

## The Moderate Islamic Construction of the *Al-Salaf Al-Şālih* in *Akidah* at Tunas Santri Islamic Boarding School, Lamongan



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**ABSTRACT:** This research is motivated by the existence of extreme and liberal interpretations of Islam and aims to describe the construction of moderate Islam of the *al-Salaf al-Şālih* in creed (*akidah*) at Tunas Santri Islamic Boarding School in Lamongan. The research method utilizes a qualitative approach with a case study design. The observational case study focuses on a single case, specifically the location, involving one subject. Data sources include Tunas Santri Islamic Boarding School, caregivers, teachers, students, documents, and their activities. Data collection methods involve interviews, observations, and documentation. Data analysis follows the theories of K. Yin, Miles, and Huberman, including data triangulation, member checks, and continuous observation to ensure data validity. The research findings indicate that the construction of moderate Islam of the *al-Salaf al-Şālih* in creed at Tunas Santri Islamic Boarding School is based on the Qur'an, Hadith, and Ijma'. The fundamental principle is justice and balance: justice towards Allah, the Prophet, the companions, and the community. Justice towards Allah involves recognizing His names, attributes, and actions, as well as fulfilling His rights. Justice towards the Prophet entails believing in him and fulfilling his rights. Justice towards the companions recognizes their status as the best community. Justice towards the community involves fulfilling the rights of brotherhood and humanity. Balance is maintained between vertical relations with Allah and horizontal relations with fellow human beings, between knowledge and action, and between textual and contextual thinking. Indicators of this moderate Islam include nationalism, tolerance, peace, and moderation. In conclusion, Tunas Santri Islamic Boarding School adheres to a moderate Salafi approach. Recommendations include internalizing the construction of moderate Islam of the *al-Salaf al-Şālih* in creed.

**KEYWORDS:** Islam Wasatiyah, al-Salaf al-Şālih, Akidah

### INTRODUCTION

Islam is the religion of moderation" (الوسطية دين الإسلام) is a fundamental principle in Islamic teachings that emphasizes balance, temperance, and avoiding extremes in all aspects of life. This concept derives from the teachings of the Qur'an, the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (Hadith), and the practices of the early Muslim community *al-Salaf al-Şālih* (Asrori, 2022). The Qur'an, Hadith, and scholars affirm that moderate Islam exists and is definite (Arif, 2020; Surasit 2024). Moderate Islam is the middle path in facing all issues (Yulianto, 2020). Moderate Islam is the solution for the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), implemented through various models; the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) introduced it as "Islam *Wasathiyah*" (Niam, 2019), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) uses the term "Islam Nusantara" (Khoiri, 2019), Muhammadiyah uses the term "Progressive Islam" (Qodir, 2019; Setiawan, 2019), and the Ministry of Religious Affairs uses the term "Religious Moderation" (RI, 2019).

*Wasathiyah* Islam has become a characteristic of the Indonesian nation. This is due to several factors: first, its society is pluralistic, heterogeneous, and multi-ethnic, linguistic, and religious (Ulinuha & Nafisah, 2020; Phan-ae, 2023). Second, Islam has long been a part of Indonesian culture, entering the country as early as the 7th century CE (Zakaria, 2017), and its practice follows the teachings of *al-Salaf al-Şālih* even before the establishment of the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali madhhabs (Zuhairini, 1997; Tsabit, 2022).

Recently, there has been a development in the understanding of following *al-Salaf al-Şālih*, termed *Salafi Wasathiyah*. According to evidence, *al-Salaf al-Şālih* are considered a moderate community, as mentioned in Surah Al-Baqarah: 143. Therefore, those who attribute their religious understanding to them are considered to have a greater claim to moderation than those who do not. Various individuals in Indonesia subscribe to this attribution; there are models of Salafi-oriented Islamic

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boarding schools such as those associated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), newer *Salafi*-oriented schools, and schools that follow *Salafi Wasatiyah* principles.

Pesantren is the oldest educational institution in Indonesia, which has made significant contributions to the education sector in the country. Its role dates back to before the establishment of the Republic of Indonesia. During colonial rule, the colonial government faced strong resistance from santri who fervently fought for independence, striving to free Indonesia from colonialism in the archipelago (Baisa et al., 2022; Shafwan, 2020; Humaidi, 2021).

