

## **TENSION BETWEEN SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT: ASWAJA AND WAHABI IN ACEH**

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### **Abstract**

*Religious life in Aceh has received attention from various parties when Aswaja and Wahabi start preaching on religious rituals. Aswaja accuses the teaching of Wahhabism is against the Islamic values and Aqidah adopted by the people in Aceh. The Acehnese who embraces Aswaja must strictly reject the teachings of Wahabi followers. Aswaja's accusations were highly opposed by Wahabi groups that later led to tensions and pressures on both sides. This research is a qualitative research with data collection methods carried out through observation, documentation, and interviews with selected informants. The results obtained from the study include first, Aswaja, the only religious group, began to be disturbed with the emergence of Wahhabism in several places. Second, Wahhabism preaching movement that was once carried out clandestinely is now carried out openly in several mosques in Aceh. Third, there is a tension in convincing the truth of the schools of thought.*

**Keywords:** *Aswaja; Wahabisme; Aceh*

### **Abstrak**

*Kehidupan beragama di Aceh akhir-akhir ini mendapat perhatian dari berbagai kalangan ketika kelompok Aswaja dan Wahabi saling menunjukkan eksistensi mereka dalam mendakwahkan tata laksana ritual beragama. Pihak Aswaja menuduh bahwa tata laksana ajaran yang dijalankan oleh Wahabisme bertentangan dengan nilai-nilai keislaman dan aqidah yang dianut masyarakat di Aceh. Masyarakat Aceh yang berpaham Aswaja harus menolak secara tegas ajaran-ajaran yang disampaikan oleh pengikut Wahabi. Tuduhan Aswaja mendapat penolakan keras dari kelompok pengikut Wahabi yang kemudian melahirkan ketegangan-ketegangan dan pressure-presure dari kedua belah pihak. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif dengan metode pengambilan data dilakukan melalui observasi, dokumentasi dan wawancara dengan narasumber yang telah dipilih oleh peneliti. Adapun hasil yang didapatkan antara lain: Pertama, Aswaja sebagai kelompok tunggal mulai terganggu ketika di beberapa tempat lahir gerakan dakwah wahabisme. Kedua, gerakan dakwah wahabisme yang dulunya dilakukan secara sembunyi-sembunyi sekarang sudah terang-terangan dilaksanakan pada beberapa mesjid di Aceh. Ketiga, terjadinya ketegangan dalam menyakinkan kebenaran mazhab yang disampaikan.*

**Kata kunci:** *Aswaja; Wahabisme; Aceh*

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### مستخلص

تلقت في هذه الأواخر الحياة الدينية في أتشيه اهتماماً بالغاً من مجموعات مختلفة عندما أظهرت مجموعات أهل السنة والجماعة والوهابية وجودها بعضها بعضاً في الدعوة إلى أنشطتهم الدينية. يزعم أهل السنة والجماعة أن الأنشطة الدينية التي نفذتها الوهابية تتعارض مع القيم الإسلامية والعقيدة التي يتبناها الناس في أتشيه. يجب على سكان أتشيه الذين ينضمون بمجموعات أهل السنة والجماعة أن يرفضوا التعاليم التي نقلها الوهابيون. وقد رفضت الجماعة الوهابية إتهام أهل السنة والجماعة، ولذلك أدى إلى حدوث توترات وضغوط من كلا الجانبين. هذا البحث بحث نوعي مع طريقة جمع البيانات من خلال الملاحظة والتوثيق والمقابلات مع أشخاص مرجعيين الذين تم اختيارهم من قبل الباحث. ومن النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها ما يلي: أولاً، بدأت أهل السنة والجماعة كمجموعة وحيدة في الانزعاج عندما ظهرت الحركة الوهابية في عدة أماكن. ثانياً، تنفيذ الدعوة الوهابية علانية في العديد من المساجد في أتشيه التي كانت تنفذ في السابق سراً. ثالثاً، وجود توتر في إقناع حقيقة المذهب التي يتم نقلها كل الجانبين.

الكلمات الرئيسية: أهل السنة والجماعة; الوهابية; أتشيه

## A. INTRODUCTION

In the history of Aceh, Acehnese was well known for being religiously devout Muslim, their observance to Islam could be observed through their perseverance in performing religious rituals and making Islam as an inseparable foundation of their life.<sup>1</sup> When Islam becomes the foundation of life, the religious system also becomes their entire day-to-day practices.

