

Treading The Footsteps of Wali Songo as The Shaper of Islam Nusantara Tradition

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Abstract

The focus of this article is to examine the footsteps of Wali Songo in shaping the tradition of Islam Nusantara. As is known, the Wali Songo period was a period of formation of the Nusantara Islamic tradition which began in the 14th century AD. This topic is considered important because the period of formation of the Nusantara Islamic tradition needs to be relevant to today's diversity. In addition, the purpose of choosing this topic is also a response to the religious attitudes of contemporary Islamic society and the various notions that have emerged under the pretext of the Nusantara Islam tradition, which is forbidden because of shirk and superstition. Studying based on socio-historical aspects is the study method used in writing this article. The conclusions reached are, first, Wali Songo is the main agent who plays a major role in shaping the tradition of Islam Nusantara. Second, there are three efforts by Wali Songo in shaping the tradition of Islam Nusantara, namely prioritizing religious substance rather than formality, spreading religious substance through popular culture, and prioritizing openness to local traditions.

Keywords: Islam Nusantara, Tradition, Wali Songo.

A. Introduction

Islam Nusantara is known as friendly Islam with all the local traditions and culture that surrounds it. The Islamic values contained in all the traditions and culture of the Indonesian people today are certainly inseparable from what was inherited by their predecessors, namely the early Islamic community. Where, the early Islamic community is considered as forming the initial foundation of the

Nusantara Islamic tradition which is different from Islamic traditions in other countries. As it is generally known that Islam entered the archipelago since the 7th century AD. However, the Islamic da'wah only began to be carried out massively and systematically in the 14th century AD by Wali Songo. The development of Islamic da'wah is also inseparable from the existence of the previous large Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms, especially after the collapse of the great kingdom of Majapahit¹ and the power of Bhre Kerthabumi. During the transition period from the Hindu-Buddhist-style kingdom to the Islamic-style kingdom, the Islamic da'wah occupies its momentum and forms a new society.²

Basically, in establishing the foundation of the Nusantara Islamic tradition, Wali Songo still refers to the and do not leave the basic patterns and orders in the traditions of the old society. So that all things and values that existed in the old society did not necessarily disappear in the Islamic community of the archipelago. It's just that there may be changes in its application in the new society, due to adapting to the teachings of Islam. Because the main thing from a tradition itself is the substance that is in it. Then from this dialectic, new values and traditions were born in the Islamic Nusantara community and formed a strong social order. However, in today's society, the emphasis on substantial religious values is slowly being replaced by the formalization of religion.³ So that Islamic

¹In Javanese, maja and bitter mean 'bitter'. However, the name of this kingdom, which is also known as the Majapahit kingdom, is more likely to be derived from the name of Manus Pati, an ancient capital city during the reign of Arjun Wijaya, which is believed by the Javanese to be the result of the reincarnation of Lord Vishnu. Read more in Thomas Stanford Raffles, *The History of Java* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Narasi, 2014), p. 453.

²The term new society, which the author uses refers to the Islamic community who were formerly followers of the Kapitayan and Hindu-Buddhist beliefs. While the term old society, which refers to the people of the Kapitayan religion and Hindu-Buddhist alias non-Islam at that time.

³The term formalization of religion refers to the term 'Islamic Formalist' which, according to Ubaidillah Achmad, the use of the term refers to the religious attitude of community groups who on the one hand are very firm in holding Islamic teachings related to communal movements, but on the other hand ignore teachings that emphasize the need to give respect to differences in understanding and belief in others. In addition, Ubaidillah Achmad also mentioned that formalist Islam is the entry point for ideological and political interests. Ubaidillah Achmad, *Islam Formalis Versus Islam Lokalis: Studi Pribumisasi Islam Walisongo dan Kiai Ciganjur*, *Jurnal Addin*, vol. 10, no. 1, Februari 2016, hal. 236.

groups who reject the traditions and culture of the Islamic Archipelago try to eliminate the formal aspects of the tradition and culture itself without considering the substance of the tradition and culture. Therefore, it is important to re-discuss Wali Songo's religiosity which prioritizes substance over formal aspects in the traditions and culture of the archipelago. Especially in the midst of the rampant formalization of religion which is slowly destroying the traditions and culture of the archipelago because they are considered contrary to Islamic teachings.⁴

B. Overview of the Entry of Islam in the Archipelago

Since long ago, the ancestors of the Indonesian people were known as master sailors who were able to explore the high seas. Shipping and trade routes between the Indonesians and other nations have been found since the early centuries AD.⁵ According to Agus Sunyoto, since the 3rd century AD there have been boats from the archipelago that stopped by the Indian subcontinent and the east coast of Africa, and some of them migrated to the island of Madagascar. The story of the voyage can be found on the reliefs of the walls of the Borobudur temple. In fact, a ship craftsman from Madura had time to prove the toughness of the boat contained in the relief by making an imitation and traces of his voyage. In 2003, the ship, called "Samudraraksa" managed to reach the mainland of Africa safely and then the ship is stored in the Samudraraksa Museum in Borobudur until today.⁶

