



POLITICAL THOUGHT OF ABDUL WAHAB CHASBULLAH: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT AND THE CONCEPT OF STATEHOOD

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Abstract

This study comprehensively discusses Abdul Wahab Chasbullah's political thought and his contribution to the national movement and the development of the concept of statehood in Indonesia. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah is one of the most important figures in the intellectual history of Islam in Indonesia, particularly through his central role in the establishment of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the largest Islamic organization that continues to play a strategic role in the religious, social, and political life of the nation. His ideas on the relationship between religion and the state are based on moderate, open, and contextual Islamic principles, which are capable of addressing contemporary challenges without losing their fundamental values. Using a qualitative approach and literature review methods, this study examines various primary and secondary sources, including biographical books, works of thought by prominent figures, scientific journal articles, historical archive documents, and contemporary writings. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the dynamics of Abdul Wahab Chasbullah's thinking and how his ideas made a real contribution to the struggle for Indonesian independence and the formation of an inclusive national framework. His thoughts were not limited to religious discourse, but also included visionary socio-political strategies in fighting for independence and building a state system that respected plurality. The results of the research show that Abdul Wahab Chasbullah was a cleric who was not only fluent in religious knowledge, but also very sensitive to the socio-political developments of his time. His moderate and adaptive political views enabled him to build bridges between Islamic tradition and the growing spirit of nationalism during the colonial period. Through NU, he made Islam a moral force that helped drive the struggle for independence. He was active in various national organizations and used the media as a means of intellectual and political struggle. Thus, Abdul Wahab Chasbullah's political thought is not only an important historical legacy but also relevant as a reference for formulating policies and the direction of national development today. His inclusive attitude and contextual understanding of Islamic values serve as an important example for future generations in building a democratic, just, and culturally rooted nation.

Key words: *Political Thought, Abdul Wahab Chasbullah, National Movement, Concept of State.*

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INTRODUCTION

Abdul Wahab Chasbullah or commonly known as Kiai Wahab is a figure of Indonesian Islamic traditionalism who lived in several eras of Indonesian history. Kiai Wahab was a national movement figure who passed through the era of colonialism to the New Order. Kiai Wahab's involvement in each of these eras made him famous not only as a scholar, but also as a movement activist and political figure. Kiai Wahab is a thinker with a pesantren background as well as the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Kiai Wahab has a distinctive political thought in relation to the concept of state, especially in the context of the role of Islam and ulama in the state order. His thinking was heavily influenced by the development of Indonesian politics during the independence movement and the early period of state formation.

In 1914, Kiai Wahab and Kiai Mas Mansoer initiated the establishment of a discussion group called Tashwirul Afkar (portrait of thought) (Daroni & Munir, 2023). In addition, Kiai Wahab also founded the Islam Study Club in Surabaya. In addition to his success in attracting traditionalist Islamic thinkers, Kiai Wahab's presence also attracted secular nationalist movement figures, such as Sutomo, the founder of Budi Utomo. Not only that, Kiai Wahab also founded Nahdlatul Wathan or the awakening of the homeland. Nahdlatul Wathan, founded and led by Kiai Wahab and Kiai Mas Mansoer, had a moderate-nationalist character which later spread to various regions in East Java.

Then in the 1920s, Kiai Wahab together with Abdullah Ubaid founded Syubbanul Wathon (Youth of the Fatherland) in Surabaya. Then in 1926, with the agreement of the pesantren scholars, the Nahdlatul Ulama (Awakening of the Ulama) organization was formed in Surabaya. Kiai Hasyim Asy'ari led NU as Rais Akbar, with Kiai Wahab as a key figure in the process of preparing for the establishment of NU. Kiai Wahab was one of the kiai with great thoughts of statehood and patriotism towards the Indonesian nation. It was the attitude of these pesantren that later according to Dauwes Dekker generated a great patriotism movement in Indonesia (Zuhri, 2012).

Kiai Wahab is known as a multitalented scholar, so that since young he has been nicknamed the best example of a traveling santri (Masfiah, 2017). With this character and

intelligence, it is not surprising that Kiai Wahab had a close relationship with influential figures such as H.O.S. Cokroaminoto and Sutomo. Kiai Wahab as a young man also often discussed with K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of the Muhammadiyah Organization in Yogyakarta.

