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AL-WASHLIYAH AND THE PRODUCTION OF ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE IN CONTEMPORARY INDONESIA

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Abstract: This article examines the position of Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah within the traditionalist–modernist spectrum of Islamic movements in Indonesia, focusing on its relationship to traditionalist and modernist orientations, its intellectual continuity with classical Muslim scholarship, and the epistemological framework underlying its production of Islamic knowledge. This study employs historical library research and qualitative content analysis, drawing on primary and secondary sources, including Al-Washliyah fatwas, organizational documents, and scholarly works produced by Al-Washliyah *ʿulamāʾ*. The findings indicate that Al-Washliyah cannot be adequately characterized as exclusively traditionalist or modernist. Rather, its intellectual tradition combines the preservation of *kitab kuning*, classical scholarly authority, and Arabic-Malay textual traditions with the use of Indonesian and Latin script in modern intellectual and institutional contexts. The analysis further demonstrates Al-Washliyah's substantial intellectual continuity with Shāfiʿī jurisprudence and the theological tradition of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah. Epistemologically, Al-Washliyah's fatwa production and scholarly discourse display a predominantly *bayānī* orientation, characterized by the use of revelation, prophetic traditions, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and authoritative scholarly opinions. The study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of Islamic intellectual formation in Indonesia beyond a binary traditionalist–modernist framework.

Keywords: Islamic intellectual history; Islamic epistemology; Islamic organizations; religious sciences

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Introduction

EXISTING SCHOLARSHIP frequently categorizes Islamic organizations in Indonesia within a traditionalist–modernist dichotomy Islamic organizations in Indonesia within a dichotomous framework—between traditionalist and modernist orientations—Al-Washliyah's position within this framework has received relatively limited and fragmented scholarly attention. Some scholars have positioned it as part of the traditionalist Islamic current,[1] while others have argued that it is closer to the modernist Islamic movement.[2] These divergent classifications suggest that the position of Al-Washliyah warrants further examination. Al-Washliyah was officially established at the Maktab Islamiyah Tapanuli building[3] in Medan on November 30, 1930,[4] by students of the Maktab Islamiyah Tapanuli and Al-

[1] Anthony Reid, *The Blood of the People: Revolution and the End of Traditional Rule in Northern Sumatra* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2014); Deliar Noer, "Contemporary Political Dimension of Islam," in *Islam in South-East Asia*, ed. M. B. Hooker (Leiden: Brill, 1988). According to Deliar Noer, traditionalists are a group that places great emphasis on religious aspects and ritual practices. This group generally follows the Shafi'ī school of thought, views *taqlīd* as something that must be upheld, and tends to reject the practice of ijtihad. In their religious expression, traditionalists also accept several practices that contain syncretic elements. In contrast, modernist groups place greater emphasis on the purification of *tawhīd* and tend to criticize various ritual practices that have developed among traditionalists. They prioritize change, rationality, and renewal, while remaining open to modern ways of thinking, institutional development, technological progress, and the values of modernity.

[2] William R. Liddle, "Ethnicity and Political Organization: Three East Sumatran Cases," in *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*, ed. Claire Holt (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing., 1972), 126–178, https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501743900-008.

[3] Hasan Asari and Muaz Tanjung, "History of Maktab Al-Islamiyah Tapanuli," *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage* 8, no. 2 (2019): 297–334, https://doi.org/10.31291/hn.v8i2.559; Muaz Tanjung, *Maktab Islamiyah Tapanuli 1918-1942: Menelusuri Sejarah Pendidikan Islam Awal Abad ke-20 di Medan* (Medan: IAIN Press, 2012); Muaz Tanjung and Umar Muhammad Noor, "Ulama, Madrasah, and Religious Sciences During Colonial Period: The History of Maktab Islamiyah Tapanuli (1918–1942)," *Nahrasiyah: Journal of Aceh and Malay Archipelago Heritage* 2, no. 1 (2024), https://doi.org/10.47766/nahrasiyah.v2i1.3488.

[4] Pengoeroes Besar Al Djamijatoel Washlijah, "Keringkasan Riwajat Hasil dan Oesaha Pekerdjaan Al Djamijatoel Washlijah Selama 5 Tahoen Moelai Tanggal 30 November 1930–30-11-1935," *Medan Islam*, 1936.

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Hasaniyah Madrasah.[5] They were Ismail Banda, M. Arsjad Th. Lubis, Abdurrahman Sjihab, Yusuf Ahmad Lubis, and Adnan Nur Lubis.[6] These founders studied under two prominent East Sumatran scholars: Shaykh Hasan Ma'sum and Shaykh Muhammad Yunus.[7] Al-Washliyah is an Islamic organization that adheres to the Ash'ariyah and Shāfi'ī schools.[8] Its activities encompass education, *da'wah*, social welfare, economic development, and cadre formation.[9] Since its establishment, Al-Washliyah has expanded its institutional activities across Indonesia.

[5] Abdurrahman Sjihab, "Memperingati Al Djamijatul Washlijah 21 Tahun," in *21 Tahun Al Dj. Washlijah* (Medan: Pustaka Al Washlijah, 1951), 1–20; Asrul, Mohammad Ajmal, and Harun Alrasyid, "Mandailing Ulama in the Early 20th Century: The Meaning and Typology," *Nahrasiyah: Journal of Aceh and Malay Archipelago Heritage* 1, no. 1 (2023): 1–17, https://doi.org/10.47766/nahrasiyah.v1i1.1860; Mhd. Syahnan and Azmi Ahmad, "East Sumatra and South Tapanuli Ulama on Religious Sciences at the Turn of the 20th Century," *Nahrasiyah: Journal of Aceh and Malay Archipelago Heritage* 1, no. 1 (2023): 18–38, https://doi.org/10.47766/nahrasiyah.v1i1.1859.

[6] Ja'far, *Jejak Sang Bintang: Sketsa Biografis Syekh Hasan Ma'sum H. Ismail Banda, H. Abdurrahman Sjihab H.M. Arsjad Th. Lubis & H. Yusuf Ahmad Lubis*, ed. Ismed Batubara (Medan: Centre for Al Washliyah Studies (Pusat Kajian Al Washliyah), 2022).

[7] Ja'far Ja'far, "Tarekat dan Gerakan Sosial Keagamaan Shaykh Hasan Maksum," *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam* 5, no. 2 (December 7, 2015): 269–293, https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2015.5.2.269-293; Maisyaroh and Muhammad Iqbal, "Malay Ulama in Deli Land: The Life, Manuscripts, and Intellectual Networks of Shaykh Hasan Ma'sum (d. 1936)," *Nahrasiyah: Journal of Aceh and Malay Archipelago Heritage* 1, no. 1 (2023): 39–68, https://doi.org/10.47766/nahrasiyah.v1i1.2038; Radinal Mukhtar Harahap, Aidilfithrah Aidilfithrah, and Ihsan Sa'dudin, "Ulama and Authority in the Deli Kingdom: A Brief History of Shaykh Hasan Ma'sum," *Journal of Indonesian Ulama* 1, no. 1 (2023): 51–62, https://doi.org/10.30821/jiu.v1i1.2; Maisyaroh, Fouad Larhzizer, and Zulpina, "Ulama and Academic Ethics: Sheikh Hasan Ma'sum Thoughts on Teacher Ethics," *Journal of Indonesian Ulama* 1, no. 2 (2023), https://journal.cas.or.id/index.php/jiu/article/view/498; Sakti Ritonga, "Ulama, Social Action, and Power Domination: The Role of Yusuf Ahmad Lubis in Socio-Religious Movements," *Journal of Indonesian Ulama* 1, no. 1 (2023): 63–79, https://doi.org/10.30821/jiu.v1i1.4.

[8] Pengurus Besar Al Djamijatul Washlijah, *Tafsir Anggaran Dasar Al Djamijatul Washlijah*, ed. Nukman Sulaiman (Medan: Pengurus Besar Al Djamijatul Washlijah, 1950).

[9] Ja'far, *Citra Al Washliyah: Histori, Moderasi dan Jihad Untuk NKRI* (Medan: Centre for Al Washliyah Studies (Pusat Kajian Al Washliyah), 2022).

