, Jajat. 2004. The fragmentation of religious authority: Islamic print media in early 20th century Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 11 (1): 23–62.
- Campbell, H.A. and Teusner, P.E. 2011. Religious authority in the age of the internet. In *Christian Reflection, Virtual Lives*. Waco TX: Baylor University Press, pp. 59–68. <<https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/130950.pdf>>
- Chairi, Effendi. 2019. Ketidadaan otoritas terpusat dalam fenomena kontemporer di Indonesia [The absence of a centralised authority in contemporary phenomena in Indonesia]. *SANGKĒP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 2 (2):197–215.
- Chaplin. Chris. 2021. *Salafism and the State: Islamic activism and national identity in contemporary Indonesia*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.
- Dakta.com. 2016. Aa Gym ajak ribuan jamaahnya ikut aksi bela Islam III [Aa Gym invites thousands of congregants to join Islamic Defence Action III]. 29 November. <<http://www.dakta.com/news/7329/aa-gym-ajak-ribuan-jamaahnya-ikut-aksi-bela-islam-iii>> Accessed 2 February 2020.
- Fadl, Khaled Abou El. 2014. *Speaking in God's name: Islamic law, authority, and women*. London: Oneworld Publications.
- Farhan, Farhan. 2017. Pesan dakwah Felix Siauw di media sosial (perspektif meaning and media). *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Administrasi Islam* 1 (2): 209–226.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2017. Peranan Maqasid Al-Shariah dalam memahami Hadith: kajian terhadap fatwa Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah [The role of Maqasid Al-Shariah in understanding Hadith: a study of the fatwa of the Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah]. MA thesis, University of Malaya.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020a. PUTM dan kaderisasi ulama: menelusuri latar belakang lahirnya Lembaga Kaderisasi Ulama Muhammadiyah [PUTM and clerical regeneration: tracing the background of the birth of the Muhammadiyah Clerical Cadre Institute]. <<https://santricendekia.com/putm-dan-kaderisasi-ulama-menelusuri-latar-belakang-lahirnya-lembaga-kaderisasi-ulama-muhammadiyah/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.

- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020b. Tantangan kader ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah di era 4.0 [Challenges for Tarjih Muhammadiyah ulama cadres in the 4.0 era]. 21 July. *Suara 'Aisyiyah* <<https://suaraaisyiyah.id/tantangan-kader-ulama-tarjih-muhammadiyah-di-era-4-0/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Fealy, Greg. 2008. Consuming Islam: commodified religion and aspirational pietism in contemporary Indonesia. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.
- Gesuri. 2020. Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia kehilangan ulama kharismatik [Yunahar Ilyas passed away, Indonesia lost a charismatic scholar]. 3 January. <<https://www.gesuri.id/internal/yunahar-ilyas-wafat-indonesia-kehilangan-ulama-kharismatik-b1YFoZpRY>> Accessed 20 March 2020.
- Hew, Wai Weng. 2018. The art of dakwah: social media, visual persuasion and the Islamist propagation of Felix Siauw. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (134): 61–79.
- Hoesterey, James B. 2008. Marketing morality: the rise, fall and rebranding of Aa Gym. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: Religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, pp. 95–114.
- Hope Cheong, Pauline. 2016. Religious authority and social media branding in a culture of religious celebrification. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*, University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 81–102.
- Horsfield, Peter. 2016. The media and religious authority from ancient to modern. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*. University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 37–66.
- IB Times Indonesia. 2020. 100 situs Islam Indonesia, NU Online peringkat pertama [100 Indonesian Islamic websites, NU Online ranks first]. 10 July. <<https://ibtimes.id/100-situs-islam-indonesia-nu-online-peringkat-pertama/>> Accessed 23 February 2023.
- Ilyas, Yunahar. 2012. *Kuliah Akhlaq* [Akhlaq lecture]. XII. Yogyakarta: LPPI Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta.
- Khamis, S., Ang, L. and Welling, R. 2017. Self-branding, 'micro-celebrity' and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191–208.
- Khomalia, Isti and Rahman, Khairul Arief. 2018. Micro hijabers celebrity: membentuk identitas dengan update self-story via instagram (kasus dian pelangi). *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban dan Pemikiran Islam* 2 (1): 33–42.
- Kompas. 2020. Sejumlah tokoh hadir prosesi pemakaman ketua PP Muhammadiyah Yunahar

- Ilyas [Many figures attended the funeral procession of Muhammadiyah chairman Yunahar Ilyas]. 3 January.  
<<https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/03/19142441/sejumlah-tokoh-hadiri-prosesi-pemakaman-ketua-pp-muhammadiyah-yunahar-ilyas>> Accessed 3 April 2022.
- Labiq. 2019. Pengaruh new media terhadap pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [The influence of new media on shifting religious authority]. 19 April.  
<<https://geotimes.co.id/opini/pengaruh-new-media-terhadap-pergeseran-otoritas-keagamaan>> Accessed 19 October 2020.
- Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. 2010. *Politik identitas dan masa depan pluralisme Indonesia*. Edited by Samsu Rizal Panggabean et al. Jakarta: Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (PUSAD) Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina.
- Madury, Zulkarnain El. 2019. Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam? [Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?]. 2 November.  
<<https://www.facebook.com/zulkarnainsumenep/posts/2386248524961601>> Accessed 5 May 2020.
- Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah. 2016. Pembukaan Halaqah, Majelis Tarjih Launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan Muhammadiyah Observatorium Network [Halaqah opening, Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and Muhammadiyah Observatory Network]. 20 August. <<https://tarjih.or.id/pembukaan-halaqah-majelis-tarjih-launching-pusat-tarjih-muhammadiyah-dan-muhammadiyah-observatorium-network/>> Accessed 6 October 2023.
- Majelis Tarjih Dahlan, Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. 2016. Nota Kesepakatan Majelis Tarjih Dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Tentang Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di Islamic Center Universitas Ahmad Dahlan [Memorandum of Agreement between the Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board and Ahmad Dahlan University on the Management of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre at the Islamic Centre of Ahmad Dahlan University]. Yogyakarta.
- Maskur, Maskur and Noor, Irfan Noor. 2014. Ustadz selebriti Abdullah Gymnastiar dalam budaya populer (perspektif hipersemiotika Yasraf Amir Piliang) [Celebrity Ustadz Abdullah Gymnastiar in popular culture (Yasraf Amir Piliang's hyper semiotics perspective)]. *Jurnal Studia Insania* 2 (1): 47–57.
- Matheson, Craig. 1987. Weber and the classification of forms of legitimacy. *British Journal of Sociology* 38 (2): 199–215.

- Muhammadiyah Central Board. 2023. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 8 October 2023.
- Nisa, Eva F. 2019. Internet and Muslim women. In Ronald Lukens-Bull and Mark Woodward (eds), *Handbook of contemporary Islam and Muslim lives*. Cham: Springer, pp. 1–19.
- Palahuddin. 2020. The typology of religious thought in Muhammadiyah. *International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 3 (2): 74–81.  
<<http://journal2.uad.ac.id/index.php/ijish/article/view/2233/pdf>>
- Peacock, James L. 1978. *Purifying the Faith: the Muhammadiyah movement in Indonesian Islam*. Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2011. *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2016. Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan MuON [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and MuON]. 20 August.  
<<http://www.umm.ac.id/id/muhammadiyah/7070.html>> Accessed 20 March 2021.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Berikut Susunan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah pPeriode 2022–2027 [The following is the composition of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the 2022–2027 period] <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/berikut-susunan-pimpinan-pusat-muhammadiyah-periode-2022-2027/>> Accessed 7 October 2023.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Majelis Tabligh [Tabligh Council]. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 07 October 2023.
- Postill, John and Pink, Sarah. 2012. Social media ethnography: the digital researcher in a messy web. *Media International Australia* 145 (1): 123–134.
- Pribadi, Yanwar. 2019. Fragmentasi umat dan penciptaan otoritas keagamaan: tanggapan terhadap ‘Islam lokal’ dan ‘Islam asing’ di Indonesia [Ummah fragmentation and the creation of religious authority: responses to ‘local Islam’ and ‘foreign Islam’ in Indonesia]. *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 21 (1): 103–119.  
<<https://jmb.lipi.go.id/jmb/article/view/828/455>>
- Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah. n.d. *Panduan pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre management guide]. Majelis Tarjih, Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta.
- Quadri, Syed Junaid A. 2013. Transformations of tradition: modernity in the thought of Muḥammad Bakhīt Al-Muṭī‘ī. PhD thesis, McGill University.
- Rahman, Asjmuni Abdur et al. 1985. Laporan penelitian Majlis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (suatu

- studi tentang sistem dan metode penentuan hukum) [Research report of Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (a study of the system and method of determining the law)]. Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga.
- Rakyat Merdeka. 2019. Dubes Malaysia jenguk ketum MUI Yunahar Ilyas di Yogyakarta [Malaysian ambassador visits MUI chairman Yunahar Ilyas in Yogyakarta]. 5 November. <<https://rm.id/baca-berita/internasional/21745/dubes-malaysia-jenguk-ketum-mui-yunahar-ilyas-di-yogyakarta>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Riesebrodt, Martin. 1999. Charisma in Max Weber's Sociology of Religion. *Religion* 29 (1): 1–14.
- Sadasri, Lidwina Mutia. 2017. Selebriti mikro di media baru kajian presentasi diri dalam vlog selebriti mikro [Micro-celebrities in new media: a study of self-presentation in micro-celebrity vlogs]. *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi Dan Opini Publik* 21 (2): 167–181. <<https://jurnal.kominfo.go.id/index.php/jpkop/article/view/1218/720>>
- Saefullah, Hikmawan. 2022. Media baru, publik baru: mengkonfigurasi ulang ruang publik Islam [New media, new publics: reconfiguring the Islamic public sphere]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sammy, Abdullah. 2022. Peluang dan tantangan dakwah digital Muhammadiyah [Opportunities and challenges of Muhammadiyah digital da'wah]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sanjaya, Makroen. 2022. Peta ideologi islam di media sosial [The map of Islamic ideology on social media]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Senft, Theresa M. 2008. *Camgirls: celebrity and community in the age of social networks*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Shamsy, Ahmed El. 2013. The Ḥāshiyā in Islamic law: a sketch of the Shāfi'ī literature. *Oriens* 41 (3-4): 289–315.
- Spencer, Martin E. 1970. Weber on legitimate norms and authority. *British Journal of Sociology* 21 (2): 123–134.
- Suara Muhammadiyah. 2019. Hyung Jun Kim: sistem di Muhammadiyah sungguh ideal [Hyung Jun Kim: Muhammadiyah's system is ideal]. <<https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/08/01/hyung-jun-kim-sistem-di-muhammadiyah-sungguh-ideal/>> Accessed 9 April 2022.

- Suyadi and Widodo, Hendro. 2019. Millennialization of Islamic education based on neuroscience in the third generation university in Yogyakarta Indonesia. *QIIS International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7 (1): 173–202.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2009. Hukum tentang jenggot dan cadar [Islamic law perspective on beards and veils]. *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine, September. Yogyakarta.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019a. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 4*. Cetakan IX. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019b. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 7*. Cetakan IV. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Tirto.id. 2018. Dari Aa' Gym ke Felix Siauw: ustaz medsos & medium dakwah politis. Tirto.Id. 16 January. <<https://tirto.id/dari-aa-gym-ke-felix-siauw-ustaz-medsos-medium-dakwah-politis-cCGf>> Accessed 5 February 2020.
- Turner, Bryan S. 2007. Religious authority and the new media. *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2): 117–134.
- Turner, Graeme. 2010. *Ordinary people and the media: the demotic turn*. Los Angeles CA: Sage.
- Widodo, Arif. 2017. Transformative intellectual discourse and movement of Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM). *Iseedu: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices* 1 (1): 126–151.  
<<https://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/iseedu/article/view/5423/3542>>
- Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change*. Princetoon NJ: Princeton University Press.

## ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY *USTAZ* PHENOMENON

### Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

#### ABSTRACTS

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the fragmentation of religious authority. In the Indonesian context, the mainstream religious authority held by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has been challenged and threatened by micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This article examines the emergence of the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah fanpage on Facebook, created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board as it has threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority. It analyses Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace, by taking a closer look at what has been done by Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, an assembly that has the exclusive authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* within Muhammadiyah. This article also discusses lessons that can be learned from the case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the response of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

#### KEYWORDS

Fragmentation of religious authority; micro-celebrity *ustaz*; Muhammadiyah; religious authority; *tarjih*.

#### ABSTRAK

*Kemunculan internet dan media sosial telah mempertajam fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. Dalam konteks Indonesia, otoritas keagamaan arus utama yang dipegang oleh Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) disaingi dan diancam oleh para ustaz mikro-*

*selebritas. Artikel ini mengkaji kemunculan fanpage Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah di Facebook yang dibuat dan dikelola oleh Zulkarnain El Madury, seseorang yang mengklaim sebagai ustaz Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, karena dianggap mengancam otoritas keagamaan Muhammadiyah. Penelitian ini menganalisis upaya Muhammadiyah dalam mempertahankan otoritas keagamaannya di dunia maya dengan melihat lebih dekat pada apa yang telah dilakukan oleh Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah, sebuah majelis yang memiliki otoritas eksklusif untuk mengeluarkan fatwa dan ijtihad keagamaan resmi di Muhammadiyah. Artikel ini juga membahas pelajaran yang dapat dipetik dari kasus Zulkarnain El Madury dan respons Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah.*

#### **KATA KUNCI**

*Ustaz mikro-selebritas; fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan; otoritas keagamaan; Muhammadiyah; tarjih*

#### **Introduction**

The Alvara Research Center (2020) survey was surprising as it stated that the clerics most heard by the public, especially in Ramadan 2020, were not from the official Muhammadiyah board.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the Alvara Research Center survey was released (IBTimes.id 2020), an Islamic website managed by young Muhammadiyah intellectuals, published a report ranking the 100 most popular Islamic websites in Indonesia. The majority of these sites are managed by or affiliated to Nahdliyyin (NU followers) and Salafi<sup>2</sup> groups with few such sites operated by or affiliated to Muhammadiyah. The Alvara Research Center survey and the IBTimes.id report show that Muhammadiyah, in terms of influence and religious authority on the internet, lags behind other religious groups which is ironic for an organisation claiming to represent the progressive Islamic group.

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the so-called fragmentation of religious authority. Eva F. Nisa (2019), for example, mentions that the proliferation of various digital platforms is directly proportional to the increasing fragmentation of religious authority. Islamic discourse is monopolised not only by an elite group of scholars or mainstream

---

<sup>1</sup> One of the 15 most popular clerics mentioned in the report, Ustaz Ali Hidayat, has since been included on the Muhammadiyah Central Board's Tabligh Council (2022–2027; Muhammadiyah Central Board 2023). Prior to that, he did not convey official Muhammadiyah ideas in his lectures.

<sup>2</sup> For more comprehensive information on the activism of Salafi groups, see Chris Chaplin (2021).



religious groups, but also by persons or groups that have not been considered in Islamic discourse. Furthermore, the presence of the internet and social media has led to the birth of what is called micro-celebrity. Theresa M. Senft (2008) defines micro-celebrity as a new style of online performance that involves increasing popularity on social media such as videos, blogs, and networking sites. These micro-celebrities unlike conventional celebrities, emerge from what is known as new media (Senft 2008).

Of course, not all new media users have the adjective ‘micro-celebrity’. Only those who experience what Graeme Turner (2010) terms ‘the demotic turn’, namely, the increasing visibility of ordinary people to appear as celebrities in the media, especially online media. In turn, both conventional and micro-celebrity exist in various public spheres, and the discourse on them is characterised as influencers, stimulants of consumerism, enthusiasm, public debate, and various activism (Sadasri 2017).

By borrowing the theory of micro-celebrities in the study of new media, we can then read how these micro-celebrities have also come to the fore in the religious realm. The emergence of ulama, *ustaz* (religious teachers), and religious leaders who become influencers in new media can perhaps be seen as one form of micro-celebrity. Felix Siauw is a prominent example. A convert, who is now a preacher, Siauw has a massive following on social media. In 2018, for example, he had 2.6 million followers on Twitter, and in 2022 it numbered 3.3 million. Felix Siauw’s Instagram account has around 4.9 million followers. It can even be said that he is the *ustaz* who has the most followers on social media (*Tirto* 2018), making him one of the leading social media preachers in Indonesia today (Hew 2018). What Felix Siauw posts on his social media has more or less influenced the map of religious authorities in Indonesia.

The existence of the internet and the continuing development of technology allows the emergence of many other micro-celebrity *ustaz*, both in the national arena more generally or more specifically in internal religious organisations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, Persis (Persatuan Islam) or others. In the context of Muhammadiyah, the largest modernist Islamic organisation began to be challenged for its religious authority by a preacher who was said to be part of Muhammadiyah itself, namely Zulkarnain El Madury. He claims to be a Muhammadiyah cadre and often introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board. In recent years, El Madury has been noticed by Muhammadiyah administrators

and Muhammadiyah cadres<sup>3</sup> and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah) has discussed him in a special meeting. This is because the posts on the Facebook page that El Madury manages, *Syarah Himpunan Putus Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (henceforth SHPTM), often differ significantly from – and to some extent delegitimise – a Muhammadiyah fatwa or official decision. Responses from grassroots or Muhammadiyah followers vary. This can be seen, for example, from the comments on each post. Some defend and remain adamant on the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah, but not a few were affected and followed what was conveyed by El Madury on his Facebook page.

This is where it becomes crucial to see how Muhammadiyah attempts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace, especially among its members and the public. By conducting web content analysis (Postill and Pink 2012) on SHPTM and official social media accounts and those affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this article shows how El Madury builds his narratives and, in turn, how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority on the internet. Additionally, field research was conducted and key actors were interviewed offline and online in a semi-structured format.<sup>4</sup> Apart from El Madury, the key actors are members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Digital Broadcast Centre (Pusat Syiar Digital Muhammadiyah), Muhammadiyah activists as well as Muhammadiyah grassroots.

### **Fragmentation of religious authority, new preacher and micro-celebrity *ustaz* phenomenon**

Fragmentation of religious authority is a phenomenon that occurs in various religious communities and is not limited to Islam (B.S. Turner 2007; Campbell and Teusner 2011; Hope Cheong 2016). The fragmentation of religious authority is also a global phenomenon as pointed out by Gary R. Bunt (2003) who states that the new media have shaped diverse understandings among individual Muslims worldwide about e-jihad (electronic jihad). The definition of electronic jihad is understood and interpreted differently, ranging from online activism to Muslim articulation after the events of 11 September 2001. Bunt (2003) shows that each new media (in this case, new websites) has authority for its respective group.

---

<sup>3</sup> This author's online and offline interviews with Amiruddin, Robby Karman, Muhammad Muflih, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, and Arif Nur Kholis, 2019–2020.

<sup>4</sup> Data collection in this study was carried out between 2018 and 2020. As personal interviews were not possible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, some interviews were conducted online.

The fragmentation of religious authority discussed here is from the 20th century to the present. Jajat Burhanudin (2004) points out that there has been a shift in religious authority in the historical phase of Indonesian religious thought in the early 20th century due to modernisation. His study, which focuses on the Islamic print media, further shows that there is a shift in religious authority that used to be in *Kitab Kuning*<sup>5</sup> taught by *kyai* or ulama in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to magazines, journals, newspapers, and books published by modernist circles or organisations.

Religious authority since the early 20th century has always stayed with Muhammadiyah and NU. These two religious organisations are often referred to by scholars as the authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016; Akmaliah 2018). The shift in religious authority occurred again in the 1990s when national television stations emerged. The Islamic programmes presented by the television stations show the *ustaz* (religious teachers), which in turn build their authority through lectures delivered by these preachers. This phenomenon prompted scholars to come up with the term ‘Islamic televangelism’ (Akmaliah 2018). Abdullah Gymnastiar who is better known as Aa Gym is one example that falls into the category of a television *ustaz*, or a ‘tele-dai’ as coined by Greg Fealy (2008).

The most obvious and recent picture of the fragmentation of religious authority in Indonesia is the series of events of the Defend Islam Action (Aksi Bela Islam). Ahmad Najib Burhani (2016) hints that these critical events marked the peak of the fragmentation of religious authorities in Indonesia as they gave rise to new actors who challenge the established religious authority. Although it cannot be said to shift or match the role of Muhammadiyah and NU, the emergence of new actors such as Rizieq Shihab provides a new map of religious authority in Indonesia.

This phenomenon of the fragmentation of religious authority has increased sharply in the development of what scholars call pop culture, marked by the birth of many new media (Labiq 2019). The availability of internet access to every social class is the main factor for this fragmentation. As a result, many new media have emerged with each individual and group competing to spread ideas (Horsfield 2016; Nisa 2019).

Aa Gym is one of the early actors who emerged in the internet era in Indonesia. This can be captured in two interesting studies on Aa Gym by James B. Hoesterey (2008), and

---

<sup>5</sup> So-called because the books were printed on yellow paper. These were the Islamic texts used in the education of Islamic schools.

Maskur and Noor (2014). Although the use of the internet as a medium of da'wah around during the early 2000s was not as massive as it is now, the emergence of Aa Gym as a new cleric on the national da'wah stage through lectures, seminars, and Islamic training is a phenomenon in itself. Hoesterey (2008) studies the journey of Aa Gym from his first appearance as a preacher, falling, and then successfully rebranding to restore his religious authority. This is evident, for example, from how Aa Gym has many listeners (*Dakta.com* 2016). Popular culture has also brought Aa Gym to be seen not only by the public, especially by his followers, as also singer, actor, author, etc. Thus, he has transformed from an ordinary cleric to a celebrity cleric. Through a hypersemiotic perspective, Maskur and Noor (2014) show the various aspects of Aa Gym's personality.

Following the appearance of Aa Gym and with further rapid development of information technology, many other new preachers began to appear. Hew Wai Weng (2018) describes how Felix SiauW is another skilful religious preacher. Being a cleric with the most followers on the internet did not make SiauW neglect to spread his da'wah in the real world. Hew (2018) points out that SiauW has blended online and offline da'wah harmoniously. According to Hew (2018) and Farhan (2017), one of the keys to SiauW's success in preaching is his ability to present an entertaining and straightforward da'wah, even though its content is dogmatic and political.

Aa Gym and Felix SiauW are two micro-celebrity *ustaz* as a result of the new media. The term micro-celebrity *ustaz* was adopted and reconstructed from the theory of micro-celebrity. Most of these studies conducted from the perspective of pop culture (Senft 2008; G. Turner 2010; Khamis, Ang and Welling 2017; Sadasri 2017; Khomalia and Rahman 2018). describe the fragmentation of religious authority, marked by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By this term this author means an ordinary *ustaz/ustazah* who has skyrocketed in popularity and is celebrity on and because of social media so that he or she is able to influence certain people or communities. In other words, it means the *ustaz/ustazah* has experienced what G. Turner (2010) calls 'the demotic turn', when ordinary people are highly visible on social media and become celebrities. Challenges to established religious authorities by new religious personalities or groups are rarely touched on except that of Yanwar Pribadi (2019). His study explains the the efforts of 'local Islam' (*Islam lokal*) to defend its religious authority from the threat of 'foreign Islam' (*Islam asing*). However, his study differs from what this author will examine in tracing Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

This study is on a micro-celebrity *ustaz*, Zulkarnain El Madury who is less well known when compared to Aa Gym or Felix Siauw but he has a strong influence on the internet. His identity as a preacher from Muhammadiyah who targets Muhammadiyah followers with postings that are often different and even delegitimise the official voice of this largest modernist mass organisation deserves to be investigated. This study, apart from showing Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority on the internet, also seeks explicitly to fill the gap in previous studies. In his latest study, Akmaliah (2020) shows that Muhammadiyah and NU have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was strongly reactive to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) indicates there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's responses less hostile. Sammy (2022), Sanjaya (2022), and Saefullah (2022) came to the same conclusion as Akmaliah, claiming that Muhammadiyah is significantly less adaptive to the emergence of new media, and therefore its da'wah often loses to that of the micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This study focuses on the struggle of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as the only assembly under Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas and official *ijtihad* exposition within Muhammadiyah.

#### **Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage**

The Facebook SHPTM fanpage was created by Zulkarnain El Madury. He was born in Sumenep on the island of Madura in 1963, with the name Zulkarnain bin Syamsuri. He claims to have studied in Malaysia at the Institute of Business Study and always introduces himself as a preacher from the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah). He spent his childhood in Madura and was a traditionalist Muslim like others on the island. He grew up in a milieu dominated by the NU traditionalist Islamic organisation. He used to perform *tahlilan* (pilgrimage to the grave), and other practices that, according to him, after becoming a member of Muhammadiyah, were not following the Sunnah of the Prophet. He received his religious education at the Islamic boarding school at-Taufiqiyyah Sumenep Madura. In 1976 he became acquainted with Muhammadiyah. Through a lecture delivered by a preacher, He became interested in the da'wah and religious understanding of the Muhammadiyah movement founded by Ahmad

Dahlan after listening to a lecture by one of its preachers. In 1977, he officially joined Muhammadiyah.<sup>6</sup>

Since joining Muhammadiyah, El Madury has been active as a preacher who spreads religious ideas and understanding. From 1990 to 2007, he was one of the Muhammadiyah preachers who was sent to remote areas by the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board. His daily activities are now preaching at different places as well as creating content on for SHPTM fanpage. He now lives in Jakarta as the *tarjih* and *tabligh* council chair of the Pondok Gede Muhammadiyah Branch.<sup>7</sup> He created SHPTM in 2014.<sup>8</sup> However, in the digital history that this author can trace, the fanpage was created in 2015 as the earliest post that is currently traceable is dated 5 January 2015.

According to El Madury, the fanpage began with the WhatsApp group he created which he named *Tarjih dan Tabligh Institut* (Tarjih and Tabligh Institute) to provide a space to discuss and spread ideas related to *tarjih*.<sup>9</sup> He included many Muhammadiyah figures and activists in this group, including (the now late) Buya Yunahar Ilyas. Over time, seeing that El Madury's posts on SHPTM were deemed inconsistent with the *tarjih* spirit of Muhammadiyah, several people, such as Fathurrahman Kamal and Buya Risman, sharply criticised the postings. El Madury, Fathurrahman Kamal, and Buya Risman were then engaged in a heated debate which was relayed later to Buya Yunahar Ilyas. The response by Buya Yunahar Ilyas at that time, according to El Madury, differed from that of his critics. Buya Yun responded quite positively because he saw El Madury's initiative as providing *syarh* (explanation) or further explication of the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Judgment Compilation). Finally, he gave his permission to El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com).<sup>10</sup>

El Madury's early postings on SHPTM, were still relatively consistent in uploading Muhammadiyah fatwas in the question (from someone) and answer format from the fatwa division of the Tarjih Council. This is similar to the the original question and answer format

---

<sup>6</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Muhammadiyah's use of the word *tarjih* has changed throughout its development. In its early period, and following its usage in the principles of law (*usul al-fiqh*), *tarjih* conveyed the meaning of examining the various opinions of Muslim jurists on a particular question and evaluating them to determine which is most faithful to the original Shari'a sources. Over time this usage gradually included any intellectual endeavour used to study new cases that earlier jurists had not addressed. In short, in Muhammadiyah's perspective, *tarjih* is identical, or almost identical, to *ijihad* (Anwar 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

administered by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, whose fatwas were later published in the *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine. However, over time, SHPTM included posts that apart from the dissemination of Muhammadiyah's official *ijtihad* included the personal opinions of El Madury. These opinions in inelegant words are often offensive to other groups. Not infrequently, his posts contradict the official stance of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in particular, or Muhammadiyah in general, such as on the veil issue (see below). Since Facebook introduced its 'live broadcast' feature, El Madury has also availed of it to conduct live lectures. The SHPTM is popular with netizens. As of the time of writing (3 April 2022), it has been followed by 19,423 and is 'liked' by 8,868 people. His posts also often receive both positive and critical comments from viewers.

El Madury gave several reasons that brought about the creation of his fanpage. Firstly, it is aimed at fortifying Muhammadiyah followers against all forms of superstition, heresy, and myth as its posts focus on issues related to faith and worship. Secondly, he aims to counter those liberal Muhammadiyah activists and has openly responded to such views. His posts often openly attacks the religious practices of the the Nahdliyyin, resulting in several clashes between him and the Nahdliyyin figure, Idrus Ramli.<sup>11</sup>

Despite having many followers El Madury and his SHPTM do have critics. Many Muhammadiyah followers are concerned about the SHPTM posts. Some have tried to convey their anxiety through the official social media accounts of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre (Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah).<sup>12</sup> Those concerned generally want to ask for firm action from the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as El Madury has included 'Tarjih Muhammdiyah' in his fanpage name. The demands to the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, when summarised, include: (1) that the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council reprimand or remind Zulkarnain El Madury not to use symbols or names that are closely related to Tarjih Muhammadiyah for or on his fanpage; (2) making and circulating an announcement that the fanpage is not a social media account of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council or the Tarjih Muhamamdiyah Centre; (3) announcing the official social media accounts and websites of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre, so that Muhammadiyah people at the grassroots are not deceived by the existence of the fanpage and know where to look for religious reference sites, especially on the internet.

---

<sup>11</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Interviews with Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf and Ariful Hazam, November 2020 who are grassroots of Muhammadiyah, and social media administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

### **Zulkarnain El Madury and his efforts in building religious authority**

Zulkarnain El Madury and his fanpage SHPTM, have threatened the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, and specifically, the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. Many of his posts affect Muhammadiyah followers in particular and Muslims in general as these posts often differ from the official stance of Muhammadiyah, and in some cases contradict the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. This has stimulated public debate on social media, allowing El Madury to become a micro-celebrity *ustaz*. As a result of the general public and the online community attention, El Madury has been able to gradually build up his religious authority. From the Weberian perspective (Riesebrodt 1999), he has been able to do this in two ways. The first is through charisma (charismatic authority). According to Weber, charisma is a particular type of authority whose original form is based on a specific belief contained in a particular person (Riesebrodt 1999). Secondly, El Madury claims he has the endorsement of Yunahar Ilyas, a very popular Muhammadiyah cleric respected by the community from within the Muhammadiyah circle and from Muslims in general which is a form of traditional authority.

Yunahar Ilyas (1956–2020) or Buya Yun as he was popularly known, was an exegete (*mufasssir*; Ilyas 2012) in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, who died at the age of 63. He was an alumnus of Imam Ibn Su'ud University (Saudi Arabia) and an excellent lecturer in conveying religious messages. He was seen as a charismatic cleric by Muhammadiyah followers and Muslims, in general, and this reputation extended to neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore (Abror 2020; *Gesuri* 2020). On his death in early 2020, many people flocked to pay their last respects to Buya Yun who held the chair of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for three terms (*Kompas* 2020; *Rakyat Merdeka* 2019).

By harnessing the charisma of Buya Yun, El Madury was able to increase his religious authority. On various occasions, including when this author interviewed him, Buya Yun's name was often mentioned as an argument and a shield.<sup>13</sup> El Madury insisted that he created the SHPTM Facebook site with the permission of Yunahar Ilyas<sup>14</sup> who had provided a further

---

<sup>13</sup> This author's informants include Muhammad Muflih (grassroot of Muhammadiyah and initiator of the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com)), Robby Karman (secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association [DPP IMM] 2018–2021), and several participants invited by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council with the agenda 'Responding to Emergence of Syarah HPT on Social Media' on 25 September, 2020; interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.



explanation on of the Tarjih Judgment Compilation). He added that Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website tanyajawabagama.com, had similarly received permission from Buya Yun. Wahyudi Abdurrahim confirmed Zulkarnain's claims and Muhammad Muflih, a grassroots representative added that it is a form of fairness.<sup>15</sup> In other words, Buya Yun's permission is a form of appreciation given by someone who is more senior and has a high social position in Muhammadiyah to someone who is more junior and classified as a grassroots Muhammadiyah member.<sup>16</sup> Permission from Buya Yun, who has charisma within Muhammadiyah in particular, has become a tool used by El Madury in building his religious authority.

In Weberian charismatic authority, charisma is not only about a belief in the existence of extraordinary or superpowers possessed by or contained in humans but also about particular objects other than humans (Riesebrodt 1999). We thus have an explanation as to why El Madury named his fanpage *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a highly respectable and crucial council in Muhammadiyah. Founded in 1927, the Council functions as an assembly that carries out its agenda of purification of religion and the dynamisation of social life. It conducts research and investigations towards this purity, and accordingly gives fatwas and compiles religious guidelines on faith (*'aqidah*) and worship (*'ibadah*) as well as social relations (*mu'amalah*) (Rahman et al. 1985; Anwar 2016). In addition, this Council makes efforts to resolve differences and disagreements on religious issues, which are usually referred to as *khilafiah* problems, so that they are directed more productively (Anwar 2007, 2016).

The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a body that is responsible for formulating the ideological basis of the Muhammadiyah movement (Anwar 2007, 2016) and is Muhammadiyah's representative in the religious field (Fauzi 2017). The Council produces three types of *ijtihad*, namely: (1) *tarjih fatwa (fatwa tarjih)*, (2) *tarjih decision (putusan tarjih)*, and (3) *tarjih discourse (wacara tarjih)* (Anwar 2016). *Tarjih fatwa* is the Council's answer to general questions on issues that require an explanation in terms of sharia law. Following the nature of the fatwa in general, the Council's fatwa is non-binding, on either organisations or members as individuals. Therefore, even the fatwa can be questioned and discussed. However, because the fatwa contains religious guidance derived from Islamic teaching sources (Anwar 2020), and the general public often does not actually understand the

---

<sup>15</sup> Online interview with Wahyudi Abdurrahim through WhatsApp, September 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Online interview with Muhammad Muflih through WhatsApp and Facebook, 20 October 2019.

aspects of such a fatwa, it is still believed by Muhammadiyah members to be religious guidance. However, the *tarjih* decision is the official stance of Muhammadiyah in religious matters and is formally binding on the organisation and its members. But, in practice, sometimes Muhammadiyah members exercise their right to freedom not to be bound by the decision because they have different *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

Meanwhile, *tarjih* discourses are ideas or thoughts that are raised and put forward by the Council in seminars, *halaqah* (religious gathering or meeting to discuss the Qur'an or Islam), or other forums in addressing various developing issues and at the same time fostering a critical spirit of *ijtihad* and collecting materials or ideas on various actual problems in society. The nature of this *tarjih* discourse is non-binding and does not become a fatwa that must be followed. *Tarjih* discourse is contained in various publications of the Council, such as *Jurnal Tarjih* (Tarjih Journal) and various published books (Anwar 2016).

The *tarjih* decision and the *tarjih* fatwa, hold their strength within Muhammadiyah as these are considered sacred by some of its members. In short, it can be said that anything that 'smells *tarjih*' has authority in the collective memory of Muhammadiyah followers. In the perspective of Khaled Abou El Fadl (2014), fatwa and *tarjih* decisions have the power of persuasive authority, as these can influence or direct others because they believed in them. The *tarjih* fatwas are officially published through the organisation's official magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, and compiled in the Tanya Jawab Agama book. In comparison, the *tarjih* decisions are codified in a book called *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*, commonly known by the abbreviation HPT. Thus, it can be understood why the attribution of the term *tarjih* to particular objects can give rise to charismatic authority, as mentioned by Weber.

What El Madury did can also be seen as identity politics which is defined as a political tool of a group whether it be ethnic, cultural, religious or others for specific purposes, such as a form of resistance or to show the identity of a group (Alfaqi 2015). Within this framework, identity is politicised through extreme interpretation, which aims to gain support from people who feel 'the same', through race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements. In the context of El Madury, the use of the *tarjih* label on his fanpage can be interpreted as a political tool to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muhammadiyah members. And, as seen in some of his sermon videos, El Madury also placed a flag with the Muhammadiyah symbol behind him. In this context, he wants to convince the viewers that he is close to

Muhammadiyah. He has introduced himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board on many occasions.

According to Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif (2010), identity politics is always related to members of social groups who feel excluded by the mainstream in a nation or state. Sri Astuti Buchari (2014) also finds that the emergence of identity politics is mainly caused by certain factors that an ethnic group sees as pressure from the political injustice. By looking at the observations made by Ahmad Najib Burhani (2013), El Madury, in this case, can be categorised as part of a group that feels excluded, threatened, and to some extent in need of justice within Muhammadiyah. Burhani (2013) explains the existence of two opposing schools of thought within Muhammadiyah which he refers to as 'Pure Islam' (*Islam Murni*) and 'Progressive Islam' (*Islam Progresif*). The conflict between these two schools of thought in Muhammadiyah began to surface at the 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Banda Aceh in 1995 (Burhani 2013).

The dominance of 'Progressive Islam' in Muhammadiyah strengthened after its 44th congress in Jakarta in 2000. This congress chose Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif as general chair. He is a progressive Muslim figure, an alumnus of the University of Chicago, and a student of the eminent progressive scholar Fazlur Rahman. At this congress, several names representing the 'Progressive Islam' group were included in the ranks of the central leadership of Muhammadiyah, such as Amin Abdullah, Dawam Raharjo, and Abdul Munir Mulkhan. During Ma'arif's leadership, progressive ideas not only dominated culturally but gradually became Muhammadiyah's official programmes (Burhani 2013).

Seeing the increasingly apparent threat from the ideas put forward by the 'Progressive Islam' group within Muhammadiyah, representatives of the 'Pure Islam' group did not remain silent. They compete and squabble over religious interpretations as to which is the most authentic. These two groups challenge each other through various channels, including seminars, discussions, publications. They usually have conflicting programmes. For example, as mentioned by Burhani (2013), when the Centre for the Study of Religion and Civilisation (PSAP/Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban) raised the theme of pluralism and multiculturalism in its journal, *Tanwir Journal*, the Tabligh Council<sup>17</sup> responded with articles in opposition in

---

<sup>17</sup> Muhammadiyah has many assemblies such as Majelis Tabligh and Majelis Tarjih, each with its own functions and responsibilities. Majelis Tarjih is responsible for producing religious thoughts through fatwas and decisions, while Majelis Tabligh is responsible for disseminating them. Historically, Majelis Tabligh is known in Muhammadiyah as the anti-liberal wing and thus there are at times poor collaboration between Majelis Tarjih

its magazine, *Majalah Tabligh*. In Burhani's investigation, during the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress in Malang, this conservative group set up a Pojok Anti-Liberal (anti-liberal corner) booth, which sold books, DVDs, t-shirts, magazines, and other anti-liberal mementos. Strikingly, some of the t-shirts for sale displayed the words 'Muhammadiyah Anti-Liberal' (Burhani 2013).

At the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress, it seemed that the 'Pure Islam' group was gaining momentum to beat back the 'Progressive Islam' group. The quarrels between these two groups occurred within congress committees and in the external arena. Burhani (2005, 2013) noted at least three critical issues where the 'Pure Islam' group defeated the 'Progressive Islam' in the congress arena, namely: (1) leadership change; (2) the position of women; and (3) resistance to liberal thought.

After the 45th congress, the feud between these two schools of thought has continued though waxing and waning at different times. The form of the feud now looks more varied given the availability of the internet where the presence of social media has changed the battle arena from a conventional to a more modern one. El Madury represents the 'Pure Islam' group, and has heated online debates with figures considered representatives of 'Progressive Islam' whose actions he sees as unsettling. For example, El Madury and the secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association (DPP IMM),<sup>18</sup> Robby Karman, have openly and frequently castigated each other on for example, issues about the veil and the Wahhabi. According to El Madury, Robby Karman is a young liberal figure in Muhammadiyah who should be challenged. El Madury also often attacks the [IBTimes.id](http://IBTimes.id) website, as it frequently contains articles that are progressive and, to some extent, controversial. This website has several former Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah (JIMM/Muhammadiyah Youth Intellectual Network) figures, such as Hilman Latief, Azaki Khoiruddin, and Mu'arif. On one occasion, when the chair of the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre admonished El Madury for uploading provocative posts that contradicted the official stance of the Tarjih Council, he defended himself by stating that equally provocative posts from the 'Progressive Islam' group should be similarly reprimanded. If he is the only one

---

and Majelis Tabligh. For example, some fatwas issued by Majelis Tarjih, in Majelis Tabligh's perspective, are the result of liberal thinking. See Burhani (2013) and Palahuddin (2020).

<sup>18</sup> Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM) or Muhammadiyah Student Association is a proponent of Muhammadiyah in student affairs with the basic mission of realising the real Islamic society as formulated by Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Widodo 2017).

selected for rebuke then he felt an injustice had been done.<sup>19</sup> El Madury's attitude in the framework of identity politics reflects someone who feels excluded and threatened by certain parties. At such, his specific attributes and identity are a deliberate form of resistance to the domination of certain groups or thoughts that threaten him.

The above describes how El Madury builds his charismatic authority. The other is authority built through tradition or what Weber calls traditional authority (Spencer 1970; Matheson 1987; Riesebrodt 1999). In simple terms, something can be considered as having traditional authority if it gains legitimacy based on beliefs or norms that have been established in a particular tradition (Chairi 2019). In other words, according to Spencer (1970), traditional authority is legitimised and, at the same time, constrained by traditional norms. Therefore, it is the opposite of charismatic authority. If in charismatic authority, it is the leader or someone who creates the norms, then it is the norms that create the leader or person in the traditional authority. In charismatic authority, the value of influence is generated by a person's personal qualities and is always associated with his personality. While in the case of traditional authority, it is generated by function and is related to someone or something that has traditional values (Spencer 1970).

In the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, ulama and the classical books they wrote can be considered to have this traditional authority. Ulama in Islamic tradition are called heirs of the Prophets. The authority of the ulama is derived from the legitimacy of religious texts which state that the prophetic tradition will be passed on to them. Therefore, the religious ideas they convey in writings or books contain an authoritative value for the next generation. This is the uniqueness of Islamic scholars and traditions, as mentioned by Muhammad Qasim Zaman (2002) who states that one of the most prominent aspects of pre-modern intellectual culture is the articulation of religious discourse through the so-called medium of the commentary. This is manifested in various forms such *al-syurūḥ*, *ḥawāsyī*, *rasā'il*, and *fatawā*. The various genres of books that contain explanations, descriptions, or responses to a book or social phenomena are a way for scholars to shape the identity and authority of the school or tradition they adhere to. In addition, it is also a means to interpreting the meaning of the foundational sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah (Zaman 2002).

---

<sup>19</sup> On 3 November 2019, the manager of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah reprimanded Zulkarnain El Madury for his post on SHPTM on the veil which contradicts Muhammadiyah's official stance.

An example is the *hawāsyī* tradition in the Shafii school. Its emergence, according to Ahmed El-Shamsy (2013), shows the peak of the authority of two scholars in that school, namely al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi‘ī. Al-Kurdī, as quoted by El Shamsy, called these two scholars ‘the higher authorities in the Syafii school’. Those who want to know the authoritative opinion of the Shafi‘i school have to go through the works of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi‘ī, and the books that explain further their works, namely the books written by Ibn Ḥajar al-Haitamī and Syamsuddīn al-Ramlī. These books have for later generations the value of traditional authority (Shamsy 2013: 292).

What is the connection between this traditional authority and El Madury? El Madury’s posts on SHPTM and at religious forums where he speaks always rely on the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāth*). According to Endang Mintarja, chair of the Jakarta branch of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this aspect has drawn many people to El Madury’s lectures.<sup>20</sup> What El Madury did, which Muhammadiyah did not do in many of its fatwas was to cite the Islamic intellectual tradition. In many of its fatwas, Muhammadiyah often only quotes the Qur’an or hadith to strengthen its argument, without citing the opinions of other Islamic scholars. Perhaps this is a consequence of the modernist movement, which became the spirit of Muhammadiyah. The modernist movement initiated by reformers such as Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad ‘Abduh, and Muḥammad Rasyīd Riḍā in the late 19th and early 20th centuries used the term *al-rujū’ ilā al-qur’ān wa al-sunnah* (‘back to the Qur’an and Sunnah’). According to Syed Junaid A. Quadri (2013), the most obvious indicator of this movement, especially in Islamic law, is its critical attitude towards the structure of pre-modern sharia authority symbols, which are articulated in the language and logic of the institution of *taqlīd*. Modernist groups always encourage reopening the door to *ijtihād* and invite Muslims to leave the interpretive monopoly that the ulama class has held (Quadri 2013).

Muhammadiyah, which is heavily inspired by the modernist movement, is oriented towards the Qur’an and Sunnah and tends to attach less importance to the Islamic intellectual tradition that has been built by the ulama. This can be seen from its *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (the methodology Muhammadiyah uses in conducting *ijtihād*), which asserts that Muhammadiyah is not affiliated to a particular school, but the opinions of these schools are only considered in determining religious norms (Anwar 2018). This means that understanding religion in the Muhammadiyah perspective is derived directly from its primary

---

<sup>20</sup> Endang Mintarja voiced this at a Muhammadiyah Central Board Tarjih Council meeting of on the emergence ‘Syarah HPT’, 25 September 2020.

sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah through the *ijtihad* process. However, it should be noted here that the narration that confirms the opinions of the scholars is taken into account in determining norms is not that clear how they are implemented in *tarjih* issues.

In some of its official *ijtihad*, the nuances of the opinions of scholars, especially the pre-modern ones do not appear, by choice or otherwise. Thus it appears that El Madury is filling the Muhammadiyah gap in presenting the authority of the Islamic intellectual tradition in religious narratives. For example, in the controversial veil case, the Tarjih Council issued three fatwas in 1993, 2003 and 2009.<sup>21</sup> The fatwas issued in 1993 and 2009 emphasised that the veil has no legal basis either in the Qur'an or the Sunnah but that Islamic law commands women to wear the hijab. These two fatwas did not cite the Islamic intellectual tradition, which also accommodates opinions about the veil. Although the Tarjih Council kept in its stance and strengthened the opinion that women's '*aurat* (parts of the body that should go covered) are the whole body except the face and the palms of the hands, in the 2003 fatwa, the Tarjih Council provides space for those who want to wear the veil by expressing several opinions from the scholars who think so.

In contrast to the *tarjih* fatwas, El Madury's (2019) article *Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam?* ('Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?') on the SHPTM site refutes the *tarjih* fatwa. He cites various opinions of scholars in the Islamic intellectual tradition who support mandatory veiling as an effort to build religious authority. From this, it appears that El Madury, apart from attacking the *tarjih* fatwa, believes in maintaining traditional authority, in this case, the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāts*).

What El Madury did in building religious authority can also be captured from what Burhani calls a conversion narrative. Some scholars define religious conversion narratives differently as for example, in the change from one religious tradition to another. William James, as quoted by Burhani (2020: 158), states that religious conversion can also be interpreted as the conversion of a person who is a sinner into someone pious. According to Burhani (2020), people who experience religious conversion, usually after embracing a new tradition or religious understanding, will be hostile to the previous religious tradition or understanding.

El Madury also experienced a religious conversion, in this case, from the NU tradition to Muhammadiyah's. On SHPTM as well as his views when interviewed by this author, he

---

<sup>21</sup> Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah (2009, 2019a, 2019b).

introduced himself as someone who had practised the '*kuburiyyun* tradition'<sup>22</sup> and other actions that did not have examples from the Prophet. To convince his followers, he posted information about his religious conversion from NU to Muhammadiyah. Besides condemning his previous practices, which were deemed to have no basis in the Qur'an and Sunnah, he has had acrimonious debates with the NU *kyai*, Idrus Ramli on various issues, such as *ahlus sunnah wal jamaah* and *wahabi, nahdliyyin* traditions that are often considered heresy, and so on.

### **Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace**

Before the advent of the internet and the emergence of various new religious authorities, Muhammadiyah and NU were the two largest religious organisations and authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). However, following the emergence of the so-called micro-celebrity *ustaz*, these two groups, according to some scholars, began to face challenges and threats. The recent study by Wahyudi Akmaliah (2020) shows that the two organisations have responded differently to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was more combative about their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) maintains there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's response look less aggressive. Akmaliah is correct on several points, but other perspectives deserve to be considered, especially Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority on the internet. The weak point, as shown in Akmaliah's study is that there is no adequate elaboration of the assembly that exclusively holds religious authority in Muhammadiyah, namely the Tarjih Council. To trace more precisely how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority we have to look at the Tarjih Council.

This discussion starts from the author's experience in attending a meeting held by the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board. The meeting was initiated in response to the emergence of El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim's SHPTM site. It should be noted here that Abdurrahim also contributed writings to this website. He was earlier mentioned as having had permission from Buya Yun to give *syarh* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Judgment Compilation) and is the author of *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*. The initial background for holding this meeting, as revealed by the secretary of the Tarjih Council,

---

<sup>22</sup> The tradition of visiting the grave with its associated practices.



Mas'udi, was purely in response to the SHPTM posts by El Madury. However, information about the SHPTM other than the one written by El Madury prompted the board of the Tarjih Council to include the book by Abdurrahim with the same title for the agenda.

On Friday, 7 Safar 1442 AH (25 September 2020), the Tarjih Council invited nine related sectors to discuss concerns over the emergence of the SHPTM on the internet written by the El Madury and Abdurrahim. The nine sector participants were: (1) the executive board of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (2) fatwa division of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (3) chair/secretary of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (4) Dr Endang Mintarja, M.Ag. (Chair of the Jakarta Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council); (5) H. Fathurrahman, Lc., M.S.I. (Chair of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council); (6) H. Budi Setiawan, S.T.; (7) Arif Nurkholis (head of Muhammadiyah Digital Syiar Centre); (8) the manager of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre; and (9) the social media assistance team of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

During the meeting, there were at least four proposals from participants on how best to respond to the SHPTM, particularly El Madury's article about the veil. The first was to complain to Facebook about the SHPTM so that it could be banned for including an institution's name without permission. According to the chair of the Tabligh Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board, Fathurrahman Kamal, who was present at the forum, the fanpage is in the illicit category. This proposal was considered by the proponents as a firm proposal but that it risked unnecessary antagonism. The second was to use a persuasive approach in the form of clarification or an appeal to El Madury not to use the name *Himpunan Putusan Tajih* (HPT) or something that is associated with *tarjih*. Its proponents consider this approach to be softer and more reflective of being Muhammadiyah members in particular, and Muslims in general. The third proposal was to use institutional authority in writing an official letter on behalf of the Tarjih Council to El Madury. The fourth idea that was considered more practical and efficient was to place the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it on social media. This would avoid being drawn into unfruitful correspondence on SHPTM.

However, there was no agreement on which approach should be undertaken despite long discussions. It was agreed instead that there would be a follow up with another forum. Since this author started writing (3 April 2022) there has been no further meeting. The emergence of SHPTM on the internet and its effects have been considered a serious problem by the Tarjih

Council. The meeting's participants were generally uneasy about the appearance of El Madury and his fanpage. In addition, they wanted El Madury to be warned or reprimanded since SHPTM is considered a threat to religious authority of the Tarjih Council. This illustrates that Muhammadiyah, through its official religious assembly, the Tarjih Council, is not passive in responding to the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. However, only certain cases and not all micro-celebrity *ustaz* who appear on social media have drawn the Tarjih Council's attention. Although there has yet to be a follow up meeting, the Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an official institution supporting the Tarjih Council illustrates how Muhammadiyah struggles to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is an institution that was founded in 2016 by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Ahmad Dahlan University (Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah 2016). Despite being a new institution, its legality is clear, and it has formal authority. In the Muhammadiyah tradition as an organisation, such legality is essential. Thus when someone from Muhammadiyah, speaks on another person's behalf or endorses an approach, the speaker's status is below that of the institution and cannot be assumed to be that of institutions within Muhammadiyah which, although new, have legality. In the context of El Madury and the SHPTM fanpage, this is important. Even though El Madury claims he has obtained permission to make *syarh* on the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* from a charismatic figure in Muhammadiyah, Buya Yunahar, legally it is not valid. In that context, Buya Yunahar spoke on behalf of himself, not on behalf of Muhammadiyah.

Fronted by young Muhammadiyah cadres, the majority of whom are alumni of Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Tarjih Ulama Education, PUTM),<sup>23</sup> Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays a role in supporting the Tarjih Council programmes. These are relatively under-performing and facing obstacles, particularly on using social media to disseminate their official *ijtihad*. The members of the Tarjih Council, who are relatively old, need support from young cadres. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays an essential role in assisting the Tarjih Council in maintaining its religious authority on the internet. It responded to El Madury and SHPTM, by being pro-active with a poster (Figure

---

<sup>23</sup> PUTM is an educational institution under the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board designed to produce a cadre of Muhammadiyah scholars. PUTM organises a special programme that educates and prepares Muhammadiyah *tarjih* scholars who are competent in the religious field. The birth of PUTM was based on the concern of some Muhammadiyah leaders about the increasing scarcity of ulama in and from Muhammadiyah (Fauzi 2020a).

1) on social media and in print form, containing information related to the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it.



Figure 1. Poster with information on the official social media accounts affiliated to the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Are you often confused about finding sources of reference about Islam from the perspective of Muhammadiyah?

There is no need to be confused anymore because various social media are straightforward for us to access. Tarjih (Council) has come with a more trendy look.

- ✓ Easy to read anywhere
- ✓ Provide updated fatwas
- ✓ Discuss current issues

As members of Muhammadiyah, let's get used to reading the decisions and fatwas of Muhammadiyah

Here are some media that can be accessed very easily. So don't be confused anymore.

Web: [fatwatarjih.or.id](http://fatwatarjih.or.id)

Facebook: [fb.me/fatwamu](https://fb.me/fatwamu)

Instagram: [pusattarjih\\_muhammadiyah](https://pusattarjih_muhammadiyah)

Telegram: [t.me/fatwatarjihmu](https://t.me/fatwatarjihmu)

Youtube: [tarjih channel](https://tarjih_channel)

Let's spread it to all Muhammadiyah people!

Figure 2. Translation of Figure 1.

Although the poster above does not directly mention the SHPTM site created by El Madury, the main message in it is clear and firm, namely to inform the Muhammadiyah followers about the official accounts of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it. This would hopefully let Muhammadiyah members understand how its official religious voice is disseminated on the internet. Following this, Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah successively uploaded other, more varied posters to indirectly counter the SHPTM fanpage. Some other examples of these posters are shown in Figures 3 and 5.

Commented [MOU1]: All captions are ranged right in typesetting for IMW. Please **do not** change this.



**Figure 3.** Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Do you know?

The Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah now have an official YouTube channel, (namely) the Tarjih Channel.

Have you subscribed yet?

**Figure 4.** Translation of Figure 3.



**Figure 5.** Information about the website fatwatarjih.or.id, an official website affiliated to the Tarjih Council containing fatwas. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Fatwatarjih.or.id is the official website for the Tarjih and the Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board (MTT).

The Media Team of Fatwa Tarjih, through this website, has been, is and will continue to strive consistently to publish various ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council. Until now,

tarjih fatwa collections from 1997 to 2018 have entered the editing stage, and some are just waiting to be published.

Figure 6. Translation of Figure 5.



Figure 7. Information on the official website of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Do you want to know the full history (of the Tarjih Council)?  
Or do you want to look for ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council?  
Come on; you can find out on this website: tarjih.or.id

Figure 8. Translation of Figure 7.

The use of informal language and emoticons typical of millennials indicate the audience that the Tarjih Council wants to target. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah team understands that informal language will appeal to its target audience. This is aimed at not only establishing

the authority of the Tarjih Council but ‘millennialisation’ i.e. to reach out to the younger generation familiar with social media. Suyadi and Widodo (2019) note that millennialisation is an alternative way to develop knowledge that will synergise with various online media and digital technology. In the context of *tarjih* millennialisation, Muhammadiyah’s official *ijtihad* that tend to be disseminated in a conventional, monotonous, and uncreative manner are now communicated through social media in more contextual packaging. This means that the Tarjih Council and its various official *ijtihad*, which previously were always identified with the ‘old’, now consciously aim to include young people.

The religious authority of the Tarjih Council in cyberspace, especially when connected with the appearance of El Madury and SHPTM, was greatly helped by the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah and its young Muhammadiyah cadres. It manages various social media platforms with large numbers of followers, and has helped maintain Muhammadiyah’s religious authority by balancing and suppressing the presence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. Its contents are fatwas and decisions of the Tarjih Council with more appealing visualisation to reach out to the millennials.

Although the number of social media followers of the Tarjih Council is less than that for the NU and Salafi groups, at least the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah acts as a compass for Muhammadiyah followers who question its religious authority, especially with the emergence of El Madury’s version in SHPTM. The administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah’s social media have received many messages either through the comments column or direct messages in its inbox, which question the authority of SHPTM.<sup>24</sup> Here, the vital role of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is increasingly finding its momentum.

## Conclusion

Although it can be said that Muhammadiyah’s religious influence and authority on the internet are inferior and lag behind other religious groups, Muhammadiyah is still trying to manage its authority, especially when facing threats from micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By focusing on Zulkarnain El Madury and his SHPTM social media page, this article offers a different perspective from previous studies by analysing the work of the Tarjih Council as the only institution in Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas. This article shows that

---

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Ariful Hazamn, Ilham Ibrahim, and Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, September 2020. They are Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah social media administrators.

Muhammadiyah has its own way of responding to the emergence of new religious authorities. With the help of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an institution in its fold, the Tarjih Council has made continuous efforts through social media and its official website to counter new voices that threaten its authority. Muhammadiyah's response was neither aggressive nor radical but it clarified its stance without mentioning who precisely was being targeted. What Muhammadiyah did was in line with the Javanese proverb *Ngluruk tanpo bolo, menang tanpo ngasorake* ('win without defeat, win without humiliation [of others]'). The form of Muhammadiyah's response is inherited from its founder, Ahmad Dahlan. As seen by James Peacock (1978), Ahmad Dahlan carried out many social transformations **calmly and systematically** without being antagonistic.

Commented [MOU2]: Could we have an example?

In a broader context, the case of Zulkarnain El Madury also provides a lesson that using the name Muhammadiyah to justify personal opinions or legitimise particular interests is wrong. Muhammadiyah has the reputation of a very well managed organisation (Barton 2014; *Suara Muhammadiyah* 2019) which is its strength and gives it clout compared to other religious organisations in Indonesia, such as NU. In short, authority in Muhammadiyah lies in the institution itself and is not based on personality. It differs from NU, where power and authority tend to lie in personal figures, such as *kyai* or *gus* (Fauzi 2020b).

Muhammadiyah followers who understand its basic rules are not easily influenced by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. They are aware that Muhammadiyah's official religious stance is only be issued by the Tarjih Council and that those external to the Tarjih Council or even specific Muhammadiyah figures who give religious opinions, speak only for themselves as individuals and not the organisation. This would be the case, for example, even if the religious opinion emanates from the chair of the Tarjih Council as an individual. This did occur when Syamsul Anwar, the current chair of the Tarjih Council, differed from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council on the issue of *iftitāh* prayer (opening night prayer [*qiyām al-lail*]).<sup>25</sup> While Anwar's opinion clearly differs from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council, the prevailing opinion in Muhammadiyah is that of the Tarjih Council, not the chair of the Tarjih Council. Within Muhammadiyah, such religious differences of opinion are common as usually happens in *fiqh* discourse in general. The

<sup>25</sup> For Anwar (2013), the *iftitāh* prayer comprises two short *rak'ah* prayers that are performed before *qiyām al-lail*, with the condition that it must be preceded by sleep, otherwise there is no need to perform the *iftitāh* prayer. However, the Tarjih Council holds that the *iftitāh* prayer consists of two short *rak'ah* prayers performed before *qiyām al-lail*, whether preceded by sleep or not (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2011; Tim Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2019a).



difference between El Madury and Anwar is that the latter does not act in the name of Muhammadiyah or the Tarjih Council when he has a different view. Instead, on many occasions, he urges Muhammadiyah followers to abide by the opinion of the Tarjih Council on the *iftitāh* prayer.<sup>26</sup> Thus Anwar has shown he can compromise his personal religious opinion with his professional attitude in the organisation. In this case, he understands that using the name Muhammadiyah to legitimise individual opinions or interests is not justifiable.

### Acknowledgements

Permission for this research PJB-002/SP3/LPPM-UAD/VI/2020 and funding were provided by the ethical board of Ahmad Dahlan University Research and Development Institute (Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan).

I am grateful to *ustaz* Zulkarnain El Madury for his exceptional help and support during my fieldwork. I also thank Amiruddin, Arif Nur Kholis, Muhammad Muflih, Wahyudi Abdurrahim, Robby Karman, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, Ilham Ibrahim, Ariful Hazam, and the members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council for providing information regarding my research. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article and to the editors of the *Indonesia and the Malay World*. Errors, if any, are solely mine.

### Note on contributor

*Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi* is a lecturer in the Department of Hadith Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He has published widely on a variety of issues relating to Islamic Studies, including al-Quran, hadith, Islamic law, social media and da'wah, and Muhammadiyah studies. Email: niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id

### References

Abror, Robby. 2020. Syeikh Yunahar, ulama Muhammadiyah kharismatik [Sheikh Yunahar, a charismatic Muhammadiyah cleric]. 3 January. <<https://menara62.com/syeikh-yunahar-ulama-muhammadiyah-kharismatik/>> Accessed 3 February 2020.

---

<sup>26</sup> On several occasions, this author has heard Syamsul Anwar's direct appeal to Muhammadiyah members to follow the opinion of the Tarjih Council on this aspect of the *iftitāh* prayer.

- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2018. Media sosial dan pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [Social media and shifting religious authority]. 12 December.  
<[https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media\\_sosial\\_dan\\_pergeseran\\_otoritas\\_keagamaan](https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media_sosial_dan_pergeseran_otoritas_keagamaan)> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2020. The demise of moderate Islam: new media, contestation, and reclaiming religious authorities. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10 (1): 1–24.
- Alfaqi, Mifdal Zusron. 2015. Memahami Indonesia melalui prespektif nasionalisme, politik identitas, serta solidaritas [Understanding Indonesia through the perspectives of nationalism, identity politics, and solidarity]. *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 28 (2): 111–116.
- Alvara Research Center. 2020. Ramadhan dan pandemi Covid-19: semangat ibadah tak surut, konsumsi tersendat. <[https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN\\_DAN\\_PANDEMI\\_COVID-19\\_SEMANGAT\\_IBADAH\\_TAK\\_SURUT\\_KONSUMSI\\_TERSENDAT.pdf](https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN_DAN_PANDEMI_COVID-19_SEMANGAT_IBADAH_TAK_SURUT_KONSUMSI_TERSENDAT.pdf)> Accessed 23 February 2021.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2007. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer* [Contemporary Islamic law studies]. Jakarta: RM Books.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2013. *Salat Tarawih: Tinjauan usul fiqh, sejarah, dan fiqh* [Tarawih prayer: usul fiqh, history, and fiqh perspectives]. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2016. Fatwā, purification and dynamization: a study of tarjīh in Muhammadiyah. *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (1): 27–44.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2018. *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Panitia Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih Muhammadiyah XXX.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2020. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer Bagian dua* [Contemporary Islamic legal studies Part two]. Yogyakarta: UAD Press.
- Barton, Greg. 2014. The Gülen movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: progressive Islamic thought, religious philanthropy and civil society in Turkey and Indonesia. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25 (3): 287–301.
- Buchari, Sri Astuti. 2014. *Kebangkitan etnis menuju politik identitas* [Ethnic awakening towards identity politics]. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Bunt, Gary R. 2003. *Islam in the digital age: e-jihad, online fatwas and cyber Islamic environments*. London: Pluto Press.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2005. The 45th Muhammadiyah Congress contest between literal-conservative and liberal-moderate Muslims in Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 12 (1): 185–

- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2013. Liberal and conservative discourses in the Muhammadiyah: the struggle for the face of reformist Islam in Indonesia. In Martin van Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary developments in Indonesian Islam: explaining the 'conservative turn'*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2016. Aksi bela Islam: konservatisme dan fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. *Maarif* 11 (2): 15–29.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2020. Muslim televangelists in the making: conversion narratives and the construction of religious authority. *Muslim World* 110 (2): 154–175.
- Burhanudin, Jajat. 2004. The fragmentation of religious authority: Islamic print media in early 20th century Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 11 (1): 23–62.
- Campbell, H.A. and Teusner, P.E. 2011. Religious authority in the age of the internet. In *Christian Reflection, Virtual Lives*. Waco TX: Baylor University Press, pp. 59–68. <<https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/130950.pdf>>
- Chairi, Effendi. 2019. Ketiadaan otoritas terpusat dalam fenomena kontemporer di Indonesia [The absence of a centralised authority in contemporary phenomena in Indonesia]. *SANGK&P: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 2 (2):197–215.
- Chaplin. Chris. 2021. *Salafism and the State: Islamic activism and national identity in contemporary Indonesia*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.
- Dakta.com. 2016. Aa Gym ajak ribuan jamaahnya ikut aksi bela Islam III [Aa Gym invites thousands of congregants to join Islamic Defence Action III]. 29 November. <<http://www.dakta.com/news/7329/aa-gym-ajak-ribuan-jamaahnya-ikut-aksi-bela-islam-iii>> Accessed 2 February 2020.
- Fadl, Khaled Abou El. 2014. *Speaking in God's name: Islamic law, authority, and women*. London: Oneworld Publications.
- Farhan, Farhan. 2017. Pesan dakwah Felix Siauw di media sosial (perspektif meaning and media). *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Administrasi Islam* 1 (2): 209–226.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2017. Peranan Maqasid Al-Shariah dalam memahami Hadith: kajian terhadap fatwa Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah [The role of Maqasid Al-Shariah in understanding Hadith: a study of the fatwa of the Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah]. MA thesis, University of Malaya.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020a. PUTM dan kaderisasi ulama: menelusuri latar belakang lahirnya Lembaga Kaderisasi Ulama Muhammadiyah [PUTM and clerical regeneration: tracing the background of the birth of the Muhammadiyah Clerical Cadre Institute].

- <<https://santricendekia.com/putm-dan-kaderisasi-ulama-menelusuri-latar-belakang-lahirnya-lembaga-kaderisasi-ulama-muhammadiyah/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020b. Tantangan kader ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah di era 4.0 [Challenges for Tarjih Muhammadiyah ulama cadres in the 4.0 era]. 21 July. *Suara 'Aisyiyah* <<https://suaraaisyiyah.id/tantangan-kader-ulama-tarjih-muhammadiyah-di-era-4-0/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Fealy, Greg. 2008. Consuming Islam: commodified religion and aspirational pietism in contemporary Indonesia. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.
- Gesuri. 2020. Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia kehilangan ulama kharismatik [Yunahar Ilyas passed away, Indonesia lost a charismatic scholar]. 3 January. <<https://www.gesuri.id/internal/yunahar-ilyas-wafat-indonesia-kehilangan-ulama-kharismatik-b1YFoZpRY>> Accessed 20 March 2020.
- Hew, Wai Weng. 2018. The art of dakwah: social media, visual persuasion and the Islamist propagation of Felix Siauw. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (134): 61–79.
- Hoesterey, James B. 2008. Marketing morality: the rise, fall and rebranding of Aa Gym. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: Religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, pp. 95–114.
- Hope Cheong, Pauline. 2016. Religious authority and social media branding in a culture of religious celebrification. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*, University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 81–102.
- Horsfield, Peter. 2016. The media and religious authority from ancient to modern. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*. University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 37–66.
- IB Times Indonesia. 2020. 100 situs Islam Indonesia, NU Online peringkat pertama [100 Indonesian Islamic websites, NU Online ranks first]. 10 July. <IBTimes.Id. 2020. <<https://ibtimes.id/100-situs-islam-indonesia-nu-online-peringkat-pertama/>> Accessed 23 February 2023.
- Ilyas, Yunahar. 2012. *Kuliah Akhlaq* [Akhlaq lecture]. XII. Yogyakarta: LPPI Universitas Muhammdiyah Yogyakarta.
- Khamis, S., Ang, L. and Welling, R. 2017. Self-branding, 'micro-celebrity' and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191–208.
- Khomalia, Isti and Rahman, Khairul Arief. 2018. Micro hijabers celebrity: membentuk identitas dengan update self-story via instagram (kasus dian pelangi). *NALAR: Jurnal*

*Peradaban dan Pemikiran Islam* 2 (1): 33–42.

Kompas. 2020. Sejumlah tokoh hadir prosesi pemakaman ketua PP Muhammadiyah Yunahar Ilyas [Many figures attended the funeral procession of Muhammadiyah chairman Yunahar Ilyas]. 3 January.

<<https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/03/19142441/sejumlah-tokoh-hadiri-prosesi-pemakaman-ketua-pp-muhammadiyah-yunahar-ilyas>> Accessed 3 April 2022.

Labiq. 2019. Pengaruh new media terhadap pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [The influence of new media on shifting religious authority]. 19 April.

<<https://geotimes.co.id/opini/pengaruh-new-media-terhadap-pergeseran-otoritas-keagamaan>> Accessed 19 October 2020.

Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. 2010. *Politik identitas dan masa depan pluralisme Indonesia*. Edited by Samsu Rizal Panggabean et al. Jakarta: Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (PUSAD) Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina.

Madury, Zulkarnain El. 2019. Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam? [Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?]. 2 November.

<<https://www.facebook.com/zulkarnainsumenep/posts/2386248524961601>> Accessed 5 May 2020.

Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah. 2016. Pembukaan Halaqah, Majelis Tarjih Launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan Muhammadiyah Observatorium Network [Halaqah opening, Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and Muhammadiyah Observatory Network]. 20 August. <<https://tarjih.or.id/pembukaan-halaqah-majelis-tarjih-launching-pusat-tarjih-muhammadiyah-dan-muhammadiyah-observatorium-network/>> Accessed 6 October 2023.

Majelis Tarjih Dahlan, Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. 2016. Nota Kesepakatan Majelis Tarjih Dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Tentang Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di Islamic Center Universitas Ahmad Dahlan [Memorandum of Agreement between the Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board and Ahmad Dahlan University on the Management of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre at the Islamic Centre of Ahmad Dahlan University]. Yogyakarta.

Maskur, Maskur and Noor, Irfan Noor. 2014. Ustadz selebriti Abdullah Gymnastiar dalam budaya populer (perspektif hipersemiotika Yasraf Amir Piliang) [Celebrity Ustadz Abdullah Gymnastiar in popular culture (Yasraf Amir Piliang's hyper semiotics perspective)]. *Jurnal Studia Insania* 2 (1): 47–57.

- Matheson, Craig. 1987. Weber and the classification of forms of legitimacy. *British Journal of Sociology* 38 (2): 199–215.
- Muhammadiyah Central Board. 2023. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 8 October 2023.
- Nisa, Eva F. 2019. Internet and Muslim women. In Ronald Lukens-Bull and Mark Woodward (eds), *Handbook of contemporary Islam and Muslim lives*. Cham: Springer, pp. 1–19.
- Palahuddin. 2020. The typology of religious thought in Muhammadiyah. *International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 3 (2): 74–81.  
<<http://journal2.uad.ac.id/index.php/ijish/article/view/2233/pdf>>
- Peacock, James L. 1978. *Purifying the Faith: the Muhammadiyah movement in Indonesian Islam*. Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2011. *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2016. Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan MuON [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and MuON]. 20 August.  
<<http://www.umm.ac.id/id/muhammadiyah/7070.html>> Accessed 20 March 2021.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Berikut Susunan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah pPeriode 2022–2027 [The following is the composition of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the 2022–2027 period] <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/berikut-susunan-pimpinan-pusat-muhammadiyah-periode-2022-2027/>> Accessed 7 October 2023.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Majelis Tabligh [Tabligh Council]. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 07 October 2023.
- Postill, John and Pink, Sarah. 2012. Social media ethnography: the digital researcher in a messy web. *Media International Australia* 145 (1): 123–134.
- Pribadi, Yanwar. 2019. Fragmentasi umat dan penciptaan otoritas keagamaan: tanggapan terhadap ‘Islam lokal’ dan ‘Islam asing’ di Indonesia [Ummah fragmentation and the creation of religious authority: responses to ‘local Islam’ and ‘foreign Islam’ in Indonesia]. *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 21 (1): 103–119.  
<<https://jmb.lipi.go.id/jmb/article/view/828/455>>
- Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah. n.d. *Panduan pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre management guide]. Majelis Tarjih, Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta.
- Quadri, Syed Junaid A. 2013. Transformations of tradition: modernity in the thought of

- Muhammad Bakhīt Al-Muṭī'ī. PhD thesis, McGill University.
- Rahman, Asjmuni Abdur et al. 1985. Laporan penelitian Majlis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (suatu studi tentang sistem dan metode penentuan hukum) [Research report of Majlis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (a study of the system and method of determining the law)]. Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga.
- Rakyat Merdeka. 2019. Dubes Malaysia jenguk ketum MUI Yunahar Ilyas di Yogyakarta [Malaysian ambassador visits MUI chairman Yunahar Ilyas in Yogyakarta]. 5 November. <<https://rm.id/baca-berita/internasional/21745/dubes-malaysia-jenguk-ketum-mui-yunahar-ilyas-di-yogyakarta>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Riesebrodt, Martin. 1999. Charisma in Max Weber's Sociology of Religion. *Religion* 29 (1): 1–14.
- Sadasri, Lidwina Mutia. 2017. Selebriti mikro di media baru kajian presentasi diri dalam vlog selebriti mikro [Micro-celebrities in new media: a study of self-presentation in micro-celebrity vlogs]. *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi Dan Opini Publik* 21 (2): 167–181. <<https://jurnal.kominfo.go.id/index.php/jpkop/article/view/1218/720>>
- Saefullah, Hikmawan. 2022. Media baru, publik baru: mengkonfigurasi ulang ruang publik Islam [New media, new publics: reconfiguring the Islamic public sphere]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sammy, Abdullah. 2022. Peluang dan tantangan dakwah digital Muhammadiyah [Opportunities and challenges of Muhammadiyah digital da'wah]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sanjaya, Makroen. 2022. Peta ideologi islam di media sosial [The map of Islamic ideology on social media]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Senft, Theresa M. 2008. *Camgirls: celebrity and community in the age of social networks*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Shamsy, Ahmed El. 2013. The Ḥāshiyā in Islamic law: a sketch of the Shāfi'ī literature. *Oriens* 41 (3-4): 289–315.
- Spencer, Martin E. 1970. Weber on legitimate norms and authority. *British Journal of Sociology* 21 (2): 123–134.
- Suara Muhammadiyah. 2019. Hyung Jun Kim: sistem di Muhammadiyah sungguh ideal [Hyung Jun Kim: Muhammadiyah's system is ideal].

<<https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/08/01/hyung-jun-kim-sistem-di-muhammadiyah-sungguh-ideal/>> Accessed 9 April 2022.

Suyadi and Widodo, Hendro. 2019. Millennialization of Islamic education based on neuroscience in the third generation university in Yogyakarta Indonesia. *QIIS International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7 (1): 173–202.

Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. Hukum tentang jenggot dan cadar [Islamic law perspective on beards and veils]. *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine, September. Yogyakarta.

Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019a. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 4*. Cetakan IX. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019b. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 7*. Cetakan IV. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Tirto.id. 2018. Dari Aa' Gym ke Felix Siauw: ustaz medsos & medium dakwah politis.

Tirto.Id. 16 January. <<https://tirto.id/dari-aa-gym-ke-felix-siauw-ustaz-medsos-medium-dakwah-politis-cCGf>> Accessed 5 February 2020.

Turner, Bryan S. 2007. Religious authority and the new media. *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2): 117–134.

Turner, Graeme. 2010. *Ordinary people and the media: the demotic turn*. Los Angeles CA: Sage.

Widodo, Arif. 2017. Transformative intellectual discourse and movement of Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM). *Iseedu: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices* 1 (1): 126–151.

<<https://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/iseedu/article/view/5423/3542>>

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change*. Princetone NJ: Princeton University Press.

**Commented [MOU3]:** Year? Is there an issue no.? Is it weekly, fortnightly, monthly?



## ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY *USTAZ* PHENOMENON

### Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

#### ABSTRACTS

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the fragmentation of religious authority. In the Indonesian context, the mainstream religious authority held by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has been challenged and threatened by micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This article examines the emergence of the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah fanpage on Facebook, created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board as it has threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority. It analyses Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace, by taking a closer look at what has been done by Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, an assembly that has the exclusive authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* within Muhammadiyah. This article also discusses lessons that can be learned from the case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the response of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

#### KEYWORDS

Micro-celebrity *ustaz*; fragmentation of religious authority; micro-celebrity *ustaz* religious authority; Muhammadiyah; religious authority; tarjih.

#### ABSTRAK

*Kemunculan internet dan media sosial telah mempertajam fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. Dalam konteks Indonesia, otoritas keagamaan arus utama yang dipegang oleh Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) disaingi dan diancam oleh para ustaz mikro-*

*selebritas. Artikel ini mengkaji kemunculan fanpage Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah di Facebook yang dibuat dan dikelola oleh Zulkarnain El Madury, seseorang yang mengklaim sebagai ustaz Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, karena dianggap mengancam otoritas keagamaan Muhammadiyah. Penelitian ini menganalisis upaya Muhammadiyah dalam mempertahankan otoritas keagamaannya di dunia maya dengan melihat lebih dekat pada apa yang telah dilakukan oleh Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah, sebuah majelis yang memiliki otoritas eksklusif untuk mengeluarkan fatwa dan ijtihad keagamaan resmi di Muhammadiyah. Artikel ini juga membahas pelajaran yang dapat dipetik dari kasus Zulkarnain El Madury dan respons Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah.*

#### **KATA KUNCI**

*Ustaz mikro-selebritas; fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan; otoritas keagamaan; Muhammadiyah; tarjih*

#### **Introduction**

The Alvara Research Center (2020) survey was surprising as it stated that the clerics most heard by the public, especially in Ramadan 2020, were not from the official Muhammadiyah board.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the Alvara Research Center survey was released (IBTimes.id 2020), an Islamic website managed by young Muhammadiyah intellectuals, published a report ranking the 100 most popular Islamic websites in Indonesia. The majority of these sites are managed by or affiliated to Nahdliyyin (NU followers) and Salafi<sup>2</sup> groups with few such sites operated by or affiliated to Muhammadiyah. The Alvara Research Center survey and the IBTimes.id report show that Muhammadiyah, in terms of influence and religious authority on the internet, lags behind other religious groups which is ironic for an organisation claiming to represent the progressive Islamic group.

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the so-called fragmentation of religious authority. Eva F. Nisa (2019), for example, mentions that the proliferation of various digital platforms is directly proportional to the increasing fragmentation of religious authority. Islamic discourse is monopolised not only by an elite group of scholars or mainstream

---

<sup>1</sup> One of the 15 most popular clerics mentioned in the report, Ustaz Ali Hidayat, has since been included on the Muhammadiyah Central Board's Tabligh Council (2022–2027; Muhammadiyah Central Board 2023). Prior to that, he did not convey official Muhammadiyah ideas in his lectures.

<sup>2</sup> For more comprehensive information on the activism of Salafi groups, see Chris Chaplin (2021).

religious groups, but also by persons or groups that have not been considered in Islamic discourse. Furthermore, the presence of the internet and social media has led to the birth of what is called micro-celebrity. Theresa M. Senft (2008) defines micro-celebrity as a new style of online performance that involves increasing popularity on social media such as videos, blogs, and networking sites. These micro-celebrities unlike conventional celebrities, emerge from what is known as new media (Senft 2008).

Of course, not all new media users have the adjective 'micro-celebrity'. Only those who experience what Graeme Turner (2010) terms 'the demotic turn', namely, the increasing visibility of ordinary people to appear as celebrities in the media, especially online media. In turn, both conventional and micro-celebrity exist in various public spheres, and the discourse on them is characterised as influencers, stimulants of consumerism, enthusiasm, public debate, and various activism (Sadasri 2017).

By borrowing the theory of micro-celebrities in the study of new media, we can then read how these micro-celebrities have also come to the fore in the religious realm. The emergence of ulama, *ustaz* (religious teachers), and religious leaders who become influencers in new media can perhaps be seen as one form of micro-celebrity. Felix Siauw is a prominent example. A convert, who is now a preacher, Siauw has a massive following on social media. In 2018, for example, he had 2.6 million followers on Twitter, and in 2022 it numbered 3.3 million. Felix Siauw's Instagram account has around 4.9 million followers. It can even be said that he is the *ustaz* who has the most followers on social media (Tirto 2018), making him one of the leading social media preachers in Indonesia today (Hew 2018). What Felix Siauw posts on his social media has more or less influenced the map of religious authorities in Indonesia.

The existence of the internet and the continuing development of technology allows the emergence of many other micro-celebrity *ustaz*, both in the national arena more generally or more specifically in internal religious organisations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, Persis (Persatuan Islam) or others. In the context of Muhammadiyah, the largest modernist Islamic organisation began to be challenged for its religious authority by a preacher who was said to be part of Muhammadiyah itself, namely Zulkarnain El Madury. He claims to be a Muhammadiyah cadre and often introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board. In recent years, El Madury has been noticed by Muhammadiyah administrators

and Muhammadiyah cadres<sup>3</sup> and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah) has discussed him in a special meeting. This is because the posts on the Facebook page that El Madury manages, *Syarah Himpunan Putus Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (henceforth SHPTM), often differ significantly from – and to some extent delegitimise – a Muhammadiyah fatwa or official decision. Responses from grassroots or Muhammadiyah followers vary. This can be seen, for example, from the comments on each post. Some defend and remain adamant on the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah, but not a few were affected and followed what was conveyed by El Madury on his Facebook page.

This is where it becomes crucial to see how Muhammadiyah attempts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace, especially among its members and the public. By conducting web content analysis (Postill and Pink 2012) on SHPTM and official social media accounts and those affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this article shows how El Madury builds his narratives and, in turn, how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority on the internet. Additionally, field research was conducted and key actors were interviewed offline and online in a semi-structured format.<sup>4</sup> Apart from El Madury, the key actors are members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Digital Broadcast Centre (Pusat Syiar Digital Muhammadiyah), Muhammadiyah activists as well as Muhammadiyah grassroots.

### **Fragmentation of religious authority, new preacher and micro-celebrity *ustaz* phenomenon**

Fragmentation of religious authority is a phenomenon that occurs in various religious communities and is not limited to Islam (B.S. Turner 2007; Campbell and Teusner 2011; Hope Cheong 2016). The fragmentation of religious authority is also a global phenomenon as pointed out by Gary R. Bunt (2003) who states that the new media have shaped diverse understandings among individual Muslims worldwide about e-jihad (electronic jihad). The definition of electronic jihad is understood and interpreted differently, ranging from online activism to Muslim articulation after the events of 11 September 2001. Bunt (2003) shows that each new media (in this case, new websites) has authority for its respective group.

---

<sup>3</sup> This author's online and offline interviews with Amiruddin, Robby Karman, Muhammad Muflih, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, and Arif Nur Kholis, 2019–2020.

<sup>4</sup> Data collection in this study was carried out between 2018 and 2020. As personal interviews were not possible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, some interviews were conducted online.

The fragmentation of religious authority discussed here is from the 20th century to the present. Jajat Burhanudin (2004) points out that there has been a shift in religious authority in the historical phase of Indonesian religious thought in the early 20th century due to modernisation. His study, which focuses on the Islamic print media, further shows that there is a shift in religious authority that used to be in *Kitab Kuning*<sup>5</sup> taught by *kyai* or ulama in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to magazines, journals, newspapers, and books published by modernist circles or organisations.

Religious authority since the early 20th century has always stayed with Muhammadiyah and NU. These two religious organisations are often referred to by scholars as the authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016; Akmaliah 2018). The shift in religious authority occurred again in the 1990s when national television stations emerged. The Islamic programmes presented by the television stations show the *ustaz* (religious teachers), which in turn build their authority through lectures delivered by these preachers. This phenomenon prompted scholars to come up with the term ‘Islamic televangelism’ (Akmaliah 2018). Abdullah Gymnastiar who is better known as Aa Gym is one example that falls into the category of a television *ustaz*, or a ‘tele-dai’ as coined by Greg Fealy (2008).

The most obvious and recent picture of the fragmentation of religious authority in Indonesia is the series of events of the Defend Islam Action (Aksi Bela Islam). Ahmad Najib Burhani (2016) hints that these critical events marked the peak of the fragmentation of religious authorities in Indonesia as they gave rise to new actors who challenge the established religious authority. Although it cannot be said to shift or match the role of Muhammadiyah and NU, the emergence of new actors such as Rizieq Shihab provides a new map of religious authority in Indonesia.

This phenomenon of the fragmentation of religious authority has increased sharply in the development of what scholars call pop culture, marked by the birth of many new media (Labiq 2019). The availability of internet access to every social class is the main factor for this fragmentation. As a result, many new media have emerged with each individual and group competing to spread ideas (Horsfield 2016; Nisa 2019).

Aa Gym is one of the early actors who emerged in the internet era in Indonesia. This can be captured in two interesting studies on Aa Gym by James B. Hoesterey (2008), and

---

<sup>5</sup> So-called because the books were printed on yellow paper. These were the Islamic texts used in the education of Islamic schools.

Maskur and Noor (2014). Although the use of the internet as a medium of da'wah around during the early 2000s was not as massive as it is now, the emergence of Aa Gym as a new cleric on the national da'wah stage through lectures, seminars, and Islamic training is a phenomenon in itself. Hoesterey (2008) studies the journey of Aa Gym from his first appearance as a preacher, falling, and then successfully rebranding to restore his religious authority. This is evident, for example, from how Aa Gym has many listeners (*Dakta.com* 2016). Popular culture has also brought Aa Gym to be seen not only by the public, especially by his followers, as also singer, actor, author, etc. Thus, he has transformed from an ordinary cleric to a celebrity cleric. Through a hypersemiotic perspective, Maskur and Noor (2014) show the various aspects of Aa Gym's personality.

Following the appearance of Aa Gym and with further rapid development of information technology, many other new preachers began to appear. Hew Wai Weng (2018) describes how Felix SiauW is another skilful religious preacher. Being a cleric with the most followers on the internet did not make SiauW neglect to spread his da'wah in the real world. Hew (2018) points out that SiauW has blended online and offline da'wah harmoniously. According to Hew (2018) and Farhan (2017), one of the keys to SiauW's success in preaching is his ability to present an entertaining and straightforward da'wah, even though its content is dogmatic and political.

Aa Gym and Felix SiauW are two micro-celebrity *ustaz* as a result of the new media. The term micro-celebrity *ustaz* was adopted and reconstructed from the theory of micro-celebrity. Most of these studies conducted from the perspective of pop culture (Senft 2008; G. Turner 2010; Khamis, Ang and Welling 2017; Sadasri 2017; Khomalia and Rahman 2018) describe the fragmentation of religious authority, marked by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By this term this author means an ordinary *ustaz/ustazah* who has skyrocketed in popularity and is celebrity on and because of social media so that he or she is able to influence certain people or communities. In other words, it means the *ustaz/ustazah* has experienced what G. Turner (2010) calls 'the demotic turn', when ordinary people are highly visible on social media and become celebrities. Challenges to established religious authorities by new religious personalities or groups are rarely touched on except that of Yanwar Pribadi (2019). His study explains the efforts of 'local Islam' (*Islam lokal*) to defend its religious authority from the threat of 'foreign Islam' (*Islam asing*). However, his study differs from what this author will examine in tracing Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

This study is on a micro-celebrity *ustaz*, Zulkarnain El Madury who is less well known when compared to Aa Gym or Felix Siauw but he has a strong influence on the internet. His identity as a preacher from Muhammadiyah who targets Muhammadiyah followers with postings that are often different and even delegitimise the official voice of this largest modernist mass organisation deserves to be investigated. This study, apart from showing Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority on the internet, also seeks explicitly to fill the gap in previous studies. In his latest study, Akmaliah (2020) shows that Muhammadiyah and NU have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was strongly reactive to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) indicates there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's responses less hostile. Sammy (2022), Sanjaya (2022), and Saefullah (2022) came to the same conclusion as Akmaliah, claiming that Muhammadiyah is significantly less adaptive to the emergence of new media, and therefore its da'wah often loses to that of the micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This study focuses on the struggle of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as the only assembly under Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas and official *ijtihad* exposition within Muhammadiyah.

#### **Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage**

The Facebook SHPTM fanpage was created by Zulkarnain El Madury. He was born in Sumenep on the island of Madura in 1963, with the name Zulkarnain bin Syamsuri. He claims to have studied in Malaysia at the Institute of Business Study and always introduces himself as a preacher from the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah). He spent his childhood in Madura and was a traditionalist Muslim like others on the island. He grew up in a milieu dominated by the NU traditionalist Islamic organisation. He used to perform *tahlilan* (the ritual of praying for the dead), *ziarah* (pilgrimage to the grave), and other practices that, according to him, after becoming a member of Muhammadiyah, were not following the Sunnah of the Prophet. He received his religious education at the Islamic boarding school at-Taufiqiyyah Sumenep Madura. In 1976 he became acquainted with Muhammadiyah. Through a lecture delivered by a preacher, He became interested in the da'wah and religious understanding of the

**Commented [nf1]:** I slightly modified this sentence and added some additional information. OK with you?

**Formatted:** Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Muhammadiyah movement founded by Ahmad Dahlan after listening to a lecture by one of its preachers. In 1977, he officially joined Muhammadiyah.<sup>6</sup>

Since joining Muhammadiyah, El Madury has been active as a preacher who spreads religious ideas and understanding. From 1990 to 2007, he was one of the Muhammadiyah preachers who was sent to remote areas by the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board. His daily activities are now preaching at different places as well as creating content on for SHPTM fanpage. He now lives in Jakarta as the *tarjih* and *tabligh* council chair of the Pondok Gede Muhammadiyah Branch.<sup>7</sup> He created SHPTM in 2014.<sup>8</sup> However, in the digital history that this author can trace, the fanpage was created in 2015 as the earliest post that is currently traceable is dated 5 January 2015.

According to El Madury, the fanpage began with the WhatsApp group he created which he named *Tarjih dan Tabligh Institut* (Tarjih and Tabligh Institute) to provide a space to discuss and spread ideas related to *tarjih*.<sup>9</sup> He included many Muhammadiyah figures and activists in this group, including (the now late) Buya Yunahar Ilyas. Over time, seeing that El Madury's posts on SHPTM were deemed inconsistent with the *tarjih* spirit of Muhammadiyah, several people, such as Fathurrahman Kamal and Buya Risman, sharply criticised the postings. El Madury, Fathurrahman Kamal, and Buya Risman were then engaged in a heated debate which was relayed later to Buya Yunahar Ilyas. The response by Buya Yunahar Ilyas at that time, according to El Madury, differed from that of his critics. Buya Yun responded quite positively because he saw El Madury's initiative as providing *syarh* (explanation) -or further explication of the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih ~~Judgment~~ Decisions Compilation). Finally, he gave his permission to El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website tanyajawabagama.com.<sup>10</sup>

El Madury's early postings on SHPTM, were still relatively consistent in uploading Muhammadiyah fatwas in the question (from someone) and answer format from the fatwa division of the Tarjih Council. This is similar to the the original question and answer format

<sup>6</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Muhammadiyah's use of the word *tarjih* has changed throughout its development. In its early period, and following its usage in the principles of law (*usul al-fiqh*), *tarjih* conveyed the meaning of examining the various opinions of Muslim jurists on a particular question and evaluating them to determine which is most faithful to the original Shari'a sources. Over time this usage gradually included any intellectual endeavour used to study new cases that earlier jurists had not addressed. In short, in Muhammadiyah's perspective, *tarjih* is identical, or almost identical, to *ijihad* (Anwar 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.



administered by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, whose fatwas were later published in the *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine. However, over time, SHPTM included posts that apart from the dissemination of Muhammadiyah's official *ijtihad* included the personal opinions of El Madury. These opinions in inelegant words are often offensive to other groups. Not infrequently, his posts contradict the official stance of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in particular, or Muhammadiyah in general, such as on the veil issue (see below). Since Facebook introduced its 'live broadcast' feature, El Madury has also availed of it to conduct live lectures. The SHPTM is popular with netizens. As of the time of writing (3 April 2022), it has been followed by 19,423 and is 'liked' by 8,868 people. His posts also often receive both positive and critical comments from viewers.

El Madury gave several reasons that brought about the creation of his fanpage. Firstly, it is aimed at fortifying Muhammadiyah followers against all forms of superstition, heresy, and myth as its posts focus on issues related to faith and worship. Secondly, he aims to counter those liberal Muhammadiyah activists and has openly responded to such views. His posts often openly attacks the religious practices of the the Nahdliyyin, resulting in several clashes between him and the Nahdliyyin figure, Idrus Ramli.<sup>11</sup>

Despite having many followers El Madury and his SHPTM do have critics. Many Muhammadiyah followers are concerned about the SHPTM posts. Some have tried to convey their anxiety through the official social media accounts of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre (Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah).<sup>12</sup> Those concerned generally want to ask for firm action from the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as El Madury has included 'Tarjih Muhammdiyah' in his fanpage name. The demands to the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, when summarised, include: (1) that the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council reprimand or remind Zulkarnain El Madury not to use symbols or names that are closely related to Tarjih Muhammadiyah for or on his fanpage; (2) making and circulating an announcement that the fanpage is not a social media account of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council or the Tarjih Muhamamdiyah Centre; (3) announcing the official social media accounts and websites of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre, so that Muhammadiyah people at the grassroots are not deceived by the existence of the fanpage and know where to look for religious reference sites, especially on the internet.

---

<sup>11</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Interviews with Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf and Ariful Hazam, November 2020 who are grassroots of Muhammadiyah, and social media administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

### Zulkarnain El Madury and his efforts in building religious authority

Zulkarnain El Madury and his fanpage SHPTM, have threatened the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, and specifically, the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. Many of his posts affect Muhammadiyah followers in particular and Muslims in general as these posts often differ from the official stance of Muhammadiyah, and in some cases contradict the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. This has stimulated public debate on social media, allowing El Madury to become a micro-celebrity *ustaz*. As a result of the general public and the online community attention, El Madury has been able to gradually build up his religious authority. From the Weberian perspective (Riesebrodt 1999), he has been able to do this in two ways. The first is through charisma (charismatic authority). According to Weber, charisma is a particular type of authority whose original form is based on a specific belief contained in a particular person (Riesebrodt 1999). ~~Secondly~~, El Madury claims he has the endorsement of Yunahar Ilyas, a very popular Muhammadiyah cleric respected by the community from within the Muhammadiyah circle and from Muslims in general which is a form of ~~traditional~~ charismatic authority.

Yunahar Ilyas (1956–2020) or Buya Yun as he was popularly known, was an exegete (*mufasssir*); ~~Ilyas 2012~~ born in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, who died at the age of 63 (Ilyas 2012). He was an alumnus of Imam Ibn Su'ud University (Saudi Arabia) and an excellent lecturer in conveying religious messages. He was seen as a charismatic cleric by Muhammadiyah followers and Muslims, in general, and this reputation extended to neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore (Abror 2020; *Gesuri* 2020). On his death in early 2020, many people flocked to pay their last respects to Buya Yun who held the chair of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for three terms (*Kompas* 2020; *Rakyat Merdeka* 2019).

By harnessing the charisma of Buya Yun, El Madury was able to increase his religious authority. On various occasions, including when this author interviewed him, Buya Yun's name was often mentioned as an argument and a shield.<sup>13</sup> El Madury insisted that he created

<sup>13</sup> This author's informants include Muhammad Muflih (grassroot of Muhammadiyah and initiator of the website tanyajawabagama.com), Robby Karman (secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association [DPP IMM] 2018–2021), and several participants invited by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council with the agenda 'Responding to Emergence of Syarah HPT on Social Media' on 25 September, 2020; interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

**Commented [nf2]:** I have changed this paragraph. The explanation of the 'second authority' is on page 15 (starting from: *The above describes how El Madury builds his charismatic authority. The other is authority built through tradition or what Weber calls traditional authority*). OK with you?

the SHPTM ~~Facebook site fanpage~~ with the permission of Yunahar Ilyas,<sup>14</sup> ~~who had provided a further explanation on of the Tarjih Judgment Compilation~~. He added that Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website tanyajawabagama.com, had similarly received permission from Buya Yun. Wahyudi Abdurrahim confirmed Zulkarnain's claims and Muhammad Muflih, a grassroots representative added that it is a form of fairness.<sup>15</sup> In other words, Buya Yun's permission is a form of appreciation given by someone who is more senior and has a high social position in Muhammadiyah to someone who is more junior and classified as a grassroots Muhammadiyah member.<sup>16</sup> Permission from Buya Yun, who has charisma within Muhammadiyah in particular, has become a tool used by El Madury in building his religious authority.

In Weberian charismatic authority, charisma is not only about a belief in the existence of extraordinary or superpowers possessed by or contained in humans but also about particular objects other than humans (Riesebrodt 1999). We thus have an explanation as to why El Madury named his fanpage *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a highly respectable and crucial council in Muhammadiyah. Founded in 1927, the Council functions as an assembly that carries out its agenda of purification of religion and the dynamisation of social life. It conducts research and investigations towards this purity, and accordingly gives fatwas and compiles religious guidelines on faith (*'aqidah*) and worship (*'ibadah*) as well as social relations (*mu'āmalah*) (Rahman et al. 1985; Anwar 2016). In addition, this Council makes efforts to resolve differences and disagreements on religious issues, which are usually referred to as *khilāfīyyah* problems, so that they are directed more productively (Anwar 2007, 2016).

The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a body that is responsible for formulating the ideological basis of the Muhammadiyah movement (Anwar 2007, 2016) and is Muhammadiyah's representative in the religious field (Fauzi 2017). The Council produces three types of *ijtihad*, namely: (1) tarjih fatwa (*fatwa tarjih*), (2) tarjih decision (*putusan tarjih*), and (3) tarjih discourse (*wacara tarjih*) (Anwar 2016). *Tarjih* fatwa is the Council's answer to general questions on issues that require an explanation in terms of sharia law. Following the nature of the fatwa in general, the Council's fatwa is non-binding, on either organisations or members as individuals. Therefore, even the fatwa can be questioned and discussed. However, because the fatwa contains religious guidance derived from Islamic

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Online interview with Wahyudi Abdurrahim through WhatsApp, September 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Online interview with Muhammad Muflih through WhatsApp and Facebook, 20 October 2019.

teaching sources (Anwar 2020), and the general public often does not actually understand the aspects of such a fatwa, it is still believed by Muhammadiyah members to be religious guidance. However, the *tarjih* decision is the official stance of Muhammadiyah in religious matters and is formally binding on the organisation and its members. But, in practice, sometimes Muhammadiyah members exercise their right to freedom not to be bound by the decision because they have different *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

Meanwhile, *tarjih* discourses are ideas or thoughts that are raised and put forward by the Council in seminars, *halaqah* (religious gathering or meeting to discuss the Qur'an or Islam), or other forums in addressing various developing issues and at the same time fostering a critical spirit of *ijtihad* and collecting materials or ideas on various actual problems in society. The nature of this *tarjih* discourse is non-binding and does not become a fatwa that must be followed. *Tarjih* discourse is contained in various publications of the Council, such as *Jurnal Tarjih* (Tarjih Journal) and various published books (Anwar 2016).

The *tarjih* decision and the *tarjih* fatwa, hold their strength within Muhammadiyah as these are considered sacred by some of its members. In short, it can be said that anything that 'smells *tarjih*' has authority in the collective memory of Muhammadiyah followers. In the perspective of Khaled Abou El Fadl (2014), fatwa and *tarjih* decisions have the power of persuasive authority, as these can influence or direct others because they believed in them. The *tarjih* fatwas are officially published through the organisation's official magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, and compiled in the *Tanya Jawab Agama* book. In comparison, the *tarjih* decisions are codified in a book called *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*, commonly known by the abbreviation HPT. Thus, it can be understood why the attribution of the term *tarjih* to particular objects can give rise to charismatic authority, as mentioned by Weber.

What El Madury did can also be seen as identity politics which is defined as a political tool of a group whether it be ethnic, cultural, religious or others for specific purposes, such as a form of resistance or to show the identity of a group (Alfaqi 2015). Within this framework, identity is politicised through extreme interpretation, which aims to gain support from people who feel 'the same', through race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements. In the context of El Madury, the use of the *tarjih* label on his fanpage can be interpreted as a political tool to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muhammadiyah members. And, as seen in some of his sermon videos, El Madury also placed a flag with the Muhammadiyah symbol behind him. In this context, he wants to convince the viewers that he is close to

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Muhammadiyah. He has introduced himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board on many occasions.

According to Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif (2010), identity politics is always related to members of social groups who feel excluded by the mainstream in a nation or state. Sri Astuti Buchari (2014) also finds that the emergence of identity politics is mainly caused by certain factors that an ethnic group sees as pressure from the political injustice. By looking at the observations made by Ahmad Najib Burhani (2013), El Madury, in this case, can be categorised as part of a group that feels excluded, threatened, and to some extent in need of justice within Muhammadiyah. Burhani (2013) explains the existence of two opposing schools of thought within Muhammadiyah which he refers to as 'Pure Islam' (*Islam Murni*) and 'Progressive Islam' (*Islam Progresif*). The conflict between these two schools of thought in Muhammadiyah began to surface at the 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Banda Aceh in 1995 (Burhani 2013).

The dominance of 'Progressive Islam' in Muhammadiyah strengthened after its 44th congress in Jakarta in 2000. This congress chose Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif as general chair. He is a progressive Muslim figure, an alumnus of the University of Chicago, and a student of the eminent progressive scholar Fazlur Rahman. At this congress, several names representing the 'Progressive Islam' group were included in the ranks of the central leadership of Muhammadiyah, such as Amin Abdullah, Dawam Raharjo, and Abdul Munir Mulkhan. During Ma'arif's leadership, progressive ideas not only dominated culturally but gradually became Muhammadiyah's official programmes (Burhani 2013).

Seeing the increasingly apparent threat from the ideas put forward by the 'Progressive Islam' group within Muhammadiyah, representatives of the 'Pure Islam' group did not remain silent. They compete and squabble over religious interpretations as to which is the most authentic. These two groups challenge each other through various channels, including seminars, discussions, publications. They usually have conflicting programmes. For example, as mentioned by Burhani (2013), when the Centre for the Study of Religion and Civilisation (PSAP/Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban) raised the theme of pluralism and multiculturalism in its journal, *Tanwir Journal*, the Tabligh Council<sup>17</sup> responded with articles in opposition in

---

<sup>17</sup> Muhammadiyah has many assemblies such as Majelis Tabligh and Majelis Tarjih, each with its own functions and responsibilities. Majelis Tarjih is responsible for producing religious thoughts through fatwas and decisions, while Majelis Tabligh is responsible for disseminating them. Historically, Majelis Tabligh is known in Muhammadiyah as the anti-liberal wing and thus there are at times poor collaboration between Majelis Tarjih

its magazine, *Majalah Tabligh*. In Burhani's investigation, during the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress in Malang, this conservative group set up a Pojok Anti-Liberal (anti-liberal corner) booth, which sold books, DVDs, t-shirts, magazines, and other anti-liberal mementos. Strikingly, some of the t-shirts for sale displayed the words 'Muhammadiyah Anti-Liberal' (Burhani 2013).

At the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress, it seemed that the 'Pure Islam' group was gaining momentum to beat back the 'Progressive Islam' group. The quarrels between these two groups occurred within congress committees and in the external arena. Burhani (2005, 2013) noted at least three critical issues where the 'Pure Islam' group defeated the 'Progressive Islam' in the congress arena, namely: (1) leadership change; (2) the position of women; and (3) resistance to liberal thought.

After the 45th congress, the feud between these two schools of thought has continued though waxing and waning at different times. The form of the feud now looks more varied given the availability of the internet where the presence of social media has changed the battle arena from a conventional to a more modern one. El Madury represents the 'Pure Islam' group, and has heated online debates with figures considered representatives of 'Progressive Islam' whose actions he sees as unsettling. For example, El Madury and the secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association (DPP IMM),<sup>18</sup> Robby Karman, have openly and frequently castigated each other on for example, issues about the veil and the Wahhabi. According to El Madury, Robby Karman is a young liberal figure in Muhammadiyah who should be challenged. El Madury also often attacks the [IBTimes.id](http://IBTimes.id) website, as it frequently contains articles that are progressive and, to some extent, controversial. This website has several former Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah (JIMM/Muhammadiyah Youth Intellectual Network) figures, such as Hilman Latief, Azaki Khoiruddin, and Mu'arif. On one occasion, when the chair of the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre admonished El Madury for uploading provocative posts that contradicted the official stance of the Tarjih Council, he defended himself by stating that equally provocative posts from the 'Progressive Islam' group should be similarly reprimanded. If he is the only one

---

and Majelis Tabligh. For example, some fatwas issued by Majelis Tarjih, in Majelis Tabligh's perspective, are the result of liberal thinking. See Burhani (2013) and Palahuddin (2020).

<sup>18</sup> Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM) or Muhammadiyah Student Association is a proponent of Muhammadiyah in student affairs with the basic mission of realising the real Islamic society as formulated by Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Widodo 2017).

selected for rebuke then he felt an injustice had been done.<sup>19</sup> El Madury's attitude in the framework of identity politics reflects someone who feels excluded and threatened by certain parties. At such, his specific attributes and identity are a deliberate form of resistance to the domination of certain groups or thoughts that threaten him.

The above describes how El Madury builds his charismatic authority. The other is authority built through tradition or what Weber calls traditional authority (Spencer 1970; Matheson 1987; Riesebrodt 1999). In simple terms, something can be considered as having traditional authority if it gains legitimacy based on beliefs or norms that have been established in a particular tradition (Chairi 2019). In other words, according to Spencer (1970), traditional authority is legitimised and, at the same time, constrained by traditional norms. Therefore, it is the opposite of charismatic authority. If in charismatic authority, it is the leader or someone who creates the norms, then it is the norms that create the leader or person in the traditional authority. In charismatic authority, the value of influence is generated by a person's personal qualities and is always associated with his personality. While in the case of traditional authority, it is generated by function and is related to someone or something that has traditional values (Spencer 1970).

In the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, ulama and the classical books they wrote can be considered to have this traditional authority. Ulama in Islamic tradition are called heirs of the Prophets. The authority of the ulama is derived from the legitimacy of religious texts which state that the prophetic tradition will be passed on to them. Therefore, the religious ideas they convey in writings or books contain an authoritative value for the next generation. This is the uniqueness of Islamic scholars and traditions, as mentioned by Muhammad Qasim Zaman (2002) who states that one of the most prominent aspects of pre-modern intellectual culture is the articulation of religious discourse through the so-called medium of the commentary. This is manifested in various forms such *al-syurūh*, *hawāsyī*, *rasā'il*, and *fatawā*. The various genres of books that contain explanations, descriptions, or responses to a book or social phenomena are a way for scholars to shape the identity and authority of the school or tradition they adhere to. In addition, it is also a means to interpreting the meaning of the foundational sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah (Zaman 2002).

---

<sup>19</sup> On 3 November 2019, the manager of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah reprimanded Zulkarnain El Madury for his post on SHPTM on the veil which contradicts Muhammadiyah's official stance.

An example is the *hawāsyī* tradition in the Shafii school. Its emergence, according to Ahmed El-Shamsy (2013), shows the peak of the authority of two scholars in that school, namely al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi‘ī. Al-Kurdī, as quoted by El Shamsy, called these two scholars ‘the higher authorities in the Syafii school’. Those who want to know the authoritative opinion of the Shafi‘i school have to go through the works of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi‘ī, and the books that explain further their works, namely the books written by Ibn Ḥajar al-Haitamī and Syamsuddīn al-Ramlī. These books have for later generations the value of traditional authority (Shamsy 2013: 292).

What is the connection between this traditional authority and El Madury? El Madury’s posts on SHPTM and at religious forums where he speaks always rely on the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāth*). According to Endang Mintarja, chair of the Jakarta branch of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this aspect has drawn many people to El Madury’s lectures.<sup>20</sup> What El Madury did, which Muhammadiyah did not do in many of its fatwas was to cite the Islamic intellectual tradition. In many of its fatwas, Muhammadiyah often only quotes the Qur’an or hadith to strengthen its argument, without citing the opinions of other Islamic scholars. Perhaps this is a consequence of the modernist movement, which became the spirit of Muhammadiyah. The modernist movement initiated by reformers such as Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad ‘Abduh, and Muḥammad Rasyīd Riḍā in the late 19th and early 20th centuries used the term *al-rujū’ ilā al-qur’ān wa al-sunnah* (‘back to the Qur’an and Sunnah’). According to Syed Junaid A. Quadri (2013), the most obvious indicator of this movement, especially in Islamic law, is its critical attitude towards the structure of pre-modern sharia authority symbols, which are articulated in the language and logic of the institution of *taqlīd*. Modernist groups always encourage reopening the door to *ijtihād* and invite Muslims to leave the interpretive monopoly that the ulama class has held (Quadri 2013).

Muhammadiyah, which is heavily inspired by the modernist movement, is oriented towards the Qur’an and Sunnah and tends to attach less importance to the Islamic intellectual tradition that has been built by the ulama. This can be seen from its *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (the methodology Muhammadiyah uses in conducting *ijtihād*), which asserts that Muhammadiyah is not affiliated to a particular school, but the opinions of these schools are only considered in determining religious norms (Anwar 2018). This means that understanding religion in the Muhammadiyah perspective is derived directly from its primary

<sup>20</sup> Endang Mintarja voiced this at a Muhammadiyah Central Board Tarjih Council meeting of on the emergence ‘Syarah HPT’, 25 September 2020.



sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah through the *ijtihad* process. However, it should be noted here that the narration that confirms the opinions of the scholars is taken into account in determining norms is not that clear how they are implemented in *tarjih* issues.

In some of its official *ijtihad*, the nuances of the opinions of scholars, especially the pre-modern ones do not appear, by choice or otherwise. Thus it appears that El Madury is filling the Muhammadiyah gap in presenting the authority of the Islamic intellectual tradition in religious narratives. For example, in the controversial veil case, the Tarjih Council issued three fatwas in 1993, 2003 and 2009.<sup>21</sup> The fatwas issued in 1993 and 2009 emphasised that the veil has no legal basis either in the Qur'an or the Sunnah but that Islamic law commands women to wear the hijab. These two fatwas did not cite the Islamic intellectual tradition, which also accommodates opinions about the veil. Although the Tarjih Council kept in its stance and strengthened the opinion that women's '*aurat* (parts of the body that should go covered) are the whole body except the face and the palms of the hands, in the 2003 fatwa, the Tarjih Council provides space for those who want to wear the veil by expressing several opinions from the scholars who think so.

In contrast to the *tarjih* fatwas, El Madury's (2019) article *Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam?* ('Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?') on the SHPTM [site fanpage](#) refutes the *tarjih* fatwa. He cites various opinions of scholars in the Islamic intellectual tradition who support mandatory veiling as an effort to build religious authority. From this, it appears that El Madury, apart from attacking the *tarjih* fatwa, believes in maintaining traditional authority, in this case, the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāts*).

