



Conception of Tradition and Religion According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Abdurrahman Wahid, and Nurcholish Majid

This article explores three primary perspectives regarding the concepts of tradition and religion. Despite the prevailing tendency among modern Muslim communities to separate tradition from religion, this research presents a contrasting view. For instance, Seyyed Hossein Nasr investigates the essential relationship between tradition and religion, formulating a new approach grounded in perennial philosophy. Additionally, Abdurrahman Wahid significantly contributes by defining tradition and religion within the discourse of localism, providing profound insights into how they mutually shape the cultural and social identity of modern Muslim society. On the other hand, Nurcholish Majid proposes that tradition and religion are parallel within the concept of the Great Tradition, offering a unique understanding of their interrelation. Utilizing a comparative study method, this article analyzes the perspectives of these three scholars on tradition and religion. This research is expected to provide valuable insights and stimulate further discussion on the intricate relationship between tradition and religion in the context of modern Muslim thought.

Keywords: *Tradition; Religion; Philosophy; Wisdom*

Artikel ini mengeksplorasi tiga perspektif utama dari pemikir Muslim terkait konsep tradisi dan agama. Meskipun mayoritas masyarakat Muslim modern cenderung memisahkan tradisi dan agama, penelitian ini menggambarkan pandangan sebaliknya. Seyyed Hossein Nasr misalnya, yang menyelidiki hubungan esensial antara tradisi dan agama dengan merumuskan pendekatan baru berbasis filsafat perenial. Sementara itu, Abdurrahman Wahid memberikan sumbangan signifikan dengan mendefinisikan tradisi dan agama dalam diskursus pribumisasi. Perspektifnya membawa pemahaman yang mendalam tentang bagaimana keduanya saling membentuk identitas kultural dan sosial dalam masyarakat Muslim modern. Nurcholish Majid, di sisi lain, mengusulkan bahwa tradisi dan agama sejajar dalam konsep Tradisi Besar, menciptakan pemahaman yang unik tentang hubungan antara keduanya. Menggunakan metode studi komparatif, artikel ini menganalisis pandangan ketiga pemikir tersebut terhadap tradisi dan agama. Meski terkadang pemikiran mereka terlihat kompleks, ide-ide ini memberikan kontribusi berharga dalam membentuk paradigma baru untuk memahami makna agama dan tradisi secara lebih mendalam.

Kata kunci: Tradisi; Agama; Filsafat; Kebijakanaksanaan

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Introduction

Religious violence in today's society that disrupts national stability is often classified as radicalism. The national newspapers in Indonesia have reported many cases of suicide bombings from time to time, including the one taking place in a famous hotel in Surabaya for religious agency. Previously, similar suicide bombings occurred in Bali,¹ that shattered the heart of many parties. These radical terrors in the name of religion are mainly attributed to exclusivism and violence.²

Abdurrahman Wahid stated that to avoid radical mind, we have to control our suspicion against modernism which creates radicalization. Terrorism principally contradicts Islamic pluralism, which is upheld to bring about harmony in the world of multi religious society.³

This study, thus, aims to present an in-depth understanding of religion and tradition from the perennial perspective by way of finding similar conception between religion and tradition.. This article argues that tradition is not different from religion as they both means the journey to God. Religion constitutes the rule about man's journey to God.

This comparative study used a qualitative research approach to analyze the thought of three Muslim scholars: SH. Nasr, Abdurahman Wahid, and Nurcholish Madjid. The author collected, observed, and classified the data from book written by these scholars as primary sources. SH. Nasr defined the term tradition in his book as Knowledge and the Sacred, while the term Great Tradition was taken from Ernes Gellner as quoted by Nurcholish Madjid. Meanwhile, the term *Pribumisasi Islam* (local

tradition) was obtained from Abdurrahman Wahid's notion.