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As an organization that has developed through educational institutions, da'wah activities, social welfare initiatives, as well as the production of fatwas and intellectual works, Al-Washliyah demonstrates a more complex dynamic in terms of its scholarly identity, the transmission of classical Islamic traditions, and Islamic epistemology.[10] This study seeks to reposition Al-Washliyah not merely as an object of classification but as an intellectual actor that actively negotiates between the *kitab kuning* tradition, the legacy of classical Muslim scholars, and contemporary systems of knowledge production. Accordingly, this study contributes to a reassessment of the intellectual landscape of Indonesian Islam through a historical and epistemological analysis of Al-Washliyah's scholarly practices.

This study examines three main aspects: Al-Washliyah's position on the traditionalist–modernist spectrum, its connection to the thought of classical *ʿulamāʾ*, and the epistemological model used in the production of Islamic knowledge. The analysis demonstrates the limitations of classifying Al-Washliyah exclusively as either traditionalist or modernist, as the organization exhibits a hybrid character that integrates the *kitab kuning* tradition with the modernization of language and writing systems. Al-Washliyah maintains a strong continuity with the tradition of classical scholars, particularly the Shāfi'ī school and the theology of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah, as reflected in its educational curriculum, the works of its scholars, and its fatwa rulings. From an epistemological

[10] See: Ja'far Ja'far, "Ulama, Al Washliyah, and Knowledge in Modern Indonesia (1930–1980)," *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman* 46, no. 2 (2022): 235–256, https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v46i2.984; Ja'far and Umar Muhammad Noor, "Religious Knowledge in Contemporary Indonesia: The Contributions of Al Washliyah Madrasahs and Scholars to the Development of Hadith Studies," *Journal of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Societies* 8, no. 2 (2024): 191–219, https://doi.org/10.30821/jcims.v8i2.21718; Mhd. Syahnan, Asrul, and Ja'far, "The Intellectual Network of Mandailing and Haramayn Muslim Scholars in the Mid-19th and Early 20th Centuries," *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam* 9, no. 2 (2019): 257–281. https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2019.9.2.257-281; Ja'far, Umar Muhammad Noor, Asrul, and Harun Al Rasyid, "Anti-Ahmadiyya Rulings in East Sumatra: An Epistemological Review of Religious Opinion in Pre-Independence Indonesia," *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam* 14, no. 2 (2024): 53–93, https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2024.14.2.53-93.

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perspective, The findings suggest that Al-Washliyah's production of Islamic knowledge is predominantly informed by the *bayānī* epistemological model —that is, it relies on religious texts, the authority of scholars, and the principles of *uṣûl al-fiqh*—while the *burhānī* and *'irfānī* elements are present only to a limited extent as complementary components. Thus, Al-Washliyah can be understood as a representation of an integrative Indonesian Islamic tradition that upholds classical authority while adapting to the modern context without abandoning its epistemological foundation.

The study employs historical library research combined with qualitative content analysis.[11] The primary corpus consists of Al-Washliyah Fatwa Council decisions, organizational statutes and guidelines, deliberative records, and selected works produced by Al-Washliyah scholars. These materials were selected according to three criteria: institutional authority (documents issued by the Fatwa Council or the central leadership of Al-Washliyah), relevance to the three analytical domains described below, and availability in published or archived form. The fatwas are drawn mainly from the compilation Keputusan-Keputusan Dewan Fatwa Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah 1933–2020 and the 1968 zakat deliberations, with four fatwas (on communism, the Ahmadiyya, Qur'an 5:51, and women as heads of state) examined in detail because they represent different areas of religious discourse. The organizational documents comprise the Articles of Association and the Fatwa Guidelines, and the scholarly works range from those of the founding generation in the 1930s to those of contemporary ʿulamāʾ. Overall, the corpus covers the period from 1930 to 2026.. Secondary sources include scholarly studies of Al-Washliyah, Indonesian Islamic organizations, traditionalism, modernism, and Islamic epistemology. The analysis proceeded in three stages: source criticism, thematic coding, and interpretive synthesis. First, primary sources were examined with attention to provenance, chronology,

[11] Klaus H. Krippendorff, *Content Analysis* (California: Sage Publication, 1980); Mestika Zed, *Metode Penelitian Kepustakaan* (Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2018); Kuntowijoyo, *Pengantar Ilmu Sejarah* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2013).

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authorship, and institutional context. Second, relevant passages were coded according to three analytical domains: textual authorities, modes of legal reasoning, and forms of scholarly authority. Third, the coded material was interpreted through al-Jābirī's distinction between *bayānī*, *burhānī*, and *ʿirfānī* epistemic systems.

This study seeks to answer the following questions: how should Al-Washliyah be positioned within the spectrum of traditionalist and modernist Islamic movements in Indonesia? How do Al-Washliyah *ʿulamāʾ* relate their religious thoughts and intellectual traditions to the works of classical Islamic scholars? What epistemological model underlies the production of Islamic knowledge in Al-Washliyah, as reflected in its fatwas and scholarly works? This study argues that Al-Washliyah cannot be adequately classified as either traditionalist or modernist, as suggested by the differing classifications proposed by Deliar Noer, Anthony Reid, and William Liddle, cannot be adequately characterized as a traditionalist organization or a modernist organization. Following Bruinessen's framework on traditional Islam, Al-Washliyah and its *ʿulamāʾ* have used both Arabic language and script, as well as Indonesian and Latin script, in all their publications. Al-Washliyah has incorporated elements associated with both traditionalist and modernist Islamic intellectual traditions. On the one hand, supporting Zamakhsyari Dhofier's interpretation of traditional Islam on the meaning of traditional Islam, Al-Washliyah has been very attached to the thoughts of classical *ʿulamāʾ*, especially the *ʿulamāʾ* of the Ash'ariyah and the Shāfi'ī school. Lastly, based on Muhammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī's classification of Islamic epistemology,[12] this study finds that Al-Washliyah mainly reflects the *bayānī* epistemological model rather than *burhānī* and *'irfānī* models. This epistemology is reflected in Al-Washliyah's emphasis

[12] Nirwan Syafrin, "New Approach in Religious Studies with Special Reference to Muhammad Abid Al-Jabiri," *Tsaqafah* 10, no. 2 (2014): 223–244, https://doi.org/10.21111/tsaqafah.v10i2.187; Seyyed Mohsen Miri, "Muhammad 'Abid Al-Jabiri and Arabic Reason: An Analytical Study," *Al-Mustafa* 1, no. 2 (2012): 37–60. In the context of Islamic epistemology, Muhammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī has introduced three epistemic systems of Islamic knowledge: *bayānī* (narratives), '*irfānī* (mystical), and *burhānī* (demonstrative).

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on revelation, Prophetic tradition, rational interpretation, and the view of authoritative *'ulamā'* as sources of Islamic knowledge. Through this approach, Al-Washliyah has contributed to the transmission and development of Islamic knowledge in Indonesia.

Several studies have examined the epistemological orientations and fatwa practices of other Indonesian Islamic organizations, for example, studies on the fatwas of the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI),[13] Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and Persatuan Islam (Persis).[14] Previous studies have examined Al-Washliyah primarily through educational history,[15] religious orientation,[16] and

[13] Syafiq Hasyim, "MUI's Discourse and Its Relevance for Shariatisation: Case Studies of Fatwa," in *The Shariatisation of Indonesia: The Politics of the Council of Indonesian Ulama (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI)* (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 271–341; Moch. Nur Ichwan, "'Ulamā', State and Politics: Majelis Ulama Indonesia After Suharto," *Islamic Law and Society* 12, no. 1 (2005): 45–72, https://doi.org/10.1163/1568519053123867; Mun'im Sirry, "Fatwas and Their Controversy: The Case of the Council of Indonesian Ulama (MUI)," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 44, no. 1 (2013): 100–117, https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022463412000641.

[14] Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Lakum Dīnukum Wa-Liya Dīnī: The Muhammadiyah's Stance Towards Interfaith Relations," *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 22, no. 3 (2011): 329–342, https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2011.586512; Ismail Jalili et al., "Nahdlatul Ulama's Ijtihad Method in Fatwa: Analysis of the Content of Legal Decisions and Their Validity in Indonesia," *Justicia Islamica: Jurnal Kajian Hukum dan Sosial* 20, no. 2 (2023): 341–360, https://doi.org/10.21154/justicia.v20i2.5971; Arif Maftuhin, "Islamic Law, Disability, and Women in Indonesia: The Cases of Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah," *Journal of Disability & Religion* 8, no. 1 (2024): 13–27, https://doi.org/10.1080/23312521.2023.2255860; R. Abbas, "Ijtihad Dewan Hisbah Persatuan Islam dalam Hukum Islam," *Al-Daulah: Jurnal Hukum dan Perundangan Islam* 6, no. 1 (2016): 214–236, https://doi.org/10.15642/ad.2016.6.1.214-236.

