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The Concept of *Aswaja* in the Thought of K. Abul Fadlol As-Senori (1916-1991 AD) and its Relationship with *Aswaja* in the Thought of KH. Hashim Ash`ari

Nur Faizin

Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia
nur.faizin.fs@um.ac.id

Abdul Basid

Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia
abdul.basid.fs@um.ac.id

Mochammad Rizal Ramadhan

Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia
mochammad.ramadhan.fs@um.ac.id

Dza Himmatin Aliyyah

Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia
dzahimm@gmail.com

Ahmad Munjin Nasih

Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia
munjin.nasih.fs@um.ac.id

Kamaluddin Nurdin Marjuni

Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Malaysia
kamluddinm@yahoo.com

Abstract

The concept of *Ahlu sunnah wal jamaah* (*Aswaja*) remains a subject of frequent debate. This article endeavors to provide a comprehensive exploration of the *Aswaja* concept through the perspective of the archipelago scholar, K. Abu Fadlol As-Senori, a disciple of KH. Hashim Ash`ari, the founder of the Nahdlatul Ulama. This article also strives to establish a connection between the concept of *Aswaja* as it is found and the *Aswaja* concept of KH. Hashim Ash`ari. This research is a descriptive-qualitative study. This study revealed that *Aswaja*, as defined by K. Abul Fadlol, encompasses four distinct groups: (1) the *Muhadditsin*, (2) the *Sufiyyah* (3) the *Ash'ariyah* and (4) *Maturidiyah*. As a student of KH. Hashim Ash`ari, the *Aswaja* concept of K. Abul Fadlol has a very big aspect of similarity. The concept of *Aswaja* from both becomes the foundation for building moderation in religion. Both also reject hardline Islamists who claim to be *Aswaja*

Keywords: *Aswaja*, Sunni, Abul Fadlol, Hashim Ash`ari, Moderation

Abstrak

Konsep Ahlu sunnah wal jamaah (*Aswaja*) tetap sering menjadi subyek perdebatan. Artikel ini berusaha untuk mengeksplorasi secara komprehensif konsep *Aswaja* melalui perspektif seorang ulama nusantara, K. Abu Fadlol As-Senori. Beliau adalah salah seorang murid KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, pendiri Nahdlatul Ulama. Artikel ini juga berusaha untuk membangun hubungan antara konsep *Aswaja* K. Abul Fadlol dan *Aswaja* KH. Hasyim Asy'ari. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian deskriptif-kualitatif. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa *Aswaja*, sebagaimana didefinisikan oleh K. Abul Fadlol, mencakup empat kelompok, yaitu: (1) *Muhadditsin*, (2) *Sufiyah* (3) *Asy'ariyah* dan (4) *Maturidiyah*. Sebagai murid d KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, konsep *Aswaja* keduanya mengandung aspek-aspek kesamaan yang sangat besar. Konsep *Aswaja* dari keduanya menjadi landasan dalam membangun moderasi dalam beragama. Keduanya juga menolak Islamis garis keras yang mengaku sebagai *Aswaja*. Perbedaan dalam gaya menyampaikan konsep tampak dari kedua tokoh ini.

Katakunci: *Aswaja*, Sunni, Abul Fadlol, Hashim Ash`ari, Moderasi

Introduction

Several studies show that *Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamaah* (*Aswaja*) within the Indonesian Muslim community represents a religious perspective that serves as the foundation for a stance of religious moderation, as *Aswaja* is the guiding spirit of moderate Islamic education in Indonesia (Anam & Yahya, 2021; Kanafi, Dahri, Susminingsih, & Bakhri, 2021; Saefudin & Al Fatihah, 2020). Nevertheless, the concept of *Aswaja* continues to be a topic of frequent debate. For instance, two prominent religious organizations in Indonesia, namely Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, both assert their respective interpretations of *Aswaja*. These debates often involve intricate arguments and interpretations, reflecting the diversity of religious views

within Indonesia (Darajat, 2017; Hilmy, 2013; Saleh, 2008). Despite differences in religious practices and theological perspectives, both Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah share a common belief in the potential of their *Aswaja* interpretations to foster a tolerant way of life, which is notably distant from radicalism and acts of terrorism in comparison to the theology of Salafi Wahabi (Azyumardi, 2002). In this matter, there has been what Tijani (2020) calls a battle of concepts in which every Islamic group claims to be an *Aswaja* group and is most entitled to use that title because it is the *Aswaja* group that Muhammad mentioned as going to heaven.

