

DISCOURSE ON OCCIDENTALISM STUDIES IN INDONESIA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MUKTI ALI

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Abstract: In the last few decades, religious studies have increasingly excited and attracted the attention of many scholars and groups. Those involved in religious studies are not only religious leaders and scientists in different fields but also politicians and policyholders in various circles. Religious studies is seen as an absolute necessity in the increasingly complex order of modern life. Many experts put their hopes on the intensification and extensification of religious studies in order to create a harmonious social life in this globalized world. In responding to the development of Western thought as a paradigm of religious studies, the concept of Occidentalism is very important to be discussed. This article will focus on the discussion of occidentalism, specifically in the perspective of Mukti Ali who in the 1970s served as the Minister of Religious Affairs. As one of the influential figures in Islamic scholarship in Indonesia, he has contributed to the development and enlightenment of Islamic thought in Indonesia. This article argues that Ali's concept of occidentalism represents the antithesis towards Western orientalism and the renewal of Islamic studies in Indonesia.

Keywords: Mukti Ali; Occidentalism; Orientalism.

Introduction

Discourses on Orientalism¹ and Occidentalism² in recent decades have been filled by extensive scholarly works written in a

¹ Orientalism is a discourse that forms a systematic basis for the formation of stereotypes of "Eastern societies" and "Eastern countries." This stereotype emphasizes the need and desire of the colonial government to position the West as superior and the East as inferior. What they show is an unchanging image of racial subjects dominated by one other race knowing them (the dominated race)

variety of Western languages. Muslim countries that were formerly colonized by Britain, for example, are now very productive with important works. This is a distinct advantage for Muslims who do not know English, and could be the reason for the widening of the intellectual gap between the latter and the former. So, it becomes a methodological challenge for them in Islamic studies.³

Basically, the teachings of Islam, which from the very beginning brought by 'Adam to those brought by Muḥammad, are "Left Teaching." In a sense, Islam is a practical teaching that seeks to dismantle the oppressive and discriminatory social order. In that context, Islamic theology is always synonymous with liberation theory. Hassan Hanafi defines the Islamic left in the context of a social structure where there are two opposing social classes.⁴ The first class, namely the well-established elite class, is the "right" class. This class controls both the means of production and the instruments of political power, and seeks to exploit the "other class." Where the "other class," which is the majority class, is the "left" class. In such a social order, the Islamic Left is intended to defend the interests of the majority to restore the rights of the poor from the rich, to defend the weak against the strong, and to make all humanity equal. Even now, the social order still reflects

and what is good for them than they know about themselves. Edward W. Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered," *Race & Class*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (1985), 20.

² Occidentalism is a discourse of "rejection." It rejects the stereotypes created by the West, as the West creates stereotypes as a form of rejection of the existence of the East. The difference between occidentalism and orientalism lies mainly in the methodological problem of placing knowledge as an object of study which honestly dialogues the West and the East. In the project of occidentalism, the awakening of the intellectual treasures of the East must be preceded by studies on Western scholarship to undermine the arrogance of the West as having universal standards of knowledge. Rohanda and Dian Nurrachman, "Orientalisme vs Oksidentalisme: Benturan dan Dialogisme Budaya Global," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2017), 388.

³ Muh. Syamsuddin, "Orientalisme, Oksidentalisme dan Filsafat Islam Modern dan Kontemporer (Suatu Agenda Masalah)," *Refleksi: Jurnal Filsafat dan Pemikiran Islam*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (2018), 48.

⁴ Hassan Hanafi, born in 1935 in Cairo, Egypt. Hanafi is a Professor and the Dean of Faculty of Philosophy at Cairo University and the initiator of the concept of modern Islam.

the clash between the elite and the majority class. That means liberation theology is still relevant to be applied.⁵

The term Occidentalism⁶ was popularized by Hassan Hanafi, a thinker from Egypt and the author of *al-Yasār al-Islāmī*. The general meaning of Occidentalism is a westernized study or a comprehensive study by examining and summarizing all aspects of the life of Western society. In Occidentalism, the position of the object-subject is reversed, the East as the subject and the West as the object of study. Although the term Occidentalism is the antonym of Orientalism, there is another difference, in that it does not have the same aims of hegemony and domination as Orientalism does. However, the Occidentalists only want to reclaim the Eastern ego which has been shaped and captured by the West.

Different scholars have dealt with the subject of Occidentalism, particularly related to Hanafi. This article, however, will focus more on the discussion of Occidentalism⁷ in the perspective of Mukti Ali, one of the reformers in the field of Islamic studies in Indonesia. Ali's view of Occidentalism is somewhat different from the established perspective as described by Hanafi or Ian Buruma.⁸ Both Hanafi and Buruma emphasize the political side by relying on the West-East dichotomy.⁹ While Hanafi emphasizes the impor-

⁵ Wilda Rihlasyita, "Kiri Islam Hassan Hanafi dan Oksidentalisme," *Jurnal Al-Yasini*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (November 2019), 112.