The archipelago, especially Malacca and Maluku, is a place of concern for foreign traders. In addition to its strategic location, the

⁴Sumantho al-Qurtuby wrote specifically on the phenomenon of the marginalization of the culture and traditions of the archipelago after Islamization. Specifically, during the New Order government, he described the encounter between world religions and local religions, one of which was the presence of Islam, which of course came into contact with the local religions and traditions of the archipelago that first existed. From that, it is inevitable that encounters occur in various spaces. See more in Sumanto Al Qurtuby and Tedi Kholiludin, *Agama dan Budaya Nusantara Pasca Islamisasi* (Semarang: Elsa Press, 2020).

⁵Badri Yatim, *Sejarah Peradaban Islam*, (Jakarta: PT Raja Grafindo Persada), p. 191.

⁶Nur Khalik Ridwan, et al., *Gerakan Islam Nusantara* (Yogyakarta: Jamaah Nahdliyin Mataram, 2015), p. 234.

place has interesting commodities in the form of spices, nutmeg, and cloves. When the Srivijaya kingdom came to power, it was recorded that since the 5th century AD this kingdom had established diplomatic and economic relations with China. The merchants almost every year sailed to Canton, China to trade. In 700 AD, the Srivijaya kingdom succeeded in obtaining an outpost in the Southwest of the Malay Peninsula so that it gained power in the Malacca Strait.⁷At that time, Malacca became an important shipping link. Spices from all corners of the archipelago were traded to China and India, especially Gujarat through Malacca.

In the year at the same time, Muslim traders from Arabia, Persia, and India began to establish trade relations to the Indonesian archipelago. Previously, the Arabs had held trade relations with India since the beginning of AD, namely before the collapse of Himjar in the Age. India, which was used as the first terminal, became a liaison for the Arabs to continue their journey to Sarandib, then to Indonesia.⁸Not only trading, Arab traders also doubled as Muslim missionaries who helped spread the teachings of Islam to the indigenous population. According to JC van Leur's estimation based on his travel stories, since 674 AD there has been a Muslim community in Northwest Sumatra, namely in the Barus area which is famous for its camphor. In addition, there are news sources from China during the Tang dynasty which state that Arabs and Persians known as Ta-Shih people were already in Canton (Kan-Fu) and Sumatra.⁹

Historically, the early entry of Islam into Indonesia is still a debate among historians. Various historical sources in the form of physical items such as tombs, ancient manuscripts, as well as records of travelers as well as non-physical items such as culture and customs that have been found seem to have given rise to various theories put forward by historians about the entry of Islam into Indonesia.

⁷Agustina Soebachman, *Sejarah Nusantara Berdasarkan Urutan Tahun* (Yogyakarta: Syura Media Utama, 2014), p. 30.

⁸Fatah Syukur, *Sejarah Peradaban Islam* (Semarang: PT Pustaka Rizki Putra, 2012), p. 178.

⁹Badri Yatim, *Sejarah Peradaban Islam...*, p. 192.

Of the many arguments that exist, there are two theories that are the most powerful. The first opinion believes that Islam began to enter Indonesia since the 7th century AD. This opinion was expressed by WP, Groenevelt, Sheikh Muhammad Naqub al-Attas, TW Arnold, George Fadlo Hourani, Hamka, JC Van Leur, and Uka Tjandrasmita. This theory states that the arrival of Islam to Indonesia was caused by the existence of trade relations between East and West Asia, especially after the establishment of three major empires such as the Umayyad Dynasty (660-749 AD) in West Asia, the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD) in East Asia. and the Srivijaya Kingdom (7th to 14th centuries AD). Islam was brought by traders from the Arabian Peninsula. They made voyages to the Eastern world not only for trade. AH Johns argues that they are no ordinary traders,¹⁰This theory is supported by the discovery of an Islamic community in the west coast of North Sumatra. This is in line with Hamka's opinion, citing a chronicle from China which states that a monk named I-Tsing had stopped on the west coast of Sumatra in 674 AD. At that time, a group of Arabs were found who made settlements and settled in the area which was later identified as an area. Barus, Central Tapanuli. Barus is an emporium city which is the center of the oldest civilization in the archipelago. The Greek governor based in Alexandria, Egypt, namely Claudius Ptolemy in his ancient map has mentioned that on the west coast of Sumatra there is a trading city called Barosai (Barus). Even camphor, which became its main commodity, was brought to Egypt for embalming purposes during the reign of Pharaoh Ramses II around the 5th century BC. In this area also found an ancient tomb with a tombstone inscribed with Sheikh Rukunuddin who died in 672 AD and the tomb of Sheikh Ushuluddin which is about seven meters long. This is proof that Islam has entered Indonesia since the 7th century AD or during the leadership of Muawiyah bin Abu Sufyan, the first caliph of the Umayyad dynasty. This theory was later referred to as the Mecca theory. This is proof that Islam has entered Indonesia since the 7th century AD or during the leadership of Muawiyah bin Abu Sufyan,