[15] Ja'far, "Khazanah Kitab Kuning di Madrasah Al Jam'iyat Al Washliyah," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam Al-Thariqah* 2, no. 2 (2017): 124–134, https://doi.org/10.25299/althariqah.2017.vol2(2).1041; Dja'far Siddik and Rosnita, "Gerakan Pendidikan Al-Washliyah di Sumatera Utara," *Ulumuna: Journal of Islamic Studies* 18, no. 1 (2014): 59–80, https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v18i1.143; Hasan Asari, "'Ulamā' Training and Modernizing Al Washliyah Madrasah," *Journal of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Societies* 3, no. 2 (2019): 149–175, https://doi.org/10.30821/jcims.v3i2.6323.

[16] Ja'far et al., *Filantropi Al Washliyah: Sejarah, Fatwa dan Revitalisasi* (Medan: Centre for Al Washliyah Studies (Pusat Kajian Al Washliyah), 2023); Mhd. Syahnan, Muhammad Iqbal, and Ja'far, "Al Washliyah Fatwa Council's Response to Contemporary Islamic Issues," *Journal of Indonesian Ulama* 1, no. 1 (2023): 1–19,

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individual fatwas.[17] However, existing scholarship has not systematically examined how Al-Washliyah's textual traditions, scholarly authority, and fatwa practices collectively shape its production of Islamic knowledge.

Al-Washliyah: Traditionalist or Modernist?

Fazlur Rahman identified four broad orientations within modern Muslim thought: Islamic traditionalism, Islamic modernism, Wahhabism, and puritan-revivalism.[18] Meanwhile, Seyyed Hossein Nasr categorized Muslim thought and movements into modernism, traditionalism, fundamentalism, and Mahdism.[19] In the context of Islamic movements in Indonesia, Deliar Noer is among the scholars most responsible for constructing a dichotomous classification of Indonesian Islamic organizations—between traditionalists, represented by Nahdlatul Ulama, and

https://doi.org/10.30821/jiu.v1i1.1; Imam Yazid, "Current Development on Al Washliyah Ulama: The Problem of Ulama Tradition and Its Revitalization," *Journal of Indonesian Ulama* 1, no. 1 (2023): 20–35, https://doi.org/10.30821/jiu.v1i1.5; Irwansyah, "Ulama and Islamic Philanthropy in Contemporary Indonesia: Al Washliyah Fatwas on Zakat and Sadaqah," *Journal of Indonesian Ulama* 1, no. 1 (2023): 36–50, https://doi.org/10.30821/jiu.v1i1.6.

[17] Mhd. Syahnan and Ja'far Ja'far, "Examining Religious Moderation of the Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah Fatwa Council," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 15, no. 1 (2021): 21–46, https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2021.15.1.21-46; Ja'far, "Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah dan Pelestarian Akidah Ahl Sunnah Wa Al-Jama'ah di Indonesia," *ISLAMICA: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 14, no. 1 (2019): 54–81, https://doi.org/10.15642/islamica.2019.14.1.54-81; Ja'far, "Respon Dewan Fatwa Al-Jam'iyatul Washliyah terhadap Isu Akidah dan Syariah di Era Global," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 10, no. 1 (2016): 97–118, https://doi.org/10.24090/mnh.v10i1.919; Muhammad Riduan Harahap and Mazni binti Muhammad, "The Ulama and Ijtihad Issue in Contemporary Indonesia: Perspectives of Al Washliyah Madrasah Teachers on Ulama and Their Ijtihad," *Nahrasiyah: Journal of Aceh and Malay Archipelago Heritage* 2, no. 2 (2024), https://doi.org/10.47766/nahrasiyah.v2i2.3493; M. Jamil and Ja'far, "Pemimpin Perempuan dan Non-Muslim Perspektif Ulama Tiga Serangkai," *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam* 8, no. 1 (2018): 144–167, https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2018.8.1.31-54.

[18] Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979); Fazlur Rahman, *Neo-Modernisme Islam: Metode dan Alternatif* (Bandung: Mizan, 1989).

[19] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Traditional Islam in Modern World* (Kuala Lumpur: Foundation for Traditional Studies, 1987), 75–79.

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modernists, represented by Muhammadiyah and Persis.[20] According to Deliar Noer, traditionalists are a group that places greater emphasis on religious matters and rituals, adheres primarily to the Shāfi'ī school of law, considers *taqlīd* obligatory, rejects ijtihad, and incorporates syncretic practices into their religious expressions. Meanwhile, modernists emphasize issues of *tawhīd*, reject the traditionalists' ritual practices, advocate change, rationality, and reform, and embrace modern ways of thinking, institutions, technology, and modernity.[21] However, this categorization has been considered inadequate, and many other scholars have proposed alternative typologies for understanding Islamic movements in Indonesia.[22]

On the other hand, according to Martin van Bruinessen's observation, traditionalist groups have written their works in Arabic, as the use of this language enhances the prestige and authority of their writings. Some of these scholars have also produced works in local languages, yet they continued to employ the Arabic script. According to Bruinessen, modernist and reformist scholars wrote their works in Indonesian using the Latin alphabet, and tended to access the writings of Arab scholars through Indonesian-language translations.[23] Within the context of traditional Islam, Dhofier further argues that traditional Islam is closely associated with the intellectual traditions of jurists (*fuqahā'*), Prophetic tradition scholars (*muhaddithūn*), Qur'anic exegetes (*mufassirūn*), theologians (*mutakallimūn*), and Sufis from the seventh

[20] Azyumardi Azra, "Liberalisasi Pemikiran NU," in Mujamil Qamar, *NU "Liberal" dari Tradisionalisme Ahlussunah ke Universalisme Islam* (Bandung: Mizan, 2002), 18–19.

[21] Deliar Noer, *Gerakan Modern Islam di Indonesia 1900-1942* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1982), 108, 253-254, 320.

[22] Media Zainul Bahri, *Perjumpaan Islam Ideologis & Islam Kultural* (Jakarta: IRCiSoD, 2022), 19-31.

[23] Martin van Bruinessen, "Kitab Kuning: Books in Arabic Script Used in the Pesantren Milieu," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 146, no. 2–3 (1990): 226–269, https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90003218; Martin van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Indonesia: Survei Historis, Geografis, dan Sosiologis* (Bandung: Mizan, 1992); Martin van Bruinessen, Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat: Tradisi-Tradisi Islam di Indonesia (Bandung: Mizan, 1995).

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to the thirteenth centuries, although this does not imply that traditionalist scholars are intellectually confined by the ideas of scholars from those periods. Dhofier firmly emphasizes that *pesantren* institutions serve as important centers for preserving and developing traditional Islamic thought.[24]

In the context of the Islamic movement in Indonesia, some researchers have often labelled Nahdlatul Ulama as a traditional Islamic organization and Muhammadiyah as a modernist organization.[25] These two organizations are frequently regarded as prominent representatives of Indonesian Islam. However, Indonesia's Islamic organizational landscape extends beyond these two organizations. Al-Washliyah is one of the Islamic organizations founded during the Dutch colonial era. Al-Washliyah, as described by Deliar Noer[26] and Anthony Reid,[27] is considered a traditional Islamic organization like NU; however, Liddle has called it a modernist Islamic organization like Muhammadiyah.[28] In this case, this article examines the position of Al-Washliyah between traditional and modernist Islamic groups.

Since its establishment in 1930, Al-Washliyah has used the Indonesian language and Latin script in its publications. Books, magazines, and organizational letters published before the era of Indonesian independence used Indonesian language and Latin script. On the other hand, Al-Washliyah, from 1930 until the independence era, had established and managed madrasas based on the yellow book, in the sense of Arabic books, and also Malay

[24] Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Pandangan Hidup Kyai* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1982).

