

# THE ROLE OF WALISONGO IN DEVELOPING ISLAM NUSANTARA CIVILIZATION

**Abdurrohman Kasdi**

STAIN Kudus, Central Java, Indonesia

abdurrahmankasdi@gmail.com

## Abstract

*Walisongo is the most important stake in the history of Islamic deployment in Nusantara. Facts of the history show that after the propagation run by Walisongo, Islam grew rapidly and inspired the development of Islam Nusantara. The idea of Islam Nusantara came from the spirit of Walisongo's Islam that later on continued by the scholars of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah with the mission of tolerant, peacefulness, open-minded, and accommodating with Nusantara culture. Understanding the formula of Islam Nusantara is very important to analyse the identity of Islam in Indonesia, using the process of selection, acculturation, and accommodation. The diverse of Islam Nusantara with the combination of three items (theology, fiqih, and tasawuf), have created diverse tradition which are consolidated, established and dominant since the age of Bintoro Demak Sultanate up to now.*

**Keywords:** *Walisongo, History, Civilization, Islam Nusantara.*

## Abstrak

*Walisongo adalah tonggak terpenting dalam sejarah penyebaran Islam di Nusantara. Fakta sejarah menunjukkan bahwa setelah dakwah Islam dijalankan Walisongo, Islam berkembang sangat pesat dan menjadi inspirasi berkembangnya Islam Nusantara. Gagasan Islam Nusantara lahir dari spirit keislaman Walisongo, yang kemudian diteruskan oleh ulama Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah dengan visi yang toleran, damai, terbuka, dan akomodatif terhadap budaya Nusantara. Memahami formulasi Islam Nusantara sangat penting untuk memetakan identitas Islam di Indonesia, dengan melalui proses seleksi, akulturasi, dan adaptasi. Keberagamaan Islam Nusantara dengan harmonisasi ketiga unsur (teologi, fiqih, dan tasawuf) nyatanya telah membentuk tradisi keberagamaan yang terkonsolidasi, mapan, dan dominan sejak Kesultanan Bintoro Demak sampai sekarang.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Walisongo, Sejarah, Peradaban, Islam Nusantara.*

## A. Introduction

Walisongo are guardians combination of syari'ah and tasawuf experts who have spread the peaceful and cultural Islam. Gus Dur calls this step as indigenous Islam, where Islam was delivered by borrowing the local custom.<sup>1</sup> Even though, they did not bring any flag but Islam of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah, the propaganda method used by Walisongo was the application of the methods developed by Sunni Sufi in embedding Islamic value throughout good exemplary. The theology school used was Asy'ariyah while the sufistic school led to al-Ghazali. The imprint left by Walisongo are seen in the collection of religious counsel kept in the students writing in Javanese known as *primbon*, which described the nature of tasawuf school that they follow and develop.

---

<sup>1</sup> Abdurrahman Wahid, "Pribumisasi Islam", in *Islam Nusantara: dari Ushul Fiqh hingga Paham Kebangsaan* (Bandung: Mizan Pustaka, 2016), p. 33.

The trustees who were members of Walisongo were symbols of the spread of Islam in Indonesia, especially in Java. They played an important role in building the civilization of Islam Nusantara.<sup>2</sup> Their influence towards people culture extensively as well as their direct propaganda, made the “nine saints” more well-known than the other. Walisongo stayed on the north coast of Java from the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the mid of 16<sup>th</sup> century, in three key areas, namely Surabaya-Gresik-Lamongan in East Java, Demak-Kudus-Muria in Central Java, and Cirebon in West Java. Therefore, those three areas became the knowledge transmission center brought by Walisongo are Pesantren Ampel Denta (Sunan Ampel), Pesantren Giri (Sunan Giri), and Watu Layar (Sunan Bonang). There were the places, Islam civilization spread to all eartern Indonesia and became key note of the beginning of Islam Nusantara intellectual web.

## **B. Discussion**

### **1. The Theory of How Islam Entered Nusantara**

The process of Islam entered Nusantara was not in a revolutionary and single way, but it entered Nusantara in an evolution, gradually, and varies. The coming and spreading was peacefully, too. Islam entered Nusantara through two channels: *First*, the North Line which included: Arabic, Damascus, Baghdad, Gujarat, Sri Lanka, and then go to Indonesia. *Second*, the South Line which included: Arabic, Yemen (Hadramaut), Sri Lanka, then go to Indonesia. The first place entered by Islam was Samudra Pasai (North Aceh) and the West Coast of Sumatra Island which then spread to various regions in Nusantara.

---

<sup>2</sup> Agus Sunyoto, *Atlas Walisongo* (Jakarta: Pustaka IIMaN and Lesbumi PBNU, 2016), p. vi.

There are some theories dealing with the entry of Islam in Nusantara: *First*, the Gujarat Theory. The process of the entry of Islam to Nusantara came from Gujarat, Western India in the 7<sup>th</sup> H or 8<sup>th</sup> H century. Islam entered Nusantara through areas in the Indian subcontinent, such as Gujarati, Bengali, and Malabar, a region adjacent to the Arabian Sea. Most of the expert who socialized this theory were the scholar from Nederland. The first one who expressed this theory was J. Pijnapel of Leiden University in the 19<sup>th</sup><sup>3</sup> century. Later, the Pijnapel theory is justified and propagated by Snouck Hurgronje.<sup>4</sup> Gujarat theory was also developed by J.P. Moquetta (1912) who argus using the gravestone of Sultan Malik al-Saleh, who died on the 17<sup>th</sup> of Dhu al-Hijjah 831 AH/1297 AD in Pasai, Aceh.