As narrated in the history, when Islam came to Aceh, the ideology that was defended and fought for by the people was an Islamic ideology.<sup>2</sup> Various other ideologies that previously existed, such as Hindu ideology, were rejected by the strong Islamic ideology adopted by the community. In defending the belief from the colonialism, all Acehnese people resisted by waging war through the spirit of a *sabil* (holy) war<sup>3</sup> against Dutch the *kaphe* (infidel). At that time, in Acehnese thinking tradition, Dutch the *Kaphe* had to be fought not

<sup>1</sup> Amirul Hadi, *Aceh Sejarah, Budaya, Dan Tradisi* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2010), 248.

<sup>2</sup> Amirul Hadi, *Menggali Makna Jihad Bagi Masyarakat Aceh: Studi Hikayat Prang Sabil*, ed. R. Michael Feener, Patrick Daly, and Anthony Reid (Denpasar: Pustaka Larasan, 2011), 188 Memetakan Masa Lalu Aceh; Firdaus, "Peran Organisasi Teungku Dayah Dalam Pelaksanaan Syariat Islam Di Aceh" (Program Studi S3 Aqidah Dan Filsafat Islam Pascasarjana UIN Sumatera Utara, 2017), 336.

<sup>3</sup> T. Ibrahim Alfian, *Perang Kolonial Belanda Di Aceh* (Banda Aceh: Pusat Dokumentasi dan Informasi Aceh, 1997), 36; Anita Iskandariata, *Makna Hikayat Prang Sabil Di Aceh* (Banda Aceh: Ar-Raniry Press In collaboration with AK. Group Yogyakarta, 2007), 4–5.

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only because they had destroyed the Islamic ideology, but also disturbed the social and religious life of people in Aceh.<sup>4</sup>

The *kaphe*'s concept has expanded in terms of meaning into whoever helps enemies of Islam, they can be categorized as *kaphe*.<sup>5</sup> This viewpoint later leads to the emergence of a social revolution in Aceh.<sup>6</sup> Recently, the *Kaphe* concept reappears when certain groups try to force certain religious practices according to the wishes of their groups and ignored the existed religious practices adopted by most of the community. Such phenomena then caused false claims aimed at the people and other groups. As a result, it has created tensions among the community, especially in performing religious rituals. Currently, the tension often arises from group who call themselves the *Aswaja* (*ahlul sunnah wal jamaah*) with the Wahhabi. The tension is no longer limited to the argument, but already at the level of seizing the podium and the expulsion of the cleric and worshipers during the teachings and recitations.

However, there is an interesting fact from a series of *Aswaja*'s rejections and expulsions against Wahhabism. It is not due to their strict implementation of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab's teachings, but more to the differences in understanding meanings from several *dalil* (argument) from *nash* (Qur'an and Hadith) or some opinions in the book written by previous Muslims scholars.

In the community, strict differences between the *Aswaja* and *Wahabi* have broadened into several other aspects. Previously, it was only related to the number of rak'ah in taraweeh prayers, and several other practices such as visiting graves, reciting Qur'an at the grave, *samadiyah* (visiting and praying at the family of the dead) and *tahlil* (sending prayers/zikr) for the dead and the *Maulid* of the Prophet (Prophet's birthday celebration). Whereas now it has escalated to the issue of forehead and clothing style.

Despite a systematic pressure from *Aswaja* to the government to act decisively and disperse all *Wahabi* activities due to its differences with the teachings of Islam in Aceh, the conflicts of understanding between *Aswaja* and *Wahabi* has not yet led MPU to issue a *fatwa* (legal pronouncement in Islam) on whether a *Wahabi* doctrine in Aceh is heretical.

The *Aswaja*'s claim on the *Wahabi* doctrine has not dampened parents' interest in sending their children to study in the Middle East. The Middle East is known for the birthplace and the development center of *Wahabi* teachings, instead, many parents expect

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<sup>4</sup> E. Gobe and Adriaanse, *Nasihat-Nasihat C.S Hurgronje Semasa Kepegawaiannya Kepada Pemerintah Hindia Belanda 1889-1936*, Terj Sukarsi (Jakarta: INIS, 1991), 111.

<sup>5</sup> C.Snouck Hurgronje, *The Acehnese*, Vol. I, Terj A.W.S. O'Sullivan ((Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1906), 177.

<sup>6</sup> Nazaruddin Sjamsuddin, *Pemberontakan Kaum Republik Kasus Darus Islam Aceh* (Jakarta: Grafiti, 1990), 26–27.

their children to be accepted at Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt, Universities in Medina, or other reputable universities in the Middle East.

Based on those problems, the researchers consider that this research is important to be conducted to find out the reality in the society so that the community, government and religious leaders know the potentials of the two understandings.

This research is qualitative. In qualitative research, the findings are not necessarily obtained through mathematical logic, numerical principles or statistical methods.<sup>7</sup> Qualitative methods can be used to uncover and understand something behind phenomena that have not been known before.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, this qualitative method is expected to describe and analyze the conflict between *Aswaja* and *Wahabis* in Aceh.

