



TEXTUAL REASON AND SOCIAL REFORM IN THE 19TH-CENTURY ISLAMIC RENEWAL MOVEMENT

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Abstract

The 19th-century Islamic renewal movement emerged as a response to intellectual stagnation and colonial domination in the Muslim world. Reformists like Jamaluddin al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rashid Rida advocated for a return to the Qur'an and Sunnah through rational and contextual interpretation—termed "textual reasoning"—rather than literalism. This study analyzes the relationship between this reasoning and social action, specifically concerning poverty alleviation and gender equality. Using a library research method with a social hermeneutic approach, the study finds that 19th-century reformism catalyzed practical transformations: educational reform, productive zakat management, and women's empowerment. The movement demonstrates Islam's capacity for sustainable social justice. This research offers a novel synthesis by linking theological "ijtihad" directly to socio-economic praxis, providing a framework for modern Muslim welfare.

Keywords: Islamic Renewal; Textual Reasoning; Social Action; Poverty; Gender Equality.

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Abstrak

Gerakan pembaruan Islam abad ke-19 muncul sebagai respons terhadap stagnasi intelektual dan dominasi kolonial di dunia Muslim. Tokoh-tokoh reformis seperti Jamaluddin al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, dan Rashid Rida menyerukan kembalinya Al-Qur'an dan Sunnah melalui interpretasi rasional dan kontekstual—yang diistilahkan sebagai "penalaran tekstual" (*textual reasoning*)—bukan melalui pemahaman harfiah. Studi ini menganalisis hubungan antara penalaran tersebut dengan aksi sosial, khususnya terkait pengentasan kemiskinan dan kesetaraan gender. Menggunakan metode penelitian kepustakaan dengan pendekatan hermeneutika sosial, studi ini menemukan bahwa reformisme abad ke-19 mengatalisis transformasi praktis: reformasi pendidikan, pengelolaan zakat produktif, dan pemberdayaan perempuan. Gerakan ini menunjukkan kapasitas Islam untuk mewujudkan keadilan sosial yang berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini menawarkan sintesis baru dengan menghubungkan "ijtihad" teologis secara langsung dengan praksis sosial-ekonomi, sehingga memberikan kerangka kerja bagi kesejahteraan Muslim modern.

Kata Kunci: Pembaruan Islam; Penalaran Tekstual; Aksi Sosial; Kemiskinan; Kesetaraan Gender.

INTRODUCTION

The journey of human civilization has always been marked by the dynamics of social, political, economic, and intellectual changes that interact with each other to form the face of society from time to time.¹ In global history, these changes have often arisen as a result of a long process of searching for meaning, adapting to the times, and human efforts to understand and organize their lives based on values, norms, and belief systems.² Every civilization possesses a mechanism to respond to crises through reform movements that renew stagnant social and moral structures. In Islamic history, religion serves as a dialectical force and a source of social inspiration rather than just a transcendental belief. In the 19th century, this phenomenon manifested as a renewal movement aimed at repairing the ummah's outlook on life and driving systemic change against intellectual and colonial stagnation.³

Social transformation inevitably begins with a paradigm shift in thought. History proves that intellectual awakening, such as the Enlightenment, catalyzes economic and humanitarian progress by replacing stagnant beliefs with rational consciousness. However, this progress is non-linear; material advancement often triggers moral and social crises, necessitating a balance between rationality and ethical values. Therefore, analyzing the

¹Alessia Spada, Mariantonietta Fiore, and Antonino Galati, 'The Impact of Education and Culture on Poverty Reduction: Evidence from Panel Data of European Countries', *Social Indicators Research*, 175.3 (2024), pp. 927-40.

²Kinan Salim and others, 'Zakat-Based Urban Farming: A Tool for Poverty Alleviation, Community Empowerment, Financial Inclusion, and Food Security', *Review of Islamic Social Finance and Entrepreneurship*, 2024, pp. 1-19.

³Sri Herianingrum and others, 'Zakat as an Instrument of Poverty Reduction in Indonesia', *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research*, 15.4 (2024), pp. 643-60.

dynamics of thought is crucial to understanding the trajectory of social change.⁴ In the framework of social development, modernization and globalization bring ambivalent impacts on human life. On the one hand, globalization accelerates the flow of information, technology, and the economy, thus opening up a wide space for progress and the exchange of ideas between civilizations. This process also gives rise to social inequality, structural poverty, and marginalization of certain groups, especially women and low-income communities.⁵ This Technological progress does not guarantee moral advancement; thus, society requires a balance between material and spiritual values. Religion must transcend ritualism to become a strategic ethical framework for sustainable social and economic development. This aligns religious ethics with social development, as both aim for collective welfare and justice.⁶