Kiai Wahab, in relation to the history of the founding of NU, played a role not only as the driving ulama of NU. But at the same time as a scholar who uses the language of the ulama to provide political ideas and acts as a confidant and linguist of Kiai Hasyim Asy'ari (Azwar, 1993). Kiai Wahab's emergence in the early 20th century, when the idea of renewal developed due to the influence of the thoughts of Jamaluddin al-Afghani (1838 - 1897), Muhammad Abduh (1849 - 1905), and Rasyid Rida (1865 - 1935). During this period, the idea of renewal emerged in response to the decline of Muslims as a result of Islamic worship methods that were not in accordance with the Qur'an and hadith in medieval times.

Tensions in religious thought often arise when various groups maintain an exclusive understanding of religion without being open to changes in the world. In Indonesia, this situation has created a polarized vision between traditionalists, modernists and fundamentalists. Traditionalist groups, such as Nahdlatul Ulama, emphasize the importance of maintaining the traditions of the madhhab and religious practices inherited by previous scholars. On the other hand, modernists, such as Muhammadiyah, encourage renewal by returning to the Qur'an and Hadith without being bound to the fiqh schools (Ismail, 2011).

In Indonesia, this tension is reflected in the polarized vision between traditionalists, modernists and fundamentalists. Traditionalist groups such as NU emphasize the importance of maintaining the traditions of madhab and religious practice inherited by previous scholars. On the other hand, modernists, such as Muhammadiyah, encourage renewal by returning to the Qur'an and Hadith without being too attached to the fiqh schools. Meanwhile, fundamentalist groups are more inclined towards purifying religious teachings, such as those promoted by Wahabism, by rejecting various traditions and practices that are considered to deviate from the pure teachings of Islam. This polarization can cause tension, but it is also a dynamic that enriches religious discourse in Indonesia. Despite differences, the process of dialog and testing of ideas in the field often leads to consensus or at least coexistence among various religious

groups.

Islamic traditionalism has flourished in Indonesia since the beginning of Islam, with its characteristic of accommodating local traditions. This open attitude towards local culture allowed Islam to develop naturally, through an evolutive and relatively non-violent process of Islamization (Ummah, 2019). This accommodation created a harmonious relationship between Islamic teachings and Nusantara customs, which in turn strengthened the acceptance of Islam among local communities. At that time, the majority of Indonesians, especially Muslims, were farmers living in rural areas, so Islam developed in a more traditional social context. The condition of rural communities far from the center of urbanization made Islam in Indonesia at that time did not develop in a modern way like in the Middle East region. Therefore, Islamic traditionalism maintained a strong loyalty to religious leaders or *kiai*, who were considered the moral and spiritual guardians of the community.

The role of *kiai* as religious leaders is very significant in maintaining the teachings of Islam combined with local customs. Islamic traditionalism, through organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), continues to emphasize the importance of maintaining religious traditions inherited from previous scholars, while maintaining harmony with local culture, without abandoning the essence of Islamic teachings. One influential Islamic traditionalist figure is Abdul Wahab Chasbullah (*Kiai Wahab*).

Speaking of renewal, Indonesian scholars have various responses to modernism. Muhammadiyah in 1912 modernized by building schools, hospitals, orphanages, and using modern management methods. This was followed by Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiah (1914) and Persatuan Islam (1923). As for the renewal of traditionalist Islam, it was initiated by *Kiai Wahab*, including by establishing madrasah and NU educational institutions. *Kiai Wahab* had his own way of arousing the enthusiasm of the *ulama* by directing his attention to the progress of the *khilafah*. Therefore, *ulama* who were previously not interested in state affairs, finally entered the NU movement.

In addition, *Kiai Wahab Chasbullah* is also seen as a smart and strategic figure by many circles. One proof of his intelligence was seen during the Japanese colonial period. At that

time, resistance groups such as Lasykar Mujahidin and Sabilillah emerged. *Kiai Wahab Chasbullah* played an important role in coordinating the *kiai* to form Barisan *Kiai*, a resistance movement led by the *ulama*. This move reflected *Kiai Wahab's* leadership and strategic acumen not only in religious affairs, but also in the physical and political struggle for Indonesian independence. His role in organizing the resistance shows that *Kiai Wahab* has the ability to adapt to complex situations and is able to lead the people in crisis situations.

