

## **ISLAM'S COMPROMISE WITH ARCHIPELAGO CULTURE IN THE ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL AND MADRASAH EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDONESIA**

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**Abstract:** This study examines the dynamics of accommodation and compromise between Islamic values and Nusantara cultural traditions in the context of the development of pesantren and madrasah educational systems in Indonesia. Historically, the spread of Islam in the Nusantara archipelago did not occur confrontationally, but rather through a long process of cultural negotiation, giving birth to a distinctive model of Islamic education different from Islamic educational traditions elsewhere in the world. Using a social history approach, this research traces how pesantren and madrasah grew as educational institutions that not only transferred religious doctrine, but also became spaces of synthesis between classical Islamic scholarly traditions and local Nusantara wisdom. The results show that the Islam-Nusantara compromise in the pesantren and madrasah educational system is reflected in three main aspects: (1) adaptation of teaching methods combining the halaqah tradition with Nusantara oral culture; (2) integration of customary values and local ethics into the akhlak and tasawuf curriculum; and (3) institutional flexibility of pesantren in responding to social change without abandoning its Islamic identity.

**Keywords:** *Islam Nusantara; pesantren; madrasah; cultural acculturation; social history of education; Islamic education; Islamic kingdoms.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The long history of Islamic education in the archipelago, entering, growing and developing along with the presence of Islam as a religion and ideology. This was the case when Hindu-Buddhism developed earlier, which simultaneously provided space and opportunity for the development of the Hindu-Buddhist educational system with places of study, sources, media, and methods of dissemination relevant to the times and conditions of the time. Because the nature of the social history of certain religious and religious education is the essence of its own spread (Abdullah, 1996; Mudzhar, 1998).

In the context of Islamic education, the development of Islamic religious education and Islam in the archipelago began with the process of spreading Islam as a religion, which then gained social and political legitimacy. This study seeks to trace *The First Center of Islamic Learning* in Bumi Nusantara, the early centers of Islamic scientific studies as a step to understand the compromise that occurs between Islam and local culture in the Islamic boarding school and madrasah education system (Azra, 1995; Tjandrasasmita, 2009).

The compromise between Islam and the culture of the archipelago in the world of education is a significant historical phenomenon but often escapes adequate academic studies. Islamic boarding schools and madrassas as the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia were not born in a cultural vacuum, but developed through a long and dynamic process of acculturation with local traditions (Hasbullah, 1995; Laffan, 2016). This research is relevant because it provides a historical basis for understanding Islam Nusantara as a moderate, inclusive, and contextual variant of Islam that is rooted in an education system that has experienced cultural compromise for centuries (Azra, 2004; Laffan, 2011).

The focus of this study includes several main questions: first, where are the locations of the early Islamic scientific centers in the

archipelago? second, how is the form and system; Third, what is the material taught? and fourth, how does it contribute and influence to the development of Islamic boarding schools and madrasah education until the contemporary era.

This paper uses a *historical approach* that is considered the most academically relevant to the theme and focus of the study. Borrowing Foucault's (1970) terminology, the social reality of Islamic religious education in the archipelago is an embodiment and answer to what happened socially in the past (Foucault, 1970). The geographical boundaries of "Nusantara" in this paper refer to the territory of the modern Indonesian state today, following the definition used by Ki Hajar Dewantara by referring to Justus M. Van Der Kroef (1951) (Vlekke, 1994).

## 2. METHOD

This research is qualitative research using a social history approach. This approach was chosen because of the theme of the study regarding the historical dynamics of the development of Islamic educational institutions in the archipelago (Yusuf, 2006). The data collection method is carried out through *library research*, namely by examining primary and secondary sources in the form of: (1) historical and chronic documents of the Islamic kingdoms of the archipelago (Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 2008); (2) works of classical scholars who visited the archipelago such as Ibn Batutah and Tome Pires (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1997); (3) contemporary academic literature on the history of Indonesian Islamic education (Hasbullah, 1995; Rofi, 2012); and (4) archaeological and philological studies related to the Islamic heritage of the archipelago (MANASSA (Nusantara Manuscript Society), 1999; Tjandrasasmita, 2009).

