



DIALECTICS OF ISLAMIC LEFT THEOLOGY: HASAN HANAFI'S THOUGHT ON PALESTINIAN OPPRESSION

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Abstract :

This study examines Hasan Hanafi's concept of Islamic Left Theology as a framework for social liberation and resistance against global injustice, particularly the oppression of Palestine by Zionist Israel. Employing a qualitative descriptive method through library research, the paper explores Hanafi's philosophical and theological paradigm that integrates faith with praxis. Hanafi views Islam as a revolutionary force that must liberate humanity from all forms of domination political, economic, and cultural by reinterpreting classical traditions through at-Turats wa at-Tajdid (Heritage and Renewal). His notion of "Islamic Left" emphasizes rational, ethical, and humanistic values to confront Western hegemony and to reconstruct Muslim consciousness toward justice and equality. The findings reveal that Hanafi's call for Oksidentalisme (Occidentalism) provides an alternative intellectual strategy for Islamic civilization to critically engage the West while affirming its own identity. This theological approach contributes to understanding Islam not merely as a spiritual system but as a transformative ideology for human liberation and social justice.

Keywords : Hasan Hanafi, Islamic Left, Liberation Theology, Occidentalism, Palestine.

INTRODUCTION

Islam is fundamentally a religion of social liberation, with its ultimate essence being the emancipation of all members within society. It promotes equality among individuals and fosters just conduct toward others, ensuring that human actions remain aligned with moral integrity and compassion in social interactions (A.R, 2023). Muslim scholars have developed critical ideas in response to Western modernization. They strive to analyze alternative paths to revive the spirit of the Islamic community. Hasan Hanafi, in particular, seeks to reconstruct Islamic thought with the aim of liberating it from all forms of oppression (Ahmad, 2000).

The issue of oppression against the Palestinian people by the Zionist Israeli regime has become a global humanitarian concern that has drawn the attention of intellectuals across the Islamic world. In this context, the emergence of Islamic liberation theology becomes highly relevant as both a theoretical and practical response to structural injustice. Hasan Hanafi, an Egyptian philosopher and theologian, positions Islamic theology not merely as a metaphysical discourse but as a means of liberating humanity from all forms of social, economic, and political oppression. Hanafi's thought is rooted in a historical awareness that Islam is, in essence, a revolutionary religion carrying a mission of justice and universal humanity far beyond the limits of ritualistic theocentrism



(Arroisi, 2014).

The contextualization of Hanafi's thought in relation to the oppression of Palestine by Israel reveals a profound relevance between the idea of liberation theology and the struggle for national independence. Within this framework, liberation is not merely understood as a political endeavor but also as a theological reflection on the essence of human freedom before God. Hanafi's version of liberation theology asserts that faith must give rise to social action, and that any form of domination over human beings constitutes a deviation from the fundamental values of tawhid the oneness of God (Alwi, 2015). Therefore, the resistance of the Palestinian people can be viewed as a concrete expression of practical theology the manifestation of faith through social action in the pursuit of justice and human equality before Allah (Azizah, 2022).

Thus, the background of this research is grounded in an effort to understand the relevance of Hasan Hanafi's thought in addressing contemporary humanitarian crises, particularly the oppression of the Palestinian people. This study is significant in reaffirming that Islam possesses a transformative potential capable of confronting global injustice through a progressive and liberating theological approach. Such an approach is expected to broaden the horizon of Islamic studies not merely focusing on normative aspects, but also serving as a practical foundation for the universal struggle for humanity (Shimogata, 1993).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach using the method of library research. Data were collected from various academic sources such as books, journals, and online publications relevant to Hasan Hanafi's concept of Islamic left liberation theology. The researcher analyzed Hanafi's theological framework and its relation to the oppression of Palestine by Zionist Israel through a philosophical and comparative lens. The qualitative analysis focuses on identifying, describing, and interpreting Hanafi's ideas concerning freedom, justice, and social liberation within the context of contemporary Islamic thought.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Hasan Hanafi, a well-known Islamic thinker, was born in Cairo, Egypt, on February 13, 1935, and passed away on October 21, 2021, at the age of 86. He completed his elementary education in 1948 and continued his studies at Khalil Agha Madrasa in Cairo, where he finished in 1952. It was during his time at this school that Hanafi first became acquainted with the ideas and movement of the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan al-Muslimin). His involvement in the movement grew stronger during his university years at Cairo University, where he became increasingly active until the organization was eventually dissolved (Muhammad Abid Al-Jabiri, 1999).

