

Mahdiism and Political Movement (Critical Study on Hadith of *Mahdawiyah*)

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Abstract-Believing in the presence of Imam al-Mahdi (called by Mahdiism) becomes an important part in the majority of Islamic theology. On the other hand Mahdiism always present in the crisis context that hit the depressed group, such as politic, economic, social and cultural. Therefore, mahdiism have double-faced in its presence, between religious movements and political movement to recapture the glory of Moslem ever achieved. Religion is a frame of ideology that legitimate and effective in political movement mission. This movement always complete with its ideology and its foundations of legitimacy. Mahdiism ideology in Islam is framed through hadith texts of mahdawiyah. These hadith is always related to the utopian hopes for the struggle (*Jihad*) spirit. By Mahdiism, Islam as a religion has been converted into a religious political movement.

Keyword: mahdiisme, hadis of *mahdawiyah*, religious political movement

A. Preface

A view about the presence of al-Mahdi in Islam has been going on for 14 centuries. The concept of al-Mahdi (*Mahdiism*) has grown since the beginning of Islam and strengthened following the development of the two major mainstreams in Islam who receive it, Shia and Sunni. Although the Qur'an did not mention the view of al-Mahdi apocalypses, both Sunnis and Shiites have a theological reference in the form of hadith of *mahdawiyah*.

Even though it is hard to find apocalyptic tendencies in the Quran and only parts of the most prestigious collections of the hadith contain apocalyptic references.¹

Hadith about al-Mahdi is problematic. In the Sunni's book of hadith compilation, *al-Ja'mi' al-Sjahji>h li al-Ima>m al-Bukha>ri>* and *al al-Ja'mi' al-Sjahji>h li al-Ima>m Moslem*, did not narrate al-Mahdi. While in the Shia's book, *al-Ka>fi li al-Kulaini*, precisely provides a conflicting information and an irrational information. Nevertheless, regardless of historicity, hadith of *mahdawiyah* is a part of the text phenomenon that is still in contact with the conditions of Moslem. Therefore, studying about it is a necessity.

Mahdiism is a concept or an ideology that believes for a coming of the *Messiah* to people who are oppressed by the regime. In a long history, Mahdiism raised in the crisis context and chaos on social, political, economic, or cultural aspects. Mahdiism encourages the emergence of resistance against tyranny, which is embodied in a political movement or a religious movement.² However,

¹ Bob de Graaff, *History of Fanaticism: From Enlightenment to Jihad*, Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation (CIR) Department of Political Science Aarhus University, Denmark, May 2010, p. 15

² Franz Delitzsch, *Messianic Prophecies in Historical Succession*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891). p. 5, 6 dan 9

Mahdiism have double-faced, it is mean that there is no difference between a political movement and religious movements. Religion has presented along with political movement.³

B. Islamic Mahdism and Problems of Hadith

Mahdiism originally presented as a socio-political movement, but in its development turned into a religious movement that theological-eschatological.⁴ Mahdiism revolution always under the leadership of a 'Prophet'. When traced turns over the years, he has been haunted by the shadows of revelation, then calling to the poor or oppressed people as a candidate for his followers in the social upheaval.⁵

R.S. Humphreys states that Mahdiism ideology is utopian; its mean that each group claiming that their achievement of expectation was the one who would build the best social order in accordance with their ability, the true and legitimate order will be obvious to everyone. Utopian goal is describing as the re-establishment of the golden age that had never happened but this time lost (romanticism), or the realization of the dreams and aspirations as imagined in the past. Models of Mahdiism ideology is cyclical and requires a radical change in social order building.⁶ This ideology, is socially, was deliberately created, organized, and disseminated to control people. This Ideology converted into a system of belief for political system mystification, as well obscure what actually happened.⁷ For getting a support and participation, religious movements have to frame their ideological argument.⁸

Religion is a legitimate form of ideological frame and effectively in social and cultural life.⁹ Therefore, in each religious history of civilization is always introduced a number of religious movements complete with its ideology and its legitimacy foundations. The phenomenon of religious movements emerged as a reaction of challenges facing or as a response from the pressure that coming from outside. Therefore, the important issue is how the challenge paved the way for religious movement's emergence, as well as how the religious movement gained legitimacy from religious texts.¹⁰ It seems hard to accept when an ideology did not get legitimacy from the sacred texts. As mentioned earlier, that the coming of al-Mahdi did not mentioned in the Qur'an, while the Qur'an is such standardized in *al-Mushaf al-Ustmani* form, so the only way to legitimize the Mahdiism ideology is through Hadith text.

