

The Development of Modern Indonesian Islamic Theology and Sufism in the Environment of Al-Jam'iyatul Washliyah

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Abstract : *Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah is an Islamic organization founded in North Sumatra in 1930. The main focus of this organization is on Islamic education and preaching, as well as efforts to integrate Islamic teachings with nationalist values. This research uses a qualitative approach based on literature study, by examining relevant texts and literature. Research findings show that Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah seeks to align Islamic teachings with contemporary issues such as education, health and welfare. Theological and sufisme thinking in this organization reflects a response to the challenges of modernity and has made significant contributions to education and preaching, as well as promoting tolerance and moderation in a diverse society.*

Keywords : *Islamic Theology, Sufism, Al-Jam'iyatul Washliyah, Education, Da'wah.*

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1. Introduction

Theological and Sufism thought in the Jam'iyatul Washliyah environment has a complex history, which reflects the social, cultural, and political dynamics that occur in Indonesia. This organization was established in 1930 with the aim of developing Islamic education and da'wah, especially among Muslims in North Sumatra. In this context, theology is one of the important aspects that shape the identity and mission of the organization. Jam'iyatul Washliyah's theological thought focuses on the harmonization between Islamic teachings and national values, which seeks to strengthen religious identity as well as Nasution nationalism (2020).

Furthermore, the theological thought that developed in Jam'iyatul Washliyah was also strongly influenced by the social context in which this organization was located. In facing the challenges of modernity, Jam'iyatul Washliyah tries to present a thinking that is responsive to the changing times. According to Ramadhan's (2019) research, this organization seeks to align Islamic teachings with contemporary issues, such as education, health, and community welfare. This approach not only strengthens theological understanding among its members,

but also creates a space for dialogue between Islam and various aspects of social life. The theology in Jam'iyatul Washliyah is also seen in their efforts to respond to various religious and social issues that arise. The organization encourages its members to be active in discussion and reflection on relevant issues, so that the resulting theological thinking becomes more inclusive and contextual. As explained by Siregar (2021) in "Jurnal Studia Islamika", this theological thought prioritizes the principles of tolerance and moderation, which are the key to maintaining harmony in the midst of the diversity of Muslims in Indonesia.

Finally, the contribution of theological thought in the Jam'iyatul Washliyah environment is not only stopped at the internal aspects of the organization, but also has a wide impact on society. Through various education and da'wah programs, this organization seeks to educate the public on the importance of understanding Islamic teachings in depth and contextual. Research by Harahap (2022) in the "Journal of Islamic Sociology" highlights how Jam'iyatul Washliyah plays a role in developing a rational and moderate understanding of religion, so that it can be a source of inspiration for the younger generation in facing global challenges.

The development of Islamic theological thought within the Jam'iyatul Washliyah environment is a very relevant topic to be researched, considering the important role of this organization in the field of education and da'wah in Indonesia. In addition, in the face of the challenges of modernity, the theological thought that emerges in it shows a response to contemporary issues. This research aims to examine the theological thinking produced by the Jam'iyatul Washliyah organization, and its impact on the development of the religious and social identity of its members. With a qualitative approach, this study will investigate how the practice of theology in Jam'iyatul Washliyah affects daily life and interfaith interactions. It is hoped that the results of this research can provide more in-depth insight into the role of theological thought in maintaining harmony and moderation in the midst of the diversity of Indonesian society. Through this analysis, it is hoped that patterns of thought that are relevant to the global context and the challenges of the current era can be found.

2. Results

2.1. History of Al-Jam'iyatul Washliyah

Al-Jam'iyatul Washliyah or often called al-Washliyah is an Islamic community organization (CSO) of the Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah (Sunni) sect that was born in Medan, North Sumatra on November 30, 1930. Linguistically, the word al-Washliyah means an organization that connects or relates (Ja'far, 2022). This organization was born in the context of the division of Muslims and Dutch colonialism in Indonesia. The initial purpose of its establishment was to unite Muslims who were divided by differences of views, especially in terms of understanding and application of Islamic law. At that time, the division between the old (traditionalist) and the young (modernists) became a big problem that the Dutch colonizers took advantage of to maintain power. The founders of Jam'iyatul Washliyah, who were mostly students of the Medan Islamic College, saw the need for unity to fight against the invaders.