Data analysis is carried out in a descriptive-interpretive manner, where historical reflective analysis is carried out at the same time as the presentation of data and information to avoid repetition of discussions (Ahmad, 2002). The data validation technique uses source triangulation, which is confirming findings from one source with other

relevant sources (Sutrisno & Purtanto, 2015). The scope of discussion is limited to the development of early Islamic scientific centers in the archipelago from the 7th to the 17th centuries AD, with a focus on areas that became centers for the spread of Islam in modern Indonesia (Al-Anshori, 2010).

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **a. Demographic Boundaries of the Archipelago in the Context of the Study**

Azyumardi Azra (2004) in *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia*, refers to the archipelago by terming it as Malay-Indonesian, which includes Indonesia and present-day Malaysia (Azra, 2004). Prior to the post-World War II political friction and development, the archipelago was described as a geographical-anthropological unity of all islands located between the Asian Continent and Australia, including the Malay Peninsula but usually not including the Philippines (Muljana, 1991; Vlekke, 1994).

In the context of the state of Java in the 12th to 15th centuries, the archipelago includes Sumatra, Kalimantan, Nusa Tenggara, parts of Sulawesi and the surrounding islands, parts of the Maluku Islands, and West Papua, plus parts of Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, and a small part of the southern Philippines (Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 2008). Apart from the difference in geographical significance restrictions, what Nusantara means in this paper is the boundaries of the current modern Indonesian state (Reid, 2010).

#### **b. Early Development of Islamic Religious Education in the Archipelago**

Initially, Islamic religious education in the archipelago took place informally/nonstructurally, with a simple orientation to the early introduction of Islam as a religion and ideology (Hasbullah, 1995). Immigrants who came from various parts of Arabia, Gujarat, India, Hadramaut with economic *motivation*, after adapting to the environment, for the sake of the continuity of trade relations, finally

appeared as muballigh while trading (Azra, 1995; Laffan, 2011). The traders who were also missionaries showed akhlaqul karimah (da'wah bil haal), a simple way of thinking, and an attitude of submission in a high spirit of work (tawakal), so that the people of the archipelago were interested in knowing Islam more deeply (Hasyimi, 1990). This deep curiosity is the opening gate for the spread of Islam in the archipelago. The course of history then records the occurrence of intermarriage between immigrants and indigenous people, to the formation of political power and the establishment of early Islamic kingdoms (Al-Anshori, 2010; Yusuf, 2006).

Sociological-anthropological acculturation is inevitable between the indigenous population of the archipelago and immigrants who bring Islamic ideology and its traditions (Sutrisno & Purtanto, 2015). From this acculturation process, various styles of Islam in the archipelago were born that differed from each other, such as Parafu in Bima, Wetu Telu in Lombok, Kejawen in Java, and the writing of sacred numbers with Hijaiyah letters in Malay culture (Laffan, 2011; Mahasin, 1996). This diversity, according to the author, appears in two faces: on the one hand it is a grace in which there is a treasure of transcendent local wisdom as a result of acculturation with Islam, but on the other hand it is relatively sensitive to various socio-political frictions (Azra, 2002; Wahid & Rumadi, 2001).

### **c. Early Islamic Scholarly Centers: From Government to Educational Institutions**

#### **1. Samudra Pasai Kingdom**

Samudra Pasai was the first Islamic kingdom in the archipelago, located  $\pm 15$  km from Lhokseumawe, Nangroe Aceh Darussalam, on the northeastern coast of Aceh (Hasyimi, 1983; Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 2008). The kingdom is estimated to have grown around 1270–1275 AD (mid-XIII century) with its first king Malik Ibrahim bin Mahdum, the second king Al-Malik Al-Shaleh (died 1297 AD), and the last king Al-Malik Sabar Shah (1444 AD) (Sunny, 1980). The emergence of this kingdom was the result of the process of Islamization of coastal areas that Muslim traders visited

continuously between the VII to VIII centuries AD (Tjandrasasmita, 2009).

