

Islam and Local Traditions: The Study of the Thinkings of Abdurrahman Wahid (1940-2009) and Khalil Abdul Karim (1930-2002) an Indonesian and an Egyptian Perspective

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Abstract

Islam and local tradition had already coexisted peacefully since Islam was revealed by Allah for the first time through the Gabriel Angel to the Prophet Muhammad in Mecca on 610 M. According to Mohammed A. Muqtedar Khan,¹ there were traditions and ethics of Islam, based on the origin of the the sharia misunderstood by the most Muslims until now. Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) with his theory of the Pribumisasi Islam and Khalil Abdul Karim with his theory about the early existence of the Islam and sharia has been revealed among the pre-Islamic Arab tradition as the blueprint for Islam and the sharia in this era. Both of these theories are those of the continuation of Islam for all times and places. For the first time, Islam and the sharia gave high appreciation and respect to the Arab tradition and had even enshrined Arab traditions that are considered good and maslahat for humanitarian life remains entrenched to the teachings of Islam and enshrined in the Qur'an. Both of these theories can be used as the basis for rejecting the discovery of Timothy Daniel about "Islamic Spectrum in Java" (2009) which holds that the religious practice of Java is the Kejawen belief (a syncretic), because the teachings of Islam has mixed with local traditions. Therefore, I assert that the religious practice of Java is very diverse and cannot be called as a Kejawen belief (a syncretic). The practice of the Kejawen belief in religious practice in Java is a form of Islam which is a contextual learning and will continue its process on the perfection of Islam to continue to honor the tradition of

¹ Mohammed A. Muqtedar Khan, Islam as an Ethical Tradition of International Relations, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations Vol. 8 No. 2* 1977, p.177.

the Javanese community that has been practiced by their ancestors and has been successively crystallized and is very difficult to eliminate. Some examples are: bathing with flower tradition in the wedding event, laying flowers at the entrance of the house every Friday night, and riyungan. The reason is that the Muslim community is still able to practice the good and maslahat tradition like in the first era of Islam in Mecca and Madina.

Keywords: Islam, local traditions, thinkings, Gus Dur, Khalil.

A. Introduction

Islam and tradition have been found since the Prophet Muhammad propagated Islam for the first time in Mecca and Madina on 610-632 M. It was the time when Islam was not the only religion practised there, but there were Hanif religion and Arab traditions that had been practiced by the inhabitants of Mecca by their ancestors. Islam came to perfect the Hanif religion, continued to honor and respect the traditions of the Arabs at that time. The reason that Hanif religion was a religion revealed from Allah to the Prophet Ibrahim *a.s.*, namely the religion of monotheism that the oneness of Allah as a forerunner of the religion of Islam and the Arab tradition, that they were also good and could bring common goodness for the Arabs at that time, such as: traditions dealing with inheritance, writing poetry, riding on horseback, the skill of shooting with arrows, respecting the Ka'ba, respecting Friday, and wearing Jilbab for women.

Islam is different from tradition, but Islam can continue to co-exist with tradition, as well as the elements of non-Arab culture, when Islam is being practiced outside the Arab land and this is not a distortion. The image of Islam met with the Arab tradition and still perpetuates the tradition in Islam strengthened by the revelation of Allah in the Qur'an. This is the blueprint in this era. The reformist figures of Islam and the sharia, including Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) and Khalil Abdul Karim (Khalil), are fighters for Islam and tradition. Gus Dur defends Islam and tradition in Indonesia and Khalil in Egypt. Gus Dur's services are realized as *Islam Nusantara* in Indonesia, whereas Khalil and the other reformists' services are

recognized that Egypt still survives to become a republic, protecting other religions, and Islam is still practiced under the Egyptian regime. For this reason I choose Gus Dur and Khalil as figures to examine their thoughts in this study.

The emergence of the term *Islam Nusantara* is a manifestation of the meeting between Islam and tradition and it creates pros and contras in Indonesia. Some people refuse it and say that *Islam Nusantara* is a manifestation of the new Islam from Liberal Islam Network in Indonesia to create disunity among Muslims. This is impossible, because there is only one Islam, not many; no Islam Nusantara, no Islam Arabia, no Islam Malaysia, no Islam Australia, and no Islam America. Even Islam Nusantara is being suspected to be a new strategy from the West to destroy Islam from inside, or any form of expression of the antipathy against the Arabs, hatreds towards them and Arabic culture and anything that contains the smell of the Arabs.² This happens because of their misunderstanding of the Islamic group that believes that Islam is *kaffah* in its teachings, comprehensive in regulating public and private lives, although not identical with the *kaffah* in Arabisation. The *kaffah* of Islam appears in a variety of expressions, as according to the context from Islamic history Islam did not come alone. There had been an old religion and old traditions that came before it. They argued that the Qur'an and the Sunnah have set up everything fully, so that Muslims must obey the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The Qur'an and the Sunnah must be obeyed literally, because they come from God and the Apostle. Islamism looked that the revelation of God in the Qur'an which is permanent, and must be strictly followed literally what is in it. Instead, Mohammed A. Muqtedar Khan argues that the Qur'an is the literal word of God, so that it must be understood and observed by using the faculty of reason where the meanings of the texts in the Qur'an are open to interpretation and re-interpretation (*ijtihad*).³

Islam Nusantara is accepted entirely by Muslims who know and understand the history of the entry of Islam in Indonesia by the *Nine*

² <https://geotimes.co.id/kolom/agama/Islam-dan-arab-menimbang-pribumisasi-islam-gus-dur/>. Accessed on 2 March 2018.

