

AL-'ULAMĀ' WARATHAT AL-ANBIYĀ': **Modernity and Nurture of Authority in Aceh Society**

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Abstract: This paper aims to analyze the immunity factor of Acehnese loyalty to the *ulama*. Generally, if the *ulama* fail to respond to problems that arise in modernity, they are abandoned by society. Modernization is taking place very quickly in Aceh. In Aceh, even though the *ulama* were unable to respond to modernity, they were never abandoned by the community. The type of modernization that is the focus of the author's observation is development, politics, and economics which includes banking and trade. Using a qualitative approach, this study finds, that is in Aceh, precisely because the *ulama* do not respond to modernity, the immunity of loyalty to the *ulama* can continue. In Aceh, secular-minded society, they give authority to experts in their respective fields. Because the *ulama* are treated as religious experts, then when they do not respond to other fields such as development, politics, economics and other fields, they become respected. Although only given space in the field of religion, the position of the *ulama* remains very important in Aceh because religion is a very important part of the life of the Acehnese people.

Abstrak: Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis faktor keberlanjutan kesetiaan masyarakat Aceh terhadap ulama. Secara umum, jika para ulama gagal merespon masalah yang muncul dalam modernitas, mereka ditinggalkan oleh masyarakat. Tetapi di Aceh, meskipun para ulama tidak mampu menanggapi modernitas, mereka tidak pernah ditinggalkan oleh masyarakat. Jenis modernisasi yang menjadi fokus pengamatan artikel ini adalah pembangunan, politik, dan ekonomi yang mencakup perbankan dan perdagangan. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini menghasilkan temuan bahwa di Aceh, justru karena ulama tidak menanggapi modernitas, imunitas loyalitas kepada ulama dapat dipertahankan. Masyarakat Aceh berpola pikir sekuler. Mereka memberikan otoritas kepada para ahli di bidangnya masing-masing. Ketika para ulama diperlakukan sebagai ahli agama, dan mereka tidak menanggapi pembangunan, politik, ekonomi dan bidang lainnya, mereka menjadi dihormati. Meskipun hanya diberi ruang di bidang agama, posisi ulama tetap sangat penting di Aceh karena agama merupakan bagian yang sangat penting dalam kehidupan masyarakat.

Keywords: *ulama*; modernization; Acehnese people; Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah; loyalty

A. Introduction

*Ulama ta peutimang ta sayang ngoen ta cinta
Ulama labang naggroe nyang peutrang asoe donya
Ulama bek ta beunci bek ta caci tahina
Ulama wareh Nabi tungkat geutanyoe dum na*

The above Aceh song lyrics are popularized by local Acehnese artist Imum John. The translation is: *The ulama should be the main reference, we must love them. The ulama are the nails for the country, they also illuminate the world. Do not hate ulama and do not despise them. The ulama are the heirs of the Prophet Muhammad who became a stick for all of us.*

Thus, the *ulama* in the general view of the people of Aceh. The *ulama* are the main references. They are loved by the people. The people of Aceh see the *ulama* as the heirs (*al-warathat*) of the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. This view is the general assumption of researchers: that the *ulama* are the most charismatic person. Generally, researchers assume that scholars have charisma in all segments of life.¹ In the study of *ulama* and modernity, the assumption of the *ulama* as a charismatic person influences the results of their research. The conclusion is that if the *ulama* are not able to respond to modernity, they will be abandoned by society.²

Modernization is necessary for man as the development of thought, improvement or change of needs, to overcome problems and facilitate the mobilization of life and awareness of diversity. Modernity is an appreciation of wisdom and rationality. In principle, Islam supports modernity. Islam emphasizes to modernize.³

The codification of theology and the jurisprudence school (*al-madhāhib al-fiqhiyyah*) of past *ulama* is a response to the theological problems and Islamic law that developed in its day. Surely every age has different problems. Thus, should the *ulama* as religious authorities constantly try to do *ijtihad* to actualize

¹Yusny Saby, "The Ulama in Aceh: A Brief Historical Survey," *Studia Islamika* 8, no. 1 (2001): 1-35, <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v8i1.694>.

²Nirzalin, "Krisis Agensi Politik Teungku Dayah di Aceh" (Dissertation. Universitas Gadjah Mada, 2011), http://repository.ugm.ac.id/digitasi/index.php?module=cari_hasil_full&idbuku=2714.

³Nucholish Madjid, *Islam Kemodernan dan Keindonesiaan* (Bandung: Mizan, 2008), 300-301.

naṣ (Qur'an and Ḥadīth) to respond to modernity because the issues of the ummah are always new and constantly changing.