[25] Hilman Latief and Haedar Nashir, "Local Dynamics and Global Engagements of the Islamic Modernist Movement in Contemporary Indonesia: The Case of Muhammadiyah (2000-2020)," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 39, no. 2 (2020): 290–309, https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103420910514; Greg Fealy and Greg Barton, *Nahdlatul Ulama, Traditional Islam and Modernity in Indonesia* (Victoria: Monash Asia Institute, 1998).

[26] Noer, "Contemporary Political Dimension of Islam," 186.

[27] Reid, *The Blood of the People*, 76.

[28] Liddle, "Ethnicity and Political Organization: Three East Sumatran Cases," 126–178.

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books with Arabic script.[29] From the independence until the reform era, the Al-Washliyah madrasas in various provinces in Indonesia, especially in North Sumatra Province, continued to teach the yellow books (*kitab kuning*), although the level of books used changed.[30] Meanwhile, the Al-Washliyah Fatwa Council, as the organization's Sharia institution only present at the central level, The Fatwa Council's decisions examined in this study were published primarily in Indonesian using Latin script in Indonesian using the Latin script rather than in Arabic.[31] *Keputusan-keputusan Dewan Fatwa Al-Washliyah (1933-2020)* are written and published in Indonesian and Latin script. This book is a compilation of several Al-Washliyah Fatwa Council decisions since the institution first issued fatwas. Likewise, Al-Washliyah scholars who deliberated on zakat in 1968 published their decision in Indonesian using Latin script, published their decision in Indonesian with Latin script. The publication of fatwas in Indonesian, such as the compilation of fatwas by *Tuan* Arsjad,[32] was considered important by these *ʿulamāʾ* so that the content of the fatwas could be read and understood directly by the Indonesian Muslim community, which was not accustomed to reading Arabic-language books. Indonesian was proclaimed the language of national unity in the 1928 Youth Pledge and subsequently established as the official state language under the 1945 Constitution. Access to Arabic-language Islamic texts was historically more concentrated among students and scholars with formal religious education.

Al-Washliyah *ʿulamāʾ* have also contributed to the Islamic intellectual tradition by writing books. Bruinessen stated that traditionalist *ʿulamāʾ* wrote books in Arabic or in vernacular

[29] Pengurus Besar Al Djamijatul Washlijah, "Lembaga Peladjaran Al Djamijatul Washlijah," in *Peringatan Al Djamijatul Washlijah ¼ Abad* (Medan: Pengurus Besar Al Djamijatul Washlijah, 1956).

[30] Dja'far Siddik, Rosnita, and Ja'far, *Edukasi Umat: Institusi Pendidikan Al Washliyah di Era Reformasi* (Medan: Centre for Al Washliyah Studies (Pusat Kajian Al Washliyah), 2023).

[31] Dewan Fatwa Al Washliyah, *Laporan Hasil-Hasil Sidang Dewan Fatwa Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah* (Medan: UMN Al Washliyah, 1998); Ja'far, *Dewan Fatwa Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah*, ed. Imam Yazid and Irwansyah (Medan: Perdana Publishing and Dewan Fatwa Al Washliyah, 2020).

[32] M. Arsjad Th. Lubis, *Fatwa: Beberapa Masalah* (Medan: Islamiyah, 1982).

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languages while in Arabic script. Conversely, in Bruinessen's characterization, modernist *ʿulamāʾ* wrote books in Indonesian with Latin script and tended to rely on Indonesian translations rather than reading Arabic works directly. On the other hand, Al-Washliyah *ʿulamāʾ* have written works in Arabic, in Malay with Arabic script, and in Indonesian with Latin script. Among the scholars examined, Hasan Ma'sum (d. 1936) appears to have written exclusively in Arabic and Malay using Arabic script, the advisor and teacher of the founders of Al-Washliyah, wrote books in Arabic and in Malay with Arabic script and never wrote books with Latin script.[33] Three of his students, Mahmud Isma'il Lubis,[34] M. Arsjad Th. Lubis or Tuan Arsjad (d. 1972)[35] and Yusuf Ahmad Lubis (d. 1980)[36] have written in Malay with Arabic script and Indonesian with Latin script. Tuan Arsjad has also written books in Arabic, including *al-Qawā'id al-Fiqhiyah*,[37] *al-'Aqā'id al-Īmāniyah*,[38] *al-Usūl min 'Ilm al-Uṣūl*,[39] *Ishthilāhāt al-Muhaddithīn*,[40] and *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*.[41] The sources examined for this study do not identify works by

[33] Hasan Ma'sum, *Targīb al-Mustaqīm* (Medan Deli, n.d.); Hasan Ma'sum, *Nayl al-Mārib Ilā Ajwibah al-Mafātī li al-Arba'ah al-Madhāhib* (Medan Deli, n.d.); Hasan Ma'sum, *Sārim al-Mīz 'an al-Talāgib bi Kalām al-Farānī* (Medan Deli, n.d.); Hasan Ma'sum, *Tazkīr al-Murīdīn Sulūk Tarīqah al-Muhtadīn* (Medan Deli: Perca Timur, 1353); Hasan Ma'sum, *Tanqīh al-Tabūn 'an Masā'il al-Maymūn* (Medan Deli, n.d.); Hasan Ma'sum, *Durār al-Bayān Syarh Hidāyah al-Ikhwān* (Medan Deli, 1348); Hasan Ma'sum, *Fath al-Wadūd* (Medan Deli, n.d.); Hasan Ma'sum, *As'āf al-Murīdīn* (Medan Deli, n.d.); Hasan Ma'sum, *al-Maqālah al-Nāfi'ah fī mā Yata'allaq bi Qabliyah al-Jumu'ah* (Medan Deli, n.d.).

[34] Mahmoed Ismail Loebis and Mangaradja Ihoetan, *Openbaar-Debat Oetoesan Ahmadijah Qadian Contra Tengkoe Fachroeddin* (Medan, 1934); Mahmoed Ismail Loebis, *Kitāb Yāsīn wa al-Fawā'id* (Medan: Pertja Timoer, n.d.).

[35] M. Arsjad Th. Lubis, *Pelajaran Iman* (Medan: Sumber Ilmu Jaya, n.d.).

[36] Yusuf Ahmad Lubis, *Shifā' al-Sudūr fi Ziyārah al-Qubūr* (Medan: Sinar Deli, 1931).

[37] M. Arsjad Th. Lubis, *Al-Qawā'id al-Fiqhiyyah* (Medan, 1959).

[38] M. Arsjad Th. Lubis, *Al-'Aqā'id al-Īmāniyah* (Medan: Sumber Ilmu Jaya, n.d.).

[39] M. Arsjad Th. Lubis, *Al-Usūl min 'Ilm al-Usūl* (Medan: Sumber Ilmu Jaya, n.d.).

[40] M. Arsjad Th. Lubis, *Istilāhāt al-Muhaddithīn* (Medan: Islamyah, 1965).

[41] M. Arsjad Th. Lubis, *Usūl al-Fiqh* (Medan, n.d.).

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Abdurrahman Sjihab[42] or Ismail Banda[43] written in Arabic or Malay-Arabic script. The works identified in this study were written in Indonesian using Latin script. Baharuddin Ali (d. 1986), an Al-Washliyah *ʿulamāʾ* alumnus of al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt, once wrote a book in Malay with Arabic script entitled *Kitāb Wasiyat al-Mustafa SAW.*[44] Nukman Sulaiman referred to them as the founding fathers of Al-Washliyah.[45]

The next generation, namely *ʿulamāʾ* who were not the founders of Al-Washliyah, such as M. Husein Abd. Karim (d. 1985),[46] Abdul Majid Siradj (d. 1975),[47] Nukman Sulaiman (d. 1996), and Hamdan Abbas (d. 2002)[48] Members of the next generation, including M. Husein Abd. Karim, Abdul Majid Siradj, Nukman Sulaiman, and Hamdan Abbas, also produced works in Arabic, Malay using Arabic script, and Indonesian using Latin script. Al-Washliyah *ʿulamāʾ* in the Reform era, such as M. Ridwan Ibrahim Lubis (d. 2024)[49] and Ramli Abdul Wahid (d. 2020)[50] have written books in Indonesian with Latin script. Additionally, Ramli, having studied in Libya, has authored a work in Arabic. Apart from them, M. Rusydi (d. 2023), a student of Tuan Arsjad and once served as the Head of the Madrasah Aliyah Muallimin UNIVA (1982-1988), has written a book in Arabic titled *Tashīl al-Tullāb*.[51] Contemporary Al-

[42] Abdurrahman Sjihab, *Penoentoen Hadji* (Medan: Boekhandel Islamijah, 1940).