Furthermore, Global crises—from poverty and gender inequality to environmental degradation—test our ability to uphold human values. Capitalist systems often widen the wealth gap, while patriarchal structures marginalize vulnerable groups. This necessitates a paradigm that integrates economic rationality with moral-spiritual values. Rather than being detached from worldly affairs, religion must serve as a foundational inspiration for building a just and humane social structure.⁷

The challenge of modern civilization also lies in the weakening of moral consciousness due to the current trend of secularisation that separates religion and public life. In such a situation, there is an urgent need to revitalize spiritual values to remain relevant in answering contemporary problems. Renewal in religion does not mean replacing basic teachings, but reinterpreting universal values to suit the needs of the times.⁸ Principles such as justice, *humanity*, and social *welfare* need to be actualized in the form of policies and concrete actions. Thus, the renewal of religious thought became an integral part of the effort to build a modern civilization that was balanced between material progress and moral maturity. Through a process of critical and open intellectual reflection, religion can function as a *liberative power*, which not only regulates the relationship between man and God, but also the relationship between man and the universe. Therefore, understanding the dynamics of renewal in religion is an important step to building an inclusive, just, and resilient society to face future global challenges.⁹

Academics with diverse focuses have widely conducted studies of the Islamic reform movement and its social role. Research by Z. Dahlan and S. Sulastri titled "*Women as Actors of Islamic Education in the 19th–20th Centuries AD in the Archipelago*" in *Al-Kaffah*:

⁴Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (Yale University Press, 2021).

⁵Zaini Dahlan and Sulastri Sulastri, 'Wanita Sebagai Aktor Pendidikan Islam Abad 19-20 M Di Nusantara', *Al-Kaffah: Jurnal Kajian Nilai-Nilai Keislaman*, 11.2 (2023), pp. 179–203.

⁶Eugenie Samier and Eman ElKaleh, 'Towards a Model of Muslim Women's Management Empowerment: Philosophical and Historical Evidence and Critical Approaches', *Administrative Sciences*, 11.2 (2021), p. 47.

⁷Umar Habibu Umar and others, 'The Potential of Islamic Social Finance to Alleviate Poverty in the Era of COVID-19: The Moderating Effect of Ethical Orientation', *International Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Finance and Management*, 15.2 (2022), pp. 255–70.

⁸Qurroh Ayuniyyah and others, 'The Impact of Zakat in Poverty Alleviation and Income Inequality Reduction from the Perspective of Gender in West Java, Indonesia', *International Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Finance and Management*, 15.5 (2022), pp. 924–42.

⁹Spada, Fiore, and Galati, 'The Impact of Education and Culture on Poverty Reduction: Evidence from Panel Data of European Countries'.

Journal of the Study of Islamic Values shows that women in the archipelago have a strategic role in internalizing Islamic values through education, especially during the Islamic revival in the early 19th Century.¹⁰ The Research highlights that the role of women is not only as a subject of learning, but also as an agent of social transformation. A. Rachman and M.S.A. Majid's Research in *Nusantara: Journal of Islamic Economics* discusses *the impact of the role of Islamic macroeconomics in realizing the sustainability of sustainable development*, emphasizing the importance of the principles of equity and justice in eliminating poverty and gender inequality.¹¹ Meanwhile, Y. Huriani in *Religion and Gender: The Version of Women's Islamic Organizations in Indonesia* emphasized that Islamic women's organizations play a role in *poverty alleviation* strategies through economic empowerment based on labour-intensive projects and independent capacity building of women.¹² The three studies show the continuity between the religious, social, and economic dimensions in Islamic reform, but have not comprehensively linked the dimension of *textual reason* with social action in the Islamic reform movement in the 19th Century.

The novelty of this research lies in its interdisciplinary approach, integrating textual reasoning with social action within the 19th-century historical framework. Unlike previous studies that often treat economics and gender in isolation, this study synthesizes both into a coherent narrative of social transformation. By employing historical analysis and social hermeneutics, this research offers a new perspective: that textual reasoning is not merely a theological instrument, but an ethical framework that drives tangible renewal through just social transformation.