As a field study, researchers interviewed several informants in several cities. The chosen cities were Banda Aceh, Bireun, Langsa, Meulaboh, and Tapaktuan. The choice of location was based on several logical considerations, one of which was regional representation. For example, Banda Aceh, as the capital of the province, is central to the development of knowledge, schools of thought, and the economy of society. Bireun is currently considered the center and the largest growth of traditional Islamic boarding schools in Aceh, graduates from these schools are now mostly *teungku imuem* (an Imam), *teungku semeubut* (religion teachers) in villages, through their services the community can easily understand the existence of *mazhab* (schools of thought) that are progressing in Aceh.

The city of Langsa is a city that strictly implements Islamic law while its people are more heterogeneous because it is geographically close to the North Sumatra. This geographic factor was a reason of choosing this area and aiming find out their perceptions of *Aswaja* and *Wahabis* which have increasingly established their influence in the community. Whereas Meulaboh as the capital city of West Aceh, has declared itself as a city of *tauhid* (monotheism) *tasauf* (Sufism). And that factors also become consideration for researchers to choose the location to trace the existence of religious doctrine that are now loved by many young people. While Tapaktuan as the capital of South Aceh regency, for researchers, their thoughts about religious schools in society must be known, because a majority of the population are followers of *rateb siribe* (a traditional dhizkr). And *rateb siribe* is popular in Aceh. The choice of locations above is expected to enrich the information in the research report.

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<sup>7</sup> Deddy Mulyana, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif Paradigma Baru Ilmu Komunikasi Dan Ilmu Sosial Lainnya* (Bandung: Rosda Karya, 2001), 150.

<sup>8</sup> Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Anselm Strauss & Juliet Corbin, Dasar-Dasar Penelitian Kualitatif*, Terj. Muhammad Shodiq and Imam Muttaqien (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2003), 5.

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In this study, data collection techniques were carried out through three stages; observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation.<sup>9</sup> The data were analyzed through three stages. First, analysis of primary data which is an analysis that considers information obtained through interviews with predetermined informants. Second, secondary data analysis which is analyzing data obtained from books, journals and research results related to the topic of discussion. Third, meta analysis, which is analyzing data that has been collected from several previous studies. In this study the three types of analysis were used according to the data obtained.

### B. DISCUSSION

#### 1. Understanding the Aswaja and Wahhabism

Explaining the features of Aswaja and Wahhabism is not an easy matter because both of these *mazhab* have a long history among Muslims. For a clearer understanding of the two schools, it will be explained as follows.

##### a. Aswaja

The term *Aswaja* has always been popular among Muslims. According to Harun Nasution, the term *ahli sunnah* and *jama'ah* was coined as a reaction to the *Mu'tazilah* tenet.<sup>10</sup> This term also sometimes refers to the existence of groups in the *kalam* sects, such as the Khawarij, Jabariah, Murji'ah and Shia and the Imams of *madzhab* (Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik bin Anas, Imam Al-Syafi'i and Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal). They are all known as the main figures among *Aswaja (Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah)*.<sup>11</sup>

Etymologically, *Aswaja* is a term composed of three words which are *Ahlu*, *sunnah*, and *jamaah*. Linguistically, the word *ahli* derived from the word *ahala*, *ya'halu*, or *ya'hilu*, *uhulan*. This word has a meaning such as a placeholder, husband, wife, relatives, and can also mean followers, families.<sup>12</sup> The word *sunnah* literally means a means, a way, a rule, and a way to act or a way to live. Originally, the *sunnah* refers to the words, deeds and

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<sup>9</sup> Suyitno, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif: Konsep, Prinsip Dan Operasionalnya* (Tulungagung: Akademia Pustaka, 2018), 13–158.

<sup>10</sup> Term *Ahlussunnah* became popular among Muslims when Abu Hasan Al-Ash'ari rejected the *Mu'tazilah*'s teachings, after he became a follower of *Mu'tazilah* for 40 years. Harun Nasution, *Teologi Islam Aliran-Aliran Sejarah Analisa Perbandingan* (Jakarta: UI Press, 2012), 62.

<sup>11</sup> M. Hasbi Amiruddin and Firdaus M. Yunus, *Aswaja Dan Wahabi Di Aceh Memahami Sebab Ketegangan Dan Solusinya* (Banda Aceh: LSAMA, 2020), 26. if we examined further, the emergence of this term is closely related to the hadith which mentions about 73 groups or hadith *iftiraqul ummah* which is explained by the Messenger of Allah and narrated by Al-Hakim and Ibnu Asakir from Abdullah bin Amr bin Al-ash. Also narrated by At-Tirmidzi dan Ath-Thabarani from Abdullah bin Amr bin Al-Ash].

