

## TRANSFORMATION OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN THE 19TH CENTURY: THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY

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### Abstract

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*The transformation of Islamic education from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century marked a crucial phase in the intellectual and institutional development of the Muslim world. This period was characterized by a dialectical encounter between the preservation of classical Islamic traditions and the growing demand for educational modernization in response to colonial expansion, scientific progress, and global intellectual reform movements. This study aims to analyze the dynamics of Islamic educational transformation through the interaction between traditional values and modern educational ideas in both the broader Muslim world and Indonesia. This research employs a qualitative historical approach based on library research, utilizing primary and secondary scholarly sources relevant to the period under study. The findings reveal that Islamic educational reform was significantly influenced by major reformist figures such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Muhammad Rashid Rida, whose ideas later shaped the development of Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, including pesantren and madrasah systems. The study contributes to the discourse on Islamic studies by demonstrating that the transformation of Islamic education was not merely a process of Westernization, but rather a negotiated synthesis between tradition and modernity that continues to influence contemporary Islamic education.*

### **Introduction**

As we enter the modern era, science continues to advance. Technological advancements and global civilization present challenges for humanity, particularly in terms of the need for scientific knowledge. Scientific development serves as a benchmark for a nation's progress and advancement (Alkadafi et al., 2024 : 5325). European nations have become an example for Islamic countries that it is science that makes them superpowers in all aspects, including technology, organization,

economics, and so on (Azman & Supriadi, 2025 : 23). However, this differs from the Islamic world, which always prioritizes rationality and adheres to classical antiquity. Therefore, it has strong principles regarding traditions and traditional beliefs. Thus, Muslims must rise, prepare themselves with all knowledge to keep pace with the times, and adhere to the teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah.

Education, in general, is an ongoing agenda that spans from the moment humans are born until they pass away. Education has always been a contentious topic and never satisfies the needs of both poor, developing, and developed countries (Akip, 2018 : 54). In human life, Islamic teachings are comprehensive and mature, both in the past, present, and future. They have encompassed a broad view of humanity, demonstrating a mature concept and an orientation towards changes that can be seen in the increasing civilization (Sukatin et al., 2019 : 22). Modern Islamic education must confront the influence of secular culture, which may question or even challenge religious values. Furthermore, modern science is often considered the dominant authority in understanding the world, posing challenges in integrating religious teachings with scientific knowledge.

Education in the modern era presents unique challenges for every country (Azman et al., 2025 : 40). Each country has its own goals regarding education, both within the government and other institutions. Modern Islamic education requires innovation, integrating religious values in a contemporary context. Teachers must be empowered with comprehensive training in spiritual understanding and effective pedagogical methods to address these challenges. Renewal of the Islamic education curriculum should be encouraged to create a harmonious, comfortable, and beneficial educational environment for all.

Islamic education is a crucial medium for the spread of Islam. This statement is historically evident in the expansion of Islam to various parts of the world. Islamic education has at least three perspectives. First, Islamic education refers to education based on Islam, or Islamic education, which is understood and developed from the fundamental teachings and values contained in its primary sources, namely the Qur'an and Hadith. Second, Islamic education refers to Islamic religious education, namely the effort to educate individuals about the Islamic religion, its teachings, and values, so that they become a way of life and shape a person's attitude. Third, Islamic education refers to education within Islam, or the practice of providing education that has developed within the historical context of the Muslim community.

Islamic education in the 19th century played a crucial role in shaping the social and religious identity of Muslims in Indonesia. During this period, the tide of European colonialism and the global reformation of Islamic thought led to significant changes in the education system (Azman et al., 2025 : 23). Dutch colonialism introduced a secular education system that challenged the role of traditional Islamic institutions, while Islamic figures such as Muhammad Abduh and Jamaluddin al-Afghani introduced ideas for educational reform that emphasized rationality and openness to modern knowledge. This dynamic created a dialectic between efforts to maintain tradition and the need to adapt to changing times (Azra, 2019 : 55).