In 1956, Hasan Hanafi earned his academic degree from Cairo University, majoring in philosophy. He later continued his doctoral studies at La Sorbonne University in France, where he successfully obtained his Ph.D. in 1966. His dissertation, titled *Essai sur la méthode d'exégèse* ("An Essay on the Method of

Exegesis”), marked a significant contribution to the study of interpretation in Islamic thought. Back in Egypt, Hanafi went on to produce a monumental work of 900 pages, which earned him the award for the best scholarly writing in the country in 1971 (Amin Abdullah, 1995).

Arabic, English, and French were no strangers to Hasan Hanafi’s intellectual life. His mastery of these languages allowed him to produce a wide range of influential works, including:

1. Qadhaya Mu’ashirah.
2. Minal Al-Aqidah ila al-Thaurah = Akidah ke Revormasi.
3. Madha Ya’ni Al-Yasar al-Islami (Kiri Islam).
4. Dirasat Falsafiyah.
5. Religious Dialogue and Revolution: Essays on Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

In addition to publishing these major works, it is undeniable that many of Hasan Hanafi’s writings can also be found in various journals and articles, most of which are written in Arabic. One notable example is his taḥqīq (critical editing) of classical Arabic texts, through which he analyzed and revitalized traditional Islamic scholarship. Alongside this, he also translated several books on religion and philosophy into Arabic, further enriching the intellectual landscape of contemporary Islamic thought (Ahmad, 2000).

Hasan Hanafi’s Liberation Theology

The term theology originates from the Greek words *theos* and *logos* *theos* meaning “God” and *logos* meaning “knowledge” or “study.” When combined, theology refers to the study or science that focuses on divinity. When contextualized within Islamic studies, theology signifies a field of knowledge that analyzes and discusses matters related to Allah. In academic discourse, Islamic theology is commonly referred to as *‘ilm al-tawḥīd* (Ananda & Masykur, 2022). This explanation emphasizes that Islamic theology is fundamentally theocentric, centered on the concept of *tawḥīd* the oneness of God. God serves as the ultimate center of human existence; to Him alone humans devote themselves and seek guidance. It is only through *tawḥīd* that humanity can attain true happiness in both this world and the hereafter (Arroisi, 2014).

To understand Hasan Hanafi’s concept of liberation theology, it is essential to recognize that his ideas cannot be separated from several factors that shaped the fundamental characteristics of his thought. As a Muslim scholar and intellectual, Hasan Hanafi was known for his deep mastery of Islamic religious sciences. Over time, he took the initiative to develop his ideas in order to revive a civilization grounded in the universal values of Islam. Hanafi consistently sought to take proactive steps by formulating ideas and concepts that reflect a progressive vision of life one that emphasizes liberation as a central dimension of human and societal development (Alwi, 2015).

The theology introduced by Hasan Hanafi, often regarded as a universal theology, focuses extensively on issues related to humanity. Hanafi took the initiative to reinterpret theology rooted in the doctrine of *tawḥīd* (the oneness of God) as a theology of human social struggle for justice and liberation of the oppressed. His aim was to restore humanity to its rightful place, where all

individuals stand on equal footing and share the same dignity. Essentially, Hanafi sought to guide humankind, particularly the Muslim community, toward social renewal by transforming their understanding of tawḥīd and Islamic teachings into a more responsive framework one that engages with the realities of human life and addresses the social dimensions of existence.

Between 1980 and 1987, Hasan Hanafi traveled to several countries, including Sweden, Spain, the Netherlands, India, Sudan, and Indonesia. During these visits, he engaged in extensive discussions with prominent scholars about the pressing issues affecting both the Muslim community and humanity as a whole, always taking into account the realities of the time. Hanafi carefully analyzed and observed all forms of oppression faced by powerless individuals across the globe. During this period, he also witnessed the rise of revolutionary theology movements in the United States and Latin America, particularly liberation theology, which had gained significant momentum in these regions.

From these observations, Hanafi concluded that Islam must be reasserted as a religion of liberation one that is attentive, compassionate, and responsive to human conflicts. He argued that Islamic theology could serve as a scientific study aimed at alleviating human suffering and addressing injustice. Hanafi's primary goal was to revive the spirit of struggle within the Muslim community, igniting a passionate drive to fight for freedom and human rights, which are inherent gifts bestowed by God. This vision established a framework within Islamic theology, providing a new scholarly perspective for analyzing and responding to conflicts in political, social, and economic spheres of human life. (Azizah, 2022).

