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# Indonesian Salafist Interpretation of Anthropomorphism Verses on YouTube

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## Abstract

Salafism and Ash'arism have debated the issue of anthropomorphism verses for a long time. In modern days, both followers spread the debate through social media. This article will discuss Indonesian Salafist's statement on interpreting anthropomorphism verses on YouTube. We will use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) from Fairclough's perspective to investigate how such discursive practices arise from and are ideologically shaped by power relations and power struggles. We conclude that the Salafists frame Ash'arite as Ahl al-Bid'ah because they distort the meaning of anthropomorphic verses. Salafi groups try to present rational arguments for their beliefs to convey to the public that what they believe is rational. As part of the global Salafist movement, the Indonesian Salafists spread their thoughts through various channels on YouTube and received a negative response from Nahdatul Ulama, an Ash'arite adherent, in the comments column. From a power relationship perspective, we can read that the Salafist group is trying to spread its theology to society. Ash'arism, as the majority sect in Indonesia, is trying to defend itself from the spread of Salafism.

**Keywords:** Salafist, anthropomorphism verses, YouTube, CDA.

## Abstrak

Salafiyah dan Ash'ariyyah telah lama memperdebatkan persoalan ayat-ayat antropomorfisme. Di zaman sekarang, kedua pengikutnya menyebarkan perdebatan tersebut melalui media sosial. Artikel ini akan membahas pernyataan Salafi Indonesia dalam menafsirkan ayat-ayat antropomorfisme di YouTube. Kami akan menggunakan Analisis Wacana Kritis (AWK) perspektif Fairclough

untuk menyelidiki bagaimana praktik diskursif tersebut muncul dan secara ideologis dibentuk oleh relasi kekuasaan. Kami menyimpulkan bahwa kelompok Salafi memframing Ash'ariyyah sebagai *Ahl al-Bid'ah* karena melakukan distorsi terhadap ayat-ayat antropomorfisme. Kelompok Salafi berusaha menghadirkan argumen-argumen rasional atas keyakinan mereka untuk menyampaikan kepada khalayak bahwa apa yang mereka yakini adalah rasional. Kelompok Salafi Indonesia sebagai bagian dari gerakan Salafi global, menyebarkan pemikirannya melalui berbagai saluran di YouTube dan mendapat tanggapan negatif dari NU, selaku penganut Ash'ariyyah di kolom komentar. Hal ini dapat dibaca sebagai relasi kekuasaan bahwa kelompok Salafi berupaya untuk menyebarkan teologinya kepada masyarakat, dan Ash'ariyyah sebagai madhab mayoritas di Indonesia berupaya untuk mempertahankan diri dari penyebaran Salafiyah.

**Kata Kunci:** Da'i Salafi, ayat antropomorfisme, YouTube, CDA.

## Introduction

Ash'ari and Salafist continuously discuss the problem of the anthropomorphism attributes of Allah in the Qur'an. Some Ash'ari scholars do *ta'wil* or divert the meaning of a word from its outward meaning and unveil its original definition.<sup>1</sup> Its context on anthropomorphism verses means shifting the meaning that describes God as similar to his creatures to another definition that distinguishes God from his creatures. For example, when God says, "O Devil, why do you refuse to prostrate to the creatures I created with my two hands (*yadayya*), the word "*yadayya*" literally means "two hands" but is interpreted by Ash'arism as strength and power. Because if we interpret *yadd* by the word «hand,» it means equating God with his creatures. Whereas Allah SWT has said that He is entirely different from his creatures, this is agreed upon by all Muslims. Salafist scholars such as Ibn Taymiyyah (728 H), the follower of Ahmad bin Hanbal (241 H), rejected Ash'arism's opinion on *ta'wil* verses anthropomorphism verse. According to them, Allah is the one who has the authority to explain Himself, so *ta'wil* should not be done on Allah's attributes.<sup>2</sup>

In the past, this discourse is discussed among scholars. With the development of technological sophistication, this discussion has spread on internet and social media such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, or videos on the YouTube channel.<sup>3</sup> In Indonesia, Umarul

<sup>3</sup> Evi Fatimatur Rusydiyah, Halimatus Sa'diyah, and Masykurotin Azizah, "The

Faruq write about the constellation of ideological interpretations on websites, describes the debate between Salafists and the Nahdatul Ulama mass organization, which is of the Ash'arism sect, on the issue of interpreting anthropomorphic verses and hadiths on their websites. He mentioned the names of two well-known Indonesian Salafist figures, Firanda Andirja and Yazid bin Abdul Qadir Jawaz.<sup>4</sup>

Firanda Andirja and Yazid bin Abdul Qadir Jawaz made strong criticisms of Ash'arism through their writing and lecture videos on YouTube. Firanda criticized Ash'arism in his book entitled *Syarah Rinci Rukun Iman*,<sup>5</sup> *Ajwibah Syaikh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah 'an Shubhat al-Tafsiliyyah li al-Mu'attilah fi al-Sifat al-Dhatiyyah*,<sup>6</sup> and *Syarah Kitab Tauhid*<sup>7</sup> firmly states that Ash'arism is a heretical group that deviates from the issue of the name and nature of Allah. In line with Firanda, Jawas, in his book *Syarah Aqidah Ahlu s-Sunnah* prohibits the use of Ilmu Kalam and discussion of Ash'arism aqidah. According to him, the science of Kalam is something that is made up and is contrary to the manhaj of the Salaf.<sup>8</sup> According to Anam, Jawas' lectures on YouTube contain the ideology of Salafism, especially when interpreting the Qur'an.<sup>9</sup> Firanda's and Jawas's lectures are distributed on popular Salafism YouTube channels such as Rodja TV, Ammar TV<sup>10</sup> and Yufid TV.<sup>11</sup>

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Millennial Kiais," *Episteme: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 15, no. 1 (2020).

<sup>4</sup> Umarul Faruq, "Kontestasi Penafsiran Ideologis Di Website: Studi Atas Ayat-Ayat Mutashābihāt Sifat Allah Dalam Situs Islam Salafi Dan Nahdlatul Ulama," *Mushaf: Jurnal Tafsir Beruawasan Keindonesiaan* 1, no. 2 (2021).

<sup>5</sup> Firanda Andirja, *Syarah Rinci Rukun Iman*, ed. Adni Kurniawan dan Muh. Afiqu Walid, 1st ed. (Jakarta: UFA Office, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Firanda Andirja, "Ajwibah Syaikh L-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah 'an Shubhat At-Tafsiliyyah Li l-Mu'attilah Fi s-Sifat Ad-Dhatiyyah" (Al-Jami'ah Islamiyyah bi l-Madinah Al-Munawwarah, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> Firanda Andirja, *Syarah Kitab Tauhid*, ed. Muhammad Afif Naufaldi bin Ali, 1st ed. (Jakarta: UFA Office, 2021).