[43] Ismail Banda, *Pengakoean Mesir dan Politik Arab League* (Yogyakarta: Himpoenan Mahasiswa Islam, 1947).

[44] Baharuddin Ali, *Kitāb Wasiyat al-Mustafa Sallallāhu ʿalaihi wa Sallam Bagi Imam ʿAli Karramallahu Wajhah* (Cairo: al-Mathbaʿah al-Marbawiyah, n.d.).

[45] Sulaiman Sulaiman, *Al Washliyah* (Medan: Pustaka Azizi, 1968).

[46] M. Husein Abd. Karim, *Tafsir Aayaatil Ahkaam: Bahagian Orang-Orang yang Berhak Menerima Zakat* (Medan: UNIVA Medan, 1979); M. Husein Abd. Karim, *al-Tasrif al-Wadih* (Medan: Sumber Ilmu Jaya, n.d.); M. Husein Abd. Karim, *Kifāyat al-Mubtadi fi 'Ilm al-Kalām* (Medan: Sumber Ilmu Jaya, n.d.).

[47] Abdul Majid Siradj, *Ikhtishar 'Ilm al-Tawhid* (Medan: UNIVA Medan, 1978).

[48] Hamdan Abbas and Abdullah Syah, *Fiqh al-'Ibādat* (Medan: MUI Sumatera Utara, n.d.).

[49] Ja'far, *Biografi Ketua Umum Pengurus Besar Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah 1930-2015* (Medan: Perdana Publishing, 2015).

[50] Ramli Abdul Wahid, *Anak Desa Tak Bertuan Jadi Profesor: Kisah Nyata Kehidupan 60 Tahun Prof. Dr. Drs. H. Ramli Abdul Wahid, LC., M.A.*, ed. Ja'far and Irwansyah (Medan: CV. Manhaji, 2014).

[51] M. Rusydi, *Tashīl al-Thullāb* (Medan, 1995).

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Washliyah *ʿulamāʾ* and intellectuals mostly write books and articles in Indonesian and English with Latin script. Few contemporary Al-Washliyah scholars appear to publish works in Arabic or Malay using Arabic script or Malay with Arabic script, except for Muslim Nasution (d. 2012), who once wrote a work in Arabic.[52] Muslim was an alumnus of Umm al-Qura University, Mecca, and was familiar with Arabic language and script. An *ʿulamāʾ* known as an expert in the *kitab kuning* tradition within this organization was Lahmuddin Nasution, who had never studied in the Middle East but deeply mastered the *kitab kuning* tradition within the Sunni school.[53] He has also authored books according to the Shāfiʻī and Ashʻarī traditions in Indonesian with Latin script.[54] The current trend among Al-Washliyah *ʿulamāʾ* and intellectuals is to write in Indonesian with Latin script. The sources examined suggest a substantial decline in the production of Malay-language works using Arabic script among contemporary Al-Washliyah scholars as the founders of Al-Washliyah in the past. Nonetheless, Al-Washliyah *ʿulamāʾ*, especially those Al-Washliyah Fatwa Council members, can read and have taught the yellow book to a few students.

As Bruinessen categorizes, Al-Washliyah *ʿulamāʾ*, who have written in Arabic or Malay with Arabic script, can be classified as traditionalist *ʿulamāʾ*. However, they have also written books in Indonesian with Arabic script, even though they rarely write in Arabic in the contemporary era. They no longer write their works in Malay with Latin script. Ramli Abdul Wahid, Chairman of the Fatwa Council of Al-Washliyah during the period of 2015-2020, stated two points: (1) Qualified religious scholars have become increasingly difficult to find within Al-Washliyah in the Al-

[52] Muslim Nasution, "Al-Muqawwimāt Al Fikriyyah li al-Ilmanīyah," *Al-Jamiah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 40, no. 1 (2002): 175–209. https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2002.11.175-209.

[53] Azhari Akmal Tarigan, Watni Marpaung, and Ziaul Haq, *Menjaga Tradisi Mengawal Modernitas: Apresiasi Terhadap Pemikiran dan Kiprah Lahmuddin Nasution* (Medan: Citapustaka Media, 2009).

[54] Lahmuddin Nasution, *Fiqh 1* (Jakarta: Logos, n.d.); Abu 'Abdillah Muhammad Yusuf al-Sanusi, *Syarh Umm al-Barahin: Bahasan Tentang Sifat Allah Yang Duapuluh*, trans. Lahmuddin Nasution (Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada, 1999); Lahmuddin Nasution, *Umat Bertanya Ulama Menjawab*, ed. Husnel Anwar Matondang and Watni Marpaung (Bandung: Citapustaka Media, 2007).

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Washliyah organization; and (2) the tradition of Arabic-Malay script (*Jawi/Pegon*) is no longer preserved and developed in the Al-Washliyah organization so that it has caused disconnection of civilization and organizational culture, even though past Al-Washliyah *ʿulamāʾ* have used Malay with Arabic script in their academic activities.[55] Although teachers within Al-Washliyah still teach Malay books in Arabic script, especially in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Al-Washliyah and Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah Awwaliyah (MDA or MDTA Al-Washliyah).[56] Thus, Al-Washliyah scholars have exhibited varying combinations of traditionalist and modernist characteristics, although some combined traditionalist-modernist characteristics.

In contrast to earlier studies that simply categorize Al-Washliyah as either a traditionalist organization (Noer and Reid) or modernist one (Liddle), this study shows that Al-Washliyah's intellectual identity has undergone a process of negotiation between the *kitab kuning* tradition and linguistic modernization and changes in writing systems. The *kitab kuning* tradition continues to be maintained in religious education, while the organization's intellectual production has gradually shifted from Arabic and Jawi (Arabic-Malay) script toward the Indonesian language and Latin Script.

Al-Washliyah and the Thoughts of Classical *ʿUlamāʾ*

Zamakhsyari Dhofier stated that traditional Islamic groups, unlike modernist Islamic groups, remain firmly bound to the thoughts of *ʿulamāʾ* from the 7th to the 13th centuries. According to Dhofier, for some research, the thinking of traditional Islamic groups has stagnated, although the thinking of Classical *ʿulamāʾ* has only partially influenced the thought of this group. The reason is that traditional Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia have continued to use classical Islamic books, especially those written by the *ʿulamāʾ* of the Shāfiʿī school, which consist of elementary,

[55] Interview with Ramli Abdul Wahid, in Medan, 12 December 2018.

[56] Dja'far Siddik, Rosnita, and Ja'far, *Sekolah Arab: Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Diniyah Al Washliyah di Tanah Melayu* (Medan: Centre for Al Washliyah Studies (Pusat Kajian Al Washliyah), 2023).

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intermediate, and advanced-level books.[57] Bruinessen also stated that traditional Islamic educational institutions such as *pesantren*, *surau*, or *dayah* have referred to writings of classical *ʿulamāʾ* from the Shāfiʻī and Ashʻarī schools, and regarded the Sufi writings of Imām al-Ghazālī as important references in religious education for their students.[58] Steenbrink also stated that traditional Islamic educational institutions such as *pesantren* have organized study sessions focused on religious texts. Firstly, students studied books in Arabic. Secondly, students studied religious texts written in Arabic, particularly in Qur'anic exegesis, Prophetic tradition, Islamic jurisprudence, and Islamic theology.[59] Thus, traditional Islam has preserved, maintained, and developed the literature of Shāfiʻī and Ashʻarī schools and Imām al-Gazālī's Sufism. For this reason, the thinking of traditional groups was considered to have stagnated, at least influenced by the thought of the Classical *ʿulamāʾ*.

As an organization, Al-Washliyah continues to maintain elements of traditional Islam. First, Al-Washliyah established Shāfiʻī and Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʻah schools as the basis of the organization.[60] Both schools have been established as the organization's basis to strengthen the unity of people who share the same madhhab and affirm the organization's stance on Islamic law (*fiqh*).[61] In 1997, Al-Washliyah amended the relevant provision of its Articles of Association to give preference to the Shāfiʿī school while accommodating legal opinions from other Sunni schools, where Al-Washliyah prioritized the Shāfiʻī school and began accommodating the legal opinions of other Sunni schools of *fiqh*. This amendment lasted until 2015. Al-Washliyah's fatwas from 1930 to 1997, as well as from 2015 to the present (2026), were based exclusively on the

[57] Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Pandangan Hidup Kyai*, 1, 50.

