Muhammadiyah Through the Ages: From Reformist Ideas to a Civilizational Movement

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Article info	Abstract

This study aims to analyze the founding ideas of Muhammadiyah, its organizational dynamics, and the periodization of its development from 1912 to the contemporary era, with particular attention to the movement's educational orientation as a core instrument of social transformation. This research adopts a historical-sociological approach by examining primary and secondary sources relevant to Muhammadiyah's intellectual roots, institutional practices, and socio-religious engagement. The findings indicate that the establishment of Muhammadiyah was driven by three major factors: colonial conditions that contributed to Muslim socio-educational marginalization, the persistence of syncretic religious practices within local communities, and the influence of Islamic reformist currents from the Middle East. Over time, Muhammadiyah has maintained ideological consistency in the spirit of tajdid through religious purification and the modernization of social services, particularly in the development of schools, universities, and community-based educational programs. Organizationally, Muhammadiyah demonstrates strong adaptive capacity in responding to political and social changes from the colonial era through independence, the New Order, and the reform and globalization periods. Its historical periodization shows that Muhammadiyah functions not only as a da'wah movement but also as a strategic actor in strengthening civil society, cultivating educated citizenship, and expanding international humanitarian diplomacy. Therefore, Muhammadiyah can be understood as a model of progressive Islamic movement that integrates religious orthodoxy with modern educational and social praxis within both national and global contexts.

Keywords: *Historicity of Muhammadiyah, Progressive Islam, Educational Movement, Social Movement*

Abstrak
Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis gagasan pendirian Muhammadiyah, dinamika organisasinya, serta periodisasi perkembangan gerakan ini sejak 1912 hingga era kontemporer, dengan menekankan orientasi pendidikan sebagai instrumen utama transformasi sosial. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan historis-sosiologis melalui penelaahan terhadap sumber-sumber primer dan sekunder yang relevan dengan akar intelektual, praktik kelembagaan, serta keterlibatan sosial-keagamaan Muhammadiyah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa berdirinya Muhammadiyah didorong oleh tiga faktor utama: kondisi kolonial yang menyebabkan marginalisasi sosial-edukatif umat Islam, menguatnya praktik keagamaan sinkretik di tingkat lokal, serta pengaruh gerakan pembaruan Islam dari Timur Tengah. Dalam perkembangannya, Muhammadiyah mempertahankan konsistensi ideologis dalam semangat tajdid melalui pemurnian

ajaran dan modernisasi layanan sosial, khususnya dalam penguatan sekolah, perguruan tinggi, serta program pendidikan berbasis komunitas. Secara organisatoris, Muhammadiyah menunjukkan kapasitas adaptif dalam merespons perubahan politik dan sosial dari masa kolonial, kemerdekaan, Orde Baru, hingga era reformasi dan globalisasi. Periodisasi historis Muhammadiyah memperlihatkan bahwa organisasi ini tidak hanya berperan sebagai gerakan dakwah, tetapi juga sebagai aktor strategis dalam penguatan masyarakat sipil, pembentukan warga negara yang terdidik, serta pengembangan diplomasi kemanusiaan internasional. Dengan demikian, Muhammadiyah dapat dipahami sebagai model gerakan Islam progresif yang memadukan ortodoksi keagamaan dengan praksis pendidikan dan sosial modern dalam konteks nasional maupun global.

Kata Kunci: Historisitas Muhammadiyah, Islam Progresif, Gerakan Pendidikan, Gerakan Sosial

INTRODUCTION

TThe Islamic reform movement that emerged in the Middle East in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries became an important intellectual backdrop for the rise of Muhammadiyah in Indonesia. Reformist figures such as Jamal al Din al Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rashid Ridha consistently argued that Muslim decline should not be accepted as destiny, but confronted through tajdid as a conscious project of renewal. Their reform agenda was closely tied to the realities of Western colonial domination and internal stagnation within Muslim societies, which they believed could be addressed through rational reasoning, renewed educational models, and a clearer commitment to authentic Islamic sources (Esposito, 2001; Hourani, 1983). In this sense, Islamic reform was not only theological but also social, aiming to rebuild Muslim strength through ideas, institutions, and public ethics.

