

## Islamic Puritanism and Wahhabi Development

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact and ideology of Wahhabism within Islamic puritanism, focusing on its historical development and contemporary implications. It aims to analyze Wahhabi thought's origins, principles, and influence on Islamic revival movements and interpretations of rituals and values. Adopting a qualitative approach, data is drawn from primary sources like the Qur'an, Hadith literature, and secondary sources such as academic articles and books. Wahhabism, led by Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, emerged in the 18th century to purify Islam, rejecting intellectualism, mysticism, and cultural diversity, advocating for a literal interpretation of texts. This ideology has influenced modern Islamic movements and contributed to religious violence, impacting the interpretation of Islamic principles amidst contemporary dynamics. In conclusion, this research underscores Wahhabism's lasting influence on Islamic thought, shaping debates on orthodoxy, cultural identity, and political ideology within the Muslim world, contributing to a deeper understanding of Islamic puritanism's complexities and its global implications.

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### ABSTRAK

Studi ini mengeksplorasi dampak dan ideologi Wahhabisme dalam puritanisme Islam, dengan fokus pada perkembangannya secara historis dan implikasi kontemporer. Tujuannya adalah menganalisis asal-usul, prinsip, dan pengaruh pemikiran Wahhabi, terutama dalam hubungannya dengan pengaruhnya terhadap gerakan kebangkitan Islam dan penafsiran tentang ritual dan nilai-nilai Islam. Mengadopsi pendekatan kualitatif, data diambil dari sumber-sumber utama seperti Al-Qur'an, literatur Hadis, dan sumber-sumber sekunder seperti artikel akademis dan buku. Wahhabisme, yang dipimpin oleh Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, muncul pada abad ke-18 untuk membersihkan Islam, menolak intelektualisme, mistisisme, dan keragaman budaya, mengadvokasi interpretasi harfiah terhadap teks-teks. Ideologi ini telah memengaruhi gerakan Islam modern dan berkontribusi pada kekerasan agama,

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*memengaruhi penafsiran prinsip-prinsip Islam di tengah dinamika kontemporer. Sebagai kesimpulan, penelitian ini menegaskan pengaruh berkelanjutan Wahhabisme terhadap pemikiran Islam, membentuk perdebatan tentang ortodoksi, identitas budaya, dan ideologi politik dalam dunia Muslim, berkontribusi pada pemahaman yang lebih dalam tentang kompleksitas puritanisme Islam dan implikasinya secara global.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Puritanism, a religious and moral tradition that emerged in England in the 16th century, had a significant impact on American culture and continues to be relevant today in a variety of ways (Ziaulhaq, 2021). Work ethic is one of the relevance of puritanism in society. This is because the puritanical belief in hard work as a means of salvation has influenced the American work ethic, which emphasizes perseverance and productivity (Hammill, 2019). Then, moral values are also among those reminded by puritans. Here, puritan values, such as honesty, responsibility, and self-control, have been embraced by many Americans and continue to shape societal norms (Warner, 2012). Likewise, religious pluralism is a result of puritanical thinking. The legacy of Puritanism has contributed to the development of religious pluralism in the United States, as Puritans were part of a broader religious and cultural context that shaped the country's religious landscape (Elliott, 2015).

The idea of Puritanism in Islam refers to the implementation of certain aspects of the Puritan tradition, such as strict moral values and a strong work ethic, in Islamic society. Although the term "Puritanism" is often associated with Protestant Christianity, it can also be applied to Islamic movements that emphasize a return to traditional religious practices and values. In the context of the Islamic revival movement, there is a puritanical impulse that seeks to reform society in accordance with traditional Islamic principles (Evstatiev, 2013). This puritanical impulse is not unique to certain regions or sects of Islam, and it can be observed in various countries and Islamic movements. One example is the Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia, which is described as a political effort to implement Wahhabism in certain Islamic countries (Turmudi, 2012).

The desire to realize a pure hold on a belief system results in changes in the main ideas. Likewise, what happens in Islamic religious teachings is that there is a separation between the teachings of Islamic law and the customs and traditions that occur among Muslims themselves. The teachings of Sufism tend to be an esoteric movement that leads to pantheism which then gained its foothold through the tarekat. So far, there is no source that definitely states when exactly the term Sufi was conventionally attached to people who had studied the teachings originating from Sufism. Sociologically, there appears to be a relationship between the background of the birth of the Sufi lifestyle trend and the changes and dynamics of people's lives (Rahman, 2021).