⁶ Hanafi's occidentalism was created to deal with the West which has a major influence on the consciousness of world civilization. The assumption it has built is that the West has its own socio-political cultural boundaries. Therefore, every attempt to hegemonize Western culture and thought in the other world must be limited. Thus, the West must be returned to the normalcy of its cultural boundaries. Hanafi seeks to study the West within its own historical-cultural perspective. Abdurrohman Kasdi and Umma Farida, "Oksidentalisme sebagai Pilar Pembaharuan (Telaah terhadap Pemikiran Hassan Hanafi)," *Fikrah*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2013), 239.

⁷ Regarding the study of occidentalism that has surfaced in Indonesia recently, it was not only discussed by Hanafi but also by Said, a scientist from Palestine, in his book *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

⁸ Ian Buruma was born in December 28, 1951. He is a Dutch writer and editor living and working in the United States. In 2017, he became editor of *The New York Review of Books*, but left his position in September 2018. Many of his writings focus on Asian culture, particularly 20th-century China and Japan.

⁹ Roma Ulinuha, "Occidentalism in Indonesia: A Study of Intellectual Ideas of Mukti Ali and Nurcholish Madjid and Contemporary Legacy," *Esensia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2011), 80.

tance of studying Western philosophy, knowledge, history and culture, Ali voices the importance of making a counter discourse to Orientalism by studying Western scholarly works about the East. Ali's contribution is quite evident in his work as a bibliographic survey of classical Indonesian studies by the Dutch, English, and German.

In the growth of Islamic academic studies in Indonesia, people will find it very difficult to ignore the meaning of Rasjidi, a graduate of an Islamic higher education institution in Egypt who went on to Paris, and who later gained experience teaching in Canada. Despite his anti-Western rhetoric, one will not escape to find that almost his entire academic construction is built on the elements which he derives from the West—he emphasizes, the Orientalists—than any other. Maybe after Hussein Djajadiningrat, Rasjidi has been an Indonesian Muslim scholar who received not only introductions but also the absorption of intellectual ingredients from the storehouse of Orientalism. But what about Occidentalism? According to Ali, Occidentalism has not been born in Indonesia. Occidentalism needs to be dealt with not only for the benefit of Muslims, but also for the benefit of Western people. They also want to know and understand the Islamic view of their religion.¹⁰

Ali is known as Muslim scholar in Indonesia and the Muslim world. He has been an influential figure in changing Islamic educational system in Indonesia. Ali has also succeeded in making syntheses: synthesis between obedience, piety and intellectuality; synthesis between the scientific and doctrinaire; synthesis between scholars and intellectuals; and synthesis between the traditional and the modern. As an Indonesian Muslim scholar with national and international reputation, Ali has made many valuable contributions to the development of Islamic knowledge and scholarship in Indonesia, especially Comparative Religions, which is his field of expertise. He has contributed his thoughts to scholarship, in particular to Comparative Religions. Not only engaging in this field of scholarship, he also took part in the government as Minister of Religious Affairs, when Indonesia faced difficult political situation, or the transition period of Indonesian politics and culture in the 1970s. It was during this period that changes had many impacts,

¹⁰ Syamsuddin, "Orientalisme," 48.

ranging from religious discourse tinged with the reorientation and formulation of the concept of modern state suitable for Indonesian culture, the renewal of Islamic thought, dialogue between religious communities, the modernization of religious institutions to the reformation of the institutions and curricula of religious education.¹¹

This article focuses on Ali's thought of Occidentalism, and argues that his concept of Occidentalism constitutes the antithesis of Western orientalism as well as the renewal of thought in Islamic and religious studies in Indonesia. His thought in this issue represents a great vision of promoting peace and harmony between all elements of society and a paradigm shift in more advanced Islamic thinking. This article begins with a discussion of the meaning and historicity of Occidentalism, followed by the biography and intellectual legacy of Ali. The following section will elaborate Ali's thought of Occidentalism and his proposal to develop this field for the development of Islamic scholarship and the enrichment of studies of the East by the Western scholars.

The Meaning and Historicity of Occidentalism

Etymologically, *occident* means 'the direction of the sunset.' This word comes from the Latin *occidens*, from the word *occido* or *occedo*, and *occidere*, which means 'to go down.'¹² This term has many meanings such as: descending, hitting, killing, crushing, falling, setting, twilight, or the West or the western part of the world of Asia, especially Europe and America. *Occidental* means everything related to occident/western or western, such as culture, nation, people, ideas, models of thought, behaviour, outlook on life, point of view, and so on, whether it exists in Europe or develops in Asia or Africa. From the word *occidental*, the term Occidentalism was born, meaning 'character, culture, customs, etc. from occident.'¹³

The academic study of Occidentalism has a relatively short history, and the definition of the concept itself varies. Occasi-

¹¹ Rafiq Noviyani, "Mengenang Kembali Sosok Mukti Ali dan Pemikirannya terhadap Pendidikan Indonesia Era Milenium," *Indonesian Journal of Education and Learning*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2018), 130.