However, the attitude of contemporary *ulama* consider the door of *ijtihad* has been closed.⁴ They claim the human needs of religion as a worship guide and the solution to all human life problems until the end of time have been fulfilled in the codification of classical *ijtihad*. The *ulama* have made the religion segmented in theology codification and classical jurisprudence. The codifications were considered standard and should not be disturbed. Consequently, as society continually faces new problems with no solution to the crystallized codifications, religion becomes powerless to address the problems facing communities in modernity. If there are intellectuals who try to solve the problems of contemporary society by reconstructing, criticizing the classical Jurisprudence or directly referring to the texts without following the classical jurisprudence, then they can be claimed by the traditionalists as the heretics of religion.

Theology and jurisprudence which is the essence of religion authoritarian have been claimed as the territory of *ulama's* authority.⁵ No one is justified to take over the authority except those who have been asked by fanatics as the authority's authority. The *ulama* in the understanding of Indonesian traditionalist Islam who are claimed to believe and know by rigid the codification of Ash'ariah theology and practice and know with rigid Shafi'i school (*madhhab*). Ash'ariah theology school and Shafi'i jurisprudence school are bundled and named Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah. Thus, Islam in Indonesia, especially in Aceh, is reduced to Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah.

In Aceh, the only the school received as true teaching in Islam is the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah. Authority over this flow is left to the *ulama*. The *ulama* are those who own and become leaders in traditional Islamic educational institutions called *dayah*. *Dayah* is a traditional Islamic higher education institution. Before studying in *dayah*, the students (*santri*) generally have learned a small

⁴Mujamil, *Tradisi-Tradisi Kreatif dalam Pemikiran Islam* (Yogyakarta: Lentera Kreasindo, 2015), 93.

⁵Khaled Abou El-Fadl, *Atas Nama Tuhan: Dari Fikih Otoriter ke Fikih Otoritatif* (Jakarta: Serambi Ilmu Semesta, 2004); Arskal Salim, *Contemporary Islamic Law in Indonesia: Sharia and Legal Pluralism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 2015); Ronald A Lukens-Bull, "The Pesantren Tradition: A Study of the Role of the Kyai in the Maintenance of the Traditional Ideology of Islam in Java," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 2000.

Qur'an (guides reading the *Juz 'Amma*) in *rangkring*. Then learn the basic introductory books about fiqh and theology in the *meunasah*. After studying in *meunasah*, the students continue to study in *balee*.⁶ After studying in *balee*, some Acehese 1) continue their religious education to *dayah*, 2) some choose to enter government education institutions, and 3) some choose not to continue their education. Of the three parts can be mapped three variant mindsets of thinking of Aceh people.⁷

The *first* variant is those who become a fanatical group to the *ulama*. Some of them set up *balee* and *rangkring* institutions. These are called *teungku*. The *teungku* are an interpreter of the *ulama*. They established and became *balee* leaders, became teachers in *meunasah*, *balee* and *dayah*. The *second* variant is generally a modernist and critical, both continuing education in the field of Islam or non-religious majors. The *third* variant is the majority that dominates the community in Aceh. They are more inclined to be loyal to scholars without rational considerations. But they are not too fanatical to the *ulama*.

Aceh is one of the regions in Indonesia that is very appreciative of modernity. The forms of modernity that can be found clearly in Aceh are infrastructure, political and economic development, particularly trade and banking. The crystallization of traditional theological and jurisprudential codifications makes religion incapable of responding to modernity. In the concept of al-Turabi about democratic Islamic jurisprudence, if the *ulama* fail to respond to modernity, the society should abandon them. But in Aceh, although the *ulama* fail to respond to modernity, people's loyalty to the *ulama* is still strong.

This research would like to examine the factor of community loyalty to the *ulama's* authority in modernity in Aceh. This study used an ethnographic approach by conducting in-depth interviews with resource persons and phenomenological observations.⁸ Researchers collect, reduce, process and

⁶To continue education in *dayah*, hierarchically from the lowest level, one must first complete studies in the *rangkring*, *meunasah*, and *balee*.

⁷This division is not always consistent. There is a traditionalist who becomes secular; there is a secular becomes modernist; there is a traditionalist becomes secular. I determine this division based on the tendency of each intellectual group whether he has a traditional, secular, or modern-Islamist paradigm.

⁸Clark Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), 21.

present data with observations of sociological concepts and theories associated with the subject of discussion.