In terms of da'wah methods, Al Washliyah is more likely to maintain traditional values in its religious practices, similar to the approach taken by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) scholars. However, they also have a diverse education system. Since its inception, the organization has established madrassas that reflect traditional education, as well as schools that adopt modern education systems from the West. This shows the balance between traditionalism and modernism in the Al Washliyah education system (Rozali, 2016).

In addition to playing a role in the world of education, Al Washliyah also made a great contribution to the struggle for Indonesian independence. This organization was involved in various activities, both when Indonesia was still under the rule of the Dutch East Indies and after the proclamation of independence by Sukarno and Hatta. On October 29, 1945, they held a conference attended by teachers and scholars to formulate steps and strategies to be taken in support of Indonesian independence. This conference showed how serious Al Washliyah was in formulating a strategy to defend independence through various means, both military and non-military.

Al Washliyah has three main goals as an organization. First, they want to apply the teachings of Islam to achieve happiness in this world and the hereafter. Second, creating a society that has faith, piety, and lives in security, peace, justice, and prosperity in the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). Third, Al Washliyah encourages the Indonesian people to actively participate in national development. These goals are realized through various activities in the fields of education, da'wah, and social charity.

The vision of this organization is to make Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah a large organization that covers the whole of Indonesia, with the main goal of maintaining good relations with Allah (Hablum-Minallah) and fellow humans (Hablum-Minan-Nas), as well as creating a prosperous and pleasing country of Allah (Baldaton Thayyibatun wa Rabbun Ghafur). They are determined to build the people to fear Allah, knowledge, and noble character, as well as achieve happiness in this world and the hereafter. Currently, Al Washliyah has 25 branches spread across various regions in Indonesia (Tati Rohayati, 2017).

2.2. Politics of Al-Jam'iyatul Washliyah

Since its inception, the Al Washliyah organization has been independent and not involved in any political party. This organization focuses on the fields of education, da'wah, and social activities, without any political affiliation. This is also what distinguishes it from other organizations involved in politics, where every organizational decision is directed at political interests.

However, Al-Washliyah does not prohibit its members from pursuing careers in politics, which shows that the organization does not completely ignore political issues, as politics is also part of da'wah efforts. Since the reform era, political dynamics have changed drastically, including the development of democracy, autonomy, and decentralization. Certain political parties and organizations are required to contribute in certain aspects, including seizing power in the region. The discussion at this point will focus on analyzing the role of Al-Washliyah from religious and political movements, as well as the movements and strategies carried out by Al Washliyah in the process.

As a religious organization, Al Washliyah has a brilliant history in spreading Islam in the Land of Batak, North Sumatra. This success was marked by the establishment of thousands of educational institutions, orphanages, and financial institutions, all owned by this organization in North Sumatra. However, as a modern organization, Al-Washliyah cannot avoid various aspects of Islamic life. Involvement with politics is considered important to ensure the financial stability of the organization and the continuity of its existence. Strong attachments between religious and political organizations can occur when there is a threat that can weaken the organization, such as fierce competition or oppression by unjust governments. This condition makes Al-Washliyah have a dual role in da'wah, education, social, economic, and political life. Since its founding, the organization has been indirectly involved in politics,

and to some extent has even been active in practical politics through its ties with current political parties.

Since its inception, Al-Washliyah has had a close relationship with the Masyumi political party during the reign of Ir. Sukarno. Sheikh Abdurrahman Syihab, who at that time served as the chairman of Al Washliyah, was also Masyumi's commissioner for the North Sumatra and Aceh regions. Sheikh Abdurrahman Syihab became a role model for other Al Washliyah activists who were later active in parliamentary politics at the central and regional levels. Islamic political sentiment grew stronger at the eighth congress of Al Washliyah in 1952, when Al Washliyah proposed the application of sharia law (Islamic marriage law). This proposal aims to provide legal certainty for Muslims in Indonesia in fostering families in accordance with sharia. In addition, the congress also responded to and pressured the issue of general elections, urged that elections be held immediately, and fought for Al Washliyah members to be able to sit in parliament.