Mahdiism theology subtly infused through the sacred texts. The text often cradles and oppressive to the human consciousness, such as language. Verbalization of ideas in the form of written text often save hegemonic ideology.¹¹ The truth assumption based on the text. Text has more influence than a rationalization. Consequently, hadith text is often understood literally and rigid, so it is often used to legitimize (*dalil*) actions. In this case, the public logical reasoning is castrated by the

³ Jean-Pierre Filiu, *The Return of Political Mahdism*, Current Trends in Islamist Ideology, Vol. 8, p. 26

⁴ Muslih Fathoni, *Faham Mahdi Syi'ah dan Ahmadiyah Dalam Perspektif*, cet. 1, (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 1994), p. 3

⁵ Norman Chon, "Milleniarisme Zaman Pertengahan: Hubungannya dengan Studi Komparatif Gerakan-gerakan Millenarian", in Sylvia L. Thrupp (ed), *Gebrakan Kaum Mahdi; Studi Tentang Gerakan-gerakan Keagamaan Revolusioner*, transl. Anas Mahyuddin, (Bandung: Pustaka, 1984), p. 51

⁶ R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: a Framework for Inquiry*, (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1991), p. 148

⁷ Muhyar Fanani, *Metode Studi Islam; Aplikasi Sosiologi Pengetahuan Sebagai Cara Pandang*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2008), p. 42

⁸ M. Imam Aziz, "Memahami Gerakan Islam: Sebuah Agenda untuk Indonesia" in Quintan Wiktorowicz (ed), *Gerakan Sosial Islam: Teori, Pendekatan, dan Studi Kasus*, (Yogyakarta: Gading Publishing, 2012), p. 6

⁹ Reza Wattimena, *Melampaui Negara Hukum Klasik (Locke - Rousseau - Habermas)*, (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2007), p. xi

¹⁰ Rusydi Sulaiman, *Pengantar Metodologi Studi Sejarah Peradaban Islam*, (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 2014), p. 87

¹¹ Thomas McCharty, *Teori Kritis Jurgen Habermas*, transl. Nurhadi, (Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana, 2008), p. 272

authorities who abuse the text for an interest. It is necessary to demystify these texts as well as dismantle the ideological veil.¹²

Although the majority of hadith about al-Mahdi has trouble, many *muh}addis* (transmitter) receive these hadith, although the hadith categorized into Hadith *ah}a>d* (single narrator) and *dha}if* (weak).¹³ They interpret the words “*al-Mahdi*” in accordance with their interests. In this case, Saleh A. Nahdi states that the hadith of *mahdawiyyah* recently been disrupted by the people concerned.¹⁴ Here, hadith that in initial appearance is very historical, now used as legitimacy to achieve the purposes and implement plans of certain groups. These hadith enriched and manipulated during the Moslem’s outbreak and the emergence of Islamic sects are competing for influence and dominance.

Here are hadiths that very prone to be used as legitimacy by radical Islamic groups. The hadith informs about the groups from the east who carry 'black flag'. They did attack to the tyrannies and seize privileges taken away. They led by al-Mahdi. Therefore, every Moslem is highly recommended for pledged to him.

