

## **Pribumization: The Epistemology Of Abdurrahman Wahid's Thought (Gus Dur)**

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### **KEYWORDS**

Pribumization, Islam, Gus  
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### **ABSTRACT**

The pribumization of Islam of Gus Dur's thought is very important to be described in the world of education, in order to explain to the wider community, about the advantages of the development of Islam in Indonesia. With the aim, so that the public better understands the cultural Islam that exists in Indonesia, where Islam and culture cannot be separated from each other. This is in line with the motto of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, namely Bhineka Tunggal Ika, which means different, both ethnic, racial, religious, cultural, linguistic, but still one, namely Indonesia. The method used in writing this article is to use the literature study method, by reading several references both from books, journals and other articles related to the title above. In short, the pribumization of Islam is how Islam is used as a normative teaching, which comes from God and then is accommodated into a culture that comes from humans without losing its own identity, Islam remains with its Islamic and culture remains with its culture.

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### **Introduction**

Islam is a very perfect religion, performed by the Prophet Muhammad shalallahu 'alaihi wasallam, descended from Allah subhanahu wata'ala through the intermediary of the angel Gabriel. The Qur'an is one of the most important guidelines for Islam, in it there are many sources of knowledge, rules, norms, and so on, which are used as reference materials in the application of Muslims in the world and later in the Hereafter.

Islam is very easily accepted in various circles of society, tribe, race, culture, nation and State. Where the Prophet Muhammad shalallahu 'alaihi wasallam, who became a leader in bringing the idea of Islam as a religion that is rahmatan lil 'alamin or a religion that gives mercy, compassion, gives security to the entire universe.

Islam enters various circles of society, tribe, race, culture, nation and State, to be the basis for them in carrying out all activities, both worship, social, and others. As one example, Islam entered Indonesia, which at that time in this Indonesian land there were already many races, tribes, religions, cultures and so on. Then Islam came not to replace what had become a custom in the archipelago, but Wali Songo who at that time as one of the spreaders of Islam in Inonesia was proselytizing by means of a cultural approach, a social approach, which in this approach the Wali Songo tried to adopt various kinds of cultures or habits of the community in general then collaborated as a medium in proselytizing. For example, what Sunan Kalijaga has done is proselytizing through

wayang performance, where this wayang performance has become a *trasidi* for the Javanese people, and when Sunan Kalijaga entered javanese land finally continued to use wayang as a medium for *da'wah*, by replacing Javanese wayang stories with stories that are Islamic in nature, such as the example of *asy-syahadatain*, namely reading two sentences of *shahada* and so on. By adopting community customs, maintaining local wisdom, that is where Islam is easily accepted by all communities, especially in Indonesia.

Such thoughts were then also adopted by Abdurrahman Wahid or commonly known as Gus Dur. So here is the importance of examining the thoughts of Abdurrahman Wahid or Gus Dur regarding the pribumization of Islam. However, as Wahid admits, he was not the first to start the idea, because he was only the successor of the relay of the strategic steps once made by Wali Songo. With this pribumization step, according to him, Wali Songo has succeeded in islamizing the land of Java, without having to face and experience tensions with the culture and customary traditions of the local people.

## Research Methods

The method used in writing this article is to use the literature study method, by reading several references both from books, journals and other articles related to the title above.

## Results and Discussions

### A. Biography of Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur)

Abdurrahman Wahid or commonly known as Gus Dur is a son of a couple of great scholars in Indonesia. Wahid was born on 04 August 1940 in Denanyar Jombang with his childhood name Abdurrahman Addakhil, the first of six sons. His father, Kyai Haji Abdul Wahid Hasyim, was the son of Kyai Haji Hasyim Asy'ari, the founder of the Tebuireng Islamic boarding school and the founder of Jam'iyyah Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Meanwhile, his mother, Nyai Hajah Sholihah, is also the daughter of a great Nahdlatul Ulama figure, namely Kyai Haji Bisri Syamsuri, the founder of Denanyar Jombang cottage and as Rais Aam, the Nahdlatul Ulama (PBNU) Executive Board.

