

# **INDONESIAN TRADITIONALIST IUM GRADUATE: AMBIVALENCE AND IDENTITY NEGOTIATION**

**A Thesis**

**Submitted to Master's Study Program of Islamic Studies at the  
Faculty of Islamic Studies in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of**

**Master of Arts (M.A.)**



**Universitas  
Islam Internasional  
Indonesia**

by:

**Fahmi Wira Angkasa**

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## ABSTRACT

Name : Fahmi Wira Angkasa  
Program : Islamic Studies  
Title : Indonesian Traditionalist IUM Graduate: Ambivalence and Identity Negotiation

Since its establishment, Saudi Arabia has recognized the role of religion in nation-building. Muhammad bin Saud, with the assistance of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab as an influential religious figure from Dariyyah, solidified his political power. The ideology of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab became the essence of the development of religious institutions in Saudi Arabia, including the Islamic University of Madinah (IUM) as a religious-based university. IUM became influential institution to spread Salafism to Indonesia, through their alumni. Their movements caused religious contestation against traditionalist Muslims. However, this phenomenon has not deterred the motivation of traditionalist Muslims to study in Madinah. This study discusses Indonesian Muslim traditionalists at the IUM in negotiating their identity with the Salafism ideology conveyed on campus, and discusses to what extent Salafism teaching in IUM influences traditionalist principles. It also discusses how they engage with the traditionalist society in Indonesia, after experiencing changes and stability in their ideologies. The study uses qualitative approach, by interviewing Indonesian traditionalist Muslim alumni of IUM. The thesis found that traditionalist Muslims at IUM exhibit various degrees of change and stability, depending on how they negotiate with the teachings there, their breadth of traditionalist knowledge, and family backgrounds. Furthermore, the thesis concludes that they have inclusive view toward Salafism ideology, and able to engage with moderate preaching towards the traditionalist society in their respective areas.

**Keywords:** *Salafism, traditionalist Muslim, IUM, identity negotiation, inclusive, moderate*

## الملخص

الاسم : فهمي وير أنكاسا

القسم : الدراسات الإسلامية

الموضوع : الخريجون التقليديون الإندونيسيون من الجامعة الإسلامية بالمدينة المنورة: التردد وتفاوض الهوية

منذ تأسيسها، أقرت المملكة العربية السعودية بدور الدين في بناء الأمة. أرست محمد بن سعود، بمساعدة محمد بن عبد الوهاب كشخصية دينية مؤثرة من الدرعية، سلطته السياسية. أصبحت فكرة محمد بن عبد الوهاب جوهر تطوير المؤسسات الدينية في المملكة العربية السعودية، بما في ذلك الجامعة الإسلامية في المدينة المنورة باعتبارها جامعة دينية. أصبحت الجامعة الإسلامية مؤسسة مؤثرة في نشر السلفية إلى إندونيسيا، من خلال خريجيها. تسببت حركاتهم في منافسات دينية مع المسلمين التقليديين. ومع ذلك، لم تشي هذه الظاهرة عن دافع المسلمين التقليديين للدراسة في المدينة. تناقش هذه الدراسة التقليديين المسلمين الإندونيسيين في الجامعة الإسلامية في التفاوض على هويتهم مع الفكر السلفي المنقول في الحرم الجامعي، وتبحث في مدى تأثير تعليم السلفية في الجامعة على مبادئهم التقليدية. كما تناقش كيفية تفاعلهم مع المجتمع التقليدي في إندونيسيا، بعد تجربة تغييرات واستقرار في معتقداتهم. يستخدم المقال نهجًا نوعيًا، من خلال مقابلة خريجين تقليديين مسلمين إندونيسيين من الجامعة الإسلامية. يتوصل المقال إلى أن المسلمين التقليديين في الجامعة الإسلامية يظهرون درجات متفاوتة من التغيير والاستقرار، اعتمادًا على كيفية التفاوض مع التعاليم هناك، وعرض معرفتهم التقليدية، وخلفياتهم العائلية. وعلاوة على ذلك، يخلص المقال إلى أن لديهم رؤية شاملة للفكر السلفي، وقادرون على التفاعل مع الوعظ المعتدل تجاه المجتمع التقليدي في مناطقهم المختلفة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** السلفية، المسلم التقليدي، الجامعة الإسلامية، تفاوض الهوية، شامل، معتدل

## TRANSLITERATION GUIDE

Arabic	Roman	Arabic	Roman	Arabic	Roman
ا	a	س	s	ل	l
ب	b	ش	sh	م	m
ت	t	ص	ṣ	ن	n
ث	th	ض	ḍ	و	w
ج	j	ط	ṭ	ه	h
ح	ḥ	ظ	ẓ	ي	y
خ	kh	ع	'		
د	d	غ	gh		
ذ	dh	ف	f		
ر	r	ق	q		
ز	z	ك	k		

### Short Vocal

Arab Alphabet	Roman Alphabet	Arabic Example	Transliteration
َ	a	جَلَسَ	<i>jalasa</i>
ِ	i	رَكِبَ	<i>rakiba</i>
ُ	u	كُتِبَ	<i>kutiba</i>

### Long Vocal

Arab Alphabet	Roman Alphabet	Arabic Example	Transliteration
ا/ى	ā	جَرِي/سَافِر	<i>jarā/sāfar</i>
ي	ī	سَلِيم	<i>salīm</i>
و	ū	سُجُود	<i>sujūd</i>

### Diphthong

Arab Alphabet	Roman Alphabet	Arabic Example	Transliteration
و	aw	مَولَا	<i>mawlā</i>
ي	ay	غَيب	<i>ghayb</i>

Notes:

1. Consonant with shaddah (◌ّ) for instance, أُمَّة is written as *ummah* (double letters).
2. Arabic letter *hamzah* (ء) at the beginning of a word is transliterated into “a” not into “`a”. For instance, أَحْمَد is written as *aḥmad* not *`aḥmad*.
3. Arabic script of *alif-lam qamariyah* (ال) is written as “al” at the beginning of words and *alif-lam shamsiyah* (ا) is written in accordance with the first letter at the beginning of words. For instance:  
المائدة : al-māidah  
الرحمان : ar-rahmān
4. Arabic letter *ta' marbutah* (ة) is written as “h” when it is located at the end of the words, such as البقرة is written as *al-baqarah*. When located in the middle of a sentence is written as “t”, such as أُمَّة وَسَطًا is written as *ummatan wasatan*.

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Certainly, the completion of this thesis was not merely a journey through the 4<sup>th</sup> semester, but it went through a lengthy process that began from the very start of my studies at the Indonesian International Islamic University. To be honest, I encountered many new things that I had never come across on this campus, particularly in the field of academic writing, which I delved into deeply. Additionally, I gained much contemporary knowledge related to the lives of Muslim societies, which motivated me to write on topics relevant to my thesis title. All of these I acquired through the kindness of the professors in the Faculty of Islamic Studies; Prof. Syamsul Rijal, Ph.D., Yanwar Pribadi Ph.D., Haula Noor Ph.D., Zezen Zaenal Mutaqin S.J.D., Bhirawa Anoraga Ph.D., Faried F. Saenong, Ph.D, Dr. M. Ilyas Marwal, MM., Dr. Phil. Syafiq Hasyim, Muhammad al-Marakeby, Ph.D, and other lecturers, led by the Dean Prof. Noorhaidi Hasan. Moreover, I have a special impression of Dr. Haula Noor as my mentor who patiently and persistently guided and provided incredible input, enabling me to complete my thesis on time. Aside from being my mentor, she also became my research partner in a joint research project organized by the campus. From there, I gained many insights that formed the foundation and inspiration for finding ideas in my thesis. Apart from the professors, I also appreciate the faculty staff; Anindhita Timika, Fakhriyan Ardyanto, and Dzakiyyah Fauziyah, who greatly assisted me with administrative matters.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of Study

In 2021, the number of students studying in Middle eastern countries reached 14,654.<sup>1</sup> Saudi Arabia is among the countries with high demand as a study destination, with a student population of 1553 in the same year. This figure ranks as the third highest number of students, following Egypt and Yemen.<sup>2</sup> There are several campuses in Saudi Arabia that have become destination for Indonesians to study, such as Islamic University of Madinah, University of Imam Muhammad bin Saud, and University of King Saud, among others. The Saudi Kingdom provides scholarships for foreign students from various countries which covers tuition fee and living allowances.

Providing scholarships for international students is one of the ways in which Saudi Arabia seeks to spread its influence. Through education, this influence can be enduring and contribute significantly to ideological development. This aligns with the kingdom's political interest, which are inseparable with the development of educational institution in Saudi Arabia. The political rivalry with Iran has prompted Saudi Arabia to actively promote its own political ideology. As a result, the Saudis took advantage of the education network as one of their political tools to spread the concept of Salafism conceptualized by royal scholars throughout the world. The aim is to strengthen Saudi Arabia's position as the center of the Muslim world and overcome its rivals<sup>3</sup>.

The Islamic University of Madinah (IUM) is one of the universities in Saudi that has the most foreign students. This campus was established in 1961 by the

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<sup>1</sup> Sekretariat, "Profil Organisasi PPI Dunia Kawasan Timtengka 21-22", (2021)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Hasan, Noorhaidi. "Transnational Islam, Violent Activism, And Cultural Resistance" *Routledge Handbook Of Contemporary Indonesia* (2018).

Saudi state<sup>4</sup>, and used for the promotion of the spread of religious belief that has been being practiced within territory (Salafism/Wahhabism) to outside the borders of the state<sup>5</sup>. Many of its alumni have become influential Salafi figures in various countries such as Safar Hawali, who was a key figure in the Sahwa political movement in Saudi Arabia in 1990. Rabi' bin Hadi al-Madkhali who became a prominent hadith expert who opposed the Sahwa political movement. Muqbil bin Hadi al-Wadi'i, a father figure of the Salafi Movement in Yemen. In the West there is Bilal Philips, who has become an influential figure in Western countries<sup>6</sup>. In addition, there are other names that spread Salafism in English-speaking countries, such as Yassir Qadhi and Muhammad al-Shareef, who have roles in the al-Maghrib Institute, a religious institution claimed to have over thirty thousand students<sup>7</sup>.

The influence of the IUM through its alumni can be found also in Indonesia. They have contributed to developing Islamic da'wah in Indonesia, and they are spread across various places and sectors such as Islamic boarding schools, community organizations, and even campuses. Some of them preach their da'wah through social media and gain lots of followers and viewers. Preachers like Khalid Basalamah, Syafiq Reza Bassalamah and Firanda Andirja are among the IUM's alumni who popular in social media. They were famous for teaching Salafism during their preaching.<sup>8</sup> Beside them, there are some names who are more senior such as Hidayat Nurwahid<sup>9</sup> and Bachtiar Nashir<sup>10</sup> who have big role in religious and national activism in Indonesia.

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<sup>4</sup> Farquhar, Michael. "Expanding the Wahhabi mission: Saudi Arabia, the Islamic University of Medina and the transnational religious economy." PhD diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Farquhar, Michael. "Saudi Petrodollars, Spiritual Capital, And The Islamic University Of Medina: A Wahhabi Missionary Project In Transnational Perspective." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47, no. 4 (2015): 701-721.

<sup>6</sup> Duderija, Adis, and Ghulam Rasool. "Bilal Philips as a Proponent of Neo-Traditional Salafism and His Significance for Understanding Salafism in the West." *Religions* 10, no. 6 (2019): 37

<sup>7</sup> Farquhar, Michael. "Expanding the Wahhabi mission: Saudi Arabia, the Islamic University of Medina and the transnational religious economy." PhD diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Aswar, Hasbi. "Politik Luar Negeri Arab Saudi Dan Ajaran Salafi-Wahabi Di Indonesia." *Jisiera: The Journal of Islamic Studies and International Relations* 1, no. 1 (2016): 15-30.

<sup>9</sup> Former Chief of Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat (MPR) 2004-2009

<sup>10</sup> President of Saudi Arabia alumni

Salafism in Indonesia has become a religious phenomenon that is widely discussed among scholars. Noorhaidi Hasan stated that the phenomenon of Salafi movement in Indonesia began to emerge in the 1980s. Their development in Indonesia can be traced back to the role of the Indonesian Council of Islamic Preaching (DDII - *Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia*), which provided enormous funds to finance the studies of Indonesian students in the Middle East. In addition, role of College for the Study of Islam and Arabic (LIPIA – *Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Islam dan Arab*)<sup>11</sup> also have the big role in spreading Salafism in Indonesia. As an educational institution which hire most of the teachers are the alumni of Saudi universities, LIPIA, at the same time, acted as the Salafi agents who created preacher to make Salafism ideology more rooted in society.<sup>12</sup> This means that educational institutions have an important role in spreading Salafism in Indonesia as trans-national ideology.

In addition, Salafi claim that their teachings follow those of the *salaf sholih*. *Salaf sholih* are pious people who lived in the first to third Hijri era, who are considered the best generation of Muslims. Salafi's distinctive feature is wearing a robe, pants above the ankles, and a beard.<sup>13</sup> Even though today some of them no longer always wear robes, they have started to acculturate by wearing Indonesian batik and sarong. They adopt the Aqidah concept that was carried by Ibn Taimiyah, and his students such as Ibnul Qayyim Jauziyah. They claim their Aqidah concept is the one adhered by the Salaf. Therefore, they named their aqidah as *Salafiyyah*.<sup>14</sup> The most distinctive one is the concept of dividing tauhid into 3, namely *Rububiyah*, *Uluhiyyah* and *Ashma wa Shifat*. They are also known as a group that is against the teachings of Sufism and against the *Asyariyah* faith.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ubaidillah, Ubaidillah. "Global Salafism Dan Pengaruhnya di Indonesia." *Thaqafiyat: Jurnal Bahasa, Peradaban dan Informasi Islam* 13, no. 1 (2012): 35-48.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Hasan, Noorhaidi. "Salafi Madrasahs and Islamic Radicalism in Post-New Order Indonesia." *Islamic Studies And Islamic Education* (2011): 93.

<sup>14</sup> Nadia, Zunly Nadia. "Perilaku Keagamaan Komunitas Muslim (Pemahaman Hadis dalam NU dan Salafi Wahabi di Indonesia)." *Jurnal Living Hadis* 2, no. 2 (2018): 141-177.

<sup>15</sup> Fauzi, Fauzi. "Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah Di Indonesia: Antara Al-Asy'ariyyah Dan Ahli Hadits." *RUSYDIAH: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 1, no. 2 (2020): 156-176.

However, internal conflicts among Salafis are inevitable. Sunarwoto mentioned that they are divided into several factions, between apolitical and political. The apolitical faction is often referred to as purist Salafis. The difference between these two Salafi factions lies in their approach to dealing with the state. Purist Salafis consider the Indonesian government as "ulil amri" that should be obeyed, forbidding any rebellion, and emphasizing the importance of maintaining state stability. While by political Salafi, the Indonesian government can be criticized and not obeying their policy while contradicts to their interest.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, the majority of Muslims in Indonesia adhere to traditionalist teachings. Traditionalist is a term that is defined by Van Bruinessen. The organization that represent the traditionalist is Nahdlatul Ulama (NU).<sup>17</sup> NU claims to be the largest Islamic community organization in Indonesia and even the world, with a total more than 60 million members<sup>18</sup>. They have the concept of applying Islamic teachings, holding the *Asyariyah* Aqidah, Syafi'i Jurisprudence, and Sufism of Imam al-Ghozali and Junaid al-Baghdadi. Salafi preachers said that the ideology of traditionalist muslim have problems, and not in accordance with the teachings of the Salaf and *ahlusunnah wal jamaah*.<sup>19</sup> The beliefs held by traditionalist Muslim are contra to the Salafi thought. Therefore, many Saudi alumni who adhere to the Salafist ideology criticize the practices and doctrines of traditionalist Muslims, labeling them as heretical acts. These practices include *tahlilan*, *yasinan*, *maulidan*, and other traditions that have developed in Indonesia.

In fact, the reason for the founding of NU was based on the existence of the Salafism movement in 1920 which was echoed by the followers of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab who tried to destroy the relics of Islamic history, with the excuse of purifying Islamic teachings from polytheism. The practices that are usually carried

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<sup>16</sup> Sunarwoto. "Online Salafi Rivalries In Indonesia: Between Sectarianism And 'Good' citizenship." *Religion, State & Society* 49, No. 2 (2021): 157-173.

<sup>17</sup> Van Bruinessen, Martin. "Traditionalist Muslims and populism in Indonesia and Turkey." *Tashwirul Afkar* 40, no. 2 (2021): 1-27.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.antaraneews.com/berita/3253369/nahdlatul-ulama-gelar-nu-festival-2023-jelang-satu-abad>, accessed in 23-2-2023

<sup>19</sup> Wahid, Ahmad Buyan. "Dakwah Salafi: Dari Teologi Puritan Sampai Anti Politik." *Media Syari'ah: Wahana Kajian Hukum Islam dan Pranata Sosial* 13, no. 2 (2017): 147-162.

by Muslims there are also prohibited by the Saudi kingdom because they are considered heretical and misguided. So that a movement emerged from the Indonesian Ulama by forming the Hijaz Committee, to voice their opinion on the Saudi Kingdom at that time. This committee continued, so that Nahdhatul Ulama was established as a continuation of the struggle of the Hijaz Committee. Thus, the founding of NU was inseparable from their disagreement with this Salafi/Wahhabi ideology.<sup>20</sup>

In addition, the Ideological debates and understandings of Islam between Muslim traditionalists and Salafi are still going on today in various places, especially social media. In fact, not infrequently they throw accusations of heresy and even disbelief each other because of different understandings. In fact, the Salafi *pengajian* was also disbanded in several places by Banser, as one of the paramilitaries belonging to NU.<sup>21</sup>

However, the conflicts and contradictions between traditionalist Muslim and Salafi did not discourage young people who have a traditionalist Islamic background and culture to study at IUM and other universities in Saudi Arabia. In fact, the former general chairman of NU, Said Aqil Siradj, is also an alumni of Ummul Qurra University Makkah. Besides him, there is also Anis Malik Toha (alumni of IUM year 1988), former rector of Universitas Sultan Agung and Said Agil Munawar, former Indonesian Minister of Religious Affair. Up to now, there are still many Indonesian students in Saudi who have traditionalist Muslim family backgrounds are running their study, especially in Islamic University of Madinah (IUM). Some of them even had a strong traditionalist Muslim tradition and intellectuality before studying in Saudi Arabia.<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, this research argues that traditionalist Muslim alumni of IUM experience ambivalence and identity negotiation in the learning process at IUM. The significance of investigating the ambivalence and identity negotiation among

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<sup>20</sup> Fuad, A. Jauhar. "Akar Sejarah Moderasi Islam Pada Nahdlatul Ulama." *Tribakti: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman* 31, no. 1 (2020): 153-168.

<sup>21</sup> Nadzifah, Siti Nailatun. "Pandangan GP Ansor terhadap Salafi Wahabi: Studi Kasus Pembubaran Pengajian Oleh GP Ansor." (2018): 1-93.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Abiyyu, April, 2023

traditionalist muslim students who study at the IUM lies on several reasons. IUM is one of the Saudi Educational Institutions that become a tool for spreading Salafism throughout the world, and has created influential figures<sup>23</sup>. In another hand, the conflicts and contradictions between traditionalist Muslim and Salafi have occurred since the establishment of NU.

In this research, I attempt to 1.) Analyze how students or alumni who have traditionalist Muslim background and culture negotiating the learning of Salafism at UIM which is generally contra to the doctrines of traditionalist Muslim 2.) examine to what extent the UIM learning influences the ideology of Salafism to traditionalist Muslim students and alumni. 3.) analyze how traditionalist Muslim alumni of IUM compromise their thought to traditionalist Muslim society.

Subsequently, I argue that the level of individuals religious knowledge before arriving in Madinah plays a crucial role in how they engage with Salafist teachings on campus. Those who have a strong foundation in traditionalist knowledge are less likely to be influenced by Salafist ideology during their time at the university, and vice versa. Furthermore, family background, circle study, and how they treat the Salafism ideology also play significant role to shape their thoughts. As important note, in this thesis, I don't intend to analyze the tendencies of lectures ideology. The argument of tendencies of lecturers are purely from the perspective of Indonesian traditionalist of IUM graduates.

## **1.2. Literature Review**

Indonesian students are scattered across various countries in the world. Discussions on the lives of the Indonesian diaspora, especially students, have been extensively explored by scholars in various scopes of research. In my study, I will focus on discussing the identity negotiation of traditionalist Muslim at IUM.

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<sup>23</sup> Farquhar, Michael. "The Islamic University of Medina since 1961: The Politics of Religious Mission and the Making of a Modern Salafi Pedagogy." (2015): 21-40.

### 1.2.1. Islamic University of Madinah

IUM was founded in 1960, provides scholarships to many students from various countries. Thus, they become agents of the spread of this ideology. Michel Farquhar uses the term "religious expansion." In his article, he mentioned the history of education during the Ottoman Empire and compares it to the period after the emergence of the Saudi Arabian kingdom. Furthermore, he mentioned that the Islamic University of Medina (IUM) serves as a place of learning for students from various countries, which has led to the expansion of Salafist thinking in the countries where its students come from.<sup>24</sup>

It was recorded that around 2001, Farquhar mentioned that ten thousand of scholarships for non-Saudi students have been granted, and there have been nearly 12 thousand had secured undergraduate qualifications from its constituent colleges. Apart from students, since its establishment, this campus has also made a policy to recruit many staffs and employees from various countries, including teaching lecturers. Among them are lecturers from al-Azhar University in Cairo, who teach a lot of major Shariah. Besides that, it also invited teachers from various affiliations who still have a basis in Salafi ideology such as Ansharu Sunnah Muhammadiyah of Egypt, and *ahle hadith* in India, and employee staff from other Arab countries. Finally in the 1990s, the policy of recruiting employees from outside Saudi Arabia was discontinued.<sup>25</sup>

Along the way, Farquhar found that IUM teaches a syllabus that has basic Salafi principles. The monotheism course at the secondary level uses the Book of *Tauhid* by Ibn Abdil Wahhab, as well as its commentary book *Fathul Majid*. In the third year, students study *Aqidah Wasitiyyah* by Ibn Taimiyah. The equivalent course at the higher studies level was to last three years, with this entire period devoted to the study of a commentary by the fourteenth-century scholar Ibn Abi al-

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<sup>24</sup> Farquhar, Michael. "Expanding the Wahhabi mission: Saudi Arabia, the Islamic University of Medina and the transnational religious economy." PhD diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, 2013.