If previous studies focused more on the biography and role of *Kiai Wahab* in the establishment of NU, this paper takes a more contextual point of view. This paper focuses on how Abdul Wahab Chasbullah (*Kiai Wahab*) as one of the Islamic traditionalists became a national movement figure and founder of Nahdlatul Ulama. Thus, exploring *Kiai Wahab's* political thought is important, especially regarding the concept of state including the dialectic of unity and nationalism.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with biographical methods and descriptive-interpretive analysis. The main focus of the study is to explore Abdul Wahab Chasbullah's political thoughts and contributions to the national movement and the concept of statehood in Indonesia. Data collection was carried out through literature studies and searches of relevant archival documents. The primary data sources in this study include Abdul Wahab Chasbullah's direct writings, such as articles, speeches, personal notes, and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) organizational documents related to his work. In addition, historical archives were also used, such as newspapers from the movement era, meeting minutes, NU meeting minutes, and colonial and republican government documents that recorded Abdul Wahab Chasbullah's role.

Secondary sources were obtained from scientific analyses by experts and historians, in the form of books, journal articles, and dissertations discussing this figure in the context of Indonesia's socio-political history. This context covers the colonial period, the independence movement, and the formation of the post-independence state. Through this approach, the researcher aims to present a comprehensive and in-depth picture of Abdul

Wahab Chasbullah's background, ideas, and political contributions within the framework of Indonesia's national history. The validity of the data is tested through source triangulation, comparing the contents of primary documents with secondary interpretations to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the information.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah: National Movement Figure and Founder of Nahdlatul Ulama

The role of Kiai Abdul Wahab Chasbullah and Kiai Hasyim Asy'ari as founders of NU cannot be separated. Kiai Wahab's thoughts are very important to study because the ideas that underlie the establishment of NU are a strong basis for the sustainability of the organization to date. NU, which was officially established on January 31, 1926, did not immediately appear in the history of Indonesia and Southeast Asia. Historians point to the initial form of this grassroots movement appearing as early as 1926, but the movement can be traced back before the 20th century (Ismail, 2011). Its epistemological and ideological traces can even be found since the beginning of Islamic history in Indonesia. The roles played by KH Hasyim Asy'ari (Kiai Hasyim) and KH Abdul Wahab Chasbullah (Kiai Wahab) in the establishment of NU are worth discussing. These two men had a relationship as teacher and student. Kiai Hasyim (1871-1947) proposed to Kiai Wahab (1888-1971) to continue his studies in Mecca after completing his studies at Tebuireng, Jombang in 1908 (Saenong, 2021). In Mecca, Kiai Wahab, Abdul Halim, Ahmad Sanusi, and Mas Mansur established a branch of the Islamic Society. Kiai Wahab is an organizer. In this case, Kiai Wahab is one of the originators of this traditional organization, apart from Kiai Hasyim.

When he returned to Surabaya in 1914, Kiai Wahab founded Nahdhatul Wathan (Awakening of the Homeland) which had been proclaimed as the first religious institution with a nationalist and moderate character in the archipelago (Bruinessen, 2002). Nahdhatul Wathan grew rapidly and spread across East Java and Central Java. Nahdlatul Wathan promoted educational and intellectual development and in 1917, established Tashwirul Afkar as a medium for Qur'anic learning and religious education. Kiai Wahab also founded Syubbanul Wathan (Youth of the

Fatherland) and Nahdlatul Tujjar (Merchant Awakening) whose members were mostly kyai (Javanese clerics). Kiai Wahab is also said to have founded Nahdlatul Fikr (Awakening of Thought).

Given the dynamics of social and cultural development in the Nusantara archipelago in the early 20th century—particularly with the growing influence of modernist Islamic movements such as Muhammadiyah (founded in 1912) and al-Irsyad (founded in 1914)—as well as geopolitical changes in the Middle East, especially after Ibn Saud, who adhered to Wahhabi ideology, succeeded in taking control of Mecca in 1924, Kiai Wahab Chasbullah strongly encouraged Kiai Hasyim Asy'ari to form an organization of Islamic scholars. This organization was expected to accommodate and protect the interests of traditional Islamic educational institutions in Java, which were beginning to be threatened by the tide of religious purification and reformism (Noer, 1996).