Although numerous studies have examined the reformist thoughts of individual Muslim scholars such as Muhammad Abduh and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, most of these studies tend to focus on biographical and descriptive

aspects of their intellectual contributions. Limited attention has been given to the broader historical transformation of Islamic education as a dialectical process between traditional institutions and modern reform movements, particularly in relation to the Indonesian context. Therefore, this article seeks to fill this gap by analyzing how Islamic educational transformation evolved from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century through the negotiation of tradition, reform, and modernity. This study offers a comparative historical perspective that links global Islamic reform movements with the development of Islamic education in Indonesia.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrative historical analysis that connects global Islamic reformist discourses with the transformation of Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, particularly in the context of the tension between tradition and modernity.

### **Research Methods**

This research employs a historical-descriptive approach in library research (Yakin, 2023: 25). Data were obtained through a literature review of books, journal articles, and historical archives relevant to the 19th century. The analysis was conducted by examining the relationship between the context of colonialism, social change, and the transformation of Islamic education, drawing on theories of modernization and educational conservatism (Miles & Huberman, 2020 : 77).

In this study, the author employed the library research method for several reasons. First, not all data sources are obtained in the field. Sometimes data sources can be obtained through libraries or written documents, such as journals, books, and other literature. Second, library research is necessary to understand new phenomena that occur and are not yet understood. Therefore, this library study is highly beneficial in understanding the history of the 19th century. Third, library data remains reliable in answering research questions. However, information or empirical data collected by others, whether in the form of books, scientific reports, or research reports, can still be used by library researchers (Pradoko, 2023 : 41). Data collection was conducted using a note-taking method, which involved copying or recording important information from the reviewed library materials (Hardani et al., 2020 : 76).

### **Discussion**

#### **Background to the Reformation in the World of Islamic Education**

The early 19th century was a pivotal period in the history of Islamic education, marked by significant shifts in the social, political, and intellectual landscape of the Islamic world. During this period, Islamic political power, particularly the Ottoman Caliphate, began to decline due to pressure from European colonial powers and the weakening of the internal governance system. Consequently, the Islamic education system, which had previously been a center for the development of science, also faced stagnation and faced significant challenges in maintaining its relevance to modern developments (Azra, 2012 : 32). In general, Islamic education in the early 19th century was still oriented towards traditional education, centered in mosques, madrasas, and kuttab (Islamic boarding schools). The curriculum emphasized religious studies such as tafsir (interpretation of the Quran), hadith (hadith), fiqh (jurisprudence), monotheism

(tawhid), and Arabic language. Meanwhile, rational sciences and science began to be marginalized from the Islamic education system (Nata, 2001). This situation left Muslims lagging in science and technology compared to the West, which was experiencing the peak of the Industrial Revolution.

At the same time, the influence of Western colonialism began to penetrate Islamic territories such as India, Egypt, and the Indonesian archipelago. The colonial government introduced a secular education system that emphasized rationality and modern sciences. This created an educational duality between modern Western-style schools and traditional Islamic educational institutions (Steenbrink, 1986 : 44). As a result, Muslims faced a dilemma: whether to maintain old traditions or adapt to a new, more modern educational system.

However, the 19th century also marked the emergence of a reform movement (tajdid) within the Islamic world. Figures such as Muhammad Ali Pasha in Egypt, Rifa'ah al-Tahtawi, and Jamaluddin al-Afghani began pushing for reforms in Islamic education, focusing not only on religious aspects but also on general knowledge, science, and technology. They believed that the decline of Muslims was due to educational backwardness and a lack of mastery of worldly wisdom.

In Indonesia, the Islamic education system in the early 19th century was still dominated by traditional Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and surau (prayer houses). However, with the influence of reforms from the Middle East and the increasing interaction of Muslims in the Indonesian archipelago with the global Islamic world, a growing awareness emerged of the need to reform the education system to be more adaptable to current developments. This awareness gave rise to modern Islamic educational institutions such as madrasas and Islamic schools in the early 20th century (Azra, 2012 : 11). Pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) remained centers of traditional Islamic education with the sorogan and bandongan systems, while the emergence of madrasas introduced a more systematic approach with a structured curriculum. Dutch colonialism indirectly influenced Islamic educational reform, particularly in administrative and curricular matters. Reformers such as Ahmad Dahlan and Sheikh Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi later became bridges between classical scholarly traditions and modern values (Wijaya, 2024 : 65).