<sup>25</sup> Farquhar, Michael. "Saudi Petrodollars, Spiritual Capital, And the Islamic University Of Medina: A Wahhabi Missionary Project In Transnational Perspective." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47, no. 4 (2015): 701-721.

‘Izz on Abu Ja‘far al-Tahawi's *al-‘Aqida al-Tahawiyya*. The syllabus in monotheism still continues to know<sup>26</sup>. However, from year to year, IUM does not only teach *syar‘i* sciences, but also teaches secular ones, and even allows female and non-Muslim staff to become staff there. These moves occurred against the backdrop of what was hailed in several sections of the Saudi press as an “opening up” (*infītāh*) of an institution that had previously been seen as an enclave of exclusivism. Several shifts of policy were due to changes in university leadership which were also opposed by themselves internally. However, the most important thing is that the development of IUM is a manifestation of the intersection between migration, education and state-backed religious mission.<sup>27</sup>

Alex Thurson, who is also a contributor to the book chapter of Michael Farquhar,<sup>28</sup> mentions Nigerian students studying at IUM. He points out that not all graduates from IUM automatically become Salafis. Furthermore, he explains that among the IUM alumni who become Salafis, they do not all have a unified understanding of religion. Additionally, the article describes the challenges faced by Nigerian students in Madinah, including discrimination and racism by the Saudi Arabian police. Thurson also mentioned the role of IUM alumni in Nigeria in building religious life there. Disputes and rivalries occur among them. Generally, these rivalries arise from the involvement of certain Salafi groups in politics and jihad, which gave rise to groups like Boko Haram and Izala. The formation of these groups is criticized and opposed by other Salafis.

In my research, I will focus on the influence of IUM to Indonesian society that have majority traditionalist Muslim citizen, represented by Nahdhatul Ulama as largest traditionalist Muslim in Indonesia. I also will discuss how the contemporary alumni of IUM contributing da’wah and negotiating their identity as IUM alumni toward traditionalist society.

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<sup>26</sup> Farquhar, Michael. "The Islamic University of Medina since 1961: The Politics of Religious Mission and the Making of a Modern Salafi Pedagogy." (2015): 21-40.

<sup>27</sup> Farquhar, Michael. *Circuits of faith: Migration, education, and the Wahhabi mission*. Stanford University Press, 2020.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid*

### 1.2.2. Identity Negotiation Among Indonesian Students in Abroad

Indonesian students studying abroad experience cultural and behavioral differences compared to their home country's reality. Many of them bring back different cultures and customs from their local experiences. In this research, I will focus on the negotiation of identity among Indonesian students abroad. This topic has been discussed by several scholars. Rika Theao analyzed how Indonesian students studying in China negotiate with Chinese culture and deeply rooted societal ideologies. In her article, she addresses three issues: the complexity of students as transnational individuals, the formation of transnational identity through student mobility, and the value of transnational identity capital.<sup>29</sup>

Yeary Panji Setianto analyzed a specific discussion about Indonesian Muslim society, including students, in the United States of America. He explained how the Muslim diaspora there negotiates religious practices in a non-Muslim country. He found that media plays a crucial role in shaping and maintaining their identity as transnational Indonesian Muslims in the US. The media helps them maintain transnational connections with their home country<sup>30</sup>. On the other hand, Putut Widjanarko specifically discussed the lives of Muslim students in New York City in his dissertation. In contrast to Setianto's findings, Widjanarko discovered that media does not play a pivotal role in the negotiation process of the Muslim community in New York.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to the West, Indonesian Muslim diaspora is also scattered in the Middle East. Mona Abazza has a particular interest in studying Indonesian students in Egypt. She has explored the profiles of Indonesian students in Cairo, specifically at Al-Azhar University.<sup>32</sup> Particularly, she examined a specific set of networks and cultural interactions formed through religious scholars' engagements in al-Azhar as

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<sup>29</sup> Theo, Rika. "Unravelling Indonesian student mobility to China: Politics, identities, and trajectories." PhD diss., Utrecht University, 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Setianto, Yeary Panji. "Mediatization of religion: How the Indonesian Muslim diasporas mediatized Islamic practices." *Journal of Media and Religion* 14, no. 4 (2015): 230-244.

<sup>31</sup> Widjanarko, Putut. "Homeland, identity and media: A study of Indonesian transnational Muslims in New York City." PhD diss., Ohio University, 2007.

<sup>32</sup> Abaza, Mona. "A profile of an Indonesian Azhari living in Cairo." *Archipel* 52, no. 1 (1996): 31-44.

one of the oldest religious education institutions in the world.<sup>33</sup> More specifically, I also have analyzed in my own article the identity negotiation of Muhammadiyah reformist-affiliated who studied in al-Azhar Cairo as having traditionalist curriculum. Muhammadiyah is known as reformist organization that has similarity with Salafi-Wahhabi thought.<sup>34</sup>

Apart from Cairo, Saudi Arabia is also a favorite destination for Muslim students in the Middle East. Sumanto al-Qurtuby mentioned that the tradition of "rihla" to the Arabian Peninsula has been carried out by Indonesian Muslims since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Since then, many alumni from the Arabian Peninsula, especially Makkah and Madinah, have become prominent Muslim scholars who have had a significant influence in the Indonesian Muslim. Additionally, currently, Makkah and Madinah, which are under the control of Saudi Arabia, have become the breeding ground for Salafi-Wahhabi ideology through its alumni spreading it to Indonesia.<sup>35</sup> Al-Qurtuby also conducts a more in-depth analysis of the varied backgrounds of Indonesian students studying in Saudi Arabia in the contemporary era. In his research, he attempts to challenge the generalization that Saudi Arabian alumni have radical ideologies and automatically become Salafi-Wahhabi after completing their education in Saudi Arabia.<sup>36</sup>

In my research, I discuss about the negotiation of identity of traditionalist Muslim, especially in Islamic University in Madinah to fill the gap of previous study by some scholars.

### **1.3. Theoretical Framework**

This study uses the theory of habitus developed by Pierre Bourdieu, a French Sociologist. Habitus is a sociological concept seeks to explain the formation of individuals' thought patterns, behaviors, and preferences as a result of their

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<sup>33</sup> Abaza, Mona. "Some research notes on living conditions and perceptions among Indonesian students in Cairo." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 22, no. 2 (1991): 347-360.

<sup>34</sup> Angkasa, Fahmi Wira. "Azharite Muhammadiyah: Ambivalence and Reinterpretation of Muhammadiyah Identity." *Al Qalam* 39, no. 2 (2022): 169-185.

<sup>35</sup> Al Qurtuby, Sumanto. *Saudi Arabia and Indonesian networks: migration, education, and Islam*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019.

<sup>36</sup> Al Qurtuby, Sumanto. "Islam, Travel, and Learning: A Case Study on Indonesian Muslim Student Diasporas in Saudi Arabia." *Journeys* 21, no. 2 (2020): 42-66.

interactions within their social surroundings. According to Bourdieu, habitus is an internal framework that is shaped by individuals accumulated social and cultural experiences over their lifetimes. Habitus encompasses various elements, including language, attitudes, values, beliefs, and preferences, all of which contribute to the construction of an individual's worldview. These elements are influenced by the social environment, family upbringing, educational background, and interactions with specific social groups. Furthermore, habitus plays a significant role in guiding individuals' choices in social, economic, and cultural domains. In essence, Bourdieu's theory of habitus provides a profound understanding of the reciprocal relationship between individuals and society, shedding light on how social and cultural structures are formed and maintained through everyday practices.<sup>37</sup>

According to this theory, I examine how the practices and thought of Indonesian traditionalist Muslim, which have become their beliefs, persist or even change after facing the teachings and socially-based values of Salafism on campus particularly. Thus, I analyze how Indonesian traditionalists negotiate with Salafism's teachings and their social life in Madinah, until they return to Indonesia and assimilate into traditionalist society.

#### **1.4. Research Significance**

This research will contribute to the study Saudi Arabia campaign of Salafism. In my research, I analyze how the IUM alumni from traditionalist Muslim affiliation negotiate their identity as IUM alumni in traditionalist society who have contradict understanding with religious teaching in IUM. Apart from that, it also complements the research on the dynamics of Indonesian students in Saudi Arabia<sup>38</sup>. Related to this topic, the scope of finding by previous scholar is still generally explained about the Indonesian Muslim diaspora in universities in whole Saudi Arabia. In my research, I attempt to compliment his research to explain about Indonesian

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<sup>37</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre. "Structures, habitus, practices." *Rethinking the Subject*. Routledge, (2018). 31-45.

<sup>38</sup> Al Qurtuby, Sumanto. "Islam, Travel, and Learning: A Case Study on Indonesian Muslim Student Diasporas in Saudi Arabia." *Journeys* 21.2 (2020): 42-66.

traditionalist Muslim in negotiating their identity during study in Islamic University of Madinah as narrower object of research.

### 1.5. Methods

In order to analyze the negotiating identity and ideology that happened among traditionalist students and alumni of IUM, I use the qualitative method with the analytical and descriptive one. As the data collection technique, I conduct observation through social media and interview.

This study uses qualitative approach in every stage of the data collection. I interviewed by offline and online (google meet and whatsapp) nine alumni of IUM randomly which consisting of seven people from a traditionalist background. In addition, I also conduct observation by coming to IUM alumni and their social media account, by analyzing their life, thought, and relationship with traditionalist society.

No	Name	Age (S.o. 2023)	Faculty	Year of Admission	Year of Graduation
1	Nuril*	29	Shariah	2018	2022
2	Hanif	27	Shariah	2017	2022
3	Ihsan*	31	al-Quran	2016	2020
4	Hari*	34	Shariah	2015	2020
5	Ramzan*	32	Arabic	2016	2020
6	Rifdi	27	Da'wah and Ushuluddin	2015	2019
7	Zia	35	Shariah	2010	2015

*Table 1. 1 Respondents with the pseudonym to keep their privacy. And those respondents with original name have agreed to show their name*

Their traditionalist identity is indicated by their family background, or practices, and or engaged education institution related to traditionalist Muslim activities before getting admission in IUM. This thesis is purely an analysis from interviews with Indonesian traditionalist IUM graduates. Then, I didn't come directly to Madinah due to the time and financial limitation that needed to be overcome. In addition, the information on the website is also limited. Therefore, the most accessible way to obtain the data is through interviewing their graduates.

## **1.6. Thesis Structure**

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 describes the introduction to the problem, such as background of study, research questions, literature review, theoretical framework, and methodology. Then in chapter 2 deals with how the Saudi Arabia political mission impacted to religious contestation in Indonesia. Then in chapter 3 discusses how IUM Influences and presence of traditionalist Muslim there. Chapter 4 describe how the Muslim traditionalist negotiating their identity in IUM and compromising their thought to traditionalist society in Indonesia. And in chapter 5 is the conclusion.

## CHAPTER 2

### SAUDI ARABIA, SALAFISM, AND RELIGIOUS CONTESTATION IN INDONESIA

#### 2.1. Introduction

In several Muslim countries, Islam become basis part of the state's decision of policy. Ulama's fatwa is taken into consideration to deal with the state policy. However, the roles, proportions, and systems of authority for ulama vary in each country.<sup>39</sup> Saudi Arabia is one of state that deals with roles of ulama since its establishment. However, the state's religious doctrine held by their scholars is antithetical to the majority of Muslims' ideology that has been a scholarly tradition for centuries in the Arabian Peninsula and other regions. The ideology they adhere to is currently known as Salafism.

The term "Salafi" refers to the phrase "*salaf*," which refers to the early generations of Muslims who were close to the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad. They claim to follow the religious practices of the *salaf al-salih*. Thus, they are called Salafi. Sometimes they are equated with term Wahhabi due to their shared intellectual lineage with Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, a prominent scholar whose teachings became religious reference since the establishment of Saudi Arabia. However, the term "Wahhabi" is often used negatively by groups opposed to them, so they prefer to be called Salafi<sup>40</sup>. In this research, I predominantly use term Salafi, although there is no significant difference between the two terms.

However, Saudi Arabia has taken several steps to expand its influence, including the establishment of various religious institutions. Its influence is not only limited to domestic affairs but also extends internationally. One example is the establishment of religious-based universities. The government heavily funds these projects, attracting many Muslims from abroad, including Indonesia, to study in

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<sup>39</sup> Mandaville, Peter, and Shadi Hamid. *Islam as statecraft: How governments use religion in foreign policy*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2018.

<sup>40</sup> Hasyim, Arrazy. "Teologi Muslim Puritan." *Geneologi dan Ajaran Salafi, 1st edn (Ciputat: Maktabah Darus Sunnah, 2017)* (2018).

Saudi Arabia. When they return to their respective countries, they bring with them Saudi ideologies that differ from the prevailing beliefs of their societies. As a result, these projects have received mixed reactions.

In this chapter, I explain how Saudi Arabia developed its mission to become the center of the Muslim world by building an international network to expand its influence in Muslim countries. Furthermore, it will discuss the foreign policy measures taken by Saudi Arabia to influence the social stability of Muslim communities in other countries, particularly through educational institutions based on Salafi teaching.

## **2.2. Saudi Arabia, Politic and Religious Policy**

### **2.2.1. Establishment of Saudi State**

Saudi Arabia is known as a country with a monarchy system, where the king serves as the head of state. Additionally, the kingdom has designated Islam as its official religion<sup>41</sup>. The establishment of the kingdom went through different phases. The first establishment occurred from 1745 to 1818. Muhammad bin Saud emerged as the founding figure of the first Saudi state. Since its establishment, Muhammad bin Saud collaborated with Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab to garner public support in building and establishing the nation. Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab was a religious figure and reformer in the history of Islam in the Arabian land. The followers of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab came to be known as Wahhabis, and their presence continues to this day. In this context, the establishment of the Saudi state cannot be separated from the role of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab as a partner to Muhammad bin Saud<sup>42</sup>.

Since commencing the cooperation with Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab, Muhammad bin Saud became a respected leader in the Wadi Hanifa region. He resided in Diriyah, a village nestled between canals and rocky terrains. During that time, Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab was also known as a religious figure with a

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<sup>41</sup> <https://www.saudiembassy.net/government/?id=Skunk-3593-6229-42-4733> accessed in 21-6-2023

<sup>42</sup> Vassiliev, Alexei. *The History Of Saudi Arabia*. Saqi, 2013.

conservative reputation among a population lacking religious devotion and engaging in practices considered unorthodox. Moreover, the society was plagued by the prevalence of polytheistic, innovative, and superstitious practices. The two figures worked together hand in hand to expand their power. Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab provided religious legitimacy to every policy implemented by Muhammad bin Saud, while Muhammad bin Saud granted authority to Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab to extend his preaching<sup>43</sup>.

### **2.2.2. Thoughts of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab**

In the dissemination of his religious teachings, Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab (1703 – 1792) and his followers adhered to the teachings of Islam derived from Ibn Taymiyyah, in accordance with what he learned from his teachers<sup>44</sup>. Additionally, they were determined to eradicate all forms of polytheism and innovation in religion. The essence of their teachings was to purify the teachings of Islam. At that time, many people would visit sacred tombs and saints, seeking their intercession with God in hopes of having their needs fulfilled. Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab and his followers considered such practices as forms of polytheism. Furthermore, many people were accustomed to and engaged in sinful acts such as intoxication and adultery. He was born and lived in a society that practiced such behaviors. It is therefore not surprising that he was a puritan who sought to purify the practices of the society, returning them to the teachings of Islam and reaffirming the oneness of Allah. As a result, he and his followers came to be known as *Muwahhiduun*<sup>45</sup>, meaning the people who make tauhid (oneness of God) as the basic principle of their life.

He has several works such as *Kasyfu asy-Syubuhât*, *Kitab Ushulu Tsalatsah*, *Kitab Ushûl as-Sittah*, *Qawaidul Arba'*, *Fadhlul Islam*, *Masail Jahiliyyah*, *Mukhtashar Sirah*, *Mukhtashar Zaadul Ma'ad*, and others. One book that is often

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<sup>43</sup> Wynbrandt, James. *A brief history of Saudi Arabia*. Infobase Publishing, (2010).

<sup>44</sup> Kechichian, Joseph A. "The Role of The Ulama In The Politics Of An Islamic State: The Case Of Saudi Arabia." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 18, no. 1 (1986): 53-71.

<sup>45</sup> Hasan, Noorhaidi. "The Salafi Movement In Indonesia: Transnational Dynamics And Local Development." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 1 (2007): 83-94.

referenced in madrasas or educational institutions affiliated with the Salafi movement is the book “*Nawaqidh al-Islam.*” In this book, it mentions the 10 nullifiers of Islam, including; 1.) Polytheism, which is worshipping other than Allah. This includes sacrificing for entities other than Allah, such as jinn and graves. 2.) Making someone an intermediary between themselves and their Lord in supplication or seeking intercession is an act of disbelief. 3.) Whoever does not declare disbelief in polytheists, or doubts their disbelief, or approves of their sect, has committed disbelief. 4.) Whoever believes that guidance other than the guidance of the Prophet is more perfect, or declares that a law other than the Prophet’s law is better than his law, has committed disbelief. 5.) Whoever hates something that comes from the Prophet has committed disbelief. 6.) Whoever insults the religion, the punishments, or the rewards of a religious act has committed disbelief. 7.) Magic and anyone who practices it has committed disbelief. 8.) Supporting disbelievers and aiding them against the Muslim community is an act of disbelief. 9.) Whoever believes that someone is free from the obligations of Islamic law, while it is clear that they still have obligations they must adhere to, has committed disbelief. 10.) Whoever rejects the religion of Islam, does not study it, and does not practice it has committed disbelief<sup>46</sup>.

However, despite his preaching being supported by the political power of Muhammad bin Saud, it did not guarantee support from his own family. Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab’s ideas were rejected by his own brother, Sulaiman bin Abdul Wahab. Sulaiman was the eldest son of Abdul Wahab, the father of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab. He was raised in a family that adhered to the Hanbali school of thought. Alongside his brother, Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab, studied Sufism, jurisprudence, and creed under their father teaching. He succeeded his father as a judge in the Huraymila region. Firmly opposing his brother’s movement and ideology, Sulaiman went to write books such as “*As-Showa’iq al-Ilahiyah fi al-radd ‘ala Mazhab al-Wahhabiyah*” and “*Fashl al-Khitab fi Mazhab Muhammad.*” These two books are believed to be Sulaiman bin Abdul Wahab’s

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<sup>46</sup> Syuhud, A. Fatih. *Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah: Islam Wasathiyah, Tasamuh, Cinta Damai.* A. Fatih Syuhud, 2018.

original works to counter his brother's ideology. There were at least two points of contention that Sulaiman had against his brother. The first was his rejection of the takfir ideology. He also denied the accusations made by the Wahhabis against Muslims they deemed deviant. Therefore, Sulaiman considered the takfiri ideology of the Wahhabis as *bid'ah*<sup>47</sup>.

### 2.2.3. Establishment of Religious-Based Institution

As mentioned in the previous section, religion remains a fundamental factor in the development of the kingdom's system of the Saudi government. This continues to the era of the modern Saudi state. The kingdom has established several official religion-based institutions, such as The Council of Senior Ulama (*Hai'ah Kibar al-Ulama*), and religious-based educational institutions including Islamic University of Madinah<sup>48</sup>. In the late 1971s, King Faysal<sup>49</sup> introduced the establishment of the Council of Senior Ulama, marking the first time a lasting platform was formed to cater to the King's future requirements of religious endorsement and consent. This institution was considered the highest religious institution in the kingdom<sup>50</sup>. The council consists of individuals appointed by the king and their salaries are funded by the government. By 2009, the council comprised a total of 21 members<sup>51</sup>.

In addition, religious-based education in Saudi Arabia is another crucial institution in the kingdom. Saudi Arabia has created this institution with the aim of reinforcing both its domestic and international connections<sup>52</sup>. The official textbooks strongly reflect the influence of the Salafi-Wahhabi ideology. These textbooks portray certain religious practices, like commemorating the Prophet's birthday, as dangerous innovations (*bid'a*) within the religion. The act of worshiping graves is condemned as an act of polytheism (*shirk*). Specifically, the Tawhid textbooks strongly discourage practices such as grave worship, fortune-telling, seeking

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<sup>47</sup> Basit, Abdul. "Muhammad Bin Abdul Wahhab: Pemikiran Teologi Dan Tanggapan Ulama Mengenai Pemikirannya." *Tazkiya* 19, no. 02 (2018): 52-67..

<sup>48</sup> Alsaif, Tawfiq. "Relationship Between State And Religion In Saudi Arabia: The Role Of Wahabism In Governance." *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 6, no. 3 (2013): 376-403..