The theology of Islamic radicalism emerged using the term *Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah (Aswaja)* in some countries, such as England (Weeks, 2020). Many religious organizations in Indonesia assert their right to claim the mantle of *Aswaja*. Conflicts initially erupted in various regions, such as Java, Kalimantan, Aceh, and others, often stemming from differing interpretations of *Aswaja*. These disputes regarding *Aswaja* continue to persist in the modern era, as exemplified by recent incidents in Pasuruan, East Java (Masyitha, 2019). An Islamic movement that seeks to purify Islamic teachings from local influences, exemplified by organizations like Muhammadiyah, Wahhabis, and others, also identifies itself as *Aswaja* (Mufid, 2013). This reason then prompted the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) organization to call its understanding of *Aswaja* the term *Aswaja al-Nahdliyah*. (Hamzah, 2017).

The overall concept of *Aswaja* in this archipelago was initially spearheaded by the NU organization, under the intellectual guidance of KH. Hashim Ash'ari, and carried forward by his disciples. Among his renowned students was K. Abul Fadlol As-Senori (Redaktur, 2004). Abul Fadlol is known as a teacher of prominent figures, including KH. Hashim Muzadi Malang, KH. Maimun Zubair Sarang, and KH. Abdullah Faqih Langitan, as well as other national figures (Latifah, 2015). He stands as one of the prolific scholars of the archipelago, having authored numerous books encompassing *sharah*, *matan*, and *nadhom*. In his works, he extensively delved into the concept of *Aswaja*, with one of his notable writings being the book titled *al-Kawâkib al-Lammâ'ah*.

This research focuses on investigating the *Aswaja* concept in the intellectual framework of K. Abul Fadlol As-Senori, aiming to gain a comprehensive understanding of *Aswaja* thought as elucidated by scholars from the archipelago themselves. The study was conducted systematically, delving deeply and critically into his perspectives regarding the *Aswaja*

concept, which can serve as a foundational basis for the cultivation of religious moderation across various dimensions, including the divine, social, ethical, and moral aspects.

In addition to establishing a foundation for religious moderation based on the perspectives of archipelago clerics, this research also contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the *Aswaja* concept. Such understanding is essential for countering radicalism and terrorism and fostering a peaceful and harmonious practice of Islam rooted in the wholesome ideology and thinking of *Aswaja*. This endeavor is aimed at benefiting the general Indonesian population, particularly the Muslim majority. Therefore, extensive research and publication efforts are crucial to nurturing a more moderate society in the practice of their faith.

This research is based on prominent figure and his thoughts. In this model of research, researchers take into account several factors when conducting figure studies. These include the figure's popularity, which generates significant interest; their influence, which yields substantial benefits; the need to address any existing controversies related to the figure; the uniqueness of the figure's thoughts and perspectives; the figure's level of engagement and impact in their respective field; and their relevance and contributions to the contemporary context (Mustaqim, 2016). This is a literature study (*library research*) (Muhadjir, 2012). This research falls under the category of descriptive-qualitative research, aimed at uncovering reality and providing insight by analyzing the data (Raco, 2010). The data in this study are categorized into primary data, which consists of K. Abul Fadlol's writings, and secondary data, encompassing various sources related to K. Abul Fadlol's perspectives (Nazir, 2003). Data, primarily in the form of sentences or textual content, are collected from literary manuscripts. The research employs tabulation techniques for data organization, categorization, the development of relevant units for understanding religious moderation concepts, and data synthesis to conclude. (Sugiyono, 2014).

The analysis and research directions are as follows (Furchan & Maimun, 2005): First, identification of the theme of *Aswaja* within the intellectual framework of K. Abul Fadlol, with a particular focus on the field of theology or religious schools (*firqah*). Second, exploration of logical connections among K. Abul Fadlol's ideas across various domains of Islamic scholarship to unveil the underlying reasons, social-historical contexts, and nuanced meanings behind these ideas. Thirdly, classification and

categorization of the types or styles of K. Abul Fadlol's thought into theological and non-theological aspects. Fourth, making comparisons with other influential figures such as KH. Hasyim Asy`ari, namely by identifying aspects of similarities and tendencies shared by both figures and highlighting aspects of their thoughts that have differences or uniqueness that are in line with the narrative that can be used as a basis for religious moderation thinking.

