

## RECONSTRUCTION MODERATE SPIRIT OF MUSLIM SCIENTISTS IN THE ERA OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION PROGRESS

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### ABSTRACT

*Religion is an aspect that cannot be separated from human life. A moderate attitude in religion is a vital element in being able to build an advanced civilization, especially in a pluralistic country like Indonesia. This research aims to explain the moderate spirit of Muslim scientists in resolving conflicts between religious communities and their urgency in building an advanced Indonesian civilization. This research methodology uses a literature review by analyzing the progress of the spirit of classical Islamic civilization (6-11 AD) in the perspective of Fazlur Rahman's double movement theory. The results of the research provide details on the meaning of the moderate spirit of the Abbasid era during the leadership of the caliphs Harun Al-Rasyid and Al Ma'mun. The progress of civilization in that era was motivated by the attitude of scientists who were open to learning from other (non-Muslim) countries or civilizations. This spirit is the key to building progressive and harmonious interactions by accepting each other regardless of ethnic, racial and religious background. Apart from that, this research also provides an overview of the concept of moderation in Islam, especially within the NISWA (Islam Washatiyyah) frame. The moderate attitude and spirit in religion as exemplified by Muslim scientists in the past is important to bring into the context of the current era. So that we can create a progressive Islamic generation with the courage to be open and pro-active in collaborating with anyone for the benefit and progress of the Indonesian nation. The success of implementing this attitude of religious moderation lies in the awareness of every religious community to work together in creating peace by building a multicultural intellectual culture.*

**Keywords :** reconstruction, religious moderation, conflict resolution

### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, multicultural issues in Indonesia are increasingly showing serious problems. Cases of human rights violations have increased quite significantly, both in the real and virtual world. In fact, conflict between religious communities is not a new problem. This is motivated by the fact that Indonesia is a pluralistic society, both in terms of religion, race, skin color, ethnicity, customs, language and culture. According to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS),

Indonesia has a variety of religions, namely Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and local religions or beliefs. This plurality of religions is an inevitability that cannot be avoided, especially in Indonesia.

The inevitability of a reality that is not single causes multicultural tension and conflict because not all individuals can accept a plural reality, especially religion. The problems of religious communities start from prejudice, stigma or negative labeling of other groups, ethnocentrism, hate speech, and what is currently massive is discrimination in the rights to freedom of religion or belief (violation of the right to freedom of religion or belief) (Halili, 2016), such as limited political, social, economic, cultural, and religious access.

In history, religious plurality has always been the main trigger in the problems of multicultural society (Soehadha, 2012). This is because religion has high sensitivity because it concerns a person's emotional aspects and is transcendental. Besides that, religious attitudes tend to be extreme, feeling superior, unwilling to be open and accepting of differences (*moral monoism*) (Bikhuparekh, 2000). In fact, it is not uncommon to hate other people who are not of the same class or religion (*karahiyyah al-ghair*) (Abdullah, 2021) make religion exclusive. In fact, religious teachings never teach that. According to Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), religion actually has universal values by teaching concern for the elements of humanity and caring for the universe (Wahid, 2007).

Using Bahtiar Effendi's term, religion always has "two faces" (*Janus face*), namely, inclusive, universal and open, but also exclusive, particular and primordial (Effendi, 2001). This universal nature of religion can be seen from the studies of the father of the sociology of religion, namely Emile Durkheim. In structural functional theory, religion actually has a social function as a forum for uniting society in a moral order based on consensus, solidarity and social bonds (Emile Durkheim, 2011). Religion plays an important role in building social order and stability in society. This is also strengthened by the thesis of Karen Armstrong, a religious historian. According to him, very little violence throughout human history was caused purely because of religion.

Meanwhile, religion as a source of conflict between religious communities occurs because of political conspiracies and economic interests. This can be seen from the problems of the bourgeoisie and proletariat during Karl Marx's time (Adang, 2013), the philosopher and sociologist of religion stated that religion is used as legitimacy to maintain the status quo or power of the bourgeois group. Therefore, Marx criticized religious groups who collaborated with the bourgeoisie with false consciousness, religion is an opium.