The significance of this research is about understanding the truth from universal perspective, since many scholars forget that the truth of being is perennial. The focus of this research is to analyze the notions of three Muslim scholars about religion and tradition; Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid as Indonesian experts of Islamic studies, and S.H. Nar, an Iranian philosopher.

Some scholars, such as Hendrik M. Vroom asserted that religion depends on truth. Hendrik has emphasized the relation between truth and religion. He also described Nasr's perspective on Islam and religion. Besides, Toshihiko Izutsu, who explained about Ibnu 'Arabi's understanding of religion, articulated that religion is about esoteric dimension in human. According to Ibnu 'Arabi, religion is about reaching towards God as the Ultimate reality, and the goal of human life. In this context, Annimarie Schimmel who described the mystical dimension of Islam⁴ said that truth and religion is closely related. Abdul Kadir Riyadi in his dissertation, *Show Me Thing as They are*, also asserted that we could find perennial truth from the inner beauty of human soul that is Islam, sufism, or tasawwuf. In other words, the perspective of Sufism considers tradition and religion as both referring to the inner reality of the universe.

Tradition and Religion

Tradition refers to an abstract conception that is deemed to contradict the conception of religion. Islamic tradition and Christian tradition is derived from the same source, namely the divine revelation through the

¹ Rusli, "Indonesian Salafism on Jihād and Suicide Bombings," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* (2014).

² Haidar Bagir, *Islam Tuhan Islam Manusia: Agama Dan Spiritualitas Di Zaman Kacau* (Bandung: Mizan, 2017), 45.

³ Abdurahman Wahid, *Islamku Islam Anda Islam Kita* (Jakarta: The Wahid Institute, 2006).

⁴ T. Nagel and Annemarie Schimmel, "Mystical Dimensions of Islam," *Die Welt des Islams* (1979); Said Amir Arjomand and Annemarie Schimmel, "Mystical Dimensions of Islam.," *Contemporary Sociology* (1978).





prophets of Islam and Christianity. Christianity appears as a religion of the will, while Islam is a religion of the intellect.⁵

In essence, Islam is the “reincarnation” of the previous religions. On this basis, it is clear that Islam is derived from the Truth (al Haqq). This is the Abrahamic tradition which we call tawhīd (unity). This spiritual belief is passed down from prophet Adam to other prophets before finally reaching Muhammad. The single Truth becomes obvious in the real world situation. Islam is thus the reassertion of this primordial truth.⁶

Nasr stated again in his other book the following:

Needless to say, each major tradition such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, or Islam presents a rich variety of schools often in contention with each other concerning the world of nature and religion's relation to the natural order. Countless studies could be devoted to any single religion as far as this issue is concerned. Our selection is meant to bring out some of the deepest salient features of the views concerning nature in the religious traditions we have discussed without in any way claiming to be exhaustive or asserting that the views chosen are exclusive in their presentation of the religious understanding of the order of nature in the religious world in question.⁷

Religion as tradition could exist without any disturbances because there is no society without religion. Anthropologist pronounced that religious believes have been adapted to many societies all around the world.⁸ Tradition was defined as “a way of behaving or a belief that has been established for a long time, or the practice of following behavior and beliefs that have been

so established.” Cambridge Dictionary, as quoted by Sumanto, defined tradition as a belief, principle, or way of acting that people in a particular society or group have continued to follow for a long time, or all of these beliefs, etc. in a particular society or group.. This belief is generally transmitted through oral communication, instead of a written text. Although transmitted through oral communication, tradition is always regarded as a historical message. Tradition is about religious values containing sacred aspects, such as greetings, and many others.⁹

According to Merriam- Webster Dictionary, quoted by Sumanto, word “tradition” have several meaning as following:

- An inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior
- A belief or story or a body of beliefs or stories relating to the past that are commonly accepted as historical though not verifiable
- The handing down of information, beliefs, and custom by word of mouth or by example from one generation to another without written instruction
- Cultural continuity in social attitudes, customs, and institutions
- Characteristic manner, method or style.¹⁰

According to Engels as quoted by Bryan S. Turner, “Religion is derived from religare originally meant a bond. Therefore, every bond between two people is a religion. Such

⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (Chicago: KAZI Publications, 2000).

⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 4.

⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁸ Husna Amin, “Makna Agama Sebagai Tradisi Dalam Bingkai Filsafat Perennial,” *Jurnal Filsafat* Vol. 22, Nomer 3, Desember 2012 (2012).

⁹ Sumanto Al Qurtuby dan Izak Y. M. Lattu (ed.), *Tradisi Dan Kebudayaan Nusantara* (Semarang: eLSA Press, 2019), x.

¹⁰ Sumanto Al Qurtuby dan Izak Y. M. Lattu (ed.), x.





etymological jugglery is the last resort of idealist philosophy".¹¹

The Meaning of Tradition by Seyyed Hossein Nasr

Nasr¹² stated that tradition is the origin of something. Tradition is the same as religion, because religion is the source of anything. Avatar, who shares similar role as the prophet in Islamic perspective, is deemed as the one who spreads religion. Tradition, like religion, is at once truth and presence.¹³

The source or religion is the divine reality that we can say about revelation to mankind, which is represented by the sacred symbol of alpha and omega, also known in Arabic as 'Huwa al awwal wa al akhir'.. In Sufism, it is also known as unity in diversity. The definition of tradition as stated by Nasr is different from the perspective widely held by of Muslims, who mostly separate between tradition and religion, although in fact tradition is like the branch of religion.

Nasr reinforced that:

In fact, the word tradition is related etymologically to transmission and contains within the scope of its meaning the idea of the transmission of knowledge, practice, techniques, laws, forms, and many other elements of both an oral and written nature. Tradition is like a living presence which leaves its imprint but is not reducible to that imprint.¹⁴

This means that tradition is more general than religion. Tradition contains all about human life, as Nasr asserted:

Tradition contains the sense of a truth which is both of divine origin and perpetuated throughout a major cycle of human history

through both transmission and renewal of the message by means of revelation. It also implies an inner truth which lies at the heart of different sacred forms and which is unique since Truth is one.¹⁵

To better understand the meaning of tradition, it is also necessary to discuss more comprehensively its relation to religion. If tradition is etymologically and conceptually related to transmission, religion at its root implies something "binding" (derived from the Latin *religare*). As aforementioned, it refers to what binds man to God and at the same time men to each other as members of a sacred community or people, or what Islam calls an *ummah*. In this sense, religion can be considered as the origin of tradition, as the heavenly beginning which through revelation manifests certain principles and truths whose applications then comprise tradition. However, as previously indicated, the plenary meaning of tradition includes this origin as well as its ramifications and deployment. In this sense, tradition is a more general concept.¹⁶

Nasr referred to this conception as perennial philosophy. Perennial philosophy is about eternal truth, beauty, and eternity. This concept is important especially in terms of existence. Perennial philosophy is the implementation of eternity. It becomes the world view of the Eastern society. Islam is religion of peace because in God's name it contains compassion and love.¹⁷

Nasr also held that: "They had an awareness of revelation, of wisdom, of the sacred and also knew of periods of decadence of their civilization and culture, but they had had no experience of a totally secularized and

¹¹ Bryan S. Turner, *Religion and Social Theory* (London: Sage Publication, 1983), 18.

¹² Ahmad Syauqi, "Retracing Jihad: A Comparative Study between Said Nursi and Seyyed Hossein Nasr," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* (2022).

¹³ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and The Sacred* (New York: State University of New York, 1989), 64.

¹⁴ Seyyed Hossein Nasr.

¹⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr.

¹⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 67.