¹⁰Anzar Abdullah and Ismail Suardi Wekke, "Origins of Islam in Indonesia", *International Journal of Pure and Applied Mathematics*, Vol. 119, No. 18, 2018, p. 1156.

the first caliph of the Umayyad dynasty. This theory was later referred to as the Mecca theory. This is proof that Islam has entered Indonesia since the 7th century AD or during the leadership of Muawiyah bin Abu Sufyan, the first caliph of the Umayyad dynasty. This theory was later referred to as the Mecca theory.¹¹

While the second opinion states that Islam originated on the west coast of India, namely Gujarat and Malabar. The person who first came up with this opinion was Pijnappel, Professor of the Malay Language at Leiden University, the Netherlands. Then developed again by Cristian Snouck Hurgronje. He stated that Islam did not only originate from Gujarat, but also from Coromandel, a city originating from Southern India.¹² Other historians such as JP Moquette, RA Kern, Husein Djayaningrat, and Haji Agus Salim also support this theory. These figures argue that Islam came to Indonesia brought by the Gujarat people in the 13th century AD. This is based on studies and research on manuscripts, tombs, coins, and Colonial archives that have been found using the point of view of Philology and Archeology. ¹³ Supporting evidence for this theory comes from travel records of a traveler from Venice named Marco Polo in the 13th century AD and a traveler from Morocco, namely Ibn Battuta in the 14th century AD.¹⁴ At that time, the tomb of Sultan Malik As-Saleh was found in Samudera Pasai with the number 17 Dzulhijjah 831 H/27 September 1297 AD. A western historian, JP Moquette through his observations stated that there are similarities between the tombstones contained in the tomb with the existing tombstones. in Gujarat, India. Likewise, the tombstone found in the tomb of Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Gresik, dated to 822 H/1419 AD.¹⁵ This theory is known as the Gujarat theory which states that Islam came to Indonesia from Gujarat, India.

It should be noted that these two theories are the most accepted opinion by the majority of historians. However, it is possible that

¹¹Ibid, p. 1163-1167.

¹²Husaini Husda, "Islamisasi Nusantara (Analisis Terhadap Diskursus Para Sejarawan), *Adabiya*, Vol. 18, No. 35, August 2016, p. 18.

¹³Anzar Abdullah and Ismail Suardi Wekke, "Origins of Islam in Indonesia", *International Journal of Pure and Applied Mathematics*, Vol. 119, No. 18, 2018, p. 1159.

¹⁴Fatah Gratitude, *History of Islamic Civilization...*, p. 186.

¹⁵Husaini Husda..., p. 18-19.

there are other historians with different arguments. The emergence of Persian theory and Chinese theory which focuses on the similarities of cultural elements that develop in the life of the Islamic community in Indonesia is a natural thing because any historical research cannot be separated from the perspective and interpretation of the researchers on the data found.

In general, the development of Islam in Indonesia is divided into three periods. First, the arrival of Islamic traders to the archipelago around the 7th century AD. Second, the emergence of Islamic communities in several coastal areas of the archipelago as a continuation of the contact between Islamic traders and the indigenous population. Third, the establishment of Islamic kingdoms, which are thought to have emerged in the 13th century AD, stems from the founding of the Samudera Pasai Kingdom as the first Islamic kingdom in the archipelago. At first, Islamic communities were only found in the coastal areas of North Sumatra and east of the Malacca Strait. Only since the Aceh kingdom carried out its political expansion in the 16th and 17th centuries AD, the process of Islamization could be intensified to the interior areas.

Meanwhile, the process of Islamization in Java is estimated to have occurred since the 11th century AD. This is supported by the discovery of the tomb of Fatimah bint Maimun in Leran, Gresik which reads the number 475 H/1082 AD. Towards the end of the 13th century AD and the centuries after, Evidence of the process of Islamization in Java began to be found, both in the form of tombs such as those in Troloyo, Trowulan, and Gresik as well as foreign news such as from Ma-Huan in 1416 AD which stated that the process of Islamization had occurred in the coastal areas of Java, even reaching the center of the archipelago. Majapahit kingdom.¹⁶The figures who played an important role in the Islamization process in Java were the ulama who were members of a council known as the Wali Songo. The spread of Islam was carried out wisely without using violence and accommodated with the traditions of the local community so that Islam could easily develop during that period.

