Islamic Reform Movement In Indonesia: Role Of Muhammadiyah In Social Empowerment

AminullahElhady

Faculty of Theology and Humanities, State Institute for Islamic Studies, Jember Indonesia
Email: aminelhady@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper discusses an Indonesian Islamic reform movement established in early 20th century, which has been then known as Muhammadiyah. It was astablished on awareness to direct the people and guide them to be dignified. The mission of the organization is to spread the values and teachings of Islam to educate and empower the people.This paper is focused on the role of Muhammadiyah as a religious group through the harmonization of religion and education. It is believed that education is the means to acquire knowledge. Muhammadiyah is still consistent with its original objective in community development through the religious teaching and education for empowerment and enlightenment, and has paid attention to the importance of education to improve the lives of the people and this nation. So, this organization has become one of empowerment and enlightenment agents for the dignity of the Indonesian nation. Its services are not only for its members, but it is for the nation and humans, as well as its participation on peace project in the international world. The importance of this study lies on the existence of Muhammadiyah as a social group which plays some roles of the state responsibility, that is to educate and empower the people.
Keywords: Muhammadiyah, Reform, Empowerment, Community Development.

Introduction

The end of the 19th century was a strong awakening era for the colonial peoples to obtain their freedom and rights from the invanders, nearly all the people in Africa and Asia. In the colonized countries rose an awareness of life as nations that determine their own fate and future. Similarly, what happened in Indonesia as marked with the emergence of groups driven by the educated elites.

Muhammadiyah was one of the groups, established with the objective to uphold and reverse Islam in order to realize the real Islamic society. Muhammadiyah endeavors are implemented in the form of charity and services, program, and activities, as it has been mentioned in its bylaws article 3: (a) Promoting belief, deepening and broadening understanding, increasing implementation, and spreading Islamic teachings in all aspects of life; (b) Deepening and

developing the study of Islamic teachings in all aspects of life to get its purity and truth; (c) Increasing the spirit of worship, charity, gift, bequest, alms, and other good deeds; (d) Increasing dignity, prestige, and the quality of human resource in order to have high skills and noble character; (e) Advancing and renewing education and culture, developing science, technology, art, and increasing research; (f) Advancing economy and entrepreneurship toward qualified life; (g) Increasing health quality and public welfare; (h) Maintaining, developing, and empowering natural resources and environment for prosperity; (i) developing communication, friendship, and cooperation in all fields with people in and outside Indonesia; (j) Maintaining the unity of country and having an active role in national life; (k) Developing and increasing quality and quantity of members as movement agent; (l) Developing equipment, infrastructure, and fund source to make the movement successful; (m) Trying to enforce law, justice, and truth, and increasing the defense for people; and (n) Other endeavors and efforts suitable to its aims and objective. (Central Board of Muhammadiyah, 2007: 4).

Discussing the existence of Muhammadiyah today is not enough to focus only on how the progress made by the institution. Its existence today is inseparable from its historical dimension. Therefore, also not enough just to see where the network as an organization that has a hierarchy from the national level to the lowest level in its branches, as well as autonomous organizations and charitable networks business carried on at the moment. Furthermore, to determine the need to comprehensively review the background and circumstances in the past that encouraged the establishment of this organization.

Muhammadiyah is an Islamic movement in Indonesia which stood at the time of the country and the nation still in the Dutch colonial hegemony. It has been established in many years before the nation and the state of Indonesia established. It appeared in the midst of the people who are in multi-dimensions of weakness: economically, socially, politically, and weakness in other areas of life, including also in the theological weakness.

Muhammadiyah has been considered important in the context of reform in Indonesia at that time, not solely due to its character that put the reform but also because many of Muhammadiyah figures, which are intellectuals as national minded and international one, became important people in the history of independence and establishment of Indonesia. So it was natural when Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of this organization, has been named as a national hero of Indonesia.

Currently, Muhammadiyah which has existed more than a century to contribute continuously to advance the nation and the people through areas managed in the field of struggle of Muhammadiyah, such as in the fields of education, health, welfare, and other social affairs. These are the ways taken by Muhammadiyah to advance the nation through empowerment and enlightenment. The Central Board of Muhammadiyah released a book entitled "The Progressive Indonesia: Reconstruction of a Meaningful Nationality Life", and stated (2014: 8) that refering to historical capital, the nation and the state of Indonesia can solve it various problems faced, now and in the future,by optimally appreciating the struggle of various elements, including social forces.