¹⁷ Ahmad Norma Permata (ed.), *Perennialisme Melacak Jejak Filsafat Abadi* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 1996), viii-xv.





antitraditional world, which would necessitate the definition and formulation of tradition as has been the case today".¹⁸

All people are looking forward to reach the Ka'ba, because it is where people understand that the diversity of religions does not have to produce tensions. Those who truly love God understand that the Ka'ba is in reality God himself. Nasr captured the familiar image of the mountain on which people ascend to the highest along many paths; God himself has chosen various paths for serious people.¹⁹

Islam is rooted from the Qur'an, and the tradition of Arabic community. Islam contains sacred elements which have embraced the esoteric dimension of the tradition. Islam also constitutes moral norms found in Sufism.²⁰ Tasawwuf becomes the inner aspect of human life in Islam, while the term Ihsan is the same as tasawwuf. The first journey is about Islam and Iman as Sharia discourse. The second journey is tariqa, while the third journey is ma'rifa or *scientia sacra* as Nasr referred to in his book as knowledge and the sacred.

Nurcholish Madjid: Between Little Tradition and Great Tradition

Nurcholish Madjid²¹ stated that tradition is a sunnatullah (the immutable constants of Allah's system).²² This definition indicates that tradition is derived from theos (God), thereby pinpointing that all religion is tradition. Furthermore, citing Hodgson's writing of traditional-modern understanding, Nurcholish evocatively stated that classical Muslim society adhered to the modern approach, whereas the modern society refers to the traditional sense.

Citing Gellners statement, Nurcholish asserted that Great Tradition becomes more flexible in our society today. He stated:

"Only Islam will survive as a serious faith, one that transcends both the Lesser Traditions and the Great Traditions. The Great Tradition of Islam can still be modernized; and its implementation can be presented not as a new addition or concession to outsiders, but as a continuation and refinement of an old dialogue in Islam."²³

Islamic practices in Indonesia are different from those of other countries around the world. In Indonesia, Islam serves as a religion and cultural being, and thus it has a unique entity. Efforts to introduce the typically Indonesian Islamic culture (or Islam and culture) to the general public, including foreigners, are mostly performed through tourism. Such attempts are expected to increase the public awareness on Islamic culture, as well to generate international recognition and general acceptance especially among Muslim world that the form of Islamic culture in Indonesia is completely legitimate, and cannot be viewed as "less Islamic" than that of the other countries.²⁴

This paper aims to cover each of the three aspects in more detail by including the following points. (1) Pancasila as Kalimah Sawa' (of the statement of equality or common platform of this nation, namely Pancasila with its constitutional completeness. As a result, today, there are no problems of disintegration, between various Islamic organizations, such as NU and Muhammadiyah.²⁵

On this basis, there is an obvious correlation between religion and the pursuit of justice (or,

¹⁸ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and The Sacred*, 63.

¹⁹ Hendrik M. Vroom, *Religions and the Truth: Philosophical Reflections and Perspectives* (Netherlands: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 291.

²⁰ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 76.

²¹ Yusdani, "Islam and the Rearrangement of Society-State Relation in the Reformation Era of Indonesia," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* (2019).

²² Nurcholish Madjid, *Karya Lengkap Nurcholish Madjid* (Jakarta: NCMS, 2019), 50.

²³ Nurcholish Madjid, 1011.

²⁴ Nurcholish Madjid, 2031.

²⁵ Nurcholish Madjid, 2077.





negatively, among religion and the fight against injustice). This high level of wisdom and insight into humanity that is so sublime is seen as "the messenger" (derived from the origin of the Arabic words Prophet). The wisdom received by the prophet is not only for himself alone as he was also assigned with a sacred mission (treatise) to convey it to the general public. Thus, the prophet in Arabic is also known as "*Rasul*" (the bearer or owner of the holy mission) while at the same time is also considered as the "Messenger" of Allah Most High, who contains almost all the main elements of religion.²⁶

All prophets assigned to mankind are Muslims. They lived in obedience to God with great responsibility as human, and thus their followers must be Muslims. This attitude has been passed down as tradition considered as unity or tawhid, the oneness of God. Despite the multiple meanings of Islam according to mankind, it is basically a life journey to reach the reality of God.²⁷

Islam as a system contains both esoteric and exoteric elements. Islam maintains a balance between the inward and outward aspects of the self. However, some Muslims put more emphasis on one aspect without tolerating others.²⁸

In Madjid's perspective, Islam is a religion of obedience to God, as a creator of realities. In addition, Islam also requires a balance between human lives to understand universe as a mode of existence. The prophets ask human being to be good human and to have transcendental awareness.²⁹ Therefore, Madjid divided the definition of Islam into two meanings. The first is Special Islam and the second is General Islam.