The Masyumi Party was finally banned by Ir. Sukarno in 1960 because of his attitude that was contrary to the government. Internal divisions within the Islamic community, which consist of traditional (NU) and modern (Muhammadiyah) groups, hindered the efforts of Islamic groups to function as a solid political force during the Old Order era (Yusyi, 2021). Although Masyumi was formed through the collaboration of several Islamic groups in Indonesia, the unity of the party was destroyed after NU withdrew from Masyumi in 1952. One of the causes was the dominance of the modernists in the party and the position of the minister of religion in the Wilopo government (Nakamura, 1980).

This split caused disappointment among Muslims and Islamic parties. In the 1955 election, the Islamic parties won only 43% of the vote, with Masyumi getting 20% and the NU and other Islamic parties getting 18.4% (Boland, 1971). After Masyumi's ban, the Al-Washliyah organization became more focused on social activism and moved away from practical politics, taking a cultural movement approach by prioritizing the development of da'wah and education as social charities.

Furthermore, after being marginalized from national politics and economic life at the end of the Sukarno regime, Muslims had high hopes for the next regime. The New Order under Suharto's leadership did provide an opportunity for Muslims to reunite in political views. However, there are indications that some of the regime's advisers are showing ambivalence towards Islamic political organization and civilian politics as a whole. Muslim activism was suppressed, and the government exercised strict control over Islamic politics by supporting the Islamic spirituality movement. The regime's strategy saw organized religion as the basis of public morality, a shield against Western liberalism, and an antidote to communism. With this view, the New Order regime not only depoliticized religion, but also expanded its influence to various levels of society. During Suharto's New Order period (1966-1998), the regime's bizarre tactics suppressed Muslim politics while encouraging Muslim piety by giving more space to the Muslim community (Hidayat, 2008).

2.3. *Al-Jam'iyatul Washliyah Education*

The importance of the role of education in Islam, coupled with the backwardness of education in Indonesia during the colonial period, encouraged the Al-Washliyah organization to make changes in the education sector. Their main goal is to improve and improve the level of education of the people in the area. With a great responsibility in providing education, Al Washliyah as an Islamic organization cannot allow this problem to drag on. Instead, they immediately take the steps that need to be prioritized in this area. In this context, an Al-Washliyah scholar, Prof. Nukman Sulaiman, stated: "Due to the breadth of Al Washliyah's

objectives, they determine which areas should be prioritized. Of course, people cannot do politics without knowledge, nor can they improve the dignity of their lives without knowledge. Therefore, Al-Washliyah prioritizes its activities in the field of educational development." (Sulaiman, 2003).

In line with this statement, the Al-Washliyah organization is trying its best to establish educational institutions, such as madrassas and schools. The principles of this organization in establishing its institution are: "The basis and purpose of all educational institutions of the Al-Qaeda Washliyah is to foster students who have strong faith, obey religious commands, have high spirits, and have the potential to become leaders for the ummah on the path blessed by Allah SWT.". The purpose of Al-Washliyah education is: "To form people who believe and are pious, have noble character, are knowledgeable, intelligent, and persistent in fighting for the happiness of this world and the hereafter, and are determined to develop the religion of Islam."

The vision and mission of Al-Washliyah in advancing education is that this organization must continue to strive to improve the level of education in the community, considering that education is part of the mandate of the establishment of Al-Washliyah. In the AD/ART (Articles of Association/Bylaws) of Al Washliyah, in article 4, paragraph D, it is stated that one of the organization's activities in the field of education is: "Establishing university houses and improving lessons and education." This statement shows Al-Washliyah's commitment to developing education. The attitude of this organization to prioritize education is a must, because Al-Washliyah comes from a scientific study institution, namely the Debating Club, which was founded by a group of students.

Al-Washliyah's attention to the field of education is greater than other fields, because according to Prof. Nukman Sulaiman, to realize the message of the establishment of Al Washliyah is to establish a madrasah or public school. He argued that Al-Washliyah students need to understand the purpose of the establishment of this organization, especially for the generation that will continue the struggle of Al Washliyah's khittah. It is undeniable that the Al-Washliyah organization makes a great contribution to education, especially in educating the nation's children. This statement is evident through the establishment of this organization and the intelligent role of students at Maktab Islamiyah Tapanuli. Thus, they are able to bring change to Muslims in Indonesia in general, and in North Sumatra in particular. For the record, Al Washliyah is one of the three largest organizations in Indonesia that fights for the renewal of Islamic education (Steenbrink, 1988). Therefore, Al-Washliyah has an important role in developing and improving the quality of education in Indonesia (Steenbrink, 1986).