B. Loyalty Test to the *Ulama*

In Aceh, the *ulama* are always involved with factual and pragmatic dynamics such as economics and politics. The *ulama* are always involved in all matters of society including politics. In the dominance of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah during the last three centuries, various social and political dynamics continue to occur in Aceh. The *ulama*, as the stakeholder religious authorities have never been absent in the constellation. But the unique is, people's loyalty to the *ulama* never faded. All social change, all forms of modernization that are part of the change of society have never had a significant influence on the immunity of the *ulama's* authority and the identity of Ahlus-sunnah Waljamaah. In the political struggle for a power struggle, each *ulama* directly determines the choice and recommends the community to elect one of the candidates for the regional head or legislative member. Such actions by the *ulama* are a longstanding tradition in Aceh. Nevertheless, if the backed candidate is defeated, the *ulama* will not lose authority before the people. Even rulers who previously did not have the support of certain *ulama* still approached them. The phenomenon is evidence of the stance and decisions of the *ulama* in politics do not make them lose the trust of the community.

For an ever-changing era, with a high purchasing power, the people of Aceh⁹ faster accept modernity. For all sorts of new things appearing before the community in Aceh, of course, *ulama* cannot respond to any kind of modernity. In this case, scholars who have a basic religious background in *rangkang*, *balee* and *meunasah* but their higher education is pursued in a general department or modern religious department argue,¹⁰ *ulama* cannot respond to all types of modernity, *ulama* do not understand modern problems in detail. So that *ulama* choose to be passive for cases that are not directly related to religion.

The *ulama* feel that they have no obligation to respond to contemporary problems that are so concrete. Any issue that is not explicitly found in the texts

⁹Suriani and Juliansyah Putra, "Faktor-Faktor yang Mempengaruhi Permintaan Gula di Indonesia," *Jurnal Ekonomika* 6, no. 3 (2012): 1-9.

¹⁰A. Hasjmy, *Sumbangan Kesusasteraan Aceh dalam Pembinaan Kesusasteraan Indonesia* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1978).

and not specifically addressed in the codification of Islamic law they are adhering to, the *ulama* will not respond. For example, the issue of infrastructure development. Infrastructure development generally leads to depletion of natural resources and the impact of the destruction of natural ecosystems that cause natural disasters. In Aceh, the community is generally domiciled in the foothills, the natural decline has direct impacts with the emergence of floods. Natural damage is so severe in Aceh. The developers who are rich businessmen freely dredge nature such as leveling the hills for their land, draining the sand at the bottom of the river, clearing the forest to pick up the rocks of mountains, sand, and soil.¹¹

The modernists argue that the *ulama* are unwilling to intervene in modern matters that are not religiously related because they do not understand the negative effects. There are so many modern problems facing communities that are in fact at odds with ethics from a religious perspective. The construction of infrastructure is one of the modern cases that have caused natural destruction. The *ulama* should issue a fatwa on the environment that is getting damaged due to infrastructure development. But they chose to silence. Besides, the modernist claim, the *ulama* do not respond to technical matters related to modernity for fear of losing charisma.¹²

The Islamic Holy Text strongly advocates preserving the environment.¹³ But the *ulama* did not use it as a basis of consideration and the basis for issuing a fatwa. Because the propositions on ecology are not included in the special discussion of the sect of the schools believed. Thus, it is indicated that the guidelines of *ulama* are not the Qur'an and Hadith but the books of schools that have been codified by the scholars of the past. But the traditionalist argues, the Qur'an and Ḥadīth should not be interpreted directly without referring to the book of 'classical scholars.¹⁴ The scholars of the codifiers of the past madhhab do not address ecological issues specifically because, in their time, ecology has not become a serious issue.

¹¹Interview with Mulyadi, M.A., August 10, 2017.

¹²Interview with Ikhsan Azhar, S.E., August 20, 2017.

¹³Fazlun M. Khalid and Joanne O'Brien, eds., "Islam and Ecology: World Religions and Ecology," in *Islam and Ecology: World Religions and Ecology* (Michigan: Cassell, 1992).

¹⁴Interview with Tgk. Muhammad Abduh, July 12, 2017.

So it can be said that the *ulama* only became the authority stakeholder for the schools of jurisprudence and theology in the past. For that reason, it is only natural that they cannot be guided except for static problems in religion such as the law of *ṭaharah*, salat, zakat, fasting, pilgrimage, and some static matter.

Today, people are well aware that the *ulama's* authority only on static religious matters.¹⁵ Society does not want the *ulama* to intervene in matters that are not directly related to religious symbols. Society does not want the *ulama* to be a hegemony as Gramsci sees in the state's treatment of society.¹⁶ The *ulama* understand that if they suppress society, then society will do resistance. And when that happens, then the charisma of the *ulama* will be lost. This is greatly feared by the *ulama* because it can make people lose their guidance in religion. Society can be far away from its religion. So that, as disclosed by Sandal and James, happened mutual understanding between the community with religious authority.