What El Madury did in building religious authority can also be captured from what Burhani calls a conversion narrative. Some scholars define religious conversion narratives differently as for example, in the change from one religious tradition to another. William James, as quoted by Burhani (2020: 158), states that religious conversion can also be interpreted as the conversion of a person who is a sinner into someone pious. According to Burhani (2020), people who experience religious conversion, usually after embracing a new tradition or religious understanding, will be hostile to the previous religious tradition or understanding.

El Madury also experienced a religious conversion, in this case, from the NU tradition to Muhammadiyah's. On SHPTM as well as his views when interviewed by this author, he

---

<sup>21</sup> Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah (2009, 2019a, 2019b).

introduced himself as someone who had practised the '*kuburiyyun* tradition'<sup>22</sup> and other actions that did not have examples from the Prophet. To convince his followers, he posted information about his religious conversion from NU to Muhammadiyah. Besides condemning his previous practices, which were deemed to have no basis in the Qur'an and Sunnah, he has had acrimonious debates with the NU *kyai*, Idrus Ramli on various issues, such as *ahlus sunnah wal jamaah* and *wahabi*, *nahdliyyin* traditions that are often considered heresy, and so on.

### Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Before the advent of the internet and the emergence of various new religious authorities, Muhammadiyah and NU were the two largest religious organisations and authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). However, following the emergence of the so-called micro-celebrity *ustaz*, these two groups, according to some scholars, began to face challenges and threats. The recent study by Wahyudi Akmaliah (2020) shows that the two organisations have responded differently to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was more combative about their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) maintains there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's response look less aggressive. Akmaliah is correct on several points, but other perspectives deserve to be considered, especially Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority on the internet. The weak point, as shown in Akmaliah's study is that there is no adequate elaboration of the assembly that exclusively holds religious authority in Muhammadiyah, namely the Tarjih Council. To trace more precisely how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority we have to look at the Tarjih Council.

This discussion starts from the author's experience in attending a meeting held by the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board. This meeting was initiated in response to the appearance of the *syarh* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Decisions Compilation) made by El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim. Unlike El Madury, who created a fanpage, Abdurrahim wrote a *syarh* on HPT in book form.<sup>23</sup> The meeting was initiated in response to the emergence of El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim's SHPTM site. It should be noted

<sup>22</sup> The tradition of visiting the grave with its associated practices.

<sup>23</sup> For more information on Abdurrahim's book, see Wahyudi Sarju Abdurrahim (2020).

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

Formatted: Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

here that Abdurrahim also contributed writings to this website. He was earlier mentioned as having had permission from Buya Yun to give *syarh* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Judgment Compilation) and is the author of *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*. The initial background for holding this meeting, as revealed by the secretary of the Tarjih Council, Mas'udi, was purely in response to the SHPTM posts by El Madury. However, information about the SHPTM other than the one written by El Madury prompted the board of the Tarjih Council to include the book by Abdurrahim with the same title for the agenda.

On Friday, 7 Safar 1442 AH (25 September 2020), the Tarjih Council invited nine related sectors to discuss concerns over the emergence of the SHPTM on the internet written by the El Madury and Abdurrahim. The nine sector participants were: (1) the executive board of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (2) fatwa division of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (3) chair/secretary of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (4) Dr Endang Mintarja, M.Ag. (Chair of the Jakarta Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council); (5) H. Fathurrahman, Lc., M.S.I. (Chair of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council); (6) H. Budi Setiawan, S.T.; (7) Arif Nur Kholis (head of Muhammadiyah Digital Syiar Centre); (8) the manager of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre; and (9) the social media assistance team of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

During the meeting, there were at least four proposals from participants on how best to respond to the SHPTM, particularly El Madury's article about the veil. The first was to complain to Facebook about the SHPTM so that it could be banned for including an institution's name without permission. According to the chair of the Tabligh Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board, Fathurrahman Kamal, who was present at the forum, the fanpage is in the illicit category. This proposal was considered by the proponents as a firm proposal but that it risked unnecessary antagonism. The second was to use a persuasive approach in the form of clarification or an appeal to El Madury not to use the name *Himpunan Putusan Tajih* (HPT) or something that is associated with *tarjih*. Its proponents consider this approach to be softer and more reflective of being Muhammadiyah members in particular, and Muslims in general. The third proposal was to use institutional authority in writing an official letter on behalf of the Tarjih Council to El Madury. The fourth idea that was considered more practical and efficient was to place the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it on social media. This would avoid being drawn into unfruitful correspondence on SHPTM.

**Commented [nf3]:** I revised this sentence from the previous one because the previous one was not correct. Abdurrahim did write a *syarh* (explanation) on the HPT, but he wrote it in book form, not on a Facebook fanpage. I have also added a footnote and bibliography related to the book written by Wahyudi Abdurrahim.

However, there was no agreement on which approach should be undertaken despite long discussions. It was agreed instead that there would be a follow up with another forum. Since this author started writing (3 April 2022) there has been no further meeting. The emergence of SHPTM on the internet and its effects have been considered a serious problem by the Tarjih Council. The meeting's participants were generally uneasy about the appearance of El Madury and his fanpage. In addition, they wanted El Madury to be warned or reprimanded since SHPTM is considered a threat to religious authority of the Tarjih Council. This illustrates that Muhammadiyah, through its official religious assembly, the Tarjih Council, is not passive in responding to the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. However, only certain cases and not all micro-celebrity *ustaz* who appear on social media have drawn the Tarjih Council's attention. Although there has yet to be a follow up meeting, the Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an official institution supporting the Tarjih Council illustrates how Muhammadiyah struggles to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is an institution that was founded in 2016 by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Ahmad Dahlan University (Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah 2016). Despite being a new institution, its legality is clear, and it has formal authority. In the Muhammadiyah tradition as an organisation, such legality is essential. Thus when someone from Muhammadiyah, speaks on another person's behalf or endorses an approach, the speaker's status is below that of the institution and cannot be assumed to be that of institutions within Muhammadiyah which, although new, have legality. In the context of El Madury and the SHPTM fanpage, this is important. Even though El Madury claims he has obtained permission to make *syarh* on the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* from a charismatic figure in Muhammadiyah, Buya Yunahar, legally it is not valid. In that context, Buya Yunahar spoke on behalf of himself, not on behalf of Muhammadiyah.

Fronted by young Muhammadiyah cadres, the majority of whom are alumni of Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Tarjih Ulama Education, PUTM),<sup>24</sup> Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays a role in supporting the Tarjih Council programmes. These are relatively under-performing and facing obstacles, particularly on using social media to disseminate their official *ijtihad*. The members of the Tarjih Council,

<sup>24</sup> PUTM is an educational institution under the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board designed to produce a cadre of Muhammadiyah scholars. PUTM organises a special programme that educates and prepares Muhammadiyah *tarjih* scholars who are competent in the religious field. The birth of PUTM was based on the concern of some Muhammadiyah leaders about the increasing scarcity of ulama in and from Muhammadiyah (Fauzi 2020a).

who are relatively old, need support from young cadres. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays an essential role in assisting the Tarjih Council in maintaining its religious authority on the internet. It responded to El Madury and SHPTM, by being pro-active with a poster (Figure 1) on social media and in print form, containing information related to the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it.



Figure 1. Poster with information on the official social media accounts affiliated to the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Are you often confused about finding sources of reference about Islam from the perspective of Muhammadiyah?

There is no need to be confused anymore because various social media are straightforward for us to access. Tarjih (Council) has come with a more trendy look.

✓ Easy to read anywhere

- ✓ Provide updated fatwas
- ✓ Discuss current issues

As members of Muhammadiyah, let's get used to reading the decisions and fatwas of Muhammadiyah

Here are some media that can be accessed very easily. So don't be confused anymore.

Web: [fatwatarjih.or.id](http://fatwatarjih.or.id)

Facebook: [fb.me/fatwamu](https://fb.me/fatwamu)

Instagram: [pusattarjih\\_muhammadiyah](https://pusattarjih_muhammadiyah)

Telegram: [t.me/fatwatarjihmu](https://t.me/fatwatarjihmu)

Youtube: [tarjih\\_channel](https://tarjih_channel)

Let's spread it to all Muhammadiyah people!

**Figure 2.** Translation of Figure 1.

Although the poster above does not directly mention the SHPTM [fanpage](#) created by El Madury, the main message in it is clear and firm, namely to inform the Muhammadiyah followers about the official accounts of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it. This would hopefully let Muhammadiyah members understand how its official religious voice is disseminated on the internet. Following this, Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah successively uploaded other, more varied posters to indirectly counter the SHPTM fanpage. Some other examples of these posters are



**Commented [MOU4]:** All captions are ranged right in typesetting for IMW. Please **do not** change this.

**Commented [nf5R4]:** OK. Sorry, Pauline.

**Figure 3.** Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Do you know?

The Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah now have an official YouTube channel, (namely) the Tarjih Channel.

Have you subscribed yet?

**Figure 4.** Translation of Figure 3.



**Figure 5.** Information about the website fatwatarjih.or.id, an official website affiliated to the Tarjih Council containing fatwas. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Fatwatarjih.or.id is the official website for the Tarjih and the Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board (MTT). The Media Team of Fatwa Tarjih, through this website, has been, is and will continue to strive consistently to publish various ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council. Until now, tarjih fatwa collections from 1997 to 2018 have entered the editing stage, and some are just waiting to be published.

Figure 6. Translation of Figure 5.



Figure 7. Information on the official website of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Do you want to know the full history (of the Tarjih Council)?  
 Or do you want to look for ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council?  
 Come on; you can find out on this website: tarjih.or.id

Figure 8. Translation of Figure 7.



The use of informal language and emoticons typical of millennials indicate the audience that the Tarjih Council wants to target. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah team understands that informal language will appeal to its target audience. This is aimed at not only establishing the authority of the Tarjih Council but ‘millennialisation’ i.e. to reach out to the younger generation familiar with social media. Suyadi and Widodo (2019) note that millennialisation is an alternative way to develop knowledge that will synergise with various online media and digital technology. In the context of *tarjih* millennialisation, Muhammadiyah’s official *ijtihad* that tend to be disseminated in a conventional, monotonous, and uncreative manner are now communicated through social media in more contextual packaging. This means that the Tarjih Council and its various official *ijtihad*, which previously were always identified with the ‘old’, now consciously aim to include young people.

The religious authority of the Tarjih Council in cyberspace, especially when connected with the appearance of El Madury and SHPTM, was greatly helped by the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah and its young Muhammadiyah cadres. It manages various social media platforms with large numbers of followers, and has helped maintain Muhammadiyah’s religious authority by balancing and suppressing the presence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. Its contents are fatwas and decisions of the Tarjih Council with more appealing visualisation to reach out to the millennials.

Although the number of social media followers of the Tarjih Council is less than that for the NU and Salafi groups, at least the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah acts as a compass for Muhammadiyah followers who question its religious authority, especially with the emergence of El Madury’s version in SHPTM. The administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah’s social media have received many messages either through the comments column or direct messages in its inbox, which question the authority of SHPTM.<sup>25</sup> Here, the vital role of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is increasingly finding its momentum.

## Conclusion

Although it can be said that Muhammadiyah’s religious influence and authority on the internet are inferior and lag behind other religious groups, Muhammadiyah is still trying to manage its authority, especially when facing threats from micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By focusing

---

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Ariful Hazam, Ilham Ibrahim, and Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, September 2020. They are *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* social media administrators.

on Zulkarnain El Madury and his SHPTM social media page, this article offers a different perspective from previous studies by analysing the work of the Tarjih Council as the only institution in Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas. This article shows that Muhammadiyah has its own way of responding to the emergence of new religious authorities. With the help of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an institution in its fold, the Tarjih Council has made continuous efforts through social media and its official website to counter new voices that threaten its authority. Muhammadiyah's response was neither aggressive nor radical but it clarified its stance without mentioning who precisely was being targeted. What Muhammadiyah did was in line with the Javanese proverb *Ngluruk tanpo bolo, menang tanpo ngasorake* ('win without defeat, win without humiliation [of others]'). The form of Muhammadiyah's response is inherited from its founder, Ahmad Dahlan. As seen by James Peacock (1978), Ahmad Dahlan carried out many social transformations **calmly and systematically** without being antagonistic. This can be seen, for example, from how Ahmad Dahlan and the early generation of Muhammadiyah fortified Muslims from various superstitions, heresies, and myths by rationalising religious thoughts and practices believed by many people at that time. In addition to confronting Christianisation, the three essential ideas initiated at that time, namely hospitals, schools, and orphanages, were actually the implementation of efforts to counter the practice of superstitions, heresies, and myths that had spread in the community calmly and systematically (Shihab 1995).

**Commented [MOU6]:** Could we have an example?

**Commented [nf7R6]:** Yes, we could. I have added an example and a reference. What do you think?

**Formatted:** English (United States)

In a broader context, the case of Zulkarnain El Madury also provides a lesson that using the name Muhammadiyah to justify personal opinions or legitimise particular interests is wrong. Muhammadiyah has the reputation of a very well managed organisation (Barton 2014; *Suara Muhammadiyah* 2019) which is its strength and gives it clout compared to other religious organisations in Indonesia, such as NU. In short, authority in Muhammadiyah lies in the institution itself and is not based on personality. It differs from NU, where power and authority tend to lie in personal figures, such as *kyai* or *gus* (Fauzi 2020b).

Muhammadiyah followers who understand its basic rules are not easily influenced by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. They are aware that Muhammadiyah's official religious stance is only be issued by the Tarjih Council and that those external to the Tarjih Council or even specific Muhammadiyah figures who give religious opinions, speak only for themselves as individuals and not the organisation. This would be the case, for example, even if the religious opinion emanates from the chair of the Tarjih Council as an individual. This did occur when Syamsul Anwar, the current chair of the Tarjih Council, differed from the

official religious stance of the Tarjih Council on the issue of *iftitāḥ* prayer (opening night prayer [*qiyām al-lail*]).<sup>26</sup> While Anwar's opinion clearly differs from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council, the prevailing opinion in Muhammadiyah is that of the Tarjih Council, not the chair of the Tarjih Council. Within Muhammadiyah, such religious differences of opinion are common as usually happens in *fiqh* discourse in general. The difference between El Madury and Anwar is that the latter does not act in the name of Muhammadiyah or the Tarjih Council when he has a different view. Instead, on many occasions, he urges Muhammadiyah followers to abide by the opinion of the Tarjih Council on the *iftitāḥ* prayer.<sup>27</sup> Thus Anwar has shown he can compromise his personal religious opinion with his professional attitude in the organisation. In this case, he understands that using the name Muhammadiyah to legitimise individual opinions or interests is not justifiable.

### Acknowledgements

Permission for this research PJB-002/SP3/LPPM-UAD/VI/2020 and funding were provided by the ethical board of Ahmad Dahlan University Research and Development Institute (Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan).

I am grateful to *ustaz* Zulkarnain El Madury for his exceptional help and support during my fieldwork. I also thank Amiruddin, Arif Nur Kholis, Muhammad Muflih, Wahyudi Abdurrahim, Robby Karman, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, Ilham Ibrahim, Ariful Hazam, and the members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council for providing information regarding my research. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article and to the editors of the *Indonesia and the Malay World*. Errors, if any, are solely mine.

### Note on contributor

---

<sup>26</sup> For Anwar (2013), the *iftitāḥ* prayer comprises two short *rak'ah* prayers that are performed before *qiyām al-lail*, with the condition that it must be preceded by sleep, otherwise there is no need to perform the *iftitāḥ* prayer. However, the Tarjih Council holds that the *iftitāḥ* prayer consists of two short *rak'ah* prayers performed before *qiyām al-lail*, whether preceded by sleep or not (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2011; Tim Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2019a).

<sup>27</sup> On several occasions, this author has heard Syamsul Anwar's direct appeal to Muhammadiyah members to follow the opinion of the Tarjih Council on this aspect of the *iftitāḥ* prayer.

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi is a lecturer in the Department of Hadith Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He has published widely on a variety of issues relating to Islamic Studies, including al-Quran, hadith, Islamic law, social media and da'wah, and Muhammadiyah studies. Email: niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id

## References

- Abdurrahim, Wahyudi Sarju. 2020. *Ahlul haq wassunnah: Syarah himpunan putusan tarjih Muhammadiyah bab iman bagian ketuhanan* [Ahlul haq wassunnah: Explanation of tarjih decisions compilation of Muhammadiyah chapter on faith part of divinity]. Yogyakarta: Al Muflihun Publishing.
- Abror, Robby. 2020. Syeikh Yunahar, ulama Muhammadiyah kharismatik [Sheikh Yunahar, a charismatic Muhammadiyah cleric]. 3 January. <<https://menara62.com/syeikh-yunahar-ulama-muhammadiyah-kharismatik/>> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2018. Media sosial dan pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [Social media and shifting religious authority]. 12 December. <[https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media\\_sosial\\_dan\\_pergeseran\\_otoritas\\_keagamaan](https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media_sosial_dan_pergeseran_otoritas_keagamaan)> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2020. The demise of moderate Islam: new media, contestation, and reclaiming religious authorities. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10 (1): 1–24.
- Alfaqi, Mifdal Zusron. 2015. Memahami Indonesia melalui prespektif nasionalisme, politik identitas, serta solidaritas [Understanding Indonesia through the perspectives of nationalism, identity politics, and solidarity]. *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 28 (2): 111–116.
- Alvara Research Center. 2020. Ramadhan dan pandemi Covid-19: semangat ibadah tak surut, konsumsi tersendat. <[https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN\\_DAN\\_PANDEMI\\_COVID-19\\_SEMANGAT\\_IBADAH\\_TAK\\_SURUT\\_KONSUMSI\\_TERSENDAT.pdf](https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN_DAN_PANDEMI_COVID-19_SEMANGAT_IBADAH_TAK_SURUT_KONSUMSI_TERSENDAT.pdf)> Accessed 23 February 2021.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2007. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer* [Contemporary Islamic law studies]. Jakarta: RM Books.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2013. *Salat Tarawih: Tinjauan usul fikih, sejarah, dan fikih* [Tarawih prayer: usul fiqh, history, and fiqh perspectives]. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2016. Fatwā, purification and dynamization: a study of tarjih in

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

- Muhammadiyah. *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (1): 27–44.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2018. *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Panitia Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih Muhammadiyah XXX.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2020. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer Bagian dua* [Contemporary Islamic legal studies Part two]. Yogyakarta: UAD Press.
- Barton, Greg. 2014. The Gülen movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: progressive Islamic thought, religious philanthropy and civil society in Turkey and Indonesia. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25 (3): 287–301.
- Buchari, Sri Astuti. 2014. *Kebangkitan etnis menuju politik identitas* [Ethnic awakening towards identity politics]. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Bunt, Gary R. 2003. *Islam in the digital age: e-jihad, online fatwas and cyber Islamic environments*. London: Pluto Press.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2005. The 45th Muhammadiyah Congress contest between literal-conservative and liberal-moderate Muslims in Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 12 (1): 185–189.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2013. Liberal and conservative discourses in the Muhammadiyah: the struggle for the face of reformist Islam in Indonesia. In Martin van Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary developments in Indonesian Islam: explaining the 'conservative turn'*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2016. Aksi bela Islam: konservatisme dan fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. *Maarif* 11 (2): 15–29.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2020. Muslim televangelists in the making: conversion narratives and the construction of religious authority. *Muslim World* 110 (2): 154–175.
- Burhanudin, Jajat. 2004. The fragmentation of religious authority: Islamic print media in early 20th century Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 11 (1): 23–62.
- Campbell, H.A. and Teusner, P.E. 2011. Religious authority in the age of the internet. In *Christian Reflection, Virtual Lives*. Waco TX: Baylor University Press, pp. 59–68. <<https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/130950.pdf>>
- Chairi, Effendi. 2019. Ketidadaan otoritas terpusat dalam fenomena kontemporer di Indonesia [The absence of a centralised authority in contemporary phenomena in Indonesia]. *SANGKÉP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 2 (2): 197–215.
- Chaplin, Chris. 2021. *Salafism and the State: Islamic activism and national identity in contemporary Indonesia*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.
- Dakta.com. 2016. Aa Gym ajak ribuan jamaahnya ikut aksi bela Islam III [Aa Gym invites

thousands of congregants to join Islamic Defence Action III]. 29 November.

<<http://www.dakta.com/news/7329/aa-gym-ajak-ribuan-jamaahnya-ikut-aksi-bela-islam-iii>> Accessed 2 February 2020.

Fadl, Khaled Abou El. 2014. *Speaking in God's name: Islamic law, authority, and women*. London: Oneworld Publications.

Farhan, Farhan. 2017. Pesan dakwah Felix Siauw di media sosial (perspektif meaning and media). *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Administrasi Islam* 1 (2): 209–226.

Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2017. Peranan Maqasid Al-Shariah dalam memahami Hadith: kajian terhadap fatwa Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah [The role of Maqasid Al-Shariah in understanding Hadith: a study of the fatwa of the Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah]. MA thesis, University of Malaya.

Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020a. PUTM dan kaderisasi ulama: menelusuri latar belakang lahirnya Lembaga Kaderisasi Ulama Muhammadiyah [PUTM and clerical regeneration: tracing the background of the birth of the Muhammadiyah Clerical Cadre Institute]. <<https://santricendekia.com/putm-dan-kaderisasi-ulama-menelusuri-latar-belakang-lahirnya-lembaga-kaderisasi-ulama-muhammadiyah/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.

Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020b. Tantangan kader ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah di era 4.0 [Challenges for Tarjih Muhammadiyah ulama cadres in the 4.0 era]. 21 July. *Suara 'Aisyiyah* <<https://suaraaisyiyah.id/tantangan-kader-ulama-tarjih-muhammadiyah-di-era-4-0/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.

Fealy, Greg. 2008. Consuming Islam: commodified religion and aspirational pietism in contemporary Indonesia. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.

Gesuri. 2020. Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia kehilangan ulama kharismatik [Yunahar Ilyas passed away, Indonesia lost a charismatic scholar]. 3 January. <<https://www.gesuri.id/internal/yunahar-ilyas-wafat-indonesia-kehilangan-ulama-kharismatik-b1YFoZpRY>> Accessed 20 March 2020.

Hew, Wai Weng. 2018. The art of dakwah: social media, visual persuasion and the Islamist propagation of Felix Siauw. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (134): 61–79.

Hoesterey, James B. 2008. Marketing morality: the rise, fall and rebranding of Aa Gym. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: Religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, pp. 95–114.

Hope Cheong, Pauline. 2016. Religious authority and social media branding in a culture of religious celebrification. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*,

- University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 81–102.
- Horsfield, Peter. 2016. The media and religious authority from ancient to modern. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*. University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 37–66.
- IB Times Indonesia. 2020. 100 situs Islam Indonesia, NU Online peringkat pertama [100 Indonesian Islamic websites, NU Online ranks first]. 10 July. <IBTimes.Id. 2020. <<https://ibtimes.id/100-situs-islam-indonesia-nu-online-peringkat-pertama/>> Accessed 23 February 2023.
- Ilyas, Yunahar. 2012. *Kuliah Akhlaq* [Akhlaq lecture]. XII. Yogyakarta: LPPI Universitas Muhammdiyah Yogyakarta.
- Khamis, S., Ang, L. and Welling, R. 2017. Self-branding, ‘micro-celebrity’ and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191–208.
- Khomalia, Isti and Rahman, Khairul Arief. 2018. Micro hijabers celebrity: membentuk identitas dengan update self-story via instagram (kasus dian pelangi). *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban dan Pemikiran Islam* 2 (1): 33–42.
- Kompas. 2020. Sejumlah tokoh hadir prosesi pemakaman ketua PP Muhammadiyah Yunahar Ilyas [Many figures attended the funeral procession of Muhammadiyah chairman Yunahar Ilyas]. 3 January. <<https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/03/19142441/sejumlah-tokoh-hadiri-prosesi-pemakaman-ketua-pp-muhammadiyah-yunahar-ilyas>> Accessed 3 April 2022.
- Labiq. 2019. Pengaruh new media terhadap pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [The influence of new media on shifting religious authority]. 19 April. <<https://geotimes.co.id/opini/pengaruh-new-media-terhadap-pergeseran-otoritas-keagamaan>> Accessed 19 October 2020.
- Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. 2010. *Politik identitas dan masa depan pluralisme Indonesia*. Edited by Samsu Rizal Panggabean et al. Jakarta: Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (PUSAD) Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina.
- Madury, Zulkarnain El. 2019. Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam? [Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?]. 2 November. <<https://www.facebook.com/zulkarnainsumenep/posts/2386248524961601>> Accessed 5 May 2020.
- Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah. 2016. Pembukaan Halaqah, Majelis Tarjih Launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan Muhammadiyah Observatorium Network [Halaqah opening, Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and

- Muhammadiyah Observatory Network]. 20 August. <<https://tarjih.or.id/pembukaan-halaqah-majelis-tarjih-launching-pusat-tarjih-muhammadiyah-dan-muhammadiyah-observatorium-network/>> Accessed 6 October 2023.
- Majelis Tarjih Dahlan, Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. 2016. Nota Kesepakatan Majelis Tarjih Dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Tentang Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di Islamic Center Universitas Ahmad Dahlan [Memorandum of Agreement between the Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board and Ahmad Dahlan University on the Management of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre at the Islamic Centre of Ahmad Dahlan University]. Yogyakarta.
- Maskur, Maskur and Noor, Irfan Noor. 2014. Ustadz selebriti Abdullah Gymnastiar dalam budaya populer (perspektif hipersemiotika Yasraf Amir Piliang) [Celebrity Ustadz Abdullah Gymnastiar in popular culture (Yasraf Amir Piliang's hyper semiotics perspective)]. *Jurnal Studia Insania* 2 (1): 47–57.
- Matheson, Craig. 1987. Weber and the classification of forms of legitimacy. *British Journal of Sociology* 38 (2): 199–215.
- Muhammadiyah Central Board. 2023. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 8 October 2023.
- Nisa, Eva F. 2019. Internet and Muslim women. In Ronald Lukens-Bull and Mark Woodward (eds), *Handbook of contemporary Islam and Muslim lives*. Cham: Springer, pp. 1–19.
- Palahuddin. 2020. The typology of religious thought in Muhammadiyah. *International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 3 (2): 74–81.  
<<http://journal2.uad.ac.id/index.php/ijish/article/view/2233/pdf>>
- Peacock, James L. 1978. *Purifying the Faith: the Muhammadiyah movement in Indonesian Islam*. Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2011. *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2016. Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan MuON [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and MuON]. 20 August.  
<<http://www.umm.ac.id/id/muhammadiyah/7070.html>> Accessed 20 March 2021.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Berikut Susunan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah pPeriode 2022–2027 [The following is the composition of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the 2022–2027 period] <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/berikut-susunan->



- pimpinan-pusat-muhammadiyah-periode-2022-2027/> Accessed 7 October 2023.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Majelis Tabligh [Tabligh Council]. <  
<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 07 October 2023.
- Postill, John and Pink, Sarah. 2012. Social media ethnography: the digital researcher in a messy web. *Media International Australia* 145 (1): 123–134.
- Pribadi, Yanwar. 2019. Fragmentasi umat dan penciptaan otoritas keagamaan: tanggapan terhadap ‘Islam lokal’ dan ‘Islam asing’ di Indonesia [Ummah fragmentation and the creation of religious authority: responses to ‘local Islam’ and ‘foreign Islam’ in Indonesia]. *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 21 (1): 103–119.  
 <<https://jmb.lipi.go.id/jmb/article/view/828/455>>
- Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah. n.d. *Panduan pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre management guide]. Majelis Tarjih, Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta.
- Quadri, Syed Junaid A. 2013. Transformations of tradition: modernity in the thought of Muḥammad Bakhīr Al-Muṭṭī. PhD thesis, McGill University.
- Rahman, Asjmun Abdur et al. 1985. Laporan penelitian Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (suatu studi tentang sistem dan metode penentuan hukum) [Research report of Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (a study of the system and method of determining the law)]. Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga.
- Rakyat Merdeka. 2019. Dubes Malaysia jenguk ketum MUI Yunahar Ilyas di Yogyakarta [Malaysian ambassador visits MUI chairman Yunahar Ilyas in Yogyakarta]. 5 November. <<https://rm.id/baca-berita/internasional/21745/dubes-malaysia-jenguk-ketum-mui-yunahar-ilyas-di-yogyakarta>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Riesebrodt, Martin. 1999. Charisma in Max Weber’s Sociology of Religion. *Religion* 29 (1): 1–14.
- Sadasri, Lidwina Mutia. 2017. Selebriti mikro di media baru kajian presentasi diri dalam vlog selebriti mikro [Micro-celebrities in new media: a study of self-presentation in micro-celebrity vlogs]. *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi Dan Opini Publik* 21 (2): 167–181.  
 <<https://jurnal.kominfo.go.id/index.php/jpkop/article/view/1218/720>>
- Saefullah, Hikmawan. 2022. Media baru, publik baru: mengkonfigurasi ulang ruang publik Islam [New media, new publics: reconfiguring the Islamic public sphere]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sammy, Abdullah. 2022. Peluang dan tantangan dakwah digital Muhammadiyah

[Opportunities and challenges of Muhammadiyah digital da'wah]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.

Sanjaya, Makroen. 2022. Peta ideologi islam di media sosial [The map of Islamic ideology on social media]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.

Senft, Theresa M. 2008. *Camgirls: celebrity and community in the age of social networks*. New York: Peter Lang.

Shamsy, Ahmed El. 2013. The Hāshiya in Islamic law: a sketch of the Shāfi'ī literature. *Oriens* 41 (3-4): 289–315.

Shihab, Alwi. 1995. *The Muhammadiyah Movement and Its Controversy with Christian Mission in Indonesia*. PhD thesis at Temple University.

Spencer, Martin E. 1970. Weber on legitimate norms and authority. *British Journal of Sociology* 21 (2): 123–134.

Suara Muhammadiyah. 2019. Hyung Jun Kim: sistem di Muhammadiyah sungguh ideal [Hyung Jun Kim: Muhammadiyah's system is ideal]. <<https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/08/01/hyung-jun-kim-sistem-di-muhammadiyah-sungguh-ideal/>> Accessed 9 April 2022.

Suyadi and Widodo, Hendro. 2019. Millennialization of Islamic education based on neuroscience in the third generation university in Yogyakarta Indonesia. *QIIS International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7 (1): 173–202.

Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2009. Hukum tentang jenggot dan cadar [Islamic law perspective on beards and veils]. *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine, number 18~~September~~. Yogyakarta.

Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019a. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 4*. Cetakan IX. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019b. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 7*. Cetakan IV. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Tirto.id. 2018. Dari Aa' Gym ke Felix Siauw: ustaz medsos & medium dakwah politis. Tirto.Id. 16 January. <<https://tirto.id/dari-aa-gym-ke-felix-siauw-ustaz-medsos-medium-dakwah-politis-cCGf>> Accessed 5 February 2020.

Turner, Bryan S. 2007. Religious authority and the new media. *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2): 117–134.

Turner, Graeme. 2010. *Ordinary people and the media: the demotic turn*. Los Angeles CA:

**Formatted:** Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

**Commented [MOU8]:** Year? Is there an issue no.? Is it weekly, fortnightly, monthly?

**Commented [nf9R8]:** I have added information regarding the year and number of publication.

Sage.

Widodo, Arif. 2017. Transformative intellectual discourse and movement of Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM). *Iseedu: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices* 1 (1): 126–151.

<<https://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/iseedu/article/view/5423/3542>>

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change*. Princetoon NJ: Princeton University Press.

## ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY *USTAZ* PHENOMENON

### Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

#### ABSTRACTS

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the fragmentation of religious authority. In the Indonesian context, the mainstream religious authority held by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has been challenged and threatened by micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This article examines the emergence of the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah fanpage on Facebook, created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board as it has threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority. It analyses Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace, by taking a closer look at what has been done by Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, an assembly that has the exclusive authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* within Muhammadiyah. This article also discusses lessons that can be learned from the case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the response of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

#### KEYWORDS

Fragmentation of religious authority; micro-celebrity *ustaz*; Muhammadiyah; religious authority; *tarjih*.

#### ABSTRAK

*Kemunculan internet dan media sosial telah mempertajam fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. Dalam konteks Indonesia, otoritas keagamaan arus utama yang dipegang oleh Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) disaingi dan diancam oleh para ustaz mikro-*

**Commented [MOU1]:** English keywords have to be in alphabetical order, IMW house style

*selebritas. Artikel ini mengkaji kemunculan fanpage Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah di Facebook yang dibuat dan dikelola oleh Zulkarnain El Madury, seseorang yang mengklaim sebagai ustaz Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, karena dianggap mengancam otoritas keagamaan Muhammadiyah. Penelitian ini menganalisis upaya Muhammadiyah dalam mempertahankan otoritas keagamaannya di dunia maya dengan melihat lebih dekat pada apa yang telah dilakukan oleh Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah, sebuah majelis yang memiliki otoritas eksklusif untuk mengeluarkan fatwa dan ijtihad keagamaan resmi di Muhammadiyah. Artikel ini juga membahas pelajaran yang dapat dipetik dari kasus Zulkarnain El Madury dan respons Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah.*

#### **KATA KUNCI**

*Ustaz mikro-selebritas; fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan; otoritas keagamaan; Muhammadiyah; tarjih*

#### **Introduction**

The Alvara Research Center (2020) survey was surprising as it stated that the clerics most heard by the public, especially in Ramadan 2020, were not from the official Muhammadiyah board.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the Alvara Research Center survey was released (IBTimes.id 2020), an Islamic website managed by young Muhammadiyah intellectuals, published a report ranking the 100 most popular Islamic websites in Indonesia. The majority of these sites are managed by or affiliated to Nahdliyyin (NU followers) and Salafi<sup>2</sup> groups with few such sites operated by or affiliated to Muhammadiyah. The Alvara Research Center survey and the IBTimes.id report show that Muhammadiyah, in terms of influence and religious authority on the internet, lags behind other religious groups which is ironic for an organisation claiming to represent the progressive Islamic group.

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the so-called fragmentation of religious authority. Eva F. Nisa (2019), for example, mentions that the proliferation of various digital platforms is directly proportional to the increasing fragmentation of religious authority. Islamic discourse is monopolised not only by an elite group of scholars or mainstream

---

<sup>1</sup> One of the 15 most popular clerics mentioned in the report, Ustaz Ali Hidayat, has since been included on the Muhammadiyah Central Board's Tabligh Council (2022–2027; Muhammadiyah Central Board 2023). Prior to that, he did not convey official Muhammadiyah ideas in his lectures.

<sup>2</sup> For more comprehensive information on the activism of Salafi groups, see Chris Chaplin (2021).

religious groups, but also by persons or groups that have not been considered in Islamic discourse. Furthermore, the presence of the internet and social media has led to the birth of what is called micro-celebrity. Theresa M. Senft (2008) defines micro-celebrity as a new style of online performance that involves increasing popularity on social media such as videos, blogs, and networking sites. These micro-celebrities unlike conventional celebrities, emerge from what is known as new media (Senft 2008).

Of course, not all new media users have the adjective 'micro-celebrity'. Only those who experience what Graeme Turner (2010) terms 'the demotic turn', namely, the increasing visibility of ordinary people to appear as celebrities in the media, especially online media. In turn, both conventional and micro-celebrity exist in various public spheres, and the discourse on them is characterised as influencers, stimulants of consumerism, enthusiasm, public debate, and various activism (Sadasri 2017).

By borrowing the theory of micro-celebrities in the study of new media, we can then read how these micro-celebrities have also come to the fore in the religious realm. The emergence of ulama, *ustaz* (religious teachers), and religious leaders who become influencers in new media can perhaps be seen as one form of micro-celebrity. Felix Siauw is a prominent example. A convert, who is now a preacher, Siauw has a massive following on social media. In 2018, for example, he had 2.6 million followers on Twitter, and in 2022 it numbered 3.3 million. Felix Siauw's Instagram account has around 4.9 million followers. It can even be said that he is the *ustaz* who has the most followers on social media (Tirto 2018), making him one of the leading social media preachers in Indonesia today (Hew 2018). What Felix Siauw posts on his social media has more or less influenced the map of religious authorities in Indonesia.

The existence of the internet and the continuing development of technology allows the emergence of many other micro-celebrity *ustaz*, both in the national arena more generally or more specifically in internal religious organisations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, Persis (Persatuan Islam) or others. In the context of Muhammadiyah, the largest modernist Islamic organisation began to be challenged for its religious authority by a preacher who was said to be part of Muhammadiyah itself, namely Zulkarnain El Madury. He claims to be a Muhammadiyah cadre and often introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board. In recent years, El Madury has been noticed by Muhammadiyah administrators

and Muhammadiyah cadres<sup>3</sup> and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah) has discussed him in a special meeting. This is because the posts on the Facebook page that El Madury manages, *Syarah Himpunan Putus Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (henceforth SHPTM), often differ significantly from – and to some extent delegitimise – a Muhammadiyah fatwa or official decision. Responses from grassroots or Muhammadiyah followers vary. This can be seen, for example, from the comments on each post. Some defend and remain adamant on the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah, but not a few were affected and followed what was conveyed by El Madury on his Facebook page.

This is where it becomes crucial to see how Muhammadiyah attempts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace, especially among its members and the public. By conducting web content analysis (Postill and Pink 2012) on SHPTM and official social media accounts and those affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this article shows how El Madury builds his narratives and, in turn, how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority on the internet. Additionally, field research was conducted and key actors were interviewed offline and online in a semi-structured format.<sup>4</sup> Apart from El Madury, the key actors are members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Digital Broadcast Centre (Pusat Syiar Digital Muhammadiyah), Muhammadiyah activists as well as Muhammadiyah grassroots.

### **Fragmentation of religious authority, new preacher and micro-celebrity *ustaz* phenomenon**

Fragmentation of religious authority is a phenomenon that occurs in various religious communities and is not limited to Islam (B.S. Turner 2007; Campbell and Teusner 2011; Hope Cheong 2016). The fragmentation of religious authority is also a global phenomenon as pointed out by Gary R. Bunt (2003) who states that the new media have shaped diverse understandings among individual Muslims worldwide about e-jihad (electronic jihad). The definition of electronic jihad is understood and interpreted differently, ranging from online activism to Muslim articulation after the events of 11 September 2001. Bunt (2003) shows that each new media (in this case, new websites) has authority for its respective group.

---

<sup>3</sup> This author's online and offline interviews with Amiruddin, Robby Karman, Muhammad Muflih, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, and Arif Nur Kholis, 2019–2020.

<sup>4</sup> Data collection in this study was carried out between 2018 and 2020. As personal interviews were not possible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, some interviews were conducted online.

The fragmentation of religious authority discussed here is from the 20th century to the present. Jajat Burhanudin (2004) points out that there has been a shift in religious authority in the historical phase of Indonesian religious thought in the early 20th century due to modernisation. His study, which focuses on the Islamic print media, further shows that there is a shift in religious authority that used to be in *Kitab Kuning*<sup>5</sup> taught by *kyai* or ulama in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to magazines, journals, newspapers, and books published by modernist circles or organisations.

Religious authority since the early 20th century has always stayed with Muhammadiyah and NU. These two religious organisations are often referred to by scholars as the authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016; Akmaliah 2018). The shift in religious authority occurred again in the 1990s when national television stations emerged. The Islamic programmes presented by the television stations show the *ustaz* (religious teachers), which in turn build their authority through lectures delivered by these preachers. This phenomenon prompted scholars to come up with the term ‘Islamic televangelism’ (Akmaliah 2018). Abdullah Gymnastiar who is better known as Aa Gym is one example that falls into the category of a television *ustaz*, or a ‘tele-dai’ as coined by Greg Fealy (2008).

The most obvious and recent picture of the fragmentation of religious authority in Indonesia is the series of events of the Defend Islam Action (Aksi Bela Islam). Ahmad Najib Burhani (2016) hints that these critical events marked the peak of the fragmentation of religious authorities in Indonesia as they gave rise to new actors who challenge the established religious authority. Although it cannot be said to shift or match the role of Muhammadiyah and NU, the emergence of new actors such as Rizieq Shihab provides a new map of religious authority in Indonesia.

This phenomenon of the fragmentation of religious authority has increased sharply in the development of what scholars call pop culture, marked by the birth of many new media (Labiq 2019). The availability of internet access to every social class is the main factor for this fragmentation. As a result, many new media have emerged with each individual and group competing to spread ideas (Horsfield 2016; Nisa 2019).

Aa Gym is one of the early actors who emerged in the internet era in Indonesia. This can be captured in two interesting studies on Aa Gym by James B. Hoesterey (2008), and

---

<sup>5</sup> So-called because the books were printed on yellow paper. These were the Islamic texts used in the education of Islamic schools.



Maskur and Noor (2014). Although the use of the internet as a medium of da'wah around during the early 2000s was not as massive as it is now, the emergence of Aa Gym as a new cleric on the national da'wah stage through lectures, seminars, and Islamic training is a phenomenon in itself. Hoesterey (2008) studies the journey of Aa Gym from his first appearance as a preacher, falling, and then successfully rebranding to restore his religious authority. This is evident, for example, from how Aa Gym has many listeners (*Dakta.com* 2016). Popular culture has also brought Aa Gym to be seen not only by the public, especially by his followers, as also singer, actor, author, etc. Thus, he has transformed from an ordinary cleric to a celebrity cleric. Through a hypersemiotic perspective, Maskur and Noor (2014) show the various aspects of Aa Gym's personality.

Following the appearance of Aa Gym and with further rapid development of information technology, many other new preachers began to appear. Hew Wai Weng (2018) describes how Felix SiauW is another skilful religious preacher. Being a cleric with the most followers on the internet did not make SiauW neglect to spread his da'wah in the real world. Hew (2018) points out that SiauW has blended online and offline da'wah harmoniously. According to Hew (2018) and Farhan (2017), one of the keys to SiauW's success in preaching is his ability to present an entertaining and straightforward da'wah, even though its content is dogmatic and political.

Aa Gym and Felix SiauW are two micro-celebrity *ustaz* as a result of the new media. The term micro-celebrity *ustaz* was adopted and reconstructed from the theory of micro-celebrity. Most of these studies conducted from the perspective of pop culture (Senft 2008; G. Turner 2010; Khamis, Ang and Welling 2017; Sadasri 2017; Khomalia and Rahman 2018) describe the fragmentation of religious authority, marked by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By this term this author means an ordinary *ustaz/ustazah* who has skyrocketed in popularity and is celebrity on and because of social media so that he or she is able to influence certain people or communities. In other words, it means the *ustaz/ustazah* has experienced what G. Turner (2010) calls 'the demotic turn', when ordinary people are highly visible on social media and become celebrities. Challenges to established religious authorities by new religious personalities or groups are rarely touched on except that of Yanwar Pribadi (2019). His study explains the efforts of 'local Islam' (*Islam lokal*) to defend its religious authority from the threat of 'foreign Islam' (*Islam asing*). However, his study differs from what this author will examine in tracing Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

This study is on a micro-celebrity *ustaz*, Zulkarnain El Madury who is less well known when compared to Aa Gym or Felix Siauw but he has a strong influence on the internet. His identity as a preacher from Muhammadiyah who targets Muhammadiyah followers with postings that are often different and even delegitimise the official voice of this largest modernist mass organisation deserves to be investigated. This study, apart from showing Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority on the internet, also seeks explicitly to fill the gap in previous studies. In his latest study, Akmaliah (2020) shows that Muhammadiyah and NU have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was strongly reactive to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) indicates there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's responses less hostile. Sammy (2022), Sanjaya (2022), and Saefullah (2022) came to the same conclusion as Akmaliah, claiming that Muhammadiyah is significantly less adaptive to the emergence of new media, and therefore its da'wah often loses to that of the micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This study focuses on the struggle of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as the only assembly under Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas and official *ijtihad* exposition within Muhammadiyah.

#### **Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage**

The Facebook SHPTM fanpage was created by Zulkarnain El Madury. He was born in Sumenep on the island of Madura in 1963, with the name Zulkarnain bin Syamsuri. He claims to have studied in Malaysia at the Institute of Business Study and always introduces himself as a preacher from the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah). He spent his childhood in Madura and was a traditionalist Muslim like others on the island. He grew up in a milieu dominated by the NU traditionalist Islamic organisation. He used to perform *tahlilan* (ritual prayers for the dead), *ziarah* (pilgrimage to the grave), and other practices that, according to him, after becoming a member of Muhammadiyah, were not following the Sunnah of the Prophet. He received his religious education at the Islamic boarding school at-Taufiqiyyah Sumenep Madura. In 1976 he became acquainted with Muhammadiyah. He became interested in the da'wah and religious understanding of the Muhammadiyah movement founded by Ahmad

**Commented [nf2]:** I slightly modified this sentence and added some additional information. OK with you?  
PK – modified *tahlilan* – OK with you?

Dahlan after listening to a lecture by one of its preachers. In 1977, he officially joined Muhammadiyah.<sup>6</sup>

Since joining Muhammadiyah, El Madury has been active as a preacher who spreads religious ideas and understanding. From 1990 to 2007, he was one of the Muhammadiyah preachers who was sent to remote areas by the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board. His daily activities are now preaching at different places as well as creating content on for SHPTM fanpage. He now lives in Jakarta as the *tarjih* and *tabligh* council chair of the Pondok Gede Muhammadiyah Branch.<sup>7</sup> He created SHPTM in 2014.<sup>8</sup> However, in the digital history that this author can trace, the fanpage was created in 2015 as the earliest post that is currently traceable is dated 5 January 2015.

According to El Madury, the fanpage began with the WhatsApp group he created which he named *Tarjih dan Tabligh Institut* (Tarjih and Tabligh Institute) to provide a space to discuss and spread ideas related to *tarjih*.<sup>9</sup> He included many Muhammadiyah figures and activists in this group, including (the now late) Buya Yunahar Ilyas. Over time, seeing that El Madury's posts on SHPTM were deemed inconsistent with the *tarjih* spirit of Muhammadiyah, several people, such as Fathurrahman Kamal and Buya Risman, sharply criticised the postings. El Madury, Fathurrahman Kamal, and Buya Risman were then engaged in a heated debate which was relayed later to Buya Yunahar Ilyas. The response by Buya Yunahar Ilyas at that time, according to El Madury, differed from that of his critics. Buya Yun responded quite positively because he saw El Madury's initiative as providing *syarh* (explanation) -or further explication of the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Decisions Compilation). Finally, he gave his permission to El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com).<sup>10</sup>

El Madury's early postings on SHPTM, were still relatively consistent in uploading Muhammadiyah fatwas in the question (from someone) and answer format from the fatwa division of the Tarjih Council. This is similar to the the original question and answer format

<sup>6</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Muhammadiyah's use of the word *tarjih* has changed throughout its development. In its early period, and following its usage in the principles of law (*usul al-fiqh*), *tarjih* conveyed the meaning of examining the various opinions of Muslim jurists on a particular question and evaluating them to determine which is most faithful to the original Shari'a sources. Over time this usage gradually included any intellectual endeavour used to study new cases that earlier jurists had not addressed. In short, in Muhammadiyah's perspective, *tarjih* is identical, or almost identical, to *ijihad* (Anwar 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

administered by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, whose fatwas were later published in the *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine. However, over time, SHPTM included posts that apart from the dissemination of Muhammadiyah's official *ijtihad* included the personal opinions of El Madury. These opinions in inelegant words are often offensive to other groups. Not infrequently, his posts contradict the official stance of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in particular, or Muhammadiyah in general, such as on the veil issue (see below). Since Facebook introduced its 'live broadcast' feature, El Madury has also availed of it to conduct live lectures. The SHPTM is popular with netizens. As of the time of writing (3 April 2022), it has been followed by 19,423 and is 'liked' by 8,868 people. His posts also often receive both positive and critical comments from viewers.

El Madury gave several reasons that brought about the creation of his fanpage. Firstly, it is aimed at fortifying Muhammadiyah followers against all forms of superstition, heresy, and myth as its posts focus on issues related to faith and worship. Secondly, he aims to counter those liberal Muhammadiyah activists and has openly responded to such views. His posts often openly attacks the religious practices of the the Nahdliyyin, resulting in several clashes between him and the Nahdliyyin figure, Idrus Ramli.<sup>11</sup>

Despite having many followers El Madury and his SHPTM do have critics. Many Muhammadiyah followers are concerned about the SHPTM posts. Some have tried to convey their anxiety through the official social media accounts of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre (Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah).<sup>12</sup> Those concerned generally want to ask for firm action from the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as El Madury has included 'Tarjih Muhammdiyah' in his fanpage name. The demands to the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, when summarised, include: (1) that the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council reprimand or remind Zulkarnain El Madury not to use symbols or names that are closely related to Tarjih Muhammadiyah for or on his fanpage; (2) making and circulating an announcement that the fanpage is not a social media account of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council or the Tarjih Muhamamdiyah Centre; (3) announcing the official social media accounts and websites of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre, so that Muhammadiyah people at the grassroots are not deceived by the existence of the fanpage and know where to look for religious reference sites, especially on the internet.

---

<sup>11</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Interviews with Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf and Ariful Hazam, November 2020 who are grassroots of Muhammadiyah, and social media administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

### Zulkarnain El Madury and his efforts in building religious authority

Zulkarnain El Madury and his fanpage SHPTM, have threatened the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, and specifically, the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. Many of his posts affect Muhammadiyah followers in particular and Muslims in general as these posts often differ from the official stance of Muhammadiyah, and in some cases contradict the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. This has stimulated public debate on social media, allowing El Madury to become a micro-celebrity *ustaz*. As a result of the general public and the online community attention, El Madury has been able to gradually build up his religious authority.

From the Weberian perspective (Riesebrodt 1999), he has been able to do this in two ways. The first is through charisma (charismatic authority). According to Weber, charisma is a particular type of authority whose original form is based on a specific belief contained in a particular person (Riesebrodt 1999:ibid.). Secondly, El Madury claims he has the endorsement of Yunahar Ilyas, a very popular Muhammadiyah cleric respected by the community from within the Muhammadiyah circle and from Muslims in general which is a form of charismatic authority.

Yunahar Ilyas (1956–2020) or Buya Yun as he was popularly known, was an exegete (*mufasssir*) born in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, who died at the age of 63 (Ilyas 2012). He was an alumnus of Imam Ibn Su'ud University (Saudi Arabia) and an excellent lecturer in conveying religious messages. He was seen as a charismatic cleric by Muhammadiyah followers and Muslims, in general, and this reputation extended to neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore (Abror 2020; Gesuri 2020). On his death in early 2020, many people flocked to pay their last respects to Buya Yun who held the chair of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for three terms (Kompas 2020; Rakyat Merdeka 2019).

By harnessing the charisma of Buya Yun, El Madury was able to increase his religious authority. On various occasions, including when this author interviewed him, Buya Yun's name was often mentioned as an argument and a shield.<sup>13</sup> El Madury insisted that he created the SHPTM fanpage with the permission of Yunahar Ilyas.<sup>14</sup> He added that Wahyudi

<sup>13</sup> This author's informants include Muhammad Muflih (grassroot of Muhammadiyah and initiator of the website tanyajawabagama.com), Robby Karman (secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association [DPP IMM] 2018–2021), and several participants invited by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council with the agenda 'Responding to Emergence of Syarah HPT on Social Media' on 25 September, 2020; interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

**Commented [MOU3]:** If you mention the first, where does the second come in if you delete 'secondly'?

**Commented [nf4]:** I have changed this paragraph. The explanation of the 'second authority' is on page 15 (starting from: *The above describes how El Madury builds his charismatic authority. The other is authority built through tradition or what Weber calls traditional authority*). OK with you?

Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website tanyajawabagama.com, had similarly received permission from Buya Yun. Wahyudi Abdurrahim confirmed Zulkarnain's claims and Muhammad Muflih, a grassroots representative added that it is a form of fairness.<sup>15</sup> In other words, Buya Yun's permission is a form of appreciation given by someone who is more senior and has a high social position in Muhammadiyah to someone who is more junior and classified as a grassroots Muhammadiyah member.<sup>16</sup> Permission from Buya Yun, who has charisma within Muhammadiyah in particular, has become a tool used by El Madury in building his religious authority.

In Weberian charismatic authority, charisma is not only about a belief in the existence of extraordinary or superpowers possessed by or contained in humans but also about particular objects other than humans (Riesebrodt 1999). We thus have an explanation as to why El Madury named his fanpage *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a highly respectable and crucial council in Muhammadiyah. Founded in 1927, the Council functions as an assembly that carries out its agenda of purification of religion and the dynamisation of social life. It conducts research and investigations towards this purity, and accordingly gives fatwas and compiles religious guidelines on faith ('*aqidah*) and worship ('*ibadah*) as well as social relations (*mu'amalah*) (Rahman et al. 1985; Anwar 2016). In addition, this Council makes efforts to resolve differences and disagreements on religious issues, which are usually referred to as *khilāfīyyah* problems, so that they are directed more productively (Anwar 2007, 2016).

The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a body that is responsible for formulating the ideological basis of the Muhammadiyah movement (Anwar 2007, 2016) and is Muhammadiyah's representative in the religious field (Fauzi 2017). The Council produces three types of *ijtihad*, namely: (1) tarjih fatwa (*fatwa tarjih*), (2) tarjih decision (*putusan tarjih*), and (3) tarjih discourse (*wacara tarjih*) (Anwar 2016). *Tarjih* fatwa is the Council's answer to general questions on issues that require an explanation in terms of sharia law. Following the nature of the fatwa in general, the Council's fatwa is non-binding, on either organisations or members as individuals. Therefore, even the fatwa can be questioned and discussed. However, because the fatwa contains religious guidance derived from Islamic teaching sources (Anwar 2020), and the general public often does not actually understand the aspects of such a fatwa, it is still believed by Muhammadiyah members to be religious

<sup>15</sup> Online interview with Wahyudi Abdurrahim through WhatsApp, September 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Online interview with Muhammad Muflih through WhatsApp and Facebook, 20 October 2019.

guidance. However, the *tarjih* decision is the official stance of Muhammadiyah in religious matters and is formally binding on the organisation and its members. But, in practice, sometimes Muhammadiyah members exercise their right to freedom not to be bound by the decision because they have different *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

Meanwhile, *tarjih* discourses are ideas or thoughts that are raised and put forward by the Council in seminars, *halaqah* (religious gathering or meeting to discuss the Qur'an or Islam), or other forums in addressing various developing issues and at the same time fostering a critical spirit of *ijtihad* and collecting materials or ideas on various actual problems in society. The nature of this *tarjih* discourse is non-binding and does not become a fatwa that must be followed. *Tarjih* discourse is contained in various publications of the Council, such as *Jurnal Tarjih* (Tarjih Journal) and various published books (Anwar 2016).

The *tarjih* decision and the *tarjih* fatwa, hold their strength within Muhammadiyah as these are considered sacred by some of its members. In short, it can be said that anything that 'smells *tarjih*' has authority in the collective memory of Muhammadiyah followers. In the perspective of Khaled Abou El Fadl (2014), fatwa and *tarjih* decisions have the power of persuasive authority, as these can influence or direct others because they believed in them. The *tarjih* fatwas are **officially** published through the organisation's **official** magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, and compiled in the *Tanya Jawab Agama* book. In comparison, the *tarjih* decisions are codified in a book called *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*, commonly known by the abbreviation HPT. Thus, it can be understood why the attribution of the term *tarjih* to particular objects can give rise to charismatic authority, as mentioned by Weber.

What El Madury did can also be seen as identity politics which is defined as a political tool of a group whether it be ethnic, cultural, religious or others for specific purposes, such as a form of resistance or to show the identity of a group (Alfaqi 2015). Within this framework, identity is politicised through extreme interpretation, which aims to gain support from people who feel 'the same', through race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements. In the context of El Madury, the use of the *tarjih* label on his fanpage can be interpreted as a political tool to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muhammadiyah members. And, as seen in some of his sermon videos, El Madury also placed a flag with the Muhammadiyah symbol behind him. In this context, he wants to convince the viewers that he is close to Muhammadiyah. He has introduced himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board on many occasions.

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

According to Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif (2010), identity politics is always related to members of social groups who feel excluded by the mainstream in a nation or state. Sri Astuti Buchari (2014) also finds that the emergence of identity politics is mainly caused by certain factors that an ethnic group sees as pressure from the political injustice. By looking at the observations made by Ahmad Najib Burhani (2013), El Madury, in this case, can be categorised as part of a group that feels excluded, threatened, and to some extent in need of justice within Muhammadiyah. Burhani (2013) explains the existence of two opposing schools of thought within Muhammadiyah which he refers to as 'Pure Islam' (*Islam Murni*) and 'Progressive Islam' (*Islam Progresif*). The conflict between these two schools of thought in Muhammadiyah began to surface at the 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Banda Aceh in 1995 (Burhani 2013).

The dominance of 'Progressive Islam' in Muhammadiyah strengthened after its 44th congress in Jakarta in 2000. This congress chose Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif as general chair. He is a progressive Muslim figure, an alumnus of the University of Chicago, and a student of the eminent progressive scholar Fazlur Rahman. At this congress, several names representing the 'Progressive Islam' group were included in the ranks of the central leadership of Muhammadiyah, such as Amin Abdullah, Dawam Raharjo, and Abdul Munir Mulkhan. During Ma'arif's leadership, progressive ideas not only dominated culturally but gradually became Muhammadiyah's official programmes (Burhani 2013).

Seeing the increasingly apparent threat from the ideas put forward by the 'Progressive Islam' group within Muhammadiyah, representatives of the 'Pure Islam' group did not remain silent. They compete and squabble over religious interpretations as to which is the most authentic. These two groups challenge each other through various channels, including seminars, discussions, publications. They usually have conflicting programmes. For example, as mentioned by Burhani (2013), when the Centre for the Study of Religion and Civilisation (PSAP/Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban) raised the theme of pluralism and multiculturalism in its journal, *Tanwir Journal*, the Tabligh Council<sup>17</sup> responded with articles in opposition in its magazine, *Majalah Tabligh*. In Burhani's investigation, during the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress in Malang, this conservative group set up a Pojok Anti-Liberal (anti-liberal corner)

---

<sup>17</sup> Muhammadiyah has many assemblies such as Majelis Tabligh and Majelis Tarjih, each with its own functions and responsibilities. Majelis Tarjih is responsible for producing religious thoughts through fatwas and decisions, while Majelis Tabligh is responsible for disseminating them. Historically, Majelis Tabligh is known in Muhammadiyah as the anti-liberal wing and thus there are at times poor collaboration between Majelis Tarjih and Majelis Tabligh. For example, some fatwas issued by Majelis Tarjih, in Majelis Tabligh's perspective, are the result of liberal thinking. See Burhani (2013) and Palahuddin (2020).



booth, which sold books, DVDs, t-shirts, magazines, and other anti-liberal mementos. Strikingly, some of the t-shirts for sale displayed the words 'Muhammadiyah Anti-Liberal' (Burhani 2013).

At the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress, it seemed that the 'Pure Islam' group was gaining momentum to beat back the 'Progressive Islam' group. The quarrels between these two groups occurred within congress committees and in the external arena. Burhani (2005, 2013) noted at least three critical issues where the 'Pure Islam' group defeated the 'Progressive Islam' in the congress arena, namely: (1) leadership change; (2) the position of women; and (3) resistance to liberal thought.

After the 45th congress, the feud between these two schools of thought has continued though waxing and waning at different times. The form of the feud now looks more varied given the availability of the internet where the presence of social media has changed the battle arena from a conventional to a more modern one. El Madury represents the 'Pure Islam' group, and has heated online debates with figures considered representatives of 'Progressive Islam' whose actions he sees as unsettling. For example, El Madury and the secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association (DPP IMM),<sup>18</sup> Robby Karman, have openly and frequently castigated each other on for example, issues about the veil and the Wahhabi. According to El Madury, Robby Karman is a young liberal figure in Muhammadiyah who should be challenged. El Madury also often attacks the [IBTimes.id](http://IBTimes.id) website, as it frequently contains articles that are progressive and, to some extent, controversial. This website has several former Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah (JIMM/Muhammadiyah Youth Intellectual Network) figures, such as Hilman Latief, Azaki Khoiruddin, and Mu'arif. On one occasion, when the chair of the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre admonished El Madury for uploading provocative posts that contradicted the official stance of the Tarjih Council, he defended himself by stating that equally provocative posts from the 'Progressive Islam' group should be similarly reprimanded. If he is the only one selected for rebuke then he felt an injustice had been done.<sup>19</sup> El Madury's attitude in the framework of identity politics reflects someone who feels excluded and threatened by certain

---

<sup>18</sup> Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM) or Muhammadiyah Student Association is a proponent of Muhammadiyah in student affairs with the basic mission of realising the real Islamic society as formulated by Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Widodo 2017).

<sup>19</sup> On 3 November 2019, the manager of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah reprimanded Zulkarnain El Madury for his post on SHPTM on the veil which contradicts Muhammadiyah's official stance.

parties. At such, his specific attributes and identity are a deliberate form of resistance to the domination of certain groups or thoughts that threaten him.

The above describes how El Madury builds his charismatic authority. The other is authority built through tradition or what Weber calls traditional authority (Spencer 1970; Matheson 1987; Riesebrodt 1999). In simple terms, something can be considered as having traditional authority if it gains legitimacy based on beliefs or norms that have been established in a particular tradition (Chairi 2019). In other words, according to Spencer (1970), traditional authority is legitimised and, at the same time, constrained by traditional norms. Therefore, it is the opposite of charismatic authority. If in charismatic authority, it is the leader or someone who creates the norms, then it is the norms that create the leader or person in the traditional authority. In charismatic authority, the value of influence is generated by a person's personal qualities and is always associated with his personality. While in the case of traditional authority, it is generated by function and is related to someone or something that has traditional values (Spencer 1970).

In the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, ulama and the classical books they wrote can be considered to have this traditional authority. Ulama in Islamic tradition are called heirs of the Prophets. The authority of the ulama is derived from the legitimacy of religious texts which state that the prophetic tradition will be passed on to them. Therefore, the religious ideas they convey in writings or books contain an authoritative value for the next generation. This is the uniqueness of Islamic scholars and traditions, as mentioned by Muhammad Qasim Zaman (2002) who states that one of the most prominent aspects of pre-modern intellectual culture is the articulation of religious discourse through the so-called medium of the commentary. This is manifested in various forms such *al-syurūh*, *hawāsyī*, *rasā'il*, and *fatawā*. The various genres of books that contain explanations, descriptions, or responses to a book or social phenomena are a way for scholars to shape the identity and authority of the school or tradition they adhere to. In addition, it is also a means to interpreting the meaning of the foundational sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah (Zaman 2002).

An example is the *hawāsyī* tradition in the Shafii school. Its emergence, according to Ahmed El-Shamsy (2013), shows the peak of the authority of two scholars in that school, namely al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī. Al-Kurdī, as quoted by El Shamsy, called these two scholars 'the higher authorities in the Syafii school'. Those who want to know the authoritative

opinion of the Shafi'i school have to go through the works of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī, and the books that explain further their works, namely the books written by Ibn Ḥajar al-Haitamī and Syamsuddīn al-Ramlī. These books have for later generations the value of traditional authority (Shamsy 2013: 292).

What is the connection between this traditional authority and El Madury? El Madury's posts on SHPTM and at religious forums where he speaks always rely on the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāth*). According to Endang Mintarja, chair of the Jakarta branch of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this aspect has drawn many people to El Madury's lectures.<sup>20</sup> What El Madury did, which Muhammadiyah did not do in many of its fatwas was to cite the Islamic intellectual tradition. In many of its fatwas, Muhammadiyah often only quotes the Qur'an or hadith to strengthen its argument, without citing the opinions of other Islamic scholars. Perhaps this is a consequence of the modernist movement, which became the spirit of Muhammadiyah. The modernist movement initiated by reformers such as Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, and Muḥammad Rasyīd Riḍā in the late 19th and early 20th centuries used the term *al-rujū' ilā al-qur'ān wa al-sunnah* ('back to the Qur'an and Sunnah'). According to Syed Junaid A. Quadri (2013), the most obvious indicator of this movement, especially in Islamic law, is its critical attitude towards the structure of pre-modern sharia authority symbols, which are articulated in the language and logic of the institution of *taqlīd*. Modernist groups always encourage reopening the door to *ijtihād* and invite Muslims to leave the interpretive monopoly that the ulama class has held (Quadri 2013).

Muhammadiyah, which is heavily inspired by the modernist movement, is oriented towards the Qur'an and Sunnah and tends to attach less importance to the Islamic intellectual tradition that has been built by the ulama. This can be seen from its *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (the methodology Muhammadiyah uses in conducting *ijtihād*), which asserts that Muhammadiyah is not affiliated to a particular school, but the opinions of these schools are only considered in determining religious norms (Anwar 2018). This means that understanding religion in the Muhammadiyah perspective is derived directly from its primary sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah through the *ijtihād* process. However, it should be noted here that the narration that confirms the opinions of the scholars is taken into account in determining norms is not that clear how they are implemented in *tarjih* issues.

---

<sup>20</sup> Endang Mintarja voiced this at a Muhammadiyah Central Board Tarjih Council meeting of on the emergence 'Syarah HPT', 25 September 2020.

In some of its official *ijtihad*, the nuances of the opinions of scholars, especially the pre-modern ones do not appear, by choice or otherwise. Thus it appears that El Madury is filling the Muhammadiyah gap in presenting the authority of the Islamic intellectual tradition in religious narratives. For example, in the controversial veil case, the Tarjih Council issued three fatwas in 1993, 2003 and 2009.<sup>21</sup> The fatwas issued in 1993 and 2009 emphasised that the veil has no legal basis either in the Qur'an or the Sunnah but that Islamic law commands women to wear the hijab. These two fatwas did not cite the Islamic intellectual tradition, which also accommodates opinions about the veil. Although the Tarjih Council kept in its stance and strengthened the opinion that women's '*aurat*' (parts of the body that should go covered) are the whole body except the face and the palms of the hands, in the 2003 fatwa, the Tarjih Council provides space for those who want to wear the veil by expressing several opinions from the scholars who think so.

In contrast to the *tarjih* fatwas, El Madury's (2019) article *Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam?* ('Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?') on the SHPTM [site fanpage](#) refutes the *tarjih* fatwa. He cites various opinions of scholars in the Islamic intellectual tradition who support mandatory veiling as an effort to build religious authority. From this, it appears that El Madury, apart from attacking the *tarjih* fatwa, believes in maintaining traditional authority, in this case, the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāts*).

What El Madury did in building religious authority can also be captured from what Burhani calls a conversion narrative. Some scholars define religious conversion narratives differently as for example, in the change from one religious tradition to another. William James, as quoted by Burhani (2020: 158), states that religious conversion can also be interpreted as the conversion of a person who is a sinner into someone pious. According to Burhani (2020), people who experience religious conversion, usually after embracing a new tradition or religious understanding, will be hostile to the previous religious tradition or understanding.

El Madury also experienced a religious conversion, in this case, from the NU tradition to Muhammadiyah's. On SHPTM as well as his views when interviewed by this author, he introduced himself as someone who had practised the '*kuburiyyun* tradition'<sup>22</sup> and other actions that did not have examples from the Prophet. To convince his followers, he posted information about his religious conversion from NU to Muhammadiyah. Besides condemning

<sup>21</sup> Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah (2009, 2019a, 2019b).

<sup>22</sup> The tradition of visiting the grave with its associated practices.

his previous practices, which were deemed to have no basis in the Qur'an and Sunnah, he has had acrimonious debates with the NU *kyai*, Idrus Ramli on various issues, such as *ahlus sunnah wal jamaah* and *wahabi*, *nahdliyyin* traditions that are often considered heresy, and so on.

### Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Before the advent of the internet and the emergence of various new religious authorities, Muhammadiyah and NU were the two largest religious organisations and authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). However, following the emergence of the so-called micro-celebrity *ustaz*, these two groups, according to some scholars, began to face challenges and threats. The recent study by Wahyudi Akmaliah (2020) shows that the two organisations have responded differently to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was more combative about their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) maintains there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's response look less aggressive. Akmaliah is correct on several points, but other perspectives deserve to be considered, especially Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority on the internet. The weak point, as shown in Akmaliah's study is that there is no adequate elaboration of the assembly that exclusively holds religious authority in Muhammadiyah, namely the Tarjih Council. To trace more precisely how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority we have to look at the Tarjih Council.

This discussion starts from the author's experience in attending a meeting held by the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board. This meeting was initiated in response to the appearance of the *syarh* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Decisions Compilation) made by El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim. Whilst Unlike El Madury's comments were on his SHPTM, who created a fanpage, Abdurrahim (2020) wrote a *syarh* on HPT in bookaired his views in his book form.<sup>23</sup> The meeting was initiated in response to the emergence of El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim's SHPTM site. It should be noted here that Abdurrahim also contributed writings to this website. He was earlier mentioned as having had permission from Buya Yun to give *syarh* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Judgment Compilation) and is the author of *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*. The initial background

<sup>23</sup> For more information on Abdurrahim's book, see Wahyudi Sarju Abdurrahim (2020).

**Commented [MOU5]:** When – just month and year will do.

**Formatted:** Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

**Commented [MOU6]:** We don't need the footnote at end of this sentence as the year after author gives the in-text citation which will appear in Reference entry with publication details. I have also tightened the phrasing.

**Commented [nf7]:** I revised this sentence from the previous one because the previous one was not correct. Abdurrahim did write a *syarh* (explanation) on the HPT, but he wrote it in book form, not on a Facebook fanpage. I have also added a footnote and bibliography related to the book written by Wahyudi Abdurrahim.

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

for holding this meeting, as revealed by the secretary of the Tarjih Council, Mas'udi, was purely in response to the SHPTM posts by El Madury. However, information about the SHPTM other than the one written by El Madury prompted the board of the Tarjih Council to include the book by Abdurrahim with the same title for the agenda.

On Friday, 7 Safar 1442 AH (25 September 2020), the Tarjih Council invited nine related sectors to discuss concerns over the emergence of the SHPTM on the internet written by the El Madury and Abdurrahim. The nine sector participants were: (1) the executive board of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (2) fatwa division of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (3) chair/secretary of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (4) Dr Endang Mintarja, M.Ag. (Chair of the Jakarta Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council); (5) H. Fathurrahman, Lc., M.S.I. (Chair of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council); (6) H. Budi Setiawan, S.T.; (7) Arif Nur Kholis (head of Muhammadiyah Digital Syiar Centre); (8) the manager of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre; and (9) the social media assistance team of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

During the meeting, there were at least four proposals from participants on how best to respond to the SHPTM, particularly El Madury's article about the veil. The first was to complain to Facebook about the SHPTM so that it could be banned for including an institution's name without permission. According to the chair of the Tabligh Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board, Fathurrahman Kamal, who was present at the forum, the fanpage is in the illicit category. This proposal was considered by the proponents as a firm proposal but that it risked unnecessary antagonism. The second was to use a persuasive approach in the form of clarification or an appeal to El Madury not to use the name *Himpunan Putusan Tajih* (HPT) or something that is associated with *tarjih*. Its proponents consider this approach to be softer and more reflective of being Muhammadiyah members in particular, and Muslims in general. The third proposal was to use institutional authority in writing an official letter on behalf of the Tarjih Council to El Madury. The fourth idea that was considered more practical and efficient was to place the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it on social media. This would avoid being drawn into unfruitful correspondence on SHPTM.

However, there was no agreement on which approach should be undertaken despite long discussions. It was agreed instead that there would be a follow up with another forum. Since this author started writing (3 April 2022) there has been no further meeting. The emergence of

SHPTM on the internet and its effects have been considered a serious problem by the Tarjih Council. The meeting's participants were generally uneasy about the appearance of El Madury and his fanpage. In addition, they wanted El Madury to be warned or reprimanded since SHPTM is considered a threat to religious authority of the Tarjih Council. This illustrates that Muhammadiyah, through its official religious assembly, the Tarjih Council, is not passive in responding to the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. However, only certain cases and not all micro-celebrity *ustaz* who appear on social media have drawn the Tarjih Council's attention. Although there has yet to be a follow up meeting, the Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an official institution supporting the Tarjih Council illustrates how Muhammadiyah struggles to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is an institution that was founded in 2016 by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Ahmad Dahlan University (Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah 2016). Despite being a new institution, its legality is clear, and it has formal authority. In the Muhammadiyah tradition as an organisation, such legality is essential. Thus when someone from Muhammadiyah, speaks on another person's behalf or endorses an approach, the speaker's status is below that of the institution and cannot be assumed to be that of institutions within Muhammadiyah which, although new, have legality. In the context of El Madury and the SHPTM fanpage, this is important. Even though El Madury claims he has obtained permission to make *syarh* on the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* from a charismatic figure in Muhammadiyah, Buya Yunahar, legally it is not valid. In that context, Buya Yunahar spoke on behalf of himself, not on behalf of Muhammadiyah.

Fronted by young Muhammadiyah cadres, the majority of whom are alumni of Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Tarjih Ulama Education, PUTM),<sup>24</sup> Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays a role in supporting the Tarjih Council programmes. These are relatively under-performing and facing obstacles, particularly on using social media to disseminate their official *ijtihad*. The members of the Tarjih Council, who are relatively old, need support from young cadres. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays an essential role in assisting the Tarjih Council in maintaining its religious authority on the internet. It responded to El Madury and SHPTM, by being pro-active with a poster (Figure

<sup>24</sup> PUTM is an educational institution under the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board designed to produce a cadre of Muhammadiyah scholars. PUTM organises a special programme that educates and prepares Muhammadiyah *tarjih* scholars who are competent in the religious field. The birth of PUTM was based on the concern of some Muhammadiyah leaders about the increasing scarcity of ulama in and from Muhammadiyah (Fauzi 2020a).

1) on social media and in print form, containing information related to the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it.



Figure 1. Poster with information on the official social media accounts affiliated to the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Are you often confused about finding sources of reference about Islam from the perspective of Muhammadiyah?

There is no need to be confused anymore because various social media are straightforward for us to access. Tarjih (Council) has come with a more trendy look.

- ✓ Easy to read anywhere
- ✓ Provide updated fatwas
- ✓ Discuss current issues



As members of Muhammadiyah, let's get used to reading the decisions and fatwas of Muhammadiyah

Here are some media that can be accessed very easily. So don't be confused anymore.

Web: [fatwatarjih.or.id](http://fatwatarjih.or.id)

Facebook: [fb.me/fatwamu](https://www.facebook.com/fatwamu)

Instagram: [pusattarjih\\_muhammadiyah](https://www.instagram.com/pusattarjih_muhammadiyah)

Telegram: [t.me/fatwatarjihmu](https://t.me/fatwatarjihmu)

Youtube: [tarjih channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

Let's spread it to all Muhammadiyah people!

**Figure 2.** Translation of Figure 1.

Although the poster above does not directly mention the SHPTM [fanpage](#) created by El Madury, the main message in it is clear and firm, namely to inform the Muhammadiyah followers about the official accounts of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it. This would hopefully let Muhammadiyah members understand how its official religious voice is disseminated on the internet. Following this, Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah successively uploaded other, more varied posters to indirectly counter the SHPTM fanpage. Some other examples of these posters are shown in Figures 3 and 5.



**Figure 3.** Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Do you know?

The Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah now have an official YouTube channel, (namely) the Tarjih Channel.

Have you subscribed yet?

**Figure 4.** Translation of Figure 3.



**Figure 5.** Information about the website fatwatarjih.or.id, an official website affiliated to the Tarjih Council containing fatwas. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Fatwatarjih.or.id is the official website for the Tarjih and the Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board (MTT).

The Media Team of Fatwa Tarjih, through this website, has been, is and will continue to strive consistently to publish various ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council. Until now,

tarjih fatwa collections from 1997 to 2018 have entered the editing stage, and some are just waiting to be published.

Figure 6. Translation of Figure 5.



Figure 7. Information on the official website of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Do you want to know the full history (of the Tarjih Council)?  
Or do you want to look for ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council?  
Come on; you can find out on this website: tarjih.or.id

Figure 8. Translation of Figure 7.

The use of informal language and emoticons typical of millennials indicate the audience that the Tarjih Council wants to target. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah team understands that informal language will appeal to its target audience. This is aimed at not only establishing

the authority of the Tarjih Council but ‘millennialisation’ i.e. to reach out to the younger generation familiar with social media. Suyadi and Widodo (2019) note that millennialisation is an alternative way to develop knowledge that will synergise with various online media and digital technology. In the context of *tarjih* millennialisation, Muhammadiyah’s official *ijtihad* that tend to be disseminated in a conventional, monotonous, and uncreative manner are now communicated through social media in more contextual packaging. This means that the Tarjih Council and its various official *ijtihad*, which previously were always identified with the ‘old’, now consciously aim to include young people.

The religious authority of the Tarjih Council in cyberspace, especially when connected with the appearance of El Madury and SHPTM, was greatly helped by the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah and its young Muhammadiyah cadres. It manages various social media platforms with large numbers of followers, and has helped maintain Muhammadiyah’s religious authority by balancing and suppressing the presence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. Its contents are fatwas and decisions of the Tarjih Council with more appealing visualisation to reach out to the millennials.

Although the number of social media followers of the Tarjih Council is less than that for the NU and Salafi groups, at least the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah acts as a compass for Muhammadiyah followers who question its religious authority, especially with the emergence of El Madury’s version in SHPTM. The administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah’s social media have received many messages either through the comments column or direct messages in its inbox, which question the authority of SHPTM.<sup>25</sup> Here, the vital role of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is increasingly finding its momentum.

## Conclusion

Although it can be said that Muhammadiyah’s religious influence and authority on the internet are inferior and lag behind other religious groups, Muhammadiyah is still trying to manage its authority, especially when facing threats from micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By focusing on Zulkarnain El Madury and his SHPTM social media page, this article offers a different perspective from previous studies by analysing the work of the Tarjih Council as the only institution in Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas. This article shows that

---

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Ariful Hazam, Ilham Ibrahim, and Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, September 2020. They are Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah social media administrators.

Muhammadiyah has its own way of responding to the emergence of new religious authorities. With the help of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an institution in its fold, the Tarjih Council has made continuous efforts through social media and its official website to counter new voices that threaten its authority. Muhammadiyah's response was neither aggressive nor radical but it clarified its stance without mentioning who precisely was being targeted. What Muhammadiyah did was in line with the Javanese proverb *Ngluruk tanpo bolo, menang tanpo ngasorake* ('win without defeat, win without humiliation [of others]'). The form of Muhammadiyah's response is inherited from its founder, Ahmad Dahlan. As seen by James Peacock (1978), Ahmad Dahlan ~~carried out~~brought about many social transformations calmly and systematically without being ~~antagonistic~~confrontational. This can be seen, for example, from how Ahmad Dahlan and the early generation of Muhammadiyah fortified Muslims from various superstitions, heresies, and myths by rationalising explaining the unacceptability of such popular religious thoughts and beliefs and practices believed by many people at that time. In addition to confronting Christianisation, the three essential ideas initiated at that time, namely hospitals, schools, and orphanages, were actually the implementation of efforts to counter the practice of superstitions, heresies, and myths that had spread in the community calmly and systematically (Shihab 1995).

In a broader context, the case of Zulkarnain El Madury also provides a lesson that using the name Muhammadiyah to justify personal opinions or legitimise particular interests is wrong. Muhammadiyah has the reputation of a very well managed organisation (Barton 2014; *Suara Muhammadiyah* 2019) which is its strength and gives it clout compared to other religious organisations in Indonesia, such as NU. In short, authority in Muhammadiyah lies in the institution itself and is not based on personality. It differs from NU, where power and authority tend to lie in personal figures, such as *kyai* or *gus* (Fauzi 2020b).

Muhammadiyah followers who understand its basic rules are not easily influenced by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. They are aware that Muhammadiyah's official religious stance is only be issued by the Tarjih Council and that those external to the Tarjih Council or even specific Muhammadiyah figures who give religious opinions, speak only for themselves as individuals and not the organisation. This would be the case, for example, even if the religious opinion emanates from the chair of the Tarjih Council as an individual. This did occur when Syamsul Anwar, the current chair of the Tarjih Council, differed from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council on the issue of *iftitāh* prayer (opening night

**Commented [MOU8]:** Could we have an example?

**Commented [nf9R8]:** Yes, we could. I have added an example and a reference. What do you think?

**Commented [MOU10]:** I don't understand this sentence. Are you trying to say hospitals, schools and orphanages were areas of superstitions etc? In any case, I feel this info is extraneous but could be included in a footnote or deleted.

**Formatted:** English (United States)

prayer [*qiyām al-lail*]).<sup>26</sup> While Anwar's opinion clearly differs from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council, the prevailing opinion in Muhammadiyah is that of the Tarjih Council, not the chair of the Tarjih Council. Within Muhammadiyah, such religious differences of opinion are common as usually happens in *fiqh* discourse in general. The difference between El Madury and Anwar is that the latter does not act in the name of Muhammadiyah or the Tarjih Council when he has a different view. Instead, on many occasions, he urges Muhammadiyah followers to abide by the opinion of the Tarjih Council on the *iftitāh* prayer.<sup>27</sup> Thus Anwar has shown he can compromise his personal religious opinion with his professional attitude in the organisation. In this case, he understands that using the name Muhammadiyah to legitimise individual opinions or interests is not justifiable.

### Acknowledgements

Permission for this research PJB-002/SP3/LPPM-UAD/VI/2020 and funding were provided by the ethical board of Ahmad Dahlan University Research and Development Institute (Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan).

I am grateful to *ustaz* Zulkarnain El Madury for his exceptional help and support during my fieldwork. I also thank Amiruddin, Arif Nur Kholis, Muhammad Muflih, Wahyudi Abdurrahim, Robby Karman, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, Ilham Ibrahim, Ariful Hazam, and the members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council for providing information regarding my research. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article and to the editors of the *Indonesia and the Malay World*. Errors, if any, are solely mine.

### Note on contributor

*Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi* is a lecturer in the Department of Hadith Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He has published widely

<sup>26</sup> For Anwar (2013), the *iftitāh* prayer comprises two short *rak'ah* prayers that are performed before *qiyām al-lail*, with the condition that it must be preceded by sleep, otherwise there is no need to perform the *iftitāh* prayer. However, the Tarjih Council holds that the *iftitāh* prayer consists of two short *rak'ah* prayers performed before *qiyām al-lail*, whether preceded by sleep or not (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2011; Tim Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2019a).

<sup>27</sup> On several occasions, this author has heard Syamsul Anwar's direct appeal to Muhammadiyah members to follow the opinion of the Tarjih Council on this aspect of the *iftitāh* prayer.

**Formatted:** Don't add space between paragraphs of the same style

on a variety of issues relating to Islamic Studies, including al-Quran, hadith, Islamic law, social media and da'wah, and Muhammadiyah studies. Email: niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id

## References

- Abdurrahim, Wahyudi Sarju. 2020. *Ahlul haq wassunnah: syarah himpunan putusan tarjih Muhammadiyah bab iman bagian ketuhanan* [Ahlul haq wassunnah: explanation of tarjih decisions compilation of Muhammadiyah chapter on faith part of divinity]. Yogyakarta: Al Muflihun Publishing.
- Abror, Robby. 2020. Syekh Yunahar, ulama Muhammadiyah kharismatik [Sheikh Yunahar, a charismatic Muhammadiyah cleric]. 3 January. <<https://menara62.com/syeikh-yunahar-ulama-muhammadiyah-kharismatik/>> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2018. Media sosial dan pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [Social media and shifting religious authority]. 12 December. <[https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media\\_sosial\\_dan\\_pergeseran\\_otoritas\\_keagamaan](https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media_sosial_dan_pergeseran_otoritas_keagamaan)> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2020. The demise of moderate Islam: new media, contestation, and reclaiming religious authorities. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10 (1): 1–24.
- Alfaqi, Mifdal Zusron. 2015. Memahami Indonesia melalui prespektif nasionalisme, politik identitas, serta solidaritas [Understanding Indonesia through the perspectives of nationalism, identity politics, and solidarity]. *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 28 (2): 111–116.
- Alvara Research Center. 2020. Ramadhan dan pandemi Covid-19: semangat ibadah tak surut, konsumsi tersendat. <[https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN\\_DAN\\_PANDEMI\\_COVID-19\\_SEMANGAT\\_IBADAH\\_TAK\\_SURUT\\_KONSUMSI\\_TERSENDAT.pdf](https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN_DAN_PANDEMI_COVID-19_SEMANGAT_IBADAH_TAK_SURUT_KONSUMSI_TERSENDAT.pdf)> Accessed 23 February 2021.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2007. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer* [Contemporary Islamic law studies]. Jakarta: RM Books.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2013. *Salat Tarawih: Tinjauan usul fikih, sejarah, dan fikih* [Tarawih prayer: usul fiqh, history, and fiqh perspectives]. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2016. Fatwā, purification and dynamization: a study of tarjih in Muhammadiyah. *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (1): 27–44.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2018. *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Panitia Musyawarah

**Commented [MOU11]:** Did you mean the divine part of faith rather than faith part of divinity?

Nasional Tarjih Muhammadiyah XXX.

- Anwar, Syamsul. 2020. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer Bagian dua* [Contemporary Islamic legal studies Part two]. Yogyakarta: UAD Press.
- Barton, Greg. 2014. The Gülen movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: progressive Islamic thought, religious philanthropy and civil society in Turkey and Indonesia. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25 (3): 287–301.
- Buchari, Sri Astuti. 2014. *Kebangkitan etnis menuju politik identitas* [Ethnic awakening towards identity politics]. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Bunt, Gary R. 2003. *Islam in the digital age: e-jihad, online fatwas and cyber Islamic environments*. London: Pluto Press.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2005. The 45th Muhammadiyah Congress contest between literal-conservative and liberal-moderate Muslims in Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 12 (1): 185–189.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2013. Liberal and conservative discourses in the Muhammadiyah: the struggle for the face of reformist Islam in Indonesia. In Martin van Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary developments in Indonesian Islam: explaining the 'conservative turn'*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2016. Aksi bela Islam: konservatisme dan fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. *Maarif* 11 (2): 15–29.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2020. Muslim televangelists in the making: conversion narratives and the construction of religious authority. *Muslim World* 110 (2): 154–175.
- Burhanudin, Jajat. 2004. The fragmentation of religious authority: Islamic print media in early 20th century Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 11 (1): 23–62.
- Campbell, H.A. and Teusner, P.E. 2011. Religious authority in the age of the internet. In *Christian Reflection, Virtual Lives*. Waco TX: Baylor University Press, pp. 59–68. <<https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/130950.pdf>>
- Chairi, Effendi. 2019. Ketidadaan otoritas terpusat dalam fenomena kontemporer di Indonesia [The absence of a centralised authority in contemporary phenomena in Indonesia]. *SANGKĒP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 2 (2):197–215.
- Chaplin. Chris. 2021. *Salafism and the State: Islamic activism and national identity in contemporary Indonesia*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.
- Dakta.com. 2016. Aa Gym ajak ribuan jamaahnya ikut aksi bela Islam III [Aa Gym invites thousands of congregants to join Islamic Defence Action III]. 29 November. <<http://www.dakta.com/news/7329/aa-gym-ajak-ribuan-jamaahnya-ikut-aksi-bela-islam->



iii> Accessed 2 February 2020.

Fadl, Khaled Abou El. 2014. *Speaking in God's name: Islamic law, authority, and women*. London: Oneworld Publications.

Farhan, Farhan. 2017. Pesan dakwah Felix Siauw di media sosial (perspektif meaning and media). *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Administrasi Islam* 1 (2): 209–226.

Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2017. Peranan Maqasid Al-Shariah dalam memahami Hadith: kajian terhadap fatwa Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah [The role of Maqasid Al-Shariah in understanding Hadith: a study of the fatwa of the Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah]. MA thesis, University of Malaya.

Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020a. PUTM dan kaderisasi ulama: menelusuri latar belakang lahirnya Lembaga Kaderisasi Ulama Muhammadiyah [PUTM and clerical regeneration: tracing the background of the birth of the Muhammadiyah Clerical Cadre Institute]. <<https://santricendekia.com/putm-dan-kaderisasi-ulama-menelusuri-latar-belakang-lahirnya-lembaga-kaderisasi-ulama-muhammadiyah/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.

Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020b. Tantangan kader ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah di era 4.0 [Challenges for Tarjih Muhammadiyah ulama cadres in the 4.0 era]. 21 July. *Suara 'Aisyiyah* <<https://suaraaisyiyah.id/tantangan-kader-ulama-tarjih-muhammadiyah-di-era-4-0/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.

Fealy, Greg. 2008. Consuming Islam: commodified religion and aspirational pietism in contemporary Indonesia. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.

Gesuri. 2020. Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia kehilangan ulama kharismatik [Yunahar Ilyas passed away, Indonesia lost a charismatic scholar]. 3 January. <<https://www.gesuri.id/internal/yunahar-ilyas-wafat-indonesia-kehilangan-ulama-kharismatik-b1YFoZpRY>> Accessed 20 March 2020.

Hew, Wai Weng. 2018. The art of dakwah: social media, visual persuasion and the Islamist propagation of Felix Siauw. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (134): 61–79.

Hoesterey, James B. 2008. Marketing morality: the rise, fall and rebranding of Aa Gym. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: Religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, pp. 95–114.

Hope Cheong, Pauline. 2016. Religious authority and social media branding in a culture of religious celebrification. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*, University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 81–102.

Horsfield, Peter. 2016. The media and religious authority from ancient to modern. In Stewart

- M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*. University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 37–66.
- IB Times Indonesia. 2020. 100 situs Islam Indonesia, NU Online peringkat pertama [100 Indonesian Islamic websites, NU Online ranks first]. 10 July. <IBTimes.Id. 2020. <<https://ibtimes.id/100-situs-islam-indonesia-nu-online-peringkat-pertama/>> Accessed 23 February 2023.
- Ilyas, Yunahar. 2012. *Kuliah Akhlaq* [Akhlaq lecture]. XII. Yogyakarta: LPPI Universitas Muhammdiyah Yogyakarta.
- Khamis, S., Ang, L. and Welling, R. 2017. Self-branding, ‘micro-celebrity’ and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191–208.
- Khomalia, Isti and Rahman, Khairul Arief. 2018. Micro hijabers celebrity: membentuk identitas dengan update self-story via instagram (kasus dian pelangi). *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban dan Pemikiran Islam* 2 (1): 33–42.
- Kompas. 2020. Sejumlah tokoh hadir prosesi pemakaman ketua PP Muhammadiyah Yunahar Ilyas [Many figures attended the funeral procession of Muhammadiyah chairman Yunahar Ilyas]. 3 January. <<https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/03/19142441/sejumlah-tokoh-hadiri-prosesi-pemakaman-ketua-pp-muhammadiyah-yunahar-ilyas>> Accessed 3 April 2022.
- Labiq. 2019. Pengaruh new media terhadap pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [The influence of new media on shifting religious authority]. 19 April. <<https://geotimes.co.id/opini/pengaruh-new-media-terhadap-pergeseran-otoritas-keagamaan>> Accessed 19 October 2020.
- Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. 2010. *Politik identitas dan masa depan pluralisme Indonesia*. Edited by Samsu Rizal Panggabean et al. Jakarta: Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (PUSAD) Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina.
- Madury, Zulkarnain El. 2019. Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam? [Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?]. 2 November. <<https://www.facebook.com/zulkarnainsumenep/posts/2386248524961601>> Accessed 5 May 2020.
- Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah. 2016. Pembukaan Halaqah, Majelis Tarjih Launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan Muhammadiyah Observatorium Network [Halaqah opening, Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and Muhammadiyah Observatory Network]. 20 August. <<https://tarjih.or.id/pembukaan-halaqah-majelis-tarjih-launching-pusat-tarjih-muhammadiyah-dan-muhammadiyah>>

observatorium-network/> Accessed 6 October 2023.

Majelis Tarjih Dahlan, Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. 2016.

Nota Kesepakatan Majelis Tarjih Dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Tentang Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di Islamic Center Universitas Ahmad Dahlan [Memorandum of Agreement between the Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board and Ahmad Dahlan University on the Management of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre at the Islamic Centre of Ahmad Dahlan University]. Yogyakarta.

Maskur, Maskur and Noor, Irfan Noor. 2014. Ustadz selebriti Abdullah Gymnastiar dalam budaya populer (perspektif hipersemiotika Yasraf Amir Piliang) [Celebrity Ustadz Abdullah Gymnastiar in popular culture (Yasraf Amir Piliang's hyper semiotics perspective)]. *Jurnal Studia Insania* 2 (1): 47–57.

Matheson, Craig. 1987. Weber and the classification of forms of legitimacy. *British Journal of Sociology* 38 (2): 199–215.

Muhammadiyah Central Board. 2023. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 8 October 2023.

Nisa, Eva F. 2019. Internet and Muslim women. In Ronald Lukens-Bull and Mark Woodward (eds), *Handbook of contemporary Islam and Muslim lives*. Cham: Springer, pp. 1–19.

Palahuddin. 2020. The typology of religious thought in Muhammadiyah. *International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 3 (2): 74–81.

<<http://journal2.uad.ac.id/index.php/ijish/article/view/2233/pdf>>

Peacock, James L. 1978. *Purifying the Faith: the Muhammadiyah movement in Indonesian Islam*. Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2011. *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2016. Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan MuON [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and MuON]. 20 August.

<<http://www.umm.ac.id/id/muhammadiyah/7070.html>> Accessed 20 March 2021.

Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Berikut Susunan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah pPeriode 2022–2027 [The following is the composition of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the 2022–2027 period] <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/berikut-susunan-pimpinan-pusat-muhammadiyah-periode-2022-2027/>> Accessed 7 October 2023.

Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Majelis Tabligh [Tabligh Council]. <

- <https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 07 October 2023.
- Postill, John and Pink, Sarah. 2012. Social media ethnography: the digital researcher in a messy web. *Media International Australia* 145 (1): 123–134.
- Pribadi, Yanwar. 2019. Fragmentasi umat dan penciptaan otoritas keagamaan: tanggapan terhadap ‘Islam lokal’ dan ‘Islam asing’ di Indonesia [Ummah fragmentation and the creation of religious authority: responses to ‘local Islam’ and ‘foreign Islam’ in Indonesia]. *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 21 (1): 103–119.  
<<https://jmb.lipi.go.id/jmb/article/view/828/455>>
- Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah. n.d. *Panduan pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre management guide]. Majelis Tarjih, Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta.
- Quadri, Syed Junaid A. 2013. Transformations of tradition: modernity in the thought of Muḥammad Bakhīt Al-Muṭī‘ī. PhD thesis, McGill University.
- Rahman, Asjmuni Abdur et al. 1985. Laporan penelitian Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (suatu studi tentang sistem dan metode penentuan hukum) [Research report of Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (a study of the system and method of determining the law)]. Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga.
- Rakyat Merdeka. 2019. Dubes Malaysia jenguk ketua MUI Yunahar Ilyas di Yogyakarta [Malaysian ambassador visits MUI chairman Yunahar Ilyas in Yogyakarta]. 5 November. <<https://rm.id/baca-berita/internasional/21745/dubes-malaysia-jenguk-ketum-mui-yunahar-ilyas-di-yogyakarta>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Riesebrodt, Martin. 1999. Charisma in Max Weber’s Sociology of Religion. *Religion* 29 (1): 1–14.
- Sadasri, Lidwina Mutia. 2017. Selebriti mikro di media baru kajian presentasi diri dalam vlog selebriti mikro [Micro-celebrities in new media: a study of self-presentation in micro-celebrity vlogs]. *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi Dan Opini Publik* 21 (2): 167–181.  
<<https://jurnal.kominfo.go.id/index.php/jpkop/article/view/1218/720>>
- Saefullah, Hikmawan. 2022. Media baru, publik baru: mengkonfigurasi ulang ruang publik Islam [New media, new publics: reconfiguring the Islamic public sphere]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sammy, Abdullah. 2022. Peluang dan tantangan dakwah digital Muhammadiyah [Opportunities and challenges of Muhammadiyah digital da'wah]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah

- Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sanjaya, Makroen. 2022. Peta ideologi islam di media sosial [The map of Islamic ideology on social media]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Senft, Theresa M. 2008. *Camgirls: celebrity and community in the age of social networks*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Shamsy, Ahmed El. 2013. The Hāshiyā in Islamic law: a sketch of the Shāfiʿī literature. *Oriens* 41 (3-4): 289–315.
- Shihab, Alwi. 1995. The Muhammadiyah movement and its controversy with Christian mission in Indonesia. PhD thesis, at Temple University, USA.
- Spencer, Martin E. 1970. Weber on legitimate norms and authority. *British Journal of Sociology* 21 (2): 123–134.
- Suara Muhammadiyah. 2019. Hyung Jun Kim: sistem di Muhammadiyah sungguh ideal [Hyung Jun Kim: Muhammadiyah's system is ideal]. <<https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/08/01/hyung-jun-kim-sistem-di-muhammadiyah-sungguh-ideal/>> Accessed 9 April 2022.
- Suyadi and Widodo, Hendro. 2019. Millennialization of Islamic education based on neuroscience in the third generation university in Yogyakarta Indonesia. *QIIS International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7 (1): 173–202.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2009. Hukum tentang jenggot dan cadar [Islamic law perspective on beards and veils]. *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine, no. 18 . Yogyakarta.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019a. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 4*. Cetakan IX. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019b. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 7*. Cetakan IV. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Tirto.id. 2018. Dari Aa' Gym ke Felix Siauw: ustaz medsos & medium dakwah politis. Tirto.Id. 16 January. <<https://tirto.id/dari-aa-gym-ke-felix-siauw-ustaz-medsos-medium-dakwah-politis-cCGf>> Accessed 5 February 2020.
- Turner, Bryan S. 2007. Religious authority and the new media. *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2): 117–134.
- Turner, Graeme. 2010. *Ordinary people and the media: the demotic turn*. Los Angeles CA: Sage.
- Widodo, Arif. 2017. Transformative intellectual discourse and movement of Ikatan

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

**Commented [MOU12]:** PhD titles are not italicised in IMW house style unless published in which case it would be treated as a book.

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM). *Iseedu: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices* 1 (1): 126–151.

<<https://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/iseedu/article/view/5423/3542>>

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change*. Princetone NJ: Princeton University Press.

## ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY *USTAZ* PHENOMENON

### Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

#### ABSTRACTS

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the fragmentation of religious authority. In the Indonesian context, the mainstream religious authority held by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has been challenged and threatened by micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This article examines the emergence of the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah fanpage on Facebook, created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board as it has threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority. It analyses Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace, by taking a closer look at what has been done by Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, an assembly that has the exclusive authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* within Muhammadiyah. This article also discusses lessons that can be learned from the case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the response of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

#### KEYWORDS

Fragmentation of religious authority; micro-celebrity *ustaz*; Muhammadiyah; religious authority; *tarjih*.

#### ABSTRAK

*Kemunculan internet dan media sosial telah mempertajam fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. Dalam konteks Indonesia, otoritas keagamaan arus utama yang dipegang oleh Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) disaingi dan diancam oleh para ustaz mikro-*

Commented [MOU1]: English keywords have to be in alphabetical order, IMW house style

Commented [nf2R1]: OK

*selebritas. Artikel ini mengkaji kemunculan fanpage Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah di Facebook yang dibuat dan dikelola oleh Zulkarnain El Madury, seseorang yang mengklaim sebagai ustaz Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, karena dianggap mengancam otoritas keagamaan Muhammadiyah. Penelitian ini menganalisis upaya Muhammadiyah dalam mempertahankan otoritas keagamaannya di dunia maya dengan melihat lebih dekat pada apa yang telah dilakukan oleh Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah, sebuah majelis yang memiliki otoritas eksklusif untuk mengeluarkan fatwa dan ijtihad keagamaan resmi di Muhammadiyah. Artikel ini juga membahas pelajaran yang dapat dipetik dari kasus Zulkarnain El Madury dan respons Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah.*

#### KATA KUNCI

~~Fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan; Muhammadiyah; otoritas keagamaan; Ustaz mikro-selebritas; fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan; otoritas keagamaan; Muhammadiyah; tarjih; ustaz mikro-selebritas.~~

#### Introduction

The Alvara Research Center (2020) survey was surprising as it stated that the clerics most heard by the public, especially in Ramadan 2020, were not from the official Muhammadiyah board.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the Alvara Research Center survey was released (IBTimes.id 2020), an Islamic website managed by young Muhammadiyah intellectuals, published a report ranking the 100 most popular Islamic websites in Indonesia. The majority of these sites are managed by or affiliated to Nahdliyyin (NU followers) and Salafi<sup>2</sup> groups with few such sites operated by or affiliated to Muhammadiyah. The Alvara Research Center survey and the IBTimes.id report show that Muhammadiyah, in terms of influence and religious authority on the internet, lags behind other religious groups which is ironic for an organisation claiming to represent the progressive Islamic group.

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the so-called fragmentation of religious authority. Eva F. Nisa (2019), for example, mentions that the proliferation of various digital platforms is directly proportional to the increasing fragmentation of religious authority.

<sup>1</sup> One of the 15 most popular clerics mentioned in the report, Ustaz Ali Hidayat, has since been included on the Muhammadiyah Central Board's Tabligh Council (2022–2027; Muhammadiyah Central Board 2023). Prior to that, he did not convey official Muhammadiyah ideas in his lectures.

<sup>2</sup> For more comprehensive information on the activism of Salafi groups, see Chris Chaplin (2021).

**Commented [nf3]:** I have sorted Indonesian abstracts in alphabetical order. But I apologise; I'm still a bit doubtful because when I look at the current volume and issue of IMW journal (Vol. 51, No. 150), the Indonesian abstracts are sorted by the English abstract version. Which one is correct?



Islamic discourse is monopolised not only by an elite group of scholars or mainstream religious groups, but also by persons or groups that have not been considered in Islamic discourse. Furthermore, the presence of the internet and social media has led to the birth of what is called micro-celebrity. Theresa M. Senft (2008) defines micro-celebrity as a new style of online performance that involves increasing popularity on social media such as videos, blogs, and networking sites. These micro-celebrities unlike conventional celebrities, emerge from what is known as new media (Senft 2008).

Of course, not all new media users have the adjective ‘micro-celebrity’. Only those who experience what Graeme Turner (2010) terms ‘the demotic turn’, namely, the increasing visibility of ordinary people to appear as celebrities in the media, especially online media. In turn, both conventional and micro-celebrity exist in various public spheres, and the discourse on them is characterised as influencers, stimulants of consumerism, enthusiasm, public debate, and various activism (Sadasri 2017).

By borrowing the theory of micro-celebrities in the study of new media, we can then read how these micro-celebrities have also come to the fore in the religious realm. The emergence of ulama, *ustaz* (religious teachers), and religious leaders who become influencers in new media can perhaps be seen as one form of micro-celebrity. Felix Siauw is a prominent example. A convert, who is now a preacher, Siauw has a massive following on social media. In 2018, for example, he had 2.6 million followers on Twitter, and in 2022 it numbered 3.3 million. Felix Siauw’s Instagram account has around 4.9 million followers. It can even be said that he is the *ustaz* who has the most followers on social media (Tirto 2018), making him one of the leading social media preachers in Indonesia today (Hew 2018). What Felix Siauw posts on his social media has more or less influenced the map of religious authorities in Indonesia.

The existence of the internet and the continuing development of technology allows the emergence of many other micro-celebrity *ustaz*, both in the national arena more generally or more specifically in internal religious organisations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, Persis (Persatuan Islam) or others. In the context of Muhammadiyah, the largest modernist Islamic organisation began to be challenged for its religious authority by a preacher who was said to be part of Muhammadiyah itself, namely Zulkarnain El Madury. He claims to be a Muhammadiyah cadre and often introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board. In recent years, El Madury has been noticed by Muhammadiyah administrators

and Muhammadiyah cadres<sup>3</sup> and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah) has discussed him in a special meeting. This is because the posts on the Facebook page that El Madury manages, *Syarah Himpunan Putus Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (henceforth SHPTM), often differ significantly from – and to some extent delegitimise – a Muhammadiyah fatwa or official decision. Responses from grassroots or Muhammadiyah followers vary. This can be seen, for example, from the comments on each post. Some defend and remain adamant on the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah, but not a few were affected and followed what was conveyed by El Madury on his Facebook page.

This is where it becomes crucial to see how Muhammadiyah attempts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace, especially among its members and the public. By conducting web content analysis (Postill and Pink 2012) on SHPTM and official social media accounts and those affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this article shows how El Madury builds his narratives and, in turn, how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority on the internet. Additionally, field research was conducted and key actors were interviewed offline and online in a semi-structured format.<sup>4</sup> Apart from El Madury, the key actors are members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Digital Broadcast Centre (Pusat Syiar Digital Muhammadiyah), Muhammadiyah activists as well as Muhammadiyah grassroots.

### **Fragmentation of religious authority, new preacher and micro-celebrity *ustaz* phenomenon**

Fragmentation of religious authority is a phenomenon that occurs in various religious communities and is not limited to Islam (B.S. Turner 2007; Campbell and Teusner 2011; Hope Cheong 2016). The fragmentation of religious authority is also a global phenomenon as pointed out by Gary R. Bunt (2003) who states that the new media have shaped diverse understandings among individual Muslims worldwide about e-jihad (electronic jihad). The definition of electronic jihad is understood and interpreted differently, ranging from online activism to Muslim articulation after the events of 11 September 2001. Bunt (2003) shows that each new media (in this case, new websites) has authority for its respective group.

---

<sup>3</sup> This author's online and offline interviews with Amiruddin, Robby Karman, Muhammad Muflih, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, and Arif Nur Kholis, 2019–2020.

<sup>4</sup> Data collection in this study was carried out between 2018 and 2020. As personal interviews were not possible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, some interviews were conducted online.

The fragmentation of religious authority discussed here is from the 20th century to the present. Jajat Burhanudin (2004) points out that there has been a shift in religious authority in the historical phase of Indonesian religious thought in the early 20th century due to modernisation. His study, which focuses on the Islamic print media, further shows that there is a shift in religious authority that used to be in *Kitab Kuning*<sup>5</sup> taught by *kyai* or ulama in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to magazines, journals, newspapers, and books published by modernist circles or organisations.

Religious authority since the early 20th century has always stayed with Muhammadiyah and NU. These two religious organisations are often referred to by scholars as the authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016; Akmaliah 2018). The shift in religious authority occurred again in the 1990s when national television stations emerged. The Islamic programmes presented by the television stations show the *ustaz* (religious teachers), which in turn build their authority through lectures delivered by these preachers. This phenomenon prompted scholars to come up with the term ‘Islamic televangelism’ (Akmaliah 2018). Abdullah Gymnastiar who is better known as Aa Gym is one example that falls into the category of a television *ustaz*, or a ‘tele-dai’ as coined by Greg Fealy (2008).

The most obvious and recent picture of the fragmentation of religious authority in Indonesia is the series of events of the Defend Islam Action (Aksi Bela Islam). Ahmad Najib Burhani (2016) hints that these critical events marked the peak of the fragmentation of religious authorities in Indonesia as they gave rise to new actors who challenge the established religious authority. Although it cannot be said to shift or match the role of Muhammadiyah and NU, the emergence of new actors such as Rizieq Shihab provides a new map of religious authority in Indonesia.

This phenomenon of the fragmentation of religious authority has increased sharply in the development of what scholars call pop culture, marked by the birth of many new media (Labiq 2019). The availability of internet access to every social class is the main factor for this fragmentation. As a result, many new media have emerged with each individual and group competing to spread ideas (Horsfield 2016; Nisa 2019).

Aa Gym is one of the early actors who emerged in the internet era in Indonesia. This can be captured in two interesting studies on Aa Gym by James B. Hoesterey (2008), and

---

<sup>5</sup> So-called because the books were printed on yellow paper. These were the Islamic texts used in the education of Islamic schools.

Maskur and Noor (2014). Although the use of the internet as a medium of da'wah around during the early 2000s was not as massive as it is now, the emergence of Aa Gym as a new cleric on the national da'wah stage through lectures, seminars, and Islamic training is a phenomenon in itself. Hoesterey (2008) studies the journey of Aa Gym from his first appearance as a preacher, falling, and then successfully rebranding to restore his religious authority. This is evident, for example, from how Aa Gym has many listeners (*Dakta.com* 2016). Popular culture has also brought Aa Gym to be seen not only by the public, especially by his followers, as also singer, actor, author, etc. Thus, he has transformed from an ordinary cleric to a celebrity cleric. Through a hypersemiotic perspective, Maskur and Noor (2014) show the various aspects of Aa Gym's personality.

Following the appearance of Aa Gym and with further rapid development of information technology, many other new preachers began to appear. Hew Wai Weng (2018) describes how Felix SiauW is another skilful religious preacher. Being a cleric with the most followers on the internet did not make SiauW neglect to spread his da'wah in the real world. Hew (2018) points out that SiauW has blended online and offline da'wah harmoniously. According to Hew (2018) and Farhan (2017), one of the keys to SiauW's success in preaching is his ability to present an entertaining and straightforward da'wah, even though its content is dogmatic and political.

Aa Gym and Felix SiauW are two micro-celebrity *ustaz* as a result of the new media. The term micro-celebrity *ustaz* was adopted and reconstructed from the theory of micro-celebrity. Most of these studies conducted from the perspective of pop culture (Senft 2008; G. Turner 2010; Khamis, Ang and Welling 2017; Sadasri 2017; Khomalia and Rahman 2018) describe the fragmentation of religious authority, marked by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By this term this author means an ordinary *ustaz/ustazah* who has skyrocketed in popularity and is celebrity on and because of social media so that he or she is able to influence certain people or communities. In other words, it means the *ustaz/ustazah* has experienced what G. Turner (2010) calls 'the demotic turn', when ordinary people are highly visible on social media and become celebrities. Challenges to established religious authorities by new religious personalities or groups are rarely touched on except that of Yanwar Pribadi (2019). His study explains the efforts of 'local Islam' (*Islam lokal*) to defend its religious authority from the threat of 'foreign Islam' (*Islam asing*). However, his study differs from what this author will examine in tracing Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

This study is on a micro-celebrity *ustaz*, Zulkarnain El Madury who is less well known when compared to Aa Gym or Felix Siauw but he has a strong influence on the internet. His identity as a preacher from Muhammadiyah who targets Muhammadiyah followers with postings that are often different and even delegitimise the official voice of this largest modernist mass organisation deserves to be investigated. This study, apart from showing Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority on the internet, also seeks explicitly to fill the gap in previous studies. In his latest study, Akmaliah (2020) shows that Muhammadiyah and NU have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was strongly reactive to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) indicates there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's responses less hostile. Sammy (2022), Sanjaya (2022), and Saefullah (2022) came to the same conclusion as Akmaliah, claiming that Muhammadiyah is significantly less adaptive to the emergence of new media, and therefore its da'wah often loses to that of the micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This study focuses on the struggle of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as the only assembly under Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas and official *ijtihad* exposition within Muhammadiyah.

