

CHARACTERISTICS OF DAKWAH AMONG THE NAHDIYYIN

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Abstract: *NU is a religious and social organization that can not be separated from the 'ulama' and Islamic tradition. NU was born in the form of Jama'ah (community) that has been strongly bound by social and religious tradition that has its own character. NU fought whole heartedly to rescue the people in the field of propaganda, education, social, and political. NU's main characteristics of propaganda is to understand the reality of the socio-religious and socio-Islam, using the approaches of sociology (sosiulujjiyyah), anthropology (antrufulujiyyah), culture (thaqafiyyah), and history (tarikhiyyah). NU is used as a Mecca of Islam throughout the world, both in terms of nationalism and in terms morality. In the propaganda system, NU Prophet and the Companions of the Prophet adopted an elegant, polite, communicative culture and tradition, and not against the current. NU then and now, even in the times to come, remain committed to deliver teachings of the Prophet and his companions' tradition.*

Keywords: *NU, community, proselytizing*

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A. History of the Birth of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)

Understanding NU as an organization (jam'iyah) properly is not sufficient by merely viewing it from a formal perspective, from its inception and development until today. Long before NU emerged as an organization, it first manifested as a community, already strongly bound by socio-religious traditions with their own characteristics. The birth of NU was nothing more than a means of reclaiming what already existed.

NU is an Islamic organization that has experienced the upheavals of history and the storms of change, yet it has always managed to stand strong. Although sometimes faltering, it has managed to continue its journey. Its primary asset is the kyai (Islamic scholars) possessing a deep and strong sense of community, in addition to their constant respect for tradition. According to Zamakhsyari Dofier, the kyai's success in developing a strong and stable organizational system lies in their wisdom and awareness that any social structure must trust in general consensus, rather than relying on forced agreements or difficult organizational systems.

Before the founding of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muslims had successfully forged a unified forum, namely the Indonesian Muslim Congress (the first of which was successfully held in Cirebon in 1922), as a joint forum for reformist and traditional groups. However, the reformist groups could not refrain from attacking the traditional groups within the forum. The congress, which was supposed to mobilize forces to fight the colonial invaders, became a forum for heated debate. Muslims, they argued, should abandon the books of the ulama and return to the Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad. By

participating in the congress, it appeared that the ulama (traditionalists) were not opposed to the reformist movement, but rather opposed the reformists' attacks on the foundations of their Islamic faith.

From the first congress in Cirebon until before the founding of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the ulama were still able to demand respect from the reformists. The next congress, held in Surabaya from December 24-26, 1924, focused on issues of *ijtihad*, the status of *Tafsir al-Manar*, the teachings of Muhammadiyah, and *al-Irsyad*. The heated debate between the Taswirul Afkar group and the reformist group led the congress to the conclusion that *ijtihad* was still open, but could not be conducted unless it was conditional on knowledge of the Quranic texts and *hadith*, understanding of *ijma'* (consensus), understanding the reasons for the rulings of Islam, and other requirements. Up to this point, the traditionalist Islamic boarding school scholars had indeed succeeded in adding significant influence to the congress's decisions.

The key figures, or founders of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), were not unfamiliar with the ideas of reform that were trending in the Middle East. Three key figures from Mecca in the early 20th century were KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, KH. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah, and KH. Bisri Samsuri. They, along with KH. Ahmad Dahlan, had studied under the renowned Indonesian cleric in the Holy Land, Sheikh Ahmad Khotib Minangkabau. Ahmad Khotib was considered a controversial figure. On the one hand, he disagreed with the ideas of Muhammad Abdu, who encouraged Muslims to break away from the four schools of thought. On the other hand, he supported the movement to eradicate all forms of tarekat practices.

Hasyim Asy'ari was the most influential figure, given the title Hadratus Syaikh, a great teacher for Javanese scholars. He also influenced Shaykh Mahfudh al-Tarmisi, who welcomed the tarekat. The difference in the paths taken by traditional ulama and the reformers lay in their educational backgrounds. Pesantren ulama never received Western education, and the close relationship between the kyai and their predecessors led to differences in the ulama's reception of the reform movement. They welcomed the reform movement but adapted it to their own traditions.

