

ISLAMIC STUDIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDONESIA

Challenges, Impact and Prospects for the World Community

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Abstract

In the global socio-political situation today, where rigid, extreme and radical interpretations of religion are commonly found and widespread, the contribution of Indonesian post-graduate education, especially Islamic higher education, come to the front stage and become a topic of serious discussion. In term of education in Indonesia, there is an unavoidable fact that Islamic education including Islamic higher education is not a new phenomenon. The situation led to the fact that some international Islamic scholars began to consider the Islamic higher education in Indonesia as a potential alternative system of graduate education including religious education and its contents and methods in offering innovation and transformation. This seems to be much more conducive approach and research to local, regional and global community and peace. This article will explain descriptively the long history of Islamic education and its development. It also aims at presenting elaboration on how higher education of indigenous Islam can modify their own teaching and research methodologies to be more relevant to the intellectual development and advancement, especially that of sciences and humanities in particular. The focus will be on: what are the key issues and elements of the Indonesian Islamic higher education leading to significantly change and contribute to the welfare of the nation and mankind, especially on the development of research which seems to illustrate the weakness of previous educational institutions system in Indonesia. Moreover, there is one

thing to remember that the worldwide academic community cannot wait for any longer the solution strongly expected to reduce the weakness since development of religious education and Islam in the Middle East, South Asia, and some parts of the Muslim world is not, more or less, promising for the sake of global humanity, prosperity and peace.

[Pada situasi sosial-politik global dewasa ini, ketika interpretasi agama yang rigid, ekstrim dan radikal meluas dan mudah dijumpai, kontribusi pendidikan tinggi, khususnya perguruan tinggi Islam, harus tampil dan menjadi bahan diskusi serius. Dalam konteks pendidikan di Indonesia, terdapat fakta tak terbantahkan bahwa pendidikan Islam termasuk pendidikan tinggi Islam, bukanlah hal baru. Situasi di Indonesia ini mendorong akademisi Islam internasional untuk mempertimbangkan pendidikan tinggi Islam sebagai alternatif dalam inovasi dan transformasi pendidikan, baik dalam hal materi ataupun metodologi. Tulisan ini menjelaskan sejarah panjang perkembangan pendidikan Islam. Selain itu, juga mengelaborasi bagaimana sistem pendidikan Islam memodifikasi metode pengajaran dan risetnya agar lebih sesuai dengan perkembangan dan capaian ilmu pengetahuan, khususnya ilmu sosial humaniora dewasa ini. Tulisan ini berfokus pada isu-isu dan unsur-unsur kunci pendidikan tinggi Islam yang sekiranya mampu berkontribusi dalam mewujudkan kesejahteraan umat manusia dan bangsa, khususnya perkembangan riset yang memetakan kelemahan dari sistem pendidikan di Indonesia. Oleh karena itu, satu hal yang harus diingat bahwa komunitas akademik dunia tidak bisa menunggu lebih lama lagi solusi untuk menutupi kekurangan - kekurangan tersebut, terlebih karena perkembangan pendidikan agama dan Islam di Timur Tengah, Asia Selatan, dan wilayah lain dunia Islam tidak terlalu menjanjikan terhadap kemanusiaan, kesejahteraan, dan perdamaian global.]

Keywords: Islamic education, higher education, educational institutions

A. Introduction

The terms “act locally” and “think globally” (meant by to act and to do around your own environment and neighbourhood in accordance with the rules and norms of the local traditions and to think, to socialize and even to communicate with any other social groups in accordance with the standard global rules and norms) have emerged since the 1980s,

but unfortunately, after 25 years or more, its formula has not appeared. What we found was a contradictory human experience i.e. there are no mutual trust, peaceful coexistence and mutual tolerance among people but violence, prejudice, hatred, anger in the name of religion, ethnicity, and class as well as local, regional, national and international race. It is seemingly congruent with Ninian Smart's observations on religion in globalization that suspicion in the name of religion abounds.¹

Another fact is that everyone wants to submit the statement "think local and act only", without "think globally". Having relationship and communication with other social groups tends to have lesser consideration of international rules, laws, agreements and relationships. Each ethnicity, religion, class, and cultural group want to hold their own apology and self-defence followed by some certain religious sects and trends of thought's tendency to strengthen and maintain their identity apart from local religions, cultures, ethnicity, and politics as they feel there appeared a threat of certain hegemony and domination and foreign cultures and civilizations. This kind of real and typical assumed psychological pressure has subsequently created a social injustice, discrimination (political attitudes of race, ethnicity, religion and origin) and subordinate (underestimating and tending to ignore any other side's role). What is wrong here? It seems there is no problem in the prevention of collective identity and the identity of the real group, but unfortunately, in fact there is a problem in the local, regional, national and international issues in universal social order.² There is no satisfactory answer addressed to this important question, but we have to figure out a solution tirelessly to build better peaceful human civilization in the future.

In response to a global challenge, this paper will focus on the

¹ Ninian Smart, "The Global Future of Religion", in *Global Religions: An Introduction*, ed. by Mark Juergensmeyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 127.

² A few years ago, terrorism in India surprised the world. Terrorist groups called Deccan Mujahidin attacked some cities simultaneously. What we witnessed in Taj Mahal Hotel in Mumbai, where some terrorists attacked the hotel and no less than 200 people died, was the most dramatic one. Instead of western foreigners as the main targets, some Indian citizens were the victims. Before, we had a Bali bombing a year after WTC bombing in New York. There are still many other places to mention such as France, Syria, Yemen. and Kenya. In about ten and twenty years, it was after the American armies ruled in Iraq and Afghanistan, there had been similar incidents.

evolution and development of Islamic higher education in Indonesia. The evolution of *‘Ulūm al-Dīn* to *al-Fīker al-Islāmy* and then to *Dirāsāt Islāmiyyah*. *‘Ulūm al-Dīn* (the conventional-traditional Islamic knowledge) representing “local tradition” of Islam focuses on the study of “language” and “text”, basically related to the belief system (dialectical Theology) and ritual, meanwhile *al-Fīker al-Islāmy* (Islamic Thought) as the Islamic human agency is mainly based on “reason and intellect”, while *Dirāsāt Islāmiyyah* (Islamic Studies) as new intellectual tools is primarily based on scientific paradigm of social studies and research. From the perspective of intellectual discourse and its progress, this three stages are very important since it involves human experience in historic-empirical development. Not only the outsiders, but also the insiders, namely students and scholars of Islamic studies,³ are often unable to distinguish so clearly and distinctively among the three. Consequently, they cannot build a comprehensive Islamic world view and do not have ability to unite in

³ The students of *‘Ulūm al-dīn* here vary in their educational levels such as Junior High School (Madrasah Tsanawiyah), Senior High School (Madrasah Aliyah), Undergraduate (S1 or Lc), Magister (MA, MSI, M. Ag), and Doctorate Program (Dr. of Theology). Some are from educational managements such as Islamic Boarding Schools (*Pesantren*), *majlis ta’lim*, Islamic missionary institute, short courses, basic trainings, *Dar al-Arqom* week-end course, and religious school (*madrasah diniyyah*; this cluster is preferably called *madrasah Islamiyyah* for it only studies certain religion, namely Islam). Islamic speeches were held also in some TVs including the ones who did study on their own. Other models of *‘Ulūm al-dīn* are performed by Islamic socio-religious organizations and movements, activists (*harakah*), and other ideological movements. There are also other special (*ad hoc*) forums of *‘Ulūm al-dīn* on certain subjects such fiqh, qur’anic interpretation, Islamic traditions (hadith), Islamic theology or aqidah and the unstructured ones systematically unrelated to each other. The term Islamic Studies (*Dirāsāt Islāmiyyah*) in its operational level— sciences taught in general educational institutions are clearly realized—is overlapping and complex at all levels, models, managements with their various interests claiming that what they teach belong to *‘Ulūm al-dīn*. In addition, there is some sort of different accentuation between the religious educational system and management run by private educational institutions and by the government through its higher educational institutions with its systematic and structured rules and programmes. This paper will also try to elaborate why “tensions” appear between styles of Islamic education that the Government higher educational institutions run through their undergraduate, magister, and doctorate programmes, researches and intellectual development in scientific journals and books inside and the styles of Islamic education run by non-educational institutions of which their managements are different from the government’s.

