

Post-traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama and Neo-modernist Muhammadiyah: A Study of Local Muslim Thoughts in Gorontalo



Arfan Nusi¹, Nurul Ilmi Idrus², Hamka Naping³, Lahaji⁴

^{1,2}Department of Philosophy, Islamic State University of Sultan Amai Gorontalo, Indonesia

^{3,4}Department of Anthropology, Hasanuddin University, Makassar, Indonesia

ABSTRACT: Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah have responded to the local reality of Gorontalo by new approaches of post-traditionalism and neo-modernism. The present article delves to explore the landscape of local Muslim community in Gorontalo within the discourse of Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah; it also aims to investigate the model of post-traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama and neo-modernist Muhammadiyah thoughts in understanding Islam and Gorontalo culture. The study employed a qualitative method that relies on primary and secondary data. Informants from the two Islamic organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, were involved within this study. Prior to the data analysis, the primary and secondary data were classified. The results of this study signified two points of concern: 1) the Muslim community in Gorontalo consists of Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah affiliations. The two organizations have a harmonious relationship; both organizations understand and respect each other. Some of the *jama'ah* (follower/member) of one organization even practice the religious traditions of the other organization. 2) Nahdlatul Ulama stands on the ground of traditional school of thoughts that are responsive to the modernization, while Muhammadiyah bases its foundation on the modern thoughts that accommodate local traditions. The results further emphasized that the difference of perspective between both organizations lies around the thoughts, while the deconstruction of religious missions remain the same between both organizations. Each organization tends to stand firm on their own ideology as what originally proposed when the organization was first established.

KEYWORDS-Post-traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama, Neo-modernist Muhammadiyah, School of Thought.

I. INTRODUCTION

(In general, the typology of thoughts of Nahdlatul Ulama (henceforth referred to as NU) indicates a traditionalist perspective of Islam (Luthfi Hadi Aminuddin, 2018). Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah is assumed by many as a modernist Islamic organization (Deliar Noer, 1973). However, the typology of religious perspective of NU and Muhammadiyah as mentioned above is not relevant in Gorontalo. Recently, NU has been very accommodative and responsive towards global issues and challenges of time. In the meantime, Muhammadiyah has also been adaptive and open towards the local tradition; in some occasions, they partake in some local tradition events. Hence, the labelling of NU and Muhammadiyah becomes more and more obscure. It is more common nowadays for people of Muhammadiyah organization to participate in *mongaruwa* (remembrance banquet of dead family members), *molubingo* (female circumcision), *beati* (initiation of a young woman entering adolescence), and other traditional rituals (Nikson Supu, 2021). The same also goes in NU, where people of its affiliation conduct several religious practices of Muhammadiyah, such as eight *raka'ah* of Tarwih prayers and other rituals (Ferdi Gani, 2021).

The academic discourse of NU and Muhammadiyah so far mainly explores two points. The first wave of studies in this academia focuses to explore the reformation of Islamic thoughts of NU and Muhammadiyah (Jarman Arroisi, et al, 2020; Widodo, 2011; Zainal Abidin, 2015). As highlighted by Arbiyah Lubis (2015), Muhammadiyah is well known as a modernist organization due to its success in modern education. However, the organization adapts a traditionalistic view in understanding the religious texts of Quran and Hadith that relies on the reality. Meanwhile, Muhammad Azhar (2001) points out that despite NU is often viewed as traditionalist, the organization tends to have a more modern outlook compared to Muhammadiyah, as seen in their acceptance of the principle Pancasila that some view as more advanced than Muhammadiyah. Second, a wave of studies on Muhammadiyah and NU also elaborates the reflection and retrospection on the context of moderatism in Indonesia (Masdar Hilmi, 2012; Mustiqowati Ummul Fithriyyah & Muhammad Saiful Umam, 2018). The academia trend shows that the investigation on NU and Muhammadiyah only focuses on the notion of reformation and paradigm shift of traditionalist-modernist.