نا مُعَاوِيَةُ بْنُ هِشَامٍ، عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ صَالِحٍ، عَنْ يَزِيدَ بْنِ أَبِي زَيْدٍ، عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، عَنْ عَلْقَمَةَ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ: بَيْنَا نَحْنُ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذْ أَقْبَلَ فِتْيَةٌ مِنْ بَنِي هَاشِمٍ، فَلَمَّا رَأَهُمُ النَّبِيُّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ اغْرُورَقَتْ عَيْنَاهُ وَتَعَيَّرَ لَوْنُهُ، قَالَ: فَمُلْتُ لَهُ: مَا نَزَلَ نَرَى فِي وَجْهِكَ شَيْئًا نَكْرَهُهُ، فَقَالَ: إِنَّا أَهْلُ بَيْتِ اخْتَارَ اللَّهُ لَنَا الْآخِرَةَ عَلَى الدُّنْيَا، إِنَّ أَهْلَ بَيْتِي سَيَلْفُونَ بَعْدِي بَلَاءً وَتَشْرِيدًا وَتَطْرِيدًا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ قَوْمٌ مِنْ قَبْلِ الْمَشْرِقِ مَعَهُمْ رَايَاتٌ سُودٌ، يَسْأَلُونَ الْحَقَّ فَلَا يُعْطَوْنَهُ، فَيُقَاتِلُونَ فَيَنْتَصِرُونَ، فَيُعْطَوْنَ مَا سَأَلُوا، وَلَا يَقْبَلُونَهَا حَتَّى يَدْفَعُوهَا إِلَى رَجُلٍ مِنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِي فَيَمْلُؤُوهَا قِسْطًا، كَمَا مَلَأُوهَا حُورًا، مَنْ أَدْرَكَ ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ فَلْيَأْتِهِمْ وَلَوْ حَبْوًا عَلَى الثَّلْجِ، فَإِنَّهُ الْمَهْدِيُّ.

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يُحْيَى، وَأَحْمَدُ بْنُ يُونُسَ، قَالَا: حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الرَّزَّاقِ، عَنْ سُفْيَانَ الثَّوْرِيِّ، عَنْ خَالِدِ الْحَدَّاءِ، عَنْ أَبِي قِلَابَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي أَسْمَاءَ الرَّحْبِيِّ، عَنْ ثَوْبَانَ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: يَفْتَتِلُ عِنْدَ كَنْزِكُمْ ثَلَاثَةٌ، كُلُّهُمْ ابْنُ خَلِيفَةٍ، ثُمَّ لَا يَصِيرُ إِلَى وَاحِدٍ مِنْهُمْ، ثُمَّ تَطَّلِعُ الرَّايَاتُ السُّودُ مِنْ قَبْلِ الْمَشْرِقِ، فَيَقْتُلُونَكُمْ قَتْلًا لَمْ يَقْتُلْهُ قَوْمٌ. ثُمَّ دَكَرَ شَيْئًا لَا أَحْفَظُهُ فَقَالَ فَإِذَا رَأَيْتُمُوهُ فَبَايِعُوهُ وَلَوْ حَبْوًا عَلَى الثَّلْجِ، فَإِنَّهُ خَلِيفَةُ اللَّهِ الْمَهْدِيُّ.¹⁵

By looking at the structure and the pattern of hadith text, we will find a variety of text almost same, and also some additions of information in it.¹⁶

C. Islamic Mahdiism and Political Movement

The presence of al-Mahdi is a phenomenon of the birth of new society who wants to realize political ideals. To realize, these idea should be encouraged to use the fanaticism spirit of group, so generating a new power to create a victory in the struggle. In this case, takes some propagandists who

¹² Habermas offers 'criticism of ideology', a theory namely to dismantle the interests and to liberate society from the shackles of ideology. See F. Budi Hardiman, *Kritik Ideologi; Menyingkap Pertautan Pengetahuan dan Kepentingan Bersama Jurgen Habermas*, cet. 2, (Yogyakarta; Kanisius, 2004), p. 209-210

¹³ Abu Zaid Abdur Rahman Ibnu Muhammad Ibnu Khaldun, *al-Muqaddimah*, Abdullah Muhammad al-Darwisy (ed), (Damsyiq: Maktabah al-Hidaya, 2004),

¹⁴ Saleh A. Nahdi, *Imam Mahdi Atau Ratu Adil?*, (Jakarta: Arista Brahmatsya, tt), p. 10

¹⁵ Ibnu Majah, *Sunan Ibnu Ma>jah*, bab *Khuru>j al-Mahdi*, p. 1367, number of hadis 4084

¹⁶ That hadith can be found at *Sunan Ibnu Ma>jah* (4082, 4084), *al-Fitan li Nu'aim bin H}ammad* (555, 562, 570, 584, 906, 907, 895, 1975), *Mus}annaaf Ibnu Abi Syaibah* (37727), *Musnad Ibnu Abi Syaibah* (308), *Musnad al-Imam Ahmad* (8760), *al-Mustadrak 'Ala al-S}ah}i>h}aini li al-H}a>kim* (8434), *al-Maqs}ad al-'Ali fi> Zawa>idi Abi Ya'la>* (1826), dan *al-Sunan al-Kubra li al-Baihaqi* (13068).

have a strong fanaticism to the group. They were tasked to persuade societies with some issues accepted easily and inculcate the high fanaticism spirit to them. Thus, it can be understood that the setbacks and defeats suffered by Moslems are weakness or losing of the fanaticism spirit from the soul of their selves.