positive and constructive way a dialogue between “local” and “global”, between “particular” and “universal”, between “distinctive values” and “common values”, between what is usually called “*zummy*” (subject to change) and “*qat’iy*” (subject to no change) in Islamic law and world view in relation to the existence of another world view and the view of the religious and cultural traditions outside of Islamic culture in the global community.⁴

In the face of highly complex global era, education is still a means of enlightenment. Islamic education is completely structured and predictable, and has the ability to provide a comprehensive picture of Islam really expected by the public, including the leaders of higher education institutions, government officials, influential public figures and religious movements in the country and abroad. This essential requirement appears in the same time when uncertainty and unreliable information about Islam and subjective Muslims’ claim that tend to be uncontrolled. Sophisticated and advanced telecommunications as well as information technology used in electronic media such as websites, Internet, Multimedia, E-Jihad, Fatwa-Online and the like are often systematically structured on things and their methodology tend to increase the difficulty for the public to get accurate information about Islam.⁵ The Information booming in this digital and cyber era has had a significant impact on public opinion in the wider community for any easy and fast access and strong Islamic knowledge. In the midst of hopelessness and helplessness in challenging new realities in the post-industrial revolution and a strong wave of public information that seems without limits, we need a new concept and the ability to enlighten, reform of syllabi,

⁴ This article will be academically meaningful if in some days can be compared with the type of Islamic educations and discourses in al-Azhar, Egypt, al-Medina in Saudi Arabia and al-Mustafa in Iran. See, Masooda Bano and Keiko Sakurai (eds.), *Shaping Global Islamic Discourses: The Role of al-Azhar, al-Medina and al-Mustafa* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

⁵ To elaborate new issues, see Gary R. Bunt, *Islam in the Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), p. 207. See also some related articles such as Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson (eds.), *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003). No one could deny that today propaganda of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) widely and globally spread through electronic social media.

curricula, methods, approaches, and Islamic philosophy of education having ability to bring the students and their community to think clearly, patiently, hospitably, ethically and of course, rationally and brought everyone to “act locally and think globally”, without ignoring each other.

B. Phases of Religious Studies and the Impacts on Islamic Studies

To begin with, as inspired by Keith Ward,⁶ I will divide the religious study into four stages.⁷ The first is the local phase. All religions in prehistoric times, even today, are called local. All practices of tradition, culture, customs, norms, and even religion are named local phenomenon. This settlement cannot be absolutely avoided since one of the main factors is language. The language used in the local traditions and customs are always local. We still find old pre-history heritage in this modern era. In China, for example, its heritage is only found in the country and so are the heritages in Japan, England, Arab and Malay. In Europe there are many languages such as French, German, Italian, Spanish, Dutch and English. Not all languages are universal in the sense that they cannot be directly understood as mother tongues. When someone has to work hard to master a foreign language, it indicates that the phenomenon of language is geographically a local one. Here we can imagine then how *Pastun* tradition in Pakistan and Afghanistan and *Dayak* ethnic group's language in Borneo (Kalimantan) of Indonesia are used. Religion cannot be, as a matter of fact, separated from the characteristics of their local language including their geographical boundaries.

A religious conviction when crystallized into habits of mind is always local, social and cultural. To survive in life, man and women as an individual or a group, must maintain certain habits, collective identity in the category of intellectual habit with responsibility and common identity. Anthropologically, religions, customs, norms, treaties, laws, rules, and so

⁶ Keith Ward, *The Case for Religion* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2004).

⁷ I am in the line with some Western religious scholars who underline the importance of relating and dialoguing Religious Studies with Islamic Studies such as Richard C. Martin (ed.), *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985). And also with some newly emerging Muslim intellectual and scholars who hold that social sciences and contemporary humanities are very vital to develop Islamic Studies, such as: Ibrahim M. Abou-Rabi, Ebrahim Moosa, Farid Esack, Abdullah Saeed, Jasser Auda to only mention some.

belong to intellectual habits and confidence in general. However, this local identity will face a difficult test when in the future they have to face and interact with the “other” systems: customs, norms, agreements, rules and rituals of other areas. There will then be some doubts.⁸

For people in the early as well as contemporary history, the presence of others outside their group is considered as a threat of extinction. Humiliation, rejection, hatred, cruelty or even the opportunity to extend this feeling is often a solution for any individuals’ and groups’ threats to their daily needs.⁹ Psychological-induced fear still follows a certain group. The best example for our today’s political life is the difficult and thorny relationship between Sunnis and Shiites in the middle eastern and south Asian areas. In modern society, only scientific and academic investigation and research or serious and diligent studies can enlighten our communal live and reduce the original doubt caused by strangers’ presence in their lives.

The second phase is either Canonical or propositional. The era of world religions belongs to this canonical category. The presence of Abrahamic Religion and religions in the East generally using holly texts and their basic interpretations represents a new phase in the history of world religions after prehistoric religion. Mankind has recognized Cultural Literacy using letters. The “oral” tradition later turned into “written” one, using the alphabet, letters, words, sub-clauses, sentences, and so on. Generally, when accepted rules, local agreements and norms are written and recorded, the history of mankind then enters into a new phase

⁸ We can elaborate this issue in the history and origin of Pragmatism in America by Charles Sander Peirce. See also Milton Karl Munitz, *Contemporary Analytic Philosophy* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1981), pp. 29–33. Peirce introduced the Logic of Inquiry by mentioning the phases of history and development of human methods and ways in overcoming doubts; those are tenacities method, authority method, a priori method, and scientific method through continuous and sustainable researches, pp. 34-42.

⁹ We get the information from literature on religious studies as follows: “A historical overview of the world’s mainstream religious traditions highlights how without exception each faith community has in the face of the threat of extinction or the opportunity to expand its fundamental teachings to accommodate the changing circumstances by sanctioning the use of violence to protect and secure its own sectarian interests”. See Oliver McTernan, *Violence in God’s Name: Religion in an Age of Conflict* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 2003), p. 76. The italic is mine.

called Canonical. All religions belong to Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) while Eastern religions have sacred texts as the basis of morality, law and social rules. In this era there appear four (4) models of understanding of spiritual reality: idealistic (spiritual only is reality), dualistic (both spiritual and materialistic realities exist), theistic (both spiritual and materialistic reality exists while the materialistic depends on the spiritualistic one), and monistic (spiritual and materialistic are two different aspects but inseparable unity). This model has been developed in India, the Near East (Central) and East Asia. Of them then there appeared four (4) major trends in the world of religious thought. This era was later called “canonical” since all religions have final and absolute revelation implemented in the sacred texts.

In the great tradition, not only does a religion have a relationship with the spiritual world but also work hard to overcome the selfish human desires and give priority to spiritual values. But most canonical religions teach high values in some interpretations. In addition, they are actively involved in the local culture and political system so that canonical religions are always involved in endless conflicts.

Along with the history of mankind, the tradition of interpretation of sacred texts has developed gradually. Social level based on ability and mastery of understanding of sacred texts tends to come true and is accompanied with the structural rules and institutions. Scholars and leaders in every religion develop in accordance with the situation and current conditions. The sacred rules of behaviour-based texts are highly developed in medieval and constitute a significant contribution to the rise of spiritualistic-textual religiosity. This is accompanied by the rapid development of more contextual tradition of interpreting sacred texts.¹⁰

The third is a critical phase. Religious consciousness radically developed in the 17th and 18th centuries, can be traced in the Enlightenment. In the process, even though it is the European experience, the development went to all religious traditions other than European Jews and Christians. Traditional religions face a so tough challenge that the followers were instigated to rethink their basic assumptions. They actually have a habit of mind and confidence. Two challenges—which

¹⁰ Ward, *The Case for Religion*, p. 3-5. To get more complete information, see chapter 5-7.

are the principles of thinking in the critical phase—are based on the principle of evidentialism, in the sense that all beliefs are ready to face the arising questions. They also have proportional responsibility and the principle of autonomy as far as those religious belief, especially their issues related to moral convictions are not authority-based ones. If the religious denominations accept two principles of the enlightenment, so their religious beliefs in their traditional-conventional forms are unavoidable things.