<sup>8</sup> Yazid bin Abdul Qadir Jawas, *Syarah 'Aqidah Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah*, 10th ed. (Bogor: Pustaka Imam Asy-Syafi'i, 2012), 31.

<sup>9</sup> Haikal Fadhil Anam, "Penafsiran Al-Qur'an Di YouTube: Telaah Atas Penafsiran Ustadz Abdul Qadir Jawas Terhadap Ayat Kursi Bercorak Ideologis," *QIST Journal of Quran dan Tafseer Studies* 1, no. 1 (2022): 78–91, <https://doi.org/10.23917/qist.v1i1.526>.

<sup>10</sup> Muliaty Amin, Nurhidayat Muh. Said, dan Yaumil Khairiyyah, "Teun A. Van Dijk's Discourse Analysis of Ustadz Firanda Andirja Abidin's Calendar Messages," *Jurnal Mercusuar* 1, no. 1 (2022), <https://journal3.uin-alauddin.ac.id/index.php/mercusuar/article/view/14572>.

<sup>11</sup> Miski Sofiyatus Soleha, "Citra Perempuan Salihah Dalam Akun Youtube Yufid. TV: Al-Qur'an, Hadis, Konstruksi, Dan Relevansi," *QOF: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 6, no. 1 (2022): 67–88.

So to understand further the Salafists statement on the interpretation of anthropomorphism verses, we will using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) from Fairclough's perspective.<sup>12</sup> CDA is a critical discourse analysis that systematically explores the often vague relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events, and texts and (b) broader social and cultural structures, relationships, and processes. CDA investigates how such practices, events, and texts arise from and are ideologically shaped by power relations and power struggles; and explores how the ambiguity of the relationship between discourse and society itself is a factor that secures power and hegemony.<sup>13</sup>

In analyzing a discourse, Fairclough divides it into three stages, namely: description (micro-structural), interpretation (meso-structural), and explanatory (macro-structural). Fairclough provides a three-dimensional framework for text and discourse analysis: linguistic description of the formal nature of the text, interpretation of the relationship between the discursive process/interaction with the text, where the text is the final product of a text production process and as a resource person in the text interpretation process, and explanation of the relationship between discourse and socio-cultural reality. Fairclough's analysis has gone beyond the "what" of text to the "how" and "why" of text interpretation.<sup>14</sup>

Fairclough believes that there are certain basic assumptions behind certain discourses. These assumptions are never value-free; instead, they are ideologically driven and motivated. By studying the forms of language, we can discover the social processes and certain ideologies embedded in them. This research leads to exploring power relations that exist in society or communities. Fairclough believes in the "hidden agenda" of any expressed discourse.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis The Critical Study of Language*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Forough Rahimi and Mohammad Javad Riasati, "Critical Discourse Analysis: Scrutinizing Ideologically-Driven Discourses," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 1, no. 16 (2011).

<sup>14</sup> Melissa N.P. Johnson and Ethan McLean, "Discourse Analysis," in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, ed. Audrey Kobayashi, 2nd ed. (Elsevier, 2020), 377–83, <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-102295-5.10814-5>.

<sup>15</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013); Rahimi and Riasati, "Critical Discourse Analysis: Scrutinizing Ideologically-Driven Discourses."

In this study, the data sources consist of: video content, YouTube channels, preachers who give lectures, and comment fields from videos on YouTube channels. In this paper, the study's object is the famous Salafism preachers in Indonesia whose lectures are uploaded on YouTube. They are Firnanda Andirja, Khalid Basalamah, Yazid bin Abdul Qadir Jawaz, Badrussalam, and Syafiq Riza Basalamah on anthropomorphism verses.

### Ash'arite and Salafist Scholars' Interpretation of Anthropomorphism Verses and Hadiths

The interpretation of the anthropomorphic verses of the generations of "Salaf" or those who lived in the first three centuries of hijriyyah has been recorded by Tafsir At-Tabari, the oldest commentary of the Qur'an, in the attributes of Allah such as *istiwa'* (reside), *al-yad* (hand), *al-wajh* (face), etc. Some Salafist scholars do *ta'wil*; the sentence sitting above *'arsh* or throne is defined as ruling, but others refuse to do *ta'wil*.<sup>16</sup> Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal rejects *ta'wil* against anthropomorphism verses and hadiths and chooses to stick to the text's literal meaning as the word 'hand' is interpreted by hand and nothing else.<sup>17</sup> The follower of Imam Ahmad is referred to as *Ahl al-Hadith/ Ahl al-Athar/ Hanabilah*.

Then in the third century of Hijriyah, Imam Al-Ash'ari refused to do *ta'wil*. This refutation is clearly mentioned in his two works entitled "*Ibanah*" and "*Al-Risalah ila Ahli al-Thagr*."<sup>18</sup> Al-Baqilani (403 H), who is a follower of Imam Al-Ash'ari, also rejects the *ta'wil* of the word "*al-yad*" or the hand whose meaning has been transferred to power.<sup>19</sup> However, the next generation, namely Al-Juwaini (478 H), Al-Ghazali (505 H), and Al-Razi (606 H), have performed *ta'wil* on

<sup>16</sup> Dzulfikar Akbar Romadlon, Anita Puji Astutik, and Khizanatul Hikmah, "Interpretation of Anthropomorphism Verses by the "Salaf" Generation in Tafsir Al-Tabari," *Procedia of Social Sciences and Humanities* 3 (2022): 965–68, <https://doi.org/10.21070/pssh.v3i.286>.

<sup>17</sup> Ahmad bin Hanbal, *Al-Radd 'ala al-Jahmiyyah wa al-Zanadiqah fi Ma Shaku min Mutashabihah al-Qur'an wa Ta'awwaluhu 'ala Ghayri Ta'wilih*, ed. Sabri bin Salamah Shahin, 1st ed. (Riyad: Maktabah Malik Fahd, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> Abu Hasan Al-Ash'ari, *Al-Ibanah 'an Ushul al-Diyanah*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Daru Ibnu Zaydun, n.d.); Abu Hasan Al-Ash'ari, *Risalah Ila Ahli Al-Thagr*, ed. Abdullah Shakir Muhammad Al-Junayd, 2nd ed. (Madinah: Maktabatu l-'Ulum wa l-Hikam, 2002).