¹² Lorens Bagus, *Kamus Filsafat* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2000), 180.

¹³ Burhanuddin Daya and Mohammad Affan, *Pergumulan Timur Menyikapi Barat: Dasar-Dasar Oksidentalisme* (Yogyakarta: Suka Press, 2008), 88-89.

onally, Occidentalism refers to Westernization, the process of non-Western societies adopting, or seeking to adopt, cultural elements that have been labelled as Western. In this sense, the word ‘Occidentalism’ would be used by an academic to label a proponent of what is seen as Western culture. Often, the word ‘West’ is used synonymously with ‘modern’ in academic and non-academic texts. This type of narrative use is not different from the evolutionist theory of nineteenth-century culture, in that it envisions a gradual continuum in which the West represents the future and the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel of progress.¹⁴

Perhaps more frequently in academic texts the word Occidentalism means ‘anti-Westernism,’ or an ideological movement that rejects rather than supports Western-labelled ideas, political processes, or material objects. For example, Islamic, anti-colonial, anti-globalist, and socialist movements have been defined as Occidentalism. According to Bryan Turner (1997), Occidentalism is a resistance to ‘modernization.’¹⁵ Buruma goes one step further and explains how aggressively Occidentalism imagines the dangerous process of Westernization—or ‘Westoxification’—that makes non-Western Occidentalists reject what is seen as a cold and mechanical West,¹⁶ a machine-like civilization characterized by emotionless rationalism, secularism, cynicism, self-centered individualism, and power-hungry colonialism. The East, by contrast, in this type of counterhegemonic Occidentalism, is a place where family values, traditions, spirituality, morality and hard work are valued.¹⁷ Jonathan Spencer explains how non-Western critics view the West as the origin and place of rationalism, but claims that the Western way of practicing rationality has gone too far. The Occidentalism of this school argues that one can do almost anything, however immoral, in the West, and justifies it by rationalizing it.¹⁸

¹⁴ Jonathan Spencer, “Occidentalism in the East: The Uses of the West in the Politics and Anthropology of South Asia,” in James G. Carrier, *Occidentalism: Images of the West* (N.p.: Clarendon Press, 1995), 55-56.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁶ Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism: A Short History of Anti-Westernism* (N.p.: Atlantic Books London, 2004), 36.

¹⁷ Jukka Jouhki and Henna-Riikka Pennanen, “The Imagined West: Exploring Occidentalism,” *Suomen Antropologi*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (2016), 4.

¹⁸ Jouhki and Pennanen, “The Imagined West,” 4-5.

According to Ali, Occidentalism is: “theories and sciences about religion, culture and Western civilization.”¹⁹ Religion here is focused on Christianity, both Catholic Christianity or Roman Catholicism, as well as Protestant Christianity and also Judaism. According to Burhanuddin Daya, the notion of Occidentalism as a flow or understanding that is related to the academic study of, and mastery of knowledge about, the West as a whole, which is academically carried out by experts from the East with an Eastern perspective.²⁰ As the antithesis of Orientalism, Hanafi sparked Occidentalism (*‘Ilm al-Istighrāb*) as a paradigm and a scientific framework as well. If Orientalism is a view of “us” (Islam and the East) through the “them” (West) perspective, then Occidentalism is meant to reveal the historical ambiguity between “us” (*Ego*) and “them” (*Other*), as well as the struggle between “our” weaknesses and “their” advantages.

In his book *Muqaddimah fi ‘Ilm al-Istighrāb*, Hanafi explains that Occidentalism is a match for orientalism. Occidentalism is projected as a study that makes the West the object of its study. The West is studied in terms of its development, culture, traditions and structures. Occidentalism intends to eliminate the domination of the West over the East (Islam).²¹ Occidentalism is a new direction of study in dealing with Western scientific hegemony. This Occidentalism is contrasted with orientalism; however, it does not have the goal of hegemony and domination like Orientalism does.

The history of the emergence of Occidentalism cannot be separated from the history of the brilliance of Islamic civilization and the dark ages of Western civilization. The advanced Islamic civilization had transformed the Eastern nations, which in fact were primitive and backward, into advanced nations in terms of religion, government, politics, science and economy. Such conditions encourage western scholars to study the East, including its society, civilization and religion. During the renaissance in the West, the Eastern world began to decline due to its weak leaders, especially when Islamic civilization was destroyed by Tartar troops,

¹⁹ Rihlasyita, “Kiri Islam Hassan Hanafi,” 144.

²⁰ Daya and Affan, *Pergumulan Timur*, 96.