Using Peter L. Berger's term, religion is always present and is a "central value", the closest cause of social action. It is a basic human need and differentiates humans from other creatures. Apart from that, religion also acts as a system of ideas and value systems which serve as a guide or way of life for its adherents. The role of religion is to be a spirit and cannot be replaced by anything, including science in the current modern era (Douglas J. Goodman, 2016). In fact, in broader terms, religion is becoming an increasingly important component of public culture rather than just matters of belief and ritual (Turner, 2013). Therefore, it is important to understand religion with a moderate spirit so that religion can be a source of inspiration in creating a creative and innovative generation for the Indonesian nation.

In this case the author will reconstruct the history of the spirit of classical Islamic progressive civilization (6th-11th century AD) (Naustion, 1985). The method used is historical analysis using Fazlur Rahman's double movement theory. This theory is a double movement theory, namely the first movement is one has to understand the import or meaning of a given statement by studying the historical situation or problem to which it was the answer. In this case, it is returning to the past to look for meaning or values and attitudes in resolving the problems that occurred at that time. The second movement, namely the general has to be embodied in the present concrete socio-historical context. The values and meanings that can be drawn from the historical context of the past can be used as inspiration to answer current problems.

There are several reasons why it is important to reconstruct the moderate spirit of Muslim scientists. First, Islam is the majority religion in Indonesia, so reinterpreting history is an urgency in maintaining the sovereignty of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Second, critical reading of past facts by providing dialogue for present purposes is one way to avoid getting trapped in historical romanticism (Muqowim, 2012). Third, this moderate spirit can encourage Indonesia to realize social inclusion as stated in the current Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) program (Sekar dan Meila, 2016).

Many previous studies related to this research topic have been carried out, considering the reality of Indonesia's pluralism. There are several previous studies, including research by Ni Made Anggi Arlina Putri (2021) which explains the important role of implementing religious moderation, especially with an orientation towards maintaining Indonesia's diversity (Putri, 2021). Ni Made stated that one of the aims of implementing religious moderation is to minimize radicalism in society. Meanwhile research from I Ketut Angga Irawan (2020) explains efforts that can become the basis of values for creating a moderate society. The emphasis of this research explains the application of human values as basic behavior in creating

a moderate society. Another previous study belongs to Umma Farida (2020) which explains the role of Indonesian figures in creating a moderate culture in society. Umu Farida said that the great Indonesian figure KH. Hasyim Asy'ari also contributed to the creation of religious moderation through fatwas and thoughts conveyed. KH Hasyim Asy'ari's views regarding Islam, which is friendly, has a gentle, polite and moderate character, has succeeded in unifying the people and reducing conflict between religious communities.

Novelty in this research focuses on providing a reconstruction of the spirit of moderation implemented by Islamic figures during the glory days of Islam. Meanwhile, previous research tends to explain from well-known figures in today's adult civilization by combining discussions regarding efforts that can be made to create a moderate society in general. Furthermore, this research focuses on reconstructing the moderate spirit of Islamic figures during the Abassiyah period with the reality of today's society which is analyzed using Fazlur Rahman's Double Movement theory.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research is research with a qualitative approach combined with literature review research methods. The focus of this research is explaining the spirit and concept of moderation by Muslim scientists in the Era of Progress of Classical Islamic Civilization and trying to provide a reconstruction of the past regarding the spirit of moderation having the urgency of resolving conflicts between religious communities as they exist today. Furthermore, this research aims to see and reinterpret the moderate spirit of Muslim scientists in the era of progress of Classical Islamic civilization. Apart from that, this research also explains the concept of moderation taught by Islam. The next aim of this research is to provide a description of the urgency of having a moderate spirit in religion (religious moderation) as a resolution to conflicts between religious communities today.