### **Reform Figures in Islamic Education in the 19th Century**

#### *Jamaludin Al-Afgani*

His full name was Sayyid Jamaluddin al-Afghani ibn Safar. He was a descendant of Sayyid Ali al-Tirmidhi, whose lineage can be traced back to Husayn ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib. This is reflected in the title of Sayyid he bore. Jamaluddin al-Afghani was born in 1838 CE/1254 AH in Asadabad. Opinions differ about the exact location of Asadabad. Some believe it was in Afghanistan, while others think it was in Persia (Siti Jumrotun, 2024 : 15).

The emergence of an idea or thought put forward by Jamaludin Al Afghani was due to seeing the condition of the Islamic world which had once achieved glory then experienced a stagnation of thought which made Muslims fall into defeat after defeat due to the pressure and power of the colonialists from the west which had once been achieved by Muslims so that Muslims became the mainstay and hope of the world at that time. In such conditions, Jamaludin Al Afghani

attempted to effect change through society by gradually incorporating the values of Islamic teachings to rebuild public trust. According to Jamaludin, in essence, the power of a society will be valuable if it arises from within itself, so that the thoughts and souls of the people must first be developed and improved, allowing them to form a government system (Rahmad Teguh Septiyadi & Nurpadjarillah, 2023 : 67).

Afghani's thinking on Islamic educational reform emphasizes an inclusive and open understanding of science and development. For him, Islamic education should not be rigid and bound by tradition alone, but rather dynamic and responsive to changing times. Afghani recognized that rigidity in Islamic education could hinder the progress of Muslims, necessitating adaptation to developments in science and technology to ensure its relevance in the modern era. Afghani's concept of Islamic educational reform encompasses efforts to align religious teachings with science and existing social realities (Rizadiliyawati & Roza, 2024 : 45)

Jamaludin al-Afgani is known as a reformer with great courage in pushing for the transformation of Islamic education. Every step he took demonstrated a strong determination to restore the dignity of Muslims, who at that time lagged far behind Western nations, especially in the field of science. This backwardness prompted al-Afgani to initiate various reforms in Islamic education relevant to the needs of the modern era (Ofiani & Mardalena, 2024). The reforms he proposed included developing critical and rational thinking skills, teaching modern science and technology, and improving the Islamic education system, which he considered outdated and unable to produce a competent young generation. He also rejected educational models that focused solely on memorization without providing space for the development of thinking and practical skills. His reformist ideas emphasized the importance of educational equality for men and women and championed open education free from political interference.

Based on Jamaludin al-Afgani's opinion above, it can be explained that education must develop critical and rational thinking skills, given that Muslims at that time were experiencing decline. Muslims must study science and technology to stay current with developments and integrate their knowledge with Islamic values. Reforming the education system involves updating the Islamic education curriculum to develop critical and rational thinking skills in the younger generation. Rejecting education that focuses solely on memorization, youth must instead rise to face the challenges of the modern era and think critically. Equality in education, regardless of gender or social status, means that men and women have the right to receive a relevant and quality education. Education that is open and free from political and power influences, education that serves as a tool to empower society, the nation, and the state. It is not intended for personal enrichment or political or power-based purposes.

#### *Muhammad Abduh*

His full name is Muhammad ibn Abduh ibn Hasan Khayrullah, who was born in 1849 in Buhayra, a local agricultural hamlet in the Nasr region, Tanta, Egypt. He came from Sali, of Egyptian descent, belonging to the Fellahin who had the Nile Valley for more than a thousand years. His mother came from the Bani Adi tribe, the line of descent of the second Khalifah, Sayidina Umar bin Khattab.

Beliaua received his initial education from private teachers and memorized the Koran. At the age of thirteen, he studied the basic religious knowledge at the Ahmadi mosque, a renowned study center in Egypt. Muhammad Abduh's thoughts on education are considered to be the beginning of the revival of Muslims at the start of the 20th century. His thoughts were widely disseminated in writings in the magazines al-Manar and al-Urwat. They became a reference for reformist figures in the Islamic world, leading various Islamic countries to establish schools or madrasas using the curriculum pioneered by Muhammad Abduh (Jamil, 2024 : 51).

Muhammad Abduh's ideas were applied to transform the Al-Azhar educational system of his time. Al-Azhar was chosen because it was considered the center of Islamic intellectual civilization, and therefore, changes to this institution were believed to have far-reaching impacts. This thinking led Al-Azhar to include philosophy courses, as suggested by Abduh, because philosophy was thought to hone students' intellect and sharpen their critical thinking amidst the decline of Islamic thought and knowledge at that time (Nasihin et al., 2023 : 58).