³ Mohammed A. Muqtedar Khan, *Islam as an Ethical Tradition . . .*, P. 26

Saints (Wali Songo) who respected local traditions of Indonesia, especially in Java at the time. Wali Songo were successful in Islamizing the land of Java without facing and experiencing tensions with the existing local tradition.⁴ For example, the ancient Javanese tradition of holding "Riyungan" at some events such as: seven months of the pregnancy of the first children of a new couple, building a house, or the death of a family member. The tradition commonly practised at the *riyungan* event, before the food was distributed, groups of people were formed to play games like gapple, romen, or domino. The saints who propagated Islam in the area kept the habit of *riyungan* by changing the habit of playing *gapple* by reading Qur'an, namely read *tahlil* prayer and read the *yasin* to pray for the acceptance of prayer of the family who invited people at the *riyungan*.

Islam has spreads in the Arab land, even to the four corners of the world, including Egypt and Indonesia which have traditions and customs very different from those of places where Islam firstly emerged, namely Mecca. Egypt and Indonesia in the context of the 21st century give completely a new opportunity for the emergence of new issues due to the influence of the modern technology system that continues until now. It does not have to exist in the Qur'an or Sunnah. In this case, how could the theory of *Pribumisasi* Islam primed by Gus Dur and Historical Islam as a blueprint which primed by Khalil be formulated?

B. Research Method

The method used in this research is a qualitative one with a contextualist historical approach and a power-relation theory. This is because the problem described in the introduction needs a deep analysis and answer of what has been formulated in the preliminary research. This is Gus Dur's and Khalil's theory, because it is

⁴ Fitriah Asad, Abdurrahman Wahid's Thought About Pribumisasi Islam, in the Journal of *theosophy*, Vol. 3 Number 1 2013, p.41

influenced by the existence of power-relation. "Where there is a power there must be a rejection".⁵

The type of this research is a library research. The data are obtained from the results of news coverage in the mass media, books and journals are processed and analyzed based on qualitative methods with the contextualist historical approach, developed with the creative imagination of the author, and read based on Foucault's theory of power-relations.

C. Biography

Both Dr. (H.C.) K.h. Abdurrahman Wahid and Khalil Abdul Karim who are being examined in this study were born in the same century — the first of the 20th century — in different countries. (H.C.) K.h. Abdurrahman Wahid, also called Gus Dur, was born of the couple K.H Abdul Wahid Hasjim bin K.H Hashim Ash'ari and Mrs Hj. Siti Solichah binti KH. Bisri Syamsuri in Jombang, East Java on September 7, 1940, whereas Khalil Abdul Karim bin Abdul Karim Nasir was born in Aswan, Egypt on June 4, 1930. Both figures came from very respectable families. Gus Dur was the grandson of two great and popular figures in the Muslim community in Indonesia, Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Bisri Syamsuri. Gus Dur's father was also very popular, as K.H. Wahid Hasyim served as the first Minister of Religious Affairs in Indonesia in 1949. Khalil's father, Abdul Karim Nasir, was a successful businessman who had been the Chairman for the Chamber of Commerce in the Aswan city and the owner of the printing ' *al-Taufiq* ' as well as the founder of the first newspaper in Egypt.⁶ This image of family background (family environment) Gus Dur and Khalil were very influential for their thinking patterns to the development of science for both figures.

Gus Dur and Khalil studied at the same university, namely, al-Azhar in Egypt. Gus Dur studied at al-Azhar from 1964 until 1966 and Khalil has completed the under-graduate study at the Faculty of

⁵ Siti Mahmudah, *Historisitas Shari'a: Criticism Power Relations Khalil Abdul Karim* (Yogyakarta: LkiS, 2016), p. 835). 25.

⁶ Khoiron Nahdiyyin, "When an activist claim against the Holy Text", in the Journal of *Syir'ah*, No.36/IV/November 2004, p. 57.

Law (Kuliyyat al-Syari'ah) in al-Azhar University in May 1951. The basis of education at al-Azhar University was still the orthodox Islam, because the classical methods of learning was still used at that time. Gus Dur moved to Baghdad university in Iraq from al-Azhar university in 1966-1970, whereas Khalil studied at Dar-Ulum in Egypt, namely institutions which implemented the modern and secular system (a new kind of religious education) in Egypt at that time.⁷ This is the second background, namely, education environment which gives much influence on the pattern of thinking, capabilities and sharpness of the analysis, as well as the development of ideas from both figures.

Gus Dur moved from Islamism to liberal thinking after returning from Egypt and Iraq in the 1970s. According to Gus Dur, when he was a young man in the 1950's he followed the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood, a group of Muslim "hardliners" whose influence also reached Jombang, East Java. Gus Dur was even active and had intended to establish a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in Indonesia before he went to Egypt, but he failed after he had seen directly the reality of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.⁸ The reason is that Gus Dur declined the conception or the movement that had Islamic ideology orientation after he had gone through education, readings, and personal experience. Similarly, Khalil moved from Islamism to liberal Islam in 1976. The reason is that he had been imprisoned twice for his opposition that could threaten the position of the regime at that time, and he also did not agree with the idea of Islamism, because they have the opinion that other Muslims who did not agree with their understanding are infidels and apostates. So Gus Dur and Khalil had been members of the Muslim Brotherhood (Islamism) before.