<sup>19</sup> Abu Bakar Muhammad bin Tayyib bin Al-Baqilani, *Kitabu al-Tamhid* (Beirut: Al-Maktabah Al-Sharqiyah, 1957), 259.

anthropomorphic verses.<sup>20</sup>

In the 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, the figure of Ibn Taymiyyah (728 H) emerged as a defender of the Hanabilah school in matters of Aqidah. In addition to criticizing deviant groups such as Wahdah Al-Wujud.<sup>21</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah also criticized Ash'arism in various ways. He rejects *ta'wil* Ash'arism and affirms attributes such as residing, hands, and face as attributes of God in essence but not like humans. Because God is different from his creatures, he further explained that if Allah had said that He created Adam with His hands, it's should not be told that it's not meant hands. If Allah's substance is not like His creatures, so are His attributes different from His creatures.<sup>22</sup>

So the principle established by Ibn Taymiyyah and his followers in the matter of attributes is that they affirm what Allah says in the Qur'an and Sunnah with its outward meaning without questioning (*takyif*) and without likening it to creatures (*tasbih*). Ibn Taymiyyah, often legitimizes his idea that what he says comes from the agreement (*ittifaq*) and the understanding of the Salaf following the Qur'an and Al-Sunnah, so that his followers are often referred to as Salafism or followers of the Salaf generation.<sup>23</sup>

If traced historically from the beginning of Islam to the 18th century AD, Hanabilah and Ibn Taymiyyah's thoughts never became the official creed of a particular country. This fact is different from Ash'arism, whose distribution is supported by power.<sup>24</sup> Ash'arism also adopted Sufism thinking so that the Ash'arism scholars usually also studied Sufism.<sup>25</sup> Until the 12th century Hijriyah or 18 AD, the Wahhabi/Salafi movement emerged in the Arabian Peninsula with a

<sup>20</sup> Imam Al-Haramain Al-Juwayni, *Kitab al-Irshad ila Qawati'i al-Adillah Fi Ushul al-I'tiqad*, ed. Muhammad Yusuf Musa and Ali Abdu l-Mun'im Abdul-Hamid (Mesir: Matba'ah Al-Sa'adah, 1950); Fakhr al-Din Al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Fakhr al-Razi al-Mushtahir bi Tafsir al-Kabir Mafatih al-Ghayb*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1981).

<sup>21</sup> Dzulfikar Akbar Romadlon, Nur Hadi Ihsan, and Istikomah, "Ibnu Arabi on Wahdatul Wujud and It's Relation to the Concept of Af'al Al-'Ibâd," *Journal TSAQAFAH* 16, no. 2 (2020): 179–200, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tsaqafah.v16i2.4901>.

<sup>22</sup> Taqiyuddin Ahmad Ibnu Taimiyyah, *At-Tadmuriyyah Tahqiq Li Asma'i Wa s-Shifat Wa Haqiqatu l-Jam'i Bayna l-Qadar Wa s-Shar'*, 2nd ed. (Riyad: Maktabah Al-Abykan, 2000), 77.

<sup>23</sup> Ibnu Taimiyyah, 65.

<sup>24</sup> Tarek Ladjal, "The Development of the Ash'arite Doctrine in North Africa: Building of Theological, Political and Religious Unity," *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies MCSEER Publishing, Rome-Italy* 4, no. 3 (2015): 291–300, <https://doi.org/10.5901/ajis.2015.v4n3p291>.

<sup>25</sup> George Makdisi, "Ash'arī and the Ash'arites in Islamic Religious History I," *Studia Islamica* 17 (1962): 37–80, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1595001>.

character named Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab taking the thoughts of Ibn Taymiyyah and becoming the official state school.<sup>26</sup> Because Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab founded it, the name of the sect is often called “Wahhabism,” but they prefer to be called “Salafism” or “Salafiyyah” or “Ahlu l-Athar” or “Ahlu l-Hadith.”

### Salafist Preachers Statement on Anthropomorphism Verses

This section will analyze the statements of Salafist preachers such as Firnanda Andirja, Khalid Basalamah, Yazid bin Abdul Qadir Jawas, Abu Yahya Badrusalam, and Syafiq Riza Basalamah about how to understand anthropomorphism verses. The author will quote several statements from the preachers and then conclude from those statements to analyze it linguistically. Statements from Salafist figures will be significant because they are a “Member Resources” (MR). Fairclough states that ideology resides in the text. Indeed, we cannot possibly read ideology from text alone. However, because discourse is the result of ideological production, we can understand ideology through the interpretation of texts, and texts have various kinds of interpretations.<sup>27</sup>

First, we will explain the rejection of the *ta'wil* method in reading the anthropomorphism verses; then, we will explain the views of the Salafist group on how to interpret the attributes of Allah.

Badrussalam, in a video lecture on Ahsan TV, defining the word *ta'wil*:

“As for the term *ta'wil* according to Salafus Salih, it is different from the latter; according to the previous people, *ta'wil* means interpretation. So in Tafsir Al-Tabari, *ta'wil ayat kadza* means interpretation.”<sup>28</sup>

This statement shows that the word *ta'wil* meant, according to Badrussalam, is the same as tafsir. In the past, there was no difference between “*ta'wil*” and “*tafsir*” meaning to interpret the meaning of the text. However, recently there has been a differentiation of the meaning of *ta'wil*.

<sup>26</sup> Frank Griffel, “What Do We Mean By ‘Salafi? Connecting Muḥammad ‘Abduh with Egypt’s Nūr Party in Islam’s Contemporary Intellectual History,” *Die Welt Des Islams* 55, no. 2 (2015), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24894180>.

<sup>27</sup> Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis The Critical Study of Language*.

<sup>28</sup> Ahsan TV, *Kajian Islam: Hukum Mentakwil Sifat Allah - Ustadz Abu Yahya Badrusalam*, Lc (Indonesia: youtube.com, 2019), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSbDegVvAtw>.

Firanda quoted Ibn Taymiyyah's statement on the channel "Ma'had Jamilurrahman" that "Ibn Taymiyyah said that the tafwid was the worst *madhab of ahl al-bida'*." Then he said in another lecture, "This is why Shaykhul Islam declared the madhab of *ta'wil min sharri madhabi ahli l-bid'ah*, the worst creed of the innovator".<sup>29</sup> These two statements show two models of interpretation of anthropomorphism verses, namely *tafwid* and *ta'wil*. *Tafwid* is to leave all matters to Allah SWT regarding the meaning of the anthropomorphism verses. If they are interpreted, it will be dangerous, while *ta'wil* is as defined above.