Abduh's thoughts on educational modernization encompassed several strategic areas of religious life. Theology was the first focus, highlighting the need to free Muslim thought from the influence of the Jabariyah and strengthening the belief that the use of common sense is a gift from God. The field of *ijtihad* received significant attention because Abduh emphasized that every Muslim is obliged to conduct *ijtihad* through reflection and appreciation of the Qur'an and Hadith as the primary sources of Islamic teachings.

The political sphere was the next aspect touched upon by Abduh through his ideas for reforming the government system. He argued that after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, no individual had the absolute right to judge the beliefs or creeds of others. Education was the area that Abduh emphasized most due to his love of knowledge and his belief that education was the path to prosperity and the advancement of civilization. He considered modern technology essential for Muslims to master to keep up with the times.

The issue of Islamic educational reform was a primary concern for Abduh throughout his life. Education was viewed as a crucial aspect, while science was believed to be obligatory to prevent the ummah from becoming intellectually stagnant. The state of Al-Azhar education, which he felt produced graduates who were rigid, static, and closed to change, presented a significant challenge. The *jumud* view causes Muslims to be reluctant to accept change, so that decline continues. Improving the quality of Islamic education and conveying basic teachings in clear language is believed by Abduh to be a means of overcoming setbacks and paving the way for future progress (Tambak, 2015: 89)

#### *Muhammad Rasyid Ridha*

Sayyid Muhammad Rasyid Ridha, whose full name is Muhammad Rasyid ibn Ali Ridha ibn Muhammad Syamsudin ibn Muhammad Bahauddin ibn Manla Ali Khalifah, was a student of Muhammad Abduh. Born in Qolamun, Lebanon, in 1865, Rasyid Ridha is a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, from the line of Husayn ibn Ali. His thinking was influenced mainly by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh. He died in August 1935 (Rahmad Teguh Septiyadi & Nurpadjarillah, 2023: 10). Modernization in education also received special

attention from Rasyid Ridha. Rasyid Ridha believed that education is a fundamental aspect in efforts to improve and elevate the social status of the ummah. The backwardness of Islam has been due to the weakness of the existing education system in the Islamic world. Meanwhile, the superiority and supremacy of the modern West were based on advances in science and technology supported by a sound education system (Harahap, 2014: 23). Rasyid Ridha's reformist ideas encompassed education, religion, and politics, aiming to foster an active and dynamic attitude among the Muslim community. Rasyid Ridha's reforms were closely tied to those of Islamic reformers who had deviated from his teachings, which were rooted in the political thought of the Islamic world (Ningsih, 2021: 67).

Muhammad Rasyid Ridha's reforms followed in the footsteps of his teacher, Muhammad Abduh, in the field of education. He also believed that Muslims would progress if they mastered education. Therefore, he made building schools or madrasas his primary mission. Sayyid's goal in building schools was to prepare strong cadres to counter the onslaught of Christian missionary schools at that time. Furthermore, Rasyid Ridha also trained skilled and resilient preachers to carry out Islamic missions worldwide.

As a journalist, Rasyid Ridha is also very productive in writing and producing several works, namely: *Tarikh al Ustadz al Imam al Seikh Abduh*, *Nida' li al Jins al Latif*, *Al Wahyu Al Muhammadi*, *Yusr al Islam wa Usul al Yasyri al'Am*, *Al Khilaf*, *Al Wahabiyah wa al Hijaz*, *Munawarat al Muslih wa al Muqallid*, *Zikra al Mauled al Nabawi*, *Syubaht al Nashara wa hujaj al Islam*, *al-Azhar wa al manar*, *al Hikmah al Syar'iah fi muhakmat al dadiri*, *Risalat al Hujjat al Islam al Ghazali*, *Al sunnah wa al Shia*, *al wahdah al Islamiyah*, *Haqiqah al Riba*, *Tafsir al Manar* (Rasionalisme et al., 2012).