⁷ Mona Abaza, *Changing Images of Three Generation of Azharites in Indonesia* (Singapore: Published by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Heng Mui Keng Terrace Long Sand, 1993), p. 7.

⁸ Abdurrahman Wahid, *Islamku Islam You Our Islam: Religion Society Democracy* (Jakarta: The Wahid Institute, 2006), p. xiii

D. Islam and the Sharia

Gus Dur and Khalil have a similar idea about Islamic renewal. *The first reason* is that Gus Dur and Khalil do not agree in establishing an Islamic state based on the sharia in Egypt and Indonesia, because it does not fit with the reality of it for the Republic or democratic state that has been mutually agreed. *Secondly*, both figures have started their Islamic renewal idea since 1970's for facing a group of Islamism⁹ textualist in understanding of Islam and the sharia at that time. *Third*, their thinkings are affected by the power-relation between the regime and Islamism as opposition involving the sharia.

The similarity in the renewal of Islam and the sharia thinking, both Gus Dur and Khalil had also been influenced by their predecessor, i.e. Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905) from Egypt. Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905)¹⁰ was a prominent liberal Islamic thinker and reformer of Islam on early generation in Egypt. Islamic renewal thinking of Muhammad 'Abduh came from his confusion in the problems of *taqlid*. He wanted to liberate Muslims in Egypt from their habit of *taqlid*. He had opened the way of secularization to take control of the state affairs and make the European model as that of the national state.¹¹ What is the best in the West, according to 'Abduh is the secular education model. He also founded the Western secular education institution. The goal was that Muslims in Egypt were capable of thinking "rationalist" and Islamic thought can be developed. This institution played an important role in the creation of

⁹ Acres of Islamists who seek and formally to make Islam the basis for public life, particularly politics, but also economics, culture and society. View the world primarily Islamists, if not exclusively, through an Islamic prism and commonly see implementation of governors tried early on the U.S. central to their agenda. There is considerable, but not total, overlap between Islamism and radicalism United States categories. While many Islamists aspire to bring about an Islamic transformation of society, other Islamists acres the trainer needs to to gradually increases change and work within the existing political structures to achieve this. See sssVirginia Hooker and Greg Fealy, "Introduction to the Sourcebook", in *Voices of Islam in Southeast Asia: A Contemporary Sourcebook*, ed. Greg Fealy and Virginia Hooker (Singapore, ISEAS Publications, 2006), p. 835). 4

¹⁰ Birth and death.

¹¹ Malise Ruthven, *Islam in the World* (London: Granata Books, 2006), p. 835). 305.

the nationalist culture and became the center for the development of the nationalist ideology. Thus, the younger generation of Muslim scholars in Egypt in the 1930's and the 1940's were not only formed by Islam and religious institutions, but also by secular institution. 'Abduh reasoned that without the influence of secular nationalists, the intellectual tradition that represents scholars will not appear.¹² What is the best in Islam and the sharia can be seen from the purpose of the revelation for the benefit of humanity through the ages.¹³

Muhammad 'Abduh's thinking had indirectly made an inspiration for motivating reformist figures of thinking of Islam and the sharia, including Gus Dur and Khalil who had become students at al-Azhar University. So, the important red thread from both figures was their rejection of the formalisation of the sharia and ideolising Islam; they tended more likely to Islamic cultural model. As evidence, both Gus Dur and Khalil did not agree with the idea of the realization of the Islamic state, both in Egypt and in Indonesia. But there was a point of difference, namely in terms of the concept used for refusing the power. Gus Dur tended with the concept of Islamic cultural to reject the existence of Islamic state and the formal application of the the sharia in Indonesia. Khalil used the concept of the historical contextuality of the sharia. His reason is that the return to the root of the problem was the most appropriate way to demonstrate the truth of scientific and rational views. These are the points of the similarities and differences between Gus Dur and Khalil.

E. Islam and Tradition

Khalil Abdul Karim's idea about Islam and Arab Tradition

According to Khalil, based on the results of his research, the Arab traditions had been made as the basic materials of Islam (the sharia), because the Arab tradition was a source of a variety of laws, norms, systems, customs and traditions where Islam had used that tradition. Islam had been inheriting all aspects of life, such as: the

¹² Mona Abaza, *Changing...*, hlm. 9.

¹³ Mona Abaza, *Changing...*, p. 835). 9.

problems of ritual, religious, civic, economic, social, political, and law (legislation).¹⁴ This statement indicates that the Arabs in pre-Islamic tradition were the material for the teachings of Islam and the sharia. However, it does not mean that Islam and the sharia are identical with the Arab tradition and must remain in the form of the Arab tradition whenever Islam and the sharia have been made rules to put into practice.