In the view of the modernists, the *ulama* only understood the written concept in the classical books they studied. Besides being unconcerned with issues that are not detected by classical Jurisprudence, the *ulama* also do not want to lose their influence. For example, if there is an *ulama* who speaks disturbing the business of a certain party, then the disturbed party will not be willing to entrust his son in *dayah* led by that *ulama*. So, in this case, scholars do not want to look for trouble. Moreover, even if they sound, related to the development of infrastructure, for example, it will not be able to change the ambitions of the developers. Though the *ulama* share their direct impact of the negative effects of infrastructure development that is done without control. The Islamic education center at Samalanga Bireuen is the largest complex of traditional Islamic education in Aceh. Whenever water exceeded over river Batee Ilik, there always been a flood. But the *ulama* there never once mentioned

¹⁵Fatimah Zuhrah, "Pergeseran Peran dan Posisi Ulama pada Masyarakat Melayu di Tanjung Pura Kabupaten Langkat," *Hikmah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 12, no. 2 (2016): 83–102.

¹⁶Antonio Gramsci, *Selection from the Prison*, ed. Quintin Hoare dan Nowell Smith (India: Novena Offset Printing, 1996); Miswari, "Mu'dilat al-Aqliyah al-Masihiyah fi Hudud Balad al-Shari'ah al-Islamiyah," *Studia Islamika* 25, no. 2 (2018): 351; James Martin, "Hegemony and the Crisis of Legitimacy in Gramsci," *History of the Human Sciences* 10, no. 1 (1997): 37–56, <https://doi.org/10.1177/095269519701000103>; Douglas Litowitz, "Gramsci, Hegemony, and the Law," *BYU Law Review*, 2000, 515–52, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>.

the problem of the natural disaster. They have never intertwined the floods with the destruction of nature. But if there is a doctrine that is slightly different from that of the *ulama* and their followers who try to spread the teachings, that is where the *ulama* and their followers issued a fatwa to reject the teaching. If necessary, send all *santri* complete with a machete in hand to destroy the teachings that they consider heretical.¹⁷ This shows how the *ulama* are only obliged and responsible for issues directly related to religion.

In Aceh, every individual has their egoism. Each field has a stakeholder authority. Sacrality has its place. The last descendant of the King of Aceh, Muhammad Daud Shah, at his school was often harassed by his friends. The king's son does not have a special place in the public space. The descendants of sultans and *ulee balangs* are even considered a symbol of feudalism that has been overthrown by the people. If in other areas the descendants of Prophet Muhammad (*sayyid, ḥabīb*) descent is so glorified, in Aceh, they are not given special honor. If there is a descendant of Prophet Muhammad who became a *ulama*, then he is respected as the *ulama*. Respected in his field as a steward of religious authority, not because he descended from the Prophet Muhammad. There is no sacredness in Aceh except for its respective territory of authority. So, the term appears: *every Acehnese is a prince*.¹⁸

Authorities are limited to their respective fields. The *ulama* are respectable in the field of religion, not other fields. The customary area is held by the *ulee balang*, the forestry field is held by the handlers, the formal school education field is held by the teachers and the religious field is held by the *ulama*.¹⁹ For that, the *ulama* must understand the limits of their authority. Public awareness of certain authorities for their respective fields makes them understand that the *ulama* only understands the religious field. "For example, an *ulama* inserts a campaign on the sidelines of lectures and recitation. In response, the public just silent and smile. But society remains with their choice".²⁰ It is proof that people believe in the *ulama*, in the religious field only.

¹⁷Interview with Mulyadi, M.A., August 10, 2017.

¹⁸Interview with Ziaulhaq, SE, M.Si., September 1, 2017.

¹⁹Interview with Ziaulhaq, SE, M.Si., September 1, 2017.

²⁰Interview with Ikhsan Azhar, S.E., August 20, 2017.

In Aceh, the recommendation of an *ulama* to choose a particular person as a candidate for the regional head is a tradition that has existed for a long time.²¹ If in some other places in Indonesia the scholars are not too brave to recommend a candidate for the regional head, worried about losing appreciation if the candidate that he support loses.²² But in Aceh, an *ulama* explicitly recommends a particular candidate. Join a campaign. Usually, each person of *ulama* supports a different candidate.

The direct involvement of the *ulama* in practical politics becomes an indication of the charisma of the *ulama* in Aceh is very high. If a candidate for a political leader supported by *ulama* is not elected, the other elected candidate still asks for blessings and asks advice from the *ulama* who did not support him before. Whoever is elected head of the region, although he is not supported by certain *ulama*, then still the head of the region needs the *ulama*. Asking for advice is only the mode of the chief, especially of the *ulama* who do not support him. The main purpose of the head of the region is to get support, or at least not appear resistance from the *ulama*. To this day, the people of Aceh are very reluctant to the *ulama*. If the *ulama* do not appreciate the policy of the regional head, there will be community resistance to the policy of the regional head. And this disrupts the stability of the government.²³

Although people want to break away from the *ulama* in professional affairs, not all professional issues are separated practically with religion. Sometimes political, scientific, educational and legal issues can be constructed to be directly related to religion. But in general, the *ulama* are not given the authority to handle matters outside of religious issues.