According to Khalid in SAP channel, those who do *ta'wil* argue using reason, he says:

"Because there are so many things, if we want to think about it using reason, it cannot be accepted. Once a Jew came to the Prophet SAW saying: O Muhammad, you believe in your book the Qur'an that heaven is as vast as the heavens and the earth. Then where is hell? The Messenger of Allah said, where is the night when the day comes? It's the same. It means that not everything has to make sense because this reason is used to understand revelation, not control revelation. So we can't say Allah can't descend later like his creatures, let's not imagine it like that, but because Qur'an says Allah has come down, Allah has come down."<sup>30</sup>

Khalid's statement shows that those who do *ta'wil* want to adapt the anthropomorphism verse to human reason that Allah cannot be similar to his creatures. Because the hadith about "*nuzul*" is interpreted as "going down," it is the same as his creatures descending from top to bottom. However, Syafiq Reza in his own YouTube channel, argues that the interpreter using *ta'wil* method follows their own imagination, especially if it is related to the attributes of Allah. He said:

"The problem with refusing the name of Allah is that there are several conditions, there are those who refuse to use the names of Allah, there is a second one with *ta'wil*, by turning its true meaning to another meaning. There are two kinds of *ta'wil*. There is *ta'wil* which is linguistically acceptable; there is *ta'wil* which is made up. But if the *ta'wil*, which is linguistically acceptable, requires an explanation, In this matter of Allah's names, Allah knows better about him. So we don't need to think that

<sup>29</sup> Ma'had Jamilurrahman, *Ceramah Agama Islam: Mazhab Tafwidh (Menyerahkan Maknanya)* - Ustadz DR Firanda Andirja MA (Indonesia: youtube.com, 2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nwEUxcqHqA>.

<sup>30</sup> SAP Channel, *Keyakinan Yang Benar Terhadap Nama dan Sifat Allah | Ustadz Khalid Basalamah* (Indonesia: youtube.com, 2020), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5BcpIcipOek>.

Allah above means Allah needs a place. You don't need to think like that. Because Allah has denied that there is no one like Allah SWT from the start, don't equate Allah with yourself. If you go down, you need stairs; going up, takes stairs."<sup>31</sup>

From this statement by Syafiq Riza, those who do *ta'wil* have the imagination that the attributes of God, especially in the anthropomorphism verse, are the same as his creatures. Badrussalam also reinforces this on Ahsan TV:

"Why do they say that, sir, because what they think is as if God's is the same as a creature, if a '*istiwa'* creature means that it needs to sit on something, it does need it, then they feel the need to mentalize the meaning *istiwa'*. What do they say *Arrahman ala l-arshi stawa*, says *istiwa'* they say they dominate. What is the argument? There is no. Only they argue with the verse of an unknown person whose name is Ibn Khattal; some say he is a Christian... What he said is impossible that Allah has hands because if Allah has hands, logically, it means that Allah consists of members of the body that need each other; they say it is impossible. Ibn Taymiyyah said everyone negates attributes because he equates Allah with creatures. That's why they feel the need to interpret this word. They say "*yadun*" has many meanings in Arabic, including "*ni'mah*" ... This is rejected because it has two forms, so it has no other meaning except one, namely hand. For them, it is difficult because the problem is that they believe in it with reason. For us, it is easy because we say that the hands of Allah are not like the hands of creatures. Finished."<sup>32</sup>

Badrussalam tries to reverse the logic of Ash'arism in understanding the anthropomorphism verse. For Badrussalam, Ash'arism logically thinks that by doing *ta'wil*, they have been saved from *tashbih* or likening Allah to His creatures. In fact, they have done *tashbih* because when Allah mentions the attribute "hand" on him, they imagine that Allah has hands. Badrussalam says their thinking is problematic because it's enough to understand that Allah has hands that are not the same as his creatures.

Furthermore, Yazid on Rodja TV even equated *ta'wil* with *tahrif*, which means misdirection or heresy. He said:

"*tahrif* or *ta'wil* changes the meaning or deviates from its true meaning. Allah says "*istawa*" it means "*istawla*," it is misguided, or changes the

<sup>31</sup> Syafiq Riza Basalamah Official, *Mengingkari Sebagian Asma' Dan Sifat Allah - Ustadz DR Syafiq Riza Basalamah MA* (Indonesia: youtube.com, 2019), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tWOO4pjuz1g&t=3233s>.

<sup>32</sup> Ahsan TV, *Kajian Islam: Hukum Mentakwil Sifat Allah - Ustadz Abu Yahya Badrusalam, Lc.*

meaning. “*Yadu llah*” *yadun* means hand, they change its meaning into strength. Allah descends to the heavens of the world, “*nuzul*” its meaning said “*nuzul rahmat*”, this is *ta’wil*, it is not allowed to do *ta’wil* or *tahrif*.”<sup>33</sup>

The actual definition of *ta’wil* is to divert, not to mislead. Yazid’s statement denies the truthful authority of interpretation using the *ta’wil* method because he equates it with *tahrif* or misdirection. The person who performs *ta’wil* is no different from *tahrif*.

From the explanation above, according to Salafism, the followers of *ta’wil* in the verses of anthropomorphism only use reason to purify Allah so that he is not like his creatures. However, the preachers of Salafism can reverse that logic they are doing *ta’wil* because when they read the verses of anthropomorphism, they imagine in their minds that God is interpreted as the same as his creatures. So the *ta’wil* was rejected. Then how does the Salafist group explain the attributes of Allah in the anthropomorphism verse?

The preachers of Salafism believe that a Muslim is obliged to accept the attributes of Allah as it is without the need for *ta’wil*. Khalid mentioned in the SAP Channel:

“Also the names and attributes of Allah, when they come, we must understand what they are, they should not be taken in *ta’wil*, transferred to other meanings, Allah descends in a third of the night. It’s said that God descends in a third of the night, but we shouldn’t ask how? We have faith in it.”<sup>34</sup>

This statement shows that the Salafism group believes that what Allah has said is sufficient to believe; there is no need for *ta’wil*. Furthermore, Syafiq Riza mentions in his YouTube channel:

“This includes the perfection of my monotheism, the first to deny that there are those who resemble Allah or that Allah resembles His creatures then affirm the names of Allah and the noble qualities of Allah which only Allah knows how. *Wa ma ya’lamu ta’wilahu illa llah*. As Imam Malik When asked *ar-rahmanu ‘ala l-arshi stawa*, how? We don’t know...”<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Rodja TV, *Syarah Aqidah: Bab 6 Tauhid Asma Wa Shifat* | Ustadz Yazid Bin Abdul Qadir Jawas (Indonesia: youtube.com, 2019), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pW\\_vLKOWx\\_s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pW_vLKOWx_s).

<sup>34</sup> SAP Channel, *Keyakinan Yang Benar Terhadap Nama Dan Sifat Allah* | Ustadz Khalid Basalamah.

<sup>35</sup> Syafiq Riza Basalamah Official, *Mengingkari Sebagian Asma’ Dan Sifat Allah* - Ustadz DR Syafiq Riza Basalamah MA.