Brief Biography of K. Abul Fadlol

K. Abul Fadlol is a prominent figure the archipelago scholars. He was born in Suwedang hamlet, Kebonharjo village, Jatirogo district, Tuban regency. Abul Fadlol was born in 1916 AD. He is the son of Abdus Shakur (Latifah, 2015). At nine years of age, Abul Fadlol successfully memorized the Quran (30 juz), which took only two months. He started writing at the age of 11. Initially, he summarized the book he taught and then wrote the independent work (Latifah, 2015). In addition to receiving instruction from his father, Abul Fadlol also pursued studies under KH. Hashim Ash`ari at Tebuireng in Jombang. Despite a relatively short duration of approximately seven months spent in Tebuireng, he acquired a comprehensive knowledge base (Redaktur, 2004).

Abul Fadlol was among the Javanese scholars who wrote many of his works in Arabic. His proficiency in Arabic was so exceptional that he consistently authored his works in Arabic, demonstrating correct grammar and a refined linguistic style, even though Abul Fadlol never received formal education in Arabic countries (Latifah, 2015). It is reported that he did not undertake the Hajj pilgrimage to Makkah. His profound command of the Arabic language and his acquisition of the "yellow book, or (*kutubut turats*)" were entirely achieved within the archipelago. Due to his extensive proficiency in Arabic, he earned the nickname "Walking Dictionary."

It is indeed known that to date, K. Abul Fadlol has authored 22 books. Here is a list of his works: (1) *al Jauharah as Saniyyah fi 'Ilm ash Shrarf* (Morphology); (2) *Kafiyah ath Thullab fi 'Ilm an-Nahw* (Syntax); (3) *ad-Durrah as-Shayyah fi 'Ilm an-Nahw* (Syntax); (4) *Sullam ath-Thullab fi 'Ilm an Nahw* (Syntax); (5) *Zubad al I'rab fi 'Ilm an Nahw* (Syntax); (6) *idhah al-Masalik Ila Alfiyyah Ibn Malik* (Syntax); (7) *Tarjamah Alfiyyah Ibn Malik* (Syntax); (8) *Kifayah ath-Thullab fi Bayan al-Qawaid al-Fiqhiyyah* (Jurisprudence); (9) *Al-Wardah al-Bahiyyah fi Bayan al-Ishthilhat al-Fiqhiyyah* (Fiqh); (10) *Syarh al-*

Kawakib (Kalam Science); (11) *Kashf at Tabarih fi Bayan Shalah at-Tarawih* (Fiqh Shalat Tarawih); (12) *Al Kawkab as Sathi' Syarh ala Nadzm Jam'u al-Jawami'* (Fiqh Hadith); (13) *Syarh Mandhumah Bahjah al-H awi* (Umar Al Wardi); (14) *Syarh Matn al Jurumiyyah* (Morphology and Syntax); (15) *Ahla al Musamarah fi Hikayah al-Auliya' al-'Ashrah* (Acts of the Guardian of the Ten); (16) *Al Mandhumah fi 'Ilm at Tashawwuf* (The Science of Sufism); (17) *Al-Mandhar al-Muwafi fi Ilm al-Arudh wa al-Qawafi* (Verse Literature); (18) *Khuthbah Jum'ah*; (19) *al-Kawakib al-Lamma'ah* (Aswaja); (20) *Tashil al Masalik Shah Alfiyyah Ibni Malik*; (21) *Tafsir Ayat Ahkam*; (22) *Ad-Durr al-Farid Syarh Jauhar at-Tauhid* (Theology).

Terminology of Aswaja in the Thought of K. Abul Fadlol

The term *Aswaja* has historical roots in the Prophet's hadith about the 73 factions, where only one is saved from Hell. When inquired about this faction, the Prophet responded, 'those who adhere to my Sunnah and the ways of my companions' (HR. Tirmidzi and Abu Dawud). *Aswaja* is consequently recognized as a school of thought embraced by the majority of Muslims worldwide, serving as a stronghold against heresies (Marmura, 1990). The term *Aswaja* was also adopted by a faction loyal to Muawiyah during their conflict with Ali bin Abi Talib during the power transition, notably during the Shiffin War. Consequently, it is not surprising that *Aswaja* has also taken on political significance in its interactions with Shi'a groups and other factions (Wensinck, 1995). Up to the present day, *Aswaja* (Sunnis) has evolved as a term often used in contrast to Shi'a. In subsequent phases, the *Aswaja* group also encountered the Mu'tazilah doctrine. By the 6th century Hijri, *Aswaja* appeared to consolidate its theological position by further fortifying the Ash'ariyyah theological tradition (Zuhri, 2011). It would be highly appropriate if K. Abul Fadlol were to include the Ash'ariyyah group at the forefront of the *Aswaja* group from this historical perspective.