Since the 47th congress of Muhammadiyah at Makassar South Sulawesi in 2015, there appeared a new terminology to refer that Indonesia is a country built jointly by all components of the nation, especially the Muslim figures. The term offered was *"Darul Ahdi was-Shahadah"* an Arabic phrase means "a country that is built on a shared commitment", and witnessed by history. The Central Board (2015) published a book entitled *"State of Pancasila as Darul Ahdi was-Shahadah"*. It is apparently Muhammadiyah does not want its work in the past separated from the historical record of Indonesia. As a new term that relates to the nationality, the leaders of Muhammadiyah need to disseminate to the members and to the wider community.

Establishment Of Muhammadiyah
The establishment of Muhammadiyah cannot be separated from the objective condition of the Indonesians and particularly of the Muslim community in the island of Java. The name of Muhammadiyah has been taken from the name "Muhammad" the last Prophet. Then the word is followed by a *ya nisbiah* which means characterizing, so the word "Muhammadiyah" means the people or the followers of the Prophet Muhammad. Judging from the name, literally in fact all Muslims are Muhammadiyah, but the word is later became the name of the organization. This organization aims to enforce and uphold the Islamic religion, to manifest a true Islamic society. (Noer, 1980: 86).

In a way that has exceeded this century, Muhammadiyah has been proven to provide a very strong influence to the social and theological reform in the midst of people's lives. Muhammadiyah reform movement taking place in the two domains, namely in the realm of theological (*aqidah*) which is commonly referred to as a movement of purification (*tajrid* or *tanzih*), and second in the mundane realm *muamalat* commonly referred to as a renewal movement (*tajdid*). The reforms have taken place since its inception to the present, through the development of Islamic theology and education and social welfare.

Coaching Islamic faith (*aqidah*) is done through teachings and guidance, while education is done through the establishment of educational institutions (school and madrasah), and public welfare through the establishment of health care institutions and the establishment of institutions of other social services. Therefore it is worth if the organization is referred to as an agent of reform that encourages religious movement as *tajdid* toward liberation and enlightenment of society.

Before the coming of Islam into Indonesia, the people had embraced a belief system or multiple beliefs at the same time. Beliefs in such a way have fused with aspects of community life. Because of the trust that has been attached to it, so when Islam came and then they embrace it, the old beliefs that can not necessarily be uninstalled. In other words, the Islamic creed which professed by the people of Indonesia were still mixed with old beliefs. At that time the Muslims in this country were undergoing systemic damage due to loss of Islamic spirituality in everyday life.

Muhammadiyah established on 18th November 1912 to support the efforts undertaken by Kiyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan in purifying the people's religious belief of Islam, so that the main purpose of its establishment is to call on the public to follow the pure Islamic teachings related to the guidance of the Qur'an and the Prophet's tradition (*Al-Sunnah*) as well as straightening

deviations occurred in the society. The conditions of the people at that time cannot be overcome by a person alone but must be done collectively, so that establishing an organization is important and urgent.

This organization has been existed continuously and running the programs according to its mission up to present. At first this organization engaged in the propagation of Islam and religious counseling for people who many of them run Islamic-syncretic teachings, which confuse the teachings derived from Islamic sources with the traditional beliefs. (Elhady, 2015).

The establishment of organization of Muhammadiyah was the result of a study and contemplation conducted by Ahmad Dahlan toward the Quran. This was actually the most important factor that encouraged the establishment of Muhammadiyah, while other factors can be considered as a supporting or stimulating factor. Ahmad Dahlan with full accuracy observed and examined the verses of the Quran, including when reviewed the verse of *Alu'Imran*: 104, "*Let there be from you a nation who invite to goodness, and enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency. Such are they who are successful*". (Pickthall, 1980: 60). From the contemplation of that paragraph emerged the concrete practice, namely the establishment of Muhammadiyah.

The verse contains cues assessed for Muslims to perform the movement for propagation of Islam in an organized run, realize people who will be constantly moving, and the movement would be implemented with organizational life.

From the background of the establishment of Muhammadiyah as mentioned above it is clear that the real establishment of Muhammadiyah was inspired, motivated, and encouraged by the teachings of the Quran, and also because the entire movement there's no other motive but purely to realize the principles of the Islamic doctrines. Everything done by Muhammadiyah, both in education and teaching, community, household, economy, and so on cannot be separated from efforts to realize and implement the teachings of Islam. Strictly, Muhammadiyah movement was about trying to show the face of Islam in the real form, concrete, and tangible, which can be considered, felt, and enjoyed by all the people.