²¹ Rihlasyita, “Kiri Islam Hassan Hanafi,” 145.

which resulted in the decline of the East. On the contrary, the West has shown its hegemony even up to the present day.²²

The Western orientalists no longer focus only on scientific studies of Eastern civilization, but also on how to rule the East and for the purposes of colonialism. They emphasize the superiority of Western people and dwarf everything related to the East, especially Islam. They reverse history and give the impression that Muslims are ignorant and backward people. The motives of orientalists studying Islam have been debated among Muslim and Western scholars alike. Positive and negative views continue to emerge in response to their works on Islam. According to Nurcholish Madjid, although there are Muslim scholars who judge Orientalists with a negative image, they still admit that there are positive points from Orientalists beneficial to Muslims.²³

Occidentalism seeks to demand freedom from the grip of orientalist colonialism. Occidentalism, as introduced by Hanafi, is cleaner, more objective, and neutral than the orientation of Orientalism. Occidentalism simply demands a balance in culture, in strength, which has so far positioned the West as the dominant center. Occidentalism hopes that Western myths which are considered as the only representation of the world can be ended and at the same time torn down. So far, we have been locked in a false understanding that the West is the center of world power, the center of knowledge, the center of lifestyle, the center of economy, and the center of civilization.

Mukti Ali's Biography and Legacy

A Brief Sketch

Abdul Mukti Ali (born in Cepu, Blora, Central Java, 23 August 1923; died in Yogyakarta, 5 May 2004 at the age of 80 years) was a Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in the Second Development Cabinet (1973-1978). He was also well-known as a scholar of comparative religions who put the framework of inter-religious harmony in Indonesia according to the principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* or the term he often uses "Agree on Differences." He is also known as a prominent Muslim

²² Kasdi and Farida, "Oksidentalisme sebagai Pilar Pembaharuan," 239-40.

²³ Nurcholish Madjid, *Kaki Langit Peradaban Islam* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1997), 59-61.

scholar who is recognized as a reformer of Islamic thought through Islamic and Religious Studies.²⁴

Ali had been named Soedjono (Sujono), but other sources mention his name as Boedjono (Bujono).²⁵ Meanwhile, the name “Abdul Mukti Ali” has been given by, or received from, K.H. Hamid of Pasuruan when the latter was his teacher. He is the fifth child of seven children to a well-off family. His father, Idris or Haji Abu Ali (the name used after performing the pilgrimage or *hajj*), was a successful tobacco trader. His mother was Mutiah, or Hj. Khodijah (the name used after performing the *hajj*) was a cloth merchant.²⁶ Even though Haji Abu Ali had a very low education (he only obtained education from reciting the book at a pesantren in Cepu), he was very careful about his child’s education. At the age of eight, Ali pursued his formal education by entering HIS (Hollandsch Inlandsche School), a school owned by the Dutch East Indies Government at the level of elementary school. In addition, he also studied the Qur’ān (studying Islam) at Madrasah Diniyah (Islamic School) in Cepu, where learning activities took place in the afternoon.

After completing his education at HIS and obtaining a Dutch government employee certificate (*Klein Ambtenar Examen*), Ali was sent to the Islamic boarding school in Cepu to study the Qur’ān from Kiai Usman. Under the well-known strict guidance of Kiai Usman, Ali learned to read the Qur’ān fluently and recite *tartil* according to the rules of recitation.

In the mid-1940, Ali was then sent by his father to study at the Pesantren Termas (Islamic Boarding School) in Pacitan, under the tutelage of K.H. Dimiyati and his son K.H. Abdul Hamid Dimiyati. He intensively studied various classical books, such as *al-Nahwu al-Wāḍiḥ*, *al-Balāghah al-Wāḍiḥah*, *Jurūmīyah*, *Alfiyah*, *Taqrīb*, *Iqnā’*, *Mustalah al-Ḥadīth*, *Jam’ al-Jawāmi’*, and others. In this traditional

²⁴ M. Damami et al., “H.A. Mukti Ali: Ketaatan, Kesalehan, dan Kecendekiawanan,” in Abdurrahman et al. (eds.), *Agama dan Masyarakat: 70 Tahun H.A. Mukti Ali* (Yogyakarta: IAIN Sunan Kalijaga Press, 1993), 4-6.

²⁵ Khairah Husin, “Peran Mukti Ali dalam Pengembangan Toleransi Antaragama di Indonesia,” *Jurnal Ushuluddin*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (2014), 103.

²⁶ Ali Munhanif, “Mukti Ali: Modernisasi Politik Keagamaan Orde Baru,” in Azyumardi Azra et al. (eds.), *Menteri-Menteri Agama RI: Biografi Sosial Politik* (Jakarta: Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat, 1998), 271.