Genetically, both from the paternal and maternal lineage, Wahid is a figure who occupies a very high social strata of Indonesian society, where his two grandfathers, both Kyai Haji Hasyim Asy'ari and Kyai Haji Bisri Syamsuri, are known as prominent scholars in Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and major figures in the Republic. But thus, the life history of Wahid does not reflect the life of a patrician or the son of a prominent figure, he lived and proceeded as befits society in general. When Wahid was a child, he studied at a boarding school and was taught to recite, learn to read the Qur'an by his grandfather Kyai Haji Hasyim Asy'ari at the Tebuireng Jombang islamic boarding school.

In 1949 when the military confrontation or armed forces tension in Indonesia with the Dutch colonial government ended and his father was appointed as the first Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, wahid Hasyim's family finally moved from Jombang to Jakarta. Since then, Gus Dur when he was a child had to finish his schooling in Jakarta. Thus, a new atmosphere and new environmental conditions had been entered by him, guests arriving consisting of figures with various professional fields that had previously been encountered in his grandfather's house, continued when his father became Minister of Religious Affairs. This indirectly provided a separate experience for

Wahid, who there began to get acquainted with the world of politics heard from his father's colleagues who at that time often came to his house.

In his daily life Gus Dur has a hobby or passion for reading and diligently uses his father's personal library, besides that he also actively visits public libraries in Jakarta to read various books, thoughts and so on. Even in his teens, Gus Dur was already familiar with various magazines, newspapers, novels, and books that were very serious. Wahid not only reads about works that contain stories, especially fiction stories and martial arts stories, but Gus Dur is very deep also books on Philosophy and foreign documents never go unnoticed, besides reading, this character also likes to play football, chess and music. Another passion, which also complements his hobby is watching cinema, this passion has caused a deep appreciation in the world of cinema, this is also the reason why Gus Dur in 1986-1987 was appointed as the chairman of the jury of the Indonesian Film Festival.

When he was a teenager, Wahid mostly spent his time in Yogyakarta and Tegalrejo, it was in these two places that Gus Dur's scientific development began to increase. Then after from those two places, the next time Gus Dur lived in Jombang, at the Tambak Beras Islamic boarding school, until then continued his education and development of knowledge in Egypt. But before leaving for Egypt, Gus Dur's uncle had proposed a girl for him, namely Sinta Nuriyah the daughter of Haji Muhammad Sakur and the wedding was carried out when Wahid was in Egypt.

## **B. The Background of Gus Dur's Islamic Pribumization Thought**

The idea of geneological or eventual pribumization of Islam, first raised by Wahid in the 1980s, since then, indigenous Islam has become a very interesting debate in the environment of intellectuals, both senior (old) intellectuals and young intellectuals. In the indigenous Islam initiated by Wahid, it is illustrated how Islam as a normative teaching derived from God is then accommodated into a culture that comes from humans without losing their respective identities, so that there is no longer a purification of Islam or a process of equating with the religious practices of Muslim communities in the Middle East.

A phenomenon that has occurred from the past and even now, some circles of preachers in Indonesia always say that we must follow what Muslims in Arabia do, ranging from religious practices, how to dress, how to look and so on. Doesn't the idea of having to be arabism or the process of identifying with Middle Eastern cultures mean the same thing as uprooting our own culture? In this case, pribumization thinking is not an attempt to prevent resistance from the forces of local cultures, but rather so that the culture is not lost. According to Wahid, the core of the pribumization of Islam is the need, not to avoid polarization between religion and culture, because such polarization is inevitable.

The pribumization of Islam has made religion and culture no longer defeat each other, not weaken each other, but rather the pribumization of Islam is manifested in a pattern of religious reason that no longer takes the authentic form of religion itself and seeks to bring together the bridges that have been crossing between religion and culture.

In the next context, the purpose of the existence of Islamic pribumization thinking itself is to create a diversity mindset (Islam) according to their respective local contexts in the form of "Indigenous Islam" as an answer to "Authentic Islam" or "Pulrificative Islam" which wants to carry out a project of Arabism within every Islamic community in all corners of the world, which assumes that Middle Eastern Islam is considered the original and most correct. In this case, "Indigenous Islam" actually gives fresh air to the

diversity of interpretations in the practice of religious life (Islam) in each different region, ranging from race, tribe, culture, nation and State. Thus, Islam is no longer viewed singularly, but rather diverse in adjusting the culture and customs in which Islam is included in it. There is no longer any presumption that Islam in the Middle East is the pure and most correct Islam, because Islam itself as a religion that experiences a history that continues with the times.