The emerging Sufi movements are a reaction to the materialistic lifestyle which is becoming increasingly unstoppable and reduces all moral aspects of humanity (Abdurahman, 2015). So far, Sufism has often been associated with religious practices that are synonymous with static, traditional life and contain mystical features in the implementation of worship. This assumption needs to be reviewed by looking at the aspects of Sufism's teachings, which are actually very

dynamic, so that in its long history it is not uncommon for the Sufism movement which was manifested through the tarekat institution to emerge as a movement that motivates the spirit of Muslims to fight against all forms of injustice that occur in all aspect of life.

If we look at the history of Islam which entered the archipelago since the beginning of the development of Islam in the 13th-15th centuries, Sufism is not a new phenomenon in the religious life of Muslims in Indonesia. Islam with a Sufi style that characterizes the spread of Islam in the archipelago in its development has provided a building of spirituality that can guide its followers toward a deep understanding of monotheism (Ronggo & Hardyanto, 2020). Such Islam can be easily accepted and absorbed into the culture of the local community. The spread of Sufism teachings in Indonesia cannot be separated from the preaching carried out by ulama and saints starting from the city center. After that, it spread to suburban areas, then to inland and rural areas. These Sufi clerics met with nobles, merchants, and people on the outskirts of cities and villages to call for truth in the path of Islam. Not a few of them are known as philosophers, intellectuals, writers and leaders of popular social religious movements.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is qualitative by taking data from the literature (Silverman, 2015). To obtain appropriate data and analysis, the researchers took steps such as identifying research questions, namely by determining what aspect of Islamic thought they were interested in, namely modern theology in Islam (Atawolo & Borgias, 2023; Rosyad et al., 2022). Then, in analyzing and explaining Wahhabi's thought, the authors read primary sources such as the Qur'an, Hadith literature, and the works of Muslim thinkers and scholars throughout history. Apart from that, the authors also use secondary sources such as academic articles, books and dissertations (Rahman, 2020).

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### a. Impact and Ideology of Wahhabism: A Historical Perspective on Islamic Puritanism

The birth of Islam cannot be separated from tradition and culture. Local traditions and local cultures are not all rejected and destroyed by Islam, as long as they are still in harmony and do not deviate from Islamic principles, this is called *Urf* in the Qur'an. But the emergence of the Puritan Salafi Wahhabis, traditions still associated with pre-Islamic religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism is often seen as syncretic, heretical and incorrect because all cultures must adhere to and conform to Islamic principles (Darmalaksana et al., 2022).

In the history of puritan Islam, it should be more appropriate to start from the Wahhabis. Even after the events of September 11, 2001 and the world awakening to the violence perpetrated by al-Qaeda, the Wahhabi impact on modern Islamic thought is impossible to measure. The Wahhabis have clearly influenced every puritan movement in the Islamic world in the contemporary era. Every Islamic group that has a bad image at the international level, such as the Taliban and al-Qaeda, is strongly influenced by Wahhabi thought.

The foundations of Wahhabi theology were built by an 18th century fanatic, namely Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1206 H./1792 AD) (Fadl, 2005). 'Abd al-Wahhab's main idea was that Muslims had made a mistake by straying from the straight path of Islam, and only by returning to the one true religion would they be accepted and pleased by Allah. With a puritanical spirit, 'Abd al-Wahhab wanted to free Islam from all the corruption that he believed had undermined the Islamic religion, including Sufism, the intermediary doctrine, rationalism, Shiite teachings, and many other practices that he considered as heretical innovations.

At the time of 'Abd al-Wahhab, modernity had revolutionized human conceptions of reality in the world by introducing concepts that shook consciousness, namely the concepts of relativity and subjectivity of all human knowledge, and also by introducing scientific empiricism. Modernism has also increased the complexity of the social and economic order, so that traditional

societies that are struggling to develop and become modern feel increasingly alienated. In the Islamic world, different societies, cultures and movements responded to the impact of modernity which disrupted this balance in various ways (Mazidah, 2011). Some, such as the Kemalist movement in Turkey, for example responded by trying to Westernize and move as far away from Islam as possible. Others, while rejecting Western culture, try to reconcile Islam and modernism by emphasizing that scientific and rational thinking is completely compatible with Islamic ethics. The Wahhabi movement responded to the forces of modernity that disrupted the balance, as well as responded to a moral and social situation that was vulnerable and ambushed it, by seeking refuge (Shafi, 2016). In this case, the protection referred to is the protection of certain Islamic texts to gain a sense of certainty and comfort. It is as if Wahhabi ideology protects itself from the challenges and threats of modernity by forcing religious texts to provide definitive and non-debatable answers to individual and social problems (Fadl, 2005).