Muhammad Rasyid Ridha is considered a modernist due to his fame and the significant influence his thought had on Islamic modernization efforts in Egypt and other parts of the world. It is essential to note that his modernization ideas and thoughts were influenced by his teachers, Muhammad Abduh and Jamaludin al-Afghani, two of the most influential reformers in Muhammad Rasyid Ridha's life. *Al-Manar* magazine also opened the way for Rasyid to disseminate ideas of Islamic reform. Through *Al-Manar*, the writings of Rasyid Ridha and Muhammad Abduh spread throughout the Islamic world, making him widely known for his reformist thinking. This significantly impacted Muslims in the Middle East, North Africa, Southeast Asia, and especially Indonesia.

### *Sultan Mahmud II*

The reforms implemented by Sultan Mahmud II included improving the madrasah learning system, which initially focused solely on teaching religious subjects. General subjects were not yet included in the madrasah curriculum, leading Sultan Mahmud II to believe that madrasas still employed a traditional style of education, which focused solely on religious subjects. Changing times in the 19th century prompted Mahmud II to take action, specifically in response to the need for changes in the system and curriculum, which included the addition of general subjects to the curriculum. To anticipate the future, Mahmud II also established the *Mektebi Ma'arif* (General Knowledge School) and the *Mektebi ulumu edebiye* (Literary School) as public schools. Many other schools were built

during Sultan Mahmud II's reign, including military, medical, engineering, and surgical schools. Mahmud II also sent students to Austria and Europe to influence the spread of new ideas in the Ottoman Empire upon their return to Turkey (Mujib, 2024 : 23).

During the reign of Sultan Mahmud II, he also established the Tanzimat (a reform movement for government regulations and legislation). Members included Mustofa Rasyid Pasha (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister), Mustofa Sami Pasha (who believed that the advancement of European education lay in breaking away from religious ties), Mehmed Sadik Rif'at Pasha (who reformed the Turkish Constitution), and Ali Pasha (foreign ambassador who replaced Mustofa Rasyid Pasha as Prime Minister). Sultan Mahmud II's reform efforts did not receive full support from within or outside the Ottoman Empire, as the Tanzimat movement was essentially aimed at implementing reforms based on Western liberalism, rather than religious law. This idea became the Achilles' heel of the Tanzimat movement, ultimately leading to its failure.

### **Similarities and Differences in the Ideas of Jamaludin Al-Afgani, Muhammad Abduh, and Muhammad Rasyid Ridha**

The ideas of Islamic educational reform proposed by Jamaludin al-Afgani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rasyid Ridha likely share similarities because these three figures had a very close relationship between teacher and student. They shared a similar background in the fields of education, politics, and the advancement of Islamic education at that time (Madyunus, 2021). However, they certainly had different goals, principles, and ideas for Islamic educational reform. The similarities and differences can be summarized as follows:

Table 1. Comparison of the Ideas of Islamic Education Reform of Jamaludin al Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Muhammad Rasyid Ridha

| <b>The Similarities of Jamaludin Al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Muhammad Rasyid Ridha</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>The Differences in Ideas Between Jamaludin Al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Muhammad Rasyid Ridha</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Islamic Reform and Reform Movement. All three agreed that Muslims must undergo reform to escape their decline. Because European nations had experienced rapid progress, they did not want Muslims to become too lulled by tradition. Reform was carried out without abandoning the core teachings of Islam, but rather by adapting approaches to religious practice to current developments.</li> <li>2. Rejection of Superstition, Bid'ah, and Superstition. They criticized religious practices deemed inconsistent with early Islamic teachings, such as the cult of religious figures, excessive rituals without any basis in Islamic law, and local traditions that contradict monotheism. Their goal was to return Islam to the purity of the Qur'an and Sunnah.</li> <li>3. Upholding Reason and Ijtihad. Third, they emphasized that reason is a vital gift for</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Jamaluddin al-Afghani <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The primary focus of the reforms was political and philosophical.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Education was seen as a means of raising the political awareness of Muslims. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasized the importance of modern science, philosophy, and rationality.</li> <li>- It did not establish a detailed educational system, but instead catalyzed the awakening of the community.</li> <li>- The goal of education: to develop a politically conscious generation capable of resisting colonialism and advancing the community.</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Muhammad Abduh <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The most systematic and practical educational reformer of the three.</li> <li>- He combined religious knowledge and modern science into the curriculum.</li> <li>- He undertook direct reforms at Al-Azhar, improving methods, curriculum, and</li> </ul> </li> </ol> |