Syafiq Riza affirmed that believing in all the attributes of Allah as they are without doing *ta'wil* is part of the perfection of a Muslim's belief in the oneness of Allah (*tawhid*). Or in other words, a Muslim who does not affirm the verses of anthropomorphism is not perfect in his belief.

Yazid on the Rodja TV channel quoted the opinion of Ibn I-Qayyim and his teacher Ibn Taymiyyah, he said:

"Imam Ibn I-Qayyim said I believe in Allah and what comes from Allah according to what Allah wants and I believe in Allah SAW and what comes from him according to what is meant by the Prophet Muhammad. Ibn Taymiyyah said manhaj salaf believe in Tawhid Al-Asma' wa s-Sifat. By affirming what Allah affirms on himself, I now believe in Allah and with what comes from Allah according to Allah's purpose, meaning we are obliged to affirm what Allah has affirmed upon himself. And this attributes of Allah has been confirmed by the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) without *tahrif*, *ta'til*, *tamthil*, and *takyif*."<sup>36</sup>

Yazid said that the method of believing in it is in four ways, namely without *tahrif* or distorting the original word's meaning. Yazid equates the word *tahrif* with *ta'wil*, as already mentioned. Then without *ta'til* or denying the attributes of Allah. Then without *tamthil* or likening the attributes of Allah to His creatures. Finally, "without *takyif*" or questioning the nature of the attributes of Allah, whether his hands are big, what kind of fingers, etc.

Then the meaning of not being able to question the attributes of Allah in anthropomorphism verse does not mean that it is not permissible at all. Firanda explained that there is a limit in understanding the attributes of Allah, namely explaining them according to what Allah has described. He said:

"In understanding the attributes of Allah, the first method is to understand the attributes of Allah according to the outward meaning without *tashbih* and *takyif*. We may do *takyif* according to the explanations in the Qur'an and As-Sunnah, for example, when Allah speaks about the nature of the hands, Allah mentions that his hands have two, this we do *takyif* according to the limits described in the Qur'an and As-Sunnah. Then it is also mentioned in many hadiths that Allah's hands have fingers. We do *takyif* but according to sunnah of the Prophet SAW. Allah's hands *yaqbid* and *yabsuth*, stretched out and grasped, as the word of Allah *wa l-ardu jami'an qabdatuhu yawma l-qiyamah. Wa s-sama'u matwoiyatun biyaminih*. We

<sup>36</sup> Rodja TV, *Syarah Aqidah: Bab 6 Tauhid Asma Wa Shifat* l Ustadz Yazid Bin Abdul Qadir Jawas.

say Allah's hand is very big, even bigger than the heavens and the earth, which on the Day of Judgment will be folded in the hands of Allah SWT. This proves that *Allahu Akbar*/Allah is great, but it is not permissible to do *takyif* outside the Prophet's explanation. This is the madhab of the Salaf and Ahlu s-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah by understanding the verses of Allah's attributes according to the outward meaning."<sup>37</sup>

The statement of God's hands are two; in his hands, there are fingers, the hands can reach out and grasp. Explaining that the understanding of the Salafism group almost falls into the category of *Mujassimah*, namely making Allah have a body, meaning that Allah has a material form. All Muslim scholars agree that the *Mujassimah* group is heretical. However, Firanda's statement has differentiated Salafism from *Mujassimah*. For Salafists, it is enough to believe in the attributes of Allah without equating them, without doing *takyif* or questioning, questioning only in the corridors of the Qur'an and Hadith, without the need to imagine them.

Then does the affirmation of Allah's attributes which are the same as human attributes, makes sense? Firanda argument is very reasonable in affirming attributes of Allah without *ta'wil* and questioning. Even the proof does not only use *naqli* evidence; he can even prove it by reasoning. He put forward his argument:

*"Al-Kalam fi s-sifat far'un fi dzat. If we don't know what God's essence is, then we don't know His attributes are? So if someone says, how did Allah descend (nuzul) to the world's sky? We will not know because to know how Allah descended to the world's atmosphere. First, you must know the essence of Allah so that you know how Allah descends. Second, you have to understand how the nature of the sky is, where the end is, where the base and the limit of the world's atmosphere to understand how Allah descends to the sky. So if you don't know how the essence of Allah is, how is the nature of the sky, then you won't know how Allah descended to the world's atmosphere."*<sup>38</sup>

Firanda's argument shows that to know Allah's anthropomorphic attributes, one must know Allah's essence. If one does not know the essence, it is impossible to know-how, so one must leave the nature of the attributes to Allah. This method is almost similar to the *tafwid* method. Still, as mentioned by Firanda, the difference is that the *tafwid*

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<sup>37</sup> Ma'had Jamilurrahman, *Ceramah Agama Islam: Mazhab Tafwidh (Menyerahkan Maknanya)* - Ustadz DR Firanda Andirja MA.

<sup>38</sup> Ma'had Jamilurrahman.

and *ta'wil* methods view the meaning in the anthropomorphism verse as not the actual meaning. It's just that their attitude is different if the *tafwid* method leaves its meaning to Allah and does not want to question it, and the *ta'wil* method diverts the meaning of the original word. While the method of the Salafism group rejects both methods and affirms the meaning of the text as it is without questioning it or diverting its meaning.

From these explanations, Firanda attempts to rationalize Salafist beliefs to affirm the attributes of Allah because Salafists are considered a textualist group that does not use reason. Firanda, with his logical proof, attempts to dispel the notion that the *ithbat* method or affirming God's anthropomorphic attributes without distortion of meaning is rational.

From their lectures Indonesian Salafist tried to reverse the theological authority, which was previously believed by Indonesian Muslims to belong to the Ash'arism, to be drawn into the Salafist sect. The way to do this is to frame the Ash'arism as a heretic group called *Ahl al-Bid'ah* because they are practitioners of *ta'wil*, and *ta'wil*, for them, is a distortion of the text. This framing is to show the audience the theological authority of the Salafists as the only Ahlussunnah. Badrussalam and Firanda attempts to annul the Ash'arism's logical argumentation about *tafwid* and *ta'wil* by reversing the rationality authority of their argument that the *ithbat* method is the right one. What the Salafist group did was the most logical.

### Salafist and Ash'arite Netizen Responses to Anthropomorphism Verses and Hadiths

This section will discuss how the Salafist group produces lecture videos on YouTube and how the public responds to the videos. This response analysis is essential because the response represents the audience's perception of each video so that it can be seen how the interaction between the video and the audience is. Audience response from a preacher's lecture will be different when disseminated in public; when the lecture was in the mosque, the audience was only a people part of the Salafist group. However, it has become public consumption when uploaded on YouTube with different responses. So, we need to understand how video consumers interpret and how the discourse from videos is disseminated, consumed, understood,

and responded to. The channels that will be analyzed include Ahsan TV, Ma'had Jamilurrahman, Rodja TV, SAP Channel, and Syafiq Riza Basalamah Official.