A core element of this reformist discourse was the call to balance religious orthodoxy with intellectual openness. Abduh and Ridha, for instance, promoted a form of Islamic reasoning that welcomed modern knowledge while remaining rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah. They also criticized the persistence of superstitious practices, blind imitation, and certain local rituals that were viewed as disconnected from normative Islam, framing purification as a prerequisite for progress (Esposito, 2001; Hourani, 1983). This reformist spirit did not remain confined to elite scholarship in Cairo or Istanbul, but gradually became part of a wider Muslim conversation that reached many regions across the Islamic world.

The diffusion of these ideas was significantly accelerated through print networks, particularly Al Manar, the influential journal published in Cairo under the leadership of Rashid Ridha. Al Manar functioned not merely as a journal but as a transregional platform for reformist debate, religious reinterpretation, and socio political commentary, enabling reform ideas to circulate beyond the Middle East into broader Muslim communities (Haddad, 1994). Through the journal's reach, Islamic reformism became increasingly visible as a global intellectual trend, shaping how Muslims in various

contexts began to re imagine the relationship between religion, modernity, and social change.

In Southeast Asia, these reformist ideas entered Indonesia through networks of Nusantara scholars and students in Mecca and Cairo, and their circulation gained renewed relevance within the realities of colonialism and local religious stagnation. Noer (1996) explains that many Jawi scholars actively read Al Manar and carried home the spirit of rationality and purification, which later influenced religious discourse in their communities. Within this context, KH Ahmad Dahlan, who had lived in Mecca, encountered reformist narratives associated with Abduh and Ridha and began to reinterpret them in a way that could respond to the concrete needs of Indonesian Muslims. His response was not limited to preaching reform, but was institutionalized through the establishment of Muhammadiyah in 1912 as a socio religious movement grounded in education and social service (Shihab, 1998; Noer, 1996).

Although many studies acknowledge the influence of Middle Eastern reformism on Muhammadiyah's emergence, scholarly discussion often remains descriptive, focusing on intellectual transmission without sufficiently explaining how reform ideas were reshaped into organizational strategies and social programs within Indonesia's unique colonial and cultural landscape. This gap is important, because the founding of Muhammadiyah was not simply an act of ideological borrowing, but a transformative process in which global modernist thought was localized into practical institutional forms, especially through schooling, charity, and social welfare. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its effort to highlight Muhammadiyah's early reformism as an indigenized model of tajdid that combined purification with modernization as a balanced social praxis, rather than treating it as a mere extension of Middle Eastern reform discourse.

Building on this perspective, the present study aims to analyze the founding ideas of Muhammadiyah, its organizational dynamics, and the historical periodization of its development from 1912 to the contemporary era, with particular attention to education as a central instrument of social transformation. By framing Muhammadiyah as both a product of transnational reform networks and an Indonesian movement with distinct institutional creativity, this study seeks to offer a more contextual understanding of how a modernist Islamic organization can sustain ideological consistency while adapting to shifting political, social, and global challenges. In line with Azra's (2004) argument on the importance of transnational scholarly networks in shaping contextual modern Islam, this study positions Muhammadiyah as an example of progressive Islamic reform that is both rooted and transformative within Indonesia and beyond.

METHODS
Research Design
This study employs a qualitative approach with a historical and sociological analytical framework to examine the establishment of Muhammadiyah, its organizational dynamics, and the periodization of its development across different

historical contexts (Atolah, 2024; Hamzah, 2020). The historical perspective is used to interpret events within their temporal setting, while the sociological lens helps explain Muhammadiyah's interaction with social structures, the state, and civil society (McAdam et al., 2004; Noer, 1996).

Data Sources

The data were obtained from relevant primary and secondary sources related to the history and development of Muhammadiyah. These include classical scholarly works on modern Islamic movements in Indonesia, official Muhammadiyah documents, and recent peer reviewed journal publications. These sources were used to reconstruct the social, political, and religious contexts surrounding Muhammadiyah's founding, as well as to trace its shifting orientations and institutional growth over time.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis was conducted through three main stages: data reduction, thematic categorization, and interpretative conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting information that directly supported the study's focus on Muhammadiyah's founding ideas, organizational dynamics, and historical periodization. The selected data were then organized into major themes, including the ideology of tajdid, the expansion of social enterprises, cadre formation, state relations, and global engagement.