According to al-Turabi, the disengagement of the *ulama's* role from the practical affairs caused religion to be stagnant.²⁴ Religion is no longer seen as a solution and guidance in human life. Religion becomes only a small space in human life. When people face obstacles in practical life, not seeing religion as

²¹Rasul Hamidy, Fachruddin Hasballah, and Rusmin Tumanggor, "Kharisma Ulama dalam Persepsi Masyarakat Aceh," Working Paper (Banda Aceh, 1982).

²²Interview with Yazid Qulbuddin, November 10, 2017.

²³M. Hasbi Amiruddin, *Ulama Dayah Pengawal Agama Masyarakat Aceh* (Lhokseumawe: Nadiya Foundation, 2007), 41.

²⁴Hasan al-Hasan al-Turabi, *Fiqh Demokratis: Dari Tradisionalisme Kolektif Menuju Modernisme Populis*, ed. Abdul Haris and Zaimul Am (Bandung: Arasy, 2003).

something that can provide a solution. Because the people have tried to interact with religion, which is certainly through the *ulama*, to solve practical problems, but makes the problem even greater.²⁵ Not because religion itself is unable to provide a way out, but because the *ulama* who have caused religion to lose power in providing solutions to practical life. The *ulama* are limit religious only in the affairs of *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām*. Religion is not turned on as it should be.

The *ulama* do not want to interfere with issues that do not relate practically to religion. They understand that the community will not obey and can leave them when issuing recommendations that are not solutive or detrimental to the interests of certain parties.²⁶ Therefore the *ulama* chose to be passive.

According to al-Turabi,²⁷ the *ulama* avoided to save themselves. But the avoidance of the *ulama* certainly not directly interpreted as an attempt to save oneself solely. Avoiding them is an attempt to avoid the perception that religion is not able to respond to practical issues in people's lives. Because the *ulama* are the actual symbols of religion. If the *ulama* are abandoned by society by failing to provide solutions in the life of society, then society will practically abandon the *ulama* and this is a symbol they have left religion.

Religion is the most sensitive segment. Therefore, the blessing of the *ulama* is needed by the government. Religion is a segment separate from pragmatic affairs such as politics. But with intelligent propaganda, religion can be easily attributed to political affairs so that very often religion becomes the determinant of pragmatic affairs.

The secularity of thinking is not only from the people but also from the *ulama*. There has been a case of an *ulama* running for the head of one of the regions in Aceh. The other *ulama* did not support him. According to them, an *ulama* should not be the head of a region because if he fails to lead the government, then not only his image as the head of the region damaged but also his image as an *ulama*. If the image of the *ulama* is corrupted then it affects the image

²⁵Jamal Ma'mur, "Hegemoni dan Counter Hegemony Otoritas Tradisional Studi Pemikiran Gender Ulama NU di Kecamatan Trangkil Pati," *International Journal Ihya' Ulum Al-Din*, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ihya.16.2.1654>.

²⁶Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Konsep Pendidikan dalam Islam* (Bandung: Mizan, 1988), 35.

²⁷al-Turabi, *Fiqh Demokratis: Dari Tradisionalisme Kolektif Menuju Modernisme Populis*.

of religion.²⁸ This mindset is similar to Nurcholish Madjid thought.²⁹ Madjid suggests separating religious affairs from pragmatic affairs. The reason is that sacred religious affairs are not involved in pragmatic-oriented worldly affairs.³⁰ Therefore, religion has indeed been agreed upon by the community and *ulama* as a small segment of human life. Religion deals only with practical worship.

The modernist scholars argue that today the *ulama* only respond to the problems of spiritual symbolism.³¹ For example, when there is a stream that is slightly different from the teachings of *dayah* then the *ulama*, the *teungku*, and the *santri* react to dissolve their lectures and worship. Even the traditionalists have done extreme acts against the flow that is considered heretical.³² But they do not care about usury that has been rampant in the midst of society.³³ The *ulama* only focuses on static affairs in religion and, as al-Turabi says, they are unable to determine the priority scale.³⁴

“When did they ever come to the bank to dissolve usury? Yet the sin of riba is the same as *zina* dozens of times. Why the mass of the *ulama* actively disperse cafes and tourist attractions that are only indicated to be a nasty place for the youth. They are only busy with small things but ignore the immorality.”³⁵

According to modernist scholars, the *ulama*, the *teungku*, and the *santri* only focus on the lower classes. They are less concerned with the owners of companies and the government. “Why are they busy attacking clothing sellers but never pressuring the government to prohibit inappropriate clothing from entering Aceh. Why are they busy taking care of the nasty cases but not pressing the government to block accessible porn sites in Aceh.”³⁶

²⁸ Rajali Samidan, “Abu Tumin: Ulama tidak Tepat Mencalonkan Diri Menjadi Bupati,” *Kanal Aceh*, May 10, 2016, <https://www.kanalaceh.com/2016/05/10/abu-tumin-ulama-ikut-pilkada-aceh-kurang-tepat/>.