An important thing to remember is that the principle of evidentialism is not intended to produce any concrete evidence that God really exists or not, but rather to produce more acceptable evidence in public practice than the commonly viewed religious social behaviour. It is really unavoidable that there often appear socio-political tensions among Canonical-textual religiosity followers. The other religious experiences we have had are among others: disharmonious relationship between Catholics and Protestants in Europe in the Middle Ages, and between Sunnis and Shiites in the Middle East having started before this century and seemingly continued in this modern era; between Mahayana and Hinayana in Buddhist tradition; Brahmanism, Visnuism and Shivaism in the Hindu tradition and many other evidence leading to the emergence of “doubt”. It was the doubt that triggered a new tradition in the history of religious thought called research, not to say research and development.

In the 18th century, let say, there is a new growing tradition in which human traditions try to reduce or eliminate “doubts” individually and collectively in social life by conducting ongoing researches.¹¹ This new tradition has continued to grow, develop and become familiar with the academic environment, research, scientific work and intellectual world in general. Religious views that represent the “insiders” and “outsiders” in a perspective¹² have started out. There are different ways

¹¹ Based on these continuing researches on religions, people began to recognize some approaches to religious reality such as: history, anthropology, sociology, psychology. See Daniel L. Pals, *Seven Theories of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

¹² Russell T. McCutcheon (ed.), *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader* (London and New York: Cassell, 1999); Kim Knott, “Insider/Outsider Perspectives”, in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. by John R. Hinnells (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 243–58; Muhammad Abdul-Rauf, “Outsiders’ Interpretations of Islam: A Muslim’s Point of View”, in *Approaches to Islam in Religious*

to approach such as objective, subjective and intersubjective type of religiosity, fideistic subjectivism and scientific objectivism,¹³ as well as origin, change and development in the historical analysis. They have been publicly recognized in academic circle. Scholars of religion, more recently, tend to distinguish between “faith” and “faith in tradition”,¹⁴ between “essence” and “manifestation” in religiosity. No one can redial, unlike clockwork, history of scientific development of religious phenomena. The three traditions, namely local, canonical and critical go together and sometimes crash each other and then separate in road traffics. In such a crucial situation, there appears the fourth phase, the global stage.

The fourth is the global stage. We do not yet know the form, but the clarity is that the continuous development of land, air and sea transports supporting the establishment of community that seems boundless follows the era of information and technology. In the global era the phenomenon of globalization can be clearly recognized. When local traditions are brought into the global arena, globalization then becomes another phenomenon elsewhere. Muslim diaspora and immigrants in Europe, trans-nationalism movement took a position in one part of the

Studies, ed. by Richard C. Martin (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985), pp. 179–88; Fazlur Rahman, “Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies: Review Essay”, in *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*, ed. by Richard C. Martin (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985), pp. 189–202.

¹³ Richard C. Martin uses the term to describe someone’s position in his full religious involvement and the one who can take, for the sake of research and academic interest, a ‘distance’ from his embraced religion. See Richard C. Martin, “Islam and Religious Studies: An Introductory Essay”, in *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*, ed. by Richard C. Martin (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985), p. 2. and his evaluation of that book after 25 years of its publication, Carl W. Ernst and Richard C. Martin (eds.), *Rethinking Islamic Studies From Orientalism to Cosmopolitanism* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2010).

¹⁴ The term “faith” used by W. C. Smith refers to internal, unavoidable, transcendence-and-privacy-oriented human religiosity, while the term “tradition” refers to the external and physical issues useful to observable socio-religious activities having historic dimension of human religiosity. This view is quoted in Charles J. Adams, “Islamic Religious Tradition”, in *The Study of the Middle East: Research and Scholarship in the Humanities and the Social Sciences*, ed. by Leonard Binder (New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc, 1976), p. 33.

religious complexity in the global era.¹⁵ Here, should Muslim immigrants in a new place in Europe or United States and other places formulate and create their own systems of religious life as a consequence of local adaptation to their new environment? Or do they still remain in their own long tradition with their old Islamic law normally used and practiced in their home countries or in places where the majority of Muslims in Turkey, Egypt, Marocco, Pakistan and Indonesia live? Or should they think and act as if they were still alive and socialized in a society where the main population is Muslim or they ignore the existing rules and norms found in their new land and community to meet the needs of their economies for three generation eras? Catholic adherents in Indonesia in their conversation with the Catholic centre in Rome, Italy have ever raised similar difficult questions.¹⁶ The *Fiqh* majority (Islamic jurisprudence applied in majority) and the *Fiqh* minority then suddenly go out when religious denominations are faced with a difficult choice of staying in a place where they do not live there. Muslim diasporas have been looking for a good solution freed of particular interest or *akthariyyah Fiqh* (Islamic code of conduct is accepted by the majority of society mainstream) and the possibility of having an autonomous authority to create a system *aqalliyah fiqh* (Islamic code of behaviour accepted by Muslim minorities in the West, not necessarily accepted by majority) adapted to the local position.¹⁷ To all religious denominations, the fourth stage is also as

¹⁵ In the last ten years some new themes of research have attracted some scholars of religious studies. See further Sean McLoughlin, “Migration, Diaspora and Trans-nationalism: Transformations of Religion and Culture in a Globalizing Age”, in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. by John Hinnells (London ; New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 526–46. See also Steven Vertovec, “Religion and Diaspora”, in *New Approaches to the Study of Religion: Textual, Comparative, Sociological, and Cognitive Approaches*, vol. 2, ed. by Peter Antes, Armin W. Geertz, and Randi R. Warne (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2004), pp. 275–97.

¹⁶ OFM Eddy Kristiyanto, “Sekapur Sirih Untuk Opus Magnum Prof. Steenbrink”, in *Orang-Orang Katolik di Indonesia 1808-1942: Pertumbuhan yang Spektakuler dari Minoritas yang Percaya Diri 1903-1942*, vol. 2 (Mauere: Ledalero, 2006), p. xiv.

¹⁷ Actually, there are many books regarding Muslim minorities in Europe, but only some are known in Indonesia. See Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*: (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Jørgen S. Nielsen, *Muslims in Western Europe* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992).

difficult as the three previous phases.

There are more important issues to inform. After the Aceh tsunami tragedy, the international community help the Indonesian government in general and NAD (Nangroe Aceh Darussalam) local authorities in particular. Meanwhile, Australia, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, USA, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Japan and others help local governments build infrastructure such as roads, public housing, water resources, hospitals, mosques, and environmental facilities etc. Automatically, the Banda Aceh people in particular that all Muslims are now open to other people and are naturally forced to be more open to the others. Foreigners and overseas institutions came to Nangroe Aceh Darussalam (NAD), not as tourists or guest workers, but as an international partner for humanitarian aid. Now Acehnese communicate with other people who are from different religion, habit, perception, ethnicity, and nation. Because of the situation, there must be something to compensate. They, at least, have been associated with a new value system, and values especially the economic ones makes the cost of living (rent, daily necessities, health care, transportation, etc.) much more expensive than before the tragedy. Strange value (foreign) then penetrated Aceh. This fact indicates that there has been a new jurisprudence in international relations and human responsibility with the basic norms of international relations which are unavoidable, especially when people are faced with the environmental and human crisis like tsunami. No one can solve the problem alone. They need more helps from the others. So, how do we understand all the issues in the perspective of religious education in this global era? Generally, on-going religious education cannot completely satisfy everyone; religious education should be then based on the normal, stable, regular, natural values, practices of religious life and there is no more room then to discuss unusual issues, the unstable and critical problem.

Based on the dilemma and complexity of religious studies in mixing four stages of development, how do we figure out Islamic Studies at the higher education especially in Indonesia and its implications in religious education? This important question is deserved to be examined, described, and supported some fresh and enlightening solutions for each competent stake holder including international observers, Muslim scholars

at home and abroad, educators, lecturers, teachers, community leaders, religious social organization as well as political parties leaders, diplomats and students of Islamic Studies in the frame of more anticipatory and accommodating reformulation for global problems of humanbeings.