Post-traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama and Neo-modernist Muhammadiyah: A Study of Local Muslim Thoughts in Gorontalo

Such a discourse still leaves a huge gap to be explored regarding other aspects of NU-Muhammadiyah relations that are yet to be discussed by the previous studies.

The present article aims to fill the gap of previous studies that neglected various dimensions of post-traditionalist NU and neo-modernist Muhammadiyah. In particular, the paper aims to elaborate the harmony of NU and Muhammadiyah in the local context of Gorontalo within the ideas of traditionalist-modernist and modernist-traditionalist. In this regard, this study aims to discuss two points of concern: First, the landscape of Muslim community in Gorontalo within the discourse of NU and Muhammadiyah; Second, the model of post-traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama and neo-modernist Muhammadiyah thoughts in understanding Islam and Gorontalo culture. These topics of discussion are the starting point of an elaboration of NU-Muhammadiyah discourse in Gorontalo.

This paper embarks on the rationale of the meeting point between both religious organizations regarding their perspective on Islam and culture. Both NU and Muhammadiyah view Islam and culture as an inseparable entity within the societal context of Gorontalo. Islam experienced a rapid growth within the region by the medium of noble culture; in turn, the acculturation of Islam enlightens the local culture.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. A Post-traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama

Your NU in a post-traditionalist viewpoint is defined as a movement of young intellectuals of the organization that focus to develop contemporary, refreshing Islamic discussions that are still relevant to the traditions inherited by the long-established schools of thought. These people propose progressive ideas in response to the modernity by referring to the traditional doctrines and incorporating new principles from modern postulates. The post-traditionalist NU posits its concerns on the critiques and careful approach on modernity as well as the revitalization of tradition (Rusmadi, et al, 2003). Firdaus Muhammad (2015) views post-traditionalists as a organization that progresses from traditionalist take on religion towards an open perspective. This faction is composed mainly of NU scholars and academic community that involve themselves in the discourse of modernity. The wake of post-traditional NU members indicates a transformation of authority from the domination of *Kyai* (Islamic traditional scholars) to the intellectuals that started to take more important roles within the school of thought.

Three forms of post-traditional NU can be proposed. First, post-traditionalists of NU manifest themselves into a context in which NU proposes a contextual reconstruction of doctrines to formulate a product that is ever-relevant to the changing times (Rifatuz Zuhro, 2019). Second, the post-traditionalists maintain the relevant propositions from the traditional doctrines and integrate those with modern outlooks (*al-muhafadhah 'ala al-qadim al-shalih wa al-akhdz bi al-jadid al-ashlah*). Third, post-traditional NU affiliates are identical with young generations of NU that uphold the tradition while keeping hold of an interpretation of social reality.

B. A Neo-modernist Muhammadiyah

Abdul Munir Mulkhan (2021) points out that a neo-modernist Muhammadiyah is the byproduct of the modernization expansion within Islamic socio-ritual tradition that was once formulated by the founder of Muhammadiyah, KH. Ahmad Dahlan. Neo-modernist Muhammadiyah is often indicated by the presence of Muhammadiyah Young Intellectuals Network (or Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah, JIMM in short). JIMM orientates towards an Islamic school of thought that is cultural-intellectual, open, and pluralistic; these traits differentiate the organization from the main stream of Muhammadiyah that leans toward a puritan, revivalist, and orthodox agendas. The community is hailed by many as a new historical block within Muhammadiyah that explores new model of religious thoughts and adopts new approaches within Islamic scholarship (Ahmad Nur Fuad, 2015).

As based on the previous concept, three main proponents of a neo-modernist Muhammadiyah can be identified. First, the doctrines of Muhammadiyah have shifted towards a modernist-traditionalist approach with socio-cultural. Second, the movement produces progressive narrations towards a cultural approach that leave behind the methods that failed to accommodate traditional society. Third, neo-modernism in Muhammadiyah is mainly dominated by aspiring scholars that proposes the interpretation of Quran that reaches beyond textual narratives and incorporates the social reality.