*Second*, the Theory of Mecca. The arrival of Islam to Nusantara, according to this theory, was directly from Mecca or Saudi. This process took place in the first century of Hijri or 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, when the Prophet was still alive. According to Sayed Naquib al-Attas, the arrival of Islam in Nusantara was since the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. At that time, the people of Islam had a Cantonese village, which showed their excitement to see the high religious climate and administrative authority. They maintained the continuity of the township and the Islamic organizations in Kedah and Palembang.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, an ancient Arab literature entitled *'Aja'ib al-Hind* written by Buzurg bin Syahrizar ar-Ramahurmuzi in 1000 AD, illustrated the Muslim village that built up in Sriwijaya region. The relationship between Sriwijaya and the Islamic Caliphate

---

<sup>3</sup> Ahmad Mansur Suryanegara, *Api Sejarah I* (Bandung: Salamadani Pustaka Semesta, 2010), p. 99-102.

<sup>4</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *De Islam en de Islam in Nederlandzch Indie* (Batavia: Akademische Boeken Centrale Rechtshoogeschool, 1941), p. 99-102.

<sup>5</sup> Syed Naquib al-Attas, *Preliminary Statement on a General Theory of the Islamisation of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 1969), p. 11.

in the Middle East continued until the time of Caliph Umar bin Abdul Aziz. Ibn Abdur Rabbih in his *al-Iqud al-Farid*, as quoted by Azyumardi Azra, mentioned that there were correspondence process between Sri Indrawarman, King of Srivijaya at that moment with Caliph Umar bin Abdul Aziz.<sup>6</sup>

*Third*, the Persian Theory. This theory was proposed by Hoesein Djajadiningrat, a historian from Banten.<sup>7</sup> He says that the coming of Islam to Nusantara was from the region of Persia or Parsi (now Iran). According to this theory, Islam was spread by Persian traders in the 12<sup>th</sup> century with the rise of Shi'as evidence at the beginning of Islam in Indonesia. In giving his argument, Hoesein focuses his analysis on the similarities of culture and tradition that developed between the Parsi community and Indonesia. The traditions include: the tradition of celebrating the 10<sup>th</sup> of Muharram or Asyuro as the Shiite holy day for the death of Husain bin Ali, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, as it developed in the tradition Tabuik or the Ark in Pariaman West Sumatra. The term "Ark" (coffin) is derived from the Arabic word transliterated through Persian, as a symbol of parading the bodies of Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Thalib, who was killed in Karbala incident. Likewise, the existence of the tribe Leran and Jawi in Persia showed the evidence that the Persians brought Islam to Indonesia. This tribe was allegedly refers to those Leran of Gresik and Javanese. Another tradition is the mystical teachings which have many similarities, such as the teachings of Sheikh Siti Jenar of Central Java with the teachings of Sufi al-Hallaj of Persia.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII dan XVIII* (Jakarta: Penerbit Prenada Media, 2004), p. 27-28.

<sup>7</sup> Hoesein Djajadiningrat, *Critische Beschouwing van de Sedjarah Banten: Bydrage ter Kenscheling van de Javaansche Geschiedschrijving* (Leiden: Akademisch Proefschrift, Haarlem-John, Enshede en Zonen, 1913), p. 121-125.

<sup>8</sup> Hasanu Simon, *Misteri Syekh Siti Jenar: Peran Walisongo dalam Mengislamkan Tanah Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, t.t.), p. 389.

*Fourth*, the Theory of China. This theory is delivered by Slamet Mulyana,<sup>9</sup> who says that the coming of Islam to Nusantara (particularly in Java) was derived from the Chinese immigrants. The Chinese had been in touch with the people of Indonesia long before Islam was known in Indonesia. This theory is strengthened by Sumanto al-Qurtuby in his book *Arus Cina-Islam-Jawa*, which states that according to the chronicles of the Tang Dynasty (618-960) in the Canton area, Zhang-zhao, Quanzhou, and the coast of southern China, there had been a number of Islam settlements. This Chinese theory is acceptable when we view from some foreign sources (chronic) and local (Chronicle and the saga). In fact, a number of local sources wrote that the first king of Islam in Java, namely Raden Patah of Demak Bintoro, is a Chinese descent. His mother was mentioned came from Campa, southern China. Based on the history of Banten and Hikayat Hasanuddin, the name and title of the kings of Demak and its ancestors were written using the Chinese term, such as “Cek Ko Po”, “Jin Bun”, “Cek Ban Cun”, “Cun Ceh”, and “Cu-cu”. Other evidences are old valuable Chinese architecture mosques established by the Chinese community in various places, especially in Java. Important ports in the 15<sup>th</sup> century such as Gresik, according to the records of China, was firstly occupied by Chinese sailors and traders.

## **2. The Revival of Islamic Civilization**

Malik bin Nabi says that one of the problems experienced by the Muslim civilization because they are less able to use the power of thought and reasoning. This is because they have long been lulled by the colonial conducted by the West. The fact is reinforced by Zaky Milad, he says that the problems of Islam civilization caused by the *isti'mar*,

---

<sup>9</sup> Slamet Mulyana, *Runtuhnya Kerajaan Hindu-Jawa dan Timbulnya Negara-negara Islam di Nusantara* (Yogyakarta: LKiS Pelangi Aksara, 2005), p. 35.

colonization by the West against the Islamic State. Malik bin Nabi call it the *al-Qabiliyyat li al-Isti'mar*, several phenomena affecting Islamic countries at that time that prolonged the continuing imperialism.