METHOD

This study employs library research to examine primary and secondary sources related to 19th-century Islamic thought. The primary data includes the works and documented lectures of Jamaluddin al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rashid Rida. The analysis follows a social hermeneutics approach. This framework goes beyond linguistic interpretation to understand the dialectical relationship between the text and the socio-economic context (*waqi'*) of the 19th century. The data was processed through a descriptive-analytical lens, connecting the epistemological foundation of "textual rationalism" to concrete social practices such as productive zakat and the establishment of modern educational institutions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Historical and Epistemological Movement of Islamic Renewal in the 19th Century

The Islamic renewal movement of the 19th Century cannot be understood independently of the complex history, which was marked by the political, social, and intellectual decline of the Islamic world due to the pressures of Western colonialism as well as the moral and spiritual crisis among Muslims. Since the beginning of the 19th Century, many Muslim regions have experienced a significant decline in political and economic capacity, which has had a direct impact on the ability of societies to manage education, law,

¹⁰Dahlan and Sulastri, 'Wanita Sebagai Aktor Pendidikan Islam Abad 19-20 M Di Nusantara'.

¹¹Arief Rachman, M Shabri Abd Majid, and M Ridwan, 'Dampak Peran Makroekonomi Islam Dalam Mewujudkan Keberlanjutan Pertumbuhan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan Dalam Suatu Negara', *NUSANTARA: Jurnal Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial*, 10.8 (2023), pp. 4186-95.

¹²Yeni Huriani, 'Agama Dan Gender: Versi Ormas Islam Perempuan Di Indonesia' (Lekkas, 2021).

and social life independently. Military defeats, colonial economic dominance, and the entry of secular Western ideologies have created an identity and moral crisis, leaving Muslims with a major dilemma: how to maintain their spiritual existence while simultaneously responding to the challenges of an increasingly complex modern world. In this situation, an awareness of the need for *tajdid*, i.e. renewal, and *islah*, i.e. reform, was born to the teachings of Islam to remain relevant to the socio-political conditions of the times. This realization arose among Muslim scholars and intellectuals, who began to see that intellectual stagnation and confinement to *the dogmatic repetition of the opinions of previous scholars* had limited the ability of the ummah to adapt to the changing times.¹³

Reformers such as *Jamaluddin al-Afghani* and *Muhammad Abduh* emphasized the need to return to the sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and the Sunnah, with a rational and contextual approach. They reject the fatalistic notion that the decline of the ummah is merely an irreversible destiny, because it weakens the spirit of the ummah to do *ijtihad* and act creatively in the face of social challenges.¹⁴ The Qur'an itself emphasizes the importance of human effort and responsibility in building a just and civilized life. For example, in Surah Al-Mulk verse 15, Allah says:

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ ذَلُولًا فَامْشُوا فِي مَنَاكِبِهَا وَكُلُوا مِن رِّزْقِهِ وَإِلَيْهِ النُّشُورُ ﴿١٥﴾

Meaning: "It is He who made the earth tame for you - so walk among its slopes and eat of His provision - and to Him is the resurrection." (QS. Al-Mulk [67]: 15).

This verse shows that humans are given the freedom and capacity to move, explore the earth, and utilize sustenance for the welfare of themselves and society. In the 19th-century Islamic reform movement, the meaning of this verse was used as a basis by reformers to emphasize that Muslims should not be passive in facing setbacks. Still, it should actively innovate, educate the community, and manage resources to achieve social prosperity. This approach also emphasizes that faith is not just a ritual of personal worship, but must be translated into real social action. This principle became the epistemological foundation of the Islamic reform movement at that time.

Epistemologically, the reasoning of the 19th-century Islamic reformers emphasized the balance between *faith* and *reason*, or faith and rationality, which is often referred to as *textual rationalism*. They understood that the Qur'an was not only a book of rituals or normative laws, but also a source of universal social values, which could be applied to form a just and civilized society. Muhammad Abduh, for example, in his various lectures and writings, emphasized the importance of developing critical thinking in interpreting the Qur'an so that Islamic teachings remain relevant to the times. According to him, the intellectual stagnation of the ummah occurs due to a rigid understanding of the text, without paying attention to changing social, economic, and political factors.¹⁵

The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of critical thinking in many verses, one of which is Surah Al-Imran verses 190-191:

¹³Hilmiatus Sahla, Isnaini Harahap, and Zuhri M Nawawi, 'Analisa Kemiskinan Dan Distribusi Pendapatan Dalam Teori Ekonomi', *Journal of Science and Social Research*, 7.1 (2024), pp. 173-80.

¹⁴Rabina Yunus, *Analisis Gender Terhadap Fenomena Sosial* (Humanities Genius, 2022).

¹⁵Mohammad Shahid and others, 'Analyzing the Commonalities between Islamic Social Finance and Sustainable Development Goals', *International Journal of Ethics and Systems*, 40.2 (2024), pp. 381-94.

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩٠﴾ الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ
 اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا
 بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿١٩١﴾

Meaning: "Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding. Who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], "Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire." (QS. Ali 'Imran [3]: 190-191).