III. METHOD

The present topic was chosen as the subject of discussion based on three considerations. First, the issue of post-modernism and neo-modernism has not been much considered by previous studies. Second, the thoughts of the two Muslim organizations experienced a shift, especially in understanding the text-context notion. Third, the existence of post-traditionalists and neo-modernists among local Muslim organizations underlies several notable events on the constellation of Islamic organizations in Gorontalo. These points of concern are the basis of the search for a comprehensive exploration on school of thoughts in local Muslim community in Gorontalo.

Post-traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama and Neo-modernist Muhammadiyah: A Study of Local Muslim Thoughts in Gorontalo

The study employed a qualitative method that relies on primary and secondary data. The data were collected from field study and mapping of research aspects. The data were in the form of a landscape of local Muslim community and the Muslim scholarship in Gorontalo that encompasses the role of NU and Muhammadiyah within the society as well as the responses of both organizations towards religious texts and local context.

This study involved the intellectuals and scholars from NU and Muhammadiyah as the informants of the research to elaborate on the thoughts of the two Muslim organizations in interpretations of religious texts and local context. In addition, the involvement of both organizations also aimed to depict whether intellectual capacity had an influence on the informants' views and attitudes towards a particular issue. Moreover, several figures who can evaluate the validity of the research also participated.

The research processes were conducted in two months, starting with desk-review, field observations, and interviews. Prior to the field study, numerous secondary materials such as online news were collected to map out the thoughts of the two Muslim organizations. Observations were made on a number of religious studies in online media and open discussions conducted by NU and Muhammadiyah.

The data analysis was carried out in two forms. First, the data were processed by Miles and Huberman's (1996) stages, starting from data reduction, observation and interview, data display in the form of a summary, and data verification. Second, the data were analyzed by an interpretation technique starting from "restatement" of the data from observations and interviews, "description" to find patterns or trends, and "interpretation" to reveal the meaning of the data.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

C. *Landscape of Muslim Community in Gorontalo: Discourse of NU and Muhammadiyah*

Islam is a dominant religion in Gorontalo; the religion has been embraced by most native community within the region. In other words, it is safe to say that a non-Muslim person is not a native Gorontaloese person, unless the person has converted to another religion (Sofyan A.P. Kau & Zainul Romiz Koesry, 2018). A total of 72.32% of the community resides within the suburban area, while the rest chooses to live in urban areas (Bobby Rantou Payu, 2010). The suburban Muslim community still practices a simple way of life and maintains the local traditions within their daily activities. In the urban area, the Muslim organization is identical with a high level of education and rational way of thinking. Interestingly, although modernity has started to penetrate the Muslim community in the city, the local customs still dominate most aspects in their life. The natives and the immigrants alike still follow the standard rules of their ancestors as cultural Muslims due to the comparatively homogeneous life style. Such a homogeneous community exists almost everywhere in Gorontalo city and it is apparent that they are not yet willing to change their traditional lifestyle.

There is no clash between NU and Muhammadiyah in the suburban and the urban area. It seems that true friendship is able to be established without being separated by differences of approaches in both organizations. Their interactions in social spaces have developed the understanding towards each other. In Gorontalo, it is not uncommon for a NU affiliate to pray at a Muhammadiyah mosque or vice versa. It is common for the members of Muhammadiyah organization to be entrusted as *khatib* or preachers Friday prayers at an NU mosque; even though the preacher has to perform an NU tradition, i.e., to use a stick to get on the podium. On the other hand, it is also common for Nahdliyin (the term for NU members) to lead the eight *raka'at* tarawih prayers at a Muhammadiyah mosque.

These phenomena are similar to the experience of the researcher as a child of parents with thick NU tradition. The researcher has also experienced studying at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Muhammadiyah and observed prayers at the Muhammadiyah mosque, because it was the only mosque in the village. In the Muhammadiyah mosque, the majority of community routinely performed *tahlilan*, *barzanji*, *yasinan* and other Nahdlatul Ulama religious traditions. From this experience, it becomes apparent that the strong understanding of individuals and organizations was not contradicted among the community as well as the younger generation. This phenomenon indicates a situation of religious variance that is able to withstand the test of times without any collision. This is contrary to the common assumption that a Muhammadiyah member do not want to experience the religious practice of Nahdlatul Ulama, or vice versa.