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| <p>humans, and that <i>ijtihad</i> must be used to address modern challenges. They rejected blind imitation of schools of thought and called for the reopening of the doors of <i>ijtihad</i>.</p> <p>4. Acceptance of Modern Science. Al-Afghani, Abduh, and Rasyid Ridha saw that the backwardness of Muslims was due to their abandonment of science, technology, and rational thought. They encouraged Muslims to master modern science without losing their Islamic identity.</p> <p>5. The Political and Social Awakening of the Muslim Community. All three shared a vision of reviving the Muslim community (<i>nadah</i>) through educational reform, Muslim unity, and political awareness of colonialism. Al-Afghani focused more on pan-Islamic politics, but Abduh and Ridha continued this spirit through social and educational reform.</p> <p>6. Returning to the Quran and Sunnah. They emphasized the Quran and Sunnah through a rational understanding of religious texts, not being bound by the opinions of classical scholars when they were irrelevant, and interpreting the Quran with a contextual and modern approach. Muhammad Rasyid Ridha reinforced this idea in his commentary on <i>Al-Manar</i>.</p> <p>7. Education as the Key to Progress. All three agreed that reform must begin with curriculum reconstruction, strengthening religious and general knowledge, and enhancing critical thinking methods. Muhammad Abduh specifically implemented this during his time as a reformer at Al-Azhar University.</p> | <p>management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-He rejected memorization and encouraged rational understanding, <i>ijtihad</i>, and discussion.</li> <li>-His goal: to develop rational, modern, and moral Muslims.</li> </ul> <p>3. Rasyid Ridha</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continuing the Abduh reform, but more conservative in aspects of the creed and <i>manhaj</i> of the <i>salaf</i>.</li> <li>- Emphasizes education based on the <i>Koran</i> and <i>Sunnah</i> purely according to the <i>Salaf</i> approach.</li> <li>- Accept modern science selectively, but reject the influence of Western culture.</li> <li>- Education must strengthen faith and moral character.</li> </ul> <p>Educational goal: to form a generation with strong beliefs, returning to authentic Islam.</p> |
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The table above shows that the three figures shared a common goal in promoting the renewal of Islamic education, although each emphasized a different focus. Jamaluddin Al-Afghani emphasizes the importance of political awareness and community awakening as the foundation for social and intellectual transformation in the Islamic world. Muhammad Abduh prioritized practical reform in the education system, including the modernization of the curriculum and learning methods that were relevant to the needs of society. Muhammad Rasyid Ridha emphasized the purification of faith through Salafi education accompanied by selective acceptance of modern science, so that renewal remained rooted in strong theological principles.

### **The Development of Islamic Education in Indonesia in the 19th Century**

Indonesia is a country with a Muslim majority, and this is inextricably linked to the active role of Islamic scholars in spreading Islam. The long journey of Islamic scholars in Indonesia, from the Dutch colonial era to the present day,

continues to shape society, influencing both religious education and general education. In the 19th century, the development of Islam and Malay culture was concentrated in Riau, particularly in Penyengat Island, where the Lingga Riau Kingdom was founded. Raja Ali Haji (1808-1873) was a pivotal figure who made significant contributions to the development of Malay-Islamic social, intellectual, and political discourse. He is also known for his writings, which have been highly influential, particularly in the development of Malay culture. One of his works on language structure, "The Book of Language Knowledge," demonstrates his passion for the Malay language. The purpose of this work is to guide all levels of society to increase their knowledge of language, religion, and proper customs. (Dalimuthe et al., 2022 : 33).

Furthermore, Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani, a Bantenese scholar, was a prolific writer who contributed to various multidisciplinary fields. His writings have been internationally recognized and published in multiple countries, including Morocco, Cairo, Sudan, Libya, Mecca, and Medina. His writings have even become references for Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Indonesia. One of Sheikh Nawawi's most extraordinary contributions to Islamic education is his explanation of the phrase "addibuhum," which translates to "allimuhum mahasin al-akhlaq." This "addibuhum" is intended to educate them (wives, children, and those under your care or guardianship) regarding moral behavior. Sheikh Nawawi Al-Bantani's thoughts on contemporary moral education emphasize the balance between reason and the soul in navigating life's challenges, particularly within the context of Islamic teachings (Muhammad et al., 2023 : 65)

In getting to know Islamic education figures in Indonesia, we must not forget their significant role in education, particularly in renewing the concept and system of Islamic education in Indonesia. Among them are those who combine or modify the idea of Dutch colonial (modern) education with the idea of Islamic boarding school (traditional) education. Among them are K.H. Ahmad Dahlan (1868 AD), K.H. Hasyiam Asyari (1871 AD), K.H. Imam Az-Zarkasy (1910 AD), Buya Hamka (1908 AD), and many others (Suja'i & Baihaqi, 2022 : 11).