The rejection of a number of traditional religious practices—such as tahlilan, grave pilgrimage, and the commemoration of the Prophet's birthday—by modernist organizations such as Muhammadiyah and al-Irsyad, sparked unease among traditional scholars. This then led to a heated debate regarding the legitimacy of these religious practices among Indonesian Muslims. In response to this situation, Kiai Hasyim Asy'ari, with the support of figures such as Kiai Wahab Chasbullah and Kiai Bisri Syansuri, initiated the establishment of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) organization on January 31, 1926 (coinciding with 16 Rajab 1344 H) in Surabaya, as a formal platform for traditional ulama to uphold the Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah doctrine and moderate local Islamic traditions (Bruinessen, 1999).

When it comes to kiai hierarchy, social recognition is key in Jombang's kiai structure. Kiai who establish and manage pesantren are considered high-ranking kiai. Endang Turmudzi categorizes kiai in Jombang into four types, namely pesantren kiai, tarekat kiai, political kiai, and stage kiai. Pesantren kiai conduct teaching activities in pesantren, tarekat kiai focus on serving the inner Muslims, stage kiai are preachers in the region who spread Islam through da'wah, and political kiai are kiai who develop NU through political channels.

The categorization of kiai above does not apply to Kiai Wahab. Kiai Wahab can fall into two categories at once, namely pesantren kiai and political kiai. As a pesantren kiai, Kiai Wahab is both a political kiai and a pesantren kiai. As a pesantren kiai, Kiai Wahab is the grandson of the founder of the Tambakberas pesantren, Kiai Abdus Salam, and served as the caretaker of the pesantren after his father. Kiai Wahab pioneered the establishment of madrassas at Pesantren Tambakberas. In his capacity as a political kiai, Kiai Wahab assisted Kiai Hasyim Asy'ari in establishing NU. Kiai Wahab reinforces that the role of kiai in society is not only as a cultural broker as stated by Geertz, but the leadership of kiai is also directly involved in the process of social and cultural transformation (Horikoshi, 1987).

2. Political Thought of Abdul Wahab Chasbullah: The Concept of State and the Role of Islam and Ulama in Politics

The Islamic boarding school where Kiai Wahab studied is a traditional institution rooted in the ideology of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamâ'ah, with an emphasis on the principles of moderation (*al-tawassut*), justice (*al-i'tidâl*), balance (*al-tawâzun*), and tolerance (*al-tasâmuh*) (Arif & Al Amin, 2021). These values not only shape an inclusive and adaptive religious character but also reflect a form of cultural-religious nationalism, namely a commitment to national identity rooted in local Islamic values that are culturally friendly and nationally oriented. In this context, Islamic boarding schools become an important pillar in sowing the seeds of nationalism based on culture and religion.

When Wahhabi teachings, which tend to be puritanical and anti-traditional, entered Indonesia alongside waves of colonialism and imperialism, Kiai Wahab emerged as one of the key figures who not only preserved traditional religious practices but also articulated them within the framework of the national struggle. By establishing organizations such as Taswirul Afkar (1914), Nahdlatul Wathon (1916), and Nahdlatut Tujjar (1918)—which culminated in the formation of Nahdlatul Ulama (1926)—Kiai Wahab applied a form of religious nationalism, namely the idea of nationality derived from a religious spirit that defended social justice and local cultural identity.

These organizations not only aimed to resist foreign colonial domination but also

served as a platform to reinforce the identity of Nusantara Islam, inherited from the Walisongo. Kiai Wahab's ideas and actions can be analyzed through the lens of cultural nationalism (Smith, 1991), which emphasizes the importance of cultural heritage as the foundation for the formation of a nation's collective identity. In this case, Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamâ'ah, which is upheld by Islamic boarding schools, is not merely a religious teaching, but also part of Indonesia's inclusive, pluralistic, and anti-colonial national narrative.

Kiai Wahab has a distinctive political thought in relation to the concept of state. His thinking was heavily influenced by the development of Indonesian politics during the independence movement and the early period of state formation. Some of Kiai Wahab's main ideas regarding the concept of state include:

a. Nationalism and Religious Nationalism

Kiai Wahab Hasbullah emphasized the importance of nationalism that does not conflict with Islamic teachings. In his perspective, loving one's homeland is part of the manifestation of faith, as stated in the motto "Hubbul wathan minal iman" (Love for one's homeland is part of faith). This expression is not merely a spiritual slogan, but also an ideological statement that aligns religious identity with national consciousness. Within the framework of religious nationalism theory, as explained (Smith, 2003). Religious nationalism emerges when religious identity becomes a source of legitimacy and motivation in the formation and defense of the nation-state.