Like other Pesantren Tunas Santri develops Islamic values based on the Qur'an and Sunnah. In matters of *mu'amalah* (social transactions), it emphasizes obedience to the government, maintaining unity, being friendly, polite, peaceful, helping one another, and rejecting extremism and liberalism. Regarding *fiqh* (jurisprudence), it does not adhere strictly to a specific school of thought (*madhhab*) such as Abu Hanifah, Malik, Shafi'i, or Ahmad, but chooses rulings based on the strongest evidence among them. In matters of ethics (*akhlak*), it teaches respect for Allah, the Prophet, and humanity in general.

What sets it apart from other pesantrens is its adherence to the understanding of *al-Salaf al-Şālih*, also known as pesantren *salafi wasatiyah*. This aspect intrigued the author to study the values of moderation in the creed of *al-Salaf al-Şālih* as understood and applied in that pesantren. Creed serves as the foundation for thought, action, social interactions, and attitudes. The focus is on matters of faith, divinity, prophecy, and the Prophet's companions.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The qualitative approach allows researchers to deeply observe and understand the subject of research in its entirety, including behaviors, actions, thoughts, etc., and provides an assessment, where the researcher is the key instrument, with the results of the study being expressed in words (Moleong, 2017; Hadi, 2021). The type of research is a case study. A case study involves contemporary research phenomena, where the phenomenon is real, the researcher has limited control, and the research focuses on how and why (K. Yin, 2011). According to Suprayogo and Tobroni, Bogdan and Biklen, a case study research pertains to a specific event, archived documents, a particular individual, or a specific context in detail (Suprayogo & Tobroni, 2001). The specific type of case study used by the researcher is an observational case study of a contemporary organization, using a single-case typology where the place of occurrence forms the backdrop for one subject (Suprayogo & Tobroni, 2001). The informants in this research are the Kiai (head) of Tunas Santri Islamic Boarding School (Bukhari Muslim), the Head of the Pesantren (Hilaluddin Basyar), the school principal (Muhammad Burhan Haka), the head of the boys' dormitory (Muhammad Sururin), the head of the girls' dormitory (Nur Imamah), and some students: Yusuf, M, Salam al-Ayubi, Emir Falaq, Miqdad, Fardan, and M. Luki. Qualitative data collection techniques include interviews, participant observation (according to Black and Champion) or full observation (according to Spradly) (Suprayogo & Tobroni, 2001), and documentation.

Analytical methods include using Miles and Huberman, as well as Yin, where data analysis starts from the initial data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and verification (drawing conclusions) (Sugiono, 2014; Suprayogo & Tobroni, 2001). Guidelines for testing the validity of data include extending the observation period, continuous observation, triangulation, and using member checks (Sugiono, 2014).

## DISCUSSION

### 1. Understanding Akidah, Wasatiyah, and al-Salaf al-Şālih

*Akidah* linguistically, in Arabic, the plural form *al-'Aqā'id* is belief or conviction (Munawir, 2020). It is derived from the verb *al-'Aqdu*, from the root *'Aqada ya'qidu*, which means to conclude and bind, as in the words of Allah: "*allazi biyadihi 'uqdatun nikâh*" meaning "in whose hand is the tying of the marriage knot," signifying strengthening and firmness, as in Allah's statement: "*wallażîna 'aqadat aimânükum*" which translates to "and those who have confirmed their oaths with you." It also signifies covenant, as in Allah's statement "*aufû bil'uqûd*" which means "fulfill the obligations." Az-Zujaj explained that *'uqûd* pertains to the covenant between a servant and Allah, and the agreements among people regarding religious obligations (Mandzur, 1990). Therefore, *akidah* refers to fundamental belief or core conviction.

According to terminology, *akidah* (theology/fundamentals of faith) in religious matters is defined as issues that must be believed in through statement alone, or statement and action, such as the issues of monotheism (*tauhid*), divine attributes, destiny (*taqdir*), prophethood, and the Day of Judgment (Taimiyah, 1374). It also entails having firm belief in Allah and everything that is His right, including affirming His oneness, believing in the angels, scriptures, prophets, the Last Day, and in destiny both good and bad, as well as all branches derived from these fundamental principles of religion (Jibrin, 1429; ).