C. Traditionalist and Revisionist Islamic Studies: From *Ulūm al-Dīn, al-Fīkrah al-Islamiyyah* to *Dirasat Islamiyyah*

To begin, it would take time to discuss the history and development of Islamic higher education in Indonesia. Unlike other countries, Indonesia has two educational systems in which three ministries organize and manage education in the country: the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kementrian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan) having control over the elementary, the junior and senior high schools and the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education having control over colleges, institutes and universities and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kementerian Agama, MORA) mainly providing religious (Islam for the majority Muslim and other religion for the rest of minority) education with their wider mandate.

I will focus on discussing the latest, MORA. Indeed, training and education for religion teachers and Islamic judges throughout Indonesia have been conducted by the Directorate of Islamic education of MORA,¹⁸ including the Islamic Higher Education (Perguruan Tinggi Agama Islam), PTAI, or what they call now as Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri (PTKIN). PTKIN is the state-based budget. The directorate of Islamic education also supervises all religious training and education institution under the private universities and advanced schools (PTKIS), namely those universities and colleges held and run by the community-based budgets. It consists around 674 institutions.

The state Islamic higher education has started since the 1950s. Now, it has 21 STAINs (Islamic State Advanced Schools), 23 IAINs (State Islamic Institute) and 11 UINs (State Islamic University). The

¹⁸ It should be noted that the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Indonesia has four directorates, namely the directorate of Islamic education, the directorate of Christianity, the directorate of Buddhism and the directorate of Hinduism. Each directorate has its own task to administer, regulate and promote a religious education according to their own religious principles and national regulations.

total number of PTKIN's student is around 318.000 students, while the total number of PTKIS is 362.400 students.¹⁹ Most of the Islamic higher education lecturers are alumni of post-graduate programmes of the State Islamic University (UIN), State Islamic Institute (IAIN) and the Islamic State Advanced Schools (STAIN). Few of them graduated from some overseas universities in, to mention some: Canada, USA, Netherlands, UK, Germany, Australia as well as Middle East and South Asian countries such as Cairo, Morocco, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Pakistan, Malaysia and the others.

The vibrant and dynamic flow of Islamic education in Indonesia can be seen from three sources of lectures and educators. Moderate tendencies of Islamic education in Indonesia are under the auspices and the administration of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. One thing to be well noted is that without the contribution of Islamic higher education, the national stability of the nation-state and the Indonesian Islamic moderation cannot reach the current situation.

Of global educational perspective, what the Islamic higher education in Indonesia has experienced is indeed a worthy issue to discuss as it is actually not easy to engage with the four phases or stages of the religious study in the context of Islamic education in the Muslim world. In addition, the origin of the three knowledge (domestic, western and middle eastern origin) including its source, literature, books, methodology, approach, mentor and college makes the Islamic education in Indonesia very unique and has, if seen from its various and diverse sources, additional value and comparative advantage. Very often, there happen **pros** and **cons** and hard debates, while the process itself is not as easy and smooth as the one we imagine. In addition, there is also a serious dialogue between their sources. It is here that what Islamic higher education in Indonesia has experienced as its contribution in facing difficult challenges in the global community is deserved to share with.

The first thing to remember clearly is that the significance of *Dirāsāt Islāmiyyah* (the typical revisionist-progressive Islamic Studies) should

¹⁹ See <https://forlap.ristekdikti.go.id/>. Also Buku Statistik Pendidikan Islam (Statistics of Islamic Education), Tahun Pembelajaran 2011/2012, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Jakarta. Also Pangkalan Data Perguruan Tinggi (PDPT), The Data Resource of Higher Education in Indonesia.

be clearly distinguished from what I call *‘Ulūm al-dīn* (Islamic religious conventionalist-traditionalist knowledge). What is commonly called the *aqidah* (doctrine, convictions, articles of faith) and *shari’ah* (rules and regulations for Muslims lives) rooted from the basic principle of the Qur’an and *Hadith*). The study of *aqidah* and *syari’ah* are accompanied by linguistics as a complementary means (which are able to help understand the meaning of sacred texts) and using deductive logic to derive religious laws, rules and norms from the sacred texts. This was followed by the emergence of Islamic religious sciences such as *‘Ilm al-Kalam* (scholastic theology), *Fiqh* (Islamic law), *Tafsir* (Qur’anic exegesis), *Hadith* (accounts of what the Prophet said or did or kept his silent approval upon something), *‘ilm al-farā’id* (the law of descent and property distribution), *Aqidah* (articles of faith), *Akhlāq* (moral ethics), *‘ibadah* (various forms of worship and ritual in Islam) supported by Arabic linguistic and its branches *‘Ilm al-nahw* (grammar; syntax), *‘ilm al-ṣarf* (morphology), *ilm al-balaghah* (rhetoric art of the Arabs), *‘ilm al-badī’* (branch of Arabic rhetoric; beautiful art style), and *‘ilm al-‘arud* (prosody).²⁰

Abdullah Saeed uses the term *Shari’a*, instead of *‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, *hadith*, *usul al-fiqh* (relating to the sources of law (*fiqh*) and methodology to extrapolate the rules of revelation) or Qur’anic interpretation.²¹ He has launched severe critique against the Islamic discipline or *‘Ulumu al-dīn* as follows:

“After the Shariah discipline reached at its maturity in the tenth/eleventh or the fourth/fifth century, they generally lose, from time to time, their vitality and creativity. Unfortunately, they rarely did ‘the water test’ against ulama and challenged any existing paradigms. The confrontation between tradition and reassessment usually win the tradition of established order. The methods developed by leading figures such as Bukhari (d. 256/870)

²⁰ Analytically, we can use Mohammad Abid al-Jabiri’s book to elaborate the history of *‘Ulūm al-dīn*. See Muhammad Abd Al-Jabiri, *Takwīn al-Aql al-Arabi* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Tsaqafy al-Arabiyy, 1991). The other books are: Muhammad Abd Al-Jabiri, *Bunyab al-Aql al-Arabiyy: Dirasah Tablīyiyah Naqdīyah li Nudūm al-Ma’rifah fī al-Tsaqafah al-Arabiyyah*, 3rd edition (Beirut: Markaz dirasaat al-Wihdah al-Arabiyyah, 1990). To trace the basic structure and frame of thought of *Mutakallimun*, see Josef van Ess, “The Logical Structure of Islamic Theology”, in *An Anthology of Islamic Studies*, ed. by Issa J. Boullata (Montreal: McGill Indonesia IAIN Development Project, 1992).

²¹ For his further critique, see Abdullah Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur’an: Towards a Contemporary Approach* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 145.

and Muslim (d. 261/875) were considered the peak of hadith criticism. There was no more significant improvement or reinvestigation for the following scholars. Because of the questions on authenticity of the hadith and its methodology, modern Western critical scholarship in hadith has been, until now, largely been ignored in the Muslim world. Even, as a matter of fact, there have been some signs of a rethinking of methodological criticism aspects of prophetic traditions with Islamic scholarship so far”.²²

At this stage, in this traditionalist-conventionalist knowledge of Islam, a Muslim cannot distinguish clearly between himself as a subject or interpreter trying to understand the object of the Shari’ah, the Quran and the prophetic tradition. Subject and object are mixed together. No clear line to draw between the subject and the object. The type of religiosity leads to what Richard C. Martin called it a kind of fideistic subjectivism religiosity. Acute truth claims on behalf of their own subjective claims of religious truth is often found in religiosity. This type, from the beginning to the contemporary era, has emerged as exclusive, rigid, uncompromising, inflexible, and literal ones. From the perspective of other branches of science, whether natural, social or humanities, no intervention is allowed. Religious education praxis elsewhere in the Muslim world are mostly coloured and dominated by this traditionalist-conventionalist understanding of religion. This is absolutely a great challenge to face for religious education elsewhere in our contemporary era of globalization.²³

In its current development, *‘Ulūm al-dīn* has grown quickly and become a subject well-known in Islamic higher education as *al-Fikr Islamiy* (Islamic Thought) as its basis material is academically united in a systematic, organized and developed entity. Fazlur Rahman and Abdullah

²² *Ibid.* Related to Tafsir, Saeed extends his critique: “Tafsir, being one of the most versatile disciplines in Islam, has escaped to some extent the suffocating dogmatism of other disciplines. The tradition of tafsir has incorporated diverse methods, approaches and principles, from the purely grammatical to the theological and symbolic. Even here, many of the new approaches utilized in tafsir were labelled by the ‘guardians’ of orthodoxy as invalid, problematic or, worse, as kufr (unbelief).”