This is a historical phenomenon of Muslims, after approximately 800 years ruled the world then becomes the second grade after the West. Yet, Malik bin Nabi is optimistic about the civilization of Muslims. He says that civilization was walking on the turnover of history, it will be repeated as the rotation of the sun and moon. It (in accordance with the rotation) in the end the history will take side on Muslims. Certainly, with some strategic calculation for leading the revival, or according to bin Nabi, there are conditions that must be met in raising the Islamic civilization. It is in line with what has been alluded to by Nurcholish Madjid, he calls on Muslims to dig up treasures of Islamic civilization through the historical approach, without being a historicist (absolutizing history).<sup>10</sup>

The history turnover, where the time is a very essence dimension should be responded positively by Muslims, by emphasizing both individuals quality and the systems. Malik bin Nabi positioning time as one of the civilization determining factors. The most well known thesis of prophet about civilization is that the components of civilization consists of three elements, namely: human, material, and time.

Man as the driving element, determine the reciprocation of civilization, while the material and the time substances are the booster factors of civilization. The realization of a dynamic civilization shows that the function of the human Caliphate had been succeeded. The function of the caliphate

---

<sup>10</sup> Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam, Doktrin, dan Peradaban* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1992), p. 525.

itself is given to humans because humans have science. This man of science should begin in the development of civilization. Man should begin the civilization using the given science.

According to Ibn Khaldun, the history of civilization can be tracked with the science of *al-Umran*. It is a collection of all sciences, including sociology.<sup>11</sup> *Al-Umran* has a broad meaning, including all aspects of human activity, such as the civilization frame of geography, economics, social, politics, and science. The purpose of *al-Umran* within the framework of Ibn Khaldun is the science of the general methodology discussing about the basics of civilization, and with it, the peak of the earth<sup>12</sup> civilization will be reached.

Human beings need interaction in the growth of civilization, because according to him, the nature of humans are social beings. Therefore, man should get together, because it is their social characteristics. It contains essential meaning of a civilization. Meetings are very urgent for human life. Without a meeting, they are not perfect. God wants to prosper this earth by them all and give his chaliph only for them.<sup>13</sup>

In his theory, the “level of wealth” can determine social class. In this regard, Ibn Khaldun says:

... then the wealth is divided in the society, and create the level of social status. The highest grade is the king, nothing is higher that can offer something to other. While the

---

<sup>11</sup> Misbah al-Amily, *Ibn Khaldūn wa Tawaffuq al-Fikr al-'Arabīy 'alā al-Fikr al-Yunanīy bi Iktisāfībi Haqā'iq al-Falsafah* (t.tp.: ad-Dār al-Jamāhiriyyah li an-Nasyr wa at-Tawzī' wa al-I'lān, 1988), p. 318.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 311-317.

<sup>13</sup> Abdurrahman Ibn Khaldun al-Magribi, *Muqaddimah* (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1983), p. 41-43.

subordinate classes are those who have nothing among others, as well as among those of different classes.<sup>14</sup>

Then he connects the goodness with indigence. He said that we find a lot of people who are always doing fun with the glitz and glory, but they do not reach the level of happiness, but they are looking for life in their land on his work, so they became poor and needy.

Koran begins with the word *igra'*, which means that people read; read the reality, read the environment, and read the text. Text is the potential that can be tapped to form civilization. It's just that the text does not create civilization by itself, but in real terms to build a civilization is human interaction with the reality on one hand, and human dialogue on the other. It is the gravity of human and the agitation in social, politic, and humanity creates civilization.

There are some records towards the revival of Islamic civilization. *First*, building the Islamic epistemology that relates to the contemporary discourse. According to Ismail al-Faruqi, it can be done by doing things that lead to the effort to achieve the synergy between Islam and modern science. Meanwhile, Ziauddin Sardar said that this step should be begun by building the Islamic world view with the main starting point to build the basic values of Islam, civilization produced should be conceptualized and realized on the basis of Islam. Only by stepping that way, we will actually generate knowledge system built on the principles of Islamic values.

*Second*, setting out the criticism methodology toward the thought in the building of Islamic epistemology. As done by some experts, such as Muhammad Arkoun with his Islamic reasoning critical methodology and Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri with his big project of thought of "Arabic

---

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 390-391.

criticism”.<sup>15</sup> This criticism has the objective to determine the extent of originality and weaknesses of the ideas produced. In addition, it is aimed to open up the horizons and an Islamic outlook, that is democratic and inclusive. Without it, according to Arkoun, Muslims will understand epistemology with hollow formal symbols, without meaning.

*Third*, optimizing the role of Islam in the sectors of social, politics, economics, education, and so forth. Because a good conceptual framework of epistemology and methodology without being accompanied by real action, will only produce high but not grounded ideas.

### 3. The Biography of Walisongo

The word *wali* comes from the Arabic *wala*, with the plural form of *awliya* which means *qaraba*,<sup>16</sup> that is near. In the Qur’an, this term is used to describe a relative, friend, or protector.<sup>17</sup> Thus, Walisongo means nine trustees who are close to God. Meanwhile, according to the Javanese tradition, *wali* is a title for those that are considered sacred.<sup>18</sup> Related to this, the term Walisongo means the nine trustees who have superiority from other communities. Some stories, generally states that Walisongo are only nine persons, namely: Syekh Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Sunan Ampel, Sunan Bonang, Sunan

---

<sup>15</sup> Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri, *Takwīm al-‘Aql al-‘Arabīy* (t.tp.: Markāz Dirāsah Wiḥdah al-‘Arabīyah, 1998), *Bunyah al-‘Aql al-‘Arabīy* (t.tp.: Markāz Dirāsah Wiḥdah al-‘Arabīyah, 2000), and *al-‘Aql as-Siyāsīy al-‘Arabīy* (t.tp.: Markāz Dirāsah Wiḥdah al-‘Arabīyah, 1995).