On the other hand, the theoretical benefit to be achieved from this research is an accumulation of knowledge that can be used as a reference for the scientific development of Sociology of Religion, Study of Religions, Sociology, History, History of Islamic Culture, and Anthropology. Apart from that, researchers also hope that the results of this research can be developed in further research. Meanwhile, practically, it is hoped that this research can become a reference in improving the spirit and ethos of moderation for the progress of the Indonesian nation. On the other hand, this research can be used as a reference for the government in making policies to overcome socio-religious problems in society, as well as encouraging people to have a moderate spirit in religion.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Reinterpreting the Spirit of Moderation

#### 1. Moderate Spirit of Muslim Scientists

The progress of Islamic civilization in the classical era, especially during the Abbasid era, could not be separated from the influence of other civilizations, namely Greece, Persia and India. These three great civilizations made a good contribution to the development of science *al-ulum al-naqliyah* as well as *asal-ulum al-aqliyyah* (Khaldun, 1989) developed by Muslim scientists. This can be seen in the process of transferring knowledge carried out by Muslim scientists regarding the works of Greek and Indian intellectuals in the 8th century in Baghdad (Hitty, 1974) and the 9th century in Andalusia (Burnet, 1994). One example is the transliteration of Greek and Sanskrit into Arabic, such as Plato becoming *aflatun*, Hippocrates becoming *buqrat*, and Aristotle becoming *aristu*.

The attitude of Muslim scientists who are willing to learn and dialogue with other civilizations is the key to progress in the Abbasid era, especially during the reign of the caliphs Harun Al-Rashid and Al Ma'mun (Hitty, 1974). This period was the peak of the golden era of Islamic civilization (the golden ages) with the development of science, such as philosophy, medicine, physics, geography, astronomy, geometry, history, chemistry, mathematics and optics. In this case, what is important to underline is the cooperative relationship between religions represented by Hunain b. Isaac. and Thabit b. The Qurah became an important part of the process of translating books from Greek, Persian and Syriac into Arabic.

It can be concluded that the progress of a civilization will not occur if scientists do not have an open nature to learn from other (non-Muslim) countries or civilizations. This spirit is the key to building harmonious interactions and living by accepting each other. Fazlur Rahman calls this the philosophical thought of Muslim scientists (Rahman, 1982). The moderate spirit exemplified by Muslim figures and scientists needs to be brought into the context of the current era (second movement). A courageous attitude to be open to accepting ethnic, racial and religious diversity, as well as being pro-active in collaborating to build a multicultural intellectual culture, especially in the Indonesian context.

#### 2. The Concept of Moderation in Islam

In the holy book Al-Quran it is clear that Islam is a moderate religion (*washatan*). This is as stated in surah Al-Baqarah: 143, "*And so We have made you 'believers' an upright community so that you may be witnesses over humanity and that the Messenger may*

*be a witness over you. We assigned your former direction of prayer only to distinguish those who would remain faithful to the Messenger from those who would lose faith. It was certainly a difficult test except for those 'rightly' guided by Allah. And Allah would never discount your 'previous acts of' faith. Surely Allah is Ever Gracious and Most Merciful to humanity."*

Quoting the interpretation of M. Quraish Shihab, Ahmad Musthofa Al-Maraghi and Hasbi ash-Shiddieqiy, explained that the *ummatan wasathan* are those who are in the middle position so that they do not take sides to the left or right, who can lead people to be fair in all matters (Shihab, 2002), not too excessive, not outrageous and not restrictive (Al-Maraghi, t.th), a people who are balanced (moderate), so that they are not included in people who live excessively in religion (extreme) and are also not included in groups of people who are too deficient in fulfilling their religious obligations (Ash-Shiddieqy, 2000).

The content of the surah emphasizes being a middle (moderate) people and a just people. Borrowing a term from the late Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), the Indonesian people need a friendly Islam, not an angry Islam. This statement by the 4th President of the Republic of Indonesia reminds us how important it is to ground Islam in "*rahmatanlil'alam*", namely Islam that brings grace and goodness to all of nature. The universal values of Islamic teachings must be the link between every element of society (connecting the dots). In essence, religion is morals, and humans were created as caliphs to care for nature and build harmony with every human being.