This verse emphasizes that reason (*'aql*) and reflection are integral parts of faith. Within the framework of the Islamic reform movement, reformists used this principle to emphasize that Muslims have an intellectual responsibility to understand the teachings of Islam in depth, adapt them to social realities, and apply them in educational, legal, economic, and social reforms. In other words, faith that is only ritual without critical analysis will fail to produce meaningful social transformation. The 19th-century reform movement also emphasized the importance of *ijtihad*, which is an intellectual effort to interpret religious texts according to the times. *Ijtihad* became an instrument to answer new questions that were not explicitly mentioned in classical texts.

In addition, reformist leaders emphasized the importance of education as the main means of empowering society. Muhammad Abduh introduced an integrative education model that combines religious science and modern science, so that the Muslim generation can master contemporary science while still adhering to Islamic values. Education is a vehicle for *social transformation* because, through education, people can understand their rights, develop economic capacity, and actively participate in public life. In Islamic epistemology, education is a form of textual rational actualization, in which the Qur'an and Sunnah are translated into practices that favour social progress.¹⁶

This reform is also related to the economic management of the people, especially through the management of *zakat* and *waqf*. The concept of *productive charity* was developed so that social funds are not only consumed, but also used for productive economic activities, such as cooperatives, small businesses, and skills training. Morally, the 19th-century reform movement emphasized the collective responsibility of the people to improve society. Islam is seen not only as an individual belief system, but also as a transformative social system. This awareness confirms that every human action has social and ethical implications. The reformers rejected a view that isolated religion from public life; instead, they emphasized that Islamic values must be present in the education, economy, law, and culture of society, so that a balance between spirituality and social welfare is achieved.

An analysis of the Islamic reform movement of the 19th Century shows that a rational and contextual approach to sacred texts opened up space for progressive and humanistic thinking. The Reformists not only improved theological understanding but also

¹⁶Gulsan Ara Parvin and others, 'Does Social Capital Contribute to Resilience? Exploring the Perspectives of Displaced Women Living in Urban Slums in Khulna City', *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 94 (2023), p. 103838.

encouraged concrete social action. For example, the development of modern education, women's empowerment, productive zakat management, and social justice advocacy show that Islam has a transformative capacity to bring prosperity and justice. In other words, this movement affirms that religious thought and social action must go hand in hand, reinforce each other, and not be separate.¹⁷

By integrating Qur'anic verses, the principles of *ijtihad*, education, and philanthropy, the 19th-century renewal movement succeeded in presenting an Islamic epistemology that is relevant to contemporary challenges. Textual reason becomes an intellectual foundation as well as a driver of social action, so that Muslims can overcome moral deterioration, poverty, and gender discrimination. The reformists of the 19th Century showed that Islam was not only a ritual religion but also an ethical framework that motivated social, economic, and educational change, with the ultimate goal of creating a just, prosperous, and civilized society.

The 19th-century Islamic reform movement built a critical awareness among Muslims that social change begins with rational, contextual, and rooted in sacred texts. The concept of *tajdid* and *islah* is an important instrument in actualizing the values of the Qur'an and Sunnah in daily life. The reformers proved that textual reason could be the foundation for inclusive and just social development, as well as strengthen Islam's position as a moral and intellectual force in the face of global challenges.

B. Textual Reason as the Basis for Social and Intellectual Reform

Textual reasoning in the 19th-century Islamic reform movement did not simply refer to a literal understanding of sacred texts, but rather emphasized an approach that used reason (*'aql*) and social (*waqi'*). Islamic reformers, such as *Rashid Ridha* and *Shah Waliullah al-Dihlawi*, saw that the decline of Muslims was largely due to a rigid and ahistorical understanding of the Qur'an and Sunnah. A dogmatic textual understanding, which emphasizes mechanical obedience without critical reflection, has caused people to lose the capacity to respond to the changing times. Therefore, the 19th-century Islamic reform movement emphasized the need for *textual rationalism*, which is an effort to balance the authority of sacred texts with the rational ability of humans to interpret and apply them in social life. This approach is not only intellectual, but also social, as it emphasizes that the values of the Qur'an must be translated into concrete actions that have an impact on the well-being of society.¹⁸

The Qur'an itself emphasizes the importance of using reason and critical thinking. In Surah Al-Ankabut verse 43, Allah says:

وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَا إِلَّا الْعُلَمَاءُ ﴿٤٣﴾

Meaning: "And these examples We present to the people, but none will understand them except those of knowledge." (QS. Al-Ankabut [29]: 43).

