

GROUNDING MUHAMMADIYAH'S COSMOLOGY

A New Frontier in the Second Century of *Jihad*

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For almost a century Muhammadiyah has poured its devotion for the people of this nation in various fields. This devotion is not swirling in the realm of thought (discourse), but has already entered into the realm of operational action (praxis). Surely embodying thousands of charitable and transformative efforts for so long time, since 1912, needs a huge strength that can maintain Muhammadiyah sustainably to do that. Here, identification of this strength will be carried out in the early part of this essay to enable me examining how Muhammadiyah articulates its theology related to environmental issues in the rest.

Identifying the Energy of the One Century Struggle

Muhammadiyah is an established organization. It is known as one of the oldest Islamic organizations in Indonesia. For that, it is quite easy to identify the strength of Muhammadiyah's character. If it is identified, it will appear that one of the key strengths lies in the theological construction chosen by Muhammadiyah. It is patterned as a transformative and liberative theology. This theology is derived from a deep understanding and appreciation of Islam itself which is bestowed upon human beings as a liberative guidance. Namely, it is the torch for human beings to overcome various problems of life on this Earth in a rational-prophetic manner. Muhammadiyah has internalized Islam's teachings as sources that always stimulate people to seek optimal realization of happiness here and hereafter. Such realization is attained through intense involvements as a caliph (*khalifah*) in the fight for managing the world as "a paradise". Paradise is a place that deserves to be inhabited by humans and other creatures with the foundation of the spirit of servitude only to God (*'ubudiyatullah wahdah; tawhid*).

This is a point of departure where Muhammadiyah believes that Islamic values must touch all aspects of human life without exception. It must be understood that this belief does not repress human freedom, but strives to excerpt and stimulate the spirit that will support and be able to give human beings meaningfulness in going over every inch of their life. The central figure who became the model of Muhammadiyah is none other than Prophet Muhammad. He was not clergy who taught his followers to be hermits staying away from worldly life, nor did he train them to be a devotee of the worldly pleasures ignoring all kind of responsibility. Rather he made his followers learn by engaging actively in the world through the work of *da'wah* (Islamic missions) to set up a more civilized life.

This prophetic method (*al-manhaj al-nabawi*) is based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah. It is what inspired the founder of Muhammadiyah, Ahmad Dahlan, to impose the elan vital of the Islamic movement upon his students. For him, the Qur'an should not merely be echoed verbally, but it must be articulated and realized through practical or real deeds. For example, when he was explaining the teaching of the surah al-Ma'un, he called his students to go directly to the Beringharjo Market, Malioboro, and the North park of Yogyakarta where many beggars and poor people could easily be found. There, by providing the beggars and poors such charities, the students learned the central message of the sura al-Ma'un. They could differ between bad human traits that belie the religion and the good ones. This is a concrete example of concern and social praxis that must be derived from the Qur'anic teachings. Ahmad Dahlan said that reading the Qur'an must be done by understanding its

translation, its meaning, and then followed by doing it. This transformative-liberative theology has succeeded in escorting Muhammadiyah to survive and continue its *jihad* for nearly a century.

The other key strength that makes Muhammadiyah still expected to and able to contribute actively to the life of the people and this nation is its commitment to give priority to moral and cultural diversity and tolerance. Its religious character has been stated in one dictum of the rules adopted by the *Tarjih* (Legal Affairs) Committee of Muhammadiyah, "(has to become) opened, tolerant, and humble regarding the truth claim." That is, Muhammadiyah realizes that the perfection of understanding and practice of Islam can not be claimed partially without noticing the breadth of intellectual and cultural treasures of Islam. The endeavor to embrace Islam in *kaaffah* (totally) by emulating the struggle of the Prophet Muhammad is a step that requires sincerity and humility. These attitudes must become an integral part of Muslims personality that guides them in maintaining relationship with others in the context of plurality.

Tidal dynamics of life has forged and convinced Muhammadiyah that the openness (inclusiveness) is the best way in the effort to broadcast and practice Islam and to defend its interests. For Muhammadiyah, narrow exclusiveness is not taught by Islam. Prophet Muhammad himself throughout his life has provided a clear example of this. He was never reluctant to interact with anyone regardless of their theological preferences, as long as they showed no resentment and hostility. In relation to the Jewish community, Christians, even pagans like his own uncle, Abu Talib, he always showed admirable morals. This is both an affirmation of the essential character of Islam that comes to spread *rahmah* (peace), to enlighten, and at the same time to liberate. This mission will only be able espoused by those who have greatness of soul to see his brothers, human beings, as servants of God who are worthy to be brought out from the darkness of the ignorance.