One example of the pribumization of Islam can be seen from the ritual practices in popular culture in Indonesia as described by Kuntowijoyo, who shows the marriage between Islam and the local culture quite closely. The Ceremony of Worship in West Java, for example, which has a certain intention so that humans can become *wiwoho* or noble humans, departs from this understanding, there is a separate cultural value where people must glorify birth, marriage, death and so on. All of these rituals are intended to show that human life is noble, and this concept of the glory of human life is clearly colored by Islamic culture itself which views that humans are noble beings.

The existence of "Indigenous Islam" is the answer to "Authentic Islam" by presupposing on three things. First, "Indigenous Islam" assesses the contextual nature, that is, Islam is understood as a teaching related to the context of times and places, so that changes in time and regional differences are one of the keys to interpreting Islamic teachings in society. Thus, Islam will experience changes and dynamics in responding to the times. Second, "Indigenous Islam" is progressive, that is, by responding to the progress of the times, it is not understood as a threat in deviation from the basic teachings of the religion (Islam), but can be seen as a trigger to carry out an intense creative response to the changes and developments of the times. Third, "Indigenous Islam" has a liberative character, namely Islam being a teaching that can answer and provide solutions to universal humanitarian problems regardless of religious, ethnic, racial, and cultural differences. Thus, Islam is no longer rigid in the face of the changing diversity and social realities that occur in the ever-changing community.

So it is in this context that "Indigenous Islam" came and wanted to liberate puritanism and all forms of Islamic purification, while being able to maintain local wisdom without having to eliminate the normative identity of Islam itself, therefore "Indigenous Islam" is more spread cultural ideology, especially in Indonesia. Where it is more concerned with differences in locality than cultural ideologies that focus and recognize religious teachings without a certain interpretation, so that they can be spread in various regions without having to damage the culture of the local community. Thus, there will be no longer any radicalism practices supported by extreme religious understandings, which have been a threat to the creation of peace in the midst of society.

One thought about religious culture, of course, can provoke the community in responding to this, so that the pros and cons always arise regarding this conception of indigenous Islam is inevitable. Around March 08-09, 1989 approximately 200 (two hundred) *kyai* gathered at the Darut Tauhid Arjawinangun Islamic boarding school in Cirebon to "prosecute" Wahid, from here several camps emerged that faced each other in responding to the discourse rolled out by Gus Dur related to his indigenous Islamic ideas. However, as Wahid himself admitted that he was not the first to start in carrying out this idea, he was only as the next generation of strategic steps that had been applied by the Wali Songo. Because with the pribumization step, according to him, Wali Songo has succeeded in islamizing the land of Java, without having to face and experience tensions with the culture and traditions of the local community.

Since the arrival of Islam in the archipelago, scholars have tried to selectively adopt various local cultures, ranging from social systems, arts, and even government, when this is seen as appropriate, it is no longer changed, including customs that are eventually widely developed in an Islamic perspective. With this, it can allow the culture of the archipelago to remain diverse, even though Islam itself has united the region religiously, starting in terms of how to dress, most of them still wear traditional clothes, and by local scholars it is considered that some have qualified enough to cover aurat and kyai wives wear traditional clothes, as the local people use. In this period, Islam was very thick with its local colors, so there was a sense of familiarity between Islam and the local environment, so that every Islam in a certain area could display its Islamic style characteristically based on their customs and culture. So in this case, Islam is really integrated with *kenusantaraan* or Indonesianness, not only in terms of customs, but also its political thoughts and aspirations that are oriented towards nationality not Islam.