Islamic boarding school, Ali studied the Qur'ān under his kiai and studied and discussed a lot with his seniors. Among the seniors are K.H. Abdul Hamid of Lasem, who later settled in Pasuruan, and K.H. Ali Ma'sum (General Chairman [*Rais Aam*] of Nahdlatul Ulama 1981-1984). In this pesantren, Ali and K.H. Ali Ma'sum also pioneered the establishment of a *madrasah*, which the latter then became the principal of the *madrasah* and Ali became his deputy.²⁷

After completing his study at Termas, Ali continued his religious education at Pesantren Hidayah, Saditan, Lasem, Rembang under the tutelage of K.H. Ma'sum, the father of K.H. Ali Ma'sum, his friend and teacher at Termas. Although the two pesantrens he had visited to study were based on Nahdlatul Ulama, Ali grew and developed into an influential intellectual and reformist scholar.

After completing his religious education at various pesantrens, Ali went to Yogyakarta to continue his education at the Islamic Higher School (Sekolah Tinggi Islam [STI]) which had just been established at that time. He decided the Faculty of Religion as his choice. This STI was later known as the Indonesian Islamic University (UII), Yogyakarta.

In 1950, Ali continued his journey to Mecca to perform pilgrimage, and decided to go to Karachi, Pakistan. With good Arabic, Dutch and English language skills, Ali was accepted into the bachelor program at the Faculty of Arabic Literature, Karachi University. He took the Islamic History program as his speciality.²⁸ Five years later, Ali was able to complete his bachelor degree program while continuing his Ph.D. program at the same university. In August 1955, he arrived in Montreal, Canada, to continue his studies at McGill University with a specialization in Comparative Religion.

What Ali paid enough attention was the career of Hossein Djajadiningrat who was educated in the Netherlands at the encouragement of Hurgronje. Djajadiningrat graduated *cum laude* from Leiden University, then worked as an official in Batavia in

²⁷ Siti Muna Hayati, "Mengingat Kembali Pemikiran Abdul Mukti Ali: Pendekatan Scientific-Cum-Doctrinaire dan Konsep Agree in Disagreement," *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Ushuluddin*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (2018), 163.

²⁸ Damami et al., "H.A. Mukti Ali," 25-27.

the Dutch Government. After studying and compiling a dictionary for the Acehnese language, his next career was in *academia*. As assistant commissioner of Batavia Hazeu, Djajadiningrat also assists R.A. Kern in indigenous affairs. His recommendation to establish a High Islamic Court (which turned into the Office of Religious Affairs in the Japanese era), became his contribution, and the Institute was led by himself until it was replaced by Hasyim Asy'ari. Then he became a professor at the University of Indonesia.²⁹ Ali learned very much from Djajadiningrat's role and contribution.

During his lifetime, Ali can be regarded as a prolific writer who has produced at least thirty scholarly works. He established a foundation called "Yayasan Nida" after his favorite daughter, Nidatul Hasanah, to publish a number of his works. Among his works are as follows: *Asal Usul Agama, Ilmu Perbandingan Agama dan Metodenya, Ke-Esaan Tuhan dalam Alqur'an, Etika Agama dalam Pembentukan Kepribadian Nasional, Pemberantasan Kemaksiatan dari Segi Agama Islam, The Spread of Islam in Indonesia, An Introduction to the Government of Aceh's Sultanate, Pelbagai Persoalan Islam di Indonesia Dewasa Ini, Agama dan Pembangunan di Indonesia, Ibn Khaldun dan Asal Usul Sosiologi, Alam Pikiran Islam Modern di Indonesia, Dialog Antaragama, dan Beberapa Pertimbangan tentang Peningkatan Mutu LAIN dan Kurikulum*.³⁰ Ali died at the age of 81 on May 5, 2004, at the General Hospital of Dr. Sardjito, Yogyakarta. He was buried in the cemetery of the extended family of the Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic Institute (IAIN) in Kadisoko Village, Kalasan District, Sleman Regency.

Religious Harmony as Mukti Ali's intellectual Legacy

Ali interprets mankind is faced with a dire contemporary world situation as well as a hopeful complexity. Now humans are at the beginning of the formation of a new world society, namely a revolution in post-industrial life from the global revolution. Revolution is built from various social, economic, technological, cultural and ethnic factors. At that time, a new understanding and attitude toward the world as a whole need to be built. Religion

²⁹ Al Makin, *Antara Barat dan Timur: Batasan, Dominasi, Relasi, dan Globalisasi* (Jakarta: PT Serambi Ilmu Semesta, 2015), 204.