#### **Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage**

The Facebook SHPTM fanpage was created by Zulkarnain El Madury. He was born in Sumenep on the island of Madura in 1963, with the name Zulkarnain bin Syamsuri. He claims to have studied in Malaysia at the Institute of Business Study and always introduces himself as a preacher from the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah). He spent his childhood in Madura and was a traditionalist Muslim like others on the island. He grew up in a milieu dominated by the NU traditionalist Islamic organisation. He used to perform *tahlilan* (ritual prayers for the dead), *ziarah* (pilgrimage to the grave), and other practices that, according to him, after becoming a member of Muhammadiyah, were not following the Sunnah of the Prophet. He received his religious education at the Islamic boarding school at-Taufiqiyyah Sumenep Madura. In 1976 he became acquainted with Muhammadiyah. He became interested in the da'wah and religious understanding of the Muhammadiyah movement founded by Ahmad

**Commented [nf4]:** I slightly modified this sentence and added some additional information. OK with you?  
PK – modified *tahlilan* – OK with you?

**Commented [nf5R4]:** OK

Dahlan after listening to a lecture by one of its preachers. In 1977, he officially joined Muhammadiyah.<sup>6</sup>

Since joining Muhammadiyah, El Madury has been active as a preacher who spreads religious ideas and understanding. From 1990 to 2007, he was one of the Muhammadiyah preachers who was sent to remote areas by the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board. His daily activities are now preaching at different places as well as creating content on for SHPTM fanpage. He now lives in Jakarta as the *tarjih* and *tabligh* council chair of the Pondok Gede Muhammadiyah Branch.<sup>7</sup> He created SHPTM in 2014.<sup>8</sup> However, in the digital history that this author can trace, the fanpage was created in 2015 as the earliest post that is currently traceable is dated 5 January 2015.

According to El Madury, the fanpage began with the WhatsApp group he created which he named *Tarjih dan Tabligh Institut* (Tarjih and Tabligh Institute) to provide a space to discuss and spread ideas related to *tarjih*.<sup>9</sup> He included many Muhammadiyah figures and activists in this group, including (the now late) Buya Yunahar Ilyas. Over time, seeing that El Madury's posts on SHPTM were deemed inconsistent with the *tarjih* spirit of Muhammadiyah, several people, such as Fathurrahman Kamal and Buya Risman, sharply criticised the postings. El Madury, Fathurrahman Kamal, and Buya Risman were then engaged in a heated debate which was relayed later to Buya Yunahar Ilyas. The response by Buya Yunahar Ilyas at that time, according to El Madury, differed from that of his critics. Buya Yun responded quite positively because he saw El Madury's initiative as providing *syarh* (explanation) -or further explication of the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Decisions Compilation). Finally, he gave his permission to El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com).<sup>10</sup>

El Madury's early postings on SHPTM, were still relatively consistent in uploading Muhammadiyah fatwas in the question (from someone) and answer format from the fatwa division of the Tarjih Council. This is similar to the the original question and answer format

<sup>6</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Muhammadiyah's use of the word *tarjih* has changed throughout its development. In its early period, and following its usage in the principles of law (*usul al-fiqh*), *tarjih* conveyed the meaning of examining the various opinions of Muslim jurists on a particular question and evaluating them to determine which is most faithful to the original Shari'a sources. Over time this usage gradually included any intellectual endeavour used to study new cases that earlier jurists had not addressed. In short, in Muhammadiyah's perspective, *tarjih* is identical, or almost identical, to *ijihad* (Anwar 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

administered by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, whose fatwas were later published in the *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine. However, over time, SHPTM included posts that apart from the dissemination of Muhammadiyah's official *ijtihad* included the personal opinions of El Madury. These opinions in inelegant words are often offensive to other groups. Not infrequently, his posts contradict the official stance of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in particular, or Muhammadiyah in general, such as on the veil issue (see below). Since Facebook introduced its 'live broadcast' feature, El Madury has also availed of it to conduct live lectures. The SHPTM is popular with netizens. As of the time of writing (3 April 2022), it has been followed by 19,423 and is 'liked' by 8,868 people. His posts also often receive both positive and critical comments from viewers.

El Madury gave several reasons that brought about the creation of his fanpage. Firstly, it is aimed at fortifying Muhammadiyah followers against all forms of superstition, heresy, and myth as its posts focus on issues related to faith and worship. Secondly, he aims to counter those liberal Muhammadiyah activists and has openly responded to such views. His posts often openly attacks the religious practices of the the Nahdliyyin, resulting in several clashes between him and the Nahdliyyin figure, Idrus Ramli.<sup>11</sup>

Despite having many followers El Madury and his SHPTM do have critics. Many Muhammadiyah followers are concerned about the SHPTM posts. Some have tried to convey their anxiety through the official social media accounts of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre (Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah).<sup>12</sup> Those concerned generally want to ask for firm action from the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as El Madury has included 'Tarjih Muhammdiyah' in his fanpage name. The demands to the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, when summarised, include: (1) that the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council reprimand or remind Zulkarnain El Madury not to use symbols or names that are closely related to Tarjih Muhammadiyah for or on his fanpage; (2) making and circulating an announcement that the fanpage is not a social media account of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council or the Tarjih Muhamamdiyah Centre; (3) announcing the official social media accounts and websites of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre, so that Muhammadiyah people at the grassroots are not deceived by the existence of the fanpage and know where to look for religious reference sites, especially on the internet.

---

<sup>11</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Interviews with Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf and Ariful Hazam, November 2020 who are grassroots of Muhammadiyah, and social media administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

### Zulkarnain El Madury and his efforts in building religious authority

Zulkarnain El Madury and his fanpage SHPTM, have threatened the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, and specifically, the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. Many of his posts affect Muhammadiyah followers in particular and Muslims in general as these posts often differ from the official stance of Muhammadiyah, and in some cases contradict the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. This has stimulated public debate on social media, allowing El Madury to become a micro-celebrity *ustaz*. As a result of the general public and the online community attention, El Madury has been able to gradually build up his religious authority.

From the Weberian perspective (Riesebrodt 1999), he has been able to do this in two ways. The first is through charisma (charismatic authority). According to Weber, charisma is a particular type of authority whose original form is based on a specific belief contained in a particular person (Riesebrodt 1999:ibid.). Secondly, El Madury claims he has the endorsement of Yunahar Ilyas, a very popular Muhammadiyah cleric respected by the community from within the Muhammadiyah circle and from Muslims in general which is a form of charismatic authority.

Yunahar Ilyas (1956–2020) or Buya Yun as he was popularly known, was an exegete (*mufasssir*) born in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, who died at the age of 63 (Ilyas 2012). He was an alumnus of Imam Ibn Su'ud University (Saudi Arabia) and an excellent lecturer in conveying religious messages. He was seen as a charismatic cleric by Muhammadiyah followers and Muslims, in general, and this reputation extended to neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore (Abror 2020; Gesuri 2020). On his death in early 2020, many people flocked to pay their last respects to Buya Yun who held the chair of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for three terms (Kompas 2020; Rakyat Merdeka 2019).

By harnessing the charisma of Buya Yun, El Madury was able to increase his religious authority. On various occasions, including when this author interviewed him, Buya Yun's name was often mentioned as an argument and a shield.<sup>13</sup> El Madury insisted that he created the SHPTM fanpage with the permission of Yunahar Ilyas.<sup>14</sup> He added that Wahyudi

<sup>13</sup> This author's informants include Muhammad Muflih (grassroot of Muhammadiyah and initiator of the website tanyajawabagama.com), Robby Karman (secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association [DPP IMM] 2018–2021), and several participants invited by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council with the agenda 'Responding to Emergence of Syarah HPT on Social Media' on 25 September, 2020; interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

**Commented [MOU6]:** If you mention the first, where does the second come in if you delete 'secondly'?

**Commented [nf7R6]:** The second one comes on page 15, as I mentioned above. Starting from: 'The above describes how El Madury builds his charismatic authority. The other is authority built through tradition or what Weber calls traditional authority.'

I did use the word 'the other' in that paragraph instead of 'the second'. What do you think? Should I replace the word 'the other' with 'the second' to make it more straightforward to the reader?

**Commented [nf8]:** I have changed this paragraph. The explanation of the 'second authority' is on page 15 (starting from: The above describes how El Madury builds his charismatic authority. The other is authority built through tradition or what Weber calls traditional authority). OK with you?



Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website tanyajawabagama.com, had similarly received permission from Buya Yun. Wahyudi Abdurrahim confirmed Zulkarnain's claims and Muhammad Muflih, a grassroots representative added that it is a form of fairness.<sup>15</sup> In other words, Buya Yun's permission is a form of appreciation given by someone who is more senior and has a high social position in Muhammadiyah to someone who is more junior and classified as a grassroots Muhammadiyah member.<sup>16</sup> Permission from Buya Yun, who has charisma within Muhammadiyah in particular, has become a tool used by El Madury in building his religious authority.

In Weberian charismatic authority, charisma is not only about a belief in the existence of extraordinary or superpowers possessed by or contained in humans but also about particular objects other than humans (Riesebrodt 1999). We thus have an explanation as to why El Madury named his fanpage *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a highly respectable and crucial council in Muhammadiyah. Founded in 1927, the Council functions as an assembly that carries out its agenda of purification of religion and the dynamisation of social life. It conducts research and investigations towards this purity, and accordingly gives fatwas and compiles religious guidelines on faith ('*aqidah*) and worship ('*ibadah*) as well as social relations (*mu'amalah*) (Rahman et al. 1985; Anwar 2016). In addition, this Council makes efforts to resolve differences and disagreements on religious issues, which are usually referred to as *khilāfīyyah* problems, so that they are directed more productively (Anwar 2007, 2016).

The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a body that is responsible for formulating the ideological basis of the Muhammadiyah movement (Anwar 2007, 2016) and is Muhammadiyah's representative in the religious field (Fauzi 2017). The Council produces three types of *ijtihad*, namely: (1) *tarjih fatwa (fatwa tarjih)*, (2) *tarjih decision (putusan tarjih)*, and (3) *tarjih discourse (wacara tarjih)* (Anwar 2016). *Tarjih fatwa* is the Council's answer to general questions on issues that require an explanation in terms of sharia law. Following the nature of the fatwa in general, the Council's fatwa is non-binding, on either organisations or members as individuals. Therefore, even the fatwa can be questioned and discussed. However, because the fatwa contains religious guidance derived from Islamic teaching sources (Anwar 2020), and the general public often does not actually understand the aspects of such a fatwa, it is still believed by Muhammadiyah members to be religious

<sup>15</sup> Online interview with Wahyudi Abdurrahim through WhatsApp, September 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Online interview with Muhammad Muflih through WhatsApp and Facebook, 20 October 2019.

guidance. However, the *tarjih* decision is the official stance of Muhammadiyah in religious matters and is formally binding on the organisation and its members. But, in practice, sometimes Muhammadiyah members exercise their right to freedom not to be bound by the decision because they have different *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

Meanwhile, *tarjih* discourses are ideas or thoughts that are raised and put forward by the Council in seminars, *halaqah* (religious gathering or meeting to discuss the Qur'an or Islam), or other forums in addressing various developing issues and at the same time fostering a critical spirit of *ijtihad* and collecting materials or ideas on various actual problems in society. The nature of this *tarjih* discourse is non-binding and does not become a fatwa that must be followed. *Tarjih* discourse is contained in various publications of the Council, such as *Jurnal Tarjih* (Tarjih Journal) and various published books (Anwar 2016).

The *tarjih* decision and the *tarjih* fatwa, hold their strength within Muhammadiyah as these are considered sacred by some of its members. In short, it can be said that anything that 'smells *tarjih*' has authority in the collective memory of Muhammadiyah followers. In the perspective of Khaled Abou El Fadl (2014), fatwa and *tarjih* decisions have the power of persuasive authority, as these can influence or direct others because they believed in them. The *tarjih* fatwas are **officially** published through the organisation's **official** magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, and compiled in the *Tanya Jawab Agama* book. In comparison, the *tarjih* decisions are codified in a book called *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*, commonly known by the abbreviation HPT. Thus, it can be understood why the attribution of the term *tarjih* to particular objects can give rise to charismatic authority, as mentioned by Weber.

What El Madury did can also be seen as identity politics which is defined as a political tool of a group whether it be ethnic, cultural, religious or others for specific purposes, such as a form of resistance or to show the identity of a group (Alfaqi 2015). Within this framework, identity is politicised through extreme interpretation, which aims to gain support from people who feel 'the same', through race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements. In the context of El Madury, the use of the *tarjih* label on his fanpage can be interpreted as a political tool to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muhammadiyah members. And, as seen in some of his sermon videos, El Madury also placed a flag with the Muhammadiyah symbol behind him. In this context, he wants to convince the viewers that he is close to Muhammadiyah. He has introduced himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board on many occasions.

Formatted: Highlight

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

According to Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif (2010), identity politics is always related to members of social groups who feel excluded by the mainstream in a nation or state. Sri Astuti Buchari (2014) also finds that the emergence of identity politics is mainly caused by certain factors that an ethnic group sees as pressure from the political injustice. By looking at the observations made by Ahmad Najib Burhani (2013), El Madury, in this case, can be categorised as part of a group that feels excluded, threatened, and to some extent in need of justice within Muhammadiyah. Burhani (2013) explains the existence of two opposing schools of thought within Muhammadiyah which he refers to as 'Pure Islam' (*Islam Murni*) and 'Progressive Islam' (*Islam Progresif*). The conflict between these two schools of thought in Muhammadiyah began to surface at the 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Banda Aceh in 1995 (Burhani 2013).

The dominance of 'Progressive Islam' in Muhammadiyah strengthened after its 44th congress in Jakarta in 2000. This congress chose Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif as general chair. He is a progressive Muslim figure, an alumnus of the University of Chicago, and a student of the eminent progressive scholar Fazlur Rahman. At this congress, several names representing the 'Progressive Islam' group were included in the ranks of the central leadership of Muhammadiyah, such as Amin Abdullah, Dawam Raharjo, and Abdul Munir Mulkhan. During Ma'arif's leadership, progressive ideas not only dominated culturally but gradually became Muhammadiyah's official programmes (Burhani 2013).

Seeing the increasingly apparent threat from the ideas put forward by the 'Progressive Islam' group within Muhammadiyah, representatives of the 'Pure Islam' group did not remain silent. They compete and squabble over religious interpretations as to which is the most authentic. These two groups challenge each other through various channels, including seminars, discussions, publications. They usually have conflicting programmes. For example, as mentioned by Burhani (2013), when the Centre for the Study of Religion and Civilisation (PSAP/Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban) raised the theme of pluralism and multiculturalism in its journal, *Tanwir Journal*, the Tabligh Council<sup>17</sup> responded with articles in opposition in its magazine, *Majalah Tabligh*. In Burhani's investigation, during the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress in Malang, this conservative group set up a Pojok Anti-Liberal (anti-liberal corner)

---

<sup>17</sup> Muhammadiyah has many assemblies such as Majelis Tabligh and Majelis Tarjih, each with its own functions and responsibilities. Majelis Tarjih is responsible for producing religious thoughts through fatwas and decisions, while Majelis Tabligh is responsible for disseminating them. Historically, Majelis Tabligh is known in Muhammadiyah as the anti-liberal wing and thus there are at times poor collaboration between Majelis Tarjih and Majelis Tabligh. For example, some fatwas issued by Majelis Tarjih, in Majelis Tabligh's perspective, are the result of liberal thinking. See Burhani (2013) and Palahuddin (2020).

booth, which sold books, DVDs, t-shirts, magazines, and other anti-liberal mementos. Strikingly, some of the t-shirts for sale displayed the words 'Muhammadiyah Anti-Liberal' (Burhani 2013).

At the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress, it seemed that the 'Pure Islam' group was gaining momentum to beat back the 'Progressive Islam' group. The quarrels between these two groups occurred within congress committees and in the external arena. Burhani (2005, 2013) noted at least three critical issues where the 'Pure Islam' group defeated the 'Progressive Islam' in the congress arena, namely: (1) leadership change; (2) the position of women; and (3) resistance to liberal thought.

After the 45th congress, the feud between these two schools of thought has continued though waxing and waning at different times. The form of the feud now looks more varied given the availability of the internet where the presence of social media has changed the battle arena from a conventional to a more modern one. El Madury represents the 'Pure Islam' group, and has heated online debates with figures considered representatives of 'Progressive Islam' whose actions he sees as unsettling. For example, El Madury and the secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association (DPP IMM),<sup>18</sup> Robby Karman, have openly and frequently castigated each other on for example, issues about the veil and the Wahhabi. According to El Madury, Robby Karman is a young liberal figure in Muhammadiyah who should be challenged. El Madury also often attacks the IBTimes.id website, as it frequently contains articles that are progressive and, to some extent, controversial. This website has several former Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah (JIMM/Muhammadiyah Youth Intellectual Network) figures, such as Hilman Latief, Azaki Khoiruddin, and Mu'arif. On one occasion, when the chair of the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre admonished El Madury for uploading provocative posts that contradicted the official stance of the Tarjih Council, he defended himself by stating that equally provocative posts from the 'Progressive Islam' group should be similarly reprimanded. If he is the only one selected for rebuke then he felt an injustice had been done.<sup>19</sup> El Madury's attitude in the framework of identity politics reflects someone who feels excluded and threatened by certain

---

<sup>18</sup> Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM) or Muhammadiyah Student Association is a proponent of Muhammadiyah in student affairs with the basic mission of realising the real Islamic society as formulated by Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Widodo 2017).

<sup>19</sup> On 3 November 2019, the manager of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah reprimanded Zulkarnain El Madury for his post on SHPTM on the veil which contradicts Muhammadiyah's official stance.

parties. At such, his specific attributes and identity are a deliberate form of resistance to the domination of certain groups or thoughts that threaten him.

The above describes how El Madury builds his charismatic authority. The other is authority built through tradition or what Weber calls traditional authority (Spencer 1970; Matheson 1987; Riesebrodt 1999). In simple terms, something can be considered as having traditional authority if it gains legitimacy based on beliefs or norms that have been established in a particular tradition (Chairi 2019). In other words, according to Spencer (1970), traditional authority is legitimised and, at the same time, constrained by traditional norms. Therefore, it is the opposite of charismatic authority. If in charismatic authority, it is the leader or someone who creates the norms, then it is the norms that create the leader or person in the traditional authority. In charismatic authority, the value of influence is generated by a person's personal qualities and is always associated with his personality. While in the case of traditional authority, it is generated by function and is related to someone or something that has traditional values (Spencer 1970).

In the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, ulama and the classical books they wrote can be considered to have this traditional authority. Ulama in Islamic tradition are called heirs of the Prophets. The authority of the ulama is derived from the legitimacy of religious texts which state that the prophetic tradition will be passed on to them. Therefore, the religious ideas they convey in writings or books contain an authoritative value for the next generation. This is the uniqueness of Islamic scholars and traditions, as mentioned by Muhammad Qasim Zaman (2002) who states that one of the most prominent aspects of pre-modern intellectual culture is the articulation of religious discourse through the so-called medium of the commentary. This is manifested in various forms such *al-syurūh*, *hawāsyī*, *rasā'il*, and *fatawā*. The various genres of books that contain explanations, descriptions, or responses to a book or social phenomena are a way for scholars to shape the identity and authority of the school or tradition they adhere to. In addition, it is also a means to interpreting the meaning of the foundational sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah (Zaman 2002).

An example is the *hawāsyī* tradition in the Shafii school. Its emergence, according to Ahmed El-Shamsy (2013), shows the peak of the authority of two scholars in that school, namely al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī. Al-Kurdī, as quoted by El Shamsy, called these two scholars 'the higher authorities in the Syafii school'. Those who want to know the authoritative

opinion of the Shafi'i school have to go through the works of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī, and the books that explain further their works, namely the books written by Ibn Ḥajar al-Haitamī and Syamsuddīn al-Ramlī. These books have for later generations the value of traditional authority (Shamsy 2013: 292).

What is the connection between this traditional authority and El Madury? El Madury's posts on SHPTM and at religious forums where he speaks always rely on the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāth*). According to Endang Mintarja, chair of the Jakarta branch of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this aspect has drawn many people to El Madury's lectures.<sup>20</sup> What El Madury did, which Muhammadiyah did not do in many of its fatwas was to cite the Islamic intellectual tradition. In many of its fatwas, Muhammadiyah often only quotes the Qur'an or hadith to strengthen its argument, without citing the opinions of other Islamic scholars. Perhaps this is a consequence of the modernist movement, which became the spirit of Muhammadiyah. The modernist movement initiated by reformers such as Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, and Muḥammad Rasyīd Riḍā in the late 19th and early 20th centuries used the term *al-rujū' ilā al-qur'ān wa al-sunnah* ('back to the Qur'an and Sunnah'). According to Syed Junaid A. Quadri (2013), the most obvious indicator of this movement, especially in Islamic law, is its critical attitude towards the structure of pre-modern sharia authority symbols, which are articulated in the language and logic of the institution of *taqlīd*. Modernist groups always encourage reopening the door to *ijtihād* and invite Muslims to leave the interpretive monopoly that the ulama class has held (Quadri 2013).

Muhammadiyah, which is heavily inspired by the modernist movement, is oriented towards the Qur'an and Sunnah and tends to attach less importance to the Islamic intellectual tradition that has been built by the ulama. This can be seen from its *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (the methodology Muhammadiyah uses in conducting *ijtihād*), which asserts that Muhammadiyah is not affiliated to a particular school, but the opinions of these schools are only considered in determining religious norms (Anwar 2018). This means that understanding religion in the Muhammadiyah perspective is derived directly from its primary sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah through the *ijtihād* process. However, it should be noted here that the narration that confirms the opinions of the scholars is taken into account in determining norms is not that clear how they are implemented in *tarjih* issues.

---

<sup>20</sup> Endang Mintarja voiced this at a Muhammadiyah Central Board Tarjih Council meeting of on the emergence 'Syarah HPT', 25 September 2020.

In some of its official *ijtihad*, the nuances of the opinions of scholars, especially the pre-modern ones do not appear, by choice or otherwise. Thus it appears that El Madury is filling the Muhammadiyah gap in presenting the authority of the Islamic intellectual tradition in religious narratives. For example, in the controversial veil case, the Tarjih Council issued three fatwas in 1993, 2003 and 2009.<sup>21</sup> The fatwas issued in 1993 and 2009 emphasised that the veil has no legal basis either in the Qur'an or the Sunnah but that Islamic law commands women to wear the hijab. These two fatwas did not cite the Islamic intellectual tradition, which also accommodates opinions about the veil. Although the Tarjih Council kept in its stance and strengthened the opinion that women's '*aurat*' (parts of the body that should go covered) are the whole body except the face and the palms of the hands, in the 2003 fatwa, the Tarjih Council provides space for those who want to wear the veil by expressing several opinions from the scholars who think so.

In contrast to the *tarjih* fatwas, El Madury's (2019) article *Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam?* ('Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?') on the SHPTM [site fanpage](#) refutes the *tarjih* fatwa. He cites various opinions of scholars in the Islamic intellectual tradition who support mandatory veiling as an effort to build religious authority. From this, it appears that El Madury, apart from attacking the *tarjih* fatwa, believes in maintaining traditional authority, in this case, the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāts*).

What El Madury did in building religious authority can also be captured from what Burhani calls a conversion narrative. Some scholars define religious conversion narratives differently as for example, in the change from one religious tradition to another. William James, as quoted by Burhani (2020: 158), states that religious conversion can also be interpreted as the conversion of a person who is a sinner into someone pious. According to Burhani (2020), people who experience religious conversion, usually after embracing a new tradition or religious understanding, will be hostile to the previous religious tradition or understanding.

El Madury also experienced a religious conversion, in this case, from the NU tradition to Muhammadiyah's. On SHPTM as well as his views when interviewed by this author, he introduced himself as someone who had practised the '*kuburiyyun* tradition'<sup>22</sup> and other actions that did not have examples from the Prophet. To convince his followers, he posted information about his religious conversion from NU to Muhammadiyah. Besides condemning

<sup>21</sup> Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah (2009, 2019a, 2019b).

<sup>22</sup> The tradition of visiting the grave with its associated practices.

his previous practices, which were deemed to have no basis in the Qur'an and Sunnah, he has had acrimonious debates with the NU *kyai*, Idrus Ramli on various issues, such as *ahlus sunnah wal jamaah* and *wahabi*, *nahdliyyin* traditions that are often considered heresy, and so on.

### Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Before the advent of the internet and the emergence of various new religious authorities, Muhammadiyah and NU were the two largest religious organisations and authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). However, following the emergence of the so-called micro-celebrity *ustaz*, these two groups, according to some scholars, began to face challenges and threats. The recent study by Wahyudi Akmaliah (2020) shows that the two organisations have responded differently to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was more combative about their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) maintains there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's response look less aggressive. Akmaliah is correct on several points, but other perspectives deserve to be considered, especially Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority on the internet. The weak point, as shown in Akmaliah's study is that there is no adequate elaboration of the assembly that exclusively holds religious authority in Muhammadiyah, namely the Tarjih Council. To trace more precisely how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority we have to look at the Tarjih Council.

This discussion starts from the author's experience in attending a meeting held by the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board. This meeting was initiated in response to the appearance of the *syarh* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Decisions Compilation) made by El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim. Whilst Unlike El Madury's comments were on his SHPTM, who created a fanpage, Abdurrahim (2020) wrote a *syarh* on HPT in bookaired his views in his book form.<sup>23</sup> The meeting was initiated in response to the emergence of El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim's SHPTM site. It should be noted here that Abdurrahim also contributed writings to this website. He was earlier mentioned as having had permission from Buya Yun to give *syarh* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Judgment Compilation) and is the author of *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*. The initial background

<sup>23</sup> For more information on Abdurrahim's book, see Wahyudi Sarju Abdurrahim (2020).

**Commented [MOU9]:** When – just month and year will do.

**Commented [nf10R9]:** I mentioned it in the next paragraph, which is 25 September 2020.

**Formatted:** Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

**Commented [MOU11]:** We don't need the footnote at end of this sentence as the year after author gives the in-text citation which will appear in Reference entry with publication details. I have also tightened the phrasing.

**Commented [nf12R11]:** OK

**Commented [nf13]:** I revised this sentence from the previous one because the previous one was not correct. Abdurrahim did write a *syarh* (explanation) on the HPT, but he wrote it in book form, not on a Facebook fanpage. I have also added a footnote and bibliography related to the book written by Wahyudi Abdurrahim.

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman



for holding this meeting, as revealed by the secretary of the Tarjih Council, Mas'udi, was purely in response to the SHPTM posts by El Madury. However, information about the SHPTM other than the one written by El Madury prompted the board of the Tarjih Council to include the book by Abdurrahim with the same title for the agenda.

On Friday, 7 Safar 1442 AH (25 September 2020), the Tarjih Council invited nine related sectors to discuss concerns over the emergence of the SHPTM on the internet written by the El Madury and Abdurrahim. The nine sector participants were: (1) the executive board of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (2) fatwa division of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (3) chair/secretary of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (4) Dr Endang Mintarja, M.Ag. (Chair of the Jakarta Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council); (5) H. Fathurrahman, Lc., M.S.I. (Chair of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council); (6) H. Budi Setiawan, S.T.; (7) Arif Nur Kholis (head of Muhammadiyah Digital Syiar Centre); (8) the manager of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre; and (9) the social media assistance team of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

During the meeting, there were at least four proposals from participants on how best to respond to the SHPTM, particularly El Madury's article about the veil. The first was to complain to Facebook about the SHPTM so that it could be banned for including an institution's name without permission. According to the chair of the Tabligh Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board, Fathurrahman Kamal, who was present at the forum, the fanpage is in the illicit category. This proposal was considered by the proponents as a firm proposal but that it risked unnecessary antagonism. The second was to use a persuasive approach in the form of clarification or an appeal to El Madury not to use the name *Himpunan Putusan Tajih* (HPT) or something that is associated with *tarjih*. Its proponents consider this approach to be softer and more reflective of being Muhammadiyah members in particular, and Muslims in general. The third proposal was to use institutional authority in writing an official letter on behalf of the Tarjih Council to El Madury. The fourth idea that was considered more practical and efficient was to place the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it on social media. This would avoid being drawn into unfruitful correspondence on SHPTM.

However, there was no agreement on which approach should be undertaken despite long discussions. It was agreed instead that there would be a follow up with another forum. Since this author started writing (3 April 2022) there has been no further meeting. The emergence of

SHPTM on the internet and its effects have been considered a serious problem by the Tarjih Council. The meeting's participants were generally uneasy about the appearance of El Madury and his fanpage. In addition, they wanted El Madury to be warned or reprimanded since SHPTM is considered a threat to religious authority of the Tarjih Council. This illustrates that Muhammadiyah, through its official religious assembly, the Tarjih Council, is not passive in responding to the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. However, only certain cases and not all micro-celebrity *ustaz* who appear on social media have drawn the Tarjih Council's attention. Although there has yet to be a follow up meeting, the Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an official institution supporting the Tarjih Council illustrates how Muhammadiyah struggles to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is an institution that was founded in 2016 by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Ahmad Dahlan University (Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah 2016). Despite being a new institution, its legality is clear, and it has formal authority. In the Muhammadiyah tradition as an organisation, such legality is essential. Thus when someone from Muhammadiyah, speaks on another person's behalf or endorses an approach, the speaker's status is below that of the institution and cannot be assumed to be that of institutions within Muhammadiyah which, although new, have legality. In the context of El Madury and the SHPTM fanpage, this is important. Even though El Madury claims he has obtained permission to make *syarh* on the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* from a charismatic figure in Muhammadiyah, Buya Yunahar, legally it is not valid. In that context, Buya Yunahar spoke on behalf of himself, not on behalf of Muhammadiyah.

Fronted by young Muhammadiyah cadres, the majority of whom are alumni of Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Tarjih Ulama Education, PUTM),<sup>24</sup> Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays a role in supporting the Tarjih Council programmes. These are relatively under-performing and facing obstacles, particularly on using social media to disseminate their official *ijtihad*. The members of the Tarjih Council, who are relatively old, need support from young cadres. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays an essential role in assisting the Tarjih Council in maintaining its religious authority on the internet. It responded to El Madury and SHPTM, by being pro-active with a poster (Figure

---

<sup>24</sup> PUTM is an educational institution under the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board designed to produce a cadre of Muhammadiyah scholars. PUTM organises a special programme that educates and prepares Muhammadiyah *tarjih* scholars who are competent in the religious field. The birth of PUTM was based on the concern of some Muhammadiyah leaders about the increasing scarcity of ulama in and from Muhammadiyah (Fauzi 2020a).

1) on social media and in print form, containing information related to the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it.



Figure 1. Poster with information on the official social media accounts affiliated to the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Are you often confused about finding sources of reference about Islam from the perspective of Muhammadiyah?

There is no need to be confused anymore because various social media are straightforward for us to access. Tarjih (Council) has come with a more trendy look.

- ✓ Easy to read anywhere
- ✓ Provide updated fatwas
- ✓ Discuss current issues

As members of Muhammadiyah, let's get used to reading the decisions and fatwas of Muhammadiyah

Here are some media that can be accessed very easily. So don't be confused anymore.

Web: [fatwatarjih.or.id](http://fatwatarjih.or.id)

Facebook: [fb.me/fatwamu](https://www.facebook.com/fatwamu)

Instagram: [pusattarjih\\_muhammadiyah](https://www.instagram.com/pusattarjih_muhammadiyah)

Telegram: [t.me/fatwatarjihmu](https://t.me/fatwatarjihmu)

Youtube: [tarjih channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

Let's spread it to all Muhammadiyah people!

Figure 2. Translation of Figure 1.

Although the poster above does not directly mention the SHPTM [fanpage](#) created by El Madury, the main message in it is clear and firm, namely to inform the Muhammadiyah followers about the official accounts of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it. This would hopefully let Muhammadiyah members understand how its official religious voice is disseminated on the internet. Following this, Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah successively uploaded other, more varied j... M fanpage. Some other examples of these posters are



**Figure 3.** Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Do you know?

The Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah now have an official YouTube channel, (namely) the Tarjih Channel.

Have you subscribed yet?

**Figure 4.** Translation of Figure 3.



**Figure 5.** Information about the website fatwatarjih.or.id, an official website affiliated to the Tarjih Council containing fatwas. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Fatwatarjih.or.id is the official website for the Tarjih and the Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board (MTT).

The Media Team of Fatwa Tarjih, through this website, has been, is and will continue to strive consistently to publish various ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council. Until now,

tarjih fatwa collections from 1997 to 2018 have entered the editing stage, and some are just waiting to be published.

Figure 6. Translation of Figure 5.



Figure 7. Information on the official website of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Do you want to know the full history (of the Tarjih Council)?  
Or do you want to look for ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council?  
Come on; you can find out on this website: tarjih.or.id

Figure 8. Translation of Figure 7.

The use of informal language and emoticons typical of millennials indicate the audience that the Tarjih Council wants to target. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah team understands that informal language will appeal to its target audience. This is aimed at not only establishing

the authority of the Tarjih Council but ‘millennialisation’ i.e. to reach out to the younger generation familiar with social media. Suyadi and Widodo (2019) note that millennialisation is an alternative way to develop knowledge that will synergise with various online media and digital technology. In the context of *tarjih* millennialisation, Muhammadiyah’s official *ijtihad* that tend to be disseminated in a conventional, monotonous, and uncreative manner are now communicated through social media in more contextual packaging. This means that the Tarjih Council and its various official *ijtihad*, which previously were always identified with the ‘old’, now consciously aim to include young people.

The religious authority of the Tarjih Council in cyberspace, especially when connected with the appearance of El Madury and SHPTM, was greatly helped by the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah and its young Muhammadiyah cadres. It manages various social media platforms with large numbers of followers, and has helped maintain Muhammadiyah’s religious authority by balancing and suppressing the presence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. Its contents are fatwas and decisions of the Tarjih Council with more appealing visualisation to reach out to the millennials.

Although the number of social media followers of the Tarjih Council is less than that for the NU and Salafi groups, at least the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah acts as a compass for Muhammadiyah followers who question its religious authority, especially with the emergence of El Madury’s version in SHPTM. The administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah’s social media have received many messages either through the comments column or direct messages in its inbox, which question the authority of SHPTM.<sup>25</sup> Here, the vital role of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is increasingly finding its momentum.

## Conclusion

Although it can be said that Muhammadiyah’s religious influence and authority on the internet are inferior and lag behind other religious groups, Muhammadiyah is still trying to manage its authority, especially when facing threats from micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By focusing on Zulkarnain El Madury and his SHPTM social media page, this article offers a different perspective from previous studies by analysing the work of the Tarjih Council as the only institution in Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas. This article shows that

---

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Ariful Hazam, Ilham Ibrahim, and Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, September 2020. They are Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah social media administrators.

Muhammadiyah has its own way of responding to the emergence of new religious authorities. With the help of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an institution in its fold, the Tarjih Council has made continuous efforts through social media and its official website to counter new voices that threaten its authority. Muhammadiyah's response was neither aggressive nor radical but it clarified its stance without mentioning who precisely was being targeted. What Muhammadiyah did was in line with the Javanese proverb *Ngluruk tanpo bolo, menang tanpo ngasorake* ('win without defeat, win without humiliation [of others]'). The form of Muhammadiyah's response is inherited from its founder, Ahmad Dahlan. As seen by James Peacock (1978), Ahmad Dahlan ~~carried out~~brought about many social transformations calmly and systematically without being ~~antagonistic~~confrontational. This can be seen, for example, from how Ahmad Dahlan and the early generation of Muhammadiyah fortified Muslims from various superstitions, heresies, and myths by rationalising explaining the unacceptability of such popular religious thoughts and beliefs and practices believed by many people at that time. In addition to confronting Christianisation, the three essential ideas initiated at that time, namely hospitals, schools, and orphanages, were actually the implementation of efforts to counter the practice of superstitions, heresies, and myths that had spread in the community calmly and systematically (Shihab 1995).

In a broader context, the case of Zulkarnain El Madury also provides a lesson that using the name Muhammadiyah to justify personal opinions or legitimise particular interests is wrong. Muhammadiyah has the reputation of a very well managed organisation (Barton 2014; *Suara Muhammadiyah* 2019) which is its strength and gives it clout compared to other religious organisations in Indonesia, such as NU. In short, authority in Muhammadiyah lies in the institution itself and is not based on personality. It differs from NU, where power and authority tend to lie in personal figures, such as *kyai* or *gus* (Fauzi 2020b).

Muhammadiyah followers who understand its basic rules are not easily influenced by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. They are aware that Muhammadiyah's official religious stance is only be issued by the Tarjih Council and that those external to the Tarjih Council or even specific Muhammadiyah figures who give religious opinions, speak only for themselves as individuals and not the organisation. This would be the case, for example, even if the religious opinion emanates from the chair of the Tarjih Council as an individual. This did occur when Syamsul Anwar, the current chair of the Tarjih Council, differed from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council on the issue of *iftitāh* prayer (opening night

**Commented [MOU14]:** Could we have an example?

**Commented [nf15R14]:** Yes, we could. I have added an example and a reference. What do you think?

**Commented [MOU16]:** I don't understand this sentence. Are you trying to say hospitals, schools and orphanages were areas of superstitions etc? In any case, I feel this info is extraneous but could be included in a footnote or deleted.

**Commented [nf17R16]:** No. My point is as follows:

In the era when Dahlan lived, many Indonesians practised superstitions, heresies and myths about health, welfare/safety and education. For example, in myths related to health, some people believed that if someone was sick, they should be taken to an indigenous medical practitioner/shaman rather than a hospital/doctor. Another example is superstitions related to safety/welfare. At that time, some Indonesians believed that if a certain type of bird flew round and round above their house, the inhabitants would be sick or have a misfortune. In the context of this society, Dahlan then built hospitals, schools and orphanages to encourage people to reason and abandon superstitions, heresies and myths.

What do you think?

**Formatted:** English (United States)



prayer [*qiyām al-lail*]).<sup>26</sup> While Anwar's opinion clearly differs from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council, the prevailing opinion in Muhammadiyah is that of the Tarjih Council, not the chair of the Tarjih Council. Within Muhammadiyah, such religious differences of opinion are common as usually happens in *fiqh* discourse in general. The difference between El Madury and Anwar is that the latter does not act in the name of Muhammadiyah or the Tarjih Council when he has a different view. Instead, on many occasions, he urges Muhammadiyah followers to abide by the opinion of the Tarjih Council on the *iftitāh* prayer.<sup>27</sup> Thus Anwar has shown he can compromise his personal religious opinion with his professional attitude in the organisation. In this case, he understands that using the name Muhammadiyah to legitimise individual opinions or interests is not justifiable.

### Acknowledgements

Permission for this research PJB-002/SP3/LPPM-UAD/VI/2020 and funding were provided by the ethical board of Ahmad Dahlan University Research and Development Institute (Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan).

I am grateful to *ustaz* Zulkarnain El Madury for his exceptional help and support during my fieldwork. I also thank Amiruddin, Arif Nur Kholis, Muhammad Muflih, Wahyudi Abdurrahim, Robby Karman, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, Ilham Ibrahim, Ariful Hazam, and the members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council for providing information regarding my research. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article and to the editors of the *Indonesia and the Malay World*. Errors, if any, are solely mine.

### Note on contributor

*Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi* is a lecturer in the Department of Hadith Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He has published widely

<sup>26</sup> For Anwar (2013), the *iftitāh* prayer comprises two short *rak'ah* prayers that are performed before *qiyām al-lail*, with the condition that it must be preceded by sleep, otherwise there is no need to perform the *iftitāh* prayer. However, the Tarjih Council holds that the *iftitāh* prayer consists of two short *rak'ah* prayers performed before *qiyām al-lail*, whether preceded by sleep or not (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2011; Tim Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2019a).

<sup>27</sup> On several occasions, this author has heard Syamsul Anwar's direct appeal to Muhammadiyah members to follow the opinion of the Tarjih Council on this aspect of the *iftitāh* prayer.

Formatted: Don't add space between paragraphs of the same style

on a variety of issues relating to Islamic Studies, including al-Quran, hadith, Islamic law, social media and da'wah, and Muhammadiyah studies. Email: niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id

## References

- Abdurrahim, Wahyudi Sarju. 2020. *Ahlul haq wassunnah: syarah himpunan putusan tarjih Muhammadiyah bab iman bagian ketuhanan* [Ahlul haq wassunnah: explanation of tarjih decisions compilation of Muhammadiyah chapter on faith part of divinity]. Yogyakarta: Al Muflihun Publishing.
- Abror, Robby. 2020. Syekh Yunahar, ulama Muhammadiyah kharismatik [Sheikh Yunahar, a charismatic Muhammadiyah cleric]. 3 January. <<https://menara62.com/syeikh-yunahar-ulama-muhammadiyah-kharismatik/>> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2018. Media sosial dan pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [Social media and shifting religious authority]. 12 December. <[https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media\\_sosial\\_dan\\_pergeseran\\_otoritas\\_keagamaan](https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media_sosial_dan_pergeseran_otoritas_keagamaan)> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2020. The demise of moderate Islam: new media, contestation, and reclaiming religious authorities. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10 (1): 1–24.
- Alfaqi, Mifdal Zusron. 2015. Memahami Indonesia melalui prespektif nasionalisme, politik identitas, serta solidaritas [Understanding Indonesia through the perspectives of nationalism, identity politics, and solidarity]. *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 28 (2): 111–116.
- Alvara Research Center. 2020. Ramadhan dan pandemi Covid-19: semangat ibadah tak surut, konsumsi tersendat. <[https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN\\_DAN\\_PANDEMI\\_COVID-19\\_SEMANGAT\\_IBADAH\\_TAK\\_SURUT\\_KONSUMSI\\_TERSENDAT.pdf](https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN_DAN_PANDEMI_COVID-19_SEMANGAT_IBADAH_TAK_SURUT_KONSUMSI_TERSENDAT.pdf)> Accessed 23 February 2021.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2007. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer* [Contemporary Islamic law studies]. Jakarta: RM Books.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2013. *Salat Tarawih: Tinjauan usul fikih, sejarah, dan fikih* [Tarawih prayer: usul fiqh, history, and fiqh perspectives]. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2016. Fatwā, purification and dynamization: a study of tarjih in Muhammadiyah. *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (1): 27–44.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2018. *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Panitia Musyawarah

**Commented [MOU18]:** Did you mean the divine part of faith rather than faith part of divinity?

**Commented [nf19R18]:** Yes, I did. It follows the Indonesian title of Abdurrahim's book.

Nasional Tarjih Muhammadiyah XXX.

- Anwar, Syamsul. 2020. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer Bagian dua* [Contemporary Islamic legal studies Part two]. Yogyakarta: UAD Press.
- Barton, Greg. 2014. The Gülen movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: progressive Islamic thought, religious philanthropy and civil society in Turkey and Indonesia. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25 (3): 287–301.
- Buchari, Sri Astuti. 2014. *Kebangkitan etnis menuju politik identitas* [Ethnic awakening towards identity politics]. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Bunt, Gary R. 2003. *Islam in the digital age: e-jihad, online fatwas and cyber Islamic environments*. London: Pluto Press.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2005. The 45th Muhammadiyah Congress contest between literal-conservative and liberal-moderate Muslims in Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 12 (1): 185–189.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2013. Liberal and conservative discourses in the Muhammadiyah: the struggle for the face of reformist Islam in Indonesia. In Martin van Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary developments in Indonesian Islam: explaining the 'conservative turn'*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2016. Aksi bela Islam: konservatisme dan fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. *Maarif* 11 (2): 15–29.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2020. Muslim televangelists in the making: conversion narratives and the construction of religious authority. *Muslim World* 110 (2): 154–175.
- Burhanudin, Jajat. 2004. The fragmentation of religious authority: Islamic print media in early 20th century Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 11 (1): 23–62.
- Campbell, H.A. and Teusner, P.E. 2011. Religious authority in the age of the internet. In *Christian Reflection, Virtual Lives*. Waco TX: Baylor University Press, pp. 59–68. <<https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/130950.pdf>>
- Chairi, Effendi. 2019. Ketidadaan otoritas terpusat dalam fenomena kontemporer di Indonesia [The absence of a centralised authority in contemporary phenomena in Indonesia]. *SANGKĒP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 2 (2):197–215.
- Chaplin. Chris. 2021. *Salafism and the State: Islamic activism and national identity in contemporary Indonesia*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.
- Dakta.com. 2016. Aa Gym ajak ribuan jamaahnya ikut aksi bela Islam III [Aa Gym invites thousands of congregants to join Islamic Defence Action III]. 29 November. <<http://www.dakta.com/news/7329/aa-gym-ajak-ribuan-jamaahnya-ikut-aksi-bela-islam->

iii> Accessed 2 February 2020.

Fadl, Khaled Abou El. 2014. *Speaking in God's name: Islamic law, authority, and women*. London: Oneworld Publications.

Farhan, Farhan. 2017. Pesan dakwah Felix Siauw di media sosial (perspektif meaning and media). *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Administrasi Islam* 1 (2): 209–226.

Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2017. Peranan Maqasid Al-Shariah dalam memahami Hadith: kajian terhadap fatwa Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah [The role of Maqasid Al-Shariah in understanding Hadith: a study of the fatwa of the Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah]. MA thesis, University of Malaya.

Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020a. PUTM dan kaderisasi ulama: menelusuri latar belakang lahirnya Lembaga Kaderisasi Ulama Muhammadiyah [PUTM and clerical regeneration: tracing the background of the birth of the Muhammadiyah Clerical Cadre Institute]. <<https://santricendekia.com/putm-dan-kaderisasi-ulama-menelusuri-latar-belakang-lahirnya-lembaga-kaderisasi-ulama-muhammadiyah/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.

Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020b. Tantangan kader ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah di era 4.0 [Challenges for Tarjih Muhammadiyah ulama cadres in the 4.0 era]. 21 July. *Suara 'Aisyiyah* <<https://suaraaisyiyah.id/tantangan-kader-ulama-tarjih-muhammadiyah-di-era-4-0/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.

Fealy, Greg. 2008. Consuming Islam: commodified religion and aspirational pietism in contemporary Indonesia. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.

Gesuri. 2020. Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia kehilangan ulama kharismatik [Yunahar Ilyas passed away, Indonesia lost a charismatic scholar]. 3 January. <<https://www.gesuri.id/internal/yunahar-ilyas-wafat-indonesia-kehilangan-ulama-kharismatik-b1YFoZpRY>> Accessed 20 March 2020.

Hew, Wai Weng. 2018. The art of dakwah: social media, visual persuasion and the Islamist propagation of Felix Siauw. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (134): 61–79.

Hoesterey, James B. 2008. Marketing morality: the rise, fall and rebranding of Aa Gym. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: Religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, pp. 95–114.

Hope Cheong, Pauline. 2016. Religious authority and social media branding in a culture of religious celebrification. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*, University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 81–102.

Horsfield, Peter. 2016. The media and religious authority from ancient to modern. In Stewart

- M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*. University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 37–66.
- IB Times Indonesia. 2020. 100 situs Islam Indonesia, NU Online peringkat pertama [100 Indonesian Islamic websites, NU Online ranks first]. 10 July. <IBTimes.Id. 2020. <<https://ibtimes.id/100-situs-islam-indonesia-nu-online-peringkat-pertama/>> Accessed 23 February 2023.
- Ilyas, Yunahar. 2012. *Kuliah Akhlaq* [Akhlaq lecture]. XII. Yogyakarta: LPPI Universitas Muhammdiyah Yogyakarta.
- Khamis, S., Ang, L. and Welling, R. 2017. Self-branding, ‘micro-celebrity’ and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191–208.
- Khomalia, Isti and Rahman, Khairul Arief. 2018. Micro hijabers celebrity: membentuk identitas dengan update self-story via instagram (kasus dian pelangi). *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban dan Pemikiran Islam* 2 (1): 33–42.
- Kompas. 2020. Sejumlah tokoh hadir prosesi pemakaman ketua PP Muhammadiyah Yunahar Ilyas [Many figures attended the funeral procession of Muhammadiyah chairman Yunahar Ilyas]. 3 January. <<https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/03/19142441/sejumlah-tokoh-hadiri-prosesi-pemakaman-ketua-pp-muhammadiyah-yunahar-ilyas>> Accessed 3 April 2022.
- Labiq. 2019. Pengaruh new media terhadap pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [The influence of new media on shifting religious authority]. 19 April. <<https://geotimes.co.id/opini/pengaruh-new-media-terhadap-pergeseran-otoritas-keagamaan>> Accessed 19 October 2020.
- Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. 2010. *Politik identitas dan masa depan pluralisme Indonesia*. Edited by Samsu Rizal Panggabean et al. Jakarta: Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (PUSAD) Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina.
- Madury, Zulkarnain El. 2019. Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam? [Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?]. 2 November. <<https://www.facebook.com/zulkarnainsumenep/posts/2386248524961601>> Accessed 5 May 2020.
- Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah. 2016. Pembukaan Halaqah, Majelis Tarjih Launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan Muhammadiyah Observatorium Network [Halaqah opening, Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and Muhammadiyah Observatory Network]. 20 August. <<https://tarjih.or.id/pembukaan-halaqah-majelis-tarjih-launching-pusat-tarjih-muhammadiyah-dan-muhammadiyah>>

observatorium-network/> Accessed 6 October 2023.

Majelis Tarjih Dahlan, Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. 2016.

Nota Kesepakatan Majelis Tarjih Dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Tentang Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di Islamic Center Universitas Ahmad Dahlan [Memorandum of Agreement between the Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board and Ahmad Dahlan University on the Management of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre at the Islamic Centre of Ahmad Dahlan University]. Yogyakarta.

Maskur, Maskur and Noor, Irfan Noor. 2014. Ustadz selebriti Abdullah Gymnastiar dalam budaya populer (perspektif hipersemiotika Yasraf Amir Piliang) [Celebrity Ustadz Abdullah Gymnastiar in popular culture (Yasraf Amir Piliang's hyper semiotics perspective)]. *Jurnal Studia Insania* 2 (1): 47–57.

Matheson, Craig. 1987. Weber and the classification of forms of legitimacy. *British Journal of Sociology* 38 (2): 199–215.

Muhammadiyah Central Board. 2023. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 8 October 2023.

Nisa, Eva F. 2019. Internet and Muslim women. In Ronald Lukens-Bull and Mark Woodward (eds), *Handbook of contemporary Islam and Muslim lives*. Cham: Springer, pp. 1–19.

Palahuddin. 2020. The typology of religious thought in Muhammadiyah. *International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 3 (2): 74–81.

<<http://journal2.uad.ac.id/index.php/ijish/article/view/2233/pdf>>

Peacock, James L. 1978. *Purifying the Faith: the Muhammadiyah movement in Indonesian Islam*. Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2011. *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2016. Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan MuON [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and MuON]. 20 August.

<<http://www.umm.ac.id/id/muhammadiyah/7070.html>> Accessed 20 March 2021.

Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Berikut Susunan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah pPeriode 2022–2027 [The following is the composition of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the 2022–2027 period] <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/berikut-susunan-pimpinan-pusat-muhammadiyah-periode-2022-2027/>> Accessed 7 October 2023.

Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Majelis Tabligh [Tabligh Council]. <

- <https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 07 October 2023.
- Postill, John and Pink, Sarah. 2012. Social media ethnography: the digital researcher in a messy web. *Media International Australia* 145 (1): 123–134.
- Pribadi, Yanwar. 2019. Fragmentasi umat dan penciptaan otoritas keagamaan: tanggapan terhadap ‘Islam lokal’ dan ‘Islam asing’ di Indonesia [Ummah fragmentation and the creation of religious authority: responses to ‘local Islam’ and ‘foreign Islam’ in Indonesia]. *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 21 (1): 103–119.  
<<https://jmb.lipi.go.id/jmb/article/view/828/455>>
- Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah. n.d. *Panduan pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre management guide]. Majelis Tarjih, Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta.
- Quadri, Syed Junaid A. 2013. Transformations of tradition: modernity in the thought of Muḥammad Bakhīt Al-Muṭī‘ī. PhD thesis, McGill University.
- Rahman, Asjmuni Abdur et al. 1985. Laporan penelitian Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (suatu studi tentang sistem dan metode penentuan hukum) [Research report of Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (a study of the system and method of determining the law)]. Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga.
- Rakyat Merdeka. 2019. Dubes Malaysia jenguk ketua MUI Yunahar Ilyas di Yogyakarta [Malaysian ambassador visits MUI chairman Yunahar Ilyas in Yogyakarta]. 5 November. <<https://rm.id/baca-berita/internasional/21745/dubes-malaysia-jenguk-ketum-mui-yunahar-ilyas-di-yogyakarta>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Riesebrodt, Martin. 1999. Charisma in Max Weber’s Sociology of Religion. *Religion* 29 (1): 1–14.
- Sadasri, Lidwina Mutia. 2017. Selebriti mikro di media baru kajian presentasi diri dalam vlog selebriti mikro [Micro-celebrities in new media: a study of self-presentation in micro-celebrity vlogs]. *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi Dan Opini Publik* 21 (2): 167–181.  
<<https://jurnal.kominfo.go.id/index.php/jpkop/article/view/1218/720>>
- Saefullah, Hikmawan. 2022. Media baru, publik baru: mengkonfigurasi ulang ruang publik Islam [New media, new publics: reconfiguring the Islamic public sphere]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sammy, Abdullah. 2022. Peluang dan tantangan dakwah digital Muhammadiyah [Opportunities and challenges of Muhammadiyah digital da'wah]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah

- Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sanjaya, Makroen. 2022. Peta ideologi islam di media sosial [The map of Islamic ideology on social media]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Senft, Theresa M. 2008. *Camgirls: celebrity and community in the age of social networks*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Shamsy, Ahmed El. 2013. The Ḥāshiyā in Islamic law: a sketch of the Shāfiʿī literature. *Oriens* 41 (3-4): 289–315.
- Shihab, Alwi. 1995. The Muhammadiyah movement and its controversy with Christian mission in Indonesia. PhD thesis, at Temple University, USA.
- Spencer, Martin E. 1970. Weber on legitimate norms and authority. *British Journal of Sociology* 21 (2): 123–134.
- Suara Muhammadiyah. 2019. Hyung Jun Kim: sistem di Muhammadiyah sungguh ideal [Hyung Jun Kim: Muhammadiyah's system is ideal]. <<https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/08/01/hyung-jun-kim-sistem-di-muhammadiyah-sungguh-ideal/>> Accessed 9 April 2022.
- Suyadi and Widodo, Hendro. 2019. Millennialization of Islamic education based on neuroscience in the third generation university in Yogyakarta Indonesia. *QIIS International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7 (1): 173–202.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2009. Hukum tentang jenggot dan cadar [Islamic law perspective on beards and veils]. *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine, no. 18 . Yogyakarta.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019a. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 4*. Cetakan IX. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019b. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 7*. Cetakan IV. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Tirto.id. 2018. Dari Aa' Gym ke Felix Siauw: ustaz medsos & medium dakwah politis. Tirto.Id. 16 January. <<https://tirto.id/dari-aa-gym-ke-felix-siauw-ustaz-medsos-medium-dakwah-politis-cCGf>> Accessed 5 February 2020.
- Turner, Bryan S. 2007. Religious authority and the new media. *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2): 117–134.
- Turner, Graeme. 2010. *Ordinary people and the media: the demotic turn*. Los Angeles CA: Sage.
- Widodo, Arif. 2017. Transformative intellectual discourse and movement of Ikatan

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic

**Commented [MOU20]:** PhD titles are not italicised in IMW house style unless published in which case it would be treated as a book.

**Commented [nf21R20]:** OK

**Formatted:** Font: Not Italic, Complex Script Font: Not Italic



Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM). *Iseedu: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices* 1 (1): 126–151.

<<https://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/iseedu/article/view/5423/3542>>

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change*. Princetone NJ: Princeton University Press.

## ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY *USTAZ* PHENOMENON

### Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

#### ABSTRACTS

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the fragmentation of religious authority. In the Indonesian context, the mainstream religious authority held by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has been challenged and threatened by micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This article examines the emergence of the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah fanpage on Facebook, created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board as it has threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority. It analyses Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace, by taking a closer look at what has been done by Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, an assembly that has the exclusive authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* within Muhammadiyah. This article also discusses lessons that can be learned from the case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the response of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

#### KEYWORDS

Fragmentation of religious authority; micro-celebrity *ustaz*; Muhammadiyah; religious authority; *tarjih*.

#### ABSTRAK

*Kemunculan internet dan media sosial telah mempertajam fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. Dalam konteks Indonesia, otoritas keagamaan arus utama yang dipegang oleh Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) disaingi dan diancam oleh para ustaz mikro-*

*selebritas. Artikel ini mengkaji kemunculan fanpage Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah di Facebook yang dibuat dan dikelola oleh Zulkarnain El Madury, seseorang yang mengklaim sebagai ustadz Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, karena dianggap mengancam otoritas keagamaan Muhammadiyah. Penelitian ini menganalisis upaya Muhammadiyah dalam mempertahankan otoritas keagamaannya di dunia maya dengan melihat lebih dekat pada apa yang telah dilakukan oleh Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah, sebuah majelis yang memiliki otoritas eksklusif untuk mengeluarkan fatwa dan ijtihad keagamaan resmi di Muhammadiyah. Artikel ini juga membahas pelajaran yang dapat dipetik dari kasus Zulkarnain El Madury dan respons Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah.*

#### KATA KUNCI

~~Fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan; Muhammadiyah; otoritas keagamaan; Ustad mikro-selebritas; fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan; otoritas keagamaan; Muhammadiyah; tarjih; ustad mikro-selebritas.~~

#### Introduction

The Alvara Research Center (2020) survey was surprising as it stated that the clerics most heard by the public, especially in Ramadan 2020, were not from the official Muhammadiyah board.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the Alvara Research Center survey was released (IBTimes.id 2020), an Islamic website managed by young Muhammadiyah intellectuals, published a report ranking the 100 most popular Islamic websites in Indonesia. The majority of these sites are managed by or affiliated to Nahdliyyin (NU followers) and Salafi<sup>2</sup> groups with few such sites operated by or affiliated to Muhammadiyah. The Alvara Research Center survey and the IBTimes.id report show that Muhammadiyah, in terms of influence and religious authority on the internet, lags behind other religious groups which is ironic for an organisation claiming to represent the progressive Islamic group.

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the so-called fragmentation of religious authority. Eva F. Nisa (2019), for example, mentions that the proliferation of various digital platforms is directly proportional to the increasing fragmentation of religious authority.

<sup>1</sup> One of the 15 most popular clerics mentioned in the report, Ustad Ali Hidayat, has since been included on the Muhammadiyah Central Board's Tabligh Council (2022–2027; Muhammadiyah Central Board 2023). Prior to that, he did not convey official Muhammadiyah ideas in his lectures.

<sup>2</sup> For more comprehensive information on the activism of Salafi groups, see Chris Chaplin (2021).

**Commented [nf1]:** I have sorted Indonesian abstracts in alphabetical order. But I apologise; I'm still a bit doubtful because when I look at the current volume and issue of IMW journal (Vol. 51, No. 150), the Indonesian abstracts are sorted by the English abstract version. Which one is correct?

PK I would follow the English abstract version.

Islamic discourse is monopolised not only by an elite group of scholars or mainstream religious groups, but also by persons or groups that have not been considered in Islamic discourse. Furthermore, the presence of the internet and social media has led to the birth of what is called micro-celebrity. Theresa M. Senft (2008) defines micro-celebrity as a new style of online performance that involves increasing popularity on social media such as videos, blogs, and networking sites. These micro-celebrities unlike conventional celebrities, emerge from what is known as new media (Senft 2008).

Of course, not all new media users have the adjective ‘micro-celebrity’. Only those who experience what Graeme Turner (2010) terms ‘the demotic turn’, namely, the increasing visibility of ordinary people to appear as celebrities in the media, especially online media. In turn, both conventional and micro-celebrity exist in various public spheres, and the discourse on them is characterised as influencers, stimulants of consumerism, enthusiasm, public debate, and various activism (Sadasri 2017).

By borrowing the theory of micro-celebrities in the study of new media, we can then read how these micro-celebrities have also come to the fore in the religious realm. The emergence of ulama, *ustaz* (religious teachers), and religious leaders who become influencers in new media can perhaps be seen as one form of micro-celebrity. Felix Siauw is a prominent example. A convert, who is now a preacher, Siauw has a massive following on social media. In 2018, for example, he had 2.6 million followers on Twitter, and in 2022 it numbered 3.3 million. Felix Siauw’s Instagram account has around 4.9 million followers. It can even be said that he is the *ustaz* who has the most followers on social media (Tirto 2018), making him one of the leading social media preachers in Indonesia today (Hew 2018). What Felix Siauw posts on his social media has more or less influenced the map of religious authorities in Indonesia.

The existence of the internet and the continuing development of technology allows the emergence of many other micro-celebrity *ustaz*, both in the national arena more generally or more specifically in internal religious organisations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, Persis (Persatuan Islam) or others. In the context of Muhammadiyah, the largest modernist Islamic organisation began to be challenged for its religious authority by a preacher who was said to be part of Muhammadiyah itself, namely Zulkarnain El Madury. He claims to be a Muhammadiyah cadre and often introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board. In recent years, El Madury has been noticed by Muhammadiyah administrators

and Muhammadiyah cadres<sup>3</sup> and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah) has discussed him in a special meeting. This is because the posts on the Facebook page that El Madury manages, *Syarah Himpunan Putus Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (henceforth SHPTM), often differ significantly from – and to some extent delegitimise – a Muhammadiyah fatwa or official decision. Responses from grassroots or Muhammadiyah followers vary. This can be seen, for example, from the comments on each post. Some defend and remain adamant on the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah, but not a few were affected and followed what was conveyed by El Madury on his Facebook page.

This is where it becomes crucial to see how Muhammadiyah attempts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace, especially among its members and the public. By conducting web content analysis (Postill and Pink 2012) on SHPTM and official social media accounts and those affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this article shows how El Madury builds his narratives and, in turn, how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority on the internet. Additionally, field research was conducted and key actors were interviewed offline and online in a semi-structured format.<sup>4</sup> Apart from El Madury, the key actors are members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Digital Broadcast Centre (Pusat Syiar Digital Muhammadiyah), Muhammadiyah activists as well as Muhammadiyah grassroots.

### **Fragmentation of religious authority, new preacher and micro-celebrity *ustaz* phenomenon**

Fragmentation of religious authority is a phenomenon that occurs in various religious communities and is not limited to Islam (B.S. Turner 2007; Campbell and Teusner 2011; Hope Cheong 2016). The fragmentation of religious authority is also a global phenomenon as pointed out by Gary R. Bunt (2003) who states that the new media have shaped diverse understandings among individual Muslims worldwide about e-jihad (electronic jihad). The definition of electronic jihad is understood and interpreted differently, ranging from online activism to Muslim articulation after the events of 11 September 2001. Bunt (2003) shows that each new media (in this case, new websites) has authority for its respective group.

---

<sup>3</sup> This author's online and offline interviews with Amiruddin, Robby Karman, Muhammad Muflih, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, and Arif Nur Kholis, 2019–2020.

<sup>4</sup> Data collection in this study was carried out between 2018 and 2020. As personal interviews were not possible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, some interviews were conducted online.

The fragmentation of religious authority discussed here is from the 20th century to the present. Jajat Burhanudin (2004) points out that there has been a shift in religious authority in the historical phase of Indonesian religious thought in the early 20th century due to modernisation. His study, which focuses on the Islamic print media, further shows that there is a shift in religious authority that used to be in *Kitab Kuning*<sup>5</sup> taught by *kyai* or ulama in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to magazines, journals, newspapers, and books published by modernist circles or organisations.

Religious authority since the early 20th century has always stayed with Muhammadiyah and NU. These two religious organisations are often referred to by scholars as the authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016; Akmaliah 2018). The shift in religious authority occurred again in the 1990s when national television stations emerged. The Islamic programmes presented by the television stations show the *ustaz* (religious teachers), which in turn build their authority through lectures delivered by these preachers. This phenomenon prompted scholars to come up with the term ‘Islamic televangelism’ (Akmaliah 2018). Abdullah Gymnastiar who is better known as Aa Gym is one example that falls into the category of a television *ustaz*, or a ‘tele-dai’ as coined by Greg Fealy (2008).

The most obvious and recent picture of the fragmentation of religious authority in Indonesia is the series of events of the Defend Islam Action (Aksi Bela Islam). Ahmad Najib Burhani (2016) hints that these critical events marked the peak of the fragmentation of religious authorities in Indonesia as they gave rise to new actors who challenge the established religious authority. Although it cannot be said to shift or match the role of Muhammadiyah and NU, the emergence of new actors such as Rizieq Shihab provides a new map of religious authority in Indonesia.

This phenomenon of the fragmentation of religious authority has increased sharply in the development of what scholars call pop culture, marked by the birth of many new media (Labiq 2019). The availability of internet access to every social class is the main factor for this fragmentation. As a result, many new media have emerged with each individual and group competing to spread ideas (Horsfield 2016; Nisa 2019).

Aa Gym is one of the early actors who emerged in the internet era in Indonesia. This can be captured in two interesting studies on Aa Gym by James B. Hoesterey (2008), and

---

<sup>5</sup> So-called because the books were printed on yellow paper. These were the Islamic texts used in the education of Islamic schools.

Maskur and Noor (2014). Although the use of the internet as a medium of da'wah around during the early 2000s was not as massive as it is now, the emergence of Aa Gym as a new cleric on the national da'wah stage through lectures, seminars, and Islamic training is a phenomenon in itself. Hoesterey (2008) studies the journey of Aa Gym from his first appearance as a preacher, falling, and then successfully rebranding to restore his religious authority. This is evident, for example, from how Aa Gym has many listeners (*Dakta.com* 2016). Popular culture has also brought Aa Gym to be seen not only by the public, especially by his followers, as also singer, actor, author, etc. Thus, he has transformed from an ordinary cleric to a celebrity cleric. Through a hypersemiotic perspective, Maskur and Noor (2014) show the various aspects of Aa Gym's personality.

Following the appearance of Aa Gym and with further rapid development of information technology, many other new preachers began to appear. Hew Wai Weng (2018) describes how Felix SiauW is another skilful religious preacher. Being a cleric with the most followers on the internet did not make SiauW neglect to spread his da'wah in the real world. Hew (2018) points out that SiauW has blended online and offline da'wah harmoniously. According to Hew (2018) and Farhan (2017), one of the keys to SiauW's success in preaching is his ability to present an entertaining and straightforward da'wah, even though its content is dogmatic and political.

Aa Gym and Felix SiauW are two micro-celebrity *ustaz* as a result of the new media. The term micro-celebrity *ustaz* was adopted and reconstructed from the theory of micro-celebrity. Most of these studies conducted from the perspective of pop culture (Senft 2008; G. Turner 2010; Khamis, Ang and Welling 2017; Sadasri 2017; Khomalia and Rahman 2018) describe the fragmentation of religious authority, marked by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By this term this author means an ordinary *ustaz/ustazah* who has skyrocketed in popularity and is celebrity on and because of social media so that he or she is able to influence certain people or communities. In other words, it means the *ustaz/ustazah* has experienced what G. Turner (2010) calls 'the demotic turn', when ordinary people are highly visible on social media and become celebrities. Challenges to established religious authorities by new religious personalities or groups are rarely touched on except that of Yanwar Pribadi (2019). His study explains the efforts of 'local Islam' (*Islam lokal*) to defend its religious authority from the threat of 'foreign Islam' (*Islam asing*). However, his study differs from what this author will examine in tracing Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

This study is on a micro-celebrity *ustaz*, Zulkarnain El Madury who is less well known when compared to Aa Gym or Felix Siauw but he has a strong influence on the internet. His identity as a preacher from Muhammadiyah who targets Muhammadiyah followers with postings that are often different and even delegitimise the official voice of this largest modernist mass organisation deserves to be investigated. This study, apart from showing Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority on the internet, also seeks explicitly to fill the gap in previous studies. In his latest study, Akmaliah (2020) shows that Muhammadiyah and NU have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was strongly reactive to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) indicates there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's responses less hostile. Sammy (2022), Sanjaya (2022), and Saefullah (2022) came to the same conclusion as Akmaliah, claiming that Muhammadiyah is significantly less adaptive to the emergence of new media, and therefore its da'wah often loses to that of the micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This study focuses on the struggle of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as the only assembly under Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas and official *ijtihad* exposition within Muhammadiyah.

#### **Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage**

The Facebook SHPTM fanpage was created by Zulkarnain El Madury. He was born in Sumenep on the island of Madura in 1963, with the name Zulkarnain bin Syamsuri. He claims to have studied in Malaysia at the Institute of Business Study and always introduces himself as a preacher from the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah). He spent his childhood in Madura and was a traditionalist Muslim like others on the island. He grew up in a milieu dominated by the NU traditionalist Islamic organisation. He used to perform *tahlilan* (ritual prayers for the dead), *ziarah* (pilgrimage to the grave), and other practices that, according to him, after becoming a member of Muhammadiyah, were not following the Sunnah of the Prophet. He received his religious education at the Islamic boarding school at-Taufiqiyyah Sumenep Madura. In 1976 he became acquainted with Muhammadiyah. He became interested in the da'wah and religious understanding of the Muhammadiyah movement founded by Ahmad



Dahlan after listening to a lecture by one of its preachers. In 1977, he officially joined Muhammadiyah.<sup>6</sup>

Since joining Muhammadiyah, El Madury has been active as a preacher who spreads religious ideas and understanding. From 1990 to 2007, he was one of the Muhammadiyah preachers who was sent to remote areas by the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board. His daily activities are now preaching at different places as well as creating content on for SHPTM fanpage. He now lives in Jakarta as the *tarjih* and *tabligh* council chair of the Pondok Gede Muhammadiyah Branch.<sup>7</sup> He created SHPTM in 2014.<sup>8</sup> However, in the digital history that this author can trace, the fanpage was created in 2015 as the earliest post that is currently traceable is dated 5 January 2015.

According to El Madury, the fanpage began with the WhatsApp group he created which he named *Tarjih dan Tabligh Institut* (Tarjih and Tabligh Institute) to provide a space to discuss and spread ideas related to *tarjih*.<sup>9</sup> He included many Muhammadiyah figures and activists in this group, including (the now late) Buya Yunahar Ilyas. Over time, seeing that El Madury's posts on SHPTM were deemed inconsistent with the *tarjih* spirit of Muhammadiyah, several people, such as Fathurrahman Kamal and Buya Risman, sharply criticised the postings. El Madury, Fathurrahman Kamal, and Buya Risman were then engaged in a heated debate which was relayed later to Buya Yunahar Ilyas. The response by Buya Yunahar Ilyas at that time, according to El Madury, differed from that of his critics. Buya Yun responded quite positively because he saw El Madury's initiative as providing *syarh* (explanation) -or further explication of the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Decisions Compilation). Finally, he gave his permission to El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com).<sup>10</sup>

El Madury's early postings on SHPTM, were still relatively consistent in uploading Muhammadiyah fatwas in the question (from someone) and answer format from the fatwa division of the Tarjih Council. This is similar to the the original question and answer format

<sup>6</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Muhammadiyah's use of the word *tarjih* has changed throughout its development. In its early period, and following its usage in the principles of law (*usul al-fiqh*), *tarjih* conveyed the meaning of examining the various opinions of Muslim jurists on a particular question and evaluating them to determine which is most faithful to the original Shari'a sources. Over time this usage gradually included any intellectual endeavour used to study new cases that earlier jurists had not addressed. In short, in Muhammadiyah's perspective, *tarjih* is identical, or almost identical, to *ijihad* (Anwar 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

administered by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, whose fatwas were later published in the *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine. However, over time, SHPTM included posts that apart from the dissemination of Muhammadiyah's official *ijtihad* included the personal opinions of El Madury. These opinions in inelegant words are often offensive to other groups. Not infrequently, his posts contradict the official stance of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in particular, or Muhammadiyah in general, such as on the veil issue (see below). Since Facebook introduced its 'live broadcast' feature, El Madury has also availed of it to conduct live lectures. The SHPTM is popular with netizens. As of the time of writing (3 April 2022), it has been followed by 19,423 and is 'liked' by 8,868 people. His posts also often receive both positive and critical comments from viewers.

El Madury gave several reasons that brought about the creation of his fanpage. Firstly, it is aimed at fortifying Muhammadiyah followers against all forms of superstition, heresy, and myth as its posts focus on issues related to faith and worship. Secondly, he aims to counter those liberal Muhammadiyah activists and has openly responded to such views. His posts often openly attacks the religious practices of the the Nahdliyyin, resulting in several clashes between him and the Nahdliyyin figure, Idrus Ramli.<sup>11</sup>

Despite having many followers El Madury and his SHPTM do have critics. Many Muhammadiyah followers are concerned about the SHPTM posts. Some have tried to convey their anxiety through the official social media accounts of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre (Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah).<sup>12</sup> Those concerned generally want to ask for firm action from the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as El Madury has included 'Tarjih Muhammdiyah' in his fanpage name. The demands to the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, when summarised, include: (1) that the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council reprimand or remind Zulkarnain El Madury not to use symbols or names that are closely related to Tarjih Muhammadiyah for or on his fanpage; (2) making and circulating an announcement that the fanpage is not a social media account of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council or the Tarjih Muhamamdiyah Centre; (3) announcing the official social media accounts and websites of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre, so that Muhammadiyah people at the grassroots are not deceived by the existence of the fanpage and know where to look for religious reference sites, especially on the internet.

---

<sup>11</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Interviews with Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf and Ariful Hazam, November 2020 who are grassroots of Muhammadiyah, and social media administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

### Zulkarnain El Madury and his efforts in building religious authority

Zulkarnain El Madury and his fanpage SHPTM, have threatened the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, and specifically, the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. Many of his posts affect Muhammadiyah followers in particular and Muslims in general as these posts often differ from the official stance of Muhammadiyah, and in some cases contradict the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. This has stimulated public debate on social media, allowing El Madury to become a micro-celebrity *ustaz*. As a result of the general public and the online community attention, El Madury has been able to gradually build up his religious authority.

From the Weberian perspective (Riesebrodt 1999), he has been able to do this in two ways.

The first is through charisma (charismatic authority) and the second is traditional authority discussed later. According to Weber, charisma is a particular type of authority whose original form is based on a specific belief contained in a particular person (Riesebrodt 1999:ibid.).

Secondly, El Madury claims he has the endorsement of Yunahar Ilyas, a very popular Muhammadiyah cleric respected by the community from within the Muhammadiyah circle and from Muslims in general which is a form of charismatic authority.

Yunahar Ilyas (1956–2020) or Buya Yun as he was popularly known, was an exegete (*mufasssir*) born in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, who died at the age of 63 (Ilyas 2012). He was an alumnus of Imam Ibn Su'ud University (Saudi Arabia) and an excellent lecturer in conveying religious messages. He was seen as a charismatic cleric by Muhammadiyah followers and Muslims, in general, and this reputation extended to neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore (Abror 2020; Gesuri 2020). On his death in early 2020, many people flocked to pay their last respects to Buya Yun who held the chair of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for three terms (Kompas 2020; Rakyat Merdeka 2019).

By harnessing the charisma of Buya Yun, El Madury was able to increase his religious authority. On various occasions, including when this author interviewed him, Buya Yun's name was often mentioned as an argument and a shield.<sup>13</sup> El Madury insisted that he created the SHPTM fanpage with the permission of Yunahar Ilyas.<sup>14</sup> He added that Wahyudi

<sup>13</sup> This author's informants include Muhammad Muflih (grassroot of Muhammadiyah and initiator of the website tanyajawabagama.com), Robby Karman (secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association [DPP IMM] 2018–2021), and several participants invited by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council with the agenda 'Responding to Emergence of Syarah HPT on Social Media' on 25 September, 2020; interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

**Commented [MOU2]:** If you mention the first, where does the second come in if you delete 'secondly'?

**Commented [nf3R2]:** The second one comes on page 15, as I mentioned above. Starting from: 'The above describes how El Madury builds his charismatic authority. The other is authority built through tradition or what Weber calls traditional authority.'

I did use the word 'the other' in that paragraph instead of 'the second'. What do you think? Should I replace the word 'the other' with 'the second' to make it more straightforward to the reader?

PK – you can't expect the reader to get to p.15 before saying this is the second. So I have modified the sentence to show the second will be discussed later.

**Commented [nf4]:** I have changed this paragraph. The explanation of the 'second authority' is on page 15 (starting from: 'The above describes how El Madury builds his charismatic authority. The other is authority built through tradition or what Weber calls traditional authority'). OK with you?

Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website tanyajawabagama.com, had similarly received permission from Buya Yun. Wahyudi Abdurrahim confirmed Zulkarnain's claims and Muhammad Muflih, a grassroots representative added that it is a form of fairness.<sup>15</sup> In other words, Buya Yun's permission is a form of appreciation given by someone who is more senior and has a high social position in Muhammadiyah to someone who is more junior and classified as a grassroots Muhammadiyah member.<sup>16</sup> Permission from Buya Yun, who has charisma within Muhammadiyah in particular, has become a tool used by El Madury in building his religious authority.

In Weberian charismatic authority, charisma is not only about a belief in the existence of extraordinary or superpowers possessed by or contained in humans but also about particular objects other than humans (Riesebrodt 1999). We thus have an explanation as to why El Madury named his fanpage *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a highly respectable and crucial council in Muhammadiyah. Founded in 1927, the Council functions as an assembly that carries out its agenda of purification of religion and the dynamisation of social life. It conducts research and investigations towards this purity, and accordingly gives fatwas and compiles religious guidelines on faith ('*aqidah*) and worship ('*ibadah*) as well as social relations (*mu'amalah*) (Rahman et al. 1985; Anwar 2016). In addition, this Council makes efforts to resolve differences and disagreements on religious issues, which are usually referred to as *khilāfīyyah* problems, so that they are directed more productively (Anwar 2007, 2016).

The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a body that is responsible for formulating the ideological basis of the Muhammadiyah movement (Anwar 2007, 2016) and is Muhammadiyah's representative in the religious field (Fauzi 2017). The Council produces three types of *ijtihad*, namely: (1) *tarjih fatwa (fatwa tarjih)*, (2) *tarjih decision (putusan tarjih)*, and (3) *tarjih discourse (wacana tarjih)* (Anwar 2016). *Tarjih fatwa* is the Council's answer to general questions on issues that require an explanation in terms of sharia law. Following the nature of the fatwa in general, the Council's fatwa is non-binding, on either organisations or members as individuals. Therefore, even the fatwa can be questioned and discussed. However, because the fatwa contains religious guidance derived from Islamic teaching sources (Anwar 2020), and the general public often does not actually understand the aspects of such a fatwa, it is still believed by Muhammadiyah members to be religious

<sup>15</sup> Online interview with Wahyudi Abdurrahim through WhatsApp, September 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Online interview with Muhammad Muflih through WhatsApp and Facebook, 20 October 2019.

guidance. However, the *tarjih* decision is the official stance of Muhammadiyah in religious matters and is formally binding on the organisation and its members. But, in practice, sometimes Muhammadiyah members exercise their right to freedom not to be bound by the decision because they have different *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

Meanwhile, *tarjih* discourses are ideas or thoughts that are raised and put forward by the Council in seminars, *halaqah* (religious gathering or meeting to discuss the Qur'an or Islam), or other forums in addressing various developing issues and at the same time fostering a critical spirit of *ijtihad* and collecting materials or ideas on various actual problems in society. The nature of this *tarjih* discourse is non-binding and does not become a fatwa that must be followed. *Tarjih* discourse is contained in various publications of the Council, such as *Jurnal Tarjih* (Tarjih Journal) and various published books (Anwar 2016).

The *tarjih* decision and the *tarjih* fatwa, hold their strength within Muhammadiyah as these are considered sacred by some of its members. In short, it can be said that anything that 'smells *tarjih*' has authority in the collective memory of Muhammadiyah followers. In the perspective of Khaled Abou El Fadl (2014), fatwa and *tarjih* decisions have the power of persuasive authority, as these can influence or direct others because they believed in them. The *tarjih* fatwas are officially published through the organisation's ~~official~~ magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, and compiled in the *Tanya Jawab Agama* book. In comparison, the *tarjih* decisions are codified in a book called *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*, (commonly known ~~as by~~ ~~the abbreviation~~ HPT). Thus, it can be understood why the attribution of the term *tarjih* to particular objects can give rise to charismatic authority, as mentioned by Weber.

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

What El Madury did can also be seen as identity politics which is defined as a political tool of a group whether it be ethnic, cultural, religious or others for specific purposes, such as a form of resistance or to show the identity of a group (Alfaqi 2015). Within this framework, identity is politicised through extreme interpretation, which aims to gain support from people who feel 'the same', through race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements. In the context of El Madury, the use of the *tarjih* label on his fanpage can be interpreted as a political tool to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muhammadiyah members. And, as seen in some of his sermon videos, El Madury also placed a flag with the Muhammadiyah symbol behind him. In this context, he wants to convince the viewers that he is close to Muhammadiyah. He has introduced himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board on many occasions.

According to Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif (2010), identity politics is always related to members of social groups who feel excluded by the mainstream in a nation or state. Sri Astuti Buchari (2014) also finds that the emergence of identity politics is mainly caused by certain factors that an ethnic group sees as pressure from the political injustice. By looking at the observations made by Ahmad Najib Burhani (2013), El Madury, in this case, can be categorised as part of a group that feels excluded, threatened, and to some extent in need of justice within Muhammadiyah. Burhani (2013) explains the existence of two opposing schools of thought within Muhammadiyah which he refers to as 'Pure Islam' (*Islam Murni*) and 'Progressive Islam' (*Islam Progresif*). The conflict between these two schools of thought in Muhammadiyah began to surface at the 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Banda Aceh in 1995 (Burhani 2013).

The dominance of 'Progressive Islam' in Muhammadiyah strengthened after its 44th congress in Jakarta in 2000. This congress chose Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif as general chair. He is a progressive Muslim figure, an alumnus of the University of Chicago, and a student of the eminent progressive scholar Fazlur Rahman. At this congress, several names representing the 'Progressive Islam' group were included in the ranks of the central leadership of Muhammadiyah, such as Amin Abdullah, Dawam Raharjo, and Abdul Munir Mulkhan. During Ma'arif's leadership, progressive ideas not only dominated culturally but gradually became Muhammadiyah's official programmes (Burhani 2013).

Seeing the increasingly apparent threat from the ideas put forward by the 'Progressive Islam' group within Muhammadiyah, representatives of the 'Pure Islam' group did not remain silent. They compete and squabble over religious interpretations as to which is the most authentic. These two groups challenge each other through various channels, including seminars, discussions, publications. They usually have conflicting programmes. For example, as mentioned by Burhani (2013), when the Centre for the Study of Religion and Civilisation (PSAP/Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban) raised the theme of pluralism and multiculturalism in its journal, *Tanwir Journal*, the Tabligh Council<sup>17</sup> responded with articles in opposition in its magazine, *Majalah Tabligh*. In Burhani's investigation, during the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress in Malang, this conservative group set up a Pojok Anti-Liberal (anti-liberal corner)

---

<sup>17</sup> Muhammadiyah has many assemblies such as Majelis Tabligh and Majelis Tarjih, each with its own functions and responsibilities. Majelis Tarjih is responsible for producing religious thoughts through fatwas and decisions, while Majelis Tabligh is responsible for disseminating them. Historically, Majelis Tabligh is known in Muhammadiyah as the anti-liberal wing and thus there are at times poor collaboration between Majelis Tarjih and Majelis Tabligh. For example, some fatwas issued by Majelis Tarjih, in Majelis Tabligh's perspective, are the result of liberal thinking. See Burhani (2013) and Palahuddin (2020).

booth, which sold books, DVDs, t-shirts, magazines, and other anti-liberal mementos. Strikingly, some of the t-shirts for sale displayed the words 'Muhammadiyah Anti-Liberal' (Burhani 2013).

At the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress, it seemed that the 'Pure Islam' group was gaining momentum to beat back the 'Progressive Islam' group. The quarrels between these two groups occurred within congress committees and in the external arena. Burhani (2005, 2013) noted at least three critical issues where the 'Pure Islam' group defeated the 'Progressive Islam' in the congress arena, namely: (1) leadership change; (2) the position of women; and (3) resistance to liberal thought.

After the 45th congress, the feud between these two schools of thought has continued though waxing and waning at different times. The form of the feud now looks more varied given the availability of the internet where the presence of social media has changed the battle arena from a conventional to a more modern one. El Madury represents the 'Pure Islam' group, and has heated online debates with figures considered representatives of 'Progressive Islam' whose actions he sees as unsettling. For example, El Madury and the secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association (DPP IMM),<sup>18</sup> Robby Karman, have openly and frequently castigated each other on for example, issues about the veil and the Wahhabi. According to El Madury, Robby Karman is a young liberal figure in Muhammadiyah who should be challenged. El Madury also often attacks the IBTimes.id website, as it frequently contains articles that are progressive and, to some extent, controversial. This website has several former Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah (JIMM/Muhammadiyah Youth Intellectual Network) figures, such as Hilman Latief, Azaki Khoiruddin, and Mu'arif. On one occasion, when the chair of the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre admonished El Madury for uploading provocative posts that contradicted the official stance of the Tarjih Council, he defended himself by stating that equally provocative posts from the 'Progressive Islam' group should be similarly reprimanded. If he is the only one selected for rebuke then he felt an injustice had been done.<sup>19</sup> El Madury's attitude in the framework of identity politics reflects someone who feels excluded and threatened by certain

---

<sup>18</sup> Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM) or Muhammadiyah Student Association is a proponent of Muhammadiyah in student affairs with the basic mission of realising the real Islamic society as formulated by Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Widodo 2017).

<sup>19</sup> On 3 November 2019, the manager of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah reprimanded Zulkarnain El Madury for his post on SHPTM on the veil which contradicts Muhammadiyah's official stance.

parties. At such, his specific attributes and identity are a deliberate form of resistance to the domination of certain groups or thoughts that threaten him.

~~The above describes how El Madury builds his charismatic authority. The second form of other is authority built through tradition or is~~ what Weber calls traditional authority (Spencer 1970; Matheson 1987; Riesebrodt 1999). In simple terms, something can be considered as having traditional authority if it gains legitimacy based on beliefs or norms that have been established in a particular tradition (Chairi 2019). In other words, according to Spencer (1970), traditional authority is legitimised and, at the same time, constrained by traditional norms. Therefore, it is the opposite of charismatic authority. If in charismatic authority, it is the leader or someone who creates the norms, then it is the norms that create the leader or person in the traditional authority. In charismatic authority, the value of influence is generated by a person's personal qualities and is always associated with his personality. While in the case of traditional authority, it is generated by function and is related to someone or something that has traditional values (Spencer 1970).

In the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, ulama and the classical books they wrote can be considered to have this traditional authority. Ulama in Islamic tradition are called heirs of the Prophets. The authority of the ulama is derived from the legitimacy of religious texts which state that the prophetic tradition will be passed on to them. Therefore, the religious ideas they convey in writings or books contain an authoritative value for the next generation. This is the uniqueness of Islamic scholars and traditions, as mentioned by Muhammad Qasim Zaman (2002) who states that one of the most prominent aspects of pre-modern intellectual culture is the articulation of religious discourse through the so-called medium of the commentary. This is manifested in various forms such *al-syurūh*, *hawāsyī*, *rasā'il*, and *fatawā*. The various genres of books that contain explanations, descriptions, or responses to a book or social phenomena are a way for scholars to shape the identity and authority of the school or tradition they adhere to. In addition, it is also a means to interpreting the meaning of the foundational sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah (Zaman 2002).

An example is the *hawāsyī* tradition in the Shafii school. Its emergence, according to Ahmed El-Shamsy (2013), shows the peak of the authority of two scholars in that school, namely al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī. Al-Kurdī, as quoted by El Shamsy, called these two scholars 'the higher authorities in the Syafii school'. Those who want to know the authoritative



opinion of the Shafi'i school have to go through the works of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī, and the books that explain further their works, namely the books written by Ibn Ḥajar al-Haitamī and Syamsuddīn al-Ramlī. These books have for later generations the value of traditional authority (Shamsy 2013: 292).

What is the connection between this traditional authority and El Madury? El Madury's posts on SHPTM and at religious forums where he speaks always rely on the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāth*). According to Endang Mintarja, chair of the Jakarta branch of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this aspect has drawn many people to El Madury's lectures.<sup>20</sup> What El Madury did, which Muhammadiyah did not do in many of its fatwas was to cite the Islamic intellectual tradition. In many of its fatwas, Muhammadiyah often only quotes the Qur'an or hadith to strengthen its argument, without citing the opinions of other Islamic scholars. Perhaps this is a consequence of the modernist movement, which became the spirit of Muhammadiyah. The modernist movement initiated by reformers such as Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, and Muḥammad Rasyīd Riḍā in the late 19th and early 20th centuries used the term *al-rujū' ilā al-qur'ān wa al-sunnah* ('back to the Qur'an and Sunnah'). According to Syed Junaid A. Quadri (2013), the most obvious indicator of this movement, especially in Islamic law, is its critical attitude towards the structure of pre-modern sharia authority symbols, which are articulated in the language and logic of the institution of *taqlīd*. Modernist groups always encourage reopening the door to *ijtihād* and invite Muslims to leave the interpretive monopoly that the ulama class has held (Quadri 2013).

Muhammadiyah, which is heavily inspired by the modernist movement, is oriented towards the Qur'an and Sunnah and tends to attach less importance to the Islamic intellectual tradition that has been built by the ulama. This can be seen from its *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (the methodology Muhammadiyah uses in conducting *ijtihād*), which asserts that Muhammadiyah is not affiliated to a particular school, but the opinions of these schools are only considered in determining religious norms (Anwar 2018). This means that understanding religion in the Muhammadiyah perspective is derived directly from its primary sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah through the *ijtihād* process. However, it should be noted here that the narration that confirms the opinions of the scholars is taken into account in determining norms is not that clear how they are implemented in *tarjih* issues.

---

<sup>20</sup> Endang Mintarja voiced this at a Muhammadiyah Central Board Tarjih Council meeting of on the emergence 'Syarah HPT', 25 September 2020.

In some of its official *ijtihad*, the nuances of the opinions of scholars, especially the pre-modern ones do not appear, by choice or otherwise. Thus it appears that El Madury is filling the Muhammadiyah gap in presenting the authority of the Islamic intellectual tradition in religious narratives. For example, in the controversial veil case, the Tarjih Council issued three fatwas in 1993, 2003 and 2009.<sup>21</sup> The fatwas issued in 1993 and 2009 emphasised that the veil has no legal basis either in the Qur'an or the Sunnah but that Islamic law commands women to wear the hijab. These two fatwas did not cite the Islamic intellectual tradition, which also accommodates opinions about the veil. Although the Tarjih Council kept in its stance and strengthened the opinion that women's '*aurat*' (parts of the body that should go covered) are the whole body except the face and the palms of the hands, in the 2003 fatwa, the Tarjih Council provides space for those who want to wear the veil by expressing several opinions from the scholars who think so.

In contrast to the *tarjih* fatwas, El Madury's (2019) article *Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam?* ('Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?') on the SHPTM [site fanpage](#) refutes the *tarjih* fatwa. He cites various opinions of scholars in the Islamic intellectual tradition who support mandatory veiling as an effort to build religious authority. From this, it appears that El Madury, apart from attacking the *tarjih* fatwa, believes in maintaining traditional authority, in this case, the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāts*).

What El Madury did in building religious authority can also be captured from what Burhani calls a conversion narrative. Some scholars define religious conversion narratives differently as for example, in the change from one religious tradition to another. William James, as quoted by Burhani (2020: 158), states that religious conversion can also be interpreted as the conversion of a person who is a sinner into someone pious. According to Burhani (2020), people who experience religious conversion, usually after embracing a new tradition or religious understanding, will be hostile to the previous religious tradition or understanding.

El Madury also experienced a religious conversion, in this case, from the NU tradition to Muhammadiyah's. On SHPTM as well as his views when interviewed by this author, he introduced himself as someone who had practised the '*kuburiyyun* tradition'<sup>22</sup> and other actions that did not have examples from the Prophet. To convince his followers, he posted information about his religious conversion from NU to Muhammadiyah. Besides condemning

<sup>21</sup> Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah (2009, 2019a, 2019b).

<sup>22</sup> The tradition of visiting the grave with its associated practices.

his previous practices, which were deemed to have no basis in the Qur'an and Sunnah, he has had acrimonious debates with the NU *kyai*, Idrus Ramli on various issues, such as *ahlus sunnah wal jamaah* and *wahabi*, *nahdliyyin* traditions that are often considered heresy, and so on.

### Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Before the advent of the internet and the emergence of various new religious authorities, Muhammadiyah and NU were the two largest religious organisations and authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). However, following the emergence of the so-called micro-celebrity *ustaz*, these two groups, according to some scholars, began to face challenges and threats. The recent study by Wahyudi Akmaliah (2020) shows that the two organisations have responded differently to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was more combative about their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) maintains there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's response look less aggressive. Akmaliah is correct on several points, but other perspectives deserve to be considered, especially Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority on the internet. The weak point, as shown in Akmaliah's study is that there is no adequate elaboration of the assembly that exclusively holds religious authority in Muhammadiyah, namely the Tarjih Council. To trace more precisely how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority we have to look at the Tarjih Council.

This discussion starts from the author's experience in attending a meeting held by the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board in September 2020. This meeting was initiated in response to the appearance of the *syarh* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Decisions Compilation) made by El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim. Whilst Unlike El Madury's comments were on his SHPTM, who created a fanpage, Abdurrahim (2020) wrote a *syarh* on HPT in bookaired his views in his book form.<sup>23</sup> The meeting was initiated in response to the emergence of El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim's SHPTM site. It should be noted here that Abdurrahim also contributed writings to this website. He was earlier mentioned as having had permission from Buya Yun to give *syarh* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Judgment Compilation) and is the author of *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*. The

<sup>23</sup> For more information on Abdurrahim's book, see Wahyudi Sarju Abdurrahim (2020).

**Commented [MOU5]:** When – just month and year will do.

**Commented [nf6R5]:** I mentioned it in the next paragraph, which is 25 September 2020.

PK I have rephrased and added date here and removed it from start of next para.

**Formatted:** Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

initial background for holding this meeting, as revealed by the secretary of the Tarjih Council, Mas'udi, was purely in response to the SHPTM posts by El Madury. However, information about the SHPTM other than the one written by El Madury prompted the board of the Tarjih Council to include the book by Abdurrahim with the same title for the agenda.

~~On Friday, 7 Safar 1442 AH (25 September 2020).~~ For this meeting, the Tarjih Council invited nine related sectors to discuss concerns over the emergence of the SHPTM on the internet written by the El Madury and Abdurrahim. The nine sector participants were: (1) the executive board of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (2) fatwa division of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (3) chair/secretary of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (4) Dr Endang Mintarja, M.Ag. (Chair of the Jakarta Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council); (5) H. Fathurrahman, Lc., M.S.I. (Chair of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council); (6) H. Budi Setiawan, S.T.; (7) Arif Nur Kholis (head of Muhammadiyah Digital Syiar Centre); (8) the manager of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre; and (9) the social media assistance team of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

Commented [MOU7]: What does this stand for?

During the meeting, there were at least four proposals from participants on how best to respond to the SHPTM, particularly El Madury's article about the veil. The first was to complain to Facebook about the SHPTM so that it could be banned for including an institution's name without permission. According to the chair of the Tabligh Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board, Fathurrahman Kamal, who was present at the forum, the fanpage is in the illicit category. This proposal was considered by the proponents as a firm proposal but that it risked unnecessary antagonism. The second was to use a persuasive approach in the form of clarification or an appeal to El Madury not to use the name *Himpunan Putusan Tajih* (HPT) or something that is associated with *tarjih*. Its proponents consider this approach to be softer and more reflective of being Muhammadiyah members in particular, and Muslims in general. The third proposal was to use institutional authority in writing an official letter on behalf of the Tarjih Council to El Madury. The fourth idea that was considered more practical and efficient was to place the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it on social media. This would avoid being drawn into unfruitful correspondence on SHPTM.

However, there was no agreement on which approach should be undertaken despite long discussions. It was agreed instead that there would be a follow up with another forum. Since this author started writing (3 April 2022) there has been no further meeting. The emergence of

SHPTM on the internet and its effects have been considered a serious problem by the Tarjih Council. The meeting's participants were generally uneasy about the appearance of El Madury and his fanpage. In addition, they wanted El Madury to be warned or reprimanded since SHPTM is considered a threat to religious authority of the Tarjih Council. This illustrates that Muhammadiyah, through its official religious assembly, the Tarjih Council, is not passive in responding to the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. However, only certain cases and not all micro-celebrity *ustaz* who appear on social media have drawn the Tarjih Council's attention. Although there has yet to be a follow up meeting, the Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an official institution supporting the Tarjih Council illustrates how Muhammadiyah struggles to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is an institution that was founded in 2016 by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Ahmad Dahlan University (Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah 2016). Despite being a new institution, its legality is clear, and it has formal authority. In the Muhammadiyah tradition as an organisation, such legality is essential. Thus when someone from Muhammadiyah, speaks on another person's behalf or endorses an approach, the speaker's status is below that of the institution and cannot be assumed to be that of institutions within Muhammadiyah which, although new, have legality. In the context of El Madury and the SHPTM fanpage, this is important. Even though El Madury claims he has obtained permission to make *syarh* on the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* from a charismatic figure in Muhammadiyah, Buya Yunahar, legally it is not valid. In that context, Buya Yunahar spoke on behalf of himself, not on behalf of Muhammadiyah.

Fronted by young Muhammadiyah cadres, the majority of whom are alumni of Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Tarjih Ulama Education, PUTM),<sup>24</sup> Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays a role in supporting the Tarjih Council programmes. These are relatively under-performing and facing obstacles, particularly on using social media to disseminate their official *ijtihad*. The members of the Tarjih Council, who are relatively old, need support from young cadres. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays an essential role in assisting the Tarjih Council in maintaining its religious authority on the internet. It responded to El Madury and SHPTM, by being pro-active with a poster (Figure

<sup>24</sup> PUTM is an educational institution under the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board designed to produce a cadre of Muhammadiyah scholars. PUTM organises a special programme that educates and prepares Muhammadiyah *tarjih* scholars who are competent in the religious field. The birth of PUTM was based on the concern of some Muhammadiyah leaders about the increasing scarcity of ulama in and from Muhammadiyah (Fauzi 2020a).

1) on social media and in print form, containing information related to the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it.



Figure 1. Poster with information on the official social media accounts affiliated to the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Are you often confused about finding sources of reference about Islam from the perspective of Muhammadiyah?

There is no need to be confused anymore because various social media are straightforward for us to access. Tarjih (Council) has come with a more trendy look.

- ✓ Easy to read anywhere
- ✓ Provide updated fatwas
- ✓ Discuss current issues

As members of Muhammadiyah, let's get used to reading the decisions and fatwas of Muhammadiyah

Here are some media that can be accessed very easily. So don't be confused anymore.

Web: [fatwatartjih.or.id](http://fatwatartjih.or.id)

Facebook: [fb.me/fatwamu](https://fb.me/fatwamu)

Instagram: [pusattartjih\\_muhammadiyah](https://pusattartjih_muhammadiyah)

Telegram: [t.me/fatwatartjihmu](https://t.me/fatwatartjihmu)

Youtube: [tarjih channel](https://tarjih_channel)

Let's spread it to all Muhammadiyah people!

Figure 2. Translation of Figure 1.

Although the poster above does not directly mention the SHPTM [fanpage](#) created by El Madury, the main message in it is clear and firm, namely to inform the Muhammadiyah followers about the official accounts of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it. This would hopefully let Muhammadiyah members understand how its official religious voice is disseminated on the internet. Following this, Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah successively uploaded other, more varied j... M fanpage. Some other examples of these posters are



**Figure 3.** Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Do you know?

The Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah now have an official YouTube channel, (namely) the Tarjih Channel.

Have you subscribed yet?

**Figure 4.** Translation of Figure 3.



**Figure 5.** Information about the website fatwatarjih.or.id, an official website affiliated to the Tarjih Council containing fatwas. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Fatwatarjih.or.id is the official website for the Tarjih and the Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board (MTT).

The Media Team of Fatwa Tarjih, through this website, has been, is and will continue to strive consistently to publish various ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council. Until now,



tarjih fatwa collections from 1997 to 2018 have entered the editing stage, and some are just waiting to be published.

Figure 6. Translation of Figure 5.



Figure 7. Information on the official website of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Do you want to know the full history (of the Tarjih Council)?  
Or do you want to look for ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council?  
Come on; you can find out on this website: tarjih.or.id

Figure 8. Translation of Figure 7.

The use of informal language and emoticons typical of millennials indicate the audience that the Tarjih Council wants to target. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah team understands that informal language will appeal to its target audience. This is aimed at not only establishing

the authority of the Tarjih Council but ‘millennialisation’ i.e. to reach out to the younger generation familiar with social media. Suyadi and Widodo (2019) note that millennialisation is an alternative way to develop knowledge that will synergise with various online media and digital technology. In the context of *tarjih* millennialisation, Muhammadiyah’s official *ijtihad* that tend to be disseminated in a conventional, monotonous, and uncreative manner are now communicated through social media in more contextual packaging. This means that the Tarjih Council and its various official *ijtihad*, which previously were always identified with the ‘old’, now consciously aim to include young people.

The religious authority of the Tarjih Council in cyberspace, especially when connected with the appearance of El Madury and SHPTM, was greatly helped by the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah and its young Muhammadiyah cadres. It manages various social media platforms with large numbers of followers, and has helped maintain Muhammadiyah’s religious authority by balancing and suppressing the presence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. Its contents are fatwas and decisions of the Tarjih Council with more appealing visualisation to reach out to the millennials.

Although the number of social media followers of the Tarjih Council is less than that for the NU and Salafi groups, at least the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah acts as a compass for Muhammadiyah followers who question its religious authority, especially with the emergence of El Madury’s version in SHPTM. The administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah’s social media have received many messages either through the comments column or direct messages in its inbox, which question the authority of SHPTM.<sup>25</sup> Here, the vital role of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is increasingly finding its momentum.

## Conclusion

Although it can be said that Muhammadiyah’s religious influence and authority on the internet are inferior and lag behind other religious groups, Muhammadiyah is still trying to manage its authority, especially when facing threats from micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By focusing on Zulkarnain El Madury and his SHPTM social media page, this article offers a different perspective from previous studies by analysing the work of the Tarjih Council as the only institution in Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas. This article shows that

---

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Ariful Hazamn, Ilham Ibrahim, and Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, September 2020. They are Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah social media administrators.

Muhammadiyah has its own way of responding to the emergence of new religious authorities. With the help of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an institution in its fold, the Tarjih Council has made continuous efforts through social media and its official website to counter new voices that threaten its authority. Muhammadiyah's response was neither aggressive nor radical but it clarified its stance without mentioning who precisely was being targeted. What Muhammadiyah did was in line with the Javanese proverb *Ngluruk tanpo bolo, menang tanpo ngasorake* ('win without defeat, win without humiliation [of others]'). The form of Muhammadiyah's response is inherited from its founder, Ahmad Dahlan. As seen by James Peacock (1978), Ahmad Dahlan ~~carried out~~brought about many social transformations calmly and systematically without being antagonistic through discussions and education.<sup>26</sup> This can be seen, for example, from how Ahmad Dahlan and the early generation of Muhammadiyah fortified Muslims from various superstitions, heresies, and myths by rationalising explaining the unacceptability of such popular religious thoughts and beliefs and practices believed by many people at that time. In addition to confronting Christianisation, the three essential ideas initiated at that time, namely hospitals, schools, and orphanages, were actually the implementation of efforts to counter the practice of superstitions, heresies, and myths that had spread in the community calmly and systematically (Shihab 1995).

In a broader context, the case of Zulkarnain El Madury also provides a lesson that using the name Muhammadiyah to justify personal opinions or legitimise particular interests is wrong. Muhammadiyah has the reputation of a very well managed organisation (Barton 2014; *Suara Muhammadiyah* 2019) which is its strength and gives it clout compared to other religious organisations in Indonesia, such as NU. In short, authority in Muhammadiyah's authority lies in the institution itself and is not based on personality. It differs from NU, where power and authority tend to ~~lie in~~reside with personal figures, such as *kyai* or *gus* (Fauzi 2020b).

Muhammadiyah followers who understand its basic rules are not easily influenced by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. They are aware that Muhammadiyah's official religious stance is only by issued by the Tarjih Council and that those external to the Tarjih Council or even specific Muhammadiyah figures who give religious opinions, speak only for themselves as individuals and not the organisation. This would be the case, for example, even if the religious opinion emanates from the chair of the Tarjih Council as an individual. This

<sup>26</sup>For example, Ahmad Dahlan and the early generation of Muhammadiyah explained to Muslims the unacceptability of popular beliefs and practices that had their roots in superstitions, heresies, and myths. He built hospitals, schools, and orphanages to counter these practices (Shihab 1995).

**Commented [MOU8]:** Could we have an example?

**Commented [nf9R8]:** Yes, we could. I have added an example and a reference. What do you think?

**Commented [MOU10]:** I don't understand this sentence. Are you trying to say hospitals, schools and orphanages were areas of superstitions etc? In any case, I feel this info is extraneous but could be included in a footnote or deleted.

**Commented [nf11R10]:** No. My point is as follows:

In the era when Dahlan lived, many Indonesians practised superstitions, heresies and myths about health, welfare/safety and education. For example, in myths related to health, some people believed that if someone was sick, they should be taken to an indigenous medical practitioner/shaman rather than a hospital/doctor. Another example is superstitions related to safety/welfare. At that time, some Indonesians believed that if a certain type of bird flew round and round above their house, the inhabitants would be sick or have a misfortune. In the context of this society, Dahlan then built hospitals, schools and orphanages to encourage people to reason and abandon superstitions, heresies and myths.

What do you think?

PK – see my suggested amendment with new footnote.

**Formatted:** English (United States)

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: 10 pt, Complex Script Font: 10 pt

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, 10 pt, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, 10 pt

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, English (United Kingdom)

did occur when Syamsul Anwar, the current chair of the Tarjih Council, differed from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council on the issue of *iftitāḥ* prayer (opening night prayer [*qiyām al-lail*]).<sup>27</sup> While Anwar's opinion clearly differs from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council, the prevailing opinion in Muhammadiyah is that of the Tarjih Council, not the chair of the Tarjih Council. Within Muhammadiyah, such religious differences of opinion are common as usually happens in *fiqh* discourse in general. The difference between El Madury and Anwar is that the latter does not act in the name of Muhammadiyah or the Tarjih Council when he has a different view. Instead, on many occasions, he urges Muhammadiyah followers to abide by the opinion of the Tarjih Council on the *iftitāḥ* prayer.<sup>28</sup> Thus Anwar has shown he can compromise his personal religious opinion with his professional attitude in the organisation. In this case, he understands that using the name Muhammadiyah to legitimise individual opinions or interests is not justifiable.

### Acknowledgements

Permission for this research PJB-002/SP3/LPPM-UAD/VI/2020 and funding were provided by the ethical board of Ahmad Dahlan University Research and Development Institute (Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan).

I am grateful to *ustaz* Zulkarnain El Madury for his exceptional help and support during my fieldwork. I also thank Amiruddin, Arif Nur Kholis, Muhammad Muflih, Wahyudi Abdurrahim, Robby Karman, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, Ilham Ibrahim, Ariful Hazam, and the members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council for providing information regarding my research. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article and to the editors of the *Indonesia and the Malay World*. Errors, if any, are solely mine.

### Note on contributor

<sup>27</sup> For Anwar (2013), the *iftitāḥ* prayer comprises two short *rak'ah* prayers that are performed before *qiyām al-lail*, with the condition that it must be preceded by sleep, otherwise there is no need to perform the *iftitāḥ* prayer. However, the Tarjih Council holds that the *iftitāḥ* prayer consists of two short *rak'ah* prayers performed before *qiyām al-lail*, whether preceded by sleep or not (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2011; Tim Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2019a).

<sup>28</sup> On several occasions, this author has heard Syamsul Anwar's direct appeal to Muhammadiyah members to follow the opinion of the Tarjih Council on this aspect of the *iftitāḥ* prayer.

*Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi* is a lecturer in the Department of Hadith Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He has published widely on a variety of issues relating to Islamic Studies, including al-Quran, hadith, Islamic law, social media and da'wah, and Muhammadiyah studies. Email: niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id

## References

- Abdurrahim, Wahyudi Sarju. 2020. *Ahlul haq wassunnah: syarah himpunan putusan tarjih Muhammadiyah bab iman bagian ketuhanan* [Ahlul haq wassunnah: explanation of tarjih decisions compilation of Muhammadiyah chapter on faith part of divinity]. Yogyakarta: Al Muflihun Publishing.
- Abror, Robby. 2020. Syeikh Yunahar, ulama Muhammadiyah kharismatik [Sheikh Yunahar, a charismatic Muhammadiyah cleric]. 3 January. <<https://menara62.com/syeikh-yunahar-ulama-muhammadiyah-kharismatik/>> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2018. Media sosial dan pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [Social media and shifting religious authority]. 12 December. <[https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media\\_sosial\\_dan\\_pergeseran\\_otoritas\\_keagamaan](https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media_sosial_dan_pergeseran_otoritas_keagamaan)> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2020. The demise of moderate Islam: new media, contestation, and reclaiming religious authorities. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10 (1): 1–24.
- Alfaqi, Mifdal Zusron. 2015. Memahami Indonesia melalui prespektif nasionalisme, politik identitas, serta solidaritas [Understanding Indonesia through the perspectives of nationalism, identity politics, and solidarity]. *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 28 (2): 111–116.
- Alvara Research Center. 2020. Ramadhan dan pandemi Covid-19: semangat ibadah tak surut, konsumsi tersendat. <[https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN\\_DAN\\_PANDEMI\\_COVID-19\\_SEMANGAT\\_IBADAH\\_TAK\\_SURUT\\_KONSUMSI\\_TERSENDAT.pdf](https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN_DAN_PANDEMI_COVID-19_SEMANGAT_IBADAH_TAK_SURUT_KONSUMSI_TERSENDAT.pdf)> Accessed 23 February 2021.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2007. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer* [Contemporary Islamic law studies]. Jakarta: RM Books.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2013. *Salat Tarawih: Tinjauan usul fikih, sejarah, dan fikih* [Tarawih prayer: usul fiqh, history, and fiqh perspectives]. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2016. Fatwā, purification and dynamization: a study of tarjih in

- Muhammadiyah. *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (1): 27–44.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2018. *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Panitia Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih Muhammadiyah XXX.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2020. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer Bagian dua* [Contemporary Islamic legal studies Part two]. Yogyakarta: UAD Press.
- Barton, Greg. 2014. The Gülen movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: progressive Islamic thought, religious philanthropy and civil society in Turkey and Indonesia. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25 (3): 287–301.
- Buchari, Sri Astuti. 2014. *Kebangkitan etnis menuju politik identitas* [Ethnic awakening towards identity politics]. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Bunt, Gary R. 2003. *Islam in the digital age: e-jihad, online fatwas and cyber Islamic environments*. London: Pluto Press.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2005. The 45th Muhammadiyah Congress contest between literal-conservative and liberal-moderate Muslims in Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 12 (1): 185–189.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2013. Liberal and conservative discourses in the Muhammadiyah: the struggle for the face of reformist Islam in Indonesia. In Martin van Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary developments in Indonesian Islam: explaining the 'conservative turn'*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2016. Aksi bela Islam: konservatisme dan fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. *Maarif* 11 (2): 15–29.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2020. Muslim televangelists in the making: conversion narratives and the construction of religious authority. *Muslim World* 110 (2): 154–175.
- Burhanudin, Jajat. 2004. The fragmentation of religious authority: Islamic print media in early 20th century Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 11 (1): 23–62.
- Campbell, H.A. and Teusner, P.E. 2011. Religious authority in the age of the internet. In *Christian Reflection, Virtual Lives*. Waco TX: Baylor University Press, pp. 59–68. <<https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/130950.pdf>>
- Chairi, Effendi. 2019. Ketidadaan otoritas terpusat dalam fenomena kontemporer di Indonesia [The absence of a centralised authority in contemporary phenomena in Indonesia]. *SANGKÉP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 2 (2): 197–215.
- Chaplin, Chris. 2021. *Salafism and the State: Islamic activism and national identity in contemporary Indonesia*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.
- Dakta.com. 2016. Aa Gym ajak ribuan jamaahnya ikut aksi bela Islam III [Aa Gym invites

thousands of congregants to join Islamic Defence Action III]. 29 November.