The hope of the gift of God's guidance (*hidayah*) for achieving the benefit and salvation will not disappear unless death occurs. It is what also made by the Prophet Muhammad for his beloved uncle, Abu Talib. From here it is apparent that the substantive value of Islamic teachings about faith is none other than the readiness of followers to be faithful to serve in the path of love. Love and compassion could instill patience, persistence, and confidence in one's soul. Love will say that the door of forgiveness and mercy of God will never be closed even for His servants who are drowned in the ignorance (*jahiliyah*).

Muhammad's character has also been articulated clearly by Ahmad Dahlan stating that in his life he became a mirror for his students. It is recorded in history, how he did not hesitate to interact constructively with diverse communities. During his time he was able to establish good communication not only with Muslim communities from various schools and ideologies but also with non-Muslim communities. This experience has taught him that democratic values taught by Islam are inevitable mechanism in the plural life. Muhammadiyah has profited of both figures, the Prophet Muhammad and Ahmad Dahlan, how to understand and practice Islam.

Furthermore, another peculiarity of Muhammadiyah is its 'puritanism'. This means that Muhammadiyah is a religious movement that tries to put its entire structure of beliefs or creeds, rituals, and other aspects of religiosity on the foundation and in the frame of the original doctrine. This confirms the theological position of Muhammadiyah that chooses *al-manhaj al-salafi*, the method and paradigm of Early Muslim generation, by taking a step of referring back to the Qur'an and the valid Sunnah (*al-ruju 'ila al-kitab wa al-sunnah al-maqbulah*). That choice leads Muhammadiyah to take "non school of thought" position (*bi-la mazhab*; avoid being tied to specific school of thought) rather than to reject schools of

thought (*mazhab*). Muhammadiyah sees that the true demand of Muslims is obedience to Allah and His Messenger Muhammad. The rest obediences have to rely on that main obedience. This means that in fact there is no obedience in the narrow sense to certain school of thought. The wisest attitude in Muhammadiyah's view toward the existing schools is by appreciating and placing them in a parallel position. All inherited and results in various fields of Islamic *ijtihad* (religiously interpretations) treated as references for approaching and understanding the truth of Islamic teachings.

Articulations of Muhammadiyah's puritanism also appear at the implementation of *tajdid* which etymologically means renewal. *Tajdid* itself moves simultaneously in two directions. Firstly, it means purification or *tajrid*, renewing people's understandings of theological doctrines in creeds as well as in ritual practices (*'ibadah mahdhah*) to be consistent or in harmony with the genuine doctrine of Islam. Secondly, the next direction of *tajdid* is primarily in *mu'amalah* that includes efforts to renew and expand the transformation of Islamic values in the praxical level. In this context, Muhammadiyah is moving to reform as well as modernize the religious articulations of the people by critically adapting the developments of science and technology.

With these cultures and characters of religiosity, namely the democratic-puritan, Muhammadiyah has willed to exist as an entity that is always actual with the times. But, the actuality of Muhammadiyah is built by staying grounded in the doctrinal foundations which are rooted and can be justified in the earliest and fundamental sources of Islamic teachings. This can be described in an adagium of Islamic thought, namely "*Al-muhafazatu ala al-qadim al-salih ma'a al-akhdh wa al-ijad bi al-jadid al-aslah.*" That is, preserving and maintaining (*al-mura'ah*) the good legacy of the past along with the attitude of openness and readiness to take new things which bring benefits (*al-tahdithi wa al-ibtikari*).

Thus, Muhammadiyah still has stood upright on this earth because its presence was proven to provide benefits (*manfa'ah wa maslahah*). Without it, undoubtedly, Muhammadiyah will only remain a name and a past history. Muhammadiyah proved able to carry himself as a bridge connecting, translating and visualizing the sky's messages to become more grounded constructs that can be understood and felt in a concrete way by the people.

A New Frontier in the Second Century of *Jihad*: Environmental Crisis

By understanding the character of Muhammadiyah, a new projection of thinking can be done. It will be applied to know the potentiality, opportunity, and possible patterns developed by this organization to respond to new issues in society. The most interesting of actual issues observed in connection with Muhammadiyah is the issue of environmental degradation and even environmental destruction or ecological damage. This issue seems to have captured the high attention of Muhammadiyah. As a proof, Muhammadiyah structurally forms an institution that is specifically engaged in the fields of environment, i.e. *Lembaga Lingkungan Hidup* or the Environmental Institution, in 2005.