³⁰ Hayati, "Mengingat Kembali Pemikiran Abdul Mukti Ali," 164.

needs to recognize external as well as internal problems so that it can be grounded in accordance with its nature. This is to avoid approaches that are bipolar and antagonistic in nature, but rather toward religious communities that are in dialogue with the globalization process with religious ramifications. Thus, religion is no longer a personal issue, but has been transformed into a bond of socio-cultural, economic and political environment.³¹

Some of Ali's well-known thoughts include the idea of religious harmony, which he conveyed through the department he served. Ali's religious harmony has a significant impact on the course of socio-religious life in Indonesia. The concept of religious thought in Ali's perspective is divided into four models. First, motivative: religion encourages, underlies, and underlies human ideals and deeds in all aspects of life. Second, creative: religion encourages humans not only to do productive work but also creative and innovative work. Third, sublimative: in religion there is an effort to sanctify all human activities, not only those of a religious nature but also of a worldly nature. In this case, religion teaches that humans make God the base and goal of their life. With such a basis and mental attitude, human life becomes meaningful and has a high value as a service to God Almighty. Forth, integrative: There is a system that combines all the activities of human life that are not compatible. Religious belief and appreciation will prevent people from becoming hostile. This concept is related to Durkheim, Geertz and Bowie's understanding.³²

It seems that Ali seeks to emphasize that each religion has theological beliefs that cannot be compromised. Islam has its own faith, even including things that are believed by other religions, for example the concept of the Prophet Jesus. Likewise, Christianity has its own faith, even including things that are believed by Islam, for example the concept of the Prophet Muhammad.³³ So, the recognition of pluralism is at the social level, in the sense that sociologically we have our respective faiths and beliefs. The issue

³¹ Almunauwar Bin Rusli, "Mukti Ali dan Tradisi Pemikiran Agama di Indonesia," *Potret Pemikiran*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (2019), 14.

³² *Ibid.*, 15.

³³ Mukti Ali, "Dialogue between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia and Its Problems," *World Council of Churches*, Lebanon, 1970, 35.

of truth is a problem in the area of each religion. Ali explained that there are several ideas put forward by people to achieve harmony in religious life. First, syncretism, which is the opinion that all religions are the same. Second, reconception, namely exploring and reviewing one's own religion in confrontation with other religions. Third, synthesis, which is creating a new religion whose elements are drawn from various religions, so that each religious adherent feels that some of his religious teachings have been taken up in this synthetic (mixed) religion. Fourth, substitution, namely admitting that one's own religion is right, while other religions are wrong; and try to get people of other religions into their religion. Fifth, agree in disagreement (agreeing in differences), which is to believe that the religion that is adhered to is the best religion, and allows others to believe that the religion they adhere to is the best religion. It is believed that between one religion and another, apart from differences, there are also similarities.

Ali himself agrees with the "agree in disagreement" path. He acknowledged that this is the important way to take to create religious harmony. A religious person must believe that the religion he adheres to is the best and truest religion, and other people are also welcome, even respected, to believe and believe that the religion he adheres to is the best and truest religion.³⁴

There are five concepts of thought proposed in order to create harmony in the lives of religious people according Ali, namely: First, syncretism, which is an assumption that all religions are the same. Syncretism in the science of religion is a variety of schools and symptoms that intend to mix all religions into one and state that all religions are essentially the same. The real form and promoter of syncretism in Indonesia is "*kejawen*" which has various names and organizations as a form of the mystical movement. Their view is that all conceptions of God are aspects of the one Divine, the supreme, the endless, the eternal, and all forms of religion are aspects of the great path leading to one truth.³⁵

Second, econception, which is to explore and review religion itself in confrontation with other religions. Religion is a desire for a

³⁴ Hayati, "Mengingat Kembali Pemikiran Abdul Mukti Ali," 171.

³⁵ H.A. Mukti Ali, *Agama dan Pembangunan di Indonesia*, Vol. 8 (Jakarta: Biro Hubungan Masyarakat Departemen Agama Republik Indonesia, 1972), 143-48.

correct way of life that comes from the insistence of the universe, which is in accordance with universal human needs and desires. Therefore, it is necessary to formulate a universal religion that meets the needs of all humans and nations by way of reconception. In the future, the world's major religions look like rivers that flow into one.

Third, synthesis, which is an attempt to create a new religion whose elements come from various religions, with the intention that every religious adherent feels that some of his religion has become part of that synthetic religion. In this way, the lives of religious people will become harmonious.

Forth, replacement, namely the recognition that one's own religion is right, while other religions are wrong, while striving hard to make followers of other religions embrace their own religion. He is not willing to see other people embracing other religions and beliefs that are different from his religion. Therefore, other religions must be replaced with the religion he adheres to. In this way, religious harmony is expected to occur.

5) Agree in disagreement. This idea emphasizes that the religion he adheres to is the best. Even so, he acknowledged that between religions and other religions, apart from differences, there are also similarities. Such a recognition will lead to a good understanding that can lead to mutual respect and understanding between groups of adherents to one another.³⁶

Methodology as a Path to Occidentalism

Ali said that what determines and brings about stagnation and a period of ignorance or progress is not because of the presence or absence of geniuses, but because of research methodologies and ways of seeing things. For this we can take the example of what happened in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Aristotle (384-322 BC) was certainly far more genius than Francis Bacon (1561-1626), and Plato (366-347 BC) was more genius than Roger Bacon (1214-1294). In this case the two Bacons became a factor in the progress of science, even though the two men were far less brilliant than Plato and Aristotle, while these geniuses

³⁶ Ibid.

