

# Heresy in Architecture; Is it Real?

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**Abstract.** Most people who Salafism holder still assume that what they do should be consist of with prophet Muhammad done, so they always being carefully whenever doing something, because they are extremely afraid if they are doing something not consist of with what Muhammad done, they assume that is bid'ah (heresy) deed. They belief all heresy deviated from Islamic law. So even though constructing some building they always copy what Muhammad done completely. It means they don't know yet the meaning of heresy is. In accordance with what prophet said, heresy is doing something which is relate with ibadah mahdhoh which is not be done by Prophet Muhammad.

Architecture is cultural product so that it is not relate with ibadah. Other ways there is not relation with heresy. So there is no heresy in Architecture.

**Keywords:** *beresy, Islamic Law, Architecture, culture*

## Introduction

A number of religious communities, especially those who adhere the Salafi viewpoints, that is the view upholding necessity to rely any activities to the Prophet's Hadith: "*Man roghiba 'an sunnati falaisa minni?*" (Who does not uphold on my tradition is none of my *ummah*), so they are very careful in performing deeds as they fear if they go astray even in a slightest point they would not be counted as the Prophet's *ummah*. In this respect, every act or performance should refer to the guidelines set by the prophet (peace be upon him). They

dress like the way the Prophet dressed, eat like the way the prophet ate, sleep like the way the Prophet slept and so on, that their community can easily be identified through their appearance, ie, wearing a robe, skull cap, shortened pants, and growing beard. Their houses are very simple, without tables, chairs, beds, TV, washing machine, or other household equipments, as the situation with Prophet's house. They believe that conducting an activity without any guidance or model from the practice of the Prophet is considered *bid'ah*, as they firmly hold on the Hadith [Those who invent an act which has no example (from Prophet) would be rejected (by Allah)].

In a different Hadith the Prophet also said, "*Man ' Amila laisa alaihi amruna fabuwa roddun*" (Those who conduct an act which has never been done by the prophet will be rejected by God). Hence they, in conducting any action, will be extremely watchful in order that they do not invent something the Prophet never modeled, as it will be considered *bid'ah*. In another hadith, the Prophet also emphasized: "*Kullu Bid'ah dholalah wakullu dholallah finnar*" (All *bid'ah* are misguided acts and all misguides will lead you to hell). On these grounds, where possible, the Salafi communities always conduct or develop everything, including their home constructions, in accordance with the model as practiced by the Prophet. Otherwise they believe to end up in hell as has been forewarned in the prophet's abovementioned Hadiths.

### **Research Problems**

Various phenomena occurring within our society, especially those which are related to architecture and its connection with the Qur'an and Sunnah, make interesting subjects to be observed and examined. Through observations and interviews with reference to the theory of the meaning of *bid'ah* in relation to the Qur'an and Sunnah, a deeper digging up

on the subject is expected to take place. Thus the Prophet's saying "*Kullu bid'ah dholalah wa Kullu Kullu dholallah finnar*" (All misguided acts are of heresy and all heresies are in Hell) brings forth the question: "Is there a *bid'ah* in Architecture?"

### **Research Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to find out if the term *bid'ah* has a correlation with, or does apply, in architecture with reference to the arguments derived from the Quran and the Sunnah in connection with the theory of *bid'ah* in the book *Al-I'tisham* written by Imam Ash-Syathibi.

### **Research contribution**

This study is expected to provide enlightenment to the perspective of the public in order that they obtain accurate understanding of what and how is an act can be categorized as an act of heresy, so that the society are well aware of the boundaries of heresy, and hence know whether the term *bid'ah* applies in the sphere of Architecture.

### **Theoretical Review**

The term *bid'ah* is derived from the verb root '*bada'a*', which means creating something without any previous example. The patterns of the term's employment are such as in:

1. Allah reveals: "*Badi'u samawaati wal ardl*" (He is God who created heavens and earth). (QS al-Baqarah:117). The meaning of this verse is that God created heavens and earth without any previous example.
2. Allah reveals: "*Qul kuntu bid'an minarrosuli maa*" (Say I am not the first among the Apostles). (QS al-Ahqaf: 9). The meaning of this verse is I (Muhammad) was not the first to deliver a message from God to His servants, but there has been many Apostles who preceded me.