<sup>16</sup> Louis Ma’luf al-Abb, *al-Munjid* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1937), p. 1061.

<sup>17</sup> “Ingatlah, sesungguhnya wali-wali Allah itu tidak ada kekhawatiran terhadap mereka dan tidak (pula) mereka bersedih hati.” (Q.S. Yunus [10]: 62).

<sup>18</sup> *Ensiklopedi Indonesia*, vol. I-III (Bandung: Ikhtiar Baru van Hoeve, t.t.), p. 1417.

Giri, Sunan Drajat, Sunan Kalijaga, Sunan Kudus, Sunan Muria, and Sunan Gunung Jati.<sup>19</sup>

Actually, if we calculate those who are included in the Walisongo they are more than nine.<sup>20</sup> However, there is a periodicity in which each period Walisongo remains of nine. The periodizations are as follows.

*First*, Walisongo First Period. At the time of Sultan Muhammad 1 become Caliph of the Ottoman Empire, he asked the development of Islam to the traders from Gujarat. They told Sultan that there were two kingdoms in Java, namely Hindu Majapahit and Pajajaran. Among of them there are Muslims, but only those of Gujarat merchant families who married with the natives in the port cities of the coast.<sup>21</sup>

Hearing this, Sultan Muhammad 1 then sent a letter to Islamic leaders in North Africa and the Middle East, asking the scholars who have *karomah* to be sent to the island of Java. Then, nine scholars who had karomah were gathered, and in 808 AH/1404 AD they went to the island of Java by boat. They were the first batch Walisongo, consisting of: Maulana Malik Ibrahim, who came from Turkey, he was an expert in ruling a country, Maulana Ishaq came from Samarqand (near Bukhara-Russian South), Maulana Ahmad Jumadil Kubra from Egypt, Maulana Muhammad al-Magrabi came of Magrib (Morocco), Maulana Malik Israel came from Turkey, Maulana Muhammad Ali Akbar came from Persia (Iran), Maulana Hasanuddin from Palestinian, Maulana Aliyuddin of Palestinian, and Syekh Subakir came from Persia.

---

<sup>19</sup> Ridin Sofwan, dkk., *Islamisasi di Jawa: Walisongo, Penyebar Islam di Jawa, Menurut Penuturan Babad* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2000), p. 11-12.

<sup>20</sup> Widji Saksiono, *Mengislamkan Tanah Jawa: Telaah atas Metode Dakwah Walisongo* (Bandung: Mizan, 1996), p. 18.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Stamford Raffles, *The History of Java* (Yogyakarta: Narasi, 2014), p. 47.

*Second*, Walisongo Second Period. In the second period three trustees replaced three trustees who died. They were: Raden Ahmad Ali Rahmatullah, who came to Java in 1421 AD to replace Malik Ibrahim, who died in 1419 AD. Raden Ahmad coming from Cempa, South Thailand (Southern Thailand). Sayyid Ja'far Sadiq a Palestinian, who came to Java in 1436. Maulana Malik replacing Israel who died in 1435 CE. He stayed in Kudus that is known as Sunan Kudus. Syarif Hidayatullah, originally from Palestine came to Java in 1436 AD to replace Maulana Ali Akbar who died in 1435 AD. Walisongo second session was held in Ampel Surabaya.

The trustees then divided tasks. Sunan Ampel, Maulana Ishaq and Maulana Jumadil Kubro worked in East Java. Sunan Kudus, Subakir Sheikh and Maulana Al-Maghrabi were in Central Java. Syarif Hidayatullah, Maulana Maulana Hasanuddin and Aliyuddin were in West Java. With the division of tasks they had their own preaching territory, they were assigned based on their expertise.

*Third*, Walisongo Third Period. In 1463 AD three guardians became members of Walisongo who replaced the previous three trustees who had died,<sup>22</sup> namely: Raden Paku or Syekh Maulana Ainul Yaqin birth of Blambangan East Java, the son of Syekh Maulana Ishaq with Blambangan princess named Dewi Sekardadu or Dewi Kasiyan. Raden Paku replaced his father who had moved to Pasai. Because Raden Paku stayed in Giri, he was well known as Sunan Giri. His tomb is located in Gresik, East Java.

Next is Raden Sahid (Sunan Kalijaga), who was born in Tuban, East Java. He was the son of Duke Wilatikta who domiciled in Tuban.<sup>23</sup> Sunan Kalijaga replaced Sheikh

---

<sup>22</sup> Zainal Abidin bin Syamsuddin, *Fakta Baru Walisongo: Telaah Kritis Ajaran, Dakwah, dan Sejarah Walisongo*, (t.tp.: t.p., 2016), p. 93.

<sup>23</sup> Sunyoto, *Atlas Walisongo*, p. 244.

Subakir who returned to Persia. Raden Makdum Ibrahim, or the Sunan Bonang, was born in Ampel Surabaya. He was the son of Sunan Ampel, Sunan Bonang replaced Maulana Hasanuddin, who died in 1462 AD. Walisongo third session also took place in Ampel Surabaya.

*Fourth*, Walisongo Fourth Period. In 1466 two trustees were appointed to replace those who had died namely Maulana Ahmad and Maulana Muhammad Jumadil Kubro Magrabi. Two trustees who succeeded him were: Raden Fattah (Sultan Patah) and Fathullah Khan. Raden Patah was Sunan Ampel's student, he was the son of King Brawijaya of Majapahit. He was appointed as Duke of Demak Bintoro in 1462 AD. He built Masjid Demak in 1465 and was crowned King or Sultan of Demak in 1468 AD. Then Fathullah Khan, son of Sunan Gunung Jati, was elected as a member Walisongo succeeded his father who had been old.