<<http://www.dakta.com/news/7329/aa-gym-ajak-ribuan-jamaahnya-ikut-aksi-bela-islam-iii>> Accessed 2 February 2020.

Fadl, Khaled Abou El. 2014. *Speaking in God's name: Islamic law, authority, and women*. London: Oneworld Publications.

Farhan, Farhan. 2017. Pesan dakwah Felix Siauw di media sosial (perspektif meaning and media). *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Administrasi Islam* 1 (2): 209–226.

Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2017. Peranan Maqasid Al-Shariah dalam memahami Hadith: kajian terhadap fatwa Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah [The role of Maqasid Al-Shariah in understanding Hadith: a study of the fatwa of the Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah]. MA thesis, University of Malaya.

Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020a. PUTM dan kaderisasi ulama: menelusuri latar belakang lahirnya Lembaga Kaderisasi Ulama Muhammadiyah [PUTM and clerical regeneration: tracing the background of the birth of the Muhammadiyah Clerical Cadre Institute]. <<https://santricendekia.com/putm-dan-kaderisasi-ulama-menelusuri-latar-belakang-lahirnya-lembaga-kaderisasi-ulama-muhammadiyah/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.

Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020b. Tantangan kader ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah di era 4.0 [Challenges for Tarjih Muhammadiyah ulama cadres in the 4.0 era]. 21 July. *Suara 'Aisyiyah* <<https://suaraaisyiyah.id/tantangan-kader-ulama-tarjih-muhammadiyah-di-era-4-0/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.

Fealy, Greg. 2008. Consuming Islam: commodified religion and aspirational pietism in contemporary Indonesia. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.

Gesuri. 2020. Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia kehilangan ulama kharismatik [Yunahar Ilyas passed away, Indonesia lost a charismatic scholar]. 3 January. <<https://www.gesuri.id/internal/yunahar-ilyas-wafat-indonesia-kehilangan-ulama-kharismatik-b1YFoZpRY.>> Accessed 20 March 2020.

Hew, Wai Weng. 2018. The art of dakwah: social media, visual persuasion and the Islamist propagation of Felix Siauw. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (134): 61–79.

Hoesterey, James B. 2008. Marketing morality: the rise, fall and rebranding of Aa Gym. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: Religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, pp. 95–114.

Hope Cheong, Pauline. 2016. Religious authority and social media branding in a culture of religious celebrification. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*,

- University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 81–102.
- Horsfield, Peter. 2016. The media and religious authority from ancient to modern. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*. University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 37–66.
- IB Times Indonesia. 2020. 100 situs Islam Indonesia, NU Online peringkat pertama [100 Indonesian Islamic websites, NU Online ranks first]. 10 July. <IBTimes.Id. 2020. <<https://ibtimes.id/100-situs-islam-indonesia-nu-online-peringkat-pertama/>> Accessed 23 February 2023.
- Ilyas, Yunahar. 2012. *Kuliah Akhlaq* [Akhlaq lecture]. XII. Yogyakarta: LPPI Universitas Muhammdiyah Yogyakarta.
- Khamis, S., Ang, L. and Welling, R. 2017. Self-branding, ‘micro-celebrity’ and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191–208.
- Khomalia, Isti and Rahman, Khairul Arief. 2018. Micro hijabers celebrity: membentuk identitas dengan update self-story via instagram (kasus dian pelangi). *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban dan Pemikiran Islam* 2 (1): 33–42.
- Kompas. 2020. Sejumlah tokoh hadir prosesi pemakaman ketua PP Muhammadiyah Yunahar Ilyas [Many figures attended the funeral procession of Muhammadiyah chairman Yunahar Ilyas]. 3 January. <<https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/03/19142441/sejumlah-tokoh-hadiri-prosesi-pemakaman-ketua-pp-muhammadiyah-yunahar-ilyas>> Accessed 3 April 2022.
- Labiq. 2019. Pengaruh new media terhadap pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [The influence of new media on shifting religious authority]. 19 April. <<https://geotimes.co.id/opini/pengaruh-new-media-terhadap-pergeseran-otoritas-keagamaan>> Accessed 19 October 2020.
- Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. 2010. *Politik identitas dan masa depan pluralisme Indonesia*. Edited by Samsu Rizal Panggabean et al. Jakarta: Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (PUSAD) Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina.
- Madury, Zulkarnain El. 2019. Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam? [Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?]. 2 November. <<https://www.facebook.com/zulkarnainsumenep/posts/2386248524961601>> Accessed 5 May 2020.
- Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah. 2016. Pembukaan Halaqah, Majelis Tarjih Launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan Muhammadiyah Observatorium Network [Halaqah opening, Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and



- Muhammadiyah Observatory Network]. 20 August. <<https://tarjih.or.id/pembukaan-halaqah-majelis-tarjih-launching-pusat-tarjih-muhammadiyah-dan-muhammadiyah-observatorium-network/>> Accessed 6 October 2023.
- Majelis Tarjih Dahlan, Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. 2016. Nota Kesepakatan Majelis Tarjih Dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Tentang Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di Islamic Center Universitas Ahmad Dahlan [Memorandum of Agreement between the Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board and Ahmad Dahlan University on the Management of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre at the Islamic Centre of Ahmad Dahlan University]. Yogyakarta.
- Maskur, Maskur and Noor, Irfan Noor. 2014. Ustadz selebriti Abdullah Gymnastiar dalam budaya populer (perspektif hipersemiotika Yasraf Amir Piliang) [Celebrity Ustadz Abdullah Gymnastiar in popular culture (Yasraf Amir Piliang's hyper semiotics perspective)]. *Jurnal Studia Insania* 2 (1): 47–57.
- Matheson, Craig. 1987. Weber and the classification of forms of legitimacy. *British Journal of Sociology* 38 (2): 199–215.
- Muhammadiyah Central Board. 2023. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 8 October 2023.
- Nisa, Eva F. 2019. Internet and Muslim women. In Ronald Lukens-Bull and Mark Woodward (eds), *Handbook of contemporary Islam and Muslim lives*. Cham: Springer, pp. 1–19.
- Palahuddin. 2020. The typology of religious thought in Muhammadiyah. *International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 3 (2): 74–81.  
<<http://journal2.uad.ac.id/index.php/ijish/article/view/2233/pdf>>
- Peacock, James L. 1978. *Purifying the Faith: the Muhammadiyah movement in Indonesian Islam*. Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2011. *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2016. Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan MuON [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and MuON]. 20 August.  
<<http://www.umm.ac.id/id/muhammadiyah/7070.html>> Accessed 20 March 2021.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Berikut Susunan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah pPeriode 2022–2027 [The following is the composition of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the 2022–2027 period] <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/berikut-susunan->

- pimpinan-pusat-muhammadiyah-periode-2022-2027/> Accessed 7 October 2023.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Majelis Tabligh [Tabligh Council]. <  
<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 07 October 2023.
- Postill, John and Pink, Sarah. 2012. Social media ethnography: the digital researcher in a messy web. *Media International Australia* 145 (1): 123–134.
- Pribadi, Yanwar. 2019. Fragmentasi umat dan penciptaan otoritas keagamaan: tanggapan terhadap ‘Islam lokal’ dan ‘Islam asing’ di Indonesia [Ummah fragmentation and the creation of religious authority: responses to ‘local Islam’ and ‘foreign Islam’ in Indonesia]. *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 21 (1): 103–119.  
 <<https://jmb.lipi.go.id/jmb/article/view/828/455>>
- Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah. n.d. *Panduan pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre management guide]. Majelis Tarjih, Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta.
- Quadri, Syed Junaid A. 2013. Transformations of tradition: modernity in the thought of Muḥammad Bakhīr Al-Muṭṭī. PhD thesis, McGill University.
- Rahman, Asjmun Abdur et al. 1985. Laporan penelitian Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (suatu studi tentang sistem dan metode penentuan hukum) [Research report of Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (a study of the system and method of determining the law)]. Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga.
- Rakyat Merdeka. 2019. Dubes Malaysia jenguk ketum MUI Yunahar Ilyas di Yogyakarta [Malaysian ambassador visits MUI chairman Yunahar Ilyas in Yogyakarta]. 5 November. <<https://rm.id/baca-berita/internasional/21745/dubes-malaysia-jenguk-ketum-mui-yunahar-ilyas-di-yogyakarta>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Riesebrodt, Martin. 1999. Charisma in Max Weber’s Sociology of Religion. *Religion* 29 (1): 1–14.
- Sadasri, Lidwina Mutia. 2017. Selebriti mikro di media baru kajian presentasi diri dalam vlog selebriti mikro [Micro-celebrities in new media: a study of self-presentation in micro-celebrity vlogs]. *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi Dan Opini Publik* 21 (2): 167–181.  
 <<https://jurnal.kominfo.go.id/index.php/jpkop/article/view/1218/720>>
- Saefullah, Hikmawan. 2022. Media baru, publik baru: mengkonfigurasi ulang ruang publik Islam [New media, new publics: reconfiguring the Islamic public sphere]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sammy, Abdullah. 2022. Peluang dan tantangan dakwah digital Muhammadiyah

- [Opportunities and challenges of Muhammadiyah digital da'wah]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sanjaya, Makroen. 2022. Peta ideologi islam di media sosial [The map of Islamic ideology on social media]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Senft, Theresa M. 2008. *Camgirls: celebrity and community in the age of social networks*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Shamsy, Ahmed El. 2013. The Hāshiya in Islamic law: a sketch of the Shāfi'ī literature. *Oriens* 41 (3-4): 289–315.
- Shihab, Alwi. 1995. The Muhammadiyah movement and its controversy with Christian mission in Indonesia. PhD thesis, Temple University, USA.
- Spencer, Martin E. 1970. Weber on legitimate norms and authority. *British Journal of Sociology* 21 (2): 123–134.
- Suara Muhammadiyah. 2019. Hyung Jun Kim: sistem di Muhammadiyah sungguh ideal [Hyung Jun Kim: Muhammadiyah's system is ideal]. <<https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/08/01/hyung-jun-kim-sistem-di-muhammadiyah-sungguh-ideal/>> Accessed 9 April 2022.
- Suyadi and Widodo, Hendro. 2019. Millennialization of Islamic education based on neuroscience in the third generation university in Yogyakarta Indonesia. *QIIS International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7 (1): 173–202.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2009. Hukum tentang jenggot dan cadar [Islamic law perspective on beards and veils]. *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine, no. 18 . Yogyakarta.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019a. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 4*. Cetakan IX. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019b. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 7*. Cetakan IV. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Tirto.id. 2018. Dari Aa' Gym ke Felix Siauw: ustaz medsos & medium dakwah politis. Tirto.Id. 16 January. <<https://tirto.id/dari-aa-gym-ke-felix-siauw-ustaz-medsos-medium-dakwah-politis-cCGf>> Accessed 5 February 2020.
- Turner, Bryan S. 2007. Religious authority and the new media. *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2): 117–134.
- Turner, Graeme. 2010. *Ordinary people and the media: the demotic turn*. Los Angeles CA:

Sage.

Widodo, Arif. 2017. Transformative intellectual discourse and movement of Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM). *Iseedu: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices* 1 (1): 126–151.

<<https://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/iseedu/article/view/5423/3542>>

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change*. Princetoon NJ: Princeton University Press.

## ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY *USTAZ* PHENOMENON

### Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

#### ABSTRACTS

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the fragmentation of religious authority. In the Indonesian context, the mainstream religious authority held by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has been challenged and threatened by micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This article examines the emergence of the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah fanpage on Facebook, created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board as it has threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority. It analyses Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace, by taking a closer look at what has been done by Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, an assembly that has the exclusive authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* within Muhammadiyah. This article also discusses lessons that can be learned from the case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the response of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

#### KEYWORDS

Fragmentation of religious authority; micro-celebrity *ustaz*; Muhammadiyah; religious authority; *tarjih*.

#### ABSTRAK

*Kemunculan internet dan media sosial telah mempertajam fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. Dalam konteks Indonesia, otoritas keagamaan arus utama yang dipegang oleh Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) disaingi dan diancam oleh para ustaz mikro-*

*selebritas. Artikel ini mengkaji kemunculan fanpage Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah di Facebook yang dibuat dan dikelola oleh Zulkarnain El Madury, seseorang yang mengklaim sebagai ustaz Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, karena dianggap mengancam otoritas keagamaan Muhammadiyah. Penelitian ini menganalisis upaya Muhammadiyah dalam mempertahankan otoritas keagamaannya di dunia maya dengan melihat lebih dekat pada apa yang telah dilakukan oleh Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah, sebuah majelis yang memiliki otoritas eksklusif untuk mengeluarkan fatwa dan ijtihad keagamaan resmi di Muhammadiyah. Artikel ini juga membahas pelajaran yang dapat dipetik dari kasus Zulkarnain El Madury dan respons Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah.*

#### KATA KUNCI

~~Fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan; Muhammadiyah; otoritas keagamaan; Ustaz mikro-selebritas; fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan; otoritas keagamaan; Muhammadiyah; tarjih; ustaz mikro-selebritas.~~

#### Introduction

The Alvara Research Center (2020) survey was surprising as it stated that the clerics most heard by the public, especially in Ramadan 2020, were not from the official Muhammadiyah board.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the Alvara Research Center survey was released (IBTimes.id 2020), an Islamic website managed by young Muhammadiyah intellectuals, published a report ranking the 100 most popular Islamic websites in Indonesia. The majority of these sites are managed by or affiliated to Nahdliyyin (NU followers) and Salafi<sup>2</sup> groups with few such sites operated by or affiliated to Muhammadiyah. The Alvara Research Center survey and the IBTimes.id report show that Muhammadiyah, in terms of influence and religious authority on the internet, lags behind other religious groups which is ironic for an organisation claiming to represent the progressive Islamic group.

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the so-called fragmentation of religious authority. Eva F. Nisa (2019), for example, mentions that the proliferation of various digital platforms is directly proportional to the increasing fragmentation of religious authority.

<sup>1</sup> One of the 15 most popular clerics mentioned in the report, Ustaz Ali Hidayat, has since been included on the Muhammadiyah Central Board's Tabligh Council (2022–2027; Muhammadiyah Central Board 2023). Prior to that, he did not convey official Muhammadiyah ideas in his lectures.

<sup>2</sup> For more comprehensive information on the activism of Salafi groups, see Chris Chaplin (2021).

**Commented [nf1]:** I have sorted Indonesian abstracts in alphabetical order. But I apologise; I'm still a bit doubtful because when I look at the current volume and issue of IMW journal (Vol. 51, No. 150), the Indonesian abstracts are sorted by the English abstract version. Which one is correct?

PK I would follow the English abstract version.

**Commented [nf2R1]:** OK. Thanks, Pauline.

Islamic discourse is monopolised not only by an elite group of scholars or mainstream religious groups, but also by persons or groups that have not been considered in Islamic discourse. Furthermore, the presence of the internet and social media has led to the birth of what is called micro-celebrity. Theresa M. Senft (2008) defines micro-celebrity as a new style of online performance that involves increasing popularity on social media such as videos, blogs, and networking sites. These micro-celebrities unlike conventional celebrities, emerge from what is known as new media (Senft 2008).

Of course, not all new media users have the adjective ‘micro-celebrity’. Only those who experience what Graeme Turner (2010) terms ‘the demotic turn’, namely, the increasing visibility of ordinary people to appear as celebrities in the media, especially online media. In turn, both conventional and micro-celebrity exist in various public spheres, and the discourse on them is characterised as influencers, stimulants of consumerism, enthusiasm, public debate, and various activism (Sadasri 2017).

By borrowing the theory of micro-celebrities in the study of new media, we can then read how these micro-celebrities have also come to the fore in the religious realm. The emergence of ulama, *ustaz* (religious teachers), and religious leaders who become influencers in new media can perhaps be seen as one form of micro-celebrity. Felix Siauw is a prominent example. A convert, who is now a preacher, Siauw has a massive following on social media. In 2018, for example, he had 2.6 million followers on Twitter, and in 2022 it numbered 3.3 million. Felix Siauw’s Instagram account has around 4.9 million followers. It can even be said that he is the *ustaz* who has the most followers on social media (Tirto 2018), making him one of the leading social media preachers in Indonesia today (Hew 2018). What Felix Siauw posts on his social media has more or less influenced the map of religious authorities in Indonesia.

The existence of the internet and the continuing development of technology allows the emergence of many other micro-celebrity *ustaz*, both in the national arena more generally or more specifically in internal religious organisations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, Persis (Persatuan Islam) or others. In the context of Muhammadiyah, the largest modernist Islamic organisation began to be challenged for its religious authority by a preacher who was said to be part of Muhammadiyah itself, namely Zulkarnain El Madury. He claims to be a Muhammadiyah cadre and often introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board. In recent years, El Madury has been noticed by Muhammadiyah administrators

and Muhammadiyah cadres<sup>3</sup> and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah) has discussed him in a special meeting. This is because the posts on the Facebook page that El Madury manages, *Syarah Himpunan Putus Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (henceforth SHPTM), often differ significantly from – and to some extent delegitimise – a Muhammadiyah fatwa or official decision. Responses from grassroots or Muhammadiyah followers vary. This can be seen, for example, from the comments on each post. Some defend and remain adamant on the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah, but not a few were affected and followed what was conveyed by El Madury on his Facebook page.

This is where it becomes crucial to see how Muhammadiyah attempts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace, especially among its members and the public. By conducting web content analysis (Postill and Pink 2012) on SHPTM and official social media accounts and those affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this article shows how El Madury builds his narratives and, in turn, how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority on the internet. Additionally, field research was conducted and key actors were interviewed offline and online in a semi-structured format.<sup>4</sup> Apart from El Madury, the key actors are members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Digital Broadcast Centre (Pusat Syiar Digital Muhammadiyah), Muhammadiyah activists as well as Muhammadiyah grassroots.

### **Fragmentation of religious authority, new preacher and micro-celebrity *ustaz* phenomenon**

Fragmentation of religious authority is a phenomenon that occurs in various religious communities and is not limited to Islam (B.S. Turner 2007; Campbell and Teusner 2011; Hope Cheong 2016). The fragmentation of religious authority is also a global phenomenon as pointed out by Gary R. Bunt (2003) who states that the new media have shaped diverse understandings among individual Muslims worldwide about e-jihad (electronic jihad). The definition of electronic jihad is understood and interpreted differently, ranging from online activism to Muslim articulation after the events of 11 September 2001. Bunt (2003) shows that each new media (in this case, new websites) has authority for its respective group.

---

<sup>3</sup> This author's online and offline interviews with Amiruddin, Robby Karman, Muhammad Muflih, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, and Arif Nur Kholis, 2019–2020.

<sup>4</sup> Data collection in this study was carried out between 2018 and 2020. As personal interviews were not possible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, some interviews were conducted online.



The fragmentation of religious authority discussed here is from the 20th century to the present. Jajat Burhanudin (2004) points out that there has been a shift in religious authority in the historical phase of Indonesian religious thought in the early 20th century due to modernisation. His study, which focuses on the Islamic print media, further shows that there is a shift in religious authority that used to be in *Kitab Kuning*<sup>5</sup> taught by *kyai* or ulama in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to magazines, journals, newspapers, and books published by modernist circles or organisations.

Religious authority since the early 20th century has always stayed with Muhammadiyah and NU. These two religious organisations are often referred to by scholars as the authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016; Akmaliah 2018). The shift in religious authority occurred again in the 1990s when national television stations emerged. The Islamic programmes presented by the television stations show the *ustaz* (religious teachers), which in turn build their authority through lectures delivered by these preachers. This phenomenon prompted scholars to come up with the term ‘Islamic televangelism’ (Akmaliah 2018). Abdullah Gymnastiar who is better known as Aa Gym is one example that falls into the category of a television *ustaz*, or a ‘tele-dai’ as coined by Greg Fealy (2008).

The most obvious and recent picture of the fragmentation of religious authority in Indonesia is the series of events of the Defend Islam Action (Aksi Bela Islam). Ahmad Najib Burhani (2016) hints that these critical events marked the peak of the fragmentation of religious authorities in Indonesia as they gave rise to new actors who challenge the established religious authority. Although it cannot be said to shift or match the role of Muhammadiyah and NU, the emergence of new actors such as Rizieq Shihab provides a new map of religious authority in Indonesia.

This phenomenon of the fragmentation of religious authority has increased sharply in the development of what scholars call pop culture, marked by the birth of many new media (Labiq 2019). The availability of internet access to every social class is the main factor for this fragmentation. As a result, many new media have emerged with each individual and group competing to spread ideas (Horsfield 2016; Nisa 2019).

Aa Gym is one of the early actors who emerged in the internet era in Indonesia. This can be captured in two interesting studies on Aa Gym by James B. Hoesterey (2008), and

---

<sup>5</sup> So-called because the books were printed on yellow paper. These were the Islamic texts used in the education of Islamic schools.

Maskur and Noor (2014). Although the use of the internet as a medium of da'wah around during the early 2000s was not as massive as it is now, the emergence of Aa Gym as a new cleric on the national da'wah stage through lectures, seminars, and Islamic training is a phenomenon in itself. Hoesterey (2008) studies the journey of Aa Gym from his first appearance as a preacher, falling, and then successfully rebranding to restore his religious authority. This is evident, for example, from how Aa Gym has many listeners (*Dakta.com* 2016). Popular culture has also brought Aa Gym to be seen not only by the public, especially by his followers, as also singer, actor, author, etc. Thus, he has transformed from an ordinary cleric to a celebrity cleric. Through a hypersemiotic perspective, Maskur and Noor (2014) show the various aspects of Aa Gym's personality.

Following the appearance of Aa Gym and with further rapid development of information technology, many other new preachers began to appear. Hew Wai Weng (2018) describes how Felix SiauW is another skilful religious preacher. Being a cleric with the most followers on the internet did not make SiauW neglect to spread his da'wah in the real world. Hew (2018) points out that SiauW has blended online and offline da'wah harmoniously. According to Hew (2018) and Farhan (2017), one of the keys to SiauW's success in preaching is his ability to present an entertaining and straightforward da'wah, even though its content is dogmatic and political.

Aa Gym and Felix SiauW are two micro-celebrity *ustaz* as a result of the new media. The term micro-celebrity *ustaz* was adopted and reconstructed from the theory of micro-celebrity. Most of these studies conducted from the perspective of pop culture (Senft 2008; G. Turner 2010; Khamis, Ang and Welling 2017; Sadasri 2017; Khomalia and Rahman 2018) describe the fragmentation of religious authority, marked by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By this term this author means an ordinary *ustaz/ustazah* who has skyrocketed in popularity and is celebrity on and because of social media so that he or she is able to influence certain people or communities. In other words, it means the *ustaz/ustazah* has experienced what G. Turner (2010) calls 'the demotic turn', when ordinary people are highly visible on social media and become celebrities. Challenges to established religious authorities by new religious personalities or groups are rarely touched on except that of Yanwar Pribadi (2019). His study explains the efforts of 'local Islam' (*Islam lokal*) to defend its religious authority from the threat of 'foreign Islam' (*Islam asing*). However, his study differs from what this author will examine in tracing Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

This study is on a micro-celebrity *ustaz*, Zulkarnain El Madury who is less well known when compared to Aa Gym or Felix Siauw but he has a strong influence on the internet. His identity as a preacher from Muhammadiyah who targets Muhammadiyah followers with postings that are often different and even delegitimise the official voice of this largest modernist mass organisation deserves to be investigated. This study, apart from showing Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority on the internet, also seeks explicitly to fill the gap in previous studies. In his latest study, Akmaliah (2020) shows that Muhammadiyah and NU have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was strongly reactive to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) indicates there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's responses less hostile. Sammy (2022), Sanjaya (2022), and Saefullah (2022) came to the same conclusion as Akmaliah, claiming that Muhammadiyah is significantly less adaptive to the emergence of new media, and therefore its da'wah often loses to that of the micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This study focuses on the struggle of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as the only assembly under Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas and official *ijtihad* exposition within Muhammadiyah.

#### **Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage**

The Facebook SHPTM fanpage was created by Zulkarnain El Madury. He was born in Sumenep on the island of Madura in 1963, with the name Zulkarnain bin Syamsuri. He claims to have studied in Malaysia at the Institute of Business Study and always introduces himself as a preacher from the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah). He spent his childhood in Madura and was a traditionalist Muslim like others on the island. He grew up in a milieu dominated by the NU traditionalist Islamic organisation. He used to perform *tahlilan* (ritual prayers for the dead), *ziarah* (pilgrimage to the grave), and other practices that, according to him, after becoming a member of Muhammadiyah, were not following the Sunnah of the Prophet. He received his religious education at the Islamic boarding school at-Taufiqiyyah Sumenep Madura. In 1976 he became acquainted with Muhammadiyah. He became interested in the da'wah and religious understanding of the Muhammadiyah movement founded by Ahmad

Dahlan after listening to a lecture by one of its preachers. In 1977, he officially joined Muhammadiyah.<sup>6</sup>

Since joining Muhammadiyah, El Madury has been active as a preacher who spreads religious ideas and understanding. From 1990 to 2007, he was one of the Muhammadiyah preachers who was sent to remote areas by the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board. His daily activities are now preaching at different places as well as creating content on for SHPTM fanpage. He now lives in Jakarta as the *tarjih* and *tabligh* council chair of the Pondok Gede Muhammadiyah Branch.<sup>7</sup> He created SHPTM in 2014.<sup>8</sup> However, in the digital history that this author can trace, the fanpage was created in 2015 as the earliest post that is currently traceable is dated 5 January 2015.

According to El Madury, the fanpage began with the WhatsApp group he created which he named *Tarjih dan Tabligh Institut* (Tarjih and Tabligh Institute) to provide a space to discuss and spread ideas related to *tarjih*.<sup>9</sup> He included many Muhammadiyah figures and activists in this group, including (the now late) Buya Yunahar Ilyas. Over time, seeing that El Madury's posts on SHPTM were deemed inconsistent with the *tarjih* spirit of Muhammadiyah, several people, such as Fathurrahman Kamal and Buya Risman, sharply criticised the postings. El Madury, Fathurrahman Kamal, and Buya Risman were then engaged in a heated debate which was relayed later to Buya Yunahar Ilyas. The response by Buya Yunahar Ilyas at that time, according to El Madury, differed from that of his critics. Buya Yun responded quite positively because he saw El Madury's initiative as providing *syarh* (explanation) -or further explication of the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Decisions Compilation). Finally, he gave his permission to El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com).<sup>10</sup>

El Madury's early postings on SHPTM, were still relatively consistent in uploading Muhammadiyah fatwas in the question (from someone) and answer format from the fatwa division of the Tarjih Council. This is similar to the the original question and answer format

<sup>6</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Muhammadiyah's use of the word *tarjih* has changed throughout its development. In its early period, and following its usage in the principles of law (*usul al-fiqh*), *tarjih* conveyed the meaning of examining the various opinions of Muslim jurists on a particular question and evaluating them to determine which is most faithful to the original Shari'a sources. Over time this usage gradually included any intellectual endeavour used to study new cases that earlier jurists had not addressed. In short, in Muhammadiyah's perspective, *tarjih* is identical, or almost identical, to *ijihad* (Anwar 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

administered by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, whose fatwas were later published in the *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine. However, over time, SHPTM included posts that apart from the dissemination of Muhammadiyah's official *ijtihad* included the personal opinions of El Madury. These opinions in inelegant words are often offensive to other groups. Not infrequently, his posts contradict the official stance of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in particular, or Muhammadiyah in general, such as on the veil issue (see below). Since Facebook introduced its 'live broadcast' feature, El Madury has also availed of it to conduct live lectures. The SHPTM is popular with netizens. As of the time of writing (3 April 2022), it has been followed by 19,423 and is 'liked' by 8,868 people. His posts also often receive both positive and critical comments from viewers.

El Madury gave several reasons that brought about the creation of his fanpage. Firstly, it is aimed at fortifying Muhammadiyah followers against all forms of superstition, heresy, and myth as its posts focus on issues related to faith and worship. Secondly, he aims to counter those liberal Muhammadiyah activists and has openly responded to such views. His posts often openly attacks the religious practices of the the Nahdliyyin, resulting in several clashes between him and the Nahdliyyin figure, Idrus Ramli.<sup>11</sup>

Despite having many followers El Madury and his SHPTM do have critics. Many Muhammadiyah followers are concerned about the SHPTM posts. Some have tried to convey their anxiety through the official social media accounts of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre (Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah).<sup>12</sup> Those concerned generally want to ask for firm action from the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as El Madury has included 'Tarjih Muhammdiyah' in his fanpage name. The demands to the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, when summarised, include: (1) that the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council reprimand or remind Zulkarnain El Madury not to use symbols or names that are closely related to Tarjih Muhammadiyah for or on his fanpage; (2) making and circulating an announcement that the fanpage is not a social media account of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council or the Tarjih Muhamamdiyah Centre; (3) announcing the official social media accounts and websites of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre, so that Muhammadiyah people at the grassroots are not deceived by the existence of the fanpage and know where to look for religious reference sites, especially on the internet.

---

<sup>11</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Interviews with Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf and Ariful Hazam, November 2020 who are grassroots of Muhammadiyah, and social media administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

### Zulkarnain El Madury and his efforts in building religious authority

Zulkarnain El Madury and his fanpage SHPTM, have threatened the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, and specifically, the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. Many of his posts affect Muhammadiyah followers in particular and Muslims in general as these posts often differ from the official stance of Muhammadiyah, and in some cases contradict the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. This has stimulated public debate on social media, allowing El Madury to become a micro-celebrity *ustaz*. As a result of the general public and the online community attention, El Madury has been able to gradually build up his religious authority.

From the Weberian perspective (Riesebrodt 1999), he has been able to do this in two ways.

The first is through charisma (charismatic authority) and the second is traditional authority discussed later. According to Weber, charisma is a particular type of authority whose original form is based on a specific belief contained in a particular person (Riesebrodt 1999:ibid.). Secondly, El Madury claims he has the endorsement of Yunahar Ilyas, a very popular Muhammadiyah cleric respected by the community from within the Muhammadiyah circle and from Muslims in general which is a form of charismatic authority.

Yunahar Ilyas (1956–2020) or Buya Yun as he was popularly known, was an exegete (*mufasssir*) born in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, who died at the age of 63 (Ilyas 2012). He was an alumnus of Imam Ibn Su'ud University (Saudi Arabia) and an excellent lecturer in conveying religious messages. He was seen as a charismatic cleric by Muhammadiyah followers and Muslims, in general, and this reputation extended to neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore (Abror 2020; Gesuri 2020). On his death in early 2020, many people flocked to pay their last respects to Buya Yun who held the chair of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for three terms (Kompas 2020; Rakyat Merdeka 2019).

By harnessing the charisma of Buya Yun, El Madury was able to increase his religious authority. On various occasions, including when this author interviewed him, Buya Yun's name was often mentioned as an argument and a shield.<sup>13</sup> El Madury insisted that he created the SHPTM fanpage with the permission of Yunahar Ilyas.<sup>14</sup> He added that Wahyudi

<sup>13</sup> This author's informants include Muhammad Muflih (grassroot of Muhammadiyah and initiator of the website tanyajawabagama.com), Robby Karman (secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association [DPP IMM] 2018–2021), and several participants invited by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council with the agenda 'Responding to Emergence of Syarah HPT on Social Media' on 25 September, 2020; interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

**Commented [MOU3]:** If you mention the first, where does the second come in if you delete 'secondly'?

**Commented [nf4R3]:** The second one comes on page 15, as I mentioned above. Starting from: 'The above describes how El Madury builds his charismatic authority. The other is authority built through tradition or what Weber calls traditional authority.'

I did use the word 'the other' in that paragraph instead of 'the second'. What do you think? Should I replace the word 'the other' with 'the second' to make it more straightforward to the reader?

PK – you can't expect the reader to get to p.15 before saying this is the second. So I have modified the sentence to show the second will be discussed later.

**Commented [nf5R3]:** OK. I think that is good idea. Agreed with you.

**Commented [nf6]:** I have changed this paragraph. The explanation of the 'second authority' is on page 15 (starting from: 'The above describes how El Madury builds his charismatic authority. The other is authority built through tradition or what Weber calls traditional authority'). OK with you?

Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website tanyajawabagama.com, had similarly received permission from Buya Yun. Wahyudi Abdurrahim confirmed Zulkarnain's claims and Muhammad Muflih, a grassroots representative added that it is a form of fairness.<sup>15</sup> In other words, Buya Yun's permission is a form of appreciation given by someone who is more senior and has a high social position in Muhammadiyah to someone who is more junior and classified as a grassroots Muhammadiyah member.<sup>16</sup> Permission from Buya Yun, who has charisma within Muhammadiyah in particular, has become a tool used by El Madury in building his religious authority.

In Weberian charismatic authority, charisma is not only about a belief in the existence of extraordinary or superpowers possessed by or contained in humans but also about particular objects other than humans (Riesebrodt 1999). We thus have an explanation as to why El Madury named his fanpage *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a highly respectable and crucial council in Muhammadiyah. Founded in 1927, the Council functions as an assembly that carries out its agenda of purification of religion and the dynamisation of social life. It conducts research and investigations towards this purity, and accordingly gives fatwas and compiles religious guidelines on faith ('*aqidah*) and worship ('*ibadah*) as well as social relations (*mu'amalah*) (Rahman et al. 1985; Anwar 2016). In addition, this Council makes efforts to resolve differences and disagreements on religious issues, which are usually referred to as *khilāfīyyah* problems, so that they are directed more productively (Anwar 2007, 2016).

The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a body that is responsible for formulating the ideological basis of the Muhammadiyah movement (Anwar 2007, 2016) and is Muhammadiyah's representative in the religious field (Fauzi 2017). The Council produces three types of *ijtihad*, namely: (1) tarjih fatwa (*fatwa tarjih*), (2) tarjih decision (*putusan tarjih*), and (3) tarjih discourse (*wacara tarjih*) (Anwar 2016). *Tarjih* fatwa is the Council's answer to general questions on issues that require an explanation in terms of sharia law. Following the nature of the fatwa in general, the Council's fatwa is non-binding, on either organisations or members as individuals. Therefore, even the fatwa can be questioned and discussed. However, because the fatwa contains religious guidance derived from Islamic teaching sources (Anwar 2020), and the general public often does not actually understand the aspects of such a fatwa, it is still believed by Muhammadiyah members to be religious

<sup>15</sup> Online interview with Wahyudi Abdurrahim through WhatsApp, September 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Online interview with Muhammad Muflih through WhatsApp and Facebook, 20 October 2019.

guidance. However, the *tarjih* decision is the official stance of Muhammadiyah in religious matters and is formally binding on the organisation and its members. But, in practice, sometimes Muhammadiyah members exercise their right to freedom not to be bound by the decision because they have different *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

Meanwhile, *tarjih* discourses are ideas or thoughts that are raised and put forward by the Council in seminars, *halaqah* (religious gathering or meeting to discuss the Qur'an or Islam), or other forums in addressing various developing issues and at the same time fostering a critical spirit of *ijtihad* and collecting materials or ideas on various actual problems in society. The nature of this *tarjih* discourse is non-binding and does not become a fatwa that must be followed. *Tarjih* discourse is contained in various publications of the Council, such as *Jurnal Tarjih* (Tarjih Journal) and various published books (Anwar 2016).

The *tarjih* decision and the *tarjih* fatwa, hold their strength within Muhammadiyah as these are considered sacred by some of its members. In short, it can be said that anything that 'smells *tarjih*' has authority in the collective memory of Muhammadiyah followers. In the perspective of Khaled Abou El Fadl (2014), fatwa and *tarjih* decisions have the power of persuasive authority, as these can influence or direct others because they believed in them. The *tarjih* fatwas are officially published through the organisation's ~~official~~ magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, and compiled in the *Tanya Jawab Agama* book. In comparison, the *tarjih* decisions are codified in a book called *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*, (commonly known ~~as by~~ ~~the abbreviation~~ HPT). Thus, it can be understood why the attribution of the term *tarjih* to particular objects can give rise to charismatic authority, as mentioned by Weber.

Formatted: Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

What El Madury did can also be seen as identity politics which is defined as a political tool of a group whether it be ethnic, cultural, religious or others for specific purposes, such as a form of resistance or to show the identity of a group (Alfaqi 2015). Within this framework, identity is politicised through extreme interpretation, which aims to gain support from people who feel 'the same', through race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements. In the context of El Madury, the use of the *tarjih* label on his fanpage can be interpreted as a political tool to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muhammadiyah members. And, as seen in some of his sermon videos, El Madury also placed a flag with the Muhammadiyah symbol behind him. In this context, he wants to convince the viewers that he is close to Muhammadiyah. He has introduced himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board on many occasions.



According to Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif (2010), identity politics is always related to members of social groups who feel excluded by the mainstream in a nation or state. Sri Astuti Buchari (2014) also finds that the emergence of identity politics is mainly caused by certain factors that an ethnic group sees as pressure from the political injustice. By looking at the observations made by Ahmad Najib Burhani (2013), El Madury, in this case, can be categorised as part of a group that feels excluded, threatened, and to some extent in need of justice within Muhammadiyah. Burhani (2013) explains the existence of two opposing schools of thought within Muhammadiyah which he refers to as 'Pure Islam' (*Islam Murni*) and 'Progressive Islam' (*Islam Progresif*). The conflict between these two schools of thought in Muhammadiyah began to surface at the 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Banda Aceh in 1995 (Burhani 2013).

The dominance of 'Progressive Islam' in Muhammadiyah strengthened after its 44th congress in Jakarta in 2000. This congress chose Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif as general chair. He is a progressive Muslim figure, an alumnus of the University of Chicago, and a student of the eminent progressive scholar Fazlur Rahman. At this congress, several names representing the 'Progressive Islam' group were included in the ranks of the central leadership of Muhammadiyah, such as Amin Abdullah, Dawam Raharjo, and Abdul Munir Mulkhan. During Ma'arif's leadership, progressive ideas not only dominated culturally but gradually became Muhammadiyah's official programmes (Burhani 2013).

Seeing the increasingly apparent threat from the ideas put forward by the 'Progressive Islam' group within Muhammadiyah, representatives of the 'Pure Islam' group did not remain silent. They compete and squabble over religious interpretations as to which is the most authentic. These two groups challenge each other through various channels, including seminars, discussions, publications. They usually have conflicting programmes. For example, as mentioned by Burhani (2013), when the Centre for the Study of Religion and Civilisation (PSAP/Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban) raised the theme of pluralism and multiculturalism in its journal, *Tanwir Journal*, the Tabligh Council<sup>17</sup> responded with articles in opposition in its magazine, *Majalah Tabligh*. In Burhani's investigation, during the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress in Malang, this conservative group set up a Pojok Anti-Liberal (anti-liberal corner)

---

<sup>17</sup> Muhammadiyah has many assemblies such as Majelis Tabligh and Majelis Tarjih, each with its own functions and responsibilities. Majelis Tarjih is responsible for producing religious thoughts through fatwas and decisions, while Majelis Tabligh is responsible for disseminating them. Historically, Majelis Tabligh is known in Muhammadiyah as the anti-liberal wing and thus there are at times poor collaboration between Majelis Tarjih and Majelis Tabligh. For example, some fatwas issued by Majelis Tarjih, in Majelis Tabligh's perspective, are the result of liberal thinking. See Burhani (2013) and Palahuddin (2020).

booth, which sold books, DVDs, t-shirts, magazines, and other anti-liberal mementos. Strikingly, some of the t-shirts for sale displayed the words 'Muhammadiyah Anti-Liberal' (Burhani 2013).

At the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress, it seemed that the 'Pure Islam' group was gaining momentum to beat back the 'Progressive Islam' group. The quarrels between these two groups occurred within congress committees and in the external arena. Burhani (2005, 2013) noted at least three critical issues where the 'Pure Islam' group defeated the 'Progressive Islam' in the congress arena, namely: (1) leadership change; (2) the position of women; and (3) resistance to liberal thought.

After the 45th congress, the feud between these two schools of thought has continued though waxing and waning at different times. The form of the feud now looks more varied given the availability of the internet where the presence of social media has changed the battle arena from a conventional to a more modern one. El Madury represents the 'Pure Islam' group, and has heated online debates with figures considered representatives of 'Progressive Islam' whose actions he sees as unsettling. For example, El Madury and the secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association (DPP IMM),<sup>18</sup> Robby Karman, have openly and frequently castigated each other on for example, issues about the veil and the Wahhabi. According to El Madury, Robby Karman is a young liberal figure in Muhammadiyah who should be challenged. El Madury also often attacks the [IBTimes.id](http://IBTimes.id) website, as it frequently contains articles that are progressive and, to some extent, controversial. This website has several former Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah (JIMM/Muhammadiyah Youth Intellectual Network) figures, such as Hilman Latief, Azaki Khoiruddin, and Mu'arif. On one occasion, when the chair of the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre admonished El Madury for uploading provocative posts that contradicted the official stance of the Tarjih Council, he defended himself by stating that equally provocative posts from the 'Progressive Islam' group should be similarly reprimanded. If he is the only one selected for rebuke then he felt an injustice had been done.<sup>19</sup> El Madury's attitude in the framework of identity politics reflects someone who feels excluded and threatened by certain

---

<sup>18</sup> Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM) or Muhammadiyah Student Association is a proponent of Muhammadiyah in student affairs with the basic mission of realising the real Islamic society as formulated by Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Widodo 2017).

<sup>19</sup> On 3 November 2019, the manager of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah reprimanded Zulkarnain El Madury for his post on SHPTM on the veil which contradicts Muhammadiyah's official stance.

parties. At such, his specific attributes and identity are a deliberate form of resistance to the domination of certain groups or thoughts that threaten him.

~~The above describes how El Madury builds his charismatic authority. The second form of other is authority built through tradition or is~~ what Weber calls traditional authority (Spencer 1970; Matheson 1987; Riesebrodt 1999). In simple terms, something can be considered as having traditional authority if it gains legitimacy based on beliefs or norms that have been established in a particular tradition (Chairi 2019). In other words, according to Spencer (1970), traditional authority is legitimised and, at the same time, constrained by traditional norms. Therefore, it is the opposite of charismatic authority. If in charismatic authority, it is the leader or someone who creates the norms, then it is the norms that create the leader or person in the traditional authority. In charismatic authority, the value of influence is generated by a person's personal qualities and is always associated with his personality. While in the case of traditional authority, it is generated by function and is related to someone or something that has traditional values (Spencer 1970).

In the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, ulama and the classical books they wrote can be considered to have this traditional authority. Ulama in Islamic tradition are called heirs of the Prophets. The authority of the ulama is derived from the legitimacy of religious texts which state that the prophetic tradition will be passed on to them. Therefore, the religious ideas they convey in writings or books contain an authoritative value for the next generation. This is the uniqueness of Islamic scholars and traditions, as mentioned by Muhammad Qasim Zaman (2002) who states that one of the most prominent aspects of pre-modern intellectual culture is the articulation of religious discourse through the so-called medium of the commentary. This is manifested in various forms such *al-syurūh*, *hawāsyī*, *rasā'il*, and *fatawā*. The various genres of books that contain explanations, descriptions, or responses to a book or social phenomena are a way for scholars to shape the identity and authority of the school or tradition they adhere to. In addition, it is also a means to interpreting the meaning of the foundational sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah (Zaman 2002).

An example is the *hawāsyī* tradition in the Shafii school. Its emergence, according to Ahmed El-Shamsy (2013), shows the peak of the authority of two scholars in that school, namely al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī. Al-Kurdī, as quoted by El Shamsy, called these two scholars 'the higher authorities in the Syafii school'. Those who want to know the authoritative

opinion of the Shafi'i school have to go through the works of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī, and the books that explain further their works, namely the books written by Ibn Ḥajar al-Haitamī and Syamsuddīn al-Ramlī. These books have for later generations the value of traditional authority (Shamsy 2013: 292).

What is the connection between this traditional authority and El Madury? El Madury's posts on SHPTM and at religious forums where he speaks always rely on the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāth*). According to Endang Mintarja, chair of the Jakarta branch of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this aspect has drawn many people to El Madury's lectures.<sup>20</sup> What El Madury did, which Muhammadiyah did not do in many of its fatwas was to cite the Islamic intellectual tradition. In many of its fatwas, Muhammadiyah often only quotes the Qur'an or hadith to strengthen its argument, without citing the opinions of other Islamic scholars. Perhaps this is a consequence of the modernist movement, which became the spirit of Muhammadiyah. The modernist movement initiated by reformers such as Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, and Muḥammad Rasyīd Riḍā in the late 19th and early 20th centuries used the term *al-rujū' ilā al-qur'ān wa al-sunnah* ('back to the Qur'an and Sunnah'). According to Syed Junaid A. Quadri (2013), the most obvious indicator of this movement, especially in Islamic law, is its critical attitude towards the structure of pre-modern sharia authority symbols, which are articulated in the language and logic of the institution of *taqlīd*. Modernist groups always encourage reopening the door to *ijtihād* and invite Muslims to leave the interpretive monopoly that the ulama class has held (Quadri 2013).

Muhammadiyah, which is heavily inspired by the modernist movement, is oriented towards the Qur'an and Sunnah and tends to attach less importance to the Islamic intellectual tradition that has been built by the ulama. This can be seen from its *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (the methodology Muhammadiyah uses in conducting *ijtihād*), which asserts that Muhammadiyah is not affiliated to a particular school, but the opinions of these schools are only considered in determining religious norms (Anwar 2018). This means that understanding religion in the Muhammadiyah perspective is derived directly from its primary sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah through the *ijtihād* process. However, it should be noted here that the narration that confirms the opinions of the scholars is taken into account in determining norms is not that clear how they are implemented in *tarjih* issues.

---

<sup>20</sup> Endang Mintarja voiced this at a Muhammadiyah Central Board Tarjih Council meeting of on the emergence 'Syarah HPT', 25 September 2020.

In some of its official *ijtihad*, the nuances of the opinions of scholars, especially the pre-modern ones do not appear, by choice or otherwise. Thus it appears that El Madury is filling the Muhammadiyah gap in presenting the authority of the Islamic intellectual tradition in religious narratives. For example, in the controversial veil case, the Tarjih Council issued three fatwas in 1993, 2003 and 2009.<sup>21</sup> The fatwas issued in 1993 and 2009 emphasised that the veil has no legal basis either in the Qur'an or the Sunnah but that Islamic law commands women to wear the hijab. These two fatwas did not cite the Islamic intellectual tradition, which also accommodates opinions about the veil. Although the Tarjih Council kept in its stance and strengthened the opinion that women's '*aurat*' (parts of the body that should go covered) are the whole body except the face and the palms of the hands, in the 2003 fatwa, the Tarjih Council provides space for those who want to wear the veil by expressing several opinions from the scholars who think so.

In contrast to the *tarjih* fatwas, El Madury's (2019) article *Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam?* ('Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?') on the SHPTM [site fanpage](#) refutes the *tarjih* fatwa. He cites various opinions of scholars in the Islamic intellectual tradition who support mandatory veiling as an effort to build religious authority. From this, it appears that El Madury, apart from attacking the *tarjih* fatwa, believes in maintaining traditional authority, in this case, the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāts*).

What El Madury did in building religious authority can also be captured from what Burhani calls a conversion narrative. Some scholars define religious conversion narratives differently as for example, in the change from one religious tradition to another. William James, as quoted by Burhani (2020: 158), states that religious conversion can also be interpreted as the conversion of a person who is a sinner into someone pious. According to Burhani (2020), people who experience religious conversion, usually after embracing a new tradition or religious understanding, will be hostile to the previous religious tradition or understanding.

El Madury also experienced a religious conversion, in this case, from the NU tradition to Muhammadiyah's. On SHPTM as well as his views when interviewed by this author, he introduced himself as someone who had practised the '*kuburiyyun* tradition'<sup>22</sup> and other actions that did not have examples from the Prophet. To convince his followers, he posted information about his religious conversion from NU to Muhammadiyah. Besides condemning

<sup>21</sup> Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah (2009, 2019a, 2019b).

<sup>22</sup> The tradition of visiting the grave with its associated practices.

his previous practices, which were deemed to have no basis in the Qur'an and Sunnah, he has had acrimonious debates with the NU *kyai*, Idrus Ramli on various issues, such as *ahlus sunnah wal jamaah* and *wahabi*, *nahdliyyin* traditions that are often considered heresy, and so on.

### Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Before the advent of the internet and the emergence of various new religious authorities, Muhammadiyah and NU were the two largest religious organisations and authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). However, following the emergence of the so-called micro-celebrity *ustaz*, these two groups, according to some scholars, began to face challenges and threats. The recent study by Wahyudi Akmaliah (2020) shows that the two organisations have responded differently to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was more combative about their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) maintains there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's response look less aggressive. Akmaliah is correct on several points, but other perspectives deserve to be considered, especially Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority on the internet. The weak point, as shown in Akmaliah's study is that there is no adequate elaboration of the assembly that exclusively holds religious authority in Muhammadiyah, namely the Tarjih Council. To trace more precisely how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority we have to look at the Tarjih Council.

This discussion ~~starts~~ from the author's ~~experience in~~ attending a meeting held by the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board in September 2020. ~~This meeting was initiated in response to the appearance of the *syarh* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Decisions Compilation) made by El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim. Whilst Unlike El Madury's comments were on his SHPTM, who created a fanpage, Abdurrahim (2020) wrote a *syarh* on HPT in bookaired his views in his book form.~~<sup>23</sup> ~~The meeting was initiated in response to the emergence of El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim's SHPTM site. It should be noted here that Abdurrahim also contributed writings to this website.~~ He was earlier mentioned as having had permission from Buya Yun to give *syarh* ~~(explanation)~~ on HPT ~~(Tarjih Judgment Compilation)~~ and is the author of *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih*. The

<sup>23</sup> For more information on Abdurrahim's book, see Wahyudi Sarju Abdurrahim (2020).

**Commented [MOU7]:** When – just month and year will do.

**Commented [nf8R7]:** I mentioned it in the next paragraph, which is 25 September 2020.

PK I have rephrased and added date here and removed it from start of next para.

**Commented [nf9R7]:** OK.

**Formatted:** Font: Italic, Complex Script Font: Italic

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

initial background for holding this meeting, as revealed by the secretary of the Tarjih Council, Mas'udi, was purely in response to the SHPTM posts by El Madury. However, information about the SHPTM other than the one written by El Madury prompted the board of the Tarjih Council to include the book by Abdurrahim with the same title for the agenda.

~~On Friday, 7 Safar 1442 AH (25 September 2020).~~ For this meeting, the Tarjih Council invited nine related sectors to discuss concerns over the emergence of the SHPTM on the internet written by the El Madury and Abdurrahim. The nine sector participants were: (1) the executive board of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (2) fatwa division of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (3) chair/secretary of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (4) Dr Endang Mintarja, M.Ag. (Chair of the Jakarta Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council); (5) H. Fathurrahman, Lc., M.S.I. (Chair of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council); (6) H. Budi Setiawan, S.T.; (7) Arif Nur Kholis (head of Muhammadiyah Digital Syiar Centre); (8) the manager of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre; and (9) the social media assistance team of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

During the meeting, there were at least four proposals from participants on how best to respond to the SHPTM, particularly El Madury's article about the veil. The first was to complain to Facebook about the SHPTM so that it could be banned for including an institution's name without permission. According to the chair of the Tabligh Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board, Fathurrahman Kamal, who was present at the forum, the fanpage is in the illicit category. This proposal was considered by the proponents as a firm proposal but that it risked unnecessary antagonism. The second was to use a persuasive approach in the form of clarification or an appeal to El Madury not to use the name *Himpunan Putusan Tajih* (HPT) or something that is associated with *tarjih*. Its proponents consider this approach to be softer and more reflective of being Muhammadiyah members in particular, and Muslims in general. The third proposal was to use institutional authority in writing an official letter on behalf of the Tarjih Council to El Madury. The fourth idea that was considered more practical and efficient was to place the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it on social media. This would avoid being drawn into unfruitful correspondence on SHPTM.

However, there was no agreement on which approach should be undertaken despite long discussions. It was agreed instead that there would be a follow up with another forum. Since this author started writing (3 April 2022) there has been no further meeting. The emergence of

**Commented [MOU10]:** What does this stand for?

**Commented [nf11R10]:** In Indonesian it stands for Sarjana Teknik (Bachelor of Engineering).

By the way, in your opinion, should the titles of some of the people invited to the meeting be removed?

SHPTM on the internet and its effects have been considered a serious problem by the Tarjih Council. The meeting's participants were generally uneasy about the appearance of El Madury and his fanpage. In addition, they wanted El Madury to be warned or reprimanded since SHPTM is considered a threat to religious authority of the Tarjih Council. This illustrates that Muhammadiyah, through its official religious assembly, the Tarjih Council, is not passive in responding to the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. However, only certain cases and not all micro-celebrity *ustaz* who appear on social media have drawn the Tarjih Council's attention. Although there has yet to be a follow up meeting, the Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an official institution supporting the Tarjih Council illustrates how Muhammadiyah struggles to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is an institution that was founded in 2016 by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Ahmad Dahlan University (Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah 2016). Despite being a new institution, its legality is clear, and it has formal authority. In the Muhammadiyah tradition as an organisation, such legality is essential. Thus when someone from Muhammadiyah, speaks on another person's behalf or endorses an approach, the speaker's status is below that of the institution and cannot be assumed to be that of institutions within Muhammadiyah which, although new, have legality. In the context of El Madury and the SHPTM fanpage, this is important. Even though El Madury claims he has obtained permission to make *syarh* on the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* from a charismatic figure in Muhammadiyah, Buya Yunahar, legally it is not valid. In that context, Buya Yunahar spoke on behalf of himself, not on behalf of Muhammadiyah.

Fronted by young Muhammadiyah cadres, the majority of whom are alumni of Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Tarjih Ulama Education, PUTM),<sup>24</sup> Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays a role in supporting the Tarjih Council programmes. These are relatively under-performing and facing obstacles, particularly on using social media to disseminate their official *ijtihad*. The members of the Tarjih Council, who are relatively old, need support from young cadres. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays an essential role in assisting the Tarjih Council in maintaining its religious authority on the internet. It responded to El Madury and SHPTM, by being pro-active with a poster (Figure

<sup>24</sup> PUTM is an educational institution under the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board designed to produce a cadre of Muhammadiyah scholars. PUTM organises a special programme that educates and prepares Muhammadiyah *tarjih* scholars who are competent in the religious field. The birth of PUTM was based on the concern of some Muhammadiyah leaders about the increasing scarcity of ulama in and from Muhammadiyah (Fauzi 2020a).



1) on social media and in print form, containing information related to the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it.



Figure 1. Poster with information on the official social media accounts affiliated to the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Are you often confused about finding sources of reference about Islam from the perspective of Muhammadiyah?

There is no need to be confused anymore because various social media are straightforward for us to access. Tarjih (Council) has come with a more trendy look.

- ✓ Easy to read anywhere
- ✓ Provide updated fatwas
- ✓ Discuss current issues

As members of Muhammadiyah, let's get used to reading the decisions and fatwas of Muhammadiyah

Here are some media that can be accessed very easily. So don't be confused anymore.

Web: [fatwatartjih.or.id](http://fatwatartjih.or.id)

Facebook: [fb.me/fatwamu](https://www.facebook.com/fatwamu)

Instagram: [pusattartjih\\_muhammadiyah](https://www.instagram.com/pusattartjih_muhammadiyah)

Telegram: [t.me/fatwatartjihmu](https://t.me/fatwatartjihmu)

Youtube: [tarjih channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

Let's spread it to all Muhammadiyah people!

Figure 2. Translation of Figure 1.

Although the poster above does not directly mention the SHPTM [fanpage](#) created by El Madury, the main message in it is clear and firm, namely to inform the Muhammadiyah followers about the official accounts of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it. This would hopefully let Muhammadiyah members understand how its official religious voice is disseminated on the internet. Following this, Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah successively uploaded other, more varied j... M fanpage. Some other examples of these posters are



**Figure 3.** Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Do you know?

The Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah now have an official YouTube channel, (namely) the Tarjih Channel.

Have you subscribed yet?

**Figure 4.** Translation of Figure 3.



**Figure 5.** Information about the website fatwatarjih.or.id, an official website affiliated to the Tarjih Council containing fatwas. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Fatwatarjih.or.id is the official website for the Tarjih and the Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board (MTT).

The Media Team of Fatwa Tarjih, through this website, has been, is and will continue to strive consistently to publish various ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council. Until now,

tarjih fatwa collections from 1997 to 2018 have entered the editing stage, and some are just waiting to be published.

Figure 6. Translation of Figure 5.



Figure 7. Information on the official website of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Do you want to know the full history (of the Tarjih Council)?  
Or do you want to look for ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council?  
Come on; you can find out on this website: tarjih.or.id

Figure 8. Translation of Figure 7.

The use of informal language and emoticons typical of millennials indicate the audience that the Tarjih Council wants to target. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah team understands that informal language will appeal to its target audience. This is aimed at not only establishing

the authority of the Tarjih Council but ‘millennialisation’ i.e. to reach out to the younger generation familiar with social media. Suyadi and Widodo (2019) note that millennialisation is an alternative way to develop knowledge that will synergise with various online media and digital technology. In the context of *tarjih* millennialisation, Muhammadiyah’s official *ijtihad* that tend to be disseminated in a conventional, monotonous, and uncreative manner are now communicated through social media in more contextual packaging. This means that the Tarjih Council and its various official *ijtihad*, which previously were always identified with the ‘old’, now consciously aim to include young people.

The religious authority of the Tarjih Council in cyberspace, especially when connected with the appearance of El Madury and SHPTM, was greatly helped by the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah and its young Muhammadiyah cadres. It manages various social media platforms with large numbers of followers, and has helped maintain Muhammadiyah’s religious authority by balancing and suppressing the presence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. Its contents are fatwas and decisions of the Tarjih Council with more appealing visualisation to reach out to the millennials.

Although the number of social media followers of the Tarjih Council is less than that for the NU and Salafi groups, at least the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah acts as a compass for Muhammadiyah followers who question its religious authority, especially with the emergence of El Madury’s version in SHPTM. The administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah’s social media have received many messages either through the comments column or direct messages in its inbox, which question the authority of SHPTM.<sup>25</sup> Here, the vital role of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is increasingly finding its momentum.

## Conclusion

Although it can be said that Muhammadiyah’s religious influence and authority on the internet are inferior and lag behind other religious groups, Muhammadiyah is still trying to manage its authority, especially when facing threats from micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By focusing on Zulkarnain El Madury and his SHPTM social media page, this article offers a different perspective from previous studies by analysing the work of the Tarjih Council as the only institution in Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas. This article shows that

---

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Ariful Hazamn, Ilham Ibrahim, and Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, September 2020. They are Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah social media administrators.

Muhammadiyah has its own way of responding to the emergence of new religious authorities. With the help of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an institution in its fold, the Tarjih Council has made continuous efforts through social media and its official website to counter new voices that threaten its authority. Muhammadiyah's response was neither aggressive nor radical but it clarified its stance without mentioning who precisely was being targeted. What Muhammadiyah did was in line with the Javanese proverb *Ngluruk tanpo bolo, menang tanpo ngasorake* ('win without defeat, win without humiliation [of others]'). The form of Muhammadiyah's response is inherited from its founder, Ahmad Dahlan. As seen by James Peacock (1978), Ahmad Dahlan ~~carried out~~brought about many social transformations calmly and systematically without being antagonistic~~through discussions and education~~.<sup>26</sup> This can be seen, for example, from how Ahmad Dahlan and the early generation of Muhammadiyah fortified Muslims from various superstitions, heresies, and myths by rationalising explaining the unacceptability of such popular religious thoughts and beliefs and practices believed by many people at that time. In addition to confronting Christianisation, the three essential ideas initiated at that time, namely hospitals, schools, and orphanages, were actually the implementation of efforts to counter the practice of superstitions, heresies, and myths that had spread in the community calmly and systematically (Shihab 1995).

In a broader context, the case of Zulkarnain El Madury also provides a lesson that using the name Muhammadiyah to justify personal opinions or legitimise particular interests is wrong. Muhammadiyah has the reputation of a very well managed organisation (Barton 2014; *Suara Muhammadiyah* 2019) which is its strength and gives it clout compared to other religious organisations in Indonesia, such as NU. In short, authority in Muhammadiyah's authority lies in the institution itself and is not based on personality. It differs from NU, where power and authority tend to ~~lie inside~~ reside with personal figures, such as *kyai* or *gus* (Fauzi 2020b).

Muhammadiyah followers who understand its basic rules are not easily influenced by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. They are aware that Muhammadiyah's official religious stance is only by issued by the Tarjih Council and that those external to the Tarjih Council or even specific Muhammadiyah figures who give religious opinions, speak only for themselves as individuals and not the organisation. This would be the case, for example, even if the religious opinion emanates from the chair of the Tarjih Council as an individual. This

<sup>26</sup> For example, Ahmad Dahlan and the early generation of Muhammadiyah explained to Muslims the unacceptability of popular beliefs and practices that had their roots in superstitions, heresies, and myths. He built hospitals, schools, and orphanages to counter these practices (Shihab 1995).

**Commented [MOU12]:** Could we have an example?

**Commented [nf13R12]:** Yes, we could. I have added an example and a reference. What do you think?

**Commented [MOU14]:** I don't understand this sentence. Are you trying to say hospitals, schools and orphanages were areas of superstitions etc? In any case, I feel this info is extraneous but could be included in a footnote or deleted.

**Commented [nf15R14]:** No. My point is as follows:

In the era when Dahlan lived, many Indonesians practised superstitions, heresies and myths about health, welfare/safety and education. For example, in myths related to health, some people believed that if someone was sick, they should be taken to an indigenous medical practitioner/shaman rather than a hospital/doctor. Another example is superstitions related to safety/welfare. At that time, some Indonesians believed that if a certain type of bird flew round and round above their house, the inhabitants would be sick or have a misfortune. In the context of this society, Dahlan then built hospitals, schools and orphanages to encourage people to reason and abandon superstitions, heresies and myths.

What do you think?

PK – see my suggested amendment with new footnote.

**Commented [nf16R14]:** I think that is good idea. I agreed with you.

**Formatted:** English (United States)

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman

**Formatted:** Font: 10 pt, Complex Script Font: 10 pt

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, 10 pt, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, 10 pt

**Formatted:** Font: (Default) Times New Roman, Complex Script Font: Times New Roman, English (United Kingdom)

did occur when Syamsul Anwar, the current chair of the Tarjih Council, differed from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council on the issue of *iftitāḥ* prayer (opening night prayer [*qiyām al-lail*]).<sup>27</sup> While Anwar's opinion clearly differs from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council, the prevailing opinion in Muhammadiyah is that of the Tarjih Council, not the chair of the Tarjih Council. Within Muhammadiyah, such religious differences of opinion are common as usually happens in *fiqh* discourse in general. The difference between El Madury and Anwar is that the latter does not act in the name of Muhammadiyah or the Tarjih Council when he has a different view. Instead, on many occasions, he urges Muhammadiyah followers to abide by the opinion of the Tarjih Council on the *iftitāḥ* prayer.<sup>28</sup> Thus Anwar has shown he can compromise his personal religious opinion with his professional attitude in the organisation. In this case, he understands that using the name Muhammadiyah to legitimise individual opinions or interests is not justifiable.

### Acknowledgements

Permission for this research PJB-002/SP3/LPPM-UAD/VI/2020 and funding were provided by the ethical board of Ahmad Dahlan University Research and Development Institute (Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan).

I am grateful to *ustaz* Zulkarnain El Madury for his exceptional help and support during my fieldwork. I also thank Amiruddin, Arif Nur Kholis, Muhammad Muflih, Wahyudi Abdurrahim, Robby Karman, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, Ilham Ibrahim, Ariful Hazam, and the members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council for providing information regarding my research. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article and to the editors of the *Indonesia and the Malay World*. Errors, if any, are solely mine.

### Note on contributor

<sup>27</sup> For Anwar (2013), the *iftitāḥ* prayer comprises two short *rak'ah* prayers that are performed before *qiyām al-lail*, with the condition that it must be preceded by sleep, otherwise there is no need to perform the *iftitāḥ* prayer. However, the Tarjih Council holds that the *iftitāḥ* prayer consists of two short *rak'ah* prayers performed before *qiyām al-lail*, whether preceded by sleep or not (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2011; Tim Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2019a).

<sup>28</sup> On several occasions, this author has heard Syamsul Anwar's direct appeal to Muhammadiyah members to follow the opinion of the Tarjih Council on this aspect of the *iftitāḥ* prayer.

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi is a lecturer in the Department of Hadith Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He has published widely on a variety of issues relating to Islamic Studies, including al-Quran, hadith, Islamic law, social media and da'wah, and Muhammadiyah studies. Email: niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id

## References

- Abdurrahim, Wahyudi Sarju. 2020. *Ahlul haq wassunnah: syarah himpunan putusan tarjih Muhammadiyah bab iman bagian ketuhanan* [Ahlul haq wassunnah: explanation of tarjih decisions compilation of Muhammadiyah chapter on faith part of divinity]. Yogyakarta: Al Muflihun Publishing.
- Abror, Robby. 2020. Syekh Yunahar, ulama Muhammadiyah kharismatik [Sheikh Yunahar, a charismatic Muhammadiyah cleric]. 3 January. <<https://menara62.com/syeikh-yunahar-ulama-muhammadiyah-kharismatik/>> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2018. Media sosial dan pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [Social media and shifting religious authority]. 12 December. <[https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media\\_sosial\\_dan\\_pergeseran\\_otoritas\\_keagamaan](https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media_sosial_dan_pergeseran_otoritas_keagamaan)> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2020. The demise of moderate Islam: new media, contestation, and reclaiming religious authorities. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10 (1): 1–24.
- Alfaqi, Mifdal Zusron. 2015. Memahami Indonesia melalui prespektif nasionalisme, politik identitas, serta solidaritas [Understanding Indonesia through the perspectives of nationalism, identity politics, and solidarity]. *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 28 (2): 111–116.
- Alvara Research Center. 2020. Ramadhan dan pandemi Covid-19: semangat ibadah tak surut, konsumsi tersendat. <[https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN\\_DAN\\_PANDEMI\\_COVID-19\\_SEMANGAT\\_IBADAH\\_TAK\\_SURUT\\_KONSUMSI\\_TERSENDAT.pdf](https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN_DAN_PANDEMI_COVID-19_SEMANGAT_IBADAH_TAK_SURUT_KONSUMSI_TERSENDAT.pdf)> Accessed 23 February 2021.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2007. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer* [Contemporary Islamic law studies]. Jakarta: RM Books.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2013. *Salat Tarawih: Tinjauan usul fikih, sejarah, dan fikih* [Tarawih prayer: usul fiqh, history, and fiqh perspectives]. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2016. Fatwā, purification and dynamization: a study of tarjih in



- Muhammadiyah. *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (1): 27–44.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2018. *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Panitia Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih Muhammadiyah XXX.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2020. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer Bagian dua* [Contemporary Islamic legal studies Part two]. Yogyakarta: UAD Press.
- Barton, Greg. 2014. The Gülen movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: progressive Islamic thought, religious philanthropy and civil society in Turkey and Indonesia. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25 (3): 287–301.
- Buchari, Sri Astuti. 2014. *Kebangkitan etnis menuju politik identitas* [Ethnic awakening towards identity politics]. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Bunt, Gary R. 2003. *Islam in the digital age: e-jihad, online fatwas and cyber Islamic environments*. London: Pluto Press.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2005. The 45th Muhammadiyah Congress contest between literal-conservative and liberal-moderate Muslims in Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 12 (1): 185–189.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2013. Liberal and conservative discourses in the Muhammadiyah: the struggle for the face of reformist Islam in Indonesia. In Martin van Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary developments in Indonesian Islam: explaining the 'conservative turn'*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2016. Aksi bela Islam: konservatisme dan fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. *Maarif* 11 (2): 15–29.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2020. Muslim televangelists in the making: conversion narratives and the construction of religious authority. *Muslim World* 110 (2): 154–175.
- Burhanudin, Jajat. 2004. The fragmentation of religious authority: Islamic print media in early 20th century Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 11 (1): 23–62.
- Campbell, H.A. and Teusner, P.E. 2011. Religious authority in the age of the internet. In *Christian Reflection, Virtual Lives*. Waco TX: Baylor University Press, pp. 59–68. <<https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/130950.pdf>>
- Chairi, Effendi. 2019. Ketidadaan otoritas terpusat dalam fenomena kontemporer di Indonesia [The absence of a centralised authority in contemporary phenomena in Indonesia]. *SANGKÉP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 2 (2): 197–215.
- Chaplin, Chris. 2021. *Salafism and the State: Islamic activism and national identity in contemporary Indonesia*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.
- Dakta.com. 2016. Aa Gym ajak ribuan jamaahnya ikut aksi bela Islam III [Aa Gym invites

thousands of congregants to join Islamic Defence Action III]. 29 November.

<<http://www.dakta.com/news/7329/aa-gym-ajak-ribuan-jamaahnya-ikut-aksi-bela-islam-iii>> Accessed 2 February 2020.

Fadl, Khaled Abou El. 2014. *Speaking in God's name: Islamic law, authority, and women*. London: Oneworld Publications.

Farhan, Farhan. 2017. Pesan dakwah Felix Siauw di media sosial (perspektif meaning and media). *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Administrasi Islam* 1 (2): 209–226.

Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2017. Peranan Maqasid Al-Shariah dalam memahami Hadith: kajian terhadap fatwa Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah [The role of Maqasid Al-Shariah in understanding Hadith: a study of the fatwa of the Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah]. MA thesis, University of Malaya.

Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020a. PUTM dan kaderisasi ulama: menelusuri latar belakang lahirnya Lembaga Kaderisasi Ulama Muhammadiyah [PUTM and clerical regeneration: tracing the background of the birth of the Muhammadiyah Clerical Cadre Institute]. <<https://santricendekia.com/putm-dan-kaderisasi-ulama-menelusuri-latar-belakang-lahirnya-lembaga-kaderisasi-ulama-muhammadiyah/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.

Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020b. Tantangan kader ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah di era 4.0 [Challenges for Tarjih Muhammadiyah ulama cadres in the 4.0 era]. 21 July. *Suara 'Aisyiyah* <<https://suaraaisyiyah.id/tantangan-kader-ulama-tarjih-muhammadiyah-di-era-4-0/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.

Fealy, Greg. 2008. Consuming Islam: commodified religion and aspirational pietism in contemporary Indonesia. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.

Gesuri. 2020. Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia kehilangan ulama kharismatik [Yunahar Ilyas passed away, Indonesia lost a charismatic scholar]. 3 January. <<https://www.gesuri.id/internal/yunahar-ilyas-wafat-indonesia-kehilangan-ulama-kharismatik-b1YFoZpRY>> Accessed 20 March 2020.

Hew, Wai Weng. 2018. The art of dakwah: social media, visual persuasion and the Islamist propagation of Felix Siauw. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (134): 61–79.

Hoesterey, James B. 2008. Marketing morality: the rise, fall and rebranding of Aa Gym. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: Religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, pp. 95–114.

Hope Cheong, Pauline. 2016. Religious authority and social media branding in a culture of religious celebrification. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*,

- University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 81–102.
- Horsfield, Peter. 2016. The media and religious authority from ancient to modern. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*. University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 37–66.
- IB Times Indonesia. 2020. 100 situs Islam Indonesia, NU Online peringkat pertama [100 Indonesian Islamic websites, NU Online ranks first]. 10 July. <IBTimes.Id. 2020. <<https://ibtimes.id/100-situs-islam-indonesia-nu-online-peringkat-pertama/>> Accessed 23 February 2023.
- Ilyas, Yunahar. 2012. *Kuliah Akhlaq* [Akhlaq lecture]. XII. Yogyakarta: LPPI Universitas Muhammdiyah Yogyakarta.
- Khamis, S., Ang, L. and Welling, R. 2017. Self-branding, ‘micro-celebrity’ and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191–208.
- Khomalia, Isti and Rahman, Khairul Arief. 2018. Micro hijabers celebrity: membentuk identitas dengan update self-story via instagram (kasus dian pelangi). *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban dan Pemikiran Islam* 2 (1): 33–42.
- Kompas. 2020. Sejumlah tokoh hadir prosesi pemakaman ketua PP Muhammadiyah Yunahar Ilyas [Many figures attended the funeral procession of Muhammadiyah chairman Yunahar Ilyas]. 3 January. <<https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/03/19142441/sejumlah-tokoh-hadiri-prosesi-pemakaman-ketua-pp-muhammadiyah-yunahar-ilyas>> Accessed 3 April 2022.
- Labiq. 2019. Pengaruh new media terhadap pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [The influence of new media on shifting religious authority]. 19 April. <<https://geotimes.co.id/opini/pengaruh-new-media-terhadap-pergeseran-otoritas-keagamaan>> Accessed 19 October 2020.
- Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. 2010. *Politik identitas dan masa depan pluralisme Indonesia*. Edited by Samsu Rizal Panggabean et al. Jakarta: Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (PUSAD) Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina.
- Madury, Zulkarnain El. 2019. Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam? [Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?]. 2 November. <<https://www.facebook.com/zulkarnainsumenep/posts/2386248524961601>> Accessed 5 May 2020.
- Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah. 2016. Pembukaan Halaqah, Majelis Tarjih Launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan Muhammadiyah Observatorium Network [Halaqah opening, Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and

- Muhammadiyah Observatory Network]. 20 August. <<https://tarjih.or.id/pembukaan-halaqah-majelis-tarjih-launching-pusat-tarjih-muhammadiyah-dan-muhammadiyah-observatorium-network/>> Accessed 6 October 2023.
- Majelis Tarjih Dahlan, Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. 2016. Nota Kesepakatan Majelis Tarjih Dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Tentang Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di Islamic Center Universitas Ahmad Dahlan [Memorandum of Agreement between the Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board and Ahmad Dahlan University on the Management of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre at the Islamic Centre of Ahmad Dahlan University]. Yogyakarta.
- Maskur, Maskur and Noor, Irfan Noor. 2014. Ustadz selebriti Abdullah Gymnastiar dalam budaya populer (perspektif hipersemiotika Yasraf Amir Piliang) [Celebrity Ustadz Abdullah Gymnastiar in popular culture (Yasraf Amir Piliang's hyper semiotics perspective)]. *Jurnal Studia Insania* 2 (1): 47–57.
- Matheson, Craig. 1987. Weber and the classification of forms of legitimacy. *British Journal of Sociology* 38 (2): 199–215.
- Muhammadiyah Central Board. 2023. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 8 October 2023.
- Nisa, Eva F. 2019. Internet and Muslim women. In Ronald Lukens-Bull and Mark Woodward (eds), *Handbook of contemporary Islam and Muslim lives*. Cham: Springer, pp. 1–19.
- Palahuddin. 2020. The typology of religious thought in Muhammadiyah. *International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 3 (2): 74–81.  
<<http://journal2.uad.ac.id/index.php/ijish/article/view/2233/pdf>>
- Peacock, James L. 1978. *Purifying the Faith: the Muhammadiyah movement in Indonesian Islam*. Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2011. *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2016. Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan MuON [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and MuON]. 20 August.  
<<http://www.umm.ac.id/id/muhammadiyah/7070.html>> Accessed 20 March 2021.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Berikut Susunan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah pPeriode 2022–2027 [The following is the composition of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the 2022–2027 period] <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/berikut-susunan->

- pimpinan-pusat-muhammadiyah-periode-2022-2027/> Accessed 7 October 2023.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Majelis Tabligh [Tabligh Council]. <  
<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 07 October 2023.
- Postill, John and Pink, Sarah. 2012. Social media ethnography: the digital researcher in a messy web. *Media International Australia* 145 (1): 123–134.
- Pribadi, Yanwar. 2019. Fragmentasi umat dan penciptaan otoritas keagamaan: tanggapan terhadap ‘Islam lokal’ dan ‘Islam asing’ di Indonesia [Ummah fragmentation and the creation of religious authority: responses to ‘local Islam’ and ‘foreign Islam’ in Indonesia]. *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 21 (1): 103–119.  
 <<https://jmb.lipi.go.id/jmb/article/view/828/455>>
- Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah. n.d. *Panduan pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre management guide]. Majelis Tarjih, Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta.
- Quadri, Syed Junaid A. 2013. Transformations of tradition: modernity in the thought of Muḥammad Bakhīr Al-Muṭṭī. PhD thesis, McGill University.
- Rahman, Asjmun Abdur et al. 1985. Laporan penelitian Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (suatu studi tentang sistem dan metode penentuan hukum) [Research report of Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (a study of the system and method of determining the law)]. Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga.
- Rakyat Merdeka. 2019. Dubes Malaysia jenguk ketum MUI Yunahar Ilyas di Yogyakarta [Malaysian ambassador visits MUI chairman Yunahar Ilyas in Yogyakarta]. 5 November. <<https://rm.id/baca-berita/internasional/21745/dubes-malaysia-jenguk-ketum-mui-yunahar-ilyas-di-yogyakarta>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Riesebrodt, Martin. 1999. Charisma in Max Weber’s Sociology of Religion. *Religion* 29 (1): 1–14.
- Sadasri, Lidwina Mutia. 2017. Selebriti mikro di media baru kajian presentasi diri dalam vlog selebriti mikro [Micro-celebrities in new media: a study of self-presentation in micro-celebrity vlogs]. *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi Dan Opini Publik* 21 (2): 167–181.  
 <<https://jurnal.kominfo.go.id/index.php/jpkop/article/view/1218/720>>
- Saefullah, Hikmawan. 2022. Media baru, publik baru: mengkonfigurasi ulang ruang publik Islam [New media, new publics: reconfiguring the Islamic public sphere]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sammy, Abdullah. 2022. Peluang dan tantangan dakwah digital Muhammadiyah

- [Opportunities and challenges of Muhammadiyah digital da'wah]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sanjaya, Makroen. 2022. Peta ideologi islam di media sosial [The map of Islamic ideology on social media]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Senft, Theresa M. 2008. *Camgirls: celebrity and community in the age of social networks*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Shamsy, Ahmed El. 2013. The Hāshiyā in Islamic law: a sketch of the Shāfi'ī literature. *Oriens* 41 (3-4): 289–315.
- Shihab, Alwi. 1995. The Muhammadiyah movement and its controversy with Christian mission in Indonesia. PhD thesis, Temple University, USA.
- Spencer, Martin E. 1970. Weber on legitimate norms and authority. *British Journal of Sociology* 21 (2): 123–134.
- Suara Muhammadiyah. 2019. Hyung Jun Kim: sistem di Muhammadiyah sungguh ideal [Hyung Jun Kim: Muhammadiyah's system is ideal]. <<https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/08/01/hyung-jun-kim-sistem-di-muhammadiyah-sungguh-ideal/>> Accessed 9 April 2022.
- Suyadi and Widodo, Hendro. 2019. Millennialization of Islamic education based on neuroscience in the third generation university in Yogyakarta Indonesia. *QIIS International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7 (1): 173–202.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2009. Hukum tentang jenggot dan cadar [Islamic law perspective on beards and veils]. *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine, no. 18 . Yogyakarta.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019a. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 4*. Cetakan IX. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019b. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 7*. Cetakan IV. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Tirto.id. 2018. Dari Aa' Gym ke Felix Siauw: ustaz medsos & medium dakwah politis. Tirto.Id. 16 January. <<https://tirto.id/dari-aa-gym-ke-felix-siauw-ustaz-medsos-medium-dakwah-politis-cCGf>> Accessed 5 February 2020.
- Turner, Bryan S. 2007. Religious authority and the new media. *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2): 117–134.
- Turner, Graeme. 2010. *Ordinary people and the media: the demotic turn*. Los Angeles CA:

Sage.

- Widodo, Arif. 2017. Transformative intellectual discourse and movement of Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM). *Iseedu: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices* 1 (1): 126–151.  
<<https://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/iseedu/article/view/5423/3542>>
- Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change*. Princetoon NJ: Princeton University Press.

# **ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY *USTAZ* PHENOMENON**

## **Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace**

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

### **ABSTRACTS**

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the fragmentation of religious authority. In the Indonesian context, the mainstream religious authority held by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has been challenged and threatened by micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This article examines the emergence of the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah fanpage on Facebook, created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board as it has threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority. It analyses Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace, by taking a closer look at what has been done by Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, an assembly that has the exclusive authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* within Muhammadiyah. This article also discusses lessons that can be learned from the case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the response of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

### **KEYWORDS**

Fragmentation of religious authority; micro-celebrity *ustaz*; Muhammadiyah; religious authority; *tarjih*.

### **ABSTRAK**

*Kemunculan internet dan media sosial telah mempertajam fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. Dalam konteks Indonesia, otoritas keagamaan arus utama yang dipegang oleh Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) disaingi dan diancam oleh para ustaz mikro-*



*selebritas. Artikel ini mengkaji kemunculan fanpage Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah di Facebook yang dibuat dan dikelola oleh Zulkarnain El Madury, seseorang yang mengklaim sebagai ustaz Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, karena dianggap mengancam otoritas keagamaan Muhammadiyah. Penelitian ini menganalisis upaya Muhammadiyah dalam mempertahankan otoritas keagamaannya di dunia maya dengan melihat lebih dekat pada apa yang telah dilakukan oleh Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah, sebuah majelis yang memiliki otoritas eksklusif untuk mengeluarkan fatwa dan ijtihad keagamaan resmi di Muhammadiyah. Artikel ini juga membahas pelajaran yang dapat dipetik dari kasus Zulkarnain El Madury dan respons Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah.*

#### **KATA KUNCI**

*Fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan; Muhammadiyah; otoritas keagamaan; tarjih; ustaz mikro-selebritas.*

#### **Introduction**

The Alvara Research Center (2020) survey was surprising as it stated that the clerics most heard by the public, especially in Ramadan 2020, were not from the official Muhammadiyah board.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the Alvara Research Center survey was released (IBTimes.id 2020), an Islamic website managed by young Muhammadiyah intellectuals, published a report ranking the 100 most popular Islamic websites in Indonesia. The majority of these sites are managed by or affiliated to Nahdliyyin (NU followers) and Salafi<sup>2</sup> groups with few such sites operated by or affiliated to Muhammadiyah. The Alvara Research Center survey and the IBTimes.id report show that Muhammadiyah, in terms of influence and religious authority on the internet, lags behind other religious groups which is ironic for an organisation claiming to represent the progressive Islamic group.

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the so-called fragmentation of religious authority. Eva F. Nisa (2019), for example, mentions that the proliferation of various digital platforms is directly proportional to the increasing fragmentation of religious authority. Islamic discourse is monopolised not only by an elite group of scholars or mainstream

---

<sup>1</sup> One of the 15 most popular clerics mentioned in the report, Ustaz Ali Hidayat, has since been included on the Muhammadiyah Central Board's Tabligh Council (2022–2027; Muhammadiyah Central Board 2023). Prior to that, he did not convey official Muhammadiyah ideas in his lectures.

<sup>2</sup> For more comprehensive information on the activism of Salafi groups, see Chris Chaplin (2021).

religious groups, but also by persons or groups that have not been considered in Islamic discourse. Furthermore, the presence of the internet and social media has led to the birth of what is called micro-celebrity. Theresa M. Senft (2008) defines micro-celebrity as a new style of online performance that involves increasing popularity on social media such as videos, blogs, and networking sites. These micro-celebrities unlike conventional celebrities, emerge from what is known as new media (Senft 2008).

Of course, not all new media users have the adjective ‘micro-celebrity’. Only those who experience what Graeme Turner (2010) terms ‘the demotic turn’, namely, the increasing visibility of ordinary people to appear as celebrities in the media, especially online media. In turn, both conventional and micro-celebrity exist in various public spheres, and the discourse on them is characterised as influencers, stimulants of consumerism, enthusiasm, public debate, and various activism (Sadasri 2017).

By borrowing the theory of micro-celebrities in the study of new media, we can then read how these micro-celebrities have also come to the fore in the religious realm. The emergence of ulama, *ustaz* (religious teachers), and religious leaders who become influencers in new media can perhaps be seen as one form of micro-celebrity. Felix Siauw is a prominent example. A convert, who is now a preacher, Siauw has a massive following on social media. In 2018, for example, he had 2.6 million followers on Twitter, and in 2022 it numbered 3.3 million. Felix Siauw’s Instagram account has around 4.9 million followers. It can even be said that he is the *ustaz* who has the most followers on social media (Tirto 2018), making him one of the leading social media preachers in Indonesia today (Hew 2018). What Felix Siauw posts on his social media has more or less influenced the map of religious authorities in Indonesia.

The existence of the internet and the continuing development of technology allows the emergence of many other micro-celebrity *ustaz*, both in the national arena more generally or more specifically in internal religious organisations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, Persis (Persatuan Islam) or others. In the context of Muhammadiyah, the largest modernist Islamic organisation began to be challenged for its religious authority by a preacher who was said to be part of Muhammadiyah itself, namely Zulkarnain El Madury. He claims to be a Muhammadiyah cadre and often introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board. In recent years, El Madury has been noticed by Muhammadiyah administrators

and Muhammadiyah cadres<sup>3</sup> and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah) has discussed him in a special meeting. This is because the posts on the Facebook page that El Madury manages, *Syarah Himpunan Putus Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (henceforth SHPTM), often differ significantly from – and to some extent delegitimise – a Muhammadiyah fatwa or official decision. Responses from grassroots or Muhammadiyah followers vary. This can be seen, for example, from the comments on each post. Some defend and remain adamant on the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah, but not a few were affected and followed what was conveyed by El Madury on his Facebook page.

This is where it becomes crucial to see how Muhammadiyah attempts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace, especially among its members and the public. By conducting web content analysis (Postill and Pink 2012) on SHPTM and official social media accounts and those affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this article shows how El Madury builds his narratives and, in turn, how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority on the internet. Additionally, field research was conducted and key actors were interviewed offline and online in a semi-structured format.<sup>4</sup> Apart from El Madury, the key actors are members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Digital Broadcast Centre (Pusat Syiar Digital Muhammadiyah), Muhammadiyah activists as well as Muhammadiyah grassroots.

### **Fragmentation of religious authority, new preacher and micro-celebrity *ustaz* phenomenon**

Fragmentation of religious authority is a phenomenon that occurs in various religious communities and is not limited to Islam (B.S. Turner 2007; Campbell and Teusner 2011; Hope Cheong 2016). The fragmentation of religious authority is also a global phenomenon as pointed out by Gary R. Bunt (2003) who states that the new media have shaped diverse understandings among individual Muslims worldwide about e-jihad (electronic jihad). The definition of electronic jihad is understood and interpreted differently, ranging from online activism to Muslim articulation after the events of 11 September 2001. Bunt (2003) shows that each new media (in this case, new websites) has authority for its respective group.

---

<sup>3</sup> This author's online and offline interviews with Amiruddin, Robby Karman, Muhammad Muflih, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, and Arif Nur Kholis, 2019–2020.

<sup>4</sup> Data collection in this study was carried out between 2018 and 2020. As personal interviews were not possible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, some interviews were conducted online.

The fragmentation of religious authority discussed here is from the 20th century to the present. Jajat Burhanudin (2004) points out that there has been a shift in religious authority in the historical phase of Indonesian religious thought in the early 20th century due to modernisation. His study, which focuses on the Islamic print media, further shows that there is a shift in religious authority that used to be in *Kitab Kuning*<sup>5</sup> taught by *kyai* or ulama in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to magazines, journals, newspapers, and books published by modernist circles or organisations.

Religious authority since the early 20th century has always stayed with Muhammadiyah and NU. These two religious organisations are often referred to by scholars as the authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016; Akmaliah 2018). The shift in religious authority occurred again in the 1990s when national television stations emerged. The Islamic programmes presented by the television stations show the *ustaz* (religious teachers), which in turn build their authority through lectures delivered by these preachers. This phenomenon prompted scholars to come up with the term ‘Islamic televangelism’ (Akmaliah 2018). Abdullah Gymnastiar who is better known as Aa Gym is one example that falls into the category of a television *ustaz*, or a ‘tele-dai’ as coined by Greg Fealy (2008).

The most obvious and recent picture of the fragmentation of religious authority in Indonesia is the series of events of the Defend Islam Action (Aksi Bela Islam). Ahmad Najib Burhani (2016) hints that these critical events marked the peak of the fragmentation of religious authorities in Indonesia as they gave rise to new actors who challenge the established religious authority. Although it cannot be said to shift or match the role of Muhammadiyah and NU, the emergence of new actors such as Rizieq Shihab provides a new map of religious authority in Indonesia.

This phenomenon of the fragmentation of religious authority has increased sharply in the development of what scholars call pop culture, marked by the birth of many new media (Labiq 2019). The availability of internet access to every social class is the main factor for this fragmentation. As a result, many new media have emerged with each individual and group competing to spread ideas (Horsfield 2016; Nisa 2019).

Aa Gym is one of the early actors who emerged in the internet era in Indonesia. This can be captured in two interesting studies on Aa Gym by James B. Hoesterey (2008), and

---

<sup>5</sup> So-called because the books were printed on yellow paper. These were the Islamic texts used in the education of Islamic schools.

Maskur and Noor (2014). Although the use of the internet as a medium of da'wah around during the early 2000s was not as massive as it is now, the emergence of Aa Gym as a new cleric on the national da'wah stage through lectures, seminars, and Islamic training is a phenomenon in itself. Hoesterey (2008) studies the journey of Aa Gym from his first appearance as a preacher, falling, and then successfully rebranding to restore his religious authority. This is evident, for example, from how Aa Gym has many listeners (*Dakta.com* 2016). Popular culture has also brought Aa Gym to be seen not only by the public, especially by his followers, as also singer, actor, author, etc. Thus, he has transformed from an ordinary cleric to a celebrity cleric. Through a hypersemiotic perspective, Maskur and Noor (2014) show the various aspects of Aa Gym's personality.

Following the appearance of Aa Gym and with further rapid development of information technology, many other new preachers began to appear. Hew Wai Weng (2018) describes how Felix Siauw is another skilful religious preacher. Being a cleric with the most followers on the internet did not make Siauw neglect to spread his da'wah in the real world. Hew (2018) points out that Siauw has blended online and offline da'wah harmoniously. According to Hew (2018) and Farhan (2017), one of the keys to Siauw's success in preaching is his ability to present an entertaining and straightforward da'wah, even though its content is dogmatic and political.

Aa Gym and Felix Siauw are two micro-celebrity *ustaz* as a result of the new media. The term micro-celebrity *ustaz* was adopted and reconstructed from the theory of micro-celebrity. Most of these studies conducted from the perspective of pop culture (Senft 2008; G. Turner 2010; Khamis, Ang and Welling 2017; Sadasri 2017; Khomalia and Rahman 2018) describe the fragmentation of religious authority, marked by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By this term this author means an ordinary *ustaz/ustazah* who has skyrocketed in popularity and is celebrity on and because of social media so that he or she is able to influence certain people or communities. In other words, it means the *ustaz/ustazah* has experienced what G. Turner (2010) calls 'the demotic turn', when ordinary people are highly visible on social media and become celebrities. Challenges to established religious authorities by new religious personalities or groups are rarely touched on except that of Yanwar Pribadi (2019). His study explains the the efforts of 'local Islam' (*Islam lokal*) to defend its religious authority from the threat of 'foreign Islam' (*Islam asing*). However, his study differs from what this author will examine in tracing Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

This study is on a micro-celebrity *ustaz*, Zulkarnain El Madury who is less well known when compared to Aa Gym or Felix Siauw but he has a strong influence on the internet. His identity as a preacher from Muhammadiyah who targets Muhammadiyah followers with postings that are often different and even delegitimise the official voice of this largest modernist mass organisation deserves to be investigated. This study, apart from showing Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority on the internet, also seeks explicitly to fill the gap in previous studies. In his latest study, Akmaliah (2020) shows that Muhammadiyah and NU have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was strongly reactive to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) indicates there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's responses less hostile. Sammy (2022), Sanjaya (2022), and Saefullah (2022) came to the same conclusion as Akmaliah, claiming that Muhammadiyah is significantly less adaptive to the emergence of new media, and therefore its da'wah often loses to that of the micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This study focuses on the struggle of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as the only assembly under Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas and official *ijtihad* exposition within Muhammadiyah.

### **Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage**

The Facebook SHPTM fanpage was created by Zulkarnain El Madury. He was born in Sumenep on the island of Madura in 1963, with the name Zulkarnain bin Syamsuri. He claims to have studied in Malaysia at the Institute of Business Study and always introduces himself as a preacher from the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah). He spent his childhood in Madura and was a traditionalist Muslim like others on the island. He grew up in a milieu dominated by the NU traditionalist Islamic organisation. He used to perform *tahlilan* (ritual prayers for the dead), *ziarah* (pilgrimage to the grave), and other practices that, according to him, after becoming a member of Muhammadiyah, were not following the Sunnah of the Prophet. He received his religious education at the Islamic boarding school at-Taufiqiyyah Sumenep Madura. In 1976 he became acquainted with Muhammadiyah. He became interested in the da'wah and religious understanding of the Muhammadiyah movement founded by Ahmad

Dahlan after listening to a lecture by one of its preachers. In 1977, he officially joined Muhammadiyah.<sup>6</sup>

Since joining Muhammadiyah, El Madury has been active as a preacher who spreads religious ideas and understanding. From 1990 to 2007, he was one of the Muhammadiyah preachers who was sent to remote areas by the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board. His daily activities are now preaching at different places as well as creating content on for SHPTM fanpage. He now lives in Jakarta as the *tarjih* and *tabligh* council chair of the Pondok Gede Muhammadiyah Branch.<sup>7</sup> He created SHPTM in 2014.<sup>8</sup> However, in the digital history that this author can trace, the fanpage was created in 2015 as the earliest post that is currently traceable is dated 5 January 2015.

According to El Madury, the fanpage began with the WhatsApp group he created which he named *Tarjih dan Tabligh Institut* (Tarjih and Tabligh Institute) to provide a space to discuss and spread ideas related to *tarjih*.<sup>9</sup> He included many Muhammadiyah figures and activists in this group, including (the now late) Buya Yunahar Ilyas. Over time, seeing that El Madury's posts on SHPTM were deemed inconsistent with the *tarjih* spirit of Muhammadiyah, several people, such as Fathurrahman Kamal and Buya Risman, sharply criticised the postings. El Madury, Fathurrahman Kamal, and Buya Risman were then engaged in a heated debate which was relayed later to Buya Yunahar Ilyas. The response by Buya Yunahar Ilyas at that time, according to El Madury, differed from that of his critics. Buya Yun responded quite positively because he saw El Madury's initiative as providing *syarh* (explanation) or further explication of the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Decisions Compilation). Finally, he gave his permission to El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com).<sup>10</sup>

El Madury's early postings on SHPTM, were still relatively consistent in uploading Muhammadiyah fatwas in the question (from someone) and answer format from the fatwa division of the Tarjih Council. This is similar to the the original question and answer format

---

<sup>6</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Muhammadiyah's use of the word *tarjih* has changed throughout its development. In its early period, and following its usage in the principles of law (*usul al-fiqh*), *tarjih* conveyed the meaning of examining the various opinions of Muslim jurists on a particular question and evaluating them to determine which is most faithful to the original Shari'a sources. Over time this usage gradually included any intellectual endeavour used to study new cases that earlier jurists had not addressed. In short, in Muhammadiyah's perspective, *tarjih* is identical, or almost identical, to *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

administered by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, whose fatwas were later published in the *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine. However, over time, SHPTM included posts that apart from the dissemination of Muhammadiyah's official *ijtihad* included the personal opinions of El Madury. These opinions in inelegant words are often offensive to other groups. Not infrequently, his posts contradict the official stance of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in particular, or Muhammadiyah in general, such as on the veil issue (see below). Since Facebook introduced its 'live broadcast' feature, El Madury has also availed of it to conduct live lectures. The SHPTM is popular with netizens. As of the time of writing (3 April 2022), it has been followed by 19,423 and is 'liked' by 8,868 people. His posts also often receive both positive and critical comments from viewers.

El Madury gave several reasons that brought about the creation of his fanpage. Firstly, it is aimed at fortifying Muhammadiyah followers against all forms of superstition, heresy, and myth as its posts focus on issues related to faith and worship. Secondly, he aims to counter those liberal Muhammadiyah activists and has openly responded to such views. His posts often openly attacks the religious practices of the the Nahdliyyin, resulting in several clashes between him and the Nahdliyyin figure, Idrus Ramli.<sup>11</sup>

Despite having many followers El Madury and his SHPTM do have critics. Many Muhammadiyah followers are concerned about the SHPTM posts. Some have tried to convey their anxiety through the official social media accounts of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre (Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah).<sup>12</sup> Those concerned generally want to ask for firm action from the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as El Madury has included 'Tarjih Muhammdiyah' in his fanpage name. The demands to the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, when summarised, include: (1) that the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council reprimand or remind Zulkarnain El Madury not to use symbols or names that are closely related to Tarjih Muhammadiyah for or on his fanpage; (2) making and circulating an announcement that the fanpage is not a social media account of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council or the Tarjih Muhamamdiyah Centre; (3) announcing the official social media accounts and websites of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre, so that Muhammadiyah people at the grassroots are not deceived by the existence of the fanpage and know where to look for religious reference sites, especially on the internet.

---

<sup>11</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Interviews with Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf and Ariful Hazam, November 2020 who are grassroots of Muhammadiyah, and social media administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah.



## **Zulkarnain El Madury and his efforts in building religious authority**

Zulkarnain El Madury and his fanpage SHPTM, have threatened the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, and specifically, the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. Many of his posts affect Muhammadiyah followers in particular and Muslims in general as these posts often differ from the official stance of Muhammadiyah, and in some cases contradict the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. This has stimulated public debate on social media, allowing El Madury to become a micro-celebrity *ustaz*. As a result of the general public and the online community attention, El Madury has been able to gradually build up his religious authority. From the Weberian perspective (Riesebrodt 1999), he has been able to do this in two ways. The first is through charisma (charismatic authority) and the second is traditional authority discussed later. According to Weber, charisma is a particular type of authority whose original form is based on a specific belief contained in a particular person (ibid.). El Madury claims he has the endorsement of Yunahar Ilyas, a very popular Muhammadiyah cleric respected by the community from within the Muhammadiyah circle and from Muslims in general which is a form of charismatic authority.

Yunahar Ilyas (1956–2020) or Buya Yun as he was popularly known, was an exegete (*mufassir*) born in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, who died at the age of 63 (Ilyas 2012). He was an alumnus of Imam Ibn Su'ud University (Saudi Arabia) and an excellent lecturer in conveying religious messages. He was seen as a charismatic cleric by Muhammadiyah followers and Muslims, in general, and this reputation extended to neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore (Abror 2020; *Gesuri* 2020). On his death in early 2020, many people flocked to pay their last respects to Buya Yun who held the chair of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for three terms (*Kompas* 2020; *Rakyat Merdeka* 2019).

By harnessing the charisma of Buya Yun, El Madury was able to increase his religious authority. On various occasions, including when this author interviewed him, Buya Yun's name was often mentioned as an argument and a shield.<sup>13</sup> El Madury insisted that he created the SHPTM fanpage with the permission of Yunahar Ilyas.<sup>14</sup> He added that Wahyudi

---

<sup>13</sup> This author's informants include Muhammad Muflih (grassroot of Muhammadiyah and initiator of the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com)), Robby Karman (secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association [DPP IMM] 2018–2021), and several participants invited by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council with the agenda 'Responding to Emergence of Syarah HPT on Social Media' on 25 September, 2020; interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com), had similarly received permission from Buya Yun. Wahyudi Abdurrahim confirmed Zulkarnain's claims and Muhammad Muflih, a grassroots representative added that it is a form of fairness.<sup>15</sup> In other words, Buya Yun's permission is a form of appreciation given by someone who is more senior and has a high social position in Muhammadiyah to someone who is more junior and classified as a grassroots Muhammadiyah member.<sup>16</sup> Permission from Buya Yun, who has charisma within Muhammadiyah in particular, has become a tool used by El Madury in building his religious authority.

In Weberian charismatic authority, charisma is not only about a belief in the existence of extraordinary or superpowers possessed by or contained in humans but also about particular objects other than humans (Riesebrodt 1999). We thus have an explanation as to why El Madury named his fanpage *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a highly respectable and crucial council in Muhammadiyah. Founded in 1927, the Council functions as an assembly that carries out its agenda of purification of religion and the dynamisation of social life. It conducts research and investigations towards this purity, and accordingly gives fatwas and compiles religious guidelines on faith ('*aqidah*) and worship ('*ibadah*) as well as social relations (*mu'āmalah*) (Rahman et al. 1985; Anwar 2016). In addition, this Council makes efforts to resolve differences and disagreements on religious issues, which are usually referred to as *khilāfiyyah* problems, so that they are directed more productively (Anwar 2007, 2016).

The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a body that is responsible for formulating the ideological basis of the Muhammadiyah movement (Anwar 2007, 2016) and is Muhammadiyah's representative in the religious field (Fauzi 2017). The Council produces three types of *ijtihad*, namely: (1) *tarjih fatwa (fatwa tarjih)*, (2) *tarjih decision (putusan tarjih)*, and (3) *tarjih discourse (wacara tarjih)* (Anwar 2016). *Tarjih fatwa* is the Council's answer to general questions on issues that require an explanation in terms of sharia law. Following the nature of the fatwa in general, the Council's fatwa is non-binding, on either organisations or members as individuals. Therefore, even the fatwa can be questioned and discussed. However, because the fatwa contains religious guidance derived from Islamic teaching sources (Anwar 2020), and the general public often does not actually understand the aspects of such a fatwa, it is still believed by Muhammadiyah members to be religious

---

<sup>15</sup> Online interview with Wahyudi Abdurrahim through WhatsApp, September 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Online interview with Muhammad Muflih through WhatsApp and Facebook, 20 October 2019.

guidance. However, the *tarjih* decision is the official stance of Muhammadiyah in religious matters and is formally binding on the organisation and its members. But, in practice, sometimes Muhammadiyah members exercise their right to freedom not to be bound by the decision because they have different *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

Meanwhile, *tarjih* discourses are ideas or thoughts that are raised and put forward by the Council in seminars, *halaqah* (religious gathering or meeting to discuss the Qur'an or Islam), or other forums in addressing various developing issues and at the same time fostering a critical spirit of *ijtihad* and collecting materials or ideas on various actual problems in society. The nature of this *tarjih* discourse is non-binding and does not become a fatwa that must be followed. *Tarjih* discourse is contained in various publications of the Council, such as *Jurnal Tarjih* (Tarjih Journal) and various published books (Anwar 2016).

The *tarjih* decision and the *tarjih* fatwa, hold their strength within Muhammadiyah as these are considered sacred by some of its members. In short, it can be said that anything that 'smells *tarjih*' has authority in the collective memory of Muhammadiyah followers. In the perspective of Khaled Abou El Fadl (2014), fatwa and *tarjih* decisions have the power of persuasive authority, as these can influence or direct others because they believed in them. The *tarjih* fatwas are officially published through the organisation's magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, and compiled in the *Tanya Jawab Agama* book. In comparison, the *tarjih* decisions are codified in a book called *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (commonly known as HPT). Thus, it can be understood why the attribution of the term *tarjih* to particular objects can give rise to charismatic authority, as mentioned by Weber.

What El Madury did can also be seen as identity politics which is defined as a political tool of a group whether it be ethnic, cultural, religious or others for specific purposes, such as a form of resistance or to show the identity of a group (Alfaqi 2015). Within this framework, identity is politicised through extreme interpretation, which aims to gain support from people who feel 'the same', through race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements. In the context of El Madury, the use of the *tarjih* label on his fanpage can be interpreted as a political tool to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muhammadiyah members. And, as seen in some of his sermon videos, El Madury also placed a flag with the Muhammadiyah symbol behind him. In this context, he wants to convince the viewers that he is close to Muhammadiyah. He has introduced himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board on many occasions.

According to Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif (2010), identity politics is always related to members of social groups who feel excluded by the mainstream in a nation or state. Sri Astuti Buchari (2014) also finds that the emergence of identity politics is mainly caused by certain factors that an ethnic group sees as pressure from the political injustice. By looking at the observations made by Ahmad Najib Burhani (2013), El Madury, in this case, can be categorised as part of a group that feels excluded, threatened, and to some extent in need of justice within Muhammadiyah. Burhani (2013) explains the existence of two opposing schools of thought within Muhammadiyah which he refers to as 'Pure Islam' (*Islam Murni*) and 'Progressive Islam' (*Islam Progresif*). The conflict between these two schools of thought in Muhammadiyah began to surface at the 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Banda Aceh in 1995 (Burhani 2013).

The dominance of 'Progressive Islam' in Muhammadiyah strengthened after its 44th congress in Jakarta in 2000. This congress chose Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif as general chair. He is a progressive Muslim figure, an alumnus of the University of Chicago, and a student of the eminent progressive scholar Fazlur Rahman. At this congress, several names representing the 'Progressive Islam' group were included in the ranks of the central leadership of Muhammadiyah, such as Amin Abdullah, Dawam Raharjo, and Abdul Munir Mulkhan. During Ma'arif's leadership, progressive ideas not only dominated culturally but gradually became Muhammadiyah's official programmes (Burhani 2013).

Seeing the increasingly apparent threat from the ideas put forward by the 'Progressive Islam' group within Muhammadiyah, representatives of the 'Pure Islam' group did not remain silent. They compete and squabble over religious interpretations as to which is the most authentic. These two groups challenge each other through various channels, including seminars, discussions, publications. They usually have conflicting programmes. For example, as mentioned by Burhani (2013), when the Centre for the Study of Religion and Civilisation (PSAP/Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban) raised the theme of pluralism and multiculturalism in its journal, *Tanwir Journal*, the Tabligh Council<sup>17</sup> responded with articles in opposition in its magazine, *Majalah Tabligh*. In Burhani's investigation, during the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress in Malang, this conservative group set up a Pojok Anti-Liberal (anti-liberal corner)

---

<sup>17</sup> Muhammadiyah has many assemblies such as Majelis Tabligh and Majelis Tarjih, each with its own functions and responsibilities. Majelis Tarjih is responsible for producing religious thoughts through fatwas and decisions, while Majelis Tabligh is responsible for disseminating them. Historically, Majelis Tabligh is known in Muhammadiyah as the anti-liberal wing and thus there are at times poor collaboration between Majelis Tarjih and Majelis Tabligh. For example, some fatwas issued by Majelis Tarjih, in Majelis Tabligh's perspective, are the result of liberal thinking. See Burhani (2013) and Palahuddin (2020).

booth, which sold books, DVDs, t-shirts, magazines, and other anti-liberal mementos. Strikingly, some of the t-shirts for sale displayed the words ‘Muhammadiyah Anti-Liberal’ (Burhani 2013).

At the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress, it seemed that the ‘Pure Islam’ group was gaining momentum to beat back the ‘Progressive Islam’ group. The quarrels between these two groups occurred within congress committees and in the external arena. Burhani (2005, 2013) noted at least three critical issues where the ‘Pure Islam’ group defeated the ‘Progressive Islam’ in the congress arena, namely: (1) leadership change; (2) the position of women; and (3) resistance to liberal thought.

After the 45th congress, the feud between these two schools of thought has continued though waxing and waning at different times. The form of the feud now looks more varied given the availability of the internet where the presence of social media has changed the battle arena from a conventional to a more modern one. El Madury represents the ‘Pure Islam’ group, and has heated online debates with figures considered representatives of ‘Progressive Islam’ whose actions he sees as unsettling. For example, El Madury and the secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association (DPP IMM),<sup>18</sup> Robby Karman, have openly and frequently castigated each other on for example, issues about the veil and the Wahhabi. According to El Madury, Robby Karman is a young liberal figure in Muhammadiyah who should be challenged. El Madury also often attacks the [IBTimes.id](https://www.ibtimes.id) website, as it frequently contains articles that are progressive and, to some extent, controversial. This website has several former Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah (JIMM/Muhammadiyah Youth Intellectual Network) figures, such as Hilman Latief, Azaki Khoiruddin, and Mu’arif. On one occasion, when the chair of the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre admonished El Madury for uploading provocative posts that contradicted the official stance of the Tarjih Council, he defended himself by stating that equally provocative posts from the ‘Progressive Islam’ group should be similarly reprimanded. If he is the only one selected for rebuke then he felt an injustice had been done.<sup>19</sup> El Madury’s attitude in the framework of identity politics reflects someone who feels excluded and threatened by certain

---

<sup>18</sup> Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM) or Muhammadiyah Student Association is a proponent of Muhammadiyah in student affairs with the basic mission of realising the real Islamic society as formulated by Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Widodo 2017).

<sup>19</sup> On 3 November 2019, the manager of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah reprimanded Zulkarnain El Madury for his post on SHPTM on the veil which contradicts Muhammadiyah’s official stance.

parties. At such, his specific attributes and identity are a deliberate form of resistance to the domination of certain groups or thoughts that threaten him.

The second form of authority is what Weber calls traditional authority (Spencer 1970; Matheson 1987; Riesebrodt 1999). In simple terms, something can be considered as having traditional authority if it gains legitimacy based on beliefs or norms that have been established in a particular tradition (Chairi 2019). In other words, according to Spencer (1970), traditional authority is legitimised and, at the same time, constrained by traditional norms. Therefore, it is the opposite of charismatic authority. If in charismatic authority, it is the leader or someone who creates the norms, then it is the norms that create the leader or person in the traditional authority. In charismatic authority, the value of influence is generated by a person's personal qualities and is always associated with his personality. While in the case of traditional authority, it is generated by function and is related to someone or something that has traditional values (Spencer 1970).