²⁹ Budhy Munawar-Rachman, *Argumen Islam untuk Pluralisme* (Jakarta: Grasindo, 2010), 266.

³⁰ Madjid, *Islam Kemandirian dan Keindonesiaan*.

³¹ Interview with Mulyadi, M.A., August 10, 2017.

³² Hasyim, “Massa Ambil Paksa Mimbar Masjid Arongan,” *Serambinews.Com*, April 6, 2013, <https://aceh.tribunnews.com/2013/04/06/massa-ambil-paksa-mimbar-masjid-arongan>.

³³ Interview with Ziaulhaq, SE, M.Si., September 1, 2017.

³⁴ al-Turabi, *Fiqih Demokratis: Dari Tradisionalisme Kolektif Menuju Modernisme Populis*.

³⁵ Interview with Mulyadi, M.A., August 10, 2017.

³⁶ Interview with Nasrullah, M.Pd., September 28, 2017.

With the blessings of the *ulama* and the *teungku*, the *santri*, even though there is a special state institution to deal with, often do sweeping clothes that are considered strict. They often take extreme measures for people who are deemed clothed not following the rules of Islam, which is certainly the rule of Islam in the meaning of the *ulama* and the *teungku*. But they do not urge the government and employers not to bring in Aceh's forbidden clothes. They only crack down on poor civilians and who may not have much of a collection of clothing.

The free trade products entering Aceh does not become an area of concentration among traditionalists. They banned books that were incompatible with Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah's beliefs.³⁷ But they do not take action against digital media that makes it easy to access all the books with all kinds of teachings in the world.

But they do not take action against digital media that makes it easy to access all the books with all kinds of teachings in the world.³⁸ One of the factors that led to candidates for regional heads in Aceh who campaigned with religious slogans such as the strengthening of Islamic Sharia could not increase their electability. The people prefer candidates for regional heads who carry human slogans such as improving the quality of education, health, transportation and aid for the poor.

Even in the minds of the *ulama*, there is an indication of the secularity of thought, but loyalists to the *ulama* disagreed with the *ulama* not being involved in pragmatic affairs.

"The *ulama* have a high level of reason and spirituality. Their perspective is very visionary, more than anyone else. They can see things not only by the naked eye and reasoning but have strong inner eyes. Their vision transcends all aspects of our lives. So, of course, every advice, advice, and direction from the *ulama* is the best way for us. In the Hereafter, when we are held accountable for decisions in life, we can say that the choice follows the direction of the *ulama*, then we are saved. After the Prophet is not with us, then whom do we follow? Of course, it is the person whose capacity is near the prophet. Who is he? Of course, the *ulama*."³⁹

³⁷Bakri, "Kitab Ghairu Muktabar Haram," *Serambinews.Com*, November 24, 2017, <https://aceh.tribunnews.com/2017/11/24/kitab-ghairu-muktabar-haram>.

³⁸Wahyudi Akmaliah, "When Ulama Support a Pop Singer Fatin Sidqiah and Islamic Pop Culture in Post-Suharto Indonesia," *Al-Jamī'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 52, no. 2 (2014): 351-72 <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2014.522.351-373>.

³⁹Interview with Tgk. Sayuti, October 8, 2017.

Although the *teungku* recognize the *ulama* do not know the details of the various praxis issues of society, but the *ulama* are considered able to give general advice. And general advice that can be taken into consideration in determining decisions and practical actions.

The people of Aceh to this day are still many who ask for advice and practical considerations to the *ulama* and the *teungku* to their praxis problem.⁴⁰ But because it is only as non-binding advice, then the advice is only used as part of the reference in decisions and actions. The government and corporations also often ask advice from the *ulama*.⁴¹ But the two types of institutions have their different objective bases. Governments are bound by certain very complicated rules.⁴² So even if they seek the advice of the *ulama*, often the advice is only used as a normative foundation that is not seen practically in the decisions and policies of the state. Corporations have a fundamental orientation of obtaining profit as much as possible. The advice of the *ulama* only they use as long as it is profitable. The *ulama*, the *teungku*, and the *santri* do not put pressure on the state and the corporation. Whereas, the two types of institutions that are determinants of public life.