Special Islam refers to something transmitted to our prophet Muhammad PBUH, which becomes universal religion, while general Islam is something given to all prophets from Adam to Muhammad.³⁰

Tradition and Religion in the Perspective of Abdurrahman Wahid

According to Abdurrahman Wahid,³¹ Islam cannot be understood as a formal set of sharia or Islamic law per se, because Muslims need to start a dialogue and live in harmony with others. This notion could be interpreted as the importance to relate between tradition and religion.³²

What is Islam? This is a very urgent question to answer. Abdurrahman Wahid asserted that Islam does not refer to a single meaning. The meaning of Islam depends on our perspective and overall it could be divided into three definitions as Wahid wrote in his article: *Islamku Islam Anda Islam Kita*. *Islam Kita* covers a very broad meaning about diversity in harmony within a single "frame". *Islamku* refers to Muslim's individual life that serves as a mirror of others, while *Islam Anda* is about the object (the other perspective). Hence, *Islamku* and *Islam Anda* have a very different perspective, which depends on individual interpretation of Islam. Thus, it is not acceptable to force others to embrace the same perspective since forcing others is undemocratic in nature, as Wahid revealed. Therefore, in this sense, it becomes clear that Islam is not a mere ideology since it has turned into culture and tradition.³³

The concept of Islamic Tradition becomes more flexible as it mostly covers patience as Gus

²⁶ Nurcholish Madjid, 2186.

²⁷ Nurcholish Madjid, 2189.

²⁸ Nurcholish Madjid, 2327.

²⁹ Zainal Abidin, "Teologi Inklusif Nurcholish Madjid: Harmonisasi Antara Keislaman, Keindonesiaan, Dan Kemoderenan," *HUMANIORA* Vol.5 No.2 Oktober 2014 (2014).

³⁰ Zainal Abidin, 670.

³¹ Yusdani, "Islam and the Rearrangement of Society-State Relation in the Reformation Era of Indonesia," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* (2019).

³² Abdurrahman Wahid, *Ilusi Negara Islam: Ekspansi Gerakan Islam Transnasional Di Indonesia* (Jakarta: The Wahid Institute, 2009).

³³ Abdurrahman Wahid, *Islamku Islam Anda Islam Kita*.





Dur stated. This moral value shows the universal message of Islam as contained in other religions, such as Judaism, Hinduism, and Christianity. In this perspective, the local wisdom of indigenous religion also becomes understandable. The principle of religious pluralism of Islam as practiced in Indonesia forbids its adherents to force non-Muslims to embrace the same perspective, as seen from how the government dealt with suicide bombing in Bali.³⁴

Abdurrahman Wahid also proposed *pribumisasi Islam* to refer to the attempt for reconciling Islam with the power of culture in the local wisdom. *Pribumisasi* is a necessity since it is not about polarization between religion and local culture. It is true that normative Islam still exists in society without any sincretization and javanization, which is generally known as "Islam Nusantara". This concept contains assimilation and acculturation between Arabic culture and local culture in Indonesia. This concept merges between Islam and local tradition so as to generate unique character of a living culture, without having one dominating the other.³⁵ The notion of *pribumisasi Islam* as ethical values does not merely serve as a theory, since it is evident from the unity between Islam and Indonesian tradition. This notion highlights that Islam is accepted by its adherents without any force, and were integrated with the life of the community to be inclusively practiced.³⁶