Furthermore, according to Khalil Islam had inherited many pre-Islamic Arab tradition, even was overloaded in all aspects of the life of Islam: the rituals of worship, civic, economic, social, political, as well as legal (legislation).¹⁵ The pre-Islamic Arab tradition itself was derived from the Prophet Ibrahim's religion, i.e. Hanif religion that had been misunderstood by most of the Arabs at that time. The tradition had been adopted in Islam and is still being practiced until now by Muslims all over the world. For example, the glorification of the Kaaba, Pilgrimage, Umrah, the honor towards Prophet Ibrahim and Ismail, the sacredness of the Ramadan and Fasting, the prayer, the distribution of wealth, the congregation on Friday (Friday prayer), and the veneration of the sacred months. On the problems of the social institution and penalties, there were the incantations and mantra, polygamy, the honoring of offsprings, slavery, *al-Aqilah* (*diyat/fines*), and *Qasamah* (the oath).

What has been mentioned above, according to Khalil, is the blueprint or test run for Islam and the sharia in this era. There are some issues that will be causing a fierce polemic. Khalil gave some examples: the debate among followers of Islamism erupting unexpectedly in Egypt at the end of Rabi'ul 1989, triggering the debate surrounding the deposit rates, and banking activities. This debate can break the *du'at* (Islamism) ranks that they refer to as a compact group, turning into two camps facing each other. So, this debate among the *du'at* (Islamism) themselves throwing the vilest accusations, the dirtiest expression, and the most abusive expression among themselves to the extent that two instances of the official

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 835). 11.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 835). 12.

religious institutions, al-Azhar and *Dar al-Ifta'* University stood opposing each other.¹⁶

In this case, Khalil tried to find the answers for the problems that posed by the *du'āt* (Islamism) about the issue of the Arab traditions and customs that had existed before Islam and the sharia. There was revival for the traditions and customs as well as the systems of ancient Arab tribalistic life presented by the tribes of the Interior. It is still living among the Muslims until now in the Arabian peninsula, as well as in the Gulf countries, Yemen, ' Irāq, Sūriyā, Jordan, Sīnā, Maṭrūḥ, Republic of Libya and across the saharan desert in other Arab countries.¹⁷

According to the author, what was termed by Khalil as blueprint can be used as rationale in resolving the problem of the sharia dealing with the problems of modern era outside of the Arab world. The reality of historical the sharia was very open and accepted openness, more emphasis on compromise and dialogue with local traditions, where Islam came as a new religion to introduce itself in front of audiences who are not considered ignorant. Furthermore, Islam can co-exist peacefully with the old tradition that already exists. The sharia has honored the pre-Islamic Arab tradition and adopted it into the teachings of Islam.

For the sake of avoiding repetition in misunderstanding what has happened during the time the sharia was being practised in the Arab world in terms of the worship tradition, dressed, the practice of social life, economic and politic, exposure is clearly needed in this case. Allah revealed Islam and the sharia in the presence of the Arabic tradition has a sense that Islam was not to be said "this is me" but Islam tends to be said "who is in front of me". Islam and the sharia could always be adapted by anyone, anywhere and anytime.

For example it can be seen from the rites of worship inherited by the Arab tribes, as follows:

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 835). 12-13.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 835). 13.

a. The glorification of the Kaaba as a Sacred House and the Holy Land.

Before Islam in the Arabian peninsula, there had been twenty one Ka'bas, but the whole Arab tribes agreed to glorify the Ka'ba in Mecca and tried hard to be able to perform the pilgrimage to the city. This is the image that the glorification of the Ka'ba was an Arab tradition that has been practiced hereditarily.

" I swear to the Ka'ba that was surrounded By the people from the descendants of Quraish and Jurhum."¹⁸

As a form of glorification of the Ka'ba for the Arabs at that time this had also been done by the Jewish and Christians religions participating in the conduct of worship in the hajj season. They considered that the Holy Kaaba was sacred, when someone during the pilgrimage of Hajj accidentally saw his father's killer in the Sacred House, he did not want to disturb him at all.¹⁹ In addition to the glorification of the Ka'ba, the Arabs also greatly honored and glorified the inhabitants of Mecca (Quraish) and called them " *Ahlul Harām* " (the inhabitants of the Holy Land).

Islam came to do the same thing that had been done by the Arabs before to the Ka'bah and the inhabitants of Mecca. The Qur'an refers to Mecca as a safe and peaceful place (who entered it his place will be safe and peaceful).²⁰ Allah had chosen the city of Mecca as the first point of Islam, as well as the son of Quraish from the Prophet Ismail who was Prophet Muhammad.

According to the author, this means that Islam does not reject anything good that had become a habit and tradition of the Arabs from their ancestors, even Islam tends to be complementary and perfect for the benefit of the human life. Efforts towards perfection will continue until now, so that Islam and the sharia can co-exist in public life for every time, including in the current global era.

¹⁸ The seven best poetry affixed in the wall of the Ka'ba, *Ibid.*, p. 835). 15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 835). 15.