It is through such derivation and employment the scholars define the term *bid'ah*. Thus inventing new conduct or customs which have no preceding examples are considered *bid'ah*.

This literal meaning then further developed into a technical definition classifying that an act conducted without any *syar'i* (religious) reference is called *bid'ah*. The employment of the term *bid'ah* in this context is more specific than its original literal meaning. According to Ash Syatiby in *Al I'tisham*, the term *bid'ah* originally means: "*Ma kbturi'a 'ala ghoiri mithaa lin saa biq*" (All that was innovated without any preceding examples). The Prophet also said in a Hadith:

"Anyone conducting an act which is none of ours, his conduct would be rejected." (Related by Ahmad);

"Anyone inventing an affair which we have never dealt with, it would be rejected." (Related by Bukhari & Muslim);

"Anyone performing an act that we have never ordered would be rejected." (Narrated by Muslim).

However, experts of *ushul* (Islamic law) restrict the boundary of *bid'ah* within the sphere of worship alone: "*Bid'ah* is the way or method innovated in accomplishing religion, and it is considered equal to religious rituals or tenets wherein performing it is equal to the intention when performing religion itself." In this regard, the term *bid'ah* is defined as a new way innovated in religion, matching the religious tenets or rituals, and the objective of its invention is to develop extended value in worshipping the Almighty God. This is corresponding to what has been explained in the Hadith of the Prophet narrated by Muslim: "What I perform in matters of faith, you should follow, but what I perform with regards to worldly affairs, you do not have to follow, as you surely know better of your worldly affairs"

Architecture was started as developing a shelter, since the first buildings in human's history of constructions were shades or shelters, and people need shelter in order to survive. But shelter is not the only or principal function of housing. Humans have long been planning and constructing buildings as a location for performing activities. Architecture can provide tone for specific activity, so each human activity requires a different architecture. For instance, mosque architecture for religious activities, architecture of market/shop/mall for commercial activities, stadium architecture for sports activities, and so forth. Briefly put, architecture is a location wherein men perform their activities, and the birth of architecture is in line with the birth of human culture itself. From this elaboration it is clear that architecture is a product of culture.

### **Results and Research Discussions**

Of the ways to answer the question 'does *bid'ah* apply in architecture?' is to conduct research through a religious approach, that is, that researchers ask questions to those who claim to always refer to the Qur'an and Sunnah in every activity. Various phenomena encountered are very interesting as it turned out that their referring to the Qur'an and Sunnah apparently restricted on textual reference only, seeing that most of them do not have awareness of the meaning and motivation behind the text. Even more disturbingly, most of them just have a blind acceptance (*taqlid*), meaningly they just went along with those who are featured in their communities. In principal, they do not have awareness of the religious legal basis or the religious science underlying their respective acts. Other words, they do not have sufficient religious knowledge, so they just went along with authoritative religious leaders functioning as role models. On this regard reference can be made to what God has revealed in the Quran QS al-Anaam:116: "*Wa man in tutthik*

*aktharu fil ardli yudziluka 'an sabilillah"* (If you follow most of the inhabitants of the earth , they will mislead you from the way of Allah). The verse clearly indicates that it is actually forbidden in Islam to adopt an ideology without knowing its legal basis or without having adequate knowledge about its nature.