In normative aspect of religion, Abdurrahman believed that there shall be no division between eschatology and profanic

world. Religion is not just about eschatologism, but it is about the life of the world. Therefore, it is oriented towards spiritual approach to actualize the truth.³⁷

Islamic tradition goes along with indigenous culture to meet human needs. Being related to the Truth, Islamic tradition is concerned with the whole aspects of human life. The transcendent unity of Islamic tradition does not go against the local tradition, since the dynamic movement of Islamic tradition and indigenous culture is transmitted from time to time based on collective awareness.³⁸

Ascetism is a syncretic tradition derived from Javanese local wisdom and about the concept of Islam Nusantara. Abdurrahman Wahid stated that the religious life in Java is not the same as that in Saudi Arabia, since the Javanese culture highlights ascetism (known as *zuhud* in Islamic perspective).³⁹

There is a shared misunderstanding in the Western perspective about Islamic practices in Indonesia, as widely believed by many Americans. Such misunderstanding forced Abdurrahman Wahid to go abroad to disseminate the true meaning of Islam in the West and the East. In fact, Islam is different from the widely shared perspective. According to Abdurrahman Wahid, Islam contains cultural aspects.⁴⁰ Therefore, the relation between religion and culture is more enigmatic. The spread of Islam is through culture, art, and so forth in peace and harmony. No violence was involved in the process of spreading Islam in the archipelago (known as Islamization).⁴¹ Religion

³⁴ Abdurrahman Wahid.

³⁵ Fathoni Ahmad, "Islam Nusantara Menurut Gus Dur: Kajian Pribumisasi Islam," *Mozaic Islam Nusantara*, 1, Vol. 4 No. 1 April 2018 (2018).

³⁶ Luk Luk Nur Mufidah, "Pemikiran Gus Dur Tentang Pendidikan Karakter Dan Kearifan Lokal," *Al-Tahrir*, Vol. 15, No. 1 Mei 2015, 15 (2015).

³⁷ Saefur Rochmat, "Pandangan Abdurrahman Wahid Tentang Relasi Islam Dan Negara: Pendekatan Sosio-Kultural," *Millah* Vol. X, No 2, Februari 2011 (2011), 349.

³⁸ Abdurrahman Wahid, *Prisma Pemikiran Gus Dur* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 1999), 77.

³⁹ Abdurrahman Wahid, *Menggerakkan Tradisi: Esai-Esai Pesantren* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2001).

⁴⁰ Abdurrahman Wahid dan Daisaku Ikeda, *Dialog Peradaban Untuk Toleransi Dan Perdamaian* (Jakarta: The Wahid Institute, 2010).

⁴¹ Abdurrahman Wahid, *Islamku Islam Anda Islam Kita*, 42.





should be oriented towards the culture instead of establishing an institution, and thus the institutional spread of Islam is a conceptual misnomer.⁴²

As a traditionalist Muslim, Abdurrahman was inclined to embrace indigenous cultural expressions of religiosity. This was apparent in his attitude to the *wayang kulit*, or puppet shadow play, which came from the pre-Islamic world of Hinduism in Southeast Asia. Abdurrahman respected this culture not only for its art but also for its spiritual contents. The characters portrayed in the Javanese shadow theatre are drawn from the Mahabharata, the Hindu classic describing conflict between two clans of brothers, and from the Ramayana. The two groups of brothers in the Mahabharata based wayang kulit stories are in many respects very similar.⁴³

Abdurrahman Wahid became the President of Indonesia from 1999 until 2001, during which he tried to avoid from the grip of Suharto's power by cleaning the corrupt government. Such attempt was evident from the way he replaced. Parni Hadi, a journalist representative of LKBN ANTARA.⁴⁴

The Analysis of the Three Muslim Scholars' Thought

Wahid's notion of humanity is emphasized on life, and thus Abdurrahman Wahid highly opposed violence about humanity. He deemed religion and tradition as a human compassion. Love and wisdom are valued as the primary principle in his sense.⁴⁵