Hanafi intended to emphasize that religion must be placed in its proper position as a theoretical ethical reference and as a motivating force for structured action toward social transformation. To achieve this, Hanafi proposed three key ideas or concepts for initiating change and reconstructing theology, as outlined below:

1. There must be an ideology that is clear and comprehensible amid the global clash of competing doctrines one capable of inspiring and directing a genuine revolution.
2. Theology should not be viewed merely from a theoretical perspective or taken lightly. It is essential to implement it in practice, transforming it into an ideology that guides social movements throughout history. One practical application is addressing pressing issues, such as land occupation in Muslim-majority countries, where the focus is on resolving problems that directly affect people's lives.
3. Amaliyah fi'liyah practical action is an essential aspect of theological knowledge. It must be applied in practice as a means of realizing the principles of tawḥīd in the lives of Muslims. Hanafi emphasizes the need for a global theology as a strategic framework to unify the Muslim community under a single order, connecting this vision with a renewed and progressive understanding of theology (Hayati, 2018).

Islamic Left Hasan Hanafi's Perspective

The concept of the “Left in Islam” proposed by Hasan Hanafi represents a progressive form of thought aimed at presenting objective and factual theories regarding Islamic adherence, which for long periods had been trapped in ideological dogmatism. Through this idea, Hanafi sought to emphasize that Islam could serve as a path for liberating the community from social domination that glorifies power, position, and rank. This concept led to a major intellectual project formulated under *“at-Turath wa at-Tajdid”* (Tradition and Renewal), which became a foundational framework for contemporary Islamic intellectual movements. According to Hanafi, the renewal of Islam must be comprehensive and universal, rather than merely symbolic or local. He also argued that previous “Islamic Left” movements, which confronted the West directly, had largely failed in achieving their goals, thereby necessitating a more reflective and ideologically grounded approach (Hasan Hanafi, 2003).

According to Abdurrahman Wahid, Hanafi’s framework of tradition and renewal which adopts an appreciative stance toward a universalistic paradigm in understanding classical traditions, Western civilization, and modernity not only led him to a more refined way of thinking but also offered greater hope for the Islamic world to become a partner with other civilizations in creating a new and universal world order (Rosyadi, 2023).

Factually, the terms “Left” and “Right” in Islam do not have a fixed basis in religious texts. However, in modern social and political developments, these terms have emerged as a result of historical, social, economic, and political factors that shape the dynamics of human life. As long as humans remain active participants in history, conflicts over power and divergent interests will persist, giving rise to the symbolic notions of “left” and “right.” From a religious perspective, Islam recognizes two terms: Ashab al-Yamin (the group of the right) and Ashab al-Shimal (the group of the left). Yet, these terms pertain to the actualization of faith and deeds in the Hereafter, rather than to political or worldly social orientations (Hasan Hanafi, 1995).

After observing various tendencies and imbalances within the Islamic world, Hasan Hanafi argued that the “Islamic Left” carries a moral and intellectual responsibility to counter these tendencies and to foster a spirit of rational revolution rooted in Islamic social values. He emphasized that the Islamic Left movement is not an attempt to replace religious teachings with a new ideology; rather, it represents a transformation of collective consciousness through the internalization of socialism that is ethical, rational, and humanistic. Its ultimate goal is to awaken the intellectual and spiritual awareness of Muslims, enabling them to achieve a civilizational renaissance (*nahdah*) that champions social justice and universal humanity.

The following are the objectives of the Islamic Left:

1. Create social equality across humanity through the guidance of Qur’anic texts (*nash*).
2. Foster a critically minded and democratic populace, meaning everyone has the right to speak freely and to express their ideas.

3. Prevent the oppression of the State of Palestine and remove or expel the occupying forces.
4. Restore the integrity of the Muslim community by developing an Islamist understanding, beginning in Egypt (along the Nile) and extending to Syria, Morocco, and other Arab lands.
5. Establish sovereign regional and local political frameworks and strengthen relations with Islamic countries across Asia, Africa, and the Third World.
6. Support the transformation or revolution of oppressed communities; essentially, their struggle is an Islamic revolution.

In this context, one of the main objectives of the Islamic Left, according to Hasan Hanafi, is to oppose all forms of oppression against weak nations, including the defense of Palestine, which continues to face political and military pressure from Israel. Hanafi frames the Palestinian issue not merely as a territorial conflict but as a symbol of global injustice that must be confronted with ideological and moral awareness among Muslims. He argues that the Islamic revolution or Islamic renaissance (*al-nahdah al-Islamiyyah*) should elevate human dignity and resist modern forms of colonialism in all their manifestations. In this regard, Hanafi highlights the power imbalance between militarily weak Palestine and Israel, backed by the United States, a superpower dominating the Western global order. For Hanafi, the struggle of the Palestinian people represents resistance against social and humanitarian injustice, in line with the mission of the Islamic Left to uphold universal justice (Ridho, 2021).