The attitude of the *ulama* made the modernists less fond of the religious authorities. This attitude also makes people loyal to *ulama* apathetic. As a result, resistance to religious-style policies is increasingly prevalent in the midst of the society.⁴³ Then came the term from the people of Aceh:

Ulama jameun pijuet-pijut
Gadoh Kalued baca doa
Ulama jinoe tumbon-tumboh
*Gadoeh ek-troen rinyeun istana*⁴⁴

⁴⁰Muliadi Kurdi, "Abdul Aziz," *Ensiklopedia Ulama Besar Aceh* (Banda Aceh: NASA, 2015); Amiruddin, *Ulama Dayah Pengawal Agama Masyarakat Aceh*.

⁴¹Miswari, "Mu'ḍilat al-Aqlīyah al-Masīhīyah fi Ḥudūd Balad al-Sharī'ah al-Islāmīyah."

⁴²Ismail Fahmi Arrauf Nasution and Miswari Miswari, "Menangkap Pesan Tuhan: Urgensi Kontekstualisasi al-Qur'an Melalui Hermeunetika," *Jurnal At-Tibyan* 3, no. 2 (2018): 223–37, <https://doi.org/10.32505/tibyan.v3i2.698>.

⁴³Muhammad Ansor, "Being Woman in the Land of Shari'a: Politics of the Female Body, Piety, and Resistance in Langsa, Aceh," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 52, no. 1 (April 8, 2015): 59–83, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2014.521.59-83>.

⁴⁴M. Hasbi Amiruddin, "Jati Diri Ulama Aceh," 2013.

The Acehnese saying is meaningful, the *ulama* in the past to be thin, very *tawādu'*, their time spent in meditation and worship. But the *ulama* today are fat because they often enter the royal palace or the ruler. But the saying was disputed by fanatic circles to the *ulama*. According to them, the *ulama* should indeed be close to the ruler so that they can continue to advise them. That way, the ruler can continue to be guided by the *ulama*. But is the pattern effective?

According to the loyalists to the *ulama*, the proximity of the *ulama* with power has long historical roots. In the time of the kingdom, the *ulama* became the place where the kings asked, asking for advice, opinions, and guidance. But today, the power approach to the *ulama* has another orientation that is so that government and corporate policies are accepted by society. Public acceptance is strongly influenced by the recruitment of the *ulama*. Therefore, today, the ruler approaches the *ulama* not to seek opinions and guidance but to persuade the *ulama* to accept government policies.

The loyalists to the *ulama* argue, because the *ulama* are not the holiest ones, then the error or deficiency certainly can't be ignored from the *ulama*. "We know that the higher the quality of one's faith, the stronger the temptation of the devil. Then, of course, the temptation of the *ulama* is very powerful. But the few shortcomings of the *ulama* we find can't be an excuse to leave them."⁴⁵

The modernists believe that the failure of religion to respond to modernity is because the *ulama* fail to understand the issues of modernity. They are considered incapable of reinterpreting the Holy Book so that the book of God is effective for modern humans. The failure occurred because the *ulama* did not dare to come out of the codification of schools and the flow of classical theology. Though the *ulama* who codify the flow of theology and the school aims to interpret the scriptures to respond to the phenomenon of its time.

Uniquely the *ulama* of today believe that the door of *ijtihad* has been closed so they dare not interpret the Holy Cults for today's needs. The 'old' only served to voice the classical codification for modern times. Consequently, a society that cannot avoid modernity loses the function of religion in its practical life. Religion is only empowered in static ritual worship rituals. Because apparently, that has not expired from the classical codification is about the ritual of worship only. As a result, the *ulama* have only authority in the field of static worship rituals.

⁴⁵Interview with Tgk. Busmadar, July 28, 2017.

Based on the awareness of the crisis of legitimacy experienced,⁴⁶ the *ulama* began to try to reduce their prohibitions against the *santri*. For example, if the first students are prohibited from using smartphones in *dayah*. Now in some *dayah*, the ban has been revoked. Because if they overeat too much of modernity, they will lose their legitimacy.

Just a few days later the *ulama* saw using smartphones. Previously, they consider smartphones are objects that can bring great harm. But since such views and actions began to be a conversation in society, the *ulama* were considered anti-modernity, then they started using smartphones and allowed their students to use the communication tool.

By being open to modernity, society has become increasingly fond of the *ulama*. In *dayah* began to be developed institutions publishing books, journals, bulletins, and even online news portals. Modern communication media is getting a place in *dayah*. With this attitude, people increasingly prefer to leave their children in *dayah*. Though somewhat loosely attached to modernity, the authority of the *ulama* remains in its field of religion.

Only by gaining religious authority, even though religion is a sensitive affair for society, as religion is powerless for practical affairs, religion will continue to be shunned by society. Thus, the *ulama* also become increasingly distant from the community. With the loosening of the distance between the community and the authorities, the government's agenda will be easier. Modernity can also take place smoothly. Thus, society will more easily adjust to the times.