²³ To have a more illustrative comparison, see Jasser Auda, *Maqasid al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach* (Herndon VA: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2008), pp. 56–60.

Saeed, for examples,²⁴ have written a book on Islamic Thought or *al-Fikr al-Islamiy* comprising a comprehensive description of Quranic Sciences and *al-Sunnah*, Legal Thought, Theology of Thought, Mystical Thought or Sufism, Artistic Expression, Philosophical Thought, and Modern Political Thought and Trend in Islam.

In this stage, the subject (interpreter) can make a distance from the object (the interpreted). In addition, due to the development of education in general, religious people can distinguish between the subjective and the object point of view to study and understand. It is no longer a mix between Shari'ah, the Quran, *Sunnah* and his/her own understanding of them. People began to realize that the *Fiqh*, namely its own understanding of the text can be separated from the text itself. In fact, the tradition of the Prophet, as Fazlur Rahman suggests, can be classified into informal, semi-formal and formal.²⁵ There are more to mention. Not all prophetic traditions automatically belong to the *shari'ah*. Not all *Hadith* narrated in women for instance can be classified as the prophetic tradition belonging to *Shari'ah* which means that the rise and development of one's education should be seriously considered in understanding the basic religious texts.²⁶ What to emphasize here is that Islamic Thought or *al-Fikr al-Islamiy* has scientific structure and also strong and comprehensive body of knowledge about Islam, while *Ulūm al-dīn* often emphasizes certain parts of, not all, the entire body of knowledge.

In general, the study of *Ulūm al-dīn* is reductive. It emphasizes certain aspects and ignoring others. This study also emphasis on *Kalam* and *Aqidah* (dialectical theology) thought without philosophical one; or often focuses on *Fiqh* (Islamic law), but ignores Sufism (Islamic mysticism). There are also people who study *hadith* alone²⁷ (even in this contemporary age they learn the prophetic traditions on CDs) without

²⁴ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1966); Abdullah Saeed, *Islamic Thought: An Introduction* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006).

²⁵ Fazlur Rahman, *Islamic Methodology in History* (Karachi: Central Institute of Islamic Research, 1965).

²⁶ Muhammad al-Ghazali, *al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah baina abl al-Fiqh and abl al-Hadith* (Beirut: Dar al-Syuruq, 1989), pp. 194–6.

²⁷ Hammādī Dhuwaib, *As-Sunna baina "l-uṣūl wa-"t-tārī* (Beirut: Al-Markaz al-Tsaqafy al-Arabiyy, 2005); Muhammad Khalid Mas'ud, "Hadith and Violence", *Oriente Moderno*, vol. 82, no. 1 (2002), pp. 5–18.

in-depth elaboration on the important issues related to the problem of *hadith* themselves and *Fiqh*, *Kalam*, *Sufism* and also social conditions. Very often, it happens that a partial study is reduced to choose just one style or a particular mindset associated with groups' 'interest' in society. Here, Sunni *Kalam*/Theology only studies and describes ideas, leaders of their own groups, and methods of thinking, and read only books on Sunni *Kalam*, and vice versa. Shiite *Kalam* only focuses on its own, and ignores Sunni *Kalam*. They are not even interested in studying and introducing *Kalam* of other religious groups', such as the Baha'i, Ahmadiyya, Qadyaniyyah and others. Every *Kalam* religious trend often isolates themselves from other groups and in some cases they even insult, hate and apostate each other. As a result, most group members psychologically tend to be highly reactive and emotional when they encounter another group'.²⁸ This type of religious education is unfortunately not conducive to human and Muslim welfare and global peace.

As a result, the teaching and learning of '*Ulūm al-dīn* in the conventionalist-traditionalist category is very "local", superficial, partial, provincial and parish. I would rather say that the trustees and supporters of '*Ulūm al-dīn* will be unconsciously and easily trapped into a certain *al-firaq al-Islamiyya* (the differences and sects in the Islamic community). Moreover, the '*Ulūm al-dīn* tends to be shallow, not deep and comprehensive, and easy to stimulate the conflict—not to mention very sensitive to inter-group violence.

Ulūm al-dīn in the study of this type in the Muslim world has almost lost their Islamic humanistic and academic horizon which are comprehensive, systematic, and integrated. '*Ulūm al-dīn* studies tend to be partial, reductive, and selective, and without linkages with other clusters

²⁸ The incident in Monas square, Jakarta, in 1 June 2008 and a clash between Sunni and Ahmadi in Cikeusik, Padeglang, West Java (2012) and Sunni and Shiite in Pamekasan Madura, East Java (2014) clearly showed us the high tension and emotion of *Kalam* supporters in Indonesia and elsewhere in the Muslim world. The internal tensions within Sunni, namely among Wahhabi, Salafi, Ikhwani, also Jihadi-Salafi or Jihadi-Ikhwani in contemporary history cannot be avoided. As long as this study of *Kalam* or Islamic dialectical theology is separated from the other subject in Islamic Studies in special, and from socio-politico-religious studies as a whole, the high tension and emotion will never decrease and accumulatively, if not handled with a care, will lead to physical violence.

of Islamic disciplines.²⁹ Indeed, it is not enough for students (who want to learn Islam comprehensively) to study the partial, parochial, sectarian, provincial and reductive *‘Ulūm al-dīn* only. The presence of *al-Fikr al-Islamiy* (Islamic thought) which is historical, systematic, comprehensive, non-sectarian, more non-parishes over the province will help students complete their knowledge of *‘Ulūm al-dīn*.

When the dynamic interaction and discussion between *‘Ulūm al-Dīn* and *al-Fikr al-Islamiy* is always an ongoing processes, Islamic academic environment in the east or the west continues to grow and develop. It follows the development of common methodologies usually used in natural or hard science, social research and humanistic thought. A contact with western education where research and critical approach are important and given a priority will give a new light in the emerging of Islamic Studies or *Dirāsāt Islāmiyyah*. Field research publication and the emergence of Islamic scientific journals, symposia, seminars, encyclopaedias, as well as the publication of new books from the inside and the outside began to engage in study and research centres in higher education in the east and the west. Philological-historical studies on Islamic issues largely conducted by orientalist, because of the advent of methods and approaches in the 18th to the 19th century, have opened a new era of academic study of Islam. Moreover, when the perspective of the social sciences and contemporary humanities³⁰ get involved in the study *‘Ulūm al-dīn* and *al-Fikr al-Islamiy* there will then appear a new cluster of Islamic science called *Dirāsāt Islāmiyyah* (Islamic Studies).

The processes and procedures of data collection, methods and approaches, including its basic assumptions and theoretical frameworks are much different from the two former Islamic knowledge and sciences. In addition to refer to the patent group of Islamic religious knowledge (*al-Turath*; Islamic cultural heritage) and standards in *‘Ulūm al-dīn* and *al-Fikr al-Islamiy*, the new cluster is also strongly supported by field studies data, history of ‘objective-empirical’ elaboration in social dynamics,

²⁹ M. Amin Abdullah, “Religion, Science, and Culture: An Integrated, Interconnected Paradigm of Science”, *Al-Jāmi‘ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 52, no. 1 (2014), pp. 175–203.