Trustworthiness and Validity

To strengthen the credibility of the findings, source triangulation was applied by comparing multiple historical references and previous research outputs to reduce the risk of single source bias (Creswell, 2014; Miles et al., 2014). Through this procedure, the study aims to produce a comprehensive and contextual interpretation of Muhammadiyah as a progressive Islamic movement within Indonesia's historical trajectory and its broader global relevance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIN

Results

The Reformer and the Small Prayer House in Kauman

The early twentieth century was a period of intense change for Muslims in the Dutch East Indies. Social and religious life stood at a crossroads: on the one hand, colonial rule restricted political space, educational access, and economic mobility; on the other hand, Muslims were confronted by the growing tide of modernity and the socio cultural transformations introduced through Western influence. In the realm of education, the Dutch colonial government promoted the Ethical Policy, which opened formal schooling opportunities for a limited segment of indigenous society. Yet, as Deliar Noer (1996) notes, in the first decades of the 1900s only around 7% of indigenous children had the opportunity to study in colonial schools. For the majority of Muslims, education continued to rely on traditional pesantren or the langgar based religious learning system (Noer, 1996). This reality produced a deep gap in human

resource quality between ordinary indigenous communities and the colonial educated elite, a disparity that shaped the social structure of the time and became one of the most urgent challenges faced by Muslim society.

At the same time, religious life in Java reflected strong syncretic tendencies, where Islamic practice often blended with local traditions. Rituals such as slametan, excessive veneration of saints' graves, and mystical practices with no firm grounding in the Qur'an and Sunnah became widely observed. Alfian (1989) describes this condition as "Javanese cultural Islam," a form of religiosity that leaned more toward inherited tradition than normative legal religious discipline. This context encouraged criticism from modernist circles that demanded a return to doctrinal purity and a more scriptural orientation in Islamic life (Alfian, 1989). Beyond local developments, global currents of Islamic reform also played a decisive role. The movement of Nusantara scholars to Mecca, Cairo, and other major centers of Islamic learning created encounters with the ideas of Jamaluddin al Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rashid Ridha. Ahmad Dahlan, who performed the pilgrimage and lived in Mecca in 1883 and 1903, was exposed to reformist debates through al Manar magazine published by Rashid Ridha (Noer, 1996). The argument that Muslims should return to the Qur'an and Sunnah, reject blind imitation, and reopen the gate of rational ijtihad became a major intellectual inspiration for Dahlan as he returned to his homeland.

In this context, the founding ideas of Muhammadiyah can be traced to three interconnected factors. First, the colonial condition that produced Muslim backwardness in education and socio economic life. Second, the internal religious situation marked by syncretic practices and excessive traditionalism. Third, the global influence of reformist movements from the Middle East that emphasized tajdid and ijtihad. These forces combined to create an urgent need for an Islamic reform organization that could integrate doctrinal purification with social modernization as a practical response to real community problems.

The Central Role of KH Ahmad Dahlan

KH Ahmad Dahlan (1868–1923) was born in Kauman, Yogyakarta, a strongly religious neighborhood shaped by the influence of the Yogyakarta Sultanate. His childhood name was Muhammad Darwis. From an early age, he studied Islamic sciences, and later deepened his knowledge in Mecca, where he spent several years and interacted with international scholars (P. Muhammadiyah, 2015).

His experience in Mecca strongly shaped Dahlan's intellectual orientation. He witnessed an expanding reformist climate and absorbed the influence of modernist thinkers such as Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Ridha. When he returned to Yogyakarta, he brought home not only religious knowledge but also the energy of tajdid. One of his earliest and most symbolic actions was correcting the qibla direction of the Great Mosque of Yogyakarta using astronomical calculations. This correction sparked debate and resistance because it was seen as disrupting established local tradition. Yet this

episode reveals Dahlan's courage to place rationality and science within religious practice, even when doing so challenged social comfort zones (Nakamura, 2012).