Kiai Wahab's thinking is in line with this model: Islam is not diametrically opposed to nationalism, but rather serves as the ethical foundation for the national struggle. Furthermore, Kiai Wahab understands nationalism as a tool for fighting injustice, whether in the form of colonialism, extreme secularism, or transnational ideologies such as Wahhabism or communism, which contradict the values of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamâ'ah and local diversity. In this case, nationalism is substantively interpreted as a commitment to realizing a just, prosperous, and dignified society, as is the Islamic ideal of achieving social justice (*'adl*), public interest (*maslahah 'ammah*), and divine pleasure. Kiai Wahab's thinking is also in line with al-Mawardi's theory in al-Ahkâm al-Sultâniyyah, which states that

the purpose of the state is to protect religion (*ḥirâsat al-dîn*) and regulate worldly affairs (*siyâsat al-dunyâ*).

In this view, the existence of the state is an essential means of ensuring the moral and spiritual continuity of the people, as well as ensuring social order and justice. Therefore, for Kiai Wahab, the independence and sovereignty of the state are absolute prerequisites for the contextual implementation of Sharia in the life of the nation and state. From the perspective of political jurisprudence, colonialism is viewed by Kiai Wahab as a form of *ghasab*, that is, the act of seizing the property of others without a valid basis (*al-istîlâ' 'ala ḥaqq al-ghayr bi lâ ḥaqq*), which is a violation of the principle of justice in Islam. Therefore, the struggle against colonialism is not only a political act, but also an act of worship and an expression of deep faith. Within the framework of integrative nationalism theory, as proposed (Hans Kohn, 1944), nationalism is not merely an expression of nationality, but an instrument of liberation and moral consolidation for a nation. Thus, nationalism for Kiai Wahab reflects a theological struggle as well as a practical effort to realize a just, prosperous, and dignified state.

b. State of the Union: A Partnership between Islam and Politics

Kiai Wahab is among the ulama who support the form of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, which in principle is a state based on Pancasila, not a state based on Islamic law. Kiai Wahab rejects the idea of a theocracy or formal Islamic state. In the 1936 NU Mukhtar forum in Banjarmasin, Kiai Wahab and other scholars agreed that Indonesia as a country could stand on a basis that did not fully refer to Islamic sharia, as long as it did not conflict with the principles of Islamic teachings. Thus, Kiai Wahab emphasized that Islamic law does not have to be the basis of the state, but Islamic values can be realized in policies that are fair and beneficial to all groups.

In building the nation and state, Kiai Wahab emphasized the importance of partnership relations between religion and the state, as well as between ulama and *umarâ'* (government). Kiai Wahab believed that the synergy between the two would support the achievement of justice and prosperity for society. Therefore, while leading NU, Kiai Wahab was known to have a close relationship with President

Soekarno. This closeness allowed him to be appointed as a member of the Supreme Advisory Council (DPA), so that Kiai Wahab had a strategic role in influencing various political policies decided by Soekarno. This relationship reflects Kiai Wahab's view that the involvement of ulama in government is very important to ensure that religious values remain the basis for state policy making.

Kiai Wahab disagreed with the political perspective of communist groups who considered religion an enemy rather than a partner in building the nation and state. According to Kiai Wahab, the separation between religion and the state is a product of Dutch colonialism and is unknown in Islamic political tradition.

Based on the principle of the partnership relationship between religion and the state, Kiai Wahab considers it important to base the state on Islamic values. However, this does not mean that Kiai Wahab wants to replace Pancasila with Islam. Kiai Wahab still respects Pancasila as the basis of the state, but believes that Islamic values can go hand in hand with the principles in Pancasila, without the need for separation between religion and politics. Kiai Wahab proposed improving the Pancasila in the Jakarta Charter by adding seven words, namely "with the obligation to carry out Islamic law for its adherents". However, the proposal was rejected by nationalist-secular groups in the Constituent Assembly, including the Communist Party. Unable to reach consensus, President Soekarno issued the 1959 Presidential Decree. Kiai Wahab responded to the 1959 Presidential Decree with a positive attitude and accepted the decision gracefully. According to Kiai Wahab, the Presidential Decree was the right step to overcome the political deadlock. Kiai Wahab realized that imposing the Jakarta Charter as the basis of the constitution exclusively could risk national unity. With this attitude, Kiai Wahab showed wisdom in balancing religious aspirations with the need for state unity and stability.