³⁰ Charles J. Adams has informed this development well (though this information was classic, as it was about 30 years ago) in Adams, “Islamic Religious Tradition”, pp. 29–89. See also Martin (ed.), *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*.

continuity, change of patterns and tendency of social political interaction, economics, culture, pattern of tension, conflict, harmony and field of researchers' plurality of meanings and interpretations. Moreover, critical and analytical approach (*Dirasah naqdiyyah-tabliliyyah*) gets a priority in the contemporary *Dirāsāt Islāmiyyah* (Islamic Studies). Methods and approaches are historical, psychological, anthropological, philosophical or sociological (in the condition that they do not fall into the trap of reductionist) to the reality of religion in Muslim societies. The use of 'theoretical framework' for the analysis of data collected in the field, literature and manuscripts are also given priority. In other words, *Dirāsāt Islāmiyyah* always uses and works with the methods of thought in the social sciences and humanities, not only in the text and in a rational world, to reveal the existing diversity of contemporary Islam in daily life.³¹

What makes it completely different from the other two previous groups? It should be noted that in the era of Islamic Studies (*Dirāsāt Islāmiyyah*), a religious person realizes that the quality of the understanding of the religion, including Islam, somehow depends on how deep and how wide someone through his/her knowledge and quality controls any scientific explanation of issues to discuss. It means that not only does the religious worldview depend on the basis of the authority of the fundamental text but also on how broad and comprehensive the scientific and academic insights and perspectives are. Undoubtedly, a science, not just the fundamental text of religion, becomes a window to see the sights of religious understanding. A competent worldview, especially the Islamic one, should be based on the cognizance of a natural, social and humanistic perspective. The competent worldview are obviously based on insights provided by the scientific and academic discourse will determine the discourse of *Fiqh*, *Kalam* or *Tafsir* in the future. In this phase, the relationship between science and religion, compared to the two previous clusters, becomes so urgent and crucial.³²

³¹ Abdullah Saeed calls the revisionist Islamic studies as Muslim or Islamic Progressive. See Saeed, *Islamic Thought*, p. 151.

³² Jasser Auda, *Maqasid al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach*, pp. 201–6; Nidhal Guessoum, *Islam's Quantum Question: Reconciling Muslim Tradition and Modern Science* (New York: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd., 2010), chap. "Introduction"; Fazlur Rahman, *Revival and Reform in Islam: A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism*, ed. by Ebrahim Moosa (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2000), p. 28.

The emergence of a new genre, *Dirāsāt Islāmīyyah*, has become something too strange and weird to the students, lectures, institutions, users and guardian of *‘Ulum al-din*, and possibly to *al-Fiker al-Islamīy*. In the dialogue, discussion and debate on contemporary global issues such as human rights,³³ gender³⁴ (women’s participation in political, social, economic and educational activity), the religious plurality,³⁵ democracy, international relations and law, harmonious life between Muslims and non-Muslims,³⁶ using mingled methods and approaches between *al-Fiker al-Islamīy* and *Dirāsāt Islāmīyyah* have surprised the students of *‘Ulūm al-dīn* still applying the old paradigm and scholastic perspective in religious field of thought. Then there came strong reactions and even suspicion of being secular, liberal, apostate, shallow faith and the likes. It is an understandable thing as a mode and style of empirical research and critical approach are unknown and not recognized yet and apparently alien to the Muslim community in the tradition of *‘Ulūm al-dīn*. There have appeared strong belief and tendency that the performance and implementation of religious teaching in society need no further elaboration, development, inquiry and investigation. It means that the implementation of the religious teaching in society needs not a constructive critique and a further elaboration.³⁷

³³ Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im, *Toward an Islamic Reformation: Civil Liberties, Human Rights, and International Law* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990); Mashood A. Baderin, *International Human Rights and Islamic Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

³⁴ Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, *Dawā’ir al Khauf: Qiraah fi Khitab al Mar’ab* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thsaqafy al-Araby, 2000); Fatima Mernissi, *Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World* (Cambridge: Perseus Publishing, 2002).

³⁵ Pradana Boy Zulian, “Fatwa in Indonesia: An Analysis of Dominant Legal Ideas and Modes of Thought of Fatwa-Making Agencies and Their Implications in the Post-New Order Period”, Ph.D. Dissertation (Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2015).

³⁶ Waleed El-Ansary and David Linnan (eds.), *Muslim and Christian Understanding: Theory and Application of “A Common Word”* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

³⁷ This anxiety and nervousness have ever appeared in Indonesia since 1980s up to nowadays. The solution was revealed by holding seminars in some places, mainly in universities and centres for religious studies. To get more details, see further Mulyanto Sumardi (ed.), *Penelitian Agama: Masalah dan Pemikiran* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1992); Abdul-Rauf, “Outsiders’ Interpretations of Islam: A Muslim’s Point of View”, pp.

Based on the perspective of the four phases of religious studies, it seems that *‘Ulūm al-dīn* was still in the canonical phase and the above description indicates a decline to the “local” phase, in the sense of parish-provincial one while *al-Fikr al-Islamī* is in a critical phase of transition to the emergence of Islamic Studies (*Dirāsāt Islāmīyyah*). Apparently, the relationship, encounters and development of linkages between those three clusters are not elaborated properly. In fact, it is often desperate in the sense that there is a huge wave of feeling insecure and uneasiness following the emergence of the new genre of Islamic studies. Not only is the situation going on in the east, in Muslim countries, but also in the west.³⁸

Apparently, proponents of the traditionalist religiosity use canonical or textual frameworks leaving aside the empirical study on the religion. They feel uncomfortably and insecure if any empirical-historical studies using academic discourses and more critical-thinking interfere their domain of discourse preserved and maintained for centuries.³⁹ It is necessary and important, but not to generalize, to mention here that in the present era, the reluctance to accept a critical approach from the history of religion was sponsored not only by supporters of *‘Ulūm al-dīn*, but also supported by those who have different background of hard sciences such as medicine, engineering, physics, computer science recognizing any less in-depth knowledge on the development from *‘Ulūm al-dīn* to Islamic studies. This is due to the education system in the

179–88; Knott, “Insider/Outsider Perspectives”, pp. 243–58.

³⁸ In commenting the existing turbulences and violence in the contemporary Muslim world, Keith Ward says: “The violent and ultra-conservative elements of Islam that catch the headlines in the modern world are products of the same historical, social and economic forces which have dethroned Christianity from being the controlling force of European life. Some Muslims see the critical scientific secularism, in its embodiment in the relativistic, amoral, technologically dehumanizing and even world-threatening West as vindication of their rejection of rationalist philosophy, and as something to oppose, possibly even with violence”. Ward, *The Case for Religion*, p. 207.

³⁹ It needs emphasizing here that the main point of the quarrel was in the public sphere, not in the ritual matter. No ‘quarrels’ at all are found in the *ibadah mahdhah* (core teaching of ritual) or *arkan al-Islam* (five basic pillars of Islam) and *arkan al-iman* (six basic pillars of Islamic belief). It is only in the area of ethic-legal which is seriously and heatedly debated among the three elements of Islamic religious knowledge in the contemporary Muslim world.

Islamic world in general underwent a dichotomy policy between public and private, religion and secular, theology and social, not to say between conservative and liberal and make the current generation very poor in facing and solving this challenging humanistic issues.

The meeting point between the objections raised by supporters and students of *‘Ulūm al-dīn* in its traditionalistic paradigm—who did not have either any comprehensive knowledge of *al-Fikr al-Islamiy* or any opportunity to study contemporary *Dirāsāt Islāmiyyah*—and students of *‘Ulūm al-dīn* of non-Islamic colleges/public higher education has created rapidly turmoil in the Muslim civilization in the contemporary world. Not only did we find the turbulence in the West where the Muslim minority live but also in the East where the majority of Muslims stay. Civilization has experienced strong turbulence due to bad nuance in the relationship between people in the world in the post-US invasion in Iraq in the 1990s and in Afghanistan, after al-Qaida’s wide influence and the bombing of the World Trade Centre (WTC), New York and the Pentagon, Washington on September 11, 2001. The bad relations between the West and the East (Islam) have led to the emergence of a new genre of *Kalam* (dialectical theology), a contemporary trend of thought in Islam that Khaled Abou el Fadl called it as puritan and moderate. He further said:

“To be really modern, according to the purists, means to retreat back to the golden age of Islam. This, however, does not mean that they want to abolish technological and scientific progress. Instead, they have deceptively simple programme- Muslims must learn Western technology and science, **but Muslims, to fight the Western culture, should not attempt to study social sciences or humanities.** This is the reason why a large number of puritans came to the West **to study physical sciences, including computer science, and completely ignore the social sciences and humanities.** Armed with modern science and technology, puritans believe that they will be in a better position to create the golden age of Islam by creating a society modelled on the Prophet’s state-cities in Madinah and Mekkah”.⁴⁰