In 1345, the Moroccan Muslim sociologist, Ibn Batutah, said that Pasai was led by King Malik Az-Zahir, a king who was famous for his religious knowledge of the Shafi'i school, who held daily recitations from ba'da Dzuhur to the time of Asr (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1997; Morocco Author Team, 2014). From Ibn Battuta's statement, several important notes can be drawn related to early Islamic religious education in the archipelago: (1) Islamic religious education has become the concern of the state/king; (2) education has not been formally institutionalized, still in the form of public lectures in mosques; (3) educational material is the field of shari'a, especially Fiqh of the Shafi'i madhhab; (4) the education system is informal in the form of ta'lim and halaqah councils; and (5) in addition to fiqhiyah, the pattern of Islamic education is also in the pattern of Sufism, with the development of Sufism values such as wara' and zuhud (Hasbullah, 1995, 1995).

Samudra Pasai reached its glory in the 14th century AD and developed into a center of Islamic studies in Southeast Asia, characterized by the large number of scholars from Islamic countries who gathered in Pasai (Azra, 2004; Reid, 2010). Sultan Malikul Zahir was known as a true scientist who loved scholars and science; When Friday arrived, he held a discussion with the scholars called the Ta'lim Council or halaqah (Hadi, 2010; Salim & Sila, 2010).

## **2. Perlak Kingdom**

The Perlak Kingdom in Aceh is the second Islamic kingdom in the archipelago after Pasai, established in 225 AH/839 AD with the first king Sultan Alaudin (1161-1186 AH/12th century AD) (Hasyimi, 1983; Suny, 1980). The Perlak Kingdom had a unique educational institution, which was also a place for the development of Islamic religious education at that time, namely "Dayah Cot Kala", the first formal Islamic religious education institution in the archipelago

(Hasbullah, 1995; Regional Cultural Inventory and Documentation Project, 1984).

Dayah can be likened to a higher education institution that has a syllabus and curriculum (Rofi, 2012). In Dayah Cot Kala, the materials taught include Arabic, monotheism, Sufism, morals, earth science, Arabic language and literature, history and state system, mantiq, astronomy, and philosophy (Hasyimi, 1990; Yusuf, 2006). Sultan Mahdum Alaudin Muhammad Amin, the 6th king of Perlak (1243-1267 AD), became a phenomenal figure for establishing the Majlis Taklim Tinggi, an Islamic university whose students were those who had passed the scientific selection (Regional Cultural Inventory and Documentation Project, 1984).

**Table 1. Comparison of Islamic Education Systems in Samudra Pasai and Perlak**

No	Unsur	Samudra Pasai	Perlak
1	Materials/Curriculum	The curriculum is not clear, closed in one madhhab (Shafi'i)	The curriculum is clear and more open to diverse books
2	Input (Student)	General without specific criteria	Professionally recruited with clear criteria and skill level
3	Output (Graduate)	Not formally measurable	Measurable with specific competencies
4	System	Halaqah, sorogan (traditional)	Classical, modern, and literalist
5	Metode	Monotone	Varies
6	Sarana & Prasarana	Facilities & Infrastructure	More available

Source: Processed from various historical sources

### 3. Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam

The Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam was the result of the unification of the Islamic kingdom of Aceh in the Western Hemisphere and the Kingdom of Samudra Pasai in the Eastern

Hemisphere, with the first king Sultan Alaudin Ali Mughayat Shah (1507-1522 AD) (Hadi, 2010; Salim & Sila, 2010). In the context of the history of Islamic education in the archipelago, the Kingdom of Aceh has implemented a top-down centralistic education system (Azra, 1999; Reid, 2010). The level of education that has developed in the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam includes three levels:

*First*, the level of Meunasah (Madrasah) is the lowest educational institution equivalent to an elementary school found in each gampong, functioning as a place to learn the Qur'an, write and read Arabic letters, religious knowledge, Malay language, morals, basic arithmetic, and Islamic history (Hasbullah, 1995; Regional Cultural Inventory and Documentation Project, 1984). In addition to being an educational institution, meunasah functions multifunctionally: a place of worship for five times of prayer, celebration of religious holidays, zakat collection, deliberation, and peaceful trial between village members (Hasyimi, 1983; Suny, 1980).