Differences emerged and led to a split after the reformers acted independently, electing delegates to the caliphate (a congress aimed at appointing a caliph, the leader of the Muslim community) in Mecca, initiated by King Saud, the new Wahhabi ruler of the Hijaz. The Egyptian rulers had previously intended to hold a caliphate congress in 1924. Indonesian Muslims had already prepared by forming a committee chaired by Wondoamiseno (Islamic Association) and Abdul Wahab Hasbullah, representing the traditional faction, as deputy. Delegates were Soerjopranoto (SI), H. Fachruddin (Muhammadiyah), and Abdul Wahab Hasbullah, representing the traditional faction. However, things took a turn when the Egyptian congress was postponed. Attention immediately shifted to the Hijaz. At that time, the reformers decided to send their own representatives: Tjokroaminoto from SI and Mas Manysur from Muhammadiyah. Although

Abdul Wahab Hasbullah, a young, highly talented cleric in organizational matters, discussed developments in the Hijaz with the more senior Hadratus Syaikh Hasyim Asy'ari. They felt

these developments were crucial. Therefore, they could not discuss them alone; they would escalate the discussion to a much larger forum. In the eyes of the clerics, what was important was that religious life, in its broadest sense, could be carried out based on the traditions they adhered to. Finally, clerics from across Java and Madura gathered in Surabaya (at Abdul Wahab Hasbullah's residence) on January 31, 1926, the date that later marked the birth of the Nahdlatul Ulama association as a religious organization (*jam'iyah diniyah*). This meeting of clerics resulted in two important decisions.

First, the inauguration and confirmation of the Hijaz Committee, with a term of office until the delegation sent to meet King Saud returned home. Second, to establish an organization to unite the ulama (Islamic scholars) in their task of leading the community toward the realization of the ideals of *izz al-Islam wa al-muslimini* (the glory of Islam and the Muslim community). At the suggestion of Alwi Abdul Aziz, this organization was named "Nahdlatul Ulama," which means "The Awakening of the Ulama."

B. The Role of Ulama in the Body of Nahdlatul Ulama

Nahdlatul Ulama is an association of religious scholars (ulama) who rose to revitalize their followers, the NU community, and Indonesian society in general. Therefore, the role of the ulama in NU is central, both as founders, leaders, and managers of the organization, as well as role models for Nahdiyyin (NU members).

NU is a religious and social organization inseparable from the figure of the ulama and the tradition of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). The name Nahdlatul Ulama (Revival of the Ulama), commonly

abbreviated to NU, was not chosen for this organization by chance. The choice of this name, rather than "Revival of the Muslim Community" (Nahdatul Muslimin) or "Revival of the Ummah" (Nahdatul Ummat), demonstrates the crucial and unique position of the ulama within this association. According to Ali, two factors contributed to the ulama's dominant position within NU. First, as a religious organization, it must select its central power from figures who are most accountable personally, morally, and for their religious knowledge. Second, even the lowest-ranking "ulama" (kyai) always wields authority and influence over his students and community of followers. Kyai also have a direct line of authority with the surrounding community, even transcending group, organizational, regional, and perhaps even broader boundaries.

The Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) community commonly refers to a "ulama" as a kyai. The existence of a kyai is inseparable from NU, as it is this organization that produces many kyai. NU is known not only as an organization (jam'iyah) characterized by its structure and administrative management processes, but also as a community (jama'ah) characterized by traditions based on Islamic boarding schools (pesantren).

The paradigm of the NU kyai within the jam'iyah is that of a socio-religious organization independent of external factors, while the paradigm of the NU kyai within the jama'ah must possess neutral power and sincerity. If NU kyai are understood organizationally, they act as a counterweight to state power and an

instrument of control. If NU kyai are understood as a community, they are individuals who contribute sincerely to society and in accordance with NU culture, even though they are not organizationally part of the leadership structure.

Regarding the position of kyai in Indonesia, specifically their function for Javanese society during the Dutch colonial era, Isma'il divides kyai into two types: first, independent kyai, or kyai who position themselves in the path of da'wah (preaching) and education. Their duties are teaching and preaching. They are kyai of Islamic boarding schools and reside in rural areas. Second, kyai penghulu, or official kyai appointed by the Dutch government, are tasked with administering justice related to Islamic law.