As the leader of the people, Kiai Wahab is guided by the rule of *tas'arruf al-imâm 'ala al-ra'iyah manútun bi al-maslahah* (the actions of an imam over the community he leads must be based on *maslahat* considerations). Kiai Wahab understands that the benefit not only includes aspects of religion (Islam) but also the nation and state as a whole. Therefore, Kiai Wahab opposes radicalism in any form, both

religious and secular based, because he believes that extreme actions can harm the interests of the people and the nation. This moderate and balanced approach reflects his commitment to maintaining harmony and prosperity in society.

Religious radicalism can threaten the good of the nation by creating conflict, intolerance and division in society. Secular radicalism, on the other hand, can harm religious interests by ignoring or trivializing religious values that are important to most people, as well as ignoring the role of religion in public life and morals. Towards the end of the 1950s, the emergence of separatist-radical movements based on both religion and secularism threatened Indonesia's national security. One prime example was Kartosuwiryo, who refused to recognize the legitimate government of the Republic of Indonesia and on 7 August 1949 established Darul Islam (DI) or Negara Islam Indonesia (NII) in Tasikmalaya, West Java. In addition, in 1948, there was a separatist action carried out by the communists (PKI) under the leadership of Amir Syarifuddin and Muso in Madiun. This action showed dissatisfaction with the central government and an attempt to replace the existing government system with communist ideology. These two separatist movements - both religious and secular - added to the complexity of the challenges faced by the Indonesian government in its efforts to maintain national stability and integrity.

If Kartosuwiryo used religious arguments to delegitimize Soekarno's political power as President of the Republic of Indonesia, then Kiai Wahab actually gave strong support to Soekarno's religious position. Kiai Wahab gave the title *waliy al-amr al-darúri bi al-shawkah*, which means "necessary leader with authority" or "leader who must be respected" to strengthen Soekarno's position. This title showed Kiai Wahab's recognition of Soekarno's legitimacy and authority as leader of the country, and reflected his commitment to supporting the existing government while still upholding religious principles. In this manner, Kiai Wahab sought to maintain political and social stability while ensuring that religious values were respected within the framework of the existing government. His approach aimed to unite the various elements of society within a harmonious framework of national unity.

c. Balance between Tradition and Modernity

In the midst of Dutch colonialism, Wahabiism began to enter Indonesia with the agenda of the Islamic renewal movement. Wahabiism was brought by Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab al-Najdi (1703-1791 AD) in the 18th century in the Arabian Peninsula. The movement received significant support from the Ibn Saud regime (ruler of Hijaz) and the British, who helped expand its influence to various parts of the world. Wahabiism, which emphasizes renewal and reestablishment of the principles of Islam that are considered pure, is often met with resistance in various places, including in Indonesia. The movement brought about significant changes in previously established interpretations and practices of Islam in the region, sparking debates and conflicts between old traditions and radical renewal.

Wahabi views criticize various religious practices of *pesantren* scholars, including *taklid* (following the Maliki, Hanafi, Shafii, and Hanbali imams), *tawassul*, *tabarruk*, as well as local religious traditions such as *tahlilan*, *maulid nabi*, grave pilgrimage and the like. The Wahabis regard these practices as deviations from the pure teachings of Islam. Indonesian modernist groups voicing Wahabi-style Islamic renewal such as Muhammadiyah, Persis, and al-Irsyad. They are often credited with spearheading Islamic renewalism that adopted some Wahabi elements in its approach. On the other hand, KH Asnawi Kudus, as a leading figure of the traditionalists, considered some figures from these organizations to be Wahabi. This accusation reflected the tension between established religious traditions and renewal movements coming from outside. However, this accusation was later refuted by the modernist organizations, who claimed that they had a different approach or were not entirely in line with Wahabiism.

Kiai Wahab also firmly denied the Wahabi accusation that accepting the imams of the four *madhabs* was the cause of the decline and division of Muslims. According to Kiai Wahab, *mazhab* is precisely a way to maintain the unity and continuity of Islamic understanding that has been inherited by previous scholars. According to Kiai Wahab, Wahabism is not only dangerous for the future of Indonesian Islam which is known to be polite and respectful of diversity, but also threatens the existence of Nusantara culture as part of the national identity and national identity. Kiai Wahab

argues that Nusantara Islam has developed harmoniously with local culture without violating the principles of Islamic sharia.