There is a dominant factor why conflict is not ignited among Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. The Muslim community of Gorontalo has been conformed by their environment. Some people may not be aware that they have come out of the previous ideology that they firmly hold as a result of the social setting that has made them follow the rules of the environment in which they live. In the meantime, some people were indeed aware, but still follow the rules that apply in their social space rather than being ostracized by other organizations. If a Muhammadiyah person lives in the midst of the majority of NU community, whether like it or not, he must participate in carrying out the NU tradition, and vice versa. Safri Mardison (2013: 79) sees this matter as the result of interactions between people that usually make everyone involved to avoid conflict and remain in a comfort zone. The sense of security and comfort that a person gets is a way for him to survive in an organization.

It is a common sense if an individual prefers security and comfort, because the human instinct within a person tend to avoid complicated problems. Even if the situation is contrary to the truth that is believed, the individual is willing to give up one's

Post-traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama and Neo-modernist Muhammadiyah: A Study of Local Muslim Thoughts in Gorontalo

principles to be accepted in the community. The sole purpose is to try not to hurt other people's feelings by following the norms that apply in that place. Likewise, the NU and Muhammadiyah have put forward solidity and solidarity to avoid rifts. This is in accordance with the ancestral philosophy of Gorontalo "*buhuta wawu walama*" (a whole unity).

This noble philosophy is strong in the Gorontalo community, especially in its actualized form in the traditions of *ti'ayo* (helping each other), *huyula* (mutual cooperation), *bilohe* (visiting each other), *depita* (exchanging gifts) and *ambuwa* (gathering). There was an intense interaction that brought together Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah in social spaces. Such a tradition transcended the dividing line between different perspectives and unified in a noble tradition. Herein lies the basis why conformity entered the people of Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah in Gorontalo. Such a context embodies the tolerance or respect (*tinepo*) between the organizations. In general, humans tend to favor conformity and integration with new environment in which they interact on a daily basis.

D. Model of Post-traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama and Neo-modernist Muhammadiyah Thoughts in Understanding Islam and Gorontalo Culture

The religious practice of the Nahdlatul Ulama organization was once the target of da'wah (preacher) from the Muhammadiyah Muslim organization. The interaction between these two religious organizations began with the return of young Muhammadiyah intellectuals from Java in the 1970s. They held religious studies at the Baiturahim Grand Mosque, Gorontalo and preached their teachings. The bid'ah labelling project continued to be presented by Muhammadiyah youth against religious tradition of Nahdlatul Ulama which often performed tahlilan, maulidan, tawasul, and others. The da'wah eventually sparked unrest from the Nahdliyin because it could worsen the atmosphere of the traditionalist Islamic society of Gorontalo (Dachlan, 2018: 291).

The reformation and purification of Islam promoted by a young Muhammadiyah leader at the time, Yusuf Polapa, was in line with the modernization spirit of Muhammadiyah since it was founded in Yogyakarta in 1912, and this pattern became a model for Muhammadiyah's thoughts principle in Gorontalo. Such a perspective, however, began to fade in the post-Yusuf Polapa generation, with the names such as Ibrahim Polontalo, Mansur Pateda, Nani Tuloli, Yasin Tuloli. The next generation of Muhammadiyah scholars, i.e., Nelson Pomalingo, Muhammad N Tuli, Kadim Masaong, Kasim Yahiji, and Lukman Arsyad play a role in Gorontalo culture. Moreover, the presence of young Muhammadiyah intellectuals such as Munkizul Umam Kau, Ilyas Daud, Salahudin Pakaya, and Ruliyanto Podungge emphasize that the Muhammadiyah has shifted towards an open minded identity that upholds traditional philosophy, or "Adati Hulahulua'a To Saraa, Saraa Hulahulaa To Quruan" (customs are based on Islamic teachings, Islamic teachings are based on the Holy Quran).