Wahhabism shows extraordinary hatred towards all forms of intellectualism, mysticism, culture and sectarianism within the body of Islam itself, viewing all of these as deviant innovations that have entered into the beliefs of Muslims due to influence from outside Islam. Wahhabis tend to view everything that does not come from the Arab region as something worthy of suspicion, and they believe that non-Islamic influences come from nations such as Persia, Turkey and Greece. For example, Wahhabis believe that Sufism is something imported from Persia. The belief in using intermediaries (*tawassul*) of saints and worshiping holy tombs originates from Turkey. Meanwhile, rationalism and philosophy are Greek influences. Wahhabi claims are overly simplistic and inaccurate. However, what is clear is that there is no doubt that the Wahhabis always equate the harsh cultural practices of Bedouin life with the only true Islam (Fadl, 2005).

Factors causing religious violence in the Middle East the by many analyses influenced by the teachings of Wahhabism. Why Wahhabism? The answer is because the Wahabi Movement has two strategic and synergistic things, namely a radical religious sect and political power to expand territory and spread teachings (Mangasing, 2008). It is proven that the Wahhabis spread their teachings through violence and used power politics and politics as a tool. On that basis, Professor Abu Zahrah said that the Wahhabis were almost the same as the Khawarij who disbelieved people who had different opinions and fought them with their power, and were even similar to the Mu'tazilah group when they were in power during the Abbasid era who spread their teachings using political tools. how to do an inquisition (*mihnah*) (Susanto, 2016).

During the expansion of territory and the spread of these teachings, the Wahhabi movement attacked, destroyed and eradicated the customs of the people they viewed heresy (*bid'ah*) and contrary to monotheism. In order to purify monotheism, they destroyed many symbols which were considered to cause polytheism. Because of this, Khaled Aboe el-Fadl (Abou El Fadl, 2014) wrote angrily about Wahhabism that "every Islamic [radical] group that is to varying degrees condemned by the world, such as the Taliban and al-Qa'ida, is deeply influenced by Wahhabi thought." Furthermore, the characteristics of Wahhabi teachings (*fiqh*) are: the results are certain, the conclusions cannot be challenged, and the decisions are firm. They rejected the idea of allegiance to a particular school of law and stated that there was no reason for a Muslim to commit himself to a particular set of rules. Their views like this have implications in particular for the emergence of a tendency to understand Islam in its literal, literal and scriptural sense. Wahhabi have developed such tendencies so far that they have neglected the "Contextual" dimension of Islamic principles and tendencies like this have prevented Muslims from being able to clearly understand the messages of the Qur'an as a divine instrument. provides guidance on moral ethical values for human life (Susanto, 2016).

Wahhabis believe that they are not involved primarily in intellectual activities that try to adapt the messages and meaning of Islam to current social conditions. According to them, most of the message and meaning of Islam are clearly contained in the Qur'an and Hadith and only need

to be applied in life. This is their belief about fighting for Islam is *kaffah*, namely the obsession with returning to the Islamic past as a whole without looking at the socio-cultural changes experienced by Muslim society today (Zaini, 2023). The Wahhabi influence with its strong literal, scriptural or literal understanding also occurs in Indonesia.

This is marked by the emergence of *halaqah* on campus and an increase in prayer congregations with clothes unique and exclusive. Islamic movements like this appeared on a large scale in cities and attracted the interest of many circles' students, college students and other educated groups. In this context, Noorhaidi Hasan (Meijer et al., 2012) emphasized: Salafis believe that Muslims must first be converted to Islam through a gradual evolutionary process that includes education (*tarbiyah*) and purification (*tasfiyah*) before the implementation of Shari'a can be perfectly realized. To fulfil this goal, they are passionately committed to activities da'wah (from the Arabic root word *da'a*, calling generally refers to the meaning of inviting people, which is an obligation for every Muslim), by participating in the implementation of *halaqah* and *daurah*. Such culture is, in fact, incoherent and incompatible with the socio-anthropological context and cultural basis of Indonesian society. From a socio-anthropological perspective, Indonesian society does not recognize religious movements that are ideological and exclusive, on the contrary, Indonesian society is prefer openness, tolerance, do not like conflict and are acculturative (Susanto, 2016).

#### **b. Wahabi Thought Figures**

Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahab identifies himself with Hanabilah and has a more specific impression, namely bringing to life the teachings of Ibn Taimiyyah (Unggul Purnomo Aji & Kerwanto, 2023). This is based on the findings that there are similarities and closeness between Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahab and Ibn Taymiyyah in interpreting verses, namely textual, literal and in their dialectic of puritanical thinking as well as similarities in the spirit of renewal in religion (Unggul Purnomo Aji & Kerwanto, 2023). This is also based on evidence that Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahab wrote extensively and quoted from Ibn Taymiyyah's writings, some of which are still stored in the London Museum, England (Unggul Purnomo Aji & Kerwanto, 2023).