Unlike Isma'il, Irsyam typologizes kyai into two categories: first, the idealist typology, where kyai choose a perspective on how they construct networks of interests and power to develop them into strength and how they manage relationships with external forces. Second, the realist typology, where kyai view the arrangement of networks of interests and power as they are and consider potential outcomes.

Suprayogo creates four typologies related to kyai's attitudes toward political, social, economic, and educational issues. First, the spiritual kyai, who solely manage and teach at Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and concentrate on worship. Second, the advocacy kyai, who actively teach at Islamic boarding schools but are deeply concerned with community empowerment. Third,

the adaptive political kyai, who are concerned with political organizations and power and are close to the government, generally affiliated with Golkar.

Fourth, the critical partner political kyai, who are concerned with political organizations but are critical of the government. They are generally affiliated with the United Development Party (PPP). Mujamil Qamar categorizes the thinking patterns of NU clerics into five typologies: first, anticipatory, a pattern of thinking that tends to respond to what is currently happening and will happen. This pattern of thinking recognizes linear developments, both expected and unexpected.

The advantage of this pattern of thinking is the ability to interpret phenomena with logical-theoretical acuity, while its ethical acuity anticipates future developments. Second, eclectic, a pattern of thinking that seeks to choose everything considered the best regardless of which school of thought, whichever philosophy, and whichever theory, as long as it is better than the others, that is what is chosen. Eclectic thinking can manifest itself in expressing a view that is less common, measured by the culture of the person expressing the opinion itself. This thinking is sometimes considered odd for someone to express, and can even contain quite serious risks. Third,

C. *Taswirul Afkar* (Portrait of the Thoughts of Scholars)

In 1869, the Suez Canal opened. This event brought significant changes to the Middle East and its surrounding

areas. The previously quiet shipping flow in the region became bustling. The journey from Europe to Asia was shortened by half. Previously, the journey had to pass through the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa, where the seas were quite rough and dangerous.

Since the opening of the Suez Canal, Indonesian Muslims have had a greater opportunity to perform the Hajj pilgrimage to the holy land of Mecca. At first glance, the pilgrimage seems like a simple ritual. However, it serves a more nuanced purpose. The Hajj also fosters a deeper religious understanding. It is not uncommon for pilgrims to stay for a while in Mecca to deepen their understanding of Islam, studying the tools of Islamic knowledge. Some even settled there, such as Sheikh Ahmad Khatib, Sheikh Nawawi, and several others. Upon their return home, many brought with them orthodox teachings. These teachings gradually replaced the mysticism and syncretism that had dominated Indonesia. Islam entered Indonesia through a process of peaceful liberation (*penetration pacifique*). This process was not without consequences. Islam in Indonesia was quickly accepted and developed, but the resulting Islam was a "soft" one with prominent assertive elements (defense) of morality.

During the mass pilgrimage of the Hajj, a movement for renewal and purification of Islamic teachings emerged in the Middle East. This movement was actually initiated by Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328) in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. He sought to disrupt the stagnant thinking of Muslims, who at that time were considered too tied to

previous ideas. His movement was called Muhyi Atahri al-Salaf, which meant reviving the ancient teachings of the Companions and Tabi'in. The aim of this Salaf movement is to return the religion of Islam to its two pure sources: the Qur'an and al-Hadith, while at the same time abandoning the sectarian squabbles and all the innovations as well as superstitions and superstitions embedded in it. Ibn Taymiyah's thoughts, among others, later influenced Muhammad Abd al-Wahab (1701-1793). The reform movement carried out by Abd al-Wahhab or better known as the Wahhabiyah movement was because the situation in Najed (Saudi Arabia) at that time could be said to have been so severe, as Zainal Syihab described that the situation in the countries of Najed, Hijaz and their surroundings during the Wahabiyah movement was so dilapidated. The crisis of faith and morals as well as the decline in socio-economic and political values have reached a climax point.

This reform movement influenced the Hajj pilgrims in Saudi Arabia, who were more or less influenced by Wahhabiyah teachings. Finally, this movement also entered Indonesia. This reform movement began in Minangkabau, led by Ahmad Khotib, and was then continued by his students, eventually spreading to Java.