*Wasatiyah* (moderation) is meant to be good, balanced, moderate, just, and a model for others, both in Islamic values and their implementation (Mandzur, 1990). *Wasatiyah* does not necessitate theology, worship, or ethical conduct that falls strictly between two opposing matters; rather, it encompasses beliefs and practices that align with the Qur'an, Sunnah, and the consensus of the

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pious predecessors (*ijma' al-Salaf al-Şālih*). Examples include beliefs in heaven and hell, among others. Therefore, *wasatīyah* has a broader meaning than mere moderation; it must be moderate, but moderation itself does not necessarily encompass *wasatīyah*.

*Al-Salaf al-Şālih* refers to the first three generations of Muslims: Sahabah: The companions of the Prophet Muhammad, who met him, believed in him, and died in a state of faith (*iman*), even if they had previously apostatized. Tabi'in: The successors or followers of the Sahabah, who were disciples of the companions and believed in Prophet Muhammad. Tabi'ut tabi'in: The followers of the Tabi'in, who were the disciples of the successors and maintained their belief in Islam (Karim, 1412; Jibrin, 1429; Mandzur, 1990; Tamimi, 1996).

### 2. The Construction of Wasatīyah in Islamic Beliefs According to Ibn Taymiyyah

Ibn Taymiyyah explains that *al-Salaf al-Şālih* (the pious predecessors) are situated in the middle ground among various factions within Islam, just as the Muslim community is positioned amidst other communities (M. K. Harras, 1995; Taimiyah, 1996). Specifically: They embody *Wasatīyah* (moderation) in matters of faith and religion between groups such as the Haruriyyah, Mu'tazilah, Murji'ah, and Jahmiyyah (Taimiyah, 1996). They believe that faith and religion involve both statements and actions: verbal and heartfelt affirmations, and actions of the heart, tongue, and limbs, increasing through obedience and decreasing through disobedience (Taimiyah, 1996; Ridlwan 2022).

Regarding Allah's position above His creation, they affirm His exaltedness and separation from His creation, which can be understood through rational evidence (*aqli*) and in accordance with textual evidence (*naqli*). As for His *istiwā'* (ascension) over the Throne, the way to know this is solely through textual evidence (*naqli*). There is no evidence in the Qur'an or Sunnah indicating that Allah's attributes are within the realm of creation or outside it, nor is He separated or mixed with the creation (Mahdi, 1413). *Al-Salaf al-Şālih's* Belief Regarding Allah's Position and *Tauhīd Al-Ībādah*. According to *al-Salaf al-Şālih* (the pious predecessors), their belief regarding Allah's position is situated between various sects: *Hulūliyyah* and *Ittihādiyyah* assert that Allah's existence is everywhere, merged with His creation (M. K. Harras, 1995). Jahmiyyah denies the existence of Allah within or outside the universe, while philosophers posit that God exists only in the world of ideas (M. K. Harras, 1995).

Ibn Taymiyyah states that Allah's being above His Throne is in accordance with His majesty and greatness. It does not mean He is above like creatures are above each other, as the anthropomorphists claim, nor does it mean He is not above the heavens, as the Mu'attilah Jahmiyyah claim. Rather, it is affirmed that He is above the heavens, above the Throne, separate from His creation (Asy'ari, 1988; M. Harras, 1995; Zamanin, 1415). Regarding *Tauhīd Al-Ībādah* (the Oneness of Worship), the concept articulated by the prophets is encapsulated in "lā ilāha illallāh" (Qur'an 21:25; 16:2), meaning there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah (Qur'an 4:36; 17:23; 9:31; 98:5; 51:56). This was the directive of the Prophet Muhammad, as reported by Bukhari and Muslim, when he sent Mu'adh bin Jabal to Yemen: the foremost teaching was to affirm the oneness of Allah. In one narration, it is "lā ilāha illallāh," in another narration, it is to worship only Allah (Ghunaiman, 1405). This explanation is shared by Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim, Ibn Rajab, al-Baqā'i, al-Ṭibbī, among others (Hasan, 1992).