Beyond the question of direction, Ahmad Dahlan also introduced a new teaching method in his small prayer house. He began teaching Qur'anic interpretation with emphasis on substantive meaning and real social consequences. He frequently used Surah al Ma'un as a tool to awaken social responsibility. Through this approach, a collective awareness began to grow: Islam is not simply about rituals, but must be expressed through concrete action, such as helping the poor, caring for orphans, and protecting the weak. This moral foundation later became one of the most important pillars of Muhammadiyah's social ideology (Maharani et al., 2024).

On 18 November 1912, Muhammadiyah was officially founded and later obtained legal recognition from the colonial government in 1914. Interestingly, although the movement initially faced resistance from traditionalist groups, it quickly gained broader public sympathy because of its strong commitment to education and social service (P. Muhammadiyah, 2015). Alfian's records show that by the 1920s Muhammadiyah already had more than 30 branches across major cities in Java, a rapid expansion that was uncommon for a newly established organization (Alfian, 1989).

In this sense, KH Ahmad Dahlan should be understood not only as a religious scholar, but also as a social reformer. His contribution lay in building a working synthesis between purification of Islamic teachings and modernization of social practice, a blend that became the hallmark of Muhammadiyah and one of the reasons for its long historical endurance.

Muhammadiyah: Planting Islam in Schools and Social Service

Ideologically, Muhammadiyah anchored itself firmly in the Qur'an and Sunnah. This principle was stated clearly in the organization's 1912 constitution, which defined its purpose as "spreading the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad to the indigenous people" (P. P. Muhammadiyah, 2015). Muhammadiyah openly rejected religious practices that lacked a strong foundation in these two primary sources of Islam.

However, purification was never the only face of Muhammadiyah. From the beginning, its vision was also oriented toward modernization and empowerment. This orientation was most visible in three major fields.

Education became Muhammadiyah's most strategic project. The organization established modern schools that integrated religious instruction with general knowledge. By 1923, Muhammadiyah had founded more than 70 schools in various Javanese cities, offering an alternative to elitist colonial schooling and to traditional pesantren education that often remained limited in structure and accessibility. The Muhammadiyah school model offered something new and persuasive: modern learning without abandoning Islamic identity.

Social services also became a defining expression of the movement. Muhammadiyah established hospitals, clinics, orphanages, and other welfare institutions. These efforts were not merely charitable activities, but were rooted in a social interpretation of Surah al Ma'un. Today, Muhammadiyah's health based institutions

include more than 400 hospitals and clinics, reflecting the scale of its long term institutional commitment to public welfare.

Dakwah, meanwhile, developed in a form that was grounded in knowledge, rational thinking, and social relevance. Muhammadiyah's preaching from the outset was not restricted to ritual teachings, but also emphasized empowering communities and addressing social realities (Ferihana, 2022). This entire framework later became conceptualized as Islam Berkemajuan, or Progressive Islam. Haedar Nashir describes Islam Berkemajuan as the distinctive identity of Muhammadiyah: a way of practicing Islam rooted in original sources while infused with rationality, scientific openness, and social compassion (Nashir, 2024). Therefore, the founding ideas of Muhammadiyah should not be reduced to doctrinal purification alone, but should be understood as a comprehensive reform movement that brought together religious orthodoxy and social modernization. This ideological foundation explains why Muhammadiyah has survived for more than a century and remains relevant today.

Organizational Dynamics and Strength: From a Small Prayer House to the World

In its early years, Muhammadiyah faced serious challenges. As a reform movement, it encountered resistance from traditionalist circles who perceived Ahmad Dahlan's renewal efforts as a rejection of local religious tradition. Early controversies around correcting the qibla direction, criticizing slametan, and questioning certain grave pilgrimage practices became points of sharp tension (Noer, 1996). Yet even under such pressures, Muhammadiyah demonstrated remarkable organizational flexibility. Dahlan did not force reform through confrontation; instead, he adopted cultural and educational strategies that were more persuasive than aggressive. He preferred to build schools and institutions that could gradually win public trust. This shows that Muhammadiyah was, from the beginning, a practical movement rooted in action, not simply intellectual debate.