<sup>12</sup> Ahmad Warson Munawwir, *Al-Munawwir: Kamus Arab-Indonesia* (Surabaya: Pustaka Progressif, 1997), 46.

agreements that come from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).<sup>13</sup> Whereas terminologically, "Sunnah" is a name for the method which is blessed and accepted in Islam and it has been adopted by the *Rasulullah*, Messenger of Allah, or those who understand Islam, such as the companions of the Prophet.<sup>14</sup>

Imam Ibn Rajab al-Hanbal as quoted by Ramli said that: The meaning of "sunnah" as defined by the scholars is the path taken by the Prophet, and his companions who survived resemblance and lust.<sup>15</sup> The definition of *sunnah* is also given by Abd al-Qadir al-Jaylani (471-561 H / 1077-1166 AD) which is everything that has been advocated by the Messenger of Allah including speeches, behaviour, and his decree.<sup>16</sup>

*Al-Jama'ah* comes from the word *jama'ah* which means to gather something, by bringing some closer to others. The word *jama'ah* also comes from the word *ijtima'* (unification), which is the opposite of *tafarruq* (separation) and the opposite of the word *furqah* (disunity). The *Jama'ah* is a people who gather with one same purpose. Besides, *jama'ah* can also mean as people who have united on a certain matter/affair. In other words, *al-Jama'ah* is a group of Muslims from the predecessors of the Prophet's companions, *tabi'in* and those who follow in the footsteps of their goodness until the Day of Judgment. They gather based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, and they live according to what has been done by the Messenger of Allah, both physically and mentally.<sup>17</sup>

Abd al-Qadir al-Jaylani interpreted *al-Jama'ah* as everything that had been agreed upon by the four Companions of the Prophet (*khulafaur ar-rasyidin*).<sup>18</sup> While Imam Asy'ari interprets *Ahlus sunnah Wal Jama'ah* as a group that holdfast to the Quran, hadith, and what narrated by friends, *tabi'in*, imams of hadith, and delivered by Abu Abdillah Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Hanbal.<sup>19</sup>

*Aswaja* holdsfasts to the Quran and Hadith, and the opinion of the *ulema* of the *mahhab* is still the most popular sect among the Muslim community in Indonesia. This sect is growing rapidly especially in the NU (*Nahdlatul Ulama*) community. The followers of this *mazhab* follow Imam Shafi'i on *fiqh*, Imam Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari on *aqeedah*

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<sup>13</sup> Muhammad Alim, *Pendidikan Agama Islam* (Bandung: Rosdakarya, 2011), 188.

<sup>14</sup> Abdurrahman Navis, *Risalah Ahlussunnah Wal-Jama'ah, Dari Pembiasaan Menuju Pemahaman Dan Pembelaan Akidah Amaliah NU* (Surabaya: Khalista, 2012), 2.

<sup>15</sup> Muhammad Idrus Ramli, *Pengantar Sejarah Ahlussunnah Wal-Jama'ah* (Surabaya: Khalista, 2011), 54.

<sup>16</sup> Abd al-Qadir Al-Jailani, *Al-Ghunya Li Talib Tariq Al-Haq* (Beirut: Maktabat al Shab'iyah, n.d.), 5.

<sup>17</sup> Navis, *Risalah Ahlussunnah Wal-Jama'ah, Dari Pembiasaan Menuju Pemahaman Dan Pembelaan Akidah Amaliah NU*, 4.

<sup>18</sup> Al-Jailani, *Al-Ghunya Li Talib Tariq Al-Haq*, 5.

<sup>19</sup> Abi al-Hasan Ali ibn Ismail Al-Asy'ari, *Al-Ibanah An Ushul Al-Diyanah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 14.

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(creed), and in *tasawuf* (Sufism) they follow Imam al-Ghazali and Imam Abu al-Hasan al-Syadzili.<sup>20</sup>