Aswaja (*Ahl Sunnah wal Jamaah*, or the Followers of Sunnah and Community) subsequently evolves into an encompassing doctrine that incorporates religious tenets, spanning theology, politics, and Sharia comprehension. The term also suggests that any group not adhering to these principles is viewed as deviating from the path of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet. Hence, the term "sunnah" within *Aswaja* signifies adherence to the Prophet's hadith, and the term "community" signifies the majority (Saleh, 2008). In the context of the archipelago, Azra observes that in Indonesia,

numerous community organizations identify with *Aswaja*. However, the actual practices and beliefs of these groups often deviate from the mainstream, as exemplified by organizations such as NU (Nahdlatul Ulama). For instance, groups like FPI (Islamic Defenders Front), JAT (Jamaah Anshar Tauhid), MMI (Majlis Mujahideen Indonesia), and others exhibit distinct interpretations. According to Azra, *Aswaja* in Indonesia showcases a diverse range of understandings, with some individuals subscribing to radical ideologies and endorsing violent actions while still associating themselves with *Aswaja* (Azra, 2016).

KH. Hashim Ash'ari established *Aswaja* as the guiding ideology for the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) organization. He founded NU in 1926, emphasizing a strong commitment to normative religious values. With a moderate disposition, he successfully defended *Aswaja*, a moderation characteristic prioritizing a middle-ground approach to handling differences of opinion among theological madhabs, reminiscent of the teachings of Imam al-Maturidi and Imam al-Ash'ari. It appears that KH Hashim Ash'ari's decision was not adequately preserved, leading to NU, which is the largest Islamic organization in terms of followers in Indonesia, becoming overshadowed by small fringe movements that proclaim themselves as *Aswaja* sects or groups (Rofiq, 2017).

According to Zuhri, *Aswaja* within the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) framework represents a distinct form of *Sunni Aswaja*, categorized as a separate theological concept within the *Aswaja* category. This theological approach has evolved in the Indonesian context, not in response to groups like the Mu'tazilah, but as a dynamic and culturally grounded manifestation of *Aswaja*. KH. Hashim Ash'ari introduced a novel conceptualization of *Aswaja*, distinct from its early historical connotations (Zuhri, 2011). After the time of KH. Hashim Ash'ari, the term *Aswaja* in the hands of the next generation did not receive special attention. In fact, it should continue to be developed and carried out so that the chain of *Aswaja* concepts can be described. K. Abul Fadlol is one of KH. Hashim Ash'ari's students and is prolific in writing and producing works. He is usually studied as an educational figure, his educational role, but his educational concept has not been seriously studied in terms of *Aswaja* thought or *Aswaja* concept (Latifah, 2015).

The concept of *Aswaja* within NU after the KH. Hashim Ash'ari era can be studied through an exploration of the ideas put forth by his student, namely K. Abul Fadlol. In his conceptualization, the *Aswaja* concept is initially

elucidated as a term rooted in history. According to him, there exists a historical continuum of *Aswaja*, with its origins tracing back to the time of the Khulafaur Rashidin and progressing through to his contemporary period. He stated:

At that time (the caliphate of Ali ibn Abi Talib), Muslims were divided, with differing views and desires. At that time, a group rebelled against the caliphate of Ali ibn Abi Talib. The group raised the flag of resistance and waged war. Those were those who were later named the Khawarij group. On the other hand, there appears to be a group that is very excessive in loving Ali and fanatical towards him. It was the group that became known as Shia. It is the name that is still used today by the followers of the Shia madhhab (As-Senori, 2000: 14)