From the perspective of social movement theory, Muhammadiyah's ability to survive and grow in its early phase can be explained through three interconnected elements: the mobilization of resources through networks of scholars, merchants, and teachers; the framing of religious issues through the language of purification and return to authentic Islam; and the political opportunities created by the weakening colonial control over indigenous socio religious expression (McAdam et al., 2004). In other words, the early dynamics of Muhammadiyah were shaped by a constant negotiation between reformist ideals and adaptive strategies in response to social resistance.

Muhammadiyah expanded rapidly from the 1920s onward. Alfian notes that only eight years after its founding, Muhammadiyah branches had spread to various parts of Java and Sumatra. The 1927 annual report recorded approximately 4,000 official members and dozens of modern schools in multiple urban centers (Alfian, 1989). One major factor behind this rapid spread was Muhammadiyah's modern organizational system. From the beginning, it adopted a structured management style with formal statutes, hierarchical leadership from the central level down to the grassroots, and clear

mechanisms of meetings and deliberation. This organizational discipline differentiated Muhammadiyah from many traditional religious networks that tended to operate more loosely.

Educational institutions became the most powerful engine of expansion. Muhammadiyah schools offered an integrated curriculum in which religious studies stood side by side with modern general subjects. This model responded directly to Muslim communities seeking modern education without losing their Islamic identity. From the perspective of sociology of education, this approach can be interpreted as an effort to create a new cultural capital for Muslims under colonialism (Bourdieu, 1990). Beyond education, Muhammadiyah also founded hospitals such as PKU Muhammadiyah in 1923, orphanages, and various charitable institutions, signaling that its growth was not only quantitative but also qualitative through institutional diversification (Ferihana, 2022).

The Pillars of the Movement and the Heart of Cadre Building

Muhammadiyah's autonomous organizations play a crucial role in strengthening its vision and mission. These bodies, often described as Ortom, consist of seven organizations that complement one another across the fields of dakwah, education, social service, and community empowerment. Aisyiyah is the women's autonomous organization within Muhammadiyah, founded in Yogyakarta on 19 May 1917. It was initiated by Nyai Ahmad Dahlan, the wife of the founder. Aisyiyah became a pioneering platform for women's religious awareness, organizational participation, and the cultivation of a strong female cadre within Muhammadiyah.

Pemuda Muhammadiyah emerged from the decision of the 21st Congress in Makassar in 1922, although it formally obtained full autonomy in 1968. The organization focuses on strengthening the awareness of the younger generation as heirs and movers of Muhammadiyah's mission, especially in responding to changing social challenges. Nasyiatul Aisyiyah is an autonomous organization established as a movement for young Muslim women. It focuses on religious development, social engagement, and youth empowerment. Founded on 28 Dzulhijah 1345 Hijriyah, corresponding to 16 May 1931 in Yogyakarta, its main goals include fostering unity, improving character, and deepening Islamic understanding among Muhammadiyah's female cadres.

Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah was formed through student initiatives from Muhammadiyah higher education institutions. A congress was held in Yogyakarta ahead of the 1962 Muhammadiyah Congress in Jakarta, and the Central Board officially declared IMM on 14 March 1964, corresponding to 29 Syawal 1384. IMM serves as an arena for student cadres to develop leadership, express aspirations, and strengthen the role of students within the Muhammadiyah movement.

Tapak Suci is the martial arts organization within Muhammadiyah, officially established on 10 Rabiul Awwal 1383 Hijriyah or 13 July 1963. Tapak Suci functions not only as a sports institution but also as a means of building discipline and Islamic

character among its members. Hizbul Wathan was founded by KH Ahmad Dahlan in Yogyakarta in 1918, pioneered by Siraj Dahlan and Sarbini. However, based on Presidential Decree No. 238/1961 dated 20 May 1961, Hizbul Wathan was abolished and merged into the Indonesian Scout Movement. Before that integration, it played an important role in youth education and scouting activities grounded in Islamic values.