This idea seems in accordance with the logic of Moslem today. Mahdiism that very abstract ideology is presented again for a goal to rebuilding the Islamic world which in backwardness, poverty, and the shallowness of knowledge to face a time's spirit. Franz Delitzsch added, the Mahdi's group is always present to a succession of their dreams in seizing political power. At that time always comes authorities who have spiritualist character, so they are very influential for supporting millennial spirits.¹⁷ Michael J. Brisboris, in his dissertation, states that Mahdiism synonymous with modernism movement that carries a utopian ideology, so the movement is doing a revolution thoroughly covers some aspects of modern society, such as tradition, history, ideologies, language, political conflict, and economic.¹⁸ Indeed, in every history of the emergence of a new Islamic sect is possible to bring the mahdiism in theology.

In Islamic eschatology, mahdiism embodied as a hope for the presence of Imam al-Mahdi (*al-Mahdi al-Muntazjar*) to uphold the God's sovereignty, kills the pigs (the majority of scholars interpret it as killing Jews), break the cross (reject Christianity), forcing everyone to convert into Islam or be killed, abolish the *jizya* (a protection tax that is required from the conquered people), lift up and restore the glory of Islam. Such ideas is actually exploited by the group of right extreme movement also fundamentalist movement to perform dehumanization and radicalism in the name of religion. They feel have a legitimate basic for their actions to attack the Non-Moslems people, which has been considered depriving privileges Moslems given by God. They claim that al-Mahdi is the leader that will come from their group. With him, they perform *jihad* to restoring the Islamic glory and to upholding *daulah Islamiyya*.

Crucial impact arising from Mahdiism, as Ibn Khaldun's expression, was the radicalism in the name of religion:

It has been accepted by all Moslems in every epoch, that at the end of time a man from the family [of the Prophet] will without fail make his appearance, one who will strengthen Islam and make justice triumph. Moslems will follow him, and he will gain domination over the Moslem realm. He will be called the Mahdi. Following him, the Antichrist will appear, together with the subsequent signs of the Day of Judgment. After the Mahdi, [the Prophet] Isa [Jesus] will descend and kill the Antichrist. Or, Isa will descend together with the Mahdi and help him kill the Antichrist. Such statements have been found in the hadiths that religious leaders have published.¹⁹

With the information from the hadith of *mahdawayah* would encourage groups of radical activism to initiate offensive actions to other religions. When current condition of Moslems are getting squeezed, while people of other religions experienced the triumph, the mahdiism spirit will present to recapture the glory of Islam. Mahdiism in Islam used as legitimacy to violence and to attacks on groups that considered depriving the Moslem's rights.

David Cook states, by hadith of *mahdawayah*, Islam has been changed to the militant apocalypses movement that carries the anti-christ idea. Furthermore, Cook explains how radicals Moslem, including al-Qa'ida group, apply this idea in their agenda.²⁰ In other paper, Cook added that Mahdiism written in the Islamic traditions is the adoption result of the Christian apocalyptic literature. Firstly, Christians had tensions with Jews that encourages them to make a paranoid idea and a

¹⁷ Franz Delitzsch, *Messianic Prophecies ...*, p. 15-16

¹⁸ Michael J. Brisbois, *Millenarian Moderns: A Study of Utopian Desire*, (Calgary, Alberta: University of Chalgary, 2013), p. ii dan v

¹⁹ L. Murawiec, *The Mind of Jihad*, (Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 109. David Cook, *Contemporary Moslem Apocalyptic Literature*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2005), p. 9