Themes such as Islam and culture, the jurisprudence of diversity, as well as Islam and democracy, are the hot topics of discussion and are regularly held by Muhammadiyah in discussion forums. These are the attempts to deconstruct the pattern of understanding Islam based on the Qur'an and hadith linked to Gorontalo customs using a new approach without confronting the feelings of traditional Muslim organizations. At present, the doctrines of Muhammadiyah of Gorontalo seems to be more dominated by a pluralist style. This is particularly understandable because most Gorontalo community upholds traditional Islamic background that still adhere to the traditional values of their ancestors. However, this does not mean that Muhammadiyah has lost its vital role as a unifying agent of the community. That is why after the conflict in the 1990s, Muhammadiyah has developed from a puritan, revivalist organization into a humanist organization towards Gorontalo traditions.

As Muhammadiyah is identical with its neo-modernist outlook, the NU shows a distinct trait of post-traditionalism. It is beyond the discussion in academia that the traditionalist Muslims of Gorontalo have begun to contribute within Islamic scholarship. Faisal Ismail (2020) denotes that the high number of traditional Muslims in Gorontalo that enrolled in university represents that the human resources (HR) among NU have increased in line with the socio-cultural transformation that is currently taking place. In other words, there has been a significant intellectual enlightenment among traditional Muslims because they have entered the world of higher education and modern civilization.

Professor Usman Kaharu is one of the prominent scholars of Nahdliyin in Gorontalo. Later, several other professors, such as Ani Hasan, Amir Khalid and Novianty Djafri, emerged to color the intellectual journey of NU in Gorontalo. Now these old organizations are supplemented by educated NU youth. Names such as Samsi Pomalingo, Dikson Yasin, Donal Tungkagi, Eka Putra B Santoso and Arief Abbas can be juxtaposed with young Muhammadiyah figures in Gorontalo. The issues that are always discussed by these young people mostly revolve around Islam and radicalism, Nusantara Islam, and Islam versus Khilafah ideology.

Young scholars of Nahdlatul Ulama always produce knowledge through various writings in the media in journal articles, free articles, or book works. Because of the progress, it has produced works to counterbalance the narratives of transnational Islamic organizations (wahhabism/salafism). Their works often sparked turmoil within Islam scholarship in Gorontalo due to the "dangerous" topics and style of writing, such as the book entitled "Tuhan, Agamamu Apa? (God, What Is Your Religion?)" However, this work is highly appreciated by most readers.

Post-traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama and Neo-modernist Muhammadiyah: A Study of Local Muslim Thoughts in Gorontalo

The NU in Gorontalo has shifted from what it used to be as a secluded and backward organization into a movement that has progressive and flexible thoughts. In the meantime, Muhammadiyah has also transformed into a religious organization that preserves the cultural values in Gorontalo. The religious studies and discussions between NU-Muhammadiyah are increasingly diverse along with the increasing number of young scholars from NU and Muhammadiyah who hold doctoral and master's degrees from well-known universities outside Gorontalo. Both organizations' views on Islam in the cultural context of Gorontalo community are described in the results of interviews with three informants from the two educated Muslim organizations who are concerned with religious issues.

This part will first elaborate the NU scholars' understanding of Islam. The first informant is Donal Tungkagi (former PMII activist), graduate of S2 Islamic Thoughts at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. He believes that the tradition practiced by Nahdlatul Ulama today does not deviate from the teachings of Islam, as it is impossible for the previous scholars who taught and practiced their teachings to lead their students and congregations astray from Islam. The first informant stated that: "I am still practicing a tradition that has been maintained for generations by the Islamic clerics in my village. This tradition was the results of the *ijtihad* of the previous scholars when spreading the religion of Islam."