Indonesia has diverse ethnicities and cultures. This diversity demands mutual understanding and tolerance among people since Indonesia is a multi-religious country. Without tolerance, the nation may suffer from disintegration. Besides tolerance, it is also necessary to pay attention to pluralism as shown by mutual respect among fellow nations regardless of their religion. It is this type of religious pluralism that is always referred to by Gus.⁴⁶

Gus Dur is the father of pluralism in Indonesia as evidenced from his protective attitude towards every element of the nation. Gus Dur had played a significant role in the dynamics of this nation. However, problems arose when Gus Dur passed away since the whole nation lost the strong figure of Gus Dur, the Nation's Teacher. Will pluralism remain in existence or will it fade away? This is where it is important to resound the traces of Gus Dur's pluralism. Gus Dur frequently said: "Why worry?" However, now that the nation has lost the figure of Gus Dur, everything has become troublesome.

The first trace is tolerance. When many people were craving to establish an Islamic state for Indonesia, Gus Dur was adamant that Pancasila was the final principle of the state, which could not be tampered with. This was also agreed by Mahfud MD in the national dialogue at the AsSyaqawi Guluk-Guluk Hall, that the principles of the nation are final. In fact, the national law had been well 'established', as it only remains to shape the personality and morality of the people. This reflects Gus Dur's

⁴² Abdurrahman Wahid, 56.

⁴³ Greg Barton, *Abdurrahman Wahid: Muslim Democrat, Indonesian President*. (Australia: UNSW Press book, 1962), 120. Greg Barton, "Indonesia's Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid as Intellectual Ulama: The Meeting of Islamic Traditionalism and Modernism in Neo-Modernist Thought," *International Journal of Phytoremediation* (1997); Azyumardi Azra, "Intelektual Muslim Baru Dan Kajian Islam," *Studia Islamika* (2012).

⁴⁴ Virdika Rizky Utama, *Menjerat Gus Dur* (Jakarta: NUmedia, 2019), 114.

⁴⁵ Abdul Wahid Hasan, *Gus Dur: Mengarungi Jagat Spiritual Sang Guru Bangsa* (Yogyakarta: Diva Press, 2015), 239.

⁴⁶ M. Shofiyyuddin, "Masa Depan Kehidupan Beragama Dan Kearifan Budaya Lokal: Studi Terhadap Pemikiran Abdurrahman Wahid Mengenai Asal Usul Peradaban Islam Dan Implikasinya Di Masa Mendatang," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* (2012).



persistence to defend Pancasila, to uphold democracy and to respect for diversity. Indonesia is a country with many tribes to look after together and there should be no disintegration.

When people were hostile to the Chinese, because they were seen to endanger the nation, Gus Dur was at the forefront for defending the Chinese for believing that the Chinese could live in harmony with other ethnicity in Indonesia.

It is necessary to resound the principle of tolerance this time since some parties are about to undermine the unity of this nation. The 212 Movement is a clear evident of act of intolerance that needs a lot of attention. Thus, it is feared that some people will tear apart the unity of the nation after Gus Dur is gone. Gus Dur once said that he was willing to serve as a president because Indonesia was on the verge of 'collapse', and thus the nation needs his hand to fix the damage.

The second principle to learn from Gus Dur is compassion. Gus Dur's compassion was mainly devoted to the oppressed people. In line with Habermas' theory, the lower and the upper layers of society need to complement each other, like the upper lip, which always depends on the lower lip to speak. Communication must be two-way. and it must eliminate vested interests. In this case, Gus Dur always remembers the right of the minority.