In the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, ulama and the classical books they wrote can be considered to have this traditional authority. Ulama in Islamic tradition are called heirs of the Prophets. The authority of the ulama is derived from the legitimacy of religious texts which state that the prophetic tradition will be passed on to them. Therefore, the religious ideas they convey in writings or books contain an authoritative value for the next generation. This is the uniqueness of Islamic scholars and traditions, as mentioned by Muhammad Qasim Zaman (2002) who states that one of the most prominent aspects of pre-modern intellectual culture is the articulation of religious discourse through the so-called medium of the commentary. This is manifested in various forms such *al-syurūḥ*, *ḥawāsyī*, *rasā'il*, and *fatawā*. The various genres of books that contain explanations, descriptions, or responses to a book or social phenomena are a way for scholars to shape the identity and authority of the school or tradition they adhere to. In addition, it is also a means to interpreting the meaning of the foundational sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah (Zaman 2002).

An example is the *ḥawāsyī* tradition in the Shafii school. Its emergence, according to Ahmed El-Shamsy (2013), shows the peak of the authority of two scholars in that school, namely al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī. Al-Kurdī, as quoted by El Shamsy, called these two scholars 'the higher authorities in the Syafii school'. Those who want to know the authoritative opinion of the Shafi'i school have to go through the works of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī, and the

books that explain further their works, namely the books written by Ibn Hajar al-Haitamī and Syamsuddīn al-Ramlī. These books have for later generations the value of traditional authority (Shamsy 2013: 292).

What is the connection between this traditional authority and El Madury? El Madury's posts on SHPTM and at religious forums where he speaks always rely on the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāth*). According to Endang Mintarja, chair of the Jakarta branch of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this aspect has drawn many people to El Madury's lectures.<sup>20</sup> What El Madury did, which Muhammadiyah did not do in many of its fatwas was to cite the Islamic intellectual tradition. In many of its fatwas, Muhammadiyah often only quotes the Qur'an or hadith to strengthen its argument, without citing the opinions of other Islamic scholars. Perhaps this is a consequence of the modernist movement, which became the spirit of Muhammadiyah. The modernist movement initiated by reformers such as Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, and Muḥammad Rasyīd Riḍā in the late 19th and early 20th centuries used the term *al-rujū' ilā al-qur'ān wa al-sunnah* ('back to the Qur'an and Sunnah'). According to Syed Junaid A. Quadri (2013), the most obvious indicator of this movement, especially in Islamic law, is its critical attitude towards the structure of pre-modern sharia authority symbols, which are articulated in the language and logic of the institution of *taqlīd*. Modernist groups always encourage reopening the door to *ijtihād* and invite Muslims to leave the interpretive monopoly that the ulama class has held (Quadri 2013).

Muhammadiyah, which is heavily inspired by the modernist movement, is oriented towards the Qur'an and Sunnah and tends to attach less importance to the Islamic intellectual tradition that has been built by the ulama. This can be seen from its *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (the methodology Muhammadiyah uses in conducting *ijtihād*), which asserts that Muhammadiyah is not affiliated to a particular school, but the opinions of these schools are only considered in determining religious norms (Anwar 2018). This means that understanding religion in the Muhammadiyah perspective is derived directly from its primary sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah through the *ijtihād* process. However, it should be noted here that the narration that confirms the opinions of the scholars is taken into account in determining norms is not that clear how they are implemented in *tarjih* issues.

In some of its official *ijtihād*, the nuances of the opinions of scholars, especially the pre-modern ones do not appear, by choice or otherwise. Thus it appears that El Madury is filling

---

<sup>20</sup> Endang Mintarja voiced this at a Muhammadiyah Central Board Tarjih Council meeting of on the emergence 'Syarah HPT', 25 September 2020.

the Muhammadiyah gap in presenting the authority of the Islamic intellectual tradition in religious narratives. For example, in the controversial veil case, the Tarjih Council issued three fatwas in 1993, 2003 and 2009.<sup>21</sup> The fatwas issued in 1993 and 2009 emphasised that the veil has no legal basis either in the Qur'an or the Sunnah but that Islamic law commands women to wear the hijab. These two fatwas did not cite the Islamic intellectual tradition, which also accommodates opinions about the veil. Although the Tarjih Council kept in its stance and strengthened the opinion that women's '*aurat* (parts of the body that should go covered) are the whole body except the face and the palms of the hands, in the 2003 fatwa, the Tarjih Council provides space for those who want to wear the veil by expressing several opinions from the scholars who think so.

In contrast to the *tarjih* fatwas, El Madury's (2019) article *Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam?* ('Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?') on the SHPTM fanpage refutes the *tarjih* fatwa. He cites various opinions of scholars in the Islamic intellectual tradition who support mandatory veiling as an effort to build religious authority. From this, it appears that El Madury, apart from attacking the *tarjih* fatwa, believes in maintaining traditional authority, in this case, the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāts*).

What El Madury did in building religious authority can also be captured from what Burhani calls a conversion narrative. Some scholars define religious conversion narratives differently as for example, in the change from one religious tradition to another. William James, as quoted by Burhani (2020: 158), states that religious conversion can also be interpreted as the conversion of a person who is a sinner into someone pious. According to Burhani (2020), people who experience religious conversion, usually after embracing a new tradition or religious understanding, will be hostile to the previous religious tradition or understanding.

El Madury also experienced a religious conversion, in this case, from the NU tradition to Muhammadiyah's. On SHPTM as well as his views when interviewed by this author, he introduced himself as someone who had practised the '*kuburiyyun* tradition'<sup>22</sup> and other actions that did not have examples from the Prophet. To convince his followers, he posted information about his religious conversion from NU to Muhammadiyah. Besides condemning his previous practices, which were deemed to have no basis in the Qur'an and Sunnah, he has had acrimonious debates with the NU *kyai*, Idrus Ramli on various issues, such as *ahlus*

---

<sup>21</sup> Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah (2009, 2019a, 2019b).

<sup>22</sup> The tradition of visiting the grave with its associated practices.



*sunnah wal jamaah* and *wahabi*, *nahdliyyin* traditions that are often considered heresy, and so on.

### **Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace**

Before the advent of the internet and the emergence of various new religious authorities, Muhammadiyah and NU were the two largest religious organisations and authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). However, following the emergence of the so-called micro-celebrity *ustaz*, these two groups, according to some scholars, began to face challenges and threats. The recent study by Wahyudi Akmaliah (2020) shows that the two organisations have responded differently to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was more combative about their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) maintains there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's response look less aggressive. Akmaliah is correct on several points, but other perspectives deserve to be considered, especially Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority on the internet. The weak point, as shown in Akmaliah's study is that there is no adequate elaboration of the assembly that exclusively holds religious authority in Muhammadiyah, namely the Tarjih Council. To trace more precisely how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority we have to look at the Tarjih Council.

This discussion starts from the author attending a meeting held by the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board in September 2020. The meeting was in response to the appearance of the *syarh* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Decisions Compilation) by El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim. Whilst El Madury's comments were on his SHPTM fanpage, Abdurrahim (2020) aired his views in his book. He was earlier mentioned as having had permission from Buya Yun to give *syarh* on HPT. The initial background for holding this meeting, as revealed by the secretary of the Tarjih Council, Mas'udi, was purely in response to the SHPTM posts by El Madury. However, information about the SHPTM other than the one written by El Madury prompted the board of the Tarjih Council to include the book by Abdurrahim with the same title for the agenda.

For this meeting, the Tarjih Council invited nine related sectors to discuss concerns over the emergence of the SHPTM on the internet written by the El Madury and Abdurrahim. The nine sector participants were: (1) the executive board of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council;

(2) fatwa division of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (3) chair/secretary of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (4) Dr Endang Mintarja, M.Ag. (Chair of the Jakarta Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council); (5) H. Fathurrahman, Lc., M.S.I. (Chair of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council); (6) H. Budi Setiawan; (7) Arif Nur Kholis (head of Muhammadiyah Digital Syiar Centre); (8) the manager of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre; and (9) the social media assistance team of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

During the meeting, there were at least four proposals from participants on how best to respond to the SHPTM, particularly El Madury's article about the veil. The first was to complain to Facebook about the SHPTM so that it could be banned for including an institution's name without permission. According to the chair of the Tabligh Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board, Fathurrahman Kamal, who was present at the forum, the fanpage is in the illicit category. This proposal was considered by the proponents as a firm proposal but that it risked unnecessary antagonism. The second was to use a persuasive approach in the form of clarification or an appeal to El Madury not to use the name *Himpunan Putusan Tajih* (HPT) or something that is associated with *tarjih*. Its proponents consider this approach to be softer and more reflective of being Muhammadiyah members in particular, and Muslims in general. The third proposal was to use institutional authority in writing an official letter on behalf of the Tarjih Council to El Madury. The fourth idea that was considered more practical and efficient was to place the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it on social media. This would avoid being drawn into unfruitful correspondence on SHPTM.

However, there was no agreement on which approach should be undertaken despite long discussions. It was agreed instead that there would be a follow up with another forum. Since this author started writing (3 April 2022) there has been no further meeting. The emergence of SHPTM on the internet and its effects have been considered a serious problem by the Tarjih Council. The meeting's participants were generally uneasy about the appearance of El Madury and his fanpage. In addition, they wanted El Madury to be warned or reprimanded since SHPTM is considered a threat to religious authority of the Tarjih Council. This illustrates that Muhammadiyah, through its official religious assembly, the Tarjih Council, is not passive in responding to the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. However, only certain cases and not all micro-celebrity *ustaz* who appear on social media have drawn the Tarjih Council's attention. Although there has yet to be a follow up meeting, the Pusat Tarjih

Muhammadiyah as an official institution supporting the Tarjih Council illustrates how Muhammadiyah struggles to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is an institution that was founded in 2016 by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Ahmad Dahlan University (Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah 2016). Despite being a new institution, its legality is clear, and it has formal authority. In the Muhammadiyah tradition as an organisation, such legality is essential. Thus when someone from Muhammadiyah, speaks on another person's behalf or endorses an approach, the speaker's status is below that of the institution and cannot be assumed to be that of institutions within Muhammadiyah which, although new, have legality. In the context of El Madury and the SHPTM fanpage, this is important. Even though El Madury claims he has obtained permission to make *syarh* on the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* from a charismatic figure in Muhammadiyah, Buya Yunahar, legally it is not valid. In that context, Buya Yunahar spoke on behalf of himself, not on behalf of Muhammadiyah.

Fronted by young Muhammadiyah cadres, the majority of whom are alumni of Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Tarjih Ulama Education, PUTM),<sup>23</sup> Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays a role in supporting the Tarjih Council programmes. These are relatively under-performing and facing obstacles, particularly on using social media to disseminate their official *ijtihad*. The members of the Tarjih Council, who are relatively old, need support from young cadres. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays an essential role in assisting the Tarjih Council in maintaining its religious authority on the internet. It responded to El Madury and SHPTM, by being pro-active with a poster (Figure 1) on social media and in print form, containing information related to the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it.

---

<sup>23</sup> PUTM is an educational institution under the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board designed to produce a cadre of Muhammadiyah scholars. PUTM organises a special programme that educates and prepares Muhammadiyah *tarjih* scholars who are competent in the religious field. The birth of PUTM was based on the concern of some Muhammadiyah leaders about the increasing scarcity of ulama in and from Muhammadiyah (Fauzi 2020a).



**Figure 1.** Poster with information on the official social media accounts affiliated to the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Are you often confused about finding sources of reference about Islam from the perspective of Muhammadiyah?

There is no need to be confused anymore because various social media are straightforward for us to access. Tarjih (Council) has come with a more trendy look.

- ✓ Easy to read anywhere
- ✓ Provide updated fatwas
- ✓ Discuss current issues

As members of Muhammadiyah, let's get used to reading the decisions and fatwas of Muhammadiyah

Here are some media that can be accessed very easily. So don't be confused anymore.

Web: fatwatarjih.or.id

Facebook: fb.me/fatwamu  
Instagram: pusattarjih\_muhammadiyah  
Telegram: t.me/fatwatarjihmu  
Youtube: tarjih channel  
Let's spread it to all Muhammadiyah people!

**Figure 2.** Translation of Figure 1.

Although the poster above does not directly mention the SHPTM fanpage created by El Madury, the main message in it is clear and firm, namely to inform the Muhammadiyah followers about the official accounts of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it. This would hopefully let Muhammadiyah members understand how its official religious voice is disseminated on the internet. Following this, Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah successively uploaded other, more varied posters to indirectly counter the SHPTM fanpage. Some other examples of these posters are shown in Figures 3 and 5.



**Figure 3.** Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Do you know?

The Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah now have an official YouTube channel, (namely) the Tarjih Channel.

Have you subscribed yet?

**Figure 4.** Translation of Figure 3.



**Figure 5.** Information about the website fatwatarjih.or.id, an official website affiliated to the Tarjih Council containing fatwas. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Fatwatarjih.or.id is the official website for the Tarjih and the Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board (MTT).

The Media Team of Fatwa Tarjih, through this website, has been, is and will continue to strive consistently to publish various ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council. Until now, tarjih fatwa collections from 1997 to 2018 have entered the editing stage, and some are just waiting to be published.

**Figure 6.** Translation of Figure 5.



**Figure 7.** Information on the official website of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Do you want to know the full history (of the Tarjih Council)?  
Or do you want to look for ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council?  
Come on; you can find out on this website: tarjih.or.id

**Figure 8.** Translation of Figure 7.

The use of informal language and emoticons typical of millennials indicate the audience that the Tarjih Council wants to target. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah team understands that informal language will appeal to its target audience. This is aimed at not only establishing the authority of the Tarjih Council but ‘millennialisation’ i.e. to reach out to the younger generation familiar with social media. Suyadi and Widodo (2019) note that millennialisation is an alternative way to develop knowledge that will synergise with various online media and

digital technology. In the context of *tarjih* millennialisation, Muhammadiyah's official *ijtihad* that tend to be disseminated in a conventional, monotonous, and uncreative manner are now communicated through social media in more contextual packaging. This means that the Tarjih Council and its various official *ijtihad*, which previously were always identified with the 'old', now consciously aim to include young people.

The religious authority of the Tarjih Council in cyberspace, especially when connected with the appearance of El Madury and SHPTM, was greatly helped by the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah and its young Muhammadiyah cadres. It manages various social media platforms with large numbers of followers, and has helped maintain Muhammadiyah's religious authority by balancing and suppressing the presence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. Its contents are fatwas and decisions of the Tarjih Council with more appealing visualisation to reach out to the millennials.

Although the number of social media followers of the Tarjih Council is less than that for the NU and Salafi groups, at least the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah acts as a compass for Muhammadiyah followers who question its religious authority, especially with the emergence of El Madury's version in SHPTM. The administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah's social media have received many messages either through the comments column or direct messages in its inbox, which question the authority of SHPTM.<sup>24</sup> Here, the vital role of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is increasingly finding its momentum.

## Conclusion

Although it can be said that Muhammadiyah's religious influence and authority on the internet are inferior and lag behind other religious groups, Muhammadiyah is still trying to manage its authority, especially when facing threats from micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By focusing on Zulkarnain El Madury and his SHPTM social media page, this article offers a different perspective from previous studies by analysing the work of the Tarjih Council as the only institution in Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas. This article shows that Muhammadiyah has its own way of responding to the emergence of new religious authorities. With the help of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an institution in its fold, the Tarjih Council has made continuous efforts through social media and its official website to counter new

---

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Ariful Hazam, Ilham Ibrahim, and Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, September 2020. They are Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah social media administrators.



voices that threaten its authority. Muhammadiyah's response was neither aggressive nor radical but it clarified its stance without mentioning who precisely was being targeted. What Muhammadiyah did was in line with the Javanese proverb *Ngluruk tanpo bolo, menang tanpo ngasorake* ('win without defeat, win without humiliation [of others]'). The form of Muhammadiyah's response is inherited from its founder, Ahmad Dahlan. As seen by James Peacock (1978), Ahmad Dahlan brought about many social transformations through discussions and education.<sup>25</sup> This can be seen, for example, from how Ahmad Dahlan and the early generation of Muhammadiyah fortified Muslims from various superstitions, heresies, and myths by explaining the unacceptability of such popular beliefs and practices.

In a broader context, the case of Zulkarnain El Madury also provides a lesson that using the name Muhammadiyah to justify personal opinions or legitimise particular interests is wrong. Muhammadiyah has the reputation of a very well managed organisation (Barton 2014; *Suara Muhammadiyah* 2019) which is its strength and gives it clout compared to other religious organisations in Indonesia, such as NU. In short, Muhammadiyah's authority lies in the institution itself and is not based on personality. It differs from NU, where power and authority tend to reside with personal figures, such as *kyai* or *gus* (Fauzi 2020b).

Muhammadiyah followers who understand its basic rules are not easily influenced by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. They are aware that Muhammadiyah's official religious stance is only be issued by the Tarjih Council and that those external to the Tarjih Council or even specific Muhammadiyah figures who give religious opinions, speak only for themselves as individuals and not the organisation. This would be the case, for example, even if the religious opinion emanates from the chair of the Tarjih Council as an individual. This did occur when Syamsul Anwar, the current chair of the Tarjih Council, differed from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council on the issue of *iftitāḥ* prayer (opening night prayer [*qiyām al-lail*]).<sup>26</sup> While Anwar's opinion clearly differs from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council, the prevailing opinion in Muhammadiyah is that of the Tarjih Council, not the chair of the Tarjih Council. Within Muhammadiyah, such religious differences of opinion are common as usually happens in *fiqh* discourse in general. The

---

<sup>25</sup> For example, Ahmad Dahlan and the early generation of Muhammadiyah explained to Muslims the unacceptability of popular beliefs and practices that had their roots in superstitions, heresies, and myths. He built hospitals, schools, and orphanages to counter these practices (Shihab 1995).

<sup>26</sup> For Anwar (2013), the *iftitāḥ* prayer comprises two short *rak'ah* prayers that are performed before *qiyām al-lail*, with the condition that it must be preceded by sleep, otherwise there is no need to perform the *iftitāḥ* prayer. However, the Tarjih Council holds that the *iftitāḥ* prayer consists of two short *rak'ah* prayers performed before *qiyām al-lail*, whether preceded by sleep or not (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2011; Tim Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2019a).

difference between El Madury and Anwar is that the latter does not act in the name of Muhammadiyah or the Tarjih Council when he has a different view. Instead, on many occasions, he urges Muhammadiyah followers to abide by the opinion of the Tarjih Council on the *iftitāh* prayer.<sup>27</sup> Thus Anwar has shown he can compromise his personal religious opinion with his professional attitude in the organisation. In this case, he understands that using the name Muhammadiyah to legitimise individual opinions or interests is not justifiable.

## Acknowledgements

Permission for this research PJB-002/SP3/LPPM-UAD/VI/2020 and funding were provided by the ethical board of Ahmad Dahlan University Research and Development Institute (Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan).

I am grateful to *ustaz* Zulkarnain El Madury for his exceptional help and support during my fieldwork. I also thank Amiruddin, Arif Nur Kholis, Muhammad Muflih, Wahyudi Abdurrahim, Robby Karman, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, Ilham Ibrahim, Ariful Hazam, and the members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council for providing information regarding my research. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article and to the editors of the *Indonesia and the Malay World*. Errors, if any, are solely mine.

## Note on contributor

*Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi* is a lecturer in the Department of Hadith Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He has published widely on a variety of issues relating to Islamic Studies, including al-Quran, hadith, Islamic law, social media and da'wah, and Muhammadiyah studies. Email: niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id

## References

Abdurrahim, Wahyudi Sarju. 2020. *Ahlul haq wassunah: syarah himpunan putusan tarjih Muhammadiyah bab iman bagian ketuhanan* [Ahlul haq wassunnah: explanation of tarjih decisions compilation of Muhammadiyah chapter on faith part of divinity]. Yogyakarta:

---

<sup>27</sup> On several occasions, this author has heard Syamsul Anwar's direct appeal to Muhammadiyah members to follow the opinion of the Tarjih Council on this aspect of the *iftitāh* prayer.

Al Muflihun Publishing.

- Abror, Robby. 2020. Syeikh Yunahar, ulama Muhammadiyah kharismatik [Sheikh Yunahar, a charismatic Muhammadiyah cleric]. 3 January. <<https://menara62.com/syeikh-yunahar-ulama-muhammadiyah-kharismatik/>> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2018. Media sosial dan pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [Social media and shifting religious authority]. 12 December. <[https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media\\_sosial\\_dan\\_pergeseran\\_otoritas\\_keagama\\_an](https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media_sosial_dan_pergeseran_otoritas_keagama_an)> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2020. The demise of moderate Islam: new media, contestation, and reclaiming religious authorities. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10 (1): 1–24.
- Alfaqi, Mifdal Zusron. 2015. Memahami Indonesia melalui prespektif nasionalisme, politik identitas, serta solidaritas [Understanding Indonesia through the perspectives of nationalism, identity politics, and solidarity]. *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 28 (2): 111–116.
- Alvara Research Center. 2020. Ramadhan dan pandemi Covid-19: semangat ibadah tak surut, konsumsi tersendat. <[https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN\\_DAN\\_PANDEMI\\_COVID-19\\_SEMANGAT\\_IBADAH\\_TAK\\_SURUT\\_KONSUMSI\\_TERSENDAT.pdf](https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN_DAN_PANDEMI_COVID-19_SEMANGAT_IBADAH_TAK_SURUT_KONSUMSI_TERSENDAT.pdf)> Accessed 23 February 2021.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2007. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer* [Contemporary Islamic law studies]. Jakarta: RM Books.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2013. *Salat Tarawih: Tinjauan usul fikih, sejarah, dan fikih* [Tarawih prayer: usul fiqh, history, and fiqh perspectives]. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2016. Fatwā, purification and dynamization: a study of tarjīḥ in Muhammadiyah. *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (1): 27–44.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2018. *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Panitia Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih Muhammadiyah XXX.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2020. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer Bagian dua* [Contemporary Islamic legal studies Part two]. Yogyakarta: UAD Press.
- Barton, Greg. 2014. The Gülen movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: progressive Islamic thought, religious philanthropy and civil society in Turkey and Indonesia. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25 (3): 287–301.
- Buchari, Sri Astuti. 2014. *Kebangkitan etnis menuju politik identitas* [Ethnic awakening towards identity politics]. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.

- Bunt, Gary R. 2003. *Islam in the digital age: e-jihad, online fatwas and cyber Islamic environments*. London: Pluto Press.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2005. The 45th Muhammadiyah Congress contest between literal-conservative and liberal-moderate Muslims in Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 12 (1): 185–189.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2013. Liberal and conservative discourses in the Muhammadiyah: the struggle for the face of reformist Islam in Indonesia. In Martin van Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary developments in Indonesian Islam: explaining the 'conservative turn'*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2016. Aksi bela Islam: konservatisme dan fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. *Maarif* 11 (2): 15–29.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2020. Muslim televangelists in the making: conversion narratives and the construction of religious authority. *Muslim World* 110 (2): 154–175.
- Burhanudin, Jajat. 2004. The fragmentation of religious authority: Islamic print media in early 20th century Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 11 (1): 23–62.
- Campbell, H.A. and Teusner, P.E. 2011. Religious authority in the age of the internet. In *Christian Reflection, Virtual Lives*. Waco TX: Baylor University Press, pp. 59–68.  
<<https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/130950.pdf>>
- Chairi, Effendi. 2019. Ketiadaan otoritas terpusat dalam fenomena kontemporer di Indonesia [The absence of a centralised authority in contemporary phenomena in Indonesia]. *SANGKÉP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 2 (2):197–215.
- Chaplin. Chris. 2021. *Salafism and the State: Islamic activism and national identity in contemporary Indonesia*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.
- Dakta.com. 2016. Aa Gym ajak ribuan jamaahnya ikut aksi bela Islam III [Aa Gym invites thousands of congregants to join Islamic Defence Action III]. 29 November.  
<<http://www.dakta.com/news/7329/aa-gym-ajak-ribuan-jamaahnya-ikut-aksi-bela-islam-iii>> Accessed 2 February 2020.
- Fadl, Khaled Abou El. 2014. *Speaking in God's name: Islamic law, authority, and women*. London: Oneworld Publications.
- Farhan, Farhan. 2017. Pesan dakwah Felix Siauw di media sosial (perspektif meaning and media). *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Administrasi Islam* 1 (2): 209–226.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2017. Peranan Maqasid Al-Shariah dalam memahami Hadith: kajian terhadap fatwa Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah [The role of Maqasid Al-Shariah in understanding Hadith: a study of the fatwa of the Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah].

MA thesis, University of Malaya.

- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020a. PUTM dan kaderisasi ulama: menelusuri latar belakang lahirnya Lembaga Kaderisasi Ulama Muhammadiyah [PUTM and clerical regeneration: tracing the background of the birth of the Muhammadiyah Clerical Cadre Institute]. <<https://santricendekia.com/putm-dan-kaderisasi-ulama-menelusuri-latar-belakang-lahirnya-lembaga-kaderisasi-ulama-muhammadiyah/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020b. Tantangan kader ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah di era 4.0 [Challenges for Tarjih Muhammadiyah ulama cadres in the 4.0 era]. 21 July. *Suara 'Aisyiyah* <<https://suaraaisyiyah.id/tantangan-kader-ulama-tarjih-muhammadiyah-di-era-4-0/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Fealy, Greg. 2008. Consuming Islam: commodified religion and aspirational pietism in contemporary Indonesia. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.
- Gesuri. 2020. Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia kehilangan ulama kharismatik [Yunahar Ilyas passed away, Indonesia lost a charismatic scholar]. 3 January. <<https://www.gesuri.id/internal/yunahar-ilyas-wafat-indonesia-kehilangan-ulama-kharismatik-b1YFoZpRY>> Accessed 20 March 2020.
- Hew, Wai Weng. 2018. The art of dakwah: social media, visual persuasion and the Islamist propagation of Felix Siau. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (134): 61–79.
- Hoesterey, James B. 2008. Marketing morality: the rise, fall and rebranding of Aa Gym. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: Religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, pp. 95–114.
- Hope Cheong, Pauline. 2016. Religious authority and social media branding in a culture of religious celebrification. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*, University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 81–102.
- Horsfield, Peter. 2016. The media and religious authority from ancient to modern. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*. University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 37–66.
- IB Times Indonesia. 2020. 100 situs Islam Indonesia, NU Online peringkat pertama [100 Indonesian Islamic websites, NU Online ranks first]. 10 July. <<https://ibtimes.id/100-situs-islam-indonesia-nu-online-peringkat-pertama/>> Accessed 23 February 2023.
- Ilyas, Yunahar. 2012. *Kuliah Akhlaq* [Akhlaq lecture]. XII. Yogyakarta: LPPI Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta.

- Khamis, S., Ang, L. and Welling, R. 2017. Self-branding, 'micro-celebrity' and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191–208.
- Khomalia, Isti and Rahman, Khairul Arief. 2018. Micro hijabers celebrity: membentuk identitas dengan update self-story via instagram (kasus dian pelangi). *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban dan Pemikiran Islam* 2 (1): 33–42.
- Kompas. 2020. Sejumlah tokoh hadir prosesi pemakaman ketua PP Muhammadiyah Yunahar Ilyas [Many figures attended the funeral procession of Muhammadiyah chairman Yunahar Ilyas]. 3 January.  
<<https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/03/19142441/sejumlah-tokoh-hadiri-prosesi-pemakaman-ketua-pp-muhammadiyah-yunahar-ilyas>> Accessed 3 April 2022.
- Labiq. 2019. Pengaruh new media terhadap pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [The influence of new media on shifting religious authority]. 19 April.  
<<https://geotimes.co.id/opini/pengaruh-new-media-terhadap-pergeseran-otoritas-keagamaan>> Accessed 19 October 2020.
- Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. 2010. *Politik identitas dan masa depan pluralisme Indonesia*. Edited by Samsu Rizal Panggabean et al. Jakarta: Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (PUSAD) Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina.
- Madury, Zulkarnain El. 2019. Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam? [Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?]. 2 November.  
<<https://www.facebook.com/zulkarnainsumenep/posts/2386248524961601>> Accessed 5 May 2020.
- Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah. 2016. Pembukaan Halaqah, Majelis Tarjih Launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan Muhammadiyah Observatorium Network [Halaqah opening, Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and Muhammadiyah Observatory Network]. 20 August. <<https://tarjih.or.id/pembukaan-halaqah-majelis-tarjih-launching-pusat-tarjih-muhammadiyah-dan-muhammadiyah-observatorium-network/>> Accessed 6 October 2023.
- Majelis Tarjih Dahlan, Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. 2016. Nota Kesepakatan Majelis Tarjih Dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Tentang Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di Islamic Center Universitas Ahmad Dahlan [Memorandum of Agreement between the Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board and Ahmad Dahlan University on the Management of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre at the Islamic Centre of Ahmad Dahlan University]. Yogyakarta.

- Maskur, Maskur and Noor, Irfan Noor. 2014. Ustadz selebriti Abdullah Gymnastiar dalam budaya populer (perspektif hipersemiotika Yasraf Amir Piliang) [Celebrity Ustadz Abdullah Gymnastiar in popular culture (Yasraf Amir Piliang's hyper semiotics perspective)]. *Jurnal Studia Insania* 2 (1): 47–57.
- Matheson, Craig. 1987. Weber and the classification of forms of legitimacy. *British Journal of Sociology* 38 (2): 199–215.
- Muhammadiyah Central Board. 2023. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 8 October 2023.
- Nisa, Eva F. 2019. Internet and Muslim women. In Ronald Lukens-Bull and Mark Woodward (eds), *Handbook of contemporary Islam and Muslim lives*. Cham: Springer, pp. 1–19.
- Palahuddin. 2020. The typology of religious thought in Muhammadiyah. *International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 3 (2): 74–81.  
<<http://journal2.uad.ac.id/index.php/ijish/article/view/2233/pdf>>
- Peacock, James L. 1978. *Purifying the Faith: the Muhammadiyah movement in Indonesian Islam*. Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2011. *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2016. Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan MuON [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and MuON]. 20 August.  
<<http://www.umm.ac.id/id/muhammadiyah/7070.html>> Accessed 20 March 2021.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Berikut Susunan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah pPeriode 2022–2027 [The following is the composition of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the 2022–2027 period] <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/berikut-susunan-pimpinan-pusat-muhammadiyah-periode-2022-2027/>> Accessed 7 October 2023.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Majelis Tabligh [Tabligh Council]. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 07 October 2023.
- Postill, John and Pink, Sarah. 2012. Social media ethnography: the digital researcher in a messy web. *Media International Australia* 145 (1): 123–134.
- Pribadi, Yanwar. 2019. Fragmentasi umat dan penciptaan otoritas keagamaan: tanggapan terhadap ‘Islam lokal’ dan ‘Islam asing’ di Indonesia [Ummah fragmentation and the creation of religious authority: responses to ‘local Islam’ and ‘foreign Islam’ in Indonesia]. *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 21 (1): 103–119.  
<<https://jmb.lipi.go.id/jmb/article/view/828/455>>

- Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah. n.d. *Panduan pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre management guide]. Majelis Tarjih, Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta.
- Quadri, Syed Junaid A. 2013. Transformations of tradition: modernity in the thought of Muḥammad Bakhīt Al-Muṭī'ī. PhD thesis, McGill University.
- Rahman, Asjmuni Abdur et al. 1985. Laporan penelitian Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (suatu studi tentang sistem dan metode penentuan hukum) [Research report of Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (a study of the system and method of determining the law)]. Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga.
- Rakyat Merdeka. 2019. Dubes Malaysia jenguk ketum MUI Yunahar Ilyas di Yogyakarta [Malaysian ambassador visits MUI chairman Yunahar Ilyas in Yogyakarta]. 5 November. <<https://rm.id/baca-berita/internasional/21745/dubes-malaysia-jenguk-ketum-mui-yunahar-ilyas-di-yogyakarta>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Riesebrodt, Martin. 1999. Charisma in Max Weber's Sociology of Religion. *Religion* 29 (1): 1–14.
- Sadasri, Lidwina Mutia. 2017. Selebriti mikro di media baru kajian presentasi diri dalam vlog selebriti mikro [Micro-celebrities in new media: a study of self-presentation in micro-celebrity vlogs]. *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi Dan Opini Publik* 21 (2): 167–181. <<https://jurnal.kominfo.go.id/index.php/jpkop/article/view/1218/720>>
- Saefullah, Hikmawan. 2022. Media baru, publik baru: mengkonfigurasi ulang ruang publik Islam [New media, new publics: reconfiguring the Islamic public sphere]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sammy, Abdullah. 2022. Peluang dan tantangan dakwah digital Muhammadiyah [Opportunities and challenges of Muhammadiyah digital da'wah]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sanjaya, Makroen. 2022. Peta ideologi islam di media sosial [The map of Islamic ideology on social media]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Senft, Theresa M. 2008. *Camgirls: celebrity and community in the age of social networks*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Shamsy, Ahmed El. 2013. The Ḥāshiya in Islamic law: a sketch of the Shāfi'ī literature. *Oriens* 41 (3-4): 289–315.



- Shihab, Alwi. 1995. The Muhammadiyah movement and its controversy with Christian mission in Indonesia. PhD thesis, Temple University, USA.
- Spencer, Martin E. 1970. Weber on legitimate norms and authority. *British Journal of Sociology* 21 (2): 123–134.
- Suara Muhammadiyah. 2019. Hyung Jun Kim: sistem di Muhammadiyah sungguh ideal [Hyung Jun Kim: Muhammadiyah's system is ideal].  
<<https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/08/01/hyung-jun-kim-sistem-di-muhammadiyah-sungguh-ideal/>> Accessed 9 April 2022.
- Suyadi and Widodo, Hendro. 2019. Millennialization of Islamic education based on neuroscience in the third generation university in Yogyakarta Indonesia. *QIIS International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7 (1): 173–202.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2009. Hukum tentang jenggot dan cadar [Islamic law perspective on beards and veils]. *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine, no. 18 . Yogyakarta.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019a. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 4*. Cetakan IX. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019b. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 7*. Cetakan IV. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Tirto.id. 2018. Dari Aa' Gym ke Felix Siauw: ustaz medsos & medium dakwah politis. Tirto.Id. 16 January. <<https://tirto.id/dari-aa-gym-ke-felix-siauw-ustaz-medsos-medium-dakwah-politis-cCGf>> Accessed 5 February 2020.
- Turner, Bryan S. 2007. Religious authority and the new media. *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2): 117–134.
- Turner, Graeme. 2010. *Ordinary people and the media: the demotic turn*. Los Angeles CA: Sage.
- Widodo, Arif. 2017. Transformative intellectual discourse and movement of Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM). *Iseedu: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices* 1 (1): 126–151.  
<<https://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/iseedu/article/view/5423/3542>>
- Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change*. Princetoon NJ: Princeton University Press.

## ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY *USTAZ* PHENOMENON

### Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

#### ABSTRACTS

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the fragmentation of religious authority. In the Indonesian context, the mainstream religious authority held by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has been challenged and threatened by micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This article examines the emergence of the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah fanpage on Facebook, created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board as it has threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority. It analyses Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace, by taking a closer look at what has been done by Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, an assembly that has the exclusive authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* within Muhammadiyah. This article also discusses lessons that can be learned from the case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the response of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

#### KEYWORDS

Fragmentation of religious authority; micro-celebrity *ustaz*; Muhammadiyah; religious authority; *tarjih*.

#### ABSTRAK

*Kemunculan internet dan media sosial telah mempertajam fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. Dalam konteks Indonesia, otoritas keagamaan arus utama yang dipegang oleh Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) disaingi dan diancam oleh para ustaz mikro-*

*selebritas. Artikel ini mengkaji kemunculan fanpage Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah di Facebook yang dibuat dan dikelola oleh Zulkarnain El Madury, seseorang yang mengklaim sebagai ustaz Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, karena dianggap mengancam otoritas keagamaan Muhammadiyah. Penelitian ini menganalisis upaya Muhammadiyah dalam mempertahankan otoritas keagamaannya di dunia maya dengan melihat lebih dekat pada apa yang telah dilakukan oleh Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah, sebuah majelis yang memiliki otoritas eksklusif untuk mengeluarkan fatwa dan ijtihad keagamaan resmi di Muhammadiyah. Artikel ini juga membahas pelajaran yang dapat dipetik dari kasus Zulkarnain El Madury dan respons Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah.*

#### **KATA KUNCI**

*Fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan; Muhammadiyah; otoritas keagamaan; tarjih; ustaz mikro-selebritas.*

#### **Introduction**

The Alvara Research Center (2020) survey was surprising as it stated that the clerics most heard by the public, especially in Ramadan 2020, were not from the official Muhammadiyah board.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the Alvara Research Center survey was released (IBTimes.id 2020), an Islamic website managed by young Muhammadiyah intellectuals, published a report ranking the 100 most popular Islamic websites in Indonesia. The majority of these sites are managed by or affiliated to Nahdliyyin (NU followers) and Salafi<sup>2</sup> groups with few such sites operated by or affiliated to Muhammadiyah. The Alvara Research Center survey and the IBTimes.id report show that Muhammadiyah, in terms of influence and religious authority on the internet, lags behind other religious groups which is ironic for an organisation claiming to represent the progressive Islamic group.

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the so-called fragmentation of religious authority. Eva F. Nisa (2019), for example, mentions that the proliferation of various digital platforms is directly proportional to the increasing fragmentation of religious authority. Islamic discourse is monopolised not only by an elite group of scholars or mainstream

---

<sup>1</sup> One of the 15 most popular clerics mentioned in the report, Ustaz Ali Hidayat, has since been included on the Muhammadiyah Central Board's Tabligh Council (2022–2027; Muhammadiyah Central Board 2023). Prior to that, he did not convey official Muhammadiyah ideas in his lectures.

<sup>2</sup> For more comprehensive information on the activism of Salafi groups, see Chris Chaplin (2021).

religious groups, but also by persons or groups that have not been considered in Islamic discourse. Furthermore, the presence of the internet and social media has led to the birth of what is called micro-celebrity. Theresa M. Senft (2008) defines micro-celebrity as a new style of online performance that involves increasing popularity on social media such as videos, blogs, and networking sites. These micro-celebrities unlike conventional celebrities, emerge from what is known as new media (Senft 2008).

Of course, not all new media users have the adjective 'micro-celebrity'. Only those who experience what Graeme Turner (2010) terms 'the demotic turn', namely, the increasing visibility of ordinary people to appear as celebrities in the media, especially online media. In turn, both conventional and micro-celebrity exist in various public spheres, and the discourse on them is characterised as influencers, stimulants of consumerism, enthusiasm, public debate, and various activism (Sadasri 2017).

By borrowing the theory of micro-celebrities in the study of new media, we can then read how these micro-celebrities have also come to the fore in the religious realm. The emergence of ulama, *ustaz* (religious teachers), and religious leaders who become influencers in new media can perhaps be seen as one form of micro-celebrity. Felix Siauw is a prominent example. A convert, who is now a preacher, Siauw has a massive following on social media. In 2018, for example, he had 2.6 million followers on Twitter, and in 2022 it numbered 3.3 million. Felix Siauw's Instagram account has around 4.9 million followers. It can even be said that he is the *ustaz* who has the most followers on social media (Tirto 2018), making him one of the leading social media preachers in Indonesia today (Hew 2018). What Felix Siauw posts on his social media has more or less influenced the map of religious authorities in Indonesia.

The existence of the internet and the continuing development of technology allows the emergence of many other micro-celebrity *ustaz*, both in the national arena more generally or more specifically in internal religious organisations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, Persis (Persatuan Islam) or others. In the context of Muhammadiyah, the largest modernist Islamic organisation began to be challenged for its religious authority by a preacher who was said to be part of Muhammadiyah itself, namely Zulkarnain El Madury. He claims to be a Muhammadiyah cadre and often introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board. In recent years, El Madury has been noticed by Muhammadiyah administrators

and Muhammadiyah cadres<sup>3</sup> and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah) has discussed him in a special meeting. This is because the posts on the Facebook page that El Madury manages, *Syarah Himpunan Putus Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (henceforth SHPTM), often differ significantly from – and to some extent delegitimise – a Muhammadiyah fatwa or official decision. Responses from grassroots or Muhammadiyah followers vary. This can be seen, for example, from the comments on each post. Some defend and remain adamant on the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah, but not a few were affected and followed what was conveyed by El Madury on his Facebook page.

This is where it becomes crucial to see how Muhammadiyah attempts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace, especially among its members and the public. By conducting web content analysis (Postill and Pink 2012) on SHPTM and official social media accounts and those affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this article shows how El Madury builds his narratives and, in turn, how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority on the internet. Additionally, field research was conducted and key actors were interviewed offline and online in a semi-structured format.<sup>4</sup> Apart from El Madury, the key actors are members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Digital Broadcast Centre (Pusat Syiar Digital Muhammadiyah), Muhammadiyah activists as well as Muhammadiyah grassroots.

### **Fragmentation of religious authority, new preacher and micro-celebrity *ustaz* phenomenon**

Fragmentation of religious authority is a phenomenon that occurs in various religious communities and is not limited to Islam (B.S. Turner 2007; Campbell and Teusner 2011; Hope Cheong 2016). The fragmentation of religious authority is also a global phenomenon as pointed out by Gary R. Bunt (2003) who states that the new media have shaped diverse understandings among individual Muslims worldwide about e-jihad (electronic jihad). The definition of electronic jihad is understood and interpreted differently, ranging from online activism to Muslim articulation after the events of 11 September 2001. Bunt (2003) shows that each new media (in this case, new websites) has authority for its respective group.

---

<sup>3</sup> This author's online and offline interviews with Amiruddin, Robby Karman, Muhammad Muflih, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, and Arif Nur Kholis, 2019–2020.

<sup>4</sup> Data collection in this study was carried out between 2018 and 2020. As personal interviews were not possible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, some interviews were conducted online.

The fragmentation of religious authority discussed here is from the 20th century to the present. Jajat Burhanudin (2004) points out that there has been a shift in religious authority in the historical phase of Indonesian religious thought in the early 20th century due to modernisation. His study, which focuses on the Islamic print media, further shows that there is a shift in religious authority that used to be in *Kitab Kuning*<sup>5</sup> taught by *kyai* or ulama in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to magazines, journals, newspapers, and books published by modernist circles or organisations.

Religious authority since the early 20th century has always stayed with Muhammadiyah and NU. These two religious organisations are often referred to by scholars as the authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016; Akmaliah 2018). The shift in religious authority occurred again in the 1990s when national television stations emerged. The Islamic programmes presented by the television stations show the *ustaz* (religious teachers), which in turn build their authority through lectures delivered by these preachers. This phenomenon prompted scholars to come up with the term ‘Islamic televangelism’ (Akmaliah 2018). Abdullah Gymnastiar who is better known as Aa Gym is one example that falls into the category of a television *ustaz*, or a ‘tele-dai’ as coined by Greg Fealy (2008).

The most obvious and recent picture of the fragmentation of religious authority in Indonesia is the series of events of the Defend Islam Action (Aksi Bela Islam). Ahmad Najib Burhani (2016) hints that these critical events marked the peak of the fragmentation of religious authorities in Indonesia as they gave rise to new actors who challenge the established religious authority. Although it cannot be said to shift or match the role of Muhammadiyah and NU, the emergence of new actors such as Rizieq Shihab provides a new map of religious authority in Indonesia.

This phenomenon of the fragmentation of religious authority has increased sharply in the development of what scholars call pop culture, marked by the birth of many new media (Labiq 2019). The availability of internet access to every social class is the main factor for this fragmentation. As a result, many new media have emerged with each individual and group competing to spread ideas (Horsfield 2016; Nisa 2019).

Aa Gym is one of the early actors who emerged in the internet era in Indonesia. This can be captured in two interesting studies on Aa Gym by James B. Hoesterey (2008), and

---

<sup>5</sup> So-called because the books were printed on yellow paper. These were the Islamic texts used in the education of Islamic schools.

Maskur and Noor (2014). Although the use of the internet as a medium of da'wah around during the early 2000s was not as massive as it is now, the emergence of Aa Gym as a new cleric on the national da'wah stage through lectures, seminars, and Islamic training is a phenomenon in itself. Hoesterey (2008) studies the journey of Aa Gym from his first appearance as a preacher, falling, and then successfully rebranding to restore his religious authority. This is evident, for example, from how Aa Gym has many listeners (*Dakta.com* 2016). Popular culture has also brought Aa Gym to be seen not only by the public, especially by his followers, as also singer, actor, author, etc. Thus, he has transformed from an ordinary cleric to a celebrity cleric. Through a hypersemiotic perspective, Maskur and Noor (2014) show the various aspects of Aa Gym's personality.

Following the appearance of Aa Gym and with further rapid development of information technology, many other new preachers began to appear. Hew Wai Weng (2018) describes how Felix SiauW is another skilful religious preacher. Being a cleric with the most followers on the internet did not make SiauW neglect to spread his da'wah in the real world. Hew (2018) points out that SiauW has blended online and offline da'wah harmoniously. According to Hew (2018) and Farhan (2017), one of the keys to SiauW's success in preaching is his ability to present an entertaining and straightforward da'wah, even though its content is dogmatic and political.

Aa Gym and Felix SiauW are two micro-celebrity *ustaz* as a result of the new media. The term micro-celebrity *ustaz* was adopted and reconstructed from the theory of micro-celebrity. Most of these studies conducted from the perspective of pop culture (Senft 2008; G. Turner 2010; Khamis, Ang and Welling 2017; Sadasri 2017; Khomalia and Rahman 2018) describe the fragmentation of religious authority, marked by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By this term this author means an ordinary *ustaz/ustazah* who has skyrocketed in popularity and is celebrity on and because of social media so that he or she is able to influence certain people or communities. In other words, it means the *ustaz/ustazah* has experienced what G. Turner (2010) calls 'the demotic turn', when ordinary people are highly visible on social media and become celebrities. Challenges to established religious authorities by new religious personalities or groups are rarely touched on except that of Yanwar Pribadi (2019). His study explains the efforts of 'local Islam' (*Islam lokal*) to defend its religious authority from the threat of 'foreign Islam' (*Islam asing*). However, his study differs from what this author will examine in tracing Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

This study is on a micro-celebrity *ustaz*, Zulkarnain El Madury who is less well known when compared to Aa Gym or Felix Siauw but he has a strong influence on the internet. His identity as a preacher from Muhammadiyah who targets Muhammadiyah followers with postings that are often different and even delegitimise the official voice of this largest modernist mass organisation deserves to be investigated. This study, apart from showing Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority on the internet, also seeks explicitly to fill the gap in previous studies. In his latest study, Akmaliah (2020) shows that Muhammadiyah and NU have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was strongly reactive to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) indicates there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's responses less hostile. Sammy (2022), Sanjaya (2022), and Saefullah (2022) came to the same conclusion as Akmaliah, claiming that Muhammadiyah is significantly less adaptive to the emergence of new media, and therefore its da'wah often loses to that of the micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This study focuses on the struggle of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as the only assembly under Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas and official *ijtihad* exposition within Muhammadiyah.

#### **Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage**

The Facebook SHPTM fanpage was created by Zulkarnain El Madury. He was born in Sumenep on the island of Madura in 1963, with the name Zulkarnain bin Syamsuri. He claims to have studied in Malaysia at the Institute of Business Study and always introduces himself as a preacher from the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah). He spent his childhood in Madura and was a traditionalist Muslim like others on the island. He grew up in a milieu dominated by the NU traditionalist Islamic organisation. He used to perform *tahlilan* (ritual prayers for the dead), *ziarah* (pilgrimage to the grave), and other practices that, according to him, after becoming a member of Muhammadiyah, were not following the Sunnah of the Prophet. He received his religious education at the Islamic boarding school at-Taufiqiyyah Sumenep Madura. In 1976 he became acquainted with Muhammadiyah. He became interested in the da'wah and religious understanding of the Muhammadiyah movement founded by Ahmad



Dahlan after listening to a lecture by one of its preachers. In 1977, he officially joined Muhammadiyah.<sup>6</sup>

Since joining Muhammadiyah, El Madury has been active as a preacher who spreads religious ideas and understanding. From 1990 to 2007, he was one of the Muhammadiyah preachers who was sent to remote areas by the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board. His daily activities are now preaching at different places as well as creating content on for SHPTM fanpage. He now lives in Jakarta as the *tarjih* and *tabligh* council chair of the Pondok Gede Muhammadiyah Branch.<sup>7</sup> He created SHPTM in 2014.<sup>8</sup> However, in the digital history that this author can trace, the fanpage was created in 2015 as the earliest post that is currently traceable is dated 5 January 2015.

According to El Madury, the fanpage began with the WhatsApp group he created which he named *Tarjih dan Tabligh Institut* (Tarjih and Tabligh Institute) to provide a space to discuss and spread ideas related to *tarjih*.<sup>9</sup> He included many Muhammadiyah figures and activists in this group, including (the now late) Buya Yunahar Ilyas. Over time, seeing that El Madury's posts on SHPTM were deemed inconsistent with the *tarjih* spirit of Muhammadiyah, several people, such as Fathurrahman Kamal and Buya Risman, sharply criticised the postings. El Madury, Fathurrahman Kamal, and Buya Risman were then engaged in a heated debate which was relayed later to Buya Yunahar Ilyas. The response by Buya Yunahar Ilyas at that time, according to El Madury, differed from that of his critics. Buya Yun responded quite positively because he saw El Madury's initiative as providing *syarh* (explanation) or further explication of the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Decisions Compilation). Finally, he gave his permission to El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com).<sup>10</sup>

El Madury's early postings on SHPTM, were still relatively consistent in uploading Muhammadiyah fatwas in the question (from someone) and answer format from the fatwa division of the Tarjih Council. This is similar to the the original question and answer format

---

<sup>6</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Muhammadiyah's use of the word *tarjih* has changed throughout its development. In its early period, and following its usage in the principles of law (*usul al-fiqh*), *tarjih* conveyed the meaning of examining the various opinions of Muslim jurists on a particular question and evaluating them to determine which is most faithful to the original Shari'a sources. Over time this usage gradually included any intellectual endeavour used to study new cases that earlier jurists had not addressed. In short, in Muhammadiyah's perspective, *tarjih* is identical, or almost identical, to *ijihad* (Anwar 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

administered by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, whose fatwas were later published in the *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine. However, over time, SHPTM included posts that apart from the dissemination of Muhammadiyah's official *ijtihad* included the personal opinions of El Madury. These opinions in inelegant words are often offensive to other groups. Not infrequently, his posts contradict the official stance of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in particular, or Muhammadiyah in general, such as on the veil issue (see below). Since Facebook introduced its 'live broadcast' feature, El Madury has also availed of it to conduct live lectures. The SHPTM is popular with netizens. As of the time of writing (3 April 2022), it has been followed by 19,423 and is 'liked' by 8,868 people. His posts also often receive both positive and critical comments from viewers.

El Madury gave several reasons that brought about the creation of his fanpage. Firstly, it is aimed at fortifying Muhammadiyah followers against all forms of superstition, heresy, and myth as its posts focus on issues related to faith and worship. Secondly, he aims to counter those liberal Muhammadiyah activists and has openly responded to such views. His posts often openly attacks the religious practices of the the Nahdliyyin, resulting in several clashes between him and the Nahdliyyin figure, Idrus Ramli.<sup>11</sup>

Despite having many followers El Madury and his SHPTM do have critics. Many Muhammadiyah followers are concerned about the SHPTM posts. Some have tried to convey their anxiety through the official social media accounts of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre (Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah).<sup>12</sup> Those concerned generally want to ask for firm action from the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as El Madury has included 'Tarjih Muhammdiyah' in his fanpage name. The demands to the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, when summarised, include: (1) that the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council reprimand or remind Zulkarnain El Madury not to use symbols or names that are closely related to Tarjih Muhammadiyah for or on his fanpage; (2) making and circulating an announcement that the fanpage is not a social media account of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council or the Tarjih Muhamamdiyah Centre; (3) announcing the official social media accounts and websites of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre, so that Muhammadiyah people at the grassroots are not deceived by the existence of the fanpage and know where to look for religious reference sites, especially on the internet.

---

<sup>11</sup> Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Interviews with Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf and Ariful Hazam, November 2020 who are grassroots of Muhammadiyah, and social media administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

### **Zulkarnain El Madury and his efforts in building religious authority**

Zulkarnain El Madury and his fanpage SHPTM, have threatened the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, and specifically, the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. Many of his posts affect Muhammadiyah followers in particular and Muslims in general as these posts often differ from the official stance of Muhammadiyah, and in some cases contradict the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. This has stimulated public debate on social media, allowing El Madury to become a micro-celebrity *ustaz*. As a result of the general public and the online community attention, El Madury has been able to gradually build up his religious authority. From the Weberian perspective (Riesebrodt 1999), he has been able to do this in two ways. The first is through charisma (charismatic authority) and the second is traditional authority discussed later. According to Weber, charisma is a particular type of authority whose original form is based on a specific belief contained in a particular person (ibid.). El Madury claims he has the endorsement of Yunahar Ilyas, a very popular Muhammadiyah cleric respected by the community from within the Muhammadiyah circle and from Muslims in general which is a form of charismatic authority.

Yunahar Ilyas (1956–2020) or Buya Yun as he was popularly known, was an exegete (*mufassir*) born in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, who died at the age of 63 (Ilyas 2012). He was an alumnus of Imam Ibn Su'ud University (Saudi Arabia) and an excellent lecturer in conveying religious messages. He was seen as a charismatic cleric by Muhammadiyah followers and Muslims, in general, and this reputation extended to neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore (Abror 2020; *Gesuri* 2020). On his death in early 2020, many people flocked to pay their last respects to Buya Yun who held the chair of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for three terms (*Kompas* 2020; *Rakyat Merdeka* 2019).

By harnessing the charisma of Buya Yun, El Madury was able to increase his religious authority. On various occasions, including when this author interviewed him, Buya Yun's name was often mentioned as an argument and a shield.<sup>13</sup> El Madury insisted that he created the SHPTM fanpage with the permission of Yunahar Ilyas.<sup>14</sup> He added that Wahyudi

---

<sup>13</sup> This author's informants include Muhammad Muflih (grassroot of Muhammadiyah and initiator of the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com)), Robby Karman (secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association [DPP IMM] 2018–2021), and several participants invited by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council with the agenda 'Responding to Emergence of Syarah HPT on Social Media' on 25 September, 2020; interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website tanyajawabagama.com, had similarly received permission from Buya Yun. Wahyudi Abdurrahim confirmed Zulkarnain's claims and Muhammad Muflih, a grassroots representative added that it is a form of fairness.<sup>15</sup> In other words, Buya Yun's permission is a form of appreciation given by someone who is more senior and has a high social position in Muhammadiyah to someone who is more junior and classified as a grassroots Muhammadiyah member.<sup>16</sup> Permission from Buya Yun, who has charisma within Muhammadiyah in particular, has become a tool used by El Madury in building his religious authority.

In Weberian charismatic authority, charisma is not only about a belief in the existence of extraordinary or superpowers possessed by or contained in humans but also about particular objects other than humans (Riesebrodt 1999). We thus have an explanation as to why El Madury named his fanpage *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a highly respectable and crucial council in Muhammadiyah. Founded in 1927, the Council functions as an assembly that carries out its agenda of purification of religion and the dynamisation of social life. It conducts research and investigations towards this purity, and accordingly gives fatwas and compiles religious guidelines on faith ('*aqidah*) and worship ('*ibadah*) as well as social relations (*mu'āmalah*) (Rahman et al. 1985; Anwar 2016). In addition, this Council makes efforts to resolve differences and disagreements on religious issues, which are usually referred to as *khilāfiyyah* problems, so that they are directed more productively (Anwar 2007, 2016).

The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a body that is responsible for formulating the ideological basis of the Muhammadiyah movement (Anwar 2007, 2016) and is Muhammadiyah's representative in the religious field (Fauzi 2017). The Council produces three types of *ijtihad*, namely: (1) tarjih fatwa (*fatwa tarjih*), (2) tarjih decision (*putusan tarjih*), and (3) tarjih discourse (*wacana tarjih*) (Anwar 2016). *Tarjih* fatwa is the Council's answer to general questions on issues that require an explanation in terms of sharia law. Following the nature of the fatwa in general, the Council's fatwa is non-binding, on either organisations or members as individuals. Therefore, even the fatwa can be questioned and discussed. However, because the fatwa contains religious guidance derived from Islamic teaching sources (Anwar 2020), and the general public often does not actually understand the aspects of such a fatwa, it is still believed by Muhammadiyah members to be religious

---

<sup>15</sup> Online interview with Wahyudi Abdurrahim through WhatsApp, September 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Online interview with Muhammad Muflih through WhatsApp and Facebook, 20 October 2019.

guidance. However, the *tarjih* decision is the official stance of Muhammadiyah in religious matters and is formally binding on the organisation and its members. But, in practice, sometimes Muhammadiyah members exercise their right to freedom not to be bound by the decision because they have different *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

Meanwhile, *tarjih* discourses are ideas or thoughts that are raised and put forward by the Council in seminars, *halaqah* (religious gathering or meeting to discuss the Qur'an or Islam), or other forums in addressing various developing issues and at the same time fostering a critical spirit of *ijtihad* and collecting materials or ideas on various actual problems in society. The nature of this *tarjih* discourse is non-binding and does not become a fatwa that must be followed. *Tarjih* discourse is contained in various publications of the Council, such as *Jurnal Tarjih* (Tarjih Journal) and various published books (Anwar 2016).

The *tarjih* decision and the *tarjih* fatwa, hold their strength within Muhammadiyah as these are considered sacred by some of its members. In short, it can be said that anything that 'smells *tarjih*' has authority in the collective memory of Muhammadiyah followers. In the perspective of Khaled Abou El Fadl (2014), fatwa and *tarjih* decisions have the power of persuasive authority, as these can influence or direct others because they believed in them. The *tarjih* fatwas are officially published through the organisation's magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, and compiled in the *Tanya Jawab Agama* book. In comparison, the *tarjih* decisions are codified in a book called *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (commonly known as HPT). Thus, it can be understood why the attribution of the term *tarjih* to particular objects can give rise to charismatic authority, as mentioned by Weber.

What El Madury did can also be seen as identity politics which is defined as a political tool of a group whether it be ethnic, cultural, religious or others for specific purposes, such as a form of resistance or to show the identity of a group (Alfaqi 2015). Within this framework, identity is politicised through extreme interpretation, which aims to gain support from people who feel 'the same', through race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements. In the context of El Madury, the use of the *tarjih* label on his fanpage can be interpreted as a political tool to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muhammadiyah members. And, as seen in some of his sermon videos, El Madury also placed a flag with the Muhammadiyah symbol behind him. In this context, he wants to convince the viewers that he is close to Muhammadiyah. He has introduced himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board on many occasions.

According to Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif (2010), identity politics is always related to members of social groups who feel excluded by the mainstream in a nation or state. Sri Astuti Buchari (2014) also finds that the emergence of identity politics is mainly caused by certain factors that an ethnic group sees as pressure from the political injustice. By looking at the observations made by Ahmad Najib Burhani (2013), El Madury, in this case, can be categorised as part of a group that feels excluded, threatened, and to some extent in need of justice within Muhammadiyah. Burhani (2013) explains the existence of two opposing schools of thought within Muhammadiyah which he refers to as 'Pure Islam' (*Islam Murni*) and 'Progressive Islam' (*Islam Progresif*). The conflict between these two schools of thought in Muhammadiyah began to surface at the 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Banda Aceh in 1995 (Burhani 2013).

The dominance of 'Progressive Islam' in Muhammadiyah strengthened after its 44th congress in Jakarta in 2000. This congress chose Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif as general chair. He is a progressive Muslim figure, an alumnus of the University of Chicago, and a student of the eminent progressive scholar Fazlur Rahman. At this congress, several names representing the 'Progressive Islam' group were included in the ranks of the central leadership of Muhammadiyah, such as Amin Abdullah, Dawam Raharjo, and Abdul Munir Mulkhan. During Ma'arif's leadership, progressive ideas not only dominated culturally but gradually became Muhammadiyah's official programmes (Burhani 2013).

Seeing the increasingly apparent threat from the ideas put forward by the 'Progressive Islam' group within Muhammadiyah, representatives of the 'Pure Islam' group did not remain silent. They compete and squabble over religious interpretations as to which is the most authentic. These two groups challenge each other through various channels, including seminars, discussions, publications. They usually have conflicting programmes. For example, as mentioned by Burhani (2013), when the Centre for the Study of Religion and Civilisation (PSAP/Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban) raised the theme of pluralism and multiculturalism in its journal, *Tanwir Journal*, the Tabligh Council<sup>17</sup> responded with articles in opposition in its magazine, *Majalah Tabligh*. In Burhani's investigation, during the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress in Malang, this conservative group set up a Pojok Anti-Liberal (anti-liberal corner)

---

<sup>17</sup> Muhammadiyah has many assemblies such as Majelis Tabligh and Majelis Tarjih, each with its own functions and responsibilities. Majelis Tarjih is responsible for producing religious thoughts through fatwas and decisions, while Majelis Tabligh is responsible for disseminating them. Historically, Majelis Tabligh is known in Muhammadiyah as the anti-liberal wing and thus there are at times poor collaboration between Majelis Tarjih and Majelis Tabligh. For example, some fatwas issued by Majelis Tarjih, in Majelis Tabligh's perspective, are the result of liberal thinking. See Burhani (2013) and Palahuddin (2020).

booth, which sold books, DVDs, t-shirts, magazines, and other anti-liberal mementos. Strikingly, some of the t-shirts for sale displayed the words 'Muhammadiyah Anti-Liberal' (Burhani 2013).

At the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress, it seemed that the 'Pure Islam' group was gaining momentum to beat back the 'Progressive Islam' group. The quarrels between these two groups occurred within congress committees and in the external arena. Burhani (2005, 2013) noted at least three critical issues where the 'Pure Islam' group defeated the 'Progressive Islam' in the congress arena, namely: (1) leadership change; (2) the position of women; and (3) resistance to liberal thought.

After the 45th congress, the feud between these two schools of thought has continued though waxing and waning at different times. The form of the feud now looks more varied given the availability of the internet where the presence of social media has changed the battle arena from a conventional to a more modern one. El Madury represents the 'Pure Islam' group, and has heated online debates with figures considered representatives of 'Progressive Islam' whose actions he sees as unsettling. For example, El Madury and the secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association (DPP IMM),<sup>18</sup> Robby Karman, have openly and frequently castigated each other on for example, issues about the veil and the Wahhabi. According to El Madury, Robby Karman is a young liberal figure in Muhammadiyah who should be challenged. El Madury also often attacks the [IBTimes.id](http://IBTimes.id) website, as it frequently contains articles that are progressive and, to some extent, controversial. This website has several former Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah (JIMM/Muhammadiyah Youth Intellectual Network) figures, such as Hilman Latief, Azaki Khoiruddin, and Mu'arif. On one occasion, when the chair of the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre admonished El Madury for uploading provocative posts that contradicted the official stance of the Tarjih Council, he defended himself by stating that equally provocative posts from the 'Progressive Islam' group should be similarly reprimanded. If he is the only one selected for rebuke then he felt an injustice had been done.<sup>19</sup> El Madury's attitude in the framework of identity politics reflects someone who feels excluded and threatened by certain

---

<sup>18</sup> Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM) or Muhammadiyah Student Association is a proponent of Muhammadiyah in student affairs with the basic mission of realising the real Islamic society as formulated by Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Widodo 2017).

<sup>19</sup> On 3 November 2019, the manager of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah reprimanded Zulkarnain El Madury for his post on SHPTM on the veil which contradicts Muhammadiyah's official stance.

parties. At such, his specific attributes and identity are a deliberate form of resistance to the domination of certain groups or thoughts that threaten him.

The second form of authority is what Weber calls traditional authority (Spencer 1970; Matheson 1987; Riesebrodt 1999). In simple terms, something can be considered as having traditional authority if it gains legitimacy based on beliefs or norms that have been established in a particular tradition (Chairi 2019). In other words, according to Spencer (1970), traditional authority is legitimised and, at the same time, constrained by traditional norms. Therefore, it is the opposite of charismatic authority. If in charismatic authority, it is the leader or someone who creates the norms, then it is the norms that create the leader or person in the traditional authority. In charismatic authority, the value of influence is generated by a person's personal qualities and is always associated with his personality. While in the case of traditional authority, it is generated by function and is related to someone or something that has traditional values (Spencer 1970).

In the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, ulama and the classical books they wrote can be considered to have this traditional authority. Ulama in Islamic tradition are called heirs of the Prophets. The authority of the ulama is derived from the legitimacy of religious texts which state that the prophetic tradition will be passed on to them. Therefore, the religious ideas they convey in writings or books contain an authoritative value for the next generation. This is the uniqueness of Islamic scholars and traditions, as mentioned by Muhammad Qasim Zaman (2002) who states that one of the most prominent aspects of pre-modern intellectual culture is the articulation of religious discourse through the so-called medium of the commentary. This is manifested in various forms such *al-syurūh*, *hawāsyī*, *rasā'il*, and *fatawā*. The various genres of books that contain explanations, descriptions, or responses to a book or social phenomena are a way for scholars to shape the identity and authority of the school or tradition they adhere to. In addition, it is also a means to interpreting the meaning of the foundational sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah (Zaman 2002).

An example is the *hawāsyī* tradition in the Shafii school. Its emergence, according to Ahmed El-Shamsy (2013), shows the peak of the authority of two scholars in that school, namely al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī. Al-Kurdī, as quoted by El Shamsy, called these two scholars 'the higher authorities in the Shafii school'. Those who want to know the authoritative opinion of the Shafii school have to go through the works of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī, and the



books that explain further their works, namely the books written by Ibn Hajar al-Haitamī and Syamsuddīn al-Ramlī. These books have for later generations the value of traditional authority (Shamsy 2013: 292).

What is the connection between this traditional authority and El Madury? El Madury's posts on SHPTM and at religious forums where he speaks always rely on the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāth*). According to Endang Mintarja, chair of the Jakarta branch of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this aspect has drawn many people to El Madury's lectures.<sup>20</sup> What El Madury did, which Muhammadiyah did not do in many of its fatwas was to cite the Islamic intellectual tradition. In many of its fatwas, Muhammadiyah often only quotes the Qur'an or hadith to strengthen its argument, without citing the opinions of other Islamic scholars. Perhaps this is a consequence of the modernist movement, which became the spirit of Muhammadiyah. The modernist movement initiated by reformers such as Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, and Muḥammad Rasyīd Riḍā in the late 19th and early 20th centuries used the term *al-rujū' ilā al-qur'ān wa al-sunnah* ('back to the Qur'an and Sunnah'). According to Syed Junaid A. Quadri (2013), the most obvious indicator of this movement, especially in Islamic law, is its critical attitude towards the structure of pre-modern sharia authority symbols, which are articulated in the language and logic of the institution of *taqlīd*. Modernist groups always encourage reopening the door to *ijtihād* and invite Muslims to leave the interpretive monopoly that the ulama class has held (Quadri 2013).

Muhammadiyah, which is heavily inspired by the modernist movement, is oriented towards the Qur'an and Sunnah and tends to attach less importance to the Islamic intellectual tradition that has been built by the ulama. This can be seen from its *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (the methodology Muhammadiyah uses in conducting *ijtihād*), which asserts that Muhammadiyah is not affiliated to a particular school, but the opinions of these schools are only considered in determining religious norms (Anwar 2018). This means that understanding religion in the Muhammadiyah perspective is derived directly from its primary sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah through the *ijtihād* process. However, it should be noted here that the narration that confirms the opinions of the scholars is taken into account in determining norms is not that clear how they are implemented in *tarjih* issues.

In some of its official *ijtihād*, the nuances of the opinions of scholars, especially the pre-modern ones do not appear, by choice or otherwise. Thus it appears that El Madury is filling

---

<sup>20</sup> Endang Mintarja voiced this at a Muhammadiyah Central Board Tarjih Council meeting of on the emergence 'Syarah HPT', 25 September 2020.

the Muhammadiyah gap in presenting the authority of the Islamic intellectual tradition in religious narratives. For example, in the controversial veil case, the Tarjih Council issued three fatwas in 1993, 2003 and 2009.<sup>21</sup> The fatwas issued in 1993 and 2009 emphasised that the veil has no legal basis either in the Qur'an or the Sunnah but that Islamic law commands women to wear the hijab. These two fatwas did not cite the Islamic intellectual tradition, which also accommodates opinions about the veil. Although the Tarjih Council kept in its stance and strengthened the opinion that women's '*aurat* (parts of the body that should go covered) are the whole body except the face and the palms of the hands, in the 2003 fatwa, the Tarjih Council provides space for those who want to wear the veil by expressing several opinions from the scholars who think so.

In contrast to the *tarjih* fatwas, El Madury's (2019) article *Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam?* ('Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?') on the SHPTM fanpage refutes the *tarjih* fatwa. He cites various opinions of scholars in the Islamic intellectual tradition who support mandatory veiling as an effort to build religious authority. From this, it appears that El Madury, apart from attacking the *tarjih* fatwa, believes in maintaining traditional authority, in this case, the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāts*).

What El Madury did in building religious authority can also be captured from what Burhani calls a conversion narrative. Some scholars define religious conversion narratives differently as for example, in the change from one religious tradition to another. William James, as quoted by Burhani (2020: 158), states that religious conversion can also be interpreted as the conversion of a person who is a sinner into someone pious. According to Burhani (2020), people who experience religious conversion, usually after embracing a new tradition or religious understanding, will be hostile to the previous religious tradition or understanding.

El Madury also experienced a religious conversion, in this case, from the NU tradition to Muhammadiyah's. On SHPTM as well as his views when interviewed by this author, he introduced himself as someone who had practised the '*kuburiyyun* tradition'<sup>22</sup> and other actions that did not have examples from the Prophet. To convince his followers, he posted information about his religious conversion from NU to Muhammadiyah. Besides condemning his previous practices, which were deemed to have no basis in the Qur'an and Sunnah, he has had acrimonious debates with the NU *kyai*, Idrus Ramli on various issues, such as *ahlus*

<sup>21</sup> Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah (2009, 2019a, 2019b).

<sup>22</sup> The tradition of visiting the grave with its associated practices.

*sunnah wal jamaah* and *wahabi, nahdliyyin* traditions that are often considered heresy, and so on.

### **Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace**

Before the advent of the internet and the emergence of various new religious authorities, Muhammadiyah and NU were the two largest religious organisations and authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). However, following the emergence of the so-called micro-celebrity *ustaz*, these two groups, according to some scholars, began to face challenges and threats. The recent study by Wahyudi Akmaliah (2020) shows that the two organisations have responded differently to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was more combative about their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) maintains there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's response look less aggressive. Akmaliah is correct on several points, but other perspectives deserve to be considered, especially Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority on the internet. The weak point, as shown in Akmaliah's study is that there is no adequate elaboration of the assembly that exclusively holds religious authority in Muhammadiyah, namely the Tarjih Council. To trace more precisely how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority we have to look at the Tarjih Council.

This discussion starts from the author attending a meeting held by the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board in September 2020. The meeting was in response to the appearance of the *syarh* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Decisions Compilation) by El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim. Whilst El Madury's comments were on his SHPTM fanpage, Abdurrahim (2020) aired his views in his book. He was earlier mentioned as having had permission from Buya Yun to give *syarh* on HPT. The initial background for holding this meeting, as revealed by the secretary of the Tarjih Council, Mas'udi, was purely in response to the SHPTM posts by El Madury. However, information about the SHPTM other than the one written by El Madury prompted the board of the Tarjih Council to include the book by Abdurrahim with the same title for the agenda.

For this meeting, the Tarjih Council invited nine related sectors to discuss concerns over the emergence of the SHPTM on the internet written by the El Madury and Abdurrahim. The nine sector participants were: (1) the executive board of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council;

(2) fatwa division of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (3) chair/secretary of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (4) ~~Dr~~ Endang Mintarja, ~~M.Ag.~~ (Chair of the Jakarta Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council); (5) ~~H.~~ Fathurrahman, ~~Le., M.S.I.~~ (Chair of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council); (6) H. Budi Setiawan; (7) Arif Nur Kholis (head of Muhammadiyah Digital Syiar Centre); (8) the manager of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre; and (9) the social media assistance team of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

During the meeting, there were at least four proposals from participants on how best to respond to the SHPTM, particularly El Madury's article about the veil. The first was to complain to Facebook about the SHPTM so that it could be banned for including an institution's name without permission. According to the chair of the Tabligh Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board, Fathurrahman Kamal, who was present at the forum, the fanpage is in the illicit category. This proposal was considered by the proponents as a firm proposal but that it risked unnecessary antagonism. The second was to use a persuasive approach in the form of clarification or an appeal to El Madury not to use the name *Himpunan Putusan Tajih* (HPT) or something that is associated with *tarjih*. Its proponents consider this approach to be softer and more reflective of being Muhammadiyah members in particular, and Muslims in general. The third proposal was to use institutional authority in writing an official letter on behalf of the Tarjih Council to El Madury. The fourth idea that was considered more practical and efficient was to place the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it on social media. This would avoid being drawn into unfruitful correspondence on SHPTM.

However, there was no agreement on which approach should be undertaken despite long discussions. It was agreed instead that there would be a follow up with another forum. Since this author started writing (3 April 2022) there has been no further meeting. The emergence of SHPTM on the internet and its effects have been considered a serious problem by the Tarjih Council. The meeting's participants were generally uneasy about the appearance of El Madury and his fanpage. In addition, they wanted El Madury to be warned or reprimanded since SHPTM is considered a threat to religious authority of the Tarjih Council. This illustrates that Muhammadiyah, through its official religious assembly, the Tarjih Council, is not passive in responding to the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. However, only certain cases and not all micro-celebrity *ustaz* who appear on social media have drawn the Tarjih Council's attention. Although there has yet to be a follow up meeting, the Pusat Tarjih

**Commented [nf1]:** I have removed the academic titles for Endang Mintarja and Fathurrahman Kamal.

Muhammadiyah as an official institution supporting the Tarjih Council illustrates how Muhammadiyah struggles to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is an institution that was founded in 2016 by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Ahmad Dahlan University (Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah 2016). Despite being a new institution, its legality is clear, and it has formal authority. In the Muhammadiyah tradition as an organisation, such legality is essential. Thus when someone from Muhammadiyah, speaks on another person's behalf or endorses an approach, the speaker's status is below that of the institution and cannot be assumed to be that of institutions within Muhammadiyah which, although new, have legality. In the context of El Madury and the SHPTM fanpage, this is important. Even though El Madury claims he has obtained permission to make *syarh* on the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* from a charismatic figure in Muhammadiyah, Buya Yunahar, legally it is not valid. In that context, Buya Yunahar spoke on behalf of himself, not on behalf of Muhammadiyah.

Fronted by young Muhammadiyah cadres, the majority of whom are alumni of Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Tarjih Ulama Education, PUTM),<sup>23</sup> Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays a role in supporting the Tarjih Council programmes. These are relatively under-performing and facing obstacles, particularly on using social media to disseminate their official *ijtihad*. The members of the Tarjih Council, who are relatively old, need support from young cadres. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays an essential role in assisting the Tarjih Council in maintaining its religious authority on the internet. It responded to El Madury and SHPTM, by being pro-active with a poster (Figure 1) on social media and in print form, containing information related to the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it.

---

<sup>23</sup> PUTM is an educational institution under the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board designed to produce a cadre of Muhammadiyah scholars. PUTM organises a special programme that educates and prepares Muhammadiyah *tarjih* scholars who are competent in the religious field. The birth of PUTM was based on the concern of some Muhammadiyah leaders about the increasing scarcity of ulama in and from Muhammadiyah (Fauzi 2020a).



Figure 1. Poster with information on the official social media accounts affiliated to the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Are you often confused about finding sources of reference about Islam from the perspective of Muhammadiyah?

There is no need to be confused anymore because various social media are straightforward for us to access. Tarjih (Council) has come with a more trendy look.

- ✓ Easy to read anywhere
- ✓ Provide updated fatwas
- ✓ Discuss current issues

As members of Muhammadiyah, let's get used to reading the decisions and fatwas of Muhammadiyah

Here are some media that can be accessed very easily. So don't be confused anymore.

Web: fatwatarjih.or.id

Facebook: fb.me/fatwamu  
Instagram: pusattarjih\_muhammadiyah  
Telegram: t.me/fatwatarjihmu  
Youtube: tarjih channel  
Let's spread it to all Muhammadiyah people!

**Figure 2.** Translation of Figure 1.

Although the poster above does not directly mention the SHPTM fanpage created by El Madury, the main message in it is clear and firm, namely to inform the Muhammadiyah followers about the official accounts of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it. This would hopefully let Muhammadiyah members understand how its official religious voice is disseminated on the internet. Following this, Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah successively uploaded other, more varied posters to indirectly counter the SHPTM fanpage. Some other examples of these posters are shown in Figures 3 and 5.



**Figure 3.** Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Do you know?

The Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah now have an official YouTube channel, (namely) the Tarjih Channel.

Have you subscribed yet?

Figure 4. Translation of Figure 3.



Figure 5. Information about the website fatwatarjih.or.id, an official website affiliated to the Tarjih Council containing fatwas. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Fatwatarjih.or.id is the official website for the Tarjih and the Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board (MTT).

The Media Team of Fatwa Tarjih, through this website, has been, is and will continue to strive consistently to publish various ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council. Until now, tarjih fatwa collections from 1997 to 2018 have entered the editing stage, and some are just waiting to be published.

Figure 6. Translation of Figure 5.





**Figure 7.** Information on the official website of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Do you want to know the full history (of the Tarjih Council)?  
 Or do you want to look for ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council?  
 Come on; you can find out on this website: tarjih.or.id

**Figure 8.** Translation of Figure 7.

The use of informal language and emoticons typical of millennials indicate the audience that the Tarjih Council wants to target. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah team understands that informal language will appeal to its target audience. This is aimed at not only establishing the authority of the Tarjih Council but ‘millennialisation’ i.e. to reach out to the younger generation familiar with social media. Suyadi and Widodo (2019) note that millennialisation is an alternative way to develop knowledge that will synergise with various online media and

digital technology. In the context of *tarjih* millennialisation, Muhammadiyah's official *ijtihad* that tend to be disseminated in a conventional, monotonous, and uncreative manner are now communicated through social media in more contextual packaging. This means that the Tarjih Council and its various official *ijtihad*, which previously were always identified with the 'old', now consciously aim to include young people.

The religious authority of the Tarjih Council in cyberspace, especially when connected with the appearance of El Madury and SHPTM, was greatly helped by the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah and its young Muhammadiyah cadres. It manages various social media platforms with large numbers of followers, and has helped maintain Muhammadiyah's religious authority by balancing and suppressing the presence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. Its contents are fatwas and decisions of the Tarjih Council with more appealing visualisation to reach out to the millennials.

Although the number of social media followers of the Tarjih Council is less than that for the NU and Salafi groups, at least the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah acts as a compass for Muhammadiyah followers who question its religious authority, especially with the emergence of El Madury's version in SHPTM. The administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah's social media have received many messages either through the comments column or direct messages in its inbox, which question the authority of SHPTM.<sup>24</sup> Here, the vital role of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is increasingly finding its momentum.

## Conclusion

Although it can be said that Muhammadiyah's religious influence and authority on the internet are inferior and lag behind other religious groups, Muhammadiyah is still trying to manage its authority, especially when facing threats from micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By focusing on Zulkarnain El Madury and his SHPTM social media page, this article offers a different perspective from previous studies by analysing the work of the Tarjih Council as the only institution in Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas. This article shows that Muhammadiyah has its own way of responding to the emergence of new religious authorities. With the help of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an institution in its fold, the Tarjih Council has made continuous efforts through social media and its official website to counter new

---

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Ariful Hazam, Ilham Ibrahim, and Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, September 2020. They are Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah social media administrators.

voices that threaten its authority. Muhammadiyah's response was neither aggressive nor radical but it clarified its stance without mentioning who precisely was being targeted. What Muhammadiyah did was in line with the Javanese proverb *Ngluruk tanpo bolo, menang tanpo ngasorake* ('win without defeat, win without humiliation [of others]'). The form of Muhammadiyah's response is inherited from its founder, Ahmad Dahlan. As seen by James Peacock (1978), Ahmad Dahlan brought about many social transformations through discussions and education.<sup>25</sup> This can be seen, for example, from how Ahmad Dahlan and the early generation of Muhammadiyah fortified Muslims from various superstitions, heresies, and myths by explaining the unacceptability of such popular beliefs and practices.

In a broader context, the case of Zulkarnain El Madury also provides a lesson that using the name Muhammadiyah to justify personal opinions or legitimise particular interests is wrong. Muhammadiyah has the reputation of a very well managed organisation (Barton 2014; *Suara Muhammadiyah* 2019) which is its strength and gives it clout compared to other religious organisations in Indonesia, such as NU. In short, Muhammadiyah's authority lies in the institution itself and is not based on personality. It differs from NU, where power and authority tend to reside with personal figures, such as *kyai* or *gus* (Fauzi 2020b).

Muhammadiyah followers who understand its basic rules are not easily influenced by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. They are aware that Muhammadiyah's official religious stance is only be issued by the Tarjih Council and that those external to the Tarjih Council or even specific Muhammadiyah figures who give religious opinions, speak only for themselves as individuals and not the organisation. This would be the case, for example, even if the religious opinion emanates from the chair of the Tarjih Council as an individual. This did occur when Syamsul Anwar, the current chair of the Tarjih Council, differed from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council on the issue of *iftitāh* prayer (opening night prayer [*qiyām al-lail*]).<sup>26</sup> While Anwar's opinion clearly differs from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council, the prevailing opinion in Muhammadiyah is that of the Tarjih Council, not the chair of the Tarjih Council. Within Muhammadiyah, such religious differences of opinion are common as usually happens in *fiqh* discourse in general. The

<sup>25</sup> For example, Ahmad Dahlan and the early generation of Muhammadiyah explained to Muslims the unacceptability of popular beliefs and practices that had their roots in superstitions, heresies, and myths. He built hospitals, schools, and orphanages to counter these practices (Shihab 1995).

<sup>26</sup> For Anwar (2013), the *iftitāh* prayer comprises two short *rak'ah* prayers that are performed before *qiyām al-lail*, with the condition that it must be preceded by sleep, otherwise there is no need to perform the *iftitāh* prayer. However, the Tarjih Council holds that the *iftitāh* prayer consists of two short *rak'ah* prayers performed before *qiyām al-lail*, whether preceded by sleep or not (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2011; Tim Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2019a).

difference between El Madury and Anwar is that the latter does not act in the name of Muhammadiyah or the Tarjih Council when he has a different view. Instead, on many occasions, he urges Muhammadiyah followers to abide by the opinion of the Tarjih Council on the *iftitāh* prayer.<sup>27</sup> Thus Anwar has shown he can compromise his personal religious opinion with his professional attitude in the organisation. In this case, he understands that using the name Muhammadiyah to legitimise individual opinions or interests is not justifiable.

### Acknowledgements

Permission for this research PJB-002/SP3/LPPM-UAD/VI/2020 and funding were provided by the ethical board of Ahmad Dahlan University Research and Development Institute (Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan).

I am grateful to *ustaz* Zulkarnain El Madury for his exceptional help and support during my fieldwork. I also thank Amiruddin, Arif Nur Kholis, Muhammad Muflih, Wahyudi Abdurrahim, Robby Karman, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, Ilham Ibrahim, Ariful Hazam, and the members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council for providing information regarding my research. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article and to the editors of the *Indonesia and the Malay World*. Errors, if any, are solely mine.

### Note on contributor

*Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi* is a lecturer in the Department of Hadith Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He has published widely on a variety of issues relating to Islamic Studies, including al-Quran, hadith, Islamic law, social media and da'wah, and Muhammadiyah studies. Email: niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id

### References

Abdurrahim, Wahyudi Sarju. 2020. *Ahlul haq wassunnah: syarah himpunan putusan tarjih Muhammadiyah bab iman bagian ketuhanan* [Ahlul haq wassunnah: explanation of tarjih decisions compilation of Muhammadiyah chapter on faith part of divinity]. Yogyakarta:

---

<sup>27</sup> On several occasions, this author has heard Syamsul Anwar's direct appeal to Muhammadiyah members to follow the opinion of the Tarjih Council on this aspect of the *iftitāh* prayer.

Al Muflihun Publishing.

- Abror, Robby. 2020. Syekh Yunahar, ulama Muhammadiyah kharismatik [Sheikh Yunahar, a charismatic Muhammadiyah cleric]. 3 January. <<https://menara62.com/syeikh-yunahar-ulama-muhammadiyah-kharismatik/>> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2018. Media sosial dan pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [Social media and shifting religious authority]. 12 December. <[https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media\\_sosial\\_dan\\_pergeseran\\_otoritas\\_keagamaan](https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media_sosial_dan_pergeseran_otoritas_keagamaan)> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2020. The demise of moderate Islam: new media, contestation, and reclaiming religious authorities. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10 (1): 1–24.
- Alfaqi, Mifdal Zusron. 2015. Memahami Indonesia melalui prespektif nasionalisme, politik identitas, serta solidaritas [Understanding Indonesia through the perspectives of nationalism, identity politics, and solidarity]. *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 28 (2): 111–116.
- Alvara Research Center. 2020. Ramadhan dan pandemi Covid-19: semangat ibadah tak surut, konsumsi tersendat. <[https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN\\_DAN\\_PANDEMI\\_COVID-19\\_SEMANGAT\\_IBADAH\\_TAK\\_SURUT\\_KONSUMSI\\_TERSENDAT.pdf](https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN_DAN_PANDEMI_COVID-19_SEMANGAT_IBADAH_TAK_SURUT_KONSUMSI_TERSENDAT.pdf)> Accessed 23 February 2021.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2007. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer* [Contemporary Islamic law studies]. Jakarta: RM Books.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2013. *Salat Tarawih: Tinjauan usul fikih, sejarah, dan fikih* [Tarawih prayer: usul fiqh, history, and fiqh perspectives]. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2016. Fatwā, purification and dynamization: a study of tarjih in Muhammadiyah. *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (1): 27–44.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2018. *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Panitia Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih Muhammadiyah XXX.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2020. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer Bagian dua* [Contemporary Islamic legal studies Part two]. Yogyakarta: UAD Press.
- Barton, Greg. 2014. The Gülen movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: progressive Islamic thought, religious philanthropy and civil society in Turkey and Indonesia. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25 (3): 287–301.
- Buchari, Sri Astuti. 2014. *Kebangkitan etnis menuju politik identitas* [Ethnic awakening towards identity politics]. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.

- Bunt, Gary R. 2003. *Islam in the digital age: e-jihad, online fatwas and cyber Islamic environments*. London: Pluto Press.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2005. The 45th Muhammadiyah Congress contest between literal-conservative and liberal-moderate Muslims in Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 12 (1): 185–189.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2013. Liberal and conservative discourses in the Muhammadiyah: the struggle for the face of reformist Islam in Indonesia. In Martin van Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary developments in Indonesian Islam: explaining the 'conservative turn'*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2016. Aksi bela Islam: konservatisme dan fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. *Maarif* 11 (2): 15–29.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2020. Muslim televangelists in the making: conversion narratives and the construction of religious authority. *Muslim World* 110 (2): 154–175.
- Burhanudin, Jajat. 2004. The fragmentation of religious authority: Islamic print media in early 20th century Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 11 (1): 23–62.
- Campbell, H.A. and Teusner, P.E. 2011. Religious authority in the age of the internet. In *Christian Reflection, Virtual Lives*. Waco TX: Baylor University Press, pp. 59–68. <<https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/130950.pdf>>
- Chairi, Effendi. 2019. Ketiadaan otoritas terpusat dalam fenomena kontemporer di Indonesia [The absence of a centralised authority in contemporary phenomena in Indonesia]. *SANGKÉP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 2 (2):197–215.
- Chaplin, Chris. 2021. *Salafism and the State: Islamic activism and national identity in contemporary Indonesia*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.
- Dakta.com. 2016. Aa Gym ajak ribuan jamaahnya ikut aksi bela Islam III [Aa Gym invites thousands of congregants to join Islamic Defence Action III]. 29 November. <<http://www.dakta.com/news/7329/aa-gym-ajak-ribuan-jamaahnya-ikut-aksi-bela-islam-iii>> Accessed 2 February 2020.
- Fadl, Khaled Abou El. 2014. *Speaking in God's name: Islamic law, authority, and women*. London: Oneworld Publications.
- Farhan, Farhan. 2017. Pesan dakwah Felix Siauw di media sosial (perspektif meaning and media). *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Administrasi Islam* 1 (2): 209–226.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2017. Peranan Maqasid Al-Shariah dalam memahami Hadith: kajian terhadap fatwa Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah [The role of Maqasid Al-Shariah in understanding Hadith: a study of the fatwa of the Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah].

MA thesis, University of Malaya.

- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020a. PUTM dan kaderisasi ulama: menelusuri latar belakang lahirnya Lembaga Kaderisasi Ulama Muhammadiyah [PUTM and clerical regeneration: tracing the background of the birth of the Muhammadiyah Clerical Cadre Institute]. <<https://santricendekia.com/putm-dan-kaderisasi-ulama-menelusuri-latar-belakang-lahirnya-lembaga-kaderisasi-ulama-muhammadiyah/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020b. Tantangan kader ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah di era 4.0 [Challenges for Tarjih Muhammadiyah ulama cadres in the 4.0 era]. 21 July. *Suara 'Aisyiyah* <<https://suaraaisyiyah.id/tantangan-kader-ulama-tarjih-muhammadiyah-di-era-4-0/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Fealy, Greg. 2008. Consuming Islam: commodified religion and aspirational pietism in contemporary Indonesia. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.
- Gesuri. 2020. Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia kehilangan ulama kharismatik [Yunahar Ilyas passed away, Indonesia lost a charismatic scholar]. 3 January. <<https://www.gesuri.id/internal/yunahar-ilyas-wafat-indonesia-kehilangan-ulama-kharismatik-b1YFoZpRY>> Accessed 20 March 2020.
- Hew, Wai Weng. 2018. The art of dakwah: social media, visual persuasion and the Islamist propagation of Felix Siauw. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (134): 61–79.
- Hoesterey, James B. 2008. Marketing morality: the rise, fall and rebranding of Aa Gym. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: Religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, pp. 95–114.
- Hope Cheong, Pauline. 2016. Religious authority and social media branding in a culture of religious celebrification. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*, University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 81–102.
- Horsfield, Peter. 2016. The media and religious authority from ancient to modern. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*. University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 37–66.
- IB Times Indonesia. 2020. 100 situs Islam Indonesia, NU Online peringkat pertama [100 Indonesian Islamic websites, NU Online ranks first]. 10 July. <<https://ibtimes.id/100-situs-islam-indonesia-nu-online-peringkat-pertama/>> Accessed 23 February 2023.
- Ilyas, Yunahar. 2012. *Kuliah Akhlaq* [Akhlaq lecture]. XII. Yogyakarta: LPPI Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta.

- Khamis, S., Ang, L. and Welling, R. 2017. Self-branding, 'micro-celebrity' and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191–208.
- Khomalia, Isti and Rahman, Khairul Arief. 2018. Micro hijabers celebrity: membentuk identitas dengan update self-story via instagram (kasus dian pelangi). *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban dan Pemikiran Islam* 2 (1): 33–42.
- Kompas. 2020. Sejumlah tokoh hadir prosesi pemakaman ketua PP Muhammadiyah Yunahar Ilyas [Many figures attended the funeral procession of Muhammadiyah chairman Yunahar Ilyas]. 3 January. <<https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/03/19142441/sejumlah-tokoh-hadiri-prosesi-pemakaman-ketua-pp-muhammadiyah-yunahar-ilyas>> Accessed 3 April 2022.
- Labiq. 2019. Pengaruh new media terhadap pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [The influence of new media on shifting religious authority]. 19 April. <<https://geotimes.co.id/opini/pengaruh-new-media-terhadap-pergeseran-otoritas-keagamaan>> Accessed 19 October 2020.
- Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. 2010. *Politik identitas dan masa depan pluralisme Indonesia*. Edited by Samsu Rizal Panggabean et al. Jakarta: Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (PUSAD) Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina.
- Madury, Zulkarnain El. 2019. Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam? [Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?]. 2 November. <<https://www.facebook.com/zulkarnainsumenep/posts/2386248524961601>> Accessed 5 May 2020.
- Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah. 2016. Pembukaan Halaqah, Majelis Tarjih Launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan Muhammadiyah Observatorium Network [Halaqah opening, Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and Muhammadiyah Observatory Network]. 20 August. <<https://tarjih.or.id/pembukaan-halaqah-majelis-tarjih-launching-pusat-tarjih-muhammadiyah-dan-muhammadiyah-observatorium-network/>> Accessed 6 October 2023.
- Majelis Tarjih Dahlan, Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. 2016. Nota Kesepakatan Majelis Tarjih Dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Tentang Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di Islamic Center Universitas Ahmad Dahlan [Memorandum of Agreement between the Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board and Ahmad Dahlan University on the Management of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre at the Islamic Centre of Ahmad Dahlan University]. Yogyakarta.



- Maskur, Maskur and Noor, Irfan Noor. 2014. Ustadz selebriti Abdullah Gymnastiar dalam budaya populer (perspektif hipersemiotika Yasraf Amir Piliang) [Celebrity Ustadz Abdullah Gymnastiar in popular culture (Yasraf Amir Piliang's hyper semiotics perspective)]. *Jurnal Studia Insania* 2 (1): 47–57.
- Matheson, Craig. 1987. Weber and the classification of forms of legitimacy. *British Journal of Sociology* 38 (2): 199–215.
- Muhammadiyah Central Board. 2023. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 8 October 2023.
- Nisa, Eva F. 2019. Internet and Muslim women. In Ronald Lukens-Bull and Mark Woodward (eds), *Handbook of contemporary Islam and Muslim lives*. Cham: Springer, pp. 1–19.
- Palahuddin. 2020. The typology of religious thought in Muhammadiyah. *International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 3 (2): 74–81.  
<<http://journal2.uad.ac.id/index.php/ijish/article/view/2233/pdf>>
- Peacock, James L. 1978. *Purifying the Faith: the Muhammadiyah movement in Indonesian Islam*. Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2011. *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2016. Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan MuON [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and MuON]. 20 August.  
<<http://www.umm.ac.id/id/muhammadiyah/7070.html>> Accessed 20 March 2021.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Berikut Susunan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah pPeriode 2022–2027 [The following is the composition of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the 2022–2027 period] <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/berikut-susunan-pimpinan-pusat-muhammadiyah-periode-2022-2027/>> Accessed 7 October 2023.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Majelis Tabligh [Tabligh Council]. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 07 October 2023.
- Postill, John and Pink, Sarah. 2012. Social media ethnography: the digital researcher in a messy web. *Media International Australia* 145 (1): 123–134.
- Pribadi, Yanwar. 2019. Fragmentasi umat dan penciptaan otoritas keagamaan: tanggapan terhadap ‘Islam lokal’ dan ‘Islam asing’ di Indonesia [Ummah fragmentation and the creation of religious authority: responses to ‘local Islam’ and ‘foreign Islam’ in Indonesia]. *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 21 (1): 103–119.  
<<https://jmb.lipi.go.id/jmb/article/view/828/455>>

- Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah. n.d. *Panduan pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre management guide]. Majelis Tarjih, Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta.
- Quadri, Syed Junaid A. 2013. Transformations of tradition: modernity in the thought of Muḥammad Bakhīt Al-Muṭī'ī. PhD thesis, McGill University.
- Rahman, Asjmun Abdur et al. 1985. Laporan penelitian Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (suatu studi tentang sistem dan metode penentuan hukum) [Research report of Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (a study of the system and method of determining the law)]. Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga.
- Rakyat Merdeka. 2019. Dubes Malaysia jenguk ketum MUI Yunahar Ilyas di Yogyakarta [Malaysian ambassador visits MUI chairman Yunahar Ilyas in Yogyakarta]. 5 November. <<https://rm.id/baca-berita/internasional/21745/dubes-malaysia-jenguk-ketum-mui-yunahar-ilyas-di-yogyakarta>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Riesebrodt, Martin. 1999. Charisma in Max Weber's Sociology of Religion. *Religion* 29 (1): 1–14.
- Sadasri, Lidwina Mutia. 2017. Selebriti mikro di media baru kajian presentasi diri dalam vlog selebriti mikro [Micro-celebrities in new media: a study of self-presentation in micro-celebrity vlogs]. *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi Dan Opini Publik* 21 (2): 167–181. <<https://jurnal.kominfo.go.id/index.php/jpkop/article/view/1218/720>>
- Saefullah, Hikmawan. 2022. Media baru, publik baru: mengkonfigurasi ulang ruang publik Islam [New media, new publics: reconfiguring the Islamic public sphere]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sammy, Abdullah. 2022. Peluang dan tantangan dakwah digital Muhammadiyah [Opportunities and challenges of Muhammadiyah digital da'wah]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sanjaya, Makroen. 2022. Peta ideologi islam di media sosial [The map of Islamic ideology on social media]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Senft, Theresa M. 2008. *Camgirls: celebrity and community in the age of social networks*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Shamsy, Ahmed El. 2013. The Ḥāshiyā in Islamic law: a sketch of the Shāfi'ī literature. *Oriens* 41 (3-4): 289–315.

- Shihab, Alwi. 1995. The Muhammadiyah movement and its controversy with Christian mission in Indonesia. PhD thesis, Temple University, USA.
- Spencer, Martin E. 1970. Weber on legitimate norms and authority. *British Journal of Sociology* 21 (2): 123–134.
- Suara Muhammadiyah. 2019. Hyung Jun Kim: sistem di Muhammadiyah sungguh ideal [Hyung Jun Kim: Muhammadiyah's system is ideal].  
<<https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/08/01/hyung-jun-kim-sistem-di-muhammadiyah-sungguh-ideal/>> Accessed 9 April 2022.
- Suyadi and Widodo, Hendro. 2019. Millennialization of Islamic education based on neuroscience in the third generation university in Yogyakarta Indonesia. *QIIS International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7 (1): 173–202.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2009. Hukum tentang jenggot dan cadar [Islamic law perspective on beards and veils]. *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine, no. 18 . Yogyakarta.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019a. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 4*. Cetakan IX. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019b. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 7*. Cetakan IV. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Tirto.id. 2018. Dari Aa' Gym ke Felix Siauw: ustaz medsos & medium dakwah politis. Tirto.Id. 16 January. <<https://tirto.id/dari-aa-gym-ke-felix-siauw-ustaz-medsos-medium-dakwah-politis-cCGf>> Accessed 5 February 2020.
- Turner, Bryan S. 2007. Religious authority and the new media. *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2): 117–134.
- Turner, Graeme. 2010. *Ordinary people and the media: the demotic turn*. Los Angeles CA: Sage.
- Widodo, Arif. 2017. Transformative intellectual discourse and movement of Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM). *Iseedu: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices* 1 (1): 126–151.  
<<https://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/iseedu/article/view/5423/3542>>
- Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change*. Princetoon NJ: Princeton University Press.

ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY *USTAZ* PHENOMENON

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

**QUERY SHEET**

This page lists questions we have about your paper. The numbers displayed at left are hyperlinked to the location of the query in your paper.

The title and author names are listed on this sheet as they will be published, both on your paper and on the Table of Contents. Please review and ensure the information is correct and advise us if any changes need to be made. In addition, please review your paper as a whole for typographical and essential corrections.

Your PDF proof has been enabled so that you can comment on the proof directly using Adobe Acrobat. For further information on marking corrections using Acrobat, please visit <https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/how-to-correct-proofs-with-adobe/>

The CrossRef database ([www.crossref.org/](http://www.crossref.org/)) has been used to validate the references. Changes resulting from mismatches are tracked in red font.

**AUTHOR QUERIES**

QUERY NO.	QUERY DETAILS
<b>Q1</b>	The disclosure statement has been inserted. Please correct if this is inaccurate.



# ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY *USTAZ* PHENOMENON

## Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi 

### ABSTRACTS

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the fragmentation of religious authority. In the Indonesian context, the mainstream religious authority held by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has been challenged and threatened by micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This article examines the emergence of the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah fanpage on Facebook, created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board as it has threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority. It analyses Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace, by taking a closer look at what has been done by Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, an assembly that has the exclusive authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* within Muhammadiyah. This article also discusses lessons that can be learned from the case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the response of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

### ABSTRAK

Kemunculan internet dan media sosial telah mempertajam fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. Dalam konteks Indonesia, otoritas keagamaan arus utama yang dipegang oleh Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) disaingi dan diancam oleh para ustaz mikro-selebritas. Artikel ini mengkaji kemunculan fanpage Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah di Facebook yang dibuat dan dikelola oleh Zulkarnain El Madury, seseorang yang mengklaim sebagai ustaz Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, karena dianggap mengancam otoritas keagamaan Muhammadiyah. Penelitian ini menganalisis upaya Muhammadiyah dalam mempertahankan otoritas keagamaannya di dunia maya dengan melihat lebih dekat pada apa yang telah dilakukan oleh Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah, sebuah majelis yang memiliki otoritas eksklusif untuk mengeluarkan fatwa dan *ijtihad* keagamaan resmi di Muhammadiyah. Artikel ini juga membahas pelajaran yang dapat dipetik dari kasus Zulkarnain El Madury dan respons Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

### KEYWORDS

Fragmentation of religious authority; micro-celebrity *ustaz*; Muhammadiyah; religious authority; *tarjih*

### KATA KUNCI

Fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan; Muhammadiyah; otoritas keagamaan; *tarjih*; *ustaz* mikro-selebritas

## Introduction

The Alvara Research Center (2020) survey was surprising as it stated that the clerics most heard by the public, especially in Ramadan 2020, were not from the official Muhammadiyah board.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the Alvara Research Center survey was released (IBTimes.id 2020), an Islamic website managed by young Muhammadiyah intellectuals, published a report ranking the 100 most popular Islamic websites in Indonesia. The majority of these sites are managed by or affiliated to Nahdliyyin (NU followers) and Salafi<sup>2</sup> groups with few such sites operated by or affiliated to Muhammadiyah. The Alvara Research Center survey and the IBTimes.id report show that Muhammadiyah, in terms of influence and religious authority on the internet, lags behind other religious groups which is ironic for an organisation claiming to represent the progressive Islamic group.

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the so-called fragmentation of religious authority. Eva F. Nisa (2019), for example, mentions that the proliferation of various digital platforms is directly proportional to the increasing fragmentation of religious authority. Islamic discourse is monopolised not only by an elite group of scholars or mainstream religious groups, but also by persons or groups that have not been considered in Islamic discourse. Furthermore, the presence of the internet and social media has led to the birth of what is called micro-celebrity. Theresa M. Senft (2008) defines micro-celebrity as a new style of online performance that involves increasing popularity on social media such as videos, blogs, and networking sites. These micro-celebrities unlike conventional celebrities, emerge from what is known as new media (Senft 2008).

Of course, not all new media users have the adjective 'micro-celebrity'. Only those who experience what Graeme Turner (2010) terms 'the demotic turn', namely, the increasing visibility of ordinary people to appear as celebrities in the media, especially online media. In turn, both conventional and micro-celebrity exist in various public spheres, and the discourse on them is characterised as influencers, stimulants of consumerism, enthusiasm, public debate, and various activism (Sadasri 2017).

By borrowing the theory of micro-celebrities in the study of new media, we can then read how these micro-celebrities have also come to the fore in the religious realm. The emergence of ulama, *ustaz* (religious teachers), and religious leaders who become influencers in new media can perhaps be seen as one form of micro-celebrity. Felix Siauw is a prominent example. A convert, who is now a preacher, Siauw has a massive following on social media. In 2018, for example, he had 2.6 million followers on Twitter, and in 2022 it numbered 3.3 million. Felix Siauw's Instagram account has around 4.9 million followers. It can even be said that he is the *ustaz* who has the most followers on social media (Tirto 2018), making him one of the leading social media preachers in Indonesia today (Hew 2018). What Felix Siauw posts on his social media has more or less influenced the map of religious authorities in Indonesia.

The existence of the internet and the continuing development of technology allows the emergence of many other micro-celebrity *ustaz*, both in the national arena more

<sup>1</sup>One of the 15 most popular clerics mentioned in the report, Ustaz Ali Hidayat, has since been included on the Muhammadiyah Central Board's Tabligh Council (2022–2027; Muhammadiyah Central Board 2023). Prior to that, he did not convey official Muhammadiyah ideas in his lectures.

<sup>2</sup>For more comprehensive information on the activism of Salafi groups, see Chris Chaplin (2021).

generally or more specifically in internal religious organisations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, Persis (Persatuan Islam) or others. In the context of Muhammadiyah, the largest modernist Islamic organisation began to be challenged for its religious authority by a preacher who was said to be part of Muhammadiyah itself, namely Zulkarnain El Madury. He claims to be a Muhammadiyah cadre and often introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board. In recent years, El Madury has been noticed by Muhammadiyah administrators and Muhammadiyah cadres<sup>3</sup> and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah) has discussed him in a special meeting. This is because the posts on the Facebook page that El Madury manages, *Syarah Himpunan Putus Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (henceforth SHPTM), often differ significantly from – and to some extent delegitimise – a Muhammadiyah fatwa or official decision. Responses from grassroots or Muhammadiyah followers vary. This can be seen, for example, from the comments on each post. Some defend and remain adamant on the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah, but not a few were affected and followed what was conveyed by El Madury on his Facebook page.

This is where it becomes crucial to see how Muhammadiyah attempts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace, especially among its members and the public. By conducting web content analysis (Postill and Pink 2012) on SHPTM and official social media accounts and those affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this article shows how El Madury builds his narratives and, in turn, how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority on the internet. Additionally, field research was conducted and key actors were interviewed offline and online in a semi-structured format.<sup>4</sup> Apart from El Madury, the key actors are members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Digital Broadcast Centre (Pusat Syiar Digital Muhammadiyah), Muhammadiyah activists as well as Muhammadiyah grassroots.

### Fragmentation of religious authority, new preacher and micro-celebrity *ustaz* phenomenon

Fragmentation of religious authority is a phenomenon that occurs in various religious communities and is not limited to Islam (B.S. Turner 2007; Campbell and Teusner 2011; Hope Cheong 2016). The fragmentation of religious authority is also a global phenomenon as pointed out by Gary R. Bunt (2003) who states that the new media have shaped diverse understandings among individual Muslims worldwide about e-jihad (electronic jihad). The definition of electronic jihad is understood and interpreted differently, ranging from online activism to Muslim articulation after the events of 11 September 2001. Bunt (2003) shows that each new media (in this case, new websites) has authority for its respective group.

The fragmentation of religious authority discussed here is from the 20th century to the present. Jajat Burhanudin (2004) points out that there has been a shift in religious authority in the historical phase of Indonesian religious thought in the early 20th century due to modernisation. His study, which focuses on the Islamic print media, further shows

<sup>3</sup>This author's online and offline interviews with Amiruddin, Robby Karman, Muhammad Muflih, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, and Arif Nur Kholis, 2019–2020.

<sup>4</sup>Data collection in this study was carried out between 2018 and 2020. As personal interviews were not possible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, some interviews were conducted online.

that there is a shift in religious authority that used to be in *Kitab Kuning*<sup>5</sup> taught by *kyai* or ulama in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to magazines, journals, newspapers, and books published by modernist circles or organisations.

Religious authority since the early 20th century has always stayed with Muhammadiyah and NU. These two religious organisations are often referred to by scholars as the authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016; Akmaliah 2018). The shift in religious authority occurred again in the 1990s when national television stations emerged. The Islamic programmes presented by the television stations show the *ustaz* (religious teachers), which in turn build their authority through lectures delivered by these preachers. This phenomenon prompted scholars to come up with the term 'Islamic televangelism' (Akmaliah 2018). Abdullah Gymnastiar who is better known as Aa Gym is one example that falls into the category of a television *ustaz*, or a 'tele-dai' as coined by Greg Fealy (2008).

The most obvious and recent picture of the fragmentation of religious authority in Indonesia is the series of events of the Defend Islam Action (Aksi Bela Islam). Ahmad Najib Burhani (2016) hints that these critical events marked the peak of the fragmentation of religious authorities in Indonesia as they gave rise to new actors who challenge the established religious authority. Although it cannot be said to shift or match the role of Muhammadiyah and NU, the emergence of new actors such as Rizieq Shihab provides a new map of religious authority in Indonesia.

This phenomenon of the fragmentation of religious authority has increased sharply in the development of what scholars call pop culture, marked by the birth of many new media (Labiq 2019). The availability of internet access to every social class is the main factor for this fragmentation. As a result, many new media have emerged with each individual and group competing to spread ideas (Horsfield 2016; Nisa 2019).

Aa Gym is one of the early actors who emerged in the internet era in Indonesia. This can be captured in two interesting studies on Aa Gym by James B. Hoesterey (2008), and Maskur and Noor (2014). Although the use of the internet as a medium of da'wah around during the early 2000s was not as massive as it is now, the emergence of Aa Gym as a new cleric on the national da'wah stage through lectures, seminars, and Islamic training is a phenomenon in itself. Hoesterey (2008) studies the journey of Aa Gym from his first appearance as a preacher, falling, and then successfully rebranding to restore his religious authority. This is evident, for example, from how Aa Gym has many listeners (*Dakta.com* 2016). Popular culture has also brought Aa Gym to be seen not only by the public, especially by his followers, as also singer, actor, author, etc. Thus, he has transformed from an ordinary cleric to a celebrity cleric. Through a hypersemiotic perspective, Maskur and Noor (2014) show the various aspects of Aa Gym's personality.

Following the appearance of Aa Gym and with further rapid development of information technology, many other new preachers began to appear. Hew Wai Weng (2018) describes how Felix Siauw is another skilful religious preacher. Being a cleric with the most followers on the internet did not make Siauw neglect to spread his da'wah in the real world. Hew (2018) points out that Siauw has blended online and offline da'wah harmoniously. According to Hew (2018) and Farhan (2017), one of the

<sup>5</sup>So-called because the books were printed on yellow paper. These were the Islamic texts used in the education of Islamic schools.



keys to Siauw's success in preaching is his ability to present an entertaining and straightforward da'wah, even though its content is dogmatic and political.