As an organization that was established in 1912, and already have a network down to the village level in almost all provinces in Indonesia and even some branches in overseas, the seriousness of this course can be regarded a quite late. At the global level, the hubbub of environmental issues has erupted since 60's. However, it is better than nothing. Initiation of this institution since the last five years is a significant development that deserves to be appreciated and encouraged by full support. Even with the emergence of this agency that specifically deals with environmental works, actually Muhammadiyah has put environmental issues as a new frontier of Muhammadiyah's battle field to articulate its *jihad*, truly and optimal devotion, for mankind, humanity, and nature.

More interestingly, even though this agency is very young, but it has been able to conceptualize its religious views about the environment in the format of the publication of books that could be consumed by the public both in inside Muhammadiyah and wider communities. The dissemination of thoughts and frameworks of this environmental jihad has really been followed by a series of concrete activities in transformative and empowering design. All this simply proves that the concern and caring for the environment has become an entrenched culture of Muhammadiyah members. Eventhough it seems to have not considered as an urgent in the past time to be backed up with a specific structure working in the environmental field. And with actual developments in contemporary Indonesia, Muhammadiyah then considers that it is the time to provide a functional structure in managing and responding to various environmental issues.

From several publications and discourses held by this institution through various seminars and strategic meetings, crucial points can be detected. Those points show the interest and concern of Muhammadiyah toward natural and environmental conditions today, especially in Indonesia and the world at large. In its first declaration on the environmental issues, Muhammadiyah stated:

Bencana demi bencana telah melanda negeri ini, seperti banjir, kekeringan, tanah longsor, wabah penyakit, ledakan jasad pengganggu tumbuhan serta semakin menurunnya ketersediaan dan kualitas sumber daya air. Kesemuanya itu merupakan bentuk-bentuk kerusakan sumber daya alam yang telah dimanfaatkan dengan mengabaikan gatra lingkungan.

Muhammadiyah sadar bahwa mengelola lingkungan secara benar dan tepat merupakan amanah yang harus dijalankan manusia sebagai khalifah di bumi, maka muhammadiyah berikhtiar sesuai kemampuannya ikut secara aktif menata lingkungan untuk menyejukkan bumi berdasarkan azas keseimbangan alam.

Oleh karena itu, pada hari ini, Kamis tanggal 13 Dzulqo'dah 1426 h/15 Desember 2005 dengan mengucapkan bismillahirrahmanirrahim dimulailah "Gerakan Muhammadiyah Menyejukkan Bumi Indonesia"

It can loosely be translated as follow:

From disaster to disaster that has struck this country, such as floods, droughts, landslides, disease outbreaks, pest explosion against plants and the decrease of availability and quality of water resources. All of them are prevalent forms of natural resources damage that have been exploited by ignoring environmental ethics.

Muhammadiyah recognizes that managing the environment correctly and appropriately is a mandate that must be run as the caliph of the earth. So, Muhammadiyah does actively participate with all its capabilities to cool (to 'green') the environment based on the principle of balance of nature.

Therefore, today, Thursday dated Dzulqo'dah 13, 1426 H corresponds to December 15, 2005, by reciting *bismillahirrahmanirrahim* (in the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful) "Muhammadiyah movement for cooling (greening) Indonesia's Earth" officially begins."

So it can be mentioned that Muhammadiyah through this declaration has mapped environmental issues at least into three boxes of consciousness. The first contains the awareness of various forms of degradation and damage that really take place in nature. The second box contains the awareness on the causes of this environmental crisis. In view of

Muhammadiyah, humans and their behaviors are the main factor affecting negatively to the environment, both directly and indirectly. So, logically, the door of solution will also be found through the door of problem, humans themselves. The third box contains the awareness of a strategy of how the environmental crisis should be approached and resolved. Here, Muhammadiyah decides to save the environment by grounding all its efforts on the principle of balance of nature in which human beings as caliphs involved do it actively. Actually, it resonates with Muhammadiyah's environmental theology.