¹⁶Badri Yatim, *History of Islamic Civilization...*, p. 193-197.

The process of Islamization in other parts of Indonesia, such as Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and eastern Indonesia, especially Maluku, cannot be separated from the influence of trading activities with Muslim traders. This process has been going on since the 14th century AD. A traveler from Portugal, Tome Pires and Antonio Galvao argues that the Moluccans began to embrace Islam between the years 1460-1465 AD. In East Kalimantan, the first person to spread Islam was Dato' Ri Bandang and Tunggang Parangan around the year 1575 AD. While the process of Islamization in Sulawesi occurred in the 15th century AD. Then in the 16th century AD the kings of Gowa and Tallo officially converted to Islam, on September 22, 1605 AD to be exact.¹⁷ The process of Islamization in the archipelago did not stop at the emergence of Islamic-style kingdoms, but continues to this day with methods, methods, channels, and approaches that continue to develop according to the situation and conditions of the community.

C. Definition of Islam Nusantara

Based on the explanation above, it can be seen that the process of Islamization in Indonesia did not occur in a short time, but took a long time. This can be seen since the discovery of the Barus village, a Muslim community on the west coast of Sumatra in 674 AD until the emergence of Islamic kingdoms starting in the 13th century AD. Even in Ma Huan's records in 1433 AD, Islam was not widely accepted by the natives. . On his way, he encountered three groups of people who occupied the north coast of Java. First, all ethnic Chinese who are Muslim. Second, Arabs and Persians who are also Muslims. Third, the indigenous people with their animistic beliefs and dynamism. It is undeniable that for approximately 800 years, the process of Islamization has not been widely accepted by indigenous peoples.¹⁸

The massive spread of Islam during the Wali Songo period could not be separated from the influence of the methods and approaches used. The da'wah strategy that puts forward educational

¹⁷Ibid, p. 199-200.

¹⁸Nur Khalik Ridwan, et al., *Gerakan Islam Nusantara...*, p. 236-238.

cultural patterns, not confrontational radicals as has happened in the Middle East makes Islam easier for indigenous people to accept.¹⁹Islam, which was indigenized with local culture, later became the forerunner to the emergence of the idea of Islam Nusantara which has recently drawn pros and cons in a number of levels of society. Pipin Armita said that this idea was popularized by Prof. Dr. KH. Said Aqil Siradj on June 14, 2015 when opening the istighosah event at the Istiqlal Mosque, Jakarta. Kiai Said emphasized that the term Islam Nusantara refers to the historical traces of Islam which was spread peacefully without coercion or violence, but with a cultural approach.²⁰ However, because this idea was initiated by the Nahdhatul Ulama' mass organization as the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia, then there was an assumption that assumed that the term Islam Nusantara was a product of NU, thus creating a stigma for other groups.²¹ Therefore, a complete and comprehensive study is needed regarding the meaning of Nusantara Islam so that the unification of community understanding can be achieved so as to create a peaceful and peaceful life even though it is in the midst of diversity.

The phrase Islam Nusantara is a combination of the words "Islam" and "Nusantara". At a glance the phrase gives a double meaning, is the combination of words an arrangement? *na'at-man'ut* (nature) so that it has the meaning of "Islam that is Nusantara" or is an idhafah structure (designation of place) so that it shows the meaning of "Islam in the archipelago". Azyumardi Azra called Islam Nusantara with the term "distinctive Islam" as a result of the contact between universal Islam and socio-cultural conditions in a society. Islam Nusantara is a form of practice of Islamic teachings which is contextualized with the understanding of Indonesian society which is influenced by 'urf, culture, and social reality.²²Meanwhile, the Jama'ah Nahdliyin Mataram in its book "The Islamic Cultural

¹⁹Pipin Armita, *Islam Nusantara dari Indonesia untuk Peradaban Dunia*, dalam antologi "Islam Nusantara Inspirasi peradaban Dunia" (Jakarta: PBNU LTN & ISOMIL Committee 2016, 2016), p. 366.

²⁰Ibid, p. 359.

²¹Saiful Mustofa, "Meneguhkan Islam Nusantara untuk Islam Berkemajuan", *Episteme*, Vol. 10, No, 2, December 2015, p. 407.

²²Pipin Armita, *Islam Nusantara dari Indonesia untuk Peradaban Dunia...*, p. 361.