But will religion be abandoned by communities? Religion remains in his space, the worship space. That's where the authority of the *ulama*. So, what about the Islamic Shariah which became the legal law in Aceh? The formalization of Islamic Sharia in Aceh can be said to have no connection with the *ulama*. The Islamic Sharia is under the construction of Muslim scholars from modern Islamic colleges, legislative members and government executives. Sometimes scholars are only positioned as ad stars for Islamic sharia campaigns. Formalization of Islamic law is the state's agenda, not the *ulama's* agenda, not the agenda of the community. Since its end Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia (DI/TII), Islamic Shari'a is no longer the agenda of Aceh. GAM was founded not to demand Islamic shari'a. GAM was born out of anxiety over the notion of economic injustice to society, not demanding Islamic shari'a.

⁴⁶Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975).

C. The Immunity of the Community's Loyalty

As mentioned at the beginning of the article, the community in Aceh is divided into three parts: 1) continue his religious education to *dayah*, 2) choose to enter the government education institution, and 3) choose not to continue education. So, divided into three levels of community namely: 1) the *teungku* who fanatic to the *ulama*, 2) the modernist and 3) the general public that dominates the community.

Because the second part is very few and their critical views are difficult to understand by the crowded third circles, their critical views are poorly accepted. Therefore, the general public who was disarmed by the third group remained loyal to the *ulama*, but only on religious matters. The third is a community that has learned from the *ulama* indirectly from the *teungku*.

The second part has also learned from the *teungku*, but there is largely shaped by their generally secular and moderate. Although only the first group became a fanatical party to the *ulama*, because the third part is dominant, then they are the determinants of loyalty to the *ulama*. But because they are constantly confronting modernity, then for matters that do not relate practically to religion, they do not give authority to the *ulama*. The authority of the *ulama* is only given to religious affairs.

Likewise, with the second group, though critical-minded, in unchanging matters of religion such as religious jurisprudence, they generally keep giving that loyalty to the *ulama*. So the loyalty of society generally to the *ulama* still have immunity on religious issues. Although the immunity of loyalty is only in the religious segment, because religion is an important segment of Acehnese life since almost all Acehnese have received religious education in *ranggang*, *balee* and *meunasah*, the position of the *ulama* in Aceh remain sacred.

D. Conclusion

Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah in the interpretation of the authority of the *ulama* will still be the identity of Aceh even though modernity is constantly entering Aceh. It will continue to be the dominant teaching because it is easily understood by the general public. The *ulama* will still have the immunity of loyalty with notes interfering in the pragmatic affairs of society. Despite continuing modernization, religion remains an important segment of society.

Although modernity is always accepted by society because it is a necessity of the times,⁴⁷ the human need for religion will increase. As long as religion becomes an important segment of people's lives, community loyalty to authority remains immune.

Although only one authority in one segment is the same, the immunity of community loyalty to the authority of the *ulama* remains strong because religion is a segment that is considered very important by society. Esoteric teachings remain only an insignificant part of society because it is only followed by small communities.

From the results of research on modernist and traditionalist Muslims about the immunity of community loyalty to the authority of the *ulama* in modernity, it was found that traditionalists who are *dayah* alumni do not agree that society only gives authority to the *ulama* in the segments of religion.

But the modernists argue that the *ulama* only understand the religious issues contained in the codification of fiqh and certain theological schools. They are perceived to have failed to provide a solution to the problems of the worldliness of society so it is not worth interfering in the affairs of society in modernity. Modernists say that the *ulama* are unwilling to intervene in technical matters because they can jeopardize the stability of community loyalty.

From the results of this study, the authority is given to the *ulama* only in the field of theology (the principle of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah), regular worship (the rules of prayer, fasting, zakat, pilgrimage) and shakhsiyah (marriage, divorce, division of inheritance), theological education and jurisprudence (holding of the corpse and leading the prayers of the newborn child and the newly deceased). While other affairs commonly referred to as mundane affairs such as formal education, law, politics, development, and others have their respective authorities that are not disturbed by the *ulama*. Even the *ulama* claim to be responsible only for issues that are practically and explicitly related to religion.□

⁴⁷Cipta Bakti Gama, "Fondasi Psikopatologi Islam: Suatu Pendekatan Psikofilosofis terhadap Konsep Gangguan Jiwa dan Faktor Penyebabnya dalam Al-Qur'an" (PTIQ Jakarta, 2018); Cipta Bakti Gama, "Reduksionisme Eksplanatif Untuk Antropologi Transendental Jawadi Amuli," *Kanz Philosophia: A Journal for Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism* 5, no. 2 (2015): 147-64, <https://doi.org/10.20871/KPJIPM.V5I2.133>.

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