<sup>49</sup> King of Saudi Arabia 1964-1975

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1754106/saudi-arabia> accessed in 1-7-2023

<sup>51</sup> [https://dbpedia.org/page/Council\\_of\\_Senior\\_Scholars\\_\(Saudi\\_Arabia\)](https://dbpedia.org/page/Council_of_Senior_Scholars_(Saudi_Arabia)) accessed in 1-7-2023

<sup>52</sup> Kovacs, Amanda. "Saudi Arabia Exporting Salafi Education And Radicalizing Indonesia's Muslims." (2014): 8.

supernatural treatment through witchcraft or sorcery, and classify them as different degrees of sinful behavior<sup>53</sup>. Furthermore, the instructors who teach also have a strong Salafism education, making it easier for the ideology to spread through textbooks<sup>54</sup>. In addition, In the curriculum, hatred is taught towards groups such as Christians, Jews, and even Islamic groups such as Sufis, Shiites, and groups that do not follow the Salafī Wahhabi doctrine.<sup>55</sup>

Students aged 12-15 being required to attend eight religious' classes per week. The core curriculum included subjects such as the *Quran, Hadith, Tawhid, Tafsir, and Fiqh*. These religious subjects were integral parts of the basic curriculum both before and after the events of 9/11.<sup>56</sup> Following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, involving 15 Saudi nationals, Saudi Arabia faced pressure from the United States to address the issue of discriminatory and anti-pluralistic content in its national curriculum. As a response to this pressure, Saudi Arabia announced its intention to revise the curriculum<sup>57</sup>. They claim that 5 percents controversial content has been removed, and 36 of 66 textbook has been revised. They also stated that this process of reformation will be taken slowly by years.<sup>58</sup>

Far from that period, under the leadership of King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia has embarked on an extensive policy of socioeconomic transformation through the Saudi Vision 2030. While one aspect of this program is aimed at countering negative international media coverage, it is clear that it represents a comprehensive blueprint for achieving social and economic transformation. Notably, the program recognizes the significance of education reforms, particularly within the public school system. These reforms prioritize the

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<sup>53</sup> Prokop, Michaela. "Saudi Arabia: The Politics of Education." *International affairs* 79, no. 1 (2003): 77-89.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Abiyyu, May, 2023

<sup>55</sup> Shea, Nina, and Ali Al-Ahmed. "Saudi Arabia's Curriculum of Intolerance with Excerpts from Saudi Ministry of Education Textbooks for Islamic Studies." *Center for Religious Freedom* (2006).

<sup>56</sup> Quamar, Md Muddassir, and Md Muddassir Quamar. "Contemporary Saudi School Education." *Education System in Saudi Arabia: Of Change and Reforms* (2021): 103-131. N

<sup>57</sup> Kovacs, Amanda. "Saudi Arabia Exporting Salafi Education And Radicalizing Indonesia's Muslims." (2014): 8.

<sup>58</sup> Shea, Nina, and Ali Al-Ahmed. "Saudi Arabia's Curriculum of Intolerance with Excerpts from Saudi Ministry of Education Textbooks for Islamic Studies." *Center for Religious Freedom* (2006).

provision of equal educational opportunities for all members of society, addressing historical discrimination based on gender, sect, ethnicity, and tribal affiliations. However, it is important to note that the ideology of Salafism, which has traditionally underpinned their education system, still to be utilized and even serves as a legitimization for attacks on other groups, particularly at the university level.<sup>59</sup>

From the above explanation, it is clear that those religious-based institutions, Senior Ulama Council and religious-based University, have significant influence in strengthening religious ideologies within and even beyond the kingdom. It is also evident that the scholars who are members of The Council of Senior Ulama are widely referenced by Muslims worldwide who have been influenced by the teachings of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab. Their fatwas serve as the basis for religious activities, beliefs, and social practices. As a result, the understanding of Islam according to Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab is legitimized as the true understanding of Islam by certain segments of Muslims outside of Saudi Arabia. This has strengthened Saudi Arabia's position in the eyes of Muslim in other nations. The fatwas issued by the council are disseminated by alumni of Saudi universities such as the Islamic University of Madinah, Imam Muhammad bin Saud University, King Saud University, and others. This demonstrates the importance of education in preserving ideology and strengthening the state's politics.

### **2.2.3. Muhammad bin Salman's Effect to IUM**

Saudi Arabia's dependence on its natural resources is not sustainable in the long run as they will eventually be depleted over time. Therefore, the kingdom must seek alternative ways to enhance the country's revenue from other sectors. As a result, the Saudi government has launched a long-term program called Vision 2030, initiated during the leadership of Muhammad bin Salman, aimed at diversifying the economy and reducing reliance on oil.<sup>60</sup> The rise of Muhammad bin Salman (MBS) as the crown prince of Saudi Arabia has brought many changes in order to implement that vision. One of them is the initiation of the modernization movement,

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<sup>59</sup> The discussion about university curriculum teaching will be in chapter 3

<sup>60</sup> Cochran, Judith A. "The Rise In Power Of Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman." *Digest Of Middle East Studies* 28.2 (2019): 369-385.

aimed at shedding the image that Saudi Arabia is a conservative country. As a result, policies that were previously controlled by fatwas and religious scholars have gradually faded away and been eliminated by the government. Some of these changes include allowing women to drive, expanding the role of women in the public sector, opening cinemas, organizing music concerts, and more.<sup>61</sup> Even in his external policies, he began to improve relations with Iran.<sup>62</sup>

The reformation effect of MBS's policies also had an impact on the field of education, including the Islamic University of Madinah. Students there experienced many changes after MBS gained authority, including the appointment of a non-religious background figure as the Rector of IUM. Hatim Hasan al-Marzuki, a Western-educated academic, was entrusted with leading IUM since 2018. Various policies were felt by the students.<sup>63</sup>

*"Hatim Hasan al-Marzuki, he is a former mayor of Mecca and who has close relation to the royal family. In his policies on campus, the promotion of wasatiyyah Islam, manifested in seminars, has been increased. They even established a center or corner dedicated to discussing Wasatiyyah. Additionally, the royal family has been invited several times to deliver public lectures and seminars on the importance of Wasatiyyah in Islam and modernity, emphasizing that we should not adopt a strict approach to religion. The concept of Wasatiyyah presented by them includes refraining from hasty condemnation or declaring others as disbelievers. The majority of students are excited about these Wasatiyyah seminars, and there is no resistance from them"*<sup>64</sup>

Furthermore, the students have also noticed changes in the annual *Mahrajan* festival<sup>65</sup>.

*"The conservative religious style is being eroded with the change of the rector, although there has been no official statement from the government. The Mahrajan festival, which used to have strict gender segregation, has become more open and without gender restrictions.*

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<sup>61</sup> Stenslie, Stig. "Royal Succession In Saudi Arabia: The Rise Of Mohammed Bin Salman." *Routledge Handbook Of Persian Gulf Politics*. Routledge, 2020. 357-365.

<sup>62</sup><https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/6/saudi-arabia-iran-agree-to-continue-efforts-to-establish-ties> accessed in 1-7-2023

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Rifdi, May, 2023

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Rifdi, May, 2023

<sup>65</sup> Annual cultural festivals held in universities in Saudi Arabia

*Many students disagree and grumble about this. Some even say that IUM has gone astray"*<sup>66</sup>

*"In terms of the curriculum in the Faculty of Sharia, since 2019 or 2020, the teaching of fiqh, which used to cover a comparison of schools of thought, has been changed to focus on the Hanbali school of thought. The books taught also reference the Hanbali fiqh"*<sup>67</sup>

Although the campus has undergone policy changes with the appointment of a new rector who has a non-Islamic studies background, I argue there hasn't been a significant change in the teaching of Salafism on campus, seeing from its curriculum study.<sup>68</sup>

### **2.3. "Salafization" of Indonesia**

#### **2.3.1. Saudi Arabia Policy and Proliferation of Salafism to Indonesia**

Besides domestic development, Saudi Arabia also has a vision to develop its ideological influence outside the country. In carrying out its activities, Saudi Arabia actively spreads its ideology, which is Salafism. They invested religious propagation efforts, such as constructing mosques, providing preachers, religious books, and educational scholarships to study in Saudi Arabia, which are offered to students from around the world<sup>69</sup>. They also empower media outlets to campaign for religious identity programs. Additionally, Saudi Arabia sponsored charitable and educational foundations as links to further their missionary activities<sup>70</sup>. The Quran is also promoted and disseminated by translating it into various languages every year. However, the amount of funds allocated by Saudi Arabia has decreased in the past 20 years. Even this data is mentioned in the Ministry of Islamic Affairs

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<sup>66</sup> Interview with Nuril, May, 2023

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Abiyu, June, 2023

<sup>68</sup> Discussion about curriculum study will be in chapter 3

<sup>69</sup> Mandaville, Peter, and Shadi Hamid. *Islam as statecraft: How governments use religion in foreign policy*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2018.

<sup>70</sup> Prokop, Michaela. "Saudi Arabia: The Politics Of Education." *International affairs* 79, no. 1 (2003): 77-89.

Statistical Book from 2012 to 2017, which also resulted in a decline in the kingdom's missionary activities externally.<sup>71</sup>

According to Noorhaidi Hasan, Saudi Arabia seeks to fill the gaps and shortcomings of other Muslim countries. Saudi Arabia strives to provide an alternative to the secular ideology developed by Kemal Abdul Nasir in Egypt<sup>72</sup>. In addition, the dissemination of the ideology by Saudi Arabia is also a step to compete with Iran's program in its mission of Islamic revolution. These activities contribute to the spread of Salafist ideology, which originally comes from Saudi Arabia, in various Muslim countries<sup>73</sup>.

Furthermore, Saudi Arabia also built international networks through the institutions they establish themselves. One of them is the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Da'wah, and Guidance. This ministry oversees the management of religious affairs and provides religious resources in the form of books and donated funds for international purposes. The second is the Muslim World League, an organization chaired by Saudi Arabia and headquartered in Mecca. This institution is utilized by Saudi Arabia to promote Islamic da'wah on a global scale. Saudi Arabia's significant role in this institution creates the impression that it serves as a vehicle for Saudi Arabia to promote its hegemony in the Muslim world<sup>74</sup>. Additionally, there is the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY). Initially, this institution was established to support young Saudi students studying in non-Muslim countries, ensuring that they are free from ideologies that are not in line with Islamic teachings. However, over time, this institution has developed connections with the Muslim Brotherhood. Eventually, it focused on engaging in activities that support the dissemination of Salafi doctrine<sup>75</sup>. Saudi Arabia funds programs carried out by

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<sup>71</sup> Mandaville, Peter, and Shadi Hamid. *Islam As Statecraft: How Governments Use Religion In Foreign Policy*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2018..

<sup>72</sup> Hasan, Noorhaidi. "The Salafi Movement In Indonesia: Transnational Dynamics And Local Development." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 1 (2007): 83-94.

<sup>73</sup> Mandaville, Peter G., ed. *Wahhabism And The World: Understanding Saudi Arabia's Global Influence On Islam*. Oxford University Press, 2022.

<sup>74</sup> Van Bruinessen, Martin. "Indonesian Muslims And Their Place In The Larger World Of Islam." *Indonesia Rising: The repositioning of Asia's third giant* (2012): 117-140.

<sup>75</sup> Jahroni, Jajang. "Saudi Arabia Charity And The Institutionalization Of Indonesian Salafism." *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 58, no. 1 (2020): 35-62..

the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which aims to coordinate the foreign policy of Muslim countries. Additionally, Saudi Arabia wields influence through the Muslim World League (*Rabitah 'Alam Islami*). The Rabita serves as a means for Saudi Arabia to distribute funding worldwide, including in Indonesia.<sup>76</sup>

Indonesia is among the countries targeted by the spread of Salafi ideology. In the 1980s, Salafism began to gain ground in Indonesia. This is evident from the emergence of individuals with certain characteristics, such as beards, wearing trousers above the ankles, wearing robes, or donning turbans<sup>77</sup>. One of the organizations in Indonesia that partners with Saudi Arabia in carrying out their missions is the *Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah* Indonesia (DDII), which was founded by Muhammad Natsir and his colleagues from the Masyumi Party of Indonesia in 1967. The establishment of this party was influenced by political pressures under President Suharto's regime, particularly the banning of their party by the regime. This case marked the beginning of the removal of Islamic parties from the political stage in Indonesia. It can be reasonably deduced that the establishment of DDII by former Masyumi leaders was a calculated decision aimed at resolving the political deadlock and evading pressures from Suharto. DDII, as the representative of Rabita in Indonesia associated with Saudi Arabia, has a mission to mobilize preachers in Indonesia. In addition to promoting Salafism, DDII also carries Islamist messages that are in line with the Muslim Brotherhood. Furthermore, the organization also aims to marginalize Shia Muslims in Indonesia. As a result, abundant financial assistance comes from various foreign foundations, particularly from the Middle East. This has led to the establishment of various educational and religious facilities such as mosques, schools, books, and even hospitals and orphanages.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Hasan, Noorhaidi. "Faith And Politics: The Rise Of The Laskar Jihad In The Era Of Transition In Indonesia." *Indonesia* 73 (2002): 145-169.

<sup>77</sup> Additional characters can be traced by content of their da'wah primarily to avoid *bid'ah* (innovation) in religion and upholding tawhid. Because some other groups such as Tablighi jamaat have same appearances

<sup>78</sup> Noor, Farish A. Bruinessen, Martin Van. "*Kitab Kuning: Books in Arabic Script Used in the Pesantren Milieu: Comments on a new collection in the KITLV Library*" *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-en Volkenkunde*, deel 146, no. 2 (2008)

In addition to DDII, Saudi Arabia also established a network by building a campus called the *Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Islam dan Bahasa* (LIPIA) in Jakarta in 1980. This campus is a branch of the Imam Muhammad bin Saud University in Riyadh. The lecturers teaching there come from various countries such as Somalia, Egypt, Jordan, Sudan, and Indonesia. Several books taught there are in line with Salafi understanding, such as *Al-'Aqida al-Wasitiyya* by Ibn Taymiyyah, *'Aqidat Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jama'a* by Ibn 'Uthaymeen, *Kitab al-Tawhid* by Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab. Additionally, there are books taught to refute deviations of Shia beliefs, such as *Al-Khuttut al-'Arida li al-Shi'a al-Ithna 'Ashariyya* by Muhib al-Din al-Khatib. As a result, the alumni and students from this campus have a good understanding of Salafi doctrine and actively participate in spreading it to various regions in Indonesia<sup>79</sup>. In addition to becoming preachers spreading to various regions, many alumni of LIPIA continue their education in Saudi Arabia.<sup>80</sup>

At that time, Salafis were known to live in exclusive environments. However, they managed to utilize areas in residential areas by becoming active in mosques. Additionally, they also established *pesantren* and schools that adhere to their religious principles. Through these means, the ideology of Salafism continued to grow. Although there were conflicts and resistance from communities rooted in their own traditions, such as the abangan community, who did not readily accept the ideology<sup>81</sup>.

### **2.3.2. Proliferation Through Establishment of Universities**

There are universities based on Salafi principles that have been established. Besides LIPIA, there is the *Sekolah Tinggi Dirasah Islamiyah* (STDI) in Jember, East Java. The founding of STDI Imam Syafii Jember can be traced back to an informal conversation among a group of Indonesian students studying at the Islamic

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<sup>79</sup> Hasan, Noorhaidi. "The Salafi Movement In Indonesia: Transnational Dynamics And Local Development." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 1 (2007): 83-94..

<sup>80</sup> Bano, Masooda, ed. *Shaping Global Islamic Discourses: The Role Of Al-Azhar, Al-Madinah And Al-Mustafa*. Edinburgh University Press, 2015.

<sup>81</sup> Hasan, Noorhaidi. "The Failure Of The Wahhabi Campaign: Transnational Islam And The Salafi Madrasa In Post-9/11 Indonesia." *South East Asia Research* 18, no. 4 (2010): 675-705.

University of Madinah in Saudi Arabia. In 2005, on a leisurely afternoon in the Prophet's Mosque, these students engaged in a lighthearted discussion that gradually shifted towards their future plans after completing their education at the university. They explored various ideas, including some aspiring to serve in their original educational institutions, others contemplating the establishment of Islamic boarding schools in their hometowns, and a few proposing a more ambitious concept of establishing an Arabic-based campus. This casual conversation at the masjid *an-nabawy* eventually led to a more serious discussion among the postgraduate students in one of the dormitories. The focus of the conversation shifted towards the establishment of a prestigious educational institution that would be centered around the Arabic language. They aimed to develop a curriculum that would draw inspiration from Islamic University of Madinah<sup>82</sup>.

Currently, Muhammad Arifin Badri<sup>83</sup> serves as the rector of STDI campus. The majority of lecturers teaching at the campus are alumni of the Islamic University of Madinah, and some are alumni of the Imam Muhammad bin Saud University, LIPIA, and STDI Jember itself<sup>84</sup>. The available programs of study include Hadith Studies and *akhwal syakhsiyyah*. The STDI Foundation has obtained legal recognition from the Ministry of Law and Human Rights of the Republic of Indonesia through the Directorate General of General Legal Administration on February 6, 2008, with Decree number: AHU-396.AH.01.02 year 2008. Meanwhile, the Hadith Studies program has received accreditation from the government in 2014 with a C grade, valid until 2019<sup>85</sup>. Students studying at this institution come not only from the local region but also from abroad, such as Malaysia and Singapore<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>82</sup> Suryadilaga, Muhammad Alfatih. "Profil Prodi Ilmu Hadis Di Era Globalisasi Teknologi Informasi." *Riwayah* 2, no. 1 (2016): 114-131.

<sup>83</sup> Doctoral alumni of IUM 2010

<sup>84</sup> [STDIIS | Dosen](#) accessed in 21-6-2023

<sup>85</sup> Irfan Yuhadi. "Efektifitas Kuliah Ekstra Tafsir Alquran Dalam Rangka Meningkatkan Keilmuan Alquran Mahasiswa."

<sup>86</sup> Silviantoro, Noor Ikhsan. "Minat Generasi Muda terhadap Ilmu Hadis (Kendala dan Solusinya Dalam Rencana Strategi Pengembangan Prodi Ilmu Hadis)." *Al-Majaalis* 5, no. 2 (2018): 28-48.

In addition to STDI, there is also the Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam (STAI) Ali bin Abi Thalib. This university originated from the establishment of Ma'had Ali al-Irsyad. With a two-year study period, Ma'had Ali al-Irsyad adopted the curriculum from the Islamic University of Imam Ibn Saud in Saudi Arabia. Over time, Ma'had Ali al-Irsyad has produced many graduates with excellent Arabic language skills and knowledge of Islamic sciences. Most of the graduates further their education at higher levels, both abroad, such as at the Islamic University of Madinah, and domestically, such as at LIPIA in Jakarta, as well as in other Islamic universities in Indonesia. However, considering the high demand for Islamic scholars, the *ma'had* was elevated to the level of a college, namely STAI Ali bin Abi Thalib, with the decision of the Director General of Islamic Education of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, number: Dj.I/495/2007.<sup>87</sup>

The establishment of STDI Imam Syafii and STAI Ali bin Abi Thalib did not escape controversy. Just like several incidents of dissolution and rejection of Salafis in various places, the existence of these colleges was rejected by the surrounding community. They had been indoctrinated with the belief that Salafis, as a group, are known for being anti-tradition and customs that are commonly practiced by traditionalist society. Especially on social media, Salafi preachers are known for using words like *bid'ah* and *shirk* when referring to traditionalists. One of the issues raised by traditionalist communities in the area of STDI was the naming of the campus after Imam Syafii. As it was known, Indonesian traditionalists adhere to the Shafi'i madhab as their guide for worship. In fact, there have been demonstrations demanding the dissolution of STDI by the local community. As a result, a reconciliation took place between the Majelis Ulama Indonesia in Jember, STDI, and the local branch of Nahdlatul Ulama. Idrus Ramli, as prominent figure of Nahdhatul Ulama stated:

*“Naming STDI with Imam Syafii is problematic. whereas it does not teach Imam Syafii's teachings, It's similar to someone selling pork satay, for example, but naming it goat satay. It will create misunderstandings. If STDI were named with Imam Ibn Taymiyyah,*

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<sup>87</sup> [Sejarah Singkat – STAI Ali bin Abi Thalib Surabaya \(stai-ali.ac.id\)](https://sejarahsingkat.com/sejarah-singkat-stai-ali-bin-abi-thalib-surabaya-stai-ali.ac.id) accessed 21-6-2023

*Utsaimin, or Bin Baz, perhaps it wouldn't be a problem. However, we object to this. This name is problematic for us because in Jember, all the Islamic boarding schools follow the Shafi'i madhhab, but none of them carry the name Imam Syafii. It is essential to maintain the feelings of the Muslim community. Moreover, unity among Muslims is crucial now. We don't need conflicts among fellow Muslims. If this issue is escalated like this, we will be disturbed. Nevertheless, the conflict between STDI and the surrounding community should be resolved amicably."*<sup>88</sup>

The incident of this rejection also received a response from the management of STDI. They believe that traditionalist members of NU feel threatened by the establishment of STDI.<sup>89</sup> Ali Musri, one of STDI founder stated:

*"The resistance against STDI cannot be separated from the lack of intelligence among the community. The people are preoccupied with traditions such as reciting tahlil and celebrating maulid. The more intelligent people become, the less they care about such traditions like tahlilan. The resistance against the Sunnah preaching is due to their anxiety as the number of their followers continues to decrease, prompting them to engage in resistance."*

STAI Ali also faced rejection. Mubarak Bamualim<sup>90</sup> stated that if STAI is considered to be disturbing the community, it is in line with the conditions during the time of the Prophet, where the Prophet also faced criticism and challenges from the Quraysh in preaching Islam.<sup>91</sup>

#### **2.4. Traditionalist Muslim Relationship with Salafist**

As a country with the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia is not exempt from the diversity of Islamic groups it possesses. At least two major Islamic groups currently have influence over the thoughts and movements of society: the traditionalists and the reformist. The traditionalists are those who adhere firmly to old Islamic traditions, relying on the principle of *taqlid* (following the opinions of

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<sup>88</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5i26pcbsNI> – accessed in 21-6-2023 accessed 21-6-2023

<sup>89</sup> Redjosari, Slamet Muliono. "Salafi, Lembaga Pendidikan dan Perlawanan Dakwah." *Jurnal Al-Fawa'id: Jurnal Agama dan Bahasa* 11, no. 1 (2021): 12-27..