The indigenous Islam initiated by Wahid actually took the spirit that the Wali Songo had done in their proselytizing to the archipelago around the 15th and 16th centuries, especially on the island of Java. So that in this case, Wali Songo has succeeded in incorporating local values in Islam that are typical of Indonesia, Wali Songo's creativity gave birth to new ideas for Islamic reason that no longer *harfiyah* imitate Islam in Arabia. The Wali Songo strongly accommodates Islam as a religious teaching that has historicalized with a culture that is adapted to the local community. For example, as Sunan Bonang did, by changing the Javanese gamelan which at that time was thick with Hindu aesthetics was then changed to a *dhikr* nuance that encouraged a love of transcendental life. The lyrics of the song "Tombo Ati" are one of Sunan Bonang's works, then in the puppetry performance, Sunan Bonang changed the play and included typical Islamic interpretations and there is also a Pandawakurawa story interpreted by Sunan Bonang as a war between *nafy* (negation) and *'itbath* (edification). While what Sunan Kalijaga did was to choose art and culture as a means of proselytizing, he was very tolerant of the local culture, he also argued that people would stay away if attacked by their establishment through purification (feeling the most correct Islam). Therefore, Sunan Kalijaga believes that if Islam is understood, then naturally the old habits will disappear, he uses carving, puppetry, gamelan, and *suluk* sound art as a means of proselytizing. Sunan Kalijaga is also believed to be the originator of Islamic traditions in Java such as, *Baju Takwa*, *Sekaten* Celebration, *Grebeg Maulud*, *Layang Kalimasada*, *Lakon wayang petruk* became king, the existence of palace symbols and so on.

Those are some examples that the Wali Songo have done in Islamic proselytizing in Java, by not doing moral purification, but by making direct adaptations or adjustments to the socio-cultural conditions of the local community, so that the community does not take action of resistance or rejection of new teachings that enter the community. Therefore, indigenous Islam can be used as part of a discourse battle that is a continuation of previous ideas with the same spirit and challenge meaning, the challenge facing indigenous Islam is the universalization of Islam in all its forms that leads to Islamic arabism itself.

### **C. Wahid's Direction of Thought on Islamic Indigenization**

There is one of Gus Dur's writings that is directly related to the theme of Islamic pribumization, namely the article on the idea of "Pribumization of Islam" which Wahid intended as an answer to the problems faced by Muslims in their history, namely how to bring together culture (*'adah*) with norms (*shari'ah*) as has always been a problem in *ushul*

al-fiqh. According to Wahid, problems that eventually become overlapping between religion and culture will inevitably occur continuously as a process that will enrich life that makes it not arid. Religion (Islam) and culture have their own independence, but both have the same regional influences, as do philosophy and science. One cannot philosophize without science, but one cannot also say that science is philosophy. It is the same as what happened between religion (Islam) and culture which became overlapping and different. Thus, "pribumization of Islam" according to Wahid is an understanding that considers local needs in formulating religious (Islamic) laws without having to change the law itself.

The point of this Islamic pribumization thinking, is not an attempt to abandon religious norms (Islam) for the sake of culture, but so that these norms can accommodate the needs of culture by utilizing the opportunities provided by variations in nass understanding, while still giving a role to ushul al-fiqh and qowa'id al-fiqh. This is why revelation in Wahid's view must be understood by bringing together contextual factors, including in legal awareness and a sense of justice. However, in this process the mixing of Islam with culture according to Wahid should not occur, because if mixing means the loss of the original qualities possessed by religion and culture, Islam must stick to its Islamic nature, the Qur'an must still use Arabic, especially in prayer, because this is the norm, while the translation of al-Qur'an is only intended to facilitate understanding instead of replacing the Qur'an itself with the local language.

The process of struggle that occurs with cultural reality is not intended to change Islam, but only to change the manifestation of Islamic religious life, therefore what is indigenous as the focus carried out by Wahid. Even according to Wahid, Islam must remain Islamic wherever Islam is, but that does not mean that all must be equated in its outer form, so in this case there must be a meeting point between Islam and culture. Wahid used the term "pribumization of Islam", because of the difficulty of finding another suitable word to use, the domestication of Islam, seemed to him to be political, namely the taming of attitudes and the castration of the establishment. Wahid's idea was motivated by the unrest of the factions that always urged that religious law (Islam) be uniformed and formalized and there must be a formal source of retrieval, namely the Qur'an and hadith. Under such circumstances, Wahid stated that this indicates that the meaning of Muslim life has been uprooted from its local cultural roots, regardless of the historical framework of each place, as is the case in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Algeria, where Islam is "made" against Arab nationalism and also each still has its ideological color. This then made Wahid tickle him by asking the question "then how to preserve the roots of local cultures that Islam already has in this country?"