The Islamic teaching "*rahmatanlilalam*" is an essential basis for religious moderation in Indonesia. This teaching is also in line with what Karen Armstrong longs for in the Welas Asih Charter, which emphasizes Muslims to live the value of compassion (love) and make it a model of compassionate living in accordance with the teachings of the Islamic religion. In a hadith, the Prophet said *takhallaqu bi-akhlaqillah*, behave with the morals of Allah. In their behavior, Muslims should be based on divine values, namely compassion and full of grace for the universe that knows no boundaries to anything or anyone.

## **B. The Urgency of Moderate Spirit in Religion**

### **1. Become a Moderate with NISWA**

Moderation is understood as a concept in religion in Indonesia. This is based on the concept of wasathiyah Islam. Values based on an understanding of Moderate Islam are directed at the Ministry of Religion in relation to Wasathiyah Islamic Values (*Indonesian: Nilai Islam Wasathiyah/NISWA*). The Ministry of Religion, through the Directorate of Teachers and

Education Personnel, explained that the NISWA concept refers to the implementation of values in Islam, including:

- a. *Tasamuh* which emphasizes the aspect of strengthening tolerance
- b. *Tawassuth* which emphasizes the aspect of taking the middle path
- c. *Tawazun* which emphasizes the aspect of maintaining balance
- d. *I'tidal* which emphasizes aspects of straight and firm attitude.
- e. *Aulawiya* twhich emphasizes priority aspects
- f. *Musawah* which relies on egalitarian aspects
- g. *Syura* persist in the deliberation aspect
- h. *Qudwatiyyah* emphasizes the pioneering aspect
- i. *Muwathanah* emphasizes the aspect of nationalism
- j. *Ishlah* emphasizes a constructive attitude
- k. *Ibtikar* which explains the existence of an innovative and creative attitude
- l. *Tathawwur* by emphasizing dynamism
- m. *Tahadlur* which makes someone have public manners

*Tasamuh* This means that everyone must have an attitude of respect for differences. This attitude of appreciation is very important to create harmony in religious diversity by accepting and celebrating diversity. To promote this value of tolerance, it is important to have an attitude of *tawassuth*, namely the ability to find a middle ground. This attitude regarding justice is confirmed in the Al-Quran (Surat al-Maidah [5]: 8) which states, "*O believers! Stand firm for Allah and bear true testimony. Do not let the hatred of a people lead you to injustice. Be just! That is closer to righteousness. And be mindful of Allah. Surely Allah is All-Aware of what you do.*"

This verse shows that God commands humans to be fair even towards people or groups who are hostile to us. Being fair means we must always have an "objective" attitude in observing something (not taking sides). In the context of the philosophy of science, objectivity is an important element in achieving wisdom. Someone who has not been able to understand and combine "universalism" and "particularism" will have difficulty acting fairly (Abdullah, 1996). People who can take a middle stance (*tawassuth*) are people who are wise and have views that see from various perspectives. If this principle becomes the basis for our lives, then we can achieve a harmonious multicultural life.

Furthermore, the value of *tawazun* shows a balanced attitude. In this context, the author understands that humans need to maintain balance in life, especially in Indonesia. This means that in religion, we do not only focus on our relationship with Allah (*hablum-minallah*), but it

is also important to pay attention to our relationships with fellow humans (*hablum-minannas*) and our relationship with the universe (*hablum-minalalam*). This is because humans are social creatures who cannot live alone. In accordance with Allah's teachings that humans were created as caliphs on this earth, whose task is to care for nature and build harmony with others.