This was in accordance with the view of Ahmad Dahlan, that religion was to be applied in daily life, not only studied and spoken. It should be mentioned here, that there was an interesting story (which became famous anecdote among Muhammadiyah members) about the amazement of the students who attend classes of Ahmad Dahlan as the teacher (*Kiyai*) when they read the Quranic chapter of *Al-Ma'un* and interpreted it, the teaching done repeatedly for several days. A student asked why not the addition of the lesson. The teacher asked: Did all of you understand very well these verses already? A student replied: we all have memorized all, Kiyai. The teacher asked: If you have already memorized, have you implemented them? The student answered: What have we do to implement, we have repeatedly read them in the prayers? That's where Ahmad Dahlan explained that examining the Quran as a source of Islam was not enough just discussed. Therefore, Dahlan terminate the lesson and asked his students to practice among the society. (Mulkhan, 2010: 193-194). This encouragement has been known among the members of Muhammadiyah as theology of *al-Ma'un*.

The verses talk about caring for orphans and the poor. So, Ahmad Dahlan's demand responded by the students, they gathered poor people to give them charity. That was the forerunner of the founding of the poor house or home which became the center of relief for the poor. Also by caring for orphans, Muhammadiyah in 1924 became the first institution to managed orphanage. Thus, it is clear that the presence of Muhammadiyah has given benefit and charity to the public.

In the early of 20th century, education in Indonesia was characterized with a dichotomy between religious education (Islam) and public education (secular). The religious education organized in Islamic schools (*pesantren* and madrasahs), while public education held in schools. The Islamic schools did not teach secular subjects, and the public schools did not teach religious subjects. (Nata, 2005: 98).

Ahmad Dahlan was a reformer of education in Islam, who seeks to find solutions to community problems. He tried to integrate general studies into the curriculum of Islamic education (madrasah), and insert religious subjects into the curriculum of public schools. The idea was intended to reform the people through education. (Nata, 2005: 98).

Islamic Preaching For The People's Enlightenment
Before the coming of world major religions in this country, the Indonesians have embraced local beliefs or traditional religions. The local religions were religions or beliefs adopted by local community, such as religions of *Sunda Wiwitan* and *Buhun* (in West Java), *Kejawen* (in Central Java and East Java), *Parmalim* (in North Sumatra), *Kaharingan* (in Borneo), *Tonaas Walian* (in Minahasa, North Sulawesi), *Tolottang* (in South Sulawesi), *Wetutelu* (in Lombok), and so on. ("Agama Asli Nusantara". Retieved from https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki).

Native religions of the archipelago was known as the doctrine of animism, or primitive religion, and called as well as *aliran kepercayaan* (cult). Then the world religions came, and the early was Hinduism and Buddhism which originally from India (Hinduism: ± 1500 BC, Buddhism: ± 500 BC). Both of these religions came in the archipelago at about the same time or simultaneously, namely in the 2nd century AD.

According to Hamka and Hashmi (Indonesian Muslim intellectuals), Islam came into Indonesia in the 7th century or the 2nd century AH gradually, together with the arrival of Arab merchants, Persian and Gujarat (India), which the first area visited was Aceh.

Another theory stated that Islam entered the archipelago in the 12th century. This theory was based on the establishment of the Islamic kingdom of Peureulak in eastern Aceh. However, according to historical records that in the year 173 AH (or 800 AD) there has anchored a ship belonging to the Muslim merchants in the kingdom of Peureulak. The merchants came from the Kambey Gulf (Gujarat, India). The merchants come to Peureulak not only intended the trading, but also spreaded Islam.

Regardless of differences in theory, Islam has entered into Indonesia since the early period of its worldly history. That is, Islam has long been a part of archipelago people's lives, besides Islam came naturally through the presence of social interactions that occur with the voluntary and not marred by a conflict.

Since the arrival of Hinduism and Buddhism, the people accepted new religion but they did not necessarily abandon old beliefs. So, in accordance with the advent of Islam, which has been accepted and embraced by the people, it could not be sure that they follow Islam by leaving their old beliefs. There has been occurred religious syncretism, which one has been embraced the teachings of a religion but practiced different religious rituals. Thus the belief patterns of Indonesian people that has long been, consciously or unconsciously, integrate different teachings: animism, polytheism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, and so on.

Muhammadiyah in its presence wanted to purify the people's faith which was mixed Islamic with non-Islamic beliefs. To realize that idea was not an easy matter, because the belief that has been attached and fused with the lives of the people would be difficult to change. Because of the syncretism that has become part of the social religious life, so if there is an attempt to change it is definitely considered as an attempt to disrupt the peace and people's belief.