For the people of Aceh, Aswaja's doctrine or concept has been established as an official school of thought by the MPU (Ulema Consultative Council) based on several criteria, including: (1) Faith (*imaan*) is to pledge verbally, justify with heart and perform with limbs/body (2) believe in Allah, angels, islamic scripture, the Prophets, doomsday and *qadha* and *qadar*, (3) believing in oneness, attributes, and *af'al* (acts) of Allah based on *aqli* (rational knowledge) and *naqli* (revealed) argument, (4) believing in the attributes of *ma'ani* to Allah *ta'ala*, (5) aqeedah should be based on the Islamic scripture (Quran and other Islamic scriptures) and authentic hadiths in accordance with the understanding of the Companions and *ijma Salafush Salih*, (6) taking the clear *aqli* argument and align it with the *naqli* argument and if it contradicts, then the *naqli* argument should be chosen first, (7) believing in the Quran as the *qadim* (eternal) and *azali kalamullah* (word of God), not a new creature, (8) believing that Allah is not obliged to do good to his servant, (9) convinced that the right to be in heaven is solely a gift from Allah, (10) Do not consider someone else infidel without having a clear shar'i argument, (11) aqeedah *mutawassithah/mu'tadilah* in accordance with *nash* and not *ghuluw / ifrath* (excessive) and less, (12) believing that only the Prophets and *Rasul* (messenger) are *mahsum* (infallibility) , (13) convinced that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is the last of Prophets and *rasul* , (14) Believing that the rank of *kerasulan* (prophethood) is a gift given by Allah to those who are desired and not sought, (15) believed that the family of the Prophet, especially Siti Aisyah was clear of any accusations, (16) believing that the most noble companions of the Prophet were in accordance with the order of the Caliphate, (17) Believing that the dispute that occurred among the companions is not based on mistakes and lust, but for the basis for *ijtihad*, (18) believing that the noblest creature of Allah is the Prophet Muhammad and followed by the other messengers (*Rasul*), Prophets and Angels, (19) understanding *mutasyabihat* verses according to the understanding of the *salaf* in *tafwidh ma'a tanzih* or according to the understanding of the *khalaf* in a *takwil*, (20) someone's life must be a combination of effort and trust in Allah SWT, (21) convinced in the existence of punishment and grace in the grave, (22) believing that heaven and hell together with the people in both will be eternal forever unless those who commit immorality, will be place in hell then later will be expelled from hell, (23) believing that there are great sins and small

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<sup>20</sup> Zuhairi Misrawi, *Hadratussyaikh Hasyim Asyari, Moderasi Keumatan Dan Kebangsaan* (Jakarta: Kompas, 2010), 107.

sins and do not label great sinners as an infidel, (24) believing that angels never commit mistakes, (25) believing that the faith of a believer can increase and decrease, (26) convinced that Prophet Muhammad's *isra'* and *mi'raj* is both a physical and spiritual journey, (27) believing in the miracles of the messengers or *rasul*, (28) believing that there is the *karomah* (honor) given by Allah to the servant of His choice, (29) believing that there are the hereafter, *mizan*, *shirath*, *arasy*, *kursi* and *qolam* and only Allah knows, (30) believing that all humans came from the Prophet Adam as the first human being created from the clay, (31) believing that there is intercession (*syafaat*) on the Day of Judgment from the Prophet Muhammad, (32) convinced that Allah can be seen in heaven, (33) believing that heaven and hell exist and have existed, (34) believe that the followers or *ummah* of Muhammad who died in a state of faith received merit from his deeds during his lifetime and benefited from the prayers of the living.<sup>21</sup>

Based on the MPU *fatwa* above, the people of Aceh are obliged to follow their religious practices according to the Aswaja aqidah as stipulated by the Aceh government.

#### **b. Wahhabism**

Terminologically, Wahhabism means teachings, understanding or da'wah movement pioneered by Shaykh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab in the 12th century H (18 AD).<sup>22</sup> He strived with his followers in the Najd region, then his influence extended to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and outside Saudi Arabia including Indonesia and other Muslim countries. Wahhabi means Muslims who agree, follow and support the *da'wah* (preaching) movement of Seikh Muhammad bin Abd Wahab and the scholars who continue his *da'wah*.<sup>23</sup>

Although the Wahhabi movement was still based in Arab in the 18th century, it has shaken the world. The Turkish Empire and some of the ruling colonial nations were frightened of this movement because the Wahhabi were considered as a source of encouragement for the people at that time. There was a believe that when a Wahhabi enters a country, he will encourage people to fight against the colonialists.<sup>24</sup> The sole mission of the Wahhabi movement is to reaffirm the pure teachings of monotheism and to remove anything that will lead to *shirk* (polytheism), that there is no one to fear except Allah SWT.

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<sup>21</sup> MPU, "Kriteria Aqidah Ahlul Sunnah Wal Jamaah," Pub. L. No. 4 (2011).

<sup>22</sup> Al-Haqir Mahfuz Muhammad Al-Khalil, *Aqidah Ahli Sunnah Dan Pertentangannya Dengan Aliran Wahabiyyah* (Johor: Sekretariat Manangani Isu-Isu Akidah dan Syariah Majlis Agama Islam Negeri Johor, 2008), 5.

<sup>23</sup> Abu Muhammad Waskito, *Bersikap Adil Kepada Wahabi* (Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Kautsar, 2011), 178.