This verse means that the Qur'anic text contains depth and complexity that invites reflection, not just mechanical obedience. In the 19th-century reform movement, reformers emphasized that Muslims must read texts with critical reasoning to interpret the principles

¹⁷Sumanta Kumar Saha and Jie Qin, 'Financial Inclusion and Poverty Alleviation: An Empirical Examination', *Economic Change and Restructuring*, 56.1 (2023), pp. 409-40.

¹⁸Enny Puji Lestari and Siti Zulaikha, 'Gender Dalam Ekonomi' (Metrouniv Press, 2022).

of justice, humanity, and social welfare. Thus, *faith* is not separated from *reason* or rationality, so spirituality becomes a driver for concrete and transformative social action.

Textual reasoning also emphasizes that the Qur'an is a dynamic source of social value. For example, the principle of justice contained in the Qur'an does not only apply in the realm of worship or personal law, but also in economic management, resource distribution, and human relations.¹⁹ The reformers also emphasized the relevance (*waqi'*) in interpreting the text. Shah Waliullah al-Dihlawi emphasized that Islamic law and teachings should be understood in accordance with the different social, economic, and political situations of the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In Surah Al-Baqarah verse 286, Allah says: "*Allah does not burden a person except according to his ability.*" (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 286).

The epistemological meaning of this verse shows that humans are given the capacity to innovate and act according to their abilities. 19th-century reformers interpreted this principle as an encouragement for Muslims to be active in education, economics, and social reform. This concept also rejects the passive fatalistic view, so that the Qur'an is understood as an ethical guideline as well as an instrument of social action.

In practice, textual reasoning encourages the birth of innovative educational, economic, and philanthropic movements. Muhammad Abduh, for example, introduced an integrative educational model that combines religious science and modern science. Education is not only to understand religious rituals, but also to equip the people with socio-economic skills so that they can contribute to the development of society. Education is a means of actualizing the values of the Qur'an, such as knowledge (*ilm*) and social responsibility.

Textual reasoning is also applied in the economic management of the people. The reformers emphasized the productive management of zakat and waqf so that social funds can be used for community empowerment. The 19th-century reformers interpreted this verse with the principle of *productive charity*, where zakat funds are not only given consumptively, but are directed to productive enterprises such as skills training, cooperatives, and small businesses. With this approach, Islamic teachings become a real instrument in alleviating poverty and creating social welfare.²⁰

In addition, textual reasoning is also the basis for the development of gender awareness in society. Reformists emphasized that the Qur'an affirms moral equality between men and women. In the framework of 19th-century Islamic epistemology, textual reason functions as a *bridge* between faith and social action. This approach emphasizes that sacred texts are not only spiritual guidelines, but also social and ethical maps that lead the people to build a just and civilized society. Qur'anic principles such as justice, welfare, knowledge, and gender equality are integrated into education, economic management, and social reform, so that Islam becomes a transformative force, not just a ritualistic or doctrinal system.²¹

Methodologically, textual reason opens up space for contemporary *ijtihad*. The reformers emphasized that the interpretation of the text must be responsive to social change and the challenges of modernity. This allowed the birth of progressive Islamic thought that

¹⁹Ana Sabhana Azmy, *Gender Dan Politik* (Prenada Media, 2024).

²⁰Wardiman Djojonegoro, *Inspirasi Kartini Dan Kesetaraan Gender Indonesia* (Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2024).

²¹Gede Wirata, 'Kebijakan Sosial. Kebijakan Pemerintah Untuk Peningkatan Kesejahteraan Masyarakat Dan Pengentasan Kemiskinan' (CV. Pena Persada, 2022).

was pro-justice, pro-humane, and open to science. In other words, *textual reasoning* is not only a theological practice but also an ethical framework that encourages social action, so that religious values can be translated into inclusive and sustainable educational, economic, and social policies.

In addition, textual reasoning also emphasizes the importance of knowledge accumulation (*ilm*) and critical reflection as the foundation of social transformation. The reformers of the 19th Century understood that the stagnation of the people was not only material, but also in intellectual and moral poverty. Therefore, education, rational interpretation of the text, and the application of the ethical principles of the Qur'an are integral to the strategy of social reform.

Thus, the 19th-century Islamic reform movement succeeded in showing that textual reasoning is an epistemological instrument as well as a social practice. The reformers proved that a rational understanding of the Qur'an and the Sunnah could be the foundation for education, the economy, women's empowerment, and the development of society in general. This approach emphasizes that faith and social action must go hand in hand, creating a just, civilized, and well-oriented society for collective welfare.