Donald lives in the midst of a hereditary tradition by village clerics or *imamu* (priests) and *khatibi* (*syara'* employees) which greatly influence the religious behavior of the community. The village clerics are the focus of the residents to ask questions and follow the orders about all religious matters. In this case, the clerics utilize traditions to support Islamic teachings and as religious infrastructure, as long as the traditions, customs, and culture do not conflict with Islam. According to Donal, the Nahdlatul Ulama of Gorontalo are not exclusive scholars who reject new traditions. He revealed: "NU is not always synonymous with the close-minded traditional model; in this regard, NU is fond of maintaining traditions that are considered good, while still opening up opportunities for new traditions as long as they are good to be implemented. The *ushul* rule: "*al-muhafadzah al-qadim al-shalih wal-akhzu bil Jadid al-ashlah*" (preserving good old values while implementing new, better values) is one of the principles of NU, because religion is considered dry without culture".

The second informant from NU is Dikson Yasin, a young intellectual from Nahdlatul Ulama who lived in a strong community culture since his childhood in Tilihuwa Village, Gorontalo Regency. With such a strong cultural background, he has developed a strong ties with traditional practices despite having experienced living in a city with modern education system that put forward rational method of thinking. He is currently in the stage of completing his doctoral studies at UIN Walisongo Semarang. He hopes that Islam and tradition will go together. He does not want Islam to become a religion that only relies on the doctrine of right/wrong or black/white in a religious matter. Rather, he visualizes Islam as an open and integrated religion that is compatible with culture. The clerics in the old times used to let the old culture persist and integrated the culture with Islamic values. Dikson said: "I understand Islam practically and realistically, as an Islam that has been practiced by people who understand Islam earlier than us today. I envisage Islam that fosters acculturation with cultural processes that are passed down from generation to generation. Thus, Islam understood by traditional people, especially us, is Islam that does not only rely on the textual truth alone, but also able to integrate cultural wisdom in Islamic practices. In this regard, Islam does not just come in a vacuum space; Islam is able to give value to cultural practices that have been passed down from generation to generation. In other words, Islam is harmonious and side by side with the cultural traditions practiced by the community.

The first and second informants tend to favor an approach of Islam from the early generations who associate the religion with traditions. However, Dikson puts more emphasis on the actualization of Islam in the socio-cultural realm in two ways. First, Islam does not only rely on the truth of the text alone since Islam was spread in the midst of a society that previously had a deep-rooted culture. This means that Islam does not exist in a vacuum space without any societal context. Second, Islam gives value to cultural practices; it does not become a barrier. Rather, it acts as a glue between traditions.

The third informant from NU is Eka Putra B. Santoso, a lecturer at IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo, a graduate of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. Eka lives in an urban area, precisely in Gorontalo City. He is a true *Nahdliyin* who always stands for traditional Muslim religious practices. He is also a prolific writer in various media and often presents in scientific forums. His understanding of Islam seeks for a commitment to build tolerance to anyone different, as differences are an undeniable truth and a gift from God. Nahdlatul Ulama was established with the principles of moderate Islam, anti-radicalism, anti-extremism, let alone terrorism. A practice of Islam will lose the essence if the follower is intolerant to the inevitable fate of diversities in the world. Eka further states that: "Islam is moderate and tolerant. In this case, Nahdlatul Ulama is an organization in which the members are faithful in worship and do not forget their social function. Towards differences, NU people are very tolerant because it is by *sunnatullah* [God's fate] that diversity exists and must be respected."

The narrative of the post-traditional Nahdlatul Ulama youth organization is in line with the Muhammadiyah perspective regarding tradition and Islam. The neo-modernism attitude of Muhammadiyah is laid more on the normative-ethical emphasis. The first informant of Muhammadiyah is Ilyas Daud, the administrator of the Gorontalo Muhammadiyah Youth, as well as a doctoral graduate of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. Ilyas is very accommodating to Gorontalo's Islamic culture; he often attends several religious rituals held by his neighbors, relatives, and friends that are affiliated to NU. Ilyas states, however, that the