Muhammadiyah views that Islam is a religion that contains the values of progress to manifest the life of mankind enlightened. (The Central Board of Muhammadiyah, 2015: 6). The occurrences of Muhammadiyah brought a mission to improve the diversity of Islamic society and straighten the syncretism patterned through *tabligh* and Islamic preaching way. The preaching of Muhammadiyah pursued since its inception not only taking conventional methods but has used a variety of approach and media. Muhammadiyah has used printed materials and writings for the dissemination of Islamic teachings and as a medium of preaching.

The materials of Islamic teaching presented in written form or leaflet, which contains, materials for the daily prayer, prayer schedule, schedule of Ramadan fasting, and other materials. Since 1916 the magazine has published by Muhammadiyah named *Soewara Moehammadijah* (at the time it was presented in Javanese, meant Voice of Muhammadiyah). The magazine has been remained from the time until today as the official magazine published as an organization magazine under the name "Suara Muhammadiyah" in Bahasa Indonesia edition.

The *da'wah* in Muhammadiyah is a systematic effort to broadcast together and defend Islam, guiding people to prepare for life in addition to the life of the world hereafter. The main proselytizing done by Ahmad Dahlan in the form of sermons to various cities, then through trade relations owned.

For the preaching sustainability, Ahmad Dahlan nurtured his young students with the hope someday they may become successors and actors of mission movement in the future, to carry the ideals of building and promoting the nation by raising awareness of oppression and backwardness of Muslims in Indonesia.

Ahmad Dahlan saw the importance of religion and knowledge for the people, and he believed that education is the means to get the knowledge, whereas the faith and the knowledge owned by someone becomes a differentiator of human dignity in the sight of Allah. The idea is related to Allah's saying in verse 9 *Al-Zumar* and verse 11 *Al-Mujadalah* of the holy Quran.

Social Movements And Empowerment

The efforts of empowerment have been made by Muhammadiyah since the early days of its existence. The real efforts that have been made by the founder of this organization were to create help center for people who suffer hardships because of poverty and disease. He established a center for Misery People Help, which later became rehabilitation centers, health clinics, hospitals, orphanages, and other social service institutions.

Of course, the priority in the efforts is to establish educational institutions. The establishment of educational institutions became the main program of Muhammadiyah since the beginning, and this has been the fact that most private institutions manage educational institutions in Indonesia until today is Muhammadiyah, because education is the most comprehensive way to empower the people.

As the education in Indonesia was characterized with a dichotomy between religious education and secular education, which the religious education organized in Islamic schools (namely *madrasah* and *pesantren*) and public education held in schools (*sekolah*), it indicated that there was not integrated. It was shown that the Islamic schools taught only Islamic subjects without secular ones, and the public schools taught only secular subjects without religious ones. This was a challenge to Ahmad Dahlan, where he had to introduce a new type of education, a strange type at that time. He tried to insert secular subject into the Islamic education curriculum, as well as he tried to be an Islamic teacher for Kweekschool, a secular education institution.

What he wanted to do was a step of crossing culture, because many of the Muslim leaders took the Prophet's saying as for granted, which means: "whoever imitates a people he is one of them" (narated by Abu Dawud. *Sunan Abi Dawud*, No. 4031). The statement meant if someone seem like an unbeliever he becomes unbeliever, so when a Muslim acts as the unbeliever acted he becomes like them. According to organizing an educational institution, where public schools commonly organized by Western colonial who were Christian, so if Dahlan organized a school such as the Christian did he is considered to be a Christian. That is why according to his initiative to make changes in education Dahlan accused of being an unbeliever scholar.

Ahmad Dahlan was a very careful person in his daily life. He realized that life was full of challenges and must be faced. In his personal note, he made an advice to himself written in Arabic. The translation of his advice is: "O Dahlan, know you that in front of you there is a great danger and there are events that will surprise you, which you should definitely pass. Maybe you can get through it safely, but you may also be destroyed by it. O Dahlan, try to imagine yourself as if you are alone with God, while you face death, court, reckoning, heaven, and hell. And of the few that you face it, ponder the closest to you, and leave the other". (Mulkhan, 2010: 182)

That's how Ahmad Dahlan challenged himself, as a builder of world spirit to confront the realities of life and even of the hereafter. Everybody must be a good man and a godly man. Because the individuals are the essence of the society, and good society is composed of good individuals, so the attention to the society should not ignore the attention to individuals. That is the importance of mobilization.