Ikatan Pelajar Muhammadiyah was established as a special organization for Muhammadiyah students. During the Pemuda Muhammadiyah conference in Surakarta on 18–20 July 1961, IPM was officially declared with Herman Helmi Farid Ma'ruf as Chair and Muhammad Hisyam Farid as Secretary. Its role is to nurture Muslim students with strong character, discipline, and religious understanding (P. Muhammadiyah, n.d.). In the context of dakwah, these autonomous organizations contribute significantly to strengthening Muhammadiyah's outreach, particularly through the wide network of Amal Usaha Muhammadiyah such as schools and mosques. These institutions serve as the front line in cultivating strong generations and spreading the spirit of Progressive Islam. Overall, the autonomous organizations act as the main pillars of Muhammadiyah's cadre system and an essential mechanism for expanding the movement's influence across diverse social layers, ensuring that Muhammadiyah continues to contribute to the Muslim community and the nation.

Muhammadiyah and the State: Between Moral Force and National Politics

Muhammadiyah's relationship with the state has always been dynamic. During the colonial era, the Dutch East Indies government tended to allow Muhammadiyah some space because the organization did not directly operate as a political party. Yet suspicion remained, especially as Muhammadiyah developed a wide network and modern educational institutions that could potentially foster nationalist leadership. After independence, Muhammadiyah entered a new political environment and had to redefine its position. Although it did not transform into a political party, Muhammadiyah maintained close interaction with Masyumi, the Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia. Many Muhammadiyah figures were active within Masyumi, and as a result Muhammadiyah was often seen as the party's cultural base. However, after Masyumi was dissolved by President Sukarno in 1960, Muhammadiyah remained alive as a socio religious movement independent from party politics. During the New Order, Muhammadiyah also experienced political pressure from the Suharto government. Under KH AR Fachruddin's leadership, Muhammadiyah adopted a careful adaptive strategy by emphasizing education and social service rather than political confrontation (Nakamura, 2012). This strategy proved effective for maintaining organizational continuity amid state repression.

In addition to its relationship with the state, Muhammadiyah has also developed a dynamic relationship with other organizations, especially Nahdlatul Ulama. While the relationship has often been framed as rivalry between modernists and traditionalists, more recent studies show that in many local contexts Muhammadiyah and NU cadres collaborate, particularly in social service and educational efforts (Bruinessen, 1994).

Intellectual Dynamics and Social Movement Development

Beyond institutional expansion, Muhammadiyah has also been shaped by evolving intellectual currents. In its early decades, Muhammadiyah focused heavily on purifying creed and worship. However, by the 1970s, it increasingly developed broader discourse on Islam and society. Thinkers such as Nurcholish Madjid, Amien Rais, and Syafii Maarif helped connect Muhammadiyah with wider debates on democracy, pluralism, and human rights. The concept of Islam Berkemajuan promoted in the twenty first century represents a culmination of these intellectual developments and reflects Muhammadiyah's effort to respond creatively to modern challenges (Nashir, 2024).

From the perspective of social change theory, Muhammadiyah demonstrates an ability for self reform. It has not only survived shifting historical landscapes, but has also transformed itself. What began as a localized purification movement has grown into a transnational organization with institutions and networks in multiple countries such as Malaysia, Egypt, and Australia.

Islam Berkemajuan: The Ideology of Muhammadiyah's Second Century
The Early Phase: Foundation and Consolidation

Muhammadiyah was officially founded on 18 November 1912 in Yogyakarta under the leadership of KH Ahmad Dahlan. During this phase, the organization focused on education and purification of Islamic teachings. Muhammadiyah schools grew rapidly and became a modern educational alternative for indigenous Muslim communities (P. Muhammadiyah, n.d.). Annual records from 1938 show that Muhammadiyah had already established 834 schools, 31 hospitals and clinics, and more than 250 orphanages (Alfian, 1989). These figures reflect a transformation from a local organization into a national scale social movement. Yet this phase also carried internal challenges. Debates over purification practices created strong tension with traditionalist groups, and Muhammadiyah's relationship with Nahdlatul Ulama often experienced strain. Even so, Muhammadiyah successfully built a reputation as a modernist organization with disciplined governance, emphasizing charitable institutions rather than merely producing ideological discourse. Sociologically, this phase positioned Muhammadiyah as a counter hegemonic movement against the dominance of Javanese syncretic culture and as a challenge to colonial educational monopoly (Noer, 1996).