The term "Shia", which is nowadays the name of a group of Muslims such as the Islamic society of the state of Iran, was the beginning of the emergence of groups in Islam. It is this Shia designation that currently frequently stands in opposition to the term "Sunnis" (Ida & Dyson, 2015). The term "Sunnis," as referred to here, relates to the term "Sunnah" within the phrase "*Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah (Aswaja)*." In essence, Sunni represents a sect, or madhhab, that engages with a Shia sect, or madhhab. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that this Sunni (*Aswaja*) engagement with Shia is not identical to the *Aswaja* concept introduced by KH. Hashim Ash'ari, who served as the teacher of K. Abul Fadlol. Rather, it is a specific segment of Sunnis who have recently encountered confrontations with Shia (Zuhri, 2011). Moreover, while the term "Khawarij" no longer exists as a distinct group today, it persists as an ideology or a set of beliefs. K. Abul Fadlol authored the book "*al-Kawakib al-Lamma'ah*" in response to the emergence and dissemination of heretical ideas (*bid'ah*) within certain groups. This theme is also discernible in the works of KH. Hashim Ash'ari, who was K. Abul Fadlol's teacher. KH. Hashim Assyrian explicitly differentiates between the terms "Sunnah" and "Bid'ah" by composing variabel distinctions between them (Asyari, 1998).

K. Abul Fadlol also saw that the differences among Muslims that began since the era of Ali ibn Abi Talib had given rise to many other terms, such as the term *Ahl al-Tawhid wal 'Adl*, the nickname for the Muktazilite group. The group that was busy being involved in the disputation of creed issues was called *Ahl al-Kalam*. The group that is busy involved in matters of charity and muamalah is called *Ahl al-Fiqh*. The group involved in the collection of hadith and the assessment of *shahih* or not is called *Ahl al-Hadith*. And the group of

scholars who are busy engaged in cleansing the soul of bad morals and adorning themselves with praiseworthy morals is called *Ahl al-Tasawwuf* (As-Senori, 2000).

In the next explanation, K. Abul Fadlol identified four groups that fall under the umbrella of *Aswaja*. According to his thoughts, these four groups are as follows: (1) *The al-Muhaddithin* group (Ahlul Hadith), which bases its religious doctrines on the *naqli* postulates (Qur'an, Sunnah), and Ijma. (2) Sufism, or the Sufis, who draw inspiration from divine sources for their religious beliefs and from similar sources to the Ahlul Hadiths. (3) the 'Ash'ariyyah group, and (4) the Maturidiyah group (As-Senori, 2000). The Asharians are followers of Imam Abu Hasan al-Ash'ari, while the Maturidiyah adheres to the teachings of Imam Abu Mansur Al-Maturidi. Both of these madhhabs share unanimous agreement on all aspects of their creed, except for two issues: the understanding of *takwin* (creation) and the interpretation of *taqlid*.

K. Abul Fadlol also asserted furthermore the existence of *al-Muhaddithin* or *Ahlul Hadith* as one of the *Aswaja*'s groups. They are people who have memorized many hadiths and have a good understanding of these hadiths. They are not those who convert themselves to the Hadith or *Sunnah* but they do not understand the Hadith. He exercised caution in using the term to categorize everyone who affiliated to the *Aswaja* group. For example, the term *al-Muhaddith* (Hadith Experts). He wrote:

"Indeed, the term Hadith or Muhaddith (Hadith experts) is included in the texts with its many contexts, which is a particular term for scholars of hadith, which is to indicate a special or certain meaning. In other words, Muhaddithin is a term for people who have fulfilled the terms and conditions that apply within their class. Thus, the term should be used specifically." (As-Senori, 2000)

K. Abul Fadlol unambiguously stated that the *Aswaja* group does not consist of individuals who reject the use of madhhabs in matters of religion, particularly within the domain of jurisprudence. Those who assert themselves as direct adherents of the Quran and Hadith without considering madhhabs, do not fall within the purview of the *Aswaja* group, according to K. Abul Fadlol's perspective. Here, K. Abul Fadlol indirectly mentions groups that began to emerge in his time and began to spread in Indonesia as groups aimed at purifying Islamic teachings from any form of local culture. This purification they do with an invitation to return only to the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Socio-Religious Aspects in the Thought of K. Abul Fadlol

K. Abul Fadlol, born in Sedan, Rembang, Central Java, was deeply immersed in the friendly Islamic culture. He received his religious and Islamic education within a milieu renowned for its students and Islamic boarding schools. This cultural backdrop exerted a significant influence on K. Abul Fadlol's thought patterns. As the son of a Kyai, he received his religious education directly from his father within the confines of their home. Kyai Shakur provided his son with moderate Islamic teachings, as well as the Islamic teachings prevalent in Javanese society at large. K. Abul Fadlol's early education under his father followed the traditional pesantren tradition, which emphasized memorization and mastery of the tools necessary for reading and comprehending Islamic texts. Alongside memorizing the Quran, K. Abul Fadlol also committed to memory numerous books commonly studied in Islamic boarding schools that employed traditional educational methods. These included texts such as *Alfiyah*, *Uqudul Juman*, *Jauharul Maknun*, and others (Ulum, 2016).