The meaning of *Tauhid* is the moderate and just monotheism that stands between two beliefs: Firstly, that the existence that exists is the existence of Allah, which means "lā ilāha illallāh" signifies that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah, implying that worshipping anything is worshipping Allah. Secondly, it stands between the belief that Allah's existence does not exist, that Allah only exists in the world of ideas. This includes the belief that Allah is neither within the universe, nor outside it, neither above nor below... Thus, the meaning of *Tauhid* is merely a process of reasoning about divinity according to their method of establishing or negating based on their intellect (M. K. Harras, 1995; Qayyim, 1988; Yaqin, 2020; Devitasari, 2023). Regarding Allah's Actions, they adopt a moderate stance between Jabariyyah and Qadariyyah and others (M. Harras, 1995). This means that human actions do not stand independently as believed by Qadariyyah, nor are they annulled as believed by Jabariyyah. Human actions and desires are creations of Allah (Taimiyah, 1996). On the issue of the Names and Attributes of Allah, they adopt a middle path between ahlu al-Taḥīl al-Jahmiyyah and ahlu al-Tamṣīl al-Musyabbihah (Taimiyah, 1374). They affirm all attributes mentioned in the Qur'an and authentic Hadith without likening them to creation, without making any comparisons, without distorting their meanings, and without negating them. Likewise, they reject any negation of attributes that has been negated for Himself (Asy'ari, 1988; Mahdi, 1413; Taimiyah, 1374).

In the issue of Allah's promises and threats, they adopt a moderate stance between the Murji'ah and groups like the Haruriyyah (Taimiyah, 1996). *Al-Salaf al-Şālih* compromises between the two by asserting that a believer who commits sins retains their faith, though it may decrease. The Khawarij declare such a person a disbeliever, while the Mu'tazilah hold that they are neither fully a believer nor a disbeliever (*manzilāh baina manzilataini*). On the other hand, the Murji'ah argue that a believer who violates the warnings in the Quran retains their complete faith (Utsaimin, 1992).

From this standpoint, the principle of *al-Salaf al-Şālih* is non-*takfiri* and non-liberal, affirming that a sinful believer maintains their complete faith. However, the fate of a believer who commits sins is subject to the will of Allah, who may forgive or punish them according to their sins (Zamanin, 1415). Regarding the Issue of Prophethood, Ibn Taymiyyah explains that seeking closeness to Allah through the Prophet Muhammad is obligatory and forms the basis of faith, which is to believe in the Prophet and obey

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him (Taimiyah, 1374). Ibn Taymiyyah articulates the existence of moderation in Islam among celestial religions, stating that Muslims are moderate concerning prophets and righteous individuals. This is unlike the Nasronis, who elevate their prophets to the status of gods, despite being instructed only to worship Allah, and unlike the Jews, who killed the prophets and righteous people who called for justice. Whenever a messenger of Allah came to them not according to their desires, some they denied and others they killed (Taimiyah, 1374).

In the matter of the companions of the Prophet, a companion is defined as someone who met the Prophet while believing in him and died in a state of faith (Hajar, 1328). Al-Salaf al-Şālih adhere to a moderate stance between the Rāfiḍah and Khawārij (Taimiyah, 1374). They accept the virtues and esteemed status of the Companions as outlined in the Quran, Sunnah, and consensus (Ijma') (Taimiyah, 1996; Zamanin, 1415). Therefore, the moderate Islamic model of *al-Salaf al-Şālih* in matters of faith embodies the values of Islam and religious principles that remain untainted by the doctrines of Shia, Khawārij, Murji'ah, and Qadariyah (Taimiyah, 1374f).

### 3. The construction of Wasatiyah Islam in faith at Pondok Pesantren Tunas Santri

The perspective of the Islamic *Wasatiyah* of *al-Salaf al-Şālih* at Pondok Pesantren Tunas Santri individually represents the institutionalization of religious totality in heart, speech, and physical actions. Collectively, it promotes synergistic adherence to beliefs among individuals to foster a just, good, moderate society that avoids extremism and liberalism. Pesantren Tunas Santri adheres to and bases itself upon the Qur'an and accepted Hadith according to the understanding of *al-Salaf al-Şālih*. This understanding of *al-Salaf al-Şālih* as a middle path guides them in facing various interpretations and movements within Islam.