<sup>24</sup> Akhilesh Pillalamarri, "The Radicalization of South Asian Islam: Saudi Money and the Spread of Wahabism," 2014, <http://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/2014/12/20/the-radicalization-of-south-asian-islam-saudi-money-and-the-spread-of-Wahabism/>.

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Therefore, they strongly oppose the understanding that leads someone to a stagnant thinking, because it can guide people to a static religion.<sup>25</sup>

The initial appearance of the Wahhabi movement coincided with the rise of Europe. At the time, Europe was fixing various deficiencies, starting from political, economic aspects and strengthening the scientific studies in various fields, and also disseminating the scientific findings throughout the world. Taking benefit of these circumstances, they easily conquered the world. While the Islamic world was still preoccupied with the fundamental problem of "avoiding" secular (worldly) understanding which set the Muslims in the phase of decline. This phenomenon was actually based on the inability of Muslims at the time to adapt to the modern scientific findings of the Western world.

Started with that political weaknesses, then followed by the religious understanding of Muslims which was considered highly "apprehensive". These had become a driving factor for the emergence of the Wahhabi movement in the Arabian Peninsula. Many Muslims were no longer guided by the Quran and Hadith as the main source of religion and knowledge. At that time, their religious and scientific spirit was replaced by a fatalist attitude and guided by a mystical lifestyle.

Aside from the those reasons, the poverty factor which plagues among Muslims was one of the causes of crime in various places. The tribal system was still at its peak, especially in Najd which was a vast desert area and heavily inhabited by Bedouin people. Tribal systems and regional conditions also contributed to their economic backwardness and turmoil. Similarly, since the Abbasid period, the Hijaz region was weak and always under the control of stronger tribes so that it was difficult to control the trade routes which caused people suffered from the poverty and food shortages.<sup>26</sup> Agriculture and livestock, which were their daily livelihood, could not guarantee their economic survival due to the security that was prone to war and chaos perpetrated by other tribes. There was no law or legislation that can authoritatively protect the life of the community, except the will of the rulers and their followers. Consequently, the people of Najd and the Arabian Peninsula generally lived in poverty.

In the religion, it was dominated by the religious practice of the Sufis, hence the morality of the society was at its lowest point. This was due to the introduction of Roman and Greek culture which brought a negative effect on the Arabs. The Wahhabi movement

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<sup>25</sup> Abu Muhammad Waskito, *Mendamaikan Ahlus Sunnah Di Nusantara Mencari Titik Kesepakatan Antara Asyariayah Dan Wahabiyah* (Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Kautsar, 2012), 134.

<sup>26</sup> Waskito, 256.

believed that the influence of other nations, such as Greece, Persia, and Turkey, had created a deviant religious pattern. According to the Wahhabis, whoever accepts the diversity of opinions as something that is equally valid and true is one of the causes of division and backwardness of Muslims.<sup>27</sup> Such a phenomenon is unacceptable to the Wahhabis and of course opposite to the Sunnis. The next stage of the Wahhabi movement was to advocate the elimination of all *bid'ah* (heresies) that emerged in the medieval period and to return to the pure teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith. The Wahhabi movement also encouraged Muslims to perform *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) which was stated to have been dismissed by previous scholars.<sup>28</sup>

The Wahhabi movement later became stronger when it received political support from Muhammad bin Sa'ud, a Dar'iyah ruler.<sup>29</sup> The given support had lifted the ranks of the Wahhabi movement. For the favor of Muhammad Sa'ud, Politically and religiously, the movement launched by the Wahhabis significantly helped him to control the Arabian Peninsula. Meanwhile, for Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab, the full support of Muhammad Sa'ud as a businessman and founder of the Saudi government towards the Wahhabis was more than enough for the future of the movement.

Wahhabi teachings then quickly spread to several Islamic countries, including Indonesia. Especially in Aceh, some said that the movement started to be seen in the reform movement of PUSA, when Abdullah Umar Lam U and Tgk. Daud M. Beureueh established a PUSA branch in Langsa on 24 March 1940. They explicitly stated that they wanted to eradicate falsehood in religion that can damage the heart and soul of the religious practice of Acehnese people. One of the similarities is to eliminate the *khilafiah* (differences in opinion) and keep the community away from the practice of superstition for such practices can bring the community closer to *shirk*.<sup>30</sup> Although the PUSA and Wahhabi movement have a similarity, the PUSA scholars were followers of the *Ahlul Sunnah Waljamaah*, thus it can be confirmed that the PUSA scholars were not Wahhabis.