<sup>90</sup> Alumni of IUM and Head of STAI Ali bin Abi Thalib

<sup>91</sup> Redjosari, Slamet Muliono. "Salafi, Lembaga Pendidikan dan Perlawanan Dakwah." *Jurnal Al-Fawa'id: Jurnal Agama dan Bahasa* 11, no. 1 (2021): 12-27.

past scholars). Conversely, the reformist are those who strive to understand Islam in the context of ongoing development. Given the dynamic nature of life, there is a need for *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) to address new issues and challenges.<sup>92</sup> At least, the religious foundation of traditionalism is upheld by several groups or organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Other traditionalist groups were more localized and focused on specific activities. These included Jamiyatul al-Washliyah in North Sumatra, Perti in West Sumatra, Mathlatul Anwar in West Java, and Nahdlatul Wathan in Lombok.<sup>93</sup> The reformist Islamic groups today can be said to be represented by Muhammadiyah,<sup>94</sup> as an "ideologically rival" to NU and at the same time a partner in maintaining the harmony and unity of the Indonesian state. Muhammadiyah currently has around 30 million members worldwide.<sup>95</sup> Apart from Muhammadiyah, there are also groups that fall under the category of reformist such as Persatuan Islam (Persis), al-Irsyad and others<sup>96</sup>.

Nahdlatul Ulama was established on January 31, 1926, in Surabaya. Several *Kyai* played significant role in the establishment of this organization, such as Kyai Wahab Hasbullah and K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari. Currently, NU is the largest traditionalist organization in Indonesia. It is claimed that the organization has around 60 million members<sup>97</sup>. In fact, it can be said to be the largest mass muslim organization in the world. This organization has religious principles based on the *Asy'ariyah* creed, Shafi'i fiqh, and the teachings of Imam Ghazali and Junaid al-Baghdadi in Sufism. Their religious foundation is deeply rooted in Indonesian society and even dominates other ideological thoughts.<sup>98</sup> *Pesantren* serve as an

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<sup>92</sup> Saeed, Abdullah. "Ijtihad And Innovation In Neo-Modernist Islamic Thought In Indonesia." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 8, no. 3 (1997): 279-295..

<sup>93</sup> Fealy, Greg, and Robin Bush. "The Political Decline Of Traditional Ulama In Indonesia: The State, Umma And Nahdlatul Ulama." *Asian Journal of Social Science* 42, no. 5 (2014): 536-560..

<sup>94</sup> Nashir, Haedar, Mutohharun Jinan, and Bambang Setiaji. "Muhammadiyah: The Political Behavior Of Modernist Muslim Elite In Indonesia." *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews* 7, no. 4 (2019): 837-844..

<sup>95</sup> <https://diktilitbangmuhammadiyah.org/id/absennya-muhammadiyah/> accessed in 21-6-2023

<sup>96</sup> Hasan, Noorhaidi. "The Salafi Movement In Indonesia: Transnational Dynamics And Local Development." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 1 (2007): 83-94..

<sup>97</sup> Saenong, Faried F. "Nahdlatul Ulama (NU): A Grassroots Movement Advocating Moderate Islam." In *Handbook of Islamic sects and movements*, pp. 129-150. Brill, 2021.

<sup>98</sup> Fuadi, Moh Ashif. "Tradisi Pemikiran Moderasi Beragama Nahdlatul Ulama." *Al-Fikra: Jurnal Ilmiah Keislaman* 21, no. 1: 12-25.

important asset for them in upholding their principles. Their *pesantren* are often referred to as traditional *pesantren* because they have old system, such as *sorogan*, which is a distinctive characteristic of how knowledge was pursued by people and scholars in previous eras. Additionally, the tradition of studying the *kitab kuning* also distinguishes the system between traditional and modern *pesantren*<sup>99</sup>.

Undoubtedly, reformist Muslims drew their inspiration and influence partly from Salafism and the reform ideas of Muhammad Abduh and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani<sup>100</sup>. It is well-known that the formal inception of the Salafi/Wahhabi movement took place in 1747 when its founder, Muhammad bin Abd al-Wahhab, traveled to various Islamic nations and observed the prevalence of religious innovations and superstitious practices that closely resembled idolatry. Upon returning to his homeland in Central Arabia, Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab initiated a religious purification campaign alongside his followers. The reformist group has a slogan of "Back to the Quran and Sunnah." They use this slogan because they perceive the current understanding of Islam as no longer pure. They believe that the Muslim community has fallen into deviation by engaging in *bid'ah*<sup>101</sup>. Additionally, many of their practices contain elements of superstition that need to be eradicated, such as *tawassul*. Sufi orders (*tarekat-tarekat* sufi) were also widespread at that time, and the practices they performed were no longer in accordance with the Quran and Hadith<sup>102</sup>.

Saudi Arabia has played a significant role in the development of the reformist group. Through its policies and political power, Saudi Arabia has sought to eliminate traces of traditionalism, starting from the territories under its control. In fact, their actions began from the early establishment of the Saudi state, which allied itself with the puritanical religious force of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab. As

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<sup>99</sup> Afif, Moh. "Penerapan Metode Sorogan Dalam Meningkatkan Baca Kitab Di Pondok Pesantren Tarbiyatun Nasyi'in." *KABILAH: Journal of Social Community* 4, no. 2 (2019): 34-43..

<sup>100</sup> Burhani, Ahmad Najib. "The Ideological Shift Of Muhammadiyah From Cultural Into Puritanical Tendency In 1930s." *Jurnal Masyarakat dan Budaya* 8, no. 1 (2006): 1-22.

<sup>101</sup> Innovations in religious practices

<sup>102</sup> Lenggono, Wahyu. "Lembaga Pendidikan Muhammadiyah (Telaah Pemikiran KH Ahmad Dahlan Tentang Pembaruan Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia)." *Islamadina: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 19, no. 1 (2018): 43-62.

mentioned in previous chapters, Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab criticized and opposed groups that were deemed engaged in shirk (polytheistic practices), many of which were preserved by the Ottoman Empire. Consequently, conflict between the Saudi state and the Ottoman Empire was inevitable. The development of Saudi Arabia faced numerous challenges. They fell and rose several times until the birth of the third Saudi generation in 1934.<sup>103</sup>

The actions of the reformist group, which sought to distance themselves from the sacredness of traditional Islamic heritage, served as one of the motives and reasons for the establishment of NU. The founding of NU began with protests raised against Saudi Arabia's policies to eliminate Islamic sites such as the graves of the companions, including close relatives of Prophet Muhammad. The Saudi government considered these sites to be part of the causes of polytheism. Additionally, the Saudi government's desire to eradicate the teachings of the four madhhab also served as an initial reason for the rise of Indonesian scholars, particularly K.H. Wahhab Hasbullah. Eventually, he proposed the idea of holding a congress that would urge the Saudi authorities to preserve and uphold the teachings of the four madzhab there. Finally, K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari and K.H. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah took the initiative to form the Hijaz Committee, leading and inviting kyai (Islamic scholars) and religious leaders from several cities in Java to join. They agreed to the invitation to form the committee. Some of them were sent to meet King Ibn Saud to discuss the religious issues under debate and to attend the World Islamic Congress in Mecca in 1926. Among the topics discussed were the policies of the Wahhabi rulers in the Hijaz to deny access to sacred places, and Saudi Arabia's plans to regulate Islamic education policies in Mecca and Medina<sup>104</sup>.

Upon their return from the Hijaz, those who were initially part of the Hijaz Committee established an Islamic organization called Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). This name was proposed by K.H. Alwi Abdul Aziz. Therefore, the organization was officially founded on January 31, 1926. The name "Nahdlatul Ulama" means the

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<sup>103</sup> Al-Rasheed, Madawi. *A History Of Saudi Arabia*. Cambridge University Press, 2010..

<sup>104</sup> Ismail, Faisal. "The Nahdlatul Ulama: Its Early History And Contribution To The Establishment Of Indonesian State." *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 5, no. 2 (2011): 247-282..

revival of the scholars. They chose the term "ulama" instead of "*muslimin*" or "*ummah*" to emphasize the crucial role of the scholars within the organization. In NU, the ulama are regarded as the central figures in religious matters because of their guaranteed religious knowledge. Additionally, the ulama hold more authority among their students (*santri*) and have greater influence in expanding Islamic propagation to remote areas.<sup>105</sup>

In order to accomplish the objectives above, NU has taken steps by creating connections between the religious scholars who adhere to any of the four recognized madhab, and emphasizing teaching under these foundations. In addition, by conducting evaluations of books before it's used in education to determine if it's written by individuals belonging to the "*ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamaah*," or by individuals associated with deviant innovations known as "*ahli bid'ah*"<sup>106</sup>

As time went on, NU experienced development. In 1928, NU sent a delegation represented by K.H. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah and Sheikh Ahmad Ghanaim al-Misri to meet with the Saudi King, requesting the king to safeguard the teaching and practice of Islam based on the methodologies of the four madhabs within his kingdom and authority. Eventually, the King responded positively to this request and sent a written response to NU. This mission was considered successful by the scholars of NU.<sup>107</sup>

Reminding that the salafi movement is unstoppable, NU created institution called Aswaja Center. This institution has been established in many management regions of NU in Indonesia. One of the most active Aswaja Centers is located in East Java. The Aswaja Center in East Java was founded on January 31, 2011, and inaugurated by the Central Executive Board of NU. The vision and mission of establishing this institution are to fortify traditionalist communities, particularly NU, from other understandings. Additionally, the mission of establishing this institution is to enhance the understanding and practice of Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah Islam in the daily lives of NU members. The materials taught there is related to

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid

<sup>106</sup> Ibid

<sup>107</sup> Ismail, Faisal. "The Nahdlatul Ulama: Its Early History And Contribution To The Establishment Of Indonesian State." *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 5, no. 2 (2011): 247-282..

defend the traditionalist thought and practices from trans-national thought including Salafism<sup>108</sup>

## 2.5. Conclusion

Since its establishment, Saudi Arabia has considered religion as a crucial factor in nation-building. Muhammad bin Saud expanded his political power with the help of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, a religious figure from Dariyyah whose ideology was rooted in the teachings of Ibn Taymiyyah. The core of his teachings was to purify the Islamic faith. According to him, the society of Dariyyah at that time was engaged in acts of polytheism. Thus, he strived to eradicate polytheism by promoting the concept of Tawhid, as conceptualized by Ibn Taymiyyah. His religious mission was also supported by the political role of Muhammad bin Saud. Several internal institutions were established to strengthen the state's politics, including the Council of Senior Ulama (*Haiah Kibar Ulama*) and religious-based universities. However, in reality, these institutions had a significant impact on Muslims outside of Saudi Arabia who sought to deepen their religious knowledge through the fatwas of Saudi scholars and the preaching delivered by alumni of religious-based universities, especially Islamic University of Madinah.

Additionally, Saudi Arabia demonstrated its efforts in external strengthening of the kingdom by establishing extensive networks with various Muslim countries. They established and funded various foundations and social organizations such as the Muslim World League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth. Through these initiatives, Saudi Arabia was able to achieve its political interests and expand its influence. The Saudi Arabian approach to understanding Islam, known as Salafism, has played a significant role in expanding their political influence.

Indonesia has become one of the target countries for Saudi Arabia in spreading this ideology. Various religious organizations and educational institutions in Indonesia, such as the DDII and LIPIA, became vehicles for

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<sup>108</sup> Munawir, Munawir. "Aswaja NU Center Dan Perannya Sebagai Benteng Aqidah." *SHAHIH: Journal of Islamicate Multidisciplinary* 1, no. 1 (2016): 61-81..

spreading Salafist teachings, starting in the 1980s. Their development has been rapid, leading to the establishment of numerous educational institutions based on Salafist ideology. Their movement is often rejected by traditionalist Muslim communities who perceive their teachings as innovations (*bid'ah*), polytheism (*syirik*), or superstitions (*khurafat*) propagated in their lectures. As a response, the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the largest traditionalist organization in Indonesia, established institutions such as the Aswaja Center to counter Salafist movements.

In fact, the establishment of NU itself was driven by the concerns of traditionalist scholars in the early 20th century who feared that their historical Islamic heritage and teachings would be eradicated from the holy land of Mecca by the Saudi kingdom. These facts demonstrate the significant influence of Saudi Arabia on the stability of Muslim communities in Indonesia.

## CHAPTER 3

### ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF MADINAH, INFLUENCES AND PRESENCE OF INDONESIAN TRADITIONALIST MUSLIM

#### 3.1. Introduction

The development of the curriculum in a university is crucial. As mentioned in chapter 2, Saudi educational institutions serve not only as a means to develop internal resources and components of the kingdom but also as a political tool for the state to strengthen its relations with countries around the world, particularly in the Muslim world.<sup>109</sup> The domestic educational institution in Saudi Arabia that has a significant influence in furthering this mission is the Islamic University of Madinah, known for teaching Salafi ideology.

This chapter discusses how the Islamic University of Madinah plays its role as an educational institution that makes Salafism the main curriculum of instruction. It will start with an overview discussion of IUM and its management in accepting students from various countries, along with the facilities provided to them. Additionally, it will describe the curriculum taught at IUM, which is based on Salafist ideology. The subsequent subchapter will delve into the classroom environment, the characteristics of faculty members and students. The subsequent subchapter will discuss how IUM, which teaches Salafist ideology, does not diminish the motivation of traditionalist Muslims to study there.

#### 3.2. Role of Islamic University of Madinah in Religious Teaching

##### 3.2.1. Brief Overview of the University

The Arab Middle East stands out as a distinguished region that has attracted Muslim students seeking Islamic education, even though other countries like Malaysia, Turkey, Australia, the United States, and certain Western European countries have

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<sup>109</sup> Alsaif, Tawfiq. "Relationship Between State And Religion In Saudi Arabia: The Role Of Wahabism In Governance." *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 6, no. 3 (2013): 376-403.

become attractive destinations for Islamic studies in recent decades. Certain Muslim groups, especially students with Salafi or Islamic traditionalist backgrounds, still view the Middle East as a prestigious location for studying Islam.<sup>110</sup> Therefore, one of Saudi Arabia's diplomatic efforts to strengthen its influence is through educational institutions. Campuses in Saudi Arabia have become popular destinations for students worldwide to study Islam. The success of these institutions in producing graduates is significant. Many of their alumni play influential roles in society, whether as preachers, teachers in Islamic schools, entrepreneurs, or even public officials in government<sup>111</sup>.

Several universities in Saudi Arabia are popular destinations for students, especially from Indonesia, such as the Islamic University of Madinah. Islamic University of Madinah remains the most favored and sought-after by students from around the world. The number of international students in that university is the highest compared to others<sup>112</sup>. One of the factors is the recruitment method applied by the Islamic University of Madinah (IUM), which includes conducting campaigns and direct selection processes in several *pesantren* in Indonesia, such as Gontor and Darunnajah. Darunnajah *pesantren* has had a Memorandum of Understanding with IUM since 1986. Their relationship further developed in 2013 with the implementation of *muqabalah* until 2017<sup>113</sup>. This *muqabalah* allows students in Indonesia to easily access the selection process by attending these events. Additionally, the IUM has established collaborations with several *pesantren* in Indonesia, which enables many alumni of these *pesantren* to receive scholarships for studying at the university such as Gontor and Darunnajah. Until now, Darunnajah still have opportunity to send their students to IUM by scholarship funded by the Kingdom<sup>114</sup>.

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<sup>110</sup> Al Qurtuby, Sumanto. "Islam, Travel, and Learning: A Case Study on Indonesian Muslim Student Diasporas in Saudi Arabia." *Journeys* 21, no. 2 (2020): 42-66.

<sup>111</sup> Al Qurtuby, Sumanto, and Shafi Aldamer. "Saudi-Indonesian Relations: Historical Dynamics and Contemporary Development." *Asian Perspective* 42, no. 1 (2018): 121-144..

<sup>112</sup> Interview with Abiyyu, Saudi University Graduate

<sup>113</sup> Interview, as part of admission examination

<sup>114</sup> Interview with Rifdi, June, 2023

Saudi Arabia's prominent international religious outreach is spearheaded by the IUM, established in September 1961 by royal decree and commencing operations in November of the same year. Initially, the university focused primarily on religious studies like *fiqh*, *usul al-fiqh*, *'aqida*, and *shari'a*, providing fully funded residential higher education exclusively to male Sunni Muslim students from across the globe<sup>115</sup>. However, in recent years, the university has expanded its scope by introducing new faculties and incorporating courses beyond its original mandate. These additions encompass disciplines such as engineering, computer science, and the sciences<sup>116</sup>.

The IUM has provided fully funded and residential religious training primarily to male students from countries other than Saudi Arabia. The scholarship facilities they receive include round-trip plane tickets every year, books, accommodation, and monthly stipends. Not only do they have the opportunity to study, but they also have many opportunities to earn a living by serving in Hajj and Umrah activities. The continuous Hajj and Umrah pilgrimage activities become an attraction in themselves for these students<sup>117</sup>.

Many students have purposes and mission to subsequently return to their home countries or travel elsewhere as preachers. Their mission involves preaching to non-Muslims and, more importantly, to Muslim communities worldwide that are perceived as deviating from the true faith. For many decades, a significant portion of the IUM's faculty consisted of individuals from outside Saudi Arabia, including the broader Middle East and beyond. Thus, the IUM serves as a significant point of connection within a global network, where Saudi political and religious figures strive to extend their influence beyond the kingdom's borders<sup>118</sup>.

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<sup>115</sup> Anzalone, Christopher, and Yasir Qadhi. "From Dir'iyya to Riyadh." *Wahhabism and the World: Understanding Saudi Arabia's Global Influence on Islam* (2022): 53..

<sup>116</sup> <https://iu.edu.sa/en-us/Colleges-> accessed in 19-6-2023

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Abiyyu, June, 2023

<sup>118</sup> Bano, Masooda, ed. *Shaping Global Islamic Discourses: The Role Of Al-Azhar, Al-Madinah And Al-Mustafa*. Edinburgh University Press, 2015.

### 3.2.2. The IUM Curriculum

#### a. Teaching Material

I have fortunate opportunity to get the syllabus of the course from the graduates in department of Da'wah and Ushuludin. From my lay perspective as the outsider, I can see that the curriculum teaching in IUM is based on Salafism ideology. And my interviewee's statements support my argument that the curriculum is structured in accordance with the methodology of Salafism. In the Department of Da'wah and Ushuludin, students are required to complete eight semesters of education. Linguistically, Ushuludin consists of two words: "*ushul*" meaning principles or foundations, and "*din*" meaning religion. Therefore, learning about beliefs becomes an important element and even constitutes the majority of courses in this department, with a strong emphasis on discussing *akidah*. However, it does not neglect teachings in other subjects such as *sirah* (biography of the Prophet), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *usul al-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence), and others. In these non-*akidah* subjects, there is generally less debate in understanding, and they tend to align with the traditionalist group.<sup>119</sup>

Several distinct topics frequently emphasized by Salafi preachers in various places are indeed taught in classes and serve as important learning targets for students at IUM. These topics include discussions on *tawassul*, *istighotsah*, and similar matters related to the concept of using intermediaries in supplication between humans and God<sup>120</sup>. In discussing those topics, students are emphasized to understand the evidence from Quran and Hadith in order to counter the arguments of other groups that justify those practices. In Salafi belief, *tawassul* falls under the category of *akidah*. Therefore, anyone who practices this act incorrectly may be considered to have fallen into the pit of polytheism and can be declared an unbeliever. This differs from the viewpoint of traditionalists who categorize *tawassul* under jurisprudence (*fiqh*), thus making the implications of differences in opinion more flexible and falling within the realm of regular *ijtihad* (scholarly

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<sup>119</sup> Interview with Nuril, April, 2023

<sup>120</sup> *Dalil at-Thalib li al-Manahij ad-Dirosiyyah*, Islamic University of Madinah

interpretation)<sup>121</sup>. According to Salafis, there are several types of *tawassul*, namely those that are legislated (recommended) and those that are not legislated. The recommended types of *tawassul* include seeking intercession through righteous actions, seeking intercession through the prayers of others, and seeking intercession through the names and *shifat* of God.<sup>122</sup>

Some types of *tawassul* that are not legislated fall into two categories: *bid'ah* (innovation) and *shirk* (polytheism). As for the types of *tawassul* that are considered as mean to *shirk*, they include Tawassul through the status of Prophet Muhammad, essence of a creature, and rights of a creature.

As for *tawassul*, which is judged as an act of *bid'ah* or even *shirk*, it refers to making the deceased as intermediaries in worship, such as supplicating, seeking needs, or asking for help from them. The reference books for discussing *tawassul* are "*at-Tawassul wal Wasilah*" by Ibn Taymiyyah, "*Kasyfu Syubuhah*" by Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, "*Ushul fi Sunan wa Bida' 'Adawi*", *Fathul Majid* by Abdul Rahman bin Hasan, "*Huquq Nabi 'ala Ummatihi*" by Abdurrahman bin Khalifah at-Tamimy, "*Itisham Syatiby*," and "*Ma'arijul Qabul*" by Hafidz Hukmy. This topic is studied in the third semester of the Aqidah 3 class. Besides *tawassul*, another practice commonly performed by some Muslims is *istighotsah* with the deceased. In this regard, students are expected to comprehensively understand this issue<sup>123</sup>.

In the discussion of *tauhid*, there are several teachings, namely regarding the concept of the three principles of monotheism as formulated by Ibn Taymiyyah. Additionally, it is also taught how Islam understands and interprets the *shifat* of God. The university teaches that understanding should be in accordance with the understanding of the pious predecessors (*salaf solih*). One part of the three principles of monotheism is the belief in the names and *shifat* of God. The belief taught at IUM is that the reference for understanding the monotheism of the names and *shifat* is the Quran and the Sunnah, with the methodology of the *salaf al-salih*.

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<sup>121</sup> Suryana, Yayan. "Fiqh Moderat: Pemikiran Hukum Islam KH. Ahmad Sanusi (1889-1950)." (2009).

<sup>122</sup> <https://muslim.or.id/5397-tawasul-syari-vs-tawasul-syirik.html> accessed in 20-6-2023

<sup>123</sup> *Dalil at-Thalib li al-Manahij ad-Dirosiyyah*, Islamic University of Madinah, p. 91

Furthermore, adhering to and believing in what is mentioned therein is an obligation, whether it aligns with reason or not. They teach that in understanding the *shifat*, one must avoid distortion (*tahrif*), negation (*ta'thil*), likening to creation (*tamtsil*), and asking how (*takyif*). The distinction of Allah from any resemblance to His creation is emphasized. It is also explained in relation to refuting understandings that contradict their understanding. Establishing the attributes based on what Allah Himself has established from His names and *shifat*. And It is not allowed to delve into the *kaifiyyah* of Allah's *shifat*.<sup>124</sup>

Every student is required to understand the textual meaning of the attributes because their meanings are known, and to leave the *kaifiyyah* of those *shifat* to Allah. This understanding is commonly referred to in the field of theology as "*tafwidh kaifiyyah*"<sup>125</sup>.