The *Aswaja* understanding within the Pesantren setting encompasses the understanding or thought described by KH. Hashim Ashari. It is a religious perspective that reflects the beliefs of the broader Javanese society, characterized by the integration of Islamic teachings with local cultural norms and practices. For example, this perspective involves customary practices like almsgiving during communal gatherings for commemorating the deceased, *tahlinan* ceremonies, and similar traditions (Asyari, 1998). In essence, although K. Abul Fadlol's formal period of study under KH. Hashim Ashari was relatively short, and their interaction occurred mainly towards the end of K. Abul Fadlol's educational journey, the concept of *Aswaja* had already solidified as a prevailing religious perspective among the Islamic boarding schools of Java during that era. While KH. Hashim Ashari can be considered a late-stage mentor to K. Abul Fadlol, their educational connection was informed by the broader academic landscape and community organizational dynamics, particularly through their association with Nahdlatul Ulama.

K. Abul Fadlol's connection with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is further evident in the examination of his work on *Aswaja*, titled "*al-Kawakib al-Lamma'ah*," which he presented in Jombang in the latter part of 1383 Hijri, followed by an elaboration (sharah) of the same work (As-Senori, 2000). The dissection of this work commenced during the 23rd NU Mukhtaman in Solo. At

that time, Kyai Abdul Jalil Kudus introduced K. Abul Fadlol's work to the participants of the Mukhtamar, receiving accolades, and the suggestion that it should be studied in detail. This scrutiny involved various scholars, including KH. Bisri Sansuri, Kyai Khalil, Kyai Mansur Anwar, and others.

It is no exaggeration to assume that K. Abul Fadlol is the figure behind the emergence of the three fundamental pillars of *Aswaja* in NU known as *al-usus al-thalathah fi i'tiqad ahl sunnah wal jamaah*, which includes taking madhhab Ash'ariy or Maturidi in the field of Aqidah; taking madhhab one of the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafii, or Hambali in the field of Fiqh; and taking madhhab with al-Ghazali or al-Baghdadi madhhab in the field of Sufism (Burhani, 2012; Fadlal, 2016). Although KH. Hashim Ash'ari himself has actually also indirectly mentioned three fundamental pillars related to the religious model of Indonesian society before the emergence of the movement initiated by Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Ridla, Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, and so on (Asyari, 1998).

KH. Maimun Zubair Sarang, a student of K. Abul Fadlol, emphasized that one of the reasons why K. Abul Fadlol focused on the *Aswaja* issue was the emergence of Wahabi beliefs infiltrating Indonesia and gaining traction in Java, particularly Central Java. The propagation aligned with the teachings of figures like Ibn Taimiyah and Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab had started to cause unrest among the Javanese population at that time. As *Aswaja* understanding, which was the prevailing belief among Javanese Muslims, began to face threats, it necessitated a balanced counter-discourse to preserve the existing *Aswaja* theology and counter the proselytization efforts carried out under the banner of a *Sunni* or *Aswaja* movement (Shonhaji, 2010).

It's not surprising that K. Abul Fadlol incorporated his arguments in the work "*al-Kawakib al-Lamma'ah*", emphasizing that the term *Aswaja* is exclusive to specific groups and not applicable to those who identify as Sunni but do not adhere to any schools of thought in jurisprudence (Fiqh). From the characteristics of radical Islamic movements that have the jargon "back to the Quran and Sunnah", then *Aswaja* in the thought of K. Abul Fadlol is not *Aswaja* who supports Islamic radicalism. On the other hand, with his family, social, and educational background, the concept of *Aswaja* K. Abul Fadlol is certainly far from the understanding of radical Islam that supports acts of terrorism. The concept of *Aswaja* in his thought is concept that is in line with Islamic moderatism, namely *Aswaja* of the NU, which has instilled the principles of

moderation in carrying out Islam, such as the principle of *tawassut wal i'tidal* (middle) (Burhani, 2012)