Aa Gym and Felix Siauw are two micro-celebrity *ustaz* as a result of the new media. The term micro-celebrity *ustaz* was adopted and reconstructed from the theory of micro-celebrity. Most of these studies conducted from the perspective of pop culture (Senft 2008; G. Turner 2010; Khamis, Ang and Welling 2017; Sadasri 2017; Khomalia and Rahman 2018) describe the fragmentation of religious authority, marked by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By this term this author means an ordinary *ustaz/ustazah* who has skyrocketed in popularity and is celebrity on and because of social media so that he or she is able to influence certain people or communities. In other words, it means the *ustaz/ustazah* has experienced what G. Turner (2010) calls 'the demotic turn', when ordinary people are highly visible on social media and become celebrities. Challenges to established religious authorities by new religious personalities or groups are rarely touched on except that of Yanwar Pribadi (2019). His study explains the the efforts of 'local Islam' (*Islam lokal*) to defend its religious authority from the threat of 'foreign Islam' (*Islam asing*). However, his study differs from what this author will examine in tracing Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

This study is on a micro-celebrity *ustaz*, Zulkarnain El Madury who is less well known when compared to Aa Gym or Felix Siauw but he has a strong influence on the internet. His identity as a preacher from Muhammadiyah who targets Muhammadiyah followers with postings that are often different and even delegitimise the official voice of this largest modernist mass organisation deserves to be investigated. This study, apart from showing Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority on the internet, also seeks explicitly to fill the gap in previous studies. In his latest study, Akmaliah (2020) shows that Muhammadiyah and NU have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was strongly reactive to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) indicates there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's responses less hostile. Sammy (2022), Sanjaya (2022), and Saefullah (2022) came to the same conclusion as Akmaliah, claiming that Muhammadiyah is significantly less adaptive to the emergence of new media, and therefore its da'wah often loses to that of the micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This study focuses on the struggle of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as the only assembly under Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas and official *ijtihad* exposition within Muhammadiyah.

### **Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah fanpage**

The Facebook SHPTM fanpage was created by Zulkarnain El Madury. He was born in Sumenep on the island of Madura in 1963, with the name Zulkarnain bin Syamsuri. He claims to have studied in Malaysia at the Institute of Business Study and always introduces himself as a preacher from the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah). He spent his childhood in Madura and was a traditionalist Muslim like others on the island. He grew up in a milieu dominated by the NU traditionalist Islamic organisation. He used to perform

*tahlilan* (ritual prayers for the dead), *ziarah* (pilgrimage to the grave), and other practices that, according to him, after becoming a member of Muhammadiyah, were not following the Sunnah of the Prophet. He received his religious education at the Islamic boarding school at-Taufiqiyyah Sumenep Madura. In 1976 he became acquainted with Muhammadiyah. He became interested in the da'wah and religious understanding of the Muhammadiyah movement founded by Ahmad Dahlan after listening to a lecture by one of its preachers. In 1977, he officially joined Muhammadiyah.<sup>6</sup>

Since joining Muhammadiyah, El Madury has been active as a preacher who spreads religious ideas and understanding. From 1990 to 2007, he was one of the Muhammadiyah preachers who was sent to remote areas by the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board. His daily activities are now preaching at different places as well as creating content on for SHPTM fanpage. He now lives in Jakarta as the *tarjih* and *tabligh* council chair of the Pondok Gede Muhammadiyah Branch.<sup>7</sup> He created SHPTM in 2014.<sup>8</sup> However, in the digital history that this author can trace, the fanpage was created in 2015 as the earliest post that is currently traceable is dated 5 January 2015.

According to El Madury, the fanpage began with the WhatsApp group he created which he named *Tarjih dan Tabligh Institut* (Tarjih and Tabligh Institute) to provide a space to discuss and spread ideas related to *tarjih*.<sup>9</sup> He included many Muhammadiyah figures and activists in this group, including (the now late) Buya Yunahar Ilyas. Over time, seeing that El Madury's posts on SHPTM were deemed inconsistent with the *tarjih* spirit of Muhammadiyah, several people, such as Fathurrahman Kamal and Buya Risman, sharply criticised the postings. El Madury, Fathurrahman Kamal, and Buya Risman were then engaged in a heated debate which was relayed later to Buya Yunahar Ilyas. The response by Buya Yunahar Ilyas at that time, according to El Madury, differed from that of his critics. Buya Yun responded quite positively because he saw El Madury's initiative as providing *syarah* (explanation) or further explication of the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Decisions Compilation). Finally, he gave his permission to El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com).<sup>10</sup>

El Madury's early postings on SHPTM, were still relatively consistent in uploading Muhammadiyah fatwas in the question (from someone) and answer format from the fatwa division of the Tarjih Council. This is similar to the the original question and answer format administered by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, whose fatwas were later published in the *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine. However, over time, SHPTM included posts that apart from the dissemination of Muhammadiyah's official *ijtihad* included the personal opinions of El Madury. These opinions in inelegant words are often offensive to other groups. Not infrequently, his posts contradict the

<sup>6</sup>Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Muhammadiyah's use of the word *tarjih* has changed throughout its development. In its early period, and following its usage in the principles of law (*usul al-fiqh*), *tarjih* conveyed the meaning of examining the various opinions of Muslim jurists on a particular question and evaluating them to determine which is most faithful to the original Shari'a sources. Over time this usage gradually included any intellectual endeavour used to study new cases that earlier jurists had not addressed. In short, in Muhammadiyah's perspective, *tarjih* is identical, or almost identical, to *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

<sup>10</sup>Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

official stance of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in particular, or Muhammadiyah in general, such as on the veil issue (see below). Since Facebook introduced its 'live broadcast' feature, El Madury has also availed of it to conduct live lectures. The SHPTM is popular with netizens. As of the time of writing (3 April 2022), it has been followed by 19,423 and is 'liked' by 8,868 people. His posts also often receive both positive and critical comments from viewers.

El Madury gave several reasons that brought about the creation of his fanpage. Firstly, it is aimed at fortifying Muhammadiyah followers against all forms of superstition, heresy, and myth as its posts focus on issues related to faith and worship. Secondly, he aims to counter those liberal Muhammadiyah activists and has openly responded to such views. His posts often openly attacks the religious practices of the the Nahdliyyin, resulting in several clashes between him and the Nahdliyyin figure, Idrus Ramli.<sup>11</sup>

Despite having many followers El Madury and his SHPTM do have critics. Many Muhammadiyah followers are concerned about the SHPTM posts. Some have tried to convey their anxiety through the official social media accounts of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre (Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah).<sup>12</sup> Those concerned generally want to ask for firm action from the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as El Madury has included 'Tarjih Muhammadiyah' in his fanpage name. The demands to the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, when summarised, include: (1) that the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council reprimand or remind Zulkarnain El Madury not to use symbols or names that are closely related to Tarjih Muhammadiyah for or on his fanpage; (2) making and circulating an announcement that the fanpage is not a social media account of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council or the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre; (3) announcing the official social media accounts and websites of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre, so that Muhammadiyah people at the grassroots are not deceived by the existence of the fanpage and know where to look for religious reference sites, especially on the internet.

### **Zulkarnain El Madury and his efforts in building religious authority**

Zulkarnain El Madury and his fanpage SHPTM, have threatened the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, and specifically, the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. Many of his posts affect Muhammadiyah followers in particular and Muslims in general as these posts often differ from the official stance of Muhammadiyah, and in some cases contradict the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. This has stimulated public debate on social media, allowing El Madury to become a micro-celebrity *ustaz*. As a result of the general public and the online community attention, El Madury has been able to gradually build up his religious authority. From the Weberian perspective (Riesebrodt 1999), he has been able to do this in two ways. The first is through charisma (charismatic authority) and the second is traditional authority discussed later. According to Weber, charisma is a particular type of authority whose original form is based on a specific belief contained in a particular person (ibid.). El Madury claims he has the endorsement of Yunahar Ilyas, a

<sup>11</sup>Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>12</sup>Interviews with Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf and Ariful Hazam, November 2020 who are grassroots of Muhammadiyah, and social media administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

very popular Muhammadiyah cleric respected by the community from within the Muhammadiyah circle and from Muslims in general which is a form of charismatic authority.

Yunahar Ilyas (1956–2020) or Buya Yun as he was popularly known, was an exegete (*mufassir*) born in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, who died at the age of 63 (Ilyas 2012). He was an alumnus of Imam Ibn Su'ud University (Saudi Arabia) and an excellent lecturer in conveying religious messages. He was seen as a charismatic cleric by Muhammadiyah followers and Muslims, in general, and this reputation extended to neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore (Abror 2020; Gesuri 2020). On his death in early 2020, many people flocked to pay their last respects to Buya Yun who held the chair of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for three terms (Kompas 2020; Rakyat Merdeka 2019).

By harnessing the charisma of Buya Yun, El Madury was able to increase his religious authority. On various occasions, including when this author interviewed him, Buya Yun's name was often mentioned as an argument and a shield.<sup>13</sup> El Madury insisted that he created the SHPTM fanpage with the permission of Yunahar Ilyas.<sup>14</sup> He added that Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website tanyajawabagama.com, had similarly received permission from Buya Yun. Wahyudi Abdurrahim confirmed Zulkarnain's claims and Muhammad Muflih, a grassroots representative added that it is a form of fairness.<sup>15</sup> In other words, Buya Yun's permission is a form of appreciation given by someone who is more senior and has a high social position in Muhammadiyah to someone who is more junior and classified as a grassroots Muhammadiyah member.<sup>16</sup> Permission from Buya Yun, who has charisma within Muhammadiyah in particular, has become a tool used by El Madury in building his religious authority.

In Weberian charismatic authority, charisma is not only about a belief in the existence of extraordinary or superpowers possessed by or contained in humans but also about particular objects other than humans (Riesebradt 1999). We thus have an explanation as to why El Madury named his fanpage *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a highly respectable and crucial council in Muhammadiyah. Founded in 1927, the Council functions as an assembly that carries out its agenda of purification of religion and the dynamisation of social life. It conducts research and investigations towards this purity, and accordingly gives fatwas and compiles religious guidelines on faith (*'aqidah*) and worship (*'ibadah*) as well as social relations (*mu'āmalah*) (Rahman et al. 1985; Anwar 2016). In addition, this Council makes efforts to resolve differences and disagreements on religious issues, which are usually referred to as *khilāfiyyah* problems, so that they are directed more productively (Anwar 2007, 2016).

The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a body that is responsible for formulating the ideological basis of the Muhammadiyah movement (Anwar 2007, 2016) and is Muhammadiyah's representative in the religious field (Fauzi 2017). The Council produces three

<sup>13</sup>This author's informants include Muhammad Muflih (grassroot of Muhammadiyah and initiator of the website tanyajawabagama.com), Robby Karman (secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association [DPP IMM] 2018–2021), and several participants invited by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council with the agenda 'Responding to Emergence of Syarah HPT on Social Media' on 25 September, 2020; interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>14</sup>Interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>15</sup>Online interview with Wahyudi Abdurrahim through WhatsApp, September 2020.

<sup>16</sup>Online interview with Muhammad Muflih through WhatsApp and Facebook, 20 October 2019.

types of *ijtihad*, namely: (1) *tarjih fatwa (fatwa tarjih)*, (2) *tarjih decision (putusan tarjih)*, and (3) *tarjih discourse (wacara tarjih)* (Anwar 2016). *Tarjih fatwa* is the Council's answer to general questions on issues that require an explanation in terms of sharia law. Following the nature of the fatwa in general, the Council's fatwa is non-binding, on either organisations or members as individuals. Therefore, even the fatwa can be questioned and discussed. However, because the fatwa contains religious guidance derived from Islamic teaching sources (Anwar 2020), and the general public often does not actually understand the aspects of such a fatwa, it is still believed by Muhammadiyah members to be religious guidance. However, the *tarjih decision* is the official stance of Muhammadiyah in religious matters and is formally binding on the organisation and its members. But, in practice, sometimes Muhammadiyah members exercise their right to freedom not to be bound by the decision because they have different *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

Meanwhile, *tarjih discourses* are ideas or thoughts that are raised and put forward by the Council in seminars, *halaqah* (religious gathering or meeting to discuss the Qur'an or Islam), or other forums in addressing various developing issues and at the same time fostering a critical spirit of *ijtihad* and collecting materials or ideas on various actual problems in society. The nature of this *tarjih discourse* is non-binding and does not become a fatwa that must be followed. *Tarjih discourse* is contained in various publications of the Council, such as *Jurnal Tarjih* (Tarjih Journal) and various published books (Anwar 2016).

The *tarjih decision* and the *tarjih fatwa*, hold their strength within Muhammadiyah as these are considered sacred by some of its members. In short, it can be said that anything that 'smells *tarjih*' has authority in the collective memory of Muhammadiyah followers. In the perspective of Khaled Abou El Fadl (2014), fatwa and *tarjih decisions* have the power of persuasive authority, as these can influence or direct others because they believed in them. The *tarjih fatwas* are officially published through the organisation's magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, and compiled in the *Tanya Jawab Agama* book. In comparison, the *tarjih decisions* are codified in a book called *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (commonly known as HPT). Thus, it can be understood why the attribution of the term *tarjih* to particular objects can give rise to charismatic authority, as mentioned by Weber.

What El Madury did can also be seen as identity politics which is defined as a political tool of a group whether it be ethnic, cultural, religious or others for specific purposes, such as a form of resistance or to show the identity of a group (Alfaqi 2015). Within this framework, identity is politicised through extreme interpretation, which aims to gain support from people who feel 'the same', through race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements. In the context of El Madury, the use of the *tarjih* label on his fanpage can be interpreted as a political tool to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muhammadiyah members. And, as seen in some of his sermon videos, El Madury also placed a flag with the Muhammadiyah symbol behind him. In this context, he wants to convince the viewers that he is close to Muhammadiyah. He has introduced himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board on many occasions.

According to Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif (2010), identity politics is always related to members of social groups who feel excluded by the mainstream in a nation or state. Sri Astuti Buchari (2014) also finds that the emergence of identity politics is mainly



caused by certain factors that an ethnic group sees as pressure from the political injustice. By looking at the observations made by Ahmad Najib Burhani (2013), El Madury, in this case, can be categorised as part of a group that feels excluded, threatened, and to some extent in need of justice within Muhammadiyah. Burhani (2013) explains the existence of two opposing schools of thought within Muhammadiyah which he refers to as 'Pure Islam' (*Islam Murni*) and 'Progressive Islam' (*Islam Progresif*). The conflict between these two schools of thought in Muhammadiyah began to surface at the 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Banda Aceh in 1995 (Burhani 2013).

The dominance of 'Progressive Islam' in Muhammadiyah strengthened after its 44th congress in Jakarta in 2000. This congress chose Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif as general chair. He is a progressive Muslim figure, an alumnus of the University of Chicago, and a student of the eminent progressive scholar Fazlur Rahman. At this congress, several names representing the 'Progressive Islam' group were included in the ranks of the central leadership of Muhammadiyah, such as Amin Abdullah, Dawam Raharjo, and Abdul Munir Mulkhan. During Ma'arif's leadership, progressive ideas not only dominated culturally but gradually became Muhammadiyah's official programmes (Burhani 2013).

Seeing the increasingly apparent threat from the ideas put forward by the 'Progressive Islam' group within Muhammadiyah, representatives of the 'Pure Islam' group did not remain silent. They compete and squabble over religious interpretations as to which is the most authentic. These two groups challenge each other through various channels, including seminars, discussions, publications. They usually have conflicting programmes. For example, as mentioned by Burhani (2013), when the Centre for the Study of Religion and Civilisation (PSAP/Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban) raised the theme of pluralism and multiculturalism in its journal, *Tanwir Journal*, the Tabligh Council<sup>17</sup> responded with articles in opposition in its magazine, *Majalah Tabligh*. In Burhani's investigation, during the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress in Malang, this conservative group set up a Pojok Anti-Liberal (anti-liberal corner) booth, which sold books, DVDs, t-shirts, magazines, and other anti-liberal mementos. Strikingly, some of the t-shirts for sale displayed the words 'Muhammadiyah Anti-Liberal' (Burhani 2013).

At the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress, it seemed that the 'Pure Islam' group was gaining momentum to beat back the 'Progressive Islam' group. The quarrels between these two groups occurred within congress committees and in the external arena. Burhani (2005, 2013) noted at least three critical issues where the 'Pure Islam' group defeated the 'Progressive Islam' in the congress arena, namely: (1) leadership change; (2) the position of women; and (3) resistance to liberal thought.

After the 45th congress, the feud between these two schools of thought has continued though waxing and waning at different times. The form of the feud now looks more varied given the availability of the internet where the presence of social media has

<sup>17</sup>Muhammadiyah has many assemblies such as Majelis Tabligh and Majelis Tarjih, each with its own functions and responsibilities. Majelis Tarjih is responsible for producing religious thoughts through fatwas and decisions, while Majelis Tabligh is responsible for disseminating them. Historically, Majelis Tabligh is known in Muhammadiyah as the anti-liberal wing and thus there are at times poor collaboration between Majelis Tarjih and Majelis Tabligh. For example, some fatwas issued by Majelis Tarjih, in Majelis Tabligh's perspective, are the result of liberal thinking. See Burhani (2013) and Palahuddin (2020).

changed the battle arena from a conventional to a more modern one. El Madury represents the 'Pure Islam' group, and has heated online debates with figures considered representatives of 'Progressive Islam' whose actions he sees as unsettling. For example, El Madury and the secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association (DPP IMM),<sup>18</sup> Robby Karman, have openly and frequently castigated each other on for example, issues about the veil and the Wahhabi. According to El Madury, Robby Karman is a young liberal figure in Muhammadiyah who should be challenged. El Madury also often attacks the IBTimes.id website, as it frequently contains articles that are progressive and, to some extent, controversial. This website has several former Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah (JIMM/Muhammadiyah Youth Intellectual Network) figures, such as Hilman Latief, Azaki Khoiruddin, and Mu'arif. On one occasion, when the chair of the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre admonished El Madury for uploading provocative posts that contradicted the official stance of the Tarjih Council, he defended himself by stating that equally provocative posts from the 'Progressive Islam' group should be similarly reprimanded. If he is the only one selected for rebuke then he felt an injustice had been done.<sup>19</sup> El Madury's attitude in the framework of identity politics reflects someone who feels excluded and threatened by certain parties. At such, his specific attributes and identity are a deliberate form of resistance to the domination of certain groups or thoughts that threaten him.

The second form of authority is what Weber calls traditional authority (Spencer 1970; Matheson 1987; Riesebrodt 1999). In simple terms, something can be considered as having traditional authority if it gains legitimacy based on beliefs or norms that have been established in a particular tradition (Chairi 2019). In other words, according to Spencer (1970), traditional authority is legitimised and, at the same time, constrained by traditional norms. Therefore, it is the opposite of charismatic authority. If in charismatic authority, it is the leader or someone who creates the norms, then it is the norms that create the leader or person in the traditional authority. In charismatic authority, the value of influence is generated by a person's personal qualities and is always associated with his personality. While in the case of traditional authority, it is generated by function and is related to someone or something that has traditional values (Spencer 1970).

In the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, ulama and the classical books they wrote can be considered to have this traditional authority. Ulama in Islamic tradition are called heirs of the Prophets. The authority of the ulama is derived from the legitimacy of religious texts which state that the prophetic tradition will be passed on to them. Therefore, the religious ideas they convey in writings or books contain an authoritative value for the next generation. This is the uniqueness of Islamic scholars and traditions, as mentioned by Muhammad Qasim Zaman (2002) who states that one of the most prominent aspects of pre-modern intellectual culture is the articulation of religious discourse through the so-called medium of the commentary. This is manifested in various forms such *al-syurūh*, *hawāsyī*, *rasā'il*, and *fatawā*. The various genres of books that contain explanations, descriptions, or responses to a book or social phenomena are a way for

<sup>18</sup>Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM) or Muhammadiyah Student Association is a proponent of Muhammadiyah in student affairs with the basic mission of realising the real Islamic society as formulated by Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Widodo 2017).

<sup>19</sup>On 3 November 2019, the manager of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah reprimanded Zulkarnain El Madury for his post on SHPTM on the veil which contradicts Muhammadiyah's official stance.

scholars to shape the identity and authority of the school or tradition they adhere to. In addition, it is also a means to interpreting the meaning of the foundational sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah (Zaman 2002).

An example is the *hawāsyī* tradition in the Shafii school. Its emergence, according to Ahmed El-Shamsy (2013), shows the peak of the authority of two scholars in that school, namely al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī. Al-Kurdi, as quoted by El Shamsy, called these two scholars 'the higher authorities in the Syafii school'. Those who want to know the authoritative opinion of the Shaf'i school have to go through the works of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī, and the books that explain further their works, namely the books written by Ibn Hajar al-Haitamī and Syamsuddīn al-Ramlī. These books have for later generations the value of traditional authority (Shamsy 2013: 292).

What is the connection between this traditional authority and El Madury? El Madury's posts on SHPTM and at religious forums where he speaks always rely on the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāth*). According to Endang Mintarja, chair of the Jakarta branch of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this aspect has drawn many people to El Madury's lectures.<sup>20</sup> What El Madury did, which Muhammadiyah did not do in many of its fatwas was to cite the Islamic intellectual tradition. In many of its fatwas, Muhammadiyah often only quotes the Qur'an or hadith to strengthen its argument, without citing the opinions of other Islamic scholars. Perhaps this is a consequence of the modernist movement, which became the spirit of Muhammadiyah. The modernist movement initiated by reformers such as Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, and Muḥammad Rasyīd Riḍā in the late 19th and early 20th centuries used the term *al-rujū' ilā al-qur'ān wa al-sunnah* ('back to the Qur'an and Sunnah'). According to Syed Junaid A. Quadri (2013), the most obvious indicator of this movement, especially in Islamic law, is its critical attitude towards the structure of pre-modern sharia authority symbols, which are articulated in the language and logic of the institution of *taqlīd*. Modernist groups always encourage reopening the door to *ijtihād* and invite Muslims to leave the interpretive monopoly that the ulama class has held (Quadri 2013).

Muhammadiyah, which is heavily inspired by the modernist movement, is oriented towards the Qur'an and Sunnah and tends to attach less importance to the Islamic intellectual tradition that has been built by the ulama. This can be seen from its *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (the methodology Muhammadiyah uses in conducting *ijtihād*), which asserts that Muhammadiyah is not affiliated to a particular school, but the opinions of these schools are only considered in determining religious norms (Anwar 2018). This means that understanding religion in the Muhammadiyah perspective is derived directly from its primary sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah through the *ijtihād* process. However, it should be noted here that the narration that confirms the opinions of the scholars is taken into account in determining norms is not that clear how they are implemented in *tarjih* issues.

In some of its official *ijtihād*, the nuances of the opinions of scholars, especially the pre-modern ones do not appear, by choice or otherwise. Thus it appears that El Madury is filling the Muhammadiyah gap in presenting the authority of the Islamic intellectual tradition in religious narratives. For example, in the controversial veil case, the

<sup>20</sup>Endang Mintarja voiced this at a Muhammadiyah Central Board Tarjih Council meeting of on the emergence 'Syarah HPT', 25 September 2020.



Tarjih Council issued three fatwas in 1993, 2003 and 2009.<sup>21</sup> The fatwas issued in 1993 and 2009 emphasised that the veil has no legal basis either in the Qur'an or the Sunnah but that Islamic law commands women to wear the hijab. These two fatwas did not cite the Islamic intellectual tradition, which also accommodates opinions about the veil. Although the Tarjih Council kept in its stance and strengthened the opinion that women's 'aurat (parts of the body that should go covered) are the whole body except the face and the palms of the hands, in the 2003 fatwa, the Tarjih Council provides space for those who want to wear the veil by expressing several opinions from the scholars who think so.

In contrast to the *tarjih* fatwas, El Madury's (2019) article *Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam?* ('Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?') on the SHPTM fanpage refutes the *tarjih* fatwa. He cites various opinions of scholars in the Islamic intellectual tradition who support mandatory veiling as an effort to build religious authority. From this, it appears that El Madury, apart from attacking the *tarjih* fatwa, believes in maintaining traditional authority, in this case, the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāts*).

What El Madury did in building religious authority can also be captured from what Burhani calls a conversion narrative. Some scholars define religious conversion narratives differently as for example, in the change from one religious tradition to another. William James, as quoted by Burhani (2020: 158), states that religious conversion can also be interpreted as the conversion of a person who is a sinner into someone pious. According to Burhani (2020), people who experience religious conversion, usually after embracing a new tradition or religious understanding, will be hostile to the previous religious tradition or understanding.

El Madury also experienced a religious conversion, in this case, from the NU tradition to Muhammadiyah's. On SHPTM as well as his views when interviewed by this author, he introduced himself as someone who had practised the '*kuburiyyun* tradition'<sup>22</sup> and other actions that did not have examples from the Prophet. To convince his followers, he posted information about his religious conversion from NU to Muhammadiyah. Besides condemning his previous practices, which were deemed to have no basis in the Qur'an and Sunnah, he has had acrimonious debates with the NU *kyai*, Idrus Ramli on various issues, such as *ahlus sunnah wal jamaah* and *wahabi, nahdliyyin* traditions that are often considered heresy, and so on.

### Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Before the advent of the internet and the emergence of various new religious authorities, Muhammadiyah and NU were the two largest religious organisations and authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). However, following the emergence of the so-called micro-celebrity *ustaz*, these two groups, according to some scholars, began to face challenges and threats. The recent study by Wahyudi Akmaliah (2020) shows that the two organisations have responded differently to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was more combative about their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) maintains there are some similarities between

<sup>21</sup>Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah (2009, 2019a, 2019b).

<sup>22</sup>The tradition of visiting the grave with its associated practices.

Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's response look less aggressive. Akmaliah is correct on several points, but other perspectives deserve to be considered, especially Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority on the internet. The weak point, as shown in Akmaliah's study is that there is no adequate elaboration of the assembly that exclusively holds religious authority in Muhammadiyah, namely the Tarjih Council. To trace more precisely how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority we have to look at the Tarjih Council.

This discussion starts from the author attending a meeting held by the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board in September 2020. The meeting was in response to the appearance of the *syarh* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Decisions Compilation) by El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim. Whilst El Madury's comments were on his SHPTM fanpage, Abdurrahim (2020) aired his views in his book. He was earlier mentioned as having had permission from Buya Yun to give *syarh* on HPT. The initial background for holding this meeting, as revealed by the secretary of the Tarjih Council, Mas'udi, was purely in response to the SHPTM posts by El Madury. However, information about the SHPTM other than the one written by El Madury prompted the board of the Tarjih Council to include the book by Abdurrahim with the same title for the agenda.

For this meeting, the Tarjih Council invited nine related sectors to discuss concerns over the emergence of the SHPTM on the internet written by the El Madury and Abdurrahim. The nine sector participants were: (1) the executive board of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (2) fatwa division of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (3) chair/secretary of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (4) Endang Mintarja (Chair of the Jakarta Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council); (5) Fathurrahman (Chair of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council); (6) H. Budi Setiawan; (7) Arif Nur Kholis (head of Muhammadiyah Digital Syiar Centre); (8) the manager of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre; and (9) the social media assistance team of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

During the meeting, there were at least four proposals from participants on how best to respond to the SHPTM, particularly El Madury's article about the veil. The first was to complain to Facebook about the SHPTM so that it could be banned for including an institution's name without permission. According to the chair of the Tabligh Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board, Fathurrahman Kamal, who was present at the forum, the fanpage is in the illicit category. This proposal was considered by the proponents as a firm proposal but that it risked unnecessary antagonism. The second was to use a persuasive approach in the form of clarification or an appeal to El Madury not to use the name *Himpunan Putusan Tajih* (HPT) or something that is associated with *tarjih*. Its proponents consider this approach to be softer and more reflective of being Muhammadiyah members in particular, and Muslims in general. The third proposal was to use institutional authority in writing an official letter on behalf of the Tarjih Council to El Madury. The fourth idea that was considered more practical and efficient was to place the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it on social media. This would avoid being drawn into unfruitful correspondence on SHPTM.

However, there was no agreement on which approach should be undertaken despite long discussions. It was agreed instead that there would be a follow up with another forum. Since this author started writing (3 April 2022) there has been no further

meeting. The emergence of SHPTM on the internet and its effects have been considered a serious problem by the Tarjih Council. The meeting's participants were generally uneasy about the appearance of El Madury and his fanpage. In addition, they wanted El Madury to be warned or reprimanded since SHPTM is considered a threat to religious authority of the Tarjih Council. This illustrates that Muhammadiyah, through its official religious assembly, the Tarjih Council, is not passive in responding to the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. However, only certain cases and not all micro-celebrity *ustaz* who appear on social media have drawn the Tarjih Council's attention. Although there has yet to be a follow up meeting, the Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an official institution supporting the Tarjih Council illustrates how Muhammadiyah struggles to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is an institution that was founded in 2016 by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Ahmad Dahlan University (Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah 2016). Despite being a new institution, its legality is clear, and it has formal authority. In the Muhammadiyah tradition as an organisation, such legality is essential. Thus when someone from Muhammadiyah, speaks on another person's behalf or endorses an approach, the speaker's status is below that of the institution and cannot be assumed to be that of institutions within Muhammadiyah which, although new, have legality. In the context of El Madury and the SHPTM fanpage, this is important. Even though El Madury claims he has obtained permission to make *syarh* on the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* from a charismatic figure in Muhammadiyah, Buya Yunahar, legally it is not valid. In that context, Buya Yunahar spoke on behalf of himself, not on behalf of Muhammadiyah.

Fronted by young Muhammadiyah cadres, the majority of whom are alumni of Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Tarjih Ulama Education, PUTM),<sup>23</sup> Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays a role in supporting the Tarjih Council programmes. These are relatively under-performing and facing obstacles, particularly on using social media to disseminate their official *ijtihad*. The members of the Tarjih Council, who are relatively old, need support from young cadres. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays an essential role in assisting the Tarjih Council in maintaining its religious authority on the internet. It responded to El Madury and SHPTM, by being pro-active with a poster (Figure 1) on social media and in print form, containing information related to the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it.

Although the poster above does not directly mention the SHPTM fanpage created by El Madury, the main message in it is clear and firm, namely to inform the Muhammadiyah followers about the official accounts of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it. This would hopefully let Muhammadiyah members understand how its official religious voice is disseminated on the internet. Following this, Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah successively uploaded other, more varied posters to indirectly counter the SHPTM fanpage. Some other examples of these posters are shown in Figures 3 and 5.

<sup>23</sup>PUTM is an educational institution under the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board designed to produce a cadre of Muhammadiyah scholars. PUTM organises a special programme that educates and prepares Muhammadiyah *tarjih* scholars who are competent in the religious field. The birth of PUTM was based on the concern of some Muhammadiyah leaders about the increasing scarcity of ulama in and from Muhammadiyah (Fauzi 2020a).



**Figure 1.** Poster with information on the official social media accounts affiliated to the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

The use of informal language and emoticons typical of millennials indicate the audience that the Tarjih Council wants to target. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah team understands that informal language will appeal to its target audience. This is aimed at not only establishing the authority of the Tarjih Council but ‘millennialisation’ i.e. to reach out to the younger generation familiar with social media. Suyadi and Widodo (2019) note that millennialisation is an alternative way to develop knowledge that will synergise with various online media and digital technology. In the context of *tarjih* millennialisation, Muhammadiyah’s official *ijtihad* that tend to be disseminated in a conventional, monotonous, and uncreative manner are now communicated through social media in more contextual packaging. This means that the Tarjih Council and its various official *ijtihad*, which previously were always identified with the ‘old’, now consciously aim to include young people.

The religious authority of the Tarjih Council in cyberspace, especially when connected with the appearance of El Madury and SHPTM, was greatly helped by the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah and its young Muhammadiyah cadres. It manages various social media platforms with large numbers of followers, and has helped maintain

Are you often confused about finding sources of reference about Islam from the perspective of Muhammadiyah?

There is no need to be confused anymore because various social media are straightforward for us to access. Tarjih (Council) has come with a more trendy look.

- ✓ Easy to read anywhere
- ✓ Provide updated fatwas
- ✓ Discuss current issues

As members of Muhammadiyah, let's get used to reading the decisions and fatwas of Muhammadiyah

Here are some media that can be accessed very easily. So don't be confused anymore.

Web: [fatwatarjih.or.id](http://fatwatarjih.or.id)

Facebook: [fb.me/fatwamu](https://www.facebook.com/fatwamu)

Instagram: [pusattarjih\\_muhammadiyah](https://www.instagram.com/pusattarjih_muhammadiyah)

Telegram: [t.me/fatwatarjihmu](https://www.telegram.me/fatwatarjihmu)

Youtube: [tarjih channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

Let's spread it to all Muhammadiyah people!

**Figure 2.** Translation of Figure 1.

Muhammadiyah's religious authority by balancing and suppressing the presence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. Its contents are fatwas and decisions of the Tarjih Council with more appealing visualisation to reach out to the millenials.

Although the number of social media followers of the Tarjih Council is less than that for the NU and Salafi groups, at least the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah acts as a compass for Muhammadiyah followers who question its religious authority, especially with the emergence of El Madury's version in SHPTM. The administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah's social media have received many messages either through the comments column or direct messages in its inbox, which question the authority of SHPTM.<sup>24</sup> Here, the vital role of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is increasingly finding its momentum.

## Conclusion

Although it can be said that Muhammadiyah's religious influence and authority on the internet are inferior and lag behind other religious groups, Muhammadiyah is still trying to manage its authority, especially when facing threats from micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By focusing on Zulkarnain El Madury and his SHPTM social media page, this article offers a different perspective from previous studies by analysing the work of the Tarjih Council as the only institution in Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas. This article shows that Muhammadiyah has its own way of responding to

<sup>24</sup>Interview with Ariful Hazamn, Ilham Ibrahim, and Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, September 2020. They are *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* social media administrators.



**Figure 3.** Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

the emergence of new religious authorities. With the help of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an institution in its fold, the Tarjih Council has made continuous efforts through social media and its official website to counter new voices that threaten its authority. Muhammadiyah's response was neither aggressive nor radical but it clarified its stance without mentioning who precisely was being targeted. What Muhammadiyah did was in line with the Javanese proverb *Ngluruk tanpo bolo, menang tanpo ngasorake* ('win without defeat, win without humiliation [of others]'). The form of Muhammadiyah's response is inherited from its founder, Ahmad Dahlan. As seen by James



Do you know?

The Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah now have an official YouTube channel, (namely) the Tarjih Channel.

Have you subscribed yet?

**Figure 4.** Translation of Figure 3.



**Figure 5.** Information about the website fatwatarjih.or.id, an official website affiliated to the Tarjih Council containing fatwas. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Peacock (1978), Ahmad Dahlan brought about many social transformations through discussions and education.<sup>25</sup> This can be seen, for example, from how Ahmad Dahlan and

<sup>25</sup>For example, Ahmad Dahlan and the early generation of Muhammadiyah explained to Muslims the unacceptability of popular beliefs and practices that had their roots in superstitions, heresies, and myths. He built hospitals, schools, and orphanages to counter these practices (Shihab 1995).

Fatwatartjih.or.id is the official website for the Tarjih and the Tajdid Council of  
Muhammadiyah Central Board (MTT).

The Media Team of Fatwa Tarjih, through this website, has been, is and will continue to  
strive consistently to publish various ijtiḥad products from the Tarjih Council. Until now,  
tarjih fatwa collections from 1997 to 2018 have entered the editing stage, and some are  
just waiting to be published.

**Figure 6.** Translation of Figure 5.



Mau tau sejarah lengkapnya?  
Atau mau cari produk tarjih?  
yuk bisa kalian kepoin di sini 🗨️

**tarjih.or.id**

tarjih channel  
majelistarjih  
pusattarjih\_muhammadiyah  
Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Muhammadiyah

tarjih.or.id  
fatwatartjih.or.id



**Figure 7.** Information on the official website of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

the early generation of Muhammadiyah fortified Muslims from various superstitions, heresies, and myths by explaining the unacceptability of such popular beliefs and practices.

In a broader context, the case of Zulkarnain El Madury also provides a lesson that using the name Muhammadiyah to justify personal opinions or legitimise particular



Do you want to know the full history (of the Tarjih Council)?  
 Or do you want to look for ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council?  
 Come on; you can find out on this website: tarjih.or.id

**Figure 8.** Translation of Figure 7.

interests is wrong. Muhammadiyah has the reputation of a very well managed organisation (Barton 2014; *Suara Muhammadiyah* 2019) which is its strength and gives it clout compared to other religious organisations in Indonesia, such as NU. In short, Muhammadiyah's authority lies in the institution itself and is not based on personality. It differs from NU, where power and authority tend to reside with personal figures, such as *kyai* or *gus* (Fauzi 2020b).

Muhammadiyah followers who understand its basic rules are not easily influenced by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. They are aware that Muhammadiyah's official religious stance is only be issued by the Tarjih Council and that those external to the Tarjih Council or even specific Muhammadiyah figures who give religious opinions, speak only for themselves as individuals and not the organisation. This would be the case, for example, even if the religious opinion emanates from the chair of the Tarjih Council as an individual. This did occur when Syamsul Anwar, the current chair of the Tarjih Council, differed from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council on the issue of *iftitāḥ* prayer (opening night prayer [*qiyām al-lail*]).<sup>26</sup> While Anwar's opinion clearly differs from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council, the prevailing opinion in Muhammadiyah is that of the Tarjih Council, not the chair of the Tarjih Council. Within Muhammadiyah, such religious differences of opinion are common as usually happens in *fiqh* discourse in general. The difference between El Madury and Anwar is that the latter does not act in the name of Muhammadiyah or the Tarjih Council when he has a different view. Instead, on many occasions, he urges Muhammadiyah followers to abide by the opinion of the Tarjih Council on the *iftitāḥ* prayer.<sup>27</sup> Thus Anwar has shown he can compromise his personal religious opinion with his professional attitude in the organisation. In this case, he understands that using the name Muhammadiyah to legitimise individual opinions or interests is not justifiable.

## Acknowledgements

Permission for this research PJB-002/SP3/LPPM-UAD/VI/2020 and funding were provided by the ethical board of Ahmad Dahlan University Research and Development Institute (Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan).

I am grateful to *ustaz* Zulkarnain El Madury for his exceptional help and support during my fieldwork. I also thank Amiruddin, Arif Nur Kholis, Muhammad Muflih, Wahyudi Abdurrahim,

<sup>26</sup>For Anwar (2013), the *iftitāḥ* prayer comprises two short *rak'ah* prayers that are performed before *qiyām al-lail*, with the condition that it must be preceded by sleep, otherwise there is no need to perform the *iftitāḥ* prayer. However, the Tarjih Council holds that the *iftitāḥ* prayer consists of two short *rak'ah* prayers performed before *qiyām al-lail*, whether preceded by sleep or not (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2011; Tim Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2019a).

<sup>27</sup>On several occasions, this author has heard Syamsul Anwar's direct appeal to Muhammadiyah members to follow the opinion of the Tarjih Council on this aspect of the *iftitāḥ* prayer.

Robby Karman, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, Ilham Ibrahim, Ariful Hazam, and the members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council for providing information regarding my research. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article and to the editors of the *Indonesia and the Malay World*. Errors, if any, are solely mine.

## Disclosure statement

Q1 No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Note on contributor

*Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi* is a lecturer in the Department of Hadith Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He has published widely on a variety of issues relating to Islamic Studies, including al-Quran, hadith, Islamic law, social media and da'wah, and Muhammadiyah studies. Email: niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id

## ORCID

*Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi*  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5659-6494>

## References

- Abdurrahim, Wahyudi Sarju. 2020. *Ahlul haq wassunah: syarah himpunan putusan tarjih Muhammadiyah bab iman bagian ketuhanan* [Ahlul haq wassunnah: explanation of tarjih decisions compilation of Muhammadiyah chapter on faith part of divinity]. Yogyakarta: Al Muflihun Publishing.
- Abror, Robby. 2020. Syekh Yunahar, ulama Muhammadiyah kharismatik [Sheikh Yunahar, a charismatic Muhammadiyah cleric]. 3 January. <<https://menara62.com/syeikh-yunahar-ulama-muhammadiyah-kharismatik/>> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2018. Media sosial dan pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [Social media and shifting religious authority]. 12 December. <[https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media\\_sosial\\_dan\\_pergeseran\\_otoritas\\_keagamaan](https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media_sosial_dan_pergeseran_otoritas_keagamaan)> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2020. The demise of moderate Islam: new media, contestation, and reclaiming religious authorities. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10 (1): 1–24.
- Alfaqi, Mifdal Zusron. 2015. Memahami Indonesia melalui prespektif nasionalisme, politik identitas, serta solidaritas [Understanding Indonesia through the perspectives of nationalism, identity politics, and solidarity]. *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 28 (2): 111–116.
- Alvara Research Center. 2020. Ramadhan dan pandemi Covid-19: semangat ibadah tak surut, konsumsi tersendat. <[https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN\\_DAN\\_PANDEMI\\_COVID-19\\_SEMANGAT\\_IBADAH\\_TAK\\_SURUT\\_KONSUMSI\\_TERSENDAT.pdf](https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN_DAN_PANDEMI_COVID-19_SEMANGAT_IBADAH_TAK_SURUT_KONSUMSI_TERSENDAT.pdf)> Accessed 23 February 2021.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2007. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer* [Contemporary Islamic law studies]. Jakarta: RM Books.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2013. *Salat Tarawih: Tinjauan usul fiqh, sejarah, dan fiqh* [Tarawih prayer: usul fiqh, history, and fiqh perspectives]. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2016. Fatwā, purification and dynamization: a study of tarjih in Muhammadiyah. *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (1): 27–44.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2018. *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Panitia Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih Muhammadiyah XXX.

- Anwar, Syamsul. 2020. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer Bagian dua* [Contemporary Islamic legal studies Part two]. Yogyakarta: UAD Press.
- Barton, Greg. 2014. The Gülen movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: progressive Islamic thought, religious philanthropy and civil society in Turkey and Indonesia. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25 (3): 287–301.
- Buchari, Sri Astuti. 2014. *Kebangkitan etnis menuju politik identitas* [Ethnic awakening towards identity politics]. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Bunt, Gary R. 2003. *Islam in the digital age: e-jihad, online fatwas and cyber Islamic environments*. London: Pluto Press.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2005. The 45th Muhammadiyah Congress contest between literal-conservative and liberal-moderate Muslims in Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 12 (1): 185–189.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2013. Liberal and conservative discourses in the Muhammadiyah: the struggle for the face of reformist Islam in Indonesia. In Martin van Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary developments in Indonesian Islam: explaining the 'conservative turn'*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2016. Aksi bela Islam: konservatisme dan fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. *Maarif* 11 (2): 15–29.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2020. Muslim televangelists in the making: conversion narratives and the construction of religious authority. *Muslim World* 110 (2): 154–175.
- Burhanudin, Jajat. 2004. The fragmentation of religious authority: Islamic print media in early 20th century Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 11 (1): 23–62.
- Campbell, H.A. and Teusner, P.E. 2011. Religious authority in the age of the internet. In *Christian Reflection, Virtual Lives*. Waco TX: Baylor University Press, pp. 59–68. <<https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/130950.pdf>>
- Chairi, Effendi. 2019. Ketidadaan otoritas terpusat dalam fenomena kontemporer di Indonesia [The absence of a centralised authority in contemporary phenomena in Indonesia]. *SANGKÉP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 2 (2):197–215.
- Chaplin. Chris. 2021. *Salafism and the State: Islamic activism and national identity in contemporary Indonesia*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.
- Dakta.com. 2016. Aa Gym ajak ribuan jamaahnya ikut aksi bela Islam III [Aa Gym invites thousands of congregants to join Islamic Defence Action III]. 29 November. <<http://www.dakta.com/news/7329/aa-gym-ajak-ribuan-jamaahnya-ikut-aksi-bela-islam-iii>> Accessed 2 February 2020.
- Fadl, Khaled Abou El. 2014. *Speaking in God's name: Islamic law, authority, and women*. London: Oneworld Publications.
- Farhan, Farhan. 2017. Pesan dakwah Felix Siauw di media sosial (perspektif meaning and media). *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Administrasi Islam* 1 (2): 209–226.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2017. Peranan Maqasid Al-Shariah dalam memahami Hadith: kajian terhadap fatwa Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah [The role of Maqasid Al-Shariah in understanding Hadith: a study of the fatwa of the Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah]. MA thesis, University of Malaya.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020a. PUTM dan kaderisasi ulama: menelusuri latar belakang lahirnya Lembaga Kaderisasi Ulama Muhammadiyah [PUTM and clerical regeneration: tracing the background of the birth of the Muhammadiyah Clerical Cadre Institute]. <<https://santricendekia.com/putm-dan-kaderisasi-ulama-menelusuri-latar-belakang-lahirnya-lembaga-kaderisasi-ulama-muhammadiyah/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020b. Tantangan kader ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah di era 4.0 [Challenges for Tarjih Muhammadiyah ulama cadres in the 4.0 era]. 21 July. *Suara 'Aisyiyah*<<https://suaraaisyiyah.id/tantangan-kader-ulama-tarjih-muhammadiyah-di-era-4-0/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Fealy, Greg. 2008. Consuming Islam: commodified religion and aspirational pietism in contemporary Indonesia. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.

Gesuri. 2020. Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia kehilangan ulama kharismatik [Yunahar Ilyas passed away, Indonesia lost a charismatic scholar]. 3 January. <<https://www.gesuri.id/internal/yunahar-ilyas-wafat-indonesia-kehilangan-ulama-kharismatik-b1YFoZpRY>> Accessed 20 March 2020.

Hew, Wai Weng. 2018. The art of dakwah: social media, visual persuasion and the Islamist propagation of Felix Siau. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (134): 61–79.

Hoesterey, James B. 2008. Marketing morality: the rise, fall and rebranding of Aa Gym. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: Religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, pp. 95–114.

Hope Cheong, Pauline. 2016. Religious authority and social media branding in a culture of religious celebrification. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*, University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 81–102.

Horsfield, Peter. 2016. The media and religious authority from ancient to modern. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*. University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 37–66.

IB Times Indonesia. 2020. 100 situs Islam Indonesia, NU Online peringkat pertama [100 Indonesian Islamic websites, NU Online ranks first]. 10 July. <<https://ibtimes.id/100-situs-islam-indonesia-nu-online-peringkat-pertama/>> Accessed 23 February 2023.

Ilyas, Yunahar. 2012. *Kuliah Akhlaq* [Akhlaq lecture]. XII. Yogyakarta: LPPI Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta.

Khamis, S., Ang, L. and Welling, R. 2017. Self-branding, ‘micro-celebrity’ and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191–208.

Khomalia, Isti and Rahman, Khairul Arief. 2018. Micro hijabers celebrity: membentuk identitas dengan update self-story via instagram (kasus dian pelangi). *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban dan Pemikiran Islam* 2 (1): 33–42.

Kompas. 2020. Sejumlah tokoh hadir prosesi pemakaman ketua PP Muhammadiyah Yunahar Ilyas [Many figures attended the funeral procession of Muhammadiyah chairman Yunahar Ilyas]. 3 January. <<https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/03/19142441/sejumlah-tokoh-hadiri-prosesi-pemakaman-ketua-pp-muhammadiyah-yunahar-ilyas>> Accessed 3 April 2022.

Labiq. 2019. Pengaruh new media terhadap pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [The influence of new media on shifting religious authority]. 19 April. <<https://geotimes.co.id/opini/pengaruh-new-media-terhadap-pergeseran-otoritas-keagamaan>> Accessed 19 October 2020.

Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. 2010. *Politik identitas dan masa depan pluralisme Indonesia*. Edited by Samsu Rizal Panggabean et al. Jakarta: Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (PUSAD) Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina.

Madury, Zulkarnain El. 2019. Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam? [Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?]. 2 November. <<https://www.facebook.com/zulkarnainsumenep/posts/2386248524961601>> Accessed 5 May 2020.

Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah. 2016. Pembukaan Halaqah, Majelis Tarjih Launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan Muhammadiyah Observatorium Network [Halaqah opening, Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and Muhammadiyah Observatory Network]. 20 August. <<https://tarjih.or.id/pembukaan-halaqah-majelis-tarjih-launching-pusat-tarjih-muhammadiyah-dan-muhammadiyah-observatorium-network/>> Accessed 6 October 2023.

Majelis Tarjih Dahlan, Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. 2016. Nota Kesepakatan Majelis Tarjih Dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Tentang Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di Islamic Center Universitas Ahmad Dahlan [Memorandum of Agreement between the Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board and Ahmad Dahlan University on the Management of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre at the Islamic Centre of Ahmad Dahlan University]. Yogyakarta.

Maskur, Maskur and Noor, Irfan Noor. 2014. Ustadz selebriti Abdullah Gymnastiar dalam budaya populer (perspektif hipersemiotika Yasraf Amir Piliang) [Celebrity Ustadz Abdullah

- Gymnastiar in popular culture (Yasraf Amir Piliang's hyper semiotics perspective)]. *Jurnal Studia Insania* 2 (1): 47–57.
- Matheson, Craig. 1987. Weber and the classification of forms of legitimacy. *British Journal of Sociology* 38 (2): 199–215.
- Muhammadiyah Central Board. 2023. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 8 October 2023.
- Nisa, Eva F. 2019. Internet and Muslim women. In Ronald Lukens-Bull and Mark Woodward (eds), *Handbook of contemporary Islam and Muslim lives*. Cham: Springer, pp. 1–19.
- Palahuddin. 2020. The typology of religious thought in Muhammadiyah. *International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 3 (2): 74–81. <<http://journal2.uad.ac.id/index.php/ijish/article/view/2233/pdf>>
- Peacock, James L. 1978. *Purifying the Faith: the Muhammadiyah movement in Indonesian Islam*. Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2011. *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2016. Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan MuON [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and MuON]. 20 August. <<http://www.umm.ac.id/id/muhammadiyah/7070.html>> Accessed 20 March 2021.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Berikut Susunan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah pPeriode 2022–2027 [The following is the composition of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the 2022–2027 period] <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/berikut-susunan-pimpinan-pusat-muhammadiyah-periode-2022-2027/>> Accessed 7 October 2023.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Majelis Tabligh [Tabligh Council]. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 07 October 2023.
- Postill, John and Pink, Sarah. 2012. Social media ethnography: the digital researcher in a messy web. *Media International Australia* 145 (1): 123–134.
- Pribadi, Yanwar. 2019. Fragmentasi umat dan penciptaan otoritas keagamaan: tanggapan terhadap 'Islam lokal' dan 'Islam asing' di Indonesia [Ummah fragmentation and the creation of religious authority: responses to 'local Islam' and 'foreign Islam' in Indonesia]. *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 21 (1): 103–119. <<https://jmb.lipi.go.id/jmb/article/view/828/455>>
- Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah. n.d. *Panduan pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre management guide]. Majelis Tarjih, Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta.
- Quadri, Syed Junaid A. 2013. Transformations of tradition: modernity in the thought of Muḥammad Bakhīr Al-Muṭī'ī. PhD thesis, McGill University.
- Rahman, Asjmunī Abdur et al. 1985. Laporan penelitian Majlis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (suatu studi tentang sistem dan metode penentuan hukum) [Research report of Majlis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (a study of the system and method of determining the law)]. Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga.
- Rakyat Merdeka. 2019. Dubes Malaysia jenguk ketum MUI Yunahar Ilyas di Yogyakarta [Malaysian ambassador visits MUI chairman Yunahar Ilyas in Yogyakarta]. 5 November. <<https://rm.id/baca-berita/internasional/21745/dubes-malaysia-jenguk-ketum-mui-yunahar-ilyas-di-yogyakarta>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Riesebrodt, Martin. 1999. Charisma in Max Weber's Sociology of Religion. *Religion* 29 (1): 1–14.
- Sadasri, Lidwina Mutia. 2017. Selebriti mikro di media baru kajian presentasi diri dalam vlog selebriti mikro [Micro-celebrities in new media: a study of self-presentation in micro-celebrity vlogs]. *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi Dan Opini Publik* 21 (2): 167–181. <<https://jurnal.kominfo.go.id/index.php/jpkop/article/view/1218/720>>
- Saefullah, Hikmawan. 2022. Media baru, publik baru: mengkonfigurasi ulang ruang publik Islam [New media, new publics: reconfiguring the Islamic public sphere]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.



Sammy, Abdullah. 2022. Peluang dan tantangan dakwah digital Muhammadiyah [Opportunities and challenges of Muhammadiyah digital da'wah]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.

Sanjaya, Makroen. 2022. Peta ideologi islam di media sosial [The map of Islamic ideology on social media]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.

Senft, Theresa M. 2008. *Camgirls: celebrity and community in the age of social networks*. New York: Peter Lang.

Shamsy, Ahmed El. 2013. The Hāshiya in Islamic law: a sketch of the Shāfi'ī literature. *Oriens* 41 (3-4): 289–315.

Shihab, Alwi. 1995. The Muhammadiyah movement and its controversy with Christian mission in Indonesia. PhD thesis, Temple University, USA.

Spencer, Martin E. 1970. Weber on legitimate norms and authority. *British Journal of Sociology* 21 (2): 123–134.

Suara Muhammadiyah. 2019. Hyung Jun Kim: sistem di Muhammadiyah sungguh ideal [Hyung Jun Kim: Muhammadiyah's system is ideal]. <<https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/08/01/hyung-jun-kim-sistem-di-muhammadiyah-sungguh-ideal/>> Accessed 9 April 2022.

Suyadi and Widodo, Hendro. 2019. Millennialization of Islamic education based on neuroscience in the third generation university in Yogyakarta Indonesia. *QIIS International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7 (1): 173–202.

Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2009. Hukum tentang jenggot dan cadar [Islamic law perspective on beards and veils]. *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine, no. 18 . Yogyakarta.

Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019a. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 4*. Cetakan IX. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019b. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 7*. Cetakan IV. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Tirto.id. 2018. Dari Aa' Gym ke Felix Siauw: ustaz medsos & medium dakwah politis. Tirto.Id. 16 January. <<https://tirto.id/dari-aa-gym-ke-felix-siauw-ustaz-medsos-medium-dakwah-politis-cCGf>> Accessed 5 February 2020.

Turner, Bryan S. 2007. Religious authority and the new media. *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2): 117–134.

Turner, Graeme. 2010. *Ordinary people and the media: the demotic turn*. Los Angeles CA: Sage.

Widodo, Arif. 2017. Transformative intellectual discourse and movement of Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM). *Iseedu: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices* 1 (1): 126–151. <<https://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/iseedu/article/view/5423/3542>>

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change*. Princetoon NJ: Princeton University Press.

ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY *USTAZ* PHENOMENON

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

**QUERY SHEET**

This page lists questions we have about your paper. The numbers displayed at left are hyperlinked to the location of the query in your paper.

The title and author names are listed on this sheet as they will be published, both on your paper and on the Table of Contents. Please review and ensure the information is correct and advise us if any changes need to be made. In addition, please review your paper as a whole for typographical and essential corrections.

Your PDF proof has been enabled so that you can comment on the proof directly using Adobe Acrobat. For further information on marking corrections using Acrobat, please visit <https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/how-to-correct-proofs-with-adobe/>

The CrossRef database ([www.crossref.org/](http://www.crossref.org/)) has been used to validate the references. Changes resulting from mismatches are tracked in red font.

**AUTHOR QUERIES**

QUERY NO.	QUERY DETAILS
<b>Q1</b>	The disclosure statement has been inserted. Please correct if this is inaccurate.



# ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY *USTAZ* PHENOMENON

## Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi 

### ABSTRACTS

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the fragmentation of religious authority. In the Indonesian context, the mainstream religious authority held by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has been challenged and threatened by micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This article examines the emergence of the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah fanpage on Facebook, created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board as it has threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority. It analyses Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace, by taking a closer look at what has been done by Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, an assembly that has the exclusive authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* within Muhammadiyah. This article also discusses lessons that can be learned from the case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the response of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

### ABSTRAK

Kemunculan internet dan media sosial telah mempertajam fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. Dalam konteks Indonesia, otoritas keagamaan arus utama yang dipegang oleh Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) disaingi dan diancam oleh para ustaz mikro-selebritas. Artikel ini mengkaji kemunculan fanpage Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah di Facebook yang dibuat dan dikelola oleh Zulkarnain El Madury, seseorang yang mengklaim sebagai ustaz Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, karena dianggap mengancam otoritas keagamaan Muhammadiyah. Penelitian ini menganalisis upaya Muhammadiyah dalam mempertahankan otoritas keagamaannya di dunia maya dengan melihat lebih dekat pada apa yang telah dilakukan oleh Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah, sebuah majelis yang memiliki otoritas eksklusif untuk mengeluarkan fatwa dan ijtihad keagamaan resmi di Muhammadiyah. Artikel ini juga membahas pelajaran yang dapat dipetik dari kasus Zulkarnain El Madury dan respons Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

### KEYWORDS

Fragmentation of religious authority; micro-celebrity *ustaz*; Muhammadiyah; religious authority; *tarjih*

### KATA KUNCI

Fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan; Muhammadiyah; otoritas keagamaan; *tarjih*; *ustaz* mikro-selebritas



## Introduction

The Alvara Research Center (2020) survey was surprising as it stated that the clerics most heard by the public, especially in Ramadan 2020, were not from the official Muhammadiyah board.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the Alvara Research Center survey was released (IBTimes.id 2020), an Islamic website managed by young Muhammadiyah intellectuals, published a report ranking the 100 most popular Islamic websites in Indonesia. The majority of these sites are managed by or affiliated to Nahdliyyin (NU followers) and Salafi<sup>2</sup> groups with few such sites operated by or affiliated to Muhammadiyah. The Alvara Research Center survey and the IBTimes.id report show that Muhammadiyah, in terms of influence and religious authority on the internet, lags behind other religious groups which is ironic for an organisation claiming to represent the progressive Islamic group.

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the so-called fragmentation of religious authority. Eva F. Nisa (2019), for example, mentions that the proliferation of various digital platforms is directly proportional to the increasing fragmentation of religious authority. Islamic discourse is monopolised not only by an elite group of scholars or mainstream religious groups, but also by persons or groups that have not been considered in Islamic discourse. Furthermore, the presence of the internet and social media has led to the birth of what is called micro-celebrity. Theresa M. Senft (2008) defines micro-celebrity as a new style of online performance that involves increasing popularity on social media such as videos, blogs, and networking sites. These micro-celebrities unlike conventional celebrities, emerge from what is known as new media (Senft 2008).

Of course, not all new media users have the adjective 'micro-celebrity'. Only those who experience what Graeme Turner (2010) terms 'the demotic turn', namely, the increasing visibility of ordinary people to appear as celebrities in the media, especially online media. In turn, both conventional and micro-celebrity exist in various public spheres, and the discourse on them is characterised as influencers, stimulants of consumerism, enthusiasm, public debate, and various activism (Sadasri 2017).

By borrowing the theory of micro-celebrities in the study of new media, we can then read how these micro-celebrities have also come to the fore in the religious realm. The emergence of ulama, *ustaz* (religious teachers), and religious leaders who become influencers in new media can perhaps be seen as one form of micro-celebrity. Felix Siauww is a prominent example. A convert, who is now a preacher, Siauww has a massive following on social media. In 2018, for example, he had 2.6 million followers on Twitter, and in 2022 it numbered 3.3 million. Felix Siauww's Instagram account has around 4.9 million followers. It can even be said that he is the *ustaz* who has the most followers on social media (Tirto 2018), making him one of the leading social media preachers in Indonesia today (Hew 2018). What Felix Siauww posts on his social media has more or less influenced the map of religious authorities in Indonesia.

The existence of the internet and the continuing development of technology allows the emergence of many other micro-celebrity *ustaz*, both in the national arena more

<sup>1</sup>One of the 15 most popular clerics mentioned in the report, Ustaz Ali Hidayat, has since been included on the Muhammadiyah Central Board's Tabligh Council (2022–2027; Muhammadiyah Central Board 2023). Prior to that, he did not convey official Muhammadiyah ideas in his lectures.

<sup>2</sup>For more comprehensive information on the activism of Salafi groups, see Chris Chaplin (2021).

generally or more specifically in internal religious organisations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, Persis (Persatuan Islam) or others. In the context of Muhammadiyah, the largest modernist Islamic organisation began to be challenged for its religious authority by a preacher who was said to be part of Muhammadiyah itself, namely Zulkarnain El Madury. He claims to be a Muhammadiyah cadre and often introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board. In recent years, El Madury has been noticed by Muhammadiyah administrators and Muhammadiyah cadres<sup>3</sup> and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah) has discussed him in a special meeting. This is because the posts on the Facebook page that El Madury manages, *Syarah Himpunan Putus Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (henceforth SHPTM), often differ significantly from – and to some extent delegitimise – a Muhammadiyah fatwa or official decision. Responses from grassroots or Muhammadiyah followers vary. This can be seen, for example, from the comments on each post. Some defend and remain adamant on the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah, but not a few were affected and followed what was conveyed by El Madury on his Facebook page.

This is where it becomes crucial to see how Muhammadiyah attempts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace, especially among its members and the public. By conducting web content analysis (Postill and Pink 2012) on SHPTM and official social media accounts and those affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this article shows how El Madury builds his narratives and, in turn, how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority on the internet. Additionally, field research was conducted and key actors were interviewed offline and online in a semi-structured format.<sup>4</sup> Apart from El Madury, the key actors are members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Digital Broadcast Centre (Pusat Syiar Digital Muhammadiyah), Muhammadiyah activists as well as Muhammadiyah grassroots.

### Fragmentation of religious authority, new preacher and micro-celebrity *ustaz* phenomenon

Fragmentation of religious authority is a phenomenon that occurs in various religious communities and is not limited to Islam (B.S. Turner 2007; Campbell and Teusner 2011; Hope Cheong 2016). The fragmentation of religious authority is also a global phenomenon as pointed out by Gary R. Bunt (2003) who states that the new media have shaped diverse understandings among individual Muslims worldwide about e-jihad (electronic jihad). The definition of electronic jihad is understood and interpreted differently, ranging from online activism to Muslim articulation after the events of 11 September 2001. Bunt (2003) shows that each new media (in this case, new websites) has authority for its respective group.

The fragmentation of religious authority discussed here is from the 20th century to the present. Jajat Burhanudin (2004) points out that there has been a shift in religious authority in the historical phase of Indonesian religious thought in the early 20th century due to modernisation. His study, which focuses on the Islamic print media, further shows

<sup>3</sup>This author's online and offline interviews with Amiruddin, Robby Karman, Muhammad Muflih, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, and Arif Nur Kholis, 2019–2020.

<sup>4</sup>Data collection in this study was carried out between 2018 and 2020. As personal interviews were not possible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, some interviews were conducted online.

that there is a shift in religious authority that used to be in *Kitab Kuning*<sup>5</sup> taught by *kyai* or ulama in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to magazines, journals, newspapers, and books published by modernist circles or organisations.

Religious authority since the early 20th century has always stayed with Muhammadiyah and NU. These two religious organisations are often referred to by scholars as the authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016; Akmaliah 2018). The shift in religious authority occurred again in the 1990s when national television stations emerged. The Islamic programmes presented by the television stations show the *ustaz* (religious teachers), which in turn build their authority through lectures delivered by these preachers. This phenomenon prompted scholars to come up with the term 'Islamic televangelism' (Akmaliah 2018). Abdullah Gymnastiar who is better known as Aa Gym is one example that falls into the category of a television *ustaz*, or a 'tele-dai' as coined by Greg Fealy (2008).

The most obvious and recent picture of the fragmentation of religious authority in Indonesia is the series of events of the Defend Islam Action (Aksi Bela Islam). Ahmad Najib Burhani (2016) hints that these critical events marked the peak of the fragmentation of religious authorities in Indonesia as they gave rise to new actors who challenge the established religious authority. Although it cannot be said to shift or match the role of Muhammadiyah and NU, the emergence of new actors such as Rizieq Shihab provides a new map of religious authority in Indonesia.

This phenomenon of the fragmentation of religious authority has increased sharply in the development of what scholars call pop culture, marked by the birth of many new media (Labiq 2019). The availability of internet access to every social class is the main factor for this fragmentation. As a result, many new media have emerged with each individual and group competing to spread ideas (Horsfield 2016; Nisa 2019).

Aa Gym is one of the early actors who emerged in the internet era in Indonesia. This can be captured in two interesting studies on Aa Gym by James B. Hoesterey (2008), and Maskur and Noor (2014). Although the use of the internet as a medium of da'wah around during the early 2000s was not as massive as it is now, the emergence of Aa Gym as a new cleric on the national da'wah stage through lectures, seminars, and Islamic training is a phenomenon in itself. Hoesterey (2008) studies the journey of Aa Gym from his first appearance as a preacher, falling, and then successfully rebranding to restore his religious authority. This is evident, for example, from how Aa Gym has many listeners (*Dakta.com* 2016). Popular culture has also brought Aa Gym to be seen not only by the public, especially by his followers, as also singer, actor, author, etc. Thus, he has transformed from an ordinary cleric to a celebrity cleric. Through a hypersemiotic perspective, Maskur and Noor (2014) show the various aspects of Aa Gym's personality.

Following the appearance of Aa Gym and with further rapid development of information technology, many other new preachers began to appear. Hew Wai Weng (2018) describes how Felix Siauw is another skilful religious preacher. Being a cleric with the most followers on the internet did not make Siauw neglect to spread his da'wah in the real world. Hew (2018) points out that Siauw has blended online and offline da'wah harmoniously. According to Hew (2018) and Farhan (2017), one of the

<sup>5</sup>So-called because the books were printed on yellow paper. These were the Islamic texts used in the education of Islamic schools.

keys to Siauw's success in preaching is his ability to present an entertaining and straightforward da'wah, even though its content is dogmatic and political.

Aa Gym and Felix Siauw are two micro-celebrity *ustaz* as a result of the new media. The term micro-celebrity *ustaz* was adopted and reconstructed from the theory of micro-celebrity. Most of these studies conducted from the perspective of pop culture (Senft 2008; G. Turner 2010; Khamis, Ang and Welling 2017; Sadasri 2017; Khomalia and Rahman 2018) describe the fragmentation of religious authority, marked by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By this term this author means an ordinary *ustaz/ustazah* who has skyrocketed in popularity and is celebrity on and because of social media so that he or she is able to influence certain people or communities. In other words, it means the *ustaz/ustazah* has experienced what G. Turner (2010) calls 'the demotic turn', when ordinary people are highly visible on social media and become celebrities. Challenges to established religious authorities by new religious personalities or groups are rarely touched on except that of Yanwar Pribadi (2019). His study explains the the efforts of 'local Islam' (*Islam lokal*) to defend its religious authority from the threat of 'foreign Islam' (*Islam asing*). However, his study differs from what this author will examine in tracing Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

This study is on a micro-celebrity *ustaz*, Zulkarnain El Madury who is less well known when compared to Aa Gym or Felix Siauw but he has a strong influence on the internet. His identity as a preacher from Muhammadiyah who targets Muhammadiyah followers with postings that are often different and even delegitimise the official voice of this largest modernist mass organisation deserves to be investigated. This study, apart from showing Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority on the internet, also seeks explicitly to fill the gap in previous studies. In his latest study, Akmaliah (2020) shows that Muhammadiyah and NU have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was strongly reactive to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) indicates there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's responses less hostile. Sammy (2022), Sanjaya (2022), and Saefullah (2022) came to the same conclusion as Akmaliah, claiming that Muhammadiyah is significantly less adaptive to the emergence of new media, and therefore its da'wah often loses to that of the micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This study focuses on the struggle of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as the only assembly under Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas and official *ijtihad* exposition within Muhammadiyah.

### **Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah fanpage**

The Facebook SHPTM fanpage was created by Zulkarnain El Madury. He was born in Sumenep on the island of Madura in 1963, with the name Zulkarnain bin Syamsuri. He claims to have studied in Malaysia at the Institute of Business Study and always introduces himself as a preacher from the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah). He spent his childhood in Madura and was a traditionalist Muslim like others on the island. He grew up in a milieu dominated by the NU traditionalist Islamic organisation. He used to perform

*tahlilan* (ritual prayers for the dead), *ziarah* (pilgrimage to the grave), and other practices that, according to him, after becoming a member of Muhammadiyah, were not following the Sunnah of the Prophet. He received his religious education at the Islamic boarding school at-Taufiqiyyah Sumenep Madura. In 1976 he became acquainted with Muhammadiyah. He became interested in the da'wah and religious understanding of the Muhammadiyah movement founded by Ahmad Dahlan after listening to a lecture by one of its preachers. In 1977, he officially joined Muhammadiyah.<sup>6</sup>

Since joining Muhammadiyah, El Madury has been active as a preacher who spreads religious ideas and understanding. From 1990 to 2007, he was one of the Muhammadiyah preachers who was sent to remote areas by the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board. His daily activities are now preaching at different places as well as creating content on for SHPTM fanpage. He now lives in Jakarta as the *tarjih* and *tabligh* council chair of the Pondok Gede Muhammadiyah Branch.<sup>7</sup> He created SHPTM in 2014.<sup>8</sup> However, in the digital history that this author can trace, the fanpage was created in 2015 as the earliest post that is currently traceable is dated 5 January 2015.

According to El Madury, the fanpage began with the WhatsApp group he created which he named *Tarjih dan Tabligh Institut* (Tarjih and Tabligh Institute) to provide a space to discuss and spread ideas related to *tarjih*.<sup>9</sup> He included many Muhammadiyah figures and activists in this group, including (the now late) Buya Yunahar Ilyas. Over time, seeing that El Madury's posts on SHPTM were deemed inconsistent with the *tarjih* spirit of Muhammadiyah, several people, such as Fathurrahman Kamal and Buya Risman, sharply criticised the postings. El Madury, Fathurrahman Kamal, and Buya Risman were then engaged in a heated debate which was relayed later to Buya Yunahar Ilyas. The response by Buya Yunahar Ilyas at that time, according to El Madury, differed from that of his critics. Buya Yun responded quite positively because he saw El Madury's initiative as providing *syarah* (explanation) or further explication of the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Decisions Compilation). Finally, he gave his permission to El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com).<sup>10</sup>

El Madury's early postings on SHPTM, were still relatively consistent in uploading Muhammadiyah fatwas in the question (from someone) and answer format from the fatwa division of the Tarjih Council. This is similar to the the original question and answer format administered by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, whose fatwas were later published in the *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine. However, over time, SHPTM included posts that apart from the dissemination of Muhammadiyah's official *ijtihad* included the personal opinions of El Madury. These opinions in inelegant words are often offensive to other groups. Not infrequently, his posts contradict the

<sup>6</sup>Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Muhammadiyah's use of the word *tarjih* has changed throughout its development. In its early period, and following its usage in the principles of law (*usul al-fiqh*), *tarjih* conveyed the meaning of examining the various opinions of Muslim jurists on a particular question and evaluating them to determine which is most faithful to the original Shari'a sources. Over time this usage gradually included any intellectual endeavour used to study new cases that earlier jurists had not addressed. In short, in Muhammadiyah's perspective, *tarjih* is identical, or almost identical, to *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

<sup>10</sup>Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

official stance of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in particular, or Muhammadiyah in general, such as on the veil issue (see below). Since Facebook introduced its 'live broadcast' feature, El Madury has also availed of it to conduct live lectures. The SHPTM is popular with netizens. As of the time of writing (3 April 2022), it has been followed by 19,423 and is 'liked' by 8,868 people. His posts also often receive both positive and critical comments from viewers.

El Madury gave several reasons that brought about the creation of his fanpage. Firstly, it is aimed at fortifying Muhammadiyah followers against all forms of superstition, heresy, and myth as its posts focus on issues related to faith and worship. Secondly, he aims to counter those liberal Muhammadiyah activists and has openly responded to such views. His posts often openly attacks the religious practices of the the Nahdliyyin, resulting in several clashes between him and the Nahdliyyin figure, Idrus Ramli.<sup>11</sup>

Despite having many followers El Madury and his SHPTM do have critics. Many Muhammadiyah followers are concerned about the SHPTM posts. Some have tried to convey their anxiety through the official social media accounts of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre (Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah).<sup>12</sup> Those concerned generally want to ask for firm action from the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as El Madury has included 'Tarjih Muhammadiyah' in his fanpage name. The demands to the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, when summarised, include: (1) that the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council reprimand or remind Zulkarnain El Madury not to use symbols or names that are closely related to Tarjih Muhammadiyah for or on his fanpage; (2) making and circulating an announcement that the fanpage is not a social media account of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council or the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre; (3) announcing the official social media accounts and websites of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre, so that Muhammadiyah people at the grassroots are not deceived by the existence of the fanpage and know where to look for religious reference sites, especially on the internet.

### **Zulkarnain El Madury and his efforts in building religious authority**

Zulkarnain El Madury and his fanpage SHPTM, have threatened the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, and specifically, the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. Many of his posts affect Muhammadiyah followers in particular and Muslims in general as these posts often differ from the official stance of Muhammadiyah, and in some cases contradict the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. This has stimulated public debate on social media, allowing El Madury to become a micro-celebrity *ustaz*. As a result of the general public and the online community attention, El Madury has been able to gradually build up his religious authority. From the Weberian perspective (Riesebrodt 1999), he has been able to do this in two ways. The first is through charisma (charismatic authority) and the second is traditional authority discussed later. According to Weber, charisma is a particular type of authority whose original form is based on a specific belief contained in a particular person (ibid.). El Madury claims he has the endorsement of Yunahar Ilyas, a

<sup>11</sup>Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>12</sup>Interviews with Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf and Ariful Hazam, November 2020 who are grassroots of Muhammadiyah, and social media administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah.



very popular Muhammadiyah cleric respected by the community from within the Muhammadiyah circle and from Muslims in general which is a form of charismatic authority.

Yunahar Ilyas (1956–2020) or Buya Yun as he was popularly known, was an exegete (*mufasssir*) born in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, who died at the age of 63 (Ilyas 2012). He was an alumnus of Imam Ibn Su'ud University (Saudi Arabia) and an excellent lecturer in conveying religious messages. He was seen as a charismatic cleric by Muhammadiyah followers and Muslims, in general, and this reputation extended to neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore (Abror 2020; Gesuri 2020). On his death in early 2020, many people flocked to pay their last respects to Buya Yun who held the chair of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for three terms (Kompas 2020; Rakyat Merdeka 2019).

By harnessing the charisma of Buya Yun, El Madury was able to increase his religious authority. On various occasions, including when this author interviewed him, Buya Yun's name was often mentioned as an argument and a shield.<sup>13</sup> El Madury insisted that he created the SHPTM fanpage with the permission of Yunahar Ilyas.<sup>14</sup> He added that Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website tanyajawabagama.com, had similarly received permission from Buya Yun. Wahyudi Abdurrahim confirmed Zulkarnain's claims and Muhammad Muflih, a grassroots representative added that it is a form of fairness.<sup>15</sup> In other words, Buya Yun's permission is a form of appreciation given by someone who is more senior and has a high social position in Muhammadiyah to someone who is more junior and classified as a grassroots Muhammadiyah member.<sup>16</sup> Permission from Buya Yun, who has charisma within Muhammadiyah in particular, has become a tool used by El Madury in building his religious authority.

In Weberian charismatic authority, charisma is not only about a belief in the existence of extraordinary or superpowers possessed by or contained in humans but also about particular objects other than humans (Riesebrodt 1999). We thus have an explanation as to why El Madury named his fanpage *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a highly respectable and crucial council in Muhammadiyah. Founded in 1927, the Council functions as an assembly that carries out its agenda of purification of religion and the dynamisation of social life. It conducts research and investigations towards this purity, and accordingly gives fatwas and compiles religious guidelines on faith (*'aqidah*) and worship (*'ibadah*) as well as social relations (*mu'āmalah*) (Rahman et al. 1985; Anwar 2016). In addition, this Council makes efforts to resolve differences and disagreements on religious issues, which are usually referred to as *khilāfiyyah* problems, so that they are directed more productively (Anwar 2007, 2016).

The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a body that is responsible for formulating the ideological basis of the Muhammadiyah movement (Anwar 2007, 2016) and is Muhammadiyah's representative in the religious field (Fauzi 2017). The Council produces three

<sup>13</sup>This author's informants include Muhammad Muflih (grassroot of Muhammadiyah and initiator of the website tanyajawabagama.com), Robby Karman (secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association [DPP IMM] 2018–2021), and several participants invited by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council with the agenda 'Responding to Emergence of Syarah HPT on Social Media' on 25 September, 2020; interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>14</sup>Interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>15</sup>Online interview with Wahyudi Abdurrahim through WhatsApp, September 2020.

<sup>16</sup>Online interview with Muhammad Muflih through WhatsApp and Facebook, 20 October 2019.

types of *ijtihad*, namely: (1) *tarjih fatwa (fatwa tarjih)*, (2) *tarjih decision (putusan tarjih)*, and (3) *tarjih discourse (wacara tarjih)* (Anwar 2016). *Tarjih fatwa* is the Council's answer to general questions on issues that require an explanation in terms of sharia law. Following the nature of the fatwa in general, the Council's fatwa is non-binding, on either organisations or members as individuals. Therefore, even the fatwa can be questioned and discussed. However, because the fatwa contains religious guidance derived from Islamic teaching sources (Anwar 2020), and the general public often does not actually understand the aspects of such a fatwa, it is still believed by Muhammadiyah members to be religious guidance. However, the *tarjih* decision is the official stance of Muhammadiyah in religious matters and is formally binding on the organisation and its members. But, in practice, sometimes Muhammadiyah members exercise their right to freedom not to be bound by the decision because they have different *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

Meanwhile, *tarjih* discourses are ideas or thoughts that are raised and put forward by the Council in seminars, *halaqah* (religious gathering or meeting to discuss the Qur'an or Islam), or other forums in addressing various developing issues and at the same time fostering a critical spirit of *ijtihad* and collecting materials or ideas on various actual problems in society. The nature of this *tarjih* discourse is non-binding and does not become a fatwa that must be followed. *Tarjih* discourse is contained in various publications of the Council, such as *Jurnal Tarjih* (Tarjih Journal) and various published books (Anwar 2016).

The *tarjih* decision and the *tarjih fatwa*, hold their strength within Muhammadiyah as these are considered sacred by some of its members. In short, it can be said that anything that 'smells *tarjih*' has authority in the collective memory of Muhammadiyah followers. In the perspective of Khaled Abou El Fadl (2014), fatwa and *tarjih* decisions have the power of persuasive authority, as these can influence or direct others because they believed in them. The *tarjih* fatwas are officially published through the organisation's magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, and compiled in the *Tanya Jawab Agama* book. In comparison, the *tarjih* decisions are codified in a book called *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (commonly known as HPT). Thus, it can be understood why the attribution of the term *tarjih* to particular objects can give rise to charismatic authority, as mentioned by Weber.

What El Madury did can also be seen as identity politics which is defined as a political tool of a group whether it be ethnic, cultural, religious or others for specific purposes, such as a form of resistance or to show the identity of a group (Alfaqi 2015). Within this framework, identity is politicised through extreme interpretation, which aims to gain support from people who feel 'the same', through race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements. In the context of El Madury, the use of the *tarjih* label on his fanpage can be interpreted as a political tool to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muhammadiyah members. And, as seen in some of his sermon videos, El Madury also placed a flag with the Muhammadiyah symbol behind him. In this context, he wants to convince the viewers that he is close to Muhammadiyah. He has introduced himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board on many occasions.

According to Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif (2010), identity politics is always related to members of social groups who feel excluded by the mainstream in a nation or state. Sri Astuti Buchari (2014) also finds that the emergence of identity politics is mainly



caused by certain factors that an ethnic group sees as pressure from the political injustice. By looking at the observations made by Ahmad Najib Burhani (2013), El Madury, in this case, can be categorised as part of a group that feels excluded, threatened, and to some extent in need of justice within Muhammadiyah. Burhani (2013) explains the existence of two opposing schools of thought within Muhammadiyah which he refers to as 'Pure Islam' (*Islam Murni*) and 'Progressive Islam' (*Islam Progresif*). The conflict between these two schools of thought in Muhammadiyah began to surface at the 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Banda Aceh in 1995 (Burhani 2013).

The dominance of 'Progressive Islam' in Muhammadiyah strengthened after its 44th congress in Jakarta in 2000. This congress chose Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif as general chair. He is a progressive Muslim figure, an alumnus of the University of Chicago, and a student of the eminent progressive scholar Fazlur Rahman. At this congress, several names representing the 'Progressive Islam' group were included in the ranks of the central leadership of Muhammadiyah, such as Amin Abdullah, Dawam Raharjo, and Abdul Munir Mulkhan. During Ma'arif's leadership, progressive ideas not only dominated culturally but gradually became Muhammadiyah's official programmes (Burhani 2013).

Seeing the increasingly apparent threat from the ideas put forward by the 'Progressive Islam' group within Muhammadiyah, representatives of the 'Pure Islam' group did not remain silent. They compete and squabble over religious interpretations as to which is the most authentic. These two groups challenge each other through various channels, including seminars, discussions, publications. They usually have conflicting programmes. For example, as mentioned by Burhani (2013), when the Centre for the Study of Religion and Civilisation (PSAP/Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban) raised the theme of pluralism and multiculturalism in its journal, *Tanwir Journal*, the Tabligh Council<sup>17</sup> responded with articles in opposition in its magazine, *Majalah Tabligh*. In Burhani's investigation, during the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress in Malang, this conservative group set up a Pojok Anti-Liberal (anti-liberal corner) booth, which sold books, DVDs, t-shirts, magazines, and other anti-liberal mementos. Strikingly, some of the t-shirts for sale displayed the words 'Muhammadiyah Anti-Liberal' (Burhani 2013).

At the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress, it seemed that the 'Pure Islam' group was gaining momentum to beat back the 'Progressive Islam' group. The quarrels between these two groups occurred within congress committees and in the external arena. Burhani (2005, 2013) noted at least three critical issues where the 'Pure Islam' group defeated the 'Progressive Islam' in the congress arena, namely: (1) leadership change; (2) the position of women; and (3) resistance to liberal thought.

After the 45th congress, the feud between these two schools of thought has continued though waxing and waning at different times. The form of the feud now looks more varied given the availability of the internet where the presence of social media has

<sup>17</sup>Muhammadiyah has many assemblies such as Majelis Tabligh and Majelis Tarjih, each with its own functions and responsibilities. Majelis Tarjih is responsible for producing religious thoughts through fatwas and decisions, while Majelis Tabligh is responsible for disseminating them. Historically, Majelis Tabligh is known in Muhammadiyah as the anti-liberal wing and thus there are at times poor collaboration between Majelis Tarjih and Majelis Tabligh. For example, some fatwas issued by Majelis Tarjih, in Majelis Tabligh's perspective, are the result of liberal thinking. See Burhani (2013) and Palahuddin (2020).

changed the battle arena from a conventional to a more modern one. El Madury represents the 'Pure Islam' group, and has heated online debates with figures considered representatives of 'Progressive Islam' whose actions he sees as unsettling. For example, El Madury and the secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association (DPP IMM),<sup>18</sup> Robby Karman, have openly and frequently castigated each other on for example, issues about the veil and the Wahhabi. According to El Madury, Robby Karman is a young liberal figure in Muhammadiyah who should be challenged. El Madury also often attacks the IBTimes.id website, as it frequently contains articles that are progressive and, to some extent, controversial. This website has several former Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah (JIMM/Muhammadiyah Youth Intellectual Network) figures, such as Hilman Latief, Azaki Khoiruddin, and Mu'arif. On one occasion, when the chair of the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre admonished El Madury for uploading provocative posts that contradicted the official stance of the Tarjih Council, he defended himself by stating that equally provocative posts from the 'Progressive Islam' group should be similarly reprimanded. If he is the only one selected for rebuke then he felt an injustice had been done.<sup>19</sup> El Madury's attitude in the framework of identity politics reflects someone who feels excluded and threatened by certain parties. At such, his specific attributes and identity are a deliberate form of resistance to the domination of certain groups or thoughts that threaten him.

The second form of authority is what Weber calls traditional authority (Spencer 1970; Matheson 1987; Riesebrodt 1999). In simple terms, something can be considered as having traditional authority if it gains legitimacy based on beliefs or norms that have been established in a particular tradition (Chairi 2019). In other words, according to Spencer (1970), traditional authority is legitimised and, at the same time, constrained by traditional norms. Therefore, it is the opposite of charismatic authority. If in charismatic authority, it is the leader or someone who creates the norms, then it is the norms that create the leader or person in the traditional authority. In charismatic authority, the value of influence is generated by a person's personal qualities and is always associated with his personality. While in the case of traditional authority, it is generated by function and is related to someone or something that has traditional values (Spencer 1970).

In the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, ulama and the classical books they wrote can be considered to have this traditional authority. Ulama in Islamic tradition are called heirs of the Prophets. The authority of the ulama is derived from the legitimacy of religious texts which state that the prophetic tradition will be passed on to them. Therefore, the religious ideas they convey in writings or books contain an authoritative value for the next generation. This is the uniqueness of Islamic scholars and traditions, as mentioned by Muhammad Qasim Zaman (2002) who states that one of the most prominent aspects of pre-modern intellectual culture is the articulation of religious discourse through the so-called medium of the commentary. This is manifested in various forms such *al-syurūh*, *hawāsyī*, *rasā'il*, and *fatawā*. The various genres of books that contain explanations, descriptions, or responses to a book or social phenomena are a way for

<sup>18</sup>Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM) or Muhammadiyah Student Association is a proponent of Muhammadiyah in student affairs with the basic mission of realising the real Islamic society as formulated by Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Widodo 2017).

<sup>19</sup>On 3 November 2019, the manager of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah reprimanded Zulkarnain El Madury for his post on SHPTM on the veil which contradicts Muhammadiyah's official stance.

scholars to shape the identity and authority of the school or tradition they adhere to. In addition, it is also a means to interpreting the meaning of the foundational sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah (Zaman 2002).

An example is the *hawāsyī* tradition in the Shafii school. Its emergence, according to Ahmed El-Shamsy (2013), shows the peak of the authority of two scholars in that school, namely al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī. Al-Kurdi, as quoted by El Shamsy, called these two scholars 'the higher authorities in the Syafii school'. Those who want to know the authoritative opinion of the Shaf'i school have to go through the works of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī, and the books that explain further their works, namely the books written by Ibn Hajar al-Haitamī and Syamsuddīn al-Ramlī. These books have for later generations the value of traditional authority (Shamsy 2013: 292).

What is the connection between this traditional authority and El Madury? El Madury's posts on SHPTM and at religious forums where he speaks always rely on the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāth*). According to Endang Mintarja, chair of the Jakarta branch of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this aspect has drawn many people to El Madury's lectures.<sup>20</sup> What El Madury did, which Muhammadiyah did not do in many of its fatwas was to cite the Islamic intellectual tradition. In many of its fatwas, Muhammadiyah often only quotes the Qur'an or hadith to strengthen its argument, without citing the opinions of other Islamic scholars. Perhaps this is a consequence of the modernist movement, which became the spirit of Muhammadiyah. The modernist movement initiated by reformers such as Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, and Muḥammad Rasyīd Riḍā in the late 19th and early 20th centuries used the term *al-rujū' ilā al-qur'ān wa al-sunnah* ('back to the Qur'an and Sunnah'). According to Syed Junaid A. Quadri (2013), the most obvious indicator of this movement, especially in Islamic law, is its critical attitude towards the structure of pre-modern sharia authority symbols, which are articulated in the language and logic of the institution of *taqlīd*. Modernist groups always encourage reopening the door to *ijtihād* and invite Muslims to leave the interpretive monopoly that the ulama class has held (Quadri 2013).

Muhammadiyah, which is heavily inspired by the modernist movement, is oriented towards the Qur'an and Sunnah and tends to attach less importance to the Islamic intellectual tradition that has been built by the ulama. This can be seen from its *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (the methodology Muhammadiyah uses in conducting *ijtihād*), which asserts that Muhammadiyah is not affiliated to a particular school, but the opinions of these schools are only considered in determining religious norms (Anwar 2018). This means that understanding religion in the Muhammadiyah perspective is derived directly from its primary sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah through the *ijtihād* process. However, it should be noted here that the narration that confirms the opinions of the scholars is taken into account in determining norms is not that clear how they are implemented in *tarjih* issues.

In some of its official *ijtihād*, the nuances of the opinions of scholars, especially the pre-modern ones do not appear, by choice or otherwise. Thus it appears that El Madury is filling the Muhammadiyah gap in presenting the authority of the Islamic intellectual tradition in religious narratives. For example, in the controversial veil case, the

<sup>20</sup>Endang Mintarja voiced this at a Muhammadiyah Central Board Tarjih Council meeting of on the emergence 'Syarah HPT', 25 September 2020.

Tarjih Council issued three fatwas in 1993, 2003 and 2009.<sup>21</sup> The fatwas issued in 1993 and 2009 emphasised that the veil has no legal basis either in the Qur'an or the Sunnah but that Islamic law commands women to wear the hijab. These two fatwas did not cite the Islamic intellectual tradition, which also accommodates opinions about the veil. Although the Tarjih Council kept in its stance and strengthened the opinion that women's 'aurat (parts of the body that should go covered) are the whole body except the face and the palms of the hands, in the 2003 fatwa, the Tarjih Council provides space for those who want to wear the veil by expressing several opinions from the scholars who think so.

In contrast to the *tarjih* fatwas, El Madury's (2019) article *Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam?* ('Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?') on the SHPTM fanpage refutes the *tarjih* fatwa. He cites various opinions of scholars in the Islamic intellectual tradition who support mandatory veiling as an effort to build religious authority. From this, it appears that El Madury, apart from attacking the *tarjih* fatwa, believes in maintaining traditional authority, in this case, the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāts*).

What El Madury did in building religious authority can also be captured from what Burhani calls a conversion narrative. Some scholars define religious conversion narratives differently as for example, in the change from one religious tradition to another. William James, as quoted by Burhani (2020: 158), states that religious conversion can also be interpreted as the conversion of a person who is a sinner into someone pious. According to Burhani (2020), people who experience religious conversion, usually after embracing a new tradition or religious understanding, will be hostile to the previous religious tradition or understanding.

El Madury also experienced a religious conversion, in this case, from the NU tradition to Muhammadiyah's. On SHPTM as well as his views when interviewed by this author, he introduced himself as someone who had practised the '*kuburiyyun* tradition'<sup>22</sup> and other actions that did not have examples from the Prophet. To convince his followers, he posted information about his religious conversion from NU to Muhammadiyah. Besides condemning his previous practices, which were deemed to have no basis in the Qur'an and Sunnah, he has had acrimonious debates with the NU *kyai*, Idrus Ramli on various issues, such as *ahlus sunnah wal jamaah* and *wahabi, nahdliyyin* traditions that are often considered heresy, and so on.

### Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Before the advent of the internet and the emergence of various new religious authorities, Muhammadiyah and NU were the two largest religious organisations and authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). However, following the emergence of the so-called micro-celebrity *ustaz*, these two groups, according to some scholars, began to face challenges and threats. The recent study by Wahyudi Akmaliah (2020) shows that the two organisations have responded differently to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was more combative about their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) maintains there are some similarities between

<sup>21</sup>Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah (2009, 2019a, 2019b).

<sup>22</sup>The tradition of visiting the grave with its associated practices.

Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's response look less aggressive. Akmaliah is correct on several points, but other perspectives deserve to be considered, especially Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority on the internet. The weak point, as shown in Akmaliah's study is that there is no adequate elaboration of the assembly that exclusively holds religious authority in Muhammadiyah, namely the Tarjih Council. To trace more precisely how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority we have to look at the Tarjih Council.

This discussion starts from the author attending a meeting held by the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board in September 2020. The meeting was in response to the appearance of the *syarh* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Decisions Compilation) by El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim. Whilst El Madury's comments were on his SHPTM fanpage, Abdurrahim (2020) aired his views in his book. He was earlier mentioned as having had permission from Buya Yun to give *syarh* on HPT. The initial background for holding this meeting, as revealed by the secretary of the Tarjih Council, Mas'udi, was purely in response to the SHPTM posts by El Madury. However, information about the SHPTM other than the one written by El Madury prompted the board of the Tarjih Council to include the book by Abdurrahim with the same title for the agenda.

For this meeting, the Tarjih Council invited nine related sectors to discuss concerns over the emergence of the SHPTM on the internet written by the El Madury and Abdurrahim. The nine sector participants were: (1) the executive board of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (2) fatwa division of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (3) chair/secretary of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (4) Endang Mintarja (Chair of the Jakarta Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council); (5) Fathurrahman (Chair of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council); (6) H. Budi Setiawan; (7) Arif Nur Kholis (head of Muhammadiyah Digital Syiar Centre); (8) the manager of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre; and (9) the social media assistance team of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

During the meeting, there were at least four proposals from participants on how best to respond to the SHPTM, particularly El Madury's article about the veil. The first was to complain to Facebook about the SHPTM so that it could be banned for including an institution's name without permission. According to the chair of the Tabligh Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board, Fathurrahman Kamal, who was present at the forum, the fanpage is in the illicit category. This proposal was considered by the proponents as a firm proposal but that it risked unnecessary antagonism. The second was to use a persuasive approach in the form of clarification or an appeal to El Madury not to use the name *Himpunan Putusan Tajih* (HPT) or something that is associated with *tarjih*. Its proponents consider this approach to be softer and more reflective of being Muhammadiyah members in particular, and Muslims in general. The third proposal was to use institutional authority in writing an official letter on behalf of the Tarjih Council to El Madury. The fourth idea that was considered more practical and efficient was to place the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it on social media. This would avoid being drawn into unfruitful correspondence on SHPTM.

However, there was no agreement on which approach should be undertaken despite long discussions. It was agreed instead that there would be a follow up with another forum. Since this author started writing (3 April 2022) there has been no further



meeting. The emergence of SHPTM on the internet and its effects have been considered a serious problem by the Tarjih Council. The meeting's participants were generally uneasy about the appearance of El Madury and his fanpage. In addition, they wanted El Madury to be warned or reprimanded since SHPTM is considered a threat to religious authority of the Tarjih Council. This illustrates that Muhammadiyah, through its official religious assembly, the Tarjih Council, is not passive in responding to the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. However, only certain cases and not all micro-celebrity *ustaz* who appear on social media have drawn the Tarjih Council's attention. Although there has yet to be a follow up meeting, the Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an official institution supporting the Tarjih Council illustrates how Muhammadiyah struggles to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is an institution that was founded in 2016 by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Ahmad Dahlan University (Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah 2016). Despite being a new institution, its legality is clear, and it has formal authority. In the Muhammadiyah tradition as an organisation, such legality is essential. Thus when someone from Muhammadiyah, speaks on another person's behalf or endorses an approach, the speaker's status is below that of the institution and cannot be assumed to be that of institutions within Muhammadiyah which, although new, have legality. In the context of El Madury and the SHPTM fanpage, this is important. Even though El Madury claims he has obtained permission to make *syarh* on the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* from a charismatic figure in Muhammadiyah, Buya Yunahar, legally it is not valid. In that context, Buya Yunahar spoke on behalf of himself, not on behalf of Muhammadiyah.

Fronted by young Muhammadiyah cadres, the majority of whom are alumni of Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Tarjih Ulama Education, PUTM),<sup>23</sup> Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays a role in supporting the Tarjih Council programmes. These are relatively under-performing and facing obstacles, particularly on using social media to disseminate their official *ijtihad*. The members of the Tarjih Council, who are relatively old, need support from young cadres. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays an essential role in assisting the Tarjih Council in maintaining its religious authority on the internet. It responded to El Madury and SHPTM, by being pro-active with a poster (Figure 1) on social media and in print form, containing information related to the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it.

Although the poster above does not directly mention the SHPTM fanpage created by El Madury, the main message in it is clear and firm, namely to inform the Muhammadiyah followers about the official accounts of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it. This would hopefully let Muhammadiyah members understand how its official religious voice is disseminated on the internet. Following this, Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah successively uploaded other, more varied posters to indirectly counter the SHPTM fanpage. Some other examples of these posters are shown in Figures 3 and 5.

<sup>23</sup>PUTM is an educational institution under the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board designed to produce a cadre of Muhammadiyah scholars. PUTM organises a special programme that educates and prepares Muhammadiyah *tarjih* scholars who are competent in the religious field. The birth of PUTM was based on the concern of some Muhammadiyah leaders about the increasing scarcity of ulama in and from Muhammadiyah (Fauzi 2020a).



**Figure 1.** Poster with information on the official social media accounts affiliated to the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

The use of informal language and emoticons typical of millennials indicate the audience that the Tarjih Council wants to target. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah team understands that informal language will appeal to its target audience. This is aimed at not only establishing the authority of the Tarjih Council but ‘millennialisation’ i.e. to reach out to the younger generation familiar with social media. Suyadi and Widodo (2019) note that millennialisation is an alternative way to develop knowledge that will synergise with various online media and digital technology. In the context of *tarjih* millennialisation, Muhammadiyah’s official *ijtihad* that tend to be disseminated in a conventional, monotonous, and uncreative manner are now communicated through social media in more contextual packaging. This means that the Tarjih Council and its various official *ijtihad*, which previously were always identified with the ‘old’, now consciously aim to include young people.

The religious authority of the Tarjih Council in cyberspace, especially when connected with the appearance of El Madury and SHPTM, was greatly helped by the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah and its young Muhammadiyah cadres. It manages various social media platforms with large numbers of followers, and has helped maintain

Are you often confused about finding sources of reference about Islam from the perspective of Muhammadiyah?

There is no need to be confused anymore because various social media are straightforward for us to access. Tarjih (Council) has come with a more trendy look.

- ✓ Easy to read anywhere
- ✓ Provide updated fatwas
- ✓ Discuss current issues

As members of Muhammadiyah, let's get used to reading the decisions and fatwas of Muhammadiyah

Here are some media that can be accessed very easily. So don't be confused anymore.

Web: [fatwatarjih.or.id](http://fatwatarjih.or.id)

Facebook: [fb.me/fatwamu](https://fb.me/fatwamu)

Instagram: [pusattarjih\\_muhammadiyah](https://pusattarjih_muhammadiyah)

Telegram: [t.me/fatwatarjihmu](https://t.me/fatwatarjihmu)

Youtube: [tarjih channel](https://tarjih_channel)

Let's spread it to all Muhammadiyah people!

**Figure 2.** Translation of Figure 1.

Muhammadiyah's religious authority by balancing and suppressing the presence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. Its contents are fatwas and decisions of the Tarjih Council with more appealing visualisation to reach out to the millenials.

Although the number of social media followers of the Tarjih Council is less than that for the NU and Salafi groups, at least the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah acts as a compass for Muhammadiyah followers who question its religious authority, especially with the emergence of El Madury's version in SHPTM. The administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah's social media have received many messages either through the comments column or direct messages in its inbox, which question the authority of SHPTM.<sup>24</sup> Here, the vital role of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is increasingly finding its momentum.

## Conclusion

Although it can be said that Muhammadiyah's religious influence and authority on the internet are inferior and lag behind other religious groups, Muhammadiyah is still trying to manage its authority, especially when facing threats from micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By focusing on Zulkarnain El Madury and his SHPTM social media page, this article offers a different perspective from previous studies by analysing the work of the Tarjih Council as the only institution in Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas. This article shows that Muhammadiyah has its own way of responding to

<sup>24</sup>Interview with Ariful Hazamn, Ilham Ibrahim, and Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, September 2020. They are *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* social media administrators.





**Figure 3.** Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

the emergence of new religious authorities. With the help of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an institution in its fold, the Tarjih Council has made continuous efforts through social media and its official website to counter new voices that threaten its authority. Muhammadiyah's response was neither aggressive nor radical but it clarified its stance without mentioning who precisely was being targeted. What Muhammadiyah did was in line with the Javanese proverb *Ngluruk tanpo bolo, menang tanpo ngasorake* ('win without defeat, win without humiliation [of others]'). The form of Muhammadiyah's response is inherited from its founder, Ahmad Dahlan. As seen by James

Do you know?

The Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah now have an official YouTube channel, (namely) the Tarjih Channel.

Have you subscribed yet?

**Figure 4.** Translation of Figure 3.



**Figure 5.** Information about the website fatwatarjih.or.id, an official website affiliated to the Tarjih Council containing fatwas. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Peacock (1978), Ahmad Dahlan brought about many social transformations through discussions and education.<sup>25</sup> This can be seen, for example, from how Ahmad Dahlan and

<sup>25</sup>For example, Ahmad Dahlan and the early generation of Muhammadiyah explained to Muslims the unacceptability of popular beliefs and practices that had their roots in superstitions, heresies, and myths. He built hospitals, schools, and orphanages to counter these practices (Shihab 1995).

Fatwatartjih.or.id is the official website for the Tarjih and the Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board (MTT).

The Media Team of Fatwa Tarjih, through this website, has been, is and will continue to strive consistently to publish various ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council. Until now, tarjih fatwa collections from 1997 to 2018 have entered the editing stage, and some are just waiting to be published.

**Figure 6.** Translation of Figure 5.



Mau tau sejarah lengkapnya?  
Atau mau cari produk tarjih?  
yuk bisa kalian kepoin di sini 🗨️

**tarjih.or.id**

tarjih channel  
majelistarjih  
pusattarjih\_muhammadiyah  
Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Muhammadiyah

tarjih.or.id  
fatwatartjih.or.id



**Figure 7.** Information on the official website of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

the early generation of Muhammadiyah fortified Muslims from various superstitions, heresies, and myths by explaining the unacceptability of such popular beliefs and practices.

In a broader context, the case of Zulkarnain El Madury also provides a lesson that using the name Muhammadiyah to justify personal opinions or legitimise particular

Do you want to know the full history (of the Tarjih Council)?

Or do you want to look for *ijtihad* products from the Tarjih Council?

Come on; you can find out on this website: [tarjih.or.id](http://tarjih.or.id)

**Figure 8.** Translation of Figure 7.

interests is wrong. Muhammadiyah has the reputation of a very well managed organisation (Barton 2014; *Suara Muhammadiyah* 2019) which is its strength and gives it clout compared to other religious organisations in Indonesia, such as NU. In short, Muhammadiyah's authority lies in the institution itself and is not based on personality. It differs from NU, where power and authority tend to reside with personal figures, such as *kyai* or *gus* (Fauzi 2020b).

Muhammadiyah followers who understand its basic rules are not easily influenced by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. They are aware that Muhammadiyah's official religious stance is only be issued by the Tarjih Council and that those external to the Tarjih Council or even specific Muhammadiyah figures who give religious opinions, speak only for themselves as individuals and not the organisation. This would be the case, for example, even if the religious opinion emanates from the chair of the Tarjih Council as an individual. This did occur when Syamsul Anwar, the current chair of the Tarjih Council, differed from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council on the issue of *iftitāḥ* prayer (opening night prayer [*qiyām al-lail*]).<sup>26</sup> While Anwar's opinion clearly differs from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council, the prevailing opinion in Muhammadiyah is that of the Tarjih Council, not the chair of the Tarjih Council. Within Muhammadiyah, such religious differences of opinion are common as usually happens in *fiqh* discourse in general. The difference between El Madury and Anwar is that the latter does not act in the name of Muhammadiyah or the Tarjih Council when he has a different view. Instead, on many occasions, he urges Muhammadiyah followers to abide by the opinion of the Tarjih Council on the *iftitāḥ* prayer.<sup>27</sup> Thus Anwar has shown he can compromise his personal religious opinion with his professional attitude in the organisation. In this case, he understands that using the name Muhammadiyah to legitimise individual opinions or interests is not justifiable.

## Acknowledgements

Permission for this research PJB-002/SP3/LPPM-UAD/VI/2020 and funding were provided by the ethical board of Ahmad Dahlan University Research and Development Institute (Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan).

I am grateful to *ustaz* Zulkarnain El Madury for his exceptional help and support during my fieldwork. I also thank Amiruddin, Arif Nur Kholis, Muhammad Muflih, Wahyudi Abdurrahim,

<sup>26</sup>For Anwar (2013), the *iftitāḥ* prayer comprises two short *rak'ah* prayers that are performed before *qiyām al-lail*, with the condition that it must be preceded by sleep, otherwise there is no need to perform the *iftitāḥ* prayer. However, the Tarjih Council holds that the *iftitāḥ* prayer consists of two short *rak'ah* prayers performed before *qiyām al-lail*, whether preceded by sleep or not (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2011; Tim Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2019a).

<sup>27</sup>On several occasions, this author has heard Syamsul Anwar's direct appeal to Muhammadiyah members to follow the opinion of the Tarjih Council on this aspect of the *iftitāḥ* prayer.

Robby Karman, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, Ilham Ibrahim, Ariful Hazam, and the members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council for providing information regarding my research. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article and to the editors of the *Indonesia and the Malay World*. Errors, if any, are solely mine.

## Disclosure statement

Q1 No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).



## Note on contributor

**Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi** is a lecturer in the Department of Hadith Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He has published widely on a variety of issues relating to Islamic Studies, including al-Quran, hadith, Islamic law, social media and da'wah, and Muhammadiyah studies. Email: niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id

## ORCID

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5659-6494>

## References

- Abdurrahim, Wahyudi Sarju. 2020. *Ahlul haq wassunah: syarah himpunan putusan tarjih Muhammadiyah bab iman bagian ketuhanan* [Ahlul haq wassunnah: explanation of tarjih decisions compilation of Muhammadiyah chapter on faith part of divinity]. Yogyakarta: Al Muflihun Publishing.
- Abror, Robby. 2020. Syekh Yunahar, ulama Muhammadiyah kharismatik [Sheikh Yunahar, a charismatic Muhammadiyah cleric]. 3 January. <<https://menara62.com/syekh-yunahar-ulama-muhammadiyah-kharismatik/>> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2018. Media sosial dan pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [Social media and shifting religious authority]. 12 December. <[https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media\\_sosial\\_dan\\_pergeseran\\_otoritas\\_keagamaan](https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media_sosial_dan_pergeseran_otoritas_keagamaan)> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2020. The demise of moderate Islam: new media, contestation, and reclaiming religious authorities. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10 (1): 1–24.
- Alfaqi, Mifdal Zusron. 2015. Memahami Indonesia melalui prespektif nasionalisme, politik identitas, serta solidaritas [Understanding Indonesia through the perspectives of nationalism, identity politics, and solidarity]. *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 28 (2): 111–116.
- Alvara Research Center. 2020. Ramadhan dan pandemi Covid-19: semangat ibadah tak surut, konsumsi tersendat. <[https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN\\_DAN\\_PANDEMI\\_COVID-19\\_SEMANGAT\\_IBADAH\\_TAK\\_SURUT\\_KONSUMSI\\_TERSENDAT.pdf](https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN_DAN_PANDEMI_COVID-19_SEMANGAT_IBADAH_TAK_SURUT_KONSUMSI_TERSENDAT.pdf)> Accessed 23 February 2021.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2007. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer* [Contemporary Islamic law studies]. Jakarta: RM Books.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2013. *Salat Tarawih: Tinjauan usul fiqh, sejarah, dan fiqh* [Tarawih prayer: usul fiqh, history, and fiqh perspectives]. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2016. Fatwā, purification and dynamization: a study of tarjih in Muhammadiyah. *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (1): 27–44.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2018. *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Panitia Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih Muhammadiyah XXX.

- Anwar, Syamsul. 2020. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer Bagian dua* [Contemporary Islamic legal studies Part two]. Yogyakarta: UAD Press.
- Barton, Greg. 2014. The Gülen movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: progressive Islamic thought, religious philanthropy and civil society in Turkey and Indonesia. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25 (3): 287–301.
- Buchari, Sri Astuti. 2014. *Kebangkitan etnis menuju politik identitas* [Ethnic awakening towards identity politics]. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Bunt, Gary R. 2003. *Islam in the digital age: e-jihad, online fatwas and cyber Islamic environments*. London: Pluto Press.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2005. The 45th Muhammadiyah Congress contest between literal-conservative and liberal-moderate Muslims in Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 12 (1): 185–189.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2013. Liberal and conservative discourses in the Muhammadiyah: the struggle for the face of reformist Islam in Indonesia. In Martin van Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary developments in Indonesian Islam: explaining the 'conservative turn'*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2016. Aksi bela Islam: konservatisme dan fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. *Maarif* 11 (2): 15–29.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2020. Muslim televangelists in the making: conversion narratives and the construction of religious authority. *Muslim World* 110 (2): 154–175.
- Burhanudin, Jajat. 2004. The fragmentation of religious authority: Islamic print media in early 20th century Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 11 (1): 23–62.
- Campbell, H.A. and Teusner, P.E. 2011. Religious authority in the age of the internet. In *Christian Reflection, Virtual Lives*. Waco TX: Baylor University Press, pp. 59–68. <<https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/130950.pdf>>
- Chairi, Effendi. 2019. Ketidadaan otoritas terpusat dalam fenomena kontemporer di Indonesia [The absence of a centralised authority in contemporary phenomena in Indonesia]. *SANGKÉP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 2 (2):197–215.
- Chaplin. Chris. 2021. *Salafism and the State: Islamic activism and national identity in contemporary Indonesia*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.
- Dakta.com. 2016. Aa Gym ajak ribuan jamaahnya ikut aksi bela Islam III [Aa Gym invites thousands of congregants to join Islamic Defence Action III]. 29 November. <<http://www.dakta.com/news/7329/aa-gym-ajak-ribuan-jamaahnya-ikut-aksi-bela-islam-iii>> Accessed 2 February 2020.
- Fadl, Khaled Abou El. 2014. *Speaking in God's name: Islamic law, authority, and women*. London: Oneworld Publications.
- Farhan, Farhan. 2017. Pesan dakwah Felix Siauw di media sosial (perspektif meaning and media). *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Administrasi Islam* 1 (2): 209–226.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2017. Peranan Maqasid Al-Shariah dalam memahami Hadith: kajian terhadap fatwa Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah [The role of Maqasid Al-Shariah in understanding Hadith: a study of the fatwa of the Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah]. MA thesis, University of Malaya.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020a. PUTM dan kaderisasi ulama: menelusuri latar belakang lahirnya Lembaga Kaderisasi Ulama Muhammadiyah [PUTM and clerical regeneration: tracing the background of the birth of the Muhammadiyah Clerical Cadre Institute]. <<https://santricendekia.com/putm-dan-kaderisasi-ulama-menelusuri-latar-belakang-lahirnya-lembaga-kaderisasi-ulama-muhammadiyah/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020b. Tantangan kader ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah di era 4.0 [Challenges for Tarjih Muhammadiyah ulama cadres in the 4.0 era]. 21 July. *Suara 'Aisyiyah*<<https://suaraaisyiyah.id/tantangan-kader-ulama-tarjih-muhammadiyah-di-era-4-0/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Fealy, Greg. 2008. Consuming Islam: commodified religion and aspirational pietism in contemporary Indonesia. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.



Gesuri. 2020. Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia kehilangan ulama kharismatik [Yunahar Ilyas passed away, Indonesia lost a charismatic scholar]. 3 January. <<https://www.gesuri.id/internal/yunahar-ilyas-wafat-indonesia-kehilangan-ulama-kharismatik-b1YFoZpRY>> Accessed 20 March 2020.

Hew, Wai Weng. 2018. The art of dakwah: social media, visual persuasion and the Islamist propagation of Felix Siau. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (134): 61–79.

Hoesterey, James B. 2008. Marketing morality: the rise, fall and rebranding of Aa Gym. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: Religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, pp. 95–114.

Hope Cheong, Pauline. 2016. Religious authority and social media branding in a culture of religious celebrification. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*, University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 81–102.

Horsfield, Peter. 2016. The media and religious authority from ancient to modern. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*. University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 37–66.