Then, the value of *i'tidal* describes a firm and firm attitude. It is important to cultivate this attitude to prevent the possibility of "shaking" or being influenced by misleading understandings. Furthermore, the *allawiyat* value reflects the ability to set the right priorities. This priority must be decided together and not based on one's own ego interests. Stephen R. Covey stated that one of the characteristics of a superior culture is having an attitude of "putting first things first", and this is related to the value of the *aulawiyat*.

The next value that is very important to implement in everyday life is *musawah*, namely equality. Every individual is considered "equal before God" and the differences that exist are determined only by devotion (Q.S. Al Hujurat; 13). In a hadith, the Prophet once reminded us that Allah does not see a person from their physical appearance, but rather Allah looks at a person's heart and deeds. Therefore, a *musawah* attitude must be applied in viewing all humans in an egalitarian manner, so that mutual understanding is created and there is no discrimination, let alone violence.

In everyday life, there are important values that need to be applied. One of them is the value of *shura*, which emphasizes the ability to act democratically towards differences and a diversity of views. In a religious context, this attitude is very important because Islam recognizes diversity of thought as part of its history (Nasr, 2003). Therefore, whenever there is an issue involving many parties, deliberation must be held as a way to reach an agreement. A relevant example can be found in Indonesian history, where the founding fathers always used deliberation in decision making, which was also an important factor in the struggle for independence. These noble values must continue to be maintained and applied in religious life in Indonesia today.

Furthermore, there is the value of *qutwatiyyah*, namely the ability to be a pioneer, especially in creating a peaceful life. Every religious individual should be an agent of change by spreading the values of their religion, especially the value of compassion towards fellow human beings. Perennial philosophy emphasizes that all religions have universal values that can connect the dots. Religious values or spirituality are noble things and can unify every religion based on the experience of God experienced by individuals.

Furthermore, there is the value of *muwathanah* which is related to the attitude of nationalism. This value is very important as a guide to life in Indonesia. Nationalism or love



of one's country is part of faith (*hubbul wathan minal iman*). Apart from that, nationalist values can also strengthen awareness of the Pancasila ideology. If there are differences in views and understanding, the common ground that must be used as a basis is Pancasila. The values of Pancasila are 'kalimatun sawa' as the basis for unification to create religious harmony.

Furthermore, *ishlah* and *ibtikar* are values that emphasize constructivity and innovation in building harmony and advancing civilization. According to Sir Muhamad Iqbal, an author of the book *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, humans should live like waves that continue to move forward. Every religious individual must have creative and progressive thoughts and behavior to create a better life. In his book, Iqbal also mentions that humans are God's co-workers on earth to represent and continue the creation process. Basically, religious values, especially in Islam, always encourage people to do good and stay away from thoughts and attitudes that cause division (*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*).

Finally, there are *tathawwur* and *tahadlur*, which show a dynamic attitude and public civility. In the current technological era, it is important for individuals to have a dynamic attitude that can adapt to change (adaptive). As stated in the book "Let's Change" by Renald Khasali, the decline of a nation is not caused by the absence of change, but by the inability to adapt. A dynamic and adaptive attitude wherever you are is a key factor in the success of religious moderation. Apart from that, public civility is also very important for every religious individual, by upholding Indonesia's noble culture, namely maintaining ethics and morals in public life, both on social media and in the real world.

### **3. The Role of Religious Moderation for Indonesia's Progress**

The polemic about religious intolerance and radicalism in Indonesia reminds us of the importance of fostering an attitude of religious moderation with inclusive (not extreme) religion. In a broader context, the issue of inclusive religious moderation emerges as a religious issue in a global context. Religious moderation has a dual role, especially in solving problems in Indonesia. An attitude of religious moderation with the embodiment of *wasathiyah* Islamic values is essential as an effort to resolve conflicts between religious communities and re-strengthen the ideology of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

Moderation in its role means adopting the concept of tolerance in the country's local wisdom. According to Fahrudin, the role of moderation emphasizes that religious communities do not isolate themselves and do not act exclusively (Fahrudin, 2019). However, moderation focuses on an inclusive attitude, adaptive to new environments (Putri, 2021). The role of religious moderation is also a way to prevent the flow of intolerance and radicalism. According

to Ridwan, the function of religion is to offer a transcendental relationship through worship activities so as to provide a sense of comfort, purify norms and values. This moderate concept is a guide so that there is no tendency towards radicalism for people who embrace religion.