[58] Bruinessen, "Kitab Kuning: Books in Arabic Script Used in the Pesantren Milieu."

[59] Karel A. Steenbrink, *Pesantren, Madrasah dan Sekolah: Pendidikan Islam dalam Kurun Modern* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1986), 12-14.

[60] Udin Sjamsuddin, *Chutbah Pengurus Besar Memperingati Ulang Tahun Al Djamijatul Washlijah Seperempat Abad 30 November 1930-30 November 1955* (Medan: Pengurus Besar Al Djamijatul Washlijah, 1955), 2.

[61] M. Arsjad Th. Lubis, "Pendirian Al Djamijatul Washlijah," in *Peringatan Al Djamijatul Washlijah ¼ Abad* (Medan: Pengurus Besar Al Djamijatul Washlijah, 1956).

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thought of Shāfi'ī *ʿulamāʾ*.[62] Meanwhile, Fatwas issued between 1997 and 2015 began to accommodate legal opinions from Sunni scholars outside the Shāfiʿī school the legal opinions of Sunni *ʿulamāʾ* outside the Shāfī'iyah school.[63] For example, Al-Washliyah's fatwa on women as heads of state was influenced by the thoughts of Shāfi'ī *ʿulamāʾ* such as al-Juwainī, al-Ījī, al-Jurjānī, Sa'ad al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, and al-Khatib al-Sharbīnī. In the cited fatwa, Al-Washliyah concluded that a woman should not serve as head of state."[64] The foregoing discussion suggests that Al Washliyah adopted the Shāfiʿī school as its sole reference in matters of Islamic jurisprudence from 1930 to 1997. However, a shift in the organization's madhhab orientation occurred at the 1997 Congress, when Al Washliyah resolved that it would no longer adhere exclusively to the Shāfiʿī school but would instead accommodate other Sunni schools of jurisprudence.

Second, Al-Washliyah's madrasas have long established the yellow books authored by Shāfi'ī and Ash'arī *ʿulamāʾ* as primary references. Before the 1970s, *Matan al-Gāyah wa al-Taqrīb* by Abī Shujā' was selected as a reference for students at the Madrasah

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[62] Pengurus Besar Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah, *Keputusan Muktamar XVIII Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah dan Organisasi Bagian* (Jakarta: Pengurus Besar Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah, 1997). Article 2 of the 1997 Constitution of Al Washliyah, concerning matters of creed (*ʿaqīdah*), stipulates that "Al-Washliyah adheres to Islam in matters of faith and follows the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah school in matters of creed and Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), with a preference for the Shāfiʿī school."

[63] Article 2 of the 2015 Constitution of Al Washliyah, concerning its foundational principles and creed, states that "Al-Washliyah is founded upon Islam, adheres to the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah creed, and follows the Shāfiʿī school in matters of fiqh." Article 5 of the 2026 Constitution of Al Washliyah, concerning fiqh, states that "Al Washliyah follows the Shāfiʿī school in matters of fiqh." Pengurus Besar Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah, *Anggaran Dasar dan Anggaran Rumah Tangga Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah* (Jakarta: Pengurus Besar Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah, 2026); Pengurus Besar Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah, *Anggaran Dasar & Anggaran Rumah Tangga dan Keputusan Muktamar Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah Periode 2015-2020* (Jakarta: Pengurus Besar Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah, 2015). See also: Irwansyah, "Dinamika Fatwa Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah (Analisis Fatwa 1997-2020)" (PhD diss., Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, 2021), http://repository.uinsu.ac.id/12160/.

[64] Dewan Fatwa Al Washliyah, *Keputusan-Keputusan Dewan Fatwa Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah 1933-2020*, ed. Ja'far, Imam Yazid, and Irwansyah (Medan: Perdana Publishing and Dewan Fatwa Al Washliyah, 2020), 63.

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Thanawiyah level, *Tuhfah al-Tullāb* by Zakariyā' al-Anshārī was set as a reference at the Madrasah Thanawiyah level, and *al-Mahalli* by Jalāl al-Suyūtī was used at the Madrasah al-Qismul 'Aly level. For Islamic theology studies, *'Aqā'id al-Dīniyah* by Abd. al-Rahman Saggaf and *Kifāyat al-'Awām* by al-Fudalī were chosen as references for students at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level, *Husūn al-Hamīdiyyah* by Sayyid Husein Affandī for the Madrasah Thanawiyah level. For Islamic spirituality (sufism) studies, *Risālah al-Qushairiyyah* was selected as a reference for students at the Madrasah al-Qismul 'Aly level. For exegesis studies, the reference books included *Tafsīr Jalālain* by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Mahallī, *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl* by Nāsir al-Dīn al-Baidāwī, *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl fī man al-Tanzīl* by 'Ala' al-Dīn 'Alī Muhammad al-Khāzin, *Madārik al-Tanzīl wa Haqā'iq al-Ta'wīl* by Abī al-Barakāt al-Nasafī, and *Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbās* by Abu Tāhir al-Fairūz Abādī.[65]

Third, Al-Washliyah *'ulamā'* have also produced books on Islamic jurisprudence and theology according to the Shāfi'ī and Ash'arī schools. For example, *Ilmu Fiqih* by M. Arsjad Th. Lubis (*Tuan* Arsjad) was a Shāfi'ī jurisprudence book in the Indonesian language. The references for writing this book were the works of Shāfi'ī *'ulamā'*. Tuan Arsjad has referred to the books of Imam al-Shāfi'ī, Imam 'Abd al-Karīm al-Rāfi'ī, Imam Abū Zakariyā' Muhy al-Dīn al-Nawawī, al-Qādī Abū al-Hasan al-Māwardī, Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn al-Mahallī, Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī, Shaykh Ibn Hajar al-Haitamī, Shaykh Muhammad Ramlī, Shaykh Zakariyā' al-Ansārī, and Shaykh Muhammad al-Khatīb al-Sharbīnī.[66] This evidence demonstrates the influence of Shāfi'ī scholarship on Tuan Arsjad, who subsequently became a leading teacher of the next generation of Al-Washliyah scholars.

The decisions reached during Al-Washliyah scholars' 1968 deliberations on zakat provide further evidence of the influence of Shāfi'ī jurisprudence that Shāfi'ī *'ulamā'* have influenced Al-

[65] Pengurus Besar Al Djamijatul Washlijah, "Lembaga Peladjaran Al Djamijatul Washlijah," 6-9.

[66] M. Arsjad Th. Lubis, *Ilmu Fiqih (Ibadat, Mu'amalat, Munakahat dan Djinajat)* (Medan: Islamyah, 1965).

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Washliyah. This forum was attended by Al-Washliyah *'ulamā'*, who followed the Shāfi'ī school strictly, especially *Tuan* Arsjad. Their decision was a response to the Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia on Zakat and Baitul Mal. Al-Washliyah took a critical stance against the regulation. The decision taken by the Al-Washliyah *'ulamā'* referred to the works of Shāfi'ī *'ulamā'* such as *al-Ahkām al-Sultāniyyah* by Imam al-Māwardī, *al-Majmū' Syarh al-Muhazzab* by Imam al-Nawawī, *Hāshiyyah al-Mahallī 'ala al-Minhāj* by Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn al-Mahallī, *al-Tuhfah al-Muhtāj bi Syarh al-Minhāj* by Shaykh Ibn Hajar al-Haitamī, *Hāshiah al-Tuhfah* by Shaykh Ibn Qāsim, *Hāshiah al-Tuhfah* by Shaykh al-Syarwānī, *Hāshiah al-Qalyūbī 'ala al-Mahallī* by Shaykh al-Qalyūbī, *Mughnī al-Muhtāj* by Shaykh al-Khathīb al-Syarbinī, and *Hāshiyah al-Syaikh Ibrāhīm al-Baijūrī* by Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Baijūrī. No other *'ulamā'* outside the Shāfi'ī school of thought were found in their decision.[67]

During their deliberations on zakat, Al-Washliyah scholars formulated several key legal rulings grounded in the Shāfi'i school of law. The decision distinguishes zakat assets into *zahir* wealth (including livestock, grains, fruits, and mined gold and silver) and *batin* wealth (including monetary assets, trade goods, pre-Islamic agricultural assets, and zakat *al-fitr*). It stipulates that the Imam or appointed amil is not permitted to demand zakat on batin wealth; it is considered unlawful to do so coercively, and Muslims are not obligated to submit such zakat to him. The 1968 Al Washliyah ulama deliberation held that zakat al-fiṭr should be paid in the form of a locally consumed staple food and considered monetary payment invalid. The ruling further states that it is unlawful and invalid for the Imam or amil to sell zakat property received from payers, except in cases of necessity under strict conditions. It is, however, permissible to transfer zakat from one region to another when required. The category of *fī sabīlillāh* is defined as volunteers engaged in warfare without receiving a state salary, while zakat wealth is not considered part of the Baitul Mal, which serves general public welfare, but is instead allocated to the eight categories

[67] Pengurus Besar Al Djamijatul Washlijah, *Keputusan Musjawarat Ulama Al Washlijah Mengenai Zakat* (Medan: Pustaka Univa, 1969), 6-13.