In Java, this reform movement gave birth to two organizations with distinct visions. The first was the Sarekat Dagang Islam (SDI), founded in 1911—though some say it was formed on October 16, 1905—later known as Sarekat Islam (SI), and when it became more involved in politics, it became the Sarekat Islam Party

(PSII). The founding of this organization was influenced not only by the trade situation and the plight of Muslims at the time, but also by the influence of the Pan-Islamist movement. The image of Islam was a powerful unifier of Muslims, who constituted the majority of the Indonesian people. This was especially true considering Islam's egalitarian and universal nature, transcending race, ethnicity, class, and exclusivity.

The second was organizations engaged in religious, social, and educational fields, such as Jamiatul Khair, al-Irsyad, Muhammadiyah, and several others. Clearly, the presence of these reformist groups brought with it a unique context. Deeply rooted religious teachings certainly cannot be simply eliminated. Consequently, conflicts and clashes arose. However, the disputed issues did not concern fundamental and fundamental issues, but rather matters of a khilafiyah (dispute) and furu' (dispute).

To avoid these conflicts, Sarekat Islam pioneered the establishment of a dialogue forum. To realize this, the first al-Islam Congress was held in Cirebon in 1921. Similar congresses followed in subsequent congresses. However, because the issues discussed were limited to khilafiyah and furu' (dispute), these congresses did not provide a solution to differences. Traditionalists were deeply marginalized at each congress. Within the reformist circles,

D. The Bahtsul Masail Institute (LBM) as a Legal Istinbat Forum for Nahdlatul Ulama

Historically, the Bahtsul Masail forum existed before the founding of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in 1926. At that time, there was already a tradition of deliberation and discussion (halaqah) within Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) involving kyai (Islamic scholars) and senior students, the results of which were disseminated to the community. Within the pesantren, senior students regularly held these discussion forums to discuss both scientific developments and emerging societal issues.

The establishment of the Bahtsul Masail institution, as stated by Ahmad Zahro, stemmed from the community's need for practical Islamic law ('amali) for everyday life, which prompted NU scholars and intellectuals to seek solutions through discussions of problems (bahth al-masail).

Still according to Zaro, Bahtsul Masail has existed since the First Congress, but institutionally Lajnah Bahtsul Masail was only officially established at the 28th Congress in Yogyakarta in 1989, when Commission I (bahth al-masail) recommended to PBNU to establish "Lajnah Bahtsul Masail al-Diniyah" (institution for the study of religious issues) as a permanent institution specifically dealing with religious issues. As also supported by the results of the Denanyar halaqah (conference) held on January 26-28, 1990 at the Mamba'ul Ma'arif Denanyar Islamic Boarding School, Jombang, which also recommended the establishment of "Lajnah Bahtsul Masail al-Diniyah" with the hope of gathering NU scholars and intellectuals to conduct istinbat jama'i (collective legal exploration and

determination). Thanks to pressure from the 28th Congress and the Denanyar halaqah, the "Lajnah Bahtsul Masail al-Diniyah" (The Council for Islamic Law) was formed in 1990, which later became the Bahtsul Masail Institute.

Within the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the official institution or forum authorized to address all religious issues faced by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Ahmad Zahro concludes that this institution's decisions can be classified into two groups. First, non-fiqh decisions, namely those unrelated to practical legal issues, and second, decisions related to practical (jurisprudential) laws ('amaliyah). Furthermore, the LBM serves as a forum for broadening intellectual insight and religious discourse because it opens up the possibility of generating new ideas, not only related to the results of decisions but also regarding working mechanisms for solving problems.

Sahal Mahfudh, in his book, *Nuansa Fikih Sosial* (Social Fiqh Nuances), explains that the performance of the LBM has not been satisfactory, both for scientific purposes and practical efforts to face the challenges of the times. One reason is its adherence solely to the Shafi'i school of thought, even though the NU constitution places equal value on all four schools of thought (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hambali). This dissatisfaction also arises from the continued dominance of textual thinking, which rejects realities that do not conform to the formulations of the yellow books, without providing solutions that are still in accordance with the guidance of the books themselves. Therefore, he believes, the Islamic

Jurisprudence (LBM) needs improvement so that its efforts can reach the level of *ijtihad*, albeit limited, and not simply match the case to specific references.