*Fifth*, Walisongo Fifth Period. In this period, Sunan Muria or Raden Umar Said (son of Sunan Kalijaga) entered to replace the died guardian. It is said that Syekh Siti Jenar or Syekh Lemah Abang was one of the members of Walisongo, but because Syekh Siti Jenar taught the people something that caused restless and ignored the religious laws, Syekh Siti Jenar was sentenced to death.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the position of Syekh Siti Jenar was replaced by Sunan Bayat (former the Duke of Semarang/Ki Pandanaran) who had been Sunan Kalijaga's student.

Seeing the biography above, it is obvious that Walisongo did not live at exactly the same time.<sup>25</sup> Yet each other had a close relationship, it could be in blood ties or the teacher-student relationship. Maulana Malik Ibrahim was the oldest. Sunan Ampel was the son of Maulana Malik Ibrahim.

---

<sup>24</sup> Sofwan, dkk., *Islamisasi di Jawa*, p. 214.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

Sunan Giri was a nephew of Maulana Malik Ibrahim, which means he was also a cousin of Sunan Ampel. Sunan Bonang and Sunan Drajad were the sons of Sunan Ampel. Sunan Kalijaga was a friend and student of Sunan Bonang. Sunan Muria was Sunan Kalijaga's son. Sunan Kudus was Sunan Kalijaga's student. Sunan Gunung Jati is a friend of other Sunans, except for Maulana Malik Ibrahim who died first.

Sunan Ampel (Raden M. Ali Rahmatullah), Sunan Gresik (Raden Santri Ali), and Sunan Majagung (Raden Alim Abu Hurairah, cousin of Sunan Ampel) were the triad who were nurtured within the same almamater. The trio gained science and Islamic education from Syekh Maulana Malik Ibrahim Asmarakandi, their father and their uncle. The name Asmarakandi behind Sunan Malik Ibrahim's name was another title for Samarkand. So we can say that the three trustees adopted Sunni scholarly, both in the field of Shari'ah and Sufism. As known that Samarkand was once the territory under the rule of daulah Sunniyah during the Abbasid, Seljuq, Sassan, until Gaznawiyah.

Other figures are Sunan Giri, Sunan Bonang, Sunan Drajat, and Sunan Ngudung. According to records, Sunan Ngudung was Syekh Sabeel bin Khalifah Khusein bin Maulana Ishaq or (according to the book of Sunan Kudus) Raden Usman Haji of Jipang Pandan bin Ibrahim bin Raja Pandita Asmarakandi. They were four series who were learning from Sunan Ampel. They learnt monotheism and mysticism from Sunan Ampel, among others, about the intricacies of God's place, and the combination of relationship-human-God (servant and the Creator). Sunan Ngudung also studied about the fundamentals of religion to Maulana Ishaq. Likewise, Sunan Giri and Sunan Bonang learn from Maulana Ishaq in mysticism, Malacca and Pasai. Sunan Gunung Jati initially

studied from Maulana Ishaq in Pasai and had settled two to three years in Makkah (1521-1524 AD).<sup>26</sup>

Sunan Kalijaga initially studied to Sunan Bonang a guardian who brought him from doing mistakes. He then continued learning from Dara Petak in Palembang, and then recite the books written by Syekh Syamsuddin ath-Thabrizi, a famous Persian scholars who was closely related to the life history Jalaluddin Rumi (died in 1273 AD).

The network built by Walisongo was not only in Java, but also in other parts of Nusantara, Malaysia, and the surrounding area. In fact, in Kalimantan, Arsyad Syekh al-Banjari was one of the students who was told to give death sentence to a zindid whose name was Syekh Abdul Hamid. In Sulawesi, the same punishment was given to Syekh Datuk Fatimang on the same charge. Scholars who conducted the trial were the students of Walisongo.<sup>27</sup>

#### **4. Walisongo and Civilization of Islam Nusantara**

In building the characteristics of Islam Nusantara, Walisongo's role was very dominant in the formation of Natives Islamic culture. The trustees who were the combination of Shari'ah and Sufism experts have developed a friendly Islam which is cultural. Although they did not carry a particular flag except for Islam and Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah, the methods of propaganda used by Walisongo was the application of methods developed by the Sunni sufism in inculcating Islamic teachings through the good examples. School theology using Ash'arite theology, while the mystical stream lead to al-Ghazali.<sup>28</sup> The footprints left by Walisongo are seen in a collection of religious advice contained in the

---

<sup>26</sup> Saksono, *Mengislamkan Tanah Jawa*, p. 38.

<sup>27</sup> Alwi Shihab, *Islam Sufistik: "Islam Pertama" dan Pengaruhnya hingga Kini di Indonesia* (Bandung: Mizan, 2001), p. 46-47.

<sup>28</sup> Saksono, *Mengislamkan Tanah Jawa*, p. 196.

students' writings Javanese language, known as *primbon*, which describes the nature of the sufism school which they have adopted and developed.<sup>29</sup>

It is based on Sunan Bonang *primbon*, *primbon I and II*, which representatively represent Walisongo teachings. In the *primbon* which describes sufism there are several paragraphs quoted from the book of *al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah* and *Ihyā' 'Ulūm ad-Dīn* written by of al-Ghazali. With reference to the two books of al-Ghazali, Walisongo intends to revive the religious sciences which was moribund in Nusantara.