The Japanese Occupation and Revolution: The Struggle Phase

The Japanese occupation from 1942 to 1945 drastically restricted Muhammadiyah's activities. The Japanese allowed Muhammadiyah to remain partly because it was seen as non political. However, many Muhammadiyah figures actively participated in the independence struggle through forces such as Hizbullah and Sabilillah. After the 1945 proclamation, Muhammadiyah helped fill the independence era by promoting public education and contributing cadres to national political efforts. Muhammadiyah reaffirmed itself not only as an internal religious organization but also as a contributor to national development. Nakamura argues that this period revealed the

dual face of Muhammadiyah: consistent as a socio religious movement while actively engaged in nation building (Nakamura, 2012).

The Old Order Period: Political Polarization

In the post independence period, Muhammadiyah became closely connected with Masyumi. Many Muhammadiyah leaders held positions in the party, making Muhammadiyah the largest social base of Masyumi. However, the dissolution of Masyumi in 1960 created a major challenge. Muhammadiyah had to reassert its identity to avoid being seen as a political opposition force. During this phase, Muhammadiyah emphasized its role as a socio religious organization independent of party structures. This period also witnessed ideological polarization. Muhammadiyah often faced conflict with leftist groups, particularly the Indonesian Communist Party, in struggles for influence within communities, including education and labor organizations. Such tensions pushed Muhammadiyah to strengthen cadre building through schools and autonomous bodies such as Pemuda Muhammadiyah and Nasyiatul Aisyiyah (Suwarno, 2015).

The New Order Period: Adaptation and Consolidation of Social Enterprises

The New Order introduced a different kind of challenge. The Suharto regime suppressed Islamic political activism, including Muhammadiyah. Under KH AR Fachruddin's leadership from 1968 to 1990, Muhammadiyah chose a cultural dakwah approach, prioritizing education, health, and charitable institutions while distancing itself from practical politics. This approach enabled the organization not only to survive but also to expand significantly. Official data from the Muhammadiyah Central Board recorded that Muhammadiyah had established more than 5,000 schools, 67 universities, 172 hospitals, and thousands of orphanages (PP Muhammadiyah, 1990). At the same time, internal debates emerged. Younger cadres, including figures such as Amien Rais, encouraged Muhammadiyah to take a stronger stance in political advocacy and democratic reform. These discussions signaled Muhammadiyah's gradual shift from being primarily an institutional charity movement toward a broader public role (Suwarno, 2019).

The Post Reform Era: Consolidation Toward the One Century Milestone

This phase became one of the most important transitions in Muhammadiyah's history. The 1998 Reform movement opened democratic space and reshaped Muhammadiyah's internal dynamics. Muhammadiyah figures such as Amien Rais became central actors in the reform process, and the founding of the National Mandate Party was often seen as ideologically linked to Muhammadiyah. Nevertheless, Muhammadiyah officially reaffirmed itself as a non party organization, maintaining the principle of not affiliating with any political party (Suwarno, 2019).

This period created a double dilemma. On one side, the political involvement of Muhammadiyah cadres generated the perception that Muhammadiyah was too close to the National Mandate Party. On the other side, Muhammadiyah worked to protect its

identity as a socio religious movement. Internal debates intensified between those who wanted deeper political engagement and those who prioritized organizational independence (Elhusein, Lahmi, Asmaret, et al., 2024).

At the same time, this phase was marked by consolidation of Islam Berkemajuan as Muhammadiyah's ideological framework. Haedar Nashir argued that Muhammadiyah must respond to modernity, pluralism, and globalization through a moderate and inclusive Islamic paradigm that remains open to scientific development. This ideological consolidation reached its peak at the 46th Muhammadiyah Congress in Yogyakarta in 2010, which adopted the theme "Enlightenment Movement Toward a Progressive Indonesia." This theme strengthened Muhammadiyah's post reform identity by integrating purification and modernization into a civil society framework rather than treating them as opposing forces. Institutionally, Muhammadiyah continued expanding its social enterprises. Data approaching Muhammadiyah's one century anniversary documented more than 5,300 schools, 172 higher education institutions, 457 hospitals and clinics, and thousands of social welfare institutions across Indonesia (Nashir, 2024). Quantitatively, Muhammadiyah's social enterprises increasingly positioned the organization as one of Southeast Asia's largest socio religious networks.