*Second*, the level of Dayah (Islamic Boarding School) is higher than meunasah, which teaches nahwu, sharaf, various qira'ah, fiqh Shafi'i, poetry, and martial arts (Rofi, 2012; Yusuf, 2006). The location of the dayah is generally adjacent to the Jami' Mukim Mosque. The first boarding system (*meudagang*) in the tradition of Islamic religious education in the archipelago began with dayah, when students whose residence was far from the dayah were required to stay (Regional Cultural Inventory and Documentation Project, 1984).

*Third*, the level of Rangkang madrasah at the level of tsanawiyah which teaches Arabic, earth science, history, arithmetic, and morals (Hasyimi, 1990). Rangkang is organized by the king in each mukim. The existence of Balai Seutia Hukama as a special institution that handles education and scientific development makes the Kingdom of Aceh a pioneer in the institutionalization of tiered educational institutions in the archipelago (Azra, 2004; Hasbullah, 1995).

In the development of science, the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam established friendly relations with the Ottoman Turks and

Haramain Azra (1995). Some international scholars who have taught in Aceh include: Muhammad Azhari (metaphysicist), Sheikh Abdul Khair Ibn Sheikh Hajar (mystic and Sufism), Muhammad Yamani (expert in fiqh), and Sheikh Nuruddin ar-Raniri (Sufism-manifestiyah expert) (Hadi, 2010). Local scholars of the archipelago who exist in Aceh include: Hamzah al-Fansuri and Syamsuddin As-Samathrani (Azra, 1999). During the time of Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607-1636), the Baitul Rahman Mosque functioned as a university with 17 *daars* (faculties) (Regional Cultural Inventory and Documentation Project, 1984; Suny, 1980).

#### 4. Islamic Kingdom in Kalimantan

It is recorded that since the XV century AD, Islam began to enter Kalimantan peacefully, brought by muballigh from Java (Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 2008). The process of acculturation of Islam with the people of Kalimantan occurred until the establishment of the Islamic kingdom in Banjar (present-day Banjarmasin) with the first king Sultan Suriansyah (1540 AD) (Al-Anshori, 2010). In the development of Islamic education, Sheikh Arsyad Al-Banjari (born 1710 AD) implemented a slightly improved halaqah system with the model of "Javanese Islamic boarding schools" and used regional languages as a medium of delivery (Laffan, 2011; Yusuf, 2006).

#### 5. Islamic Kingdoms in Sulawesi, Bima, and Lombok

The kingdoms of Gowa and Tallo known as the "Twin Kingdoms" became the first Islamic kingdoms in Sulawesi in 1605 AD under Sultan Abdullah Awwalul Islam (Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 2008), 2008). The influence of these two kingdoms was based on mutual agreement: "Whoever finds a better way, he promises to tell the kings who are his allies" (Tjandrasmita, 2009). Furthermore, Islam that had been strong in South Sulawesi spread to Nusa Tenggara Bima (Sumbawa) and Lombok brought by Bugis traders; Sumbawa was controlled by the Kingdom of Gowa in 1616 AD (Reid, 2010; Vlekke, 1994).

In these three areas, especially Lombok, unique traditions are found in Islamic religious education, namely *pitemes* and *paosan* traditional forms of recitation that reflect the compromise between Islamic values and local wisdom (Mahasin, 1996; Umar et al., 2019).

#### **d. Islam-Nusantara Compromise: Three Key Aspects in the Education System**

From the historical tracing above, the Islam-Nusantara compromise in the Islamic boarding school and madrasah education system can be identified in three main aspects (Azra, 2004; Hasbullah, 1995; Laffan, 2016).

*First*, adaptation of teaching methods. The halaqah tradition that originates from the Islamic scientific tradition meets the strong oral culture of the archipelago (Abdullah, 1996; Syahidin, 2003). This combination produces a distinctive teaching method: sorogan (students recite the book in front of the kiai), bandongan/wetonan (the kiai reads and the students listen), and open discussions in the majlis ta'lim forum (Rofi, 2012). This system is not only a transfer of knowledge, but also a transformation of values that are adapted to the characteristics of the local culture (Mudzhar, 1998; Smith & Woodward, 2014).