Relationship of Aswaja K. Abul Fadlol and KH. Hashim Ash'ari

The concept of *Aswaja*, as perceived by both archipelago scholars, exhibits both similarities and differences. In terms of similarities, both figures saw that the *Aswaja* faction could be historically traced back to the divisions that occurred among the companions of the Prophet. KH. Hashim Ash'ari, in particular, emphasized that various groups within Islam were connected to the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This hadith foretold that his followers would be divided into 73 factions, with only one group surviving—the group that adheres to the teachings of the Prophet and his companions. This historical hadith, which explains the division of the Muslim community, serves as a justification or premise for explaining that *Aswaja* is the faction destined to survive. KH. Hashim Ash'ari maintained that one of these surviving groups was the *Aswaja* faction. Both scholars referenced the opinions of earlier scholars who had explicitly mentioned this concept. KH. Hashim Ash'ari, in particular, quoted the views of Shihabuddin Al-Khafaji and Abu Mansur At-Tamimi.

K. Abul Fadlol, without directly referencing the historical hadith, established a connection between *Aswaja* and the historical divisions that originated during the caliphate of Ali ibn Abi Talib. During that period, the Khawarij and Shia factions emerged. These divisions were primarily driven by political factors, power struggles, and disputes over the caliphate. The conflict between Ali's camp and Muawwiyah's camp led to a division within the Muslim community. The Shia and Khawarij factions continued to evolve during Ali's reign and throughout the Umayyad dynasty. They made contributions in various aspects, including politics, culture, and religion. The impact of the emergence of the Shia and Khawarij factions is evident in the differences in the practice of Islamic worship and varying political perspectives, which were rooted in the power struggles of the time.

K. Abul Fadlol also made a distinction between the Wahabi sect and the *Aswaja* faction. The term "Wahabi" refers to a reformist school of thought within Islam, that emerged during the proselytizing efforts of the 18th-century reformer Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab from Najd, Saudi Arabia. In K. Abul Fadlol's perspective, the Wahabi group or sect does not fall under the category of *Aswaja*, even though they often describe themselves as Sunni in

recent times. They identify themselves as *Sunni* or *Ahlul Hadith*. This differentiation aligns with KH. Hashim Ash'ari's views, as he emphasized the distinction between practices that conform to the standards of The Sunnah (orthodox Islamic tradition) and those considered heretical. KH. Hashim Ash'ari's opinions include practices such as omitting almsgiving during tahlil (prayers for the deceased), reciting intentions, engaging in grave pilgrimages, and using prayer beads for pilgrimage, among others, as aspects of heresy.

The limitations associated with the concept of *Aswaja*, as presented by KH. Hashim Ash'ari and K. Abul Fadlol, can be considered different. KH. Hashim Ash'ari utilized an approach based on standards related to Sunnah (orthodox Islamic tradition) and Heresy. In contrast, K. Abul Fadlol's approach to defining the concept of *Aswaja* involved a linguistic approach, or Usul Fiqh, which pertains to the use of terminology, particularly the inclusion of the term '*Urfiyyah*'. According to the principles of Usul Fiqh, a term should primarily be used in its Shar'i (Islamic legal) context; if this is not feasible, it may then be used in an '*Urfi* (customary) context, and finally in a *Lughawi* (linguistic) sense. The concept built by K. Abul Fadlol shows his mastery of the principles of law-making (*istimbath al-ahkam*) as explained by expert scholars in the field of Usul Fiqh (Al-Razi, 2001). While KH. Hashim Ashari tends to build on his arguments about *Aswaja* as a founding father who was just beginning to draw boundaries for a new group that maintains the tradition and culture that have been running before.

K. Abul Fadlol indirectly excluded the group that identified themselves as *Aswaja*'s followers but they did not adhere to the Fiqh Madhhabs, were not part of the Sufism group, and did not align themselves with the Ash'ari and Maturidiyah factions. On the other hand, KH. Hashim Ashari had previously emphasized that the concept of *Aswaja* he advocated should encompass followers of a Madhhab; adhere to the Ashariyyah or Maturidiyyah Madhhab in matters of Aqidah, follow the Madhhab of Imam al-Ghazali or Imam Junaid in Sufism, and adhere to one of the four Madhhabs, namely Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, or Hanbali, in Islamic law (Fiqh).