could not revive medieval Europe, even caused stagnation and stagnation.³⁷

There is a question why geniuses cause stagnation in the world, whereas ordinary people can bring about scientific advances and the rise of the people? Ali answered that the reason was because ordinary people found the correct and complete method of thinking. Even though their intelligence was ordinary, they could find the (scientific) truth. As for the great thinkers of genius, if they do not know the correct method of seeing things and thinking about their problems, then they will not be able to take advantages of their genius. This description is not at all intended to denigrate geniuses, but rather to say that in order to make progress, genius is not enough, but must be equipped with the precision of choosing the method used for his work in the field of knowledge. The correct method is the first problem to be worked out in any branch of science. The first obligation of every researcher is to choose the most appropriate method for his research. In addition, the mastery of right method can help a person develop their knowledge. Those who do not master the method will only become consumers of knowledge, not producers.³⁸

Therefore, when looking at the strength of Orientalism with a strong methodological foundation, Islam must balance it by strengthening the methodology in accordance with Islamic epistemology. When the foundation of the Islamic methodology is strong, it will be able to balance the superiority of the West in reading social and religious thought. If we study the way people approach and understand Islam, there are three ways. The three approaches are firstly *naqli* (traditional) approach, the second is *'aqli* (rational) approach, and the third is a *kashfi* (mystical) approach. These three approaches were already in the mind of the Prophet Muḥammad, and continued to be used by Muslim scholars after he died. Sometimes there is an approach that is very prominent at one time, then receded and replaced by another

³⁷ Hafidz Zachary, "Pemikiran Mukti Ali Tentang Ilmu Perbandingan Agama Pada 1971-1978" (Ph.D. Dissertation--Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2020), 57.

³⁸ Abuddin Nata, *Metodologi Studi Islam* (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 2004), 24-25.

approach, but nevertheless, although at different levels, the three approaches exist in the way Islamic scholars try to understand Islam.³⁹

The obligation of Muslim intellectuals today is to believe in and know Islam as a religion that provides guidance (*hudan*) for humans, both individuals and society, and that Islam promises a pathway in the lives of mankind today and in the future. Intellectuals must reflect on and explore Islam from a new point of view. This is because Islam is multi-dimensional and has various aspects, so that anyone who tries to study Islam will get new views and instructions from his field of study.

Mukti Ali's Occidentalism as Anti-thesis to Orientalism

According to Ali, Occidentalism is a study of the East, by the East with the Western Method. Of course, this is like reviewing what the West has done. As a consequence of Ali's view, the East must make a different voice toward everything the West has studied, by reviewing their studies, and also speaking on behalf of the East. This is another meaning and another way of making counter-discourse to Orientalism. As a result, the East studies the East, where the East has to be a reviewer, researcher, and scholar for the object of Eastern study itself which has a different tone from the results that have been achieved by previous Western reviewers, with the same method, namely the Western method, but the perspective used is different. This is Ali's difference from Hanafi; for Hanafi, Occidentalism is when the East studies the West; for Ali, the East studies the East with scientific awareness and provides solutions and theses that are different from Western studies.⁴⁰

Each view has its relevance and consequences. Hanafi invited the East to see the West. In fact, it has already been started that every science in Indonesia must be linked with Western studies: history, anthropology, sociology, language, culture, and tradition. All knowledge refers to Western history. In philosophy, for example, studies will first refer to ancient Greece, Arabic, Latin, and then to modern and postmodern philosophy. All philosophical

³⁹ H.A. Mukti Ali, *Memahami Beberapa Aspek Ajaran Islam* (Bandung: Mizan, 1991), 19.

⁴⁰ Makin, *Antara Barat dan Timur*, 203.

traditions are studied. Meanwhile, Eastern philosophies, such as Chinese and Japanese fall into their own category. In philosophy, it has been recognized that Greek and Latin were carried on in the Arabic tradition. Furthermore, Western modern and postmodern philosophy constitutes a discussion in itself. In Arabic philosophy, Neoplatonism had been developed highly by Muslim philosophers, ranging from al-Kindī, al-Farābī, Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Rushd, and others. Meanwhile, early modern Western philosopher, such as Thomas Aquinas, recognized the role of Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd. In this case, in the study of philosophy, there had been an established link, from the West to the East and then to the West again.⁴¹

It seems that Ali's proposal is much more relevant and realistic in the realm of contemporary intellectualism. It is true that we need to study the West more, but knowledge about the West seems to have developed highly, because there have been already many Western scholars. From philosophy, history, and social sciences, theories and methods have been developed in Western intellectualism. In addition, the boundaries of Western studies are also very complex. Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Albert Camus, and Habermas, all became Western as well as Eastern studies. Currently, those who want to learn all the sciences must master the Western language first, since important works in the study of natural sciences, social sciences and humanities are written in Western languages.