C. Islamic Reform and Poverty Alleviation Movement

The Islamic reform movement of the 19th Century was not only limited to the intellectual or theological realm, but also included a real socio-economic dimension, one of which was the commitment to poverty alleviation. At that time, the condition of Muslims in various parts of the world, from Egypt to the archipelago, was filled with social inequality, structural poverty, and limited access to education. Colonial oppression and Western economic domination exacerbated this condition, causing Muslim communities to lose control of their own resources. Reformist figures such as *Muhammad Abduh* in Egypt and *Ahmad Dahlan* in Indonesia emphasized that poverty alleviation is not just an act of philanthropy, but a moral and social obligation derived from Islamic teachings. Education, zakat and waqf management, and productive economic development are the main instruments in this strategy.²²

Muhammad Abduh, for example, introduced educational reforms that emphasized the integration of religious *knowledge* and modern sciences. Education is no longer just ritualistic but geared towards shaping a generation of intelligent, independent, and productive Muslims. This concept is in line with the principles of the Qur'an in Surah Al-Mujadila, verse 11:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوا فِي الْمَجَالِسِ فَافْسَحُوا يَفْسَحِ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَإِذَا قِيلَ ادشُرُوا فَادشُرُوا يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١١﴾

Meaning: "O you who have believed, when you are told, "Space yourselves" in assemblies, then make space; Allah will make space for you. And when you are told, "Arise," then arise; Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees. And Allah is Acquainted with what you do." (QS. Al-Mujadalah [58]: 11).

²²Noraisah Yusop and Kartini Aboo Talib, 'Kepimpinan Wanita Dalam Sejarah Gerakan Sosial Di Malaysia (1900-2020)', *Akademika*, 94.1 (2024), pp. 224-37.

This verse shows the connection between knowledge, faith, and social status. In the framework of 19th-century reform, education is considered a means of empowering the people, because through science, individuals can overcome economic and social limitations, thus creating a more empowered society. This integrative education approach also emphasises that the mastery of modern science does not contradict religious teachings, but rather complements and strengthens the ability of the people to face the challenges of the times.

In addition to education, the 19th-century reform movement also emphasized the management of zakat and waqf as economic instruments to alleviate poverty. In addition to education and philanthropy, the 19th-century Islamic reform movement emphasized the importance of productive economic development. Muhammad Abduh and other figures see structural poverty as being caused by society's dependence on an unjust economic system, colonial monopolies, and lack of access to capital and knowledge. Therefore, reformists encourage the establishment of cooperatives, small businesses, and skills training as strategies to increase the economic independence of the people.²³

The 19th-century reformers also realized that poverty was not only an economic problem, but also linked to social injustice and lack of access to education and public participation. Therefore, poverty alleviation is seen as part of the collective responsibility of Muslims. Muhammad Abduh emphasized that society must have the capacity to be independent and innovative, so that the principles of social *justice* can be actualized in real terms.²⁴

In addition, the reformers emphasized the importance of integration between education, economics, and social ethics. Education is not only to acquire knowledge, but also to form a moral character that cares for others, so that the application of zakat and productive efforts can be carried out effectively. This shows that the 19th-century Islamic reform movement built a *holistic approach* to poverty alleviation, combining spiritual, intellectual, and socio-economic dimensions in one integrated framework.

In the archipelago, Ahmad Dahlan, through the *Muhammadiyah* movement and the *'Aisyiyah* organization emphasized that women's education and economic empowerment are part of the poverty alleviation strategy. Women are empowered through religious education and practical skills, so that they can contribute economically and socially in the family and society.²⁵

The 19th-century Islamic reform movement also emphasized the importance of collaboration between communities, governments, and religious institutions in managing social resources. The concept of *the Islamic welfare state* initiated by the reformists emphasizes that the welfare of the community is a collective responsibility, where the management of zakat, education, and productive businesses must be carried out systematically and fairly. This principle aims to create a prosperous, independent, and just society, in accordance with the principles of the Qur'an in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 215:

²³Shanti Nurani, *KESETARAAN GENDER Deskonstruksi Pemikiran Islam* (Mafy Media Literasi Indonesia, 2024).

²⁴Muhammad Zainul Arifin and others, 'Membumikan Teori Negara Kesejahteraan Dalam Penguatan Dana Desa Untuk Pengentasan Kemiskinan Menurut Keadilan Distributif', *Journal Of Law And Social Society*, 1.2 (2024), pp. 29-42.

²⁵Arifin and others, 'Membumikan Teori Negara Kesejahteraan Dalam Penguatan Dana Desa Untuk Pengentasan Kemiskinan Menurut Keadilan Distributif'.

يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلْ مَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنِ
السَّبِيلِ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢١٥﴾

Meaning: "They ask you, [O Muhammad], what they should spend. Say, "Whatever you spend of good is [to be] for parents and relatives and orphans and the needy and the traveler. And whatever you do of good - indeed, Allah is Knowing of it." (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 215).

This verse shows that poverty alleviation must be carried out selectively and strategically, prioritising the most needy groups. 19th-century reformers emphasized that the distribution of wealth should be part of a sustainable and productive social development strategy.

Thus, the 19th-century Islamic reform movement showed that poverty alleviation was not only a material problem, but also a matter of education, morality, and social structure. This approach integrates the principles of textual reasoning, education, productive zakat management, and economic empowerment to create a just and prosperous society. The reformists of the 19th Century proved that Islam has a transformative capacity, where faith and social action go hand in hand to overcome poverty and social inequality.

The 19th-century Islamic reform movement built an epistemological and practical foundation for poverty alleviation through education, a productive economy, and strategic philanthropy. The principles of the Qur'an, such as justice, wealth distribution, individual empowerment, and social responsibility, are actualized in concrete action, so that Islam becomes a transformative instrument oriented towards the welfare of society sustainably. This concept remains relevant today as an inspiration for the socio-economic development of Muslims in the modern era.

D. Gender Issues in the Framework of Islamic Renewal

The Islamic reform movement of the 19th Century not only focused on intellectual and socio-economic aspects, but also touched on gender issues significantly, especially the role and position of women in Muslim society. At that time, the social conditions of many Muslim countries were still influenced by patriarchal practices that limited women's participation in the public sphere, education, and decision-making. Conservative interpretations of religious texts are often used as a legitimacy to curb women's rights. However, the Islamic reform movement, with its *textual reasoning* approach and rational interpretation of the Qur'an and Sunnah, challenges the patriarchal paradigm, showing that Islam actually supports moral equality and social responsibility between men and women.²⁶

Reformist figures such as Qasim Amin, through his work *Tahrir al-Mar'ah* and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain in India-Bengal emphasized the importance of women's education as a means of liberation and empowerment. Amin emphatically rejects the social view that places women only as housekeepers or male subordinates, as this has no solid basis in the Qur'an. On the contrary, women's education is seen as the same rights as men, because with science and knowledge, women can contribute to the development of society at large.

²⁶Abdul Haris Rasyidi and Ulyan Nasri, 'Muslim Sasak Female Scholars: Empowerment and Strengthening of Islamic Education in the Lombok Community, Indonesia', *Path of Science*, 9.12 (2023), pp. 3029-39.

This concept is in line with Surah Al-Ahzab verse 35, which affirms moral equality before Allah:

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّائِمِينَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٣٥﴾

Meaning: “Indeed, the Muslim men and Muslim women, the believing men and believing women, the obedient men and obedient women, the truthful men and truthful women, the patient men and patient women, the humble men and humble women, the charitable men and charitable women, the fasting men and fasting women, the men who guard their private parts and the women who do so, and the men who remember Allah often and the women who do so - for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward.” (QS. Al-Ahzab [33]: 35).

This verse clearly affirms that the degree of glory and reward in the sight of Allah does not discriminate between gender but is determined by faith, piety, and deeds. 19th-century reformers used this principle to emphasize that women had the same moral and social rights as men in contributing to society. Education is not only a personal tool, but also a social instrument to strengthen the moral and intellectual foundations of the people as a whole.

In the archipelago, this thought resonates through the work and activities of Nyai Ahmad Dahlan with the 'Aisyiyah organization, which places women as agents of social change and education of the people. Women are not only allowed to learn and teach, but are also involved in economic empowerment and philanthropic programs, so that they contribute directly to overcoming poverty and social inequality. This concept affirms the principle of *Islamic feminism*, which is rooted in textual reason, namely that gender equality is not a modern ideology alien to Islam, but rather an ethical principle that can be traced from the sources of the Qur'an and Sunnah.²⁷

In addition to education, the 19th-century reform movement emphasised women's empowerment in the economic and social spheres. Strengthening the role of women is not just symbolic, but practical and strategic. For example, in the productive zakat and waqf programs, women are allowed to manage small businesses, skills training, and philanthropic activities. This activity allows women to become economically independent while contributing to poverty alleviation and community development.

19th-century reformist thought also emphasized the need to eliminate social practices that discriminated against and harmed women. For example, the practice of restricting education for women or patriarchal domination that curbs public participation is considered contrary to the principles of the Qur'an.²⁸

²⁷Khofifah Indar Parawansa, NU, *Perempuan Indonesia: Sudut Pandang Islam Tradisional* (Nuansa Cendekia, 2023).