Similar impression launched by a Palestinian scholar, who lived in the United States and Canada, the late Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi‘. He

⁴⁰ Khaled M. Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), p. 171. The bold is mine.

observed that:

“The absence of social science or critical philosophical perspectives of sharia can be illustrated by the fact that most students who received government scholarships to continue their graduate studies abroad, especially from the Gulf countries, only study ‘hard sciences’ or business administration, supposedly value-free or subject of free-criticism. In my experience of staying in America (nearly twenty five years ago), I had never encountered a single student from the Gulf pursuing a graduate degree in political science, philosophy, or history. Shutting the door to all kinds of critical perspectives has been the foundation of the field of Religious Studies (especially Islamic Studies) and makes it quite relevant. This fact has made it very difficult in many Arab countries to encourage the growth of scientific tradition mainly developed in the West, to study the complex interaction between religion and society in the modern Arab world. **The discipline of sociology of religion is seen as heresy, or innovation, which does not convey the true essence of Islam.** Just as the study of the modern Arab state system, the sociology of religion is a necessity in the Arab world”.⁴¹

Jargon and standards used in the ideological conflict embedded in *Kalam* in the Local-Canonical era has strongly reappeared and arisen in contemporary era. It has been popularized in Indonesia through transnational movement of global *Salafism* and of course a global injustice using a strategy of socio-religious conflict via social media as well as a verbal one.⁴²

Apostasy, silting Islamic faith (*aqidah*), redeclaring *syahadah* (to reaffirm faith in Islam), liberalism, secularism, pluralism for those scholars and laymen who think in historical and critical mind is a reflection of the difficult position in victimizing the intellectual and academic effort to unite *Ulūm al-dīn*, *al-Fikr al-Islamiy* and *Dirāsāt Islāmiyyah* in Muslim thought today. As a matter of fact, users and supporters of the three groups do not need to build in the minds of “thick wall” of separation

⁴¹ Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi’, “A Post-September 11 Critical Assessment of Modern Islamic Thought”, in *September 11: Religious Perspectives on the Causes and Consequences*, ed. by Ian S. Markham and Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi’ (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2002), p. 36. The bold is mine.

⁴² For a detail description of Global Salafism, see Roel Meijer (ed.), *Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement* (London: Oxford University Press, 2009).

among the three religious (Islamic) knowledge. Basically, the three groups reflect the historical development of Islamic intellectualism and Islamic religiosity as well. The existence of the wall in the mind makes them separate, strange, and isolated from one to another. There appears then mutual distrust, suspicion, hatred and impoliteness. The relationship between the three is not antagonistic, threatening and not competing with each other but it is indeed a big challenge of Islamic higher education in Indonesia today and in the Muslim world in general.

The main project of contemporary Islamic studies in higher education in Indonesia is to describe the ideal pattern and compromise the relationship between the three different proportional opinions and to eliminate mutual suspicion. These three clusters are apparently brothers and sisters. They have a strong family relationship, even a family resemblance. They only have differences in methods (processes and procedures), observation horizon (approach), and the source of the data (empirical and literal), of different languages, including foreign languages. The difference is only due to the human intellectual development, and advancement of intellectual discourse in natural history. No one can escape from this natural process. The people and community from ethnic groups (*qabilah*), for the establishment of community, then lead to the formation of nation states that even now lead to the state of post-nation-state. Here, it should be noted that each phase has its own characteristics ranging from legal, social, educational, knowledge systems and economic systems, including the religious one. In the process of a long history, there should appear continuity, change and development. However, in terms of intellectual development experience, all actors must comply with the golden rule. No mutual disorientation and prejudice are allowed.

Based on the above elaboration, it shows clearly that the *‘Ulūm al-dīn* (the traditional knowledge of Islam) in particular is an alien to a critical phase and global yet. *‘Ulūm al-dīn*, as described above, will undergo extra-ordinary difficulty when they have to face the historical development of mankind globally with a dynamic, new challenges, competition and conflict, locally, regionally, nationally, and of course internationally. That is why there must be new forms and templates which are more accommodating and anticipatory to the difficulty the Muslim communities and religious denominations face in general, and

more especially when they have to face the idea of progress, problems of otherness, insider and outsider of the group. Insider and outsider of the group viewed from the aspects of religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Catholicism, and Christianity), races (yellow, brown and white), ethnicity (Java, Acehnese, Minang, Batak, Malay, Bugis, etc.), and countries (Asia, Europe, Africa, America, Australia), educational levels (*pesantren* (Islamic boarding school), SMP (Junior High School, Madrasah Tsanawiyah/MTs), SMA (Senior High School, Madrasah Aliyah/MA), undergraduate students (S1), Masters (S2), and PhD (S3); Geography (West, East, South, North), sex (gender differences), economy classes (developed, undeveloped, poor-rich), the concept of *fiqh* (old and new jurisprudence on human rights), *fiqh al-Aghlabiyyah* (*fiqh* for Muslim majority) and *fiqh al-aqalliyah* (*fiqh* for Muslim minority) in European and North American countries where the Muslim minority lives, and the development of social media.

So, the 'Ulūm al-dīn we have today is not enough to face the new challenges of modernity and post-modernity era. To separate and isolate the paradigm of Islamic studies, from the old to the new, is not the right solution. There must be new efforts to have the ability to incorporate and unify, to enrich and relate to the old intellectual 'Ulūm al-dīn (in-Turast; Islamic cultural heritage) with new the intellectual treasury of *Dirasat Islamiyyah* (al-Hadatsab; Islamic cultural modernity) to build a new generation of scholars, academicians, intellectuals, clergy and ulama (religious scholars) in the global era and within the time provided by the ability of the on-going challenges of modernity and post-modernity.

D. The Contributions of Revisionist Islamic Studies in Indonesia to the Global Community

Indeed, as mentioned above, there are missing links in the development and the relationship between Canonical type of 'Ulūm al-dīn and of Critical and analytical Islamic Studies (*Dirāsāt Islāmīyyah*). They also seem to have lost links having a serious impact of no dialogue together, no mutual benefit, and no mutual respect between the three groups of methodologies and approaches and their impact on building internal

and external harmony among faiths in the global era.⁴³ The linkage and interrelation between the three, to my knowledge, are not hierarchical, where *Ulūm al-dīn* has been assumed to have been the best, the highest, and the most important compared to the others. The relationship between the traditionalists (*Ulumu al-dīn*) and the revisionist Islamic studies (*Dirasat Islamiyya*) does not lay in a relationship of binary opposition which has its own truth claims, negating the other contributions. The linkage between the three should be dialogical, complementary and negotiative.⁴⁴

Not only does each group take any advantage of others, but also require others to contribute actively. Each of them can actually carry out joint dialogue and constructive criticism (*al-naqd*) if they find within themselves some weakness, unusual things or anomalies and badness for their better future. It is quite a strong suggestion to have no more truth claim, stagnation, and status quo, but respectable and mutual helps among them. Through *al-Fikr Islamiy* it is hopefully effective that the ideal situation would lead the development of *Ulumu al-din* to *Dirasat al-Islamiyyah* (Islamic Studies) into a more humanistic to give a significant contribution to the methods and patterns of religious education in the global era and to be able to face any challenges from time to time, decade to decade and century to century. Popular jargon or slogan that we know so far in Indonesia is that Islam is a “*rahmatan li al-'alamin*” (blessing for the universe, thanks to the global community) and not only thanks to its own internal Muslim group, will actually come true.⁴⁵ Of course, this big

⁴³ For more information, see Muhammad Arkoun, *al-Fikr al-Islami Qira'ab Ilmiyyah* (Beirut: Markaz al-Inma' al-Qaumiy, 1987), pp. 87–112; Martin (ed.), *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*, pp. 1–18.