²⁰ 4 Ali Imran [3]: 97.

b. Hajj and Umrah

Pre-Islamic Arabs have performed the pilgrimage on *Zulhijjah* every year. That month was very famous and was called "the Hajj season". Pre-Islamic Arabs did the rituals during the Hajj as that was done by the Muslims performing the pilgrimage to the Holy land until now. The rituals like the *talbiyah*, *ihram*, wearing *ihram*, sacrificing animals and announcing it, *wuqūf* in 'Arafah, marching toward Muzdalifah, departing to Mina to throw pebbles, slaughtering animals, *ṭawāf* around the Ka'ba seven cycles, and kissing the Black Stone (*al-Ḥajar al-Aswad*), and the *sa'i* between Ṣafa' and Marwah. They called the 8th Zulhijjah *Yaumu al-Tarwiyah* (the Tarwiyah day), *wuqūf* at 'Arafah on the ninth day of the ten days starting going toward Mina and throw pebbles. They called those days the Tasyrīq day. So they performed umrah ritual outside of Hajj season.²¹

There were some rituals of Hajj to be eliminated by Islam, like the expressions embodied in the *talbiyah* indicating polytheism (worshipping idols around the Ka'ba), and performing the *ṭawāf* naked. So, rituals considered good and do not violate the sharia, are still adopted in Islamic teachings and ritual and become routine in the Hajj and the Umrah.

c. Purification of the Month of *Ramadan*

There was a tradition of the followers of Prophet Ibrahim religion (Hanīfiyyah group) in Arabia on the coming of every Ramaḍan to go to the cave of Hira far off the road. This is always done by Abdul Muṭalib and his followers. In this holy month it was highly recommended to give charity to the poor as a form of respect for the exalted month.²²

According to the author, the habit of Abdul Mutalib have been followed by his grandson, i.e. Prophet Muhammad. He was always off the road in the cave of Hira to reflect and seek answers for the problems he was facing, particularly the problems of the people at that time. Eventually, Muhammad got instructions from Allah by

²¹ Khalil Abdul Karim, *al-Juzuru al-Tarikhiah li al-shari'ah al-Islamiyah* (Cairo: Sina li al Nasyr, 1990), p. 16-17

²² *Ibid.*, p.30.18.

receiving His revelation via the angel Gabriel as a milestone for the beginning the spread of Islam in Arabia, namely in 610 M.

So, the habit of Prophet Muhammad going to the cave of Hira far off the road away from problems of life at that time was no merely a bouquet and wishful thinking of Prophet Muhammad without any basis. This habit had been taught by his grandfather, Abdul Mutalib, as an example to his followers, because he remained consistent in upholding the teachings of Prophet Ibrahim (Hanīf religion) until the end of his life.

Abdul Mutalib was a prominent figure who was admired by his people due to his good character and discipline, good in his worship, and dealing with others. He could always be fair and wise in resolving any problems of his community. He was regarded as the person who had the power, but he did not use his influence to seek personal gain and pleasure. He had done a strategy of power with the discipline method for himself and his followers and put into practice in the Prophet Muhammad's life from childhood until he was appointed as a Prophet and a Apostle.

Based on the exposure of the Khalil's text above, I can explain that the examples of the Arab traditions which have been mentioned implies the existence of the sharia. What had already existed and good for the Arabian life at that time was highly appreciated. However, it does not mean that the the sharia was identical with the Arab, purity, sacredness, and permanence.

Islam (the sharia) was not identical with the Arab tradition, because Islam and the sharia as described from the beginning came to Mecca and was very friendly with environment. This means that Islam can be moved to any places out of the Arabs for every time, also it does not need to be antidentical with Arab tradition. For example, how to dress for Indonesian, even they had already converted to Islam, and this means that they do not need to change their dress model like the Arabian dress, and as understood by the groups of Islamism, they do not need to wear veils for women and to wear robes for men.

Most the teaching of Islam were adopted from the pre-Islamic Arab tradition, and this means that Islam came only to repair and

improve the teaching of the Prophets before, such as the teachings in the Hanīf religion that had been taught by Prophet Ibrahim, practiced and followed by the pre-Islamic Arabs.

The sharia was not permanent, because it still could be reinterpreted when times changed and come new issues that have not been specified their level of the law through an *ijtihad* called Fiqh. Khalīl confirms that the holy Qur'an was permanent and sacred that it was written based on revelation, but in terms of interpretation as a result of human *ijtihad* it still can be changed for every time.

The Egyptian scholar, Muhammad al-Nuwaiḥī, who coincided with the Khalīl's thinking, denied the discourse to mention that the sharia was permanent. He believed that Islam was a religion that generally progressive and revolutionary, but since the decadence era (decline and retreat), Islam went back, i.e. the development of intellectuality was halted, and the mindset of the community was closed too. He mentioned two reasons for this, namely: (1) the emergence of a class in the society which has monopoly on the interpretations of religion that claimed that they were the only group that was true when they talked about religion and defined the appropriate doctrine or anything incompatible with the religion; and (2) this class was confidence that the sources of religion or its texts have rules and precepts that bind, and cannot be modified or changed, both relating to the doctrine or the problems of daily life.²³

Al-Nuwaiḥī confirmed that the system of grade levels mentioned above was not recognized in Islam, because Islam did not differentiate the classes in the community. He recognized the importance of the existence of the experts who studied Islam, but he objected the claim of "infallibility" (cannot be wrong). This Islamism's group refused to hold discussion, but accused the intellectual opponents of becoming infidels or atheists, and attempted to ban the publication of books that might marginalize it, performing alongside with the Government the seizure of the books, if it was

²³ The book paper Issa J. Boullata, *Trends and Issues in Contemporary Arab Thought, published in bahasa Indonesia with the title: inane deconstruction traditions: Gelegar Arab Thought of Islam, terj. The High Priest Khoiri.* (Yogyakarta: LKiS. 2001), p. 88-89.