They combine sufism with the *fiqh* in a harmonious blend. The reason is that, according to them, if studying sufism without the starting with *fiqh*, it is likely someone will be *zindiq*. Conversely, if studied *fiqh* with no regard to Sufism, the brain is only met by a case study of *halal-haram*, while the soul remains empty and hollow. Thus, in their struggle, Walisongo tried to end the dispute that occurred between the great Sufi scholars and scholars of *fiqh*.<sup>30</sup>

In spreading the teachings of Islam, the Guardians applying *maw'izah al-hasanah wa al-mujādalah bi al-lahīy hiya ahsan* methods. They were treated personally, contacted preferentially, and made direct communication, personal meeting giving a description, understanding and contemplation (*taẓkīr*) about Islam. This was applied by Raden Rahmat or Sunan Ampel when preaching to the Duke of Aria Damar from Palembang. Thanks to the hospitality and discretion of Raden Rahmat, Aria Damar converted to Islam with his wife and the entire population of the country he leads. In *Walisana* with *Dandanggula* style, it is stated:

---

<sup>29</sup> Shihab, *Islam Sufistik*, p. 38.

<sup>30</sup> Hamka, *Perkembangan Tasawuf dari Abad ke Abad* (Jakarta: Pustaka Keluarga, 1952), p. 193.

*Arya Damar pan pinrih anunggil, anetepi ing agami Islam datan lenggana sapaken, kalawan garwanipun, sampun anut tunggil agami, tekwan sawadya bala, sadaya samya nut, pangrehe ri Sang datengan, pan inganggep guru awal prapteng akhir, sumungku sung sungkemira.<sup>31</sup>*

This strategies was also used by Sunan Kalijaga when preaching to invite the Duke of Pandanaran Semarang. Initially, there was a debate, but the debate was then ended with a sense subject to the Duke to convert to Islam. A touching incident was when the Duke was willing to leave his incumbency and willingly leave his property and family to join Sunan Kalijaga for da'wah. The Duke of Pandanaran was willing to be a faithful disciple of Sunan Kalijaga. It is mentioned in *Walisana* style *Asmaradana*:

*Jeng Sunan alon wuwuse, tan ngemis arta kawula, tan remen donya brana, yen paring kula nyunyuwun, ungeling bedug Semarang / / Ki Adipati ngucap bengis, lengus temen paman sira, tan remen donya saketeng, iku gempalaning real, real gempalan (e) dirbam anjaluk unining bedug, mangsa bedug antuk dirbam.<sup>32</sup>*

In line with the other trustees, Sunan Kudus collected people in a unique way. The Ox (beef) owned by Sunan Kudus was decorated in such a way that was eccentric. The cow that appeared to be a bride was then tied up in the courtyard of the mosque, so that the community who was still Hindus flocked to watch the cows treated special and strange. After they came and gathered around the mosque, Sunan Kudus conveyed his message.<sup>33</sup> This method was practical and strategic. As it is known, the cow to the Hindus is a sacred animal.

---

<sup>31</sup> R. Tanojo, *Walisana (Babad Para Wali Disandarkan pada karya Sunan Giri II)* (Solo: Sadu Budi, t.t.), p. 13.

<sup>32</sup> D.A. Rinkes, *De Heiligen van Java*, jilid IV (Leiden: t.p., 1910), p. 435.

<sup>33</sup> Saksono, *Mengislamkan Tanah Jawa*, p. 91.

As a reliable preacher, Walisongo have the ability to preach as true (overall). The spirit of their sermons not only rests on worship ritual. But it extended to various aspects of community life, including Sunan Gunung Jati to control health problems and treatment of inner and outer. Sunan Ampel thought about and prepared relevant rules of civil law and family. Sunan Majagung, an expert on the economy and welfare.<sup>34</sup>

Some wali even have proved themselves as the head of the region such as Sunan Giri,<sup>35</sup> Sunan Gunung Jati, and Raden Patah who were the authority in the areas around their homes. Diplomacy strength and ability in hujjah on the power of Majapahit which was ruling shown by Sunan Ampel, Malik Ibrahim and Sunan Maja Agung. As a result, Prabu Brawijaya I (the king who was ruling Majapahit at the time) gave them permission to choose areas that are favored as a place to stay. In the new area they were given the freedom to develop religious, priests and even the regional head of local communities. Sunan Kalijaga was different, he was more suited to character as a priest or religious elders that affected the surrounding areas as well as scholars now.

Several other guardians became teachers at the royal courts and become a respectable public figures. Sunan Kudus, for example, was the teacher of Regent Aria Penangsang; Sunan Kalijaga was the teacher of Sultan Hadiwijaya or Jaka Tingkir, so where Ki Ageng Pemanahan and Penjawi. Their role was very important in the government of the kingdoms of Pajang and Mataram. Their unity in propaganda can be seen from the way the work and tasks of propaganda they

---

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111-112.

<sup>35</sup> B. Schrieke, *Indonesian Sociological Studies I* (The Hague: van Hoeve Ltd., 1955), p. 33-34.

entailed. For example, when building Mosque Demak, all guardians have been intervened.

The trustees had their own responsibility. For example, the issue of songs is the responsibility of Sunan Bonang and Sunan Kalijaga, but the other trustees contributed as well. For example, Sunan Giri was contributed to Asmaradana style, while Sunan Majagung contributed to Maskumambang song. Agriculture was Sunan Majagung's task, but Sunan Kalijaga contributed his expertise that enhance the form of the plow and hoe.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, their specific functions for each Walisongo, Sunan Ampel was the Master Chief, Sunan Giri was the Chief Justice, Sunan Ngudung was the Commander, Sunan Kudus was the Commander, Sunan Bonang was the King of Religious Studies, and Sunan Kalijaga was a diplomat. Being the head of the trustees was Sunan Ampel. After the death of Sunan Ampel, the leadership of Walisongo and the Islamic community was held by Sunan Giri and Sunan Bonang.

