

JAVANESE MUSLIM LOCAL CULTURE AND TRADITION IN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: Back to the history of Islam arrival in Java, Islam came to Java is not in the condition of cultural vacuum. There have been a growing local culture in Javanese society, like Hindu culture, Buddhist culture and Animism-Dinamism culture. This condition then makes the Javanese Muslims people can not be separated from the existing cultures, and bring some pros and cons for doing it. In terms of the said culture, it is something that is related to the cycle of life like birth, marriage, and death as a transitional phase in terms of improving religious improvement. Beyond of the said culture, there are another Javanese Muslim traditions and cultures such as Sekaten. Sekaten is a tradition that came as one of preaching's ways to spreading Islamic beliefs in Java. Which is that time the majority was Hindu. Based on the investigation result, the existing tradition and culture (that have been) done by Javanese Muslims is the outcome of culture acculturation between Islamic and Hindu-Buddhist cultures which was done by Wali Songo (The nine-saints). Through the cultural acculturation, Walisongo spread the Islamic beliefs in wise and humanity ways. So that the Islamic beliefs can be accepted by the community as well. In Islamic perspective, doing the said tradition and culture above for the safeguard of the community united is allowed as long as the tradition and culture is not contradicting to the paramaters of Islamic beliefs it self.

Keywords: Javanese Tradition, Culture, Islamic Perspective

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia as one of country that has many islands (archipelago) in the world. Which mean Indonesia has a variety of races, tribes, religions, languages, and cultures. As an archipelago with diverse cultures, this make Indonesia people have a variety of patterns and characteristics. Besides that, Indonesia also known as one of the biggest muslim population country in the world. According to the history of arrival and spread of Islam in Indonesia, Islam came as a new religion where the religions that adopted in Indonesia at that time were Hindu and

Buddhist, and also there some people that embrace Animism and Dinamism beliefs. Islam became a new religion because it came from aboard.¹

There some popular theory that explained about history of arrival and spread of Islam in Indonesia such as Gujarat-India theory, Middle East theory, and Persia theory. But from all the theory said, there is one theory that believed as the most right history of arrival and spread of Islam in Indonesia that is Middle East theory. This theory said that Islam came from a group of Arabs that living in the west coast of Sumatra in 652 AD². Azyumadi Azra also give the same opinion about this in his book. It said that the arrival and spread of Islam in Indonesia happened since the first century of Hijria, directly came from Arab. The spreader of this belief is the da'I (the professional Islamic preacher) that sent by Islamic institution under khalifa instruction on purpose.³ Although the history noted that Arab played a major role about arrival and spread of Islam in Indonesia, Islam in Indonesia is not as the original Islam as it was the first time came in Arab. So that is why Indonesia muslims have the different socio-cultural expressions form the Middle East.

Islam as the universal religion marging with the diverse local culture, so that in society's life, Islam and the local culture canf not be sparated. Both of them are one part that complate each others. In Indonesia, especially in Java, the people until now cannot be sparated from the local culture and tradition itself. Regarding from the Islamic history in Java, Islam came not in the vacuum of culture condition. There have been growing a local culture from the people itself such as Hindu-Buddhist culture and also from Animism belief.

The occurrence of islamization in Java has created the culture acculturation between Islam and the local cultures so, Islam culture mixing with the local cultures. This condition then bring some pros and cons in Javanese muslim society itself. Therefore it is necessary to know what kind of culture and tradition that have been done by Javanese muslim society and what law of doing it if seen by Islamic perspective. Then this topic will be present by author in this paper.

¹ Mujamil Qomar, "Ragam Identitas Islam Di Indonesia Dari Perspektif," *Episteme*, IAIN Tulungagung, Vol. 10, (2015): 318.

² Zainal Abidin, "Sejarah Islam Indonesia," February, 2019, <https://zakat.or.id/sejarah-islam-indonesia/>.

³ Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII Dan XVIII* (Bandung: Mizan, 1995). 31

FIND AND DISCUSSION

Javanese Culture

Before Islam came to Indonesia, the people's major religions are Hindu and Buddhist. In Java itself, Animism and Dinamism became the major beliefs then followed by Hindu and Buddhist as a major religions. So there have been a growing local culture in Javanese society, like Hindu culture, Buddhist culture and Animism-Dinamism culture. Until the 7th century, Islam began to enter Java,⁴ and this is become the reason why Islam came to Java not in the cultural vacuum condition.

Culture is derived from Latin. In Latin, culture is written as *colore*. This Latin word can mean cultivating. According to Koentjaraningrat, in Indonesia, culture taken from word of "budaya" which is derived from Sanskrit "*budayah*" as a plural form of *buddhi* (mind). There are some expert mentioning culture as the developing plural form of *budidaya* which means *cipta* (creation), *karsa* (wish), and *rasa* (sense). So the meaning of culture is the result of creation, wish, and sense of human being.⁵ Or it could be understood by the entire human being from behaviour and the result of regular behaviour it self by the system of conduct that gained by studying. Which all of them arranged in the society's life.

With regards to Islam acculturation in Java, Javanese culture is divided into two eras. The first one is Javanese culture in pre-Islamic acculturation era (pre-Hindu Buddhist and Hindu-Buddhist culture eras), and the second one is Javanese culture in Islamic era.

1. Javanese culture in pre-Islamic acculturation era

Before Islam came to Java, people majority's fate is Animism then followed by Hindu and Budhhist. The characteristic of Javanese people is living in kinship. Where the society is tied up with norms like norms of tradition or religion. Javanese culture in pre-Islamic acculturation era is divided into two eras. There are pre-Hindu Buddhist era (Animism belief) and Hindu-Buddhist era.

First of All, pre Hindu-Budhhist era. In this era, Animism became the major's fate of Javanese people. Animism is the believe in soul and spirits on objects, places, and creatures all possess a distinct spiritual essence. With this believe, they believe that there a big spirit controlling the world that stronger than

⁴ The arrival of Islam in java still bring some pros and cons. This opinion is carried by Hamka that stating Islam entered in Java have the same period as Islam entered in Sumatra that is the first century Hijria or 7th century AD.

⁵ Ahmad Khalil, *Sufisme Dalam Etika Dan Tradisi Jawa* (Malang: UIN Malang Press, 2008).129

human. So to avoiding the anger of the spirit itself they worship them with doing a ritual tradition such ceremonial and give a ritual offerings.⁶ This kind of worship then create a customary law and sbecame the most rooted cultural value in Javanese society because of their trust of ancestors and spiritual essense in the universe.

Talking about the social community of Javanese people in pre-Hindu Buddhist era (Animism) they already created the first political institution in the village level. And created regulation of central irrigation through local leaders. The form of social government in this era is forming as small village republic where in that small environment, they are emotionally attached, so their emotional bounding make a strong relation of solidarity.⁷

Secondly, Hindu-Buddhist era. In this era, Indonesia had interlace some social relation with other countries such a trade relation with India, Arab, China, and Persia. The arrival of India and China also overspread in Java and then causing some Javanese people have the same religion as in India and China. This fact is proven by the existence of an ancient kingdoms in East Java like Mataram Kingdom that embrace Hinduism and Buddhist, and many others.

In fact, the Javanese society's culture in Hindu-Buddhist era is the manifestation of Hindu Buddhist beliefs since the arrival of Hindu and Buddhist itself. With regard to Javanese culture in Hindu-buddhist era is the culture such as traditional ceremony that conducted to gained life prosperity from goddess, which the existence of this tradition still can be seen until now. Among the said tradition there are old rituals like *wiwit* (beginning of planting season) this aiming to gain economic prosperity which is manifested in the worship of the rice goddess, Dewi Sri. Eventhough term of Dewi Sri originally from India, this myth also spread in Indonesia with various version until to an island that completely untouched by India influence. Then about the opposing powers, to maintain the harmony of cosmos, the people also doing some fertility rituals in their village so the people are blessed with many children.⁸ Aside from the said ceremony above, there are some tradition and ceremony like grebeg, slametan, and many others.