IB Times Indonesia. 2020. 100 situs Islam Indonesia, NU Online peringkat pertama [100 Indonesian Islamic websites, NU Online ranks first]. 10 July. <~~IBTimes.Id.~~ 2020. <<https://ibtimes.id/100-situs-islam-indonesia-nu-online-peringkat-pertama/>> Accessed 23 February 2023.

Ilyas, Yunahar. 2012. *Kuliah Akhlaq* [Akhlaq lecture]. XII. Yogyakarta: LPPI Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta.

Khamis, S., Ang, L. and Welling, R. 2017. Self-branding, ‘micro-celebrity’ and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191–208.

Khomalia, Isti and Rahman, Khairul Arief. 2018. Micro hijabers celebrity: membentuk identitas dengan update self-story via instagram (kasus dian pelangi). *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban dan Pemikiran Islam* 2 (1): 33–42.

Kompas. 2020. Sejumlah tokoh hadir prosesi pemakaman ketua PP Muhammadiyah Yunahar Ilyas [Many figures attended the funeral procession of Muhammadiyah chairman Yunahar Ilyas]. 3 January. <<https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/03/19142441/sejumlah-tokoh-hadiri-prosesi-pemakaman-ketua-pp-muhammadiyah-yunahar-ilyas>> Accessed 3 April 2022.

Labiq. 2019. Pengaruh new media terhadap pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [The influence of new media on shifting religious authority]. 19 April. <<https://geotimes.co.id/opini/pengaruh-new-media-terhadap-pergeseran-otoritas-keagamaan>> Accessed 19 October 2020.

Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. 2010. *Politik identitas dan masa depan pluralisme Indonesia*. Edited by Samsu Rizal Panggabean et al. Jakarta: Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (PUSAD) Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina.

Madury, Zulkarnain El. 2019. Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam? [Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?]. 2 November. <<https://www.facebook.com/zulkarnainsumenep/posts/2386248524961601>> Accessed 5 May 2020.

Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah. 2016. Pembukaan Halaqah, Majelis Tarjih Launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan Muhammadiyah Observatorium Network [Halaqah opening, Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and Muhammadiyah Observatory Network]. 20 August. <<https://tarjih.or.id/pembukaan-halaqah-majelis-tarjih-launching-pusat-tarjih-muhammadiyah-dan-muhammadiyah-observatorium-network/>> Accessed 6 October 2023.

Majelis Tarjih ~~Dahlan~~, Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. 2016. Nota Kesepakatan Majelis Tarjih Dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Tentang Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di Islamic Center Universitas Ahmad Dahlan [Memorandum of Agreement between the Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board and Ahmad Dahlan University on the Management of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre at the Islamic Centre of Ahmad Dahlan University]. Yogyakarta.

Maskur, Maskur and Noor, Irfan Noor. 2014. Ustadz selebriti Abdullah Gymnastiar dalam budaya populer (perspektif hipersemiotika Yasraf Amir Piliang) [Celebrity Ustadz Abdullah

- Gymnastiar in popular culture (Yasraf Amir Piliang's hyper semiotics perspective)]. *Jurnal Studia Insania* 2 (1): 47–57.
- Matheson, Craig. 1987. Weber and the classification of forms of legitimacy. *British Journal of Sociology* 38 (2): 199–215.
- Muhammadiyah Central Board. 2023. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 8 October 2023.
- Nisa, Eva F. 2019. Internet and Muslim women. In Ronald Lukens-Bull and Mark Woodward (eds), *Handbook of contemporary Islam and Muslim lives*. Cham: Springer, pp. 1–19.
- Palahuddin. 2020. The typology of religious thought in Muhammadiyah. *International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 3 (2): 74–81. <<http://journal2.uad.ac.id/index.php/ijish/article/view/2233/pdf>>
- Peacock, James L. 1978. *Purifying the Faith: the Muhammadiyah movement in Indonesian Islam*. Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2011. *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2016. Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan MuON [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and MuON]. 20 August. <<http://www.umm.ac.id/id/muhammadiyah/7070.html>> Accessed 20 March 2021.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Berikut Susunan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah pPeriode 2022–2027 [The following is the composition of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the 2022–2027 period] <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/berikut-susunan-pimpinan-pusat-muhammadiyah-periode-2022-2027/>> Accessed 7 October 2023.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Majelis Tabligh [Tabligh Council]. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 07 October 2023.
- Postill, John and Pink, Sarah. 2012. Social media ethnography: the digital researcher in a messy web. *Media International Australia* 145 (1): 123–134.
- Pribadi, Yanwar. 2019. Fragmentasi umat dan penciptaan otoritas keagamaan: tanggapan terhadap 'Islam lokal' dan 'Islam asing' di Indonesia [Ummah fragmentation and the creation of religious authority: responses to 'local Islam' and 'foreign Islam' in Indonesia]. *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 21 (1): 103–119. <<https://jmb.lipi.go.id/jmb/article/view/828/455>>
- Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah. n.d. *Panduan pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre management guide]. Majelis Tarjih, Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta.
- Quadri, Syed Junaid A. 2013. Transformations of tradition: modernity in the thought of Muḥammad Bakhīr Al-Muṭī'ī. PhD thesis, McGill University.
- Rahman, Asjmun Abdur et al. 1985. Laporan penelitian Majlis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (suatu studi tentang sistem dan metode penentuan hukum) [Research report of Majlis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (a study of the system and method of determining the law)]. Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga.
- Rakyat Merdeka. 2019. Dubes Malaysia jenguk ketum MUI Yunahar Ilyas di Yogyakarta [Malaysian ambassador visits MUI chairman Yunahar Ilyas in Yogyakarta]. 5 November. <<https://rm.id/baca-berita/internasional/21745/dubes-malaysia-jenguk-ketum-mui-yunahar-ilyas-di-yogyakarta>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Riesebrodt, Martin. 1999. Charisma in Max Weber's Sociology of Religion. *Religion* 29 (1): 1–14.
- Sadasri, Lidwina Mutia. 2017. Selebriti mikro di media baru kajian presentasi diri dalam vlog selebriti mikro [Micro-celebrities in new media: a study of self-presentation in micro-celebrity vlogs]. *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi Dan Opini Publik* 21 (2): 167–181. <<https://jurnal.kominfo.go.id/index.php/jpkop/article/view/1218/720>>
- Saefullah, Hikmawan. 2022. Media baru, publik baru: mengkonfigurasi ulang ruang publik Islam [New media, new publics: reconfiguring the Islamic public sphere]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.



Sammy, Abdullah. 2022. Peluang dan tantangan dakwah digital Muhammadiyah [Opportunities and challenges of Muhammadiyah digital da'wah]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.

Sanjaya, Makroen. 2022. Peta ideologi islam di media sosial [The map of Islamic ideology on social media]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.

Senft, Theresa M. 2008. *Camgirls: celebrity and community in the age of social networks*. New York: Peter Lang.

Shamsy, Ahmed El. 2013. The Hāshiya in Islamic law: a sketch of the Shāfi'ī literature. *Oriens* 41 (3-4): 289–315.

Shihab, Alwi. 1995. The Muhammadiyah movement and its controversy with Christian mission in Indonesia. PhD thesis, Temple University, USA.

Spencer, Martin E. 1970. Weber on legitimate norms and authority. *British Journal of Sociology* 21 (2): 123–134.

Suara Muhammadiyah. 2019. Hyung Jun Kim: sistem di Muhammadiyah sungguh ideal [Hyung Jun Kim: Muhammadiyah's system is ideal]. <<https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/08/01/hyung-jun-kim-sistem-di-muhammadiyah-sungguh-ideal/>> Accessed 9 April 2022.

Suyadi and Widodo, Hendro. 2019. Millennialization of Islamic education based on neuroscience in the third generation university in Yogyakarta Indonesia. *QIIS International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7 (1): 173–202.

Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2009. Hukum tentang jenggot dan cadar [Islamic law perspective on beards and veils]. *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine, no. 18 . Yogyakarta.

Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019a. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 4*. Cetakan IX. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019b. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 7*. Cetakan IV. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Tirto.id. 2018. Dari Aa' Gym ke Felix Siauw: ustaz medsos & medium dakwah politis. Tirto.Id. 16 January. <<https://tirto.id/dari-aa-gym-ke-felix-siauw-ustaz-medsos-medium-dakwah-politis-cCGf>> Accessed 5 February 2020.

Turner, Bryan S. 2007. Religious authority and the new media. *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2): 117–134.

Turner, Graeme. 2010. *Ordinary people and the media: the demotic turn*. Los Angeles CA: Sage.

Widodo, Arif. 2017. Transformative intellectual discourse and movement of Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM). *Iseedu: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices* 1 (1): 126–151. <<https://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/iseedu/article/view/5423/3542>>

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change*. Princetoon NJ: Princeton University Press.

### A List of Corrections

Title: ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY USTAZ PHENOMENON Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Author: Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

No	Line	Correction
1	46	I added 'Fauzi' in the contact section to enhance my full name (Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi).
2	234	I added the word 'Muhammadiyah's' before the word 'religious.'
3	419	I replaced the word 'leadership' with the word 'board.'
4	459	I replaced the phrase 'has several' with the phrase 'was initiated by.'
5	588	Before the word 'efforts', I added the phrase ', through its official religious assembly,'
6	609	I added 'Kamal' to enhance Fathurrahman's full name.
7	610	I removed the letter 'H.' It stands for the title Hajj, and I don't think it needs to be included.
8	643	I replaced the word 'and' with the phrase 'in collaboration with.'
9	801 [Figure 3.]	Can figures 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 not be placed in the conclusion section? I think it would be more appropriate to put them in the section "Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain religious authority in cyberspace." What do you think?
10	817 [Figure 4.]	The font for the translation of Figure 3 seems too big, right?
11	853	I added the phrase 'education systematically, not in anarchic and aggressive ways.'
12	856	I replaced the sentence 'He built hospitals, schools, and orphanages to counter these practices' with the phrase 'Rather than resorting to anarchist practices, they have built hospitals, orphanages and schools, one of the purposes of which is to counter such practices.'

13	856	I added one reference, besides Shihab. It became '(Shihab 1995; Peacock 1978).'
14	906 [Figure 8.]	The font for the translation of Figure 7 seems too big, right?
15	954 [Q1]	I have responded to your question: OK. That is correct. Thank you for adding.
16	982	<https:
17	1049	I deleted '<IBTimes.Id. 2020.'
18	1055	I added an English translation to the title of Khomalia's article.
19	1074	I deleted 'Dahlan' after the phrase 'Majelis Tarjih.'
20	1121	I added '<'

ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY *USTAZ* PHENOMENON

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

**QUERY SHEET**

This page lists questions we have about your paper. The numbers displayed at left are hyperlinked to the location of the query in your paper.

The title and author names are listed on this sheet as they will be published, both on your paper and on the Table of Contents. Please review and ensure the information is correct and advise us if any changes need to be made. In addition, please review your paper as a whole for typographical and essential corrections.

Your PDF proof has been enabled so that you can comment on the proof directly using Adobe Acrobat. For further information on marking corrections using Acrobat, please visit <https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/how-to-correct-proofs-with-adobe/>

The CrossRef database ([www.crossref.org/](http://www.crossref.org/)) has been used to validate the references. Changes resulting from mismatches are tracked in red font.

**AUTHOR QUERIES**

QUERY NO.	QUERY DETAILS
<b>Q1</b>	The disclosure statement has been inserted. Please correct if this is inaccurate.



# ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY *USTAZ* PHENOMENON

## Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi 

### ABSTRACTS

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the fragmentation of religious authority. In the Indonesian context, the mainstream religious authority held by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has been challenged and threatened by micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This article examines the emergence of the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah fanpage on Facebook, created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board as it has threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority. It analyses Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace, by taking a closer look at what has been done by Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, an assembly that has the exclusive authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* within Muhammadiyah. This article also discusses lessons that can be learned from the case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the response of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

### ABSTRAK

Kemunculan internet dan media sosial telah mempertajam fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. Dalam konteks Indonesia, otoritas keagamaan arus utama yang dipegang oleh Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) disaingi dan diancam oleh para ustaz mikro-selebritas. Artikel ini mengkaji kemunculan fanpage Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah di Facebook yang dibuat dan dikelola oleh Zulkarnain El Madury, seseorang yang mengklaim sebagai ustaz Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, karena dianggap mengancam otoritas keagamaan Muhammadiyah. Penelitian ini menganalisis upaya Muhammadiyah dalam mempertahankan otoritas keagamaannya di dunia maya dengan melihat lebih dekat pada apa yang telah dilakukan oleh Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah, sebuah majelis yang memiliki otoritas eksklusif untuk mengeluarkan fatwa dan ijtihad keagamaan resmi di Muhammadiyah. Artikel ini juga membahas pelajaran yang dapat dipetik dari kasus Zulkarnain El Madury dan respons Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

### KEYWORDS

Fragmentation of religious authority; micro-celebrity *ustaz*; Muhammadiyah; religious authority; *tarjih*

### KATA KUNCI

Fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan; Muhammadiyah; otoritas keagamaan; *tarjih*; *ustaz* mikro-selebritas

## Introduction

The Alvara Research Center (2020) survey ~~was surprising as it~~ stated that the clerics most heard by the public, especially in Ramadan 2020, were not from the official Muhammadiyah board.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the Alvara Research Center survey was released (IBTimes.id 2020), an Islamic website managed by young Muhammadiyah intellectuals, published a report ranking the 100 most popular Islamic websites in Indonesia. The majority of these sites are managed by or affiliated to Nahdliyyin (NU followers) and Salafi<sup>2</sup> groups with few such sites operated by or affiliated to Muhammadiyah. The Alvara Research Center survey and the IBTimes.id report show that Muhammadiyah, in terms of influence and religious authority on the internet, lags behind other religious groups which is ironic for an organisation claiming to represent the progressive Islamic group.

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the so-called fragmentation of religious authority. Eva F. Nisa (2019), for example, mentions that the proliferation of various digital platforms is directly proportional to the increasing fragmentation of religious authority. Islamic discourse is monopolised not only by an elite group of scholars or mainstream religious groups, but also by persons or groups that have not been considered in Islamic discourse. Furthermore, the presence of the internet and social media has led to the birth of what is called micro-celebrity. Theresa M. Senft (2008) defines micro-celebrity as a new style of online performance that involves increasing popularity on social media such as videos, blogs, and networking sites. These micro-celebrities unlike conventional celebrities, emerge from what is known as new media (Senft 2008).

Of course, not all new media users ~~have the adjective~~ 'micro-celebrity'. ~~Only~~ those who experience what Graeme Turner (2010) terms 'the demotic turn', namely, the increasing visibility of ordinary people to appear as celebrities in the media, especially online media. In turn, both conventional and micro-celebrity exist in various public spheres, and the discourse on them is characterised as influencers, stimulants of consumerism, enthusiasm, public debate, and various activism (Sadasri 2017).

By borrowing the theory of micro-celebrities in the study of new media, we can then read how these micro-celebrities have also come to the fore in the religious realm. The emergence of ulama, *ustaz* (religious teachers), and religious leaders who become influencers in new media can perhaps be seen as one form of micro-celebrity. Felix Siauww is a prominent example. A convert, who is now a preacher, Siauww has a massive following on social media. In 2018, for example, he had 2.6 million followers on Twitter, and in 2022 it numbered 3.3 million. Felix Siauww's Instagram account has around 4.9 million followers. It can even be said that he is the *ustaz* who has the most followers on social media (Tirto 2018), making him one of the leading social media preachers in Indonesia today (Hew 2018). What Felix Siauww posts on his social media has ~~more or less~~ influenced the map of religious authorities in Indonesia.

The existence of the internet and the continuing development of technology ~~allows~~ the emergence of many other micro-celebrity *ustaz*, both in the national arena more

<sup>1</sup>One of the 15 most popular clerics mentioned in the report, Ustaz Ali Hidayat, has since been included on the Muhammadiyah Central Board's Tabligh Council (2022–2027; Muhammadiyah Central Board 2023). Prior to that, he did not convey official Muhammadiyah ideas in his lectures.

<sup>2</sup>For more comprehensive information on the activism of Salafi groups, see Chris Chaplin (2021).

generally or more specifically in internal religious organisations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, Persis (Persatuan Islam) or others. In the context of Muhammadiyah, the largest modernist Islamic organisation ~~began to be challenged for~~ its religious authority by a preacher who was said to be part of Muhammadiyah itself, namely Zulkarnain El Madury. He claims to be a Muhammadiyah cadre and often introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board. In recent years, El Madury has been noticed by Muhammadiyah administrators and Muhammadiyah cadres<sup>3</sup> and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah) has discussed him in a special meeting. This is because the posts on the Facebook page that El Madury manages, *Syarah Himpunan Putus Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (henceforth SHPTM), often differ significantly from – and to some extent delegitimise – a Muhammadiyah fatwa or official decision. Responses from grassroots or Muhammadiyah followers vary. This can be seen, for example, from the comments on each post. Some defend and remain adamant on the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah, but not a few were affected and followed what was conveyed by El Madury on his Facebook page.

This is where it becomes crucial to see how Muhammadiyah attempts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace, especially among its members and the public. By conducting web content analysis (Postill and Pink 2012) on SHPTM and official social media accounts and those affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this article shows how El Madury builds his narratives and, in turn, how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority on the internet. Additionally, field research was conducted and key actors were interviewed offline and online in a semi-structured format.<sup>4</sup> Apart from El Madury, the key actors are members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Digital Broadcast Centre (Pusat Syiar Digital Muhammadiyah), Muhammadiyah activists as well as Muhammadiyah grassroots.

### Fragmentation of religious authority, new preacher and micro-celebrity *ustaz* phenomenon

Fragmentation of religious authority is a phenomenon that occurs in various religious communities and is not limited to Islam (B.S. Turner 2007; Campbell and Teusner 2011; Hope Cheong 2016). The fragmentation of religious authority is also a global phenomenon as pointed out by Gary R. Bunt (2003) who states that the new media have shaped diverse understandings among individual Muslims worldwide about e-jihad (electronic jihad). The definition of electronic jihad is understood and interpreted differently, ranging from online activism to Muslim articulation after the events of 11 September 2001. Bunt (2003) shows that each new media (in this case, new websites) has authority for its respective group.

The fragmentation of religious authority discussed here is from the 20th century to the present. Jajat Burhanudin (2004) points out that there has been a shift in religious authority in the historical phase of Indonesian religious thought in the early 20th century due to modernisation. His study, which focuses on the Islamic print media, further shows

<sup>3</sup>This author's online and offline interviews with Amiruddin, Robby Karman, Muhammad Muflih, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, and Arif Nur Kholis, 2019–2020.

<sup>4</sup>Data collection in this study was carried out between 2018 and 2020. As personal interviews were not possible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, some interviews were conducted online.

that there is a shift in religious authority that used to be in *Kitab Kuning*<sup>5</sup> taught by *kyai* or ulama in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to magazines, journals, newspapers, and books published by modernist circles or organisations.

Religious authority since the early 20th century has always stayed with Muhammadiyah and NU. These two religious organisations are often referred to by scholars as the authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016; Akmaliah 2018). The shift in religious authority occurred again in the 1990s when national television stations emerged. The Islamic programmes presented by the television stations show the *ustaz* (religious teachers), which in turn build their authority through lectures delivered by these preachers. This phenomenon prompted scholars to come up with the term 'Islamic televangelism' (Akmaliah 2018). Abdullah Gymnastiar who is better known as Aa Gym is one example that falls into the category of a television *ustaz*, or a 'tele-dai' as coined by Greg Fealy (2008).

The most obvious and recent picture of the fragmentation of religious authority in Indonesia is the series of events of the Defend Islam Action (Aksi Bela Islam). Ahmad Najib Burhani (2016) hints that these critical events marked the peak of the fragmentation of religious authorities in Indonesia as they gave rise to new actors who challenge the established religious authority. Although it cannot be said to shift or match the role of Muhammadiyah and NU, the emergence of new actors such as Rizieq Shihab provides a new map of religious authority in Indonesia.

This phenomenon of the fragmentation of religious authority has increased sharply in the development of what scholars call pop culture, marked by the birth of many new media (Labiq 2019). The availability of internet access to every social class is the main factor for this fragmentation. As a result, many new media have emerged with each individual and group competing to spread ideas (Horsfield 2016; Nisa 2019).

Aa Gym is one of the early actors who emerged in the internet era in Indonesia. This can be captured in two interesting studies on Aa Gym by James B. Hoesterey (2008), and Maskur and Noor (2014). Although the use of the internet as a medium of da'wah around during the early 2000s was not as massive as it is now, the emergence of Aa Gym as a new cleric on the national da'wah stage through lectures, seminars, and Islamic training is a phenomenon in itself. Hoesterey (2008) studies the journey of Aa Gym from his first appearance as a preacher, falling, and then successfully rebranding to restore his religious authority. This is evident, for example, from how Aa Gym has many listeners (Dakta.com 2016). Popular culture has also brought Aa Gym to be seen not only by the public, especially by his followers, as also singer, actor, author, etc. Thus, he has transformed from an ordinary cleric to a celebrity cleric. Through a hypersemiotic perspective, Maskur and Noor (2014) show the various aspects of Aa Gym's personality.

Following the appearance of Aa Gym and with further rapid development of information technology, many other new preachers began to appear. Hew Wai Weng (2018) describes how Felix Siauw is another skilful religious preacher. Being a cleric with the most followers on the internet did not make Siauw neglect to spread his da'wah in the real world. Hew (2018) points out that Siauw has blended online and offline da'wah harmoniously. According to Hew (2018) and Farhan (2017), one of the

<sup>5</sup>So-called because the books were printed on yellow paper. These were the Islamic texts used in the education of Islamic schools.



keys to Siau-w's success in preaching is his ability to present an entertaining and straightforward da'wah, even though its content is dogmatic and political.

Aa Gym and Felix Siau-w are two micro-celebrity *ustaz* as a result of the new media. The term micro-celebrity *ustaz* was adopted and reconstructed from the theory of micro-celebrity. Most of these studies conducted from the perspective of pop culture (Senft 2008; G. Turner 2010; Khamis, Ang and Welling 2017; Sadasri 2017; Khomalia and Rahman 2018) describe the fragmentation of religious authority, marked by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By this term this author means an ordinary *ustaz/ustazah* who has skyrocketed in popularity and is celebrity on and because of social media so that he or she is able to influence certain people or communities. In other words, it means the *ustaz/ustazah* has experienced what G. Turner (2010) calls 'the demotic turn', when ordinary people are highly visible on social media and become celebrities. Challenges to established religious authorities by new religious personalities or groups are rarely touched on except that of Yanwar Pribadi (2019). His study explains the efforts of 'local Islam' (*Islam lokal*) to defend its religious authority from the threat of 'foreign Islam' (*Islam asing*). However, his study differs from what this author will examine in tracing Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

This study is on a micro-celebrity *ustaz*, Zulkarnain El Madury who is less well known when compared to Aa Gym or Felix Siau-w but he has a strong influence on the internet. His identity as a preacher from Muhammadiyah who targets Muhammadiyah followers with postings that are often different and even delegitimise the official voice of this largest modernist mass organisation deserves to be investigated. This study, apart from showing Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority on the internet, also seeks explicitly to fill the gap in previous studies. In his latest study, Akmaliah (2020) shows that Muhammadiyah and NU have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was strongly reactive to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) indicates there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's responses less hostile. Sammy (2022), Sanjaya (2022), and Saefullah (2022) came to the same conclusion as Akmaliah, claiming that Muhammadiyah is significantly less adaptive to the emergence of new media, and therefore its da'wah often loses to that of the micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This study focuses on the struggle of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as the only assembly under Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas and official *ijtihad* exposition within Muhammadiyah.

### Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah fanpage*

The Facebook SHPTM fanpage was created by Zulkarnain El Madury. He was born in Sumenep on the island of Madura in 1963, with the name Zulkarnain bin Syamsuri. He claims to have studied in Malaysia at the Institute of Business Study and always introduces himself as a preacher from the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah). He spent his childhood in Madura and was a traditionalist Muslim like others on the island. He grew up in a milieu dominated by the NU traditionalist Islamic organisation. He used to perform

*tahlilan* (ritual prayers for the dead), *ziarah* (pilgrimage to the grave), and other practices that, according to him, after becoming a member of Muhammadiyah, were not following the Sunnah of the Prophet. He received his religious education at the Islamic boarding school at-Taufiqiyyah Sumenep Madura. In 1976 he became acquainted with Muhammadiyah. He became interested in the da'wah and religious understanding of the Muhammadiyah movement founded by Ahmad Dahlan after listening to a lecture by one of its preachers. In 1977, he officially joined Muhammadiyah.<sup>6</sup>

Since joining Muhammadiyah, El Madury has been active as a preacher who spreads religious ideas and understanding. From 1990 to 2007, he was one of the Muhammadiyah preachers who was sent to remote areas by the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board. His daily activities are now preaching at different places as well as creating content on for SHPTM fanpage. He now lives in Jakarta as the *tarjih* and *tabligh* council chair of the Pondok Gede Muhammadiyah Branch.<sup>7</sup> He created SHPTM in 2014.<sup>8</sup> However, in the digital history that this author can trace, the fanpage was created in 2015 as the earliest post that is currently traceable is dated 5 January 2015.

According to El Madury, the fanpage began with the WhatsApp group he created which he named *Tarjih dan Tabligh Institut* (Tarjih and Tabligh Institute) to provide a space to discuss and spread ideas related to *tarjih*.<sup>9</sup> He included many Muhammadiyah figures and activists in this group, including (the now late) Buya Yunahar Ilyas. Over time, seeing that El Madury's posts on SHPTM were deemed inconsistent with the *tarjih* spirit of Muhammadiyah, several people, such as Fathurrahman Kamal and Buya Risman, sharply criticised the postings. El Madury, Fathurrahman Kamal, and Buya Risman were then engaged in a heated debate which was relayed later to Buya Yunahar Ilyas. The response by Buya Yunahar Ilyas at that time, according to El Madury, differed from that of his critics. Buya Yun responded quite positively because he saw El Madury's initiative as providing *syarah* (explanation) or further explication of the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Decisions Compilation). Finally, he gave his permission to El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com).<sup>10</sup>

El Madury's early postings on SHPTM, were still relatively consistent in uploading Muhammadiyah fatwas in the question (from someone) and answer format from the fatwa division of the Tarjih Council. This is similar to the the original question and answer format administered by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, whose fatwas were later published in the *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine. However, over time, SHPTM included posts that apart from the dissemination of Muhammadiyah's official *ijtihad* included the personal opinions of El Madury. These opinions in inelegant words are often offensive to other groups. Not infrequently, his posts contradict the

<sup>6</sup>Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Muhammadiyah's use of the word *tarjih* has changed throughout its development. In its early period, and following its usage in the principles of law (*usul al-fiqh*), *tarjih* conveyed the meaning of examining the various opinions of Muslim jurists on a particular question and evaluating them to determine which is most faithful to the original Shari'a sources. Over time this usage gradually included any intellectual endeavour used to study new cases that earlier jurists had not addressed. In short, in Muhammadiyah's perspective, *tarjih* is identical, or almost identical, to *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

<sup>10</sup>Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

official stance of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in particular, or Muhammadiyah in general, such as on the veil issue (see below). Since Facebook introduced its 'live broadcast' feature, El Madury has also availed of it to conduct live lectures. The SHPTM is popular with netizens. As of the time of writing (3 April 2022), it has been followed by 19,423 and is 'liked' by 8,868 people. His posts also often receive both positive and critical comments from viewers.

El Madury gave several reasons that brought about the creation of his fanpage. Firstly, it is aimed at fortifying Muhammadiyah followers against all forms of superstition, heresy, and myth as its posts focus on issues related to faith and worship. Secondly, he aims to counter those liberal Muhammadiyah activists and has openly responded to such views. His posts often openly attacks the religious practices of the the Nahdliyyin, resulting in several clashes between him and the Nahdliyyin figure, Idrus Ramli.<sup>11</sup>

Despite having many followers El Madury and his SHPTM do have critics. Many Muhammadiyah followers are concerned about the SHPTM posts. Some have tried to convey their anxiety through the official social media accounts of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre (Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah).<sup>12</sup> Those concerned generally want to ask for firm action from the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as El Madury has included 'Tarjih Muhammadiyah' in his fanpage name. The demands to the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, when summarised, include: (1) that the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council reprimand or remind Zulkarnain El Madury not to use symbols or names that are closely related to Tarjih Muhammadiyah for or on his fanpage; (2) making and circulating an announcement that the fanpage is not a social media account of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council or the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre; (3) announcing the official social media accounts and websites of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre, so that Muhammadiyah people at the grassroots are not deceived by the existence of the fanpage and know where to look for religious reference sites, especially on the internet.

### **Zulkarnain El Madury and his efforts in building religious authority**

Zulkarnain El Madury and his fanpage SHPTM, have threatened the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, and specifically, the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. Many of his posts affect Muhammadiyah followers in particular and Muslims in general as these posts often differ from the official stance of Muhammadiyah, and in some cases contradict the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. This has stimulated public debate on social media, allowing El Madury to become a micro-celebrity *ustaz*. As a result of the general public and the online community attention, El Madury has been able to gradually build up his religious authority. From the Weberian perspective (Riesebrodt 1999), he has been able to do this in two ways. The first is through charisma (charismatic authority) and the second is traditional authority discussed later. According to Weber, charisma is a particular type of authority whose original form is based on a specific belief contained in a particular person (ibid.). El Madury claims he has the endorsement of Yunahar Ilyas, a

<sup>11</sup>Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>12</sup>Interviews with Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf and Ariful Hazam, November 2020 who are grassroots of Muhammadiyah, and social media administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

very popular Muhammadiyah cleric respected by the community from within the Muhammadiyah circle and from Muslims in general which is a form of charismatic authority.

Yunahar Ilyas (1956–2020) or Buya Yun as he was popularly known, was an exegete (*mufassir*) born in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, who died at the age of 63 (Ilyas 2012). He was an alumnus of Imam Ibn Su'ud University (Saudi Arabia) and an excellent lecturer in conveying religious messages. He was seen as a charismatic cleric by Muhammadiyah followers and Muslims, in general, and this reputation extended to neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore (Abror 2020; Gesuri 2020). On his death in early 2020, many people flocked to pay their last respects to Buya Yun who held the chair of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for three terms (Kompas 2020; Rakyat Merdeka 2019).

By harnessing the charisma of Buya Yun, El Madury was able to increase his religious authority. On various occasions, including when this author interviewed him, Buya Yun's name was often mentioned as an argument and a shield.<sup>13</sup> El Madury insisted that he created the SHPTM fanpage with the permission of Yunahar Ilyas.<sup>14</sup> He added that Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website tanyajawabagama.com, had similarly received permission from Buya Yun. Wahyudi Abdurrahim confirmed Zulkarnain's claims and Muhammad Muflih, a grassroots representative added that it is a form of fairness.<sup>15</sup> In other words, Buya Yun's permission is a form of appreciation given by someone who is more senior and has a high social position in Muhammadiyah to someone who is more junior and classified as a grassroots Muhammadiyah member.<sup>16</sup> Permission from Buya Yun, who has charisma within Muhammadiyah in particular, has become a tool used by El Madury in building his religious authority.

In Weberian charismatic authority, charisma is not only about a belief in the existence of extraordinary or superpowers possessed by or contained in humans but also about particular objects other than humans (Riesebradt 1999). We thus have an explanation as to why El Madury named his fanpage *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a highly respectable and crucial council in Muhammadiyah. Founded in 1927, the Council functions as an assembly that carries out its agenda of purification of religion and the dynamisation of social life. It conducts research and investigations towards this purity, and accordingly gives fatwas and compiles religious guidelines on faith (*'aqidah*) and worship (*'ibadah*) as well as social relations (*mu'āmalah*) (Rahman et al. 1985; Anwar 2016). In addition, this Council makes efforts to resolve differences and disagreements on religious issues, which are usually referred to as *khilāfiyyah* problems, so that they are directed more productively (Anwar 2007, 2016).

The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a body that is responsible for formulating the ideological basis of the Muhammadiyah movement (Anwar 2007, 2016) and is Muhammadiyah's representative in the religious field (Fauzi 2017). The Council produces three

<sup>13</sup>This author's informants include Muhammad Muflih (grassroot of Muhammadiyah and initiator of the website tanyajawabagama.com), Robby Karman (secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association [DPP IMM] 2018–2021), and several participants invited by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council with the agenda 'Responding to Emergence of Syarah HPT on Social Media' on 25 September, 2020; interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>14</sup>Interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>15</sup>Online interview with Wahyudi Abdurrahim through WhatsApp, September 2020.

<sup>16</sup>Online interview with Muhammad Muflih through WhatsApp and Facebook, 20 October 2019.

types of *ijtihad*, namely: (1) *tarjih fatwa (fatwa tarjih)*, (2) *tarjih decision (putusan tarjih)*, and (3) *tarjih discourse (wacara tarjih)* (Anwar 2016). *Tarjih fatwa* is the Council's answer to general questions on issues that require an explanation in terms of sharia law. Following the nature of the fatwa in general, the Council's fatwa is non-binding, on either organisations or members as individuals. Therefore, even the fatwa can be questioned and discussed. However, because the fatwa contains religious guidance derived from Islamic teaching sources (Anwar 2020), and the general public often does not actually understand the aspects of such a fatwa, it is still believed by Muhammadiyah members to be religious guidance. However, the *tarjih* decision is the official stance of Muhammadiyah in religious matters and is formally binding on the organisation and its members. But, in practice, sometimes Muhammadiyah members exercise their right to freedom not to be bound by the decision because they have different *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

Meanwhile, *tarjih* discourses are ideas or thoughts that are raised and put forward by the Council in seminars, *halaqah* (religious gathering or meeting to discuss the Qur'an or Islam), or other forums in addressing various developing issues and at the same time fostering a critical spirit of *ijtihad* and collecting materials or ideas on various actual problems in society. The nature of this *tarjih* discourse is non-binding and does not become a fatwa that must be followed. *Tarjih* discourse is contained in various publications of the Council, such as *Jurnal Tarjih* (Tarjih Journal) and various published books (Anwar 2016).

The *tarjih* decision and the *tarjih fatwa*, hold their strength within Muhammadiyah as these are considered sacred by some of its members. In short, it can be said that anything that 'smells *tarjih*' has authority in the collective memory of Muhammadiyah followers. In the perspective of Khaled Abou El Fadl (2014), fatwa and *tarjih* decisions have the power of persuasive authority, as these can influence or direct others because they believed in them. The *tarjih* fatwas are officially published through the organisation's magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, and compiled in the *Tanya Jawab Agama* book. In comparison, the *tarjih* decisions are codified in a book called *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (commonly known as HPT). Thus, it can be understood why the attribution of the term *tarjih* to particular objects can give rise to charismatic authority, as mentioned by Weber.

What El Madury did can also be seen as identity politics which is defined as a political tool of a group whether it be ethnic, cultural, religious or others for specific purposes, such as a form of resistance or to show the identity of a group (Alfaqi 2015). Within this framework, identity is politicised through extreme interpretation, which aims to gain support from people who feel 'the same', through race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements. In the context of El Madury, the use of the *tarjih* label on his fanpage can be interpreted as a political tool to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muhammadiyah members. And, as seen in some of his sermon videos, El Madury also placed a flag with the Muhammadiyah symbol behind him. In this context, he wants to convince the viewers that he is close to Muhammadiyah. He has introduced himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board on many occasions.

According to Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif (2010), identity politics is always related to members of social groups who feel excluded by the mainstream in a nation or state. Sri Astuti Buchari (2014) also finds that the emergence of identity politics is mainly



caused by certain factors that an ethnic group sees as pressure from the political injustice. By looking at the observations made by Ahmad Najib Burhani (2013), El Madury, in this case, can be categorised as part of a group that feels excluded, threatened, and to some extent in need of justice within Muhammadiyah. Burhani (2013) explains the existence of two opposing schools of thought within Muhammadiyah which he refers to as 'Pure Islam' (*Islam Murni*) and 'Progressive Islam' (*Islam Progresif*). The conflict between these two schools of thought in Muhammadiyah began to surface at the 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Banda Aceh in 1995 (Burhani 2013).

The dominance of 'Progressive Islam' in Muhammadiyah strengthened after its 44th congress in Jakarta in 2000. This congress chose Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif as general chair. He is a progressive Muslim figure, an alumnus of the University of Chicago, and a student of the eminent progressive scholar Fazlur Rahman. At this congress, several names representing the 'Progressive Islam' group were included in the ranks of the central leadership of Muhammadiyah, such as Amin Abdullah, Dawam Raharjo, and Abdul Munir Mulkhan. During Ma'arif's leadership, progressive ideas not only dominated culturally but gradually became Muhammadiyah's official programmes (Burhani 2013).

Seeing the increasingly apparent threat from the ideas put forward by the 'Progressive Islam' group within Muhammadiyah, representatives of the 'Pure Islam' group did not remain silent. They compete and squabble over religious interpretations as to which is the most authentic. These two groups challenge each other through various channels, including seminars, discussions, publications. They usually have conflicting programmes. For example, as mentioned by Burhani (2013), when the Centre for the Study of Religion and Civilisation (PSAP/Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban) raised the theme of pluralism and multiculturalism in its journal, *Tanwir Journal*, the Tabligh Council<sup>17</sup> responded with articles in opposition in its magazine, *Majalah Tabligh*. In Burhani's investigation, during the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress in Malang, this conservative group set up a Pojok Anti-Liberal (anti-liberal corner) booth, which sold books, DVDs, t-shirts, magazines, and other anti-liberal mementos. Strikingly, some of the t-shirts for sale displayed the words 'Muhammadiyah Anti-Liberal' (Burhani 2013).

At the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress, it seemed that the 'Pure Islam' group was gaining momentum to beat back the 'Progressive Islam' group. The quarrels between these two groups occurred within congress committees and in the external arena. Burhani (2005, 2013) noted at least three critical issues where the 'Pure Islam' group defeated the 'Progressive Islam' in the congress arena, namely: (1) leadership change; (2) the position of women; and (3) resistance to liberal thought.

After the 45th congress, the feud between these two schools of thought has continued though waxing and waning at different times. The form of the feud now looks more varied given the availability of the internet where the presence of social media has

<sup>17</sup>Muhammadiyah has many assemblies such as Majelis Tabligh and Majelis Tarjih, each with its own functions and responsibilities. Majelis Tarjih is responsible for producing religious thoughts through fatwas and decisions, while Majelis Tabligh is responsible for disseminating them. Historically, Majelis Tabligh is known in Muhammadiyah as the anti-liberal wing and thus there are at times poor collaboration between Majelis Tarjih and Majelis Tabligh. For example, some fatwas issued by Majelis Tarjih, in Majelis Tabligh's perspective, are the result of liberal thinking. See Burhani (2013) and Palahuddin (2020).

changed the battle arena from a conventional to a more modern one. El Madury represents the 'Pure Islam' group, and has heated online debates with figures considered representatives of 'Progressive Islam' whose actions he sees as unsettling. For example, El Madury and the secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association (DPP IMM),<sup>18</sup> Robby Karman, have openly and frequently castigated each other on for example, issues about the veil and the Wahhabi. According to El Madury, Robby Karman is a young liberal figure in Muhammadiyah who should be challenged. El Madury also often attacks the IBTimes.id website, as it frequently contains articles that are progressive and, to some extent, controversial. This website has several former Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah (JIMM/Muhammadiyah Youth Intellectual Network) figures, such as Hilman Latief, Azaki Khoiruddin, and Mu'arif. On one occasion, when the chair of the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre admonished El Madury for uploading provocative posts that contradicted the official stance of the Tarjih Council, he defended himself by stating that equally provocative posts from the 'Progressive Islam' group should be similarly reprimanded. If he is the only one selected for rebuke then he felt an injustice had been done.<sup>19</sup> El Madury's attitude in the framework of identity politics reflects someone who feels excluded and threatened by certain parties. At such, his specific attributes and identity are a deliberate form of resistance to the domination of certain groups or thoughts that threaten him.

The second form of authority is what Weber calls traditional authority (Spencer 1970; Matheson 1987; Riesebrodt 1999). In simple terms, something can be considered as having traditional authority if it gains legitimacy based on beliefs or norms that have been established in a particular tradition (Chairi 2019). In other words, according to Spencer (1970), traditional authority is legitimised and, at the same time, constrained by traditional norms. Therefore, it is the opposite of charismatic authority. If in charismatic authority, it is the leader or someone who creates the norms, then it is the norms that create the leader or person in the traditional authority. In charismatic authority, the value of influence is generated by a person's personal qualities and is always associated with his personality. While in the case of traditional authority, it is generated by function and is related to someone or something that has traditional values (Spencer 1970).

In the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, ulama and the classical books they wrote can be considered to have this traditional authority. Ulama in Islamic tradition are called heirs of the Prophets. The authority of the ulama is derived from the legitimacy of religious texts which state that the prophetic tradition will be passed on to them. Therefore, the religious ideas they convey in writings or books contain an authoritative value for the next generation. This is the uniqueness of Islamic scholars and traditions, as mentioned by Muhammad Qasim Zaman (2002) who states that one of the most prominent aspects of pre-modern intellectual culture is the articulation of religious discourse through the so-called medium of the commentary. This is manifested in various forms such *al-syurūh*, *hawāsyī*, *rasā'il*, and *fatawā*. The various genres of books that contain explanations, descriptions, or responses to a book or social phenomena are a way for

<sup>18</sup>Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM) or Muhammadiyah Student Association is a proponent of Muhammadiyah in student affairs with the basic mission of realising the real Islamic society as formulated by Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Widodo 2017).

<sup>19</sup>On 3 November 2019, the manager of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah reprimanded Zulkarnain El Madury for his post on SHPTM on the veil which contradicts Muhammadiyah's official stance.

scholars to shape the identity and authority of the school or tradition they adhere to. In addition, it is also a means to interpreting the meaning of the foundational sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah (Zaman 2002).

An example is the *hawāsyī* tradition in the Shafii school. Its emergence, according to Ahmed El-Shamsy (2013), shows the peak of the authority of two scholars in that school, namely al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī. Al-Kurdi, as quoted by El Shamsy, called these two scholars 'the higher authorities in the Syafii school'. Those who want to know the authoritative opinion of the Shaf'i school have to go through the works of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī, and the books that explain further their works, namely the books written by Ibn Hajar al-Haitamī and Syamsuddīn al-Ramlī. These books have for later generations the value of traditional authority (Shamsy 2013: 292).

What is the connection between this traditional authority and El Madury? El Madury's posts on SHPTM and at religious forums where he speaks always rely on the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāth*). According to Endang Mintarja, chair of the Jakarta branch of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this aspect has drawn many people to El Madury's lectures.<sup>20</sup> What El Madury did, which Muhammadiyah did not do in many of its fatwas was to cite the Islamic intellectual tradition. In many of its fatwas, Muhammadiyah often only quotes the Qur'an or hadith to strengthen its argument, without citing the opinions of other Islamic scholars. Perhaps this is a consequence of the modernist movement, which became the spirit of Muhammadiyah. The modernist movement initiated by reformers such as Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, and Muḥammad Rasyīd Riḍā in the late 19th and early 20th centuries used the term *al-rujū' ilā al-qur'ān wa al-sunnah* ('back to the Qur'an and Sunnah'). According to Syed Junaid A. Quadri (2013), the most obvious indicator of this movement, especially in Islamic law, is its critical attitude towards the structure of pre-modern sharia authority symbols, which are articulated in the language and logic of the institution of *taqlīd*. Modernist groups always encourage reopening the door to *ijtihad* and invite Muslims to leave the interpretive monopoly that the ulama class has held (Quadri 2013).

Muhammadiyah, which is heavily inspired by the modernist movement, is oriented towards the Qur'an and Sunnah and tends to attach less importance to the Islamic intellectual tradition that has been built by the ulama. This can be seen from its *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (the methodology Muhammadiyah uses in conducting *ijtihad*), which asserts that Muhammadiyah is not affiliated to a particular school, but the opinions of these schools are only considered in determining religious norms (Anwar 2018). This means that understanding religion in the Muhammadiyah perspective is derived directly from its primary sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah through the *ijtihad* process. However, it should be noted here that the narration that confirms the opinions of the scholars is taken into account in determining norms is not that clear how they are implemented in *tarjih* issues.

In some of its official *ijtihad*, the nuances of the opinions of scholars, especially the pre-modern ones do not appear, by choice or otherwise. Thus it appears that El Madury is filling the Muhammadiyah gap in presenting the authority of the Islamic intellectual tradition in religious narratives. For example, in the controversial veil case, the

<sup>20</sup>Endang Mintarja voiced this at a Muhammadiyah Central Board Tarjih Council meeting of on the emergence 'Syarah HPT', 25 September 2020.



Tarjih Council issued three fatwas in 1993, 2003 and 2009.<sup>21</sup> The fatwas issued in 1993 and 2009 emphasised that the veil has no legal basis either in the Qur'an or the Sunnah but that Islamic law commands women to wear the hijab. These two fatwas did not cite the Islamic intellectual tradition, which also accommodates opinions about the veil. Although the Tarjih Council kept in its stance and strengthened the opinion that women's 'aurat (parts of the body that should go covered) are the whole body except the face and the palms of the hands, in the 2003 fatwa, the Tarjih Council provides space for those who want to wear the veil by expressing several opinions from the scholars who think so.

In contrast to the *tarjih* fatwas, El Madury's (2019) article *Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam?* ('Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?') on the SHPTM fanpage refutes the *tarjih* fatwa. He cites various opinions of scholars in the Islamic intellectual tradition who support mandatory veiling as an effort to build religious authority. From this, it appears that El Madury, apart from attacking the *tarjih* fatwa, believes in maintaining traditional authority, in this case, the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāts*).

What El Madury did in building religious authority can also be captured from what Burhani calls a conversion narrative. Some scholars define religious conversion narratives differently as for example, in the change from one religious tradition to another. William James, as quoted by Burhani (2020: 158), states that religious conversion can also be interpreted as the conversion of a person who is a sinner into someone pious. According to Burhani (2020), people who experience religious conversion, usually after embracing a new tradition or religious understanding, will be hostile to the previous religious tradition or understanding.

El Madury also experienced a religious conversion, in this case, from the NU tradition to Muhammadiyah's. On SHPTM as well as his views when interviewed by this author, he introduced himself as someone who had practised the '*kuburiyyun* tradition'<sup>22</sup> and other actions that did not have examples from the Prophet. To convince his followers, he posted information about his religious conversion from NU to Muhammadiyah. Besides condemning his previous practices, which were deemed to have no basis in the Qur'an and Sunnah, he has had acrimonious debates with the NU *kyai*, Idrus Ramli on various issues, such as *ahlus sunnah wal jamaah* and *wahabi, nahdliyyin* traditions that are often considered heresy, and so on.

### Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Before the advent of the internet and the emergence of various new religious authorities, Muhammadiyah and NU were the two largest religious organisations and authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). However, following the emergence of the so-called micro-celebrity *ustaz*, these two groups, according to some scholars, began to face challenges and threats. The recent study by Wahyudi Akmaliah (2020) shows that the two organisations have responded differently to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was more combative about their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) maintains there are some similarities between

<sup>21</sup>Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah (2009, 2019a, 2019b).

<sup>22</sup>The tradition of visiting the grave with its associated practices.

Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's response look less aggressive. Akmaliah is correct on several points, but other perspectives deserve to be considered, especially Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority on the internet. The weak point, as shown in Akmaliah's study is that there is no adequate elaboration of the assembly that exclusively holds religious authority in Muhammadiyah, namely the Tarjih Council. To trace more precisely how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority we have to look at the Tarjih Council.

This discussion starts from the author attending a meeting held by the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board in September 2020. The meeting was in response to the appearance of the *syarh* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Decisions Compilation) by El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim. Whilst El Madury's comments were on his SHPTM fanpage, Abdurrahim (2020) aired his views in his book. He was earlier mentioned as having had permission from Buya Yun to give *syarh* on HPT. The initial background for holding this meeting, as revealed by the secretary of the Tarjih Council, Mas'udi, was purely in response to the SHPTM posts by El Madury. However, information about the SHPTM other than the one written by El Madury prompted the board of the Tarjih Council to include the book by Abdurrahim with the same title for the agenda.

For this meeting, the Tarjih Council invited nine related sectors to discuss concerns over the emergence of the SHPTM on the internet written by the El Madury and Abdurrahim. The nine sector participants were: (1) the executive board of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (2) fatwa division of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (3) chair/secretary of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (4) Endang Mintarja (Chair of the Jakarta Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council); (5) Fathurrahman (Chair of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council); (6) H. Budi Setiawan; (7) Arif Nur Kholis (head of Muhammadiyah Digital Syiar Centre); (8) the manager of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre; and (9) the social media assistance team of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

During the meeting, there were at least four proposals from participants on how best to respond to the SHPTM, particularly El Madury's article about the veil. The first was to complain to Facebook about the SHPTM so that it could be banned for including an institution's name without permission. According to the chair of the Tabligh Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board, Fathurrahman Kamal, who was present at the forum, the fanpage is in the illicit category. This proposal was considered by the proponents as a firm proposal but that it risked unnecessary antagonism. The second was to use a persuasive approach in the form of clarification or an appeal to El Madury not to use the name *Himpunan Putusan Tajih* (HPT) or something that is associated with *tarjih*. Its proponents consider this approach to be softer and more reflective of being Muhammadiyah members in particular, and Muslims in general. The third proposal was to use institutional authority in writing an official letter on behalf of the Tarjih Council to El Madury. The fourth idea that was considered more practical and efficient was to place the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it on social media. This would avoid being drawn into unfruitful correspondence on SHPTM.

However, there was no agreement on which approach should be undertaken despite long discussions. It was agreed instead that there would be a follow up with another forum. Since this author started writing (3 April 2022) there has been no further

meeting. The emergence of SHPTM on the internet and its effects have been considered a serious problem by the Tarjih Council. The meeting's participants were generally uneasy about the appearance of El Madury and his fanpage. In addition, they wanted El Madury to be warned or reprimanded since SHPTM is considered a threat to religious authority of the Tarjih Council. This illustrates that Muhammadiyah, through its official religious assembly, the Tarjih Council, is not passive in responding to the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. However, only certain cases and not all micro-celebrity *ustaz* who appear on social media have drawn the Tarjih Council's attention. Although there has yet to be a follow up meeting, the Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an official institution supporting the Tarjih Council illustrates how Muhammadiyah struggles to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is an institution that was founded in 2016 by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Ahmad Dahlan University (Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah 2016). Despite being a new institution, its legality is clear, and it has formal authority. In the Muhammadiyah tradition as an organisation, such legality is essential. Thus when someone from Muhammadiyah, speaks on another person's behalf or endorses an approach, the speaker's status is below that of the institution and cannot be assumed to be that of institutions within Muhammadiyah which, although new, have legality. In the context of El Madury and the SHPTM fanpage, this is important. Even though El Madury claims he has obtained permission to make *syarh* on the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* from a charismatic figure in Muhammadiyah, Buya Yunahar, legally it is not valid. In that context, Buya Yunahar spoke on behalf of himself, not on behalf of Muhammadiyah.

Fronted by young Muhammadiyah cadres, the majority of whom are alumni of Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Tarjih Ulama Education, PUTM),<sup>23</sup> Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays a role in supporting the Tarjih Council programmes. These are relatively under-performing and facing obstacles, particularly on using social media to disseminate their official *ijtihad*. The members of the Tarjih Council, who are relatively old, need support from young cadres. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays an essential role in assisting the Tarjih Council in maintaining its religious authority on the internet. It responded to El Madury and SHPTM, by being pro-active with a poster (Figure 1) on social media and in print form, containing information related to the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it.

Although the poster above does not directly mention the SHPTM fanpage created by El Madury, the main message in it is clear and firm, namely to inform the Muhammadiyah followers about the official accounts of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it. This would hopefully let Muhammadiyah members understand how its official religious voice is disseminated on the internet. Following this, Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah successively uploaded other, more varied posters to indirectly counter the SHPTM fanpage. Some other examples of these posters are shown in Figures 3 and 5.

<sup>23</sup>PUTM is an educational institution under the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board designed to produce a cadre of Muhammadiyah scholars. PUTM organises a special programme that educates and prepares Muhammadiyah *tarjih* scholars who are competent in the religious field. The birth of PUTM was based on the concern of some Muhammadiyah leaders about the increasing scarcity of ulama in and from Muhammadiyah (Fauzi 2020a).



**Figure 1.** Poster with information on the official social media accounts affiliated to the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

The use of informal language and emoticons typical of millennials indicate the audience that the Tarjih Council wants to target. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah team understands that informal language will appeal to its target audience. This is aimed at not only establishing the authority of the Tarjih Council but ‘millennialisation’ i.e. to reach out to the younger generation familiar with social media. Suyadi and Widodo (2019) note that millennialisation is an alternative way to develop knowledge that will synergise with various online media and digital technology. In the context of *tarjih* millennialisation, Muhammadiyah’s official *ijtihad* that tend to be disseminated in a conventional, monotonous, and uncreative manner are now communicated through social media in more contextual packaging. This means that the Tarjih Council and its various official *ijtihad*, which previously were always identified with the ‘old’, now consciously aim to include young people.

The religious authority of the Tarjih Council in cyberspace, especially when connected with the appearance of El Madury and SHPTM, was greatly helped by the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah and its young Muhammadiyah cadres. It manages various social media platforms with large numbers of followers, and has helped maintain

Are you often confused about finding sources of reference about Islam from the perspective of Muhammadiyah?

There is no need to be confused anymore because various social media are straightforward for us to access. Tarjih (Council) has come with a more trendy look.

- ✓ Easy to read anywhere
- ✓ Provide updated fatwas
- ✓ Discuss current issues

As members of Muhammadiyah, let's get used to reading the decisions and fatwas of Muhammadiyah

Here are some media that can be accessed very easily. So don't be confused anymore.

Web: [fatwatarjih.or.id](http://fatwatarjih.or.id)

Facebook: [fb.me/fatwamu](https://fb.me/fatwamu)

Instagram: [pusattarjih\\_muhammadiyah](https://pusattarjih_muhammadiyah)

Telegram: [t.me/fatwatarjihmu](https://t.me/fatwatarjihmu)

Youtube: [tarjih channel](https://tarjih_channel)

Let's spread it to all Muhammadiyah people!

**Figure 2.** Translation of Figure 1.

Muhammadiyah's religious authority by balancing and suppressing the presence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. Its contents are fatwas and decisions of the Tarjih Council with more appealing visualisation to reach out to the millenials.

Although the number of social media followers of the Tarjih Council is less than that for the NU and Salafi groups, at least the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah acts as a compass for Muhammadiyah followers who question its religious authority, especially with the emergence of El Madury's version in SHPTM. The administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah's social media have received many messages either through the comments column or direct messages in its inbox, which question the authority of SHPTM.<sup>24</sup> Here, the vital role of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is increasingly finding its momentum.

## Conclusion

Although it can be said that Muhammadiyah's religious influence and authority on the internet are inferior and lag behind other religious groups, Muhammadiyah is still trying to manage its authority, especially when facing threats from micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By focusing on Zulkarnain El Madury and his SHPTM social media page, this article offers a different perspective from previous studies by analysing the work of the Tarjih Council as the only institution in Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas. This article shows that Muhammadiyah has its own way of responding to

<sup>24</sup>Interview with Ariful Hazamn, Ilham Ibrahim, and Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, September 2020. They are *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* social media administrators.



**Figure 3.** Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

the emergence of new religious authorities. With the help of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an institution in its fold, the Tarjih Council has made continuous efforts through social media and its official website to counter new voices that threaten its authority. Muhammadiyah's response was neither aggressive nor radical but it clarified its stance without mentioning who precisely was being targeted. What Muhammadiyah did was in line with the Javanese proverb *Ngluruk tanpo bolo, menang tanpo ngasorake* ('win without defeat, win without humiliation [of others]'). The form of Muhammadiyah's response is inherited from its founder, Ahmad Dahlan. As seen by James



Do you know?

The Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah now have an official YouTube channel, (namely) the Tarjih Channel.

Have you subscribed yet?

**Figure 4.** Translation of Figure 3.



**Figure 5.** Information about the website fatwatarjih.or.id, an official website affiliated to the Tarjih Council containing fatwas. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Peacock (1978), Ahmad Dahlan brought about many social transformations through discussions and education.<sup>25</sup> This can be seen, for example, from how Ahmad Dahlan and

<sup>25</sup>For example, Ahmad Dahlan and the early generation of Muhammadiyah explained to Muslims the unacceptability of popular beliefs and practices that had their roots in superstitions, heresies, and myths. He built hospitals, schools, and orphanages to counter these practices (Shihab 1995).

Fatwatarijih.or.id is the official website for the Tarjih and the Tajdid Council of  
Muhammadiyah Central Board (MTT).

The Media Team of Fatwa Tarjih, through this website, has been, is and will continue to  
strive consistently to publish various ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council. Until now,  
tarjih fatwa collections from 1997 to 2018 have entered the editing stage, and some are  
just waiting to be published.

**Figure 6.** Translation of Figure 5.



Mau tau sejarah lengkapnya?  
Atau mau cari produk tarjih?  
yuk bisa kalian kepoin di sini 🗨️

**tarjih.or.id**

tarjih channel  
majelistarjih  
pusattarjih\_muhammadiyah  
Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Muhammadiyah

tarjih.or.id  
fatwatarijih.or.id



**Figure 7.** Information on the official website of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

the early generation of Muhammadiyah fortified Muslims from various superstitions, heresies, and myths by explaining the unacceptability of such popular beliefs and practices.

In a broader context, the case of Zulkarnain El Madury also provides a lesson that using the name Muhammadiyah to justify personal opinions or legitimise particular



Do you want to know the full history (of the Tarjih Council)?

Or do you want to look for *ijtihad* products from the Tarjih Council?

Come on; you can find out on this website: [tarjih.or.id](http://tarjih.or.id)

**Figure 8.** Translation of Figure 7.

interests is wrong. Muhammadiyah has the reputation of a very well managed organisation (Barton 2014; *Suara Muhammadiyah* 2019) which is its strength and gives it clout compared to other religious organisations in Indonesia, such as NU. In short, Muhammadiyah's authority lies in the institution itself and is not based on personality. It differs from NU, where power and authority tend to reside with personal figures, such as *kyai* or *gus* (Fauzi 2020b).

Muhammadiyah followers who understand its basic rules are not easily influenced by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. They are aware that Muhammadiyah's official religious stance is only be issued by the Tarjih Council and that those external to the Tarjih Council or even specific Muhammadiyah figures who give religious opinions, speak only for themselves as individuals and not the organisation. This would be the case, for example, even if the religious opinion emanates from the chair of the Tarjih Council as an individual. This did occur when Syamsul Anwar, the current chair of the Tarjih Council, differed from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council on the issue of *iftitāḥ* prayer (opening night prayer [*qiyām al-lail*]).<sup>26</sup> While Anwar's opinion clearly differs from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council, the prevailing opinion in Muhammadiyah is that of the Tarjih Council, not the chair of the Tarjih Council. Within Muhammadiyah, such religious differences of opinion are common as usually happens in *fiqh* discourse in general. The difference between El Madury and Anwar is that the latter does not act in the name of Muhammadiyah or the Tarjih Council when he has a different view. Instead, on many occasions, he urges Muhammadiyah followers to abide by the opinion of the Tarjih Council on the *iftitāḥ* prayer.<sup>27</sup> Thus Anwar has shown he can compromise his personal religious opinion with his professional attitude in the organisation. In this case, he understands that using the name Muhammadiyah to legitimise individual opinions or interests is not justifiable.

## Acknowledgements

Permission for this research PJB-002/SP3/LPPM-UAD/VI/2020 and funding were provided by the ethical board of Ahmad Dahlan University Research and Development Institute (Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan).

I am grateful to *ustaz* Zulkarnain El Madury for his exceptional help and support during my fieldwork. I also thank Amiruddin, Arif Nur Kholis, Muhammad Muflih, Wahyudi Abdurrahim,

<sup>26</sup>For Anwar (2013), the *iftitāḥ* prayer comprises two short *rak'ah* prayers that are performed before *qiyām al-lail*, with the condition that it must be preceded by sleep, otherwise there is no need to perform the *iftitāḥ* prayer. However, the Tarjih Council holds that the *iftitāḥ* prayer consists of two short *rak'ah* prayers performed before *qiyām al-lail*, whether preceded by sleep or not (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2011; Tim Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2019a).

<sup>27</sup>On several occasions, this author has heard Syamsul Anwar's direct appeal to Muhammadiyah members to follow the opinion of the Tarjih Council on this aspect of the *iftitāḥ* prayer.

Robby Karman, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, Ilham Ibrahim, Ariful Hazam, and the members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council for providing information regarding my research. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article and to the editors of *the Indonesia and the Malay World*. Errors, if any, are solely mine.

## Disclosure statement

Q1 No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).



## Note on contributor

**Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi** is a lecturer in the Department of Hadith Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He has published widely on a variety of issues relating to Islamic Studies, including al-Quran, hadith, Islamic law, social media and da'wah, and Muhammadiyah studies. Email: niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id

## ORCID

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5659-6494>

## References

- Abdurrahim, Wahyudi Sarju. 2020. *Ahlul haq wassunah: syarah himpunan putusan tarjih Muhammadiyah bab iman bagian ketuhanan* [Ahlul haq wassunnah: explanation of tarjih decisions compilation of Muhammadiyah chapter on faith part of divinity]. Yogyakarta: Al Muflihun Publishing.
- Abror, Robby. 2020. Syekh Yunahar, ulama Muhammadiyah kharismatik [Sheikh Yunahar, a charismatic Muhammadiyah cleric]. 3 January. <<https://menara62.com/syeikh-yunahar-ulama-muhammadiyah-kharismatik/>> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2018. Media sosial dan pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [Social media and shifting religious authority]. 12 December. <[https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media\\_sosial\\_dan\\_pergeseran\\_otoritas\\_keagamaan](https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media_sosial_dan_pergeseran_otoritas_keagamaan)> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2020. The demise of moderate Islam: new media, contestation, and reclaiming religious authorities. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10 (1): 1–24.
- Alfaqi, Mifdal Zusron. 2015. Memahami Indonesia melalui prespektif nasionalisme, politik identitas, serta solidaritas [Understanding Indonesia through the perspectives of nationalism, identity politics, and solidarity]. *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 28 (2): 111–116.
- Alvara Research Center. 2020. Ramadhan dan pandemi Covid-19: semangat ibadah tak surut, konsumsi tersendat. <[https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN\\_DAN\\_PANDEMI\\_COVID-19\\_SEMANGAT\\_IBADAH\\_TAK\\_SURUT\\_KONSUMSI\\_TERSENDAT.pdf](https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN_DAN_PANDEMI_COVID-19_SEMANGAT_IBADAH_TAK_SURUT_KONSUMSI_TERSENDAT.pdf)> Accessed 23 February 2021.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2007. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer* [Contemporary Islamic law studies]. Jakarta: RM Books.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2013. *Salat Tarawih: Tinjauan usul fiqh, sejarah, dan fiqh* [Tarawih prayer: usul fiqh, history, and fiqh perspectives]. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2016. Fatwā, purification and dynamization: a study of tarjih in Muhammadiyah. *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (1): 27–44.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2018. *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Panitia Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih Muhammadiyah XXX.

- Anwar, Syamsul. 2020. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer Bagian dua* [Contemporary Islamic legal studies Part two]. Yogyakarta: UAD Press.
- Barton, Greg. 2014. The Gülen movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: progressive Islamic thought, religious philanthropy and civil society in Turkey and Indonesia. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25 (3): 287–301.
- Buchari, Sri Astuti. 2014. *Kebangkitan etnis menuju politik identitas* [Ethnic awakening towards identity politics]. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Bunt, Gary R. 2003. *Islam in the digital age: e-jihad, online fatwas and cyber Islamic environments*. London: Pluto Press.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2005. The 45th Muhammadiyah Congress contest between literal-conservative and liberal-moderate Muslims in Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 12 (1): 185–189.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2013. Liberal and conservative discourses in the Muhammadiyah: the struggle for the face of reformist Islam in Indonesia. In Martin van Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary developments in Indonesian Islam: explaining the 'conservative turn'*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2016. Aksi bela Islam: konservatisme dan fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. *Maarif* 11 (2): 15–29.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2020. Muslim televangelists in the making: conversion narratives and the construction of religious authority. *Muslim World* 110 (2): 154–175.
- Burhanudin, Jajat. 2004. The fragmentation of religious authority: Islamic print media in early 20th century Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 11 (1): 23–62.
- Campbell, H.A. and Teusner, P.E. 2011. Religious authority in the age of the internet. In *Christian Reflection, Virtual Lives*. Waco TX: Baylor University Press, pp. 59–68. <<https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/130950.pdf>>
- Chairi, Effendi. 2019. Ketidadaan otoritas terpusat dalam fenomena kontemporer di Indonesia [The absence of a centralised authority in contemporary phenomena in Indonesia]. *SANGKÉP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 2 (2):197–215.
- Chaplin. Chris. 2021. *Salafism and the State: Islamic activism and national identity in contemporary Indonesia*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.
- Dakta.com. 2016. Aa Gym ajak ribuan jamaahnya ikut aksi bela Islam III [Aa Gym invites thousands of congregants to join Islamic Defence Action III]. 29 November. <<http://www.dakta.com/news/7329/aa-gym-ajak-ribuan-jamaahnya-ikut-aksi-bela-islam-iii>> Accessed 2 February 2020.
- Fadl, Khaled Abou El. 2014. *Speaking in God's name: Islamic law, authority, and women*. London: Oneworld Publications.
- Farhan, Farhan. 2017. Pesan dakwah Felix Siauw di media sosial (perspektif meaning and media). *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Administrasi Islam* 1 (2): 209–226.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2017. Peranan Maqasid Al-Shariah dalam memahami Hadith: kajian terhadap fatwa Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah [The role of Maqasid Al-Shariah in understanding Hadith: a study of the fatwa of the Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah]. MA thesis, University of Malaya.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020a. PUTM dan kaderisasi ulama: menelusuri latar belakang lahirnya Lembaga Kaderisasi Ulama Muhammadiyah [PUTM and clerical regeneration: tracing the background of the birth of the Muhammadiyah Clerical Cadre Institute]. <<https://santricendekia.com/putm-dan-kaderisasi-ulama-menelusuri-latar-belakang-lahirnya-lembaga-kaderisasi-ulama-muhammadiyah/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020b. Tantangan kader ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah di era 4.0 [Challenges for Tarjih Muhammadiyah ulama cadres in the 4.0 era]. 21 July. *Suara 'Aisyiyah*<<https://suaraaisyiyah.id/tantangan-kader-ulama-tarjih-muhammadiyah-di-era-4-0/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Fealy, Greg. 2008. Consuming Islam: commodified religion and aspirational pietism in contemporary Indonesia. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.

Gesuri. 2020. Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia kehilangan ulama kharismatik [Yunahar Ilyas passed away, Indonesia lost a charismatic scholar]. 3 January. <<https://www.gesuri.id/internal/yunahar-ilyas-wafat-indonesia-kehilangan-ulama-kharismatik-b1YFoZpRY>> Accessed 20 March 2020.

Hew, Wai Weng. 2018. The art of dakwah: social media, visual persuasion and the Islamist propagation of Felix Siau. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (134): 61–79.

Hoesterey, James B. 2008. Marketing morality: the rise, fall and rebranding of Aa Gym. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: Religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, pp. 95–114.

Hope Cheong, Pauline. 2016. Religious authority and social media branding in a culture of religious celebration. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*, University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 81–102.

Horsfield, Peter. 2016. The media and religious authority from ancient to modern. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*. University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 37–66.

IB Times Indonesia. 2020. 100 situs Islam Indonesia, NU Online peringkat pertama [100 Indonesian Islamic websites, NU Online ranks first]. 10 July. <~~IBTimes.Id~~. 2020. <<https://ibtimes.id/100-situs-islam-indonesia-nu-online-peringkat-pertama/>> Accessed 23 February 2023.

Ilyas, Yunahar. 2012. *Kuliah Akhlaq* [Akhlaq lecture]. XII. Yogyakarta: LPPI Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta.

Khamis, S., Ang, L. and Welling, R. 2017. Self-branding, ‘micro-celebrity’ and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191–208.

Khomalia, Isti and Rahman, Khairul Arief. 2018. Micro hijabers celebrity: membentuk identitas dengan update self-story via instagram (kasus dian pelangi). *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban dan Pemikiran Islam* 2 (1): 33–42.

Kompas. 2020. Sejumlah tokoh hadir prosesi pemakaman ketua PP Muhammadiyah Yunahar Ilyas [Many figures attended the funeral procession of Muhammadiyah chairman Yunahar Ilyas]. 3 January. <<https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/03/19142441/sejumlah-tokoh-hadiri-prosesi-pemakaman-ketua-pp-muhammadiyah-yunahar-ilyas>> Accessed 3 April 2022.

Labiq. 2019. Pengaruh new media terhadap pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [The influence of new media on shifting religious authority]. 19 April. <<https://geotimes.co.id/opini/pengaruh-new-media-terhadap-pergeseran-otoritas-keagamaan>> Accessed 19 October 2020.

Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. 2010. *Politik identitas dan masa depan pluralisme Indonesia*. Edited by Samsu Rizal Panggabean et al. Jakarta: Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (PUSAD) Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina.

Madury, Zulkarnain El. 2019. Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam? [Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?]. 2 November. <<https://www.facebook.com/zulkarnainsumenep/posts/2386248524961601>> Accessed 5 May 2020.

Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah. 2016. Pembukaan Halaqah, Majelis Tarjih Launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan Muhammadiyah Observatorium Network [Halaqah opening, Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and Muhammadiyah Observatory Network]. 20 August. <<https://tarjih.or.id/pembukaan-halaqah-majelis-tarjih-launching-pusat-tarjih-muhammadiyah-dan-muhammadiyah-observatorium-network/>> Accessed 6 October 2023.

Majelis Tarjih ~~Dahlan~~, Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. 2016. Nota Kesepakatan Majelis Tarjih Dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Tentang Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di Islamic Center Universitas Ahmad Dahlan [Memorandum of Agreement between the Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board and Ahmad Dahlan University on the Management of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre at the Islamic Centre of Ahmad Dahlan University]. Yogyakarta.

Maskur, Maskur and Noor, Irfan Noor. 2014. Ustadz selebriti Abdullah Gymnastiar dalam budaya populer (perspektif hipersemiotika Yasraf Amir Piliang) [Celebrity Ustadz Abdullah

- Gymnastiar in popular culture (Yasraf Amir Piliang's hyper semiotics perspective)]. *Jurnal Studia Insania* 2 (1): 47–57.
- Matheson, Craig. 1987. Weber and the classification of forms of legitimacy. *British Journal of Sociology* 38 (2): 199–215.
- Muhammadiyah Central Board. 2023. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 8 October 2023.
- Nisa, Eva F. 2019. Internet and Muslim women. In Ronald Lukens-Bull and Mark Woodward (eds), *Handbook of contemporary Islam and Muslim lives*. Cham: Springer, pp. 1–19.
- Palahuddin. 2020. The typology of religious thought in Muhammadiyah. *International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 3 (2): 74–81. <<http://journal2.uad.ac.id/index.php/ijish/article/view/2233/pdf>>
- Peacock, James L. 1978. *Purifying the Faith: the Muhammadiyah movement in Indonesian Islam*. Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2011. *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2016. Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan MuON [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and MuON]. 20 August. <<http://www.umm.ac.id/id/muhammadiyah/7070.html>> Accessed 20 March 2021.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Berikut Susunan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah pPeriode 2022–2027 [The following is the composition of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the 2022–2027 period] <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/berikut-susunan-pimpinan-pusat-muhammadiyah-periode-2022-2027/>> Accessed 7 October 2023.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Majelis Tabligh [Tabligh Council]. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 07 October 2023.
- Postill, John and Pink, Sarah. 2012. Social media ethnography: the digital researcher in a messy web. *Media International Australia* 145 (1): 123–134.
- Pribadi, Yanwar. 2019. Fragmentasi umat dan penciptaan otoritas keagamaan: tanggapan terhadap 'Islam lokal' dan 'Islam asing' di Indonesia [Ummah fragmentation and the creation of religious authority: responses to 'local Islam' and 'foreign Islam' in Indonesia]. *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 21 (1): 103–119. <<https://jmb.lipi.go.id/jmb/article/view/828/455>>
- Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah. n.d. *Panduan pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre management guide]. Majelis Tarjih, Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta.
- Quadri, Syed Junaid A. 2013. Transformations of tradition: modernity in the thought of Muḥammad Bakhīr Al-Muṭī'ī. PhD thesis, McGill University.
- Rahman, Asjmun Abdur et al. 1985. Laporan penelitian Majlis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (suatu studi tentang sistem dan metode penentuan hukum) [Research report of Majlis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (a study of the system and method of determining the law)]. Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga.
- Rakyat Merdeka. 2019. Dubes Malaysia jenguk ketum MUI Yunahar Ilyas di Yogyakarta [Malaysian ambassador visits MUI chairman Yunahar Ilyas in Yogyakarta]. 5 November. <<https://rm.id/baca-berita/internasional/21745/dubes-malaysia-jenguk-ketum-mui-yunahar-ilyas-di-yogyakarta>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Riesebrodt, Martin. 1999. Charisma in Max Weber's Sociology of Religion. *Religion* 29 (1): 1–14.
- Sadasri, Lidwina Mutia. 2017. Selebriti mikro di media baru kajian presentasi diri dalam vlog selebriti mikro [Micro-celebrities in new media: a study of self-presentation in micro-celebrity vlogs]. *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi Dan Opini Publik* 21 (2): 167–181. <<https://jurnal.kominfo.go.id/index.php/jpkop/article/view/1218/720>>
- Saefullah, Hikmawan. 2022. Media baru, publik baru: mengkonfigurasi ulang ruang publik Islam [New media, new publics: reconfiguring the Islamic public sphere]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.



Sammy, Abdullah. 2022. Peluang dan tantangan dakwah digital Muhammadiyah [Opportunities and challenges of Muhammadiyah digital da'wah]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.

Sanjaya, Makroen. 2022. Peta ideologi islam di media sosial [The map of Islamic ideology on social media]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.

Senft, Theresa M. 2008. *Camgirls: celebrity and community in the age of social networks*. New York: Peter Lang.

Shamsy, Ahmed El. 2013. The Hāshiya in Islamic law: a sketch of the Shāfi'ī literature. *Oriens* 41 (3-4): 289–315.

Shihab, Alwi. 1995. The Muhammadiyah movement and its controversy with Christian mission in Indonesia. PhD thesis, Temple University, USA.

Spencer, Martin E. 1970. Weber on legitimate norms and authority. *British Journal of Sociology* 21 (2): 123–134.

Suara Muhammadiyah. 2019. Hyung Jun Kim: sistem di Muhammadiyah sungguh ideal [Hyung Jun Kim: Muhammadiyah's system is ideal]. <<https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/08/01/hyung-jun-kim-sistem-di-muhammadiyah-sungguh-ideal/>> Accessed 9 April 2022.

Suyadi and Widodo, Hendro. 2019. Millennialization of Islamic education based on neuroscience in the third generation university in Yogyakarta Indonesia. *QIIS International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7 (1): 173–202.

Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2009. Hukum tentang jenggot dan cadar [Islamic law perspective on beards and veils]. *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine, no. 18 . Yogyakarta.

Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019a. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 4*. Cetakan IX. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019b. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 7*. Cetakan IV. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Tirto.id. 2018. Dari Aa' Gym ke Felix Siauw: ustaz medsos & medium dakwah politis. Tirto.Id. 16 January. <<https://tirto.id/dari-aa-gym-ke-felix-siauw-ustaz-medsos-medium-dakwah-politis-cCGf>> Accessed 5 February 2020.

Turner, Bryan S. 2007. Religious authority and the new media. *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2): 117–134.

Turner, Graeme. 2010. *Ordinary people and the media: the demotic turn*. Los Angeles CA: Sage.

Widodo, Arif. 2017. Transformative intellectual discourse and movement of Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM). *Iseedu: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices* 1 (1): 126–151. <<https://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/iseedu/article/view/5423/3542>>

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change*. Princetoon NJ: Princeton University Press.

ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY *USTAZ* PHENOMENON

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

**QUERY SHEET**

This page lists questions we have about your paper. The numbers displayed at left are hyperlinked to the location of the query in your paper.

The title and author names are listed on this sheet as they will be published, both on your paper and on the Table of Contents. Please review and ensure the information is correct and advise us if any changes need to be made. In addition, please review your paper as a whole for typographical and essential corrections.

Your PDF proof has been enabled so that you can comment on the proof directly using Adobe Acrobat. For further information on marking corrections using Acrobat, please visit <https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/how-to-correct-proofs-with-adobe/>

The CrossRef database ([www.crossref.org/](http://www.crossref.org/)) has been used to validate the references. Changes resulting from mismatches are tracked in red font.

**AUTHOR QUERIES**

QUERY NO.	QUERY DETAILS
<b>Q1</b>	The disclosure statement has been inserted. Please correct if this is inaccurate.



# ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY *USTAZ* PHENOMENON

## Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi 

### ABSTRACTS

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the fragmentation of religious authority. In the Indonesian context, the mainstream religious authority held by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has been challenged and threatened by micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This article examines the emergence of the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah fanpage on Facebook, created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board as it has threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority. It analyses Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace, by taking a closer look at what has been done by Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, an assembly that has the exclusive authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* within Muhammadiyah. This article also discusses lessons that can be learned from the case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the response of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

### ABSTRAK

Kemunculan internet dan media sosial telah mempertajam fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. Dalam konteks Indonesia, otoritas keagamaan arus utama yang dipegang oleh Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) disaingi dan diancam oleh para ustaz mikro-selebritas. Artikel ini mengkaji kemunculan fanpage Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah di Facebook yang dibuat dan dikelola oleh Zulkarnain El Madury, seseorang yang mengklaim sebagai ustaz Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, karena dianggap mengancam otoritas keagamaan Muhammadiyah. Penelitian ini menganalisis upaya Muhammadiyah dalam mempertahankan otoritas keagamaannya di dunia maya dengan melihat lebih dekat pada apa yang telah dilakukan oleh Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah, sebuah majelis yang memiliki otoritas eksklusif untuk mengeluarkan fatwa dan ijtihad keagamaan resmi di Muhammadiyah. Artikel ini juga membahas pelajaran yang dapat dipetik dari kasus Zulkarnain El Madury dan respons Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

### KEYWORDS

Fragmentation of religious authority; micro-celebrity *ustaz*; Muhammadiyah; religious authority; *tarjih*

### KATA KUNCI

Fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan; Muhammadiyah; otoritas keagamaan; *tarjih*; *ustaz* mikro-selebritas



## Introduction

The Alvara Research Center (2020) survey ~~was surprising as it~~ stated that the clerics most heard by the public, especially in Ramadan 2020, were not from the official Muhammadiyah board.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the Alvara Research Center survey was released (IBTimes.id 2020), an Islamic website managed by young Muhammadiyah intellectuals, published a report ranking the 100 most popular Islamic websites in Indonesia. The majority of these sites are managed by or affiliated to Nahdliyyin (NU followers) and Salafi<sup>2</sup> groups with few such sites operated by or affiliated to Muhammadiyah. The Alvara Research Center survey and the IBTimes.id report show that Muhammadiyah, in terms of influence and religious authority on the internet, lags behind other religious groups which is ironic for an organisation claiming to represent the progressive Islamic group.

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the so-called fragmentation of religious authority. Eva F. Nisa (2019), for example, mentions that the proliferation of various digital platforms is directly proportional to the increasing fragmentation of religious authority. Islamic discourse is monopolised not only by an elite group of scholars or mainstream religious groups, but also by persons or groups that have not been considered in Islamic discourse. Furthermore, the presence of the internet and social media has led to the birth of what is called micro-celebrity. Theresa M. Senft (2008) defines micro-celebrity as a new style of online performance that involves increasing popularity on social media such as videos, blogs, and networking sites. These micro-celebrities unlike conventional celebrities, emerge from what is known as new media (Senft 2008).

Of course, not all new media users ~~have the adjective~~ 'micro-celebrity'. ~~Only~~ those who experience what Graeme Turner (2010) terms 'the demotic turn', namely, the increasing visibility of ordinary people to appear as celebrities in the media, especially online media. In turn, both conventional and micro-celebrity exist in various public spheres, and the discourse on them is characterised as influencers, stimulants of consumerism, enthusiasm, public debate, and various activism (Sadasri 2017).

By borrowing the theory of micro-celebrities in the study of new media, we can then read how these micro-celebrities have also come to the fore in the religious realm. The emergence of ulama, *ustaz* (religious teachers), and religious leaders who become influencers in new media can perhaps be seen as one form of micro-celebrity. Felix Siauww is a prominent example. A convert, who is now a preacher, Siauww has a massive following on social media. In 2018, for example, he had 2.6 million followers on Twitter, and in 2022 it numbered 3.3 million. Felix Siauww's Instagram account has around 4.9 million followers. It can even be said that he is the *ustaz* who has the most followers on social media (Tirto 2018), making him one of the leading social media preachers in Indonesia today (Hew 2018). What Felix Siauww posts on his social media has ~~more or less~~ influenced the map of religious authorities in Indonesia.

The existence of the internet and the continuing development of technology ~~allows~~ the emergence of many other micro-celebrity *ustaz*, both in the national arena more

<sup>1</sup>One of the 15 most popular clerics mentioned in the report, Ustaz Ali Hidayat, has since been included on the Muhammadiyah Central Board's Tabligh Council (2022–2027; Muhammadiyah Central Board 2023). Prior to that, he did not convey official Muhammadiyah ideas in his lectures.

<sup>2</sup>For more comprehensive information on the activism of Salafi groups, see Chris Chaplin (2021).

generally or more specifically in internal religious organisations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, Persis (Persatuan Islam) or others. In the context of Muhammadiyah, the largest modernist Islamic organisation ~~began to be challenged for~~ its religious authority by a preacher who was said to be part of Muhammadiyah itself, namely Zulkarnain El Madury. He claims to be a Muhammadiyah cadre and often introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board. In recent years, El Madury has been noticed by Muhammadiyah administrators and Muhammadiyah cadres<sup>3</sup> and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah) has discussed him in a special meeting. This is because the posts on the Facebook page that El Madury manages, *Syarah Himpunan Putus Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (henceforth SHPTM), often differ significantly from – and to some extent delegitimise – a Muhammadiyah fatwa or official decision. Responses from grassroots or Muhammadiyah followers vary. This can be seen, for example, from the comments on each post. Some defend and remain adamant on the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah, but not a few were affected and followed what was conveyed by El Madury on his Facebook page.

This is where it becomes crucial to see how Muhammadiyah attempts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace, especially among its members and the public. By conducting web content analysis (Postill and Pink 2012) on SHPTM and official social media accounts and those affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this article shows how El Madury builds his narratives and, in turn, how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority on the internet. Additionally, field research was conducted and key actors were interviewed offline and online in a semi-structured format.<sup>4</sup> Apart from El Madury, the key actors are members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Digital Broadcast Centre (Pusat Syiar Digital Muhammadiyah), Muhammadiyah activists as well as Muhammadiyah grassroots.

### Fragmentation of religious authority, new preacher and micro-celebrity *ustaz* phenomenon

Fragmentation of religious authority is a phenomenon that occurs in various religious communities and is not limited to Islam (B.S. Turner 2007; Campbell and Teusner 2011; Hope Cheong 2016). The fragmentation of religious authority is also a global phenomenon as pointed out by Gary R. Bunt (2003) who states that the new media have shaped diverse understandings among individual Muslims worldwide about e-jihad (electronic jihad). The definition of electronic jihad is understood and interpreted differently, ranging from online activism to Muslim articulation after the events of 11 September 2001. Bunt (2003) shows that each new media (in this case, new websites) has authority for its respective group.

The fragmentation of religious authority discussed here is from the 20th century to the present. Jajat Burhanudin (2004) points out that there has been a shift in religious authority in the historical phase of Indonesian religious thought in the early 20th century due to modernisation. His study, which focuses on the Islamic print media, further shows

<sup>3</sup>This author's online and offline interviews with Amiruddin, Robby Karman, Muhammad Muflih, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, and Arif Nur Kholis, 2019–2020.

<sup>4</sup>Data collection in this study was carried out between 2018 and 2020. As personal interviews were not possible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, some interviews were conducted online.

that there is a shift in religious authority that used to be in *Kitab Kuning*<sup>5</sup> taught by *kyai* or ulama in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to magazines, journals, newspapers, and books published by modernist circles or organisations.

Religious authority since the early 20th century has always stayed with Muhammadiyah and NU. These two religious organisations are often referred to by scholars as the authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016; Akmaliah 2018). The shift in religious authority occurred again in the 1990s when national television stations emerged. The Islamic programmes presented by the television stations show the *ustaz* (religious teachers), which in turn build their authority through lectures delivered by these preachers. This phenomenon prompted scholars to come up with the term 'Islamic televangelism' (Akmaliah 2018). Abdullah Gymnastiar who is better known as Aa Gym is one example that falls into the category of a television *ustaz*, or a 'tele-dai' as coined by Greg Fealy (2008).

The most obvious and recent picture of the fragmentation of religious authority in Indonesia is the series of events of the Defend Islam Action (Aksi Bela Islam). Ahmad Najib Burhani (2016) hints that these critical events marked the peak of the fragmentation of religious authorities in Indonesia as they gave rise to new actors who challenge the established religious authority. Although it cannot be said to shift or match the role of Muhammadiyah and NU, the emergence of new actors such as Rizieq Shihab provides a new map of religious authority in Indonesia.

This phenomenon of the fragmentation of religious authority has increased sharply in the development of what scholars call pop culture, marked by the birth of many new media (Labiq 2019). The availability of internet access to every social class is the main factor for this fragmentation. As a result, many new media have emerged with each individual and group competing to spread ideas (Horsfield 2016; Nisa 2019).

Aa Gym is one of the early actors who emerged in the internet era in Indonesia. This can be captured in two interesting studies on Aa Gym by James B. Hoesterey (2008), and Maskur and Noor (2014). Although the use of the internet as a medium of da'wah around during the early 2000s was not as massive as it is now, the emergence of Aa Gym as a new cleric on the national da'wah stage through lectures, seminars, and Islamic training is a phenomenon in itself. Hoesterey (2008) studies the journey of Aa Gym from his first appearance as a preacher, falling, and then successfully rebranding to restore his religious authority. This is evident, for example, from how Aa Gym has many listeners (Dakta.com 2016). Popular culture has also brought Aa Gym to be seen not only by the public, especially by his followers, as also singer, actor, author, etc. Thus, he has transformed from an ordinary cleric to a celebrity cleric. Through a hypersemiotic perspective, Maskur and Noor (2014) show the various aspects of Aa Gym's personality.

Following the appearance of Aa Gym and with further rapid development of information technology, many other new preachers began to appear. Hew Wai Weng (2018) describes how Felix Siauw is another skilful religious preacher. Being a cleric with the most followers on the internet did not make Siauw neglect to spread his da'wah in the real world. Hew (2018) points out that Siauw has blended online and offline da'wah harmoniously. According to Hew (2018) and Farhan (2017), one of the

<sup>5</sup>So-called because the books were printed on yellow paper. These were the Islamic texts used in the education of Islamic schools.

keys to Siau-w's success in preaching is his ability to present an entertaining and straightforward da'wah, even though its content is dogmatic and political.

Aa Gym and Felix Siau-w are two micro-celebrity *ustaz* as a result of the new media. The term micro-celebrity *ustaz* was adopted and reconstructed from the theory of micro-celebrity. Most of these studies conducted from the perspective of pop culture (Senft 2008; G. Turner 2010; Khamis, Ang and Welling 2017; Sadasri 2017; Khomalia and Rahman 2018) describe the fragmentation of religious authority, marked by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By this term this author means an ordinary *ustaz/ustazah* who has skyrocketed in popularity and is celebrity on and because of social media so that he or she is able to influence certain people or communities. In other words, it means the *ustaz/ustazah* has experienced what G. Turner (2010) calls 'the demotic turn', when ordinary people are highly visible on social media and become celebrities. Challenges to established religious authorities by new religious personalities or groups are rarely touched on except that of Yanwar Pribadi (2019). His study explains the efforts of 'local Islam' (*Islam lokal*) to defend its religious authority from the threat of 'foreign Islam' (*Islam asing*). However, his study differs from what this author will examine in tracing Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

This study is on a micro-celebrity *ustaz*, Zulkarnain El Madury who is less well known when compared to Aa Gym or Felix Siau-w but he has a strong influence on the internet. His identity as a preacher from Muhammadiyah who targets Muhammadiyah followers with postings that are often different and even delegitimise the official voice of this largest modernist mass organisation deserves to be investigated. This study, apart from showing Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority on the internet, also seeks explicitly to fill the gap in previous studies. In his latest study, Akmaliah (2020) shows that Muhammadiyah and NU have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was strongly reactive to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) indicates there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's responses less hostile. Sammy (2022), Sanjaya (2022), and Saefullah (2022) came to the same conclusion as Akmaliah, claiming that Muhammadiyah is significantly less adaptive to the emergence of new media, and therefore its da'wah often loses to that of the micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This study focuses on the struggle of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as the only assembly under Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas and official *ijtihad* exposition within Muhammadiyah.

### **Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah fanpage**

The Facebook SHPTM fanpage was created by Zulkarnain El Madury. He was born in Sumenep on the island of Madura in 1963, with the name Zulkarnain bin Syamsuri. He claims to have studied in Malaysia at the Institute of Business Study and always introduces himself as a preacher from the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah). He spent his childhood in Madura and was a traditionalist Muslim like others on the island. He grew up in a milieu dominated by the NU traditionalist Islamic organisation. He used to perform

*tahlilan* (ritual prayers for the dead), *ziarah* (pilgrimage to the grave), and other practices that, according to him, after becoming a member of Muhammadiyah, were not following the Sunnah of the Prophet. He received his religious education at the Islamic boarding school at-Taufiqiyyah Sumenep Madura. In 1976 he became acquainted with Muhammadiyah. He became interested in the da'wah and religious understanding of the Muhammadiyah movement founded by Ahmad Dahlan after listening to a lecture by one of its preachers. In 1977, he officially joined Muhammadiyah.<sup>6</sup>

Since joining Muhammadiyah, El Madury has been active as a preacher who spreads religious ideas and understanding. From 1990 to 2007, he was one of the Muhammadiyah preachers who was sent to remote areas by the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board. His daily activities are now preaching at different places as well as creating content on for SHPTM fanpage. He now lives in Jakarta as the *tarjih* and *tabligh* council chair of the Pondok Gede Muhammadiyah Branch.<sup>7</sup> He created SHPTM in 2014.<sup>8</sup> However, in the digital history that this author can trace, the fanpage was created in 2015 as the earliest post that is currently traceable is dated 5 January 2015.

According to El Madury, the fanpage began with the WhatsApp group he created which he named *Tarjih dan Tabligh Institut* (Tarjih and Tabligh Institute) to provide a space to discuss and spread ideas related to *tarjih*.<sup>9</sup> He included many Muhammadiyah figures and activists in this group, including (the now late) Buya Yunahar Ilyas. Over time, seeing that El Madury's posts on SHPTM were deemed inconsistent with the *tarjih* spirit of Muhammadiyah, several people, such as Fathurrahman Kamal and Buya Risman, sharply criticised the postings. El Madury, Fathurrahman Kamal, and Buya Risman were then engaged in a heated debate which was relayed later to Buya Yunahar Ilyas. The response by Buya Yunahar Ilyas at that time, according to El Madury, differed from that of his critics. Buya Yun responded quite positively because he saw El Madury's initiative as providing *syarah* (explanation) or further explication of the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Decisions Compilation). Finally, he gave his permission to El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com).<sup>10</sup>

El Madury's early postings on SHPTM, were still relatively consistent in uploading Muhammadiyah fatwas in the question (from someone) and answer format from the fatwa division of the Tarjih Council. This is similar to the the original question and answer format administered by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, whose fatwas were later published in the *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine. However, over time, SHPTM included posts that apart from the dissemination of Muhammadiyah's official *ijtihad* included the personal opinions of El Madury. These opinions in inelegant words are often offensive to other groups. Not infrequently, his posts contradict the

<sup>6</sup>Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Muhammadiyah's use of the word *tarjih* has changed throughout its development. In its early period, and following its usage in the principles of law (*usul al-fiqh*), *tarjih* conveyed the meaning of examining the various opinions of Muslim jurists on a particular question and evaluating them to determine which is most faithful to the original Shari'a sources. Over time this usage gradually included any intellectual endeavour used to study new cases that earlier jurists had not addressed. In short, in Muhammadiyah's perspective, *tarjih* is identical, or almost identical, to *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

<sup>10</sup>Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.



official stance of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in particular, or Muhammadiyah in general, such as on the veil issue (see below). Since Facebook introduced its 'live broadcast' feature, El Madury has also availed of it to conduct live lectures. The SHPTM is popular with netizens. As of the time of writing (3 April 2022), it has been followed by 19,423 and is 'liked' by 8,868 people. His posts also often receive both positive and critical comments from viewers.

El Madury gave several reasons that brought about the creation of his fanpage. Firstly, it is aimed at fortifying Muhammadiyah followers against all forms of superstition, heresy, and myth as its posts focus on issues related to faith and worship. Secondly, he aims to counter those liberal Muhammadiyah activists and has openly responded to such views. His posts often openly attacks the religious practices of the the Nahdliyyin, resulting in several clashes between him and the Nahdliyyin figure, Idrus Ramli.<sup>11</sup>

Despite having many followers El Madury and his SHPTM do have critics. Many Muhammadiyah followers are concerned about the SHPTM posts. Some have tried to convey their anxiety through the official social media accounts of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre (Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah).<sup>12</sup> Those concerned generally want to ask for firm action from the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as El Madury has included 'Tarjih Muhammadiyah' in his fanpage name. The demands to the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, when summarised, include: (1) that the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council reprimand or remind Zulkarnain El Madury not to use symbols or names that are closely related to Tarjih Muhammadiyah for or on his fanpage; (2) making and circulating an announcement that the fanpage is not a social media account of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council or the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre; (3) announcing the official social media accounts and websites of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre, so that Muhammadiyah people at the grassroots are not deceived by the existence of the fanpage and know where to look for religious reference sites, especially on the internet.

### **Zulkarnain El Madury and his efforts in building religious authority**

Zulkarnain El Madury and his fanpage SHPTM, have threatened the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, and specifically, the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. Many of his posts affect Muhammadiyah followers in particular and Muslims in general as these posts often differ from the official stance of Muhammadiyah, and in some cases contradict the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. This has stimulated public debate on social media, allowing El Madury to become a micro-celebrity *ustaz*. As a result of the general public and the online community attention, El Madury has been able to gradually build up his religious authority. From the Weberian perspective (Riesebrodt 1999), he has been able to do this in two ways. The first is through charisma (charismatic authority) and the second is traditional authority discussed later. According to Weber, charisma is a particular type of authority whose original form is based on a specific belief contained in a particular person (ibid.). El Madury claims he has the endorsement of Yunahar Ilyas, a

<sup>11</sup>Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>12</sup>Interviews with Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf and Ariful Hazam, November 2020 who are grassroots of Muhammadiyah, and social media administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

very popular Muhammadiyah cleric respected by the community from within the Muhammadiyah circle and from Muslims in general which is a form of charismatic authority.

Yunahar Ilyas (1956–2020) or Buya Yun as he was popularly known, was an exegete (*mufassir*) born in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, who died at the age of 63 (Ilyas 2012). He was an alumnus of Imam Ibn Su'ud University (Saudi Arabia) and an excellent lecturer in conveying religious messages. He was seen as a charismatic cleric by Muhammadiyah followers and Muslims, in general, and this reputation extended to neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore (Abror 2020; Gesuri 2020). On his death in early 2020, many people flocked to pay their last respects to Buya Yun who held the chair of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for three terms (Kompas 2020; Rakyat Merdeka 2019).

By harnessing the charisma of Buya Yun, El Madury was able to increase his religious authority. On various occasions, including when this author interviewed him, Buya Yun's name was often mentioned as an argument and a shield.<sup>13</sup> El Madury insisted that he created the SHPTM fanpage with the permission of Yunahar Ilyas.<sup>14</sup> He added that Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website tanyajawabagama.com, had similarly received permission from Buya Yun. Wahyudi Abdurrahim confirmed Zulkarnain's claims and Muhammad Muflih, a grassroots representative added that it is a form of fairness.<sup>15</sup> In other words, Buya Yun's permission is a form of appreciation given by someone who is more senior and has a high social position in Muhammadiyah to someone who is more junior and classified as a grassroots Muhammadiyah member.<sup>16</sup> Permission from Buya Yun, who has charisma within Muhammadiyah in particular, has become a tool used by El Madury in building his religious authority.

In Weberian charismatic authority, charisma is not only about a belief in the existence of extraordinary or superpowers possessed by or contained in humans but also about particular objects other than humans (Riesebradt 1999). We thus have an explanation as to why El Madury named his fanpage *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a highly respectable and crucial council in Muhammadiyah. Founded in 1927, the Council functions as an assembly that carries out its agenda of purification of religion and the dynamisation of social life. It conducts research and investigations towards this purity, and accordingly gives fatwas and compiles religious guidelines on faith (*'aqidah*) and worship (*'ibadah*) as well as social relations (*mu'āmalah*) (Rahman et al. 1985; Anwar 2016). In addition, this Council makes efforts to resolve differences and disagreements on religious issues, which are usually referred to as *khilāfiyyah* problems, so that they are directed more productively (Anwar 2007, 2016).

The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a body that is responsible for formulating the ideological basis of the Muhammadiyah movement (Anwar 2007, 2016) and is Muhammadiyah's representative in the religious field (Fauzi 2017). The Council produces three

<sup>13</sup>This author's informants include Muhammad Muflih (grassroot of Muhammadiyah and initiator of the website tanyajawabagama.com), Robby Karman (secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association [DPP IMM] 2018–2021), and several participants invited by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council with the agenda 'Responding to Emergence of Syarah HPT on Social Media' on 25 September, 2020; interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>14</sup>Interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>15</sup>Online interview with Wahyudi Abdurrahim through WhatsApp, September 2020.

<sup>16</sup>Online interview with Muhammad Muflih through WhatsApp and Facebook, 20 October 2019.

types of *ijtihad*, namely: (1) *tarjih fatwa (fatwa tarjih)*, (2) *tarjih decision (putusan tarjih)*, and (3) *tarjih discourse (wacara tarjih)* (Anwar 2016). *Tarjih fatwa* is the Council's answer to general questions on issues that require an explanation in terms of sharia law. Following the nature of the fatwa in general, the Council's fatwa is non-binding, on either organisations or members as individuals. Therefore, even the fatwa can be questioned and discussed. However, because the fatwa contains religious guidance derived from Islamic teaching sources (Anwar 2020), and the general public often does not actually understand the aspects of such a fatwa, it is still believed by Muhammadiyah members to be religious guidance. However, the *tarjih* decision is the official stance of Muhammadiyah in religious matters and is formally binding on the organisation and its members. But, in practice, sometimes Muhammadiyah members exercise their right to freedom not to be bound by the decision because they have different *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

Meanwhile, *tarjih* discourses are ideas or thoughts that are raised and put forward by the Council in seminars, *halaqah* (religious gathering or meeting to discuss the Qur'an or Islam), or other forums in addressing various developing issues and at the same time fostering a critical spirit of *ijtihad* and collecting materials or ideas on various actual problems in society. The nature of this *tarjih* discourse is non-binding and does not become a fatwa that must be followed. *Tarjih* discourse is contained in various publications of the Council, such as *Jurnal Tarjih* (Tarjih Journal) and various published books (Anwar 2016).

The *tarjih* decision and the *tarjih fatwa*, hold their strength within Muhammadiyah as these are considered sacred by some of its members. In short, it can be said that anything that 'smells *tarjih*' has authority in the collective memory of Muhammadiyah followers. In the perspective of Khaled Abou El Fadl (2014), fatwa and *tarjih* decisions have the power of persuasive authority, as these can influence or direct others because they believed in them. The *tarjih* fatwas are officially published through the organisation's magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, and compiled in the *Tanya Jawab Agama* book. In comparison, the *tarjih* decisions are codified in a book called *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (commonly known as HPT). Thus, it can be understood why the attribution of the term *tarjih* to particular objects can give rise to charismatic authority, as mentioned by Weber.

What El Madury did can also be seen as identity politics which is defined as a political tool of a group whether it be ethnic, cultural, religious or others for specific purposes, such as a form of resistance or to show the identity of a group (Alfaqi 2015). Within this framework, identity is politicised through extreme interpretation, which aims to gain support from people who feel 'the same', through race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements. In the context of El Madury, the use of the *tarjih* label on his fanpage can be interpreted as a political tool to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muhammadiyah members. And, as seen in some of his sermon videos, El Madury also placed a flag with the Muhammadiyah symbol behind him. In this context, he wants to convince the viewers that he is close to Muhammadiyah. He has introduced himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board on many occasions.

According to Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif (2010), identity politics is always related to members of social groups who feel excluded by the mainstream in a nation or state. Sri Astuti Buchari (2014) also finds that the emergence of identity politics is mainly



caused by certain factors that an ethnic group sees as pressure from the political injustice. By looking at the observations made by Ahmad Najib Burhani (2013), El Madury, in this case, can be categorised as part of a group that feels excluded, threatened, and to some extent in need of justice within Muhammadiyah. Burhani (2013) explains the existence of two opposing schools of thought within Muhammadiyah which he refers to as 'Pure Islam' (*Islam Murni*) and 'Progressive Islam' (*Islam Progresif*). The conflict between these two schools of thought in Muhammadiyah began to surface at the 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Banda Aceh in 1995 (Burhani 2013).

The dominance of 'Progressive Islam' in Muhammadiyah strengthened after its 44th congress in Jakarta in 2000. This congress chose Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif as general chair. He is a progressive Muslim figure, an alumnus of the University of Chicago, and a student of the eminent progressive scholar Fazlur Rahman. At this congress, several names representing the 'Progressive Islam' group were included in the ranks of the central leadership of Muhammadiyah, such as Amin Abdullah, Dawam Raharjo, and Abdul Munir Mulkhan. During Ma'arif's leadership, progressive ideas not only dominated culturally but gradually became Muhammadiyah's official programmes (Burhani 2013).

Seeing the increasingly apparent threat from the ideas put forward by the 'Progressive Islam' group within Muhammadiyah, representatives of the 'Pure Islam' group did not remain silent. They compete and squabble over religious interpretations as to which is the most authentic. These two groups challenge each other through various channels, including seminars, discussions, publications. They usually have conflicting programmes. For example, as mentioned by Burhani (2013), when the Centre for the Study of Religion and Civilisation (PSAP/Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban) raised the theme of pluralism and multiculturalism in its journal, *Tanwir Journal*, the Tabligh Council<sup>17</sup> responded with articles in opposition in its magazine, *Majalah Tabligh*. In Burhani's investigation, during the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress in Malang, this conservative group set up a Pojok Anti-Liberal (anti-liberal corner) booth, which sold books, DVDs, t-shirts, magazines, and other anti-liberal mementos. Strikingly, some of the t-shirts for sale displayed the words 'Muhammadiyah Anti-Liberal' (Burhani 2013).

At the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress, it seemed that the 'Pure Islam' group was gaining momentum to beat back the 'Progressive Islam' group. The quarrels between these two groups occurred within congress committees and in the external arena. Burhani (2005, 2013) noted at least three critical issues where the 'Pure Islam' group defeated the 'Progressive Islam' in the congress arena, namely: (1) leadership change; (2) the position of women; and (3) resistance to liberal thought.

After the 45th congress, the feud between these two schools of thought has continued though waxing and waning at different times. The form of the feud now looks more varied given the availability of the internet where the presence of social media has

<sup>17</sup>Muhammadiyah has many assemblies such as Majelis Tabligh and Majelis Tarjih, each with its own functions and responsibilities. Majelis Tarjih is responsible for producing religious thoughts through fatwas and decisions, while Majelis Tabligh is responsible for disseminating them. Historically, Majelis Tabligh is known in Muhammadiyah as the anti-liberal wing and thus there are at times poor collaboration between Majelis Tarjih and Majelis Tabligh. For example, some fatwas issued by Majelis Tarjih, in Majelis Tabligh's perspective, are the result of liberal thinking. See Burhani (2013) and Palahuddin (2020).

changed the battle arena from a conventional to a more modern one. El Madury represents the 'Pure Islam' group, and has heated online debates with figures considered representatives of 'Progressive Islam' whose actions he sees as unsettling. For example, El Madury and the secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association (DPP IMM),<sup>18</sup> Robby Karman, have openly and frequently castigated each other on for example, issues about the veil and the Wahhabi. According to El Madury, Robby Karman is a young liberal figure in Muhammadiyah who should be challenged. El Madury also often attacks the IBTimes.id website, as it frequently contains articles that are progressive and, to some extent, controversial. This website has several former Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah (JIMM/Muhammadiyah Youth Intellectual Network) figures, such as Hilman Latief, Azaki Khoiruddin, and Mu'arif. On one occasion, when the chair of the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre admonished El Madury for uploading provocative posts that contradicted the official stance of the Tarjih Council, he defended himself by stating that equally provocative posts from the 'Progressive Islam' group should be similarly reprimanded. If he is the only one selected for rebuke then he felt an injustice had been done.<sup>19</sup> El Madury's attitude in the framework of identity politics reflects someone who feels excluded and threatened by certain parties. At such, his specific attributes and identity are a deliberate form of resistance to the domination of certain groups or thoughts that threaten him.

The second form of authority is what Weber calls traditional authority (Spencer 1970; Matheson 1987; Riesebrodt 1999). In simple terms, something can be considered as having traditional authority if it gains legitimacy based on beliefs or norms that have been established in a particular tradition (Chairi 2019). In other words, according to Spencer (1970), traditional authority is legitimised and, at the same time, constrained by traditional norms. Therefore, it is the opposite of charismatic authority. If in charismatic authority, it is the leader or someone who creates the norms, then it is the norms that create the leader or person in the traditional authority. In charismatic authority, the value of influence is generated by a person's personal qualities and is always associated with his personality. While in the case of traditional authority, it is generated by function and is related to someone or something that has traditional values (Spencer 1970).

In the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, ulama and the classical books they wrote can be considered to have this traditional authority. Ulama in Islamic tradition are called heirs of the Prophets. The authority of the ulama is derived from the legitimacy of religious texts which state that the prophetic tradition will be passed on to them. Therefore, the religious ideas they convey in writings or books contain an authoritative value for the next generation. This is the uniqueness of Islamic scholars and traditions, as mentioned by Muhammad Qasim Zaman (2002) who states that one of the most prominent aspects of pre-modern intellectual culture is the articulation of religious discourse through the so-called medium of the commentary. This is manifested in various forms such *al-syurūh*, *hawāsyī*, *rasā'il*, and *fatawā*. The various genres of books that contain explanations, descriptions, or responses to a book or social phenomena are a way for

<sup>18</sup>Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM) or Muhammadiyah Student Association is a proponent of Muhammadiyah in student affairs with the basic mission of realising the real Islamic society as formulated by Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Widodo 2017).

<sup>19</sup>On 3 November 2019, the manager of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah reprimanded Zulkarnain El Madury for his post on SHPTM on the veil which contradicts Muhammadiyah's official stance.

scholars to shape the identity and authority of the school or tradition they adhere to. In addition, it is also a means to interpreting the meaning of the foundational sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah (Zaman 2002).

An example is the *hawāsyī* tradition in the Shafii school. Its emergence, according to Ahmed El-Shamsy (2013), shows the peak of the authority of two scholars in that school, namely al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī. Al-Kurdi, as quoted by El Shamsy, called these two scholars 'the higher authorities in the Syafii school'. Those who want to know the authoritative opinion of the Shaf'i school have to go through the works of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī, and the books that explain further their works, namely the books written by Ibn Hajar al-Haitamī and Syamsuddīn al-Ramlī. These books have for later generations the value of traditional authority (Shamsy 2013: 292).

What is the connection between this traditional authority and El Madury? El Madury's posts on SHPTM and at religious forums where he speaks always rely on the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāth*). According to Endang Mintarja, chair of the Jakarta branch of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this aspect has drawn many people to El Madury's lectures.<sup>20</sup> What El Madury did, which Muhammadiyah did not do in many of its fatwas was to cite the Islamic intellectual tradition. In many of its fatwas, Muhammadiyah often only quotes the Qur'an or hadith to strengthen its argument, without citing the opinions of other Islamic scholars. Perhaps this is a consequence of the modernist movement, which became the spirit of Muhammadiyah. The modernist movement initiated by reformers such as Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, and Muḥammad Rasyīd Riḍā in the late 19th and early 20th centuries used the term *al-rujū' ilā al-qur'ān wa al-sunnah* ('back to the Qur'an and Sunnah'). According to Syed Junaid A. Quadri (2013), the most obvious indicator of this movement, especially in Islamic law, is its critical attitude towards the structure of pre-modern sharia authority symbols, which are articulated in the language and logic of the institution of *taqlīd*. Modernist groups always encourage reopening the door to *ijtihād* and invite Muslims to leave the interpretive monopoly that the ulama class has held (Quadri 2013).

Muhammadiyah, which is heavily inspired by the modernist movement, is oriented towards the Qur'an and Sunnah and tends to attach less importance to the Islamic intellectual tradition that has been built by the ulama. This can be seen from its *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (the methodology Muhammadiyah uses in conducting *ijtihād*), which asserts that Muhammadiyah is not affiliated to a particular school, but the opinions of these schools are only considered in determining religious norms (Anwar 2018). This means that understanding religion in the Muhammadiyah perspective is derived directly from its primary sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah through the *ijtihād* process. However, it should be noted here that the narration that confirms the opinions of the scholars is taken into account in determining norms is not that clear how they are implemented in *tarjih* issues.

In some of its official *ijtihād*, the nuances of the opinions of scholars, especially the pre-modern ones do not appear, by choice or otherwise. Thus it appears that El Madury is filling the Muhammadiyah gap in presenting the authority of the Islamic intellectual tradition in religious narratives. For example, in the controversial veil case, the

<sup>20</sup>Endang Mintarja voiced this at a Muhammadiyah Central Board Tarjih Council meeting of on the emergence 'Syarah HPT', 25 September 2020.

Tarjih Council issued three fatwas in 1993, 2003 and 2009.<sup>21</sup> The fatwas issued in 1993 and 2009 emphasised that the veil has no legal basis either in the Qur'an or the Sunnah but that Islamic law commands women to wear the hijab. These two fatwas did not cite the Islamic intellectual tradition, which also accommodates opinions about the veil. Although the Tarjih Council kept in its stance and strengthened the opinion that women's 'aurat (parts of the body that should go covered) are the whole body except the face and the palms of the hands, in the 2003 fatwa, the Tarjih Council provides space for those who want to wear the veil by expressing several opinions from the scholars who think so.