In addition, in the discussion of the *shifat*, it is taught that there are several groups in understanding the *shifat*, including; *The Salaf* who understand the *shifat* textually in a manner that befits the greatness of Allah, *The Musyabbihah* who understand the *shifat* textually and liken them to the types of *shifat* found in creatures, *The Jahmiyyah* and *Mu'tazilah* who understand the *shifat* by negating them and then interpreting them through the method of *ta'wil* to determine their intended meaning, *The Mufawwidhah* who understand the *shifat* by rejecting the textual meanings and stating, "Allah is knowing more what is intended by Him"

In that discussion, several books serve as references, such as "*Akidah Tadammuriyyah*" by Ibn Taimiyah with its commentary, "*Majmu' al-Fatawa*" by Ibn Taimiyah, "*Mukhtashar Shawaiq al-Mursalat*" by Ibnul Qayyim, the commentary of "*Akidah Tahawiyah*" by Ibn Abi al-Izz, "*Manhaj wa Dirasaat li-ayatil al-asma wa sifat*" by Syanqithy, and "*as-Shifaat al-Ilahiyah fi al-kitab wa sunnah*" by Muhammad Amman.<sup>126</sup>

In the chapter about asma' and *shifat*, there are several sentences in the Quran that are part of Allah's *shifat* taught at IUM. Specifically, they discuss in detail the

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<sup>124</sup> *Dalil at-Thalib li al-Manahij ad-Dirosiyyah*, Islamic University of Madinah, p. 115

<sup>125</sup> Muhammad, N. H. Klaim Dusta Salafi-Wahabi Tentang Akidah Salaf. (2020)

<sup>126</sup> *Dalil at-Thalib li al-Manahij ad-Dirosiyyah*, Islamic University of Madinah, p. 121

understanding of the *mutashabihat*<sup>127</sup> verses, which is the understanding of Allah's *shifat* that have been widely debated by Muslim scholars<sup>128</sup> including; *Uluw, Istiwa 'ala arsy, Kursiy, Nuzul, Maji', Maiyyah*, etc.<sup>129</sup>. In this chapter, there are several books as their references, such as commentary of *Akidah Wasitiyyah Ibnu Utsaimin*, Commentary of *Akidah Thahawiyah Ibnu Abi al-Izz*<sup>130</sup>.

This faculty also teaches about the history of Saudi Arabia. It introduces the role of da'wah tauhid and the methodology of the *salaf* by Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab and its spread. It is also explained that the Saudi kingdom is bound by Islamic da'wah and practices Sharia in its governmental system, referring to the Quran and Sunnah. It is further explained that the Saudi kingdom is the source of Islam with the presence of the two holy cities, Mecca and Medina. Additionally, it is taught that the kingdom plays an important role in the development of Muslim communities within and outside the state. Among the activities carried such as; building foundations and institutions with a mission to strengthen Islamic da'wah within and outside the kingdom, preserving and maintaining the two holy cities, Mecca and Medina, assisting in the construction of mosques within and outside the kingdom, paying attention to education to strengthen Islamic da'wah, safeguarding the Quran and Sharia knowledge by establishing Islamic campuses and various institutions that contribute to the development of Islamic scholarship, developing da'wah activities, strengthening the bases for the development of Islam, sending preachers abroad, promptly assisting those in need during times of calamity, and resolving issues faced by Muslims and Muslim minorities worldwide<sup>131</sup>.

IUM also teaches the virtues of prominent scholars from Saudi Arabia such as Sheikh Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al Sheikh, Abdurrahman as-Sa'di, Abdullah al-Qar'awy, Abdul Aziz bin Baz, and Saleh al-Fawzan.

The discussion on *bid'ah* is covered in the Aqidah 3 course. It is explained there that *bid'ah* is divided into several parts: *Haqiqah* and *Idhafiyah, I'tiqadiyah*

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<sup>127</sup> Ambiguous

<sup>128</sup> *Dalil at-Thalib li al-Manahij ad-Dirosiyyah*, Islamic University of Madinah, p. 148

<sup>129</sup> *Dalil at-Thalib li al-Manahij ad-Dirosiyyah*, Islamic University of Madinah, p. 148

<sup>130</sup> *Dalil at-Thalib li al-Manahij ad-Dirosiyyah*, Islamic University of Madinah, p.152

<sup>131</sup> *Dalil at-Thalib li al-Manahij ad-Dirosiyyah*, Islamic University of Madinah, p.228

and *amaliyah*, *Mukaffirah* and *ghoiru mukaffirah*. In addition, it is also explained that there is no division of bid'ah into *hasanah* (good innovation) and *sayyiah* (bad innovation). And there is also a rebuttal given to the doubts that arise regarding this issue. The reference to discuss about this theme is *al-I'tisham Syathibi*

It is also explained that the fundamental cause of division among all Islamic groups is *bid'ah*<sup>132</sup>, The essence and foundation of unity is the Sunnah. Due to *bid'ah*, the Muslim ummah has become divided into various groups. The purpose of this study is to help students understand that all of these groups will be in Hell except for one, which is the *Jama'ah*. Some of the groups that are studied include the *Khawarij*, *Shia* factions consisting of the *Rafidhah*, *Zaidiyyah*, and *Batinis*.

In addition, students are taught that there are several groups that are not in accordance with or contradict the *Ahlu Sunnah* in their understanding of monotheism (Tawhid). These include the philosophers and *mutakallim*. The theologians or *mutakallim* are categorized as the *Jahmiyyah*, *Mu'tazilah*, *Qadariyyah*, *Ash'ariyyah*, and *Maturidiyyah*.<sup>133</sup> Among the agreed-upon points of deviation are<sup>134</sup>: Prioritizing reason over textual evidence, rejecting the *shifat* of God, applying the method of *ta'wil*, and their ignorance regarding the concept of tawhid in terms of worship *uluhiyyah*.

*Asyariyyah* group is categorized as *muatthilah*<sup>135</sup> because their using methodology of *ta'wil* and *tafwidh* to understand the *shifat* of God. There are several books considered as references of this theme including *Maqalatul islamiyyin Abu Hasan al-Asyary*, *al-Milal wa Nihal Syahrastani*, *Fadhaihul Bathiniyyah al-Ghazali*, *Minhaj as-Sunnah Ibnu Taimiyah*, *al-Fashl Ibnu Hazm*, *al-Khuthuth al-'Aridhah Muhibbin Khathib*, and *al-harakah al-Bathiniyyah fi al-alam al-Islamy Muhammad al-Khatib*<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> *Dalil at-Thalib li al-Manahij ad-Dirosiyyah*, Islamic University of Madinah, p. 238

<sup>133</sup> *Dalil at-Thalib li al-Manahij ad-Dirosiyyah*, Islamic University of Madinah, p.261

<sup>134</sup> *Dalil at-Thalib li al-Manahij ad-Dirosiyyah*, Islamic University of Madinah, p.262

<sup>135</sup> Rejecting *Shifat* of God

<sup>136</sup> *Dalil at-Thalib li al-Manahij ad-Dirosiyyah*, Islamic University of Madinah, p.264

## **b. Character of Lecturer**

As explained in the previous chapter, the curriculum taught at IUM follows the teachings of Salafism, which is the official religious doctrine of Saudi Arabia. The university attracts students from various parts of the world and from different schools of thought, including those that have historically been at odds with Salafism, such as *Ash'ariyah* and *Maturidiyah*. Since 1961, IUM has been a significant institution in Saudi Arabia's efforts to spread Salafi preaching worldwide<sup>137</sup>. Therefore, since its establishment, IUM has been committed to accepting 80 percent of its students from foreign countries outside of Saudi Arabia. They are offered various scholarship facilities, including round-trip airfare, tuition fees, living expenses, and others<sup>138</sup>.

In addition to students, the faculty members at IUM are not only from Saudi Arabia but also from various countries. However, local teachers dominate the faculty. In the selection of faculty members, each rector has different policies during their tenure. In the 1980s, under the authority of Rector Bin Baz, several foreign teachers were invited by him. For example, Taqi al-Din al-Hilali, a reformist from Morocco, was one of them. Some of them were even faculty members from al-Azhar, known for their adherence to the principles of *Asyariyah* and *Maturidiyah*. However, in the 1990s, there was a policy change to reduce the recruitment of staff from outside Saudi Arabia. As a result, 90 percent of all faculty members at IUM are Saudi nationals<sup>139</sup>.

In the period mentioned above, which is after 2015, the faculty lecturers at IUM consists of various nationalities but is still predominantly composed of Saudi citizens. Interestingly, not all of them adhere to the teachings and principles of Salafism. This has been observed by some students studying in the Shariah faculty. However, in class, they do not openly declare their non-Salafi beliefs. This is

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<sup>137</sup> Interview with Abiyyu, May, 2023

<sup>138</sup> Farquhar, Michael. "Saudi Petrodollars, Spiritual Capital, and the Islamic University of Medina: A Wahhabi Missionary Project in Transnational Perspective." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47.4 (2015): 701-721.

<sup>139</sup> Farquhar, Michael. "Saudi Petrodollars, Spiritual Capital, and the Islamic University of Medina: A Wahhabi Missionary Project in Transnational Perspective." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47.4 (2015): 701-721.

because it would violate campus and state regulations. Usually, if a professor wants to discuss topics outside the curriculum, especially sensitive ones, they would explain privately to students who approach them<sup>140</sup>. In terms of appearance, it is usually noticeable that those who do not have long beards and come from countries like Egypt<sup>141</sup>.

The characters of the lecturers also vary, ranging from strict to moderate. Usually, those with a strict character are the ones teaching theology and hadith. Hadith lecturers tend to emphasize the textual understanding of Sharia laws. And then the lecturers of theology, according to them, considered that matters of theology must be firm and there should be no differences of opinion among the companions of the Prophet. As a result, extending of labelling someone as a disbeliever. There are also lecturers who mention certain *Ash'ari* figures like Ali Jumah, stating that his teachings have brought clear misguidance as they are considered contradictory to the Quran and Hadith. Even the Sufi figure Sayyid Alwi al-Maliki is not spared from negative stigma, as he is referred to as a prominent figure destined for hellfire<sup>142</sup>. However, there are not so many lecturers have this kind of judgment character<sup>143</sup>. However, they are firm in their judgment that the traditionalist understanding of theology, such as *Ash'ariyah* or *Maturidiyah*, are misguided and not part of *Ahlu Sunnah wal Jama'ah*.

However, there was a lecturer in the Quran faculty who disagree with the labelling of Salafi being attributed to the laypeople. This phenomenon was experienced by Ihsan during the teaching process in the classroom.<sup>144</sup>

*"The lecturers here are more moderate compared to the Salafi scholars in Indonesia. In fact, there are lecturers who say, 'I disagree with categorizing everyone as Salafi just because they have a beard, wear pants above the ankles, or practice other Sunnah. Do we need to label them as Salafi? No. Salafism should be attributed to the scholars. In history, there were scholars who wanted to combat misguided schools of thought such as Mu'tazilah and Shia. These scholars classified these*

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<sup>140</sup> Interview with Rifdi, May, 2023

<sup>141</sup> Interview with Abiyu, May, 2023

<sup>142</sup> Interview with Nuril, May, 2023

<sup>143</sup> Interview with Ihsan, May, 2023

<sup>144</sup> Interview with Ihsan, May, 2023

*groups in order to differentiate between what is right and wrong. Those scholars need to be called Salafi scholars to provide understanding to the general public about which scholars are correct."*

The lecturers who are known to be moderate by the students there are those who teach *Fiqh*, *Ushul Fiqh*, and *Sirah*. In *Fiqh* classes, they teach the jurisprudence of the four schools of thought, referring to the book "*Bidayatul Mujtahid*" by Ibn Rushd. The lecturers explain the differences among the scholars of the four schools of thought, presenting the evidence each school relies on. As a result, students are taught to be tolerant of differences in opinions regarding *fiqh* matters. In *Ushul Fiqh* class, students are taught the methods of understanding texts so that their thinking is not limited to a textual interpretation of the Quran and Hadith. As for *Sirah*, discussions about differences among scholars are not common, and the majority of the content aligns with the beliefs of other Islamic groups.<sup>145</sup>

As explained above, the teaching of *Fiqh* includes a comparison of schools of thought. It is even recommended to study the school of thought of one's own country. This means that following a specific school of thought is encouraged by the lecturer in the classroom<sup>146</sup>. This phenomenon is different from some Salafi preachers in Indonesia who prohibit following a specific school of thought. Abdul Hakim Abdat, one of the Salafi preachers, states that adhering to a specific school of thought is a big *bid'ah* in religion. Therefore, everything should return to the Quran and Sunnah<sup>147</sup>. In addition, the method of *tarjih* (preference) is taught in some Salafi educational institutions in Indonesia. However, the method of *tarjih* is not even recommended by the *fiqh* teachers in the classroom<sup>148</sup>.

Sufis are also among the groups that are subject to criticism. In fact, Sufi groups are considered deviant by them. The essence of Sufi teachings is actually the purification of the soul from all spiritual ailments. Salafis prefer to use the term "tazkiyatun nufus" for this concept, and it is not considered forbidden.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Interview with Nuril May, 2023

<sup>146</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dwCd7LyraA8> accessed in 20-6-2023

<sup>147</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGBTyg-swz4> accessed in 20-6-2023

<sup>148</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dwCd7LyraA8> accessed in 20-6-2023

<sup>149</sup> Interview with Hari, May, 2023

Explanations regarding specific issues debated in Indonesia, such as "tahlilan", "yasinan", and "maulidan", are not extensively discussed in class unless a student specifically asks about them<sup>150</sup>.

### 3.3. Salafist Agent of IUM

IUM alumni have greatly contributed to the spread of da'wah worldwide. However, the preaching they convey is closely and majority associated with Salafi preaching, which has been the predominant religious approach in Saudi Arabia. Several notable alumni from the Islamic University of Madinah (IUM) have emerged as influential figures within the Salafi movement across different countries. For instance, as been mentioned Safar Hawali played a significant role in Saudi Arabia's Sahwa political movement in 1990<sup>151</sup>. Rabi' bin Hadi al-Madkhali gained prominence as a respected expert in hadith and opposed the *sururi*<sup>152</sup> movement<sup>153</sup>. Muqbil bin Hadi al-Wadi'i, regarded as a paternal figure in the Salafi Movement in Yemen, also has a substantial following in Indonesia<sup>154</sup>. In Western countries, Bilal Philips has become an influential figure<sup>155</sup>. These examples highlight how IUM alumni have become crucial pillars in the dissemination of Salafism, including in Indonesia. Consequently, the university has rich history of promoting Salafi ideology through its curriculum, extending its influence Globally.

In Indonesia, alumni of IUM are involved in various sectors. Many of them become preachers, teach in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), universities, or even work in the government sector. Some prominent preachers like Kholid Bassalamah<sup>156</sup>, Nuzul Dzikri<sup>157</sup>, and Firanda Andirja<sup>158</sup> are among the IUM alumni

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<sup>150</sup> Interview with Hanif, May, 2023

<sup>151</sup> Beranek, Ondrej. "Divided We Survive: A Landscape Of Fragmentation In Saudi Arabia." *Middle East Brief* 33 (2009): 1-8.

<sup>152</sup> Referred to Muhammad bin Surur

<sup>153</sup> Sunarwoto. "Online Salafi Rivalries In Indonesia: Between Sectarianism And 'Good' citizenship." *Religion, State & Society* 49, no. 2 (2021): 157-173..

<sup>154</sup> Hasan, Noorhaidi. "The Failure Of The Wahhabi Campaign: Transnational Islam And The Salafi Madrasa In Post-9/11 Indonesia." *South East Asia Research* 18, no. 4 (2010): 675-705..

<sup>155</sup> Duderija, Adis, and Ghulam Rasool. "Bilal Philips as a Proponent of Neo-Traditional Salafism and His Significance for Understanding Salafism in the West." *Religions* 10, no. 6 (2019): 371.

<sup>156</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/khalidbasalamahofficial/> accessed in 20-6-2023

<sup>157</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/muhammadnuzuldzikri/> accessed in 20-6-2023

<sup>158</sup> [https://www.instagram.com/firanda\\_andirja\\_official/](https://www.instagram.com/firanda_andirja_official/) accessed in 20-6-2023

who have millions follower of social media. They utilize platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. As I observed, each of these Salafi preachers who are alumni of IUM has their own distinct characteristics or leaves a special impression on their loyal listeners during their lectures. Khalid Bassalamah is known for his lectures on the *Sirah Nabawiyah* (Prophetic biography). He once shared that he had a dream of meeting the Prophet Muhammad as a result of his lectures on the *Sirah*, which always keep him mindful of the Prophet. Syafiq Reza Bassalamah is recognized for his ability to speak softly with a gentle and soothing voice. Nuzul Dzikri is a preacher who has students and followers attending his lectures in the Blok M area of Jakarta. Some of his followers include artists. He is well-known for his lectures on ethics (akhlak) and self-purification (*tazkiyatun nafs*).

Firanda Andirja is known as an expert in Islamic theology (akidah). He is a courageous Salafi preacher who openly criticizes the errors found in the teachings of other figures and groups. In 2006, he engaged in a scientific debate with Kyai (Islamic scholar) Idrus Ramli in Riau, who represents the traditionalist group<sup>159</sup>. Furthermore, he has also been involved in conflicts with other Salafis due to his remarks about Rabi' al-Madkhali, as it was considered inconsistent with the teachings of senior scholars from *Hay'ah Kibar Ulama* and *Lajnah Daimah* in Saudi Arabia, such as Nasirudin Al-Albani, Ibn Uthaymeen, Bin Baz, Solih Fauzan, and Abd Muhsin al-'Abbad. Firanda's criticism has sparked debates fueled by hatred from Madkhali's supporters. Another Salafi figure, Luqman Ba'abduh, responded to this criticism by writing several articles in the magazine *Fawa'id*. He highlighted the virtues and merits of Madkhali and affirmed that he is a credible scholar and defender of the Sunnah against innovation (*bid'ah*)<sup>160</sup>.

In addition to preaching, some of them also serve as heads of university institutions. Several campuses in Indonesia that are affiliated with Salafi curricula include LIPIA, Sekolah *Tinggi Dirasah Islamiyah* (STDI) Imam Syaf'i Jember,

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<sup>159</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkClfDrQgUU> accessed in 20-6-2023

<sup>160</sup> Sunarwoto, A. "Negotiating Salafi Islam and the State: The Madkhaliyya in Indonesia." *Die Welt des Islams* 60, no. 2-3 (2020): 205-234.

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam (STAI) Ali bin Abi Thalib, and others. Muhammad Arifin Badri is the rector of STDI Imam Syaf'i Jember. He is an IUM doctoral alumni. He is also entrusted with being a mentor for Muslim entrepreneurs in Indonesia, Islamic magazines, and websites<sup>161</sup>.

Badri has a personal blog. On his blog, he wrote several rebuttals to the Salafi thoughts of Luqman Baabduh regarding his book titled "*Mereka Adalah Teroris*" ("They Are Terrorists")<sup>162</sup>. Luqman Baabduh is a former activist of Laskar Jihad who advocated for jihad during the conflict in Ambon. He is claimed to have repented and left the ranks of the Ja'far Umar Talib group. Therefore, he wrote the book to refute the thoughts and actions carried out by the group led by Ja'far Umar Talib. Arifin Badri criticizes the use of the term "terrorists" in the book because the definition of the term has not yet been agreed upon. In addition, he also criticizes Baabduh's gentle approach towards his Muslim brothers who have not yet emerged from the understanding of Laskar Jihad. He believes that one should not be harsh towards those who still hold on to their old beliefs before repentance<sup>163</sup>. Apart from writing on his website, Arifin Badri is also known for being active on his Facebook account. He often refutes and posts statuses that counter thoughts that do not align with their understanding, such as refuting the *Ash'ari* school of thought regarding the "*shifat*" of Allah<sup>164</sup>.

The facts above explain that the Salafi movement is divided into several factions. Among them, there are those who are purely Salafist (puritanical), and there are also those who have political or activist orientations<sup>165</sup>. Sometimes they are also referred to as "*hizbi*" by fellow Salafis who do not align with their movement. Their political orientations are influenced by the thinking of the Muslim Brotherhood, which was propagated through Muhammad bin Surur, and his

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<sup>161</sup> <https://arifinbadri.com/about> accessed in 20-6-2023

<sup>162</sup> <https://arifinbadri.com/62-bantahan-untuk-luqman-baabduh-dan-koreksi-buku-mereka-adalah-teroris-bag-1.html> accessed in 20-6-2023

<sup>163</sup> Sunarwoto, A. "Negotiating Salafi Islam and the State: The Madkhaliyya in Indonesia." *Die Welt des Islams* 60, no. 2-3 (2020): 205-234.

<sup>164</sup> [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid0bWmse5X9CFDPbbf2MLEGuknSoJbTMUq9y9QHzzkkZnPvAwNgoKmoJuCccDfgReUkl&id=100044302190144&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0bWmse5X9CFDPbbf2MLEGuknSoJbTMUq9y9QHzzkkZnPvAwNgoKmoJuCccDfgReUkl&id=100044302190144&mibextid=Nif5oz) accessed in 20-6-2023

<sup>165</sup> Salafism, Global. "Islam's New Religious Movement." *London: C. Hurst & Co* (2009)..

followers are known as Sururis<sup>166</sup>. Laskar Jihad and its followers are often labeled as "haroki" or "sururi" as well. Arifin Badri belongs to the puritanical and apolitical Salafi group. His thinking is heavily influenced by prominent scholars such as Bin Baz, Solih Fauzan, or Ibn Uthaymeen, who do not align with the ideas of the *haroki* scholars<sup>167</sup>.