In relation to Fiqh Science, there is a problem in Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahab's thinking. On the one hand, there is an impression as if there is an effort on his part to encourage Muslims not to be blind to taqlid and to upgrade them from *taqlid lil-madzhab* to *taqlid lil-manhaj*. However, on the other hand, it was found that he himself sentenced the jurists who were different to him as heretics and even infidels, even though the issue of *furu'* was good from within the Hanabilah, especially to those outside it.

In this regard, he believes that a madhhab is a relative thought. Because it is relative, it is possible for the originator of the madhhab to make mistakes in his ijtihad. This sect tends to reject all schools of *fiqh* in practice and assumes that they are also people who are capable of ijtihad. In relation to Sufism, Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahab rejected it more strongly than the science of jurisprudence (Arfan, 2008). For example, in his opinion responding to Ibn Arabi's thoughts which are based on philosophical Sufism, he disbelieves them and says that those who do not want to disbelieve them are also considered disbelievers. Of course, in relation to this verdict, this cannot be separated from the error in the premise of the concept of monotheism which was believed and used by Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahab. In terms of the science of monotheism, Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahab submitted to Ibn Taymiyyah who divided the faith into 3 parts, namely: Rububiyah, Uluhiyah, Asma' wa sifat.

In talking about divinity (*rububiyah*) Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahab means that both Muslims and unbelievers recognize the existence of Allah. He assumes that even unbelievers do not deny the existence of Allah as creator, provider of sustenance and regulator. Even though this

terminology is wrong because many philosophers do not recognize the existence of God at all and make the premise that nature is eternal.

Tauhid Uluhiyah is an extension of Tauhid Rububiyah which differentiates between disbelief and Islam. The emphasis is that Uluhiyah is a representation of the signal that worship should be directed purely to God alone. In this view, a person is not allowed to practice practices that have impure connotations in worshipping him, such as performing linkage (*tawassul*) through the blessings of the prophets (*anbiya'*) and saints (*aulia'*), visiting graves, paying homage (*ta'dhim*) to a shaykh, etc. Finally, about *asma' wa sifat*, Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahab has something in common with Ibn Taymiyyah that the verses related to the nature of God cannot be repeated. For example, in the example of God sitting on the Throne, they also believe this in secret so that this interpretation has the consequence of crashing into many rules in the characterization of God which brings this Wahhabi thought into the flow of *mujassim* (likening God to humans), which equates or likens the attributes of God to the attributes of creatures such as God is above, has direction, etc.

The Wahhabi movement aims to cleanse Islam of all practices considered non-Islamic and establish a puritanical form of Islam in national politics. The idea of Puritanism in Islam refers to the implementation of certain aspects of the Puritan tradition in Islamic society, particularly in the context of Islamic revival movements and debates about the interpretation and practice of Islamic rituals and values. In Indonesia, there is debate among Islamic groups regarding the implementation of certain practices and interpretations that some people consider puritanical, while others consider them deviant from "true" Islam (Mansurnoor, 2009; Turmudi, 2012). These debates often revolve around issues such as the use of certain rituals and practices, which may be considered new or non-traditional by some, but considered important by others.

In Christianity, although Puritanism as a religious tradition may have declined, its influence on the culture, values, and norms of American society is still felt, making it relevant in contemporary society (Schroeder, 2019). One of the prominent influences on people's lives is the emergence of political and economic thought. The rhetorical strategies of New England Puritans have influenced American political and economic thought, with ideas such as the "City on a Hill" and "Beacon to the World" shaping America's vision of a Christian utopia (Elliott, 2015). Apart from that, there is also a tightening of sexual behavior. Although Puritans are often associated with strict sexual morality, contemporary research shows that American students still hold conservative views regarding sexual behavior compared to their British counterparts (Hammill, 2019).

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The Wahabi school emerged from the thoughts of Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahab, the majority of whom were genealogically motivated by Ibn Taimiyyah's thoughts indirectly, although in several respects they were different. This flow was able to expand and survive thanks to the mutual symbiosis with Saudi Arabia. This sect has a puritanical style, rejects the Islamic jurisprudence and Sufism as well as *mujassim* (likening God to humans) beliefs and has limitations in determining gray beliefs so that it is very easy to judge other groups as heretics, infidels or polytheists. Therefore, quite a few people criticize this sect, including the founder's own father and brother, but there are still those who support it. The Wahhabi approach today has changed from a repressive basis as at the beginning of its emergence to a diplomatic basis with the majority using institutions funded by Saudi Arabia. In its movement, this flow has a different spectrum, which shows that this flow has quite powerful existence power.

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