The relationship between of the concept of *Aswaja* built by K Abul Fadlol and his teacher, KH. Hashim Ashari, is also seen in terms of building a moderate attitude in understanding and practicing religious teachings. KH. Hashim Ashari builds moderatism in religion by inviting them to accept the existing religious ways of Muslims, namely religious ways that can accommodate local culture and wisdom in Indonesia. K. Abul Fadlol through

his mapping of Islamic groups or sects, tried to show that *Aswaja* was in the middle of extremism in creed, not Mu'tazilah who was too rationalist, and not Kharijite, who was strict in religion. In other words, these two figures of the archipelago of ulama are two figures who both have the desire to build moderatism within Indonesian Muslims through the correct concept of *Aswaja*.

There are very few differences in the concept of *Aswaja* between the thoughts of these two figures. This is because K. Abul Fadlol is a student of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, so this relationship greatly influences K. Abul Fadlol's concept of *Aswaja* thought. However, the style or model used between the two figures in writing the concept of *Aswaja* that is understood appears to have differences.

K. Abul Fadlol is a prolific writer and a diligent teacher who takes notes, so his style of explaining the concept of *Aswaja* tends to be descriptive and argumentative. He explains *firqah* that are not included in *Aswaja* descriptively and presents historical arguments and quotes from medieval Islamic scholars to strengthen the concept of *Aswaja* conveyed, even K. Abul Fadlol appears to quote some fairly long texts from the references he reads (As-Senori, 2000). This is understandable, because it could be that the material he wrote was part of the materials that would be delivered when he would teach his santri.

As a founder of the organization, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari was a driving force. Despite his pesantren background, his leadership character emerged clearly when explained the *Aswaja* concept that he understood. The socio-religious situation at that time encouraged him to convey the concept of *Aswaja* and who the real *Aswaja* group was by providing explanations to the non-*Aswaja* groups that had emerged at that time by giving emphasis or warning not to follow these groups. He seemed to prioritize the invitation to Muslims not to be carried away or deluded by sects or ideas other than *Aswaja*, which he explained (Asyari, 1998). In conveying the concept, he is more inclined to invite and accentuate the *da'wah* (inviting) side.

Another unique difference is that KH. Hasyim Asy'ari tends to be more contextual to the situation he faces nationally, so that sects such as *ibahiyyun* (liberalism) are also discussed. Meanwhile, K. Abul Fadlol's argumentation tends to be more historical, using the Middle Ages as the standard and basis for his argument.

Conclusion

In the battle of concepts related to *Aswaja*, K. Abul Fadlol placed restrictions on certain groups that were eligible to be included in the category of *Aswaja*. In his thought, *Aswaja* consists of four groups, namely (1) *al-Muhadditsun* who have a good understanding of the hadiths of the Messenger of Allah Saw; (2) the *Shufiyyah* (Sufism experts) who make purification of the soul as a model in practicing their religion; (3) the *Asy`ariyah* (followers of Imam Abul Hasan Al-Asy`ari) in the field of creed; (4) the *Maturidiyah* (followers of Imam Abu Manshur Al-Maturidi) in the field of creed as well. The last two groups are also referred to by K. Abul Fadlol as the groups that think rationally or think in faith. Thus, the definition of *Aswaja* constructed by other groups that do not fall into the four groups is far-fetched.

There is a similarity between K. Abul Fadlol's concept and KH. Hashim Ash'ari's concepts. Both agreed that the *Ash'ariyah* and *Maturidiyah* creeds were *Aswaja*, as the Sufismists settled the straight path to the afterlife. In the KH. Hashim Ash'ari, Sufismists are referred to as the followers of Imam Al-Ghazali and Imam Abu Hasan Ash-Shadzili in the field of morals and sufism. K. Abul Fadlol also gave the same explanation as KH. Hashim Ash'ari's explanation on the Sunnah and Heresy. Both also explain that the faction that enjoys accusing heresy blatantly and the faction that breaks away from the madhabs in the field of Jurisprudence are not the *Aswaja* group.

The difference between the thoughts of the two figures is in conveying the concept of *Aswaja*. K. Abul Fadlol tended to be descriptive and argumentative, while KH. Hasyim Asy`ari was persuading and influencing conversation. Finally, the concept of *Aswaja* from teachers and students can be put as an ideology in building moderation in religion. In short, K. Abul Fadlol is a student who has been devoted to his teacher, that is, by continuing the thoughts of his teacher.

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