Furthermore, Hasan Hanafi emphasized the need for rationalist pressure to revitalize the classical Islamic heritage. This rationalism is implemented through the critical restoration of texts, aiming to reconstruct fields of knowledge such as philosophy, theology, *fiqh*, Qur'anic and Hadith studies, and exegesis. In other words, traditional knowledge should be approached as dynamic and historically grounded rather than fixed. By doing so, Muslims can address contemporary issues, achieve social transformation, and foster collective prosperity. Hanafi particularly focuses on two dimensions that have been neglected in the progression of Islamic intellectual heritage: human beings and history (Ahmad, 2000).

In responding to this, there is a stance of opposing Western civilization. A brief look at history shows that Muslims, during the time of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, actively resisted military imperialism. At the beginning of that century, the Muslim community confronted economic imperialism in the form of legitimate multinational corporations, as well as cultural imperialism. This cultural imperialism sought to undermine societies from within by attacking their own cultural foundations while weakening the alliance of people with their indigenous heritage (Jamaludin Al-Afghani, 2004).

These historical, social, and ideological factors gave rise to the concept of the Islamic Left as a movement aimed at resisting Western domination and challenging the hegemonic position of Western civilization in the modern world order. In the context of global politics, as seen in the case of Palestine's oppression by Israel, Hasan Hanafi argued that Muslims need to strengthen internal

solidarity to avoid remaining victims of backwardness and dependency. Although Muslims generally lag behind in technological and military capabilities, Hanafi emphasized that they still possess their own civilizational and cultural potential, which can serve as a foundation for a new awakening (Khudori Sholeh, 2003).

The next stage, according to Hanafi, involves the Islamic Left building an alternative civilization by restoring Western power to its own cultural limits while treating the West as an object of critical and reflective study for the Eastern world. From this perspective emerged the important concept he called "Occidentalism" (al-Istighrāb), which is the study of the West from an Eastern viewpoint as a response to the limitations of traditional Orientalism. Through Occidentalism, Hanafi sought to demonstrate that methods for historical renewal and the Islamic renaissance can be developed by understanding, critiquing, and reinterpreting Western civilization from the perspective of the Muslim world itself (Ahmad, 2000).

The Relevance of the Islamic Left:

1. In 1979, Iran achieved a significant success in establishing an Islamic circulation, which had a profound impact on Arab countries, highlighting the importance of Islamic influence in both the contemporary Arab-Islamic world and global history.
2. Hasan Hanafi envisioned religion and liberation through the framework of Third World revolutions and liberation theology, within the context of modern socio-political structures.
3. The movements initiated by Al-Afghani also had a considerable influence on analyzing the development of modern Islam, framing it as the Islamic Left in key texts.
4. The Islamic Left serves as a text on the transformation of Islamic thought, particularly through the examination of Hasan Hanafi's ideas regarding the Mu'tazilah (praised as the "noble Left") and the Ash'ariyah (regarded as the "Right," which Hanafi did not accept).
5. Islam has always confronted Western challengers; Hasan Hanafi studied Western knowledge to understand how a Muslim intellectual identity engages with the West. He approached this both theoretically and fundamentally, continuously striving to create a new branch of social science focused on the Western world rather than Eastern studies.
6. The Islamic Left serves as introspection or a reflection of the political and social anarchy prevalent in Arab societies and among Arab intellectuals.
7. The most critical phenomena addressed by the Islamic Left include colonialism, capitalism, and Zionism surrounding the Islamic world, along with the suffering, oppression, and backwardness faced by Muslims. Hasan Hanafi sought to answer questions such as: How are Muslims oppressed? How can they overcome these pressures? And what strategies can Muslims employ globally to address these challenges.

CONCLUSION

Hasan Hanafi's concept of Islamic Left Theology emerges from a critical awareness of Western domination and global injustice that oppresses the Islamic world, particularly the Palestinian nation. For Hanafi, the Islamic Left is not merely a political movement but an intellectual and moral project aimed at liberating humanity from structural oppression through theological and social consciousness. Through his ideas of *at-Turats wa at-Tajdid* (Heritage and Renewal) and *Occidentalism*, Hanafi presents a progressive paradigm of Islamic reform that empowers Muslims as active agents in constructing civilization and upholding universal justice. Therefore, Hanafi's liberation theology remains relevant in contemporary discourse, as it integrates the essence of *tawhid* (divine unity) with the struggle for human freedom and dignity, emphasizing that true faith must manifest in social action for justice and emancipation.

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