Sociologically, this phase can be interpreted as a period of repositioning. Muhammadiyah evolved beyond functioning as a religious movement for internal Muslim communities and increasingly presented itself as a national moral force. It became active in democratization, civil society development, and addressing national issues such as corruption, radicalism, and social inequality.

The Contemporary Period: Post One Century Muhammadiyah and Its National and Global Role

Following 2012, Muhammadiyah entered its second century with both the weight of historical legacy and new global challenges. The 47th Congress in Makassar in 2015 adopted the theme "Enlightenment Movement for a Progressive Indonesia," reaffirming Muhammadiyah's commitment as a religious, cultural, and social movement oriented not only to Muslim society but also to universal humanitarian values. This period reflects three major consolidations. Muhammadiyah strengthened its social enterprises, especially in education, health, and welfare. Official data recorded 172 higher education institutions, 457 hospitals and clinics, 5,700 primary and secondary schools, and thousands of social institutions. Muhammadiyah also reinforced Islam Berkemajuan as the theological, ethical, and practical basis for engaging globalization, democracy, pluralism, and environmental concerns. In addition, Muhammadiyah expanded global cadre formation through the growth of Muhammadiyah Special Branch Leaderships in countries such as Egypt, Australia, Japan, the United States, and Saudi Arabia (Shofan, 2015).

Within the national context, Muhammadiyah has increasingly acted as a moral force and civil society pillar. Its contributions include democratic and anti corruption advocacy through legal and human rights bodies, active promotion of religious

moderation by rejecting both extremism and radical secularism, and rapid humanitarian responses through institutions such as the Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center during crises including the Lombok earthquake, the Palu disaster, and the COVID 19 pandemic (Al Mufarriju, 2024).

On the international level, Muhammadiyah has extended its role through interfaith dialogue forums such as the World Interfaith Harmony Week and through humanitarian assistance for global crises including Palestine and Rohingya, facilitated through Lazismu. Muhammadiyah has also pursued international educational expansion, including initiatives such as Universiti Muhammadiyah Malaysia and the Muhammadiyah Australia College in Victoria, alongside growing academic cooperation with international universities (Elhusein, Lahmi, & Asmaret, 2024; Nugroho, 2023). Muhammadiyah has also promoted partnerships with international organizations such as the United Nations and UNESCO, while developing one of its most ambitious global initiatives: the unification of the Islamic calendar through the Integrated Global Hijri Calendar, based on astronomical calculation and measurement (Nakamura, 2025).

On 25 June 2025 at the Convention Hall of Universitas Aisyiyah Yogyakarta, Muhammadiyah officially launched the Integrated Global Hijri Calendar as a strategic step toward unifying Islamic timekeeping worldwide. The event was attended by Muhammadiyah's General Chair Haedar Nashir, representatives from the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ambassadors from Islamic countries, and astronomy experts from institutions such as the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. This initiative reflects Muhammadiyah's vision of Progressive Islam as a movement that not only manages ritual matters but also integrates scientific thinking and structural solutions as part of serving the Muslim community and contributing to the building of global civilization.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that Muhammadiyah is a modernist Islamic movement that has grown into one of the most influential forces in Indonesia's socio religious history. Founded in 1912 by KH Ahmad Dahlan, Muhammadiyah emerged from concerns over syncretic religious practices, the educational and social decline of Muslims under Dutch colonial rule, and the inspiration of Islamic reform ideas from the Middle East. Over time, the organization has remained faithful to the spirit of tajdid by strengthening religious purification while modernizing social services, especially through education, health care, and community empowerment. Across different historical periods, from the colonial era to independence, the New Order, the reform era, and the present day, Muhammadiyah has shown a strong ability to adapt without losing its core identity, keeping its distance from practical politics while consistently contributing to nation building and expanding its role on the global stage through the vision of Progressive Islam.

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