After the independence of Indonesia, Wahhabi doctrine grew in private within the Acehnese community. However, nowadays the teaching has been preached openly by those who admire Wahhabism. Some have accused the teachings are being spread by those

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<sup>27</sup> Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Selamatkan Islam Dari Muslim Puritan*, Terj. Helmi Mustafa (Jakarta: Serambi, 2006), 63–64.

<sup>28</sup> Edward Mortimer, *Islam Dan Kekuasaan*, Terj. Enna Hadi Dan Rahmani Astuti (Bandung: Mizan, 1984), 96.

<sup>29</sup> Zainal Abidin Syihab, *Wahabi Dan Reformasi Islam Internasional* (Jakarta: Pustaka Dian, 1986), 25.

<sup>30</sup> A. Hasjmy, *Ulama Aceh Mujahid Pejuang Kemerdekaan Dan Pembangun Tamadun Bangsa* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1997), 86–87; Rusdi Sufi, *Kiprah Ulama Aceh Pada Masa Revolusi Kemerdekaan 1945-1949* (Banda Aceh: Badan Arsip dan Perpustakaan, n.d.), 65–66.

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who have received scholarships from the Saudi Arabian government. The implications of strong Wahhabi teachings also have an impact on the social and religious order of the Acehnese whose majority are Aswaja followers, so that tensions within the *mazhab* are difficult to avoid.

### **2. The tensions between Aswaja dan Wahabi**

The tensions that led to open conflict between the Wahabi and Aswaja groups in Aceh are becoming more frequent. Looking back at some cases, many can be found, ranging from the seizing of mosque management, getting rid the preacher from the Friday podium, forceful dissolution of religious discussion, and the weakening of each other through videos on YouTube, or viral writings in various social media platforms.

Regarding the seizing of mosque management, the Aswaja group already sued several mosques, one of which became a social media trending when the group questioned the management and the way of worshipping in the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque which was considered as the pride of the people in Aceh. Aswaja accused the mosque was dominated and ruled by Wahhabis so that the Governor of Aceh was obliged to return it to the original management. The aswaja claimed that the Aceh Governor Regulation No. 37 Year 2013 on the Management Board of Baiturrahman Grand Mosque agreed on 23 April 2014 was not implemented by the government of Aceh.<sup>31</sup> Since the Governor did not respond to the demands, they asked for the support from the leader of the Aceh provincial parliament (DPRA).

The meeting with the provincial parliament resulted in some of the recommendations expected to be executed by the regional government, which the government still refused. Later, the Aswaja group tried to mobilize the masses in considerable numbers for the parade which was held on Thursday, October 1st, 2015. The march called for all Acehnese to do dhikr together in the tomb complex of Syiah Kuala.<sup>32</sup> In addition, the parade organizers also urged the community to strengthen Aswaja and reject the Wahhabi teachings in Aceh.<sup>33</sup> Also,

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<sup>31</sup>Following Up on Aceh Government Deliberation Results with Aceh Ulemas, 4 June 2014.

<sup>32</sup>The Joint Appeal of the Lovers of Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah, delivered on September 28, 2015 by HUDA, MUNA, Inshafuddin, RTA, FPI, Students, Gabthat Front Guard, and Congregations of Islamic Safety Fighters in Nanggroe Aceh.

<sup>33</sup>Aswaja supporters, "The City Was Crowded," *Serambi*, September 11, 2015.

demanded the management of the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque to be returned to Aswaja shortly.<sup>34</sup>

According to Tgk. Bulqaini, the marching activity had no political agenda as claimed by many parties.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, according to Tgk. Tirmizi Daud, the Aswaja parade was held to remind the governments and communities in Aceh that there were issues that needs attention from all parties.<sup>36</sup> The same opinion was said by Tgk. Ali Basyah Usman, that such demonstrations would not need to happen if the government responded to the people's demand. Aswaja group has, nine times, consulted with the government of Aceh and the management of Baiturrahman mosque to conduct worship procedures as were carried out by earlier scholars of Aceh, but they did not respond to these demands.<sup>37</sup>

The seizing of Baiturrahman mosque was not the first case that occurred in Aceh, a number of other mosques that were considered to be managed by the Wahhabis were taken back by Aswaja, such as Bustanul Jannah Mosque in Ajun, Great Aceh.<sup>38</sup> and Al-Aziziyah Mosque in Krueng Mane, North Aceh. In fact, these mosques have always been managed by Muhammadiyah, not by the Wahhabis.<sup>39</sup> The last was Al Makmur Mosque (Mosque of Oman) in Lampriet, Banda Aceh. The action from the Aswaja group also received strong resistance from the mosque management and the local community. According to the community, the practice of worship that they were performing was not strange, as they have implemented it long ago since the mosque was built. Why they were considered deviant and such seizing happened when the congregation was growing, and the mosque administrators were well-taken care of.<sup>40</sup>

Another case that ignited these two groups into conflict was when an *ustad* (preacher) accused as a Wahhabi denied the arguments which were presented by one of the great scholars (ulema) of Aswaja in Aceh. This case had lured many of Aswaja disciples to oppose the accused Wahhabi preacher through opinions on newspapers, videos, as well as boycotting

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<sup>34</sup> "Chaos in Management of Baiturrahman Grand Mosque, Thousands of Students Demand Management Be Returned to Ulemas," *Rakyat Aceh*, September 11, 2015.