published, harrasing th authors and the authority, and enciting the public to fight it.²⁴

Al-Nuwaihî affirmed that religious sources were early, the rules and the teachings of Islam were not raw materials with the categories and absolute forms. Al-Nuwaihî rejected the statements of scholars that the sources were perfect and a comprehensive system that was appropriate for all people in any place and time without need for change. When they referred to the Koran to support their opinion, al-Nuwaihî was against their interpretation. For example, he said that there was the word of Allah which states:

"We do not leave anything in that book (the Koran)."²⁵

The meaning of the verse did not mean that Allah had mentioned everything in the Koran like what they said. In this context, the Koran was in *al-lauh al-mahfûz* (the Preserved Tablet) from which Allah derived the natural and eternal decrees mentioned in the Koran including the whole of his creation, the fate of all people and the provision for every things. Scholars often refer to the word of Allah:

"And We had sent down the Koran to explain everything".²⁶

*"... a book that explains everything"*²⁷

"This day I have perfected for you your religion, and I have completed My favors to you, and I have been pleased Islam as a religion for you".²⁸

According to al-Nuwaihî these verses will be used just a reference for the principles of religious doctrines, and not related with the problems of the daily lives. Al-Nuwaihî did not agree with the person who claimed that the Koran is a recording of the entire science and the whole area of human knowledge.²⁹

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 835). 89.

²⁵ Q.S. Al-An'ām [6]: 38.

²⁶ Q.S. Al-Nahl [4]: 89.

²⁷ Q.S. Yusuf [12]: 111.

²⁸ Q.S. Al-Ma'idāh [5]: 3.

²⁹ The book paper Issa J. Boullata, *Trends and Issues...*, p. 835). 90.

According to al-Nuwaihi by recognizing the depth, diversity, complexity, and the investigation of the modern science, he accused them that they had adopted the position of people who leave the human intellect, calling for social stagnation and the view that turned to back the reactionary. So, he did not agree with their idea that the Holy Koran, the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad and Mazhabs of Islamic law had the solution for all problems in human lives. He stated that such persons did not need to be advised. The reason is that because they did not know anything about the extent and complexity of the law of science, the code, and the history of Islamic law through many changes and developments, and that they were shown the vitality and flexibility at the time where Islamic law had the dominant influence.³⁰

The image of al-Nuwaihi's thinking above can clarify more the existence of discursive structure that called the the sharia to be permanent, and there was no need for compliance with the local wisdom whenever the sharia is applied. This discourse continues to spread and crystallized without a clear way out. The model of the old structure did not matter more to the interests of humanity, hiding behind the reality of real life, and assume that everythings was not important for maintaining the status quo.

Based on the Islamism thinking above, I argue that they survived in the tradition of the sharia-minded and rejected democracy. The reason is that in addition to the related power it was the impact of traumatic life during the middle of the century over 500 years (from the 13th century until the 18th century AD). They cannot afford to build a new thinking, for fear of violating their parents who simply existed during classical period. They can only conclude what it is (based on the literal meaning of the text) from what has been coined by the scholars in classical period.

Umar bin Khaṭṭab (d. 644 M) firmly did not apply the terms of certain provisions of the Koran, because there was a difference in the condition of life on the moment with the condition at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632 M). For example, (1) Umar had stopped punishing the thieves during the period of scarcity that was

³⁰ *Ibid.*

temporarily in conflict with Q.S. al-Maidah [5]: 38; and (2) Umar did not give zakāt for those whose hearts were still weak with Islam (*al-mu'allafu qulūbuhum*), as set in the Q.S. at-Taubah [9]: 60.

In terms of the share in inheritance in the past, the girls got only half of the boys' shares, and this needs to be reviewed, because it was incompatible with the modern life in this era. Is it still fair that girls get half of boys' shares? It should be understood that the interpretation of the text can be repeated for every time, while that cannot to be changed just because of the authenticity of the text of the Koran. This is the emphasis from al-Nuwaihi that has become the duty of Muslim leaders to find solutions themselves for the modern issues and answer the modern problems without needing to "authenticate" the past traditions.

There is another Arab thinker who holds the same with Khalil's thinking describing the possibility of terminating the implementation of certain provisions of the Glorious Koran. If the conditions demanded, according to a scholar from Lebanon, Hasan Sha'b in his book, *al-Islām Tijāh Tahāddiyāt al-Hayāt al-ʿAşriyyah* (Islam face the challenges of Modern life) he said:

"No one can cancel our intelligence in understanding the Koran in new ways based on conditions that were unprecedented. If we see the need to stop the implementations (*waqf al-'ammah*) one of the provisions of the text of the Koran, Allah gave these rights to us. Because He wants His word to be practised and not without action as the cause of success so that it does not harm us."³¹

Hasan Sha'b asserted that this opinion was not a departure from the historical precedent as performed by al-Nuwaihi, but from the starting point of theological case that takes seriously the concept of the Holy Koran that the human beings were the caliphs of Allah on the earth (for example in Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 30), and that free human beings can reach the truth under the guidance of Allah, using their minds and senses (e.g. Q.S. ar-Ra'd [13]: 1-14). Consequently, Hasan Sha'b understood Islam as a process of "becoming" the endless, in revolutionism intellectual that continued support, and ideological framework. where Islamic civilization can always