²⁰ David Cook, *Contemporary Moslem ...*, p. 9-10

sentimental action to Jewish. On its progress, these ideas are adopted by the Moslem authorities to instil a sentiment to Christians. They manipulate by way of revising hadith of *mahdawiyah* many times in accordance with the conditions of political conflict. In addition, the political conflict between the Judeo-Christian had a seizure setting for Syrian territory. So, Islam also described the presence of al-Mahdi was in that region.²¹

With all the characteristics that are informed in hadith, that the presence of al-Mahdi was to carry 'black flag' from the east, enforcement of Islamic Shari'ah, destroyer of evil, destruction of the cross and so would encourage every sect to immediately realize the al-Mahdi's figure. Indeed, there is no agreement whose al-Mahdi's figure, but in fact, each Islamic sect claiming that they are the leaders of revolutionary.²² In Ahmadiya's theology have a belief that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as a revolutionary figure, even confirmed as a prophet.²³ Mahdis movement in Sudan claimed that Muhammad Ahmad bin Abdullah al-Mahdi, a descendant of Prophet, as Imam al-Mahdi.²⁴ Even this perspective, al-Mahdi positions can be inherited, such as to Abdurrahman al-Mahdi. Local Islam in Java also adopted this mahdiyyism in the form of Ratu Adil or Satria Piningit. In the latest movement form, ISIS claims that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is the leader and savior of Moslem world, and will bring a black flag to Isa al-Masih.²⁵

By coronation of their figures as al-Mahdi as well as orders for pledged him actually makes a spirit to defend him radically. Radical Islamic groups always have aspired to enforce Islamic Shariah as an effort of socio-political change in violence and drastic ways.²⁶ What's happening is just political tension. Radical activism has been framed Islam in ideological boundaries, literal interpretation, and their political platform, so they unable to see and to understand the truth that opposite with them. By changing Islam from a religion into a political ideology has indirectly reduce, amputate, and emasculate Islamic sublime message from Qur'an as a universal religion that is loving and tolerant into Islam ideologically that is pressed and rigid.

Mahdiyyism has become a transnational movement now. Its influence extends to countries with Moslems. In Indonesia appeared Jama'ah Islamic movements, Usrah movement, NII and so on. By its radicalism, they being confrontational towards the government and want to change Indonesian ideology drastically from Pancasila into caliphate ideology. They inaugurate their leaders as 'al-Mahdi', which would embody the triumph of Islam under al-Mahdi's leadership. Extremist movements and uncooperative is often identified as a subversive movement, which when using the label of Islam will damage the image of Islam as a merciful and peaceful religion.

D. Conclusion

Although the hadith of *mahdawiyah* relatively problematic, it does not mean to go away without further assessment. Hadith texts is a part of cultural phenomenon that should be studied in conjunction with an community assessment. The discussion showed that the hadith of *mahdawiyah* radically understood and used as legitimacy to a violence action (radicalism) in the name of religion. Mahdiyyism which is its presence context always coincide with the social crisis and political turmoil in

²¹ David Cook, "Hadith", *Authority and the End of the World: Traditions in Modern Moslem Apocalyptic Literature*, Oriente Moderno, Nuova serie, Anno 21 (82), Nr. 1, Hadith in Modern Islam (2002), p. 51-53

²² William F. Tucker, *Mahdis and Millenarians: Shiite Extremists in Early Moslem Iraq*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. xvi

²³ Saleh A. Nahdi, *Imam Mahdi...*, p. 120

²⁴ Linda Sayid Ah{mad Abdu al-Rah{ma>n S{a>diq, *al-Tsaurah al-Mahdiyah fi> Syarqi al-Suda>n*, thesis series, (Khotoum: Khourotoum University, 2013), p. 1-2

²⁵ Aaron Y Zelin, *Mengenal lebih jauh Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, pemimpin Negara Islam*, in http://www.bbc.co.uk/indonesia/dunia/2014/07/140731_albaghdadi_negara_islam, accessed on April 6th 2015 jam 19:51

²⁶ Afif Muhammad, *Agama dan Konflik Sosial; Studi Pengalaman Indonesia*, (Bandung: Marja, 2013), p. 63

fact exploited by radical groups to gain political power under guise of enforcing Islamic shariah and recognizes their leader as al-Mahdi. Mahdiism has transformed Islam from a religion into a political movement.

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