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designated in the Qur'an. The amil is defined in Islamic jurisprudence as a person appointed by the Imam to collect and distribute zakat to its rightful recipients. In addition, the Al-Washliyah *ʿulamāʾ* issued three appeals: they urged all members of Al-Washliyah across Indonesia to align their practice with these fatwa rulings, encouraged Muslims adhering to the Shāfi'ī school throughout Indonesia to follow them as guidance, and requested that the Indonesian government, particularly the Ministry of Religious Affairs, respect Al-Washliyah's position in the implementation of state regulations on zakat. Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Jābirī distinguishes three epistemological systems in Islamic intellectual history: bayānī, ʿirfānī, and burhānī.

Islamic Epistemology in the Knowledge Production of Al-Washliyah *ʿUlamāʾ*

Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī has divided the epistemic system of Islamic knowledge into three types, namely *bayānī* (narratives), *'irfānī* (mystical), and *burhānī* (demonstrative).[68] Mulyadhi Kartanegara has also added another epistemic system, *tajrībī* (experimental method).[69] Amin Abdullah has explained that the mindset of *fiqh* and *kalām* has supported *bayānī* epistemology. The rules of *uṣūl fiqh* have been highly favored.[70] In the context of the work of Nusantara *ʿulamāʾ*, according to Azyumardi Azra, the yellow books that have been written by *ʿulamāʾ*, both *ʿulamāʾ* in the Middle East and the archipelago, have had a distinctive epistemological system. According to him, there were four main sources of the yellow books' discourse: revelation as the first source, prophetic traditions as the second source, reason as the third source, and authoritative *ʿulamāʾ* thoughts as the fourth source.[71] Examining the application of Islamic epistemology within the Al-

[68] Syafrin, "New Approach in Religious Studies with Special Reference to Muhammad Abid Al-Jabiri," 229.

[69] Mulyadhi Kartanegara, *Essentials of Islamic Epistemology: Philosophical Inquiry Into the Foundation of Knowledge* (Bandar Seri Begawan: UBD Press, 2014), 61-73.

[70] Amin Abdullah, *Islamic Studies di Perguruan Tinggi: Pendekatan Integratif-Interkonektif* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2012).

[71] Azyumardi Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan Modernisasi di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2012).

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Washliyah organization is a subject of inquiry. Al-Washliyah's epistemological orientation can be examined through the decisions of its Fatwa Council, the deliberations of its scholars, and their intellectual works of the Al-Washliyah Fatwa Council as the institution authorized to address religious matters, as well as the results of deliberations among Al-Washliyah *'ulamā'* and the intellectual works produced by its *'ulamā'*.

Two analytical questions arise. First, this study examines whether Al-Washliyah's epistemological orientation reflects the three categories proposed by Muhammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī, namely *bayānī* (textual reasoning based on revelation and authoritative texts), *'irfānī* (intuitive and mystical knowledge), and *burhānī* (demonstrative and rational-scientific reasoning). These categories are relevant because they provide an analytical framework for identifying how Islamic knowledge is constructed and legitimized within Al-Washliyah's intellectual tradition. Second, the study investigates the primary sources of Islamic discourse employed in the organization's fatwas, deliberations, and scholarly works.

The analysis suggests that Al-Washliyah's intellectual production exhibits a predominantly *bayānī* orientation. In Al-Washliyah Articles of Association, for example, it is mentioned that the organization adheres to Shāfi'ī school and the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah school. The organizational documents examined do not explicitly identify a distinct Sufi affiliation. The organizational documents and fatwas examined suggest a predominantly bayānī epistemological orientation. A study of the fatwas and works of Al-Washliyah *'ulamā'* has concluded that Al-Washliyah has established the Qur'an, Prophetic tradition, reason, and authoritative *'ulamā'* thoughts as the primary sources in various religious discourses. These four sources function as important foundations for the organization's production of religious knowledge. The fatwas of the Al-Washliyah Fatwa Council from the establishment of the Fatwa Council through 1945 have only contained legal conclusions according to the Shāfi'ī school on an issue as seen in the fatwas on marriage ordinances (*ordonansi perkawinan*), lotteries, plays about the Prophet (*mentonelkan Nabi*), safar bathing (*mandi safar*), usury (*riba*), orphan's fitrah (*fitrah untuk*

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anak yatim), and jihad against the Dutch colonizers.[72] On the other hand, fatwas on *tarīqah* (sufi orders), *kahin*, the names of angels, and getting close to jinn have contained arguments. Nevertheless, the arguments primarily draw on the interpretations of authoritative Sunni scholars such as Ibn Hajar al-Haitamī, Shaykh Ahmad al-Naqshabandī, and Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī.[73] On the other hand, Fatwas issued by the Fatwa Council from 1988 through the 2026 Muktamar increasingly included explicit legal arguments. The primary sources used by the Fatwa Council as arguments in religious discourse were the Qur'an, Prophetic tradition, reason, and authoritative *'ulamā'* thoughts. Al-Washliyah and its *'ulamā'* have recognized the thinking of the Shāfi'ī school *'ulamā'*.

The application of Islamic epistemology within Al-Washliyah can be observed in the *Pedoman Fatwa Dewan Fatwa Al-Washliyah* (Fatwa Guidelines of the Al-Washliyah Fatwa Council). In the Guidelines, the fatwa of the Al-Washliyah Fatwa Council must be based on one of the sources and principles of Islamic law, namely the Qur'an, sunnah, consensus (*ijma'*), *qiyās*, *al-istihsān, al-maslahah al-mursalah, al-'urf, al-istishāb*, *shar'u man qablanā*, and the madhhab of the companions. The *istinbāt* method that must be used is the methods employed by Shāfi'ī jurists. Fatwas issued by the Al-Washliyah Fatwa Council must also refer to the leading books of the Shāfi'ī school, especially the works of Imam al-Nawawī, and Imam al-Rāfi'ī. Fatwas issued by the Al-Washliyah Fatwa Council from 1998 to 2015 have also referred to the thoughts of Sunni *'ulamā'* outside the Shāfi'ī school.[74]

The following section demonstrates that the Al-Washliyah Fatwa Council prioritizes the *bayānī* epistemological model in its fatwa formulation process, as evidenced by its fatwas. It is described as prioritizing the *bayānī* epistemological model because this institution emphasizes the principles of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and the modes of thought found in *fiqh* and kalam. Four selected fatwas illustrate the predominance of bayānī reasoning in the Fatwa Council's legal deliberations that the Al-Washliyah Fatwa Council

[72] Dewan Fatwa Al Washliyah, *Keputusan-Keputusan Dewan Fatwa,* 6-13.
[73] Dewan Fatwa Al Washliyah, *Keputusan-Keputusan Dewan Fatwa*, 14-17.
[74] Dewan Fatwa Al Washliyah, *Keputusan-Keputusan Dewan Fatwa*, 5-7.