In contrast to the *tarjih* fatwas, El Madury's (2019) article *Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam?* ('Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?') on the SHPTM fanpage refutes the *tarjih* fatwa. He cites various opinions of scholars in the Islamic intellectual tradition who support mandatory veiling as an effort to build religious authority. From this, it appears that El Madury, apart from attacking the *tarjih* fatwa, believes in maintaining traditional authority, in this case, the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāts*).

What El Madury did in building religious authority can also be captured from what Burhani calls a conversion narrative. Some scholars define religious conversion narratives differently as for example, in the change from one religious tradition to another. William James, as quoted by Burhani (2020: 158), states that religious conversion can also be interpreted as the conversion of a person who is a sinner into someone pious. According to Burhani (2020), people who experience religious conversion, usually after embracing a new tradition or religious understanding, will be hostile to the previous religious tradition or understanding.

El Madury also experienced a religious conversion, in this case, from the NU tradition to Muhammadiyah's. On SHPTM as well as his views when interviewed by this author, he introduced himself as someone who had practised the 'kuburiyyun tradition'<sup>22</sup> and other actions that did not have examples from the Prophet. To convince his followers, he posted information about his religious conversion from NU to Muhammadiyah. Besides condemning his previous practices, which were deemed to have no basis in the Qur'an and Sunnah, he has had acrimonious debates with the NU *kyai*, Idrus Ramli on various issues, such as *ahlus sunnah wal jamaah* and *wahabi, nahdliyyin* traditions that are often considered heresy, and so on.

### Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Before the advent of the internet and the emergence of various new religious authorities, Muhammadiyah and NU were the two largest religious organisations and authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). However, following the emergence of the so-called micro-celebrity *ustaz*, these two groups, according to some scholars, began to face challenges and threats. The recent study by Wahyudi Akmaliah (2020) shows that the two organisations have responded differently to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was more combative about their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) maintains there are some similarities between

<sup>21</sup>Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah (2009, 2019a, 2019b).

<sup>22</sup>The tradition of visiting the grave with its associated practices.

Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's response look less aggressive. Akmaliah is correct on several points, but other perspectives deserve to be considered, especially Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority on the internet. The weak point, as shown in Akmaliah's study is that there is no adequate elaboration of the assembly that exclusively holds religious authority in Muhammadiyah, namely the Tarjih Council. To trace more precisely how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority we have to look at the Tarjih Council.

This discussion starts from the author attending a meeting held by the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board in September 2020. The meeting was in response to the appearance of the *syarh* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Decisions Compilation) by El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim. Whilst El Madury's comments were on his SHPTM fanpage, Abdurrahim (2020) aired his views in his book. He was earlier mentioned as having had permission from Buya Yun to give *syarh* on HPT. The initial background for holding this meeting, as revealed by the secretary of the Tarjih Council, Mas'udi, was purely in response to the SHPTM posts by El Madury. However, information about the SHPTM other than the one written by El Madury prompted the board of the Tarjih Council to include the book by Abdurrahim with the same title for the agenda.

For this meeting, the Tarjih Council invited nine related sectors to discuss concerns over the emergence of the SHPTM on the internet written by the El Madury and Abdurrahim. The nine sector participants were: (1) the executive board of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (2) fatwa division of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (3) chair/secretary of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (4) Endang Mintarja (Chair of the Jakarta Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council); (5) Fathurrahman (Chair of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council); (6) H. Budi Setiawan; (7) Arif Nur Kholis (head of Muhammadiyah Digital Syiar Centre); (8) the manager of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre; and (9) the social media assistance team of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

During the meeting, there were at least four proposals from participants on how best to respond to the SHPTM, particularly El Madury's article about the veil. The first was to complain to Facebook about the SHPTM so that it could be banned for including an institution's name without permission. According to the chair of the Tabligh Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board, Fathurrahman Kamal, who was present at the forum, the fanpage is in the illicit category. This proposal was considered by the proponents as a firm proposal but that it risked unnecessary antagonism. The second was to use a persuasive approach in the form of clarification or an appeal to El Madury not to use the name *Himpunan Putusan Tajih* (HPT) or something that is associated with *tarjih*. Its proponents consider this approach to be softer and more reflective of being Muhammadiyah members in particular, and Muslims in general. The third proposal was to use institutional authority in writing an official letter on behalf of the Tarjih Council to El Madury. The fourth idea that was considered more practical and efficient was to place the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it on social media. This would avoid being drawn into unfruitful correspondence on SHPTM.

However, there was no agreement on which approach should be undertaken despite long discussions. It was agreed instead that there would be a follow up with another forum. Since this author started writing (3 April 2022) there has been no further



meeting. The emergence of SHPTM on the internet and its effects have been considered a serious problem by the Tarjih Council. The meeting's participants were generally uneasy about the appearance of El Madury and his fanpage. In addition, they wanted El Madury to be warned or reprimanded since SHPTM is considered a threat to religious authority of the Tarjih Council. This illustrates that Muhammadiyah, through its official religious assembly, the Tarjih Council, is not passive in responding to the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. However, only certain cases and not all micro-celebrity *ustaz* who appear on social media have drawn the Tarjih Council's attention. Although there has yet to be a follow up meeting, the Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an official institution supporting the Tarjih Council illustrates how Muhammadiyah struggles to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is an institution that was founded in 2016 by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Ahmad Dahlan University (Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah 2016). Despite being a new institution, its legality is clear, and it has formal authority. In the Muhammadiyah tradition as an organisation, such legality is essential. Thus when someone from Muhammadiyah, speaks on another person's behalf or endorses an approach, the speaker's status is below that of the institution and cannot be assumed to be that of institutions within Muhammadiyah which, although new, have legality. In the context of El Madury and the SHPTM fanpage, this is important. Even though El Madury claims he has obtained permission to make *syarh* on the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* from a charismatic figure in Muhammadiyah, Buya Yunahar, legally it is not valid. In that context, Buya Yunahar spoke on behalf of himself, not on behalf of Muhammadiyah.

Fronted by young Muhammadiyah cadres, the majority of whom are alumni of Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Tarjih Ulama Education, PUTM),<sup>23</sup> Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays a role in supporting the Tarjih Council programmes. These are relatively under-performing and facing obstacles, particularly on using social media to disseminate their official *ijtihad*. The members of the Tarjih Council, who are relatively old, need support from young cadres. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays an essential role in assisting the Tarjih Council in maintaining its religious authority on the internet. It responded to El Madury and SHPTM, by being pro-active with a poster (Figure 1) on social media and in print form, containing information related to the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it.

Although the poster above does not directly mention the SHPTM fanpage created by El Madury, the main message in it is clear and firm, namely to inform the Muhammadiyah followers about the official accounts of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it. This would hopefully let Muhammadiyah members understand how its official religious voice is disseminated on the internet. Following this, Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah successively uploaded other, more varied posters to indirectly counter the SHPTM fanpage. Some other examples of these posters are shown in Figures 3 and 5.

<sup>23</sup>PUTM is an educational institution under the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board designed to produce a cadre of Muhammadiyah scholars. PUTM organises a special programme that educates and prepares Muhammadiyah *tarjih* scholars who are competent in the religious field. The birth of PUTM was based on the concern of some Muhammadiyah leaders about the increasing scarcity of ulama in and from Muhammadiyah (Fauzi 2020a).



**Figure 1.** Poster with information on the official social media accounts affiliated to the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

The use of informal language and emoticons typical of millennials indicate the audience that the Tarjih Council wants to target. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah team understands that informal language will appeal to its target audience. This is aimed at not only establishing the authority of the Tarjih Council but ‘millennialisation’ i.e. to reach out to the younger generation familiar with social media. Suyadi and Widodo (2019) note that millennialisation is an alternative way to develop knowledge that will synergise with various online media and digital technology. In the context of *tarjih* millennialisation, Muhammadiyah’s official *ijtihad* that tend to be disseminated in a conventional, monotonous, and uncreative manner are now communicated through social media in more contextual packaging. This means that the Tarjih Council and its various official *ijtihad*, which previously were always identified with the ‘old’, now consciously aim to include young people.

The religious authority of the Tarjih Council in cyberspace, especially when connected with the appearance of El Madury and SHPTM, was greatly helped by the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah and its young Muhammadiyah cadres. It manages various social media platforms with large numbers of followers, and has helped maintain

Are you often confused about finding sources of reference about Islam from the perspective of Muhammadiyah?

There is no need to be confused anymore because various social media are straightforward for us to access. Tarjih (Council) has come with a more trendy look.

- ✓ Easy to read anywhere
- ✓ Provide updated fatwas
- ✓ Discuss current issues

As members of Muhammadiyah, let's get used to reading the decisions and fatwas of Muhammadiyah

Here are some media that can be accessed very easily. So don't be confused anymore.

Web: [fatwatarjih.or.id](http://fatwatarjih.or.id)

Facebook: [fb.me/fatwamu](https://fb.me/fatwamu)

Instagram: [pusattarjih\\_muhammadiyah](https://pusattarjih_muhammadiyah)

Telegram: [t.me/fatwatarjihmu](https://t.me/fatwatarjihmu)

Youtube: [tarjih channel](https://tarjih_channel)

Let's spread it to all Muhammadiyah people!

**Figure 2.** Translation of Figure 1.

Muhammadiyah's religious authority by balancing and suppressing the presence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. Its contents are fatwas and decisions of the Tarjih Council with more appealing visualisation to reach out to the millenials.

Although the number of social media followers of the Tarjih Council is less than that for the NU and Salafi groups, at least the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah acts as a compass for Muhammadiyah followers who question its religious authority, especially with the emergence of El Madury's version in SHPTM. The administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah's social media have received many messages either through the comments column or direct messages in its inbox, which question the authority of SHPTM.<sup>24</sup> Here, the vital role of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is increasingly finding its momentum.

## Conclusion

Although it can be said that Muhammadiyah's religious influence and authority on the internet are inferior and lag behind other religious groups, Muhammadiyah is still trying to manage its authority, especially when facing threats from micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By focusing on Zulkarnain El Madury and his SHPTM social media page, this article offers a different perspective from previous studies by analysing the work of the Tarjih Council as the only institution in Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas. This article shows that Muhammadiyah has its own way of responding to

<sup>24</sup>Interview with Ariful Hazamn, Ilham Ibrahim, and Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, September 2020. They are *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* social media administrators.





**Figure 3.** Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

the emergence of new religious authorities. With the help of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an institution in its fold, the Tarjih Council has made continuous efforts through social media and its official website to counter new voices that threaten its authority. Muhammadiyah's response was neither aggressive nor radical but it clarified its stance without mentioning who precisely was being targeted. What Muhammadiyah did was in line with the Javanese proverb *Ngluruk tanpo bolo, menang tanpo ngasorake* ('win without defeat, win without humiliation [of others]'). The form of Muhammadiyah's response is inherited from its founder, Ahmad Dahlan. As seen by James

Do you know?

The Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah now have an official YouTube channel, (namely) the Tarjih Channel.

Have you subscribed yet?

**Figure 4.** Translation of Figure 3.



**Figure 5.** Information about the website fatwatarjih.or.id, an official website affiliated to the Tarjih Council containing fatwas. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

Peacock (1978), Ahmad Dahlan brought about many social transformations through discussions and education.<sup>25</sup> This can be seen, for example, from how Ahmad Dahlan and

<sup>25</sup>For example, Ahmad Dahlan and the early generation of Muhammadiyah explained to Muslims the unacceptability of popular beliefs and practices that had their roots in superstitions, heresies, and myths. He built hospitals, schools, and orphanages to counter these practices (Shihab 1995).

Fatwatartjih.or.id is the official website for the Tarjih and the Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board (MTT).

The Media Team of Fatwa Tarjih, through this website, has been, is and will continue to strive consistently to publish various ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council. Until now, tarjih fatwa collections from 1997 to 2018 have entered the editing stage, and some are just waiting to be published.

**Figure 6.** Translation of Figure 5.



Mau tau sejarah lengkapnya?  
Atau mau cari produk tarjih?  
yuk bisa kalian kepoin di sini 🗨️

**tarjih.or.id**

tarjih channel  
majelistarjih  
pusattarjih\_muhammadiyah  
Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Muhammadiyah

tarjih.or.id  
fatwatartjih.or.id



**Figure 7.** Information on the official website of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.

the early generation of Muhammadiyah fortified Muslims from various superstitions, heresies, and myths by explaining the unacceptability of such popular beliefs and practices.

In a broader context, the case of Zulkarnain El Madury also provides a lesson that using the name Muhammadiyah to justify personal opinions or legitimise particular

Do you want to know the full history (of the Tarjih Council)?

Or do you want to look for ijtihad products from the Tarjih Council?

Come on; you can find out on this website: tarjih.or.id

**Figure 8.** Translation of Figure 7.

interests is wrong. Muhammadiyah has the reputation of a very well managed organisation (Barton 2014; *Suara Muhammadiyah* 2019) which is its strength and gives it clout compared to other religious organisations in Indonesia, such as NU. In short, Muhammadiyah's authority lies in the institution itself and is not based on personality. It differs from NU, where power and authority tend to reside with personal figures, such as *kyai* or *gus* (Fauzi 2020b).

Muhammadiyah followers who understand its basic rules are not easily influenced by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. They are aware that Muhammadiyah's official religious stance is only be issued by the Tarjih Council and that those external to the Tarjih Council or even specific Muhammadiyah figures who give religious opinions, speak only for themselves as individuals and not the organisation. This would be the case, for example, even if the religious opinion emanates from the chair of the Tarjih Council as an individual. This did occur when Syamsul Anwar, the current chair of the Tarjih Council, differed from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council on the issue of *iftitāḥ* prayer (opening night prayer [*qiyām al-lail*]).<sup>26</sup> While Anwar's opinion clearly differs from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council, the prevailing opinion in Muhammadiyah is that of the Tarjih Council, not the chair of the Tarjih Council. Within Muhammadiyah, such religious differences of opinion are common as usually happens in *fiqh* discourse in general. The difference between El Madury and Anwar is that the latter does not act in the name of Muhammadiyah or the Tarjih Council when he has a different view. Instead, on many occasions, he urges Muhammadiyah followers to abide by the opinion of the Tarjih Council on the *iftitāḥ* prayer.<sup>27</sup> Thus Anwar has shown he can compromise his personal religious opinion with his professional attitude in the organisation. In this case, he understands that using the name Muhammadiyah to legitimise individual opinions or interests is not justifiable.

## Acknowledgements

Permission for this research PJB-002/SP3/LPPM-UAD/VI/2020 and funding were provided by the ethical board of Ahmad Dahlan University Research and Development Institute (Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan).

I am grateful to *ustaz* Zulkarnain El Madury for his exceptional help and support during my fieldwork. I also thank Amiruddin, Arif Nur Kholis, Muhammad Muflih, Wahyudi Abdurrahim,

<sup>26</sup>For Anwar (2013), the *iftitāḥ* prayer comprises two short *rak'ah* prayers that are performed before *qiyām al-lail*, with the condition that it must be preceded by sleep, otherwise there is no need to perform the *iftitāḥ* prayer. However, the Tarjih Council holds that the *iftitāḥ* prayer consists of two short *rak'ah* prayers performed before *qiyām al-lail*, whether preceded by sleep or not (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2011; Tim Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2019a).

<sup>27</sup>On several occasions, this author has heard Syamsul Anwar's direct appeal to Muhammadiyah members to follow the opinion of the Tarjih Council on this aspect of the *iftitāḥ* prayer.

Robby Karman, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, Ilham Ibrahim, Ariful Hazam, and the members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council for providing information regarding my research. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article and to the editors of *the Indonesia and the Malay World*. Errors, if any, are solely mine.

## Disclosure statement

Q1 No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).



## Note on contributor

**Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi** is a lecturer in the Department of Hadith Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He has published widely on a variety of issues relating to Islamic Studies, including al-Quran, hadith, Islamic law, social media and da'wah, and Muhammadiyah studies. Email: niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id

## ORCID

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5659-6494>

## References

- Abdurrahim, Wahyudi Sarju. 2020. *Ahlul haq wassunah: syarah himpunan putusan tarjih Muhammadiyah bab iman bagian ketuhanan* [Ahlul haq wassunnah: explanation of tarjih decisions compilation of Muhammadiyah chapter on faith part of divinity]. Yogyakarta: Al Muflihun Publishing.
- Abror, Robby. 2020. Syekh Yunahar, ulama Muhammadiyah kharismatik [Sheikh Yunahar, a charismatic Muhammadiyah cleric]. 3 January. <<https://menara62.com/syekh-yunahar-ulama-muhammadiyah-kharismatik/>> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2018. Media sosial dan pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [Social media and shifting religious authority]. 12 December. <[https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media\\_sosial\\_dan\\_pergeseran\\_otoritas\\_keagamaan](https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media_sosial_dan_pergeseran_otoritas_keagamaan)> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2020. The demise of moderate Islam: new media, contestation, and reclaiming religious authorities. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10 (1): 1–24.
- Alfaqi, Mifdal Zusron. 2015. Memahami Indonesia melalui prespektif nasionalisme, politik identitas, serta solidaritas [Understanding Indonesia through the perspectives of nationalism, identity politics, and solidarity]. *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 28 (2): 111–116.
- Alvara Research Center. 2020. Ramadhan dan pandemi Covid-19: semangat ibadah tak surut, konsumsi tersendat. <[https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN\\_DAN\\_PANDEMI\\_COVID-19\\_SEMANGAT\\_IBADAH\\_TAK\\_SURUT\\_KONSUMSI\\_TERSENDAT.pdf](https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN_DAN_PANDEMI_COVID-19_SEMANGAT_IBADAH_TAK_SURUT_KONSUMSI_TERSENDAT.pdf)> Accessed 23 February 2021.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2007. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer* [Contemporary Islamic law studies]. Jakarta: RM Books.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2013. *Salat Tarawih: Tinjauan usul fiqh, sejarah, dan fiqh* [Tarawih prayer: usul fiqh, history, and fiqh perspectives]. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2016. Fatwā, purification and dynamization: a study of tarjih in Muhammadiyah. *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (1): 27–44.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2018. *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Panitia Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih Muhammadiyah XXX.

- Anwar, Syamsul. 2020. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer Bagian dua* [Contemporary Islamic legal studies Part two]. Yogyakarta: UAD Press.
- Barton, Greg. 2014. The Gülen movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: progressive Islamic thought, religious philanthropy and civil society in Turkey and Indonesia. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25 (3): 287–301.
- Buchari, Sri Astuti. 2014. *Kebangkitan etnis menuju politik identitas* [Ethnic awakening towards identity politics]. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Bunt, Gary R. 2003. *Islam in the digital age: e-jihad, online fatwas and cyber Islamic environments*. London: Pluto Press.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2005. The 45th Muhammadiyah Congress contest between literal-conservative and liberal-moderate Muslims in Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 12 (1): 185–189.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2013. Liberal and conservative discourses in the Muhammadiyah: the struggle for the face of reformist Islam in Indonesia. In Martin van Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary developments in Indonesian Islam: explaining the 'conservative turn'*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2016. Aksi bela Islam: konservatisme dan fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. *Maarif* 11 (2): 15–29.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2020. Muslim televangelists in the making: conversion narratives and the construction of religious authority. *Muslim World* 110 (2): 154–175.
- Burhanudin, Jajat. 2004. The fragmentation of religious authority: Islamic print media in early 20th century Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 11 (1): 23–62.
- Campbell, H.A. and Teusner, P.E. 2011. Religious authority in the age of the internet. In *Christian Reflection, Virtual Lives*. Waco TX: Baylor University Press, pp. 59–68. <<https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/130950.pdf>>
- Chairi, Effendi. 2019. Ketidadaan otoritas terpusat dalam fenomena kontemporer di Indonesia [The absence of a centralised authority in contemporary phenomena in Indonesia]. *SANGKêP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 2 (2):197–215.
- Chaplin. Chris. 2021. *Salafism and the State: Islamic activism and national identity in contemporary Indonesia*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.
- Dakta.com. 2016. Aa Gym ajak ribuan jamaahnya ikut aksi bela Islam III [Aa Gym invites thousands of congregants to join Islamic Defence Action III]. 29 November. <<http://www.dakta.com/news/7329/aa-gym-ajak-ribuan-jamaahnya-ikut-aksi-bela-islam-iii>> Accessed 2 February 2020.
- Fadl, Khaled Abou El. 2014. *Speaking in God's name: Islamic law, authority, and women*. London: Oneworld Publications.
- Farhan, Farhan. 2017. Pesan dakwah Felix Siauw di media sosial (perspektif meaning and media). *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Administrasi Islam* 1 (2): 209–226.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2017. Peranan Maqasid Al-Shariah dalam memahami Hadith: kajian terhadap fatwa Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah [The role of Maqasid Al-Shariah in understanding Hadith: a study of the fatwa of the Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah]. MA thesis, University of Malaya.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020a. PUTM dan kaderisasi ulama: menelusuri latar belakang lahirnya Lembaga Kaderisasi Ulama Muhammadiyah [PUTM and clerical regeneration: tracing the background of the birth of the Muhammadiyah Clerical Cadre Institute]. <<https://santricendekia.com/putm-dan-kaderisasi-ulama-menelusuri-latar-belakang-lahirnya-lembaga-kaderisasi-ulama-muhammadiyah/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020b. Tantangan kader ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah di era 4.0 [Challenges for Tarjih Muhammadiyah ulama cadres in the 4.0 era]. 21 July. *Suara 'Aisyiyah*<<https://suaraaisyiyah.id/tantangan-kader-ulama-tarjih-muhammadiyah-di-era-4-0/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Fealy, Greg. 2008. Consuming Islam: commodified religion and aspirational pietism in contemporary Indonesia. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.



Gesuri. 2020. Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia kehilangan ulama kharismatik [Yunahar Ilyas passed away, Indonesia lost a charismatic scholar]. 3 January. <<https://www.gesuri.id/internal/yunahar-ilyas-wafat-indonesia-kehilangan-ulama-kharismatik-b1YFoZpRY>> Accessed 20 March 2020.

Hew, Wai Weng. 2018. The art of dakwah: social media, visual persuasion and the Islamist propagation of Felix Siau. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (134): 61–79.

Hoesterey, James B. 2008. Marketing morality: the rise, fall and rebranding of Aa Gym. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: Religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, pp. 95–114.

Hope Cheong, Pauline. 2016. Religious authority and social media branding in a culture of religious celebrification. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*, University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 81–102.

Horsfield, Peter. 2016. The media and religious authority from ancient to modern. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*. University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 37–66.

IB Times Indonesia. 2020. 100 situs Islam Indonesia, NU Online peringkat pertama [100 Indonesian Islamic websites, NU Online ranks first]. 10 July. <~~IBTimes.Id.~~ 2020. <<https://ibtimes.id/100-situs-islam-indonesia-nu-online-peringkat-pertama/>> Accessed 23 February 2023.

Ilyas, Yunahar. 2012. *Kuliah Akhlaq* [Akhlaq lecture]. XII. Yogyakarta: LPPI Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta.

Khamis, S., Ang, L. and Welling, R. 2017. Self-branding, ‘micro-celebrity’ and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191–208.

Khomalia, Isti and Rahman, Khairul Arief. 2018. Micro hijabers celebrity: membentuk identitas dengan update self-story via instagram (kasus dian pelangi). *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban dan Pemikiran Islam* 2 (1): 33–42.

Kompas. 2020. Sejumlah tokoh hadir prosesi pemakaman ketua PP Muhammadiyah Yunahar Ilyas [Many figures attended the funeral procession of Muhammadiyah chairman Yunahar Ilyas]. 3 January. <<https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/03/19142441/sejumlah-tokoh-hadiri-prosesi-pemakaman-ketua-pp-muhammadiyah-yunahar-ilyas>> Accessed 3 April 2022.

Labiq. 2019. Pengaruh new media terhadap pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [The influence of new media on shifting religious authority]. 19 April. <<https://geotimes.co.id/opini/pengaruh-new-media-terhadap-pergeseran-otoritas-keagamaan>> Accessed 19 October 2020.

Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. 2010. *Politik identitas dan masa depan pluralisme Indonesia*. Edited by Samsu Rizal Panggabean et al. Jakarta: Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (PUSAD) Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina.

Madury, Zulkarnain El. 2019. Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam? [Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?]. 2 November. <<https://www.facebook.com/zulkarnainsumenep/posts/2386248524961601>> Accessed 5 May 2020.

Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah. 2016. Pembukaan Halaqah, Majelis Tarjih Launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan Muhammadiyah Observatorium Network [Halaqah opening, Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and Muhammadiyah Observatory Network]. 20 August. <<https://tarjih.or.id/pembukaan-halaqah-majelis-tarjih-launching-pusat-tarjih-muhammadiyah-dan-muhammadiyah-observatorium-network/>> Accessed 6 October 2023.

Majelis Tarjih ~~Dahlan~~, Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. 2016. Nota Kesepakatan Majelis Tarjih Dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Tentang Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di Islamic Center Universitas Ahmad Dahlan [Memorandum of Agreement between the Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board and Ahmad Dahlan University on the Management of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre at the Islamic Centre of Ahmad Dahlan University]. Yogyakarta.

Maskur, Maskur and Noor, Irfan Noor. 2014. Ustadz selebriti Abdullah Gymnastiar dalam budaya populer (perspektif hipersemiotika Yasraf Amir Piliang) [Celebrity Ustadz Abdullah

- Gymnastiar in popular culture (Yasraf Amir Piliang's hyper semiotics perspective)]. *Jurnal Studia Insania* 2 (1): 47–57.
- Matheson, Craig. 1987. Weber and the classification of forms of legitimacy. *British Journal of Sociology* 38 (2): 199–215.
- Muhammadiyah Central Board. 2023. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 8 October 2023.
- Nisa, Eva F. 2019. Internet and Muslim women. In Ronald Lukens-Bull and Mark Woodward (eds), *Handbook of contemporary Islam and Muslim lives*. Cham: Springer, pp. 1–19.
- Palahuddin. 2020. The typology of religious thought in Muhammadiyah. *International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 3 (2): 74–81. <<http://journal2.uad.ac.id/index.php/ijish/article/view/2233/pdf>>
- Peacock, James L. 1978. *Purifying the Faith: the Muhammadiyah movement in Indonesian Islam*. Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2011. *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2016. Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan MuON [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and MuON]. 20 August. <<http://www.umm.ac.id/id/muhammadiyah/7070.html>> Accessed 20 March 2021.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Berikut Susunan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah periode 2022–2027 [The following is the composition of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the 2022–2027 period] <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/berikut-susunan-pimpinan-pusat-muhammadiyah-periode-2022-2027/>> Accessed 7 October 2023.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Majelis Tabligh [Tabligh Council]. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 07 October 2023.
- Postill, John and Pink, Sarah. 2012. Social media ethnography: the digital researcher in a messy web. *Media International Australia* 145 (1): 123–134.
- Pribadi, Yanwar. 2019. Fragmentasi umat dan penciptaan otoritas keagamaan: tanggapan terhadap 'Islam lokal' dan 'Islam asing' di Indonesia [Ummah fragmentation and the creation of religious authority: responses to 'local Islam' and 'foreign Islam' in Indonesia]. *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 21 (1): 103–119. <<https://jmb.lipi.go.id/jmb/article/view/828/455>>
- Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah. n.d. *Panduan pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre management guide]. Majelis Tarjih, Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta.
- Quadri, Syed Junaid A. 2013. Transformations of tradition: modernity in the thought of Muhammad Bakhit Al-Muti'i. PhD thesis, McGill University.
- Rahman, Asjmun Abdur et al. 1985. Laporan penelitian Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (suatu studi tentang sistem dan metode penentuan hukum) [Research report of Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (a study of the system and method of determining the law)]. Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga.
- Rakyat Merdeka. 2019. Dubes Malaysia jenguk ketum MUI Yunahar Ilyas di Yogyakarta [Malaysian ambassador visits MUI chairman Yunahar Ilyas in Yogyakarta]. 5 November. <<https://rm.id/baca-berita/internasional/21745/dubes-malaysia-jenguk-ketum-mui-yunahar-ilyas-di-yogyakarta>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Riesebrodt, Martin. 1999. Charisma in Max Weber's Sociology of Religion. *Religion* 29 (1): 1–14.
- Sadasri, Lidwina Mutia. 2017. Selebriti mikro di media baru kajian presentasi diri dalam vlog selebriti mikro [Micro-celebrities in new media: a study of self-presentation in micro-celebrity vlogs]. *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi Dan Opini Publik* 21 (2): 167–181. <<https://jurnal.kominfo.go.id/index.php/jpkop/article/view/1218/720>>
- Saefullah, Hikmawan. 2022. Media baru, publik baru: mengkonfigurasi ulang ruang publik Islam [New media, new publics: reconfiguring the Islamic public sphere]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.



Sammy, Abdullah. 2022. Peluang dan tantangan dakwah digital Muhammadiyah [Opportunities and challenges of Muhammadiyah digital da'wah]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.

Sanjaya, Makroen. 2022. Peta ideologi islam di media sosial [The map of Islamic ideology on social media]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhammadiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.

Senft, Theresa M. 2008. *Camgirls: celebrity and community in the age of social networks*. New York: Peter Lang.

Shamsy, Ahmed El. 2013. The Hāshiya in Islamic law: a sketch of the Shāfi'ī literature. *Oriens* 41 (3-4): 289–315.

Shihab, Alwi. 1995. The Muhammadiyah movement and its controversy with Christian mission in Indonesia. PhD thesis, Temple University, USA.

Spencer, Martin E. 1970. Weber on legitimate norms and authority. *British Journal of Sociology* 21 (2): 123–134.

Suara Muhammadiyah. 2019. Hyung Jun Kim: sistem di Muhammadiyah sungguh ideal [Hyung Jun Kim: Muhammadiyah's system is ideal]. <<https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/08/01/hyung-jun-kim-sistem-di-muhammadiyah-sungguh-ideal/>> Accessed 9 April 2022.

Suyadi and Widodo, Hendro. 2019. Millennialization of Islamic education based on neuroscience in the third generation university in Yogyakarta Indonesia. *QIIS International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7 (1): 173–202.

Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2009. Hukum tentang jenggot dan cadar [Islamic law perspective on beards and veils]. *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine, no. 18 . Yogyakarta.

Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019a. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 4*. Cetakan IX. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019b. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 7*. Cetakan IV. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.

Tirto.id. 2018. Dari Aa' Gym ke Felix Siauw: ustaz medsos & medium dakwah politis. Tirto.Id. 16 January. <<https://tirto.id/dari-aa-gym-ke-felix-siauw-ustaz-medsos-medium-dakwah-politis-cCGf>> Accessed 5 February 2020.

Turner, Bryan S. 2007. Religious authority and the new media. *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2): 117–134.

Turner, Graeme. 2010. *Ordinary people and the media: the demotic turn*. Los Angeles CA: Sage.

Widodo, Arif. 2017. Transformative intellectual discourse and movement of Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM). *Iseedu: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices* 1 (1): 126–151. <<https://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/iseedu/article/view/5423/3542>>

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change*. Princetoon NJ: Princeton University Press.

# PUBLISHING AGREEMENT

## PUBLISHING AGREEMENT

This is an agreement under which you, the author, assign copyright in your Article to The Editors, Indonesia and the Malay World, SOAS, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG, UK (hereinafter 'the Society') to allow us and our publisher Informa UK Limited registered in England under no. 1072954 trading as Taylor & Francis Group, Registered Office: 5 Howick Place, London, SW1P 1WG (hereinafter 'Taylor & Francis') to publish your Article, including abstract, tables, figures, data, and supplemental material hosted by our publisher, as the Version of Record (VoR) in the Journal for the full period of copyright throughout the world, in all forms and all media, subject to the Terms & Conditions below.

ARTICLE TITLE ('Article'):	Zulkarnain El Madury and the micro-celebrity Ustaz phenomenon: Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace
ARTICLE DOI:	10.1080/13639811.2023.2274708
AUTHOR(S):	Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi
JOURNAL TITLE ('Journal'):	Indonesia and the Malay World
JOURNAL ISSN:	1469-8382

In consideration of the publication of the Article, you hereby grant with full title guarantee all rights of copyright and related rights in the above specified Article as the Version of Scholarly Record which is intended for publication in all forms and all media (whether known at this time or developed at any time in the future) throughout the world, in all languages, for the full term of copyright, to take effect if and when the Article is accepted for publication in the Journal.

The author(s) have noted that third party content is used in this article, and that written permission for its use has been obtained by the author(s).

## ASSIGNMENT OF PUBLISHING RIGHTS

I hereby assign the Society with full title guarantee all rights of copyright and related publishing rights in my Article, in all forms and all media (whether known at this time or developed at any time in the future) throughout the world, in all languages, where our rights include but are not limited to the right to translate, create adaptations, extracts, or derivative works and to sub-license such rights, for the full term of copyright (including all renewals and extensions of that term), to take effect if and when the Article is accepted for publication. If I am one of several co-authors, I hereby confirm that I am authorized by my co-authors to make this assignment as their agent on their behalf. For the avoidance of doubt, this assignment includes the rights to supply the Article in electronic and online forms and systems. If a statement of government or corporate ownership appears above, that statement modifies this assignment as described.

I confirm that I have read and accept the full Terms & Conditions below including my author warranties, and have read and agree to comply with the Journal's policies on [peer review](#) and [publishing ethics](#).

**Signed and dated:**

**20 October 2023**



**Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi**

**THIS FORM IS A LEGALLY BINDING DOCUMENT. WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU RETAIN A COPY OF IT AND CONSULT A LEGAL ADVISOR IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.**

## **ASSIGNMENT OF COPYRIGHT: TERMS & CONDITIONS**

### **DEFINITION**

1. Your Article is defined as comprising (a) your Accepted Manuscript (AM) in its final form; (b) the final, definitive, and citable Version of Record (VoR) including the abstract, text, bibliography, and all accompanying tables, illustrations, data, and media; and (c) any supplemental material hosted by our publisher. This assignment and these Terms & Conditions constitute the entire agreement and the sole understanding between you and us ('agreement'); no amendment, addendum, or other communication will be taken into account when interpreting your and our rights and obligations under this agreement, unless amended by a written document signed by both of us.

### **TAYLOR & FRANCIS' RESPONSIBILITIES**

2. If deemed acceptable by the Editors of the Journal, we shall prepare and publish your Article in the Journal. We may post your Accepted Manuscript in advance of the formal publication of the VoR. We reserve the right to make such editorial changes as may be necessary to make the Article suitable for publication, or as we reasonably consider necessary to avoid infringing third-party rights or breaching any laws; and we reserve the right not to proceed with publication for whatever reason.
3. Taylor & Francis will deposit your Accepted Manuscript (AM) to any designated institutional repository including [PubMedCentral \(PMC\)](#) with which Taylor & Francis has an Article deposit agreement; see 4 iv (a) below.

### **RIGHTS RETAINED BY YOU AS AUTHOR**

4. These rights are personal to you, and your co-authors, and cannot be transferred by you to anyone else. Without prejudice to your rights as author set out below, you undertake that the fully reference-linked VoR will not be published elsewhere without our prior written consent. You assert and retain the following rights as author(s):
  - i. The right to be identified as the author of your Article, whenever and wherever the Article is published, such rights including moral rights arising under § 77, Copyright, Designs & Patents Act 1988, and, so far as is legally possible, any corresponding rights we may have in any territory of the world.
  - ii. The right to retain patent rights, trademark rights, or rights to any process, product or procedure described in your Article.
  - iii. The right to post and maintain at any time the Author's Original Manuscript (AOM; your manuscript in its original and unrefereed form; a 'preprint').
  - iv. The right to post at any time after publication of the VoR your AM (your manuscript in its revised after peer review and accepted for publication form; a 'postprint') as a digital file on your own personal or departmental website, provided that you do not use the VoR published by us, and that you include any amendments or deletions or warnings relating to the Article issued or published by us; and with the acknowledgement: 'The Version of Record of this manuscript has been published and is available in <JOURNAL TITLE> <date of publication> <http://www.tandfonline.com/><Article DOI>.'
    - a. Please note that embargoes apply with respect to posting the AM to an institutional or subject repository. For further information, please [see our list of journals with applicable embargo periods](#). For the avoidance of doubt, you are not permitted to post the final published paper, the VoR published by us, to any site, unless it has been published as Open Access on our website.
    - b. If, following publication, you or your funder pay an Article Publishing Charge for [retrospective Open Access publication](#), you may then opt for one of three licenses: [CC BY](#), [CC BY-NC](#), or [CC BY-NC-ND](#); if you do not respond, we shall assign a CC BY licence. All rights in the Article will revert to you as author.
  - v. The right to share with colleagues copies of the Article in its published form as supplied to you by the publisher as a [digital eprint](#) or printed reprint on a non-commercial basis.
  - vi. The right to make printed copies of all or part of the Article on a non-commercial basis for use by you for lecture or classroom purposes provided that such copies are not offered for sale or distributed in any systematic way, and provided that acknowledgement to prior publication in the Journal is given.
  - vii. The right, if the Article has been produced within the scope of your employment, for your employer to use all or part of the Article internally within the institution or company on a non-commercial basis provided that acknowledgement to prior publication in the Journal is given.
  - viii. The right to include the Article in a thesis or dissertation that is not to be published commercially, provided that acknowledgement to prior publication in the Journal is given.
  - ix. The right to present the Article at a meeting or conference and to distribute printed copies of the Article to the delegates attending the meeting provided that this is not for commercial purposes and provided that acknowledgement to prior publication in the Journal is given.
  - x. The right to use the Article in its published form in whole or in part without revision or modification in personal compilations, or other publications of your own work, provided that acknowledgement to prior publication in the Journal is given.
  - xi. The right to expand your Article into book-length form for publication provided that acknowledgement to prior publication in the Journal is made explicit (see below). Where permission is sought to re-use an Article in a book chapter or edited collection on a commercial basis a fee will be due, payable by the publisher of the new work. Where you as the author of the Article have had the lead role in the new work (i.e., you are the author of the new work or the editor of the edited collection), fees will be waived. Acknowledgement to prior publication in the Journal should be made explicit (see below):

**Acknowledgement:** This <chapter or book> is derived in part from an Article published in <JOURNAL TITLE> <date of publication> <copyright <the Society>, available online: <http://www.tandfonline.com/><Article DOI>

If you wish to use your Article in a way that is not permitted by this agreement, please contact [journalpermissions@tandf.co.uk](mailto:journalpermissions@tandf.co.uk)

## **WARRANTIES MADE BY YOU AS AUTHOR**

5. You warrant that:

- i. All persons who have a reasonable claim to authorship are named in the Article as co-authors including yourself, and you have not fabricated or misappropriated anyone's identity, including your own.
- ii. You have been authorized by all such co-authors to sign this agreement as agent on their behalf, and to agree on their behalf the priority of the assertion of copyright and the order of names in the publication of the Article.
- iii. The Article is your original work, apart from any permitted third-party copyright material you include, and does not infringe any intellectual property rights of any other person or entity and cannot be construed as plagiarizing any other published work, including your own published work.
- iv. The Article is not currently under submission to, nor is under consideration by, nor has been accepted by any other journal or publication, nor has been previously published by any other journal or publication, nor has been assigned or licensed by you to any third party.
- v. The Article contains no content that is abusive, defamatory, libellous, obscene, fraudulent, nor in any way infringes the rights of others, nor is in any other way unlawful or in violation of applicable laws.
- vi. Research reported in the Article has been conducted in an ethical and responsible manner, in full compliance with all relevant codes of experimentation and legislation. All Articles which report in vivo experiments or clinical trials on humans or animals must include a written statement in the Methods section that such work was conducted with the formal approval of the local human subject or animal care committees, and that clinical trials have been registered as applicable legislation requires.
- vii. Any patient, service user, or participant (or that person's parent or legal guardian) in any research or clinical experiment or study who is described in the Article has given written consent to the inclusion of material, text or image, pertaining to themselves, and that they acknowledge that they cannot be identified via the Article and that you have anonymized them and that you do not identify them in any way. Where such a person is deceased, you warrant you have obtained the written consent of the deceased person's family or estate.
- viii. You have complied with all mandatory laboratory health and safety procedures in the course of conducting any experimental work reported in your Article; your Article contains all appropriate warnings concerning any specific and particular hazards that may be involved in carrying out experiments or procedures described in the Article or involved in instructions, materials, or formulae in the Article; your Article includes explicitly relevant safety precautions; and cites, if an accepted Standard or Code of Practice is relevant, a reference to the relevant Standard or Code.
- ix. You have acknowledged all sources of research funding, as required by your research funder, and disclosed any financial interest or benefit you have arising from the direct applications of your research.
- x. You have obtained the [necessary written permission](#) to include material in your Article that is owned and held in copyright by a third party, which shall include but is not limited to any proprietary text, illustration, table, or other material, including data, audio, video, film stills, screenshots, musical notation and any supplemental material.
- xi. You have read and complied with our policy on [publishing ethics](#).
- xii. You have read and complied with the Journal's Instructions for Authors.
- xiii. You have read and complied with our guide on [peer review](#).
- xiv. You will keep us and our affiliates indemnified in full against all loss, damages, injury, costs and expenses (including legal and other professional fees and expenses) awarded against or incurred or paid by us as a result of your breach of the warranties given in this agreement.
- xv. You consent to allowing us to use your Article for marketing and promotional purposes.

## **GOVERNING LAW**

6. This agreement (and any dispute, proceeding, claim or controversy in relation to it) is subject to English law and the parties hereby submit to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Courts of England and Wales.

# Bukti Artikel yang Sudah Terbit

# Zulkarnain EL Madury and the micro-celebrity *ustaz* phenomenon

Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi

To cite this article: Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi (2023) Zulkarnain EL Madury and the micro-celebrity *ustaz* phenomenon, Indonesia and the Malay World, 51:151, 304-329, DOI: [10.1080/13639811.2023.2274708](https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2023.2274708)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2023.2274708>



Published online: 13 Feb 2024.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 20



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



# ZULKARNAIN EL MADURY AND THE MICRO-CELEBRITY *USTAZ* PHENOMENON

## Tracing Muhammadiyah's struggle in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi 

### ABSTRACTS

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the fragmentation of religious authority. In the Indonesian context, the mainstream religious authority held by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has been challenged and threatened by micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This article examines the emergence of the Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah fanpage on Facebook, created and managed by Zulkarnain El Madury, who claims to be a preacher of the Muhammadiyah Central Board as it has threatened Muhammadiyah's religious authority. It analyses Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority in cyberspace, by taking a closer look at what has been done by Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, an assembly that has the exclusive authority to issue fatwas and official religious *ijtihad* within Muhammadiyah. This article also discusses lessons that can be learned from the case of Zulkarnain El Madury and the response of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

### ABSTRAK

Kemunculan internet dan media sosial telah mempertajam fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. Dalam konteks Indonesia, otoritas keagamaan arus utama yang dipegang oleh Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) disaingi dan diancam oleh para *ustaz* mikro-selebritas. Artikel ini mengkaji kemunculan fanpage Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah di Facebook yang dibuat dan dikelola oleh Zulkarnain El Madury, seseorang yang mengklaim sebagai *ustaz* Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, karena dianggap mengancam otoritas keagamaan Muhammadiyah. Penelitian ini menganalisis upaya Muhammadiyah dalam mempertahankan otoritas keagamaannya di dunia maya dengan melihat lebih dekat pada apa yang telah dilakukan oleh Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah, sebuah majelis yang memiliki otoritas eksklusif untuk mengeluarkan fatwa dan *ijtihad* keagamaan resmi di Muhammadiyah. Artikel ini juga membahas pelajaran yang dapat dipetik dari kasus Zulkarnain El Madury dan respons Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah.

### KEYWORDS

Fragmentation of religious authority; micro-celebrity *ustaz*; Muhammadiyah; religious authority; *tarjih*

### KATA KUNCI

Fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan; Muhammadiyah; otoritas keagamaan; *tarjih*; *ustaz* mikro-selebritas



## Introduction

The surprising results of the Alvara Research Center (2020) survey stated that the clerics most heard by the public, especially during Ramadan 2020, were not from the official Muhammadiyah board.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the Alvara Research Center survey was released (IBTimes.id 2020), an Islamic website managed by young Muhammadiyah intellectuals, published a report ranking the 100 most popular Islamic websites in Indonesia. The majority of these sites are managed by or affiliated to Nahdliyyin (NU followers) and Salafi<sup>2</sup> groups with few such sites operated by or affiliated to Muhammadiyah. The Alvara Research Center survey and the IBTimes.id report show that Muhammadiyah, in terms of influence and religious authority on the internet, lags behind other religious groups which is ironic for an organisation claiming to represent the progressive Islamic group.

The rise of the internet and social media has sharpened the so-called fragmentation of religious authority. Eva F. Nisa (2019), for example, mentions that the proliferation of various digital platforms is directly proportional to the increasing fragmentation of religious authority. Islamic discourse is monopolised not only by an elite group of scholars or mainstream religious groups, but also by persons or groups that have not been considered in Islamic discourse. Furthermore, the presence of the internet and social media has led to the birth of what is called micro-celebrity. Theresa M. Senft (2008) defines micro-celebrity as a new style of online performance that involves increasing popularity on social media such as videos, blogs, and networking sites. These micro-celebrities unlike conventional celebrities, emerge from what is known as new media (Senft 2008).

Of course, not all new media users can be categorised by the adjective ‘micro-celebrity’. The label only applies to those who experience what Graeme Turner (2010) terms ‘the demotic turn’, namely, the increasing visibility of ordinary people to appear as celebrities in the media, especially online media. In turn, both conventional and micro-celebrity exist in various public spheres, and the discourse on them is characterised as influencers, stimulants of consumerism, enthusiasm, public debate, and various activism (Sadasri 2017).

By borrowing the theory of micro-celebrities in the study of new media, we can then read how these micro-celebrities have also come to the fore in the religious realm. The emergence of ulama, *ustaz* (religious teachers), and religious leaders who become influencers in new media can perhaps be seen as one form of micro-celebrity. Felix Siauw is a prominent example. A convert, who is now a preacher, Siauw has a massive following on social media. In 2018, for example, he had 2.6 million followers on Twitter, and in 2022 it numbered 3.3 million. Felix Siauw’s Instagram account has around 4.9 million followers. It can even be said that he is the *ustaz* who has the most followers on social media (Tirto 2018), making him one of the leading social media preachers in Indonesia today (Hew 2018). What Felix Siauw posts on his social media has to some extent influenced the map of religious authorities in Indonesia.

<sup>1</sup>One of the 15 most popular clerics mentioned in the report, Ustaz Ali Hidayat, has since been included on the Muhammadiyah Central Board’s Tabligh Council (2022–2027; Muhammadiyah Central Board 2023). Prior to that, he did not convey official Muhammadiyah ideas in his lectures.

<sup>2</sup>For more comprehensive information on the activism of Salafi groups, see Chris Chaplin (2021).

The existence of the internet and the continuing development of technology has allowed for the emergence of many other micro-celebrity *ustaz*, both in the national arena more generally or more specifically in internal religious organisations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, Persis (Persatuan Islam) or others. In the case of Muhammadiyah, the largest modernist Islamic organisation, its religious authority began to be challenged by a preacher who was said to be part of Muhammadiyah itself, namely Zulkarnain El Madury. He claims to be a Muhammadiyah cadre and often introduces himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board. In recent years, El Madury has been noticed by Muhammadiyah administrators and Muhammadiyah cadres<sup>3</sup> and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council (Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah) has discussed him in a special meeting. This is because the posts on the Facebook page that El Madury manages, *Syarah Himpunan Putus Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (henceforth SHPTM), often differ significantly from – and to some extent delegitimise – a Muhammadiyah fatwa or official decision. Responses from grassroots or Muhammadiyah followers vary. This can be seen, for example, from the comments on each post. Some defend and remain adamant on the fatwa or official decision of Muhammadiyah, but not a few were affected and followed what was conveyed by El Madury on his Facebook page.

This is where it becomes crucial to see how Muhammadiyah attempts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace, especially among its members and the public. By conducting web content analysis (Postill and Pink 2012) on SHPTM and official social media accounts and those affiliated with the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this article shows how El Madury builds his narratives and, in turn, how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority on the internet. Additionally, field research was conducted and key actors were interviewed offline and online in a semi-structured format.<sup>4</sup> Apart from El Madury, the key actors are members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, the chairman of the Muhammadiyah Digital Broadcast Centre (Pusat Syiar Digital Muhammadiyah), Muhammadiyah activists as well as Muhammadiyah grassroots.

### Fragmentation of religious authority, new preacher and micro-celebrity *ustaz* phenomenon

Fragmentation of religious authority is a phenomenon that occurs in various religious communities and is not limited to Islam (B.S. Turner 2007; Campbell and Teusner 2011; Hope Cheong 2016). The fragmentation of religious authority is also a global phenomenon as pointed out by Gary R. Bunt (2003) who states that the new media have shaped diverse understandings among individual Muslims worldwide about e-jihad (electronic jihad). The definition of electronic jihad is understood and interpreted differently, ranging from online activism to Muslim articulation after the events of 11 September 2001. Bunt (2003) shows that each new media (in this case, new websites) has authority for its respective group.

The fragmentation of religious authority discussed here is from the 20th century to the present. Jajat Burhanudin (2004) points out that there has been a shift in religious

<sup>3</sup>This author's online and offline interviews with Amiruddin, Robby Karman, Muhammad Muflih, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, and Arif Nur Kholis, 2019–2020.

<sup>4</sup>Data collection in this study was carried out between 2018 and 2020. As personal interviews were not possible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, some interviews were conducted online.

authority in the historical phase of Indonesian religious thought in the early 20th century due to modernisation. His study, which focuses on the Islamic print media, further shows that there is a shift in religious authority that used to be in *Kitab Kuning*<sup>5</sup> taught by *kyai* or *ulama* in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to magazines, journals, newspapers, and books published by modernist circles or organisations.

Religious authority since the early 20th century has always stayed with Muhammadiyah and NU. These two religious organisations are often referred to by scholars as the authentic holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016; Akmaliah 2018). The shift in religious authority occurred again in the 1990s when national television stations emerged. The Islamic programmes presented by the television stations show the *ustaz* (religious teachers), which in turn build their authority through lectures delivered by these preachers. This phenomenon prompted scholars to come up with the term 'Islamic televangelism' (Akmaliah 2018). Abdullah Gymnastiar who is better known as Aa Gym is one example that falls into the category of a television *ustaz*, or a 'tele-dai' as coined by Greg Fealy (2008).

The most obvious and recent picture of the fragmentation of religious authority in Indonesia is the series of events of the Defend Islam Action (Aksi Bela Islam). Ahmad Najib Burhani (2016) hints that these critical events marked the peak of the fragmentation of religious authorities in Indonesia as they gave rise to new actors who challenge the established religious authority. Although it cannot be said to shift or match the role of Muhammadiyah and NU, the emergence of new actors such as Rizieq Shihab provides a new map of religious authority in Indonesia.

This phenomenon of the fragmentation of religious authority has increased sharply in the development of what scholars call pop culture, marked by the birth of many new media (Labiq 2019). The availability of internet access to every social class is the main factor for this fragmentation. As a result, many new media have emerged with each individual and group competing to spread ideas (Horsfield 2016; Nisa 2019).

Aa Gym is one of the early actors who emerged in the internet era in Indonesia. This can be captured in two interesting studies on Aa Gym by James B. Hoesterey (2008), and Maskur and Noor (2014). Although the use of the internet as a medium of da'wah during the early 2000s was not as massive as it is now, the emergence of Aa Gym as a new cleric on the national da'wah stage through lectures, seminars, and Islamic training is a phenomenon in itself. Hoesterey (2008) studies the journey of Aa Gym from his first appearance as a preacher, falling, and then successfully rebranding to restore his religious authority. This is evident, for example, from the number of Aa Gym's listeners (*Dakta.com* 2016). Popular culture has brought Aa Gym to also be seen by the public, especially by his followers, as also as a singer, actor, author, etc. Thus, he has transformed from an ordinary cleric to a celebrity cleric. Through a hypersemiotic perspective, Maskur and Noor (2014) show the various aspects of Aa Gym's personality.

Following the appearance of Aa Gym and with further rapid development of information technology, many other new preachers began to appear. Hew Wai Weng (2018) describes how Felix Siauww is another skilful religious preacher. Being a cleric with the most followers on the internet did not lead Siauww to neglect da'wah in the

---

<sup>5</sup>So-called because the books were printed on yellow paper. These were the Islamic texts used in the education of Islamic schools.

real world. Hew (2018) points out that Siauw has blended online and offline da'wah harmoniously. According to Hew (2018) and Farhan (2017), one of the keys to Siauw's success in preaching is his ability to present an entertaining and straightforward da'wah, even though its content is dogmatic and political.

Aa Gym and Felix Siauw are two micro-celebrity *ustaz* as a result of the new media. The term micro-celebrity *ustaz* was adopted and reconstructed from the theory of micro-celebrity. Most of these studies conducted from the perspective of pop culture (Senft 2008; G. Turner 2010; Khamis, Ang and Welling 2017; Sadasri 2017; Khomalia and Rahman 2018) describe the fragmentation of religious authority, marked by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By this term this author means an ordinary *ustaz/ustazah* who has skyrocketed in popularity and is celebrity on and because of social media so that he or she is able to influence certain people or communities. In other words, it means the *ustaz/ustazah* has experienced what G. Turner (2010) calls 'the demotic turn', when ordinary people are highly visible on social media and become celebrities. Challenges to established religious authorities by new religious personalities or groups in Indonesia have received little attention to date. One exception is Yanwar Pribadi (2019) whose study explains the efforts of 'local Islam' (*Islam lokal*) to defend its religious authority from the threat of 'foreign Islam' (*Islam asing*). However, his study differs from the research presented in this article which will trace Muhammadiyah's efforts to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

This study is on a micro-celebrity *ustaz*, Zulkarnain El Madury who is less well known when compared to Aa Gym or Felix Siauw but who has a strong influence on the internet. His identity as a preacher from Muhammadiyah who targets Muhammadiyah followers with postings that are often different and even delegitimise the official voice of this largest modernist mass organisation deserves to be investigated. This study, apart from showing Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining its religious authority on the internet, also seeks explicitly to fill the gap in previous studies. In his latest study, Akmaliah (2020) shows that Muhammadiyah and NU have different responses to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was strongly reactive to their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) indicates there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's responses less hostile. Sammy (2022), Sanjaya (2022), and Saefullah (2022) came to the same conclusion as Akmaliah, claiming that Muhammadiyah is significantly less adaptive to the emergence of new media, and therefore its da'wah often loses to that of the micro-celebrity *ustaz*. This study focuses on the struggle of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as the only assembly under Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas and official *ijtihad* exposition within Muhammadiyah.

### **Overview of Zulkarnain El Madury and *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah* fanpage**

The Facebook SHPTM fanpage was created by Zulkarnain El Madury. He was born in Sumenep on the island of Madura in 1963, with the name Zulkarnain bin Syamsuri. He claims to have studied in Malaysia at the Institute of Business Study and always introduces himself as a preacher from the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board (Lembaga Dakwah Khusus Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah). He spent his

childhood in Madura and was a traditionalist Muslim like others on the island. He grew up in a milieu dominated by the NU traditionalist Islamic organisation. He used to perform *tahlilan* (ritual prayers for the dead), *ziarah* (pilgrimage to the grave), and other practices that, according to him, after becoming a member of Muhammadiyah, were not following the Sunnah of the Prophet. He received his religious education at the Islamic boarding school at-Taufiqiyyah Sumenep Madura. In 1976 he became acquainted with Muhammadiyah. He became interested in the da'wah and religious understanding of the Muhammadiyah movement founded by Ahmad Dahlan after listening to a lecture by one of its preachers. In 1977, he officially joined Muhammadiyah.<sup>6</sup>

Since joining Muhammadiyah, El Madury has been active as a preacher who spreads Muhammadiyah's religious ideas and understanding. From 1990 to 2007, he was one of the Muhammadiyah preachers who was sent to remote areas by the Special Da'wah Institute of Muhammadiyah Central Board. His daily activities are now preaching at different places as well as creating content on for SHPTM fanpage. He now lives in Jakarta as the *tarjih* and *tabligh* council chair of the Pondok Gede Muhammadiyah Branch.<sup>7</sup> El Madury states that he created SHPTM in 2014.<sup>8</sup> However, in the digital history that this author can trace, the fanpage was created in 2015 as the earliest post that is currently traceable is dated 5 January 2015.

According to El Madury, the fanpage began with the WhatsApp group he created which he named *Tarjih dan Tabligh Institut* (Tarjih and Tabligh Institute) to provide a space to discuss and spread ideas related to *tarjih*.<sup>9</sup> He included many Muhammadiyah figures and activists in this group, including (the now late) Buya Yunahar Ilyas. Over time, seeing that El Madury's posts on SHPTM were deemed inconsistent with the *tarjih* spirit of Muhammadiyah, several people, such as Fathurrahman Kamal and Buya Risman, sharply criticised the postings. El Madury, Fathurrahman Kamal, and Buya Risman were then engaged in a heated debate which was relayed later to Buya Yunahar Ilyas. The response by Buya Yunahar Ilyas at that time, according to El Madury, differed from that of his critics. Buya Yun responded quite positively because he saw El Madury's initiative as providing *syarah* (explanation) or further explication of the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (Tarjih Decisions Compilation). Finally, he gave his permission to El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website [tanyajawabagama.com](http://tanyajawabagama.com).<sup>10</sup>

El Madury's early postings on SHPTM, were still relatively consistent in uploading Muhammadiyah fatwas in the question (from someone) and answer format from the fatwa division of the Tarjih Council. This is similar to the the original question and answer format administered by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, whose fatwas were later published in the *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine. However, over time, SHPTM included posts that apart from the dissemination of Muhammadiyah's official

<sup>6</sup>Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Muhammadiyah's use of the word *tarjih* has changed throughout its development. In its early period, and following its usage in the principles of law (*usul al-fiqh*), *tarjih* conveyed the meaning of examining the various opinions of Muslim jurists on a particular question and evaluating them to determine which is most faithful to the original Shari'a sources. Over time this usage gradually included any intellectual endeavour used to study new cases that earlier jurists had not addressed. In short, in Muhammadiyah's perspective, *tarjih* is identical, or almost identical, to *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

<sup>10</sup>Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

*ijtihad* included the personal opinions of El Madury. These opinions in inelegant words are often offensive to other groups. Not infrequently, his posts contradict the official stance of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in particular, or Muhammadiyah in general, such as on the veil issue (see below). Since Facebook introduced its 'live broadcast' feature, El Madury has also availed of it to conduct live lectures. The SHPTM is popular with netizens. As of the time of writing (3 April 2022), it has been followed by 19,423 and is 'liked' by 8,868 people. His posts also often receive both positive and critical comments from viewers.

El Madury gave several reasons that brought about the creation of his fanpage. Firstly, it is aimed at fortifying Muhammadiyah followers against all forms of superstition, heresy, and myth as its posts focus on issues related to faith and worship. Secondly, he aims to counter those liberal Muhammadiyah activists and has openly responded to such views. His posts often openly attacks the religious practices of the the Nahdliyyin, resulting in several clashes between him and the Nahdliyyin figure, Idrus Ramli.<sup>11</sup>

Despite having many followers El Madury and his SHPTM do have critics. Many Muhammadiyah followers are concerned about the SHPTM posts. Some have tried to convey their anxiety through the official social media accounts of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre (Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah).<sup>12</sup> Those concerned generally want to ask for firm action from the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council as El Madury has included 'Tarjih Muhammdiyah' in his fanpage name. The demands to the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, when summarised, include: (1) that the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council reprimand or remind Zulkarnain El Madury not to use symbols or names that are closely related to Tarjih Muhammadiyah for or on his fanpage; (2) making and circulating an announcement that the fanpage is not a social media account of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council or the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre; (3) announcing the official social media accounts and websites of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council and Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre, so that Muhammadiyah people at the grassroots are not deceived by the existence of the fanpage and know where to look for religious reference sites, especially on the internet.

### **Zulkarnain El Madury and his efforts in building religious authority**

Zulkarnain El Madury and his fanpage SHPTM, have threatened the religious authority of Muhammadiyah, and specifically, the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. Many of his posts affect Muhammadiyah followers in particular and Muslims in general as these posts often differ from the official stance of Muhammadiyah, and in some cases contradict the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council. This has stimulated public debate on social media, allowing El Madury to become a micro-celebrity *ustaz*. As a result of the general public and the online community attention, El Madury has been able to gradually build up his religious authority. From the Weberian perspective (Riesebrodt 1999), he has been able to do this in two ways. The first is through charisma (charismatic authority) and the second is traditional authority discussed later. According to Weber, charisma is a

<sup>11</sup>Online interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 18–20 October 2020.

<sup>12</sup>Interviews with Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf and Ariful Hazam, November 2020 who are grassroots of Muhammadiyah, and social media administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah.



particular type of authority whose original form is based on a specific belief contained in a particular person (ibid.). El Madury claims he has the endorsement of Yunahar Ilyas, a very popular Muhammadiyah cleric respected by the community from within the Muhammadiyah circle and from Muslims in general which is a form of charismatic authority.

Yunahar Ilyas (1956–2020) or Buya Yun as he was popularly known, was an exegete (*mufasssir*) born in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, who died at the age of 63 (Ilyas 2012; N.A. and Chirzin 2021). He was an alumnus of Imam Ibn Su'ud University (Saudi Arabia) and an excellent lecturer in conveying religious messages. He was seen as a charismatic cleric by Muhammadiyah followers and Muslims, in general, and this reputation extended to neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore (Abror 2020; Gesuri 2020). On his death in early 2020, many people flocked to pay their last respects to Buya Yun who held the chair of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for three terms (Kompas 2020; Rakyat Merdeka 2019).

By harnessing the charisma of Buya Yun, El Madury was able to increase his religious authority. On various occasions, including when this author interviewed him, Buya Yun's name was often mentioned as an argument and a shield.<sup>13</sup> El Madury insisted that he created the SHPTM fanpage with the permission of Yunahar Ilyas.<sup>14</sup> He added that Wahyudi Abdurrahim, an al-Azhar alumnus who now maintains the website *tanyajawabagama.com*, had similarly received permission from Buya Yun. Wahyudi Abdurrahim confirmed Zulkarnain's claims and Muhammad Muflih, a grassroots representative added that it is a form of fairness.<sup>15</sup> In other words, Buya Yun's permission is a form of appreciation given by someone who is more senior and has a high social position in Muhammadiyah to someone who is more junior and classified as a grassroots Muhammadiyah member.<sup>16</sup> Permission from Buya Yun, who has charisma within Muhammadiyah in particular, has become a tool used by El Madury in building his own religious authority.

In Weberian charismatic authority, charisma is not only about a belief in the existence of extraordinary or superpowers possessed by or contained in humans but also about particular objects other than humans (Riesebrodt 1999). We thus have an explanation as to why El Madury named his fanpage *Syarah Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a highly respectable and crucial council in Muhammadiyah. Founded in 1927, the Council functions as an assembly that carries out its agenda of purification of religion and the dynamisation of social life. It conducts research and investigations towards this purity, and accordingly gives fatwas and compiles religious guidelines on faith (*'aqidah*) and worship (*'ibadah*) as well as social relations (*mu'amalah*) (Rahman et al. 1985; Anwar 2016). In addition, this Council makes efforts to resolve differences and disagreements on religious issues, which are

<sup>13</sup>This author's informants include Muhammad Muflih (grassroots of Muhammadiyah and initiator of the website *tanyajawabagama.com*), Robby Karman (secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association [DPP IMM] 2018–2021), and several participants invited by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council with the agenda 'Responding to Emergence of Syarah HPT on Social Media' on 25 September, 2020; interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>14</sup>Interview with Zulkarnain El Madury, 3 November 2019.

<sup>15</sup>Online interview with Wahyudi Abdurrahim through WhatsApp, September 2020.

<sup>16</sup>Online interview with Muhammad Muflih through WhatsApp and Facebook, 20 October 2019.

usually referred to as *khilāfiyyah* problems, so that they are directed more productively (Anwar 2007, 2016).

The Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council is a body that is responsible for formulating the ideological basis of the Muhammadiyah movement (Anwar 2007, 2016) and is Muhammadiyah's representative in the religious field (Fauzi 2017). The Council produces three types of *ijtihad*, namely: (1) *tarjih* fatwa (*fatwa tarjih*), (2) *tarjih* decision (*putusan tarjih*), and (3) *tarjih* discourse (*wacara tarjih*) (Anwar 2016). *Tarjih* fatwa is the Council's answer to general questions on issues that require an explanation in terms of sharia law. Following the nature of the fatwa in general, the Council's fatwa is non-binding, on either organisations or members as individuals. Therefore, even the fatwa can be questioned and discussed. However, because the fatwa contains religious guidance derived from Islamic teaching sources (Anwar 2020), and the general public often does not actually understand the aspects of such a fatwa, it is still believed by Muhammadiyah members to be religious guidance. However, the *tarjih* decision is the official stance of Muhammadiyah in religious matters and is formally binding on the organisation and its members. But, in practice, sometimes Muhammadiyah members exercise their right to freedom not to be bound by the decision because they have different *ijtihad* (Anwar 2016).

Meanwhile, *tarjih* discourses are ideas or thoughts that are raised and put forward by the Council in seminars, *halaqah* (religious gathering or meeting to discuss the Qur'an or Islam), or other forums in addressing various developing issues and at the same time fostering a critical spirit of *ijtihad* and collecting materials or ideas on various actual problems in society. The nature of this *tarjih* discourse is non-binding and does not become a fatwa that must be followed. *Tarjih* discourse is contained in various publications of the Council, such as *Jurnal Tarjih* (Tarjih Journal) and various published books (Anwar 2016).

The *tarjih* decision and the *tarjih* fatwa, hold their strength within Muhammadiyah as these are considered sacred by some of its members. In short, it can be said that anything that 'smells *tarjih*' has authority in the collective memory of Muhammadiyah followers. In the perspective of Khaled Abou El Fadl (2014), fatwa and *tarjih* decisions have the power of persuasive authority, as these can influence or direct others because they believed in them. The *tarjih* fatwas are officially published through the organisation's magazine, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, and compiled in the *Tanya Jawab Agama* book. In comparison, the *tarjih* decisions are codified in a book called *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (commonly known as HPT). Thus, it can be understood why the attribution of the term *tarjih* to particular objects can give rise to charismatic authority, as mentioned by Weber.

What El Madury did can also be seen as identity politics which is defined as a political tool of a group whether it be ethnic, cultural, religious or others for specific purposes, such as a form of resistance or to show the identity of a group (Alfaqi 2015). Within this framework, identity is politicised through extreme interpretation, which aims to gain support from people who feel 'the same', through race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements. In the context of El Madury, the use of the *tarjih* label on his fanpage can be interpreted as a political tool to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the Muhammadiyah members. And, as seen in some of his sermon videos, El Madury also placed a flag with the Muhammadiyah symbol behind him. In this context, he wants to convince



the viewers that he is close to Muhammadiyah. He has introduced himself as a preacher from the Muhammadiyah Central Board on many occasions.

According to Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif (2010), identity politics is always related to members of social groups who feel excluded by the mainstream in a nation or state. Sri Astuti Buchari (2014) also finds that the emergence of identity politics is mainly caused by certain factors that an ethnic group sees as pressure from the political injustice. By looking at the observations made by Ahmad Najib Burhani (2013), El Madury, in this case, can be categorised as part of a group that feels excluded, threatened, and to some extent in need of justice within Muhammadiyah. Burhani (2013) explains the existence of two opposing schools of thought within Muhammadiyah which he refers to as 'Pure Islam' (*Islam Murni*) and 'Progressive Islam' (*Islam Progresif*). The conflict between these two schools of thought in Muhammadiyah began to surface at the 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Banda Aceh in 1995 (Burhani 2013).

The dominance of 'Progressive Islam' in Muhammadiyah strengthened after its 44th congress in Jakarta in 2000. This congress chose Ahmad Syafii Ma'arif as general chair. He is a progressive Muslim figure, an alumnus of the University of Chicago, and a student of the eminent progressive scholar Fazlur Rahman. At this congress, several names representing the 'Progressive Islam' group were included in the ranks of the central board of Muhammadiyah, such as Amin Abdullah, Dawam Raharjo, and Abdul Munir Mulkhan. During Ma'arif's leadership, progressive ideas not only dominated culturally but gradually became Muhammadiyah's official programmes (Burhani 2013).

Seeing the increasingly apparent threat from the ideas put forward by the 'Progressive Islam' group within Muhammadiyah, representatives of the 'Pure Islam' group did not remain silent. They compete and squabble over religious interpretations as to which is the most authentic. These two groups challenge each other through various channels, including seminars, discussions, publications. They usually have conflicting programmes. For example, as mentioned by Burhani (2013), when the Centre for the Study of Religion and Civilisation (PSAP/Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban) raised the theme of pluralism and multiculturalism in its journal, *Tanwir Journal*, the Tabligh Council<sup>17</sup> responded with articles in opposition in its magazine, *Majalah Tabligh*. In Burhani's investigation, during the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress in Malang, this conservative group set up a Pojok Anti-Liberal (anti-liberal corner) booth, which sold books, DVDs, t-shirts, magazines, and other anti-liberal mementos. Strikingly, some of the t-shirts for sale displayed the words 'Muhammadiyah Anti-Liberal' (Burhani 2013).

At the 45th Muhammadiyah Congress, it seemed that the 'Pure Islam' group was gaining momentum to beat back the 'Progressive Islam' group. The quarrels between these two groups occurred within congress committees and in the external arena. Burhani (2005, 2013) noted at least three critical issues where the 'Pure Islam' group

---

<sup>17</sup>Muhammadiyah has many assemblies such as Majelis Tabligh and Majelis Tarjih, each with its own functions and responsibilities. Majelis Tarjih is responsible for producing religious thoughts through fatwas and decisions, while Majelis Tabligh is responsible for disseminating them. Historically, Majelis Tabligh is known in Muhammadiyah as the anti-liberal wing and thus there are at times poor collaboration between Majelis Tarjih and Majelis Tabligh. For example, some fatwas issued by Majelis Tarjih, in Majelis Tabligh's perspective, are the result of liberal thinking. See Burhani (2013) and Palahuddin (2020).

defeated the 'Progressive Islam' in the congress arena, namely: (1) leadership change; (2) the position of women; and (3) resistance to liberal thought.

After the 45th congress, the feud between these two schools of thought has continued though waxing and waning at different times. The form of the feud now looks more varied given the availability of the internet where the presence of social media has changed the battle arena from a conventional to a more modern one. El Madury represents the 'Pure Islam' group, and has heated online debates with figures considered representatives of 'Progressive Islam' whose actions he sees as unsettling. For example, El Madury and the secretary-general of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah Student Association (DPP IMM),<sup>18</sup> Robby Karman, have openly and frequently castigated each other on for example, issues about the veil and the Wahhabi. According to El Madury, Robby Karman is a young liberal figure in Muhammadiyah who should be challenged. El Madury also often attacks the IBTimes.id website, as it frequently contains articles that are progressive and, to some extent, controversial. This website was initiated by former Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah (JIMM/Muhammadiyah Youth Intellectual Network) figures, such as Hilman Latief, Azaki Khoiruddin, and Mu'arif. On one occasion, when the chair of the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre admonished El Madury for uploading provocative posts that contradicted the official stance of the Tarjih Council, he defended himself by stating that equally provocative posts from the 'Progressive Islam' group should be similarly reprimanded. If he is the only one selected for rebuke then he felt an injustice had been done.<sup>19</sup> El Madury's attitude in the framework of identity politics reflects someone who feels excluded and threatened by certain parties. As such, his specific attributes and identity are a deliberate form of resistance to the domination of certain groups or thoughts that threaten him.

The second form of authority is what Weber calls traditional authority (Spencer 1970; Matheson 1987; Riesebrodt 1999). In simple terms, something can be considered as having traditional authority if it gains legitimacy based on beliefs or norms that have been established in a particular tradition (Chairi 2019). In other words, according to Spencer (1970), traditional authority is legitimised and, at the same time, constrained by traditional norms. Therefore, it is the opposite of charismatic authority. If in charismatic authority, it is the leader or someone who creates the norms, then it is the norms that create the leader or person in the traditional authority. In charismatic authority, the value of influence is generated by a person's personal qualities and is always associated with his personality. While in the case of traditional authority, it is generated by function and is related to someone or something that has traditional values (Spencer 1970).

In the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, ulama and the classical books they wrote can be considered to have this traditional authority. Ulama in Islamic tradition are called heirs of the Prophets. The authority of the ulama is derived from the legitimacy of religious texts which state that the prophetic tradition will be passed on to them. Therefore, the religious ideas they convey in writings or books contain an authoritative value for the next generation. This is the uniqueness of Islamic scholars and traditions, as

<sup>18</sup>Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM) or Muhammadiyah Student Association is a proponent of Muhammadiyah in student affairs with the basic mission of realising the real Islamic society as formulated by Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (Widodo 2017).

<sup>19</sup>On 3 November 2019, the manager of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah reprimanded Zulkarnain El Madury for his post on SHPTM on the veil which contradicts Muhammadiyah's official stance.

mentioned by Muhammad Qasim Zaman (2002) who states that one of the most prominent aspects of pre-modern intellectual culture is the articulation of religious discourse through the so-called medium of the commentary. This is manifested in various forms such *al-syurūh*, *hawāsyī*, *rasā'il*, and *fatawā*. The various genres of books that contain explanations, descriptions, or responses to a book or social phenomena are a way for scholars to shape the identity and authority of the school or tradition they adhere to. In addition, it is also a means to interpreting the meaning of the foundational sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah (Zaman 2002).

An example is the *hawāsyī* tradition in the Shafii school. Its emergence, according to Ahmed El-Shamsy (2013), shows the peak of the authority of two scholars in that school, namely al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī. Al-Kurdī, as quoted by El Shamsy, called these two scholars 'the higher authorities in the Syafii school'. Those who want to know the authoritative opinion of the Shafi'i school have to go through the works of al-Nawawī and al-Rāfi'ī, and the books that explain further their works, namely the books written by Ibn Hajar al-Haitamī and Syamsuddīn al-Ramlī. These books have for later generations the value of traditional authority (Shamsy 2013: 292).

What is the connection between this traditional authority and El Madury? El Madury's posts on SHPTM and at religious forums where he speaks always rely on the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāth*). According to Endang Mintarja, chair of the Jakarta branch of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council, this aspect has drawn many people to El Madury's lectures.<sup>20</sup> What El Madury did, which Muhammadiyah did not do in many of its fatwas was to cite the Islamic intellectual tradition. In many of its fatwas, Muhammadiyah often only quotes the Qur'an or hadith to strengthen its argument, without citing the opinions of other Islamic scholars. Perhaps this is a consequence of the modernist movement, which became the spirit of Muhammadiyah. The modernist movement initiated by reformers such as Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, and Muḥammad Rasyīd Riḍā in the late 19th and early 20th centuries used the term *al-rujū' ilā al-qur'ān wa al-sunnah* ('back to the Qur'an and Sunnah'). According to Syed Junaid A. Quadri (2013), the most obvious indicator of this movement, especially in Islamic law, is its critical attitude towards the structure of pre-modern sharia authority symbols, which are articulated in the language and logic of the institution of *taqlīd*. Modernist groups always encourage reopening the door to *ijtihād* and invite Muslims to leave the interpretive monopoly that the ulama class has held (Quadri 2013).

Muhammadiyah, which is heavily inspired by the modernist movement, is oriented towards the Qur'an and Sunnah and tends to attach less importance to the Islamic intellectual tradition that has been built by the ulama. This can be seen from its *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah* (the methodology Muhammadiyah uses in conducting *ijtihād*), which asserts that Muhammadiyah is not affiliated to a particular school, but the opinions of these schools are only considered in determining religious norms (Anwar 2018). This means that understanding religion in the Muhammadiyah perspective is derived directly from its primary sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah through the *ijtihād* process. However, it should be noted here that the narration that confirms the opinions of the

<sup>20</sup>Endang Mintarja voiced this at a Muhammadiyah Central Board Tarjih Council meeting of on the emergence 'Syarah HPT', 25 September 2020.

scholars is taken into account in determining norms is not that clear on how they are implemented in *tarjih* issues.

In some of its official *ijtihad*, the nuances of the opinions of scholars, especially the pre-modern ones do not appear, by choice or otherwise. Thus it appears that El Madury is filling the Muhammadiyah gap in presenting the authority of the Islamic intellectual tradition in religious narratives. For example, in the controversial veil case, the Tarjih Council issued three fatwas in 1993, 2003 and 2009.<sup>21</sup> The fatwas issued in 1993 and 2009 emphasised that the veil has no legal basis either in the Qur'an or the Sunnah but that Islamic law commands women to wear the hijab. These two fatwas did not cite the Islamic intellectual tradition, which also accommodates opinions about the veil. Although the Tarjih Council kept in its stance and strengthened the opinion that women's '*aurat* (parts of the body that should go covered) are the whole body except the face and the palms of the hands, in the 2003 fatwa, the Tarjih Council provides space for those who want to wear the veil by expressing several opinions from the scholars who think so.

In contrast to the *tarjih* fatwas, El Madury's (2019) article *Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam?* ('Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?') on the SHPTM fanpage refutes the *tarjih* fatwa. He cites various opinions of scholars in the Islamic intellectual tradition who support mandatory veiling as an effort to build religious authority. From this, it appears that El Madury, apart from attacking the *tarjih* fatwa, believes in maintaining traditional authority, in this case, the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turāts*).

What El Madury did in building religious authority can also be captured from what Burhani calls a conversion narrative. Some scholars define religious conversion narratives differently as for example, in the change from one religious tradition to another. William James, as quoted by Burhani (2020: 158), states that religious conversion can also be interpreted as the conversion of a person who is a sinner into someone pious. According to Burhani (2020), people who experience religious conversion, usually after embracing a new tradition or religious understanding, will be hostile to the previous religious tradition or understanding.

El Madury also experienced a religious conversion, in this case, from the NU tradition to Muhammadiyah's. On SHPTM as well as his views when interviewed by this author, he introduced himself as someone who had practised the '*kuburiyyun* tradition'<sup>22</sup> and other actions that did not have examples from the Prophet. To convince his followers, he posted information about his religious conversion from NU to Muhammadiyah. Besides condemning his previous practices, which were deemed to have no basis in the Qur'an and Sunnah, he has had acrimonious debates with the NU *kyai*, Idrus Ramli on various issues, such as *ahlus sunnah wal jamaah* and *wahabi*, *nahdliyyin* traditions that are often considered heresy, and so on.

## Muhammadiyah's efforts in maintaining religious authority in cyberspace

Before the advent of the internet and the emergence of various new religious authorities, Muhammadiyah and NU were the two largest religious organisations and authentic

<sup>21</sup>Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah (2009, 2019a, 2019b).

<sup>22</sup>The tradition of visiting the grave with its associated practices.

holders of religious authority in Indonesia (Burhani 2016). However, following the emergence of the so-called micro-celebrity *ustaz*, these two groups, according to some scholars, began to face challenges and threats. The recent study by Wahyudi Akmaliah (2020) shows that the two organisations have responded differently to the emergence of new religious authorities. While NU was more combative about their emergence, Muhammadiyah seemed calmer. Akmaliah (2020) maintains there are some similarities between Muhammadiyah and those often referred to as new religious authorities, making Muhammadiyah's response look less aggressive. Akmaliah is correct on several points, but other perspectives deserve to be considered, especially Muhammadiyah's efforts, through its official religious assembly, in maintaining religious authority on the internet. The weak point, as shown in Akmaliah's study is that there is no adequate elaboration of the assembly that exclusively holds religious authority in Muhammadiyah, namely the Tarjih Council. To trace more precisely how Muhammadiyah maintains religious authority we have to look at the Tarjih Council.

This discussion starts from the author attending a meeting held by the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board in September 2020. The meeting was in response to the appearance of the *syarh* (explanation) on HPT (Tarjih Decisions Compilation) by El Madury and Wahyudi Abdurrahim. Whilst El Madury's comments were on his SHPTM fanpage, Abdurrahim (2020) aired his views in his book. He was earlier mentioned as having had permission from Buya Yun to give *syarh* on HPT. The initial background for holding this meeting, as revealed by the secretary of the Tarjih Council, Mas'udi, was purely in response to the SHPTM posts by El Madury. However, information about the SHPTM other than the one written by El Madury prompted the board of the Tarjih Council to include the book by Abdurrahim with the same title for the agenda.

For this meeting, the Tarjih Council invited nine related sectors to discuss concerns over the emergence of the SHPTM on the internet written by the El Madury and Abdurrahim. The nine sector participants were: (1) the executive board of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (2) fatwa division of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (3) chair/secretary of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council; (4) Endang Mintarja (Chair of the Jakarta Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council); (5) Fathurrahman Kamal (Chair of the Muhammadiyah Tabligh Council); (6) Budi Setiawan; (7) Arif Nur Kholis (head of Muhammadiyah Digital Syiar Centre); (8) the manager of Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre; and (9) the social media assistance team of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council.

During the meeting, there were at least four proposals from participants on how best to respond to the SHPTM, particularly El Madury's article about the veil. The first was to complain to Facebook about the SHPTM so that it could be banned for including an institution's name without permission. According to the chair of the Tabligh Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board, Fathurrahman Kamal, who was present at the forum, the fanpage is in the illicit category. This proposal was considered by the proponents as a firm proposal but that it risked unnecessary antagonism. The second was to use a persuasive approach in the form of clarification or an appeal to El Madury not to use the name *Himpunan Putusan Tajih* (HPT) or something that is associated with *tarjih*. Its proponents consider this approach to be softer and more reflective of being Muhammadiyah members in particular, and Muslims in general. The third proposal was to use

institutional authority in writing an official letter on behalf of the Tarjih Council to El Madury. The fourth idea that was considered more practical and efficient was to place the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated with it on social media. This would avoid being drawn into unfruitful correspondence on SHPTM.

However, there was no agreement on which approach should be undertaken despite long discussions. It was agreed instead that there would be a follow up with another forum. Since this author started writing (3 April 2022) there has been no further meeting. The emergence of SHPTM on the internet and its effects have been considered a serious problem by the Tarjih Council. The meeting's participants were generally uneasy about the appearance of El Madury and his fanpage. In addition, they wanted El Madury to be warned or reprimanded since SHPTM is considered a threat to religious authority of the Tarjih Council. This illustrates that Muhammadiyah, through its official religious assembly, the Tarjih Council, is not passive in responding to the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. However, only certain cases and not all micro-celebrity *ustaz* who appear on social media have drawn the Tarjih Council's attention. Although there has yet to be a follow up meeting, the Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an official institution supporting the Tarjih Council illustrates how Muhammadiyah struggles to maintain its religious authority in cyberspace.

Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is an institution that was founded in 2016 by the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council in collaboration with Ahmad Dahlan University (Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah 2016). Despite being a new institution, its legality is clear, and it has formal authority. In the Muhammadiyah tradition as an organisation, such legality is essential. Thus when someone from Muhammadiyah speaks on another person's behalf or endorses an approach, the speaker's status is below that of the institution and cannot be assumed to be that of institutions within Muhammadiyah which, although new, have legality. In the context of El Madury and the SHPTM fanpage, this is important. Even though El Madury claims he has obtained permission to make *syarh* on the *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* from a charismatic figure in Muhammadiyah, Buya Yunahar, legally it is not valid. In that context, Buya Yunahar spoke on behalf of himself, not on behalf of Muhammadiyah.

Fronted by young Muhammadiyah cadres, the majority of whom are alumni of Pendidikan Ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Tarjih Ulama Education, PUTM),<sup>23</sup> Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays a role in supporting the Tarjih Council programmes. These are relatively under-performing and facing obstacles, particularly on using social media to disseminate their official *ijtihad*. The members of the Tarjih Council, who are relatively old, need support from young cadres. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah plays an essential role in assisting the Tarjih Council in maintaining its religious authority on the internet. It responded to El Madury and SHPTM, by being pro-active with a poster (Figure 1) on social media and in print form, containing information related to the official account of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it.

---

<sup>23</sup>PUTM is an educational institution under the Tarjih Council and Tajdid of Muhammadiyah Central Board designed to produce a cadre of Muhammadiyah scholars. PUTM organises a special programme that educates and prepares Muhammadiyah *tarjih* scholars who are competent in the religious field. The birth of PUTM was based on the concern of some Muhammadiyah leaders about the increasing scarcity of ulama in and from Muhammadiyah (Fauzi 2020a).





**Figure 1.** Poster with information on the official social media accounts affiliated to the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.<sup>24</sup>

Although the poster above does not directly mention the SHPTM fanpage created by El Madury, the main message in it is clear and firm, namely to inform the Muhammadiyah followers about the official accounts of the Tarjih Council and those affiliated to it. This would hopefully let Muhammadiyah members understand how its official religious voice is disseminated on the internet. Following this, Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah successively uploaded other, more varied posters to indirectly counter the SHPTM fanpage. Some other examples of these posters are shown in Figures 2 and 3.

The use of informal language and emoticons typical of millennials indicate the audience that the Tarjih Council wants to target. The Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah team understands that informal language will appeal to its target audience. This is aimed at

<sup>24</sup>Translation of Figure 1: Are you often confused about finding sources of reference about Islam from the perspective of Muhammadiyah? There is no need to be confused anymore because various social media are straightforward for us to access. Tarjih (Council) has come with a more trendy look: Easy to read anywhere; Provide updated fatwas; Discuss current issues. As members of Muhammadiyah, let's get used to reading the decisions and fatwas of Muhammadiyah. Here are some media that can be accessed very easily. So don't be confused anymore. Web: fatwatarjih.or.id; Facebook: fb.me/fatwamu; Instagram: pusattarjih\_muhammadiyah; Telegram: t.me/fatwatarjihmu; Youtube: tarjih channel. Let's spread it to all Muhammadiyah people!



**Figure 2.** Information about the official Youtube Channel of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.<sup>25</sup>

not only establishing the authority of the Tarjih Council but ‘millennialisation’ i.e. to reach out to the younger generation familiar with social media. Suyadi and Widodo (2019) note that millennialisation is an alternative way to develop knowledge that will synergise with various online media and digital technology. In the context of *tarjih* millennialisation,

<sup>25</sup>Translation of Figure 2: Do you know? The Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah now have an official YouTube channel, (namely) the Tarjih Channel. Have you subscribed yet?





**Figure 3.** Information about the website [fatwatarjih.or.id](http://fatwatarjih.or.id), an official website affiliated to the Tarjih Council containing fatwas. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.<sup>26</sup>

Muhammadiyah's official *ijtihad* that tend to be disseminated in a conventional, monotonous, and uncreative manner are now communicated through social media in more contextual packaging. This means that the Tarjih Council and its various official *ijtihad*, which previously were always identified with the 'old', now consciously aim to include young people.

The religious authority of the Tarjih Council in cyberspace, especially when connected with the appearance of El Madury and SHPTM, was greatly helped by the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah and its young Muhammadiyah cadres. It manages

<sup>26</sup>Translation of Figure 3: Fatwatarjih.or.id is the official website for the Tarjih and the Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board (MTT). The Media Team of Fatwa Tarjih, through this website, has been, is and will continue to strive consistently to publish various *ijtihad* products from the Tarjih Council. Until now, tarjih fatwa collections from 1997 to 2018 have entered the editing stage, and some are just waiting to be published.



**Figure 4.** Information on the official website of the Tarjih Council. Source: Tarjih Muhammadiyah Centre, 2020.<sup>27</sup>

various social media platforms with large numbers of followers, and has helped maintain Muhammadiyah's religious authority by balancing and suppressing the presence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. Its contents are fatwas and decisions of the Tarjih Council with more appealing visualisation to reach out to the millennials (Figure 4).

Although the number of social media followers of the Tarjih Council is less than that for the NU and Salafi groups, at least the presence of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah acts as a compass for Muhammadiyah followers who question its religious authority, especially with the emergence of El Madury's version in SHPTM. The administrators of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah's social media have received many messages either through the comments column or direct messages in its inbox, which question the authority of SHPTM.<sup>28</sup> Here, the vital role of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah is increasingly finding its momentum.

<sup>27</sup>Translation of Figure 4: Do you want to know the full history (of the Tarjih Council)? Or do you want to look for ijthad products from the Tarjih Council? Come on; you can find out on this website: tarjih.or.id

<sup>28</sup>Interview with Ariful Hazamn, Ilham Ibrahim, and Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, September 2020. They are *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* social media administrators.

## Conclusion

Although it can be said that Muhammadiyah's religious influence and authority on the internet are inferior and lag behind other religious groups, Muhammadiyah is still trying to manage its authority, especially when facing threats from micro-celebrity *ustaz*. By focusing on Zulkarnain El Madury and his SHPTM social media page, this article offers a different perspective from previous studies by analysing the work of the Tarjih Council as the only institution in Muhammadiyah that has the authority to issue fatwas. This article shows that Muhammadiyah has its own way of responding to the emergence of new religious authorities. With the help of Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah as an institution in its fold, the Tarjih Council has made continuous efforts through social media and its official website to counter new voices that threaten its authority. Muhammadiyah's response was neither aggressive nor radical but it clarified its stance without mentioning who precisely was being targeted. What Muhammadiyah did was in line with the Javanese proverb *Ngluruk tanpo bolo, menang tanpo ngasorake* ('win without defeat, win without humiliation [of others]'). The form of Muhammadiyah's response is inherited from its founder, Ahmad Dahlan. As seen by James Peacock (1978), Ahmad Dahlan brought about many social transformations through discussions and education systematically, not in anarchic and aggressive ways.<sup>29</sup> This can be seen, for example, from how Ahmad Dahlan and the early generation of Muhammadiyah fortified Muslims from various superstitions, heresies, and myths by explaining the unacceptability of such popular beliefs and practices.

In a broader context, the case of Zulkarnain El Madury also provides a lesson that using the name Muhammadiyah to justify personal opinions or legitimise particular interests is wrong. Muhammadiyah has the reputation of a very well managed organisation (Barton 2014; *Suara Muhammadiyah* 2019) which is its strength and gives it clout compared to other religious organisations in Indonesia, such as NU. In short, Muhammadiyah's authority lies in the institution itself and is not based on personality. It differs from NU, where power and authority tend to reside with personal figures, such as *kyai* or *gus* (Fauzi 2020b).

Muhammadiyah followers who understand its basic rules are not easily influenced by the emergence of micro-celebrity *ustaz*. They are aware that Muhammadiyah's official religious stance is only be issued by the Tarjih Council and that those external to the Tarjih Council or even specific Muhammadiyah figures who give religious opinions, speak only for themselves as individuals and not the organisation. This would be the case, for example, even if the religious opinion emanates from the chair of the Tarjih Council as an individual. This did occur when Syamsul Anwar, the current chair of the Tarjih Council, differed from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council on the issue of *iftitāḥ* prayer (opening night prayer [*qiyām al-lail*]).<sup>30</sup> While Anwar's

<sup>29</sup>For example, Ahmad Dahlan and the early generation of Muhammadiyah explained to Muslims the unacceptability of popular beliefs and practices that had their roots in superstitions, heresies, and myths. Rather than resorting to anarchist practices, they have built hospitals, orphanages and schools, one of the purposes of which is to counter such practices (Shihab 1995; Peacock 1978).

<sup>30</sup>For Anwar (2013), the *iftitāḥ* prayer comprises two short *rak'ah* prayers that are performed before *qiyām al-lail*, with the condition that it must be preceded by sleep, otherwise there is no need to perform the *iftitāḥ* prayer. However, the Tarjih Council holds that the *iftitāḥ* prayer consists of two short *rak'ah* prayers performed before *qiyām al-lail*, whether preceded by sleep or not (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2011; Tim Majelis Tarjih and Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2019a).

opinion clearly differs from the official religious stance of the Tarjih Council, the prevailing opinion in Muhammadiyah is that of the Tarjih Council, not the chair of the Tarjih Council. Within Muhammadiyah, such religious differences of opinion are common as usually happens in *fiqh* discourse in general. The difference between El Madury and Anwar is that the latter does not act in the name of Muhammadiyah or the Tarjih Council when he has a different view. Instead, on many occasions, he urges Muhammadiyah followers to abide by the opinion of the Tarjih Council on the *iftitāḥ* prayer.<sup>31</sup> Thus Anwar has shown he can compromise his personal religious opinion with his professional attitude in the organisation. In this case, he understands that using the name Muhammadiyah to legitimise individual opinions or interests is not justifiable.

## Acknowledgements

Permission for this research PJB-002/SP3/LPPM-UAD/VI/2020 and funding were provided by the ethical board of Ahmad Dahlan University Research and Development Institute (Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Universitas Ahmad Dahlan).

I am grateful to *ustaz* Zulkarnain El Madury for his exceptional help and support during my fieldwork. I also thank Amiruddin, Arif Nur Kholis, Muhammad Muflih, Wahyudi Abdurrahim, Robby Karman, Ahmad Muttaqin Alim, Farida Fardhani az-Zukhruf, Ilham Ibrahim, Ariful Hazam, and the members of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council for providing information regarding my research. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article and to the editors of *Indonesia and the Malay World*. Errors, if any, are solely mine.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Note on contributor

**Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi** is a lecturer in the Department of Hadith Studies, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He has published widely on a variety of issues relating to Islamic Studies, including al-Quran, hadith, Islamic law, social media and da'wah, and Muhammadiyah studies. Email: niki.fauzi@ilha.uad.ac.id

## ORCID

Niki Alma Febriana Fauzi  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5659-6494>

## References

- Abdurrahim, Wahyudi Sarju. 2020. *Ahlul haq wassunah: syarah himpunan putusan tarjih Muhammadiyah bab iman bagian ketuhanan* [Ahlul haq wassunnah: explanation of tarjih decisions compilation of Muhammadiyah chapter on faith part of divinity]. Yogyakarta: Al Muflihun Publishing.

<sup>31</sup>On several occasions, this author has heard Syamsul Anwar's direct appeal to Muhammadiyah members to follow the opinion of the Tarjih Council on this aspect of the *iftitāḥ* prayer.

- Abror, Robby. 2020. Syekh Yunahar, ulama Muhammadiyah kharismatik [Sheikh Yunahar, a charismatic Muhammadiyah cleric]. 3 January. <<https://menara62.com/syeikh-yunahar-ulama-muhammadiyah-kharismatik/>> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2018. Media sosial dan pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [Social media and shifting religious authority]. 12 December. <[https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media\\_sosial\\_dan\\_pergeseran\\_otoritas\\_keagamaan](https://www.academia.edu/37961422/Media_sosial_dan_pergeseran_otoritas_keagamaan)> Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Akmaliah, Wahyudi. 2020. The demise of moderate Islam: new media, contestation, and reclaiming religious authorities. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10 (1): 1–24.
- Alfaqi, Mifdal Zusron. 2015. Memahami Indonesia melalui prespektif nasionalisme, politik identitas, serta solidaritas [Understanding Indonesia through the perspectives of nationalism, identity politics, and solidarity]. *Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 28 (2): 111–116.
- Alvara Research Center. 2020. Ramadhan dan pandemi Covid-19: semangat ibadah tak surut, konsumsi tersendat. <[https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN\\_DAN\\_PANDEMI\\_COVID-19\\_SEMANGAT\\_IBADAH\\_TAK\\_SURUT\\_KONSUMSI\\_TERSENDAT.pdf](https://covid19.datapedia.id/images/research/RAMADHAN_DAN_PANDEMI_COVID-19_SEMANGAT_IBADAH_TAK_SURUT_KONSUMSI_TERSENDAT.pdf)> Accessed 23 February 2021.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2007. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer* [Contemporary Islamic law studies]. Jakarta: RM Books.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2013. *Salat Tarawih: Tinjauan usul fiqh, sejarah, dan fiqh* [Tarawih prayer: usul fiqh, history, and fiqh perspectives]. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2016. Fatwā, purification and dynamization: a study of tarjih in Muhammadiyah. *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (1): 27–44.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2018. *Manhaj Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Panitia Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih Muhammadiyah XXX.
- Anwar, Syamsul. 2020. *Studi hukum Islam kontemporer Bagian dua* [Contemporary Islamic legal studies Part two]. Yogyakarta: UAD Press.
- Barton, Greg. 2014. The Gülen movement, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama: progressive Islamic thought, religious philanthropy and civil society in Turkey and Indonesia. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25 (3): 287–301.
- Buchari, Sri Astuti. 2014. *Kebangkitan etnis menuju politik identitas* [Ethnic awakening towards identity politics]. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Bunt, Gary R. 2003. *Islam in the digital age: e-jihad, online fatwas and cyber Islamic environments*. London: Pluto Press.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2005. The 45th Muhammadiyah Congress contest between literal-conservative and liberal-moderate Muslims in Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 12 (1): 185–189.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2013. Liberal and conservative discourses in the Muhammadiyah: the struggle for the face of reformist Islam in Indonesia. In Martin van Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary developments in Indonesian Islam: explaining the 'conservative turn'*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2016. Aksi bela Islam: konservatisme dan fragmentasi otoritas keagamaan. *Maarif* 11 (2): 15–29.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2020. Muslim televangelists in the making: conversion narratives and the construction of religious authority. *Muslim World* 110 (2): 154–175.
- Burhanudin, Jajat. 2004. The fragmentation of religious authority: Islamic print media in early 20th century Indonesia. *Studia Islamika* 11 (1): 23–62.
- Campbell, H.A. and Teusner, P.E. 2011. Religious authority in the age of the internet. In *Christian Reflection, Virtual Lives*. Waco TX: Baylor University Press, pp. 59–68. <<https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/130950.pdf>>
- Chairi, Effendi. 2019. Ketidadaan otoritas terpusat dalam fenomena kontemporer di Indonesia [The absence of a centralised authority in contemporary phenomena in Indonesia]. *SANGKÉP: Jurnal Kajian Sosial Keagamaan* 2 (2): 197–215.
- Chaplin, Chris. 2021. *Salafism and the State: Islamic activism and national identity in contemporary Indonesia*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.

- Dakta.com. 2016. Aa Gym ajak ribuan jamaahnya ikut aksi bela Islam III [Aa Gym invites thousands of congregants to join Islamic Defence Action III]. 29 November. <<http://www.dakta.com/news/7329/aa-gym-ajak-ribuan-jamaahnya-ikut-aksi-bela-islam-iii>> Accessed 2 February 2020.
- Fadl, Khaled Abou El. 2014. *Speaking in God's name: Islamic law, authority, and women*. London: Oneworld Publications.
- Farhan, Farhan. 2017. Pesan dakwah Felix Siau di media sosial (perspektif meaning and media). *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Administrasi Islam* 1 (2): 209–226.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2017. Peranan Maqasid Al-Shariah dalam memahami Hadith: kajian terhadap fatwa Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah [The role of Maqasid Al-Shariah in understanding Hadith: a study of the fatwa of the Tarjih Council of Muhammadiyah]. MA thesis, University of Malaya.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020a. PUTM dan kaderisasi ulama: menelusuri latar belakang lahirnya Lembaga Kaderisasi Ulama Muhammadiyah [PUTM and clerical regeneration: tracing the background of the birth of the Muhammadiyah Clerical Cadre Institute]. <<https://santricendekia.com/putm-dan-kaderisasi-ulama-menelusuri-latar-belakang-lahirnya-lembaga-kaderisasi-ulama-muhammadiyah/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Fauzi, Niki Alma Febriana. 2020b. Tantangan kader ulama Tarjih Muhammadiyah di era 4.0 [Challenges for Tarjih Muhammadiyah ulama cadres in the 4.0 era]. 21 July. *Suara Aisiyiah* <<https://suaraaisiyah.id/tantangan-kader-ulama-tarjih-muhammadiyah-di-era-4-0/>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Fealy, Greg. 2008. Consuming Islam: commodified religion and aspirational pietism in contemporary Indonesia. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.
- Gesuri. 2020. Yunahar Ilyas Wafat, Indonesia kehilangan ulama kharismatik [Yunahar Ilyas passed away, Indonesia lost a charismatic scholar]. 3 January. <<https://www.gesuri.id/internal/yunahar-ilyas-wafat-indonesia-kehilangan-ulama-kharismatik-b1YFoZpRY.>> Accessed 20 March 2020.
- Hew, Wai Weng. 2018. The art of dakwah: social media, visual persuasion and the Islamist propagation of Felix Siau. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (134): 61–79.
- Hoesterey, James B. 2008. Marketing morality: the rise, fall and rebranding of Aa Gym. In Greg Fealy and Sally White (eds), *Expressing Islam: Religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, pp. 95–114.
- Hope Cheong, Pauline. 2016. Religious authority and social media branding in a culture of religious celebration. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*, University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 81–102.
- Horsfield, Peter. 2016. The media and religious authority from ancient to modern. In Stewart M. Hoover (ed.), *The media and religious authority*. University Park PA: Penn State University Press, pp. 37–66.
- IB Times Indonesia. 2020. 100 situs Islam Indonesia, NU Online peringkat pertama [100 Indonesian Islamic websites, NU Online ranks first]. 10 July. <<https://ibtimes.id/100-situs-islam-indonesia-nu-online-peringkat-pertama/>> Accessed 23 February 2023.
- Ilyas, Yunahar. 2012. *Kuliah Akhlaq* [Akhlaq lecture]. XII. Yogyakarta: LPPI Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta.
- Khamis, S., Ang, L. and Welling, R. 2017. Self-branding, ‘micro-celebrity’ and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191–208.
- Khomalia, Isti and Rahman, Khairul Arief. 2018. Micro hijabers celebrity: membentuk identitas dengan update self-story via instagram (kasus dian pelangi) [Micro hijabers celebrity: shaping identity with self-story updates via Instagram (Dian Pelangi case)]. *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban dan Pemikiran Islam* 2 (1): 33–42.
- Kompas. 2020. Sejumlah tokoh hadir prosesi pemakaman ketua PP Muhammadiyah Yunahar Ilyas [Many figures attended the funeral procession of Muhammadiyah chairman Yunahar Ilyas]. 3 January. <<https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/03/19142441/sejumlah-tokoh-hadiri-prosesi-pemakaman-ketua-pp-muhammadiyah-yunahar-ilyas>> Accessed 3 April 2022.



- Labiq. 2019. Pengaruh new media terhadap pergeseran otoritas keagamaan [The influence of new media on shifting religious authority]. 19 April. <<https://geotimes.co.id/opini/pengaruh-new-media-terhadap-pergeseran-otoritas-keagamaan>> Accessed 19 October 2020.
- Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. 2010. *Politik identitas dan masa depan pluralisme Indonesia*. Edited by Samsu Rizal Panggabean et al. Jakarta: Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (PUSAD) Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina.
- Madury, Zulkarnain El. 2019. Siapa bilang cadar tak ada dalilnya dalam Islam? [Who says the veil has no evidence in Islam?]. 2 November. <<https://www.facebook.com/zulkarnainsumenep/posts/2386248524961601>> Accessed 5 May 2020.
- Majelis Tarjih & Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah. 2016. Pembukaan Halaqah, Majelis Tarjih Launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan Muhammadiyah Observatorium Network [Halaqah opening, Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and Muhammadiyah Observatory Network]. 20 August. <<https://tarjih.or.id/pembukaan-halaqah-majelis-tarjih-launching-pusat-tarjih-muhammadiyah-dan-muhammadiyah-observatorium-network/>> Accessed 6 October 2023.
- Majelis Tarjih, Tajdid PP Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. 2016. Nota Kesepakatan Majelis Tarjih Dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Dan Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Tentang Pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah Di Islamic Center Universitas Ahmad Dahlan [Memorandum of Agreement between the Tarjih and Tajdid Council of Muhammadiyah Central Board and Ahmad Dahlan University on the Management of the Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre at the Islamic Centre of Ahmad Dahlan University]. Yogyakarta.
- Maskur, Maskur and Noor, Irfan Noor. 2014. Ustadz selebriti Abdullah Gymnastiar dalam budaya populer (perspektif hipersemiotika Yasraf Amir Piliang) [Celebrity Ustadz Abdullah Gymnastiar in popular culture (Yasraf Amir Piliang's hyper semiotics perspective)]. *Jurnal Studia Insania* 2 (1): 47–57.
- Matheson, Craig. 1987. Weber and the classification of forms of legitimacy. *British Journal of Sociology* 38 (2): 199–215.
- Muhammadiyah Central Board. 2023. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 8 October 2023.
- N.A., Afifatur Rasyidah Insan and Chirzin, Muhammad. 2021. Konstruksi Penafsiran Yunahar Ilyas (Studi Buku Kisah Para Rasul Tafsir Al-Qur'an Tematis). *Taqaddumi: Journal of Quran and Hadith Studies* 1 (1): 45–63. <[http://journal2.uad.ac.id/index.php/taqaddumi/article/view/4193/pdf\\_1](http://journal2.uad.ac.id/index.php/taqaddumi/article/view/4193/pdf_1)>
- Nisa, Eva F. 2019. Internet and Muslim women. In Ronald Lukens-Bull and Mark Woodward (eds), *Handbook of contemporary Islam and Muslim lives*. Cham: Springer, pp. 1–19.
- Palahuddin. 2020. The typology of religious thought in Muhammadiyah. *International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 3 (2): 74–81. <<http://journal2.uad.ac.id/index.php/ijish/article/view/2233/pdf>>
- Peacock, James L. 1978. *Purifying the Faith: the Muhammadiyah movement in Indonesian Islam*. Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2011. *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2016. Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah launching Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah dan MuON [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Council launches Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre and MuON]. 20 August. <<http://www.umm.ac.id/id/muhammadiyah/7070.html>> Accessed 20 March 2021.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Berikut Susunan Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah pPeriode 2022–2027 [The following is the composition of the Muhammadiyah Central Board for the 2022–2027 period] <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/berikut-susunan-pimpinan-pusat-muhammadiyah-periode-2022-2027/>> Accessed 7 October 2023.
- Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2022. Majelis Tabligh [Tabligh Council]. <<https://muhammadiyah.or.id/majelis-tabligh/>> Accessed 07 October 2023.

- Postill, John and Pink, Sarah. 2012. Social media ethnography: the digital researcher in a messy web. *Media International Australia* 145 (1): 123–134.
- Pribadi, Yanwar. 2019. Fragmentasi umat dan penciptaan otoritas keagamaan: tanggapan terhadap ‘Islam lokal’ dan ‘Islam asing’ di Indonesia [Ummah fragmentation and the creation of religious authority: responses to ‘local Islam’ and ‘foreign Islam’ in Indonesia]. *Jurnal Masyarakat Dan Budaya* 21 (1): 103–119. <<https://jmb.lipi.go.id/jmb/article/view/828/455>>
- Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah. n.d. *Panduan pengelolaan Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah* [Muhammadiyah Tarjih Centre management guide]. Majelis Tarjih, Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah and Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta.
- Quadri, Syed Junaid A. 2013. Transformations of tradition: modernity in the thought of Muḥammad Bakhīt Al-Muṭī‘ī. PhD thesis, McGill University.
- Rahman, Asjmuni Abdur et al. 1985. Laporan penelitian Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (suatu studi tentang sistem dan metode penentuan hukum) [Research report of Majelis Tarjih Muhammadiyah (a study of the system and method of determining the law)]. Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga.
- Rakyat Merdeka. 2019. Dubes Malaysia jenguk ketum MUI Yunahar Ilyas di Yogyakarta [Malaysian ambassador visits MUI chairman Yunahar Ilyas in Yogyakarta]. 5 November. <<https://rm.id/baca-berita/internasional/21745/dubes-malaysia-jenguk-ketum-mui-yunahar-ilyas-di-yogyakarta>> Accessed 4 April 2022.
- Riesebrodt, Martin. 1999. Charisma in Max Weber’s Sociology of Religion. *Religion* 29 (1): 1–14.
- Sadasri, Lidwina Mutia. 2017. Selebriti mikro di media baru kajian presentasi diri dalam vlog selebriti mikro [Micro-celebrities in new media: a study of self-presentation in micro-celebrity vlogs]. *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi Dan Opini Publik* 21 (2): 167–181. <<https://jurnal.kominfo.go.id/index.php/jpkop/article/view/1218/720>>
- Saefullah, Hikmawan. 2022. Media baru, publik baru: mengkonfigurasi ulang ruang publik Islam [New media, new publics: reconfiguring the Islamic public sphere]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sammy, Abdullah. 2022. Peluang dan tantangan dakwah digital Muhammadiyah [Opportunities and challenges of Muhammadiyah digital da’wah]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Sanjaya, Makroen. 2022. Peta ideologi islam di media sosial [The map of Islamic ideology on social media]. Paper presented at Seminar Pra-Muktamar Muhamamdiyah 2022: Media, Masyarakat Digital, dan Dakwah Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 17 March.
- Senft, Theresa M. 2008. *Camgirls: celebrity and community in the age of social networks*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Shamsy, Ahmed El. 2013. The Hāshiya in Islamic law: a sketch of the Shāfi‘ī literature. *Oriens* 41 (3-4): 289–315.
- Shihab, Alwi. 1995. The Muhammadiyah movement and its controversy with Christian mission in Indonesia. PhD thesis, Temple University, USA.
- Spencer, Martin E. 1970. Weber on legitimate norms and authority. *British Journal of Sociology* 21 (2): 123–134.
- Suara Muhammadiyah. 2019. Hyung Jun Kim: sistem di Muhammadiyah sungguh ideal [Hyung Jun Kim: Muhammadiyah’s system is ideal]. <<https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/08/01/hyung-jun-kim-sistem-di-muhammadiyah-sungguh-ideal/>> Accessed 9 April 2022.
- Suyadi and Widodo, Hendro. 2019. Millennialization of Islamic education based on neuroscience in the third generation university in Yogyakarta Indonesia. *QIIS International Journal of Islamic Studies* 7 (1): 173–202.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2009. Hukum tentang jenggot dan cadar [Islamic law perspective on beards and veils]. *Suara Muhammadiyah* magazine, no. 18 . Yogyakarta.
- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019a. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 4*. Cetakan IX. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.



- Tim Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah. 2019b. *Fatwa-fatwa tarjih: tanya jawab agama jilid 7*. Cetakan IV. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah.
- Tirto.id. 2018. Dari Aa' Gym ke Felix Siauw: ustaz medsos & medium dakwah politis. Tirto.Id. 16 January. <<https://tirto.id/dari-aa-gym-ke-felix-siauw-ustaz-medsos-medium-dakwah-politis-cCGf>> Accessed 5 February 2020.
- Turner, Bryan S. 2007. Religious authority and the new media. *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2): 117–134.
- Turner, Graeme. 2010. *Ordinary people and the media: the demotic turn*. Los Angeles CA: Sage.
- Widodo, Arif. 2017. Transformative intellectual discourse and movement of Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (IMM). *Iseedu: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices* 1 (1): 126–151. <<https://journals.ums.ac.id/index.php/iseedu/article/view/5423/3542>>
- Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The ulama in contemporary Islam: custodians of change*. Princetoon NJ: Princeton University Press.