Meanwhile, the problem-solving mechanism in the Islamic Jurisprudence (LBM) involves direct reference to the authoritative texts from the four schools of thought, especially the Shafi'i school. This differs from modernists, who often refer directly to the Quran and Sunnah. Modernist scholars, to a certain extent, permit the use of rational reasoning. Meanwhile, traditionalist scholars, as long as possible, tend to apply the literal (textual) laws of *fiqh* established by the great scholars of the past. Rifyal Ka'bah explains this because Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) steadfastly upholds Islamic traditionalism and pays close attention to the legacy of Islamic studies, the legacy of the early scholars' thoughts. However, due to their attachment to a particular school of thought, the *kyai* who study it often become bogged down in minor issues or issues discussed by their sources, overlooking the larger issue of understanding purer and more reliable primary sources for their daily needs. Meanwhile, NU members who feel the need for these major issues are unable to express criticism fluently because they are often hampered by the authority of the *kyai*.

D. Characteristics of Ulama's Thought

In describing the characteristics of the thinking of *ulama* (*kyai*), the author naturally describes the characteristics of *ulama* thought in general—not just the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) *ulama* community. Therefore, the author cites extensively the

descriptions and terms conceptualized by Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri, particularly in his book *Bunyat al-‘Aql al-‘Arabi: Dirasah Tahliliyah Naqdiyyah Li Nazm al-Ma’rifah fi al-Thaqafah al-‘Arabiyah*. In this book, al-Jabiri offers a critique of the reason of Arab ulama. He explains that the constituents of ulama reason can be classified into three trends: rhetorical reason (al-‘aql al-bayani), gnostic reason (al-‘aql al-‘irfani), and demonstrative reason (al-‘aql al-burhani), each of which has its own cognitive field.

According to him, the discourse of the ulama's thought over the past hundred years has been unable to provide a clear and definitive content, even temporarily, for their much-trumpeted revival project. Their awareness of the urgency of this revival is not rooted in reality and its movement, alternatives for change, or even its developmental orientation. They derive their spirit from a sense of difference, namely the profound gulf separating the backward contemporary Arab reality from the progress of others, namely the modern West. As a result, to date, the discourse of the Arab ulama's revival has failed to make any progress in formulating a "blueprint for the project of civilizational revival," either in the realm of proportional utopia or in the realm of scientific planning.

Since the proclamation of the past hundred years as "the era of new codification (al-'asr al-tadwin al-jadid)" in al-Jabiri's words, the distinction between the past and the present has unfortunately reached a point where it is driven by an intellect unaware of its egotistical essence. An effective intellect (munfa'il), not an active intellect (fa'il). Throughout history, effective human reason has drawn its life force from one of the following sources:

1. Awareness of the challenges posed by Western civilization, awakening one from a long slumber and immediately positioning oneself on the periphery of a circle with the West as its center of rotation.
2. A backlash that seeks to derive legitimacy from the past, making the past the center of rotation and all others revolving around its periphery.

This latter trend dominates the discourse of contemporary Arab thought. A trend that hides behind the legitimacy of its predecessors (the Salaf), armed with the deductive analogy of Islamic jurisprudence and ideological functionalism to cover up epistemological flaws, and interacts with the possibility of fictions mistaken for factual reality. Yet, the aforementioned are nothing more than some of the traces left by human history, particularly since the emergence of Arab reason during the codification period in the mid-2nd century Hijri.

Al-Jabiri's critique of Arab reason ('ulama') apparently cannot escape the classic dichotomy of Islamic philosophy between the East (al-Mashriq) and the West (al-Maghrib). This is understandable, as such a dichotomy was imposed by existing realities. The East extends from Egypt to Central Asia. The West, meanwhile, encompasses the Maghreb al-Arabi (Tunisia and Morocco) and the Andalusian Peninsula.

Here, al-Jabiri examines the development of the original reason of Arab scholars, which he calls rhetorical reason (al-'aql al-bayan). This reason, represented by the Arabic language, *usul fiqh* (jurisprudence), and theology, was a product of Arab genius that unfortunately could not develop further, having reached its peak of maturity, the era of codification.