Movement of the Archipelago” places the phrase Islam Nusantara in the form of an adjective which means attribution. so that there will be an Islamic meaning that has the character and pattern of the archipelago that accommodates culture and tradition but still stands on the essence of Islam itself.²³This is reiterated by Teuku Kemal Fasya that the addition of the word "Nusantara" is an adjective explanation that shows the difference between the quality of Islam in the archipelago and Islam elsewhere. Islam as a religion that is peaceful and easily accepted by the Indonesian people is none other than because of its acculturation, adaptation, and resilience with local culture.²⁴

Actually, the term Islam Nusantara is not a term that refers to a new madzhab, a new group, or a new religion. Akhmad Sahal stated that to understand Nusantara Islam, one must believe in the existence of overlapping religious and cultural dimensionseach other. These two aspects cannot be separated, seeing that Islam is not a rigid and closed religion. In its journey, Islam will always be in contact with the culture of the local community so as to produce characters and characters that differ from one region to another. The formality of Islam in the Middle East is certainly different from Islam in Indonesia, but the essence remains the same. This happens because each region has a variety of cultures that develop in it.²⁵In this case, Nurcholis Madjid makes an example of the sarong object which is usually worn by Indonesians for the purpose of covering the genitals. Normatively, the sarong is a symbol of Islam but is only limited to the scope of Indonesia. However, its essence contains a universal intrinsic value, namely as a cover for genitalia. Where in a broader realm, there are distinctions in covering the genitals, such as the use of a robe in Arabia, sirwal in India, and pantalon in western countries. It is not an exaggeration to say that the sarong is one of the characteristics of Islam Nusantara.²⁶

²³Nur Khalik Ridwan, et al., *Nusantara Islamic Cultural Movement...*, p. 4.

²⁴Saiful Mustofa, “Strengthening Nusantara Islam for Progressive Islam”, *Episteme*, Vol. 10, No, 2, December 2015, p. 409.

²⁵*Ibid*, p. 407.

²⁶Eko Andrianto, *Kedamaian Universal (as-Silmi Kaffah): Watak Dasar Islam Nusantara yang Menginspirasi Dunia*, dalam antologi “Islam Nusantara Inspirasi peradaban Dunia” (Jakarta: PBNU LTN & ISOMIL Committee 2016, 2016), p. 332.

In the rules of Usul Fiqh, it has been explained that *al-'Addah muhakkamah* which has the meaning of custom or habit can be used as a source of Islamic law provided that it does not conflict with Islamic principles. Therefore, Wali Songo also took a locality-based da'wah strategy. Traditions that do not conflict with Islamic Shari'a are maintained, while traditions that do not conform are not immediately removed, but are inserted with Islamic values. The acculturation between local traditions and Islam then produces various local wisdoms that are characteristic of Nusantara Islam. This can be found in various mosque buildings in the archipelago such as the Great Mosque of Kudus, the Great Mosque of Demak, as well as various other architectures that illustrate the combination of two different cultures. In retrospect, the actual acculturation of Islam with local culture is not a new phenomenon. The practice of religious rituals such as *istisqa'* prayer, *tawaf*, and so on is an Arab tradition that has developed since the Prophet Muhammad SAW had not delivered the message of Islam.

Furthermore, the marriage between two different cultures gave rise to an Islamic civilization with an archipelago pattern that was accommodating, tolerant, relaxed, and welcome diversity. Nurcholis Madjid or who is often called Cak Nur emphasized that a civilization or human thought would be even stronger if it had three values covering roots in tradition, originality, and relevance. Islam Nusantara is an idea to realize Islam that is *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. Walking in the footsteps of Wali Songo who spread Islam with full wisdom reflects that a socio-cultural-based Nusantara Islam can establish peace as a manifestation of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* itself.²⁷

D. Wali Songo as an Agent for Shaping the Tradition of Islam Nusantara

Wali Songo in the understanding of Indonesian society is a term associated with figures who played a role in the spread of Islam in Indonesia, especially in Java in the 15th and 16th centuries AD. For the Javanese, the figures who are members of the Wali Songo are

²⁷Zakiya Darajat, "Warisan Islam Nusantara", *Al-Turats*, Vol. 21, No. 1, January 2015, p. 78-84.

believed to be religious broadcasters with a deep understanding of science, possessing supernatural powers, magic, and sacredness. According to Prof. Dr. Simuh as quoted by Agus Sunyoto, Wali Songo's terminology is the embodiment of the cosmological concept of "Nawa Dewata" which has developed among Javanese and Balinese Hindus who believe that the universe is guarded and protected by the gods guarding the cardinal directions. There are eight gods who control the eight cardinal directions and one god as the ruler of the central direction so that there are nine. In other words, the selection of the term Wali Songo is a takeover from the Hinduistic concept of Nawa Dewata to the Sufistic concept of Wali Nine.²⁸