<sup>35</sup> "Tens of Thousands of Students Flocked Banda Aceh," *Rakyat Aceh*, September 8, 2015.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Tgk. Tarmizi Daud, Ariematea Aceh leader and one of the initiators of the parade, dhikr and prayer at the Syiah Kuala Tomb, 17 December 2015.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Tgk. Ali Basyah Usman, Leader of MUNA, 20 December 2015.

<sup>38</sup> Chaos in Ajun Mosque, 2 April 2016.

<sup>39</sup> www.ajnn.net. *Pemuda Muhammadiyah kecam kerucuhan di masjid*, 21 May 2016

<sup>40</sup> Interview with one of the followers of the Oman Lampriet mosque, 29 January, 2020. A group of masses to stop the lesson of Ustaz Farhan in Oman Mosque, Aceh, in, <https://kumparan.com/acehkini/sekelompok-massa-hentikan-pengajian-ustaz-farhan-di-masjid-oman-aceh-1sj3jr2OdQG>. Women Association disagree that the Mosque Taken Over by the Government, in, <https://modusaceh.co/news/ib-ibu-tak-terima-masjid-diambil-alih-pemerintah/index.html>. Accessed on 4 April 2020.

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every discussion held by the accused. This case also attracted the FPI to threaten the attitude shown by the *ustad* because it was considered unethical to issue opinions to great scholars who are highly respected by the people of Aceh.

Tu Min, who is regarded as a charismatic *ulema*, believes that the rapid growth of Wahhabism in Aceh lately because they have strong cadres. There used to be no Wahhabi cadre in Aceh, but now many Acehnese has become Wahhabi cadres. Through their cadres, Wahhabis have been able to influence the public through lectures and writings against Aswaja.<sup>41</sup>

Apart from Tu Min's previous statement, the perspective of Wahhabism in Aceh is varied, some accept it and many rejects it. The pros and cons were very clearly seen when a parade was held in Banda Aceh on September 10th, 2015.<sup>42</sup> Those who call themselves Aswaja supporters radically opposed Wahhabi even though they did not understand Wahhabi teachings. On the other hand, some academics questioned the opposition of Wahhabism.<sup>43</sup> As a result, arguments were unavoidable from both the Aswaja and Wahabi counterparts.<sup>44</sup> The pros and cons of one school against another are common, provided that they respect each other over the dissent and difference school of thoughts.

### C. CONCLUSION

Aswaja as a sole *mazhab* adopted by the majority of the people in Aceh is now facing a great challenge when the da'wah and religious studies delivered by Wahhabism attract many city millennials and bureaucrats in Aceh. Youths who are infatuated with Wahhabism ideology are generally educated and graduated from public schools, religious schools, boarding schools, and tertiary institutions. From a number of observations and interviews conducted by the writers, one that creates youth interest in Wahhabism studies is the ability of Wahhabi preachers to present lessons in a straightforward and systematic manner by including the complete sources from verses and Hadiths.

This ability is sometimes not possessed by all Aswaja teachers, so they have difficulty influencing educated young people. This phenomenon becomes a problem since the lesson materials presented in the Wahhabism study are different from those delivered by Aswaja

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<sup>41</sup>Interview with Tu Min, Aceh charismatic ulema, 4 September 2018.

<sup>42</sup>The city was crowded by Aswaja supporters, 11 September 2015.

<sup>43</sup> Hasanuddin Yusuf Adan, "'Pawai Aswaja, Apa Untung Ruginya'" (Aswaja Parade, What Are the Benefits?), *Serambi Indonesia*, September 17, 2015.

<sup>44</sup> Muhammad Iqbal Jalil, "'Pawai Aswaja, Kenapa Panik?'" (Aswaja Parade, Why Panic?), *Serambi Indonesia*, September 29, 2015.

teachers, which can lead to further conflict when these two different thoughts being delivered to the ordinary community.

Even though the Aswaja group disagreed with Wahhabi studies, the MPU has not yet banned their teachings and discussions and has not yet stated that Wahhabi studies conducted in many mosques as deviant, despite various tensions between Aswaja and Wahabis schools in Aceh.

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