2. Javanese culture in Islamic era

Islam came to Java after the arrival of Hindu and Buddhist religion. Where Javanese people in Hindu and Buddhist era are open minded to receiving a new

⁶ Darori Amin, *Islam Dan Kebudayaan Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Gama Media, 2002).6

⁷ Khalil, *Islam Jawa, Sufisme Dalam Etika Dan Tradisi Jawa*.135

⁸ Amin, *Islam Dan Kebudayaan Jawa*.14-16

religion and tradition. On their mind, they assumed that every religion is good and right, the most important is on practicing the religious/tradition itself have to dedicated for society's advantage collectively.⁹

When Islam came to Java, Islam did not force to abolish the exist Javanese belief. As Hindu belief came to Java, Islam also spread to Javanese scholars life that handling the rules of society's life. Islam is modified with the exist beliefs like Animism, Dynamism, and also Hindu-Buddhist¹⁰. The arrival of Islam then creating a new model of acculturation where the previous acculturation happened between Javanese culture and Hindu-Buddhist culture, then the new acculturation occurred between Javanese and Hindu-Buddhist culture with Islamic culture.

The spread of Islamic belief to scholars that have the authority in society's have made Islam as inseparable part of scholars and the noble's life itself. The kingdom that first had the character of Hindu-Buddhist then had a contact with the characteristic of Islamic culture because the acculturation. In this Islamic era Javanese cultural activists actively learn what is in Islamic belief and then transferred and integrated it with the kingdoms culture they controlled. The court sides as the supporter and protector of certain religions felt like they have to help out gracing Islamic missionary. So the kings/sultans try to harmonize the two cultures and build various facilities that structural and cultural for the sake of achieving Islamic missionary itself. That is why in Demak Kingdom's come up various religious ceremony such as *sekaten*, *grebeg maulud*, *grebeg hari raya fitrah*, *grebeg hari raya haji*, and many others.¹¹

Therefore, Javanese traditions and culture in the Islamic period from the establishment of the Islamic kingdoms such as Demak, Pajang, until Mataram still retains the Hindu-Buddhist tradition and also the animism-dynamism which is those cultures and traditions is pre-Hindu-Budhhist culture period, which of course in maintaining the culture remains adapted to the values of Islamic belief itself.

Kinds of tradition and Islamic culture in Java

Islam through Al-Qur'an and Sunnah very concerned about the important processes that related with life cycle such as birth, marriage, and death as a transitional phase in terms of improving religious improvement. For the Javanese muslims, those cycle become an important aspect that cannot be sparated from

⁹ Khalil, *Islam Jawa, Sufisme Dalam Etika Dan Tradisi Jawa*.145

¹⁰ Khalil.146

¹¹ Khalil.146-148

the journey of human's neither physically nor spiritually. Therefore kind of tradition in Javanese muslim's society usually related with those cycle. And then when performing/doing the rituals, people accommodated it between the basic of Islamic belief with the Javanese ancestors belief.

One of the popular tradition in Javanese muslim society is "Slametan". Slametan is a communal ritual ceremony that become a tradition in Islamic Java society that implemented in important events in someone life such as birth, marriage, death, building a house, harvest, celebrating big events and many others. Generally, the aim of doing slametan is for creating properous condition, safe condition and free from the distraction of bad creatures (human and devil). The object that used for worship in the beginning was the of ancestors who was considered have magical power.¹² And then, when Islam come to Java that tradition still exist but the substance is more islamic such as the prayers. And the object that used for worship changed from ancestors to Allah the Almighty.¹³