If you study more about Wali Songo, you will not only find Wali Songo figures who have become famous in the ears of the Indonesian people, such as Sunan Gresik, Sunan Ampel, Sunan Giri, Sunan Drajat, Sunan Bonang, Sunan Kalijaga, Sunan Muria, Sunan Kudus, and Sunan Teak Mountain. This is because Wali Songo is a da'wah institution with regular and continuous member changes and has experienced several "management" periods of change. The first period includes Maulana Malik Ibrahim (Sunan Gresik), Maulana Ishaq, Maulana Ahmad Jumadil Kubra, Maulana Muhammad Al-Maghribi, Maulana Malik Israil, Maulana Muhammad Ali Akbar, Maulana Hasanuddin, Maulana Aliyuddin, and Sheikh Subakir. Because in 1419 AD Maulana Malik Ibrahim died, he was replaced by Raden Rahmad Ali Rahmatullah (Sunan Ampel). In 1435 AD Maulana Malik Israel and Muhammad Ali Akbar also died, which was later replaced by Sayyid Ja'far Sadiq (Sunan Kudus) and Syarif Hidayatullah (Sunan Gunung Jati). This period was later referred to as the second period of Wali Songo. In the third period there were four guardians who replaced the previous guardians, namely Raden Paku (Sunan Giri) replacing Maulana Ishaq, Raden Said (Sunan Kalijaga) replacing Sheikh Subakir, Raden Makdum Ibrahim (Sunan Bonang) replacing Maulana Hasanuddin, and Raden Qasim (Sunan Drajat) who replaced Maulana Aliyuddin. The next period was

²⁸ Agus Sunyoto, *Atlas Wali Songo: Buku Pertama yang Mengungkap Wali Songo Sebagai Fakta Sejarah* (Depok: LESBUMI PBN, 2017), p. 142-147.

marked by the entry of Raden Fatah and Fathullah Khan who replaced Ahmad Jumadil Kubra and Muhammad Maghribi. The last period Sunan Muria entered the Wali Songo council. It is estimated that he replaced Raden Fatah who ascended the throne as the first Sultan of Demak. and Raden Qasim (Sunan Drajat) who replaced Maulana Aliyuddin. The next period was marked by the entry of Raden Fatah and Fathullah Khan who replaced Ahmad Jumadil Kubra and Muhammad Maghribi. The last period Sunan Muria entered the Wali Songo council. It is estimated that he replaced Raden Fatah who ascended the throne as the first Sultan of Demak. and Raden Qasim (Sunan Drajat) who replaced Maulana Aliyuddin. The next period was marked by the entry of Raden Fatah and Fathullah Khan who replaced Ahmad Jumadil Kubra and Muhammad Maghribi. The last period Sunan Muria entered the Wali Songo council. It is estimated that he replaced Raden Fatah who ascended the throne as the first Sultan of Demak.²⁹

The saints mentioned above all have nasab from various nations, some of which Most of them came from Arab, Egyptian, Persian, Gujarat, and Samarkandi who married the natives (Majapahit and Pajajaran). From the mother line, Raden Patah and Sunan Ampel are descendants of the king of Campa (Cambodia) who originally came from Samarkandi. It should be noted that there are no Wali Songo clerics who have direct blood relations with the Chinese and Chinese.³⁰ Basically they do not live at the same time, but have a close relationship, both in blood relations (nasab) and scientific relations (teacher-student).

The Wali Songo period can be said to be a reform of the Islamization process in Indonesia. Previously, the spread of Islam tended to be individual without organizational management. It was only during this period that the process of Islamization was carried out with good, organized, systematic and sustainable principles of organization. The use of da'wah methods with neat approaches and strategies makes Islam a religion that is easily accepted by the people of Indonesia.

²⁹ Nur Khalik Ridwan, et al., *Nusantara Islamic Cultural Movement...*, p. 240.

³⁰Ridin Sofwan, et al., *Islamisasi di Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2000), p. 20.

E. Wali Songo's Efforts in Forming the Foundation of Islam Nusantara Tradition

Wali Songo has a moderate attitude towards local culture. This can be seen when Wali Songo adopted local culture and traditions and filled them with Islamic values. This attitude is still maintained, even though Wali Songo has become part of the majority as a Muslim community along with the establishment of many Islamic kingdoms. Besides, even if the changeThe old society which is characterized by the old community of Kapitayan and Hindu-Buddhist influences into an Islamic society has occurred, but in a number of aspects related to the patterns and structures of the old society there has not been any revolutionary change in the new society.³¹Wali Songo as the main character who wants the change has its own efforts in forming a new foundation in a tradition. Because it is undeniable that Wali Songo made a big contribution to Javanese culture. Not only in the field of education and teaching, but other aspects of culture in general. The following are some of Wali Songo's efforts that can be relevant to the current religion, as follows.