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applies the *bayānī* epistemological model. In the case of the fatwa on communism, the Al-Washliyah Fatwa Council ruled that communism is an ideology opposed to all religions; the fatwa classifies adherents who knowingly and consciously embrace communism as *kāfir*, while those who follow it without knowledge and awareness are deemed misguided. The legal consequences established also follow *fiqh* patterns, such as a prohibition on holding leadership positions, invalidation of one's role as a marriage guardian, forfeiture of inheritance rights, and the non-fulfillment of *fard kifāyah* obligations toward such individuals. The construction of these fatwas is based not only on socio-political considerations but primarily on an Islamic theological framework. The Fatwa Council argues that communism is an ideology that does not rely on religion; in fact, it views religion as something that hinders human consciousness. The Fatwa Council interprets Marx's critique of religion as evidence that communism is incompatible with Islamic theological commitments. The *bayānī* epistemological model becomes increasingly evident when the fatwa is constructed by referring to Qur'anic verses on *tawhīd*, faith, human *fitrah*, and the obligation to worship Allah, accompanied by Prophetic traditions on the pillars of faith and the concept of fitrah. These references indicate that the Fatwa Council employs a textual-normative pattern of argumentation characteristic of the *fiqh* and *kalām* traditions, namely, evaluating an ideology based on its conformity with the principles of Islamic creed.

In the case of the fatwa regarding the Ahmadiyya movement, the *bayānī* model is also evident in the way this institution constructs legal arguments by using religious texts—particularly the Qur'an, the Prophetic tradition, and the views of scholars—as the primary basis for evaluating a religious doctrine. The Fatwa Council does not begin its analysis from social or political aspects, but rather from theological issues—specifically, the claims attributed to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, which the Fatwa Council considers inconsistent with the fundamental principles of Islam. The Fatwa Council highlights Mirza Gulam Ahmad's claims to be a prophet and messenger, to receive revelation, and to communicate with the Angel Gabriel. These claims are viewed as contradicting the concept of the finality of prophethood in Islam. The epistemological

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construction of *bayānī* is further strengthened because this fatwa refers directly to textual evidence. The Fatwa Council cited Qur'ān 33:40 regarding Prophet Muhammad as *khatam al-nabiyyīn* (the Seal of the Prophets), Qur'an 6:93 and 6:153, as well as Prophetic traditions affirming that there is no prophet after Prophet Muhammad. These textual references served as the normative basis for the Fatwa Council's theological assessment to demonstrate that claims of prophethood after the Prophet Muhammad contradict the principles of Islamic creed. In addition to the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition, the fatwa also strengthens its argument by citing the opinions of scholars and the fatwa of the Indonesian Ulama Council, which declares Ahmadiyya to be a doctrine outside of Islam, heretical, and misleading. Based on this reasoning, the Al Washliyah Fatwa Council classified Ahmadiyah as outside Islam and characterized its teachings as heretical and misleading.

In the case of the fatwa regarding the interpretation of Qur'an 5:51, the dominance of *bayānī* epistemology in the legal ruling process is particularly apparent. This is reflected in the way this institution approaches the issue of non-Muslim leadership by using the Qur'anic text as the primary basis, which is then reinforced by Prophetic tradition, the opinions of scholars, and the principles of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. The Fatwa Council explains that there are differing interpretations of the term *awliyā'* in Qur'an 5:51, making it necessary to issue a fatwa to provide legal guidance to Muslims. The fatwa's argumentation is built upon several Qur'anic verses that address the prohibition against appointing non-believers as guardians or leaders, such as Qur'an 3: 28, Qur'an 4: 144, and Qur'an 5:51. In addition, the fatwa also draws upon Prophetic traditions and the opinions of scholars such as al-Mawardī and Qādī 'Iyād regarding the requirements for leadership in Islam. The *uṣūl al-fiqh* principle of *qiyās awlawī* is employed to strengthen the legal conclusion.

In the case of the fatwa regarding the legal status of women holding the position of head of state, the use of *bayānī* epistemology in the legal determination process is also evident. The ruling relies on Qur'anic passages, Prophetic traditions, *ijmā' al-'ulamā'*, and the opinions of classical fiqh scholars as its principal sources of legal authority.. The Fatwa Council affirmed the need for a legal

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clarification regarding the issue of women serving as heads of state. This fatwa is based on Qur'an 4:34, a Prophetic tradition narrated by Bukhārī, an-Nasā'ī, al-Tirmizī, Ahmad, and al-Hakīm from Abu Bakrah, as well as the concept of the qualifications for a head of state according to scholars such as al-Juwainī and al-Ījī. This argument demonstrates that the Fatwa Council employs a *fiqh* and *kalām* framework by interpreting normative texts as the basis for determining the legal status of leadership. The argument is further supported by the opinions of classical scholars such as al-Juwainī, Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, and al-Sharbīnī al-Khatīb. Based on this line of reasoning, The Fatwa Council ruled that women may not serve as heads of state.

Across the four fatwas, scriptural authority is mediated through established juristic methods and classical Sunni scholarship, indicating a predominantly bayānī approach to religious knowledge production. In each case, the Fatwa Council begins with verses of the Qur'an and hadith and then reinforces them with the opinions of classical scholars, so that its legitimacy rests not on the texts alone but on their transmission and interpretation within the Sunni scholarly tradition. In this sense, bayānī in the context of Al-Washliyah refers to an orientation that treats revelation, the prophetic tradition, and the authority of the ʿulamāʾ as the primary sources of legitimate religious knowledge.Nevertheless, the findings indicate that Al-Washliyah's epistemological orientation cannot be equated with purely literalist textual interpretation. The Fatwa Guidelines of the Al-Washliyah Fatwa Council explicitly recognize *ijmāʿ*, *qiyās*, *al-istihsān*, *al-maslahah al-mursalah*, *al-'urf*, and *al-istishāb* as sources and legal principles that may be used in issuing fatwas. Furthermore, fatwas are required to employ the istinbāt method developed within the Shāfi'ī fiqh tradition and to refer to the major works of scholars of that school. Thus, authoritative texts are not always applied directly but are mediated through the tools of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and established fiqh authorities. The presence of *qiyās, istihsān, maslahah*, and other methods demonstrates that reason and reasoning play a role in the process of knowledge production, although this role remains within the Sunni epistemological framework and the Shāfi'ī fiqh tradition. Therefore, it is more accurate to describe the epistemology of Al-

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Washliyah as a text-centered Sunni epistemology mediated through established forms of fiqh reasoning, rather than as a form of textualism that is purely literal.

On the other hand, evidence regarding *'irfānī* and *burhānī* epistemology in Al-Washliyah's production of knowledge remains limited. The organizational documents examined do not explicitly indicate any specific Sufi affiliation, while fatwas regarding *tarīqah*, soothsayers, the names of angels, and efforts to draw closer to jinn primarily rely on the thought of Sunni scholars as the basis for their arguments, rather than intuitive experience or mystical knowledge. The examined materials provide limited evidence of a dominant ʿirfānī epistemological orientation. Although rational reasoning is present through established methods of uṣūl al-fiqh, the materials examined do not establish demonstrative or empirical reasoning as an independent, dominant epistemological framework. Rational legal interpretation in the fatwas, such as qiyās, istihsān, and maslahah, operates within the boundaries of revealed texts and juristic authority, whereas burhānī reasoning in the strict sense would treat demonstrative or empirical argument as an independent source of knowledge.. Thus, the study's strongest findings support the characterization of Al-Washliyah as an organization with a predominantly *bayānī* orientation, while elements of rational reasoning function as mediating mechanisms within the framework of the Sunni fiqh tradition.

Conclusion

Three findings emerge from this study. First, Al-Washliyah cannot be adequately understood through the traditionalist–modernist dichotomy: it has preserved classical Sunni scholarly authority while modernizing its modes of textual production, education, and organizational communication. Second, its intellectual formation shows substantial continuity with classical Sunni scholarship, as seen in the persistence of kitab kuning, Shāfiʿī jurisprudence, and Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah. Third, its production of Islamic knowledge is predominantly bayānī in orientation: scriptural authority is interpreted through established methods of uṣūl al-fiqh and classical scholarship, rather than

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through textual literalism or an independent demonstrative framework.

Together, these findings show that organizational intellectual identities in Indonesian Islam are not necessarily captured by inherited typologies, and that continuity with classical scholarship can coexist with institutional, linguistic, and intellectual adaptation. Future research could compare the institutional procedures, evidentiary hierarchies, and methods of legal reasoning employed in fatwa production by Al-Washliyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Muhammadiyah.

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