The books of faith (*akidah*) used and taught at the boarding school include: *Usūl al-Sunnah* by Imam Ahmad, *Khuz' aqīdataka min al-kitab wa al-Sunnah ṣahīhah* by Muhammad bin Jamil Zainu, *Mukhtaṣar al-Aqīdah al-Islāmiyah* by Muhammad bin Jamil Zaenu, *Durūs al-Tauhid* by Nizar Mubidh, *Uṣūl Ṣalāṣah* by Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, *Aqīdah ahlu Sunnah wal-jamā'ah* by Muhammad Shalih al-'Utsaimin, *Al-Aqīdah al-Ṣahīhah* by Abul Aziz bin Baz, *Kitab al-Tauhid* by Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, *Matan Aqīdah Wāsiṭiyah* by IbnuTaimiyah, *Syarhu aqīdah wasitiyah* by Shalih Fauzan and Khalil Harras, *Fathul Majīd* by Abdurrahman Ali Syaekh, *Min usūli Aqīdati ahli al-Sunnati wa al-Jamā'ah* by Shalih Fauzan, *Syarah Risālah Imam Mujaddid Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhabi la Ahli Qasim lima sa' aluhu 'an Aqīdatihi* by Shalih Fauzan. These books represent foundational texts in Islamic creed (*akidah*) that are studied and adhered to at Pondok Pesantren Tunas Santri.

Pesantren Tunas Santri Lamongan bases its creed on the principles of *al-Salaf al-Şālih* and promotes the concept of moderate Islam (*wasatiyah*). Their creed is founded upon the Qur'an, authentic hadiths, and scholarly consensus (*ijma'*). In this regard, they hold a distinguished position as a balanced community. The chosen creed of Pesantren Tunas Santri reflects a thought process that integrates text and context, combining revelation with reasoning, knowledge with action, and connecting the relationship between *hablumminallah* (connection with Allah) and *hablumminannas* (connection with people). This approach is consistent with the teachings of Abu al-Hasan al-Asy'ari in his book *al-Ibānah 'an usūliḍdiyānah* (Asy'ari, 1988), and Ibn Qaiyim in his book *Mukhtaṣar al-Şawā'iq al-Mursalah* (Jauziyah, 1994).

Regarding liberal and extremist tendencies on this issue, firstly, philosophers who adopt liberal thinking do not adhere to revelation but rely on reason (*ra'yu*). Although they claim to follow the thought patterns of the polytheists like Aristotle (Rusman, 2020), who emphasized contemplation of divinity, their method involves emptying the mind of all knowledge and belief, casting doubt on everything, and then establishing beliefs based solely on intellect, imagination, and thought, only believing in what can be perceived by the senses (Rumaiyan, 1429; Yaqin, 2020; Anwar, 2023). Consequently, among Muslim philosophers, there are those who assert that God exists only in the realm of ideas (Harras, 1995; Ferdian 2022). The second extreme trend in this matter is the Jahmiyyah movement, followers of Ja'd bin Dirham, who claim to adhere to revelation but prioritize reason (*ra'yu*). They refuse to equate Allah with His creation but reject the manner of revelation, ultimately denying Allah's existence altogether. They assert that Allah is neither above nor below, neither within the universe nor outside of it, and so forth. Essentially, they excessively deny attributes of Allah, surpassing even those who refuse to acknowledge Allah out of fear of equating Him with His creation. This model of thinking mirrors the thoughts of Iblis (Satan) when commanded by Allah to prostrate to Adam; he refused, deeming it incompatible with his own reasoning based on intellect, believing himself superior to Adam. This initial deviation led to the fall of creatures, making intellect the basis for argumentation and opposing revelation (Syahristani, 1996; Asrori, 2024; lestari 2023).

## CONCLUSIONS

The model of moderate Islam according to *al-Salaf al-Şālih* in terms of creed at Pondok Pesantren Tunas Santri is built upon the foundations of the Qur'an, Hadith, and the consensus of the *al-Salaf al-Şālih*. Its fundamental principles are: Firstly, justice: Justice towards Allah involves recognizing His names, attributes, and actions based on the texts of revelation, and fulfilling His rights as the only true deity. Justice towards the Prophet Muhammad entails believing in him as the servant and messenger of Allah, who is infallible (*ma'shum*), and fulfilling his rights as a role model in religion: creed, worship, and morality. Justice

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towards the companions of the Prophet includes recognizing them as chosen individuals, beloved and approved by Allah. Justice towards all humanity, whether they are those who have embraced Islam or those who are being invited to Islam. Secondly, balance: Balancing the vertical relationship with Allah and the horizontal relationship with fellow human beings. Balancing between knowledge and action, between the physical and the spiritual, between textual understanding and contextual application, and between rights and responsibilities. The indicators include national awareness, tolerance, humility (*tawadhu'*), civility, peace, mutual assistance, non-*takfiri* (not declaring others as non-believers), non-extremism, non-liberalism, adherence to local customs, and being anti-violence.

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