1. Prioritizing Religious Substance over Formality

Indeed, religion contains two dimensions, namely symbols represented by language and teachings stored in language. The main dimension of both is actually the teaching, not the symbol. However, for people with formalist religious reasoning, symbols are often more powerful than their teachings. This is one of the reasons why some religious groups with formalist reasoning attack, destroy and eradicate the customs of society which they view as heresy and contrary to monotheism. The group destroys a lot of symbols that are considered to cause polytheism in the context of purification of monotheism that is carried out. In Indonesia, these religious groups are generally known as groups that have been contaminated with Wahhabi teachings such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Hizb ut-Tahrir. Generally,

³¹Agus Sunyoto, *Atlas Wali Songo: Buku Pertama yang Mengungkap Wali Songo Sebagai Fakta Sejarah...*, p. 407.

The reasoning culture of formalist religious groups that tend to be exclusive and conservative is in fact incompatible with the socio-anthropological context and cultural basis of the multicultural Indonesian society. Socio-anthropologically, Indonesian people do not recognize religious movements that are ideological and exclusive, such as those driven by religious groups with formalist reasoning, on the contrary, Indonesian people prefer an attitude of openness, tolerance, away from conflict, and acculturation.³² The attitude of the Indonesian people is nothing but the values and attitudes shown by Wali Songo when forming the foundation of the tradition of Islam Nusantara.

Local tradition and culture is one of the formal aspects of Islam which was designed by Wali Songo as a tool to convey da'wah in the past around the 14th century AD. Some of the efforts of Wali Songo in the beginning to form a new tradition were by prioritizing the substance of religion rather than its formality. This can be found in the efforts of Wali Songo, one of which is in terms of slametans and offerings. Before the Wali Songo era, the old people used offerings in the form of food to places that were considered sacred, such as under big trees, rivers, and the ocean. Wali Songo then did not necessarily prohibit the ritual, but instilled and replaced the original intention with the intention of giving alms to other creatures of Allah SWT.

In addition, Wali Songo also carried out assimilation and syncretization of the values of religious traditions such as in the case of Islamic boarding school education which is also a form of assimilation of Hindu-Buddhist education. The previous Islamic boarding school was a local education system characterized by Hindu-Buddhist and Kapitayan which was later adopted as an Islamic educational institution. In his leadership system, the kyai occupies the highest position. According to Zamakhsyari Dhofier, there are five basic elements of the pesantren tradition, namely the hut, the mosque, the santri, the teaching of classical books and the kyai. Indirectly, Zamkhsyari Dhofier argues that if a recitation institution has developed to have these five elements, then its status changes to

³²Edy Susanto and Karimullah, Islam Nusantara: Islam Khas dan Akomodasi Terhadap Budaya Lokal, *Al-Ulum Journal*, vol. 16, no. June 1, 2016, p. 60-61.

become a pesantren.³³In the Hindu-Buddhist era, the pesantren called 'dukuh' was a hermitage to educate prospective priests called wiku. The education system emphasizes etiquette in studying, spiritual and emotional processing, and being obedient and loyal. Thus, the values and processes taught in the Hindu-Buddhist Hamlet have similarities with education in Islamic boarding schools. Where aspects of student education are more focused on the formation of character and character.

2. The spread of religious substances is carried out through popular culture

If we look at the spread of Islam in other parts of the world, its spread and expansion is carried out by means of violence through war and the conquest of controlled areas. This is contrary to the method of expansion and spread of Islamic da'wah carried out by Wali Songo through peaceful means without the slightest violence. One of them is through popular culture by means of acculturation and assimilation.³⁴

For example, Wali Songo who shows the level of hard work in the field of wayang. Sunan Kalijaga is creative by making equipment such as screens. The sail symbolically symbolizes the sky and the universe, debog (banana stem) which symbolizes the earth, and belencong (big lamp) which symbolizes the sun. While the puppeteer, that is a symbol of God's way of governing His creatures. From the stories compiled, Sunan Kalijaga also gave the character the shape of the main character of the wayang so as not to violate Islamic

³³Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Pandangan Hidup Kyai dan Visinya Mengenai Masa Depan Indonesia* (West Jakarta: LP3ES, 2011), p. 79.