Only then did al-Jabiri move on to introduce two other modes of reason (thought models) into the world of Arabic thought: the gnostic reason (al-'Irfani) and the demonstrative reason (al-Burhani). Al-Jabiri called the former al-'aql al-mustaqil (resigning reason—the reason that stabbed itself). This reason was used to provide rational proof of the impotence of reason. The gnostic reason was the result of adopting the teachings of hermeneutics and neo-Platonism. In the history of Islamic philosophy, this reason reached its peak of maturity under Ibn Sina and its crowning glory under al-Ghazali. Meanwhile, the second "infiltrating" reason is demonstrative reason, which originates from the philosophical texts of Aristotle. This reason began to be popularized by al-Ma'mun, but only developed properly in the Andalusian Peninsula, particularly in the hands of the great Arab philosopher, Abu al-Walid Ibn al-Rushd.

In the codification era of the mid-2nd century AH, three ideological, political, and populist forces competed with each other. First, the Abbasid Caliphate with Baghdad as its capital. Second, the Shi'ite power, represented politically by the Banu 'Ubayd (Fatimid) Dynasty in Egypt and socially by the Ismaili Shi'ite propagandists.

F. Nahdlatul Ulama's Method of Da'wah

1. Nahdlatul Ulama's Preaching in the Style of the Prophet and Wali Songo

Humans are born from a mother's womb and then receive teachings according to the culture of their environment. This primordial nature automatically grows and develops. A love that tends to defend one's own culture is undeniable. Therefore, all

cultures are good as long as they don't conflict with religion, as the principle always proclaimed by preachers in Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) mosques states that custom is law as long as it doesn't conflict with religion.

Regarding customs, many anticultural or deculturalist movements are now emerging. Although they were born amidst a particular culture, they are instead destroying it. A lecturer at the Faculty of Tarbiyah at UIN Sunan Kalijaga once said, "If the Prophet Muhammad had been born in Yogyakarta, he wouldn't have worn a robe and turban, but would have worn a sarong and a blangkon (traditional headdress).

Shaykh Ja'far Sadiq (Sunan Kudus) employed the principle of *receptio de contrario* in the application of Islamic law. This principle fundamentally prioritized religion, almost eroding pre-existing culture. In contrast, Sunan Kalijaga employed the theory of acculturation-assimilation in his preaching. He maintained the traditional culture with minimal guidance to prevent it from leading to polytheism or heresy (*sayyi'ah*). This method of preaching was more refined and, of course, more widely accepted by the wider community. Examples include *kenduri* (celebrations) and thanksgiving for the deceased, all of which have existed since before the Islamization of Java. This model of preaching was ultimately passed down to Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) members.

If we look back, we can see that the Prophet Muhammad also employed the acculturation-assimilation method of preaching. In an authentic hadith, narrated by al-Imam Hakim in the book *Al-Mustadrak*, Imam Abu Dawud in *Sunan Abi Dawud*, Imam Malik in *Al-Muwattha'* and Imam al-Baihaqi in *Sunan Al-Kubra* all narrated the Hadith whose sanad comes from Buraidah

Al-Aslami. "In the past, when we were in Jahiliyah, if a child was born among us, we slaughtered a goat and smeared the child's head with the goat's blood. But when Allah brought Islam, we slaughtered the goat, shaved the hair on the child's head and smeared the baby's head with za'faran oil."

2. The Process of Development of Nahdlatul Ulama's Da'wah

Each region has its own unique da'wah process. Urban areas, for example, with a predominantly high-income population, make da'wah easier, but challenges also arise because higher education levels make residents more critical, requiring da'is to truly master their religion.

Some are also trusted to da'wah because of their lineage. For example, the ascribed status of "gus" (the nickname "gus" for the children of kyai) certainly encourages these "gus" to da'wah. However, what is most interesting is examining the da'wah process in villages. Initially, a santri (student) who has graduated from an Islamic boarding school (pesantren) returns home with the knowledge he has acquired. In a village prayer room (surau), he teaches children the correct way to read the Quran. Afterward, community trust boosts his electability as a religious teacher. He is trusted to teach religious studies in the village. Due to his fame, many residents, including those from other villages, come. Due to inadequate space, a self-contained center is built that can accommodate tens or even hundreds of people. Unbeknownst to them, over time, an Islamic boarding school (pesantren) was born in the village, and a new kyai was born. This is how the da'wah (Islamic outreach) process unfolded in the village. This is interesting because the da'wah itself truly began from scratch.