Basically, Ali originated from the environment of Orientalism, like Edward Said, in the science that the West studied the East. Ali, in this case, has paid attention to the role of the Dutch in the colonial era which has started to study the Indonesian history and culture. Ali also took into account of Snouck Hurgronje's advice and the Dutch attitude towards the natives, which is related to education as well as customs and religions in the archipelago. All of these involve knowledge which of course can be related to hegemonic discourse.

Ali's version of Orientalism is an early study of the archipelago in English and Dutch, starting with Marsden,⁴² Raffles, and

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² William Marsden, *History of Sumatra: Containing an Account of the Government* (N.p: Longman, 1811).

Crawfurd.⁴³ The last two figures, Raffles and Crawfurd, according to Ali, have paid attention to how Islam had been practiced in another part of archipelago, in the sense that Javanese people are very loose in practicing Islam, and Islam is only present on the surface, does not enter the core of religious teaching. If Raffles concentrates on Java, Crawfurd, like Marsden, includes Sumatran culture and customs.

When discussing Hurgronje and his contribution to the development of Islam and customs in the archipelago, Ali presented several Dutch figures who paid attention to Java and Sumatra, for example Juynboll. Ali noted not only books published in Leiden, but also journals and periodicals. The strong Leiden tradition of studying the archipelago was also particularly mentioned. The main figure, Hurgronje, is discussed by Ali very extensively, from his advice to the Netherlands, his works, as well as comparisons with other works. It seems that Ali represented the old generation who still maintained the Dutch language in reading colonial works. For the generation of young scholars, it will be difficult to follow Ali, except for those who studied in Leiden and learn the Dutch language. However, most of the works of contemporary Dutch scholars are also written in English, and this help much the Indonesian scholars understand the scholarly contribution of the Dutch scholars in the field of Islamic studies, for example.

In discussing Orientalism, Ali divides it into several parts: the Leiden tradition which displays the development of intellectuals and observers in the circle, a special chapter on Hurgronje, magazines and publications containing many important works in the Netherlands, advisers to the Dutch colonial government in which the interaction between knowledge and power took place, and the missionaries who also had a special interest in the culture, traditions and religions of the archipelago. Ali also featured observers after the war, namely the era of independence. This tradition still continues with many studies on the archipelago by the Dutch, such as Drewes, a student of Hurgronje. Ali reminded the importance of the studies of other observers such as de Graaf and his colleague Pigeaud.

⁴³ Thomas Stamford Raffles, *The History of Java*, Vol. 1 (N.p.: BoD—Books on Demand, 2018).

If Hanafi dreams of a project for Occidentalism, Ali proposes that the embryo of Occidentalism is still at the critical stage of western discourse. In a short chapter in his book, he states: “writings—In a small number—on non-Islamic religions, especially Christianity, written by Muslim writers.”⁴⁴ On average, writings on other religions written by Muslims are apologetical, that is, they have the tone to defend and justify their own faith and traditions. Ali mentions works that are reactive to orientalism or missionary works. Ali concluded that Occidentalism had not yet been born in Indonesia. Therefore, it is necessary to think about this specific knowledge or field of study. Occidentalism is not only needed for the development of Muslim scholarship, but also for the enrichment of studies in the West. There have been many books on Islam written by non-Muslim scholars. Ali has not found any work on Judaism and Christianity, for example, written by Muslim scholars. It is also the case with Hinduism, Buddhism, Shinto, and Confucianism which are not given adequate attention by Muslims.⁴⁵ In this regard, Ali’s goals are twofold: in addition to develop counter-discourse against Orientalism, he also dreams that another world or religion should be written by Muslims.

Conclusion

As stated by Hanafi, Occidentalism is not an opponent of Orientalism but rather a dialectic relationship that complements and criticizes one another so as to avoid the hegemonic and dominative relations of the West over the East. The ideal relationship between the ego and the other is respect to one another. Therefore, Occidentalism differs from Orientalism, in its political vision and mode of the West-East relations. However, Ali perceives Occidentalism as a study of the East, by the East with the Western method. As a consequence, Ali maintains that the East must make a different voice toward what the West has studied extensively, by reviewing their studies, and also must speak on behalf of the East. In addition, Ali hopes that the outcome of the Occidentalist studies is projected not only to develop the

⁴⁴ H.A. Mukti Ali, *Ilmu Perbandingan Agama di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: IAIN Sunan Kalijaga Press, 1988), 57.

⁴⁵ Makin, *Antara Barat Dan Timur*, 205-6.

Muslim scholarship, but also to enrich the studies of the East in the Western world.

It can also be suggested that Occidentalism is still relevant, because in fact the differences between the West and the East are not completely gone. The boundaries between countries, ethnicities, races and religions continue to be important subjects of research. The study of cultural differences can be worked on further through the study of classical texts, historical treasures, as well as contemporary cultures. It not only examines the contradiction between Islam and non-Muslims, but also there are many religions and traditions that exist. Occidentalism can also be linked to contemporary phenomena: from politics, art, culture, social and global issues.

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