Grounding Muhammadiyah's Cosmology

The rational construction of Muhammadiyah's environmental-theology can not be separated from how Muhammadiyah views Islamic teachings related to the nature and the environment. In other words, the cosmological view of Muhammadiyah will affect how this organization will see, address, and then act toward the nature and the environment. Islam in the eyes of Muhammadiyah, as what has been formulated in *Khittah Perjuangan dalam Kehidupan Berbangsa dan Bernegara* (the code for struggle in political, social and cultural life), is a teaching system that does not make any separation between the field of theology, morality, rituals, and social aspects (*mu'amalah duniawiyah*). The devotional life of a Muslim for Muhammadiyah is knitted from aspects of beliefs, thoughts, and acts as a unified whole. Therefore, the environmental field is also seen as an area that should be touched by and can not be separated from religious wisdom or religious values. This means that the ignorance of environmental problems from the beginning is not a religious paradigm of Muhammadiyah.

The first official document that describes the view of Muhammadiyah about the environment has actually born on the 44th Muhammadiyah National Congress in Jakarta in 2000. That document is *Pedoman Kehidupan Islam Warga Muhammadiyah* (the guidance of Islamic life for Muhammadiyah member). The document in Chapter I specifically mentions Muhammadiyah's view on the environmental conservation. The idea is then crystallized in the form of initiation of the environmental institution as a sub-official body within the structure of Muhammadiyah organization in the 45th Muhammadiyah National Congress in East Java in 2005.

Further elaboration was conducted by the environmental institution through developing Muhammadiyah environmental views both theoretical and practical in two books, the first is titled *Teologi Lingkungan* (Environmental Theology) and the second is *Pendidikan Lingkungan* (Environmental Education). Based on authoritative documents of Muhammadiyah, then the basic principles which guide the Muhammadiyah theology in its struggle in the environmental field can be summarized as follow. Muhammadiyah believes that:

1. Islam has a clear vision about conservation and protection of nature and environment.
2. The environment is an integral part of one's faith in God.
3. Maintaining and protection of the environment is an obligation which is equivalent to the obligation of other social even ritual worship.
4. Harmful action to the environment is equivalent to a big sin.
5. Humans are the main cause of the environmental damages.
6. The use of science and technology and other possible means should be carried out to save the environment.
7. Cooperation/partnerships between "stakeholders" are needed to save the environment.
8. Muhammadiyah's environmental movements must be rooted in Islamic values.

The 'holy' struggle for grounding Muhammadiyah's cosmology through many activities during 2005 to 2010, based on the Environmental Institution of Muhammadiyah central board's report 2010, has highlighted some problems. Those are the lack understanding of Islamic doctrine related to the environment, limitation of human resources who have environmental competencies handling this struggle, and limitation of partners inside and outside Muhammadiyah in implementing programs of the environmental *jihad*. By grasping these problems, Muhammadiyah has outlined some written plans to do in the next period (2010 to 2015). Hopefully, the plans will be effective to overcome the problems.

Muhammadiyah has planned to continue the initiation of environmental institutions as official sub-bodies of Muhammadiyah until regency level or provincial level at minimum. This step is strategic to strengthen Muhammadiyah structure as functional instruments in addressing environmental crisis. In addition to that, the institutions will also potentially push the acceleration of disseminating Muhammadiyah's thoughts and frameworks related to environmental issues among Muhammadiyah members and other communities. The dissemination can be done through environmental education, training, and publication.

Muhammadiyah with its environmental institutions in all levels will also try harder to expand active participations from potential agencies. They may come from inside Muhammadiyah such as *Ortoms* (Autonom Muhammadiyah-affiliated organizations), Muhammadiyah education institutions from Early Child Education to Higher Education, and Muhammadiyah activists and professionals in various fields. They may also come from outside Muhammadiyah whether governmental institutions or NGOs which have concerns in environmental issues. Those participants are equally partners in conducting environmental movements and enforcing campaigns to promote protection of the environment. This cooperation or partnership with various environmental agencies surely can be managed at all phases of implementing environmental programs including drafting, planning, financing, until evaluating and following up.

Here is the articulation of Muhammadiyah in dealing with the environmental crisis. This organization has recognized the critical problems occurring against the nature and the environment. This recognition leads Muhammadiyah to reinterpret and contextualize its theology in facing contemporary circumstances. This interpretation and contextualization are deeply rooted in Muhammadiyah's Islamic characters. So that, Muhammadiyah emphasizes that environmental crisis has become a new frontier of its second century of *jihad*. This 'holy' struggle is needed equal and mutual cooperations with other agencies from diverse religious or ideological affiliations. For Muhammadiyah, this is an Islamic obligation that must be carried out as best as possible to protect the sustainability of the nature and to ensure the justice for the future generations.