Similarly, in Nasr perspective, this notion is known as the perennial philosophy. This is due to the fact that religion and tradition contain a sense of spirituality. According to Haidar Bagir, religion is a form of spirituality that Nasr also stated reinforced in his article, which is underpinned by the perennial perspective. All science, human thought, and religion are derived from the divine source, which we refer

to aswisdom. God's Wisdom is believed to be revealed to human through the prophets.⁴⁷

God is often referred to as the Truth. This is related to the notion that God is the perfect knowledge, as revealed by some thinkers who were influenced by Aristotle. Sometimes, it means that God knows all things and that sometimes it is connotated with the fact that that God has the truest act. This notion, thus embraces true knowledge, true being, and true action.⁴⁸

Islam and other religions basically are sent down to all human as the guide, which is the core of all religions. Although textually every religion has a special symbol and a universal message to consciousness, Abdurrahman Wahid emphasized human beings to live with pluralism and peaceful coexistence. Nasr stated that Islam is the final link from Adam to Muhammad: "Islam sees itself as the final link in a long chain of prophecy that goes back to Adam, who was not only the father of humanity, but also the first prophet. There is, in fact, but a single religion, that of Divine Unity, which has constituted the heart of all messages from Heaven and which Islam has come to assert in its final form."⁴⁹

In Madjid's perspective about tradition, it serves as a combination between Islam and tradition. Irrelevant local tradition is useless, as opposed to Islam that suits the life of Indonesian community and has to be spread from generation to generation. Quoting Geertz's writing about Islam in Indonesia and Morocco, Madjid agreed with acculturation and assimilation between religion and culture (tradition). Sunan Kalijaga in Java has greatly contributed to conversion of the adherents of Hinduism and Buddhism of Majapahit into Islam.

⁴⁷ Haidar Bagir, *Islam Tuhan Islam Manusia: Agama Dan Spiritualitas Di Zaman Kacau*. 183.

⁴⁸ Hendrik M. Vroom, *Religions and the Truth: Philosophical Reflections and Perspectives*. 317

⁴⁹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam: Religion, History, and Civilization* (Australia: HarperCollin Publishers, 2003), 3.



As an Indonesian scholar, Nurcholish Madjid has shown the need to deeply understand the truth. The Truth (with capitalized T) and with non-capitalized t share two different meanings. The Truth refers to the wisdom of religion, while the truth refers to the inner reality of human, the heart. Nasr referred to this concept as *cordis*, the core of reality. Every religion contains the truth that is the perennial aspect of life.

S.H. Nasr, Abdurrahman Wahid, and Nurcholish Madjid had thoroughly elaborated the universal truth of religion that is referred to as the tradition passed down from one prophet to another. The term prophet may refer to *the avatar* who could control the universe. The three Muslim scholars under study shared the same perspective that religion and tradition are integrated. This notion somehow goes against some people who asserted that religion is different from tradition. In fact, it refers to the concept of perennial philosophy, which highlights that religion and tradition are moral entity that sharpens more understanding about reality and the truth. Humanity, the well-being of the self, the safety of the intellect, justice, honesty, and the other aspect of moral and wisdom are component of tradition and religion understood as wisdom.

Spirituality and wisdom in religion and tradition become the core aspect of reality exposed by these three Muslim scholars with different perspective. Nasr described tradition and religion as the truth that becomes the core of reality, while Abdurrahman Wahid stated that tradition is all about indigenization of Islam in Indonesia.

Conclusion

The writings of Seyyed Hossen Nasr put an emphasis on the perennial perspective of life, on which Muslim Scholars relied greatly. Abdurrahman Wahid's thought highlighted religious pluralism, while Nurcholish Madjid greatly influenced Muslim Scholars in Indonesia

through the concept of tradition written in his book, *Islam Dokrin dan Peradaban*. Among many thinkers explaining Islamic tradition, SH. Nasr, Abdurrahman Wahid, and Nurcholish Madjid have gained a special position not only because of their contribution in understanding religion as tradition but also because of their emphasis on how to make people live together in harmony based on wisdom.

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Competing Interest

All authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript..

Author's Contribution

All of the listed authors contributed to this article.

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The authors confirms, that all procedures followed were in accordance with the ethical standards, without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

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Disclaimer

The views and assumptions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policies or official





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