⁴⁴ A book regarding a response to the development of contemporary Islamic studies, more specifically on Islamic law, is Khaleed Abou el-Fadl's *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority and Women*. Khaleed suggests the importance to create a genre in the new Islamic thought and studies with five mutually interrelated ethical standpoints: honesty, diligence, comprehensiveness, rationality and self-restraint. The new Islamic studies should be “negotiative” among internal as well as external groups and fractions mutually competing in gaining authority of reading and interpretation of Islamic teachings in the contemporary era.

⁴⁵ In line with his expertise, Jasser Auda criticizes the tendency of Muslim's understanding of *Maqasid al-Syari'ah* (the aim and the purpose of Islamic law) which tends to accentuate and prioritize the welfare of Muslim community only, neglecting the whole community. He classifies *Maqasid al-Syari'ah* into three, namely *Maqasid 'ammah*

and ambitious project is vigorously expected to, by means of conformity, seriousness, diligence, rigor, wisdom, and not in a hurry and trouble, come to its smooth realization.

Since 2000, the Indonesian Islamic Studies in higher education has made serious efforts to overcome weaknesses and tendency to conservatism in education and exclusiveness in religious education in the modern global era. Critical and dialogic *Dirāsāt Islāmīyyah* (Islamic Studies) has been introduced to the students to the values of authentic religiosity to maintain peaceful coexistence in the local and global community to maintain. There must be, as a matter of fact, a strong bridge between the differences of traditionalist vision and mission and of revisionist in the Islamic education of Indonesia. In this case, altruism (the tendency to give more priority to the needs of other groups communities instead of his/her personal and own group's ones), which is the basic value of global humanitarian and Islamic religiosity, should be introduced to students and the community to avoid egoistic, parochial, and provocative attitudes.

The above contribution is one of the major challenges the Islamic studies at Islamic higher education in Indonesia face. To have assimilation and positive dialogue between the three groups of Islamic learning in college especially in the fabric of the global study of religion is not easy as they have to face many obstacles and hurdles. Nevertheless, all efforts are focused on academic thought for the country to bridge the gaps commonly found in each institution. Institutional transformation of the institute of Islamic studies into a full-fledged Islamic university symbolizes serious effort to get rid of the obstacles, difficulties, and weaknesses in educational life.

Institutional transformation of IAIN (State Islamic Institute) to UIN (State Islamic University) in 2000 is a mailing stone to the Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia to be academically and scientifically more open in international forums in the global community. Paradigm of integration and interconnection of religion and science has been officially announced. With this new paradigm, the revisionist Islamic studies have been introduced and play an important and significant role across the country. Now, there are at least three international

(universal maqasid), *Maqasid kbassab* (specific maqasid) and *Maqasid juz'īyyah* (partial maqasid). Auda, *Maqasid al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach*, p. 5.

journals which can be globally accessed: *Studia Islamica*⁴⁶ of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, *Al-Jami'ah*⁴⁷ of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta and *The Journal of Indonesian Islam*⁴⁸ of UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. Among the three, the journal of *Al-Jami'ah* recently has been indexed by Scopus. The two others will follow soon.

There is another important development to mention. Since 2006, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Yogyakarta of MORA, in collaboration with Gadjah Mada State Public University, Yogyakarta of MONA and Duta Wacana Christian University, Yogyakarta has opened a new PhD program of International Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS).⁴⁹ Their students are Indonesian and overseas ones. Muslims, Christians and others, both for students and lectures, work together academically without religious boundaries and burdens. This performance of organizing this course is very unique, as not only is it very rare in Indonesia, but also elsewhere in the world. In addition, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Yogyakarta opens a new program for international students in 2015.⁵⁰

Today, there have appeared bad tensions between the West and the East, not to mention Judea-Christianity and Islam, between fundamentalism and secularism, minority and majority, as well as Puritanism and Moderatism in contemporary Islamic thought. All religious denominations have their own truth claims and basic assumptions of no falsifiable. Clash of civilizations can appear anywhere, and be added and seasoned with provocation intended to fish in troubled waters, so that there arises what is called hardliner, extremism, radicalism and terrorism everywhere in the world.⁵¹ This is followed by the fact that Muslims, in their internal social groups, tend to accuse others of apostasy,

⁴⁶ <http://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/studia-islamika>

⁴⁷ <http://aljamiah.or.id/index.php/AJIS>

⁴⁸ <http://jiis.uinsby.ac.id/index.php/JIIs>

⁴⁹ <http://icrs.ugm.ac.id/>

⁵⁰ <http://pps.uin-suka.ac.id>

⁵¹ M. Amin Abdullah, "Introductory Elaboration on the Roots of Religious Violence: The Complexity of Islamic Radicalism", in *Innerer Friede und die Überwindung von Gewalt: Religiöse Traditionen auf dem Prüfstand*, ed. by Hans-Martin Barth and Christoph Elsas (Schnefeld: Eb-Verlag, 2007).

belief (infidel), religious superstition, and the likes. Tensions spread out excessively. We often hear open fights, gunfire and suicide bombings and other anarchic violence in the name of religion.

In terms of perspective of Islamic studies in Indonesian higher education, unity and interconnection between *Ulūm al-dīn* (the traditional religious sciences), *al-Fīkīr al-Islāmīy* (Islamic thought) and *Dirāsāt Islāmīyyah* (Islamic Studies) constitute the only thing to do immediately as attempts to fill the gaps and weaknesses embedded in the general picture of Islamic education in Muslim-majority countries as Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi describes above. The success of this programme will be recorded as the hall mark of a new Islamic intellectualism in modern and post-modern era in facing the challenges of a global society.

Unfortunately, in the Islamic world today the three clusters are still standing in their own exclusiveness because each of them feels they are able to stand on their own. Once again, each of them assumes they do not need others' help. They tend to avoid mutual interaction and negotiation. Moreover, the most common and obvious phenomenon is that they tend to generalize one another without considering the different methodologies they have. There is another generalization between *Dirāsāt Islāmīyyah*, *Ulūm al-dīn*, and *al-Fīkīr al-Islāmīy*. Not only can the disintegrity be seen in the curriculum, syllabus, and teaching methods in Islamic universities, mainly in public universities. The most important thing to note and explain is the impact of the 'isolationist' type of Islamic education in the development of the Islamic way of thinking the students and stakeholders have. It is very clear that they would find it difficult to cope with and adapt to a new era of human life in which people in the world are interconnected in the current situation in culture, science, religion, economics, art and music, and politics. Mutual linkages between the three pillars are unavoidable and undeletable. No contact and mutual negotiation demonstrate clearly their isolation. The isolationist type will easily lead to misunderstanding between trustees and stakeholders. The pattern of thought should be reorganized and reconstructed seriously and radically if the present generation wants to have a harmonious life between the orchestra of diversity in the internal life of the people (Muslim community), and the external lives when Muslims interact and socialize with non Muslims in the global world.

Indeed, elaboration on the pattern of a single entity relationship (only recognizes one cluster), a separate entity (there appear three groups but each of them have their own isolation), and integrated entity (three clusters of interrelated and integrated); including the implications and consequences on practical areas will cause serious efforts necessarily to connect and unite the three pillars. Unity and interconnectedness of the three pillars will lead to the emergence of a new mentality, attitudes and behaviour in Islamic religiosity to be opened in front of the challenges of global society. Old patterns of thinking, traditionalist-conventionalist, which seems to be status quo, antagonist, black and white, exclusive, absolute, dogmatic, truth claims, closed and stiff should be turned into a revisionist one which is more conducive to spread the seeds of meaningful participation and to prioritizing consensus with an inclusive and open mind. Not only is the 'tradition' (*al-muhafazah 'ala al-qadim al-salib*) but also the aspect of 'transformation' (*al-akhdh bi al-jadid al-aslab*), which is to translate and interpret the old concept of intellectual concepts and treasures to a new and more promising to address the challenges of humanity and what the people have in this global world. After the Indonesian Islamic studies in higher education solve difficult, complicated and complex problems, it will contribute a lot to global Muslim as well as world communities. In the long term, the experience of teaching and learning of Islam in Islamic higher education in Indonesian will become a benchmark for the world Muslim community elsewhere for its contribution to a peaceful and harmonious life and human welfare in general.

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