³¹ *Ibid.*, hlm. 95.

creatively be reformd with the help of creative imagination possessed by everybody as the servant of Allah on this earth. According to Hasan Sha'b, if modern civilization was basically rational and scientific in nature, Islam would be metaphysical and the Islamic civilization would be essentially religious. This fact in his opinion was the origin of the emergence of challenges to modern life confronting Islam. It is because the creative mind only which enables Islam to be out of the challenge, and the human beings must act independently to find the spirit or the essence of true Islam in order to establish a new Islamic civilization.³² The chained human beings, living in traumatic and stress will not be able to disburse their existing ideas stored in their memory. Only the free human beings that can sharpen their intelligence and creativity to transform a civilization into a more advanced one and can be enjoyed by modern society.

According to my opinion, logically, Allah is very supportive for every work of His servants in order to straighten out the goodness of life for themself and their community. Whatever the form of the solution, as long as it is for the benefit of human survival on the earth, it would be preferred. Reality is instrumental as the basis for any decision making that is fair and wise in the universal, humane, and spiritual life. A democratic spiritual structure which does not distinguish between Muslims and non-Muslims, men and women should be generated, because Allah does not make any preference. The human kindness should be developed and the human beings must act to give a positive value for themselves, their families and communities.

Gus Dur's idea about the theory of the *Pribumisasi Islam*

Pribumisasi Islam for the first time had been proposed by Gus Dur in 1980's which it was a manifesto for *Islam Nusantara*, as the strategy that was once done by Wali Songo in order to islamize Java in the 14th century.³³ After that, the *Pribumusasi Islam* held different

³² *Ibid.*, hlm. 96.

³³ Wali Songo tinggal di tiga wilayah penting pantai utara Pulau Jawa, yaitu: Surabaya-Gresik-Lamongan Jawa Timur, Demak-Kudus- Muria Jawa Tengah, dan Cirebon Jawa Barat. (Sahal, 2017)

interest in the intellectual environment, either among the young or older intellectuals.³⁴ The core contention around the term "Arabism" is whether Islam is identical with the Arab tradition or not? While the core of the *Pribumisasi Islam* was that in order to perpetuate Islam and the sharia in public areas wherever and whenever Islam will be practised as a religion. The reason is that Islam will never come alone since its first era until now, there were religions and traditions that have been around and preceded both in Mecca and Madinah, or other places all over the world, including in Indonesia. Islam as a religion will continue to experience the continuing historicity,³⁵ such as the existence of ritual practices in the culture of marriage between local culture and Islam in Indonesia. For example, marriages that occurred in my area, i.e. Lampung, Sumatra, Indonesia, the marriage ritual used the Lampung custom in terms of dress, marriage arrangements, and the manners in eating, but in terms of *ijab* and *qabul* it remained based on the sharia. This was a co-existence between local traditions and the sharia that can occur and the marriage law can be said to be valid.

Gus Dur through his theory of *Pribumisasi Islam* argued that the historical context of Islam at the time of Prophet Muhammad's era in Mecca and Medina, as already explained by Khalil required the contextualisation of Islam, not the change of the doctrines of Islam, but for the safety of the teachings of Islam to fit the needs of the Muslim community in any time and place. Islam must remain able to adapt and co-exist with many traditions from one country to another, and from one area to another. This reason has become the basis by which Gus Dur rejected the equation between Islam and the Arab

³⁴ Pada tanggal 8-9 Maret 1989, sekitar 200 kiai berkumpul di Pondok Pesantren Darut Tauhid Arjawinangun Cirebon untuk mengadili Gus Dur dengan konsep Pribumisasi Islam yang telah diidekannya. Namun demikian Gus Dur tetap mampu menjawab dengan bahasa yang sangat tetap dan tidak bisa dibantah lagi, yaitu bahwa ide Pribumisasi Islam dimaksud hanyalah melanjutkan dan menghidupkan kembali tentang apa yang telah diidekan oleh para pendahulunya, yaitu Wali Songo. Wali Songo telah berhasil mengislamkan tanah Jawa dengan menggunakan teori Pribumisasi Islam, yaitu syiar Islam dengan cara tetap menghargai dan menghormati tradisi lokal yang sudah ada dan dipraktikkan secara turun-temurun di dalam masyarakat Jawa. Lihat Fitriah Asad, *Pemikiran Abdurrahman Wahid . . .*, p. 45.

³⁵ Zada Khamami, dkk, Search for Islam Indigenous: answered the face of Islam Indonesia, in the Journal *Tashwirul Afkar*, No. 14, 2003, p.9-10.

tradition. Adherents of Islam outside the Arab world just practised Islamic teachings based on the sharia and they did not need to follow the Arab tradition, such as how to dress, to eat, and to deal with people, because of the widely difference between Islam and Arab tradition. The other reason that Arabization was not necessarily matched with the tradition in Indonesia or in other countries where there were adherents of Islam.