³⁴According to Ahmad Khoiri, cultural acculturation is a form of moderation in the midst of an inclusive religious view. Indonesia as a country with diverse socio-cultural realities, the religious aspect has a significant portion for the unifying creator, but on the other hand it also has the potential to be a sentiment that divides unity. Therefore, in order to anticipate the last possibility, in the midst of a pluralistic socio-cultural order, acculturation becomes a necessary route. This is based on the fact that the Qur'an is accommodating to the concepts of moderation such as tolerance, unity, and justice, so confronting it with reality is unavoidable; In practical terms, this is what is called acculturation. See Ahmad Khoiri, *Moderasi Islam dan Akulturasi Budaya: Revitalisasi Kemajuan Peradaban Islam Nusantara*, *ISLAMADINA Journal*, vol. 20, no. 1, March 2019, p. 7.

regulations. The puppets, in and during the Wali Songo proselytizing process, such as slametans and offerings were not removed and banned, but instead were used as much as possible as a supporting tool in spreading Islam.³⁵

So, in Wali Songo's da'wah, especially in the fields of art and culture as well as entertainment, Wali Songo explored and used it creatively and as much as possible to become a wasilah (connection) to Islamize the land of Java, which at that time still adhered to the Hindu-Buddhist and animist views. The strategy adopted by Wali Songo is popularly attracts attention and is easily accepted by the audience because it is not too surprising.³⁶

3. The nature of openness

One more thing that shows Wali Songo's attitude in preaching is an open attitude. This is shown in people's lives where Wali Songo adopts the architectural philosophy of the old community into the architecture of the mosque. The mosque with a three-tiered top is a representation of an egalitarian social order that makes ordinary people no longer feel awkward to join in that place.³⁷ However, the mosque with the roof was not built only for the common people, but for Muslims as a whole including the nobles or even the King.³⁸

In addition, Wali Songo's open attitude was also shown when carrying out religious symbols creatively, one of which was by holding commemorative Islamic holidays. One such celebration is sekaten in order to commemorate the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. This Sekaten celebration begins seven days before the commemoration of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad SAW on 12 Rabi'ul Awal and ends with the Garebeg ceremony, which is a ceremony culminating in the reading of *Siratun Nabiyy* (the history of

³⁵Widji Saksono, *Mengislamkan Tanah Jawa: Telaah atas Metode Dakwah Wali Songo* (Bandung: Mizan Publisher, 1996), p. 148-149.

³⁶Ibid., p. 61.

³⁷As it is known that in Hindu society there are differences in caste or class which are described in the three-tiered temple architecture. The three castes include Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Sudras.

³⁸Suparjo, *Islam dan Budaya: Strategi Kultural Wali Songo dalam Membangun Masyarakat Muslim Indonesia*, *Journal of Da'wah STAIN Purwokerto*, vol. 2, no. 2 July 2008, p. 126-127.

the Prophet) followed by Southern alms, namely distributing food gifts from the Sultan at the Grand Mosque.³⁹

Some of Wali Songo's efforts above were later adopted by Gus Dur with a new term, namely the indigenization of Islam. The indigenization of Islam, which was proclaimed by Gus Dur in the 1980s, was an attempt to bridge the gap between religion and culture, which were not mutually exclusive. Gus Dur also admitted that the idea of indigenizing Islam actually stands and takes the spirit of what Wali Songo taught in his da'wah. In line with that, the indigenization of Islam is an inevitable process when religion meets local culture. Religion (Islam) is believed to originate from the revelation of Allah SWT, on the contrary, culture is a product of human thought. Religion is permanent, while culture is changing. But the relationship between religion and culture is not easy to break or separate, the two have a complex relationship.⁴⁰ More than that, whether Wali Songo or Gus Dur, this attitude is in line with and practicing the rules of *ushul fiqh al-muhafazatu bi qadimis ash-shalih wal-aldzu bil Jadid al-ashlah* (maintaining good old things and adopting new things that are better).).

F. Conclusion

Wali Songo's success in his da'wah is due to internal factors, aka emerging from within Wali Songo himself. This is because Wali Songo uses a method of da'wah that is in line with the Prophet Muhammad, namely bil wisdom and *maw'izhatul hasanah*. In addition, the elements in Islam itself have many similarities and conformity with the original Indonesian elements. Islam as a religion is proven to be able to manifest in any culture, including Indonesian culture and then gives birth to many religious expressions as pioneered by Wali Songo as the main agent.

The three efforts made by Wali Songo in his preaching, such as prioritizing religious substance over formality, spreading religious

³⁹Widji Saksono, *Islamizing the Land of Java...*, p. 150.

⁴⁰Abdurrahman Wahid, *Pribumisasi Islam*, dalam buku *Islam Nusantara dari Ushul Fiqih hingga Paham Kebangsaan* (Bandung: PT Mizan Pustaka, 2015) p. 33.

substance through popular culture, and prioritizing openness to local traditions, it can be concluded that all of them illustrate that Wali Songo places more emphasis on the essence/substance dimension than the artificial dimension in religious. Wali Songo can distinguish the core teachings/substances of the culture that surrounds them so that the Nusantara Islamic tradition is formed which is practiced by the Indonesian Muslim community until now. What is certain is that Wali Songo conveyed Islam that made a real contribution to society rather than Islam which was accepted formally and also understood formally.

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