Ahsan TV is a channel from one of the satellite TV channels with the same name and has the website [ahsan.tv](http://ahsan.tv) and has Instagram with 22.3K followers. The video showing Abu Yahya Badrussalam in 2019 with the title "Kajian Islam: Hukum Mentakwil Sifat Allah" only had 802 views and only two comments from netizens.

Ma'had Jamilurrahman's YouTube channel belongs to Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Jamilurrahman As-Salafy in Bantul, Yogyakarta. This pesantren has Instagram and Facebook links on the YouTube channel page. All videos on the channel have an average of 50 to 300 views, and the videos featuring Firanda Andirja have 8,610 views and 268 comments. From the researchers' observations, some of the comments in the video supported some who rejected it. Some described Firanda's logical errors in lengthy writings in the column comments, like the account "Ilmu-Ilmu Islam TV" which criticizes Firanda:

*"Firanda (salafi/wahabi) berkata :  
madzhab tafwidh adalah madzhab yang diserukan oleh ahlul bid'ah....  
Madzhab ini disangka atau dituduhkan bahwasanya itu adalah madzhab salaf....  
Dan ini adalah KEDUSTAAN, bahwasanya yang sebenarnya para salaf dulu mereka tidak bermadzhab tafwidh....  
mahsyur dikalangan madzhab al asya'iroh, mereka yang menyatakan demikian, bahwasanya madzhab salaf adalah tafwidh, dan ini dinukil dari al imam al baihaqi rahimahullah ta'ala, beliau mengatakan bahwa madzhab salaf adalah tafwidh dan juga dinukil dari al juwaini (imam haramain) dan juga ar raziyy....  
Intinya salafi menghukumi al baihaqi, al juwaini dan ar raziyy adalah PENDUSTA. Jika al baihaqi pendusta, kenapa firanda menukil riwayatnya di dalam tulisannya.  
Firanda menulis :  
Al-Baihaqi dalam kitabnya "Manaaqib Asy-Syaafi'i" juga menukil perkataan Al-Imam Asy-Syafi'i tentang persyaratan budak mukmin yang bisa dimerdekan sebagai kaffaaroh."*

Rodja TV is one of the Salafi Youtube channels with many subscribers and viewers. This channel also has satellite TV, a radio called radiorodja, website: [rodja.tv](http://rodja.tv), which contains many lectures from well-known Salafist preachers such as Firanda, Khalid, Yazid, Badrussalam, and Syafiq, as well as many other preachers. Yazid's lectures have 11,856 views and 24 comments. There is one comment written by the account "Arifin Tanjung" he wrote it in a tone of anger as described in figure 3.

The sentence in this text criticizes Yazid for quoting Imam As-Shafi'i, the founder of the Syafi'ism school of fiqh, which most Muslims in Indonesia embrace. The sentence "Aswaja" in the commentary is an acronym for the word Ahlu s-Sunnah Wa l-Jama'ah; this acronym is used by the most prominent Islamic organization in Indonesia, Nahdatul Ulama (NU). So the author of the comment must be affiliated with this mass organization. However, this comment received 13 replies, including mentioning that the written sentence was not very clear. It shows that there are far more Salafi viewers on this channel than non-Salafi viewers, like the account "Arifin Tanjung" which criticizes Yazid:

*"Antum siapa sebenarnya...??*

*Oknum ustad kalee...*

*Sebab jika disbt ulama ! Kayaknya gak nempil...krn ciri ulama bukan fasih bicara... juga bukan hafal hadits sekian2 hadits or hafal quran; orng yahudi banyak yg hafal quran...So ? Ulama itu yang paling takut kpd ALLAH Az w Jl...*

*Sementara antum dan para wahabians terlalu banyak menghujat amalan ASWAJA...tanpa dasar pengetahuan yg benar...tetapi HANYA berdasar prasangka belaka !*

*Sengaja mengutip pndpt dari asSyafi'i...krn bertepatan cocok or yg tdk bertabrakan dg wahabian. Disamping...agar dpt menarik simpati dari klpk ASWAJA yg awam ilmu agama hehehe...*

*Sudahlah...SEGERA berTOBAT, hari sudah petang, dunia mau dilipat...ntar gak keburu;*

*C'mon boy !!!"*

There are significant differences between Salafism and NU. If the Salafist understand the term *Ahlu s-Sunnah wa l-Jama'ah* as referring to the understanding of the Salaf as understood by Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal and Ibn Taymiyyah. The Salafist movement has the spirit of purification: purifying Islamic teachings from shirk and bid'ah or heresy or innovations in religion. In contrast to NU, they understand the meaning of *Ahlu s-Sunnah wa l-Jama'ah* as a sect that recognizes the differences between the Aqidah and Fiqh schools or madhab in Islam, including the Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal school of thought. In the context of Indonesia, NU, as a mass organization, can accept and acculturate various traditions in society into its teachings. Unlike the Salafists, they see almost all practices in society that do not fit with Qur'an and Hadith as heresy.<sup>39</sup> Faizah, in her study, sees that the Salafist

<sup>39</sup> Zunly Nadia Nadia, "Perilaku Keagamaan Komunitas Muslim (Pemahaman Hadis Dalam NU Dan Salafi Wahabi Di Indonesia)," *Jurnal Living Hadis* 2, no. 2 (2018),

group will often come into conflict with other groups, especially with practical issues.<sup>40</sup> So the commentary on Yazid's video above represents the opinion of the NU towards the Salafist group.

The SAP channel is owned by a man named Supky Agung. He mentioned that his profession is graphic designers, animators, IT trainers, and photography on his Instagram. He also calls himself a traveler and a mountaineer (mountain climber), but that is a hobby, not a profession. On this channel, Supky cuts a lot of video lectures of famous Salafist preachers. However, unlike Rodja, the SAP Channel is privately owned. It can be seen in the video that uploaded Khalid's lecture entitled "Keyakinan Yang Benar Terhadap Nama Dan Sifat Allah" with 9,241 views. There are comments from netizens who support some who reject it. The critics' comments say that Khalid is a follower of Aqidah *tajsim* and *tashbih*, and another criticizes Khalid that he does tafwid, but his method is wrong. The comments from these two accounts show their hatred to Khalid.