Among the IUM alumni who are active in national political movement are Hidayat Nur Wahid, Salim Segaf al-Jufri, and Bachtiar Nasir. Although they are rarely acknowledged as Salafis, each of them has joined different political movement groups. In general, Hidayat Nur Wahid and Salim Segaf al-Jufri currently serve as the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Advisory Council of the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS)<sup>168</sup>, while Bachtiar Nasir is a member of Muhammadiyah<sup>169</sup>. However, politically, especially during the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election, they had the same stance to overthrow Basuki Cahaya Purnama, also known as Ahok, to prevent him from being re-elected as the governor for the next term. Furthermore, after the blasphemy case involving Ahok, the opposition gained strength in mobilizing support from the people of Jakarta, and even received support and sympathy from people outside Jakarta. This led to the formation of the 212 Movement at the National Monument in Jakarta. Additionally, IUM alumni such as Zaitun Rasmin is also influential figures in mobilizing the masses. Rasmin is the eternal chairman of Wahdah Islamiyah, known as a *Salafi-haraki* organization<sup>170</sup>.

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<sup>166</sup> Iqbal, Asep Muhamad. "Internet, Identity And Islamic Movements: The Case Of Salafi Movement In Indonesia." *Islamika Indonesiana* 1, no. 1 (2014): 81-105..

<sup>167</sup> Sunarwoto, A. "Negotiating Salafi Islam and the State: The Madkhaliyya in Indonesia." *Die Welt des Islams* 60, no. 2-3 (2020): 205-234.

<sup>168</sup> Machmudi, Yon. "The PKS And Tarbiyah Movement: Its Agenda And Future In Indonesia." In *Rising Islamic Conservatism In Indonesia*, pp. 163-180. Routledge, 2020..

<sup>169</sup> Nubowo, Andar. "Muhammadiyah: The Challenge of Rising Conservatism." *RSIS Commentary* 76 (2018).

<sup>170</sup> Malik, Abdul. "New Variants Of Ultra-Conservative Islamic Schools In Indonesia: A Study On Islamic School Endeavor With Islamic Group Movement." *Power and Education* (2023): 17577438231163042.

### 3.4. Presence of Traditionalist Muslim in IUM

Saudi Arabia universities are no longer seen as just a destination for studying Islam, but also for studying various disciplines including in IUM, such as medicine, physics, engineering, and other non-religious faculty provided.<sup>171</sup> Students in Saudi Arabia come from various backgrounds, including different organizations, families, religious affiliations, political orientations, and so on. This is evident from the diverse range of Saudi alumni who are involved in various sectors.<sup>172</sup>

Since its establishment over six decades ago, IUM has had students from 170 countries<sup>173</sup>. Several important factors contribute to this preference. Firstly, the campus is located in the holy city of Madinah, which is the center of the spread of Islam during the time of the Prophet. Additionally, the scholarships provided by the Saudi government are quite enticing for many prospective students who wish to study there. Moreover, students who receive scholarship status can also assist their parents economically, enabling them to live independently<sup>174</sup>.

However, the admission process to IUM is not easy. Many applicants have to wait between 2 to 5 years to begin their studies from the start of registration process. This is due to the large number of applicants and the need to queue among thousands of applicants. Some even continue their studies at universities in Indonesia while waiting. Once they receive the letter of acceptance, they immediately depart for Madinah, leaving their current university even if they are already in the middle of the study term. However, starting from 2022, the announcement is only required to wait for one year. If their names are not listed during that period, their hopes of acceptance are extinguished<sup>175</sup>. Each cohort has a different number of students. In 2017, their total number reached 637. The majority, consisting of 488 students, were pursuing a bachelor's degree, while 9 were enrolled in diploma programs, 87 in master's programs, and 17 in doctoral programs<sup>176</sup>.

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<sup>171</sup> Panduan Pendaftaran dan Penerimaan MABA 1443 H/2022 M

<sup>172</sup> Al Qurtuby, Sumanto. "Islam, Travel, and Learning: A Case Study on Indonesian Muslim Student Diasporas in Saudi Arabia." *Journeys* 21.2 (2020): 42-66.

<sup>173</sup> Panduan Pendaftaran dan Penerimaan MABA 1443 H/2022 M

<sup>174</sup> Interview with Nuril, May, 2023

<sup>175</sup> Interview with Faisal, Student of IUM, June, 2023

<sup>176</sup> Panduan Studi di Kerajaan Saudi Arabia, PPMI Arab Saudi, 2017

The registration process they need to undergo is by submitting the required documents through the official website of the university. After that, they need to participate in the *muqabalah*<sup>177</sup>. Some official *muqabalah* locations in Indonesia are Pesantren Darunnajah, Pondok Modern Gontor, Pesantren Raudhatul Hasanah Medan, and Universitas Negeri Makassar<sup>178</sup>. However, currently, the *muqabalah* is no longer conducted, and the selection is solely based on the selection of documents through the official website of the university<sup>179</sup>. The almamater of IUM students comes from various affiliations, including Salafi pesantren, modern Islamic boarding schools, and traditional Islamic boarding schools.

Many alumni have traveled extensively around the world. They are spread across various sectors, both in government and private organizations. As a practical application of what they have learned in class, which is religious education, many of them play roles as religious preachers (dai). Moreover, the establishment of Salafi Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia has also been initiated by Madinah alumni. Their movement began in the 1980s, coinciding with the emergence of Salafism in Indonesia, characterized by the appearance of wearing robes, long beards, loose trousers, and so on. In other words, Madinah alumni have made significant contributions to the development of Salafism in Indonesia<sup>180</sup>.

The emergence of Salafism in Indonesia brought a new teaching that contradicted the practices of traditional Muslims. They criticized the rituals and practices that had been customary among traditional Muslims, such as *tahlilan*, *yasinan*, *maulid* gatherings, grave visits, and others. These practices were categorized as *bid'ah* by the Salafis, and some of them even claimed that engaging in these practices could make a person an unbeliever (kafir). Their movement, which did not tolerate the previous customs, was rejected by the traditionalist

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<sup>177</sup> Interview

<sup>178</sup> Panduan Studi di Kerajaan Saudi Arabia, PPMI Arab Saudi, 2017

<sup>179</sup> Interview with Faisal, June, 2023

<sup>180</sup> Hasan, Noorhaidi. "The Salafi Movement In Indonesia: Transnational Dynamics And Local Development." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27.1 (2007): 83-94.

Muslims, and conflicts between the two groups frequently occurred in various regions.<sup>181</sup>

However, the Islamic University of Madinah, which is associated with Salafism and brings teachings that are contrary to the traditionalist Muslims, does not deter students with traditional backgrounds from studying at IUM. In fact, some of them come from scholarly backgrounds, including prominent traditionalist figures, particularly those affiliated with NU (Nahdlatul Ulama), such as Said Agil al-Munawar<sup>182</sup>, The former Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia from 2001 to 2004, during the presidency of Megawati Soekarnoputri, came from a *habaib* background. Until today, he continues to practice traditional rituals such as *maulid* gatherings, *tahlilan*, and others. Additionally, there are other figures who adhere to traditionalist beliefs but still uphold the traditions of NU (Nahdlatul Ulama). This demonstrates that not all IUM alumni automatically become Salafis, even though the teachings they receive at IUM are Salafi teachings.

Nahdlatul Ulama, as the largest traditionalist Muslim organization in Indonesia, has branches in Saudi Arabia. However, the active official members of this organization mainly consist of Indonesian migrant workers and staff of the Indonesian embassy there, particularly in Jeddah. They carry out various educational programs for Indonesian children, aiming to instill love for Indonesia and NU (Nahdlatul Ulama). Only a few students are actively involved and support the organization. Although they may not actively participate in organizational activities, they form their own communities in the Madinah region, specifically among students studying at the Islamic University of Madinah. They have their own WhatsApp group with around 60 members. In other words, for every 100 IUM students, there are approximately 5 who follow traditionalist beliefs, particularly NU. This number is still relatively small compared to the total number of IUM students, which ranges from 900 to 1000.<sup>183</sup> Therefore, traditionalist Muslims there

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<sup>181</sup> Kau, Sofyan AP, and Zulkarnain Suleman. "Traditional Islamic Religious Practice Arguments: Criticism of The Concept of Bid'ah of Islam Salafi-Wahabi." *Al-Ulum* 23.1 (2023): 1-20.

<sup>182</sup> Al Qurtuby, Sumanto. "Saudi Arabia And Indonesian Networks: On Islamic And Muslim Scholars." *ISLAM NUSANTARA: Journal for the Study of Islamic History and Culture* 2.2 (2021): 17-44

<sup>183</sup> Interview with Nuril, May, 2023

are considered a minority. Most of the students at IUM indeed come from *pesantren* affiliated with Salafism and modern Islamic boarding schools that also incorporate some Salafi teachings in their curriculum.<sup>184</sup>

The NU community in Madinah often coordinates to organize traditional activities such as *tahlilan*, *yasinan* in the students' rooms on campus. Essentially, gatherings without permission from the government are prohibited. Therefore, they carry out these activities secretly to avoid drawing too much attention. Nevertheless, as the years go by, their movement becomes increasingly known among other students in Madinah. Each cohort has its own group. They have even started to show up and gather publicly, taking photos, and uploading them on social media. It seems as though they want to prove that they are now strong and not dominated by Salafi students there.<sup>185</sup> In fact, in 2010, Gerakan Pemuda (GP) Anshar, as one of the subgroups within NU consisting of NU youth, began to be initiated<sup>186</sup>.

### **3.5. Traditionalist Respond**

Negotiating with opposing new ideas is not an easy task, especially when the consequences of these new understandings may affect a student's belief. The responses of students to such teachings vary. Some try to respond, while others simply remain silent. As mentioned earlier, the students in IUM classrooms come from different madhabs and schools of thought, including traditionalist Muslims. Many teachings in the classroom contradict their original beliefs before coming to Madinah, leading to a sense of ambivalence. On one hand, they reject the teachings presented in class, but on the other hand, they must accept them as subjects they need to master and overcome. Therefore, in order to achieve their goal of graduating from IUM, they have to negotiate with the teachings they receive.

However, the attitudes of some students with a traditionalist background vary. However, generally, students who have traditionalist affiliations do not respond much. They choose to remain silent to maintain their privacy as individuals who

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<sup>184</sup> Interview with Abiyyu, May, 2023

<sup>185</sup> Interview with Nuril, May, 2023

<sup>186</sup> <https://pcinu-arabsaudi.net/gp-ansor-arab-saudi/> accessed in 30-6-2023

are in opposition to Salafism.<sup>187</sup> Although there are also those among them who dare to have open and critical thinking, their numbers are still limited<sup>188</sup>. There are some activities they engaged as part of study process in IUM:

### 3.5.1. Examination

During exams, they have to set aside their idealism as traditionalists in order to fulfill their obligation to pass the exams successfully. They all answer according to what is taught by the teachers.

*"I answer according to what is taught by the teachers. Even though in some questions, I disagree and feel uncomfortable with my answers. I respond according to their understanding. Additionally, it is also due to the demand to fulfil academic obligations. My principle is to take what is good and discard what is bad."*<sup>189</sup>

And IUM alumni like Nuril said:

*"For example, in an akidah exam, there was a question asking whether Imam Ash'ari is included in the Qadariyyah school of thought or not. So I answered "yes" because if I didn't, I wouldn't pass. I answered that to pass to the next level. But in my heart, I still denied that belief"*<sup>190</sup>

Even since the *muqabalah*, there were questions related to Salafism, such as "Aina Allah" (Where is Allah?). So everyone answered, "Fissama" (In the sky). Additionally, they were asked about "Ma hukmu tahlil" (What is the ruling on reciting tahlil). Rifdi, as a traditionalist, answered, "inni la uhibbu tahlil" (I do not like reciting tahlil). Although Rifdi's answer did not intend to forbid or deny the practice of reciting the Quran for the deceased, he simply had no costume to perform that activity in his household.

*"In fact, prospective students who were about to take the muqabalah had discussions with their seniors regarding the questions that would be asked. Their seniors advised them to answer in accordance with Salafī understanding. The most important thing was to be accepted into the university first. After arriving in Madinah, they could then accept what they believed in and reject what they did not*

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<sup>187</sup> Interview with Nuril, May, 2023

<sup>188</sup> Interview with Rifdi, May, 2023

<sup>189</sup> Interview with Ihsan, May, 2023

<sup>190</sup> Interview with Nuril, May, 2023

*believe in. There would be actually many benefits in seeking knowledge in Madinah*<sup>191</sup>.

*"I have heard from my senior that there were some students from Africa who were known to have a Sufi background. Once, they displayed a critical attitude. There was a time when they were taught that bowing down to other than Allah is forbidden. Then, one of the students pretended to drop a pen under the table in front of the professor, and he had to bow down to pick it up, right in front of the professor. Then he asked, 'Is this considered part of the prohibited bowing?' It is rumored that the student did not pass the course taught by that professor."*<sup>192</sup>

### **3.5.2. Classroom Teaching**

The level of rejection and acceptance of traditionalist students towards Salafi teachings in the classroom varies, depending on how they treat the knowledge they acquire in class and the proportion of subjects they take. I will analyze it based on the categorization in the previous section. Among those who have a strong intellectual and traditionalist background, each has their own experiences. However, they tend to already know and understand that the teachings they receive in class will contradict their own understanding. Nuril's opinion regarding what is taught in class is as follows:

*"I respond to the lessons taught in class from an academic perspective. Differences like this are common among knowledgeable individuals. The learned individuals base their behavior on scientific approaches toward differences of opinions. Usually, those who like to fight due to differences are from grassroots backgrounds."*

Zia has a principle to uphold his old beliefs and was advised by his father to take what is good and discard what is bad:

*"What I take from their way of learning and practicing religion is in terms of memorizing *mutun**<sup>193</sup>. Then I learned from them how steadfast they are in their beliefs and the insights they possess. However, I cannot accept their differing views on matters such as the celebration of the Prophet's birthday (*maulid*) because I have my own principles. Additionally, what the teachers conveyed regarding the *maulid* ritual differed from its actual implementation in

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<sup>191</sup> Interview with Rifdi, May, 2023

<sup>192</sup> Interview with Nuril, May, 2023

<sup>193</sup> Textbook

*Indonesia. Therefore, the context they presented was different from the reality on the ground."*

Ihsan, as a student in the Faculty of Quran, had a different experience:

*"I have encountered a different teaching approach in the Faculty of Quran that has broadened my understanding of Salafism. My teachers rarely discuss controversial issues. There, I feel more focused on studying the Quran. Perhaps it is the nature of the teachers themselves."*

On the other hand, another student, Rifdi, feels excited about what is being learned in class.

*"My respond is normal. Even though they declare Fakhruddin Arrazi<sup>194</sup> or Ibnu Arabi<sup>195</sup> as unbeliever, I take that lesson only as knowledge and it is interesting. But no as for practicing and believing. But I'm just happy with the knowledge I gain."*

Although the professors who teach in the classroom promote Salafism, there are some professors who do not fully agree with the ideology of Saudi Arabia.

*"I am someone who likes to ask questions in class, so the professor noticed that I have an open and broad mindset. There was a time when the professor discussed the ideal system of governance. However, he did not elaborate further in the classroom because it was considered risky for him. So, I was called to his office for a private conversation. There, he explained that he actually agrees with democracy, but because he was born and raised in a country that is anti-democracy, he has to comply with the existing system."*

### **3.6. Conclusion**

The curriculum taught at IUM is basically Salafist ideology. Some of the teaching materials contradict the ideology of traditionalist Muslims. For example, in the Faculty of *Da'wah* and *Ushuluddin*, they teach about the three aspects of Tawhid conceptualized by Ibn Taimiyah: *rububiyah*, *uluhiyyah*, and *asma wa shifat*. From the division of Tawhid, they branch out into discussions about teachings that distort this division. The topic of *bid'ah* is also important in the curriculum. It is explained that the main cause of division among Muslims is *bid'ah*.

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<sup>194</sup> Ulama of *Asyariyah*

<sup>195</sup> Ulama of Sufism

Furthermore, it explains how other Muslim groups are considered deviant in their understanding of Tawhid. Some of these groups include *Ash'ariyyah*, *Maturidiyyah*, Sufis, Shiites, and those groups who have similar concepts. The reason is that their understanding of Tawhid regarding *rububiyyah*, *uluhiyyah*, and *asma wa sifat* is deemed flawed. For instance, *Ash'ariyyah* and *Maturidiyyah* apply methods such as *ta'wil* and *tafwidh*. These methods are considered ta'thil by Salafists, leading them to classify these groups as non Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah. The reference books used are primarily from Salafi scholars such as Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, Ibn Taimiyah, Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, Ibn Uthaymeen, and others. However, I did not find any mention of Sheikh al-Albani's books being taught in the Faculty of Da'wah and Ushuluddin.

Moreover, the lecturers have different characters in delivering the material. According to students' perceptions, the most strict lecturers are those teaching theology and hadith. Lecturers in other subjects like *fiqh* are considered moderate because the materials taught revolve around differences of opinion among scholars in matters of *fiqh*. I argue that this differs from the understanding of some Salafi groups in Indonesia who equate the understanding of *fiqh* with Aqidah which is rigid and definitive. Lecturers' judgments toward Sufi figures, *Ash'ariyyah*, and other groups inevitably involve accusations of disbelief and deviance. However, not all lecturers have such characteristics; it depends on the subject they teach. Many of them deliver the material gently.

I argue that the topics taught in class, open the mind of students about the "misguidance" thought and belief of other groups, leading them to feel that they are the most correct Muslim group. Additionally, the character of the lecturers also plays a role in shaping the way IUM alumni engage in da'wah activities in society. As a result, many alumni who adhere firmly to these teachings implement their religious activities in line with what they learned in class. Consequently, they often face rejection in society. Although the curriculum taught at IUM follows Salafi teachings, it does not discourage traditionalist Muslims from studying there. Currently, traditionalist organizations such as NU and GP Ansor have been established and carry out their activities, although with a minority presence.

## CHAPTER 4

### TRADITIONALIST MUSLIM EXPERIENCES: COMPROMISING THE TWO IDEOLOGICAL EDGES

#### 4.1. Introduction

As previously explained in chapter 2, there is still ongoing religious contestation between Salafis and traditionalist Muslims. The development of Salafism in Indonesia has also grown and threatens the existence of traditional teachings within the community. Salafis judge traditionalists as practicing *bid'ah* and shirk, which ignites conflicts between ulama and the community due to their statements.

In chapter 3 was mentioned that the Islamic University of Madinah, as a Saudi educational institution, is one of the sectors contributing to the spread of Salafism in Indonesia. Salafist ideology is taught there, along with how to defend this ideology against others, such as *Ash'ariyyah* and *Maturidiyyah*. Additionally, they are taught about *bid'ah* and its impact on the division among Muslims. As a result, alumni from IUM propagate the same teachings in society, often leading to conflicts between Salafis and traditionalist Muslims.

However, this phenomenon does not deter traditionalist Muslims from to study at IUM, even though they learn materials that contradict their beliefs. This chapter will discuss how traditionalist Muslims negotiate with the Salafist curriculum at IUM. The first subchapter will discuss the background and motivation of traditionalist Muslim students' studies. The following subchapter will describe their responses to the teaching of Salafist ideology on campus. After being exposed to various Salafist thoughts, the next subchapter will discuss their perspectives on Salafism. Following the process of negotiating their thoughts, the subsequent subchapter will explain how they compromise the Salafist teachings they received on campus to align with traditionalist Muslim society. Additionally, to provide additional information and strengthen the data, it will also explain how non-traditionalist affiliated students receive and negotiate with Salafist teachings on campus.

## 4.2. Motivation of Study

Generally, They have the same reasons for continuing his studies at IUM. One of them is because Madinah is the city of the Prophet, and close to the Prophet's Mosque and his tomb. The presence of *Al-Masjid an-Nabawi* is also a reason for him to study in Madinah, as it allows for easy visits to these sacred places. In addition, the scholarship they got also one of the strongest factors to get admission there.

*"My motivation to continue my studies in Madinah was driven by the scholarship opportunity. Due to my parents' low economic status, I wanted to pursue a scholarship at King Saud University initially. I was inspired by my seniors at Gontor who received a generous monthly allowance from the university, allowing them to take their parents on trips using the pocket money. Therefore, I applied to both King Saud University and IUM (Islamic University of Madinah) simultaneously, and eventually, I was accepted into Madinah"*<sup>196</sup>

Although some of their family are from strong NU culture, it was not a prohibiting factor for their child to study at IUM. In fact, even some of their families are not from the laypeople, they feel happy and proud of their child's achievement in getting the opportunity to study there, considering that IUM has a challenging selection process. Moreover, because their family have strong knowledge background, the differences in understanding between NU and Salafi are not a serious issue for them.

*"My motivation to study at IUM came from my parents. They convinced me to study in Madinah because it is the city where revelation was sent down. Indirectly, my parents, who enrolled me before Madinah in an NU pesantren (Islamic boarding school) since childhood and later sent me to Gontor, aimed to equip and encourage me to have an open mind towards various religious understandings."*<sup>197</sup>

Majority of them chose to major in Shariah at IUM because they believe that the teachings he will learn align well with his traditionalist thinking,

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<sup>196</sup> Interview with Ramzan, May, 2023

<sup>197</sup> Interview with Ihsan, May, 2023

particularly in the field of *fiqh*<sup>198</sup>. Some of them chose major al-Quran because he is a “hafidz” want to deepen the understanding of Qur’an<sup>199</sup>.

### 4.3. Family Background

I observed that Muslim traditionalists at IUM come from families with varying levels of religious devotion. Based on the level of knowledge and family background of my interviewees, I classified them into three categories: a.) Those who come from families or personal backgrounds with a strong traditionalist knowledge tradition. b.) Those who come from families or personal backgrounds with a relatively weaker traditionalist knowledge tradition. c.) Those who come from families with a weak traditionalist family tradition but have a strong individual capacity for knowledge.

*a) Those who come from families or personal backgrounds with a strong traditionalist knowledge tradition.*

The meaning of this category is those who come from families with a strong background in traditionalist education, whether formal or non-formal, and may even be recognized as figures within traditionalist communities. Additionally, they also have religious practices deeply rooted in their daily lives.