Moreover, their specific functions for each Walisongo, Sunan Ampel as Master Chief, Sunan Giri as Chief Justice, Sunan Ngudung as Commander, Sunan Kudus as Commander, Sunan Bonang as King of Religious Studies, and Sunan Kalijaga as a diplomat. Being who became head of the trustees is Sunan Ampel. After the death of his leadership Walisongo and the Islamic community held by Sunan Giri and Sunan Bonang.

There are two important factors that become the privilege of Walisongo, so that they succeed in the struggle to convert the Nusantara society: *First*, the trustees made the teachings of Islam inclusive, not exclusive. They did not only aim that Islamic values to be understood by the public,

---

<sup>36</sup> Saksono, *Mengislamkan Tanah Jawa*, p. 112.

but more than that, they tried to make Islam practiced in real life. *Secondly*, they had proven themselves as an eminent mujtahid who understood Islam as a theory and ideas. They even paid attention, have the knowledge and firm stance against the social problems of their times. Islam as *das sollen* (ideals and necessity) whereas society as *das sein* (reality) they are calculated with a blend of strategic compromise.<sup>37</sup>

## 5. The Role of Islam in Nusantara Civilization

According to the theory of relations,<sup>38</sup> we find the excellence that is praiseworthy in Walisongo circle. The personal relationships internally among them was very close. They contacted each other, made approval (agree), made familiar adaptation (adjustment), and the combined (blend) them. There was never a reference stating that the trustees were competing in the sense of competition, nor do the opposition (resistance) for each other, moreover, do a conflict (at odds with violence), except when responding to the case of Syekh Siti Jenar.<sup>39</sup>

Islam that was spread by Walisongo and became the religion of most people in Nusantara, has been playing an important role in various life of social, political, economic, and cultural. The role can be seen from the development of Islam and its influence on the society of broad Nusantara, so it is difficult to separate between the local civilization and the Islamic civilization. In this context, Kraemer notes:

*Het raadselachtige in den Islam nu is, dat hij, ofschoon als godsdienst ondiep en arm van inhoud, alle godsdienten ter wereld overtreft door de kracht waarmee hij beslag op zijn belijders. Geen godsdienst maakt*

---

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>38</sup> W.J.H. Sprott, *Sociology* (London: Hutchinsons University Library, 1956), p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> Saksono, *Mengislamkan Tanah Jawa*, p. 205.

*zulk een groot percentage van zijn belijders tot loyale, innig aan den godsdienst verknochte, felle aanhangwers als de Islam.*<sup>40</sup>

The entry of Islamic civilization in the civilization of the Nusantara involved language, names, customs, art, and politics. *First*, the influence of language and name. Indonesian as the national language is much affected by Arabic. This language has been so united in the tongue of Indonesian. It is not only used for daily communication, but it is also used in the newspapers, and so on. While the influence of Islam in the name field is legion. Many leaders and members of the public uses the name based on the Arabic language, the language of a unifying symbol of Islam. All of them are the evidence of the influence of Islam in public life and the nation of Indonesia. Walisongo has introduced terms such as *sabar, ikhlas, tawadu, adil, ukhwah, rida*, and other terms absorbed from the Arabic term.<sup>41</sup>

*Second*, the influences of indigenous customs. Customs that exist and thrive in Nusantara is heavily influenced by the Islamic civilization. Among the influences is the greetings to all Muslims that were found, or is used in official government events. Another influence is such utterances using important sentences in a prayer that is the sustainable influence of Islamic tradition.

*Third*, the influence of the arts and building of worship. The most prominent influence of art is seen in qasidah rhythm and Islamic songs. Ode that exalts God's names pronounced by Muslims, is evidence of the influence of Islam on the religious life of the Indonesian Islamic community. So does the influence in buildings of worships. Many mosques in Indonesia detracted from the building of mosques in Islamic

---

<sup>40</sup> Hendrik Kraemer, *De Islam: Als Godsdienstig-en als Zendingsprobleem* (Gravenhage: Boekencentrum NV, 1938), p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> Sunyoto, *Atlas Walisongo*, p. 434.

countries, either in the Middle East or in other places in the Islamic world. Besides the mosque, there are historical relics with Islamic character, such as, calligraphy, literature, and religious traditions.

*Fourth*, the influence in politics. When the Islamic kingdoms experienced its heyday, there were many elements of political Islam influence the government political system of the Islamic kingdoms. For instance on the concept of *khalifah Allah and zill Allah fi al-'ard*. Both of these concepts were applied during the rule of the Islamic Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam and the Islamic Kingdom of Mataram.

Four of the things above are forms of integration between Islam and the character of Nusantara. It shows that Islam Nusantara is very significant in shaping the character of the diversity of Indonesia. Indonesia with a population of over 250 million has about 700 ethnic groups, 500 languages, thousands of cultural traditions, and 6 religions and hundreds of local beliefs as well. Islam Nusantara was able to position itself as a religious force that integrate and maintain the unity of the Indonesian people in the frame of the NKRI.<sup>42</sup> The application of Islamic values in Nusantara may not be even. There are different traditions in every place that requires to be adjusted.

### **C. Conclusion**

Accordingly, Walisongo has formulated a systematic propaganda strategy, especially on how to deal with Javanese civilization and Nusantara in general which was very old, strong, and very well established. Walisongo's strategy in developing the teaching of Islam in Nusantara begins with a few strategic steps, namely through a process of adjustment

---

<sup>42</sup>Zainul Milal Bizawie, *Masterpiece Islam Nusantara: Sanad dan Jejaring Ulama-Santri 1830-1945* (Jakarta: Pustaka Compass, 2016), p. xxi.

and not to disturb the local tradition at the time. Walisongo actually strengthened the expanding tradition to include Islamic spirit.