3. Nahdlatul Ulama's Journey of Da'wah

a. The Past

Starting from a moment of anxiety among the antisocial Jombang community, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari attempted to provide a ray of sunshine beneath the canopy of rain. Of course, dealing with these Javanese "laymen" was not easy. Spreading Islamic teachings among them was like casting a small hook into a shark-infested ocean. The bait would be taken, they would be full, the line would break, and who knows where. Yet, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari persisted, determined to cast his hook. Initially, he only had a few students, some of whom had boarded at his father's house.

Life was not always easy. The presence of a cat among millions of mice naturally invited the mice to seek revenge. Furthermore, the tense atmosphere of Dutch colonialism, which sought to eradicate the existence of intellectuals, presented a unique challenge, in addition to the limitations. The bamboo walls of the pondok were attacked every night by spears from unknown guerrilla forces, resulting in the students having to sleep huddled together in the middle of the room to avoid being hit. This was the embryo of NU, born from a very difficult and complex da'wah struggle.

b. The New Order Era

As a necessity to maintain its existence, NU was forced to enter the practical political arena in the early New Order era. NU's need for politics was not a permanent thing (*pathok bangkrong*), but rather a long-term necessity. At certain times, politics was essential, but at other times, NU's political standing could decline.

In the early 1950s, NU adhered to Masyumi, but then shifted its focus to the United Development Party (PPP) because NU's presence within Masyumi was considered merely a mere

prop due to a lack of modern human resources. Before adopting the PPP, NU even stood as its own political party and finished in the top four in the first election.

As a result, PPP became a strong rival to the parent party (the governing party), Golkar, led by Suharto. This was not without reason; NU, with its large mass, seriously threatened the stability of Golkar's membership. Ultimately, Golkar made some incredibly absurd decisions, including prohibiting civil servants and government workers from joining parties other than Golkar.

Not only that, but even Muslims who preach must face strict security, and if the content of their preaching offends the government, the preacher must willingly leave the stage before being shoved under the military's feet. This often results in arrests. Gus Dur was even detained for allegedly obstructing the United Development Party (PPP) campaign. Furthermore, absolute government authority also applies in the regions. According to the confession of KH. Imam Shofwan (former chairman of the Nahdlatul Ulama Executive Board (PCNU) in Pati Regency, in the early 1980s, he was punished and abused by several members of the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) for tearing down all the Golkar flags that had previously flown along the Pati-Gembong highway.

However, in the mid-1980s, the government's machetes loosened as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) withdrew from practical politics, marked by a return to the 1986 Khittah (The 26th Principles) in 1984, which declared NU's return to its original form as a mass organization focused on socio-religious and civil society. The government and NU members were relieved. All NU members had the right to fly their respective political flags, and many NU members naturally began wearing yellow jackets.

The previously absurd policies disappeared. Islamic preaching (especially for NU), which previously required complicated permits, now required only a report to the local Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), or even no permits at all. The content of preaching was also given freedom. Civil servants and government employees, even Golkar members, were no longer afraid to attend NU religious study groups and religious study groups. Government buildings were permitted to be used as NU preaching facilities. Many modernists also adopted NU-style prayer practices and practiced all-NU practices.

In such circumstances, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) was the newly born golden child. It's no wonder that NU received more special attention than its older sibling, Muhammadiyah. This was evident in the early 1990s, when NU sent 25 preachers as a token of appreciation for government programs, sending 1,000 preachers to remote areas. Young people also celebrated their "independence." One such organization was KOMADA (Student Da'wah Corps), which had regular programs. By 1994, KOMADA had 180 preachers, 90% of whom were students, spread across 48 regions.

c. The Present

Times have begun to change. Over the past few decades, there have been many revolutions and evolutions. The 21st century is the pinnacle of modernity, producing great individuals whose work has the potential to change the world. NU will thrive if its followers are.

G. Conclusion

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is a social organization that wholeheartedly strives to save the people. NU strives in the fields of da'wah, education, social affairs, politics, and more. Recently,

NU has become a mecca for Islam throughout the world, both in terms of its nationalism and its politeness. In the field of da'wah, NU adheres to the da'wah system of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, which is elegant, polite, communicative, culturally and traditionally, and does not go against the grain. NU, past and present, and even in the future, remains committed to spreading the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and the traditions of his companions. Specifically, NU will champion the teachings of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah (Aswaja) until they are truly rooted in the earth.

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