Religious moderation also emphasizes equalizing rights between religious communities and placing other people with different views, especially in the realm of religion, in an equal position. In simple terms, the concept of religious moderation prioritizes the embodiment of human values in religious relations. The application of human values then encourages the formation of outputs of religious moderation such as tolerance and tolerance. Furthermore, this tolerance process will create collaboration and joint innovation. The role of religious moderation is an old perspective that needs to be realized together in this era.

Meanwhile, referring to religious moderation from the Ministry of Religion, religious moderation is indirectly oriented towards four focuses, namely relating to national commitment, building an attitude of tolerance, implementing non-violence principles, and accommodation to local culture (Ministry of Religion, 2021). The concept of national commitment is related to the foundations of the Indonesian state, namely Pancasila and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika. This perspective is oriented towards loyalty to the nation and state. Because in understanding national commitment is the process of accepting national principles, especially those contained in the 1945 Constitution and the regulations under it.

An attitude of tolerance is the focus and main goal of religious moderation. Where, the concept of tolerance provides a space within a person to be able to accept all differences that arise from the existence of intersectional social interactions. It does not stop at accepting, but the highest level of tolerance is not interfering with other people's rights in their beliefs and expression of their beliefs. The real existence of forms of religious social tolerance can be seen from everyday life in the social environment of society. This existence can be seen from the process of society's acceptance of people of different religions, willingness to dialogue and work together, the establishment of places of worship, and experiences with followers of other religions.

Non-violence is an important perspective in society's social life. This anti-violence is also interpreted as anti-radicalism. Where, radicalism becomes an ideology that emphasizes the use of extreme methods both verbally, physically and mentally to achieve one's desires. As per Mahatma Gandhi's concept of ahimsa, the value of non-violence is the highest point of the role of religious moderation to create peaceful relations within the framework of diversity.

Accommodation in local culture is also a serious role in implementing religious moderation. Indonesia is a plural country with 1331 ethnic groups and sub-ethnic groups which

have their own local culture. This local culture is often implemented in religious practices in society. This then increases understanding of the importance of implementing religious moderation in everyday life. Willingness to accept other people's religious practices and behavior, whether intra-religious or inter-religious.

The success of implementing religious moderation lies in the awareness of each individual to work together in creating peace and progress in Indonesia. Basically, religious moderation cannot be carried out by just one religion, but all religions must do it (Al-Makin, 2022), especially religions in Indonesia. With the moderate spirit exemplified by the Muslim scientists above, the author is optimistic that every religious person can understand diversity and use religion as an inspiration so that the spirit of religion will live for the common good.

## CONCLUSION

The progress of Classical Islamic civilization cannot be separated from the moderate attitude of Muslim scientists. Openness to learning from other countries or civilizations regardless of ethnic, racial and religious background is the key to building productive interactions. Cultural encounters create a creative tension which then creates an acculturation process as a meeting point to build a civilizational progress. Therefore, the spirit exemplified by Muslim figures and scientists is important to bring into the context of the current era.

We can exemplify that a moderate attitude in religion (neither extreme right nor left) is highly emphasized in Islam, especially as the religion of *rahmatanlil'amin*. The concept of religious moderation within the framework of NISWA (*Washatiyah* Islamic Values) is important to implement to build an advanced civilization, especially in a pluralistic country like Indonesia. With this spirit, society can have an open perspective, respect, empathy (feeling for the people), and prioritize the common good in religious, social, cultural, scientific and political aspects. In this way, a golden generation of Indonesia will be created, namely a generation of peacemakers, who are intellectual, creative, innovative and have an insight into Pancasila in order to achieve the progress that the Indonesian people aspire to.

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