The traces of indigenization of Islam conducted by Walisongo in spreading Islam are still visible today in the form of adjustments to the teachings of Islam in the context of Nusantara. Nusantara Muslim religiosity with the harmonization of the three elements (theology, jurisprudence, and mysticism) forms a consolidated religious traditions and well established. The idea of Islam Nusantara was born from the spirit to Walisongo Islamization, which is then continued by the scholars of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah, worshipers with the vision of a tolerant, peaceful, open, and accommodating to the culture of Nusantara. Thus, understanding the formulation Islam archipelago is very important to map the identity of Islam in this country, through the selection process, acculturation, and adaptation. [ ]

## REFERENCES

- al-Abb, Louis Ma'luf. *al-Munjid*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1937.
- al-Amily, Misbah. *Ibn Khaldūn wa Tawaffuq al-Fikr al-'Arabīy 'alā al-Fikr al-Yunanīy bi Iktisyāfihī Ḥaqā'iq al-Falsafah*. t.tp.: ad-Dār al-Jamāhiriyyah li an-Nasyr wa at-Tawzī' wa al-I'ān, 1988.
- al-Attas, Syed Naquib. *Preliminary Statement on a General Theory of the Islamisation of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 1969.
- Azra, Azyumardi. *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII dan XVIII*. Jakarta: Penerbit Prenada Media, 2004.
- Bizawie, Zainul Milal. *Masterpiece Islam Nusantara: Sanad dan Jejaring Ulama-Santri 1830-1945*. Jakarta: Pustaka Compass, 2016.
- Djajadiningrat, Hoesein. *Critische Beschouwing van de Sedjarah Banten: Bydrage ter Kenscheling van de Javaansche Geschiedschrijving*. Leiden: Akademisch Proefschrift, Haarlem-John, Enshede en Zonen, 1913.
- Ensiklopedi Indonesia*, vol. I-III. Bandung: Ikhtiar Baru van Hoeve, t.t.
- Hamka. *Perkembangan Tasawuf dari Abad ke Abad*. Jakarta: Pustaka Keluarga, 1952.
- Hurgronje, Snouck. *De Islam en de Islam in Nederlandꝛch Indië*. Batavia: Akademische Boeken Centrale Rechtshoogeschool, 1941.
- al-Jabiri, Muhammad Abid. *al-'Aql as-Siyāsīy al-'Arabīy*. t.tp.: Markāz Dirāsah Wiḥdah al-'Arabīyah, 1995.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Bunyah al-'Aql al-'Arabīy*. t.tp.: Markāz Dirāsah Wihdah al-'Arabiyah, 2000.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Takwīn al-'Aql al-'Arabīy*. t.tp.: Markāz Dirāsah Wihdah al-'Arabiyah, 1998.
- Kraemer, Hendrik. *De Islam: Als Godsdienstig-en als Zendingsprobleem*. Gravenhage: Boekencentrum NV, 1938.
- Madjid, Nurcholish. *Islam, Doktrin, dan Peradaban*. Jakarta: Paramadina, 1992.
- al-Magribi, Abdurrahman Ibn Khaldun. *Muqaddimah*. Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1983.
- Mulyana, Slamet. *Runtuhnya Kerajaan Hindu-Jawa dan Timbulnya Negara-negara Islam di Nusantara*. Yogyakarta: LKiS Pelangi Aksara, 2005.
- Nurhisam, Luqman and Muallimul Huda. "Islam Nusantara: a Middle Way?," in *Qijis: Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies*, Volume 4, Number 2, August 2016.
- Raffles, Thomas Stamford. *The History of Java*. Yogyakarta: Narasi, 2014.
- Rinkes, D.A. *De Heiligen van Java*, jilid IV. Leiden: t.p., 1910.
- Saksono, Widji. *Mengislamkan Tanah Jawa: Telaah atas Metode Dakwah Walisongo*. Bandung: Mizan, 1996.
- Schrieke, B. *Indonesian Sociological Studies I*. The Haque: van Hoeve Ltd., 1955.
- Shihab, Alwi. *Islam Sufistik: "Islam Pertama" dan Pengaruhnya hingga Kini di Indonesia*. Bandung: Mizan, 2001.
- Simon, Hasanu. *Misteri Syekh Siti Jenar: Peran Walisongo dalam Mengislamkan Tanah Jawa*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, t.t.

- Sofwan, Ridin, dkk. *Islamisasi di Jawa: Walisongo, Penyebar Islam di Jawa, Menurut Penuturan Babad*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2000.
- Sprott, W.J.H. *Sociology*. London: Hutchinsons University Library, 1956.
- Sunyoto, Agus. *Atlas Walisongo*. Jakarta: Pustaka IIMaN and Lesbumi PBNU, 2016.
- Suryanegara, Ahmad Mansur. *Api Sejarah I*. Bandung: Salamadani Pustaka Semesta, 2010.
- Syamsuddin, Zainal Abidin bin. *Fakta Baru Walisongo: Telaah Kritis Ajaran, Dakwah, dan Sejarah Walisongo*. t.tp.: t.p., 2016.
- Tanojo, R. *Walisana (Babad Para Wali Disandarkan pada karya Sunan Giri II)*. Solo: Sadu Budi, t.t.
- Wahid, Abdurrahman. "Pribumisasi Islam", in *Islam Nusantara: dari Ushul Fiqh hingga Pabam Kebangsaan*. Bandung: Mizan Pustaka, 2016.