Post-traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama and Neo-modernist Muhammadiyah: A Study of Local Muslim Thoughts in Gorontalo

tradition must not go beyond the religious values and disregards Islamic law. He elaborates: "As a Muhammadiyah member, I perceive that Islam is accommodative to the Gorontalo tradition, or Islam that is inclusive or open to any culture. I usually attend if invited to a tahlilan event as a form of my open attitude to the traditions held by my NU friends. But I note that the tradition should not disregard Islamic Shari'a obligation and performed beyond the religious doctrine. Regarding the issue of tahayyul (superstition), bid'ah, and khurafat, for me, nowadays we do not discuss about these anymore unlike in the past. Problems regarding social-humanitarian issues are more relevant nowadays because Muhammadiyah does no longer only focus on the textual fiqh, sharia, and theology."

The notion is supported by the second informant from Muhammadiyah, Munkizul Umam Kau, as an academician at the Universitas Negeri Gorontalo. Munkizul is also appointed as the Chairman of the Gorontalo Muhammadiyah Regional Tarjih Council. He volunteers to participate in several events such as initiating hileyiya (lit. moving/shifting, i.e., an activity of preparing a meal to be given for the neighbors that hold a funeral of their family members) activities by his own method without deconstructing the essence of the activity. Munkizul however emphasizes that practicing traditions is not a big problem as long as the tradition does not conflict the Shari'a. He adds that this cannot apply when a tradition is assumed as a part of the Shari'a, in which the tradition becomes an obligation to perform. But overall, he strongly supports the religious traditions of Gorontalo. "What I underlined is not that the tradition that is in question, but that it is wrong when tradition transcends and is regarded in the same level as Islamic law. The tradition in Gorontalo has several benefits for Islam development in the region because our ancestors have carried it out during their times. For example, the hileyiya tradition aims to lessen the burden of a grieving family during a funeral. In my experience, I took the initiative to perform hileyiya to prepare meals and hand them to our neighbors. Then, we ate together to comfort the grieving family."

Ilyas and Munkizul's experience is echoed by the third informant of Muhammadiyah, Salahudin Pakaya. As the third vice-rector of Universitas Muhammadiyah Gorontalo and Secretary of the Gorontalo Muhammadiyah Regional Board of Council, Salahuddin lives during a strong cultural community. Salahudin supports Gorontalo culture as long as it does not deviate from Islamic teachings and the values of monotheism. In his view, Muhammadiyah always orientates toward progress, as the notion of progressive Islam and incorporation of science has been the emphasis since the establishment of the organization. As he expressed; "For me, anything related to tradition, as long as it doesn't conflict with tawhid, it doesn't matter. I see that there are some Gorontalo traditions that do not destroy monotheism, for example tumbilotohe (night lights on 27 Ramadan). It is beautiful to look at. This tumbilotohe tradition has also become part of our regions' tourism destination. We in Muhammadiyah emphasize on tawhid, because that is where the vitality of religion is. If a person still conducts practices that contain elements of tahayyul, bid'ah, and khurafat, then for us, the person is clearly deviated from Islamic sharia. Indeed, the impression is a bit extreme, but for the problem of tawhid, Muhammadiyah does not tolerate heresy in the slightest. So, the principle of tawhid in Muhammadiyah is final. Nowadays, our spirit of tawhid focuses towards the development of education and health."

Salahuddin is rather open to the traditions practiced in Gorontalo. His assertiveness towards Muhammadiyah principles is apparent from his stance towards the culture or tradition that tends to be heretic. In this case, there seems to be an assumption some Muslims that perform heresy do not practice the religion the correct way and have enough tawhid. Salahuddin refers to the Prophet Muhammad's sayings where at one time he made a line on the sand and said; "Hadzihi sabili (this is my path)", then Prophet Muhammad made more lines with directions to the right and to the left while saying: "And these are the ways that deviate, do not deviate to the right or to the left or you will be disunited." This is why Muhammadiyah is not bound or affiliated with any theological or jurisprudence schools of Islam. Their benchmark is the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad.