In this category, some of them are Nuril, Zia, and Ihsan. First, let’s discuss about Nuril. He is an alumni of the Bachelor degree program at the Faculty of Shariah, IUM, graduating in 2020. He started his education there in 2016. Both of his parents are alumni of Islamic boarding schools affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). His father studied at Pondok Sarang Rembang, while his mother is also an alumni of a boarding school initiated by Kyai Sahal Mahfuzh, Masalikul Huda, in Pati, Central Java. Kyai Sahal Mahfuzh is one of the NU figures who is known as a pioneer in Nahdlatul Ulama's thinking. He has also led Nahdlatul Ulama and served as the chairman of the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) for two terms<sup>200</sup>. As a result, his family firmly adheres to the traditions of Nahdlatul Ulama in terms

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<sup>198</sup> Interview with Nuril, Zia and Hari, May, 2023

<sup>199</sup> Interview with Ihsan, May, 2023

<sup>200</sup> Mukaffa, Zumrotul. "Peranan Ulama'pesantren Dalam Pendidikan Masyarakat; Potret Keulama'an KH. MA Sahal Mahfudz." *Murobbi: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan* 1.2 (2017): 19-34..

of *fiqh*, *aqidah*, and *tasawuf*. They regularly perform practices such as visiting graves, conducting *tahlilan*, reciting *yasin*, and so on. Since childhood, Nuril has been introduced to these practices. He also received education at Mathaliul Falah, a traditional NU boarding school in Pati. There, he became an "Abdi Dalem"<sup>201</sup> of the boarding school and had special privileges compared to other students. Among the special privileges he enjoyed at the boarding school was the opportunity to use gadgets and the internet. Being a dedicated learner, he utilized the internet as an additional knowledge he acquired at the boarding school<sup>202</sup>.

Nuril is aware that IUM has a curriculum based on Salafi teachings, evident from its alumni who have become Salafi preachers in Indonesia. However, he doesn't see it as a problem. He sees many similarities in understanding between NU and Salafi in the field of *fiqh*. Even during his time at the boarding school, taking advantage of his privileges as an "Abdi Dalem," he would watch Salafi preachers' lectures on YouTube. He even became a fan of Ustadz Firanda Andirja. In his opinion, Firanda is a *faqih* who understands the differences in muslim practices Ulama opinion. Unlike many Salafi preachers who consider *Maulid* as bid'ah, Firanda believes that the celebration of Maulid is a matter of *ijtihad* and that the practitioners should not be labeled as *ahl al-bid'ah*. For Nuril, Salafi teachings were not something new to him before he enrolled at IUM.<sup>203</sup>

Furthermore, there is Zia. He is an alumni of the Bachelor's degree in the Faculty of Shariah at IUM, graduating in 2015. He began his education at IUM in 2011. He is the son of Kyai Ali Mustafa Ya'qub, a former Imam of the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta. Ya'qub is a prominent figure and a great scholar who specializes in the field of *hadith*. He is an alumni of the Tebuireng Islamic boarding school in Jombang<sup>204</sup>. He delved into the study of *kitab kuning* and the teachings of NU during his journey of seeking knowledge. After completing his education at the pesantren, he pursued his undergraduate studies at Imam Muhammad bin Saud

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<sup>201</sup> Servant of the kyai family

<sup>202</sup> Interview with Nuril, May, 2023

<sup>203</sup> Interview with Nuril, May, 2023

<sup>204</sup> Nurdin, Nasrullah. "Prof. Dr. KH. Ali Mustafa Yaqub, MA.: Muhaddis Nusantara Bertaraf Internasional." *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 14.1 (2016): 197-228.

University in Riyadh. He then continued to pursue a master's degree at King Saud University. After completing his studies in Saudi Arabia, he returned to Indonesia and obtained various important and esteemed positions in society. He once served as the "Rais Syuriah" of PB Nahdlatul Ulama during the period of 2010-2015. His concentration in the field of hadith inspired him to establish the Darus Sunnah International Institute for Hadith Science<sup>205</sup>. Like Nuril, Zia and his family also maintain a strong routine of NU practices. They have customary NU practices that they follow, even though he is not formally affiliated with NU. In terms of *akidah*, he adheres to the principles of *Asy'ariyah* theology. According to him, when referring to *Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah* in an absolute sense, it encompasses *Asy'ariyah* and *Maturidiyah*.<sup>206</sup>

Zia has a background and educational history in traditional institutions. He has received education at the Quran Sunan Pandanaran Islamic boarding school in Yogyakarta. He also had a one-year experience studying at UIN Jakarta and was actively involved as a member of the *Persatuan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia* (PMII).<sup>207</sup> In addition, he was also trained through self-study at home by his family with teachings in the traditionalist style<sup>208</sup>.

Despite coming from a strong NU family background, Zia was not reluctant to continue his education at IUM. His family fully supported his decision to study at IUM. Additionally, he was not overly concerned about IUM teaching Salafism. However, his father did provide him with some guidance regarding the IUM campus.<sup>209</sup>:

*"My father advised me that there would be some things that are different and contradictory to their practices. He told me to take what is good and discard what is bad. Take what is beneficial for the community and leave behind what is not useful. Ultimately, when I was about to depart, I had no prejudice against IUM. What mattered was that whatever happens there, I have principles and values that I can uphold."*

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid

<sup>206</sup> Interview with Zia, May, 2023

<sup>207</sup> Student Organization affiliated with Nahdhatul Ulama

<sup>208</sup> Interview with Zia, May, 2023

<sup>209</sup> Interview with Zia, May, 2023

Before studying at IUM, Zia was familiar with Salafis as a group that tends to criticize the practices of traditionalists. However, he did not delve into the specific issues they raised. Zia chose the Shariah department at IUM because he saw that the field of Shariah has a broader scope and continues to expand at every level<sup>210</sup>.

Furthermore, there is Ihsan. He is an alumni of the Bachelor's degree program in Quranic Studies. He began his education at IUM in 2016 and graduated in 2020. He then immediately continued his master's program in the same faculty the following year. Since birth, he has lived in the environment of the pesantren (Islamic boarding school) founded, led, and managed by his father, Pesantren Rafah. Rafah is a pesantren that is connected to the Gontor modern boarding school network. His father, Nashir Zein, is a respected figure in Bogor, West Java. Zein is an alumni of the Gontor Modern Boarding School and currently holds a strategic position as a member of the Wakaf Board of the Gontor Modern Boarding School. He also had the opportunity to study at IUM in the past.

According to Ihsan, his father, after returning from studying at IUM, he was influenced by Salafi teachings, such as forbidding music, *tahlilan*, and the practices commonly performed by traditionalist Muslim. However, after associating with local scholars and *habaib*, his thinking became more open, and he eventually accepted the practices that he had previously forbidden as permissible acts. As a result, activities such as *tahlilan*, *yasinan* and maulid gatherings became routine events at Pesantren Rafah. Being someone who lives in the environment of Rafah, Ihsan also frequently participates in these activities<sup>211</sup>.

Ihsan has a background in Islamic traditional education since childhood. He completed his elementary and junior high school education at Yanbaul Quran pesantren in Kudus, Central Java. The pesantren specializes in Quran memorization (tahfidz al-Quran) but also provides teachings in traditional Islamic knowledge. In the field of *fiqh*, they studied the book "Fathul Qarib" and continued with "Fathul Muin," following the Shafi'i school of thought. For the subject of *akidah*, they

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<sup>210</sup> Interview with Zia, May, 2023

<sup>211</sup> Interview with Ihsan, May, 2023

studied the book "*Akidatul Awwam*." After graduating, Ihsan continued his studies at Pondok Modern Gontor<sup>212</sup>.

Before attending UIM, Ihsan didn't have much knowledge about Salafism. However, what he knew was that they had a way of preaching that was considered extreme by some people. According to him, in terms of presenting evidence, they often had valid points, but it became problematic when they delivered it through judgment and blame. Ihsan chose the Quranic Studies department because he had been learning the Quran since childhood and had memorized it, so he wanted to delve deeper into its meanings<sup>213</sup>.

*b) Those who have traditionalist family background with a less traditionalist knowledge.*

The meaning of this category is those who come from families with a weak background in traditionalist education and didn't have religious recognition within their traditionalist communities. Or having religious recognition but not in the level of authoritative traditionalist ulama. However, they have religious practices deeply rooted in their daily lives. In addition, they don't have strong education in traditionalist knowledge.

In this category, some of them are Ramzan, Hanif, and Rifdi. First, let's talk about Hanif. Hanif is an alumni of IUM, graduating in 2022. He started his education at IUM in 2017. He comes from a NU family background and enjoys practicing amaliyahs such as tawassul, sholawat, reciting Yasin every Friday night, and Waqi'ahan every *fajr* time<sup>214</sup>.

*"I come from a cultural environment of NU society. However, my family has a hybrid background. My mother comes from an NU family and enjoys ngaji and sorogan<sup>215</sup>. My father comes from a Muhammadiyah family that does not engage in such practices. However, he is tolerant and understanding of differences and accepts other family members' practices. Sometimes, my father also attends events like tahlilan, but as a passive participant when*

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<sup>212</sup> Interview with Ihsan, May, 2023

<sup>213</sup> Interview with Ihsan, May, 2023

<sup>214</sup> Reading surah *al-Waqiah* gathered with some people

<sup>215</sup> Classic learning method to study *kitab kuning*

*invited. We often participate in these kinds of activities. In terms of formal education, neither my father nor my mother received religious education. They only have an educational background up to the high school level."*

Hanif has a relatively weak educational background in traditionalist teachings. During elementary school, he studied Salafi creed, and in junior high school, he learned about *Asy'ariyah* creed from the book *Akidatul Awwam*. After that, he continued his studies at Husnul Khotimah Islamic boarding school. Husnul Khotimah is an Islamic boarding school based on the principles of the *Ikhwanul Muslimin*. There, Hanif received teachings on Salafi creed conceptualized by Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya. After that, he participated in the selection exam for admission to Middle Eastern universities organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Simultaneously, he also took the entrance exam for IUM. Eventually, the announcement for the Middle Eastern selection came out first, and he was accepted at al-Azhar University in Cairo. In Cairo, he experienced two years of education. He was also actively involved in the *Pengurus Cabang Istimewa Nahdlatul Ulama (PCINU)* in Cairo. At al-Azhar, he was taught that the *akidah* conceptualized by Ibn Taymiyyah was *bid'ah*. However, he admitted that he was still studying the fundamental creed because he had not yet entered the *takhasus*<sup>216</sup> period. As a result, he did not delve into the *Ash'ariyah* creed. Eventually, he received a call from IUM and continued his education in Madinah, leaving his education in Cairo. Hanif chose the Shariah department because it is more needed by the people. Because in society, he often encounters questions and issues related to practical religious laws.

The second person is Ramzan. He is an alumni of IUM in 2020, starting his education there in 2015. Like the other respondents, he has a routine of NU practices. His parents are also NU activists in their village, but it is more of a cultural involvement rather than a structural one. Ramzan often accompanies his father in *tahlilan* gatherings, as his father is a leader in such events. Both his father and mother are alumni of NU-affiliated pesantren. After completing pesantren, his

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<sup>216</sup> Concentration

father continued his education at UIN Bandung and pursued a master's degree in law at the *Universitas Islam Nusantara* (UNINUS). However, his father never specifically taught about NU, but rather encouraged him to practice the distinctive practices of NU<sup>217</sup>.

Ramzan never had a formal education background in NU. He attended a public elementary school and then continued his education at Pondok Modern Gontor. Gontor follows a hybrid teaching system that incorporates elements of traditionalism and Salafism. In the early stages of his studies, he was taught the *Asy'ariyah* creed with its sifat 20. He also studied the book on Tawhid by Sheikh Salih Fauzan.<sup>218</sup> Additionally, there are no specific traditional religious traditions practiced, such as *tahlilan*, *yasinan*, *maulid*, and others. Informally, Ramzan only attended Taman Pendidikan Quran (TPQ) with an ustadz affiliated with NU. However, in terms of knowledge, he admitted that he was not familiar with the laws, evidence, and understanding related to NU practices, as well as the concept of *bid'ah*<sup>219</sup>.

The third person is Rifdi. He is an alumni of IUM in 2019 and started his education at IUM in 2015. He comes from a family background associated with the Darunnajah Islamic boarding school that its guardian is his father, Kyai Shofwan Manaf. In the boarding school, they practice the customary rituals of traditionalist Muslim. The educational system follows Gontor principles. Although NU-specific practices are carried there, the boarding school is not automatically claimed as an NU-affiliated institution. The family still performs grave visitations. Rifdi's grandfather's family had a connection with the Masyumi party and once studied at the Jamiatul Khoir boarding school in Tanah Abang, which was managed by the habaib. Therefore, his grandfather's family has a close relationship with the habaib. However, practices such as tawassul or istighotsah are not performed, not because

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<sup>217</sup> Interview with Ramzan, May, 2023

<sup>218</sup> Salafi ulama and mufti of Saudi Arabia

<sup>219</sup> Interview with Ramzan, May, 2023

they are considered bid'ah or forbidden, but simply because they do not align with the customs of the boarding school<sup>220</sup>.

Rifdi received his education from an early age at Darunnajah kindergarten and elementary school. He then continued to the Gontor boarding school. While waiting for his call to Madinah, he stayed at an NU-affiliated institution, but only to memorize the Quran and did not study NU-related subjects. At that time, he didn't quite understand and comprehend what salafi meant. However, his perception of salafi was that they had a textual view of Quranic verses. he also had not yet to understand the differences between salafi, *asyariyah*, or *maturidiyah*<sup>221</sup>.

Despite having routine tradition of traditionalist practices in his family, Rifdi was actually recommended to pursue his studies in Madinah. Although initially reluctant to study Islam in Madinah, Rifdi wanted to study management or philosophy instead. He initially chose the Da'wah and Ushuludin department with the hope of studying philosophy. However, in reality, that course was not taught and was even prohibited. When he was about to depart, he brought many philosophy books to read and study. However, all those books were confiscated at the airport. He just knew that the kingdom prohibited the distribution of philosophy books. According to the Salafi/Hanbali teachings, which were the state's school of thought, philosophy is considered forbidden and cannot be used as a means to study Islam<sup>222</sup>.

*c) Those who come from families with a weak traditionalist scholarly background, but possess a strong personal capacity for knowledge.*

The meaning of this category is those who come from families with a weak background in traditionalist education, and not recognized as figures within traditionalist communities. However, they have religious practices deeply rooted in their daily lives. Even their family have weak background in traditionalist education, but they have strong traditionalist knowledge.

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<sup>220</sup> Interview with Rifdi, May, 2023

<sup>221</sup> Interview with Rifdi, May, 2023

<sup>222</sup> Fahamsyah, Fadlan. "Dinamika dan Sejarah Pemikiran Salafi." *Jurnal Al-Fawa'id: Jurnal Agama dan Bahasa* 10.2 (2020): 26-41.

In this category, there is Hari. He is an alumni of IUM in 2019, starting his education in 2015. He and his family have the habits of NU's amaliyah. They frequently engage in visiting the tombs of the wali songo and righteous individuals around Gresik, seeking *baraka* through their intercession. His parent comes from a non-scholarly background, and their formal education only extends up to primary school level<sup>223</sup>.

Before going to Madinah, Hari had received education at a local public elementary and junior high school in his area, and then continued to study at Gontor Islamic boarding school. After graduating, he pursued his studies at LIPIA, majoring in Sharia for three years. Alongside his formal studies at the university, he actively attended religious study sessions at Rumah Fiqih with Ustadz Ahmad Tsarwat and engaged in discussions with fellow participants of the study group. He learned extensively about fiqh issues, *Tarikh tasyri'* (the history of Islamic legislation), *usul al-fiqh, qadha'* (legal rulings), and other related topics.

Rumah Fiqih is a discussion and study institution that focuses on fiqh issues. Many of the instructors there are graduates of LIPIA and universities in the Middle East. Interestingly, despite the presence of many LIPIA graduates, the topics frequently discussed there are actually antithetical to Salafism. Some instructors there acknowledged that they once believed in Salafi ideology but later moved away from it and shifted towards the majority understanding of traditionalist Islam. Besides fiqh issues, debates on matters of creed (*akidah*) are also commonly discussed<sup>224</sup>.

*"At LIPIA, I studied various ideologies, including Ash'ariyah. However, I also independently learned about the essence of Ash'ariyah creed by watching YouTube videos as a point of comparison. Outside the classroom, I engaged in discussions with my Salafi friends who resided in the same dormitory. Therefore, despite being formally taught a certain perspective in class, I still held on to the Ash'ariyah creed in understanding the shifat of God. I leaned more towards the Ash'ari method of tafwidh (referring the meaning of the shifat of God to God), without denying ta'wil as*

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<sup>223</sup> Interview with Hari, May, 2023

<sup>224</sup> Interview with Hari, May, 2023

*another Ash'ariyah method of understanding the texts related to sifat of God. I consider Ahlus Sunnah to include Ash'ariyah, Maturidiyah, and Atsariyah"*

*"While studying at LIPIA, with a traditionalist background from my family and community, I was not surprised by the Salafist materials taught. I had already learned various schools of thought in previous schools, such as studying Ash'ariyah and Salafiyah creeds in Gontor, and studying books like Bidayat al-Mujtahid on fiqh, and others. I understood the differences of opinion within the Muslim community. However, I had doubts about the practices and beliefs I had held. But through discussions with friends who shared similar thoughts or by searching on YouTube and Google for comparisons, such as lectures by Habib Ali al-Jufri, Sheikh Ali Jumah, Usamah al-Azhari, Sheikh Hatim al-Auni, UAS, and Adi Hidayat, I began to feel more accepting of different opinions."*

Although Hari had already completed three years of study at LIPIA, he received a call to go to Madinah. His motivation for studying at IUM was due to the presence of the Prophet's tomb, the scholarship opportunity, the excellent quality of the campus, and the fact that many senior students from Gontor also studied there. Despite coming from a NU family, there were no concerns about Hari becoming a Salafi Wahhabi, as his family and the surrounding community were from a lay background. Additionally, his decision to pursue a Shariah major was driven by his interest in *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*. Prior to that, he often gathered with the community at the House of Fiqh. At LIPIA, he also chose the Shariah department, which further solidified his confidence in pursuing Shariah studies<sup>225</sup>.

#### **4.4. Negotiating Identity and Maintaining Belief**

Some of the traditionalist students often feel skeptical about what they receive from the teachings in the classroom because their basic knowledge and beliefs are already different. Although there are also those among them who do not negotiate and accept the teaching of Salafism in class as it is, eventually they justify Salafi teachings. As a result, those who feel skeptical seek other ways to balance it out by engaging some activities as their mean to negotiate Salafism ideology:

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<sup>225</sup> Interview with Hari, May, 2023

#### 4.4.1. Traditionalist Circle and *Syeikh*

The teachings by the sheikhs in Madinah are not only conducted in the university. For a long time, the *Masjid Nabawi* has been the place where scholars impart their knowledge to their students, and this tradition continues to this day. Various disciplines of knowledge are taught through the method of *talaqqi*, which involves the recitation and study of classical and contemporary Arabic texts. Some of these include Aqidah (theology) taught by Sheikh Ibrahim Ruhaili, Tafsir (Quranic exegesis) by Sheikh Shinqithi, Sheikh al-Ushaimy's lessons on the establishment of knowledge (*ta'asis al-'ilm*), *Fiqh* by Sheikh Sulaiman Ruhaily, and others.<sup>226</sup> In addition, the aforementioned instructors are scholars who adhere to the Salafi school of thought, so some of the knowledge they teach aligns with the principles of Salafi scholarship. However, there are now *halaqahs* that teach books from other schools of thought besides the Hanbali Salafi school, such as the Shafi'i, Maliki, and others, by studying the specific books of each respective school. Therefore, these *halaqahs* are utilized by students who wish to study a particular school of thought, including those from the Indonesian traditionalist Muslim community.<sup>227</sup>

In addition, They often organize gatherings with their friends from the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) group during weekly *tahlilan* and *yasinan* moments. By this activity, the discussion of certain issues among traditionalist students were held. Moreover, the IUM Indonesian students from "Gus"<sup>228</sup> circle also attended, who have been expert in traditionalist teachings before going to Madinah<sup>229</sup>. As they are expert in the *Shafi'i* madhhab, they assisted the other traditionalist friends to understand *shafii madhhab*. As a result, traditionalist students have ample opportunities to deepen their understanding of the foundational teachings of *fiqh*<sup>230</sup>. The discussions are very meaningful for them to maintain their beliefs, and that is indeed their goal, to remain steadfast in their old beliefs<sup>231</sup>. In addition to gathering

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<sup>226</sup> Interview with Abiyyu, May, 2023

<sup>227</sup> Interview with Hari, May, 2023

<sup>228</sup> Son of traditionalist Kyai

<sup>229</sup> Interview with Rifdi, May, 2023

<sup>230</sup> Interview with Hanif, May, 2023

<sup>231</sup> Interview with Nuril, May, 2023

with their own friends, they also frequently visit the homes of the *habaib*<sup>232</sup> in Madinah to attend monthly *maulid* celebrations and Quran recitation sessions. These *habaib* are Saudi and Yemeni citizen who have been residing there for a long time. Additionally, they often attend an annual gathering at Sayyid Ahmad's place, although it is far from the campus.<sup>233</sup>

#### 4.4.2. Clarification Through Social Media

In addition, the role of social media is also inevitable. After hearing teachings from professors that contradict their beliefs, they try to use YouTube as a source for comparative studies. This is similar to Hari's experience.