Based on AD/ART Al-Washliyah, it is stated that in order to achieve the goal of developing Islamic teachings and fostering a society that is faithful, obedient, intelligent, reliable, prosperous, and achieves the pleasure of Allah SWT, it is necessary to build educational institutions at all levels. This is in accordance with the *wijhah* of Al-Washliyah, which states that with education, Islam can be upright, and education is a mandatory requirement for both men and women.

In an effort to advance education, the Al-Washliyah organization formed a board that managed education in 1934. The council was originally called *Majlis Tarbiyah*, which was later renamed the Education and Culture Council (MPPK) in 1955. The task of the MPPK is to regulate the continuity and completeness of education; teaching in accordance with article 4, part d of the AD/ART mentioned earlier. The duties of the MPPK, as decided by the Executive Board of Al-Washliyah on January 25, 1979 (PB Al Washliyah, 1979), are as follows:

- a) Regulating the completeness of education and teaching administration at each level of education.
- b) Establish madrasahs, schools, and colleges.
- c) To provide teaching staff and scholars.
- d) Provide scholarships.

The stages of the Al Washliyah education system are divided into four parts (PB Al-Washliyah, 1979), in accordance with the management arrangements of Al-Washliyah:

- a) Preschool education, such as Kindergarten (TK), where the Al Washliyah organization officially opened its first kindergarten in Pematang Siantar in August 1983.
- b) Elementary schools, such as Al Washliyah Elementary School/Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Al-Washliyah and Al-Washliyah Junior High School/Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al-Washliyah.
- c) High schools, such as Al Washliyah Senior High School,
- d) Vocational Intermediary/Madrasah Aliyah Al-Washliyah, and al-Qismul Aliy Al Washliyah/Muallimin Al Washliyah.
- e) Higher education, such as universities, institutes, colleges, and polytechnics.

To foster scholars, the Al-Washliyah organization has prepared two madrasahs aimed at shaping the character of future scholars, namely Madrasah Al-Qismul Aliy and Madrasah Muallimin Al

Washliyah. Thus, since its inception, Al-Washliyah has developed and implemented two types of education: general education and religious education. These two types of education are not fundamentally different, as they both aim to inculcate competitive religious and scientific teachings in accordance with the main goals of Al Washliyah education that have been mentioned. According to the national statement of MPPK PB Al-Washliyah in 2009.

3. Conclusion

Islamic theological thought in Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah developed in line with social and political changes in Indonesia. This organization has a crucial role in Islamic education and da'wah, with a focus on forming a generation that is not only faithful, but also insightful and ready to face the challenges of modern times. The organization's moderate and inclusive approach to addressing social issues has been the foundation for strengthening religious identity and maintaining harmony in Indonesia's diverse society.

Through the total number of educational institutions, Al Washliyah has reached 700 madrasahs and schools, including 12 higher education institutions. In addition, the general report of the leadership of Al-Washliyah North Sumatra in X Mesyuarah in July 2003 stated that MPPK Al-Washliyah North Sumatra has 148 public schools and 461 madrasahs, bringing the total to 609 schools. These types of schools include 9 kindergartens, 96 primary schools, 39 junior high schools, 5 high schools, and 9 vocational high schools. For Al-Washliyah religious schools, there are 3 Islamic Kindergartens, 283 Madrasah Ibtidaiyah and Tsanawiyah, 112 Madrasah Aliyah, 58 Madrasah Al Qismul Aliy, and 5 Madrasah Aliyah Muallimin. All of these levels of education are realized by Al-Washliyah leaders in every province in Indonesia (PW PW Al-Jam'iyatul Washliyah, 2003).

Various educational and social programs, Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah continues to contribute to fostering the ummah and encouraging national development, especially in creating a moral, knowledgeable, and prosperous society.

The author's suggestion is that there is a lot more knowledge that is more comprehensive, therefore hopefully this research will be a motivation, especially for readers and writers. Sorry if there is a mistake in writing this article, the author's great hope is that this research is useful for students in the field of theology and modern Islamic Sufism studies.

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