Pribumisasi Islam does not mean that Islam has been put in the subordination of culture and tradition, nor does the "Jawanisasi" or syncretism. As mentioned in the history of Islam in Java there had been a reconciliation between the palace with Islamic tradition, at Sultan Agung's period in Mataram in 1613-1646 M. Although he remains loyal to Ratu Kidul, his palace was more 'Islamic' in appearance. He liked to make a pilgrimage to the tombs of the Saints, introduced the principal literature about Islam, a sort of Book Usulbiyah, and sent messengers to the ruler of Hijaz to recognise him as 'a sultan' which was the *khalifatullah zhillullah fil ardhi*.³⁶ The results in the stage of this Islamization was called by M.C. Ricklefs³⁷ as a 'mystical synthesis' on three basic: *First*, realizing a strong Islamic identity, becoming Javanese at the same time becoming Muslims. *Second*, performing the five pillars of Islam. *Third*, accepting the reality of religious tradition and local culture about Ratu Kidul, Sunan Lawu, and other supernatural creatures.³⁸ This is the manifestation of the image of Islam which met with Javanese tradition when Islam came to Indonesia for the early stages, and could not remove the previous tradition. As Islam came in Arabia face to face with pre-Islamic Arab tradition, Islam still respected and honored the Arab tradition. Islam even took that tradition as the teaching of Islam and endorsed by revelation. 085253173895

The goal of *Pribumisasi Islam* was how to let Islam be well-understood, and still considered the contextual or local needs into

³⁶ Azyumardi Azra, Islamisation of Java, in the Journal Studia Islamika: English Journal for Islamic Studies Vol. 20, no. 1, 2013, p. 172-173.

³⁷ M.C. Ricklefs is the author of the book *Islamisation and Its opponents in Java: A Political, Social and Religious History, c. 1930 to the present* (Singapore: NUS IN Press, 2012, xxi+575 page)

³⁸ *Ibid*, h. 173

consideration in formulating the law of religion without changing the law itself. The meaning that Islamic teachings contained in the sharia was necessarily very flexible from the first era until now.

Pribumisasi Islam is the answer of the authentic Islam which is applicable in all places and times. *The first*, the *Pribumisasi Islam* is contextual in its nature, namely Islam is understood as a teaching that is related to the context of the times and places. This is particularly relevant to Khalil's theory of the practice of Islamic preaching in the first era in Islam, i.e. in the era of Prophet Muhammad in Mecca (610-622 M) and in Medina (622-632 M). It is the blueprint for the practice of Islamic preaching in this era. The changes of time and place is the key to test that Islam remains adaptable wherever and whenever Islam will be practiced as a religion and the rules of the human life. *The Second, Pribumisasi Islam* is being progressive, where the progress of the era is not understood as a threat to the sharia, but can be seen as a trigger for conducting a creative response intensively. *The Third, Pribumisasi Islam* has liberal character where Islam can answer the problems of humanity universally regardless of religious and ethnic differences. This is evidence that Islam and the sharia are very flexible, not rigid.³⁹

The idea of Gus Dur about the *Pribumisasi Islam* was very relevant with Khalil's idea for the first the sharia that came among pre-Islamic Arab tradition as the blueprint or test for Islam and the sharia in this era. It means that Islam for the first time came to Mecca dealing with Arab religion and tradition that had been embraced by the Arabs as legacy. It was very reasonable if Prophet Muhammad for the first time preached about Islam just had two hundred followers until he moved to Medina to continue preaching Islam as religion that had been revealed by Allah to him. The teachings of the religion before Islam existed in Mecca, namely Hanif religion and most of the Arab tradition that was good and fair to keep the Islamic teachings, had even been confirmed in the Koran and Sunnah, such as the tradition of inheritance and marriage.

Gus Dur and Khalil had been quite clear in explaining about how to preach Islam among other religions and traditions from one

³⁹ Fitriah Asad, Thoughts Abdurrahman Wahid . . . , P. 44)

place to another. Islam and the sharia will not become enemies of other religions and traditions that had already existed before in the place where Islam will begin to be taught and practiced. Islam was very much appreciated and respected the traditions since the first time in the history of Islam in Mecca which also had a tradition of ancestral heritage of the Arabs. So, wherever Islam can still accept traditions that bring benefit to the human life in public from the original, there was space. *Pribumisasi Islam* will not change the Koran as the basic teachings of Islam to the Batak Koran or the Java Hadith. The Koranic verses should not be changed even one character. What can be changed is the interpretation of the Koran itself in order to maintain the existence of the sharia in public life.

F. Conclusion

The ideas of Gus Dur and Khalil about Islam and local tradition are how Islam as a normative teachings from Allah be able to be accommodated into local traditions different from the Arab tradition and of other countries without losing their identity. Islam has been settled in the teaching of Islam and tradition and remains in the core tradition. Islam is certainly not identical with the Arab tradition; Islam is a religion that comes from Allah the Almighty through the angel Gabriel to Prophet Muhammad *s.a.w.* in Arabia (Mecca). Islam was revealed for all people in the world — not just for the Arabs — for everybody who wants to embrace Islam. Adherents of the Islamic religion outside the Arab world do not need to follow the Arab tradition, such as in terms of the pattern of dress, eating and customs. Thus the adherents of Islam outside the Arab world are still able to use their usual tradition in terms of dress, how to eat, and customs. This is the idea of *Pribumisasi Islam* from Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) and the description of the earliest period of Islam in Mecca and Medina as a blueprint in this time from Khalil Abdul Karim.

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