*"I enjoy delving deeper into fiqh issues, especially those that are often debated, such as qunut, post-prayer remembrance, and others. Channels that I frequently visit are the lectures of Kyai Idrus Ramli, Sheikh Ali Jumah, Sheikh Abdul Ba'its al-Kattani, and Sheikh Ali Al-Jufri. Sheikh Abdul Ba'its often discusses the shifat of Allah such as Nuzul<sup>234</sup>. His discussions are light, easily understandable, supported by evidence, and his explanations are logical. Habib Ali Al-Jufri often explains about tazkiyatun nafs, and also addresses his defense against attacks from Salafis."*

Rifdi also experienced the same thing:

*"I feel the influence of media on my thinking. Usually, when I have doubts about the explanations given by the lecturers in class, I immediately open YouTube for comparison. Usually, the issues that make me doubt are related to the lineage of the Prophet Muhammad, whether it exists or not. Salafis believe in the existence of Sharifs and Sharifahs, although they still consider some lineages as unknown (*majhul*). On the other hand, Salafis who hold the *mutasyadid*<sup>235</sup> view deny and completely reject the lineage of the Prophet Muhammad until now. My interest in Ash'ari creed is also influenced by listening to lectures on YouTube. I often watch lectures by Ustadz Kholid Bassalamah, Syafiq Reza Bassalamah, and Firanda Andirja. Then, I compare them with lectures by Ustadz Abdul Somad, Ustadz Adi Hidayat, and Buya Yahya. After that, I draw my own conclusions."*

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<sup>232</sup> Descendants of the Prophet

<sup>233</sup> Interview with Hari, May, 2023

<sup>234</sup> Attribute of God, means "going down"

<sup>235</sup> Strict

In addition to watching YouTube, reading books on their own also becomes an alternative, as experienced by Hari:

*“The books I read to compare the teaching in class such as al-Qaul at-Tamam fi Itsbati Tafwidh Madzhaban li al-Salafi al-kiram<sup>236</sup> by Syaikh Saiful ‘Ashry, or kitab Alla Madzhabiyyah<sup>237</sup> by Dr. Said Ramadhan al-Buthi”.*

It's different for Zia. As an IUM alumni from the year 2015 and the son of Kyai Ali Mustafa Ya'qub<sup>238</sup>, when he encounters doubts about what he learns in class, he contacts or sends an SMS to his father to seek clarification and ask for answers to enlighten his curiosity<sup>239</sup>.

#### **4.4.3. Students' Ideological Stance**

In the previous sections and chapters, it was found that many teachings received were based on Salafism, which contradicted the understanding of students with traditionalist ideologies. They tried to negotiate and make efforts to maintain their beliefs. I have categorized the discussions according to the classifications based on their backgrounds.

I argue that the presence or absence of their change or shift in ideology depends on their efforts to uphold their beliefs, in accordance with the level of knowledge they strive for. Indeed, students who come from families or personal backgrounds with strong traditionalist scholarly traditions generally remain steadfast in their traditionalist beliefs. However, this does not mean that they are completely unaffected by Salafist thoughts, although the influence may be limited to a few issues.

Some of the issues that are often debated between Salafist and traditionalists are their understanding of *asma wa shifat* (names and attributes of Allah), *bid'ah*, *khurafat* (superstitions), and other practices that are considered superstitious and

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<sup>236</sup>This book explains that the Salaf generation often used the method of tafwidh in treating the *shifat* of God. This undermines the Salafi argument that the Salaf understood the *shifat* with a literal meaning.

<sup>237</sup> This book explains that not using madhhab in practicing religion is the biggest mistake. It refutes the Salafi teaching that madhhab is *bid'ah*.

<sup>238</sup> Former Imam of Istiqlal Majid, Jakarta

<sup>239</sup> Interview with Zia, May, 2023

detrimental to the monotheism of a Muslim. Regarding practical matters such as *tahlilan*, *yasinan*, *maulidan*, the majority of respondents from the traditionalist Muslim that I interviewed tended to maintain their position that these practices are not *bid'ah*.

Below, starting from the first category, which I analyze as the one who had the most extreme change and shift in thinking, he is Ramzan<sup>240</sup>:

*"I strongly agree with the lessons in class, especially when discussing the specific practices conducted by NU followers, because they teach based on Quranic and Sunnah evidence, unlike in the NU study groups where the preachers rarely mention evidence and often rely on their own opinions. So, I am satisfied with the teachings in class and share the same opinion. In terms of understanding bid'ah, I agree with them. I no longer participate in those activities because they are not based on valid foundations and are unnecessary to be practiced regularly."*

Regarding matters of creed (*akidah*) and Sufism (*tasawuf*), he also agrees with the teachings there. "I follow and accept the teachings in class that *Asyariyah* is a deviant group and not part of *Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamaah*. I do not agree with the *ta'wil* of *Asyariyah* because they tend to go too extremes in conducting *ta'wil*"<sup>241</sup> In the matter of Sufism, it is taught that Sufism is not correct. Additionally, they are taught about their practices are similar with Shia, such as engaging in *dhikr* with dancing. And I disagree with that."<sup>242</sup>

It is known that Ramzan's parents do not impose restrictions or warn him about certain ideologies. Additionally, he rarely engages in studying and participating in *halaqah* with the scholars there. Moreover, his interactions with NU students are limited, and he never joins their activities. He admits that he belongs to circles of *rebahan*<sup>243</sup>.

The second respondents group I categorize as having a less extreme change in their thinking. There are Rifdi and Hanif. They neither fully justify nor criticize certain debatable issues, whether traditionalist or Salafi, but tend to lean towards traditionalist thinking. For example, in matters of *akidah*, Rifdi does not dwell too

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<sup>240</sup> Interview with Ramzan, May, 2023

<sup>241</sup> Interview with Ramzan, May, 2023

<sup>242</sup> Interview with Ramzan, May, 2023

<sup>243</sup> People loving to stay in room and lazy to move

much on akidah issues, although he prefers *Ash'ariyah* theology. However, he also does not condemn Salafi theology. What has changed in his perspective that he dislike excessive zealotry and idolization of specific figures. It is known that Rifdi is the son of a Kyai in the Darunnajah Islamic Boarding School, which teaches both theological schools of thought at its institution.<sup>244</sup>

I argue that Rifdi's perspective in this matter is also influenced by his position as a cadre *pesantren* Darunnajah, where he also holds a strategic position at present. Hanif's attitude is similar to Rifdi's. He leans more towards *Ash'ariyah* theology, but he chooses not to engage in debates about creedal matters, as he considers the debate between *Ash'ariyah* and *Salafi* theology to fall under the category of *furu' akidah*. Therefore, he is reluctant to blame the Salafi group. It is known that Hanif is an alumnus of a boarding school affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, whose stance does not focus on this particular debate. The boarding school also teaches the principles of Salafi theology. Hanif has also not received formal education in traditional Islamic boarding schools to deepen his understanding of *Ash'ariyah* theology.<sup>245</sup>

In other matters, they tend to align with their traditionalist views by not rejecting practices such as tahlilan, yasinan, and maulid as part of virtuous deeds. However, when it comes to *tasawuf*, Hanif does not agree Sufi forms of *dhikr* such as dancing while performing the *dhikr*.<sup>246</sup>

The third category consists of IUM alumni who have largely remained committed to the principles of Islamic traditionalism and have undergone minimal shifts in their understanding. This includes Ihsan, Nuril, Hari, and Zia. In all aspects of *amaliyah* and *akidah*, especially in their understanding of Allah's *asma wa shifat*, they adhere to traditionalist principles and the *Ash'ariyah* theology. The breadth of their knowledge before studying in Madinah significantly maintaining their principles. However, Ihsan is somewhat influenced by Salafi opinion that *asyariyah* considered has restricted the *shifat* of Allah to only 20<sup>247</sup>. If we refer to *Ash'ariyah*

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<sup>244</sup> Interview with Rifdi, May, 2023

<sup>245</sup> Interview with Hanif, May, 2023

<sup>246</sup> Interview with Hanif, May, 2023

<sup>247</sup> Interview with Ihsan, May, 2023

scholars, they considered to never restrict the shifat of God to only 20. Instead, they categorize them to facilitate understanding for students, similar to the conditions and pillars of prayer. All of these categorizations are the result of the *ijtihad* of *Ash'ariyah* scholars in understanding the *shifat* of God<sup>248</sup>.

As for Hari, he leans more towards the method of *tafwid* rather than *ta'wil*. However, he does not reject *ta'wil* as a method of understanding the *shifat* of God.<sup>249</sup> In terms of matters outside of *akidah*, Nuril admits to experiencing a shift in thinking:

*"Of course, there are changes that are inevitable. Even before going to Madinah, I guess there would be changes. The most noticeable change is that I used to be very focused and devout when visiting graves. However, now I feel it's just ordinary. Before going to Madinah, I was very fanatic to the pious mayyit of the graves, believing that they were the ones whose prayers were answered. So, I took it very seriously back then. But in Madinah, I often heard that our practices were being misled and misguided, which psychologically influenced my subconscious mind and eroded my fanaticism."*

However, Most of them tend to maintain their traditionalist practices such as *tahlilan*, *yasinan*, and *maulidan* and consider it as part of righteous deeds.

All respondents from the traditionalist group agree that the Salafi method of da'wah is not good and needs improvement. This has triggered conflict among the society, leading to the expulsion of their propagation efforts. They need to understand the correct methodology that can be easily accepted by the society.

In the other hand, one of the disputed claims between the traditionalist and Salafi groups is the name claim of "*Ahlusunnah wal Jamaah*". In the formal teaching environment of IUM, *Ash'ariyah* and those who adhere to their beliefs are considered deviant and not considered as *Ahlusunnah wal Jamaah* group. The perspectives of IUM alumni with traditionalist backgrounds vary regarding the Salafi group. However, the majority of them consider Salafis to be still part of *Ahlusunnah wal Jamaah*. As explained by Hanif, the debates on *akidah* among

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<sup>248</sup> Muhammad, Nur Hidayat. "Klaim Dusta Salafi-Wahabi Tentang Akidah Salaf." (2020).

<sup>249</sup> Interview with Hari, May, 2023

them are considered *furu'* in *akidah* matters, which do not result to the violators being excluded from *Ahlusunnah wal Jamaah*.<sup>250</sup> Ihsan also believes that the judgments made by the figures of NU in Indonesia stating that Salafis are not part of *Ahlusunnah wal Jamaah* are too extreme.<sup>251</sup>

And Rifdi believes that there are two categories of *Ahlusunnah wal Jamaah*. He states that he follows the opinion of his teacher during his time in Gontor:

*"I agree with the response of Pak Amal<sup>252</sup> that Ahlusunnah consists of the Salaf (early generations) and the Khalaf (later generations). The Salaf includes Ahlul Hadith and Ahlul Atsar, and the Khalaf includes Ash'ariyah and Maturidiyah. Salafis, as followers of the Salaf, are also considered part of Ahlusunnah."*

Zia has different opinion regarding this matter:<sup>253</sup>

*"While they are not easy to accuse or declare someone as a disbeliever, so they are still considered part of Ahlusunnah wal Jamaah. However, if they attribute to Allah physical attributes such as having a hand, as we know it, then they fall into the category of Mujassimah<sup>254</sup>, and Mujassimah is not included in the group of Ahlusunnah wal Jamaah."*

Furthermore, Salafis claim to be followers of the *salaf salih*. However, this claim is not agreed upon by some respondents and is accepted by others.

Zia has own opinion:

*"I believe that Salafis do not truly follow the salaf. It is merely a claim and a branding of themselves as followers of the salaf, but in reality, their adherence to the salaf salih is limited. There are other scholars between the period of the salaf salih and their own scholars whom they overlook. This is not justified according to the principles of acquiring knowledge. In practice, they primarily follow figures such as Ibn Taymiyyah, Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, Albani, and others."<sup>255</sup>*

Ihsan also believes that it is problematic to say that they are followers of the *salaf*:

*"They claim to follow the salaf, but not purely. They are still influenced by the da'wah in Saudi Arabia. The Salafi people in Saudi*

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<sup>250</sup> Interview with Hanif, May, 2023

<sup>251</sup> Interview with Ihsan, May, 2023

<sup>252</sup> Headmaster of Gontor *pesantren*

<sup>253</sup> Interview with Zia, May, 2023

<sup>254</sup> Anthropomorphist

<sup>255</sup> Interview with Zia, May, 2023

*Arabia have limited methods of learning, and indirectly, the teachings there are propagate that their belief is the most correct."*

Additionally, Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab as the founder of the Salafi-Wahhabi movement, his ideas continue to be referenced by them to this day. This figure's thought is also taught at IUM as a reformist figure who played a significant role in purifying Islamic teachings. Many NU figures in Indonesia hold negative views about his movement. However, the majority of respondents do not find issue with the controversies surrounding him. Some even praise the knowledge and character of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, like Rifdi:

*"He was a knowledgeable and pious figure, I believe that. I disagree when people say he was fond of declaring others as disbelievers, as some traditionalists claim. Sometimes, NU adherents use unauthentic stories to retaliate against Salafi attacks. However, what I have observed is that his methods of preaching are not suitable to be applied in Southeast Asia."<sup>256</sup>*

However, Nuril holds a different opinion. He believes that Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab is a *takfiri* figure<sup>257</sup>:

*"The story that Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab was a takfiri is true. In the IUM campus, there is a teaching of tarikh mamlakah (history of the kingdom). Although the book was written by Saudi Arabia side, it is clearly explained there that Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab and his army killed many of sharifs<sup>258</sup>. They are proud of their actions because they consider it part of the jihad to purify the Islamic creed"*

#### **4.5. Compromising the Two Ideological Edges**

IUM alumni are expected by their villager's society to give da'wah by their Islamic knowledge. Different case happened to IUM alumni who engaged with traditionalist Muslim society. The society observed their religious perspectives, worrying to the Salafism ideology lied to them. However, once they know that Salafist ideology did not dominate IUM alumni ideology, then the society accepted

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<sup>256</sup> Interview with Rifdi, May, 2023

<sup>257</sup> Interview with Nuril, May, 2023

<sup>258</sup> Descendants of prophet

them. Subsequently, they join various activities of traditionalist Muslim society, and become fully trusted to give da'wah and preaching.

In this sub-chapter, I discuss how they compromise the two ideological edges to their traditionalist society, starting from the most influenced by Salafist ideology. The pattern consists of their understanding of traditionalist practices rooted in society.

Ramzan is a respondent from the traditionalist group who was most influenced by Salafist thinking. He considered practices like *tahlil*, *yasinan*, and *maulid* as lacking religious basis and evidence. Currently, he serves as the chairman of the Mosque Welfare Council (DKM) in the Rawamangun area. However, he still integrates with the traditionalist society with some exceptions:

*"At the beginning, I was advised by my father and some community members to participate in the customary practices of the community. I agreed to their invitation, but I said in my heart that this is part of the process of conveying my message. I didn't want the community to immediately see me as significantly different from them. During tahlil events, I try my best not to participate and have never joined them. Occasionally, I adjust dzikir jahr to align with the practices of the mosque. When conducting religious discussions, I never express the Salafist version of bid'ah. However, I have taught the book Fathul Majid<sup>259</sup>, but only specific chapters in the beginning."<sup>260</sup>*

*"As the chairman of DKM, I have the authority to determine the speakers for ta'lim. I choose those who are not fanatical about a particular group, including those from the NU community. Even among fanatical Salafists, I do not give them the opportunity to give ta'lim at the mosque. I only want to focus on the da'wah efforts"<sup>261</sup>*

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<sup>259</sup> Book of Salafi Scholar

<sup>260</sup> Interview with Ramzan, May, 2023

<sup>261</sup> Interview with Ramzan, May, 2023

Interestingly, there was one of my respondents who was also accepted in a Salafi Mosque, recognizing his identity as an IUM alumni. This was experienced by Hanif:

*"I have been actively involved in da'wah activities since I returned, particularly in the women's study circle. The topics I discuss are general. In terms of dhikr, I have a different practice because in Madinah it is common to perform silent dhikr, not jahr.<sup>262</sup> There are two mosques there with NU and Salafi characteristics, and I was accepted in both mosques. I led the prayer and adapted to their practices. In the NU mosque, I recited the qunut, but in the Salafi Mosque, I did not. For me, it was not a big issue as it falls within the realm of fiqh. When in the Salafi community, I often gave additional knowledge about their distinctive thoughts. Apart from that, I only attend events based on invitations<sup>263</sup>"*

In addition, Rifdi, as the son of the Kyai of the *Pesantren* Darunnajah, has a kind of special authority in determining policies there:

*"Because I am now involved in the educational institution, I urge the residents of the boarding school not to taqlid<sup>264</sup>. I advised them that they are free to engage in various practices such as tahlilan, yasinan, and others, but they should also understand the evidences of those practices. They should not blindly follow without knowing the basis. That's what I am striving for on their behalf"*

Apart from them, there are Zia, Ihsan, Nuril, and Hari. They appear to blend in more with the community because their perspectives are heavily un-influenced by Salafism, and they come from families and communities with strong traditionalist backgrounds. As a result, they easily integrate into the community and freely convey traditional teachings.

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<sup>262</sup> Dzikir with low voice

<sup>263</sup> Interview with Hanif, May, 2023

<sup>264</sup> Following something without knowing it's evidence

#### **4.6. Conclusion**

I observed there are three categories of Traditionalist Muslim in IUM: first, those who come from families or personal backgrounds with a strong traditionalist knowledge and tradition; second, those who come from families or personal backgrounds with relatively weaker traditionalist knowledge and tradition; and third, those who come from families with weak traditionalist family traditions but possess a strong individual capacity for knowledge. IUM, with its teachings contrasting traditionalist thinking, requires them to negotiate their thoughts. They experience ambivalence while studying at IUM. However, their negotiation of thoughts begins during the *muqabalah* process, where they must provide answers in line with the typical Salafist responses desired by the examiners. The classroom teaching atmosphere also confuses their feelings, oscillating between rejection and acceptance. Moreover, the characteristics of the lecturers, who present textual evidence indicating that traditionalist thinking is incorrect and even considered deviating from the understanding of *Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah*.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

This thesis argues that Indonesian traditionalist IUM graduates developed an inclusive view to Salafism while dominantly still maintaining the traditions of practice and thought deeply rooted in their minds and daily life. Their maintenance level of traditionalist belief accordance with the strength of their negotiation with Salafist ideologies conveyed in the campus environment. The religious knowledge capacity they possess before coming to Madinah is the most crucial factor in negotiating the Salafist teachings they receive on campus. Those with a high level of traditionalist knowledge capacity have a lower likelihood of being influenced by Salafist ideology on campus. Additionally, family background is also a significant factor. Practices and beliefs that have been established since their upbringing in the family are also crucial in negotiating Salafist thinking on campus. Other factors include friendship circles and media. They often socialize with friends who share similar frequencies, leading to discussions related to the ideas they encounter and comparisons with their original ideologies. In traditionalist Muslim friendship circles, they motivate each other to maintain their ideologies. Additionally, they often use media platforms such as YouTube or downloadable books from the internet to address their skepticism by comparing the opinions of traditionalist scholars.

After doing such negotiations, one of traditionalist respondents fully embrace Salafist teachings because he is lacking traditionalist knowledge capacity, lack in space for discussion and circle of traditionalist Muslim friends, and do not use social media or additional traditionalist literature as a basis for comparison and consideration. He also has to negotiate with the traditionalist community and develop specific strategies for preaching. Even though he fully embraces the teachings of Salafism, he still strives to make his identity as a Salafi unknown to the traditionalist society. He also makes an effort to maintain a moderate approach to them.

Some of them lean more towards traditionalist thinking and ideology, but still justify the Salafist teachings they receive is correct. They tend to have experience in Salafism study before coming to Madinah, or coming from families with relatively weak traditionalist practices and traditions. They tend to be accepted by the Salafi or traditionalist community upon their return to Indonesia.

There are who remain steadfast in traditionalist teachings and do not justify Salafism as correct ideology which is generally contra to traditionalist ideology. Typically, they have had strong knowledge capacity in traditionalist teachings before coming to Madinah, or coming from families with strong traditionalist practices and traditions. However, they still consider Salafi as part of *ahlusunnah wal jamaah*. It's different with some traditionalist scholars in Indonesia who view Salafi as not part of *ahlusunnah wal jamaah*. They view the different perspective and opinion between the two edges of ideology as common phenomenon in religious interpretation. They tend to find easier da'wah to engage within their communities, even though they may initially be suspected of converting to Salafism when in their first emergence in traditionalist society. This finding is further supported by the experiences of two reformist affiliated respondents showing that they are more easily receptive to Salafist teachings at IUM.

However, despite their varying levels of influence from Salafi teachings in IUM, they agree, including non-traditionalist affiliated, that the type of preaching conducted by previous Salafi preachers, which leads to rejection in certain areas, is not justified. I argue that this is due to the influence of different teaching approaches by the lecturers, some of them are strict and others more moderate. Additionally, it seems that recent alumni from Madinah are more moderate compared to the Salafis in Indonesia. This can be seen from their moderate approach to preaching and their ability to integrate with the traditional Muslim community, even from IUM alumni who have affiliation with reformist organization. I argue that the comparative study of *madhahib* in the classroom also influences their perspectives on the differences in *fiqh* practices among Muslim communities. This sets them apart from some Salafis in Indonesia who have an anti-madhhab stance. Furthermore, there have been certain campus policies since the rise of Muhammad bin Salman that campus

emphasized on students behaving in a moderate manner and not easily accusing others of deviance. These policies indirectly have impact on their behavior in society.

Briefly, the combination of pre-existing knowledge and practices of traditionalist Muslims, mixed with the teachings of Salafism conveyed by Salafi scholars through strong evidence, along with the dominant Salafi community environment at IUM, shaped the different perspective of traditionalist Muslims at IUM with traditionalist Muslims in general in Indonesia. The undeniable fact is that there is a change in thinking as a consequence of the influence of Salafi teachings on their thoughts, despite their strong traditionalist family background in terms of practices and knowledge.

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### **Interview**

Rifdi, Alumni of Islamic University of Madinah

Nuril, Alumni of Islamic University of Madinah

Ihsan, Alumni of Islamic University of Madinah

Abiyyu, Alumni of Islamic University of Madinah

Irfan, Alumni of Islamic University of Madinah

Hanif , Alumni of Islamic University of Madinah

Hari, Alumni of Islamic University of Madinah

Ramzan, Alumni of Islamic University of Madinah

Zia, Alumni of Islamic University of Madinah

Faisal, Student candidate of Islamic University of Madinah

### **Guidance book**

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