Supky also uploaded a link to Khalid Basalamah's YouTube channel called "Khalid Basalamah Official," It has 2.18 million subscribers. The number of subscribers shows the fame of the figure of Khalid Basalamah. The content in the video averages 5K to 2 million views. Still, on Khalid's channel, the author did not find any lectures discussing khilafiyah problems among Muslims, both in terms of Aqidah and Fiqh. Researchers see that Khalid on his channel prioritizes the entertainment aspect and avoids religious conflicts, but that doesn't mean that because the content is not scientific, Khalid, with his character, can make his listeners entertained by thinking logically.<sup>41</sup>

Finally, Syafiq Reza's official channel called "Syafiq Riza Basalamah Official" has 1.14 million subscribers; this shows Syafiq's popularity. Syafiq is one of the Salafist preachers who use the internet in his da'wah. He has a website: syafiqrizabasalamah.com, a Facebook page with 993,651 followers, telegrams, lectures on SoundCloud, Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/syafiqrizabasalamah\\_official/](https://www.instagram.com/syafiqrizabasalamah_official/) with 1.8 million followers, and apps that can be installed via android.

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<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14421/livinghadis.2017.1327>.

<sup>40</sup> Faizah, "Pergulatan Teologi Salafi Dalam Mainstream Keberagamaan Masyarakat Sasak," *Ulumuna* 16, no. 2 (2012): 375–420, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v16i2.183>.

<sup>41</sup> Muftihaturrahmah Burhamzah, Nelly, and Alamsyah, "A Critical Discourse Analysis of Ustadz Khalid Basalamah's Lecture Fragment on Youtube About 'Durhaka Kepada Orang Tua Karena Istri,'" *Al-Qalam Jurnal Penelitian Agama Dan Sosial Budaya* 27, no. 2 (2021): 359–68.

The analysis of Syafiq's video study entitled "Rejecting Some Asma' And Allah's Attributes," which was uploaded in 2019 with a duration of 1:14:20, was watched 5,880 times and only has two comments. This is different from videos that take popular themes, such as the video titled: "Kau Yang Ku Tunggu " uploaded in March 2022 with 22,204 views and 24 comments. The video uploaded in the same month entitled "Kisah Sebelas Wanita" was viewed 39,531 times and 35 comments. Popular-themed videos like these two videos are watched tens to hundreds of thousands of times on average. This data shows that videos with light themes are preferred by the public, while heavy themes such as lectures on the attributes of Allah are less attractive.

Indonesian Salafist lectures gain a large audience by discussing popular issues that touch everyday life; this adds to their popularity among Indonesian Muslims so that they can have many loyal listeners. Not many audiences watched the theme of Aqeedah, especially anthropomorphism verses and hadith, as the core of the debate between Salafists and Ash'arism. We can see that the majority of Salafist viewers on their channels are Salafist followers. However, various negative responses emerged from NU followers belonging to the Ash'arism in the comments column because they disagreed with Salafism theology.

#### Eksplanation: Social Context Analysis

This section will analyze the ideological power relations behind the Salafist discourses. Ideology usually controls the thinking of social groups, representing the essential social characteristics of groups based on their identity, purpose, norms, values, positions and resources. That's why we can find the ideology from discourses.

Salafists' spirit of purification restored the understanding of Islam through the Qur'an and Hadith following the Salaf. In the theme of these anthropomorphism verses, they reject *ta'wil* because *ta'wil* distorts its original meaning of verses. So, rejecting *ta'wil* and *tafwid* is part of returning the meaning of the Qur'an and Al-Hadith as intended by Allah. They also often mention that their understanding is the understanding of the Salaf al-Salih; this is the legitimacy that their understanding is the same as the Sahabah and Tabi'in.

The Salafist understanding has been rejected and criticized by Ash'arite scholars. Ramadan Al-Buti, an Ash'arism cleric from Syria,

criticizes the word Salafism or “Salafiyyah” and says that it was as if they were legitimizing the truth of the understanding of the Salaf generation only for themselves. Including the terminology of the word “Salaf” for him is not a particular school. Still, it is a period, including the Salaf generation, who lived in the first three centuries of Hijriyyah. While the generations after them are called “Khalaf.” According to Al-Buti, the Salaf generation has different understandings, including the issue of Aqidah. The Khalaf then inherited the problems that had existed since their time. This matter also includes the interpretation of anthropomorphism verses and hadith.<sup>42</sup>

Most Muslims in Nusantara follow a school of Aqedah Ash’arism. AF Zarkasyi mentioned that the Aqedah schools that came to the Peurlak Aceh region were Ahlussunnah and Shi’ah. However, in the development of the Aqedah that the majority of the people of Aceh adhere to, it is Ahlussunnah Ash’arism. The pattern of Islamic growth in Indonesia is the same as the pattern that occurs in the rest of the Islamic world, as T. Ladjal’s research on the development of Islam in North Africa shows that Muslims in that area follow the Ash’arism.<sup>43</sup> K. Hasib rejects that a Shi’ah people enter the territory of Peurlak. According to Hasib, who entered Peurlak was a family of Ahlul Bait from Yemen known as Bani Alawi (Ba’lawi), not a Shi’ah group; according to Hasib, some historians misinterpret Ahlul Bait as Shi’ah. The explanation above shows that the Muslims of the archipelago initially followed the Ash’arite faith and various schools of Sufism.<sup>44</sup>

Since the 1980s, Chaplin’s mentioned that the Salafi movement emerged in Indonesia because of the role of the Dewan Dakwah Islam Indonesia (DDII), which cooperated with LIPIA in providing offers for talented students from various boarding schools in Indonesia to continue their education in Salafism educational institutions in Saudi Arabia such as the Islamic University of Medina, the al-Turath in Kuwait, the International Islamic Relief Organization, and Jamiyyat Dar al-Ber (Charity House Society). So that when they have finished their studies, they will be able to become Salafist promoters in

<sup>42</sup> Muhammad Sa’id Ramadan Al-Buti, *As-Salafiyyah Marhalah Zamaniyyah Mubarakah La Madhab Islamy*, 2nd ed. (Damaskus: Dar al-Fikr, 1990).

<sup>43</sup> Amal F Zarkasyi, “معالم الفكر الإسلامي قبل ظهور الاتجاه السلفي بإندونيسيا,” *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 2, no. 2 (2008): 419–63, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2008.2.2.419-463>.

<sup>44</sup> Kholili Hasib, “Mazhab Akidah Dan Sejarah Perkembangan Tasawuf Ba’lawi,” *Kalimah: Jurnal Studi Agama Dan Pemikiran Islam* 5, no. 1 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.21111/klm.v15i1.822>.