The situation is observable in the case that in building a mosque most societies think that it should include a construction of a dome, as if a dome is a necessary requirement in building a mosque itself and as if without a dome the construction of a mosque is invalid, for they are referring to common mosque constructions in Islamic countries in the Middle East. Further implication of this attitude is their presumption that prayers performed in a mosque without a dome are not valid. In certain communities there even exist a belief that when building a mosque, the installation of the dome should be performed with a special procession, wherein the dome is carried in a car parade heading to the mosque (if the location is distant), or on a walking parade (if the location is nearby). Then there is the recitation of the Holy Qur'an and a communal prayer, bearing the wish that the mosque to be prosperous and bestowing blessing. In fact guidance of reference for such procession is not found in Islam. The most worrying is the ritual of building a mosque in a community holding Javanese tradition, as the procession includes sacrificing a buffalo and burying its head at the location to initiate construction, for they strongly belief that burying the buffalo head will bring about survival. This indicates that a great extent of our society still preserve belief in superstition or *kebufofat*, which will lead to heresy and polytheism or *shirk*, to which Allah the Most High reveals: "*laa Innallaha yaghfiru anyusro kabih, wa maa yaghfiru duna dzalika Yasak liman "* (Verily God will never forgive shirk). In addition to this, there are also still many people who perform certain rituals in constructing buildings or

houses, such as installing *mulo* (section of the roof) with the ritual of "*bancaan*" and *tumpengan* or other kinds of meals for offering, as they strongly believe that performing such ritual will bring about safety and leaving it out will bring harm.



Caption: it is obvious that application of a dome on a mosque construction is influenced by Middle East and European architecture or culture, that it has no correlation with the Sunnah. As a matter of fact, it would be much nicer if the architecture of mosque construction is adapted with the local architectural culture to reflect indigenous characteristics and uniqueness.



Caption: In a Javanese community a lot number of people still preserve the practice of building house procession completed with a buffalo head burial ceremony and an offering ritual before starting and after a completion of a construction. This is not counted as *bid'ah*, but it is a superstition potentially leading to *shirk*.

Many people would include rituals and ceremonies such as described above as of *bid'ah* since there are no references of their scheme from the practice of the Prophet. This shows that there exist communities which are considered religious but in fact do not accurately understand the concept of *bid'ah*. They mistakenly think that every single activity which has no example from the Prophet is reckoned as *bid'ah*, and those who conduct it will go to hell.

It has been explained above that *bid'ah* comprise only matters of religious worship, and subjects outside of worship are accordingly not included. Worldly affairs such as traditions, customs, culture, and other habits outside of worship, although they have no reference from the practice of the prophets, cannot be classified as *bid'ah*. However, they can be categorized into superstition or *khurofat* for it is very closely related to faith, not to worship.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

In point of fact, many religious communities claim to keep striving to implement Islamic law in *kafah* (thoroughly) but in reality they do not have sufficient knowledge of the religion. Most of them are blindly following their religious leaders, or just give '*taqlid*', that is blindly following without any ground knowledge of the legal and technical reference. Even in building houses they also try to find reference from the practice modeled by the Prophet. Some even do not apply furniture to their houses and only put carpets or mattress on the entire floor on the basis that the Prophet himself practiced as such. On the other side, however, they are also not consistent with their principles as they are only partially adopting certain aspects and leaving some others. They carry this out without sufficient religious awareness and that their attitudes are lacking of spiritual intelligence.

In general, some people still think that every act conducted should always copy that of the Prophet's, for they stick to the Hadith which reads: "*Man roghiba 'an sunnati falaisa Minni*" (Those who do not adhere to my Sunnah is not regarded as my followers). They believe the meaning intended in the Hadith is that we should imitate everything conducted by the Prophet, otherwise we will not be included among the followers of Prophet Muhammad SAW. Even in constructing buildings or houses they also should imitate the Prophet, or else their conduct will be considered *bid'ab*, as the Prophet said "*Kullu Bid'ab dholallah wakullu dholallah finnar*" (All misguided acts or *bid'ab* are of heresy and all heresies are in Hell). This brings about a serious concern in that it imply a significant need of some enlightenment on the part of these Muslim communities, since the actual meaning intended in the Hadith is creating new inventions with regards to religious affairs. As for the non religious affairs, there is no obligation to imitate the Prophet. This principle is derived from the Prophet's Hadith which reads: "*Antum a'lamu bi umuridunyakum*": (you certainly know better concerning your worldly affairs).

To sum up, the above discussion has made it clear that the term *bid'ab* does not apply for the subject of architecture, as architecture is a genuine cultural product comprised within men's worldly affairs, not in that of the afterlife's or of worship's.

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