According to Wahid, in this idea, what is prioritized is a mere manifestation of Islamic life, not a teaching that concerns the core of his faith and formal worship, but what is on Wahid's agenda is to think about how to preserve Islam as a culture, through efforts to serve and realize the interests of the entire nation. In this case, the starting point of Wahid's thought is not to glorify modernism, but to criticize modernism which is universalized using the knife of Islamic traditionalism. Wahid's style of thinking like this was already apparent when Wahid explained the universalism of Islam and the cosmopolitanism of Islamic civilization. For example, in terms of Islamic universalism, according to Wahid, there is no need to refer directly to the Qur'an or hadith, as is often used by modernist groups, but rather refer to a theory in ushul al-fiqh called al-daruriyat al-khamsah (the five basics of religion).

The five basics of this are first, hifz al-din (keeping religion) which Wahid interpreted as the salvation of their respective religious beliefs without any compulsion

to convert, second, *hifz al-nafs* (self-preservation) which is interpreted as a necessity in maintaining the physical safety of citizens from carnal actions outside the provisions of the law, third, *hifz al-'aql* (guarding reason) which is interpreted as the maintenance of intellectual intelligence, Fourth, *hifz al-nasl* (guarding the family) which is interpreted as the salvation of the family and offspring, fifth, *hifz al-mal* (guarding property) which is interpreted as the safety of property, property and profession rights from interference and eviction outside legal procedures.

From this explanation, Gus Dur actually used the term classical Islam, then given its contextual meaning, for example in the term *hifz al-din*, originally just given the meaning of maintaining religion, in the sense that Muslims should not leave Islam and embrace other religions, but in the hands of Wahid, this term became a spirit to defend freedom of religion and belief without coercion. Likewise with the term *hifz al-'aqli* (keeping reason), which in classical *fiqh* is always exemplified by the prohibition of drinking, but in the hands of Wahid *hifz al-'aqli* this is interpreted and associated with the necessity to maintain intellectual intelligence. Thus, for Wahid, Islamic universalism is reflected in his teachings that have concern for human values as evidenced by providing protection to society from tyranny and arbitrariness.

So in this case the universalism used by Wahid is to develop the theology of *ahl Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* or commonly abbreviated as *Aswaja* in the face of various changes and challenges in the midst of society. According to Wahid, there are several general basics regarding social life, namely, first, the view of man and his place in life, second, the view of science and technology, third, the economic view of the regulation of social life, fourth, the view of individual and community relations, fifth, the view of tradition and its dynamism through legal, educational, political and cultural institutions, sixth, views on ways of community development, seventh, a view of the principles of internalization and socialization that can be developed in the context of formal doctrines that are acceptable today.

So that with the framework for the development of *Aswaja* proposed by Wahid, it is very visible that his efforts so that *Aswaja* does not become a standard and frozen doctrine, but a dynamic doctrine. Even Wahid seems to want to say that if *Aswaja* wants to be a living doctrine, then there is no other choice but to be willing to interact openly with the development of social reality, that way, the pattern used by Wahid is how to create a balance method by emphasizing the creation of harmony in the midst of a diverse society.

## Conclusion

The pribumization of Islam is how Islam is used as a normative teaching, which comes from God and then is accommodated into a culture that comes from humans without losing its own identity, Islam remains with its Islamic and culture remains with its culture. Because according to Wahid, Arabism or the process of identifying with Middle Eastern culture is a sign of our detachment from our own culture, more than that Arabism has not been suitable for needs if applied in Indonesia. Pribumization is also not an effort to prevent resistance from the forces of local cultures, but rather so that the culture does not disappear and remains in the midst of society. The core of the pribumization of Islam (Indigenous Islam) is a need to avoid the parallelity between religion and culture, because such polarization is inevitable. The pribumization of Islam is not an attempt to abandon religious norms for the sake of culture, but so that they can

accommodate the needs of culture by utilizing the opportunities provided by variations in mass understanding, while still giving a role to *ushul al-fiqh* and *qowa'idul al-fiqh*.

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