Besides the culture and tradition that often used in life cycle (birth, marriage, and death) such slametan, there some another tradition and culture such as sekaten ceremony and grebeg Maulud. Sekaten is a ceremony to celebrating big event such Maulud (Birth of prophet PBUH) that have been done by Yogyakarta society that placed in Kraton Ngayogyakarta.¹⁴ Sekaten ceremony is identic with grebeg and playing two gamelan Kiai dan Nyai Sakati in front of Sultani Mosque in birth of Prophet Muhammad PBUH. While grebeg is a king/sultan's ceremony that symbolic with tumpengan and ambengan or known as the mountain of foods (gunungan). This gunungan then brought from palace where the king of Keraton Yogyakarta and the royal family will come out from the Keraton sending gunungan to muslim leader to give some prays to it.¹⁵ Sekaten ceremony and grebeg are the culture and tradition came from Java (*Kejawen*) which the contents or substances have been islamization. Back then, this ceremony used by Walisongo (nine-saint) to Islamification Javanese society before they know about Islam, it is bacuse at that time the major belief of Javanese society ware Hindu and Buddhist.

¹² Khalil.279

¹³ Mundzirin Yusuf, *Islam Dan Budaya Lokal* (Yogyakarta: Pokja Akademik UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2005).16

¹⁴ Marzuki, "Tradisi Dan Budaya Masyarakat Jawa Dalam Perspektif Islam," eprints.uny.ac.id, 2006, https://www.bing.com/search?q=https%3A%2F%2F02F02Feprints.uny.ac.id5._tradisi_dan_budaya_masyarakat_jawa_dalam_perspektif_islam.pdf. 8

¹⁵ Simun, *Sufisme Jawa : Transformasi Islam Ke Mistik Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Bentang Budaya, 1996).129

Javanese Culture and Tradition in Islamic Perspective

Religion is identic with culture. It is because both of them are the guidance in our life. What make them difference is, if religion comes from God, while cultures come from agreement of people. So that is why religion and culture are integrated and affect each other because both of them had the same things like symbols and values. Religion known as a devoting symbol to God. While culture also considered as a symbol and has values for human to living. Religion needs symbol system, which means in other words religion need culture. But we have to distinguish to understand this. Religion is something that final, universal, eternal, and absolute. Meanwhile culture is something particular, relative, and temporary. So religion without culture indeed still can stood alone as the religion itself but, without culture, religion as collectivity will not have a place in society's life.¹⁶

When Islam came to Java, actually the Javanese people already have the local life guidelines that they obey. Then the arrival of Islam is identic with new culture that will acculturate with the exist culture and change the exist culture elements.¹⁷ According to the tradition and culture that mention in this result is the outcome of culture acculturation between Javanese and Islamic culture so the Islamic values more visible in every tradition and ritual that done by Javanese muslim. The outcome of culture acculturation between Javanese and Islamic culture is coming from Wali Songo (The nine-saints) that doing Islamic missionary through acculturation and self-adjustment ways with the exist culture. The aim of doing Islamic missionary through acculturation and self-adjustment ways is to gained a peacefull condition in society's life. Because religion and diversity will not live peacefully in society's life if the preachers did not adopting good varieuse culture (*al-Sunnah al-tsaqafiyah*). Therefore it is necessary to consider if cultural elements in the locality aspect all removed from the religion system, this will bring some cons and causing a conflict and chaos to community itself.¹⁸

In Islam, Al-Qur'an as the life guidance already explain the position of tradition and culture in religion. Islam as a religion with the perfect sharia is functioned to control all living things in the world such as human. Every rules, suggestions, and orders will give a positive impact, and every prohibition that not done will bring a good luck for human being. One of the prohibition that will

¹⁶ Kuntowijoyo, *Muslim Tanpa Masjid : Esai-Esai Agama, Budaya, Dan Politik Dalam Bingkai Strukturalisme Transendental* (Bandung: Mizan, 2001).196

¹⁷ Yusuf, *Islam Dan Budaya Lokal*.11

¹⁸ Muhammad Sholikhin, *Ritual Dan Tradisi Islam Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Narasi, 2010).20

bring a good luck if you not doing it as example is abstaining the ancestors previous habits that contrary to Islamic beliefs.