In his view, Wahabism, which promotes religious purification, often rejects local traditions and idolizes many religious practices that have long been integrated with Muslim communities in Indonesia. In fact, Kiai Wahab emphasized that the principle in fiqh states that local customs (*al-'adat*), as long as they do not deviate from sharia, can be accommodated as a source of inspiration for Islamic law. This fiqh principle is known as the rule "*al-'adat muhakkamah*" (custom can be made into law). By referring to this principle, Kiai Wahab argues that being a good Muslim does not have to abandon tradition. Islam can work in harmony with local culture, as long as the tradition does not conflict with Islamic teachings. This approach allows Islam in Indonesia to grow while maintaining Islamic values and appreciating the cultural richness of the archipelago.

Some of Kiai Wahab's thoughts, such as the concept of "*keris-hard politics*", "*kusiriyah unity*", "*halal bi halal*", "*cancut taliwondo diplomacy*", and "*Indonesian socialism*", show that Kiai Wahab is very strong in maintaining local traditions and has thoughts that are indigenous or typical of the archipelago. These thoughts show how Kiai Wahab integrates Islamic values with local culture and wisdom, creating solutions that are relevant to Indonesian society.

As a response to Wahabism, especially when he heard about the Wahabi regime's plan to restrict the madhab of Ibn Saud, Kiai Wahab together with other pesantren kiai founded Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) on January 31, 1926 in Surabaya. NU was established to maintain the deep-rooted tradition of madhab in Indonesian Islam, especially the Syafi'i madhab, and to preserve the religious practices and understanding of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah that characterize traditional Islam in Indonesia. At that time, Kiai Wahab and other kiai saw that the threat of Wahabism could damage the religious traditions and local culture that had been living peacefully in Indonesian Muslim communities. To strengthen the movement, KH. M. Hasyim Asy'ari was appointed Rais Akbar, the highest position in the NU management structure (1926-1947). NU has since become a major organization that maintains the tradition of mazhab and

preserves moderate Islam in Indonesia.

From the description above, Kiai Wahab became known as a moderate scholar who is open to modern ideas, but still maintains religious traditions. In the context of the state, Kiai Wahab advocates that the Nusantara Islamic tradition can adapt to modernity without losing its identity. This reflects his view that a modern state can be in harmony with traditional Islamic values, as long as there is a balance between the two.

Kiai Wahab has the view that Islam can be adapted to the local context without reducing the essence of Islamic teachings itself. In the state, Kiai Wahab emphasizes the importance of a contextual *ijtihad* (free thinking) approach, where Islamic laws and rules can be adapted to the situation and needs of plural Indonesian society. Kiai Wahab understands that Indonesia has religious, cultural and ethnic diversity, so an inclusive approach is needed to maintain unity.

CONCLUSION

Kiai Abdul Wahab Chasbullah's political thought emphasizes the importance of religious nationalism, a form of nationalism that is not only based on love for the homeland, but also rooted in religious values. Kiai Wahab fully supports the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) based on Pancasila, seeing Pancasila as a middle way that can maintain Indonesian pluralism. Despite rejecting the idea of a formal Islamic state, Kiai Wahab supports the application of Islamic values in state life, while respecting the diversity of religions and cultures that exist in Indonesia.

Abdul Wahab Chasbullah's political thought had a significant contribution to the national movement and the concept of state in Indonesia. Through a moderate and inclusive approach, Chasbullah successfully integrated Islamic values with the social and political realities faced by Indonesian society. His contribution in establishing Nahdlatul Ulama and his role in the independence struggle show that his thoughts are still relevant today. Thus, Chasbullah's thoughts are not only a historical legacy, but also a guideline for future generations in building a just and prosperous country.

In addition to all the contributions and roles of Kiai Wahab's thoughts, of course there are several things that need to be criticized or according to the author are still weaknesses.

First, although Kiai Wahab founded an organization like NU to fight for the people by focusing on religious nationalism and defense of tradition, it has not yet provided concrete socio-economic solutions. The socio-economic issues referred to here are primarily related to poverty and more structural social injustice. Second, Kiai Wahab's position as a member of the Supreme Advisory Council (DPA) also shows a tendency to be too close to power, which reduces the assessment of the moral independence of the ulama.

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