²⁸Filia Hanum, *Pemberdayaan Buruh Tani Perempuan Dalam Peningkatan Perekonomian Dan Kesejahteraan* (Mega Press Nusantara, 2024).

The 19th-century Islamic reform movement also opened up discussions about women's rights in the realms of law, politics, and leadership. However, in practice, they were still limited by the society of the time.²⁹ Figures such as Qasim Amin emphasized that these restrictions were more cultural than religious, so that with a rational interpretation of the text, gender equality could be realized more broadly. This confirms that Islamic reform does not aim to replace religious teachings, but rather to reinterpret basic principles to address contemporary challenges, including gender discrimination.³⁰

In addition, the 19th-century reform movement fostered a collective awareness that equitable community development would not be achieved without women's empowerment. Women's education is the key to improving the quality of families, because educated mothers will give birth to a generation that is intelligent, moral, and productive. This education also strengthens the moral and social base of society as a whole, as intellectually and spiritually empowered women can become agents of change at the community and family levels.³¹

The movement emphasizes the importance of integration between Qur'anic values, education, and social practice. Women's education focuses not only on religious science, but also on modern *sciences* and practical skills that enable women to play an active role in socio-economic development. This approach shows that the 19th-century Islamic reform movement was *holistic*, combining spiritual, intellectual, and socio-economic dimensions in building gender equality.

Thus, the Islamic reforms of the 19th Century affirmed that gender equality was not a modern ideology foreign to Islam, but an ethical principle derived from sacred texts, *rationality*, and *social contextuality*. This movement opened up space for *Islamic feminism* rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah, combining moral principles, education, and economic empowerment to create a just, egalitarian, and socially just society. Women are both subjects and agents of social transformation, showing that Islam has a transformative capacity that crosses gender boundaries and enables the creation of a balanced and just society.³²

The Islamic reform movement of the 19th Century proved that rational and contextual interpretations of sacred texts were capable of producing real changes in gender consciousness. Women's education, economic empowerment, and social participation are not just rhetorical efforts but transformative strategies to build an inclusive, just, and prosperous society. These values remain relevant today as an inspiration for the development of *social justice*, *gender equality*, and women's empowerment in modern times in the Muslim world.

E. The Relevance of the Islamic Reform Movement to Contemporary Issues

The 19th-century Islamic reform movement remains highly relevant in addressing contemporary global challenges such as structural poverty, social inequality, and gender

²⁹Foyasal Khan and Mohamed Aslam Haneef, 'Religious Responses to Sustainable Development Goals: An Islamic Perspective', *Journal of Islamic Monetary Economics and Finance*, 8.2 (2022), pp. 161-80.

³⁰Rini Novita Sari and Surya Sukti, 'Praktik Etika Ekonomi Islam Dalam Lembaga Filantropi Islam', *PENG: Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Manajemen*, 2.2 (2025), pp. 1762-70.

³¹Cahya Putri, 'Peran IPPNU Dalam Meningkatkan Kesetaraan Gender Di Kota Bandung' (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2024).

³²Rusny Istiqomah Sujono and Meutia Layli, 'Peran Pembangunan Berkelanjutan Dalam Pengentasan Kemiskinan Dan Pengangguran', *Ekonomi Sirkular Dan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan*, 185 (2022).

discrimination. By translating reformist values into a modern Islamic social ethics paradigm, principles like *ijtihad*, *maslahah*, and justice can serve as the foundation for inclusive socio-economic policies. In the face of globalization and moral crises, this intellectual heritage transcends history, acting as a transformative moral and social force. It provides a strategic framework for modern Muslim societies to bridge the gap between spiritual discourse and concrete humanitarian solutions.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the Islamic reform movement in the 19th Century was an important milestone in the transformation of Muslim thinking and social practice in various regions of the world, including the archipelago. This movement was born out of a critical awareness of the decline of the ummah and the dominance of colonialism that curbed the social, political, and economic development of the Muslim community. Through a rational textual reasoning approach, reformers such as Jamaluddin al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rashid Ridha sought to revitalize the teachings of Islam so that it functioned not only as a system of beliefs but also as a system of social ethics that promoted justice and prosperity. The reinterpretation of the Qur'an and Sunnah was carried out to correct stagnant religious understanding and present Islam as a solution to poverty, social inequality, and gender subordination. This movement proves that Islam possesses great potential as a liberative power by linking spirituality with social praxis. Through education reform, justice-based economic management, and women's empowerment, the renewal of 19th-century Islam has paved the way for an Islamic social transformation paradigm.

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