The concept of Islamic educational reform proposed by these figures demonstrates a continuity of ideas, albeit with varying emphases. K.H. Ahmad Dahlan was born to Kyai Abu Bakar and Siti Aminah in 1285 H (1868 M) and is known as the founder of Muhammadiyah, which was established on November 18, 1912, coinciding with the 18th of Dzulhijjah 1330 H. The educational ideas he put forward include moral education that instills character based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, individual education that fosters integrative awareness between mental, faith, and intellectual development, and community education that encourages the willingness and desire to live in society (Fitri et al., 2022 : 89).

K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari was born in Gedang, Jombang, East Java, on 24 Dzulhijjah 1287, or February 14, 1871 CE, and is known as an influential cleric and founder of Nahdlatul Ulama, along with other notable figures. His thoughts on education are outlined in the book *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim*, which prioritizes logic and begins with quotations from verses of the Qur'an, hadith, the views of scholars, and poetry rich in wisdom. This method of delivery allows readers to grasp the meaning in depth without explicit explanation from him, while his main ideas can be traced through his works. His educational goals are oriented towards forming a society with high ethics and noble character (Mukhlis, 2020 :

66).

K.H. Imam Zarkasyi was born in Gontor, Ponorogo, East Java, on March 21, 1910, to Santosa Anam Basyari and a mother who was a descendant of the regent Suriadiningrat. His educational ideas encompassed the modernization of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) as Islamic academic institutions, the affirmation of their significant contribution to the nation's intelligence, and an emphasis on morals as the spiritual foundation for students. His hope was for a society capable of becoming agents of social change with moral character. The concept of the five souls of the *pondok* (*pondok*) that he developed became a distinctive characteristic of modern, applied Islamic boarding school education (Budiman, Azizah Hanum, Muhammad Amran, Faisal, 2022 : 49). Buya Hamka defined the goal of Islamic education as the process of knowing and seeking God's pleasure, developing character, and preparing students to live a dignified and proper life in society. Buya Hamka's ideas are considered to remain relevant to the development of contemporary Islamic education if correctly reconstructed and adapted (Nurhasanah et al., 2023 : 23)

The concepts of Islamic educational reform proposed by these scholars have had a profound impact on the development of national education in Indonesia. Their ideas are deeply rooted in society and have made a tangible contribution to educational advancement. Their influence is evident in the successful character development of the younger generation, reflected in various cultural works such as the films *Lima Menara* (Five Towers), *Sang Kiai* (The Kiai), and *Laskar Pelangi* (Rainbow Troops), which depict the values of Islamic education and the struggle to build national intelligence.

### **Conclusion**

The 19th century Islamic education in Indonesia was characterized by a dynamic interplay between preserving traditional scholarly practices and embracing modern reforms. Influenced by international Islamic scholars such as Jamaludin Al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh, alongside local leaders like K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, Indonesian educators sought to adapt their curricula by integrating rational sciences and general knowledge while maintaining core religious teachings. This dialectical process allowed Islamic institutions such as *pesantren* and *madrasahs* to evolve by incorporating modern educational systems without entirely abandoning their traditional values, reflecting a flexible approach to modernization.

Colonialism significantly impacted the landscape of Islamic education during this period by introducing secular and Western-style schooling systems that challenged traditional Islamic institutions. Colonial authorities promoted rationality and scientific knowledge, creating a dichotomy between traditional religious education and new, modern schools. Indonesian Islamic leaders responded by synthesizing these influences preserving their cultural and religious identity while adopting elements of Western pedagogy to foster progress and resilience. This blend of tradition and modernization played a vital role in shaping contemporary Islamic education in Indonesia, illustrating a strategic adaptation to social, political, and economic changes during the colonial era.

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