When the reality of the people who are in poverty, oppression, ignorance, and inferiority makes them become poor, marginal, and do not have the choice and bargaining power in life. According to the Muslims condition at the time his heart was moved to invite them back to the true teachings of Islam based on the Quran and Hadith. For this purpose Ahmad Dahlan handled the education and teaching, as well as he taught his students religious lessons in his house, as he dedicated in Islamic Elementary School for children at the village of Kauman, besides his daily duty as a preacher and leader in the mosque of the Yogyakarta palace.

Ahmad Dahlan was not a secular educated. He never got Western secular education. He just got a good Islamic education from his parent and his close family, and also from some local scholars and other great scholars when he lived in Macca. Nevertheless, Dahlan can hang out with educated secular academicians and Budi Utomo activists which were generally educated at Dutch Schools. Ahmad Dahlan and his friends also had to take charge of Budi Utomo when the organization launched its branch in Yogyakarta.

Its proximity to the Budi Utomo activists gave him the opportunity to gain access to teach religious lesson for students of Kweekschool, though only as an extracurricular subject. That occasion he used as well as possible, attempting to teach Islam in interesting ways, so that some of the Kweekschool students were interested to meet Dahlan.

His presence in the Budi Utomo not only beneficial to the organization, but Ahmad Dahlan also wanted to make the organization as a way to bring his mission to improve the people's life, he also wanted it to facilitate his activities of preaching and Islamic education he has acted. (Kurniawan, 2011: 197).

After the establishment of Muhammadiyah in 1912 at Yogyakarta, the development of Islamic preaching was not just a mere teaching of the Islamic knowledge. Muhammadiyah developed schools that have been pioneered by Ahmad Dahlan before. The schools and educational institutions are the most effective and efficient media to make changes and reforms.

To expand the dissemination of ideas of changes and reforms, Ahmad Dahlan as the president of Muhammadiyah proposed constitutional amendments to be approved by the Government. Then, in the year 1920 Muhammadiyah has approved to do its activities in all regions of Java, and in 1921 it was allowed to expand its territory up to the rest of the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia).

Along with the expansion of area which allowed for Muhammadiyah preaching, the organization continued to develop its reform efforts by developing educational institutions. Muhammadiyah has organized education continuously since the Dutch colonial era, as well as the Japanese colonial period, and the independence time of Indonesia. At the time of Indonesian independence, education organized by Muhammadiyah followed its presence in countries across Indonesia.

At this time Muhammadiyah organizes educational institutions ranging from Early Childhood to Higher education. The newest data of Muhammadiyah (2015) showed it has had: Early childhood education as much as 4623, Primary school more than 2604, Junior high school

more than 1772, Senior high school as much as 687, Vocational high school as much as 278, and Higher education as much as 172 universities and colleges.

Muhammadiyah is also considered as an organization that takes account into continuity of generations. Hence, to run its programs this organization equipped with several councils based on job descriptions. The council fields formed following the needs of community development.

According to the Profile of Muhammadiyah (2010), it has a number of hospitals, maternity hospitals, health clinics, and other health service institutions not less than 457. There are orphanages, nursing homes, rehabilitation centers and so on, which are not less than 454. There are also special schools for children with special needs which amounted to 71, as well as big mosques with 6118 buildings and simple ones as much as 5080. Assets of land owned at this time recorded as large as 20,945,504 m^2 scattered throughout the teritory of Indonesia.

Besides its existence as a *da'wah* movement toward empowerment and enlightenment for the people of Indonesia, Muhammadiyah also performs in promoting world peace, particularly for nations that were hit by the conflict. For example, it became a member of the International Contact Group (ICG) for Mindanao, and so on.

Its involvement in the international movements is real, but many of its members do not know it because who participate in the movement is only from a limited circle. So, there is an impression that some movement in the organization cannot be understood by all the members, even the administrators at the middle to the lower level.

Those are evidence that Muhammadiyah has paid attention to the importance of education to improve the lives of the people and this nation. The education will achieve the goal of empowerment and enlightenment for the dignity of the Indonesian nation. So, it can be illustrated that Muhammadiyah is not only for its members, but it is for all the nation and human being. As a social group which plays some roles of the state responsibility, that is to educate and empower the people.

Conclusion
Based on the discussion above, it is understood that the emergence of Muhammadiyah in the people's life, which colored with issues of poverty and ignorance, should provide a solution to the problem. Since its establishment in 1912 Muhammadiyah has carried a mission of Islamic preaching, the straight theology of Islam, appropriate to the guidance of the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet. In addition, until now Muhammadiyah pays uninterupted attention to the social issues through education, health, and another fields related to the social welfare. In this case, Muhammadiyah as an Islamic reform movement has played a role which is the responsibility of the state that is empowerment of the people to achieve dignity as an independent nation.

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