According to the law of the tradition and culture that have been done by Javanese Muslim, Quraish Shihab ever mention about doing a tradition an culture that never exist in Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) era. He said that Islam came to Java not in cultural vacuum condition. There have been a growing culture that develop in the society's life. Then the good culture and tradition (which is not contrary to Islamic beliefs) being preserved in Islam, meanwhile the culture and tradition that contrary to Islamic beliefs being rejected and attempts to correct misconceptions and negative cultures so that culture being acceptable in Islamic beliefs. Such as system of adopted children in jahiliyyah (ignorance) era that being corrected by Islamic perspective which is allowed to adopted children but the status beome not exactly the same as a biological children.¹⁹

Moreover, Islam perceives that avoiding bad deeds have greater rewards than only doing a good deeds . As many scholars (*'alim ulama*) say ²⁰:

الضَّرُّ يُزَالُ

"Harms should be remove"

This also could be use for responding to culture and tradition issues in society's life. Some chapter and verse in Al-Qur'an command to do *'urf* (local habits and tradition that became one of the sources of jurisprudence/ fiqh)²¹ and *ma'ruf* (goodness), the ulamas of principles of Islamic jurisprudence made a conclusion rules that said: *Al-'adah Muhakkimah*. Which mean *adah* (traditions) that did not contradict with the prinsiples of Islamic belief are the sources to determined the binding laws.²²

Therefore, the society's culture and tradition are allowed and can be maintained as long as they are not contradicting with the principles of Islamic belief. In this condition, the culture and tradition that have been done by the Javanese muslim people could be seen as religious culture only, not as the core values of Islam itself. So, if some people choose to not doing it, that can not be considered wrong. And if there some people (muslims) doing the local culture and tradition it only can be considered as the *siar* (Actions or attempts to convey

¹⁹ Sholikhin.27

²⁰ Muhamad Mas'ud Zein, *Sitematika Teori Hukum Islam (Qawa'id-Fiqhiyyah)*. Al-Syarifah Al-Khadizah (Ponorogo: Darussalam Press Gontor, 2006).60

²¹ Reuben Levy, *Susunan Masyarakat Islam* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 1986).116

²² Sholikhin, *Ritual Dan Tradisi Islam Jawa*.27

and introducing various things in Islam). What most important is from all religion substains in life such as birth, marriage, and death we still have to believe and maintained it because, Islam still connected with those life's cycle. Regarding on how the people expressed the local culture and tradition they believe it is up to each individual itself as long as how they expressed it not contradicting with Islamic belief itself.

CONCLUSION

Kind of the tradition and culture (that have been) done by Javanese Muslims is something that related to the life's cycle. And the tradition that related to this life's cycle is *Slametan*. Slametan known as a communal ritual ceremony that implemented in important events in someone life such as birth, marriage, death, building a house, harvest, celebrating big events and many others. Besides selamatan, ther another tradition like sekaten and grebeg maulud.

Based on the investigation result, the existing tradition and culture (that have been) done by Javanese Muslims is the outcome of culture acculturation between Islamic and Hindu-Buddhist cultures which was done by Wali Songo (The nine-saints). This aim to Islamic missionary and to Islamification Javanese society before they know about Islam. Through the cultural acculturation, Walisongo spread the Islamic beliefs in wise and self-adjustment ways. So that the Islamic beliefs can be accepted by the community as well. In Islamic perspective, doing the said tradition and culture above for the safeguard and avoiding chaos of the community united is allowed as long as the tradition and culture is not contradicting to the paramaters of Islamic beliefs itself.

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