Indonesia.<sup>45</sup>

The development of Salafism throughout the world has resulted in rejection from the majority of Ahlussunnah. Umar, M.S. & Woodward, M. referred to this rejection as the izala effect. One of the reasons is because of their easy attitude to accuse the tradition that has been going on among the Muslim community with the terms *bid'a* and *kufr*. Salafism has various forms, but the most fundamental of their beliefs is a strict understanding of Tawhid. Then, they easily accuse other Sunni Muslims as infidels and heretics. It is for this reason that there has been conflict between Salafis and other Sunni groups in Islamic history.<sup>46</sup>

For the case of Indonesia, Woodward, M. mentions that the rejection of Salafism has been done by religious leaders, especially from Nahdatul Ulama and Islamic intellectuals such as KH. Hasjim Ash'ari, KH. Sa'id Aqil Siradj, Komarudin Hidayat and so on.<sup>47</sup> The refusal also appeared in the form of a fatwa as the MPU Aceh Ulama Consultative Council issued fatwa Number 09 of 2014, stating that Salafism is a misguided and misleading group, especially in their understanding of the *mutashabihat* verses, which, if interpreted, literally shows that God has a body like his creatures or *mushabbihah*.

Indonesian Salafist is always in conflict with Nahdatul Ulama as an Islamic organization that adheres to the Ash'arism creed. According to Woodward, it has a lot to do with developing religious practices and rites. Such as: reading *Surah Yasin* and *Tahlil* when someone dies, carrying out the *maulid*, reading *shalawat* etc. According to the Salafi group, such a teaching is a *bid'ah* or heresy.<sup>48</sup> However, Umar and Wood stated that the problem of conflict at a practical level stems from the theoretical understanding of Salafism which rejects the existence of *ta'wil* in understanding religion. So the various rites which have no basis with a text for them must be rejected.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Chris Chaplin, "Salafi Islamic Piety as Civic Activism: Wahdah Islamiyah and Differentiated Citizenship in Indonesia," *Citizenship Studies* 22, no. 2 (2018): 208–23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2018.1445488>.

<sup>46</sup> Muhammad Sani Umar and Mark Woodward, "The Izala Effect: Unintended Consequences of Salafi Radicalism in Indonesia and Nigeria," *Contemporary Islam* 14 (2020): 49–73, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-019-00441-y>.

<sup>47</sup> Mark Woodward, "Resisting Salafism and the Arabization of Indonesian Islam: A Contemporary Indonesian Didactic Tale by Komaruddin Hidayat," *Cont Islam* 11 (2017): 237–258, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-017-0388-4>.

<sup>48</sup> Woodward.

<sup>49</sup> Umar and Woodward, "The Izala Effect: Unintended Consequences of Salafi

The much-rumored link between Salafists and Saudi Arabian politics, Haykel noted that the Saudi clerics who were the actors behind Wahhabism were not political actors. So Haykel doubts if the spread of Wahhabism occurred for political purposes. According to him, the spread of Wahhabism occurred because it was very attractive to some Muslims, especially because its thinking method returned the understanding of Islam to the Qur'an and Al-Hadith.<sup>50</sup> In contrast to Haykel, Al-Shamsi explained that Wahhabism became a political tool since it became the state's ideology since the alliance between Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab and Emir Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud. So that, political activities become supporters of Wahhabism's da'wah.<sup>51</sup> Sullivan mentions that Wahhabism was later used as a better political tool by King Faisal.<sup>52</sup> Scholars divide Wahhabism into two categories: the Salafi group, which refuses to engage in politics and even chooses to obey the leader; this group is as mentioned by Haykel. The second is Salafi Jihadists who use the ideology of Salafism for political purposes. They act in the name of Salafism to reject other groups and often use violence.<sup>53</sup> Here it can be concluded that there are Salafism groups who do not care about political matters; on the other hand, they are engaged in politics.

In the case of Indonesian Salafist discussed in this study, they have links to Salafist institutions in the Middle East. Based on Wikipedia sources, Firnanda, Khalid, Syafiq Reza, Badrussalam have studied at the Islamic University of Medina, and even Firnanda completed a doctoral at the campus. Then Yazid is a direct student of Prof. Dr. Shakh Abdurrazzaq, is a professor at the Islamic University of Medina, and has a teacher-student relationship with Shaykh Muhammad bin Salih Al-Uthaimin, a leading scholar of Salafism.<sup>54</sup> From the background of the preachers, it can be seen how the regeneration activities carried out

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Radicalism in Indonesia and Nigeria.”

<sup>50</sup> Bernard Haykel, “On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action1,” in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Inc, 2014).

<sup>51</sup> Mansoor Jassem Alshamsi, *Islam and Political Reform in Saudi Arabia*, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 22.

<sup>52</sup> Robert R. Sullivan, “Saudi Arabia in International Politics,” *The Review of Politics* 32, no. 4 (1970): 436–60.

<sup>53</sup> Woodward, “Resisting Salafism and the Arabization of Indonesian Islam: A Contemporary Indonesian Didactic Tale by Komaruddin Hidayat.”

<sup>54</sup> Muhamad Nurdin Fathurrohman, “Biografi Ustadz Yazid Bin Abdul Qadir Jawas,” *Biografi Tokoh Ternama*, 2018, <https://biografi-tokoh-ternama.blogspot.com/2018/11/biografi-ustadz-yazid-bin-abdul-qadir-jawas.html>.

by Salafists in Indonesia in spreading their understanding. Huges said that the Salafist movement spread among people through the Islamic University of Medina.<sup>55</sup>

From this discussion, we can conclude that the discourse on the interpretation of anthropomorphic verses and hadith expressed by Salafists is part of a global phenomenon related to the spread of the Salafi movement worldwide. The distribution of lectures by Salafist preachers via YouTube shows their strenuous efforts in spreading their ideology to all people. Following the izala effect, the Salafi doctrine faced opposition from the Ash'arite followers as the Aqidah school of most Indonesian society.

## Conclusion

We conclude that the Salafis are trying to reverse the theological authority in Indonesia that belongs to the Asy'ariyyah in the discourse on interpreting anthropomorphic verses. From this discourse, the Salafists framed the Asy'ariyyah as Ahl al-Bid'ah because they do ta'wil it means that Ash'arism distort the meaning of anthropomorphic verses. The Salafists try to present rational arguments for their beliefs to convey to the audience that what they believe is rational and annulled the rationality that was considered to belong to Ash'arism. This is to reverse the assumption that Salafism is textual and Ash'arism is rational.

As part of the global Salafist movement, the Indonesian Salafist spread their thoughts through various channels on YouTube. In the comments column, they receive the support of the Salafist audience. However, Salafism received a negative response from the follower of Nahdatul Ulama, an Ash'arite adherent, in the comments column because they disagreed with the theology of Salafism. From a power relationship perspective, we can read that the Salafist group is trying to spread its theology to society. Ash'arism, as the majority and original madhab in Indonesia, is trying to defend its from the spread of Salafism.

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<sup>55</sup> Micah A. Huges, "[Book Review] Michael Farquhar, *Circuits of Faith: Migration, Education, and the Wahhabi Mission* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017)," *Maydan*, 2017, <https://www.themaydan.com/2017/06/book-review-michael-farquh>.

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