*Second*, the integration of traditional values into the curriculum. The pesantren curriculum not only contains fiqh and tawhid materials, but also integrates local ethical values into the subjects of morality and Sufism (Laffan, 2011; Wahid & Rumadi, 2001). In Bima, the value *of maja labo dabu* (shame and fear of violating norms) is integrated in moral education (Umar et al., 2019); in Java, the concept of Javanese is absorbed in the practice of Sufism (Mahasin, 1996); in Lombok, the tradition of *pitemes* is part of non-formal religious education (Yusuf, 2006). This integration makes the education of Islamic boarding schools and madrassas familiar to the local community (Azra, 2002; Hasbullah, 1995).

*Third*, institutional flexibility. Islamic boarding schools and madrassas show high adaptability in responding to social changes without stripping away their Islamic identity (Tjandrasmita, 2009;

Vlekke, 1994). From the halaqah system in mosques, it developed into boarding schools in Aceh, then Javanese Islamic boarding schools and finally modern madrasas. Each transformation is carried out while maintaining the substance of Islamic values, while the technical aspects (methods, language, institutions) are adapted to the local cultural context (Abdullah, 1996; Sutrisno & Purtanto, 2015).

#### **e. Islam Nusantara as a Historical Product of Civilizational Dialogue**

The wave of acculturation periodization in the archipelago has made Islam in the archipelago give rise to various distinctive patterns (Azra, 2004; Laffan, 2016). This acculturation process runs naturally, peacefully, and continuously. The history of Islam since the time of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH has shown that mosques of worship function as places of education and teaching (Syahidin, 2003). The Prophet Muhammad PBUH made the mosque a political base (the unity of the Muhajirin and the Anshar) as well as a center of education. This move then inspired the caliphs after him, including the kings of the Islamic kingdoms of the archipelago, to act similarly (Azra, 1995; Hasbullah, 1995).

The inculturation process that occurs makes pesantren and madrasas not only religious institutions, but also agents of preserving the nation's cultural identity (Smith & Woodward, 2014). Seen from this perspective, Islam Nusantara as reflected in the education system of Islamic boarding schools and madrasas is a historical product of a continuous dialogue of civilization between the universal values of Islam and the local wisdom of the archipelago (Azra, 2002; Laffan, 2011; Tjandrasasmita, 2009)(Laffan, 2011; Azra, 2002; Tjandrasasmita, 2009).

## **4. CONCLUSION**

Concluding this study, it can be concluded that the compromise of Islam with the culture of the archipelago in the Islamic boarding school and madrasah education system is a long historical process, taking place since the beginning of the entry of Islam in the archipelago.

This compromise is reflected in three main aspects: (1) adaptation of teaching methods that combine halaqah traditions with the oral culture of the archipelago; (2) the integration of customary values and local ethics into the curriculum of morality and Sufism; and (3) the institutional flexibility of Islamic boarding schools and madrassas in responding to social changes without stripping away their Islamic identity.

The Islamic educational institutions that grew in the early days of the Nusantara Masjid and Langgar, Dayah/Pesantren, Meunasah, Rangkang are tangible evidence of this compromise. The mosque and langgar became the first Islamic educational institution to be functioned for all levels. Pesantren (pondok) developed from a boarding system that first began in the Kingdom of Aceh, referring to the pre-existing Hindu-Buddhist ashram tradition. Meunasah at the elementary school level and Dayah at the higher education level are examples of the institutionalization of Islamic education rooted in the cultural context of Aceh.

This research contributes to the understanding that Islam Nusantara is a moderate, inclusive, and contextual variant of Islam, while affirming that pesantren and madrasah education is a historical product of a continuous civilizational dialogue between Islam and local Indonesian culture. In the future, further research is needed on the Islam-Nusantara compromise in each region more specifically, considering the very rich diversity of patterns in each region of the Indonesian archipelago.

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