V. DISCUSSION

This paper shows that the Muslim organization Nahdlatul Ulama appears with a modernist identity while also maintaining local traditions to utilize culture as a medium to strengthen Islam within the community. The community of Gorontalo do not live in an empty space; rather, they already practice traditions that are deeply rooted from their previous ancestors. The thoughts of the young NU scholars as voiced in public spaces give a refreshing breeze within the religious discussions at the local level. They tend to offer a reconception of Islam using a critical reasoning approach. They never stop and feel that the conception of Islamic interpretation is final, because Islam always develops within different dimensions of time and place. In the last ten years, Muslims from the NU in Gorontalo have emerged with a dual identity, namely "traditional and modernist". Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah members tend to emphasize "modernism and traditionalism". In this regard, it is very clear that Muhammadiyah in Gorontalo is very open to the noble values of Gorontalo culture; in fact, some of them implement and preserve the culture in their daily context.

The results of the interviews with informants from the two organizations illustrate the identity of the thoughts of the Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. The post-traditionalist and neo-modernist contexts are present at the level of scientific argumentation in discussion spaces and religious activities. This, however, does not deconstructs the religious spirit that has become their respective identities. Nahdlatul Ulama still maintains its stance on maintaining tradition, while responding to globalization and Muhammadiyah is still consistent with modernism that accomodates tradition. For example, the arguments of Donal, Dikson and

Post-traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama and Neo-modernist Muhammadiyah: A Study of Local Muslim Thoughts in Gorontalo

Eka from the Nahdlatul Ulama organization tend to be firm in the grounding of Nusantara Islam that was once echoed by Abdurrahman Wahid. In Muhammadiyah, being responsive to tradition does not mean accepting the whole tradition. Munkizul Umam and Salahuddin Pakaya firmly do not accept traditions that deviate from the values of *tawhid*. Meanwhile, Ilyas Daud is a little flexible, he only emphasizes that religious traditions should not be performed with exaggeration.

The tenets of these two Muslim organizations can be mapped in two ways. **First**, post-traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama is responsive to the development of science and plays a role in religious discourse, especially in Islamic and cultural studies. Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah's neo-modernism is accommodative to the religious reality of society and then responds to the context with modernist thoughts. **Second**, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah maintain their respective identity; rather, both organizations only progress on the paradigm shift, not in the religious stance.

CONCLUSION

Nahdlatul Ulama in Gorontalo shows progress in the fields of school of thoughts and science. The impression that this Islamic organization is backward, old, and close-minded is slowly disappearing. They were able to keep pace with Muhammadiyah which had already survived in religious discourse in the region. Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah remains attached to a modern identity that always thinks progressively. The attention of this Muslim organization focuses on the social spirit and education. Their discussions about *tahayyul*, *bid'ah*, and *khurafat* are rarely heard nowadays. There are no clashes between the Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah organizations in the discussion space and in socio-religious terms. The maturity of these two organizations is reflected in the reality in religious practice. For example, many of NU members perform prayers at the Muhammadiyah mosque, some even are appointed to be the imam that leads the prayers. There are also many Muhammadiyah affiliates who become preachers at the Nahdlatul Ulama mosque. This phenomenon has become a common thing in the Muslim community of Gorontalo.

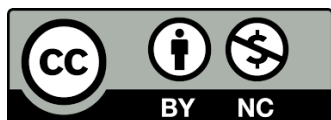
The identity of NU and Muhammadiyah is still apparent from the model of post-traditionalism and the neo-modernism of both organizations in interpreting Islam-culture relations. Nahdlatul Ulama organization is responsive to changes and progress; in response, the young scholars of Nahdlatul Ulama arises with the thoughts that intertwines Islam and culture. On the other hand, Muhammadiyah remains open to culture but emphasize that no heresy is allowed within the cultural practices. In this regard, Muhammadiyah does not always agree with some traditions that they consider as heretic.

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Post-traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama and Neo-modernist Muhammadiyah: A Study of Local Muslim Thoughts in Gorontalo

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